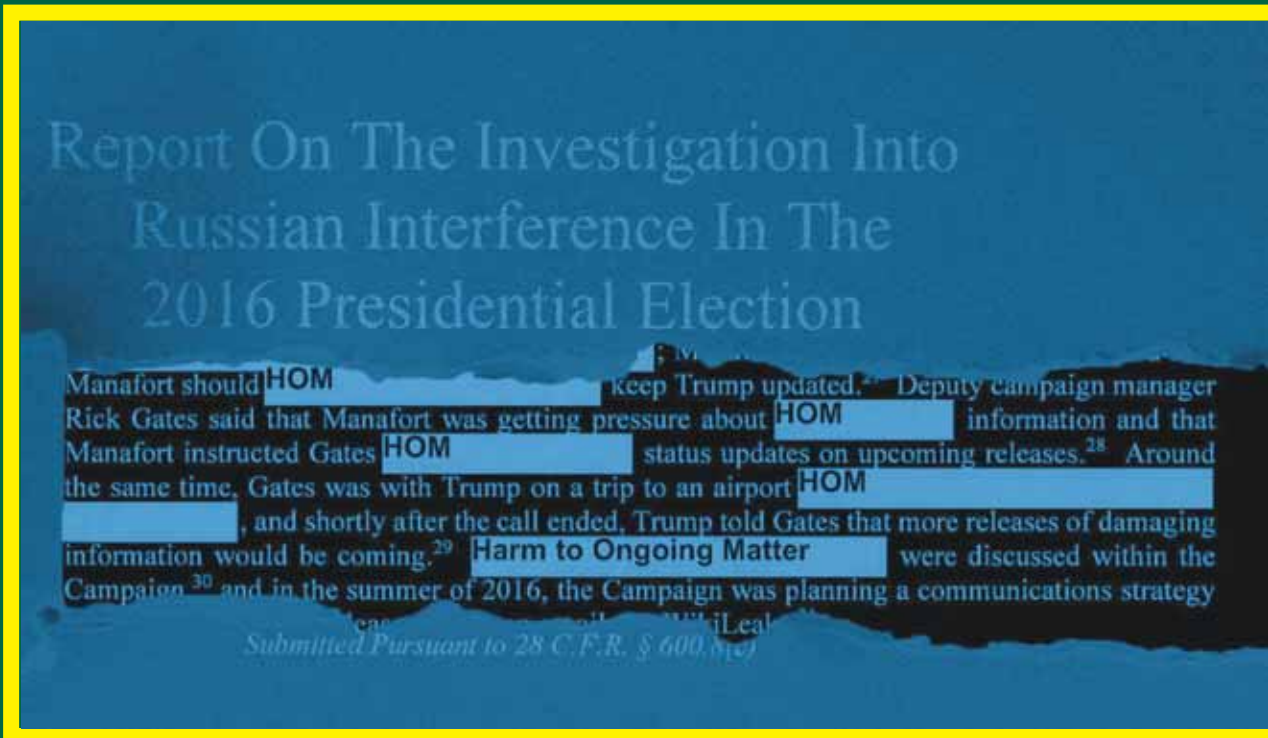




The Surprises in the Mueller Report

So what did we really learn about Trump, Russia and the power of the presidency? Some of the nation's top legal minds unpack the document of the decade.



(SAI Bureau) Washington D.C. : From the instant Robert Mueller's report landed Thursday, a nation of legal experts and analysts began tearing into its 448 pages, skipping past the heavy black ink of redactions, and weighing the special counsel's findings and conclusions against the president's claims about his campaign's behavior with the Russians. What surprises lurked in the two thick volumes released by the Department of Justice? And, given Attorney General William Barr's decision not to pursue any charges, which of Mueller's findings will end up mattering the most for the remainder of Donald Trump's presidency?

Politico Magazine went to some of the brightest legal minds in America for the answers. We'd already seen plenty of detail through the 199 criminal charges and 37 criminal indictments and plea deals that emerged from Mueller's investigations, and in the countless news stories issued in the 100 weeks since Mueller was appointed special counsel. But there were still surprises, depending on what you were looking for—from Mueller's underargued

'Her personal view', says BJP about Sadhvi Pragma's remark on Hemant Karkare



(SAI Bureau) New Delhi: The BJP 26/11 martyr Hemant on Friday distanced itself from Karkare died because she the remarks of Sadhvi Pragma had cursed him for "torturing" Singh Thakur who claimed that her. **Continued on Page 19**

Ban on Masood Azhar: China looking for a face-saving formula



(Insider Bureau) Beijing : China is looking for a formula that would save face for Beijing in Pakistan if it does an about turn on the Masood Azhar issue. **Continued on Page 19**

State Bank of India wasting Indian taxpayers' money on UK legal fees: Vijay Mallya



Sears sues Kunal Kamrani & others

(SAI Bureau) Chicago: Sears Holdings Corp sued longtime former Chairman Eddie Lampert, his hedge fund ESL Investments and others like Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, claiming they illegally siphoned billions of dollars of assets from the retailer before it went bankrupt. The lawsuit, made public on Thursday, was filed by the restructuring team winding down Sears' bankruptcy estate and suing on behalf of creditors, many of whom blame **Continued on Page 19**



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Gift of Life USA Gala 2019 held



(Insider Bureau) - Gift of Life USA recently celebrated its Annual Fundraising gala this past weekend at the Huntington Hilton with young talented emcees Harshil Parekh & Freya Savla. The Gala serves as a unique platform to support these specially-abled individuals - attendees get the opportunity to meet the beneficiaries they will be supporting and see for themselves the beautiful talents these individuals bring to the world. An amazing flow of special needs talent at Gift of Life USA Special Needs Gala 2019 benefited

the special needs community with inspiring Cerebral Palsy Speakers, Special needs FREE StyleDancers & performers, autistic musician and special needs band. Celebrity Cerebral Palsy model Autumn Kinkade and Ms. Wheel Chair Ketrina Hazell mesmerized the audience with their accomplishments beyond abilities. The Indian American community is whole heartedly appealed to embrace and share the organization's vision of acceptance and compassion of the differently abled.

Sev Vettivetpillai, Third senior executive of Abraaj Group arrested

Arif Naqvi, founder of The Abraaj Group is remanded for another week in jail, is awaiting possible extradition to the US.

(By a staff reporter) London- British police have arrested a third executive on charges related to the collapse of the Abraaj Group, it has emerged, as the Dubai equity company's founder was remanded to custody for another week. Sev Vettivetpillai, a former managing partner who left Abraaj last year to join the LGT Group, has been detained in London and faces extradition on a US warrant. Former Abraaj chief executive Arif Naqvi appeared in a London court on Thursday on US charges of allegedly misappropriating \$230 million (Dh844.8m) in fund money. After his appearance before magistrates, Mr Vettivetpillai was placed on £1 million (Dh4.7m) bail until June 12 with proviso that he observes a nightly curfew at a private address. He served as head of impact investing for Abraaj after the company acquired his former employer, London private equity outfit Aureos Capital. Mr Vettivetpillai had been held on the same charge as Mr Naqvi and the former Abraaj managing partner Mustafa Abdel-Wadood, who is being detained in New York. Last week, the private equity company founder was arrested at Heathrow Airport by British

police on behalf of the American authorities. His initial extradition hearing, in which he was planning to make a bail application, was delayed until April 26 at Mr Naqvi's lawyers' request. Representing Mr Naqvi, Hugo Keith QC said he anticipated the court would impose a substantial surety if he was granted bail. Shortly before his appearance, a number of people flocked into the public gallery at Westminster Magistrates' Court to catch a glimpse of Mr Naqvi, 59. The businessman was led into the dock by guards, where he remained for less than a minute before being led away from the well of the court. Casually dressed and sporting a full beard, Mr Naqvi seemed relaxed, waving and smiling at supporters in the gallery. A small group of people who apparently knew him

responded with gestures. The Pakistani national will remain in custody in Britain until his next hearing date on Friday. The whereabouts of Mr Naqvi was not known before his arrest in Britain where his family have at least two properties, in London and rural Oxfordshire. He left the UAE after Abraaj's liquidation in 2018 following a fallout with investors, including the Gates Foundation. Investors had commissioned an audit to investigate alleged mismanagement of \$1 billion in the group's healthcare fund. Mr Naqvi founded the private equity company, which includes Abraaj Investment Management and Abraaj Holdings, in 2002. The company grew to become the largest buyout fund in the Mena region and at its peak managed more than \$14bn in assets.

In the executives' indictments, US prosecutors said Mr Naqvi and Mr Abdel-Wadood lied about the value of the company's holdings and stole hundreds of millions of dollars. They said that from 2014 to 2018, the Abraaj executives artificially inflated the value of the company's funds by more than \$500m. "The SEC alleges that Naqvi and his firm raised money for the Abraaj Growth Markets Health Fund, collecting more than \$100m over three years from US-based charitable organisations and other US investors," the US Securities and Exchange Commission said. "According to the SEC's complaint, Naqvi misappropriated money from the Health Fund and commingled the assets with corporate funds of Abraaj Investment Management Ltd and its parent company, and used it for purposes unrelated to the health fund." A spokeswoman for the Southern District of New York prosecutors' office said a hearing for Mr Abdel-Wadood, scheduled for later on Thursday, had been delayed until April 23. The pair are accused of stealing investor funds for themselves. Mr Naqvi and Mr Abdel-Wadood deny any wrongdoing.



SEV VETTIVETPILLAI,



ARIF NAQVI

Vaisakhi Celebrated by IALI



(By Indu Gajwani) Long Island- India Association of Long Island celebrated Vaisakhi on April 14 th at Anthun's, Long Island. Vaisakhi is very important day in the history of Punjab .There was gathering of around two hundred guests in spite of quite many celebrations of Vaisakhi in long Island same day.. Main attractions of the function was Bhangra, Dhol, DJ & specially

GIDDA prepared by IALI team of Women's Forum & other committee members. Function was started about 1.30.p m after the delicious lunch with introduction of IALI President Lalit Aery by Women's Forum Chair Veena Lamba. President Lalit Aery welcomed all the guests & community leaders & congratulate them on this historical day . President also thanked the past presidents for

coming all his committees members for their participation and making the programs very successful and requested Mr. Mukesh Modi ,IALI Community Outreach Chair to introduce Mr. Jasbir(Jay) singh ,IALI Executive Council Member,Public Relation Chair IDP President ,who was honored for his service to the community Cultural program was started with very enthusiast

team Bhangra dance which was very well received by lot of applause , then right after Ladies GIDDA team performed Gidda dance. This was Gidda team of all IALI committees members who showed their talent beautifully right after DHOL beats & Punjabi bolians made everyone dance. It was really very entertaining afternoon with full variety of food items ,fresh JALABES as desert

remind everyone back in India. TV & newspaper media was their to note down record all the community activities promoting Indian culture by India Association of Long Island. It was great honor to greet Mr. Zahid Syed ,Commissioner of Human Rights, Nassau County to grace the occasion. President thanked everyone for coming made it a memorable one.

"Sikh Recognition Day"

Second Sunday of every April declared as "Sikh Recognition Day" by the state of Colorado



(Insider Bureau) -The state of Colorado has declared the second Sunday of every April as "Sikh Recognition Day," which falls during the religious and historic Holiday for Sikhs known as Vaisakhi. In the historic proclamation signed by Governor Jared Polis, the newly elected governor for the state of Colorado, core aspects of the Sikh faith are discussed in great detail.

The proclamation begins with referencing "Nil Sine Numine," the motto of Colorado and how it closely aligns to "Ek Onkar," or the one shared light and essence amongst us all. Concepts in the Sikh faith, such as selfless service, eternal optimism, and the well-being of everyone are woven throughout the proclamation to pay respect to Sikh teachings and how the Sikh



community in Colorado has given back.

According to Serene Singh, who spearheaded the effort for "Sikh Recognition Day", the proclamation signed by Governor Jared Polis is a dream made a reality. Singh says that she is "proud to be a Sikh in this beautiful state and that today is

a win for Sikhs, for Coloradans, and for our community!"

This proclamation comes at a great time for Sikhs in the state of Colorado. Sikhs have increased in population drastically in the past few decades in the midwest, many choosing to make Colorado their home. With four Gurdwaras in the state, a Sikh Student Association at CU Boulder, and non-profits aimed at uplifting the Sikh community in the state, this proclamation pays homage to the entire Sikh community with references to core Sikh concepts. Singh credits the historical proclamation to Governor Polis, the CU Boulder Sikh Student Association, her older sister Naureen Singh, and the Colorado Sikh community for supporting the effort.

Will this election decide NEDA's fate in northeast?

NEDA was formed on May 24, 2016, the same day Sarbananda Sonowal took oath as chief minister of the first elected BJP government in Assam. Himanta Biswa Sarma, a former Congressman, who switched to the BJP a year back, was made convenor of the platform.



(Agencies)- Alliances of the political kind are almost always fragile and the same holds true for India's northeast. The ongoing Lok Sabha election, polling for which began on April 11, is ample proof of that.

An air of uneasiness hangs among allies of the BJP, who are part of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), the central party led platform of anti-Congress parties from the region, formed three years ago.

The National People's Party (NPP), one of the main constituents of NEDA, is contesting the election alone. The party, which heads the coalition government in Meghalaya and where the BJP is a minor partner, is contesting from 11 Lok Sabha seats in the region.

The party also fielded candidates in 29 of the 60 assembly seats in Arunachal Pradesh against the Bharatiya Janata Party's nominees.

In Tripura, the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), partner of the BJP-led government in the state and a NEDA constituent, also fielded its own candidates in the two Lok Sabha constituencies, after seat-sharing talks with the central party failed.

"We decided to contest separately as BJP didn't agree to give us one of the two seats in the state. We are still part of NEDA and are likely to continue the association," said IPFT general secretary and Tripura minister Mevar Kumar Jamatia. A rosy start

NEDA was formed on May 24, 2016, the same day Sarbananda Sonowal took oath as chief minister of the first elected BJP government in Assam. Himanta Biswa Sarma, a former Congressman, who switched to the BJP a year back, was made convenor of the platform.

Besides Sonowal, chief ministers of Sikkim, Arunachal

Pradesh and Nagaland-Pawan Kumar Chamling, Kalikho Pul, TR Zeliang-and the BJP's national general secretary Ram Madhav were present at the launch.

Though "all-round development of northeast and better coordination among the states and central government" was stated to be NEDA's prime objective, opposition to the Congress, which had ruled most states in the region for decades, was the main glue that bound the parties. Over the next three years, several other smaller parties of the region joined NEDA and the BJP and its allies were able to form governments in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

Problems arise

One of the first successes of NEDA was in Arunachal Pradesh when chief minister Pema Khandu and 42 other Congress MLAs switched over to the People's Party of Arunachal (PPA), a NEDA partner, in

September 2016 and assumed office.

But three months later Khandu and most of PPA legislators moved to the BJP and formed the second government led by the central party in the state after the 44-day government of Gegong Apang in 2003.

The development led to the souring of relations between the PPA and BJP.

"Though we were part of NEDA from the start, some BJP leaders worked against the platform. They wanted a BJP government instead of one formed by NEDA. We were used as a stepping stone," said Kamen Ringu, chairperson of PPA.

In 2017, NEDA partners

witnessed another high with the BJP, despite coming second behind Congress in the assembly polls, as they were able to form the government in Manipur with the support of the National People's Party (NPP) and Naga People's Front (NPF). But problems surfaced again with the NDA government at Centre banning the sale of cattle for slaughter. The move, which evoked negative reactions in poll-bound Christian majority states of Nagaland and Meghalaya, forced the BJP to assure that it will not ban beef in the northeast. Worried it would distance voters, allies like NPP contested the assembly elections independently.

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Tejashwi Yadav calls PM Modi 'fake OBC', BJP hits back

Attacking the RJD, which draws its support from sections of OBC, especially Yadavs, Bhupendra Yadav said it had "betrayed" the cause of social justice ideologue Ram Manohar Lohia and challenged Tejashwi Yadav for a debate.



(Agencies): The BJP Thursday accused RJD leadership of promoting dynasty and using politics for personal "enjoyment", as it hit out at Tejashwi Yadav after he questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's OBC credentials.

BJP general secretary Bhupendra Yadav accused Tejashwi Yadav, son of Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad, of posting "arrogant, graceless and childish" tweets on the "advice" of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, whom he dubbed as the Bihar leader's "friend, philosopher and guide".

The sharp attack from the BJP leader, who is also the party's in-charge for Bihar affairs, came after the state's former deputy chief minister posted tweets, alleging that Modi's OBC's credentials are "fake" and he had done nothing for backward castes.

Modi's caste is categorised under the Other Backward Class (OBC) category. Attacking the RJD, which draws its support from sections of OBC, especially Yadavs, Bhupendra Yadav said it had "betrayed" the cause of social justice ideologue Ram Manohar Lohia and challenged Tejashwi Yadav for a debate.

People of Bihar have rejected the RJD during the ongoing Lok Sabha election and will put a full stop to its politics when votes are counted on May 23, he said.

Taking a swipe at Tejashwi Yadav and his elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav, who has often voiced his anger at his party's decisions, the BJP leader said they have been doing a drama.

There is rebellion within the RJD against its candidates at every seat, he said.

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Julian Assange: Bond villain or cyber-messiah? It's complicated

Once upon a time the ethical debates around journalism were comparatively simple -- beginning with the most basic question of all: Who is a journalist?

But here in 2019, nothing about Julian Assange is simple. Looking like a befuddled Old Testament prophet, the WikiLeaks founder was dragged out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London on Thursday to a new form of captivity -- and to challenge journalists around the world as to whether he is a hero deserving their support, or a villain for whom few would weep tears if he spent the rest of his life in a jail cell.

