

## Will Priyanka's Charisma save Congress?

*Before Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was appointed as Congress general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh East, she had refused to take up any active role in the state politics beyond the parliamentary constituencies of Amethi and Rae Bareli.*

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## CBI books former Air India chief

The CBI booked Jadhav and other former senior officials of the national carrier for allegedly violating norms in appointing general manager rank officers.



(Agencies) The CBI has booked former Air India Chairman-cum-Managing Director Arvind Jadhav and other former senior officials of the national carrier for allegedly violating norms in appointing general manager rank officers, officials said Wednesday.

Along with Jadhav, the CBI has booked Dr (Ms) LP Nakhwa (now retired), then General Manager (medical services) and then Additional General Managers A Kathpalia2, Amitabh Singh and Rohit Bhasin.

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## Congress is "Parivarwadi", says PM Modi



(Agencies) After Congress president Rahul Gandhi appointed sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh East on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi targeted the party with dynastic politics barb during his interaction with the BJP workers in Maharashtra while praising Nationalist Party or the NCP chief Sharad Pawar.

Addressing the BJP workers at Baramati, Sharad Pawar's home town, via video-conferencing, PM Modi hit out at the Congress calling it "parivarwadi" (dynastic) party and referred to an alleged "ill treatment" offered by it to NCP chief Sharad Pawar.

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## India's new Ambassador to US



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## 2020 Democratic Party Frontrunner

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# India's new Ambassador to US calls on US President



(Insider Bureau)- Washington: India's new Ambassador to the United States Harsh Vardhan Shringla called on the US President Donald Trump and presented his credentials here on Friday (local time). Post the meeting, Shringla addressed the media and the State Department officials.

Talking about his meeting with

Trump, Shringla said, "The President attaches great importance to our bilateral relations. He referred to the wide gamut of operations that two nations are involved in, not just at the bilateral level but also as strategic partners in a level that involves regional and global areas of interest, in particular, the vision of the Indo-Pacific region.

"He further stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump had envisioned partnership on the Indo-Pacific front during their 2017 meeting. Stating that the work on the relationship will be a great experience as they "have a wide Canvas," Shringla said, "It is really for us to see how we can manoeuvre the various

elements that comprise our relationship to take this forward in a way that it is befitting of the two nations and the commonalities that the two countries enjoy in the terms of ideas, principles and objectives on regional, bilateral and global levels." He further revealed that he had called on Prime Minister Modi before arriving in Washington DC and said, "He (the Prime Minister) was quite particular that we should make the fullest endeavour to address all the

areas that could show a very significant change in the relationship."

Furthermore, talking about the huge potentials for cooperation, Shringla said, "It is very incumbent on me and my colleagues along with partners and stakeholders to see how we can best take this relationship to the levels for which the potentials exist."

He further said that the two countries have been working on multiple levels together.

**H**ailing the progress as momentous, the ambassador stated that a great amount of progress has been made in different areas of cooperation including bilateral, regional and global levels.

Reiterating that team India aims to be very diligent in pursuing these opportunities of cooperation, Shringla said, "As team Indian, we need to be on our toes."

Shringla arrived in Washington DC on January 9 and took charge as Ambassador-designate. Shringla replaced outgoing envoy Navtej Sarna.

## Raj Shah leaves White House to helm communications firm with Clinton administration alum



(By a Staff Reporter) Raj Shah, who served as deputy press secretary for much of the Trump administration, has left the White House and joined a prominent communications and lobbying firm. Shah and Jamie Rubin, former assistant secretary of state for public affairs in former President Bill Clinton's administration, are together leading Ballard Media Group. It's a division of the government relations firm Ballard Partners, founded by longtime Florida lobbyist Brian Ballard.

"I'm excited to join Brian, Jamie and the top-notch team to launch Ballard Media Group," Shah said in a statement. "Companies, organizations and industries today face increasing scrutiny from an unrelenting media landscape. Our team, with years

of proven results, will provide the strategic communications clients need to navigate these challenges and successfully deliver their message to the right audience." Shah joined the White House as principal deputy press secretary after serving as deputy communications director for the Republican National Committee. During his tenure at the White House, Shah briefed the press in the absence of White House press secretary Sarah Sanders and helped to oversee strategy and communications for the successful confirmation last year of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. The Senate narrowly confirmed Kavanaugh in October after a contentious confirmation fight.

Ballard Partners said Shah will join the firm as a partner.

## Indian couple was intoxicated during fatal fall from California's Yosemite Park: Autopsy report

**Due to the condition of the bodies after the extreme fall, investigators were unable to accurately discern a specific level of intoxication, Andrea Stewart, assistant Mariposa County coroner said.**

(By a Staff Reporter) An Indian couple, who fell to their deaths in October reportedly while taking a selfie at a steep cliff in California's Yosemite National Park, were intoxicated at the time of the tragic fall, according to an autopsy report.

Vishnu Viswanath, 29, and his wife, Meenakshi Moorthy, 30, were "intoxicated with ethyl alcohol" prior to falling 800 feet from Taft Point on October 25, but no drugs were present in their bodies, according to the autopsy report. Ethyl alcohol is found in alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine and hard liquor.

Due to the condition of the bodies after the extreme fall, investigators were unable to accurately discern a specific level of intoxication, Andrea Stewart, assistant Mariposa County coroner said. "All we can conclude is that they had been



drinking and that they had alcohol in their systems. We don't know how much," Stewart was quoted as saying by Mercury News. The couple from Kerala died "of multiple injuries to the head, neck, chest and abdomen, sustained by a fall from a mountain," the report said. The couple had been married since 2014. Both graduated in 2010 from the College of Engineering, Chengannur, in Kerala. Viswanath was a software engineer with Cisco India at the company's headquarters in Silicon Valley. Moorthy and Viswanath - who showcased their adventure-seeking travels on Instagram - had set up a tripod at Taft Point before they

fell 800 feet down the side of a steep cliff. The tripod was later discovered on the edge of the overlook. Viswanath's brother, Jishnu Viswanath said it appeared the couple died trying to take a photo. Viswanath and his wife Moorthy, travelled the world documenting their trips to locales like the Grand Canyon, Paris, New

York City, Niagara Falls, London, Big Sur and other scenic destinations. Just months before her tragic death, Moorthy had warned in an Instagram post the dangers of taking photographs on the edge of cliffs and atop skyscrapers. She posted a picture of herself at the Grand Canyon, saying in the caption that "A lot of us including yours truly is a fan of daredevilry attempts of standing at the edge of cliffs. But did you know that wind gusts can be fatal? Is our life worth one photo?" In an eerie coincidence, Moorthy appears in the selfie of another tourist couple at Taft Point, just minutes before she plummeted to her death.

# Kamala Harris represents the rise of the Indian Americans

(By a Staff Reporter) The Indian American immigrant population has often been called the "model migrants" and earned high points for its level of education, prosperity and integration.

California senator and Indian American Kamala Devi Harris announced her plans to seek to be elected to the most powerful political position in the world. While she is not the first person of Indian descent to make such an announcement, her candidacy is the first credible one by an Indian American. Harris is widely seen as a serious contender for the Democratic Party nomination and, therefore, the Oval Office. That the name of another Indian American, Nikki Haley, is always mentioned when cocktail conversation in Washington weighs possible Republican alternatives to Donald Trump is a sign of how far Indian Americans have progressed in the hyper-competitive world of the US politics.

The Indian American immigrant population has often been called the "model migrants" and earned high points for its level of education, prosperity and integration. But less commented upon is the speed with which Indian Americans have entered the realm of US politics. In the recently concluded US midterm congressional elections, a remarkable 37 Indian Americans ran for office - roughly double the number that ran in the last congressional contest. Kamala Harris was the first Indian American to break through into the Senate, the US Congress's upper house. Notably, in one house seat in Illinois, both the Democratic and Republican candidates were of Indian origin. While only a handful of Indians won seats, the fact that an immigrant population of barely five million, most of whom arrived largely in the past century, is having so much political impact is significant. There are some

obvious reasons for the ease with which Indian Americans have entered the US political fray. One is their high levels of education and wealth. Another is their proficiency in English, unusual among non-white immigrant groups. A third is the degree to which they have merged into the larger American population. Indian Americans are widely scattered with minimal ghettoisation. Instead, they are found largely in white middle class suburbs and have taken on the political, cultural and social values of middle class educated Americans - one reason three quarters of Indian Americans are Democrats.

However, none of this explains the speed with which Indian Americans have entered US politics. The likes of Kamala Harris, Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal are all second generation Indian Americans. More striking is how Indian Americans are



found sprinkled throughout the US political systems - participating in local and regional politics. Nothing could cement the argument that India and the US are "natural allies" as well as the election of the first Indian American president

## Mueller team disputes aspects of BuzzFeed report on Trump, Cohen

**The special counsel's normally tight-lipped operation issued a statement saying there were inaccuracies in a blockbuster report that the president instructed his former personal attorney to lie to Congress.**

(By a Staff Reporter) Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office is denying aspects of a blockbuster BuzzFeed news report that President Donald Trump instructed his former personal attorney Michael Cohen to lie to Congress about dealings related to a Trump Tower Moscow project under consideration during the 2016 presidential election.

Mueller's normally tight-lipped operation issued a statement Friday night indicating that the BuzzFeed report contained inaccuracies, at least with respect to its statements about the information gathered by the special counsel's team.

"BuzzFeed's description of specific statements to the Special Counsel's Office, and characterization of documents and testimony obtained by this office, regarding Michael Cohen's Congressional testimony are not

accurate," Mueller spokesman Peter Carr said in a statement. He did not elaborate.

