



Past Continuous

Will Modi's 2014 Mandate Be Wasted, Like Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 One?



Late Rajiv Gandhi
Former Prime Minister of India

Narinder Modi
Prime Minister of India

(SAI Bureau) : On securing a handsome mandate – bigger than any in recent past – in an election, political leaders have to first resolve whether that victory shall be her or his 'peak', or if the bar should be further raised. Determination to conquer even higher electoral peaks must necessarily be reflected in humility, as any streak of arrogance or hubris is a guarantee of stumbling sooner or later. In Indian history, Jawaharlal Nehru won three successive elections, not just because the opposition was yet to become a viable project and because his party

(Contd on page 24)

Massive Recapitalisation Plan for State-Run Banks

(SAI Bureau) :New Delhi- In a stimulus package to boost the flagging economic growth, create jobs and increase credit flow, the cabinet on Tuesday approved a recapitalisation plan for state-run banks to the tune of Rs 2.11 lakh crore and a massive road infrastructure investment costing nearly Rs 7 lakh crore over the next five years.



Of the support to banks, a sum of Rs 1.35 lakh crore will be raised through recapitalisation bonds and the rest through budgetary support as well as market borrowings, Financial Services Secretary Rajiv Kumar disclosed at a media conference in the presence of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and a battery of secretaries from the ministry. Under the road connectivity programme at a cost of nearly Rs 7 lakh crore, the government will construct 84,000 km highways in the next 5 years. (Contd on page 25)

Paris Climate Deal

U.S. is officially the only country besides syria not to support

Nicaragua signed on after initially refusing because the targets weren't ambitious enough.

(News Agencies) Nicaragua has officially joined the Paris climate accord, leaving just two countries to not support the deal ? the United States and Syria. "It is the only instrument we have in the world that allows the unity of intentions and efforts to face up to climate change and natural disasters," Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario Murillo said Monday. President Daniel Ortega initially announced his intention to sign in September.

When the agreement was reached

in 2015, Nicaragua and Syria were the only countries to refuse to sign. Syria wasn't involved in the negotiations as a result of ongoing conflict in the country, and Nicaragua opposed the agreement's (Contd on page 25)

The plants that NASA scientists say you need in your bedroom to beat colds, tight chests and insomnia

(News Agencies)They may look pretty in our garden but scientists maintain that we can reap plenty of health benefits of plants by bringing them indoors. While experts have long preached the benefits of house plants, scientists are now saying that popping some greenery on your bedside table can boost your sleep and health.

The presence of plants reduces stress, anxiety and helps with the removal

of airborne pollutants.

Elle Decor and The Joy of Plants delved into research from NASA and the American College to determine which houseplants are best suited to your bedroom - and the benefits they provide.

1. Areca Palm: Madagascan areca palm leads the way in efficiency at 'mopping up' pollutants.

(Contd on page 25)

Woman raped in broad daylight on a busy road in vizag as passers by turned a blind eye



(News Agencies)A man was arrested on Monday after he raped a woman in broad daylight on the streets of Andhra Pradesh's Vizag on Sunday. The entire incident was caught on camera, but it seems that passersby chose to ignore it completely. An NDTV report says that, in the video that has gone viral, 20-year-old Ganji Siva can be seen forcing himself on the woman, who was sitting on a pavement near the railway station. (Contd on page 25)

ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

PUNJABI DUNIYA

*Satguru
Nank
Pargatiya
Mitti Dhund
Jag Chanan
Hoya
Wishing you
Happy
Gurpurab*



Indian American Voters Victory Forum

(An inclusion, education & advocacy organization for concerned voters)

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**if you don't
VOTE
then don't
COMPLAIN**

US cops arrest father of missing Indian toddler; body still not identified

(News Agencies) Houston: Wesley Mathews, the father of missing three-year-old adopted Indian girl Sherin Mathews has been arrested, a day after body of a small child was found in a culvert, less than a mile from the family's home. Sherin Mathews, who has developmental issues and limited verbal communication skills, was last seen outside her family's backyard in Richardson city in Texas on October 7 after her Indian-American father Wesley Mathews upbraided her and sent her alone outside late at

night as a punishment for not finishing her milk. Wesley was arrested last evening and faces charges of injury to a child, Police Sgt Kevin Perlich said. Yesterday, Wesley and his attorney voluntarily arrived at the Richardson police station and shared a different account of the girl's disappearance than his original statement, Perlich said. "He provided an alternate series of events from what he had previously given us," Perlich said. In Video: Father of missing Texas girl arrested, charged



\$250K In Synthetic Marijuana Found In Basement Of Long Island Foot Spa: Police A married couple was arrested after police say they found more than 20 pounds of synthetic marijuana in the basement of a foot spa.



(News Agencies) A husband and wife from Albertson were arrested Wednesday afternoon after the smell of gas coming from a foot spa led police to a huge stash of synthetic marijuana. According to detectives,

police officers and the Williston Park Fire Department responded to Simply Foot Spa, located at 120 Hillside Ave. in Williston Park, at 2:10 p.m. for a smell of gas. A short time later, Sunita Shah, 57, and Rajesh Shah, 62, arrived and opened the door.

When officers entered, they say they saw several cans of chemicals and drug paraphernalia, police said. The building was evacuated and aired out so the investigation could continue. The Nassau County Fire Marshal later deemed the scene safe and police entered.

Third Precinct officers, the Narcotics Vice Squad, Emergency Services Unit and Crime Scene Unit all began searching the business. Police say they found more than 20 pounds of loose synthetic marijuana and 5,300 bags of the same substance. The estimated street value of the drugs is \$250,000. Both Sunita and Rajesh Shah were placed under arrest without incident.

Both are charged with criminal possession of a controlled substance, second-degree reckless endangerment and illegal use of nitrous oxide. Their attorney told Newsday that

while the couple does own and lease out the building, they have no connection to the drugs that were found. The Shahs were released on their own recognizance after being arraigned Thursday in First District Court in Hempstead.

Synthetic marijuana, or synthetic cannabinoids, refer to a growing number of man-made mind-altering chemicals that are either sprayed on dried, shredded plant material so they can be smoked (herbal incense) or sold as liquids to be vaporized and inhaled in e-cigarettes and other devices (liquid incense), according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Donald Trump celebrates Diwali in Oval office



(News Agencies) senior Indian-American WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has hailed the extraordinary contributions of Indian-Americans to science, medicine, business and education in the country as he celebrated his first Diwali at the White House! Trump was joined by

Commission and Raj Shah, his Principal Deputy Press Secretary also joined Diwali celebrations.

"As we do (celebrate Diwali) so, we especially remember the People of India, the home of the Hindu faith, who have built the world's largest democracy," Trump said in a Facebook post along with a video of his Diwali celebrations inside the Oval Office.

Trump said he greatly valued his "very strong relationship" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Trump said he was deeply honoured to be joined by so many administration officials and leaders of the Indian-American community in celebrating Diwali -- the festival of lights.

The president's daughter Ivanka also joined him in celebrations, according to a picture released by the White House.

In his remarks, Trump said Indian-American neighbours and friends have made incredible contributions to the country - and to the world.

"You have made extraordinary contributions to art, science, medicine, business and education. America is especially thankful for its many Indian-American citizens who serve BRAVELY in our armed forces and as first responders in our great land," he said.

"Today, we proudly celebrate this holiday in

the people's House. In so doing, we reaffirm that Indian-Americans and Hindu-Americans are truly cherished, treasured and beloved members of our great American family," Trump added. Diwali, he said, is one of the most important celebrations in the Hindu religion.

"A time of peace and prosperity for the New Year, it is a tradition that is held dear by more than 1 billion Hindus worldwide and more than 2 million Hindus in the United States. It is also celebrated by millions of Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains in America, India and around the world," he said.

The tradition of Diwali celebration at the White House was first started by President George Bush.

Obituary

Gurvinder Singh Bajwa , Son of a noble soul and my family friend Balbir Singh Bajwa, leaves behind a distraught and grieving family.

It's a very sad day, a day when a very young soul, Gurwinder Singh Bajwa, suddenly left us.

I join his father Balbir Singh Bajwa, mother Surinder kaur Bajwa and sister Parvinder Kaur Bajwa, and other family members/friends , to pray to almighty God to give his soul place in heavens.



May God bless his soul, and give all loved ones he leaves behind, strength to cope up with this huge loss.

***Sharanjit Singh Thind
& Family***

Indian-origin MP tables motion on Jallianwala Bagh in UK parliament

(Insider Bureau) LONDON: One of Britain's senior-most Indian-origin MPs has tabled a parliamentary motion, calling for Prime Minister Theresa May to apologise for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar during the Raj in 1919.

Virendra Sharma tabled his Early Day Motion (EDM) titled 'Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919' earlier this week and has attracted five additional signatures from British MPs so far.

"This was an important moment in the history of Britain in India. Many

suggest it was the beginning of the end, a moment that finally emboldened the Independence Movement. It must be commemorated, and the British government should make clear its repudiation of such a barbaric act," said the Labour Party MP for Ealing Southall. The massacre took place in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar over Baisakhi in April 1919 when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Dyer fired machine guns at a crowd of people

holding a pro-independence demonstration. It claimed thousands of lives and injured thousands others.

The EDM calls on the House of Commons to recognise the importance of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as a turning point in the history of the British Empire in India.

The EDM notes that as the centenary of the event is approaching, it is appropriate to commemorate it. It also recognises that former British Prime Minister David Cameron referred to the

massacre as a "deeply shameful act" during a visit to India. It urges the government to ensure that "British children are taught about this shameful period and that modern British values welcome the right to peaceful protest; and further urges the government formally to apologise in the House and inaugurate a memorial day to commemorate this event". EDMs are formal motions tabled in the House of Commons as a means of drawing attention to a particular issue or cause.

Indian cities must become 'sponge cities' to tackle urban flooding

One of the key reasons why cities are collapsing due to natural calamities is because we have gone against the natural systems. While natural systems retain water, concrete structures tend to waste it. So when we build cities, we tend to build on wetlands and ponds, which actually have the ability to soak in extra water.



(Insider Bureau) aUrban flooding has become a recurrent feature in Indian metros. If it was Mumbai yesterday, it is Bangalore today. It is true that this year has been the IT hub's

wettest year in at least 115 years, but that's not the only cause for the collapse of Bangalore. The reason for such mayhem is along with crumbling infrastructure and drainage

system, there is no long-term vision on how to tackle such climate challenges. This lack of a proper plan is criminal neglect on the part of the State since the intensity and frequency of these events have been increasing. In the last couple of years, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh and Chennai have faced the same challenge. One of the key reasons why cities are collapsing due to natural calamities is because we have gone against the natural systems. While natural systems retain water, concrete structures tend to waste it. So when we

build cities, we tend to build on wetlands and ponds, which actually have the ability to soak in extra water. But experts point out that the solution to such urban flooding is to mimic nature, by making cities act as a sponge or becoming "sponge cities". Take for example, Berlin. The city's Rummelsburg neighbourhood is investing hugely on green roofs with swales (a low or hollow place), urban wetlands, gardens and parks, and permeable pavements to soak in the extra water and also keep the city cool. According to Mother Nature Network, China too is investing in their growing cities

in this way, and test projects show that keeping rainwater local works. They have set an ambitious goal that began in 2015. By 2020, the government has decreed that 80% of 16 urban areas should absorb and be able to use at least 70% of rainwater, and they're even teaching the concept in elementary schools. So far, they've spent about \$12 billion. This regular collapse of the city must worry India since we are urbanising and moving from an agrarian economy to a GDP dependent mainly on industries and services that operate from urban India.

Meet and Greet organized by The South Asian Community



(By a staff reporter) Troy, New York- The program began with the US National Anthem, followed by a moment of silence that was solemnly observed to pay respect to the fallen heroes of Niger attack on US troops, Hurricane in Texas and Florida and the mass shooting in Las Vegas recently. Akbar Khan provided the rules of engagement and thanked the audience. He recognized the work of Nisar & Naima Khan for providing the leadership in Organizing such an event on a short notice. He went on to introduce different ethnic community leaders present at this occasion: Dr. Gopal Uppal, Annu Subramanian, Dr. Wang, Dr. Suresh, Ripon, Ram Lalukota. A special thank you note was given for the East Greenbush - Town Supervisor Mr. Jack Conway. Ms. Leesa Pezzaro, Schenectady City Council President was introduced. Leesa spoke about

the importance of voting from her experience. At the end Leesa introduced Ms. Annu Subramanian. Following Electoral candidates were present:

Mr. Julian Schreiber: Seeking election of District 3rd, Supreme County Judge Jennifer Sober: Seeking position of County Criminal Judge in the Rensselaer County Andrea Smyth: Running for Rensselaer County Executive From District 1 County Legislature Candidates representing Troy • Edward Manny • Cynthia Doran • Peter Grimm • Mark Fleming • Erin Sullivan-Teta Troy Council President • Gary Pavlic

Dr. Gopal introduced the UN Ambassador Malik Nadeem Abid after Q&As in the last segment of the program. Ambassador Malik Nadeem Abid is Secretary General & Ambassador to UN, International Human Rights Commission. (Contd on page 24)



Manmohan Singh deserves a better report card than he got, writes Barkha Dutt

He was that rare entity in Indian politics — a genuinely democratic leader who made space for some dissent and did not personalise media criticism of him. As the second tenure of the UPA descended into chaos and corruption scandals I was among the many journalists who became unsparing in my criticism of his leadership. But not once did he hold that against me or anyone else or clamp down on information routes or reporting access to officials in the Prime Minister's office

By Barkha Dutt

This month listening to Manmohan Singh describe Pranab Mukherjee as the “better qualified” candidate for the post of Prime Minister, I remembered something else he had said. “History will be kinder to me than the media,” he had proclaimed in his quintessentially soft-spoken manner. I think we don’t have to wait for the passage of significant time to accept that he had a point. While there were many things to be greatly disappointed in his government for — and as its leader the buck stopped with him — perhaps we were far too stingy in our praise for what he got right.

Above everything else I think he was that rare entity in Indian politics — a genuinely democratic leader who made space for some dissent and did not personalise media criticism of him. As the second tenure of the UPA descended into chaos and corruption scandals I was

among the many journalists who became unsparing in my criticism of his leadership. But not once did he hold that against me or anyone else or clamp down on information routes or reporting access to officials in the Prime Minister's office.

Through the worst things we said about him — we accused him mostly of not standing up to the corrupt in his cabinet as well as the overweening interference from his party — he continued to be unfailingly civil if we happened to meet him at public events. This is the true test of press freedom — how politicians behave when the media is rough on them. On reflection, Manmohan Singh did not get enough credit from us for largely preserving the institutional autonomy of a free press at least at an individual level. Of course, institutionally, the Congress is yet to wipe its record clean of the stains of the 1970s Emergency. And books and films have been banned on

the Congress watch, making it just as culpable as other political parties. It's also true that Singh was not as personally open to the media as the contemporary information age demands — he did press conferences but avoided interviews — and that is certainly a flaw. But, what sets him apart among politicians of his ilk is that he never turned hostile to journalists even when we were brutal in our critique.

is authentic liberal instincts — perhaps something to do with the fact that he was an academic and technocrat more than a conventional politician — are distinctly different from both the main leaders of his own party as well as the ruling BJP. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi, for instance, seem to share a mistrust of the English-speaking media, albeit for different reasons and in different ways. Both believe the media has been less than fair to them and both appear to take



criticism very personally. Once you have been critical of either leader on an issue, chances are that they will cease to speak to you. Unlike in the case of Manmohan Singh, in both their cases, this aversion to the media does not spring from diffidence; it comes from a skepticism bordering on near-dislike. And with both Modi and the Gandhi family, those around them take their cue from the top and tend to shut down channels of communication to the media as well. By contrast, during Manmohan Singh's tenure, we were able to report on the government in a way that we were not able to report on his party. There were two moments when Singh should have resigned for the sake of personal redemption. One, when he surrendered to party duress on inducting compromised DMK

ministers into his cabinet against his preference and two, when Rahul Gandhi tore up an ordinance his government had cleared while he was away in the United States. Yes, the ordinance was unforgivable and was designed to save lawmakers convicted of corruption — like Lalu Prasad Yadav. But by protesting in public and while the PM was on foreign soil, Gandhi sorely undermined Manmohan Singh's authority. Had Manmohan Singh asserted his independence and authority — forget history — even the present would have been more than kind to him. To that extent he permitted and enabled some elements of the scathing appraisal he was subjected to. But, with all the flaws of his tenure, we also owe it to him to revise our report card on him. He deserved a better score than we gave him.

No naming names: India's Harvey Weinstein moment is passing by in deafening silence



By Namita Bhandare

Did you know he...?

Oh, we knew better than to enter his cabin alone.

Yeah, she complained but left the job when no action was taken.

This should have been the moment when the gossip swirling around water coolers burst into the open, leading to discussion on social media, letters to newspapers and outrage on TV.

This should have been the moment that sent powerful men scurrying for cover. Instead our Harvey Weinstein moment

The price of speaking up is simply too high. We have a law, but most companies remain mindful of hierarchies that make it easy for powerful men to prey on subordinate women. When it comes to the crunch, who's more dispensable, the boss or the one who reports to him?

is passing by in deafening silence. Sure, #MeToo tells us how depressingly pervasive sexual harassment and assault is all over the world from Malawi to Malegaon. And, yet revelations that Hollywood's most powerful producer is a creep has not emboldened similar whistle-blowing here in India. Everyone has a story to tell: The editor with wandering hands. The art director who wants to discuss ideas over drinks, after work. The groping bureaucrat. The leering judge. But so far, we're walking on eggshells, hinting, nudging, whispering. It took the extraordinary courage of a handful of film actors including Ashley Judd to come forward and expose years of predatory behaviour, leading to the sacking of Weinstein. But, Bollywood's silence is

deafening — as is the silence from every other industry. Why aren't we naming names? Why are we shielding these sick abusive men? Several reasons. Foremost is society's instinctive reaction to turn the spotlight on the victim. Even in light of the Weinstein allegations, so many asked why the women had remained silent for so long. Almost instinctively, we look at women who complain as trouble-makers. We ask, could be that she was denied a promotion? The price of speaking up is simply too high. Pick any high profile case. TERI? Now the court cases languish while the victim has quit her job. At Greenpeace India, three separate charges filed against the same individual resulted in zero action and a belated realisation from the organisation. At a

Hindi news channel, one traumatised woman tried to kill herself; the powerful editors hushed up the case and the woman quit her job, quit town and quit the profession. If this is what happens in high profile cases, imagine what happens at smaller establishments, shops, schools. Still wonder why we aren't naming names? We have a law, but most companies remain mindful of hierarchies that make it easy for powerful men to prey on subordinate women. When it comes to the crunch, who's more dispensable, the boss or the one who reports to him? #MeToo breaks the culture of silence. Now that we know a great, universal sickness exists, what next? How do we end the sense of entitlement? And, until we come up with an answer, here's my addition to the debate: #MeToo.

Dineshwar Sharma as J&K interlocutor can build on the gains achieved in recent times

The Centre's decisions to appoint an interlocutor, albeit not a politician, for dialogue with all stakeholders in Kashmir is a positive step. Votaries of dialogue had for long sought a blend of military and political approach to the Kashmir imbroglio. The move half meets the call but is well-timed



Security forces can encounter militants, not engage with people and adversaries the way politicians do. In that sense, the Centre's decisions to appoint an interlocutor, albeit not a politician, for dialogue with all stakeholders in Kashmir is a positive step.