Why the polarized differences?

Assange's story is an extraordinary one. He started out as an obscure and anonymous hacker, and became one of the most talked-about people in the world -- at once reviled, celebrated and lionized; sought-after, imprisoned, self-exiled and shunned. He had been catapulted from the obscurity of a life dribbling out leaks that nobody much noticed, to publishing a flood of classified documents that went to the heart of America's military and foreign policy operations -- even playing a controversial, some say decisive, role in the 2016 US presidential election. From being a marginal figure invited to join panels at geeky tech conferences he was suddenly America's public enemy number one. If this wasn't dramatic enough, in the middle of it all, two women in Sweden came forward with allegations of sex crimes, which he has denied: One accused him of sexual assault and the other of rape. The media and public were torn between those who saw Assange as a new kind of cyber-messiah and those who regarded him as something akin to a James Bond villain. But -- despite the tensions and the shouting matches and the disappearances and the threats and the silences -- he briefly helped collaborate with the Guardian and New York Times to produce some rather important reporting. As Sarah Ellison's Vanity Fair piece on the Iraq and diplomatic cables disclosures concluded: "Whatever the differences, the results have been extraordinary. Given the range, depth, and accuracy of the leaks, the collaboration produced by any standard one of the greatest journalistic scoops of the last 30 years." So is Assange really a journalist? The answer in 2019 is a complicated one. New technologies allow millions of people to commit individual acts of journalism. That may not make them "journalists" in a conventional sense, but it does raise

the question of whether these journalistic acts deserve the same sort of protection as those carried out by people who have had more traditional careers in journalism.

To my mind, Assange is partly a journalist. Part of what he does has involved the selection, editing, verifying and contextualizing of news material -- just as any journalist would do. But Assange is also a publisher, a political activist, a hacker, an information anarchist, a player. Yes, he believes -- sometimes -- in editing. But he also believes in dumping vast oceans of documents, unedited and unredacted, careless to the consequences.

One is journalism, the other isn't.

Things become still more complicated if -- and it's a big "if" because we don't know the whole truth -- Assange subsequently allowed himself to become the conduit for material stolen by one foreign power to destabilize another: The release of thousands of emails hacked from the Democratic National Committee and published at the height of the 2016 presidential campaign. It prompted the man who would become President of the United States to declare: "I love WikiLeaks!" On the basis of the US extradition request to the British government, the charges against Assange are currently rather thin. He is accused of pushing his source, Chelsea Manning, to come up with still more documents around 2010. Well, many journalists might put their hands up and say they've done the same. Next he's accused of trying to help Manning conceal her identity on various official computer systems as she roamed around for more documents to download and leak. Is this a sinister sign of Assange trying to hack secret systems (though the indictment doesn't use the word "hack")? Or is it what any decent journalist would do: Try to protect their sources from detection? We won't know the answers to these questions until the case comes to court in the US -- a process that could well take months, if not years. The US authorities could come up with more ammunition as the case proceeds. But -- on the basis of what we know so far -- it is not clear that Assange is being accused of behaving in ways that respected Pulitzer Prize winning journalists would disavow.

His case is not a simple one. But disliking Assange shouldn't be the same as disowning him.

Sustaining India: Is There Anything to Choose Between BJP and Congress?

Twin crises beset India today: serious unemployment and the loss of livelihoods, along with the collapse of the ecological basis on which we all survive. Any political party that does not deal with these is not serious about the country's future. So how well do the country's political heavyweights, the Congress and the BJP, deal with the environment and livelihoods in their poll manifestos? Overall vision of livelihoods and ecology The Congress manifesto, 'Congress Will Deliver', appears to have recognised at least some important steps that are needed to slow down the catastrophic destruction of the environment. The actions it promises could help provide dignified livelihoods for 65-70% of Indians who depend directly on the natural environment, including farmers, forest-dwellers, fishers, and craftspersons. These include a rejig of its flagship MNREGA programme to incorporate land-based work, and substantial focus on forest-fish-agriculture based livelihoods. Unfortunately, its main economic plank for these and several other major programmes remains economic growth. For some reason, every major political party in India still relies on the outdated myth that high rates of GDP growth will magically translate into jobs, environmental security, and much else. This is not surprising coming from the Congress; it was after all the one that ushered in economic liberalisation and globalisation in 1991, with macro-economic policy shifts that have not generated substantial net new

employment ('jobless growth', as its called), and on top of this have proven disastrous for the environment and for nature-dependent communities.

But this serious blindspot afflicts the BJP too. The BJP's overall vision of livelihoods and ecology does not exist. Its ecological ignorance is breathtaking, and its cavalier approach to the livelihoods of nature-based communities is callous. In a way, at least, it is consistent. In the 2014-2019 phase, it has shown itself to be quite insensitive to the needs of those who toil the land or in the forests or in the seas, or at home using natural ingredients to make crafts. The same attitude with which it hurt the lives of such people through measures like demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax oozes through much of its manifesto. This is either ecological ignorance or deliberate neglect at its worst.

'Environmental clearances' is a euphemism for allowing forests to be destroyed for mining, dams, expressways, industries and the like.

So what this seems to be saying is that several thousand square km of land have been allowed to be deforested; perhaps an equivalent or more has been planted as part of 'compensatory afforestation'. But even a schoolchild would be able to tell the BJP bosses that no plantation can replace a natural forest.

Wildlife and biodiversity

The joke the BJP manifesto plays on forests gets even more deadly in its vision on India's wildlife and biodiversity since there is none.



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Political opportunism rules the day

People are disillusioned by declining political standards, hence the rise in NOTA votes

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has filed a FIR against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleging that the latter has deceived the 4.5 crore people of the state on the issue of giving special status to Odisha. This BJD tactic has raised some questions. It's true that the BJP had promised to grant special status to Odisha in its manifesto for the 2014 Vidhan Sabha elections. But if criminal cases are filed on the basis of manifestos, then many of the prominent leaders of major political parties will be in jail. Has Naveen Patnaik himself been able to fulfil all the promises he made during the last four elections? If Naveen Patnaik was so unhappy with the BJP, then why did his party MPs stage a walk-out when there was a no-confidence motion against the present government in the Lok Sabha? Not only this, earlier too, in nominating the Rajya Sabha deputy speaker and the president, the BJD was supported the BJP. Doesn't this policy of changing colours according to

convenience amount to fooling voters?

If you look at the history of coalition politics, you cannot anticipate when old and strong friends turn into enemies or when an old enmity mysteriously transforms into friendship! Andhra Pradesh neighbours Odisha. Chandrababu Naidu is the chief minister in Andhra Pradesh. In 2014, his Telegu Desam Party (TDP) contested the Lok Sabha elections in alliance with the BJP. By winning 18 out of 25 seats, this alliance had proved that the people had accepted it. About a year ago, Naidu was considered close to the BJP. He had even invited the prime minister to lay the foundation stone for Andhra's new capital Amaravati. The TDP supported the BJP in the election of the president and the Vice President. But on March 17, 2018, he also broke away from the NDA on the issue of granting special status to the state. Naidu has alleged that he visited New Delhi 29 times to convince the central government on this issue but the Centre did not pay attention. Last

November, Chandrababu Naidu contested the Telangana assembly elections in alliance with the Congress and both parties lost. Now the Congress and TDP are fighting the Lok Sabha elections separately. The present leaders of the BJD and Telugu Desam are the heirs to political history. But even the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) which has revolutionary roots has not been left untouched by this. Praful Kumar Mahanta had contested the last Assam assembly election in coalition with the BJP. He was an ally in the NDA too. But in January he walked out of the alliance protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Bill. It seemed as if Praful's old aggressive attitude was returning, but this was not so. As Lok Sabha elections drew nearer, the BJP high command wooed him and he became an NDA's ally again. While breaking or making a coalition, why do our regional leaders forget that they have some responsibility towards the voters too? Like the AGP,



the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also came to power in Delhi with the promise of alternative politics. At that time, the Modi wave had swept the country and Kejriwal's victory came like a breath of fresh air to those who favoured a new brand of politics. But after four years, this euphoria is fading. Of course, the AAP has done some public welfare work in Delhi but its political thought has now become like any other regional political party.

It is now talking of an alliance with the Congress, the very party opposing which Kejriwal built his political career on. Doesn't this prove that this alternative politics is also shallow and meaningless?

The second question arises—does our democracy not allow ideals to survive and mature? One thing is certain, Indian political leaders have undermined political standards. Today, whether it is the NDA or the UPA, many of their allies periodically raise the banner of revolt against them. These coalitions built with the bricks of personal ambition and political self-interest are fragile and cannot fulfil their responsibilities towards the common man.

This is the reason why the practice of using NOTA is gradually increasing. Four months ago, elections in Madhya Pradesh had opened the eyes of political parties.

Here, 5.42 lakh out of 5.05 crore voters had used the NOTA option. Had these many votes been cast in favour of the BJP's Shivraj Singh Chouhan, he would have become chief minister for the fourth time. And had the Congress got these votes, it would definitely have won an absolute majority, because the difference between defeat and victory was less than 5,000 votes in 44 seats. Don't you think that this democratic resistance of people against existing political parties, leaders and coalitions is getting stronger? If this continues in the Lok Sabha elections as well, then the results could well be shocking.

Demeaning women is an assault on our politics

This utter lack of respect proves that men can't accept women politicians as equals

Women in Indian politics face a double disadvantage. The first is the difficulty in getting a foot in through the door in a male-dominated arena. Women account for only 12.15% of the outgoing 16th Lok Sabha. The second is facing unacceptable sexist remarks from male colleagues. The latest to face this is Jaya Prada, formerly of the Samajwadi Party (SP) and now a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). SP leader Azam Khan, in an

attempt to highlight her new affiliation, referred to her innerwear being khaki, the colour of the RSS uniform. This is the kind of raw deal that women of calibre, regardless of their political affiliation, are offered in Indian politics. Smriti Irani, despite her achievements, has often been dismissed as a mere television actress. Sharad Yadav felt it was important to discuss former Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje's weight. Lalu Prasad spoke of how

he would make Bihar's roads as smooth as Hema Malini's cheeks. From being described as akin to a sex worker to her gender being questioned, four-time Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mayawati, has been at the receiving end of a staggering amount of vitriol. Politics needs a quantum increase in women to be genuinely representative. But the viciousness faced by women, who have held their own in what is a highly competitive world, is bound

to deter other women who might want to consider politics as a career. Politics need not have so much to do with gender. A person's ability to take up a relevant issue and being able to work for the well being of constituents should be the only criteria. After all, men are not judged on their looks or their weight. This lack of respect towards women demonstrates that many male politicians are simply unable to accept women as their equals. It is equally shameful that



audiences lap up such insults to women politicians. Witness the laughter when BJP leader, Kailash Vijayvargiya, spoke of Priyanka Gandhi having a "chocolatey" face. When people speak of how India has a woman defence minister and foreign minister, they seem to forget that these women have got there through sheer merit and against all odds. As in certain other professions, that is what should count in politics. To demean women politicians on issues that are irrelevant to the political discourse is repugnant. It is as much an assault on women as it is on our politics.

Douglas MacKinnon: Liberal elites can solve the illegal immigrant problem immediately

Dear liberal elites in Hollywood, the media, the Democrat Party, and academia: I applaud your ongoing concern for the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants streaming toward, and trying to cross, our border. Knowing there is no way you would cravenly use them as cheap political pawns to attack a president who has permanently taken up residence in your troubled minds, I offer up a solution which will end the crisis immediately. I have created a sign-up sheet for you to fill out, then pass along to the next entitled liberal to your left.

The sign-up sheet simply stipulates that you personally will take as many illegal immigrants as will fit into every square foot of your luxurious home, and then, forever more, feed them, clothe them, and pay for their educational and

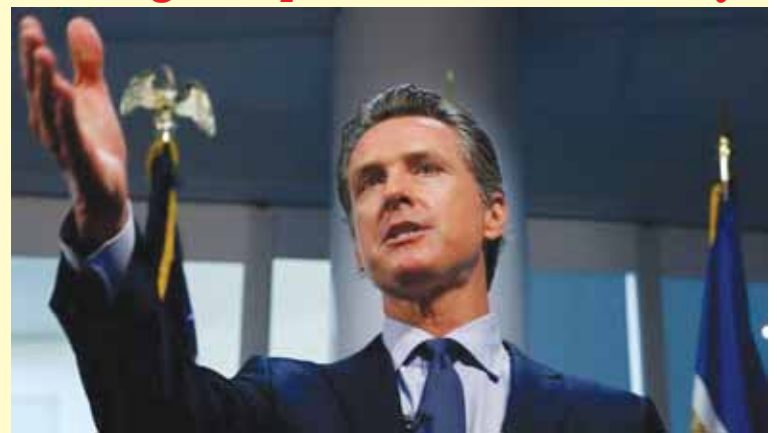
medical needs.

Crisis over. Now, I must admit that I cribbed part of this brilliant and foolproof plan from one of your far-left socialist dictator heroes. That being the late, never great, murderous totalitarian thug, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. As I watch Venezuela descend into permanent darkness, chaos, and a real-life version of "The 19 Purge" -- only because of the far-left and socialist policies you liberal elites believe should apply to everyone but yourselves - I was reminded of an autocratic dictate forced upon the good, hard-working, tax-paying people of Venezuela by Chavez.

He forced them to take strangers off the street - many of them criminals or drug addicts - and into their homes to care for them under the severe penalty of his law. I have no doubt that liberals such as Sean Penn, Danny Glover, Joe Kennedy and Oliver Stone - who all used to regularly

sing the praises of Hugo Chavez when they were not physically giving him a hug - would be the very first to sign up for this plan and then encourage their fellow ultra-wealthy liberals with thousands of square-feet to spare, to do the same.

As one who is married to a legal immigrant - you know, those people foolish enough to actually stand in line, fill out all the paperwork asked of them by the government of the United States, and then patiently wait their turn to enter the country - I am told that this plan would also be wildly popular with the millions of immigrants who came to this country legally. Millions of legal immigrants who do, in fact, regularly vote. A reality which all self-serving politicians - especially those who abandoned their principles and the rule of law out of fear of offending someone while bottom-fishing for votes - should write down in the largest



font possible and then slap up on their walls.

Legal immigrants - including millions of Hispanic-Americans - who truly do feel betrayed by those politicians who looked the other way while others broke the laws they were honored and proud to obey to become a part of the greatest nation on earth. While liberals in Hollywood, the media, academia, and the Democrat Party work overtime to bury this truth, it is our legal immigrants who add billions of

dollars to our national treasury, create companies, hire Americans, serve in our military, and have become an integral part of our success.

Now, with the liberal elites about to take ownership of the illegal immigrant problem by lovingly bringing them all into their homes, we can all step back, take a deep breath, and do the right thing.

Which is to say "Thank You" to all the legal immigrants making America great again.

Arvind Kejriwal Must Accept The Truth. He Has Missed The Bus

The problem with Arvind Kejriwal is that he has not been able to reconcile to the fact that he is no longer the national leader that he was potentially seen as in the early years of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). His second problem emanates from the first problem. It is difficult for Arvind Kejriwal to digest the fact that Rahul Gandhi has emerged like a phoenix from the ashes and now he seems to be the pivot of opposition unity. It is also difficult for Kejriwal to come to terms with the fact that the Congress is reviving itself and AAP is no longer seen as an alternative to the Congress. It is this context which is creating a problem for the alliance between the Congress and AAP in Delhi and

surrounding states.

In Delhi, an alliance between the two parties is an absolute necessity if these two want to defeat the BJP, as has been espoused by the two top leaders of the parties. Rahul Gandhi and Kejriwal have been emphatically saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to be defeated if India is to be saved. Even as recently as Monday, Kejriwal tweeted on these lines, in response to Rahul Gandhi's tweet. Rahul Gandhi tweeted that the Congress is willing to leave four of Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats for AAP and if both could agree to the formula then the BJP would be routed in Delhi. But then he mischievously added that it was "Kejriwal's U-Turn"

which had stalled efforts to set up a coalition.

Rahul Gandhi's statement is not politically prudent and reveals whether he really is interested in a tie-up with Kejriwal. There are two reasons.

First, why did he choose social media to express his views? Written words in the public domain have the potential to be misunderstood. Serious politics needs depth handling and one-on-one interaction away from the public glare. Public positioning restricts the possibility of major adjustments and accommodation. As a result, to save his public image, Kejriwal also responded in a way he should not have. That has complicated things even more.



Second, Rahul should have avoided mentioning Kejriwal and accusing him of blocking the alliance. It was a foolish move for a leader who is proposing to form an alliance to defeat the BJP and PM Modi in Delhi. I know a bit about Kejriwal. And I can assure you that the tweet was a red rag

dangled before him.

I was right.

First he unleashed all his battle-hardened social media warriors who launched a multi-point attack on the Congress and Rahul. Then he jumped in and reacted on Twitter with a vengeance.