Trump quickly took to Twitter to react to the news, retweeting messages from supporters who'd expressed suspicion about the report. He later tweeted it was "A very sad day for journalism, but a great day for our Country!" Prior to Mueller's office throwing cold water on the anonymously sourced report, Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani had denied the BuzzFeed story as based on "made-up lies" from Cohen.

"Any suggestion - from any source - that the President counseled Michael Cohen to lie is categorically false," Giuliani said. Later Friday, Giuliani said Cohen "is on his way to destroying the credibility of anyone relying on him."

BuzzFeed added the statement to its report, but suggested that the comment from Mueller's office

was vague about what parts of the media outlet's story were being denied. "We stand by our reporting, and we are working to determine what exactly the Special Counsel is disputing," BuzzFeed spokesman Matt Mithenthal said in an email to POLITICO. "Stay tuned."

In a statement posted online, BuzzFeed editor-in-chief Ben Smith said: "In response to the statement tonight from the Special Counsel's spokesman: We stand by our reporting and the sources who informed it, and we urge the Special Counsel to make clear what he's disputing." The BuzzFeed report posted Thursday said two unnamed federal law enforcement officials involved in probing Cohen's statements about the Trump Tower Moscow project said Trump had told Cohen to lie to Congressional committees about the status of the project during



the 2016 race.

BuzzFeed's story said law enforcement sources confirmed that Cohen had given that account to Mueller's office. The outlet also said its sources maintained that Cohen had at least ten face-to-face meetings with Trump about the project during the campaign, despite his repeated denials of business dealings with Russia.

In November, Cohen pleaded guilty to a single count of lying to Congress for making inaccurate statements to House

and Senate committees about the Moscow project. He's scheduled to testify publicly to the House Oversight Committee on Feb. 7.

The initial report drew an unusually grave reaction from many Democratic lawmakers and even some Republicans on Friday, who said that if the account was true it appeared to implicate Trump in a clear violation of laws prohibiting false and misleading statements to Congress.

Trump's legal team embraced Mueller's Friday evening denial.

# Shackled suspect

**38, sobs and talks to himself as he appears in court for kidnapping Boston woman from a bar found crying in his home - as judge orders psychiatric evaluation**



(Insider Bureau)-, A man charged with kidnapping a 23-year-old woman in Boston was ordered to undergo a mental health evaluation after sobbing and muttering to himself during his arraignment this afternoon. Victor Pena had a not guilty plea entered on his behalf and was ordered held without bail. The 38-year-old was arrested Tuesday after police found Olivia Ambrose alive inside his apartment in the Charlestown neighborhood. Court documents say that when police entered Pena's home Tuesday, Ambrose

was crying and had a 'horrified look on her face.' Ambrose told a detective 'she was being held against her will,' and that Pena took her phone and 'refused to let her leave the apartment for the entire time she was held there,' according to the filings. Boston Police Commissioner William Gross says Pena could face additional charges, based on Ambrose's interview with detectives. He is due back in court on February 11. Wearing a white jumpsuit, and with his

wrists cuffed and ankles shackled, Pena was overheated crying and talking quietly to himself at the Charlestown Division of the Boston Municipal Court in Charlestown, reported The Boston Globe. Court psychologist Jodie Shapiro, who examined Pena after his arrest, told the judge the suspect acted in a 'bizarre' manner during their interview, including sucking his thumb and praying for forgiveness. Shapiro said Pena told her he was having paranoid thoughts and hearing

voices, and purported to have no understanding of what was happening. The psychologist said that while Pena appeared to show signs of mental illness, she suggested it was possible he was playing up some of the symptoms. Pena's older brother, Jose, told the Globe his sibling is mentally challenged as a result of a medical procedure performed on him aged seven, during which his brain was deprived of oxygen. Jose said that based on his brother's version of events, which he relayed to him in a phone call from jail, Victor did not kidnap Ambrose. According to the paper, Victor told his older brother that he met the 23-year-old woman Saturday, and that she went with him willingly and spent the night at his home. The next morning, Ambrose allegedly told Victor she was afraid her father would be angry with her and decided to stay in his apartment. Jose said Victor told him Ambrose busied herself by cleaning his cluttered apartment.

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**Priyanka Formally Enters politics**



**Trump White House grows eager to escape losing shutdown fight**

After a day of failed Senate action, Trump and his advisers realize they may never win over Democrats in a battle that is costing them dearly.

# Multiple White House aides are 'handling Rudy's f\*\*\* ups'

(Insider Bureau)-Rudy Giuliani's latest media blitz, which was filled with a dizzying array of misstatements and hurried clarifications, agitated President Donald Trump and some of his allies, who have raised the possibility that the outspoken presidential lawyer should be sidelined from televised interviews - at least temporarily.

'Every time he opens his mouth on TV it's like "Cleanup on aisle Giuliani!"' a White House official told DailyMail.com on Wednesday.

Politico reported that a White House official acknowledged the severity of the West Wing's all-hands approach to putting out Giuliani-related fires.

'Handling Rudy's f\*\*\* ups takes more than one man,' that official said.

Trump was frustrated with Giuliani, according to three White House officials and Republicans close to the White House who were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Yet the president is in no mood to cut him loose, according to

CNN. 'Rudy's not getting fired,' one of the network's sources said.

Some of Trump's allies have suggested that Giuliani should at least be barred from evening interviews because of concerns that he was going on TV after drinking, according to three Republicans close to the White House.

Giuliani has previously insisted he does not have an issue with alcohol, denying to Politico last May that it affected his interviews. He added: 'I may have a drink for dinner. I like to drink with cigars.' White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders walked away from reporters on Wednesday morning outside the West Wing when she was asked about Giuliani.

The president told advisers that he felt his lawyer had obscured what he believed was a public relations victory: the special counsel's rare public statement disputing portions of a BuzzFeed News story that Trump instructed his former attorney, Michael Cohen, to lie before Congress.

The president told confidants that Giuliani had 'changed the

headlines' for the worse and raised the possibility that Giuliani do fewer cable hits, at least for a while, according to the officials and Republicans.

Several of Trump's influential outside allies also have begun expressing reservations about Giuliani. Some members of this informal network of advisers, whom the president frequently calls from the White House residence, urged Trump in recent days to bench Giuliani - but most stopped short of suggesting he fire his trusted attorney.

Rarely reluctant to appear before TV cameras or answer a reporter's call, Giuliani has spent nearly a year acting as a sort of human smokescreen for Trump. He has long played the role more of presidential spokesman than attorney, often unleashing public attacks on special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into possible contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia.

But a recent set of interviews, which were quickly pilloried across cable news, prompted increased concerns about both Trump's legal exposure and the effectiveness of his vocal



attorney.

Frustration about Giuliani in the West Wing has long run rampant. The former New York City mayor, who frequently speaks directly to the president, is Trump's outside counsel and works in a different orbit than White House officials, who are still left to play damage control after some of Giuliani's wilder interviews.

The latest furor began Sunday as Giuliani, wearing a suit, tie and New York Yankees World Series ring, appeared on NBC's 'Meet the Press' and dramatically altered the timeline regarding discussions about a Trump

Tower in Moscow, now asserting they stretched until November 2016.

That statement, which suggested that the Trump Organization was engaged in business dealings with Russia up to and beyond the election, ignited a firestorm and then an abrupt walk-back from Giuliani. He issued a statement the next day saying his comments about the project 'were hypothetical and not based on conversations I had with the President. My comments did not represent the actual timing or circumstances of any such discussions.'

Then, hours later in an interview

## 'Me too - only I was a kid'

**Bryan Singer is accused of raping more underage teens and molesting one boy who was 13 in shocking expose as Oscar voters give Bohemian Rhapsody Best Picture nom**

(Insider Bureau)- Bryan Singer is once again being accused of raping multiple underage teens in a shocking expose published by The Atlantic. Four new men have come forward to share their stories, which are remarkably similar to those shared by a number of men in the past. The youngest accuser claims that he was just 13 when Singer molested him on a film set, while others recount being plied with drugs and alcohol before being led to a bedroom by the director. That youngest victim said that as he watched the Harvey Weinstein scandal unfold, he started to think: 'Me too - only I was a kid.' This comes one day after Oscar voters awarded the director's latest film, Bohemian Rhapsody, with five Oscar nominations. He is also being paid \$10 million to direct the upcoming film Red Sonja, whose title character is

survivor of sexual abuse. Time's Up did not respond to a request for comment. The producers and actors who worked on Bohemian Rhapsody claim that they were unaware of the allegations against Singer, which were first reported back in 2014 when Michael Egan accused the director of rape. Among the men speaking out is Victor Valdovinos, who claims that he was 13 when Singer, then in his 30s, molested him on the set of Apt Pupil. He claims that Singer first approached him in a bathroom at his school, and then asked him to be in the film. Valdovinos arrived on the set the next day only to be told to strip, put on a towel and then hidden away in a room. 'I'm hanging out. All of a sudden, Bryan comes in. He goes, "Hey! How are you?" Real cheerful. And I'm like, "Hi," said Valdovinos. 'I can't remember his exact words, but

he was kind of just saying "Come back here." He kind of directs me; he kind of grabs me; and he takes us to the back area, which was kind of closed off. He went on to say: 'I was back here, in the towel, with no shirt and no clothes on, sitting on one of the locker-room benches. Bryan's like, "Just hang out here. It's going to be all day. Don't worry." Singer allegedly paid multiple visits to the seventh-grade student throughout the day. 'Every time he had a chance - three times - he would go back there;' claimed Valdovinos. 'He was always touching my chest.' Then, at one point, Singer allegedly 'grabbed my genitals and started masturbating it' and then 'rubbed his front part on me,' Valdovinos said. 'He did it all with this smile.'