Votaries of dialogue had for long sought a blend of a military and political approach to the Kashmir imbroglio. The move half meets the call but is well-timed. Kashmir hasn't returned to normalcy. It's experiencing nevertheless a relative calm that can be strengthened by reaching out to alienated groups and formations.

It's not clear whether the Hurriyat will be a part of call for former IB chief Dineshwar Sharma, the interlocutor. The possibility isn't ruled out, what with Home Minister Rajnath Singh leaving the decision to him. In fact, J&K police chief Shesh Paul Vaid had the other day made out a case for a political initiative to build on the security force's success in taking out 160 militants this year. A repeat of a Burhan Wani kind of trigger, he had feared, could negate the gains of the past months.

Among those eliminated were Abu Dujana and Bashir Lashkari of the LeT. People turned out for their funerals, but there was no outrage of the kind that followed Wani's death.

The dip in stone-pelting is attributed to the NIA probe against the Hurriyat operatives accused of funding mobs. In reality that's just one factor in the counter-militancy story in which the police has been a key protagonist.

But from where should the peace overture start and how? As Mr Vaid suggested, the Opposition should refrain from eulogising stone-pelters as freedom fighters. His allusion was to Farooq Abdullah's response to the prime minister exhorting the Kashmiri youth to choose between "terrorism and tourism".

At the same time, the Centre and the PDP-BJP regime in J&K would be well advised to vigorously implement pro-people elements in their common agenda of governance. That will build the ambience for talks by strengthening a peace that's still tenuous.

Besides, the Centre, through its points-person, should attempt at an understanding with pro-India parties like the National Conference and the Congress to not be expedient on issues requiring political consensus. Much of that will also depend on the Centre's own sincerity on having all stakeholders on board.

For their part, the Opposition too should, in the interest of Kashmir and the country, lead from the front — rather than being led by popular sentiments. Only a united polity can repair the political and emotional chasm in Kashmir.

Tillerson's South Asia rhetoric must translate into action on the ground by both India and US

So far, Washington has found it hard to keep focussed on India, finding itself easily diverted by other immediate international problems. New Delhi retains a blinkered approach to a number of policy areas such as trade where it echoes global attitudes of a previous century.

India and the United States are the world's largest democracies, separated by different worldviews. That has been the fundamental source of friction in the Indo-US relationship. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Wednesday outlined Washington's big picture view of the Indo-US relationship. The degree of consonance with New Delhi's present strategic perspective was striking.

The strategic core of the speech was his declaration that "the Indo-Pacific — including the entire Indian Ocean, the Western Pacific, and the nations that surround them — will be the most consequential part of the globe in the 21st century" and that the greatest challenge to a stable, rules-based Indo-Pacific is a China that has taken to reworking the international system to its own benefit. In contrast, India has been responsible and law-abiding even as it acquires greater power. The US secretary of state took direct aim at China's Belt Road Initiative, echoing Indian arguments that the strings Beijing attaches to its projects, most dangerously in the form of its financing structures, result in a loss of sovereignty and minimal economic gain. Finally, he commits the US to partnering with India and doing what it can to help India in facing this challenge, especially in the field of defence.

This is a hand-in-glove fit with the prevailing sense in New Delhi that control of the Indian Ocean will be their primary security concern in the coming decades. The speech puts geopolitical icing on a series of positive Indian interactions with the Trump administration. However, India has heard similar words from earlier US administrations, notably that of George W. Bush. The question is why such sentiments have struggled to become action on the ground.

Both sides have been to blame. Washington has found it hard to keep focussed on India, finding itself easily diverted by other immediate international problems. New Delhi retains a blinkered approach to a number of policy areas such as trade where it echoes global attitudes of a previous century. Tillerson was silent on the degree of convergence India and the US had on international economic policy. And that is no surprise: India's commerce ministry remains bereft of any sense of strategic thinking. Defence cooperation is another bureaucratic labyrinth that continues to trap the best of political intentions. Solving economic problems is what the Narendra Modi government claims to be all about. It needs to channel some of that energy in the direction of its US policy so that an overlap in worldviews becomes an overlap in tangible reality.

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AAP's limited foray into Gujarat is a sign it is maturing

The party and its tallest leader Arvind Kejriwal are beginning to realise and profess that politics is the art of the possible.



By Jatin Gandhi

After planning to launch into the Gujarat assembly elections all cylinders blazing and then at one point abandoning the fight altogether, the Aam Aadmi Party has finally decided to make it a limited foray. There are a number of reasons why AAP will enter the electoral fray in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bharatiya Janata Party chief Amit Shah's home state. But trying to form the next government in the state is not one of them. And in doing that, the party is showing signs of wisening up and learning from its recent electoral losses.

AAP has its eyes set on the next Lok Sabha polls and assembly polls in states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and

Karnataka that precede the general election. To begin with, the AAP brass simply wants to keep its flock together for that. The local unit of the party has been raring for a fight for more than three years and not contesting the elections would mean disappointing the cadres in Gujarat to the extent of losing a sizeable portion. Two, AAP's bargaining position vis-à-vis other parties in a future coalition will be decided by the number of seats it can win in the Lok Sabha elections.

Though the party has always positioned itself as equidistant from both the BJP and the Congress, AAP will be willing to join an anti-BJP coalition in 2019 or whenever the next Lok Sabha polls take place. And the

indication for that came from none other than Delhi chief minister and AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal at Congress leader Manish Tewari's book launch last fortnight.

"Whether opposition parties will come together or not, that is arithmetic. That is also necessary in electoral politics but a churning is taking place. The coming election will not be opposition versus BJP. It will be BJP versus the rest of the country," Kejriwal said at the function where he shared the stage with BJP's Yashwant Sinha and Tewari. AAP and its tallest leader are beginning to realise and profess that politics is the art of the possible.

In the realm of the possible, AAP believes it can cash in on the anti-incumbency against the ruling BJP there, target specific groups — like the Dalits, Muslims, farmers and Patidars — and poll enough votes to stay in contention for being a national party. To be able to focus on Gujarat, it has decided to stay away from Himachal Pradesh, where elections will be held in November.

AAP is in power in Delhi, the

principal opposition in Punjab and polled 6.3% votes in Goa in February. (To be recognised as a national party by the Election Commission, a party needs to have secured six per cent of the votes polled in four states — whether in the general election or the assembly election — and won four seats to the House of the People). Though it won't change much on the ground unless it wins seats in the assembly, unlike Goa where it drew a naught, crossing the magic mark of six% will help AAP cross a psychological barrier and serve as a booster for its cadres. AAP leaders privately admit that the debacles in Goa and the Delhi municipal polls earlier this year saw several party volunteers leave.

So far, AAP has just declared 21 seats in the state where it will field candidates. The eventual number will be close to 50. AAP strategists feel the party can dent the Congress and try and wean away some of the anti-BJP votes from the party that has played opposition in Gujarat's bipolar polity for over two decades now. The Congress has already begun accusing

AAP of dividing the anti-incumbency vote in Gujarat with its state in-charge Ashok Gehlot saying in a recent interview that AAP should withdraw from the contest and not divide Congress votes in the country's interest.

But AAP rejects the suggestion as undemocratic. "The Congress did not act as an active opposition for 22 long years and allowed the state to slip under the BJP," says Harshil Nayak, party spokesperson. "AAP's support in the last two years to issues concerning the farmers and marginalised communities and the agitations we organised have brought the anger against the BJP to a boil." "Contesting Gujarat will help the AAP shed its image of an urban governance party. If it feels it can attract certain sections of voters, it should test the waters in the elections," says political analyst Abhay Dubey of Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), a Delhi-based advocacy group. Two surveys by CSDS have pointed out that the Congress is closing in on the BJP but the gap has not gone down drastically except among the Muslims and Dalits.

US in the crosshairs: Why a crisis is looming over the Korean peninsula

Japan and even South Korea may decide that becoming nuclear armed states themselves may be the only effective means of ensuring their security. The emergence of these two countries friendly to India may seriously limit China's room for manoeuvre

By Shyam Saran

The Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Mike Pompeo has warned that North Korea could well be just months away from developing the ability to hit the American mainland with nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). The country has already carried out six nuclear tests since 2006 the latest being in September this year. Pyongyang claims the last was a hydrogen bomb but this is doubted by experts.

In parallel with developing its nuclear weapons capability, North Korea has also been conducting a series of missile tests of different range. It has tested ICBMs with a range that could strike the Pacific coast of the US though these are not yet of operational quality. There

appear to be problems relating to the missiles' re-entry into the earth's atmosphere since in some tests the missiles have been seen to burn up and disintegrate upon re-entry. However, it is a matter of time before these technological glitches are fixed. The development of nuclear weapons and delivery capabilities has proceeded despite strict economic sanctions imposed on the country including by China, its main ally.

China has refrained from applying an economic squeeze on a scale which might lead to a regime collapse in North Korea with all its negative and unpredictable consequences. China is unlikely to accept a situation where it may be inundated with large number of refugees escaping political and

economic collapse. Nor would it accept the possible incorporation of the North into South Korea resulting in a much stronger neighbour at its doorstep. Even if South Korea were to exit its military alliance with the US, it would still be difficult for China to accept a reunified Korea. Furthermore, would the South inherit and retain the North's nuclear weapons after reunification? If this were to happen the security situation in North-East Asia would undergo a dramatic transformation.

The US has been unable to prevent North Korea from developing a nuclear arsenal which may now number more than a dozen weapons. The focus has therefore shifted to preventing the country from acquiring a delivery capability

that extends to the US homeland. But this stance of the US is not reassuring to its allies, South Korea and Japan, who are covered by the US nuclear umbrella. North Korea already has the capability to strike these two countries with fully tested missiles of a shorter range. The US was unable or unwilling to use coercive force to prevent it. If it is now willing to risk using force to prevent North Korea from graduating to a capability to strike the US itself then it may be inferred that the assurance to its allies is of lesser importance. The deployment of the THAD anti-missile system in South Korea and Japan offers some protection but then it has brought China and Russia into the equation since they believe their own nuclear deterrent has been rendered less effective as

a result. North Korea has already crossed the threshold in terms of having a credible nuclear arsenal and a reasonably sophisticated delivery system with intercontinental range. Therefore, the only option short of war to respond to this threat would be to build and deploy an effective and credible deterrent against it. The deployment of THAD would appear to tacitly accept this proposition. But Donald Trump has drawn a line at the acquisition of a delivery capability that threatens the US itself. His National Security Advisor, General HR McMaster said recently "There are those who have said what about accept and deter? Accept and deter is unacceptable and so this puts us in a situation where we are in a race to resolve this short of military action."

Ask Partition victims what it means to be a refugee

Those who seek to throw out the migrants from Myanmar must first consider the pain any refugee suffers



By Sidharth Luthra

The Rohingya issue is before the Supreme Court of India. One side claims them to be illegal migrants and interlopers, who ought to be cast out. It is said they enjoy scarce resources in India, while indulging in crime and are a threat to our national security. The other wants the Indian State to see them as a helpless people seeking refuge from persecution in Myanmar.

I don't hold a brief for the Rohingyas or any migrants, illegal or legal, irrespective of their religion, creed, colour and nature. But for those who seek to throw out the migrants from Myanmar, they must first

consider the pain any refugee suffers first.

For centuries India has been a haven to the world's outcasts. Diverse communities such as the Parsis, Jews, Armenians and Tibetans found refuge here and have survived the depredations of hostile regimes. With the downfall of the Shah and Pahlavi regime (1979), Iranians, and later with the collapse of Soviet-supported administration, Afghans, came to India.

To understand what it means to be a refugee, cast out from your home, we must go back to what happened in this land in 1947. Hindus and Sikhs left what

is West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) to migrate to India while Muslims moved to Pakistan. Both my parents belong to refugee families, who came from West Punjab and finally settled in Delhi. Even today in states where descendants of 1947 immigrants live, they continue to be called refugees colloquially.

For children of refugees born two decades after 1947 like me, the conversations in our homes since birth have been embedded with the horrors of that time, of loss of home and hearth, of being cast out from your land, of overnight poverty, the struggle to survive in an alien place and to make it your home. These feelings are so deeply engrained in our Punjabi psyche, that we think of 1947, not as Independence but as Partition alone. My late father, who lost everything and began afresh and rose to great heights in the legal profession, taught me an important lesson of my life. Aga Emani, an Iranian gentleman of noble descent, had fled to India with his wife and two small

daughters and came in contact with our family in the early 1980s. Soon he began hanging around my late father, who would find ways to keep sending him on odd jobs and errands and would then slip him money, despite our entire family disapproving. To top it he and his wife began calling my parents "daddy and mummy".

As his constant presence around my father became an irritant to the family, and I could stand it no longer, one day I summoned the courage to ask my father why he indulged this man and his family? His answer was "Son, you were born post-Partition. You don't know what it means to be homeless, living on the charity of others and with no hope for the future". The odd jobs, he said, were to generate some money for Mr Emami with dignity, as the man and his family were barely surviving on the dole from the UNHCR. After living in India for about 20 years, Mr Emami went back to Iran. His daughters had grown up in an alien land and he worried for them and he had run out of

finances. We never got to know what became of Mr Emami or his family.

International conventions exist to deal with the status of refugees and the UNHCR is active in providing aid and rehabilitation. But no amount of rehabilitation and compensation can make up for the loss of one's home, which is not just monetary loss in monetary terms, but a loss of identity, a sense of statelessness, of upheaval, of deprivation. It is for the Indian government to determine which refugees are to be brought in or not, but seeing the humanitarian crisis next door, can an exception be made based on the religion or alleged propensity of crime of any class of refugees?

This land has welcomed many of the world's oppressed with an open heart and open arms. If we don't provide safety and sustenance to refugees, (resources and government policy, along with relations with other nations permitting) will we be able to hold our head high as a leader among nations and a proponent of human rights?

Does it take a Twitter trend to know women are harassed every day?

Over 34,600 rape cases were reported in India in 2015. Are men finding just now how bad it's for women in India?



A journalist recounts being molested when she was 11 and holding her mother's hand on a bus. The man grinned at her. An actress says she was made to feel she deserved harassment because she was a "party girl". "I shouldn't have been there, I shouldn't have been 'bad'," she writes. A social media marketing professional says she was 8 when an uncle groped her breasts, while taking her out to buy sweets in a rickshaw.

These are just some of the searing accounts of assault and sexual harassment that Indian women shared when the hashtag #MeToo starting trending worldwide. The hashtag started trending Sunday when actor Alyssa Milano tweeted an appeal from a friend in the wake of allegations of harassment and rape against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. "If you've been

sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet," said Milano.

Within 24 hours, there were more than 500,000 tweets and 12 million Facebook posts hashtagged #MeToo. These social media posts show that the scale of sexual assault is staggering and its victims too many to number. "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem," reads the original post. But, the question is, who did not know the magnitude of the problem? Because as testimonies from woman after woman can attest, we knew exactly how deep, how wide the rot runs.

In India, over 34,600 cases of rape were reported in 2015, among the 1.3 lakh reported incidents of sexual offences, according to National Crime Records Bureau figures. This is when rape and sexual assault is hugely underreported. Only one out of every four rape cases in India ended in conviction in 2015. In Delhi, reported cases of rape jumped 277% in the last five years. Women are four times as likely to be raped in New Delhi than any other city. As I write this, a Thompson Reuters poll has ranked New Delhi, along with Sao Paulo, as the worst megacity when it comes to sexual violence against women.

Women have always known what it's like to be harassed and violated. For many of us, our first brush with harassment happened when we weren't even "women" but still children. We know that our friends, mothers, colleagues, aunts, young cousins have all faced harassment -- we know because we have seen it happen, we have heard the stories. We have seen complaints of harassment being dismissed or laughed off, of our 'feeble no' or clothes or morals being cited as reasons to let perpetrators off the hook. So who is it exactly who did not know that the problem was this bad? Turns out, it is men. Men, cocooned by privilege, are just finding out how bad it is for women. #MeToo hasn't blown the lid off anything, hasn't 'exposed' how widespread sexual violence is, except for people who were ignoring it till now.

Closer home, Weinstein's exposure made Pune-based lifestyle blogger Sheena Dabolkar publicly accuse Khodu Irani, the owner of a Pune pub, for being a serial harasser and encouraging an atmosphere hostile to women at the pub. More people, including well-known comedians Aditi Mittal and Tanmay Bhatt, joined the growing chorus of complaints against Irani, while his friends jumped to his defence. Reactions to Dabolkar's post mirror those of Weinstein's

defenders. In fact, they are typical of the way men react to women being vocal about harassment: "I never saw it happen", "why didn't you complain earlier", "patting your butt may not have sexual undertones", "you're lying for publicity". #MeToo testimonies are brave. They have the power to shake those who deliberately choose to enable a culture that silences and shames victims. When every woman on your timeline is voicing her assault and abuse, you can no longer turn around and say, "oh, I didn't know it was so bad".

Men are shocked at how every single woman they know has a horror story of being abused, assaulted, harassed, violated. The sheer scale, the number of victims who stood up to be counted, have been overwhelming.

And this is why we need a shift in the way we discuss sexual assault. Women don't "get raped", men rape. As people have pointed out, for every #MeToo story there is a corresponding #IDidThat.

If #MeToo has to change anything, men will need to listen and examine the ways in which they are complicit. Their bro codes, their silence, their actions. If men don't change, if men don't do better, a new generation of women will still be tweeting #MeToo years from now.

In Rajasthan, New Law To Shield Public Servants From Probe

Under the changes made by the executive order, the government will get six months to decide if an allegation against a public servant is worth probing. If the state government does not get back to the court with its decision within six months, it will be deemed to have given its sanction.

It is not clear if the changes will impact the power of the police to register cases against public servants as well.

But if the police does not act on a complaint, say against a minister or lawmaker accused of corruption, a private citizen has the right to go to the local court to seek orders for a probe.

Now, before the court gets to decide if the complaint merits a probe, the law says the government will take get six months to decide if the court should hear the complaint at all. If the state government does not get back to the court with its

approval within six months, it will be deemed to have given its sanction. The law does not require the government to give any reasons.

The changes are broadly patterned on restrictions proposed in the Prevention of Corruption Act pending in parliament's Rajya Sabha. The Manmohan Singh government had first moved similar changes in 2013 to the anti-corruption law, ostensibly to protect honest public servants. The Rajasthan government's version goes a step further and outlaws reporting any information that ends up

disclosing the identity of the judges or public servant facing accusations unless the government has vetted the case. Journalists can be sentenced to two years jail for violating this rule.

The Supreme Court had last upheld the right of a private citizen to set the anti-bribery law in motion in the January 2012. In this judgment delivered on a petition by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, the court had ruled that the constitutional right of a citizen to file a complaint "should not be burdened with unreasonable fetters".



(Agencies) JAIPUR: In a controversial move, the Vasundhara Raje government in Rajasthan has barred courts from taking up private complaints against public servants including lawmakers, ministers and officials without the government's concurrence and made it a crime for the media to name the accused till the government decides that the public servant concerned can be investigated. The restriction will apply to

cases where the allegation can be linked to a public servant's official work.