Why Britain must apologise for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre

On Wednesday, the British Parliament commemorated the Jallianwala Bagh massacre with a 90-minute debate. As I said in my speech, very few in the United Kingdom (UK) are aware of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and fewer know of the monumental impact the murder of 1,000 men, women and children had on that hot dusty still afternoon in Amritsar. That afternoon in 1919, when General Reginald Dyer ordered his men to shoot, rang the bell for the end of

British India. The massacre finally crystallised in the minds of the intellectual and wealthy middle classes of British India, what millions of working class people knew, that Imperial rule was ultimately neither enlightened nor benevolent, but brutalising, dehumanising and murderous. It set in motion the forces which ultimately secured India's independence. General Dyer did not believe Indians were capable of rational thought and did not deserve free speech. It is ironic that

looking back we can thank him for making independence for more than one billion people inevitable. Very few people in Britain at that time supported General Dyer, and Members of Parliament from all parties condemned his behaviour, and although ultimately the Army failed to punish General Dyer, he was quietly retired and brought back to the UK. The Prime Minister at the time expressed his sadness at what took place in that City Garden and even that apogee of imperialism,

Winston Churchill, was highly critical of General Dyer's actions on that day. There was, though, a small minority who supported him, a conservative newspaper, which later merged with the Telegraph, raised funds for him, and collected the modern equivalent of one million pounds for him. But the British Government has never offered a formal apology for this most heinous of acts. Our former Prime Minister, David Cameron, visited the garden in 2013 and

laid a wreath in memory of the dead and called the murders a "deeply shameful event" but stopped short of a full apology. Last year, I asked Theresa May for an apology in Parliament but again the British Prime Minister would not offer a full and formal apology. On Wednesday, May reiterated the UK government's long-standing expression of 'deep regret' over the April 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, calling it a 'shameful scar' on British Indian history.

'Won't raise income tax'

**Rahul Gandhi
defends NYAY
with a jab on PM
Modi**

At an election rally in Kerala, Congress president Rahul Gandhi said PM Modi's claim that middle class will be taxed to fund NYAY is wrong.

(Agencies)- Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is misleading the middle class over his party's poll promise of providing cash support to the poor families. Gandhi said if the Congress is voted to power, it will not hike the income tax rates to fund the minimum income guarantee scheme. Gandhi, who was addressing an election rally in Kerala, said, "Mr Narendra Modi says that the money for the NYAY scheme is going to come from the middle class. But I want to make it clear to the middle class of Kerala and the country, you are the engine of India's growth. We are not going to take a single rupee from the pocket of middle class. The income taxes will not be raised at all." "Mr Narendra Modi gave Rs 35,000 to Nirav Modi, Rs 35,000 to Mehul Choksi, Rs 30,000 to Anil Ambani, to Vijay Mallya, Lalit Modi... These are the people who are going to pay for NYAY," said Gandhi, who is contesting from Wayanad apart from Amethi Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh. Gandhi was addressing the

public rally in Pathanamthitta, which was recently at the centre of the Sabarimala controversy following a Supreme Court order allowing entry of women of all age groups in the Lord Ayyappa shrine. The Sabarimala shrine is situated in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala, which goes to the polls for all 20 Lok Sabha seats in the third phase of the parliamentary polls on April 23. The Congress has promised to roll out Nyuntam Aay Yojana or NYAY, a minimum income guarantee scheme for the poorest 20 per cent families of the country. Gandhi has been leading the Congress campaign with the promise of rolling out NYAY if the party forms the next government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha polls that ends on May 19. Going by the records of the latest socio-economic census, the NYAY could benefit about five crore poorest families. The Congress has said that there could be 25 crore individual beneficiaries under the NYAY scheme. The BJP, on the other hand, dismissed the scheme as poll gimmick with PM Modi calling it an

"admission" by the Congress of "committing injustice" during its previous regimes.

Gandhi said he chose Wayanad Lok Sabha seat to send a message that the "idea of other people" should be respected. "View me as a brother in your heart," the Congress president told the crowd gathered to listen to his speech adding, "Your spirit, your spirit to look at the things is a guide to the rest of the world." Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency goes to the polls on April 23 along with 19 other parliamentary constituencies in Kerala. Votes will be counted on May 23. Wayanad has been a Congress bastion in Kerala, where the CPM-led Left Front is in power since 2016.

On NYAY, Gandhi said, "We are going to give Rs 72,000 every year directly into the five crore bank accounts, Rs 3.60 lakh in five years. We are going to do a surgical strike on poverty. Imagine 20 per cent of India's poor can be given Rs 72,000 a year. There is no shortage of money in the country."

He targeted the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the



Centre over demonetisation and the goods and services tax, which he calls "Gabbar Singh Tax" referring to the extortion by the villain of Bollywood blockbuster of 1970s, "Sholay". "Mr Narendra Modi did demonetization and gave you Gabbar Singh Tax. He took thousands and thousands of crore out of the Indian economy... small businessmen, shopkeepers were destroyed... Mr Narendra Modi demonetised Indian economy, NYAY will remonetise Indian economy... The damage Mr Narendra Modi did will be fixed," said Gandhi at the rally where he faced difficulties with translation from his English speech to

Malayalam.

PJ Kurien, the senior Congress leader and former deputy chairman of the Lok Sabha, was facilitating as the translator for Gandhi. But Kurien was unable to pick Gandhi's address clearly apparently due to some technical glitch that led to "echo" of his speech. Gandhi looked a little unhappy over the issue and was seen repeating himself to Kurien but he continued with his speech. The Congress is contesting on 16 out of the 20 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala. The party has left four seats for its allies - two for Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and one each for Kerala Congress (Mani) and Socialist Party (RSP).

Most J-K Jaish commanders neutralised, new launch pads open across LoC

According to the counter-terror and police officials, none of whom wished to be identified, the reason for the activation of the launch pads is to boost the Jaish's strength and capabilities in the state.

(Agencies)- Terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed's (JeM) launch pads in new locations across the Line of Control have been activated ahead of a possible effort to push terrorists from the Pakistan-based group into Jammu and Kashmir, top counter-terror officials and senior Jammu and Kashmir police officials said, although the latter added that this is because Indian security forces have eliminated most of the Jaish leadership in the valley. They added that Mohammad Umair, JeM chief Masood Azhar's nephew, who was seen around Pulwama in February, when a terrorist affiliated to it carried out a suicide attack on a CRPF convoy, killing 40, has either

been killed or has gone back to Pakistan.

According to the counter-terror and police officials, none of whom wished to be identified, the reason for the activation of the launch pads is to boost the Jaish's strength and capabilities in the state.

After the Pulwama attack, Indian security forces have been able to eliminate the majority of the Jaish leadership in the valley, they added, with only one commander, who operates under the codename Munna Bihari currently active in the Shopian district.

Previously, Indian forces have gunned down Azhar's elder brother Ibrahim Athar eldest son Usman Haider and brother-in-law

Abdul Rasheed Kamran's son Talha Rasheed. Soon after Pulwama, the security forces gunned down Jaish divisional commander Kamran on February 18.

In a recent audio clip, broadcast over the Jaish's Rang-o-Noor channel, Ibrahim Athar indicates that Mohammed Umair may have also been neutralized by the Indian security forces. In the audio clip, Athar is heard telling his cadre that Umair and Kamran have already reached "heaven." HT learns that many of these launch pads are in the scenic Lolab Valley, north of Kupwara, and around 114 km north-west of Srinagar.

The effort to amplify the infiltration of terrorists coincides with the



melting of snows on high mountain passes. Post Pulwama, the Pakistan Army cleared terrorist launch pads fearing a repeat of the 2016 Indian surgical strikes. After the Indian air strike at Jaish's biggest terror training camp at Balakot, the globally proscribed group has threatened to get even by targeting innocents in hinterland India or security forces in the Valley. Communication

intercepts indicate that Jaish will ratchet up violence in the Valley in the coming months, the counter-terror officials said.

"While Pakistan has taken some uncontrolled action against its nationals involved in terrorism to curry favour with Financial Action Task Force (FATF), it is continuing to shelter Indian fugitives like Dawood Ibrahim gang, remnants of Indian Mujahideen and Sikh radicals.

Shatrughan's wife Poonam joins Samajwadi Party



(Agencies)- Ms. Sinha is likely to be fielded from Lucknow seat against Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, who is a BJP candidate, said party sources. Bollywood actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha's wife Poonam Sinha joined the Samajwadi Party here on Tuesday. The party's Twitter handle carried a picture showing Poonam Sinha joining the party in the presence of Dimple Yadav, Kannauj MP and wife of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav. Ms. Sinha is likely to be fielded for the Lucknow seat against Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, said party sources. Mr. Singh

filed his nomination on Tuesday. When asked about her candidature, Ms. Sinha avoided a direct reply. "Will tell you tomorrow," she said. Asked whether she would be contesting against Mr. Singh, she said, "Koi baat nahi, acchi tarah se ladenge (It does not matter. I will fight strongly)." Ms. Sinha is likely to file her nomination on April 18. Lucknow is going to the polls on May 6 along with a total of 51 constituencies across seven States in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election.

ED seizes Rs 6-crore assets of Kashmiri businessman who funded Hurriyat

(Agencies)- The Enforcement Directorate has seized Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali's assets worth Rs 6 crore in its terror financing probe that targeted terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa founder Hafiz Saeed. The order to seize the businessman's assets worth Rs 6.19 crore was issued after the central probe agency came across evidence that established his role in raising funds and acting as a financial conduit for Hurriyat leaders, a statement by the probe agency mandated to investigate financial crimes said. The statement said the central agency's probe had also been able to directly establish that the Pakistan high commission was one channel of funding for the Kashmiri separatists. During a search at the house of Watali's cashier Ghulam Mohd, it seized a document that makes it clear that the businessman "was receiving money from Hafiz Saeed

(Head of Jamaat-ud-Dawa), from ISI, from the Pakistan High Commission at New Delhi and also from a source based in Dubai", the ED statement said. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali was remitting the same to the Hurriyat leaders, separatists and stone-throwers in the Kashmir valley. The document, the probe agency said, is signed by Watali. ED initiated investigation under the Prevention of Money laundering Act (PMLA) based on charges sheet filed by National Investigation Agency (NIA) against a group of people including Hafiz Saeed and Watali. Watali along with other nine accused are under judicial custody in Delhi's Tihar Jail in the case terror funding and money laundering case investigated by the NIA.



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'Ask kin to leave Libya': Sushma tweets, says situation worsening fast

In a tweet, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that though there had been massive evacuations from Libya, more than 500 Indians were still stranded in Tripoli.

External Affairs minister Sushma Swaraj on Friday took to Twitter to reach out to relatives of those Indians who are living in Libya.

In a tweet she said that though there had been massive evacuations from Libya, more than 500 Indians were still stranded in Tripoli.

"Even after massive evacuation from Libya and the travel ban, there are over 500 Indian nationals in Tripoli. The situation in Tripoli is deteriorating fast. Presently, flights are operational. Pls ask your relatives and friends to leave Tripoli immediately. We will not be able to evacuate them later," she tweeted.

Libya has been witnessing intensifying fighting in Tripoli ever since the self-styled Libyan National Army, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, launched an assault on the country's capital on April 4. The move has been seen as one that could potentially drag the country into a civil war.

An arrest warrant has been issued against Haftar and six of his aides, even as the Libyan prime minister Fayez Al-Sarraj called on the International Criminal Court to investigate "crimes and violations by the forces of warlord Khalifa Haftar and bring them to justice".

More than 205 people are reported to have died with more than 900 others being injured.

Libya has been in witnessing unrest since 2011 when an uprising led to the overthrowing and killing of longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

On April 7, Swaraj had tweeted that the entire Indian contingent of peacekeeping forces comprising 15 CRPF personnel from Tripoli had been evacuated after the situation there "suddenly worsened".

"The situation in Libya has suddenly worsened. There is fighting in Tripoli. Indian Embassy in Tunisia



@IndiainTunisia has personnel yesterday itself. Embassy in Tunisia evacuated the entire Indian contingent of 15 CRPF work by the Indian early on Sunday. I appreciate the excellent #Libya," Swaraj tweeted.

Now Lalit Modi threatens to sue Rahul Gandhi for 'Modis are thieves' jibe



(Agencies)- Lalit Modi, the former Indian Premier League chief, has threatened to sue Congress president Rahul Gandhi for his "all Modis are thieves" remark while targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the election rallies.

"Rahul Gandhi says 'All Modis are thieves. Well, he will be taken to court in the UK by me. But reality is that the world knows five decades of daylight looting of India was done by none other than the Gandhi family," Lalit Modi tweeted on Friday morning tagging PM Modi on the micro-blogging site.

He was referring to Gandhi's

attack on PM Modi holding him responsible for the alleged financial irregularities committed by businessman Nirav Modi and the former cricket administrator. Gandhi had earlier this week asked how all "thieves" have 'Modi' as the common surname.

"I have a question. Why all thieves have Modi in their names whether it is Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi or Narendra Modi? We don't know how many more such Modis will come out," Gandhi said at a public rally in Maharashtra. Lalit Modi's threat to sue Gandhi followed a defamation suit filed by Bihar Deputy

Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi against the Congress president.

Sushil Modi has filed a criminal complaint before a Bihar court under Section 500 of IPC (punishment for defamation) against Gandhi for the same comment.

In his petition, Sushil Modi said he "felt hurt" by Gandhi's "sweeping remarks" at the April 13 rally, which was telecast live on TV news channels, as it tarnished the reputation of those who shared the surname. The matter will come up for hearing on April 22.

PM Modi, too, has hit back at Gandhi for the remark. Speaking at a rally in Chhattisgarh this week, he said, "Is it appropriate to use such language? We have to throw out such people. Abusive language has become the norm. The Sahu community here would have been called Modi in Gujarat. Are they all thieves?"

Delhi Police crime branch to probe Rohit Shekhar Tiwari's death case



(By Our Staff Reporter)- The crime branch of the Delhi Police will probe the death case of Rohit Shekhar, who won paternity suit against late Narayan Dutt Tiwari, the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Rohit Shekhar was declared dead by Delhi hospital on Wednesday.

News agency ANI reported that the death case has been transferred to the crime branch of the Delhi Police. The forensic and crime branch teams visited Rohit Shekhar's residence in the national capital as the agency took over the probe.

The cause of the death of Rohit Shekhar, 40, is not clear. He had

been taken to Max Hospital in Delhi's Saket following "an emergency call". A statement issued by the hospital said, "Max Hospital received an emergency call from the residence of Mr Rohit Shekhar Tiwari at 04:41 pm this afternoon (Wednesday). An ambulance brought Mr Tiwari to Max Hospital, Saket, where he was declared "brought dead" at the hospital emergency."

Rohit Shekhar Tiwari had left Haldwani in Uttarakhand for Delhi on Monday morning with plans to join the Congress. He was in Haldwani to cast his vote in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections on April 11.

Review plea filed in SC for civil rights of homosexuals

It had sought recognition of their rights to same-sex marriages, adoption, surrogacy, IVF and directions so that the community can serve openly in the army, navy and air force.

(By Our Staff Reporter)- A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking review of an order by which a plea for various civil rights, such as same-sex marriage, adoption and surrogacy for the LGBTQ community was dismissed. The apex court, on October 29, 2018, had dismissed a plea filed by Tushar Nayar which had sought reliefs such as grant of civil rights to the members of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer) community besides seeking decriminalising the consensual gay sex. "We are not inclined to entertain this petition after the decision of this Court in Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India decided on September 6, 2018," the apex court had said. Seeking the review of the order, the plea said that the petition, which was dismissed, was not limited to the issue of decriminalising the consensual gay sex only. The plea had raised the issue of "non-recognition

of same-sex marriages" under the Special Marriages Act, 1954) and denial of adoption and surrogacy rights to the members of the LGBTQ community. The plea had sought civil rights of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer) community as part of the basic human rights and said that these rights were not addressed in the apex court's judgement on Section 377 of the IPC which had criminalised consensual gay sex. It had sought recognition of their rights to same-sex marriages, adoption, surrogacy, IVF and directions so that the community can serve openly in the army, navy and air force. "LGBTQ rights are not recognised as part of human rights. Non Recognition of same-sex marriages (Indian Special Marriages Act, 1954), availability of adoption, surrogacy, IVF (for LGBTQ only) is violative of Article 14, 15, 19, 21, 29.

Discrimination solely on basis of sexual orientation violates Article 14, 15, 21 in relation to Army, Navy, Air force Act. "Other instances of indirect discrimination are not addressed in the Navtej Singh Johar case. People in the military are not allowed to serve openly. Heterosexual people end up marrying LGBT people, end up consummating marriage with them, which harms heterosexual people most. Gay women have it worst," the plea had said. The plea had said that the definition of marriage for LGBTQ had not been addressed in the apex court's judgement of September 6, 2018. The plea said both heterosexuals in an opposite-sex relationship and homosexuals in a same-sex relationship are similarly circumstanced as the general nature of relationship is romantic and sexual one, either at the time of marriage as in a love marriage or is sought or hoped to be as in the case of arranged marriage. PTI SJK SA



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TikTok App Blocked In India By Google After Couart Order: Report

(Agencies)- Google has blocked access to the hugely popular video app TikTok in India to comply with the Madras High Court's directive to prohibit its downloads, a person with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters on Tuesday.

The move comes hours after the high court refused a request by China's Bytedance Technology to suspend a ban on its TikTok app, putting its future in one of its key markets in doubt. The high court had on April 3 asked the centre to ban TikTok, saying it encouraged pornography and made child users vulnerable to sexual predators. Its ruling came after an individual launched a public interest litigation calling for a ban. The centre had sent a letter to Apple and Google to abide by the high court's order, according to an IT ministry official. The app was no longer available on Google's Play store in India late on Tuesday. Google said in a statement it does not comment on individual apps but adheres to local laws.

Apple did not respond to requests for comment, while TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Google's move. TikTok, which allows users to create and share short videos with special effects, has become hugely popular in India but has been criticised by some politicians who say its content is inappropriate. It had been downloaded more than 240 million times in India, app analytics firm Sensor Tower said in February.