## Texas man arrested for reportedly stabbing his nephew's dog



(Agencies)-A Texas man is accused of taking a knife to his nephew's dog in a revenge attack for the canine killing his chicken last year.

Owen Jay Pettit, 45, of Leander, Texas, was arrested Saturday and charged with cruelty to animals after admitting to stabbing the dog, according to the Austin American Statesman. According to the arrest affidavit, Pettit's nephew, 28, Pettit's said he heard his dog, Jessica, or 'Jess,' barking and yelping after he had left his uncle for the evening. The nephew also lives on the same Leander property, but in a separate residence.

When he went to investigate, he found his uncle holding Jess down on the ground, and he yelled for him to stop.

Owen then stabbed a three-and-a-half inch steak knife into the shoulder of the dog, before the nephew managed to pull his uncle off. The dog then limped away with the knife still stuck in the shoulder.

The nephew was removed the knife from the shoulder before police came on the scene.

The uncle said he stabbed the dog because she had killed his chicken last year. Court documents noted he 'openly admitted' to the stabbing 'and showed no remorse.'

Pettit has since posted bond and was released from Travis County jail, NBCDFW reports.

The dog was given stitches and is now doing well, according to Kristen Dark, Travis County sheriff's office spokesperson.

Sheriff's deputies reportedly recovered the knife from the scene covered in blood and dog fur.

# Heck, yes, Trump should give his State of the Union

Speaker Nancy Pelosi has given President Trump an opportunity to change the dynamic of the State of the Union address, an event that has become predictable and often boring. It has featured members of Congress popping up and down like w h a c k - a - m o l e s , interrupting the president with applause if they agree with him, or stone silence if they don't.

Pelosi claims that because of the partial government

shutdown, the security of the U.S. Capitol cannot be guaranteed. The Department of Homeland Security debunked her claim, saying that the Secret Service and Capitol Police will perform their duties whether or not they are receiving paychecks.

President Trump might consider reverting to the pattern of previous presidents, sending his address to Congress in writing. Then he might deliver the speech from the Oval Office, or at one of his rallies instead of in the Capitol Building. Democrats wouldn't be able to instantly respond on television, as they did following the president's border wall speech, and even if they did, they would likely look as small as Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) did then.

The truth is that the economic state of the union is good. According to Labor Department data, more people than ever are working and unemployment figures, especially in the African-American and Hispanic communities, are at record, or near record lows. The stock market, after a recent decline, has rebounded, for which retirees are no doubt grateful.

Unfortunately, the political state of the country is anything but unified; not even close. For decades the media and their Democrat allies have blamed Republicans for dividing the country when they stand on their principles, only praising members of the GOP when they submit to Democrat demands.

The Constitution requires a president to deliver an annual assessment of the state of the union. George Washington delivered the first one before Congress on Jan. 8, 1790 in New York City, which was the new nation's provisional capital. In 1801, Thomas Jefferson, believing an in-person address would have made him look like a king appearing before his subjects, set



the precedent of writing his state of the union address and having it delivered to Congress by a clerk.

Woodrow Wilson re-established the practice of an in-person speech, but the practice was not consistent even during the latter part of the 20th century. Jimmy Carter delivered a written report in January 1981, shortly before Ronald Reagan was inaugurated. Every president since has delivered a State of the Union address before Congress with Reagan adding a twist, the recognition of balcony guests he and his successors wished to honor.

When radio and especially television offered an opportunity for presidents to be heard and later seen, most have delivered their remarks in person. The House of Representatives offers an impressive backdrop, but shots of some members of Congress smirking, texting and otherwise not paying much attention, do not demonstrate the respect the speech deserves.

Most people who pay attention to the childish and partisan behavior that characterizes Washington these days can do their own assessment of the state of the union. If they have jobs and are prospering, they probably think it is pretty good - the pettiness in Washington notwithstanding. Should President Trump decide to do an alternative report, either in writing, or from the White House, or even a retro address on radio, he is likely to get more attention than he would receive from delivering it in person. He could also go ahead with a speech in the House of Representatives and by doing so challenge Democrats and Pelosi's claims of insufficient security. Maybe Pelosi and Schumer would boycott the speech; it would certainly appeal to their liberal base. It would also demonstrate who the real culprits are when it comes to the country's disunity.

# A wide Democratic field

As expected, the array of presidential hopefuls for the 2020 U.S. election has widened considerably on the Democratic Party side, with at least eight candidates declared running, another six likely to run, and a further eight potential entrants sitting on the fence. Some analysts put the total size of the potential Democratic aspirational pool at 34. The latest addition to the list was Kamala Harris, a first-term Senator from California and daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants. Ms. Harris enters this crowded arena with the heft of her star power, having accumulated considerable political capital through her tough questioning of President Donald Trump's cabinet nominees - including then Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who admitted that being grilled by Ms. Harris made him "nervous" - and other notables. Nevertheless, she was beaten to it by the New Year's Day announcement of Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, a top-tier Democrat who also took on Mr. Trump over policy issues but attracted criticism for an unnecessary controversy over a DNA test to establish her Native American ancestry. While it is likely that the two Senators will remain on the ballot when the first state, Iowa, heads to the primaries in early February 2020, most entrants between now and then are expected to drop out as their popularity and donor-support figures come into sharper focus. That is the real question at the heart of America's complex Democratic primary:

why are so many candidates throwing their hats in the ring at this juncture, and what does it tell us about the challenge that the ultimate nominee will pose to Mr. Trump's re-election prospects? First, whoever wins the nomination will inherit the burden - and benefits - of the considerable anti-Trump sentiment that is swirling across diverse pockets of the country. An early indication of this likely outcome lies in the fact that most prospective candidates have announced policy positions that are situated in the centre-left of the American political spectrum, positioning themselves against Trump on immigration, health care, criminal justice and more. An example of such a policy position is Medicare-for-All, which not only Ms. Harris and Ms. Warren, but some newcomers too, such as Julián Castro, the former mayor of San Antonio, Texas, consider a part of their core agenda. Second, the Democratic universe is enthusiastic about this race as Mr. Trump not only lost the popular vote in 2016, by 46% to 48%, nearly three million votes, but also, currently, has the worst net approval rating of any post-World War II U.S. President. However, a big challenge that looms for Democratic candidates is to gauge the way independent voters, who often keep their voting preferences secret from pollsters, lean. These voters were the undoing of Hillary Clinton in the Rust Belt states, and they could again tip the scales back toward the nativist populism of their Commander-in-Chief.



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# Question the government on Rafale

**The handling of the Rafale issue by the Modi government have dealt a deep blow to India's**

(Insider Bureau)-The Rafale deal is back in the news. Writing in The Hindu, its former editor N Ram has shown why the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government ended up paying substantially more for 36 fighter aircraft. The article has drawn the ire of the government's votaries and their responses merit scrutiny. But we also need to go beyond the question of costs and look at the causes and consequences of the decision to scrap the older process for acquiring 126 aircraft. Although the government has resolutely refused to share the full details of the costs of the deal, the broad figures have been in the public domain from the time the agreement was inked. As early as September 24,

2016, Ajai Shukla reported that the average cost of each of the 36 bare-bones aircraft was ₹91.7 million (in all, ₹3.3 billion). In addition, there were costs of India-specific enhancements (₹1.7 billion), spares (₹1.8 billion), logistics (₹350 million) and weaponry (₹700 million). Drawing on official documents, The Hindu article shows that the cost of these enhancements is actually ₹1.3 billion. In its original bid for 126 aircraft, Dassault Aviation had pegged the design and development costs of these at ₹1.4 billion. In the negotiations for the new contract, this came down a bit to ₹1.3 billion. Because this fixed cost would now be spread over 36 aircraft instead of 126, the cost per aircraft in the

new deal was naturally higher. When the bids for the older tender had opened in 2011, the price of each of the bare 126 aircraft quoted by Dassault was ₹100.85 million (including the price escalation from ₹91.75 million in 2007, as claimed by Dassault). The cost of development and design for each of the 126 aircraft worked out to ₹11.11 million. So, the total cost of each aircraft stood at ₹111.96 million. By contrast in the new deal, the government procured each bare aircraft at ₹91.7 million. But the costs of development and design amounted to ₹36.11 million, taking the total price of each of the 36 aircraft to ₹127.86 million. In short, the government obtained a 9% reduction in the price of the bare aircraft, but ended up paying substantially more

owing to the fixed costs of development. The difference in price per aircraft could actually be higher as the government dropped the standard 'options' clause that allows it to purchase an additional 50% of the aircraft under the same terms and conditions. In other words, the costs of design and development in the older process could have covered not 126 but 189 aircraft, bringing the average cost of each plane further down. Critics have claimed that the comparison is misleading because these 36 aircraft will come with additional capabilities beyond those specified in the older tender. This is true, but beside the point. The salient fact is that there is no increase in India-specific enhancements sought by the Indian Air Force. As the ministry of defence's spokesperson notes in his response to

The Hindu report (circulated to a few journalists): "These were part of the 2007 bid and continued to be part of the 2016 deal." The additional weaponry and logistics performance now sought by the Air Force are calculated under separate heads of costing. Bringing them in does not in any way detract from the point that the government has ended up paying more owing to the fixed costs of design and development of India-specific enhancements. This extraordinary ineptitude can only be explained by the circumvention of laid down procedures. The prime minister evidently took the decision to scrap the old tender and purchase 36 Rafales without consulting the Air Force or the ministry of defence. According to the procurement procedure, a declaration of intent to buy any defence equipment can happen only after the government approves the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the equipment in the specified quantity. This is done by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by the Raksha Mantri, after a statement of case is moved by the concerned service headquarters. The government has informed the Supreme Court that the DAC approved the AoN for 36 aircraft on May 13, 2015, although Prime Minister Modi had announced the deal during his visit to Paris on April 10, 2015.