It will apply to serving as well as former public servants.

The Rajasthan government had made the changes to the criminal procedure code by an executive order, or ordinance, on 7 September last month.

On Monday, the ordinance is expected to come up for approval of the state assembly, where the BJP has 162 of the 200 seats.

Taj Mahal is a beautiful graveyard, says Haryana minister Anil Vij

Haryana minister's tweet on Taj Mahal came in the backdrop of Sangeet Som, BJP legislator from Sardhana, Uttar Pradesh, questioning the monument's place in India's heritage.



(News Agencies) Amid the controversy over BJP leader Sangeet Som's remarks on the Taj Mahal, Haryana minister Anil Vij described the monument as a "beautiful graveyard" on Friday. "Taj Mahal ek khoobsurat kabristan

hai (Taj Mahal is a beautiful graveyard," the minister for health and sports in the BJP government in Haryana tweeted. Vij has courted controversy several times in the past with his remarks. His tweet on Taj Mahal came in the backdrop of Som, BJP legislator from Sardhana, Uttar Pradesh, questioning the monument's place in India's heritage. Downplaying the controversy over Taj Mahal, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath had said the monument

was made by the blood and sweat of "Bharat Mata's sons" and its protection was the responsibility of his government. However, another senior BJP leader Vinay Katiyar had claimed that the Taj Mahal was a Lord Shiva temple called 'Tejo Mahal' which was converted into a mausoleum by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. The 17th century marble monument was built by Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. Both were buried there.

Sushma meets US Secretary of State

(News Agencies) New Delh : External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Wednesday met US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson who is on his first visit to India in his official capacity. "Strengthening strategic partnership. EAM @SushmaSwaraj welcomes US Secretary of State Tillerson, his first India visit as Secretary of State," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted.

The meeting assumes significance given Tillerson's remarks on boosting India-US ties ahead of his arrival here on Tuesday evening. During an

unannounced visit to Afghanistan on Monday, Tillerson explained that the US approach was that the scope of its relationship with India was not confined to South Asia, but went beyond Pakistan's regional interests to a wider area stretching across the Indian and Pacific Oceans and having global implications. "Our view of the relationship with India is one that's of strategic importance not just for this specific region, but in the context of that speech it was about a free and open Indo-Pacific region stretching all the way to - from Japan to India," Tillerson said. "So it's a broader relationship." Last week, in an

address on 'Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century' at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC, he made clear Washington's position on key geopolitical and strategic matters pertaining to the Indo-Pacific and South Asian regions, saying the "Trump administration is determined to dramatically deepen ways for the United States and India" to further their strategic partnership that is heading for "strategic convergence" and put China and Pakistan on notice that it intended to "do what is needed" to support India.

Haryana Folk Singer Harshita Dahiya Killed On Orders Of Brother-In-Law: Police

Dinesh Karala, Ms Dahiya's brother-in-law and a notorious gangster, told the police about the conspiracy to kill the singer after he was brought in for questioning from a jail in Haryana.

(News Agencies) Panipat :Harshita Dahiya, the 22-year-old folk singer from Haryana who was shot



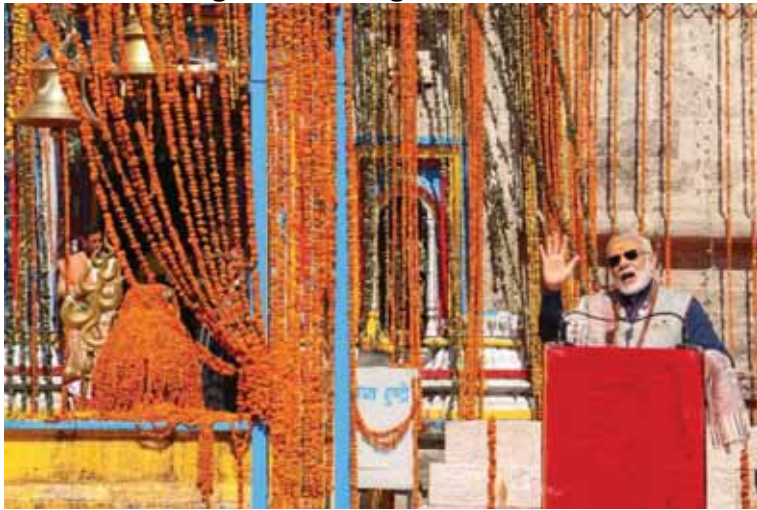
multiple times on Tuesday, was killed on the orders of her brother-in-law, the police said today. Dinesh Karala, Ms Dahiya's brother-in-law and a notorious gangster, told the police about the conspiracy to kill the singer after he

was brought in for questioning from a jail in Haryana, senior police officer Rahul Sharma told Press Trust of India. In 2014, Harshita Dahiya had accused Karala of raping her and killing her mother. Ms Dahiya's sister, Lata, has also claimed that her husband Dinesh was behind Harshita's murder. Karala has a long history of crime, with 12 cases registered against him at various police stations in Haryana and Delhi, according to the police.

Police said Karala has revealed the names of the four others involved in the murder and that teams have been sent out to arrest them. Harshita Dahiya was shot in the head and neck at close range by men who blocked her car in Panipat and forced others with her to get out. She died instantly, the police said. The singer, who specialized in Haryana folk songs, was returning to Delhi after a show at a village in Panipat. A few days before she was killed, Ms Dahiya had posted a video on social media alleging death threats. "Do whatever you want, I am not afraid of dying," she had declared in the video. Even despite allegedly receiving death threats, she had not alerted the police to the threat to her life. Harshita Dahiya was known for her Haryanvi 'Ragini' songs and was also a dancer.

PM Modi reaches out to India Inc, other states to develop ideal 'tirth kshetra' at Kedarnath

Prime Minister lays foundation stone of five major reconstruction projects at the shrine, including developing New Kedarpuri town, retaining walls and ghats at the Mandakini and Saraswati rivers and reconstructing the Samadhi Sthal of Adi Shankaracharya



(News Agencies) Promising to show "how an ideal 'Tirth Kshetra' (religious tourism site) should be," Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday laid the foundation stones of five major reconstruction projects at Kedarnath shrine and urged corporate groups and other states to pitch in to help the Uttarakhand government restore the religious destination to its old glory. He described the projects as ambitious and expensive and added that there would be no dearth of funds to ensure that they are completed in a time-bound manner. "I was destined to undertake reconstruction of the Kedarpuri...I urge other states and corporate groups to pitch in to help Uttarakhand restore the fabled shrine town

to its old glory," Modi said. "Through the work we are doing in Kedarnath, we want to show how an ideal 'Tirth Kshetra' should be, how it should be pilgrim friendly and the well being of the priests should be given importance," the PM said. "We are building quality infrastructure in Kedarnath. It will be modern but the traditional ethos will be preserved. We will ensure the environment is not damaged," Modi, who had visited the shrine in May this year too, added. The reconstruction projects for which he laid the foundation stone include improved facilities for devotees, construction of retaining walls and ghats at the Mandakini and Saraswati rivers, an approach road to the shrine and reconstructing the Samadhi Sthal (mausoleum) of Adi Shankaracharya, an early eighth century seer and the

founder of the Vedanta school of philosophy who died at Kedarnath. Modi announced that the mausoleum would be "as splendid as the Kedarnath shrine and the proposed New Kedarpuri town". Similarly, widening of the approach road to the Kedarnath shrine would be carried out. "It will have all the modern facilities like post office and cyber cafes etc available along its both sides for yatris (pilgrims)", Modi said. On the bathing ghat and a retaining wall to be built along the Mandakini and Saraswati rivers flowing through the shrine town, he said, "The walkway along both rivers would be built in a manner that pilgrims would be able to enjoy the natural music emanating from the flowing rivers." Giving details of proposed New Kedarpuri, a housing colony for Teerth Purohits (priests),

Modi said houses planned under the scheme would be "spacious enough to also accommodate the yatris (tourists) and yajmans (guests) of Teerth purohits". Modi assured that the state government would ensure that no environmental damage occurred during the implementation of the reconstruction of New Kedarpuri "Similarly, the character of the Old Kedarpuri town would be kept intact." Modi said his earlier visit to Kedarnath that coincided with the reopening of the portals of the shrine on May 3 had sent a clear message across the country that a journey to the religious destination was safe. "As a result, some four lakh yatris visited the shrine in the past about six months", he said, adding that following his current visit some 10 lakh would visit the shrine after its portals reopen next year.

Ranjit Kumar resigns as solicitor general for 'personal reasons'

Ranjit Kumar was appointed solicitor general in June 2014 after the Modi government came to power



(News Agencies) Solicitor general Ranjit Kumar, the second-highest ranking legal officer in the country, quit his position citing personal reasons on Friday. Kumar's resignation letter, which was submitted to the law ministry, stated that his official responsibilities and busy schedule were leaving him with little time for his family. "The government is good to me, but I tendered my resignation due to personal reasons," he said. Sources said the senior advocate's mother has been ailing for a while now, and he was struggling to take time off his official duties to attend to her medical needs. Kumar's resignation comes within four months of senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi relinquishing the attorney general's post on June 11. The top law official, in his letter to the central government, had said he was not keen on procuring a tenure extension. He had also cited personal reasons, besides a keen desire to resume his private practice, for his decision. Rohatgi's letter came nearly a week after the government notified the tenure extension of five law officials – including the attorney general and solicitor general – until further notice. He was succeeded by senior advocate KK Venugopal. Prior to taking up the solicitor general's job, Kumar used to handle environment-related cases in the Supreme Court. Notably, he had assisted the top court in prescribing a series of directives that eventually led to the Capital's public transport system switching to a cleaner fuel – the compressed natural gas. His other legal

contributions included playing a crucial role in a river-pollution case that the apex court took up on the basis of an HT report titled 'And quiet flows the maili (dirty) Yamuna', and assisting the court in a case pertaining to the relocation of polluting units from residential areas to suburban Delhi. Kumar was appointed as the solicitor general in 2014, soon after

Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister. An expert on constitutional laws, he represented the Centre in many high-profile cases. A known perfectionist, Kumar often took it upon himself to ensure that the government complied with court directions. Judges relied heavily on him in matters where he represented government

agencies, and took for granted that their orders would be executed. Other high-profile cases handled by Kumar included the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case, where he argued for the Gujarat government, and a disproportionate assets case where he represented former Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa.

China piles on OBOR pressure on India

(News Agencies) BEIJING: In an unexpected move, the Communist Party of China has enshrined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in its constitution. This will mean intense pressure on a reluctant New Delhi to join the programme as China would enhance infrastructure funding to India's neighbours apart from enticing Indian leaders with attractive construction projects, observers said. Last May, India was the only major country to boycott a major Belt and Road Forum in Beijing although most Western countries, including the US, sent senior officials to the event after Chinese diplomats made a prestige issue of it. The Indian foreign ministry went a step further, issuing a statement highlighting some of the concerns about the

programme. The five-yearly Communist Party Congress, which ended in Beijing on Tuesday, introduced new dimensions to the party constitution, which include steps to "follow the principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration" and "to pursue the Belt and Road Initiative". Chinese President Xi Jinping has been calling on foreign leaders to participate in this plan for a "shared destiny for all mankind" under the BRI. This aspect has also been included in the party constitution because it provides the ideological underpinning for Beijing's plan to fund and construct infrastructure projects across the globe. The new move may bring some relief

among Pakistani leaders who have been under pressure over terrorist attacks taking place along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of the BRI. With BRI becoming a part of the Communist Party's constitution, Islamabad can expect continued funding for projects planned and constructed by Chinese companies. India has been opposed to one portion of the economic corridor because it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir which is claimed by New Delhi. Beijing has brushed off Indian concern saying it was investing for the welfare and development of the backward region and did not have any military objective in the construction of the corridor.

National Anthem In Cinema Halls

Supreme Court Open To Changing Order, Leaves It To Centre

The Centre said that it favours playing of national anthem in cinema halls, saying it is necessary to bring uniformity in a diverse country like India.

(News Agencies) The Supreme Court today asked the Centre to consider amending the national flag code for regulating the playing of national anthem in cinema halls across the country. A bench, comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud, said the Centre has to take a call uninfluenced by its earlier order on the playing of national anthem in the theatres.

During the hearing, Attorney General K K Venugopal,

appearing for the Centre, said India was a diverse country and the national anthem needs to be played in the cinema halls to bring in uniformity. The bench indicated that it may modify its order of December 1, 2016, by which the playing of the anthem was made mandatory for cinema halls before the screening of a movie, and it may replace the word "shall" with "may". The apex court had last year ordered the theatres across the country to mandatorily play the national anthem before a movie and the

audience must stand and show respect, in a bid to "instil committed patriotism and nationalism". It had said that "love and respect for the motherland is reflected when one shows respect to the national anthem as well as to the national flag". The court had barred printing of the anthem or a part of it on any object and displaying it in such a manner at places which may be "disgraceful to its status and tantamount to disrespect".

The court's directions had



come on a PIL filed by one Shyam Narayan Chouksey seeking directions that the national anthem should be played in all the cinema halls before a film begins.

It had also said proper norms and protocol should be fixed regarding its playing and singing at official functions and programmes where those holding constitutional office are present.

Vasundhara Raje govt blinks, puts gag bill in cold storage

(News Agencies) JAIPUR: Within 24 hours of tabling in the Rajasthan assembly a bill that sought to shield public servants and judges from investigation, the Vasundhara Raje government on Tuesday put the controversial draft into "cold storage" by sending it to a select committee of the House.

The move followed widespread protests and legal challenges, including two PILs and a writ petition in the Rajasthan high court, against the proposed law.

The select committee is expected to submit its report on the Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Bill, 2017, by the budget session of the assembly, normally held in February, home minister Gulab Chand Kataria said.

By then, the controversial ordinance would have lapsed as it has a life of 42 days from the day it was tabled along with the bill in the House (Monday).

Kataria told reporters that the ordinance will remain valid for 42 days from October 23. "The ordinance has not been withdrawn. It will lapse automatically on the 43rd day," he said.

Advocate general Narpal Mal Lodha told TOI that for enacting a law, any bill replacing the ordinance tabled in the assembly has to be passed within six



weeks, whether it is referred to the select committee or not.

Given this, the bill is all set to meet the fate of the Rajasthan Land Acquisition Bill, 2014, which was referred to the select committee in the same year. The panel submitted its recommendations in 2015, but no action has taken place ever since. Soon after the House resumed proceedings on Tuesday, Kataria proposed that the bill be sent to a select committee. His proposal was cleared by the House unanimously. Kataria will head the committee which is expected to have 15 members.

Heated exchanges took place between Kataria and rebel BJP MLA Ghanshyam Tiwari when the latter alleged that the pre-requisite sanction from the President for the ordinance, which was promulgated on September 6, was not taken by the state government. "I would

like to inform the House that the sanction from the President was received on September 4," Kataria said. He lashed out at Tiwari and opposition members saying they had failed to react for a good one month after the ordinance was published. Putting up a brave front, parliamentary affairs minister Rajendra Rathore said: "The bill has been only referred to the select committee for consideration and will be presented in the budget session of the assembly beginning in February next year." Kataria said the bill was drafted on the lines of a similar law in Maharashtra. He said the major objection to the bill was the provision of two-year jail term for mediapersons for disclosing the identity of a judge or a public servant in cases where government sanction for a probe has not been obtained. He said such a penal provision for mediapersons was not there in the Maharashtra law.

Court summons writer, editors for Jay Shah article

(News Agencies) AHMEDABAD: A metropolitan court here on Tuesday began criminal proceedings on defamation charges levelled by Jay Shah, son of BJP chief Amit Shah, and summoned six journalists of news portal — The Wire — for publishing an article on the sudden increase in turnover of his company, Temple Enterprise Pvt Ltd.



Additional chief metropolitan magistrate S K Gadhvi ordered registration of Jay Shah's complaint on charges of criminal defamation and abetment to publish the article, which was prima facie intended to defame the complainant. The court, however, refused to accept the charges of criminal conspiracy against the journalists.

The court has summoned Rohini Singh, the author of the article 'The Golden Touch of Jay Amit Shah,' and the editors of the portal on November 13. The editors of the news portal — Siddharth Varadraj, Siddharth Bhatia, M K Venu, Monobina Gupta and Pamela Philipose — have also been summoned by the court.

The article was published on October 8 on the news portal. Jay Shah had moved court the next day.

The court took cognizance of Shah's complaint and initiated criminal proceedings after a court inquiry into the allegations under section 202 of the CrPC. The court, in its order, said that the hurried manner in which the journalists sent a questionnaire to Jay and sought reply in a very short time prompted it to take cognizance of the matter. Moreover, the questionnaire was not sent to another partner of the firm, Jitendra Shah. The court noticed in its conclusion that there was 'prima facie an intention to defame the complainant'. The court said: "The questionnaire was sent in a manner that the complainant did not get enough time and the defamatory article could get published. The accused did not give enough time to the complainant and facts regarding Temple Enterprise's revenue of 2015-16 were not published in a proper manner. By creating confusion between turnover and profit, it can be prima facie said that the accused have published defamatory writing."

Patna jathedar to abide by Akal Takht edict, will not attend RSS convention

Giani Gurbachan Singh had called upon Sikhs to boycott the function after several organisations protested the RSS's alleged agenda to subsume Sikhism into the Hindu identity.

(News Agencies) Jathedar of Sikh temporal seat Takht Patna Sahib, Giani Iqbal Singh, will not attend a convention being organised by the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat in New Delhi on Wednesday, after the highest temporal seat Akal Takht underlined its edict to not engage with the Sikh wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. The function is being held to mark the 350th birth anniversary of the tenth Sikh master, Guru Gobind Singh.

Giani Iqbal Singh has purportedly succumbed to the diktat from Giani Gurbachan

Singh, jathedar (head priest) of the Akal Takht in Amritsar, who on Monday called upon Sikhs to boycott the function after several organisations protested the RSS's alleged agenda to subsume Sikhism into the Hindu identity. Giani Gurbachan specifically asked Sikhs to abide by a hukamnama (edict) of July 2004 by the Takht that had asked Sikhs not to support the Sangat's march on completion of 400 years of Guru Granth Sahib. While Giani Iqbal Singh was not available for comment, Sangat national chief Gurcharan Singh Gill told HT over phone: "We

made all arrangements for Giani-ji (Iqbal Singh), booked a ticket from him! When I checked in the afternoon, I was told he's unwell. We are waiting for him. Sources said Harvinder Singh Sarna, who heads the Gurdwara Patna Sahib body management, has prevailed upon Giani Iqbal Singh, who heads one of the five Sikh temporal seats, not to attend the function. Gill, however, insisted that the Sangat functions independent of the RSS and its political body Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It must be underlined, though, that while Gill will deliver the



opening address at the function, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will deliver the concluding address. In between, schoolchildren will sing Gurbani hymns. "We have no political motive behind the function and never have taken part in gurdwara management politics too. When we talk about the Guru, it should be a matter of pride for all Sikhs," Gill said.

However, Sikh historian

Pirthipal Singh Kapur explained, "The issue is not what Rashtriya Sikh Sangat is doing about Sikhs. It is that they are making Guru Gobind Singh just a 'national hero', comparing him to Shivaji, which is wrong. Guru Gobind Singh is the creator of Sikhism (with establishment of Khalsa in 1699) which is recognised as the fifth largest religion in the world."