More than 30 million users in India installed it in January 2019, 12 times more than in the same month last year. Jokes, clips and footage related to India's thriving movie industry dominate the app's platform, along with memes and videos in which youngsters, some scantily clad, lip-sync and dance to popular music. Bytedance challenged the court's ban order in Supreme Court last week, saying it went against freedom of speech rights in India. The top court had referred the case back to the



high court, where a judge on Tuesday rejected Bytedance's request to put the ban order on hold, K Neelamegam, a lawyer arguing against Bytedance in the case, said. TikTok earlier said in a statement that it had faith in the Indian judicial system and was "optimistic about an outcome that would be well received by millions" of its users. It did not comment further on the

judge's decision. The company however welcomed the decision to appoint a senior lawyer to assist the court in upcoming proceedings. The high court has requested written submissions from Bytedance in the case and has scheduled its next hearing for April 24. Salman Waris, a technology lawyer at TechLegis Advocates & Solicitors, said the legal action against Bytedance

could set a precedent of Indian courts intervening to regulate content on social media and other digital platforms. In its Supreme Court filing, Bytedance argued that a "very minuscule" proportion of TikTok content was considered inappropriate or obscene. The company employs more than 250 people in India and had plans for more investment as it expands the business, it said.

Government reviewing its Jammu-Srinagar highway ban

The movement of civilian traffic was restricted on Wednesdays and Sundays to allow unhindered movement of convoys.

(Agencies)- Restrictions on the movement of civilian traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, imposed ahead of elections in light of the Pulwama terror attack that claimed the lives of at least 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers, are being reconsidered, senior officials in the security establishment said on condition of anonymity.

The restrictions had come into effect on April 7 and were to be in place until May 31.

A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a bus carrying CRPF troopers from Jammu to Srinagar on February 14 in the single deadliest terrorist attack in three decades of insurgency in Kashmir. On March 30, another explosives-laden vehicle exploded close to another convoy, but did not cause casualties or damage.

The movement of civilian traffic

was restricted on Wednesdays and Sundays to allow unhindered movement of convoys.

"Restriction on movement of civilian traffic was largely imposed to prevent any further attack on the security forces during the elections," a senior official in the security establishment said.

Elections to the six Lok Sabha seats in Jammu and Kashmir will be completed on May 6.

The re-think on restrictions was visible on the 270km Jammu-Srinagar highway on Wednesday. Civilian traffic moved freely on the highway.

"Civilian traffic was allowed to move without any hurdle because there were no troops who required to be moved," a ministry of home affairs official said. In addition, the Indian Army has been moving troops along



the highway as and when required irrespective of the restrictions on the movement of civilian traffic.

"Irrespective of the restriction on civilian traffic, soldiers of the para-military forces are being moved whenever required especially for the forthcoming elections," a second senior MHA official said.

Security forces - the para-military and even the Indian Army - have not been very keen on restricting civilian traffic along

the highway. "The population is inconvenienced, which is avoidable," the senior official in the security establishment cited above said, explaining the reason for the rethink.

New Delhi's assessment is that the ground situation in Kashmir is changing for the better, as evidenced by the flow of intelligence from the local population that has led to the elimination of several top terrorists and the fact that

recruitment of local men to militant ranks has dried up.

Explaining measures to protect security force convoys, another senior official said: "Convoys can be protected even without the restriction of civilian traffic. For instance, earlier, only portions of the highway through which the convoy is passing were blocked temporarily and only till the convoy was passing through that stretch of the road. Civilians were less inconvenienced."

Universe's first molecule detected in space

Helium hydride ion (HeH⁺) was the first molecule that formed when, almost 14 billion years ago, falling temperatures in the young universe allowed recombination of the light elements produced in the Big Bang.

(Insider Bureau) - Scientists have detected the most ancient type of molecule in our universe in space for the first time ever.

Helium hydride ion (HeH⁺) was the first molecule that formed when, almost 14 billion years ago, falling temperatures in the young universe allowed recombination of the light elements produced in the Big Bang.

At that time, ionised hydrogen and neutral helium atoms reacted to form HeH⁺, said researchers from The Max Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy (MPIfR) in Germany.

Despite its importance in the history of the early Universe, HeH⁺ has so far escaped detection in astrophysical nebulae -- cloud of gas and dust in outer space.

Operating the GREAT far-infrared spectrometer onboard the flying observatory SOFIA, an international team reported the unambiguous detection of the molecule towards the planetary

nebula NGC 7027.

During the dawn of chemistry when the temperature in the young universe had fallen below 4000 Kelvin, the ions of the light elements (hydrogen, helium, deuterium and traces of lithium) produced in Big Bang nucleosynthesis recombined in reverse order of their ionisation potential.

Helium combined first with free electrons to form the first ever neutral atom, according to the study published in the journal Nature.

At that time hydrogen was still ionised or present in form of bare protons.

Helium atoms combined with these protons into the helium hydride ion HeH⁺, the universe's first molecular bond.

As recombination progressed, HeH⁺ reacted with then neutral hydrogen and created a first path to the formation of molecular hydrogen -- marking the beginning of the modern universe.

Despite its unquestioned

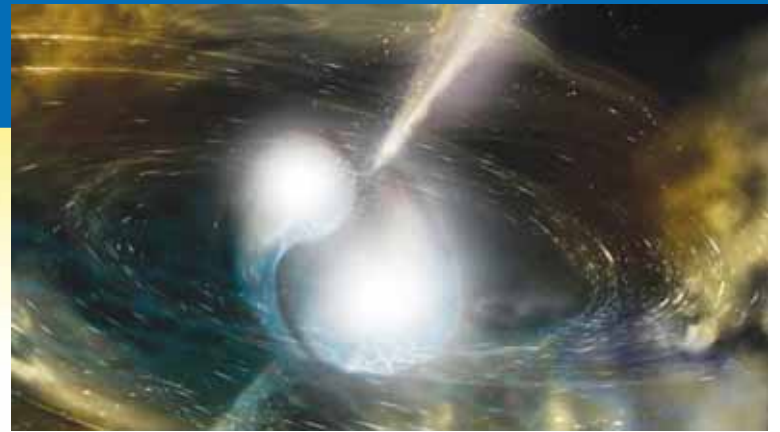
importance in the history of the early Universe, the HeH⁺ molecule has so far escaped detection in interstellar space, researchers said.

Studied in the laboratory as long ago as 1925, dedicated searches during the last decades have been unsuccessful, thereby challenging our understanding of the underlying chemical networks, they said.

"The chemistry of the universe began with HeH⁺. The lack of definitive evidence of its very existence in interstellar space has been a dilemma for astronomy for a long time," said Rolf Gusten from the MPIfR.

In the late 1970s, astro-chemical models suggested the possibility that HeH⁺ might exist at detectable abundances in local astrophysical nebulae, and would be most easily observed in so-called planetary nebula, ejected by Sun-like stars in the last stage of their lifetime.

The hard radiation field produced by the central white dwarf star



with a temperature of more than 100,000 degrees drives ionisation fronts into the ejected envelope, where HeH⁺ is predicted to form.

The molecule will emit its strongest spectral line at a characteristic wavelength of 0.149 mm.

However, Earth's atmosphere is opaque at this wavelength for ground-based observatories, requiring this search to be performed from space or a high-flying observatory like SOFIA cruising above the absorbing layers of the lower atmosphere.

"With recent advancements in terahertz technologies it has now become possible to perform high-resolution spectroscopy at the

required far-infrared wavelength," said Gusten.

Operating the GREAT spectrometer aboard SOFIA the team now reports the unequivocal detection of HeH⁺ towards the envelope of the planetary nebula NGC 7027. "The discovery of HeH⁺ is a dramatic and beautiful demonstration of nature's tendency to form molecules," said David Neufeld from the Johns Hopkins University in the US.

"Despite the unpromising ingredients that are available, a mixture of hydrogen with the unreactive noble gas helium, and a harsh environment at thousands of degrees Celsius, a fragile molecule forms," Neufeld said.

Gunmen kill at least 14 bus passengers in Pakistan's Balochistan province

The attackers were wearing uniforms from the paramilitary Frontier Corps, provincial home secretary Haider Ali told AFP.



(Insider Bureau) - Gunmen killed at least 14 people after forcing them to disembark from buses in Pakistan's restive southwestern Balochistan province, officials said Thursday. The attackers were wearing uniforms from the paramilitary Frontier Corps, provincial home secretary Haider Ali told AFP.

The gunmen "stopped buses on the Makran Coastal Highway and gunned down 14 people", he said, adding that the vehicles were travelling to the port

megacity of Karachi from the coastal town of Ormara.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which came less than a week after a suicide blast in provincial capital Quetta killed 20 people. Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is Pakistan's largest and poorest province, as well as the site of Islamist, sectarian and separatist insurgencies. A naval official and a coast guard member were among those killed, Ali said.

Trump tried to take over Russia probe, says Mueller report

The 448-page report was divided into two volumes. The first volume dealt with the question of Russian interference and possible collusion by members of the Trump campaign.

(Insider Bureau) - US special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation had looked at 10 actions by President Donald Trump for potential obstruction of justice regarding the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election - including the firing of James Comey as the FBI director - but it was unable to determine if the US president did or did not commit a chargeable offence.

"The evidence we obtained about the president's actions and intent presents difficult issues that would need to be resolved if we were making a traditional prosecutorial judgment," said a redacted copy of Mueller's much awaited report that was released first to the US Congress and then to the public on Thursday. The report added, "At the same time, if we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the president clearly did



not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and the applicable legal standards, we are unable to reach that judgment. Accordingly, while this report did not conclude that the president committed a crime, it does not exonerate him." The 448-page report was divided into two volumes. The first volume dealt with the question of Russian interference and possible collusion by members of the Trump campaign. The second volume pertained to the question of obstruction of justice, which had become of key interest since a summary of the report released

earlier by US attorney general William Barr had gone ahead and cleared Trump of it. The president had claimed "total exoneration" from the charges of collusion and obstruction. He repeated that claim on Thursday. "No collusion, no obstruction," Trump said in a picture posted on Twitter. "For the haters and the radical left Democrats - GAME OVER." The 10 actions by the US president that Mueller's investigators looked at for possible obstruction included the firing of Comey in 2017; conduct regarding Comey and Michael Flynn; response to the probe; response to the appointment of the special counsel and efforts to remove him; efforts to curtail the probe; efforts to make former attorney general Jeff Sessions reverse his recusal from the probe; his conduct involving former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and former personal lawyer Michael Cohen.

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Wake up, people

You're fooling yourself about sleep, study says



(Insider Bureau) - Hey, sleepyheads. What you believe about sleep may be nothing but a pipe dream.

Many of us have notions about sleep that have little basis in fact and may even be harmful to our health, according to researchers at NYU Langone Health's School of Medicine, who conducted a study published Tuesday in the journal *Sleep Health*.

"There's such a link between good sleep and our waking success," said lead study investigator Rebecca Robbins, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Population Health at NYU Langone Health. "And yet we often find ourselves debunking myths, whether it's to news outlets, friends, family or a patient."

Robbins and her colleagues combed through 8,000 websites to discover what we thought we

knew about healthy sleep habits and then presented those beliefs to a hand-picked team of sleep medicine experts. They determined which were myths and then ranked them by degree of falsehood and importance to health. Here are 10 very wrong, unhealthy assumptions we often make about sleep, an act in which we spend an estimated third of our lives -- or, if we lived to 100, about 12,227 combined days. Stop yawning. It's time to put these unsound sleep myths to bed.

1. Adults need five or fewer hours of sleep "If you wanted to have the ability to function at your best during the day, not to be sick, to be mentally strong, to be able to have the lifestyle that you would enjoy, how many hours do you have to sleep?" asked senior study investigator Girardin Jean-Louis, a professor in the Department of Population

Health. "It turns out a lot of people felt less than five hours of sleep a night was just fine," he said. "That's the most problematic assumption we found." "We're supposed to get between seven and 10 hours of sleep each night, depending on our age, but the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that a third of Americans sleep fewer than seven hours a night. According to World Sleep Day statistics, sleep deprivation is threatening the health of up to 45% of the global population.

"We have extensive evidence to show that sleeping five hours a night or less, consistently, increases your risk greatly for adverse health consequences, including cardiovascular disease and early mortality," Robbins said. In a longitudinal study of 10,308 British civil servants

published in 2007, researchers found that those who reduced their sleep from seven to five hours or fewer a night were almost twice as likely to die from all causes, especially cardiovascular disease.

Science has also linked poor slumber with high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, weight gain, a lack of libido, mood swings, paranoia, depression and a higher risk of diabetes, stroke, dementia and some cancers.

2. It's healthy to be able to fall asleep 'anywhere, anytime' Falling asleep as soon as the car/train/airplane starts moving is not a sign of a well-rested person, sleep experts say. In fact, it's just the opposite.

"Falling asleep instantly anywhere, anytime, is a sign that you are not getting enough sleep and you're falling into 'micro

sleeps' or mini-sleep episodes," Robbins said. "It means your body is so exhausted that whenever it has a moment, it's going to start to repay its sleep debt." "You feel sleepy because of a buildup of a chemical called adenosine in the brain, which happens throughout the day as you head toward night. Sleeping soundly reduces that chemical so that when you wake up, the levels are at their lowest, and you feel refreshed. But the longer you stay awake and the less sleep you get, the more your adenosine levels rise, creating what's called a sleep load or sleep debt. Want to check your level of sleepiness? Look at the Epworth sleepiness scale, and if you're worried, check in with a sleep doctor who can do more extensive testing in a sleep lab.

ICE deported the husband of a soldier killed in combat even though he had been cleared to stay in US

(Insider Bureau) - The husband of a US Army soldier killed in combat was detained and deported to Mexico last week by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement even though he had been granted permission to stay in the United States, according to his attorney.

The man, who is now back in Phoenix, where he lives, had been granted "parole in place," clearing him to remain in the United States after his wife was killed in 2010 in Afghanistan, the attorney says.

Jose Gonzalez Carranza was arrested by ICE agents at his home in Phoenix on April 8 and was taken to Nogales, Mexico, on the border two days later, his lawyer, Ezequiel Hernandez, told CNN on Monday. Carranza was brought back to Phoenix and released Monday, hours after his

deportation was first reported by The Arizona Republic.

Hernandez said his law firm tried to contact ICE for details related to why Carranza was taken back to Mexico but did not receive a response until after his office notified the press.

Despite Carranza's return to the United States, Hernandez said his case isn't over.

Carranza entered the US illegally as a teenager in 2004 from Mexico. In 2007, he married Army Pfc. Barbara Vieyra and the two had a daughter, who is now 12 years old.

"Pfc. Barbara Vieyra, 22, of Mesa, Arizona, died September 18 of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked her unit using an improvised explosive device and rocket propelled grenade fire in Kunar province, Afghanistan. She was assigned to the 720th

Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, Fort Hood, Texas," according to Department of Defense records. After Carranza was arrested, his daughter went to live with her grandparents who were awarded joint custody after Vieyra's death, Hernandez said.

Carranza was given "parole in place" status by immigration authorities after his wife was killed in 2010, Hernandez said. This designation, typically given in increments, means Carranza was allowed to stay in the United States without the threat of deportation.

ICE refiled a deportation case against Carranza last year despite the parole-in-place designation. However, a notice for Carranza to appear in court was sent to an old address, Hernandez added.



As a result, Carranza did not show up to court and a judge ordered him deported.

"The government never revoked the (parole-in-place)," Hernandez said. "They detained (Carranza) because of the order of removal done due to the court hearing my client did not go to because he did not know. As of today, we do not know why the client was removed."

In a release, ICE said it arrested Carranza on April 8 "with a final order of removal." The same day, Carranza filed a motion to reopen with the Executive Office for Immigration Review, or EOIR. On April 11, ICE removed Carranza "from the United States pending the motion to reopen while a stay was in place," according to the release.

Sadhvi Pragya's remark on Hemant Karkare evokes strong reactions BJP says her 'personal view'

Hemant Karkare, a former Mumbai Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) chief, was martyred fighting terrorists during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack. He was also leading the probe into the Malegaon attack. The remarks of the BJP candidate for the Bhopal Lok Sabha seat evoked strong reactions from all quarters. While the IPS association condemned + Sadhvi Pragya's statement, the

Congress demanded an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As opposition parties used the remarks to hit out at the BJP, the party issued a statement distancing itself from Sadhvi Pragya's statement. "The BJP is of the clear view that late Hemant Karkare died bravely fighting the terrorists. The BJP has always considered him a martyr. The statement of

Sadhvi Pragya in this context + is her personal opinion, possibly due to the years of physical and mental torture that she faced," the BJP statement said. Earlier today, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the remark was an insult to every soldier who has sacrificed his life for the country while fighting terrorism. "Modi ji, only BJP leaders can commit

the crime of declaring 26/11 martyr Hemant Karkare a traitor," Surjewala said on Twitter. "This is an insult to every Indian soldier who has sacrificed his life for Mother India while fighting terrorism. Apologise to the country and take action against Pragya,"

he added. Addressing a gathering of BJP workers on Thursday, Thakur said Karkare committed an anti-national act by falsely implicating her in the Malegaon blast case and keeping her behind bars without evidence.