## The crisis of imbalance in the world economy

**Privatisation of social sector services are making people poorer and eating into their chances of upward mobility. Rise of finance compared to green field economic activity has made economic growth more skewed. Solutions to these problems requires coordinated, long-term policy actions.**

(Insider Bureau)- The World Economic Forum (WEF), an annual event held in the Swiss ski resort of Davos, has become a symbol of global capitalism. Oxfam, an international advocacy organisation, releases its global report on inequality to coincide with the WEF to question the rising inequality which has accompanied the current phase of capitalism. The findings of the report, like other advocacy studies, are important, but also sensational at times. Here are some examples from this year's report. Twenty-six people owned the same amount of wealth as the bottom 3.8 billion people in the world in 2018. This figure was 43 in 2017.

The total wealth owned by billionaires increased by \$900 billion in 2018, while the wealth of the bottom 3.8 billion fell by 11%. In the 10 years since the global financial crisis, the number of billionaires has nearly doubled. These findings are based on calculations by Credit Suisse and Forbes, which, in turn, rely on multiple other sources and assumptions. Some of these are extremely volatile. Oxfam revised the number of billionaires who owned as much wealth as the bottom half of humanity from eight to 61 for 2016 in its 2018 report. Surveys estimating the wealth of the population are often

conducted infrequently in countries, especially in the global south. For India, this data is not available after 2012-13. Even if these issues are set aside, there are other logical problems. Should wealth be the sole indicator of the problem of inequality? A rural house in Bihar might be worth nothing compared to a posh villa in South Mumbai. But, if the village where the house is located were to receive a significant boost in terms of education and health infrastructure, life would become a lot better for its occupants without there being any decline in wealth inequality at all. Similarly, if a labour intensive industrialist were



to become the new developments which run counter to the examples given above. Privatisation of social sector services are making people poorer and eating into their chances of upward mobility. Rise of inequality in the global economy is due to

developments which run counter to the examples given above. Privatisation of social sector services are making people poorer and eating into their chances of upward mobility. Rise of inequality in the global economy is due to

made economic growth more skewed. The solution to these problems requires coordinated, long-term policy actions and not Robin Hood-type solutions which a cursory reading of Oxfam's drastic conclusions might suggest.

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# Decoding Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's big role in UP politics

**Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is a formidable campaigner. In speech, she can be firmly soft and softly firm, deftly using her charisma to connect with the audience.**

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is a formidable campaigner. In speech, she can be firmly soft and softly firm, deftly using her charisma to connect with the audience. She first donned the mantle of poll campaigner in 1999 in support of family friend and Congress candidate Satish Sharma. His BJP rival in those elections in Rae Bareilly was Arun Nehru, her father's estranged cousin who left the party to join VP Singh's Jan Morcha at the height of the Bofors controversy of the 1980s. At her first public meeting, Priyanka asked the crowds whether they'd vote for the man who stabbed her father in the back: "kya aap uss

vyakti ke liye vote karenge jisne merey pitaa ke peeth mein churi bhonki thei." It was then widely believed that Priyanka's intervention changed the game, destroying in one blow the prospects of Nehru who finished fourth in the election won by Sharma. That was two decades ago. Neither Rae Bareilly nor Amethi are today a cakewalk for the Congress. Mayawati made a valid point while giving her reasons for the Bahujan Samaj Party-Samajwadi Party alliance leaving for the Congress, seats represented by Sonia and Rahul Gandhi in Parliament. She said: that's to ensure they don't get bogged down in their constituencies and are free to campaign across India. In sum, Priyanka's launch in a formal

party role is on a difficult terrain; she is in charge of east Uttar Pradesh. The BSP-SP combine in eastern UP will be formidable; and the BJP is resting its hopes on the political clout of the Narendra Modi-Yogi Adityanath duo in the region bordering Bihar. Modi's Varanasi is in east UP, so is Yogi's Gorakhpur. In immediate terms, Priyanka's elevation as AICC general secretary has earned the Congress a part in UP's poll narrative from which it was absent after being kept out of the BSP-SP tie-up. But the airwaves the party has come to dominate cannot create a presence on the ground where social alliances of the kind the SP-BSP have, are required to take on the BJP. The consequences could be

deleterious if it turns out to be a spectacle without substance, like the Rahul-Akhilesh Yadav partnership in the 2017 UP assembly polls. That brings one to the efficacy of the Priyanka factor in the upcoming polls-and the objective behind bringing her on-board the party at the current juncture. For one, her arrival will motivate and galvanize cadres in UP and beyond, especially in states where the Congress retains political primacy. For that reason, old timers foresee her role expanding beyond what's assigned to her for starters. If true, that'll be the strategic dimension of Priyanka's organizational role. The tactical part of it could be to force a rethink in the BSP-SP camp for affording the Congress a respectable space in the anti-BJP lineup. Akhilesh Yadav is expected to be more amenable to the idea. But can he, or will he prevail over Mayawati who thinks little of the Congress's non-

transferable vote? If it becomes the third corner in the fight, the Congress in a 'spoiler' role could hurt the BSP-SP more by splitting the youth and the minority vote. The other edge of the knife will cut into the BJP's forward caste base. "If the alliance includes us, the BJP's tally will be reduced to less than ten," claimed a former president of the Congress's UP unit. Conversely, the saffron party could win 20-25 seats. The tactical aspect of the Congress move found robust expression in Rahul's first comments on Priyanka's organizational avatar. Underscoring ideological similarities with the BSP-SP combine and the high esteem in which he holds Mayawati and Akhilesh, he said: "We have no enmity... We will cooperate with each other. They can come and talk to us. All three of us want to defeat the BJP."

## India must focus on resilience and adaptation

Policy makers must also use traditional knowledge to deal with climate change. Pointing towards a rise in catastrophic weather events in India, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that the year 2000 was a "tipping point" for the impact of climate change led warming in the country. The IMD's report - 'Statement on Climate of India during 2018'- has documented a gradual, significant rise in the annual mean temperature from 2000 and linked this trend to climate change because India's warming trends are similar to the pattern of global warming. In India, 11 out of 15 warmest years

occurred during the past 15 years (2004-2018). The past decade (2009-2018) was also the warmest decade on record in the country. Reacting to the IMD report, scientists said India is projected to experience a temperature rise of 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2040 if measures are not taken to curb greenhouse gas emissions. This could have devastating impact on agriculture, coastal communities, and cost several animal species their natural habitat. There is only one way to tackle such temperature variability. One must plan proper climate adaptation strategies and do everything possible to

implement them without delay. Unfortunately, that is not happening at either the speed or scale required. For example, India may lead the Solar Alliance, but when it comes to the nation's electric mobility policy, there has hardly been much movement beyond piecemeal strategies. Or, for that matter, are our cities ready to tackle climate change? No. Most are yet to firm up resilience and adaptation strategies such as climate-resilient infrastructure, proper waste management and water harvesting to tackle this enormous challenge. There are many reasons for this. Most city



governments struggle to deal with other day-to-day development challenges such as education, infrastructure and health, and so climate resilience and adaptation figure low on their list of priorities. Second, big cities such

as Delhi and Mumbai have no city resilience plans because there is a multiplicity of authorities, which tend to work in silos whereas climate change cuts across several departments:

## US trade war takes its toll on the Chinese economy

China's GDP grew at 6.6% in the quarter ending December 2018. This is the slowest pace of growth for the Asian giant since March 1992 in normal times. This figure was 6.4% during the March 2009 quarter. But this came in the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2008.

The deceleration has not come suddenly. After a brief recovery in the post-crisis phase, China's GDP has been on a downward trajectory for almost a decade now. This was to be expected. No country can maintain double

digit growth rates for ever. China hopes to replace investment by mass consumption as its future growth engine. But it will also have to reckon with the sobering impact of decelerating population growth, thanks to the one-child policy, on the economy. Challenges to China's growth are not just internal. Access to US

export markets was an important pillar of the China growth story. The Trump administration believes that this growth has come at the cost of the American economy, particularly jobs. To undo this damage, it has now

started a trade war.

The policy has come at a time when China is no pushover in terms of both economic and strategic might. Despite having lost its fastest growing economy status, China's contribution to global GDP growth continues to be high. World Bank data shows that China accounted for more than one-fourth of global GDP growth in 2017. The figure was less than one-tenth for India. Any significant and sudden deceleration in Chinese economic growth is bound to have ripple effects across the

globe. Given China's infrastructural initiatives, such as the One Belt One Road project, these effects will come from more avenues than export markets. What complicates understanding China's future economic trajectory even more is the role of its communist state. Analysts expect the state to come up with strong policies to reverse the deceleration in growth. The same holds for its external engagements. Chinese retaliated against initial tariff hostilities by the US. On 18 January, 2019, Bloomberg

reported that China is also considering reconciliatory tactics, and has made an offer of bringing down its trade surplus with the US to zero by 2024.

There has been much jubilation about India replacing China as the world's fastest growing economy. However, we must not make the mistake of thinking that just because its growth rate is decelerating, China's importance in the global economy will reduce significantly in the days to come.