'Modinomics' destroyed India's growth story: Congress Congress termed as a "shoddy attempt" by finance minister Arun Jaitley to defend the "decimation" of the economy.



(News Agencies) The Congress launched a blistering attack on Tuesday on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying "Modinomics" has destroyed India's growth story.

The main opposition party also termed as a "shoddy attempt" by finance minister Arun Jaitley to defend the "decimation" of the economy after he reeled out economic indicators to support the government's contention that GDP growth slowdown has bottomed out and economy is turning around.

"Modinomics' has destroyed India's growth story. A shoddy attempt of a desperate finance minister Arun Jaitley to defend the decimation of economy has failed to impress either the Indian industry or common people. The growth as projected by the government is only on paper," Congress' communications department incharge Randeep Surjewala said.

Surjewala said decisions like noteban and "poor"

implementation of GST hurt the core of macro and micro economic fundamentals, and expressed concern over growing NPAs of public sector banks.

The bank recapitalisation plan announced by the finance minister neither has a roadmap nor a timeframe, he said, asking the government to do a reality check and share a targeted framework of bank recapitalisation rather than engage in "hyperbole and high-sounding syllables".

On Jaitley's claim that the macro economic fundamentals of economy are very strong, he said, "On the contrary, mindless and unsound decisions like demonetisation and the poor implementation of GST has hurt the core of the fundamentals of macro and micro economic fundamentals."

The Congress leader alleged common people were being made to suffer, jobs were in peril, and medium and small industries in dire straits, as economy

stuttered due to demonetisation and GST roll out. "Time has come to travel from empty jumlas (rhetoric) to meaningful governance," he said in a statement.

Congress spokesperson Sushmita Dev said if the prime minister or the finance minister were claiming "all is well", they should go to Gujarat and listen to what the people were saying.

"Today, if the economy is turning around, then why is there 'no feel good factor among the people. I will tell the prime minister and the finance minister that all is not well," she said.

Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari said on Twitter, "If

Economy was a wish-horse Arun Jaitley could have ridden it. Fact- in 41 months he created a new bumper sticker 'Hey honey I sunk the Economy'."

Surjewala said the NPAs of public sector banks jumped from 36 per cent in March 2014 to 82 per cent in June 2017—from Rs 36,000 crore to Rs 8.35 lakh crore.

Noting that the money given for recapitalisation of banks will increase the fiscal deficit, he said, "This is a desperate move by a finance minister groping in the dark as demonetisation and GST failed to bring in the promised Rs 4-5 lakh crore."

Jaitley announced on

Tuesday a Rs 2.11 lakh crore bank recapitalisation plan to revive investment and growth.

Accusing the government of waiving loans worth Rs 1,88,287 crore of wilful defaulters in the last three years, the Congress leader asked, "Is the government risking taxpayers' money for more such loan waivers without commitment to MSME and agrarian sectors?"

On Bharatmala project, he said it is completely debt driven with the burden falling on people of India. Bharatmala is an umbrella programme under which 34,800 km of highways will be constructed at a cost of Rs 5.35 lakh crore.

Don't attack families of militants, Mehbooba tells Police

(News Agencies) Srinagar : Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday urged police personnel not to attack families of militants. Speaking at the passing out parade of recruits at the police training centre in Ganderbal district, Mehbooba Mufti said:

"Do not attack families of militants just because they (militants) attack families of policemen. You must maintain the



difference." She said policemen were facing many difficulties in the discharge of their duties, but they had set an example of discipline and sacrifice. The Chief Minister said efforts must be taken to ensure surrender of local militants who had joined militancy for one or the other reason. The comments followed reports that houses of some militants had been ransacked by security forces in south Kashmir areas.

Does Boris own a mirror ?

Scruffy Foreign Secretary turns out for Cabinet after leaks reveal even Brussels leaders fear his outbursts are weakening Theresa May

(News Agencies) Donald Tusk today claimed Theresa May could still reverse Brexit as told EU leaders they must be united to 'defeat' Britain in the Brexit talks. The Council president said only Britain could decide if there would be a good deal, no deal or whether Brexit could be stopped - but warned the remaining 27 countries they must hold together in the talks.

The next phase of Brexit talks are expected to be even more difficult as differing interests across the EU risk deep splits in what the bloc wants from Brexit.

Mr Tusk's call for unity comes a day after leaks from the European Commission suggested Brussels is worried Theresa May could be replaced by Boris Johnson.

The Foreign Secretary turned out for Cabinet talks on Brexit this morning and appeared in a rush to No 10 as

he was pictured walking up Downing Street with his collar out of place.

Mr Johnson's essay on Brexit on the eve of Tory conference earlier this month exploded government divisions back into public view and threw new questions on Mrs May's future.

An incendiary leak from Brussels yesterday suggested Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker fears a takeover by Mr Johnson because he could walk out of talks.

In other developments, Mr Barnier warned trade talks would last for 'several years' and even then would need to mirror an existing relationship the EU has with a third country.

Downing Street today said progress had been made at last week's EU summit and that Mrs May and Mr Tusk had held 'hugely constructive' conversations. Mr Tusk told MEPs today he was 'obsessed

by unity' and said he had worked hard to give David Cameron enough in his renegotiation to keep all 28 countries together.

He said: 'Last Friday all the leaders agreed that the priority for them is unity among 27. This was voiced in unison.'

The President added: 'But ahead of us is still the toughest stress test. If we fail it, the negotiations will end in our defeat. 'We must keep our unity regardless of the direction of the talks.

'The EU will be able to rise to every scenario as long as we are not divided.

'It is in fact up to London how this will end: with a good deal, no deal or no Brexit. But in each of these scenarios we will protect our common interest only by being together.' Mr Tusk's intervention came as Mrs May met her Cabinet today to draw up plans for the next steps.



Senior ministers gathered in Downing Street early for a 'political' summit ahead of the weekly formal meeting. Mrs May briefed her Cabinet on last week's summit and yesterday's lengthy debate on it in Parliament. Her official spokesman said after the meeting: 'The Government is committed to an implementation period. We are clear we want to achieve it and believe we can do so. 'Talks the Prime Minister has had with Donald Tusk have been hugely constructive. We welcome his comments last week that have helped us to take steps forward. 'This needs to be a joint

endeavour. We need to work together. We believe a good deal is in the interests of both sides.'

Leaks from Brussels into the German press on Sunday suggest the Commission favours continuing talks with Mrs May and not her Foreign Secretary.

A translation of the report said: 'Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, is quite different: he still tells people that Britain is going to have a "great future," even without a deal.

'Better to negotiate with a realistic May than with the dream-merchant Johnson — that is the calculation on the Continent.

Care worker, 27, who slit her 34-year-old sister's throat and cut off her hand at her home

(News Agencies) A woman stabbed her older sister to death and cut off her hand at their family home while her children slept upstairs. Care worker Sabah Khan, 27, cut the throat of mother-of-four Saima Khan, 34, at the home they shared in Luton. As Saima was murdered by her sister, the rest of the Khan family were attending a funeral of an elderly aunt at the local mosque.

Sabah is believed to have virtually cut her older sister's neck in half and severed her hand in the savage attack.

Saima was found slumped in a pool of blood in the hallway of her semi-detached home at around 11.30pm on 23 May last year.

Detectives sent to the scene initially investigated claims a burglar had broken into the property and carried out the horrific killing.

Sabah Khan now faces a life sentence after pleading guilty to murdering her sister at the Old Bailey today.

Saima, who was also a care worker, had moved to England from Holland and lived with her sister, their parents, her children and her taxi-driver husband Hafeez Rehman.

She was described by

neighbours as a 'quiet but friendly lady'.

Sabah will be sentenced at the Old Bailey on Thursday.

Judge Christopher Moss QC told her: 'You will appear before this court again on Thursday at 10am and you must remain in custody.'

After the case the senior investigating office, Detective Inspector Adam Gallop described the murder as 'a horrific crime.'

He added: 'This is any family's worst nightmare — it is beyond comprehension for the family to hear that one daughter has brutally murdered another.

'It has been a horrendous ordeal for them and we are pleased that we have received the guilty plea today.

'We continue to support the family, I'm not sure there can ever really be a closure, but what I do hope is that after sentencing they can hear what happened that night and start to move forward.'

Shortly after her death Mrs Khan's husband Hafeez paid an emotional tribute to his wife.

He said: 'She was a loving mother to four beautiful children, a devoted wife, a beloved daughter and the most caring of sisters.



'She has been taken from us at the age of 34 and my children have been deprived of their mother.

'This was a junction in our lives where we intended to watch our children grow, to love them and spend quality time as a family and make memories.

'We have been left with a gap in our lives and we can only pray that she is resting in peace.

'As everyone can appreciate and understand that the circumstances have torn our hearts apart. 'My family and I would like to thank you all for the condolences messages, and support that we have received from family, friends and the local community.'

Muttontown Village Mayor, Husband Arrested for Tax Fraud

(News Agencies) The Muttontown village mayor and her gastroenterologist husband were arrested Thursday for allegedly failing to pay their income taxes for the past five years, Nassau County prosecutors said. Julianne Beckerman, 48, and her 55-year-old husband, Adam Beckerman, both of Muttontown, were charged with four counts of criminal tax fraud and three counts of repeated failure to file personal income and earnings taxes.

"While nobody likes taxes, we are obligated to file them and pay our fair share," said Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas said. "So it's especially disturbing that a doctor and an elected official allegedly failed to file tax their taxes for five years."

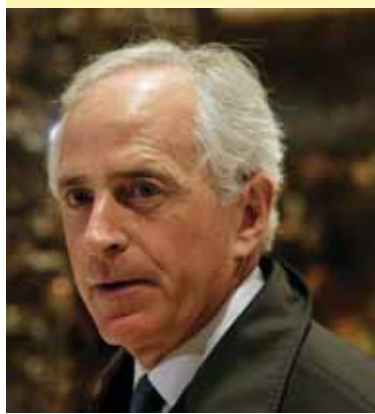
Prosecutors said the couple failed to file New York State personal tax returns for tax years 2010-2014, despite earning a total income of more than \$4.5 million during that time frame. Investigators determined that the Beckermans allegedly owe \$243,865.00 in back taxes, authorities said.

The mayor is the the seventh government official arrested or convicted in Nassau County in the past two years. Her arrest follows the October arrests of Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano and Oyster Bay Town Supervisor John Venditto, the conviction of ex-Oyster Bay Town Planning Commissioner Frederick Ippolito in January 2016, the conviction of former New York State Sen. Dean Skelos (R-Rockville Centre) in December 2015, the recent arrest of Gerard Terry, an attorney who held numerous local government titles and the arrest of Hempstead Town Councilman Ed Ambrosino last week.

Julianne Beckerman, who ran on the Concerned Taxpayers Party line, is currently serving her third four-year term as mayor of Muttontown, where she oversaw the creation of the village police department six years ago. The village recently scored a "D" for transparency in a report card compiled by the Press. Village officials did not respond to a request for comment on the mayor's arrest.

Adam Beckerman is a gastroenterologist with a practice in Seaford. The couple's arrest followed a joint investigation between Nassau prosecutors and investigators with the state Department of Taxation and Finance. The couple was released without bail and surrendered their passports following their initial court appearance Thursday. They are due back in court May 30. They face up to 15 years in prison, if convicted.

Sen. Bob Corker stands by his criticism of Trump, tells President to 'leave it to the professionals'



(News Agencies) President Trump's feud with fellow Republican Sen. Bob Corker intensified on Tuesday as the pair once again traded barbs.

Corker stood by his inflammatory criticisms of the Trump administration — his description of the White House as an "adult day care center" and his argument that the President is putting the U.S. on a path toward "World War III."

"I don't make comments I haven't thought about," the Tennessee senator told "Good Morning America."

Corker went on to chastise Trump for his handling of the ongoing tensions with North Korea, telling him to "leave it to the professionals." "The President undermines our secretary of state (and) raises tensions in the area by virtue of the tweets that he sends out," Corker said.

He previously admonished Trump for what he called Trump's effort to "castrate" Secretary of State Tillerson.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders defended the President during an appearance on Fox News.

"Look, I think if Bob corker is suggesting leaving it to the professional and he is referring to himself, we've left it to him long enough and he has been ineffective and now I think we need to let the president take the lead on this front working with leader McConnell and others," she said.

Corker also encouraged the President to take a back seat in the upcoming tax debate, telling "Today," "I think that's the best way for us to have success."

Trump is heading to Capitol Hill Tuesday afternoon to meet with Republicans about the long-sought overhauls.

Trump immediately hit back at Corker on Twitter, writing that Corker was a "lightweight" that "couldn't get elected dog catcher in Tennessee" and "is now fighting Tax Cuts."

Corker announced last month he won't seek a third term and will retire from the Senate when his term ends in 2018.

Trump tweeted that Corker decided to retire after he refused to endorse him "and now is only negative on anything Trump. Look at his record!" That account stands in opposition to reports from the Associated Press that Trump urged Corker to run during a private meeting in September. Corker's chief of

staff also said Trump called and asked the senator to reconsider his decision to retire.

Corker on Tuesday doubled down on his earlier assessment of the White House.

"Same untruths from an utterly untruthful president. #AlertTheDaycareStaff," he tweeted in response to Trump's barbs. Trump is heading to Capitol Hill to meet with Republicans about tax reform. Corker, one of Trump's earliest supporters, later told CNN he would "not do that again" when asked if he regretted backing Trump in the election.

In a pointed rebuke of the President, Corker added that he believes Trump's legacy will be the "debasement of our nation."

"I think at the end of the day, when his term is over. I think the debasing of our nation, the constant not truth telling, just the name calling, the things... I think the debasement of our nation will be what he'll be remembered

most for and that's regretful," he said.

Trump, again, responded on Twitter, calling Corker "liddle" and "incompetent."

Corker, on his way to meet with the other members of his party and the President during his first visit to Capitol Hill, told reporters that he has no hope that Trump will change his ways or act in a manner befitting the President of the United States.

The lawmaker noted that he's spent a lot of time with Trump in the last two years and that he sees the President's behavior as worsening over time and that it's up to others to act like leaders.

"I've seen no evolution in an upward way," he said. "Matter of fact I would say it appears to me that it's almost devolving."

"It's up to others who serve in elected capacity whether governors, mayors or senators to try to conduct themselves in a manner that is more becoming of a leader," he added.

Bill O'Reilly blames God for sexual harassment allegations

(News Agencies) Bill O'Reilly is pointing the finger at God for the allegations of sexual harassment against him.

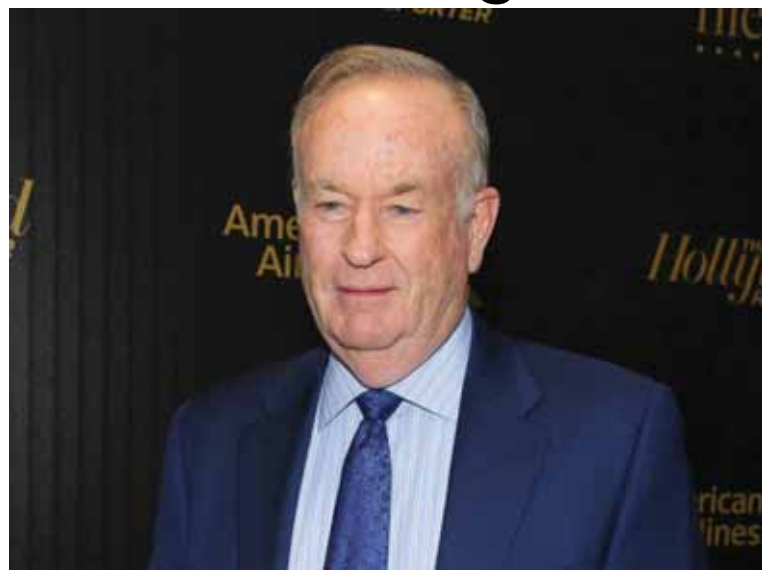
"You know, am I mad at God? Yeah I'm mad at him. I wish I had more protection. I wish this stuff didn't happen," O'Reilly said on his web series, "No Spin News," according to CNN.

The former Fox News anchor has adamantly denied wrongdoing after a New York Times article revealed he paid a \$32 million sexual harassment settlement — the largest of at least six.

O'Reilly, who claimed the Times "maliciously smeared" him, said he settled with his accusers to protect his children.

He mentioned his children again in his defense on Monday, saying, "If I die tomorrow and I get an opportunity, I'll say, 'Why'd you guys work me over like that? Didn't [you] know my children were going to be punished? And they're innocent.'"

In another interview with the Times, O'Reilly cited the sexual harassment allegations against



former Fox News anchor Eric Bolling as the reason behind Eric Bolling Jr.'s death which came just hours after the network announced his father was let go.

After Bolling slammed O'Reilly's comments as 'inappropriate', he apologized late Monday night in a statement on Twitter clarifying, "The message I tried to send was that allegations harm kids. Nothing more." O'Reilly, who also defended himself to the sympathetic ears of Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity, allegedly

harassed legal analyst Lis Wiehl. Wiehl alleged O'Reilly sent her gay pornography and forced her into a nonconsensual sexual relationship, the Times reported.

News of the \$32 million settlement came six months after another bombshell Times report revealed O'Reilly settled with five other women for a total of \$13 million. Weeks later, the top-rated cable news host followed the footsteps of executive Roger Ailes, who was ousted after numerous allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct.

Tiny power company from Interior Secretary's hometown snags huge Puerto Rico contract



(News Agencies) A Montana energy company that had only two full-time employees when Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico has been tasked with restoring the power grid in the cash-strapped territory, according to a report Monday.

Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC snagged the daunting \$300 million contract from the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority and has been filling its workforce with at least 280 short-term contractors since the storm's Sept. 20 landfall, according to The Washington Post.

Company spokesman Chris Chiames said the company hopes to dispatch hundreds more. Their workers have been

on the ground since Sept. 26, after Maria wrecked an estimated 80% of the power grid.

Gov. Ricardo Rossello has said he hopes to restore at least 95% of the country's power by Dec. 15. The contract would be the biggest job yet for Whitefish Energy, which opened for business in 2015. It landed a recent contract to replace and upgrade just 5 miles of Arizona's transmission lines. The business is based in Whitefish, where Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke was raised. A spokesman for the cabinet member said he had no role in securing the work for the company, according to the newspaper.



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Gujarat elections 2017: Clear path for the BJP

Lack of a popular Congress leader and inherent contradictions in various caste-based agitations might result in a record victory for the BJP in Gujarat



vote for the Congress.

It is ironical that BJP is enjoying this lead despite relatively lower popularity ratings of its incumbent chief minister. Twenty-four percent of the respondents wanted to see Vijay Rupani as the next chief minister. This figure is low in comparison to popularity ratings of chief ministers from similar studies are conducted in other states. However, no Congress leader from the state has even scored 2% on this question. The Congress also faces a popularity deficit in terms of the national leadership. Eighty-two percent of the voters like Narendra Modi. The figure is 48% for Rahul Gandhi.

Why is the Congress not gaining from various caste-based agitations like it could in the 2015 local body polls? Hardik Patel and Alpesh Thakor remain extremely popular within their respective caste groups.