Sears sues Lampert, claiming he looted assets and drove it into bankruptcy

Lampert for the retailer's downfall. It followed the billionaire's \$5.2 billion purchase in February of most Sears assets, including the DieHard and Kenmore brands, after a bankruptcy auction. The complaint seeks the repayment of "billions of dollars of value looted from Sears," including while it was in what Lampert would later call a "death spiral" where it sold core assets to meet daily

expenses with no real plan for becoming profitable. "Had defendants not taken these improper and illegal actions, Sears would have had billions of dollars more to pay its third-party creditors today and would not have endured the amount of disruption, expense, and job losses resulting from its recent bankruptcy filing," the complaint said. Sears filed for Chapter 11 protection in October after a prolonged decline under Lampert

marked by large losses, scant investment and lost market share to retailers such as Walmart Inc, Home Depot Inc and Amazon.com Inc. Others sued include ESL President Kunal Kamrani; Bruce Berkowitz and his Fairholme Capital Management, which was a large Sears shareholder; and Seritage Growth Properties, which took over 266 of Sears' best stores in a 2015 spinoff.

Ban on Masood Azhar: China looking for a face-saving formula

(Agencies)- by India, the US and other countries to get the United Nations to declare Jaish-e-Muhammed head Masood Azhar a global terrorist. "We are also having communication with relevant parties and the matter is moving towards the direction of settlement (sic). Regarding what you said, relevant parties are forcing a new resolution through the Security Council," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said. Lu added, "On the issue of the

listing of Masood Azhar, China's position remains unchanged." But China is known to say this about almost all international matters even when it is changing its approach to certain issues. Changing its stance towards Azhar, which has protected both Pakistan and the Jaish chief for years, is going to be difficult for Beijing. The Pakistani military checks the possible flow of Taliban influence into the troubled Chinese border region of Xinjiang which has seen a lot of terrorism. Before changing its stance on Azhar, China needs a good enough explanation to not just get the Pakistani government and military to accept it but also sell the idea to the media and public in Pakistan. Most importantly, Beijing wants to make sure that a change in stance does not result in anger and put Chinese workers in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at risk. Share to Twitter In Video: Masood Azhar ban: China claims 'positive progress'

State Bank of India wasting Indian taxpayers' money on UK legal fees: Vijay Mallya accuses

The 63-year-old fugitive businessman issued a string of statements on Twitter to allege that the SBI led consortium of PSU banks were wrongly going after him in the UK courts. Mallya is wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an alleged Rs 9,000 crore. (By our staff reporter) London- Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya once again used social media to reiterate his offer to pay back the debt owed to public sector banks in India, targeting this time

the State Bank of India (SBI) for allegedly wasting Indian taxpayers' money on expensive legal fees in the UK. Days after a UK high court judge refused to dismiss an interim order freezing nearly 260,000 pounds in one of his London bank accounts, the 63-year-old issued a string of statements on Twitter to allege that the SBI led consortium of PSU banks were wrongly going after him in the UK courts. "SBI Lawyers in UK making presentations on their accomplishments against me.

Indian Tax payers cost. Despite full recovery in India confirmed by the Prime Minister himself," he tweeted on Friday. His statements were illustrated with a series of document screenshots showing TLT LLP, the banks' law firm, hailing its victory in the 1.142 billion pounds worldwide freezing order judgment in their favour last May. "SBI UK Lawyers in self-promotion at Indian public cost. SBI must answer," reads Mallya's tweet. In his characteristic style, the media was once again at the

receiving end of the former Kingfisher Airlines boss' social media comments. He noted: "Whilst media love sensational headlines, why doesn't anybody ask the PSU State Bank of India under RTI [Right to Information] on how much they are spending on legal fees trying to recover money from me in the UK when I have offered 100 per cent payback in India. "To substantiate my point, assets belonging to me in the UK were sold and the costs of sale were almost 50 per cent of value.

Maldives election paves way for China deals investigations

(Insider bureru)- A landslide parliamentary victory for the party of Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has strengthened his hand to investigate corruption during his pro-China predecessor's term when the new session of the 87-seat legislature opens in May. The revelations are expected to test the ties between the strategically located Indian Ocean archipelago and China, its largest lender. Solih wasted little time in driving home his anti-corruption message following the results of the April 6 election, where his Maldivian Democratic Party secured a record 65 seats. "The presidential commissions I

established will hopefully start functioning at a better pace with the new parliament," Solih told a crowd of raucous MDP supporters celebrating the electoral triumph. "This is more bad news for China," an MDP insider told the Nikkei Asian Review. "It is the second political defeat Beijing has suffered after investing millions of dollars to back a thug like [former President Abdulla] Yameen. It is worse because China did not openly reach out to Solih's camp for this election." Last September, Solih campaigned on an anti-corruption platform to defeat Yameen, the incumbent, in a shock election outcome at the presidential polls.

Yameen, who ruled the Maldives with an iron fist from 2013 to 2018, had depended on Chinese loans and financial assistance under the Belt and Road Initiative to consolidate his authority. Yameen's Progressive Party of Maldives had rallied behind his pro-China tilt to rush through the China-Maldives Free Trade Agreement to deepen Beijing's foothold in a stretch of the Indian Ocean long regarded as the backyard of India, the South Asian regional power. Complaints by Yameen's critics of kickbacks dogged the tilt by the Maldives toward China during his regime. But Solih's attempt to investigate corruption through



a presidential commission he appointed soon after beginning his term last November was stalled in the parliament early this year. Objections were raised by an influential parliamentarian, Qasim Ibrahim, leader of the former main opposition

Jumhooree Party. Voters on the necklace of islands famous for high-end tourist resorts were in a different mood. They turned against the Jumhooree Party and Yameen's PPM, giving them only five seats each in the Majlis, as the parliament is called.

The Surprises in the Mueller Report

case for publishing an obstruction report at all to the sharp contradiction—noted by many of our experts—between Barr’s public statements and what Mueller’s team actually found. Here are their responses:

‘The report did not exonerate the president’

Marisa Maleck is a senior associate with King & Spalding, and a former clerk to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

I found the most surprising part of the report to be twofold: One, that special counsel Mueller went out of his way multiple times to dispel the notion that there is any concept called “collusion,” and that what he investigated was instead coordination and conspiracy; and two, that the report did not exonerate the president even with respect to conspiracy and coordination.

Although the report stated that there was “no evidence” of conspiracy or coordination, it left open the possibility that there may be evidence out there that the president’s associates suppressed. Some individuals invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Some information was screened even from the special counsel and his team. Several people affiliated with the Trump campaign (including Michael Flynn, George Papadopoulos, Michael Cohen and Paul Manafort) lied or provided incomplete information to the special counsel about their interactions with Russian-affiliated individuals. Still others deleted communications or used encryption that did not provide for the long-term retention of data. And with respect to redactions within the report, the ones concerning the Trump campaign’s interest in WikiLeaks’ releases of hacked material are particularly concerning.

The special counsel declined to make a recommendation on obstruction mostly because the Office of Legal Counsel has concluded, most recently in 2000, that a sitting president is immune from indictment. The report made clear that it is up to Congress to decide whether to use impeachment as a remedy. So what will matter most for the remainder of the Trump presidency is whether the House

of Representatives will file articles of impeachment based on the substantial allegations that the president may have obstructed justice.

Mueller whiffed on a crucial legal question

Josh Blackman is a constitutional law professor at the South Texas College of Law Houston, and an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute.

The special counsel’s report spans more than 400 pages. However, only 12 pages are dedicated to a critical question: Can the federal obstruction of justice statute apply to the president? Robert Mueller treated this question—which is separate from whether a sitting president can be indicted—in an underwhelming fashion.

Attorney General Barr stated in his press conference Thursday that he “disagreed with some of the special counsel’s legal theories.” I can speculate about one such theory: Mueller failed to do the necessary work to show that the precedents of the Supreme Court, and the Justice Department, support the application of the obstruction statute in this context.

Mueller could have avoided the entire second volume of his report—which spends 182 pages summarizing his obstruction of justice investigation—if he had simply concluded that the obstruction statute does not apply to the president. There is no reason to detail whether the president violated a federal law, if the federal law does not apply to the president.

The Supreme Court has historically been hesitant to resolve disputes between Congress and the president, and its justices have suggested that general statutes should not limit the president’s power unless Congress expressly indicated an intent to do so. Mueller declined to exercise this caution. Why? First, he reasoned, the Office of Legal Counsel has suggested that applying the federal bribery statute to the president “raises no separation of powers questions.” Second, Mueller reasoned that the prohibition on obstruction was indistinguishable from the prohibition on bribery. Therefore the obstruction statute could be applied to the president. This analogy between bribery and obstruction, which supports much of Mueller’s analysis,

falters. Accepting a bribe is an impeachable offense that cannot in any situation be considered a lawful exercise of presidential authority. An obstruction charge is very different. For example, Mueller implies that Trump’s removal of James Comey as the FBI director, with a corrupt intent, could constitute obstruction of justice. The president’s lawyers countered that the termination was a lawful exercise of presidential authority. Applying the obstruction statute to the president raises separation of powers questions that the bribery statute does not. Mueller should have taken this more restrained, and correct, approach.

‘The campaign certainly tried to collude’

Bradley P. Moss is a national security attorney in Washington. It is shocking how misleading and disingenuous the attorney general’s four-page letter, and his subsequent remarks at the press conference, turned out to be. The Mueller report identifies numerous instances of interactions with Russian nationals—by the Trump campaign or Trump associates—in an effort to gain hacked emails and to coordinate their dissemination. That may not be enough to warrant criminal conspiracy charges, but saying there was no collusion—as Barr did—is brazenly dishonest. The campaign certainly tried to collude.

Similarly, the attorney general’s description of the president’s lack of corrupt intent regarding obstruction is contradicted by the Mueller report. The president repeatedly tried to shut down or interfere with the investigation. He dangled pardons to try to get people to keep quiet. That he was saved by his aides’ willingness to ignore his rants and instructions is a weak defense. This matter will remain a stain on the Trump presidency going into 2020. Whether the public will care remains to be seen.

‘Americans should be proud of what we just witnessed’

Mark Zaid is executive director of the James Madison Project and a co-founder of Whistleblower Aid.

What was most intriguing from the report so far was the revelation that 14 criminal referrals had been made by the Office of Special Counsel to various U.S. Attorney’s Offices

and we had only publicly known of two of them. Clearly, Trump and his family are not out of potential hot water.

Additionally, looking at the investigation from the 30,000-foot view, Americans should be proud of what we just witnessed. We had the president of the United States investigated by a nonpartisan group that fairly and fully explored all the facts it believed needed to be reviewed, and the republic survived intact. The fear the president expressed when he learned of the appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel, which deserves scrutiny as to why he felt that way, was unfounded, and that is a good thing.

‘The facts are muddy’

Miriam Baer is a professor at Brooklyn Law School and a former assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of New York.

Those who slog through the special counsel’s report may find surprising the sheer amount of time that Trump spent directing his aides to say or do things on his behalf that were either untrue or aimed at undermining the Mueller investigation. Among the vignettes that stand out are the president’s failed attempt to have K.T. McFarland draft a statement, the day after he offered her the ambassadorship to Singapore, denying Trump’s involvement in Michael Flynn’s efforts to discuss American sanctions with Russian officials; the president’s unsuccessful pressure on Don McGahn to fire the special counsel; and the president’s (also unsuccessful) attempts to use Corey Lewandowski to direct Jeff Sessions to truncate the special counsel’s investigation.

All of these efforts are damning, particularly in the aggregate—but they also demonstrate the challenges inherent in an obstruction case. The facts are muddy. There are a lot of moving parts, and it’s difficult to keep track of all the details. The portrait they paint nevertheless falls far short of an exoneration. ‘If the attack were a bombing rather than a hacking, perhaps the magnitude of the problem would be clearer’

Justin Levitt is an associate dean at Loyola Law School and was a deputy assistant U.S. attorney general from 2015 to 2017.

The Mueller report makes

unmistakably clear that Americans were attacked by foreign military units: specifically Russian “Military Units 26165 and 74455.” And it reminds us that the president and members of his campaign invited and welcomed those attacks, even if it did not arrange them, and that they were eager to profit from the proceeds of those attacks. That should be of immense concern. If the attack were a bombing rather than a hacking, perhaps the magnitude of the problem would be clearer. The hack was no less an attack than something more literally explosive.

We should all be disturbed by the lack of clarity regarding our ability—and our will—to deter similar future interference in our election process. And though I don’t know whether that will be the element of the Mueller report that matters most for the remainder of the Trump presidency, it should be.

‘Mueller flinched’

Paul Rosenzweig is a former deputy assistant secretary for policy at the Department of Homeland Security from 2005 to 2009; he also served on the staff of the Whitewater investigation of President Bill Clinton.

The obstruction of justice portion of the report reads like a prosecution memorandum that is leading up to a conclusion to recommend an indictment. It lays out the facts in painstaking detail, some of which (like the discussions of a Manafort pardon) are classic efforts to influence witness testimony. It then contains a lengthy legal analysis of why these acts are criminal and why the legal counterarguments are mere hand-waving. And then, at the denouement, when the conclusion should have read “for these reasons we recommend an indictment,” the report radically changes tack. Any other American in the same circumstances would likely be facing criminal charges. Mueller flinched—and that’s a shame.

Mueller documented a ‘pattern of conduct that leaves us wondering whether Barr made the right call’

Laurie L. Levenson is professor of law and David W. Burcham chair of ethical advocacy at Loyola Law School. She was formerly an assistant U.S. attorney in Los Angeles.

House Democrats subpoena Deutsche Bank in Trump investigation

(Insider Bureau)- House Democrats subpoena Deutsche Bank in Trump investigation House Democrats on Monday issued a subpoena to the German lender Deutsche Bank seeking information on President Donald Trump's finances, a major escalation of their investigation into his business dealings. In addition to the Deutsche Bank subpoena, House Democrats subpoenaed other banks - including JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Citigroup - seeking information on Russian money laundering. The issuance of the subpoenas was first reported by The New York Times. The House Intelligence and Financial Services committees, which authorized the subpoenas, were expected to issue additional subpoenas targeting Trump's finances soon, Democratic aides said.

Democrats are ratcheting up their coordinated investigations into

Trump's business dealings as the Justice Department prepares to release findings from special counsel Robert Mueller's probe on Thursday.

"As part of our oversight authority and authorized investigation into allegations of potential foreign influence on the U.S. political process, the House Intelligence Committee today issued subpoenas to multiple financial institutions in coordination with the House Financial Services Committee, including a friendly subpoena to Deutsche Bank, which has been cooperative with the Committees," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), the House Intelligence chairman. "We look forward to their continued cooperation and compliance."

The subpoenas are the latest example of House Democrats' crossing the "red line" Trump has drawn when it comes to investigators looking into his finances and business

transactions. Trump's attorneys have already started fighting back, warning the accounting firm Mazars USA that it should not comply with a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee subpoena seeking the president's financial records. Deutsche Bank has long been a top target for Democrats. The bank lent Trump hundreds of millions of dollars over the years for property development, and it has also been under scrutiny for its role in Russian money laundering. Democrats have said they want to know whether Russia has had financial leverage over the president via Deutsche Bank and other loans.

Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the Financial Services Committee, said in a statement Monday that the potential use of the U.S. financial system for illicit purposes was a "very serious concern."

"The Financial Services



Committee is exploring these matters, including as they may involve the President and his associates, as thoroughly as possible pursuant to its oversight authority, and will follow the facts wherever they may lead us," she said.

Republicans - as expected - lashed out at the Democratic subpoenas, calling them part of "partisan fishing expeditions" designed to hurt Trump and the GOP.

My colleagues across the aisle continue to politicize the banking industry and set out on partisan fishing expeditions," said Rep. Patrick McHenry (N.C.), the top

Republican on the Financial Services Committee. "All while ignoring the issues the American people need our committee to be focused on. Republicans have repeatedly expressed our desire to work in a bipartisan manner, but today's actions seem driven solely by a political agenda."

Other financial institutions had been expecting Democrats to seek further information about their relationships with Deutsche Bank, a representative of another bank said. Deutsche Bank in a statement said that it was "in a productive dialogue with the House Financial Services and Intelligence Committees."

Macron draws parallel between Notre Dame and political turmoil

President addresses nation and says he wants cathedral reconstruction finished in five years.



to the protests.

"I will get back to you as I had promised in the coming days so we can collectively act together after the great debate, but now is not the time," he said Tuesday.

"After the time of hardship, the time of reflection and action will come but let's not mix them up, let's not fall in the trap of precipitation ... being head of state [is not] just administering things, [it is] being conscious of our history."

Macron has been accused by political rivals of drawing out the national debates and using them to improve his approval ratings.

But on Tuesday he struck a solemn tone, appealing to the French sense of resilience and unity. "The fire at Notre Dame reminds us that history doesn't stop and that we always have trials to overcome. We are this nation of builders, we have so much to rebuild," he said.

(Insider Bureau)- Emmanuel Macron said he wants Notre Dame cathedral, which was ravaged by fire on Monday, to be rebuilt within five years. Macron gave a televised address on Tuesday evening that was short and solemn, but that also attempted to draw a parallel between the blaze at the cathedral and the political turmoil France has been experiencing for five months because of the Yellow Jacket protests.

"I profoundly believe that it is

up to us to transform this catastrophe into an opportunity to come together and think about what we were and what we need to become, to improve ourselves," Macron said in what was a clear metaphor for the deep political divisions within France.

Because of the fire, Macron had postponed a long-awaited televised speech planned for Monday evening at which he was going to outline measures he plans to take following nationwide public debates held in response

Ivanka Trump says she passed on World Bank job



(Insider Bureau)- White House senior adviser Ivanka Trump says her father asked her if she was interested in the job of World Bank chief but she passed on it. In an Associated Press interview, President Donald Trump's daughter said Wednesday she was happy with her current role in the administration. She was travelling in Africa to promote a global women's initiative. Ivanka Trump said her father raised the job as "a question" and she told him she was "happy with the work" she's doing.