# Ships still burning

## Search resumes for missing Indian, Turkish crew in Kerch Strait

**Both vessels were flying Tanzanian flags. One of them was a liquefied natural gas carrier and another one was a tanker. The fire broke out as the two ships were transferring fuel from one to the other.**

(Agencies)-Russian authorities on Wednesday resumed search operation for 10 missing sailors after two ships carrying Indian, Turkish and Libyan crew members caught fire in the Kerch Strait, where the blaze was still raging following the accident which killed 14 seafarers.

At least 14 people reported dead after the fire broke out on Monday off Russia's territorial waters. A search for 10 others is ongoing in the Kerch Strait which separates Russia from Crimea.

"The situation has not changed," an official from the Russian Federal Agency of Maritime and

River Transportation was quoted as saying by the TASS news agency.

"The two ships are still burning, the Spasatel Demidov vessel approaches them from time to time in order to throw water on them, but it cannot stay close to the fire all the time," he noted.

Though there was no information from Russia and Crimea about the identities of those killed and missing, but Turkey said four of its nationals were killed, eight were rescued and four went missing after the fire.

Indian authorities earlier said the Indian embassy in Moscow was in constant

touch with the concerned Russian agencies to get more information on Indian nationals affected in the incident and to extend necessary assistance.

Both vessels were flying Tanzanian flags. One of them was a liquefied natural gas carrier and another one was a tanker. The fire broke out as the two ships were transferring fuel from one to the other.

The search effort for sailors missing in the accident was resumed on Wednesday.

A local official of the maritime rescue service said that the Merkury tow boat, which brought the sailors to Crimea's Kerch

on Tuesday, was also returning to the accident scene. "Merkury is heading to the fire scene, it will be involved in searching [for the sailors] and extinguishing the fire," a spokesperson said. A special vessel, Spasatel Demidov, is continuing the effort to put out the fire, which is still underway. The ships have not sunk because their important parts remain intact. Citing a source in the Azov-Black Sea branch of the Maritime Rescue Service, the TASS said that attempts to extinguish the fire were failing because of burning LNG. "Only LNG is burning at the moment. The fire engulfing parts of



the ships has been extinguished but gas is coming out and burning, it is like a gas burner," the source said, adding that according to recent information, the Candy was carrying about 2,500 tonnes of LNG. There is no information about the amount of gas carried by the Maestro but the two ships are similar in size, so it might be the same.

The condition of sailors who were rescued during the ship fire incident in the Kerch Strait causes no concern, head of Crimea's Disaster Medicine and Ambulance Center Sergei Olefirenko was quoted as

saying by the TASS. "The rescued sailors... are being treated at Kerch City Hospital. Their condition is fair, there are no signs of deterioration. There is no danger to their lives," he said. Meanwhile, Crimean Human Rights Ombudsman Lyudmila Lubina said that border guards and consular workers were preparing documents for the rescued sailors. "They are Turkish and Indian nationals. Border guards and consular services are working on documents so that they can return to their home countries," the ombudsman said.

## A nurse is accused of impregnating a woman in a vegetative state who later gave birth

(Agencies)- A 36-year-old nurse has been arrested on suspicion of impregnating a woman in a vegetative state who unexpectedly gave birth last month at a Phoenix health care facility, police said Wednesday. Nathan Sutherland, a licensed practical nurse who was caring for the woman at the Hacienda HealthCare facility, has been charged with one count of sexual assault and one count of vulnerable adult abuse, according to court documents from Maricopa County Superior Court.

A court order compelled Sutherland to provide a DNA sample to investigators on Tuesday, and crime lab technicians determined his DNA "matched the baby," Phoenix police Sgt. Tommy Thompson said. Sutherland was arrested on Tuesday. A judge set a cash bond at \$500,000 and scheduled Sutherland's next court appearance for January 30. The nurse is being held in the Maricopa County Jail. Sutherland has "invoked his Fifth Amendment rights" and has not participated in an

interview with police, Thompson said.

The arrest is the latest chapter in a weekslong investigation that started when the 29-year-old woman -- who is not able to give consent and has been at the facility since 2002 -- gave birth in late December.

Investigators are trying to determine whether he assaulted anyone else, or whether this woman was assaulted more than once, Thompson said.

"We owed this arrest to the victim. We owed this arrest to the newest member of our community -- that innocent baby," Phoenix police Chief Jeri Williams said at a news conference Wednesday.

The woman's family is aware of Sutherland's arrest but declines to comment further, said their attorney, John Michaels. Hacienda HealthCare said every member of the company is "troubled beyond words to think that a ... nurse could be capable of seriously harming a patient."

The arrest came two days after the facility announced, without elaboration, that one

doctor who led the woman's care resigned, and another was suspended. The company did not name the doctors, and police did not mention them at their news conference. "We had no idea she

was pregnant." Caretakers of the woman were surprised by the December 29 birth, with one telling a 911 dispatcher, "We had no idea she was pregnant." The woman is a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe and has long been in a vegetative state, the tribe's chairman has said. "The baby, I am told, is doing quite well," Thompson said, without elaborating on who is taking care of the infant. Police began investigating the case as a sexual assault because the woman cannot give consent. Hacienda was ordered to hire a third-party manager to oversee several of its facilities.

Investigators obtained search warrants for records that helped them identify people who had access to the woman, as well as court orders to get DNA evidence from men who worked at

the facility, police said. Detectives learned that Sutherland was among those responsible for caring for the woman "during the time this sexual assault occurred," leading to the court order compelling him to provide a DNA sample, Thompson said. At Sutherland's initial court appearance, Cohen explained the prosecution's decision to seek the significant cash bond. "The charges in this case are very serious, the defendant sexually assaulted a very vulnerable adult who had no capacity to resist, no capacity to cry out, no capacity to do anything other than to be subject to what the defendant did to her," Cohen said. Sutherland attorney David Gregan asked for a much lower bond, saying there was "no direct evidence that Mr. Sutherland has committed these acts," and that he anticipated that Sutherland's defense would include his own DNA expert. Sutherland, wearing a dark shirt and jacket, said nothing other



than his name and date of birth. If he posts bond, Sutherland must be under house arrest and wear an electronic monitoring bracelet while awaiting trial, a judge said. Sutherland has also been ordered to stay away from the Hacienda HealthCare facility and cannot contact the victim or any witnesses involved in the case, according to the court documents. Chairman Terry Rambler of the San Carlos Apache Tribe said the tribe "hopes that justice will be served to the maximum extent allowed under the law." Nicole Capone, a spokeswoman for Arizona Department of Health Services, said the agency's requirement for additional safety measures remains in place, including increased staff presence during interactions with patients and more monitoring of patient care areas. Hacienda HealthCare offers apology

and send our deepest sympathies to the client and her family, to the community and to our agency partners at every level," the company said in a statement Wednesday. Sutherland had worked at the facility since 2012, Hacienda HealthCare said Wednesday. Thompson had previously said Sutherland had worked at the facility since 2011. Sutherland, who had a current nursing license and had undergone an extensive background check before he was hired, was fired immediately Wednesday morning after the company learned of his arrest. His last shift was on Sunday, the company said. "We will do everything in our power to ensure justice in this case," the statement said, adding that Hacienda had been cooperating with investigators. "In the past two weeks, the Hacienda team has increased security measures to ensure the safety of all our patients. We will continue to do so.

## Class 12 student strangulates 6-year-old girl to death for resisting rape, held

**The girl had returned home around 7pm from her tuitions but left again soon, saying "bhaiya" was calling her and that she would be back soon. She did not return.**



(Insider Bureau)-An 18-year-old class 12 student was arrested by Ghaziabad Police on Wednesday for allegedly attempting to rape a six-year-old girl and later strangulating her to death when he resisted his attempt.

Police said the suspect, the girl's private tutor, also tried to allegedly sexually assault the body before dumping it.

The incident took place in Loni on Monday evening.

The girl had returned home around 7pm from her tuitions but left again soon, saying "bhaiya" was calling her and that she would be back soon. She did not return.

Her father found her body the next morning outside a mosque when he went to offer prayers after a night-long reach.

Police arrested Faizul Islam, a student of a government school in Delhi, who used to teach eight children, including five girls, in his neighbourhood.

The cops got a hint about his involvement as the girl had told her family that "bhaiya" was calling her. Her family told police she used to refer to Faizul as "bhaiya" and this led them to close in on him during investigation.

"On Monday evening, the accused called the girl, saying he would give her an eraser. He took her to his maternal uncle's house, where he used to take tuitions. There was no one in the house at that time. He took her to a room on the first floor, where he tried to assault her but she started crying. He gagged her with his hand when she tried to resist," AK Maurya, superintendent of police (rural), said.

Police said the girl lost consciousness and later died. He took her to the roof and wrapped her body in a quilt to hide it. "He was planning how to dump the body, while the girl's family started searching for her. Around 1.30am, once

the streets became quiet, he dumped the body on a sand pile outside the mosque and went to sleep," Maurya said. Police said based on the initial investigations, they booked the accused for rape, murder and destruction of evidence, besides levying provisions of the Protection of

Children from Sexual Offences Act.

"We recovered the quilt he used to hide the body on the roof and the slippers of the victim which he had hidden in the house. He is an adult. Initially, he denied any involvement but later broke down and narrated all events

leading to the girl's murder," Maurya said.

Police said he had been eyeing the girl for the past one week before the incident.