Both these communities are polarized on opposite sides of the reservation debate. Sixty-

three percent Patidars support OBC status for the community. Only 18% OBCs concur with the demand. Endorsing one group's demand is likely to alienate the other. While the Congress leadership has been vocal against the government on police firing on Patidar protestors, it has been cautious on supporting the demand for reservation due to the fear of alienating OBCs. The BJP has so far managed to prevent reservations from becoming a salient issue in the elections. The state government conducted another round of talks with Hardik Patel and other Patidar leaders last week. While the government's offers for setting up a commission for looking into reservation demands by upper castes, withdrawing cases against Patidar youngsters, providing assistance to families of youth who were killed in police firing were welcomed by the leaders, they weren't enough to make them suspend their movement. How the

reservation issue plays out in the election may depend on whether Hardik Patel and Alpesh Thakor's organizations extend support to any party. Until now, both leaders have kept their cards close to their chest and clarity on their position is expected in the new few weeks. As of now, the Congress only enjoys a lead among Dalits and Muslims over the BJP. Even among these two groups, the BJP has made significant inroads. As compared to the 2012 election, the BJP's vote share among Dalits and Muslims has increased by 16 and 7 percentage points, respectively. Despite, high awareness about the Una incident, the Congress has failed to consolidate support among the Dalits.

If these trends remain stable until December, the Congress could face its worst ever defeat in the state. On the other hand, the BJP may comfortably register its sixth consecutive electoral victory in the state.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) got 60% of votes and won all the 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat in the 2014 general elections. Things have not been smooth for the party in the post-2014 phase though.

Patidars, an influential social group, started an agitation demanding reservation in government jobs and education in mid-2015. A counter mobilisation by the Kshatriyas against this demand started under the banner of the OSS (Other Backward Classes, Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe) Ekta Manch. Hardik Patel and Alpesh Thakor have emerged as the leaders of these movements. Both these movements have been critical of the BJP government. In the local body polls held in December 2015, the Congress won 23 out of 31 Zila Panchayats and 113 of 193 Taluka Panchayats.

Widespread protests erupted in the state in 2016 after flogging of Dalit youth in Una District. The BJP had to replace Narendra Modi's successor Anandiben Patel and Vijay Rupani took over as chief minister in August 2016.

The turn of events would suggest that BJP should be on the back-foot in the forthcoming Gujarat assembly elections. Findings of the Lokniti-Centre for Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS) tracker survey suggest otherwise. The BJP might end up with its biggest ever victory in the state.

The survey was conducted in mid-August among more than 4,000 randomly selected voters. It shows that the BJP has a 30 percentage point lead in terms of vote share over the Congress. Close to six out of 10 (59%) respondents said that they would vote for BJP while less than three in 10 (29%) said that they would

A possible link between Pyongyang and Doklam

Once we understand China's limitations vis-à-vis North Korea, the diversionary role of Doklam (and other such missions) in Xi Jinping's strategy becomes clear

"I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful secretary of state, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man...Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!" tweeted US President Donald Trump about his secretary of state's claims that the US has direct communication channels with North Korea.

With North Korean leader Kim Jong-un having previously referred to Trump as a "dotard", not only is the level of conversation at a new low, but the prospect of a war is a little too close for comfort. Can we expect some damage control from China?

As mentioned in a previous column, it is against China's interest to have an unstable nuclear power in its backyard, especially one that is consciously adopting a belligerent attitude towards its large western

neighbour. Kim's uncle and cousin, both considered close to China, have been assassinated. Kim's missile tests have given the US a pretext to set up the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) missile defence system in South Korea, giving it an asymmetric advantage over China. With North Korea averaging two missile tests a month since February, it is no longer in China's interest to play cat-and-mouse while North Korea does its dirty work with respect to the US.

The Chinese dream sold by President Xi Jinping envisages the rise of China to the high table of nations. In this context, North Korea is not merely a threat. It also represents China's "Pearl Harbour moment"—an opportunity to solve a pressing world problem and receive the widespread appreciation that

would establish it as a moral force for good, complementing the material bases of its power. Everything points to the fact that getting rid of Kim without eliminating North Korea as a buffer state against the US is in China's highest interest. Why then, despite calls in the mainstream Chinese press to reconsider the equation with North Korea, is China seemingly paralysed?

The main reason is that it is powerless to take on a nuclear-armed state possessed of the will to use its arsenal to protect itself. It is also hampered by the high-octane rhetoric from the US president that makes it an open question as to which is the rogue state in this face-off.

Some observers ask if Trump's seemingly uncontrolled responses are part of a well thought strategy to create unpredictability and fear. To be



fair, we must extend the same benefit of doubt to Kim's actions as well. Trump's no-holds-barred communication may strengthen his hold in his core base of supporters, but a growing section of the Republican caucus is beginning to ascribe his actions to a lingering childishness. Kim's belligerence too may seem like a logical

response to US' long history of attempting to attack, assassinate, or otherwise emasculate its enemies—episodes in Cuba and Iraq come to mind. Yet one cannot ignore the psychological instability that is as much a part of Kim's actions as his calculated chutzpah.

(Contd on page 24)

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The Union health ministry has decided to impose a monetary penalty on candidates who opt for seats during the centralised counselling process, but drop out at the last moment.

The practice – informally termed as seat-blocking – not only prevents deserving candidates from gaining admission to good colleges but also wastes government money that has gone into creating these seats.

An article published in HT on September 28 showed how private colleges collude with highly ranked candidates to block MBBS seats, which are



Now, health ministry to penalise students who block medical seats for kicks

The health ministry will penalise candidates who indulge in such tactics for three degree courses: MBBS, post-graduate and super-specialty

then offered to low-rank holders for huge donations during the mop-up round of counselling. While private colleges use seat-blocking as a tool to make money, government colleges end up losing resources as well as deserving candidates.

The health ministry will penalise candidates who indulge in such tactics for three degree courses: MBBS, post-graduate and super-specialty streams. Interestingly, it had warned candidates during the last round of counselling for super-specialty courses that they would be debarred from appearing in the entrance

examination next year if they needlessly block a seat. Despite that, around 150 of the 300 candidates who opted for admissions (from 550 seats) in the last counselling session failed to turn up.

Health ministry officials believe the threat of debarment didn't work because there are examinations other than the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) for gaining admission to certain super-specialty courses. Some medical institutions that still remain out of its purview are the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research in

Pondicherry; Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh; All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi; Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology in Thiruvananthapuram; and National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences in Bengaluru.

As many as 2,000 seats have been allotted for super-specialty courses at medical colleges across the country.

"From next year, we will ask candidates to deposit the first-year fee at the time of seat allotment. If the

candidate refuses to take admission after opting for a seat, he will lose the entire amount," said Dr B Srinivas, additional director general (medical education) with the Directorate General of Health Services.

Some candidates block seats just for kicks, hampering others' chances. Take the case of 29-year-old M Dharanindra – a medical professional with a master's degree in anaesthesiology – who has not only lost an opportunity to pursue his doctorate in critical care from the prestigious Tata Memorial Hospital-Mumbai but is now

being forced to spend an additional Rs 57 lakh to pursue the same course at a private medical college.

The story goes thus: Dharanindra and another candidate – Rakesh (name changed on request) – scored the same percentile of 96.94190, but the latter was ranked a notch higher due to seniority in age. "The last seat at the Tata Memorial went to him, while I was forced to join the Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University Medical College at Pune," said Dharanindra. The fee for the three-year course at Bharati Vidyapeeth – a private institution – turned out to be Rs 60 lakh, 57 lakh more than Tata Memorial.

Meanwhile, Rakesh dropped out of the Tata Memorial because it couldn't offer him "family accommodation". He denied blocking the seat deliberately, or for any untoward consideration.

Dharanindra can no longer avail of the vacant seat because the third round of counselling – conducted on the Supreme Court's orders – ended on October 20. "Now, I will have to approach the apex court once again to seek yet another round of counseling," he said.

The Supreme Court had introduced NEET – a single examination for all government and private colleges – on April 11, 2016. However, as the post-graduate and super-specialty examinations were already over by the time the apex order came along, it was implemented for these courses for the first time this year.

India reaffirms pledge to step up reconstruction initiatives in Afghanistan

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told visiting Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani that India supports a negotiated political reconciliation that is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed on Tuesday India's pledge to step up reconstruction initiatives in Afghanistan and called for joint efforts to combat terrorism.

He told visiting Afghanistan president Ashraf Ghani that India supports a negotiated political reconciliation in his country not dictated by any other nation.

"The Indian leadership reiterated its support for a negotiated political reconciliation in Afghanistan that is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled. It was emphasised that renunciation of violence and terror; and closure of cross-border safe havens and sanctuaries were essential for any meaningful progress and lasting peace," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

India blames Pakistan-based

terrorist outfits for the instability in Afghanistan and the region.

This was Ghani's fourth visit to the country in three years and 12th personal interaction with Modi, the latest after the US announced a new Afghan policy that sought a larger role for India and faulted Pakistan for doing little to rein in terrorist outfits.

India refused to send troops to Afghanistan but promised to expand its humanitarian efforts.

Modi and Ghani reviewed India's new development initiatives in Afghanistan. Ghani's visit concluded hours before US secretary of state Rex Tillerson arrived in New Delhi.

India is one of the biggest regional donors of Afghanistan and has pledged \$3.1 billion to the country since the

ouster of the Taliban regime in November 2001.

The new projects cover health, agriculture, drinking water, education, renewable energy, infrastructure and skills development, and capacity building.

The two leaders agreed that these will accelerate Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development, and provide effective governance.

The Indian side pledged more assistance, if the need arises, to strengthen Afghan military and police forces. India has trained thousands of Afghan defence and security personnel.

Connectivity was another major topic of discussion. India hopes to send in the coming weeks wheat through Iran's



Chabahar port, which "would shape new trade and transit opportunities for landlocked Afghanistan".

New Delhi also reiterated that it is ready for an integrated check post at Attari on the India-Pakistan border for Afghan trucks carrying goods to and from India.

Ghani also called on President Ram Nath Kovind and met external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj.

India must detoxify its poisoned farmlands

Many of these chemicals have become extremely pervasive in our environment as a result of their widespread repeated use and, in some cases, their environmental persistence



Last week, the Maharashtra government registered a police complaint against three pesticide companies and Krishi Seva Kendras (agro-input centres) for selling pesticides not recommended for the region after 32 farmers from Vidarbha died of poisoning. The agriculture department, which is responsible for educating farmers about pesticides, found highly toxic and expensive ones were being sold to unsuspecting farmers by the firms to earn profits. While the deaths indicate failure of the department itself, the genesis of the crisis dates back to the time of the Green Revolution in the 1960s when the need was felt to sharply increase crop productivity to ensure food security. This problem — increase in the use of pesticides — is not an India-specific problem: Since 1950, population has doubled, yet the area of arable land used to feed these people has increased by only 10%. There are huge pressures to provide food, at low cost, on land that is becoming more and more degraded as nutrients are stripped from the soil. Naturally, farmers started to rely on external inputs — fertilisers and pesticides for short-term solution for large-scale commercially intensive agricultural systems, says a report by Greenpeace.

PESTICIDES IN OUR ENVIRONMENT

This over-reliance has led to several problems: Many of these chemicals have become extremely pervasive in our environment as a result of their widespread repeated use and, in some cases, their environmental persistence. The report adds that some take an extremely long time to degrade, such that even those banned decades ago, including DDT and its secondary products, are routinely found in the environment today. What's important to understand here is that it is not just

farmers and pesticide applicators are at risk from pesticide use: When women are exposed to pesticides during pregnancy, some of these chemicals pass directly to the child in the womb. During development, the foetus is particularly vulnerable to the toxic impacts of pesticides. Young children, in general, are more susceptible than adults due to their increased exposure rates, in that toddlers and crawling babies are more

likely to touch surfaces in the home and put their hands in their mouths. Medical management of pesticide poisoning is difficult because there is little evidence with which to determine the best strategies for treatment and there is often an intermittent supply of antidotes, say experts.

WE MUST DETOX OUR FARMLANDS

The only sure-shot approach to reduce exposure to toxic pesticides is

through a move towards a more long-term and sustainable approach to producing food. This will require legally-binding agreements to immediately phase-out all pesticides that are toxic to non-target organisms implemented at both national and international level. It will not be easy to achieve this but it's worth giving a strong push — a similar one that is happening in the case of air pollution — for a healthier tomorrow.

Why illegal wildlife trade flourishes in India

Last week, a notorious wildlife trafficker with international links, who was involved in smuggling body parts of 125 tigers and 1,200 leopards, was convicted by a Madhya Pradesh court along with four other traffickers and awarded four-year rigorous imprisonment.

Despite strong laws, wildlife trade thrives in India due to political backing, disincentives for over-exploitation and illegal trade, such as penalties for legal infringements

India's forests and wildlife have been under threat for a while not just from mindless development but also the illegal trade in flora and fauna. Last week, a notorious wildlife trafficker with international links, who was involved in smuggling the body parts of 125 tigers and 1,200 leopards, was convicted by a Madhya Pradesh court along with four other traffickers and awarded four years rigorous imprisonment. For the crime he has committed, four years in jail is disproportionately small.

HOW STRONG IS INDIA'S LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This is not to say that India doesn't have a strong legal and policy framework to regulate and restrict the wildlife trade. Trade in over 1,800 species of wild animals, plants and their derivatives, is prohibited under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Yet illegal wild animal trade takes place all over the country.

Porous international land borders and a constrained enforcement exacerbate the situation. Native and non-native species are being brought into illegal

trafficking and this threatens biodiversity and conservation in the wild.

A WWF-India document lists all that is illegally traded: From bird eggs to marmosets, and a moth to tiger, a large number of wildlife species bear price tags put on them by poachers and illegal traffickers.

India is also a member of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora) since 1976. CITES is an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species listed on Appendices to certain controls.

WHAT INDIA NEEDS TO DO TO CURB WILDLIFE TRADE

But arrests such as the one made in Madhya Pradesh shows India has a long way to go if it has to curb such illegal



trade.

In India like many other countries, the problem is not of the laws but that these may be poorly communicated and poorly implemented and enforced.

Often, positive efforts to address wildlife trade concerns are undermined by lack of political will and governance failures. Without political backing, disincentives for over-exploitation and illegal trade, such as penalties for legal infringements, are all too often weak.

According to WWF-India, there is an urgent need for knowledge and action to bring the legal wildlife trade within sustainable levels and stop all illegal trade that has threatened and even pushed many species towards extinction.

What He said Was In The Past

Trump's volte face on Pakistan startles India. But impetuosity apart, harder realities may have forced the presidential tweet.

US President Donald Trump's policy pronouncements, often delivered via punchy tweets, are about as predictable as the series of storms battering America this season—one knows when one is coming and the possible areas, but not the damage and confusion it can wreak.

The growing India-US ties notwithstanding, a possible Donald Trump tweet putting India in a spot was never really beyond South Block's reckoning. The question was, perhaps, its time of arrival.

It came last weekend (October 14-15)—a tweet that jolted many in the Indian establishment: "Starting to develop a much better relationship with Pakistan and its leaders. I want to thank them for their cooperation on many fronts," Trump wrote.

A flip-flop on a key issue is a Trump hallmark—he has done it many times, embarrassing his officials and policy planners and delighting his detractors. Despite that, this 180-degree turn by Trump, who till a few days back had identified Pakistan as the main source of instability in the AfPak region and publicly castigated it for its terror links, shook the confidence of Indians, who were visualising the country's future closely tied to the US.

What exactly Pakistan had managed to do in this short time remains a matter of speculation. Its foreign minister, Khwaja Asif, had recently been to the US to hold talks with officials in the Trump administration and pledge Pakistan's loyalty. The only visible move that might have been initiated by Pakistan came in the release of an American-Canadian couple and their three children from a harrowing five-year captivity by the Haqqani network—a terror group active in Af-Pak with alleged links with the ISI.

Seasoned observers, however, are not surprised. "The US move looks predictable. We have seen it in the past. After a lot of fire and brimstone, there always comes a time when the Americans try to

reach out to the Pakistanis," says geo-strategic thinker C. Uday Bhaskar.

There is a growing view in New Delhi that the development might force India to go back to the drawing board and re-strategise its policy to deal with a resurgent Pakistan, which might feel encouraged by the US President's tweet. Clearly, the Pakistani government's decision not to keep 26/11 Mumbai terror mastermind Hafiz Saeed and some of his associates under house arrest any longer points to such confidence. This indicates that as long as Pakistan ensures the safety of American assets and interests, it would continue to pursue its earlier policies, especially nurturing its terror proxies, to be used against India.

One of the most disruptive presidents in recent US history, Trump has regularly 'fired' his aides and tried to dismantle policies of his predecessor, Barack Obama. His tweets in the past 10 months as US president have disconcerted some of the US's close allies and created disquiet across the world.

Yet, the June meeting between PM Narendra Modi and the president in Washington had gone off without a hitch. The palpable warmth they radiated created the impression that the two countries that already enjoyed strong, bilateral ties were now climbing to a new high in the partnership.

Thus, the sense of elation that most Indian commentators felt when Trump announced his new Afghanistan policy two months later, and which caused panicky consternation in Islamabad, was understandable.

Pakistan, Trump had thundered, sheltered the same terrorist organisations that had been trying to kill Americans every day, though the US had been paying Islamabad "billions and billions of dollars". All that will have to change immediately, asserted the US President, as he asked Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to "civilisation, order and peace".

To Indian policy planners, Trump's statement on Pakistan's terror links, especially his public castigation of Islamabad, was almost a total endorsement of what New Delhi had been talking about all these years on cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistani soil.

Former Indian foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal feels India should have been more cautious in its response. "We did go overboard in our response. We should have said it is a welcome first step to keep up the pressure. But we seemed a little too eager in highlighting Trump's statement on Pakistan and its links with terror groups," Sibal points out.

Moreover, when China joined in this effort through an anti-terror statement at the BRICS summit it hosted in Xiamen in September, and Russia, Brazil and South Africa supported it, the attempt to isolate Pakistan and force it to give up using terror as a foreign policy tool looked to be working for the first time. The fact that the statement for the first time named Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed—the two Pakistani terror proxies active in Kashmir—as a major source of instability, was also deemed significant.

Most Indian commentators attributed China's shift in stand to its realisation that growing India-US ties under Trump could build up a strong partnership, attracting other US allies in Asia towards a move to curtail Beijing's expanding influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Seeing this, Trump's dramatic praise for the Pakistani leadership's cooperation on Sunday has raised more than eyebrows in New Delhi and elsewhere, leaving many to wonder about India's next moves to deal with the new reality.

Srinath Raghavan of Delhi's Centre for Policy Research points out that one will have to stick to the basic issues that keep the US interested in Pakistan. "The geo-strategic advantage that Pakistan enjoys always gives it more

than one card to play with the US and other international players." He adds, "They always play this game better than India."

According to Raghavan, the US's interest in Pakistan is primarily twofold: it wants to have access to Pakistani territory so that it can extract its heavy military hardware from Afghanistan through Pakistan; and two, it wants Pakistan to ensure that terror groups that operate from its territory do not target American assets. "As long as Pakistan guarantees cooperation on these two areas, bilateral ties between Washington and Islamabad will remain on track," he says.