The president recently told The Atlantic: "I even thought of Ivanka for the World Bank. . She would've been great at that because she's very good with numbers." Ivanka Trump worked on the selection process for the new head of the 189-nation World Bank, David Malpass. She said he'll do an "incredible job." Asked if her father had approached her about other top jobs, Ivanka Trump said she'd "keep that between" them. She said she doesn't see a run for office in her future.

France's 3 richest families lead \$700 million fundraising effort for Notre Dame

France's three wealthiest families are coming to the rescue of a national icon, spearheading a fundraising drive to rebuild Notre Dame that has topped \$700 million.

The billionaires behind luxury giants LVMH Group,

Bettencourt Meyers family, which controls L'Oreal (LRLCF).

The Pinault family, which operates luxury conglomerate Kering (PPRUF), has pledged \$100 million (\$113 million). The three fashion

and consulting firm Capgemini will give \$1 million (\$1.1 million).

Combined with other donations from companies including French bank Crédit Agricole, the total amount pledged by business and wealthy donors has reached \$700 million.

Luxury giving LVMH (LVMHF), which owns Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior and Givenchy, said in a statement that its donation showed "solidarity with this national tragedy" and that funds would be used to rebuild this "extraordinary cathedral."

The fashion house went on to describe Notre Dame as a "symbol of French heritage and unity." LVMH said it would make its creative and financial teams available to help with rebuilding and soliciting donations.

Arnault, its CEO, is the



Kering and L'Oreal on Tuesday pledged a combined \$500 million (\$565 million) after a massive fire ripped through the Paris cathedral.

LVMH (LVMHF) and its CEO Bernard Arnault have promised \$200 million (\$226 million). The donation has been matched by the

dynasties have invoked patriotism and shared cultural identity in explaining their generosity following the devastating fire.

Other French companies have also written big checks: The oil and gas company Total (TOT) has promised \$100 million (\$113 million), while tech



third richest person in the world, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. His net worth comes in at \$90.4 billion, more than that of Warren Buffett or Mark Zuckerberg.

In addition to its fashion lines, LVMH controls high-end alcohol brands such as Dom Pérignon, Hennessy and Veuve Clicquot, as well as popular beauty retailer Sephora. LVMH chief executive Bernard Arnault

pictured in 2018. Kering, which is the home for brands including Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent, was first out of the gate Tuesday with its donation. "This tragedy is striking all the French people, and beyond that, all those attached to spiritual values," François-Henri

Pinault, the CEO of Kering, said in a statement.

"Faced with this tragedy, everyone wishes to give life back to this jewel of our heritage as soon as possible," added Pinault, who is the son of the billionaire businessman François Pinault.

The Pinault family is worth an estimated \$37.3 billion, per Bloomberg.

François-Henri Pinault, who manages the family's businesses, is married to actress Salma Hayek.

Kering also owns fashion brands such as Alexander McQueen and Balenciaga. The Bettencourt family owns a 33% stake in L'Oreal, which controls brands like Maybelline, Lancome, Garnier and Kiehl's.

Francoise Bettencourt Meyers, the richest woman in the world, is worth \$53.5 billion, according to Bloomberg.

She inherited the stake from her mother, Liliane Bettencourt, who died in 2017. Bettencourt Meyers is the granddaughter of the company's founder, Eugene Schueller.

The rebuilding process on Monday devastated large parts of the 850-year-old church, including its iconic spire. The fire was extinguished after nine hours. French President Emmanuel Macron has promised to rebuild the site, saying Monday that France will launch an international fundraising campaign to assist with the effort.

Harris' Hollywood haul: Donors include Ben Affleck, Elizabeth Banks, Wanda Sykes



(Insider Bureau)- Hollywood donors are flocking to Kamala Harris. Actors and actresses who wrote checks to the Harris campaign during the first three months of the year included Ben Affleck, who gave \$2,800; Elizabeth Banks, who donated \$5,600; Eva Longoria Baston, who donated \$5,400; Alison Pill, who donated \$360; Wanda Sykes, who donated \$500; Lily Tomlin, who donated

\$525; and America Ferrera, who donated \$250. Filmmakers and studio executives were similarly supportive of Harris' presidential bid: Filmmakers J.J. Abrams and Lee Daniels wrote Harris checks of \$2,800 and \$2,700, respectively. Hollywood fundraiser Jeffrey Katzenberg gave \$2,800 to Harris, and former Fox Television Group Chairman Gary Newman gave \$2,700.

Harris did not garner a herd of Hollywood supporters by accident. She has made an effort to court donors in Hollywood for years while holding statewide office in California, as well as during the early months of her presidential bid.

She stopped in Los Angeles in February for events with David Cooley, CEO and founder of the nightclub Abbey, and Jeff Shell, chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment Group, then in March for another event hosted by actress Katie McGrath and Abrams.

Harris raised \$13.2 million as of the beginning of April, the second-largest fundraising haul of any candidate in the race. Of those funds, \$1.2 million was money she transferred from her Senate campaign account.

Bloodsucking worms found in Florida rattlesnake species alarm researchers: It's a 'nasty situation'

(Insider Bureau)- While examining a deceased pygmy rattlesnake last summer, a Florida professor and a biology fellow were stunned as they watched wiggling parasitic worms slowly emerge from the serpent's open mouth. Dr. Terence Farrell, who teaches biology at Stetson University in DeLand, has been studying the venomous rattlesnake species for decades - and even he admits he found the scene "pretty alarming." "We conducted research and found that these types of parasites (pentastome) have never been found in pygmy rattlesnakes before," Farrell said in a statement released by Stetson University on Friday. Since then, Farrell and his students have tested a total of three

pygmy rattlesnakes and found the same type of bloodsucking parasitic worms in each of the reptiles' lungs and near their tracheas. The researchers then collaborated with the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine to conduct tests on the creatures' DNA to determine how the parasites were being introduced.

They discovered the parasite species appeared to be from southeast Asia, indicating they may be connected to Burmese pythons, a species native to that particular region that also happens to be an invasive species in the Sunshine State. They published their findings in the *Herpetological Review* in March. The Florida Wildlife Commission has been encouraging the public to "remove and kill pythons from

private lands whenever possible." The South Florida Water Management District even created a python elimination program in 2017 to protect the Everglades and eliminate the snakes from public lands. "Tens of thousands of invasive Burmese pythons are estimated to be present in the Everglades," the United States Geological Survey (USGS) says. Officials believe the snakes multiplied over the years, turning into an invasive species after careless pet owners released the exotic animals in swamps. Though Burmese pythons are more heavily populated in the southern portion of the state, Farrell and his team say they've found evidence of the parasite up to 100 miles away in Central Florida.

Many layers within India's middle class

The middle classes may comprise nearly 40% of the country. This has varied implications for the evolution of democracy and economic choices.

As India grows, it gets more middle class people.

Depending on the measures used, the estimated size of this middle class ranges between 78 million (Economist, Jan 2018) to 604 million (Krishnan and Hatekar, EPW June 2017).

What are the political implications of the expansion of this class? How will it affect the evolution of India's democracy? Is it interested in economic well-being and progress, and uninterested in politics? If it does participate in politics, will this class promote patronage politics and lower the quality of democracy? Or, will it deepen democracy?

Others have tried to answer these questions. On economics, most observers, if not all, believe that this class favours market-oriented liberalization, something India has witnessed since 1991. Indeed, it is argued that this class is the social mainstay of India's turn towards globalization and internal economic

liberalization. On politics, the opinions vary. Some argue that this class has separated from mainstream politics, craving technocratic solutions to economic problems. Others say that this class is illiberal, exhibiting a Hindu majoritarian proclivity and it would not mind leaving the minorities ever more vulnerable.

We submit that India has many middle classes (Easwaran Sridharan of the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for the Advanced Study of India was the first to use the term 'middle class' in plural). These classes neither have the same interests, nor do they speak with the same political voice. Some vigorously participate in politics; others are disengaged. Some are Hindu majoritarian, others would prefer a less aggressive Hindu voice even as they support freedom of religion and minority rights, and still others hold more inclusive views on secular matters.

There are four parameters that

distinguish the many middle classes: location (rural or urban); occupation; education (high school or college); and vehicular ownership (2-wheeler or car). The parameters related to location and occupation are self-explanatory, as is the parameter on education, with one clarification: the Rising Middle Class is one with high school or college education, but whose fathers (not mothers) were illiterate. The fourth parameter relates to vehicular ownership because vehicular assets are likely to be a more robust indicator (Krishna and Bajpai, EPW, 2015). Their arguments for this choice are threefold: assets are less susceptible to seasonal fluctuation, unlike income and expenditure; people themselves identify the possession of incremental assets as intrinsic markers of vertical mobility; and there is social status associated with assets, especially of certain kinds. In any event, there is significant correlation between



data on assets and income/expenditure.

Based on these parameters there are actually five middle classes in India: Rural Middle Class, Public Sector Middle Class, Urban Private Sector Middle Class, Trader Middle Class and Rising Middle Class. This may sound technical, but in the real world, the difference between a mid-level bureaucrat and a senior manager in a private firm, is all too obvious. How big are these middle classes? According to our calculations, they accounted for around 33% of India's population in 2014 (we used the National Electoral Survey (NES) conducted by CSDS/Lokniti for the years 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014,

summarised in Table 2).

Given that the proportion is up from 11.7% in 1999, the current size of India's middle classes could be 40% of the population. Interestingly, contrary to the perception that India's middle class is primarily urban, the Rural Middle Class at 13.7%, is the single largest category. Adding Trader middle class - Rural, and Rising middle class - Rural, the overall size of Rural middle classes is 2/3rd of India's total middle class. Essentially, there is no difference between the Rural-Urban distribution of India's middle class and the rural-urban distribution of the overall population. Rural India's economic demographic is no different from Urban India's.

Govt Money Meant for Adivasi Development Is Being Used to Support Mining



The tribal sub-plan is a strategy recommended by the Planning Commission and opted by the government of India. It is a fund meant for tribal areas and communities affected by mining. All ministries are required to contribute a specific part of their budget to the tribal sub-plan. During the last few years, the fund has received hundreds of crores of rupees. But where was the money spent? To summarise, the money meant for the development of tribals has been spent on preparing grounds for their

displacement. Mining, whether for coal or any other mineral, is usually carried out in tribal areas of the country. The government of India had set up the fund in order to support tribals who face problems or are displaced as a result of mining. After the Planning Commission was dissolved and replaced by the NITI Aayog, the tribal sub-plan was renamed the Scheduled Tribe component. Using the Right to Information, we tried to find out where and how the money was used under the scheme. The

response to our query revealed how the fund allocated for the development of tribals was used in 'other works'. These 'other works' are likely to lead to further displacement of tribals or cause them other problems. First, we need to know the purpose of the tribal sub-plan. The Planning Commission had clearly stated that the money allocated under it is to be used for the overall development of Scheduled Tribes. With the money, schemes were to be

devised which would directly benefit tribal communities. The Planning Commission had said that 8.2% of the coal ministry's budget and 4% of the Ministry of Mines' budget had to be set aside for the fund. Both ministries must have deposited the amount fixed under this plan every financial year. But was the money actually used for the development of tribal communities? Between 2010-11 and 2017-18, how much money did the two ministries allocate for the fund, how much of it was spent and where was it spent? Information obtained through the RTI Act brings out a shocking truth. The fund was invested in tasks which are most likely to bring about the destruction of tribal communities instead of developing them. The figures provided by Ministry of Coal and Ministry of Mines reveal that the money is being spent on activities which cannot be considered pro-tribal at all. Development or destruction?

According to data and

documents obtained, the coal ministry allocated the fund to government coal companies - CCL, SCCL and MCL. Instead of spending money for the development of tribal communities, the companies used the money for regional exploration, stowing, detailed drilling and security of mines. These activities are all directly related to mine detection and protection, and clearly, their objective is to find more mining opportunities and locate more mineral reserves. The fund, therefore, which was meant to benefit the tribal communities, is being siphoned off for activities that are likely to bring more harm to them. Meanwhile, the Geological Survey of India, regulated by the Ministry of Mines, received Rs 6,621 lakh under the tribal sub-plan between 2010-11 and 2017-18. The GSI spent the money in conducting surveys to locate mineral reserves in Kolkata, Nagpur, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Shillong.



The Insiders' Guide To the Mueller Report

How experts and political operatives are gearing up to read the juiciest Washington info dump in two decades.

(Insider Bureau) - The 400-page Mueller report, expected to land this week, is the most anticipated political read since Ken Starr, Monica Lewinsky and the stained blue dress-and potentially even juicier. But how do you wring that juice out of a behemoth of a legal document, full of redactions, at the speed of social media?

That's what the tribes of American politics are gearing up to do this week.

From the moment it drops, the scramble will be on-to defend the president, to plan new lines of attack, or to put this whole big crazy story into the wider context

of American history. So much material released all at once raises the question of how to dig in on something so dense, with so much buildup, where the feeding frenzy will be instant among the cable TV chattering classes and Twitter piranhas.

The capital has already evolved one model for processing a big tell-all book: "the Washington read," where you scan the index (assuming there is one) to find everything it says about you, your boss and your enemies and then fake like you've read the rest. But this time that won't be enough. The goods might not come easily. They might be

buried in an obscure subsection. And there's way more at stake than in the typical gossip memoir.

The report by special counsel Robert Mueller could be the biggest oppo dump in history. It could be a fizzle. Although Mueller didn't find enough evidence to charge President Donald Trump for conspiring with Russia to win the White House, and Attorney General William Barr has concluded that it doesn't show Trump obstructed justice, the report itself is expected to be rich with details uncovered by the sweeping 22-month investigation. We already know something

about the way the report will look, courtesy of Barr. The attorney general last week told Congress that the document will be color-coded to explain why lawyers for Mueller and DOJ have redacted some of the most sensitive material. But he promised that, for all the gaps, the report won't end up looking totally like Swiss cheese. "You will get more than the gist," Barr told a Senate appropriations subcommittee. To help navigate this once-in-a-generation moment, POLITICO asked dozens of people who have been tuned in since the 2016 presidential election-Trump officials, Republicans and

Democrats, former prosecutors, academics, historians and even the Russians-how they plan to read this two-years-in-the-making document when it shows up in their inbox. Here's what some of them said.

The President's Defenders Nobody has more at stake than Trump and his inner circle of family members, aides, loyalists and defenders. They've already seen some of their former colleagues face criminal charges and jail time from the Mueller probe. With the report's arrival, they know that any page could still contain a ticking bomb, one that could open the door to more legal scrutiny or kneecap the president politically as he mounts his reelection campaign. But the document might also have exculpatory material that would help Trump push back with his narrative that the whole probe has been a "witch hunt." Above all, Team Trump will need to respond. So inside the president's world, the attention will be focused on digesting the material, and quickly. Jay Sekulow, Trump's media-savvy personal lawyer, said he'll have a team of five to six people in place, each assigned a key section to read in parallel. The goal is preparing the quickest possible response to blast out to reporters-as well as to brief him and Rudy Giuliani as they fan out to talk more at length in media interviews.

How millions still continue to use TikTok

(Agencies)- TikTok, stuck in a legal tussle, and a ban invoked by the Madras High Court continues to be used extensively in the country with the app's engagement rates still in millions, people familiar with the developments said. Officials familiar with the developments at the company said its over 120 million existing users continue to use the app extensively in the country. Tik Tok is currently not available for new downloads on the app stores after the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asked Apple and Google to disable the downloads of the TikTok app from the App Store and the Google Play Store respectively.

Officials at the company said it is hopeful of a 'very good outcome' in the case which has reached the apex court, given the

app's 'skyrocketing popularity'. "Tik Tok has penetrated the cultural consciousness of people not just in tier 1, but tier 2, tier 3 cities. It has become an app for every man and we have been able to do that in less than a year. Tik Tok is everywhere from lanes in Connaught Place, Delhi, to a place like Surat which has a creator with over half a million followers," an official working at the company said.

"We are mindful of the local laws and regulations but what we are trying to say it that it has made a phenomenal impact in the everyday lives of Indians. In the lives of the 120 million monthly active users that we serve. We are an app for people to showcase their creativity and bring their imagination to life," the official added.

The ban was invoked by MeitY

after the Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay an earlier order by the Madras High Court that asked the Indian government to ban the TikTok app for spreading inappropriate content. The Madras High Court on Tuesday had refused to stay the ban on the app and appointed an independent counsel to the case. As per data shared with ET by app analytics firm App Annie, between April 1-18, Tik Tok still ranked #1 in terms of downloads on Google Play within social (Applications) and #1 in iOS under the photos and video category in India.

Justices N Kirubakaran and SS Sundar of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on April 3 had also issued directions prohibiting the media from telecasting the videos made using Tik Tok and asked if the



Government would enact a statute, like the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, enacted by the United States, to prevent the children becoming cyber/online victims.

A cyber security expert said it seemed that the court's order had been followed in letter but not in spirit by MeitY as children

(existing users) could still have access to the app. "It is not a complete ban considering the app's current user base," he added.

A recent report by app intelligence firm Sensor Tower estimated TikTok added 188 million users in quarter one of this year.



Modi Wave Over? Why Pollsters Are Scaling Down Predictions for BJP

(Insider Bureau)- Two of India's most prominent polling agencies - CSDS and C-Voter - appear to be scaling down their predictions for the BJP, after the first phase of polling that took place on 11 April. And this gives us an indication that the last set of opinion polls which predicted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's National Democratic Alliance either getting a slender majority or stopping just short of the half-way mark, might have ended up overestimating the BJP.