The officers said he had created a social networking group in which he had invited his known friends and used to chat about pornography



## After 24 hours of losing contact, navy relocates body in Meghalaya mine

**Rescuers managed to relocate the body of a miner in the rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills District on Wednesday, 24 hours after it slipped from the grip of the Indian Navy's underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV).**

(Agencies) - Rescuers managed to relocate the body of a miner in the rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills District on Wednesday, 24 hours after it slipped from the grip of the Indian Navy's underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV). An official involved in the rescue, who did not want to be named, said the body was relocated late in the evening on Wednesday. Another official familiar with development also confirmed that the body "has been relocated and in the process to pull it out continues."

The body disengaged from the ROV after it was pulled from the rat hole to the main shaft of the mine on Tuesday.

"The Indian Navy today

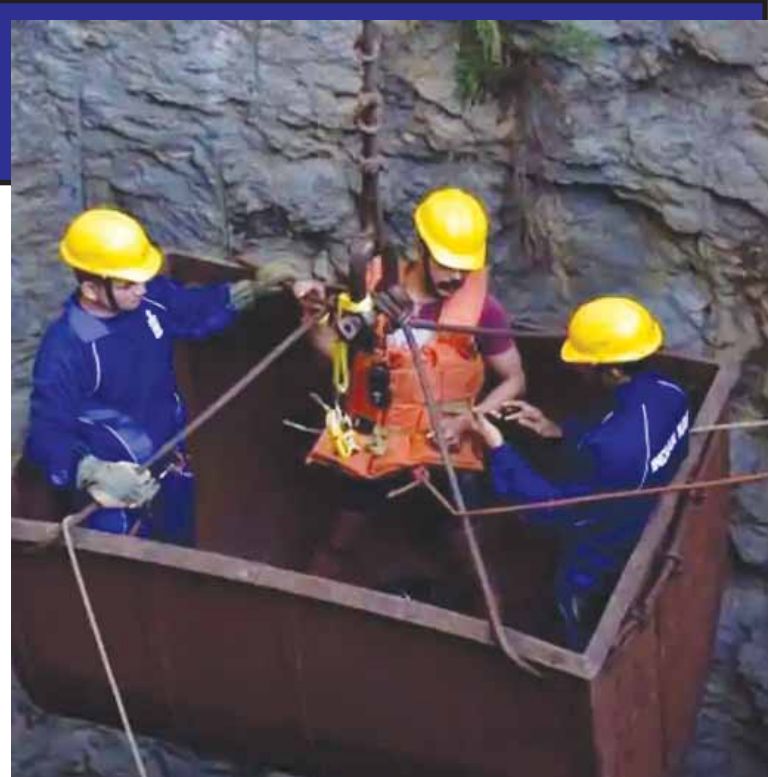
(Wednesday) resumed their work with the ROV inside the main shaft to locate the remains that slipped from the jaw of ROV yesterday (Tuesday) while trying to pull it upwards," R Susngi, the spokesperson of the East Jaintia Hills district administration, said earlier on Wednesday as the navy ROV searched for the body. At least 15 miners were trapped in the illegal rat-hole mine in Khloo Rynksan of East Jaintia Hills district, when it was flooded on December 13.

"Due to the presence of pipes, cables, debris, their efforts to locate have not been successful," Susngi said

elaborating the difficulties in tracing the body.

Officials involved in the rescue operation said they believed the body would float in the water in the main shaft. Instead, it went to the bottom. The main shaft has around 170 feet of water which has not receded despite attempts to pump it out.

The body which was spotted by the ROV in one of the rat holes on January 16, was in a highly decomposed state and authorities had sought the help of family members of the missing miners to identify the victim. Parts of the body started disintegrating as the ROV tried to pull it out, officials



had said earlier. The look for survivors will continue. Meghalaya government It also indicated that the informed the Supreme Court workers trapped in the mine on Monday that the operations for more than a month may at the rat-hole coal mine to have died.



# Congress bets on Priyanka's 'charisma'

Congress workers celebrate outside AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday.



Since the party is a family concern, these kinds of postings are nothing unusual... why has she been given a limited role...?

— RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD,  
UNION MINISTER FOR LAW & JUSTICE



Priyanka Gandhi became general secy of Congress, but everyone knows how this household company works.

— JP NADDA,  
UNION HEALTH MINISTER



It's a stamp by Congress & Rahul Gandhi on his utter failure and they had to play this East UP card to ensure seats.

— HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL,  
UNION MINISTER OF FOOD PROCESSING

(Insider Bureau)- While Rahul wishes his sister well, BJP dubs move usual in 'family-centric' party

The Congress hopes to galvanise the cadre by appointing Priyanka Gandhi as General Secretary in-charge of politically-crucial Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

'Charismatic campaigner'

The party expects that she, along with Jyotiraditya Scindia, will be a "charismatic campaigner" during the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. There is also a demand that she must contest from any of the family turfs - Amethi or Rae Bareilly.

The elevation of Priyanka Gandhi helps the Congress to try the time-tested method of two power

centres within the family.

Jawaharlal Nehru joined the Congress in 1919, the year his father Motilal Nehru became the Congress President. Indira Gandhi was the Congress President in 1959 when Nehru was the Prime Minister.

Both Rajiv Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi were general secretaries under their mother Indira Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi was the general secretary when his mother Sonia Gandhi was the president of the party.

BJP takes a dig

Taking a dig at the family-centric leadership of the Congress, BJP leader and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Priyanka Gandhi deserved a wider role.

"Priyanka ji has become the General Secretary, my good luck to her. Since the party is a family concern, these kind of postings are nothing unusual, except to say with a caveat why has she been given the limited role of eastern UP? Perhaps her persona merited a more wider role," he said. Rahul Gandhi said he is happy to welcome his sister to the leadership and hoped that it will improve the party's prospects in Uttar Pradesh.

Ideological fight

He said the fight against the BJP is ideological and the party will play on the front foot.

"We won't play on the back-foot, we will play on the front-foot, be it Gujarat or Uttar Pradesh," he

said in Amethi. When asked whether his sister will contest elections, he said the decision is up to Priyanka Gandhi. Though he said the aim of the move is to strengthen the Congress, he did not rule out a possible alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in the State. When asked about the decision of the SP and the BSP to keep the Congress away from the alliance, he said the fight of the three parties is against the BJP. "SP, BSP have formed alliance in Uttar Pradesh to defeat the BJP. I have no animosity against them. I have to take forward Congress' ideology and make place for

Congress' philosophy in Uttar Pradesh," the Amethi MP said.

"I have said this earlier too that they have stitched an alliance and the aim of all of us is to defeat the BJP. There is no animosity against Mayawati or Akhilesh ... but we have to fight for the Congress' ideology and will fight in Uttar Pradesh with our full strength ... if they want to talk there is no problem with it," he added.

'Enthusiastic cadre'

Congress members and leaders across the country were also upbeat about the announcement. "Priyanka's entry into UP will galvanise the party cadre to take on the BJP. Priyanka has always played a key role in decision-making but remained in the background. Her entry into active politics will strengthen the hands of Rahul, Sonia and crores of workers who will be energised to bring the Congress back to power and save the people of India from the mis-governance and divisive politics of the BJP," said veteran party MP KV Thomas.

## Scindia is new West UP general secretary

By Nelanshu Shukla in Lucknow

CONGRESS party chief Rahul Gandhi has "handpicked" youth leader Jyotiraditya Scindia to strengthen his party rule in Western UP ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. However, this is going to be an uphill task after the Mayawati-Akhilesh alliance, and there is a possibility of Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) joining

the 'mahagathbandhan'.

Scindia, who is considered close to the Rahul, played a significant role in driving his party to victory in the recently concluded Madhya Pradesh elections. However, strengthening his party in West UP, where Congress performed poorly in the previous Lok Sabha and legislative elections, is going to be a challenge for Scindia. West UP has a sizeable population comprising

Jats, Muslims and Dalits.

Senior Journalist Sharat Pradhan said, "The decision to make Priyanka Gandhi the in-charge of the East UP will infuse a lot of energy among the dormant cadre of the Congress. Her impact will be visible across the state. However, the responsibility assigned to Scindia is very challenging and he will have to work hard."

India Today TV



# PM Modi's rally in West Bengal likely to be rescheduled

A rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which was proposed to be held on January 28 in North 24 Parganas district's Thakurnagar area is likely to be rescheduled to February 2, a senior party leader said on Wednesday.



(Agencies)-A rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which was proposed to be held on January 28 in North 24 Parganas district's Thakurnagar area is likely to be rescheduled to February 2, a senior party leader said on Wednesday.

"As of now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's January 28 rally at Bongaon' Thakurnagar area has been rescheduled to February 2. On February 2, he will address another rally at Durgapur and on

February 8, he will address a rally at Siliguri. However, nothing is final as of now," BJP national secretary Rahul Sinha said.

This is the second time in one month that the West Bengal BJP has rescheduled Modi's rallies.