Agreeing with the point of Pakistan's geo-strategic advantage, Uday Bhaskar argues that the possibility of Pakistan moving closer to the growing China-Russia alliance and its likely impact on Afghanistan may have forced Trump to rethink his policy of isolating Pakistan. China has heavily invested in Pakistan through the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; it is thus in Beijing's interest to see a stable Pakistan. Far from ticking its 'all-weather ally' off, the Chinese attempt to criticise Pakistani terror groups was actually an attempt to ensure, through a bit of pressure, that its heavy investment does not go up in smoke because of the instability born of spiralling terrorist activities there. In addition, avoiding an armed confrontation between India and Pakistan not only ensures peace, but also brightens the chance that India may also join the CPEC in the near future.

It's a challenge for India to chart a course on the storm-tossed sea of Trump's policy statements.

Given the 'intemperate' nature of the US President, it may not come as a surprise if in coming weeks he again lets out his steam on Pakistan and its terror links. The Indian leadership, wiser now, should be more careful about its reactions. After all, these events enrich the bank of experience they can draw upon later.

Tech Giants Are Paying Huge Salaries for Scarce A.I. Talent

Nearly all big tech companies have an artificial intelligence project, and they are willing to pay experts millions of dollars to help get it done.

Silicon Valley's start-ups have always had a recruiting advantage over the industry's giants: Take a chance on us and we'll give you an ownership stake that could make you rich if the company is successful.

Now the tech industry's race to embrace artificial intelligence may render that advantage moot — at least for the few prospective employees who know a lot about A.I.

Tech's biggest companies are placing huge bets on artificial intelligence, banking on things ranging from face-scanning smartphones and conversational coffee-table gadgets to computerized health care and autonomous vehicles. As they chase this future, they are doling out salaries that are startling even in an industry that has never been shy about lavishing a fortune on its top talent.

Typical A.I. specialists, including both Ph.D.s fresh out of school and people with less education and just a few years of experience, can be paid from \$300,000 to \$500,000 a year or more in salary and company stock, according to nine people who work for major tech companies or have entertained job offers from them. All of them requested anonymity because they did not want to damage their professional prospects.

Well-known names in the A.I. field have received compensation in salary and shares in a company's stock that total single- or double-digit millions over a four- or five-year period. And at some point they renew or negotiate a new contract, much like a professional athlete. At the top end are executives with experience managing A.I. projects. In a court filing this year, Google revealed that one of the leaders of its self-driving-car division, Anthony Levandowski, a longtime employee who started with Google in 2007, took home over \$120 million in incentives before joining Uber last year through the acquisition of a start-up he had co-founded that drew the two companies into a court fight over intellectual property.

Salaries are spiraling so fast that some joke the tech industry

needs a National Football League-style salary cap on A.I. specialists. "That would make things easier," said Christopher Fernandez, one of Microsoft's hiring managers. "A lot easier."

There are a few catalysts for the huge salaries. The auto industry is competing with Silicon Valley for the same experts who can help build self-driving cars. Giant tech companies like Facebook and Google also have plenty of money to throw around and problems that they think A.I. can help solve, like building digital assistants for smartphones and home gadgets and spotting offensive content.

Most of all, there is a shortage of talent, and the big companies are trying to land as much of it as they can. Solving tough A.I. problems is not like building the flavor-of-the-month smartphone app. In the entire world, fewer than 10,000 people have the skills necessary to tackle serious artificial intelligence research, according to Element AI, an independent lab in Montreal.

"What we're seeing is not necessarily good for society, but it is rational behavior by these companies," said Andrew Moore, the dean of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, who previously worked at Google. "They are anxious to ensure that they've got this small cohort of people" who can work on this technology. Costs at an A.I. lab called DeepMind, acquired by Google for a reported \$650 million in 2014, when it employed about 50 people, illustrate the issue. Last year, according to the company's recently released annual financial accounts in Britain, the lab's "staff costs" as it expanded to 400 employees totaled \$138 million. That comes out to \$345,000 an employee.

"It is hard to compete with that, especially if you are one of the smaller companies," said Jessica Cataneo, an executive recruiter at the tech recruiting firm CyberCoders. The cutting edge of artificial intelligence research is based on a set of mathematical techniques called deep neural networks. These networks are mathematical algorithms that can

learn tasks on their own by analyzing data. By looking for patterns in millions of dog photos, for example, a neural network can learn to recognize a dog. This mathematical idea dates back to the 1950s, but it remained on the fringes of academia and industry until about five years ago.

By 2013, Google, Facebook and a few other companies started to recruit the relatively few researchers who specialized in these techniques. Neural networks now help recognize faces in photos posted to Facebook, identify commands spoken into living-room digital assistants like the Amazon Echo and instantly translate foreign languages on Microsoft's Skype phone service.

Using the same mathematical techniques, researchers are improving self-driving cars and developing hospital services that can identify illness and disease in medical scans, digital assistants that can not only recognize spoken words but understand them, automated stock-trading systems and robots that pick up objects they've never seen before. With so few A.I. specialists available, big tech companies are also hiring the best and brightest of academia. In the process, they are limiting the number of professors who can teach the technology.

Uber hired 40 people from Carnegie Mellon's groundbreaking A.I. program in 2015 to work on its self-driving-car project. Over the last several years, four of the best-known A.I. researchers in academia have left or taken leave from their professorships at Stanford University. At the University of Washington, six of 20 artificial intelligence professors are now on leave or partial leave and working for outside companies.

"There is a giant sucking sound of academics going into industry," said Oren Etzioni, who is on leave from his position as a professor at the University of Washington to oversee the nonprofit Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence.

Some professors are finding a way to compromise. Luke



Zettlemoyer of the University of Washington turned down a position at a Google-run Seattle laboratory that he said would have paid him more than three times his current salary (about \$180,000, according to public records). Instead, he chose a post at the Allen Institute that allowed him to continue teaching. "There are plenty of faculty that do this, splitting their time in various percentages between industry and academia," Mr. Zettlemoyer said. "The salaries are so much higher in industry, people only do this because they really care about being an academician."

To bring in new A.I. engineers, companies like Google and Facebook are running classes that aim to teach "deep learning" and related techniques to existing employees. And nonprofits like Fast.ai and companies like DeepLearning.ai, founded by a former Stanford professor who helped create the Google Brain lab, offer online courses. The basic concepts of deep learning are not hard to grasp, requiring little more than high-school-level math. But real expertise requires more significant math and an intuitive talent that some call "a dark art." Specific knowledge is needed for fields like self-driving cars, ro-

botics and health care. In order to keep pace, smaller companies are looking for talent in unusual places. Some are hiring physicists and astronomers who have the necessary math skills. Other start-ups from the United States are looking for workers in Asia, Eastern Europe and other locations where wages are lower.

"I can't compete with Google, and I don't want to," said Chris Nicholson, the chief executive and a co-founder of SkyMind, a start-up in San Francisco that has hired engineers in eight countries. "So I offer very attractive salaries in countries that undervalue engineering talent." But the industry's giants are doing much the same. Google, Facebook, Microsoft and others have opened A.I. labs in Toronto and Montreal, where much of this research outside the United States is being done. Google also is hiring in China, where Microsoft has long had a strong presence. Not surprisingly, many think the talent shortage won't be alleviated for years. "Of course demand outweighs supply. And things are not getting better any time soon," Yoshua Bengio, a professor at the University of Montreal and a prominent A.I. researcher, said. "It takes many years to train a Ph.D."

Past Continuous

was considered as the only legatee of the freedom struggle, but also for his politically inclusive qualities. True, he resorted to several questionable steps – like use of Article 356 of the Indian constitution to dismiss state governments – but by and large, he was open to the voice of reason and often re-examined his prior posture.

Indira Gandhi was overtaken by delusion regarding her eternal stranglehold in the wake of the triumph in the first mid-term Lok Sabha polls in 1971 – and the successes in state elections in 1972 – along with the Indian military success against Pakistan. Within two years of the 1971 war, winds of unrest began blowing across several parts of India and by the middle of 1974, this had become a raging storm against her regime. What followed in the wake of the Navnirman agitation in Gujarat is well known, but the moot point is that her decline had truly set in by the time she imposed Emergency. Thereafter, it was just a matter of time – subject to her ending the draconian rule and allowing fair polls – before she would be ousted in an election. The 1977 election demonstrated that people do not always look for an alternative when they wish to vote out a leader, a fact demonstrated again in 2004, when the people defeated the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led alliance.

A similar error of judgement was made by Rajiv Gandhi, who still has to his credit, the biggest landslide in Indian electoral history. However, barely two years had elapsed before his regime began its slide downhill. The process which began with the eruption of the Fairfax controversy in December 1986, when it was alleged that V.P. Singh as finance minister, initiated investigations conducted by Michael Hershman (he resurfaced recently his television interviews when in India to attend a conference of private detectives and is likely to be inducted as witness by CBI in its reopening of the Bofors kickbacks allegations) gathered momentum after the Swedish radio alleged that bribes were paid to secure the contract for the Howitzer.

Events in 1987 were particularly significant and determined the nature of Indian politics for years to come, but developments in the fall of that year, starting October, were of special significance. The story of that wasted mandate, which

began exactly three decades ago, has great significance today as it has numerous similarities to recent developments. Like in 1984, the Lok Saba elections in 2014 also yielded a mandate which was astounding when compared with verdicts in the immediate past. But while it took two and half years before Rajiv Gandhi's car began sputtering, it has taken one year longer before the Modi engine has begun showing signs of trouble.

The future of this regime will be greatly determined by events over the next couple of months, but strong parallels exist between the political backdrop in 1987 and the current situation, and this should be cause for worry for supporters of this regime. The most significant similarity then and now, is that the supposition in 1987 that there was no alternative to Rajiv Gandhi existed. That was in sharp contrast to the 1984 election when Rajiv Gandhi was the natural choice. Similarly, if Modi had been voted in 2014 because he seen as 'The Alternative', the renewal of his mandate – whether in Gujarat and others states that go to the polls over the next two years – or in the 2019 polls, would depend solely on the TINA (there is no alternative) factor. Gandhi was voted out in 1989 because an alliance was cobbled up from nowhere in circumstances still contentious. Similarly, the dramatic turn of political events in Gujarat demonstrates that the future is not something that can be spoken about with certainty.

It is worthwhile recalling apologists for Gandhi in 1987 writing off V.P. Singh when he resigned from the cabinet on April 11, declaring that he "was clearly an isolated and beaten man", someone who earned the "reputation of a man who runs away from battle." V.P. Singh's departure was then interpreted by the 'official camp' and conveyed to sympathetic journalists that "Rajiv may have emerged stronger within the party". But such assertions came to a naught just two months later when the Congress was handed an abject electoral humiliation barely two months later in Haryana. The party won just five seats out of 90, and an implausible alliance between the Devi Lal led faction of Lok Dal and the BJP swept the polls. More incredulously, the Lok Dal did not align with only the BJP but also allocated one seat each to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) and the

Communist Party of India (CPI), thereby settling up an veiled electoral partnership between the BJP on the one hand and two communist parties on the other.

Post polls, despite Devi Lal being in a position to form the government on his own, he requested the BJP to join his government and Sushma Swaraj became the first ever BJP minister in any state. Her induction – this must be mentioned for record – almost coincided with the decision of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to depute Narendra Modi to the BJP, a decision that heralded the revival of the practise of the Jana Sangh of positioning pracharaks in the political party. Despite the electrifying nature of the Haryana verdict, its impact was local or regional and to convert this into a national sentiment there was need for a leader with a pan-Indian identity to anchor the nascent opposition to Congress. It was also imperative that this person was not tainted with the failure of the Janata Party government and seen as opportunists by people. This ruled out opposition stalwarts like Devi Lal, Chandrasekhar and H.N. Bahuguna from leading the anti-Rajiv bandwagon. This is when V.P. Singh developed confidence and on October 2, 1987, formed the Jan Morcha with a handful of colleagues who had either left the Congress along with him or had been evicted from the party earlier.

The significance of the formation of Jan Morcha was that it demonstrated that

regardless of an emphatic mandate and overwhelming parliamentary support, fortified by the Anti-Defection law enacted in 1985, there was still space for opposition to rally people's sentiment against a regime. Events between 1987 and 1989 when the Congress was voted out in the polls for the ninth Lok Sabha demonstrated that one failed attempt to put together an anti-Congress coalition did not necessarily foreclose the possibility of another such conglomerate being cobbled up. Moreover, as the mood of the people changed, opposition parties cast aside their prejudices against each other and joined hands despite severe ideological differences. To put it differently, if the communist parties could forge an indirect alliance with the BJP to ensure that the anti-Congress vote did not get divided in 1989, noting prevents different anti-BJP parties from cobbling together a loose coalition. Significantly while opposition to Congress was more programmatic and personality driven, differences of the non-BJP parties to it are fundamentally ideological.

While the Jan Morcha was formed in October 1987, efforts continued to put together a Janata Party like behemoth. Eventually a year later, on October 11 1988, (chosen intentionally for this day is Jayaprakash Narayan's birth anniversary) the Janata Dal was formed with the merger of various groups of the Lok Dal, Congress (S) and Jan Morcha. The BJP which was invited to join the new rump, chose to retain its "distinct identity" but aligned with the

newly formed party to defeat the Congress.

A few months prior to the formation of the Janata Dal, V.P. Singh was elected to Lok Sabha in a tumultuous bypoll from Allahabad, the seat vacated by Amitabh Bachchan. V.P. Singh was the joint opposition candidate and he defeated Sunil Shastri, the son of India's second prime minister. The margin of more than 1.10 lakh votes would have been greater had not Kanshi Ram entered the fray and cut away a significant number of anti-Congress votes. It is worth recalling that Bachchan quit his parliamentary seat because he was stung by aspersions cast on him in the wake of the Bofors scandal. At that time however, few expected the bypoll to catalyse such a major turnaround in the political narrative. The anti-Congress coalition that comprised forces on the Right and on the Left came together because of their inherent anti-Congressism and also because both concluded that a tactical handshake was historically imperative.

For the past several months the CPI(M) has witnessed a debate over the posture it must adopt towards the Congress in its strategy to pose a credible opposition to the BJP. The matter has now been deferred for the party Congress due in April next year, but the party cannot be guided by the necessities of its Kerala unit and the diktats of certain influential leaders. From a time barely seven months ago, when Omar Abdullah made the politically naive statement that opposition parties should focus on 2014 as 2019 was a settled affair, the situation has altered dramatically.

Meet and Greet organized by The South Asian Community

Also he is the First Vice President at New York State Adult Day Services Association; New York State Chair at Democratic National Committee's Ethnic Council of DNC. In the past he held the positions of First Vice President at New York State Adult Day Services Association; Director - Business Development at Center light Health System (Previously Comprehensive Care Management) and County Commissioner at Nassau. He is a team player, born leader who leads the team to achieve the corporate & team goals, motivator, innovative approach in sales and marketing. Mr. Malik Abid spoke on the necessity of a south Asian Community to participate in the Local / future elections. Ambassador Malik: Spoke with the intensity and tenacity of asking people to stay home and watch your favorite

shows and listen to nice music unless you cared about this country and the future of your children. In this case you it is your obligation to go and vote rather than complaining later about the system or individuals. He shared his experience in Nassau county where the discrimination has played a major role, he shared information as the words of wisdom can come at any age and gave the example of his daughter who told him to fight a monster "hold my hand so we can fight together" - The Audience appalled. He asked everyone if anyone plans to move back to their respective country where they came from and there was no response - Silence. Ambassador Malik suggested that if you are not going back and this is your home country than exercise your right

to vote. He strongly recommended that you "select Row A- all the way" on the ballot. Ambassador Malik urged the people to open their wallets and start supporting the local candidates even if it is ten dollars. President Obama stated with \$5/- Since his active role in Nassau County- Long Island, the voters turn-out was 57% in 2016. We can have someone from the Ethnic County to run for County executive position. He provided assistance to the local candidates and as they currently have a call center at his office. He offered that the calls can be made to the upstate region for each candidate here. At the End - Ambassador Malik endorsed the Candidacy of Julien / Andrea / Jennifer on behalf of the New York State Chair of Democratic National Committee's Ethnic Coordinating Council.

Massive Recapitalisation Plan for State-Run Banks

Of this, the Bharatmala project component will involve an outlay Rs 5.35 lakh crore that will generate 14.2 crore man-days of work.

Funding for the programme will be raised as debt from the market (Rs 2.09 lakh crore), private investments through PPP (Rs 1.06 lakh crore) and from accruals to the central road fund and toll collections (Rs 2.19 lakh crore).

Jaitley said that the economic blueprint to revive growth being presented follows extensive recent discussions on the state of the economy.

"You will recall the press conference last time, where I had mentioned that we will respond appropriately to the situation as it develops," he said.

"We have conducted analysis within the ministry and held detailed consultation with Prime Minister on the state of the economy. We have decided

on the steps needed to sustain the growth momentum," he said.

"The unprecedented recapitalisation and the initiatives announced today (Tuesday) are expected to have a noticeable impact in the near term, contributing to accelerated economic activity, employment and growth of the economy," he added.

The public sector banks' recapitalisation comes in a context where their non-performing assets (NPAs), or bad loans, have reached the level of 82 per cent of their stressed assets, Kumar said.

"The NPAs of government owned banks have increased to the level of Rs 4.55 lakh crore between 2015 and 2017," he said.

"Of this, 12 cases, which have been referred to the NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) account for Rs 1.75 lakh

crore, or 25 per cent of all NPAs," he added.

Pointing out that the accumulated NPA figures reflect the result of "aggressive lending" in the past, Jaitley said the government's move to fund banks comes at a time when private sector investment has dwindled.

Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian, who was also present at the briefing, clarified that the recapitalisation bonds would count as debt, while their exact nature would be made available in due course.

The government, however, denied that this support to banks would affect fiscal consolidation.

The Finance Minister said the banks would get Rs 18,000 crore under the Indradhanush plan. Under the Indradhanush roadmap introduced in 2015, the government had announced

infusion of Rs 70,000 crore in state-run banks over four years to meet their capital requirement in line with global banking risk norms, known as Basel-III.

In line with the plan, public sector banks were given Rs 25,000 crore in 2015-16, and a similar amount has been earmarked for the following years. Besides, Rs 10,000 crore each would be infused in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

This stimulus package comes after data from various sources showed India's GDP growth flagging under the twin impact of demonetisation and GST.

The IMF said in its latest World Economic Outlook that India's economic growth for 2017 and 2018 will be slower than earlier projections. The report cited the "lingering impact" of demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) for the expected slowdown during the current and the next year.

A possible link between Pyongyang and Doklam

We seem to be hostage to the idiosyncrasies of two leaders whose personalities are feeding off each other to bring the world to the nuclear precipice. As if this problem were not enough, Xi has opened a new front with respect to India in Doklam, and, with no apparent cause, Trump has refused to certify the Iran nuclear deal. Again, we ask, is there some method to this madness?