In an article published in The Asian Age on 13 April titled 'Is It Disadvantage BJP After First Phase of Polling?' CSDS director Sanjay Kumar makes the following observations:

"Of the eight Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh that went to polls in this state in the first round, the turnout went up only in Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar seats where the two Union ministers VK Singh and Mahesh Sharma, are,

respectively, contesting."

"In the remaining six Lok Sabha seats, that have a sizable proportion of Muslim voters, the turnout dropped compared to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections."

"My reading is, the BJP may have an advantage only in these two Lok Sabha seats and might be in trouble in the others."

"If that happens, the BJP would be down six in UP in the first round. It had won all these eight Lok Sabha seats in 2014 when elections were held there on 11 April.

Kumar's observations involve a both qualitative and quantitative change compared to his earlier prediction for the BJP.

In another article in The Asian Age, written exactly a week before this piece, Kumar had argued that it is "advantage BJP". Within just a week, "advantage BJP" has changed into "disadvantage BJP" albeit with a

question mark at the end.

In terms of seats, let's compare Kumar's prediction to the CSDS' last survey.

In the survey, released just a few days before the first phase of polling on 11 April, CSDS predicted that the BJP could win 32-40 out of Uttar Pradesh's 80 seats, that is around 40-50 percent of the seats in UP. But in his article on 13 April, Kumar predicts that BJP could lose six out of eight seats in the first phase. If this trend continues in the subsequent phases, the BJP's tally could end up with a tally of 20-25 seats.

The Quint asked Dr Sanjay Kumar whether he had indeed scaled down his prediction for the BJP. "My earlier piece (on 6 April) was mostly based on the data from the CSDS survey, in which I had said that BJP is at an advantage. The observations in my second article (dated 13 April) are based on the turnout

figures for the first phase," Kumar said. Kumar sticks by his assessment that BJP could be in trouble in six out of eight seats in the first phase in Uttar Pradesh.

Using the turnout data, Kumar extends his assessment of Uttar Pradesh to Bihar and Maharashtra as well.

"The turnout didn't increase in the seats in Bihar and Maharashtra that voted in the first phase, which indicates that the BJP is facing a challenge. In Bihar, the survey had predicted a one-sided sweep for the BJP. But four seats that voted in the first phase, appear to be witnessing a seat-to-seat fight," he told The Quint.

Even in the case of the Vidarbha region in Maharashtra, Kumar says that things may not have gone as well as expected for the BJP.

In its survey earlier this month, CSDS had predicted a near clean

sweep for the NDA in these two states - 28-34 seats out of 40 seats in Bihar and 38-42 seats out of 48 in Maharashtra.

Interestingly, this is the first time in several years that the CSDS had chosen to make seat predictions. Till now, CSDS gave vote share predictions and other key trends in its rather comprehensive surveys but always desisted from predicting seat-shares, which was done by the Chennai Mathematical Institute.

But it isn't just the CSDS that is scaling down its prediction for the BJP. Another prominent survey agency - CVoter - in its latest survey, has said that the approval rating of the Narendra Modi government has fallen by 19 points in a little over a month. According to the CVoter-IANS election tracker, the Modi government's approval rating peaked after the Balakot strike on 26 February.

A crackdown on Americans of Indian descent will cause worry

(Insider Bureau)- There are an estimated 2.8 million Americans of Indian descent (2010 census). Most of them are prosperous, highly educated and, notably, not known to get into trouble. They don't break the law, pay their taxes and, now increasingly, run for public offices. They have often been called the "model minority". But not every one of them has contributed equally to creating that gold standard, and their numbers, unfortunately, may be growing. They are not doctors, IT engineers, business leaders or academics that Indians have come to be associated with. They are scammers.

Twenty-four men and women from India (and of Indian descent) were convicted in July 2018 for defrauding thousands of Americans of millions of dollars through telephone frauds. They

targeted the elderly, preying on their vulnerabilities and insecurities. The scam was run from well-staffed call centres in India. Victims were approached on phone by callers impersonating federal income tax officials. They threatened victims with arrests if they did not pay up tax dues. This is just one of the many scams that are being tracked by US law enforcement. The cons, who were sentenced up to 20 years in jail, were a mix of Indians merely residing in the United States or those who had become American citizens. Some of those in the latter category, were ordered to be stripped of their citizenship after their sentence and sent back to India.

Another bunch of scammers, based in India and operating with Indian American accomplices,

targeted elderly Americans in what is called phone tech support fraud, according to an announcement from the US Department of Justice in March about a countrywide takedown of such frauds carried out jointly by multiple law enforcement and government agencies. A pop up ad on the computer screen would warn the victim, in stern language and tone, about a virus attack that could compromise the system and access personal information. Victims were asked to call a telephone number on the screen for help. Many people fell for it, and paid large sums of money to fix the phony problem. These operations were so well organised and sophisticated that US law enforcement officials have compared them to the Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian mafia. Attorney General William Barr



drew that comparison during an unrelated hearing on Capitol Hill on April 9. Nationals of many other countries have been involved in these frauds but America's top law enforcement officer mentioned only India as the source of most of them - "they are actually ... international criminal organisations, a lot of them come out of India".

And there are visa frauds, which he didn't talk about, but other officials have. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reported multiple cases of visa fraud, including those involving H-1B but not confined to it. An Indian American in Florida state pleaded guilty in March for running a marriage fraud along with an accomplice.

'Scrapping India's trade privileges could hit American consumers': US senators

India is the world's largest beneficiary of the GSP, dating from the 1970s, but trade ties with the US have widened over what Trump calls its high tariffs and concerns over New Delhi's e-commerce policies.

A US plan to end preferential duty-free imports of up to \$5.6 billion from India could raise costs for American consumers, two US senators have told their country's trade office, urging a delay in adopting the plan, and seeking more negotiations.

If US President Donald Trump presses ahead with his plan to end the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) for India, it could lose the status in early May, Indian officials have said, raising the prospect of retaliatory tariffs.

India is the world's largest beneficiary of the GSP, dating from the 1970s, but trade ties with the US have widened over what Trump calls its high tariffs

and concerns over New Delhi's e-commerce policies.

"While we agree that there are a number of market access issues that can and should be addressed, we do remain concerned that the withdrawal of duty concessions will make Indian exports of eligible products to the United States costlier," the senators, John Cornyn and Mark Warner, wrote.

"Some of these costs will likely be passed on to American consumers".

In their Friday letter, the co-chairs of the Senate's India caucus of more than 30 senators called for withdrawal to be delayed until the end of India's 39-day general elections, which began on Thursday, with results expected

on May 23.

Allowing for talks to continue beyond the elections would underscore the importance of the trade ties, presenting an opportunity to resolve market access issues and improve the overall US-India relationship for years to come, they added.

If the United States scraps duty-free access for about 2,000 product lines, it will mostly hurt small and medium businesses in India, such as makers of engineering goods.

Despite close political ties, trade between India and the United States, which stood at \$126 billion in 2017, is widely seen to be performing at nearly a quarter of its potential.

Trade relations suffered in the



past few months after India adopted new rules on e-commerce reining in how companies such as Amazon.com Inc and Walmart Inc-backed Flipkart do business. Last June, India said it would step up import duties varying

from 20 percent to 120 percent on a slew of U.S. farm, steel and iron products, angered by Washington's refusal to exempt it from new steel and aluminium tariffs. But it has since repeatedly delayed adopting the higher duties.

India seizures of cash, booze and gold surge

They're confiscating as much as one billion rupees in cash and goods each day, as offenders use ambulances and other vehicles fitted with flashing lights to carry cash and give handouts in lunch boxes to lure voters.



India's enforcement agencies have so far seized cash, liquor, drugs, gold and other contraband worth 25 billion rupees (\$361 million) as the country's polling gets underway, already double the value of goods seized in the

entire 2014 elections.

They're confiscating as much as one billion rupees in cash and goods each day, as offenders use ambulances and other vehicles fitted with flashing lights to carry cash and give handouts in lunch

boxes to lure voters.

The Election Commission's observers, surveillance teams and enforcement agencies are raiding airports, highways, railway stations, hotels and farm houses if there's a suspicion of illegal money.

They keep watch on financial brokers, cash couriers and pawn brokers engaged in the movement of cash, check vehicles crossing state borders and open bags on buses to search for bribes in order to ensure a fair vote.

"It is becoming a menace and assuming alarming proportions -- it is a national malady," said V.S. Sampath, former chief election commissioner. "It also shows how people are placing more faith on money than policies and programs."

The cat-and-mouse game between election commission officials and offenders happens because small handouts mean a lot to people in a country where a quarter of the population still live on less than \$2 per day.

Politicians also give handouts such as petrol, free meals, umbrellas and torches to stay below the permitted spending limit by a candidate -- a maximum seven million rupees, or the price of Jaguar's top luxury car model. These are on top of the publicly-declared freebies -- from smartphones to wifi, bicycles to pressure cookers -- provided by the political parties as part of their campaign promises.

Acceptance of money to vote or not to vote for a candidate is punishable with prison terms, fines or both. In 2014 the Election Commission seized 12 billion rupees worth of cash and contraband.

Political parties previously used physical intimidation or 'muscle power' to get voters to the ballot box, now they use 'money power,' said Sheyphali Saran, the spokeswoman for the poll watchdog.

'The Election Commission is concerned about the fact that the abuse of money is increasingly becoming a major challenge,' Saran said. "Instances of violations have increased but at the same time the Election Commission has increased its surveillance."

This growth in vote-buying also means a significant rise in election spending, making it the world's costliest election. Expenditure is set to rise 40 percent to \$7 billion, according to Centre for Media Studies, a New Delhi-based non-government organization.

'There should be moral and ethical awareness among the voters,' said Sampath. "The Election Commission alone can't solve it."

Roll over, quinoa. New, healthier rice is here

Having rice that breaks down more slowly to glucose, or low-GI rice, can therefore ensure sugar is more evenly released over time, rather than all at once. Any variety of rice with a GI score of 55 or less is considered diabetic-friendly.



Rice isn't nice for diabetics, but four low glycaemic index (GI) varieties developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) could make the cereal not just less damaging but also help achieve better diabetes control, scientists have said.

In a country on course to becoming the world's diabetes capital

by 2025, low GI foods - including quinoa and millets-based cereals - have become a fad for those wanting alternatives to starchy grains. According to World Health Organization (WHO), India has close to 62 million people living with the diseases and is projected to have close to 70 million diabetics by 2025, more than the

diabetic population of any other country in the world.

Glycaemic index is a measure of how quickly food is digested and sugar released into the bloodstream. Low GI foods are digested slowly and don't instantly release huge amounts of sugar in the body. Rice, naturally high in starch, has a high GI score,

making it a bad grain for diabetics.

"But for a vast majority of Indians whose diets culturally depend on rice, it's very difficult for other grains to take its place," says scientist Jyothi Badri of the Hyderabad-based, state-run Indian Institute of Rice Research. The institute has cracked complex rice plant biology to produce a bunch of varieties that have lower GI index.

They also are better quality and have higher yields. Rice naturally has a GI score of 70-80.

According to V Ravindrababu, a former director of the institute who oversaw the project, the challenge was to reduce the GI score to 55. The new varieties that were validated by the National Institute of Nutrition as having the lowest GI scores compared to commonly consumed varieties are Lalat (GI=53.17), BPT5204 (GI=51.42), Sampada (GI=51) and Samba Masuri (GI=53). All the new varieties have GI scores that are comparable to millet-based breakfast cereals such as oatmeal and quinoa, which have GI scores of 55 and 53. These varieties will be released to farm-

ers in the upcoming kharif or summer-sown season in 13 states.

Diabetes is a condition where the body can't maintain the right amount of glucose in the blood. Having rice that breaks down more slowly to glucose, or low-GI rice, can therefore ensure sugar is more evenly released over time, rather than all at once. Any variety of rice with a GI score of 55 or less is considered diabetic-friendly.

According to Badri, the "intention" behind developing these low GI rice varieties was to produce high-yielding rice. Their low glycaemic profile was incidental, she said. "Since they come with a low GI index, they can help good control of diabetes because they release sugar more slowly. But it is important to note that the quantity consumed is still important. Too much of these low GI rice isn't advisable," Badri said. What's more, the government even distributes rice cheaply to some 800 million poor Indians every month and many experts have said the government would do well to replace some of the rations with protein-based items.

World Autism Month: Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disability without physical traits

Like mental health issues, many developmental disorders are not visible in the same way that physical disabilities are (with the exception of Down syndrome and cerebral palsy, which do have physical characteristics).

How much do you know about developmental disorders? Do you know that many of these disorders are not associated with any physical traits or visible characteristics? Like mental health issues, many developmental disorders are not visible in the same way that physical disabilities are (with the exception of Down syndrome and cerebral palsy, which do have physical characteristics). Certain behaviours are linked to developmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but without physical characteristics that suggest a disorder or disability; these behaviours are often seen as odd, inappropriate or unacceptable. Unfortunately,

unusual behaviours lead to reactions that are hurtful and isolating - certainly not how someone with a disorder should be treated. And this is just one way that low levels of awareness affect those with developmental disorders, particularly autism spectrum disorder.

World Autism month, in April, is meant to change this.

Children affected with this disorderThe number of children with a developmental disorder in India is likely greater than you would have imagined. In India today, nearly one in eight children between the ages of two and nine years has at least one developmental disorder, according to a study published in July 2018. Developmental disorders covered in this study include vision impairment, epi-

lepsy, neuromotor impairments (cerebral palsy), hearing impairment, speech and language disorders, autism spectrum disorder, and intellectual disability. A global study published in August 2018 reported that as of 2016, India had 11,560,118 children under age five with a developmental disability - the largest number of any of the 195 countries covered in the study, which was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The figures are too great to be ignored, from both a public health perspective and from an economic perspective. Children with developmental disorders are not lacking intelligence or potential. In fact, these disorders are associated with unique strengths that can be put to great use in



many different fields. But their skills and talents can only be maximized if they are given the support they need from the healthcare professionals and schools in their communities. Support for the families Their families need support too, and that's where we can all lend a hand - first by making an effort to understand developmental disorders like ASD and then by sharing our understanding to build awareness and acceptance. Though you may not know it, you likely have a friend, co-worker

or neighbour with a special needs child. You can help them by spreading awareness around autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disorders. And we can all help by calling on government bodies and the private sector to do more for them and their families. Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder oASD is a neuro-developmental disorder with symptoms that typically appear in the first two years of life, though it can be diagnosed at any age.



Jennifer Lopez to be honoured with 2019 CFDA Fashion Icon award

J.Lo as she is popularly known, is being honoured by the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) for her impact on fashion, according to a popular magazine.

American singer-actor Jennifer Lopez, after remaining in the spotlight for more than two decades, has finally earned her place as a bonafide style icon. The 49-year-old star is being

honoured by the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) for her impact on fashion, reported People.

The CFDA recently announced that Lopez is all set to receive the prestigious Fashion Icon

Award at the 2019 CFDA Fashion Awards in New York City, later this year. From her bold and stunning red carpet fashion choices to her breathtakingly beautiful onstage looks, the 'Second Act' actor always pushes boundaries and takes chances with her fashion choices. In addition to her

red carpet looks, the singer has also graced the cover of almost every major fashion magazine worldwide, from Vogue to Harper's BAZAAR to InStyle, throughout her career. "Jennifer Lopez's style is bold, uninhibited, and always memorable. Designers, including many of our CFDA Members, love to dress her for both stage and private moments," said Steven Kolb, President, and CEO of the CFDA.

According to CFDA Chairwoman, Diane von Furstenberg, the actor chooses outfits that express confidence and power.

"Jennifer Lopez uses clothes as a way to express confidence and power. Both designers and fans look forward to her fashion statements," she said.

Lopez will join a list of previous recipients, including Beyonce, Rihanna, Pharrell Williams and



last year's winner, Naomi Campbell. The 2019 CFDA Fashion Awards will be held on June 3 and will be hosted at the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

The Tashkent Files movie review

Disgusting propaganda in which truth is a luxury

A host of worthy actors including Pankaj Tripathi and Naseeruddin Shah are wasted in this political propaganda on PM Lal Bahadur Shastri's death.

The Tashkent Files

Cast: Shweta Basu Prasad, Naseeruddin Shah, Mithun Chakraborty

Director: Vivek Agnihotri

Rating: 1/5

'Truth is a luxury'

12 angry men -- correction, 6 men and 3 women but all very angry and not afraid to show it -- sit down in a closed room to decide if former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died of natural causes or whether he was murdered. Director Vivek Agnihotri picks his menagerie carefully; he is in maximum impact mode this election season, after all. There is a historian and a journalist, a judge and a woman with multiple NGOs on her CV, a former intelligence operative and a scientist, an industrialist and two politicians.

The above line about truth just about sums up what happens in the dimly lit room where fact and

fiction are happily muddled up to serve you a concoction so lethal it can either send your blood pressure soaring or send you off to sleep. I would suggest the latter course in case you find yourself with a ticket of The Tashkent Files; it saves you a headache later.

Tashkent, referring to the Uzbekistan capital -- formerly a part of the USSR -- is where India's second prime minister died the day he signed an important treaty with Pakistan after the 1965 war. While officially his death is said to be due to a heart attack, conspiracy theories have suggested poisoning. Either Google it or watch The Tashkent Files - every whack-a-doodle conspiracy theory finds a play at both.

To take a stab at the film's story, thin as it is, a low-on-scruples journalist Ragini (Shweta Basu Prasad) gets a call from a Deep Throat who is a big fan of Kaun

Banega Crorepati. After playing fastest-fingers-first with her on the phone, he sends her a 'super secret dossier' on PM Shastri's death. There are no Pentagon Papers inside, only every theory or RTI query that is already out there on the internet.