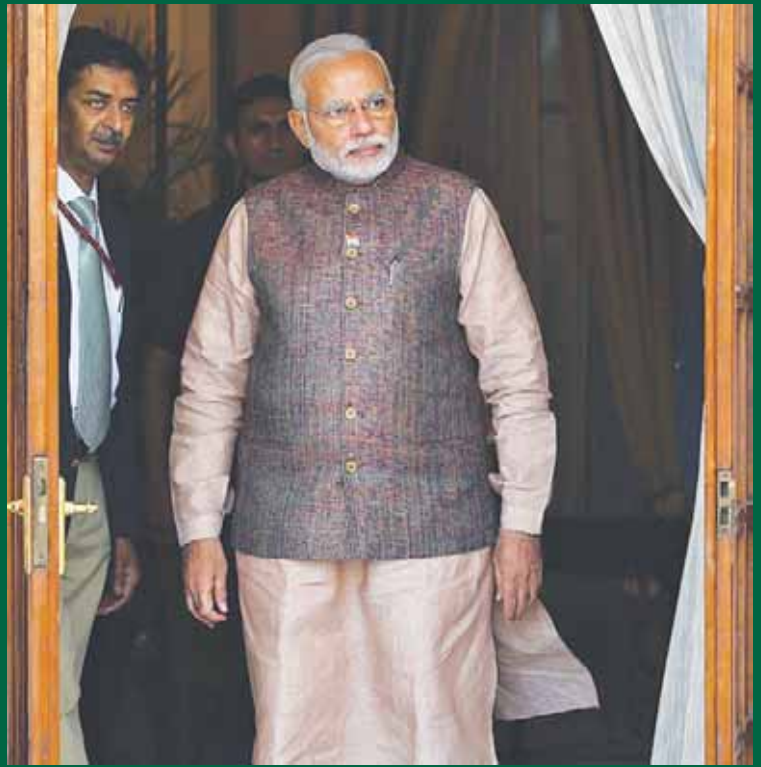
Earlier it was decided that the prime minister will address a rally at Brigade Parade Ground on February 8. It was recently cancelled and the party said he would attend three rallies in the state starting next week.

It was then decided that

Modi would address a rally at Thakurnagar on January 28, another at Siliguri in north Bengal on February 2 and a third one at Asansol - represented by Union minister Babul Supriyo - on February 8.

However, on Wednesday evening, the state BJP announced that the dates are likely to be altered.

The BJP kick-started its Lok Sabha poll campaign in the state from Tuesday, with party president Amit Shah addressing a rally in Malda district. Shah has set a target to win more than 23 out of the total 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state.



## Woman judge among dozen passengers robbed of cash, jewellery in Ajmer-Chandigarh Garib Rath Express

**Around a dozen passengers travelling in the Ajmer-Chandigarh Garib Rath Express were robbed of their valuables by masked assailants near Rohtak**

(Agencies)- Around a dozen passengers travelling in the Ajmer-Chandigarh Garib Rath Express were robbed of their valuables by masked robbers near Rohtak, police said on Wednesday.

Among the robbed passengers are a travelling ticket examiner (TTE), a woman judge and four more women whose gold and diamond jewellery were snatched from them, the police said.

The government railway police (GRP) in Rohtak said the incident occurred around 2.30 am on Wednesday when the Chandigarh-bound train stopped at Rohtak junction and some robbers entered the G9 coach. When the train reached Makrauli village, the robbers inside the train pulled the chain, following which, their accomplices waiting at the spot entered the coach with guns and knives and robbed the passengers of around Rs 2 lakh cash and valuable jewellery. The assailants then jumped off

the train and fled.

"There were more than 10 men, each having a gun or a knife in their hand. They put their guns on our heads, placed knives on our necks and took away all our valuables," a woman victim robbed of her gold chain told Hindustan Times.

She added that the assailants also tore a passenger's pocket

and snatched Rs 25,000 from him. "They also took away a woman's diamond mangalsutra. They forced us to open our bags as well and took whatever they liked. Even the TTE who came for help was robbed. We sent our location to the GRP police but no one came for help."

While the passengers said the number of robbers were more



than 10, the GRP police said its officer (SHO) of Rohtak GRP inquiry has found they were five to six in number. "By the time we reached the location with our team, the robbers had fled," said Raj Kumar, the station house

station.

He said the police have registered a case against unidentified persons and formed four teams to arrest them.

## 'Most awaited entry in Indian politics': JD(U) no.2 Prashant Kishor on Priyanka Gandhi's new role in UP

(Agencies)-Janata Dal (United) vice president Prashant Kishor has described the appointment of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as Congress' general secretary in-charge of east Uttar Pradesh as "one of the most awaited entries in Indian politics". Prashant Kishor had worked with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh as a poll strategist before joining the Janata Dal (United). "One of

the most awaited entries in Indian politics is finally here! While people may debate the timing, exact role and position, to me, the real news is that she finally decided to take the plunge! Congratulations and best wishes to Priyanka Gandhi," Kishor said in a tweet. The appointment is being seen as a masterstroke which will boost the morale of party workers in a state where

Congress influence has been waning over the years and where the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party have announced a tie-up. Priyanka Gandhi, who turned 47 on January 12, will assist her brother and Congress president Rahul Gandhi in the Hindi heartland state, which has 80 Lok Sabha seats, the largest of any state in the country.



# India stares at water scarcity

(By Our Staff Reporter)- The coming elections to the Lok Sabha, crucial to the future of our democracy, our pluralism, our federalism, are only a few weeks away. But something else, something urgent, something is already upon us. And something that is going to coincide with the elections. A drought. The rains have failed us. Nothing new, one might say. True, except that the rains' let down this time comes on top of an already low-rain and, in many places, no-rain ground situation. And the next nearest rains are six months away. The cruelly blue, cloudless skies over much of India, north, central, eastern and peninsular India, say it all. And there is no guarantee that June will see the onset of a normal monsoon. What the sky says Does anyone care? Does the political class? The Prime Minister and Chief Ministers are not unaware of the situation. They cannot be. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has given them enough data. But when droughts and elections intersect, it is extremely uncomfortable to leaders. It is

inconvenient to dwell on the skies' tidings. Which government would like to tell farmers that suffering lies at their threshold? Who would like to tell them that water will be scarcer than before, that aquifers will plummet, crops wither, livestock go thirsty? Which government would, just weeks before the elections, tell us that with reservoirs drying up taps will sputter to a stop and that we may well be looking at water-rationing? The truth is, none of them will say that. This is where, as Amartya Sen has told us time and again, the media comes in, and comes in redemptively. It is India's great good luck that public awareness, nudged and prodded by public discussions on meteorological data and media reportage, has kept droughts from deepening into famines in our country. The IMD report on scant rains has received scant attention so far, with exceptions being provided by P. Sainath's relentless warnings and observations of experts of the calibre

and veracity of Ramchandra Sable, agro-meteorologist, and D.M. More, Secretary of the Second Maharashtra Irrigation Commission, reported in The Hindustan Times (January 6, 2019). Rain deficit facts To turn to the facts. The actual deficit last monsoon was modest - barely 10%. But the post-monsoon rainfall (October to December, 2018) or PMR as it is called by meteorologists has registered a 44% deficit. This national average conceals shortages in some regions where it is much higher. In Marathwada, according to the IMD, the deficit is 84%, in Vidarbha, 88%. Why should we worry, more than before, this time? For the reason that this low-rain and no-rain situation is going to aggravate the water crisis that we have brought upon ourselves without the 'help' of a dry sky. Years of policy-driven, corporate-driven water transfers from rural to urban, agriculture to industry, poor to rich and so on have made our country-side chronically water-scarce. Urban India



does not realise this fast enough or well enough. It will, when there are power-outages and air-conditioners do not work!

is when election-campaigning will be at its peak. The pre-election mood 'yesterday' was all about agrarian distress, farm-loan waivers. Will the pre-election mood 'tomorrow' be even thinking of, leave alone talking of, drought and what can be done to address it beyond loan-waivers?

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# India likely to surpass UK in world's largest economy rankings: Report

**As per the report, while the UK and France have regularly switched places owing to similar levels of development and roughly equal populations, India's climb up the rankings is likely to be permanent.**

(By Our Staff Reporter)-India is likely to surpass the United Kingdom in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019, according to a report by global consultancy firm PwC.

As per the report, while the UK and France have regularly switched places owing to similar levels of development and roughly equal populations, India's climb up the rankings is likely to be permanent.

PwC's Global Economy Watch report projects real GDP growth of 1.6 % for the UK, 1.7 per cent for France and 7.6 per cent for India in 2019.

"India and France are likely to surpass the UK in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019, knocking it from fifth to seventh place in the global table," the report said.

According to World Bank data, India became the world's sixth largest economy in 2017 surpassing France and was likely to go past the UK which

stood at the fifth position. PwC's Global Economy Watch is a short publication that looks at the trends and issues affecting the global economy and details its latest projections for the world's leading economies.

"India should return to a healthy growth rate of 7.6 % in 2019-20, if there are no major headwinds in the global economy such as enhanced trade tensions or supply side shocks in oil.

"The growth will be supported through further realisation of efficiency gains from the newly adopted GST and policy impetus expected in the first year of a new government," said Ranen Banerjee, Partner and Leader - Public Finance and Economics, PwC India.

Mike Jakeman, senior economist at PwC, said India is the fastest growing large economy in the world, with an enormous population, favourable demographics and

high catch-up potential due to low initial GDP per head.

"The UK and France have regularly alternated in having the larger economy, but subdued growth in the UK in 2018 and again in 2019 is likely to tip the balance in France's favour. The relative strength of the euro against the pound is an important factor here," Jakeman said.

The global economy as a whole is expected to slow in 2019 as G7 countries return to long-run average growth rates, the PwC report said.

PwC expects that the pick-up in growth of most major economies seen between the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2018 is now over.

As per the World Bank data, in 2017, India became the sixth largest economy with a GDP of USD 2.59 trillion, relegating France to the seventh position. The GDP of France stood at USD 2.58



trillion.

The UK, which is facing Brexit blues, had a GDP of USD 2.62 trillion, which is about USD 25 billion more than that of India, the data showed.

The US was the world's

largest economy with a size of USD 19.39 trillion, followed by China (USD 12.23 trillion) at the second place in 2017. Japan (USD 4.87 trillion) and Germany (USD 3.67 trillion) were at the third and fourth places, respectively.