Xi's stranglehold on power in a country facing stressful economic transformations is based on drumming up nationalistic fervour along with a war on corruption. With limited possibilities in North Korea, the face-saving strategy in the run-up to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of

China, where Xi is expected to consolidate power by waiving the rule which limits the term of office of a Chinese president, is expansionist action on other fronts. Once we understand China's limitations vis-à-vis North Korea, the diversionary role of Doklam (and other such missions) in Xi's strategy becomes clear. Trump's actions on Iran may well stem from the same desire to deflect interest from his lack of options in North Korea. While India's swift response to China's Doklam incursion deserves plaudits, given the underlying incentives, one should assume the provocations will continue. As two neighbouring great powers, India and China can expect to remain in a relationship of simultaneous conflict and

cooperation. Both sides should not let historical disputes come in the way of exploring win-win possibilities in other avenues. Ideally, India should leave most of the political and economic costs of containing China to the US and its immediate allies (as indicated by Trump's recent about-face on Pakistan, getting too close to the US would allow it to play India and Pakistan against each other). Hence, the recent renewal of disputes is an undesirable irritation. India would do well to aggressively negotiate with China using its importance as a source of demand for Chinese goods (India has a \$51 billion trade deficit with China) to minimize border skirmishes. And yet, one wonders if the Indian government's need to demonstrate its newly discovered

"strength" since 2014 prevents it from taking steps that would defuse tensions. The refusal to speak to the Hurriyat in Kashmir, the chest-thumping on "surgical strikes", the non-participation in the meeting on China's "One Belt One Road" project over objections to the passage of the economic corridor through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir indicate, in my view, an unnecessary intransigence. With little to show on the economy, in India as in the world, the primacy of domestic power struggles over international relations constitutes a new and deadly prisoners' dilemma. Rohit Prasad is a professor at MDI Gurgaon, and author of Blood Red River. Game Sutra is a fortnightly column based on game theory.

The plants that NASA scientists say you need in your bedroom to beat colds, tight chests and insomnia

Researchers say that the palm is brilliant for anyone prone to colds and sinus problems because it releases moisture into the air. This, in turn, makes it much easier to breathe so will help you nod off quicker.

2. Aloe Vera: Easy to keep and aesthetically pleasing in any home, the aloe vera plant has been named as one of the best plants for air purification by NASA. Why? It releases oxygen continuously throughout the night, making it an ideal bedroom addition. It also fights benzene (which is found in detergents and plastics) and formaldehyde (in varnishes and floor finishes) so helps keep the air super pure.

3. English Ivy: More commonly associated with Christmas, the ivy that grows up your house is actually perfect for your bedroom.

Indeed, researchers at the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology found that English ivy in particular removes 78 per cent of airborne mould in just 12 hours.

4. Dwarf date palm: This plant

is hardy, drought-tolerant and long-lived and it's brilliant at removing indoor air pollutants - especially xylene.

5. Boston Fern: This attractive plant has graced indoor landscapes since Victorian times - and for good reason. The plant ranks ninth in NASA's list of 50 air-purifying plants, being particularly adept at removing formaldehyde.

6. Chinese evergreen: This has been dubbed the easiest houseplant because it grows well

in low light and areas of the home where other plants won't grow (like a dark bedroom). The best part about it is that it removes more toxins as time and exposure continues.

7. Peace lily: This beautiful plant can cleanse air and improve it by 60 per cent. It also absorbs mould spores through its leaves and circulates them its roots to use as food.

8. Spider plant: This houseplant grows super quickly and can remove up to 90 per cent

of the toxins from the air in your bedroom in just two days. It's especially great for people with dust allergies.

9. Lady palm: This houseplant is one of the most effective plants at cleansing the air of formaldehyde, ammonia, xylene and toluene.

10. Weeping fig: This houseplant is the best at beating pollutants that are emitted from carpeting and furniture such as formaldehyde, benzene and trichloroethylene.

Paris Climate Deal

non-binding nature and contended it didn't go far enough to fight climate change. The U.S., under then-President Barack Obama, helped spearhead the agreement. But President Donald Trump, who has referred to climate change as a "hoax," in June announced his plans to withdraw from the deal. Formally pulling out of the deal could take years, though, and many have speculated that Trump could still reverse course. The White House has pushed back on those claims. Leaders worldwide have

spoken out against Trump's opposition to the deal. Former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said on Monday that Trump was "standing on the wrong side of history." The U.S. is the second-largest greenhouse gas producer worldwide after China. Nicaragua, meanwhile, is already a haven for renewable energy, with its high exposure to sun and wind, according to a 2013 World Bank study. Renewables already account for 58 percent of the country's energy.

Woman Raped In Broad Daylight

On A Busy Road In Vizag As Passersby Turned A Blind Eye

An auto-rickshaw driver recorded the incident and immediately submitted it to the police, which resulted in the accused's arrest. However, it is shocking that eye-witness didn't bother stop the man from committing the crime

In the video, a lot of people can be seen passing-by but no one cared to stop and help the victim. "The woman had left her home in Vepagunta near Pendurthi on the outskirts of Vizag after a tiff with her husband and had arrived in Vizag on a bus early Sunday. She took shelter under a tree on the pavement when Shiva assaulted her," The Indian Express quoted Inspector Ramana as saying.

The investigating officer also reportedly said that though they received at least six calls to report the incident, but not one person made an effort to stop the accused.

Men, take note: What you eat before sex can impact your baby's health

It's not just the mother's diet that matters. If the father eats a balanced diet, it can also contribute to the mother delivering a healthy baby. Lifestyle



(News Agencies) A diet high in carbohydrates and low in protein. "We were really surprised," said Michal Polak, a Professor at University of Cincinnati in the US. "In many species, the men should avoid having

So we expect there to be an effect from maternal diet on offspring because of that strong link. But it was a real surprise to find a link between paternal diet and offspring," Polak said. For the study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B, the researchers manipulated the nutrition of male fruit flies and observed a strong correlation between poor diet and poor survivorship among their offspring. Scientists regularly study fruit flies because they and more than 75% of our disease genes. Geneticists have mapped their entire genome. More than 150 years of study have made this unassuming little fly a good model system, Polak said. For the study, Polak isolated females and males of the fruit fly species *Drosophila melanogaster*, which is famous for its enormous red eyes and high reproductive capacity. A single fly can lay 50 eggs per day or as many as 2,000 eggs in her short two-month lifetime. The researchers fed

and more than 75% of our disease genes. Geneticists have mapped their entire genome. More than 150 years of study have made this unassuming little fly a good model system, Polak said. For the study, Polak isolated females and males of the fruit fly species *Drosophila melanogaster*, which is famous for its enormous red eyes and high reproductive capacity. A single fly can lay 50 eggs per day or as many as 2,000 eggs in her short two-month lifetime. The researchers fed females the same diet. But they fed males 30 different diets of yeast and sugars. The flies could eat all they wanted from the agar mixture in the bottom of their glass beaker homes, but the quality of the food varied dramatically from low to high concentrations of proteins, carbohydrates and calories. After 17 days on the strict diet, the males were mated individually and consecutively with two females, which all received the same diet of yeasted

Living near trees makes people less stressed by boosting their brain

Research showed that city dwellers are at a higher risk of psychiatric illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia.



(News Agencies) Living near an abundance of trees makes adults less stressed, according to new research. People who build their homes in the lap of mother nature may have a healthier brain and may be at lower risk of developing stress-related depression and anxiety disorders than those living near the urban green or wasteland, the research says.

The findings showed that city dwellers are at a higher risk of psychiatric illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia than countryside dwellers. This is because life in a city is full of noise and

pollution, and many people scramble in a confined space, increasing the risk for chronic stress. In the study, appearing in the journal *Scientific Reports*, city dwellers' showed higher activity levels of amygdala — a central nucleus in the brain that plays an important role in stress processing and reactions to danger. On the other hand, people living close to a forest showed indications of a physiologically healthy amygdala structure and were therefore presumably better able to cope with stress compared to those living the urban green, water or wasteland, the researchers observed. "Research on brain plasticity supports the assumption that the environment can shape brain structure and function." That is why we are interested in the environmental conditions that may have positive effects on brain development," said lead author Simone Kuhn, psychologist at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) Hospital in Germany. "Studies of people in the countryside have already shown that living close to nature is good for their mental health and well-being. We therefore decided to examine city dwellers," Kuhn added. By 2050, almost 70% of the world population is expected to be living in cities, the researchers said, adding that these results could therefore be very important for urban planning.



Beware, your 'bromance' can threaten your heterosexual relationship

A "bromance" can be more emotionally satisfying for men than romantic relationships with women, says a new study.



(News Agencies) For young men, their "bromance", or close friendships with other men, could be more emotionally satisfying than their romantic relationships with women, finds a study. The findings showed that the increasingly intimate, emotive and trusting nature of bromances offers young men a new social space for emotional disclosure, outside of traditional heterosexual relationships. Men also felt less judged by their close male friends than by their girlfriends. "A bromance offered men elevated emotional stability, enhanced emotional disclosure, social fulfilment, compared to the emotional lives they shared with their girlfriends," said Stefan Robinson from UK's University of Winchester.

Moreover, it was easier for them to overcome conflicts and express their emotions in their bromances than in their romances. However, "strong bromances could challenge traditional domestic living arrangements between men and women," Robinson added. The rise in bromances can be recognised as a progressive development in the relations between men, researchers noted while adding that this progress may negatively affect heterosexual relations. For the study, detailed in the journal *Men and Masculinities*, the team interviewed undergraduate straight men. Participants stated that the lack of boundaries and judgement in a bromance is expressed as emotionally rivalling the benefits of a heterosexual romance. The tensions of the bromance versus romance can be studied against a backdrop of declining homophobia, sexual liberalism and inclusive masculinity, the researchers said.

Amazon to embed Alexa in third-party consumer electronic products

Consumer electronics maker BPL will launch an Alexa-integrated line of smart speakers in January 2018



(News Agencies) Amazon India plans to integrate Alexa into third-party consumer electronic products such as speakers and TV sets as the online retailer seeks to expand the presence of its intelligent personal assistant in India.

Consumer electronics maker BPL will launch an Alexa-integrated line of smart speakers in January 2018.

Amazon India will form more such partnerships with Indian manufacturers in the coming months.

The data produced from such partnerships will help Amazon derive valuable insights on shopping habits of Indian customers, particularly in urban areas.

Branded BPL Voice One, the smart speaker will be available on Amazon's online marketplace exclusively, the company said in a statement on Friday.

Just like Amazon's Echo range, which was launched earlier this month, BPL Voice One will connect to the cloud-based Alexa voice service to play music, set alarms and timers, check the calendar and weather, and control smart home devices, among others.

BPL's smart speaker will have

access to a number of Alexa skills that Amazon has planned for India. Apart from BPL, many other Indian and global developers are already building skills for use on Alexa. BPL's speaker is still in the prototype stage and will be released after specific tests are completed, the company said.

"As a brand that pioneered numerous technologies in India, I am happy that we have the opportunity to be the first Indian consumer company to bring out an AVS (Alexa Voice Service)-enabled smart speaker. Our relationship with Amazon has been engaging and insightful, and we do believe that through AVS we will continue to give our

customers the perfect mix of innovation and reliability in a brand," Manmohan Ganesh, head of corporate strategy at BPL, said in a statement.

The development comes a few months after BPL ended its exclusive partnership with Flipkart in May to tie up with Amazon. BPL's new partnership with Amazon may not just be limited to smart speakers. The domestic manufacturer also manufactures LED TVs, microwaves, and air conditioners, among others, and Amazon may forge partnerships with consumer electronics firms to integrate Alexa into these devices.

How companies are spending on CSR projects

The top 100 NSE companies are moving beyond compliance to focus on creating long-term impact for beneficiaries of their CSR projects



(News Agencies) New Delhi: In the three years since Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) rules were implemented, not much has changed in patterns of spending by the top 100 National Stock Exchange (NSE) listed companies by market capitalization. While education and healthcare continue to attract most of the monies, Maharashtra still sees the maximum inflow of CSR spends. The top 10 companies still account for almost half of the total CSR spend.

CSR Rules, which came into effect on 1 April 2014, state that companies with a net worth of Rs500 crore or revenue of Rs1,000 crore or net profit of Rs5 crore should spend 2% of their average profit in the last three years on social development-related activities such as sanitation, education, healthcare and

poverty alleviation, among others, which are listed in Schedule VII of the Rules.

In fiscal year 2017 (FY17), an actual spend of Rs6,810 crore was recorded for the 92 companies whose annual reports were studied to collect the data by Goodera (previously NextGen), a CSR and sustainability management platform. The cut-off date for collecting the data was 18 September. The remaining eight had either not released their annual reports or follow a different fiscal year.

At Rs3,307 crore, the share of the top 10 companies was once again nearly 50% of the total amount spent by the firms surveyed. "The overall CSR spend growth has reduced to 10% this fiscal from 23% in the previous. This is primarily due to two reasons: the overall rate of growth of companies' profits has slowed down in this fiscal year and second, 16% of companies have reduced their overall spend, though their profits have grown, causing an overall slowdown of CSR spend in the ecosystem," says Abhishek Humbad, founder and co-chief executive officer (CEO) of Goodera.

Public sector focus

Of the 92 firms surveyed, 15 were public sector units (PSUs) and their spend was Rs1,996

crore out of Rs6,810 crore, or 30% of the total spend.

"In FY17, spend by PSUs has decreased by 9%, though the prescribed spend grew by 1%. This is mainly due to certain PSUs being non-compliant since the law came into existence. Some of the common explanations cited for non-compliance are multi-year projects, delay in identification of projects and other related delays," says Humbad.

One of the ways to improve the current situation is to invest in fewer but strategic projects instead of taking up more projects. "On an average, while private companies take up 14 projects, the corresponding number for PSUs is 26, which leads to thinning of resources and lack of adequate focus on projects under PSUs," he adds.

Perhaps one approach could be like that of NTPC Ltd, which ranks at No. 6 in the spend tally. The company reported that almost half of its CSR budget was allocated to hunger, healthcare and poverty alleviation projects. NTPC also takes up most of the CSR activities primarily in the neighbourhood villages of its units too. "Despite the slowdown in the growth rate of the economy, India is still one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

Lending start-ups grow consumer credit business amid caution by banks

Slowdown in bank credit has given a boost to fintech start-ups such as Faircent, Wishfin and Loantap



(News Agencies) Online lending start-ups such as Faircent, Wishfin and Loantap as well as large e-commerce firms are helping expand consumer credit at a time when banks burdened by bad loans have become cautious about lending. Because of demonetisation, announced in November, many consumers have become more comfortable with online services. That, along with the slowdown in bank credit, has given a boost to financial technology start-ups.

Personal loans advanced by banks grew 15.7% in August, slower than the 18.1% growth that the segment reported a year ago, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.

Online lending start-ups offer loans for a variety of purposes such as paying medical expenses, salary overdraft, credit card refinancing, personal loans and purchases of high-value items such as smartphones, televisions and

refrigerators.

Some start-ups stash their loan book by directly borrowing from banks or capital funds, while others use a peer-to-peer (P2P) lending format. P2P lending entails lending money to individuals or businesses through online services that match lenders with borrowers. "Demonetisation had a greater impact on lenders who were worried about depleting their cash reserves. There was a considerable surge in the number of borrowers applying for loans during the demonetisation drive," Faircent's founder Rajat Gandhi said in an email interview. Faircent uses the peer-to-peer model for sourcing and disbursing loans.

Faircent (Fairassets Technologies Pvt. Ltd) is now processing around 300 loans per month, with an average loan size of Rs1.5 lakh on a monthly basis, compared with 130 loans given in November and December last year.

Sonam to Alia: Amazing outfits celebs rocked at Diwali 2017 parties.

Some of the biggest names in showbiz showed up in their eye-catching Diwali-ready looks. From Sonam Kapoor and Alia Bhatt to Katrina Kaif, here's a round-up of who wore what for Diwali.



(News Agencies) Diwali this year saw an array of Bollywood superstars parading their brightest and most stylish outfits. This year's seemingly never-ending celebrity bashes saw incredible style, with guests so done-up, the word glamorous doesn't even do them justice. Actor and fashionista Sonam Kapoor, as always, somewhat stole the show in her two very different, very chic Abu Jani-Sandeep Khosla ensembles, whilst others, like actor Alia Bhatt, remained more low-key in an elegant Raw Mango ensemble.

We've got a refresher for you right here. Scroll down to see our favourite looks from Diwali 2017:

We loved Alia's oh-so-

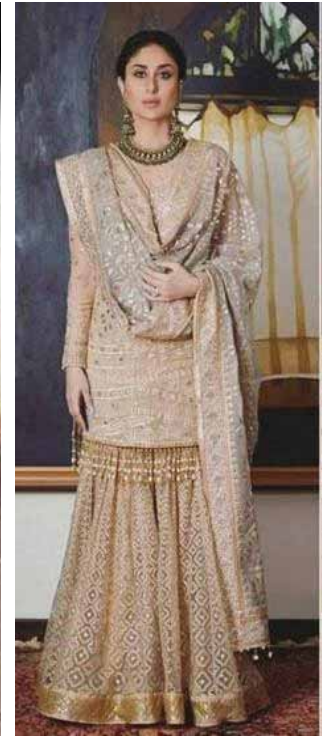
sleek sage green salwar suit with palazzo pants by Sanjay Garg of Raw Mango. What better way to show your support for the handloom industry than to



wear handwoven ensembles during India's biggest and most-celebrated festival? It's no surprise that Sonam Kapoor killed it with her grand Diwali look in not one, but two splendid Abu Jani-Sandeep Khosla outfits: An effortlessly stylish A blue and beige lehenga paired with a heavily-embellished blouse. All we have to say is: Enchantress. Actor Shilpa Shetty showed us how to ace a desi look like a pro with her orange and red handwoven sari by Raw Mango. Perfect for the

festive season. Celebrations like Diwali are made for beauties like actor Kareena Khan. She was the epitome of regal style in her ethereal Tarun Tahiliani ensemble. Kareena, just doing Kareena things. Actor Sonakshi Sinha's Diwali-ready ensemble was a bit of everything: It's floral, it's white, it's rich, it's all-sparkle-everything. And Clearly, Diwali is quite a festive occasion for actor Jacqueline Fernandez. We get her bright and traditional outfit is fab, but look at the

excitement in the Sri Lanka beauty's eyes. Pure joy! Red + lehenga = one timeless way to bring in Diwali. Did you expect anything less than this head-turning Anamika Khanna ensemble that included an embroidered blouse, a cape jacket and a lehenga from actor Katrina Kaif? We especially love that emerald necklace on her. Sonali Bendre gets that a gal can be comfy and glam at the same time. We're digging her Benarasi-esque Manish Malhotra lehenga in bright colours.