Ragini gets her scoop but the political machinations are already underway. A manipulative home minister (Naseeruddin Shah) sets up a committee to look into her claims and heading it is Tripathi (Mithun Chakraborty), a politician looking for 'mudda' for the next elections. What happens next is best summed up by Naseer's crooked leader, "Only idiots are afraid of the truth. One should be scared of rumours because if they are not stopped, they become such irrefutable truth that even the truth starts looking like lies." We, the audience, get all kinds of rumours - said at a high octave over and over again. Inside



this committee room, nobody speaks, they shout. Instead of conversation, they deliver declamatory speeches. The closer we get to the climax, the shriller the tone becomes. To make sure the theories have a facsimile of truth, statements made by PM Shastri's family members - wife Lalita, Anil Shastri and Sunil Shastri - are referenced; works of his press secretary Kuldip Nayar and journalist Anuj Dhar are mentioned. The Tashkent Files is a propaganda film primarily and makes no bones to hide the fact. Mithun's character seems to be talking for the director when he calls historians "liberal terrorists",

NGOs "social terrorists", judges "judicial terrorists" and media "TRP terrorists". While "presstitutes", "liberal siculars" and "war of narratives" crawl out of social media onto the big screen in this film, the choicest of shots are saved for the Congress and Indira Gandhi. Emergency is alluded to repeatedly and claims made by KGB archivist Vasili Mitrokhin about the agency paying bribes to an unnamed senior leader and her cohorts run as a scroll. The director claims India was colonised again in the 70s and it would have never happened if Shastri was still at the helm.

Kalank movie review

Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Madhuri Dixit shine in a stunning but soulless film

Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt and especially Madhuri Dixit shine in director Abhishek Varman's stunning but soulless film. Rating: 2.5/5.

Kalank

Director - Abhishek Varman

Cast - Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Aditya Roy Kapur, Sonakshi Sinha, Madhuri Dixit, Sanjay Dutt

Rating - 2.5/5

First things first, this is a gorgeous film. Ostensibly set in pre-Independent India, Kalank instead appears to have been staged inside a 'Good Earth' catalogue curated by Baz Luhrmann. In a disreputable neighbourhood, a courtesan stands in her doorway while gondoliers paddle about in what looks to be a moat behind her, and later, when she feels the need to cry, she walks first to the centre of the elaborate golden motifs painted on her floor before dropping to her knees and wailing cinematically. This is as

baroque as it gets.

Directed by Abhishek Varman and shot by the masterful Binod Pradhan, the makers of Kalank not only want every frame to be a painting, but every dialogue a proverb, every scene a portent. The result is beautiful but tedious, an opera that needed a stout songstress to warble through it midway. We see revolutionaries in different shades of mustard, since it is set around the kite festival of Basant Panchami, but as Kalank goes on, we are conditioned to the exorbitant colours and their matching - from scarlet umbrellas to marsala walls and columns. Yet it jars when rioters holding swords march in fiery streets, dressed as if they'd first bickered about a suitably Prussian shade of blue. "You sing well," says the

courtesan to a young ingenue, "but there isn't enough salt." This search for the indefinable namak goes a long way in Indian art, and the older woman blames the blandness on the lack of spice in the girl's life. The girl - Roop (Alia Bhatt) - may agree, caught in a passionless marriage via Victorian circumstances: a wealthy woman with a few years to live wants Roop to be her husband's bride after she passes away. The arrangement is mechanical until Roop, inevitably, can be caged no more. The names are literal. The pretty girl is Roop, the outsider Bahaar Begum, the husband is Dev (like in pati-dev), the upright lady is Satya and the boy who wins women over is named Zafar, meaning victor. Played by Varun Dhawan, his eyes tinged with



kohl and misery, Zafar brings Kalank alive, a blacksmith forging swords with serrated edges, and lines even more lethal. Zafar says he doesn't lay a hand on a woman without permission or payment, and an awestruck Roop wonders aloud that even he must have a limit. He may not. "Inhi tez jumlon se Heera Mandi ke auraton ke dil kaat rakhe hain," admires his friend, emphasising how in a film where all lines are poetically potent,

Zafar often gets the last word because of the sharpness of his phrases. Dhawan is super, understanding the melodramatic syntax, making the audience root for him. Bhatt is fine in their scenes together, but otherwise appears reluctant to embrace this gaudy cinematic style, while Sonakshi Sinha, as Satya, is rather effective as a woman perpetually biting her tongue - and biding her time.

Saif Ali Khan-Kareena Kapoor's age difference gets a mention in *De De Pyaar De*. Here's how he reacted

The trailer for Ajay Devgn's new comedy *De De Pyaar De* made a reference to the age gap between Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor. Saif has responded to it.

Ajay Devgn, Tabu and Rakul Preet's new comedy *De De Pyaar De* will release in May this year. Ahead of its release, the trailer has created quite a ripple. One particular reference to the age difference between Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan has caught on. Now, Saif has responded to it.

According to a report in DNA, soon after the trailer was released on Ajay's birthday on April 2, he called up Saif to let him know about the reference. Saif, who is well known for his sense of humour, said that he was okay about it and was quoted as saying: "Hey, that's cool, man."

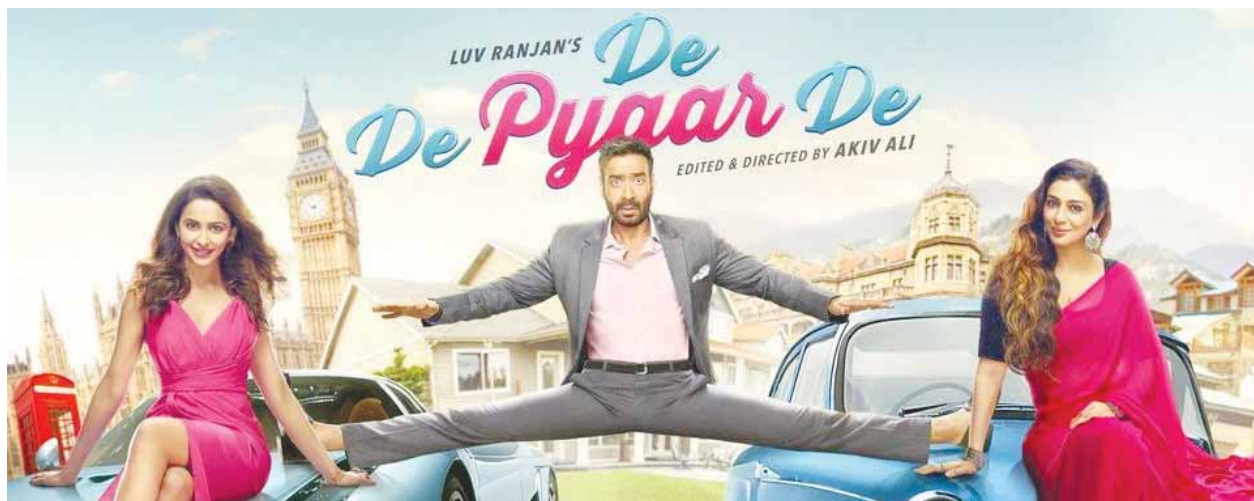
In the trailer, there is a moment where Ajay and his shrink Javed Jafferi are having a discussion about Ajay's romance with a much-younger girl (Rakul Preet). At one instance, Ajay talks about successful pairs with



considerable age difference and names Michael Douglas-Catherine Zeta Jones, George Clooney and Amal Clooney, and Saif and Kareena.

De De Pyaar De stars Ajay and Tabu who play a divorced couple with Rakul playing Ajay's newfound love. The trailer has notched up quite a few views, thanks to its rib-tickling humour. Ajay is a middle-aged man, caught between his ex-wife and his girlfriend, two unrelenting grown-up kids and mocking parents. Ajay and Saif,

who have worked together in *Om Kara* before, are working on *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, based on the 17th century Maratha warrior Tanaji Malusare, who fought alongside Shivaji and is famous for the Battle of Sinhagad in 1670 AD. Saif will be seen as the Rajput leader with Mughal army called Uday Bhan, while Ajay will essay the titular role.

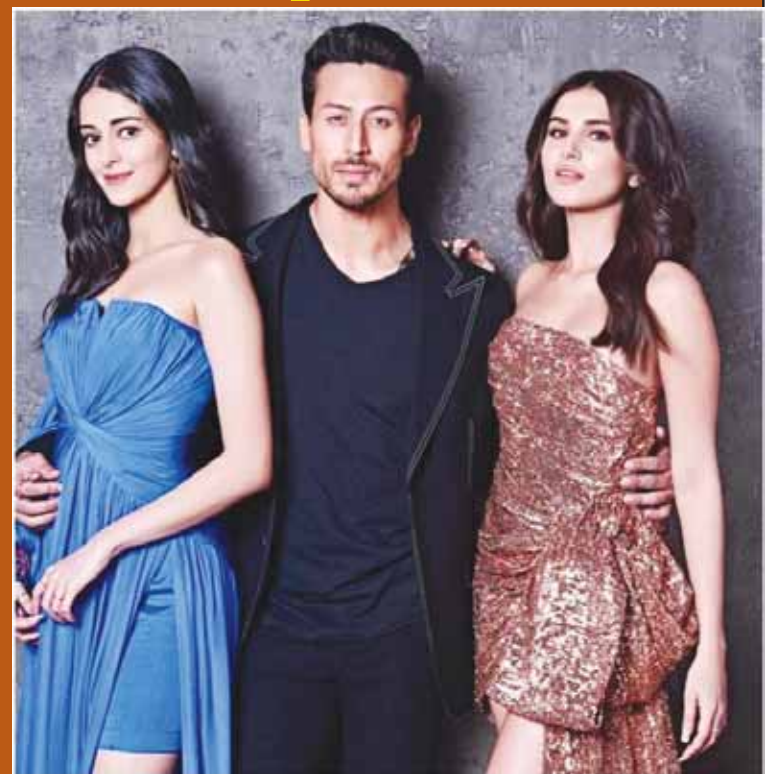


Student of The Year 2 actor Tara Sutaria to make her singing debut in Ahan's Shetty's launchpad, *RX100*

Soon after *Student of the Year 2*, Tara Sutaria will make her singing debut with a romantic number in Suniel Shetty's son Ahan's first Bollywood film, a Hindi remake of Telugu hit *RX100*.

Actor Tara Sutaria, who makes her Bollywood debut alongside Tiger Shroff and Ananya Panday with *Student of The Year 2*, is already bagging new projects and is set to join the league of singer-actors like Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar, Alia Bhatt, Parineeti Chopra, Priyanka Chopra and Shradha Kapoor. Tara will croon a romantic number in Suniel Shetty's son Ahan's debut film. When she was recently seen at the trailer launch of her debut film, she also sang a few lines of the famous Lata Mangeshkar song *Lag Ja Gale*. A source told Hindustan Times that the makers of *RX100* Hindi remake have roped in Tara for a romantic song. "She will render the romantic number, which will be picturised on her in Ahan Shetty's debut. Sajid Bhatt, Parineeti Chopra, Priyanka Chopra and Shradha Kapoor. Tara will croon a romantic number in Suniel Shetty's son Ahan's debut film. When she was recently seen at the trailer launch of her debut film, she also sang a few lines of the

RX100 and launches Suniel Shetty's son Ahan with the action movie, which goes on floors in June. The film will be shot in Dehradun and Mussoorie and stunt director Stefan Richter, who worked with Salman on the 2014 hit *Kick*, and has been credited for *Hitman's Bodyguard*, starring Ryan Reynolds and Samuel L Jackson. Directed by Punit Malhotra, Tara's launch vehicle *Student of The Year 2* is a sequel to Karan Johar's 2012 hit *Student of The Year* that launched the careers of Alia Bhatt, Varun Dhawan and Sidharth Malhotra.



Kim Kardashian reveals new fragrance collaboration with Kylie Jenner

(Insider Bureau) - Kim Kardashian revealed a delay in her latest fragrance release on Wednesday. The 37-year-old reality star took to her social media to reveal that her collaboration with sister Kylie Jenner - KKW Fragrance X Kylie perfumes - will be put on hold due to issues with the durability of the bottles. The announcement may have quelled fans who believed the original release date of the fragrance 4/26 meant the sisters were trolling Taylor Swift as the pop star was teasing a big announcement for the same date. The siblings teased about the new line - which will be in lip-shaped fragrance bottles retailing for \$40 each - just days prior. Kim wrote in a lengthy note on her Instagram and Twitter: 'We are so excited to launch our fragrance

collaboration that we've been working on for such a long time.' The mother of three continued: 'Sadly, we found out today from the manufacturer that a few of our bottles did not pass durability tests while on the assembly line and we have paused production while the team explores the issue further.' Adding: 'Together, we have made the difficult decision to delay the launch as we would never release a product that did not meet the strictest of quality guidelines.' Kim finished it off with: 'We'll be sure to let you know as soon as we have a new launch date! Thank you for your understanding and support always. Love Kim & Kylie.' Kim and Kylie first teased the fragrance collaboration on the season 16 premiere of Keeping Up With The Kardashians. Meanwhile, the reality

star was accused of re-igniting her feud with Taylor after their infamous 2016 fallout. Kim and Kylie originally announced the release date to be April 26, which just happens to be the day Taylor has been hinting she'll be dropping new music. With their history of bad blood it could be concluded that Kim deliberately chose the same day Swift plans to release her new music. 'LIKE ON THE SAME DAY AS TAYLOR SWIFT NEW SINGLE LIKE YOU ARE NOT OVER IT LIKE YOU SAY YOU ARE,' wrote one follower. But now with the delay, fans can rest easy that Kim Vs. Taylor 2.0 is not happening.



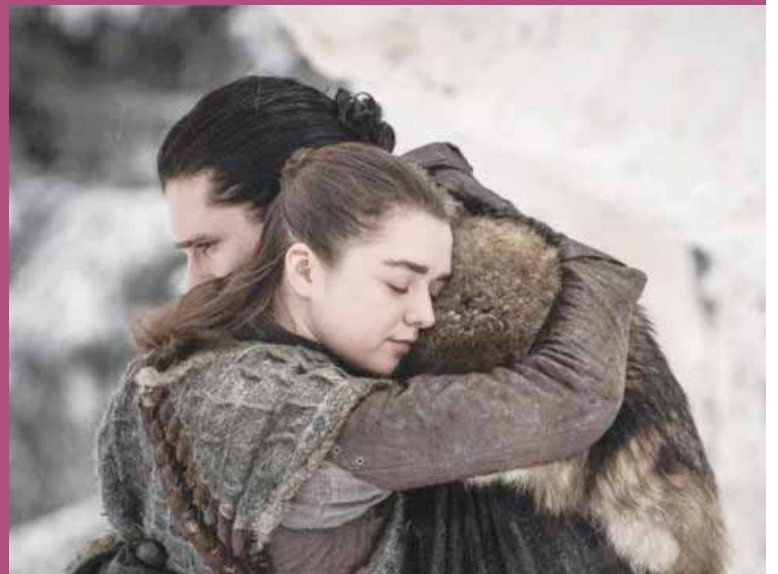
9 scenes in Game of Thrones premiere were exact replicas of series' first episode

Did you spot them all?

(Insider Bureau) - The first episode of the eighth and final season of the popular TV show Game of Thrones aired on Monday, bringing back memories of the seasons that went by. Viewers drew parallels between several scenes from the new episode and were amazed to pick up hints that were dropped by the makers in the first season. Millions of fans worldwide joined the dots to discover the prominent instances shown in the first episode which were repeated in the latest episode. Here are some of them that will leave you in awe:
 S1E1: Ned Stark tells Jon Snow as they part ways

outside Winterfell. "Next time we see each other, we'll talk about your mother," Ned tells Jon.
 S8E1: While Ned Stark is now dead, Samwell Tarly tells Jon about his mother in front of Ned's statue in the crypt of Winterfell.
 S1E1: Young Bran was seen climbing a tower to catch a glimpse of a King (Robert Baratheon) arriving in Winterfell.
 S8E1: A young boy is seen climbing a tree to watch a Queen (Daenerys) arriving in Winterfell.
 1E1: Arya joins the crowd to watch the king and queen arrive.
 S8E1: Arya joins the crowd to watch the King in the North and Queen Daenerys arrive.
 S1E1: A King and a Queen (Robert Baratheon and Cersei

Lannister) come to Winterfell to meet the Starks (Ned Stark and his family).
 S8E1: A Queen and a King (Daenerys and Jon Snow) come to Winterfell and meet the Starks (Sansa Stark, Arya Stark and Bran Stark).
 S1E1: Ned and Robert (best friends) talk in the crypt about Lyanna Stark and Rhaegar Targaryen.
 S8E1: Jon and Samwell Tarly (best friends) talk in the crypt about Lyanna and Rhaegar.
 S1E1: Starks welcomed Cersei and Robert, Ned said 'Your Grace, Winterfell is yours.'
 S8E1: Starks welcomed Jon and Daenerys and Sansa said 'Winterfell is yours, Your Grace.'



Ned Stark and Catelyn Stark in season 1 episode 1 and Jon meets Arya in season 8 episode 1 near the weirwood tree of the Godswood of Winterfell.
 S1E1: Ned is at the Weirwood tree of the Godswood of Winterfell meeting a Stark lady (Catelyn Stark).
 S8E1: Jon is near the Weirwood tree of the Godswood

of Winterfell meeting a Stark lady (Arya).
 S1E1: White Walkers made a creepy mandala made out of the Wildlings' body parts after an attack.
 S8E1: Young Lord Umber was pinned to a wall at the centre of the same mandala made out of severed body parts.



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