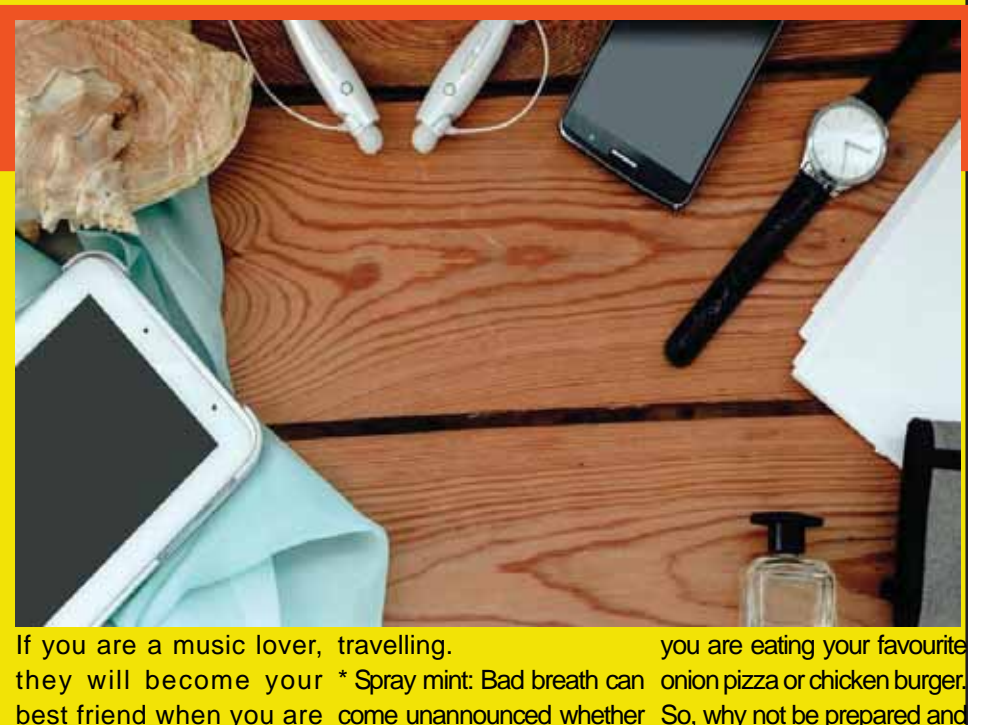


Men, take note: Here are 5 essentials that every man should carry

Are you heading to the gym, or to work? Make sure you are carrying these essentials and can be presentable anywhere, any time.

(News Agencies) Before heading out, men should ensure that their bag includes a perfume, spray mint, headphones, and more. Ritika Ahuja, chief operating officer — merchandising, Big Boy Toyz, and Vikas Bagaria, founder and managing director, Redcliffe Hygiene, have shared a list of must-have items for men:

- * A perfume: If you're just starting out picking a fragrance, find a scent you like. Then build on that. Just don't bathe in it.
- * Sanitiser sprays: Spray a little on your chest and the base of your throat.
- * Gym equipment sanitiser spray: With many using gym equipment for their daily workouts, gyms centres tend to be another area where illness-causing bacteria thrive. Many gyms don't resort to proper sanitising
- * A pair of headphones: methods, and hence, using gym equipment while using the treadmill, bench press, dumbbells, exercise-cycle and leg extension machine can reduce the number of germs.
- * Grooming kit: This is an essential toolkit for a man to stay presentable and perfect. From a hairbrush to a trimmer or a mirror, a grooming kit has it all.
- * A pair of headphones: best friend when you are travelling.



* Spray mint: Bad breath can come unannounced whether you are eating your favourite onion pizza or chicken burger. So, why not be prepared and carry a spray mint?

Time To Call Out The Desi Weinsteins

Bollywood is always in search of a great big Diwali dhamaka. I am hoping this year will provide a big bang!

Come on, all you Bollywood babes - you know who you are - speak up! Nail those vile men who have done a Harvey Weinstein on you. You can do it. No shame. The timing is perfect. All it needs is one top female star to open her gab - just one. If that happens, the dam will burst! And all those slimy Sugar Daddies of showbiz will have no place to hide. That is, if they have any sharam in the first place.

I have monitored the shenanigans in Bollywood for over 40 years. During my decade-long association with a popular movie magazine, the stories would arrive taaza taaza, straight from the horse's - or mare's - mouth. I have sat grim-faced and open-mouthed as a blousy star mother tried hard to peddle her nubile, underage daughter's very risqué, half-naked pictures to our team. Before asking her to leave, I did question her need to pimp a young, possibly innocent, girl in this lurid way. The mother was brazen about her motives. Said

she stonily, "My daughter is sexy. Nothing wrong in sharing..." That same young girl today is a much-admired, matronly mother to a highly-successful star son.

There are several stories from way back then of self-styled showmen and their upfront propositions to starlets looking for breaks. "Meet me in the make-up room..." came later after the girl had a make-up room to call her own. She knew in order to get that status, she would first have to "please" the showman. There were hundreds like her waiting for "script sessions" in dingy hotel suites. Or even in the powerful producer's plush office. I recall a young scion of a very influential movie mogul (in the mould of a Weinstein), telling me with a wicked smile, "My father has a couch in his office. He is an old man, and needs his post-lunch siesta. But the minute an actress walks in and spots it, her body language automatically changes. Some start undressing even before they've been asked

to take a seat!" If heroes in the bad old days, had their sidekicks to handpick back-up dancers for a quickie after pack-up - that goes on even today. If you notice, every top male star carefully chooses his 'boys' for secondary roles. These other fellows play villains or comedians - but that's for the books. Their real job is to scout for 'meat' every day of the shoot - particularly at outdoor locations. Away from snooping, insecure wives and girl friends, the heroes have an elaborate arrangement with the entire unit. Things only get out of hand if the wife/girl-friend lands on the set for a sneak attack and catches the rake red-handed, as it were. These clinical strikes are generally orchestrated with military precision by a rival camp. It is widely accepted and tacitly understood that randomly sleeping around for roles is what happens if you venture into Bollywood. It used to affect ambitious young women the most, but these days the ratio of men and women is pretty equal.

Male models are beginning to crib, since they have to perform what they call 'double duty' - jump into bed with a host of other men and sexually service a few women as well - if not the heroine herself, then others in her entourage. The strain, they say, is killing them. They have no energy left to work!

As in Hollywood, so in Bollywood: the male predators call the shots. Sex for roles and awards is the way it goes. Are women playing the victim card now that the whistle has been blown on the bad boys? Yes and no. A woman always has the option to walk away from a proposition. Always. And if she is physically overpowered, she also has the choice to go to the police. If a woman chooses to keep mum, I would say, there is some complicity involved. Bollywood girls today are smart, tough, aggressive and pretty much on top of their lives and careers. They are known to play men. Some of our top female stars are often the initiators and aggressors. In which case, they

have no business to mew and crib later. Yes, Bollywood is patriarchal, misogynistic, exploitative, materialistic, amoral and more. But it is also creative, innovative, exciting, dynamic and turbo-charged. This is the deal. Screw or get screwed. Or, that's what those waiting hungrily on the outside think. For every 'untouched virgin' who makes it big, there are hundreds of women who have been groped, pummelled, raped, sodomised, beaten, passed on to a buddy, forced to go through abortions and worse. Some take their own lives, unable to deal with the brutality. Others 'adjust'. Or take to drugs, alcohol even prostitution. It is not a pretty world. I remember a so-called posh hero walking up to a starry-eyed, good-looking female fan at a party and asking cockily, "I think I recognise you... did you sleep with me recently?" She didn't kick him where it hurts the most. She simpered. It's time to stop simpering, ladies. And start kicking. Call out the creeps. Do it, someone.

Blade Runner 2049 movie review

Like The Dark Knight, one of the greatest sequels ever made. 5 stars



Blade Runner 2049

Director - Denis Villeneuve

Cast - Ryan Gosling, Harrison Ford, Jared Leto, Robin Wright, Sylvia Hoeks, Ana de Armas

Rating - 5/5

There's a lot to unpack here.

Blade Runner 2049 - for better or for worse - is a lot like the original film, and depending on your stance on that touchstone sci-fi classic, this could either be the best news you could've hoped for, or the worst. It shares the original's bleak vision of the future, its pessimism, and its

cool, path-breaking aesthetic - but also its frustrating narrative shortcomings, its irritating pacing, and its stubborn ambivalence.

It walks along the same dingy alleys, steps in the same dirty puddles, and shakes down the same sort of shady riffraff. It's lit with the same blazing neon, and it is scored with the nostalgic futurism of the same synth tones. These deliberate references to the original, these knowing echoes from the past, they're like a long-forgotten

dream, remembered with a bittersweet jolt.

Like two other recent Harrison Ford films - Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull and Star Wars: The Force Awakens - it acknowledges the time that has passed since the last time we entered this world. Blade Runner 2049 picks up 30 years after the events of the first film, in an almost apocalyptic world. The replicants - man-made humanoid machines built to do humanity's bidding - have evolved at a terrifyingly rapid rate. They can reproduce. And if they can reproduce, the persecuted replicant population reasons, they can rebel. They no longer have a reason to be subservient to their creators. They are the masters of their own fate.

Ryan Gosling (back in Nicolas Winding Refn mode) plays K, an LAPD Blade Runner, haunted by memories of a childhood he cannot remember. During an investigation into a replicant

uprising, he stumbles upon a long-buried secret.

For 30 years, this secret, which has the power to alter the future of sentient life, has been kept hidden. And the key to uncover it, K learns, lies with Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford, reprising his role).

Blade Runner 2049 is a dense film. Perhaps too dense. But so was the original, which was just as comfortable borrowing from the Greek myths as it was at asking the big questions posed in Philip K Dick's source novel: Who are we? Why are we here? What makes us human? Are we superior to the rest? Do we have the power to create? If we do, does that mean we also have the power to destroy? And the most important question of them all: Do androids dream of electric sheep?

It's all very interesting, and this may be a bit of a controversial stance to take, but I believe that the original Blade Runner is a terribly flawed movie - it's great,

don't get me wrong, but problematic. For instance, it never really explores its themes to their fullest potential. I've always felt that the most intriguing idea posed by Ridley Scott's origin - more than artificial intelligence, or the inherent hubris of human beings, or man vs machine - was immigration.

Remember how the remnants of humanity looked at the replicants? They were seen as scum, rapists and thieves. Total 'bad hombres'.

Now, you could argue that for the sequel to continue this exploration of AI - what with it hardly being science-fiction anymore - would make perfect sense, but I'd counter by saying that in the world we live in, there is no greater danger than our growing fear of the other.

But alas, director Denis Villeneuve is still utterly preoccupied with finding humanity where there is none.

Taxed to the core



South star **Raai Laxmi**, who is all set to make her Bollywood debut with *Julie 2*, underwent a major transformation for the film. The actor lost 15 kilos in two months. But it wasn't painless. She followed a strict diet and worked out for a toned body. It was physically and emotionally taxing. The erotic thriller, which was delayed due to copyright issues, will now release next month.

It's a baby girl for Asin



Ghajini (2008) and *Ready* (2011) actor **Asin Thottumkal** is a mommy now. She delivered a baby girl in Kochi yesterday. Not many knew that Asin, who is off the radar, was pregnant. She tied the knot with entrepreneur **Rahul Sharma** in January 2016. In a statement, the couple said, "We are ecstatic to announce the arrival of our angelic baby girl. The last nine months have been special and exciting. We would like to thank those who have been part of our journey for their love and support." Asin celebrates her birthday on October 26. A double celebration is in store.

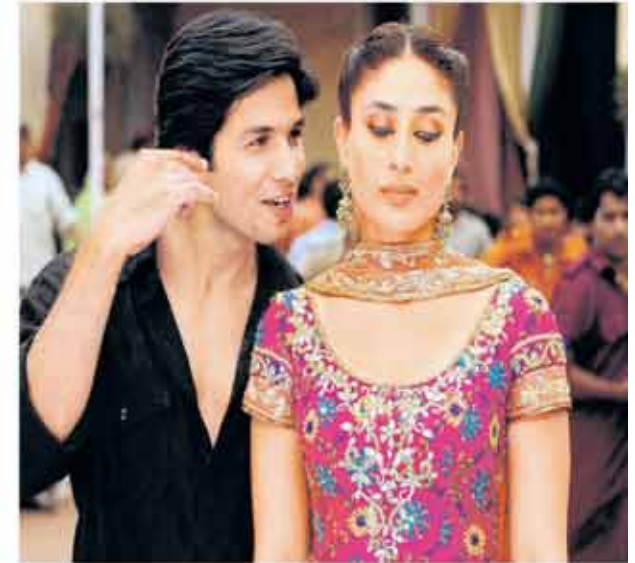
Bidding the final farewell



Rani Mukerji immersed the ashes of her father **Ram Mukerji** at the Sangam in Allahabad on Monday. The filmmaker passed away on Sunday. Rani was accompanied by husband **Aditya Chopra**, brother **Raja Mukerji** and near and dear ones. The family took a steamer ride to Sangam to immerse the ashes. Ram, one of the founders of Filmalaya Studios, had directed films such as *Hum Hindustani* (1960) and *Leader* (2010).

No solo battle

Kriti Sanon's act has been axed from **Farah Khan's** *Lip Sing Battle*. She was to take on **Rajkumar Rao**, who hurt himself in the celebrity show. **Kriti** needed a new partner, but at short notice it was difficult to match dates with another star. **Kriti** should have been on the show last week when rumoured beau **Sushant Singh Rajput** and **Sania Mirza** battled it out. It would have been fun to watch the rumoured lovebirds together, but **Farah** knows better.



10 years later

Kareena Kapoor and **Shahid Kapoor**-starrer *Jab We Met* completes a decade tomorrow. **Imtiaz Ali's** cult film released on October 26, 2007. The director says he would have loved to make alterations in the love story of **Geet** and **Aditya**. There are a lot of things that he would like to change in the script. Ten years on and people are still loving it, he might as well resist from tampering with it.



Virushka's knotty ad issues

There has been buzz about **Anushka Sharma** and **Virat Kohli** getting hitched in December. What led to speculation is when news surfaced that **Kohli** has asked the **BCCI** for a break in December. But those in the know apparently say it is a publicity gimmick for their new ad for ethnic wear. The commercial has them exchanging vows. It seems to have spilled on to real life. **Anushka** is busy with her production, *Pari*. She also stars in **Aanand L Rai's** film, **Sanjay Dutt's** biopic and **Yash Raj's** production, *Sui Dhaaga*, which has **Varun Dhawan** as her co-star. Doesn't look like **Anushka** can go on a break. She might just squeeze in a holiday with **Virat**. With no denial or confirmation, speculations continue.



ON THE SET

New judges **Shreyas Talpade** and **Sajid Khan** have begun shooting with **Akshay Kumar** for *The Great Indian Laughter Challenge*. When one of the contestants did a gag on the uses of mustard oil, the star said it was the secret of his well-built physique. During his younger days, his mother would regularly massage him with mustard oil. Want to be as supple as the *Khiladi*? Give the oil a shot.

Kat, Sallu yet again?

There is talk that **Katrina Kaif** will team up with **Salman Khan** in *Bharat*, which is slated to release during **Eid** 2019. An adaptation of the South Korean film, *Ode To My Father* (2014), it will be directed by **Ali Abbas Zafar**. The producer is **Sallu's** brother-in-law, **Atul Agnihotri**. **Kat** considers **Ali** her brother. **Sallu** developed a special bond with him during the shoot of *Tiger Zinda Hai*. Won't exactly be a surprise if **Kat** lands a role in the long-in-the-planning human drama.





Nisa Shetty started performing solo at the age of 16.

Living life in the spotlight

by **Karishma Kuenzang**

NISA Shetty, whose name is literally the coming together of two parts of the *sargam* — 'ni' and 'sa' — started performing solo at the age of 16. The Delhi girl, who played Babette in India's interpretation of Disney's musical *Beauty and the Beast*, first started singing when she was five, and is currently competing in the third season of *The Stage*, an English talent/singing competition.

Music came naturally to her as she grew up in a household wherein her grandparents — the founders of Akshara Theatre — were heavily into theatre and Indian classical music. "Akshara Theatre symbolised free thinking for artistes. My grandfather was an Indian classical singer and he would teach my siblings and I. But we mostly spoke English at home because my grandmother is half British, and so I gravitated towards Western styles of singing as well," she says. She started performing in bands in school at Woodstock, followed by meeting more musicians and performing with them through college at Hindu College in Delhi. Her biggest moment was when she performed at the F1 2012 closing ceremony.

Speaking about 2015's *Beauty and the Beast*, which brought Broadway music to India, she says, "The musical had a lot of financial backing. Indians want to see big

fancy things and it was a big spectacle with tricks and fireworks."

Meanwhile, *The Stage 3* has been a bit of task for this young singer, as she struggles with her stage fright. "I always wanted to go for it because I grew up watching shows like *American Idol*. I'm around musicians and learning all the time. It's a good place to be for people who are passionate about music. But not everyone who's a singer is a performer. And then, there's my massive stage fright," she says.

Nisa, who's grown up in a household where the women are really strong, says she's never really felt side-lined because she was a woman, though the online voting process in the show has left the women contestants a little vulnerable. "Anyone and everyone can vote and while we do get encouraging messages, we're also getting weird, dirty, vulgar messages from men asking for personal details. I don't think the guys receive any dirty messages," she says.

You can vote for Nisa at www.colorsinfinity.com/thestage

Nisa Shetty grew up in a household where her grandparents were interested in music and theatre

WONDERS OF THE ANGELINA JOLIE EFFECT



Angelina Jolie

It was dubbed 'the Angelina Jolie effect' by the media. When the actress revealed that she carries a genetic mutation that increased her risk of breast and ovarian cancer, it was suspected — and hoped by many — that she had raised awareness of the issue among women.

Now, research has confirmed that a sharp rise in 2013 in females seeking BRCA genetic testing was driven by the Hollywood star, who had preventive surgery to remove both her breasts. That was the year Angelina published a piece in *The New York Times* revealing her decision and promoted BRCA gene testing.

KEY FINDINGS

The University of Georgia found that between 2003 to 2014, there was a huge 80-fold increase in BRCA testing, with a large jump in testing occurring in *Gone with the Wind* star's revelation year in 2013. It led them to conclude that multiple factors influenced this, including celebrity endorsement, primarily Angelina. "This could provide insights on

the impact of the policy changes and the media coverage of celebrity endorsement," said lead study author Dr Zhuo Chen. "Jolie's op-ed, the Supreme Court decision on BRCA gene and the USPSTF recommendation occurred in a very compact timeline."

Their study analysed testing rates, payment to the provider, and out-of-pocket costs for patients, and compared findings to reported revenue from Myriad Genetics, the only provider of the test until 2013.

TESTING CAN SAVE LIVES

Women with hereditary BRCA gene mutations have a 45 to 65 percent risk of developing breast cancer before age 70, compared to 7 percent in the general population, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Dr Chen said increased awareness of genetic testing can save lives. "BRCA testing and counseling provide important information on the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancers among women with family history of the cancers," said lead study author Zhuo Chen.

— Daily Mail



As we complete 15 Years

“Words cannot express the monumental journey that each and every person reading this has crossed through. The South Asian Insider has completed fifteen year journey, that has brought a wave of information and has amassed everyone together in this community. Few people can claim to have been a part of a tireless effort to soar through the top of the skies of the newspaper industries and be able to remark on it, 15 years later. We believe an order of gratitude is granted to all of you. To everyone who has stayed with The South Asian Insider through our path, thank you.

If it was not for each and every one of you today who have supported our endeavours to become a reliable source of information, we would not have been able to voice our appreciation today. We as a family will continue to move forward with every article printed, with every word typed and with every voice incorporated into the publication that has stood to uphold the value of information and knowledge. Because with each idea shared, we as a community continue to move forward. And to all, thank you for sharing this achievement with all of us here today, working towards a new tomorrow.”

**-Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor In Chief & Publisher**