## 'Goes for celebrity weddings, skips seer's funeral'

*The 111-year-old seer of the Lingayat community was laid to rest on Tuesday with full state honours at the premises of the seminary he headed for over seven decades.*



(Agencies)-G Parameshwara, deputy chief minister of Karnataka, took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday for not attending the funeral of Shivakumara Swami, the revered seer of Siddaganga mutt.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends celebrity weddings, meets movie stars but skips the funeral of our NaDed?Duva devaru, who dedicated his life to help the poor and the marginalised. Repeated requests to confer Bharat Ratna on him have gone in vain," Parameshwara tweeted.

While inaugurating the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention in Varanasi on Tuesday, Modi had said the country would always remember

the seer's work for mankind.

Soon after Shivakumara Swami's death on Monday, PM Modi had tweeted that the seer had lived for the people, especially the poor and vulnerable and expressed his prayers and solidarity with the seer's devotees around the world.

The 111-year-old seer of the Lingayat community was laid to rest on Tuesday with full state honours at the premises of the seminary he headed for over seven decades.

Lakhs of people bid a tearful adieu to their "Walking God on Tuesday. Shivakumara Swami was buried as "Kriya Samadhi", according to Veerashaiva/Lingayat traditions, amid chanting of hymns.

## Dawn of new kind of politics, says Rahul Gandhi on Priyanka's new role in UP

**Priyanka Gandhi, 47, will look after the party affairs in the eastern part of the country's politically important state and senior leader Jyotiraditya Scindia has been elevated as general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh (West).**

(Agencies)- Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday welcomed the appointment of his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh (East ) saying that she was capable. "Priyanka Gandhi and Jyotiraditya Scindia are powerful leaders. We wanted the young leaders to change Uttar Pradesh politics," Rahul Gandhi said. She is capable and I am happy that she will work with me, he added. "The BJP is in a bit of panic," he told reporters in Amethi when the party made the stunning announcement. Congress workers started celebrating immediately after the announcement, bursting



firecrackers and distributing sweets with partymen calling it a 'game changer'.

The Congress also welcomed the new appointments saying the party was now "all fired up and ready to go."

Priyanka Gandhi, 47, will look after the party affairs in the eastern part of the country's politically important state and senior leader Jyotiraditya Scindia

has been elevated as general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh (West). This is Priyanka Gandhi's first official party work as till now she only looked after the election management in Rae Bareilly and Amethi, the two Lok Sabha constituencies represented

by her mother and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi and brother and Congress president Rahul Gandhi respectively.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's husband Robert Vadra also congratulated her in a Facebook post: Congratulations P... always by your side in every phase of your life. Give it your best.



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# Five reasons Kamala Harris is the brand-new 2020 Democratic Party frontrunner

It may seem presumptuous to declare that freshman Senator Kamala Harris of California, who has been in office for only two years, is the most likely Democrat to be nominated for president next year. But those few who said the same thing about another freshman Senator of mixed race heritage named Barack Obama in 2006 found themselves proven right. In Harris' case she has an even better chance than Obama since she won't face the Clinton Machine that Obama did. Here are the five reasons why Kamala Harris should be viewed as the frontrunner:

1. The mega-state of California has about a quarter of the delegates needed to nominate a president. It has moved its primary to March (from its traditional June date) and the winner will garner outside media attention - and delegates. While California isn't winner-take-all and apportions its delegates by congressional district, Harris is likely to dominate the delegate count. Any candidate who wins less than 15 percent of the vote

in a Congressional seat won't get any delegates, with their votes allocated to those getting above that number. Analysts say Harris probably can place first in almost every district and will likely win the lioness' share of delegates. KAMALA HARRIS, HITTING 2020 TRAIL, FACES TOUGH QUESTIONS OVER PROSECUTOR RECORD

2. Democratic primaries are now heavily "feminized." In 2016, 58 percent of Democratic primary voters were women. That figure is likely to top 60 percent in 2020 because recent polls show 62 percent of self-described Democrats are women. Women are also increasingly likely to vote for another woman - especially in the wake of the #MeToo sexual harassment movement. A poll by the Barbara Lee Family Foundation found that 37 percent of women said #MeToo made them more likely to vote for female candidates. That number rises to 50 percent among millennial women and 40 percent among African-American women.

Many women see voting for a

"sister" as a distinct way to send a message about their values. "A large number of women use their identity as a woman as their primary political identity," says Henry Olsen, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Indeed, a 2016 poll by the Wall Street Journal and NBC News found nearly 90 percent of Democratic women saying the country would be better off with more women in office.

Democratic pollsters say women now are likely to pick up support from other women and sympathetic men at the polls if candidates are viewed as roughly equal in qualifications. "It's incredibly difficult for each candidate to communicate, and gender serves as a shortcut," pollster Stanley Greenberg said. "Voters might think, 'I don't know much about the candidate, so I'm going to vote for the woman.'"

3. Democratic primaries are also weighted towards minority candidates such as Kamala Harris. In 2016, a full 35 percent of Democratic primary voters were members of minority groups, and a full three-fifths of



them were African-American. Black voters have long been very loyal to candidates who share their background. In 2008, Barack Obama routinely beat Hillary Clinton in Democratic primaries among African-American voters by margins of greater than 8 to 1. In 2004, more than a tenth of African-American voters voted for Al Sharpton in the primaries that year, even though he had a highly checkered past, and no real chance of winning any primary.

Harris can even claim she has more "street cred" than Obama did with blacks, having attended Howard University, an historically black college, rather than Harvard. More than Obama, she is viewed as a fighter for progressives - she is known to use the "F-word" in public to blast Republicans. In her victory speech after winning the Senate seat in 2016, she quickly pivoted to attacking President-elect Trump and used the word "fight" 33 times in just eight minutes. She has embraced Bernie Sanders' single-payer national health care and making community college free for all.

4. Harris' parents hailed from Jamaica and India, so she would be the first major female candidate for president with a family background in the Indian subcontinent. (Bobby Jindal fared poorly in the 2016 GOP primaries and Nikki Haley has not yet run for president).

Indian-Americans - 4 million strong - are the most wealthy demographic subgroup in America. "Indian-Americans consistently over time tend to be the most progressive leaning among Asian groups," Karthick Ramakrishnan, a political scientist who directs the National Asian American Survey told Politico in 2016. His survey before the 2016 election found that only 18 percent of Indians had a favorable view of the Republican Party, compared with 64 percent who viewed the Democratic Party favorably.

Expect wealthy Indians to create SuperPACS to turbocharge Kamala Harris' candidacy in a way that will make

other candidates highly jealous. Ditto with her support from Silicon Valley moguls, who will like the idea of having a San Francisco Democrat in the White House.

5. Harris will also make an electability argument. Conventional wisdom on the left is that Hillary Clinton failed to match the African-American turnout that Barack Obama generated. With Harris, the Democratic nominee would be a "two-fer" - a candidate who would appeal to feminists and minorities alike and drive turnout up.

"If Washington were a Hollywood movie, you couldn't cast anyone more different than Donald Trump," says Nathan Ballard, a San Francisco political consultant who worked with Harris when she was district attorney of San Francisco, before being elected attorney general, the state's top law-enforcement position, in 2010.

Harris checks all the requisite liberal boxes. She has a law enforcement background but with a decidedly liberal twist. In 2004, as San Francisco DA she refused to seek the death penalty against a man accused of killing a police officer. She's also emerged as one of the leading political figures standing in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Liberal fans of Harris in her native California are already trying to grease the skids for her. In September, the state moved its presidential primary from June to March, making it a Prime Time Player in the race for the Democratic nomination. Harris would have a huge advantage in such a primary given her name recognition and vast donor network in Hollywood and Silicon Valley.

Harris is also a new political avatar for gay voters. In late October, she shared the podium with Hillary Clinton at the Human Rights Campaign's national dinner where she proclaimed gay rights were now "under attack by a Justice Department that now stands on the side of discrimination instead of equality."

## PM Modi hits out at Congress over Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's new role, praises Sharad Pawar

Addressing the BJP workers at Baramati, Sharad Pawar's home town, via video-conferencing, PM Modi hit out at the Congress calling it "parivarwadi" (dynastic) party and referred to an alleged "ill treatment" offered by it to NCP chief Sharad Pawar.

PM Modi's comments came on the day when Priyanka Gandhi was officially given a bigger role in the Congress by the party president. Priyanka Gandhi had till now actively supervised electioneering only in Amethi and Rae Bareilly, the parliamentary constituencies of Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi respectively. Now, Priyanka Gandhi has been given the responsibility of Uttar Pradesh East, a region in which PM Modi's Lok Sabha constituency of Varanasi is also situated.

PM Modi said the Congress has repeatedly insulted Pawar, who "worked" for people while

being in public life. He said, "You know how Congress treated the leader of Baramati. Personally, I have high regard for him. He worked for people for many years while in public life."

"As senior Congress leader, he was insulted by Congress party. His only mistake was to aspire for Congress president post for which he was shown doors. This can happen only in dynasty-based parties," said Modi referring to Pawar's expulsion from Congress in 1999 when he opposed Sonia Gandhi's candidature as the party president.

PM Modi's praise for Pawar has come at a time the NCP president is seen to be proactively working for a possible united front of opposition parties including the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. However, this is not first time PM Modi has praised Pawar. Earlier in November 2016, PM Modi had said that it was Pawar who hand-

held him into politics.

Besides workers from Baramati, PM Modi also interacted with booth-level workers from Gadchiroli, Hingoli, Nanded and Nandurbar as a part of the BJP's programme, "Mera booth sabse majboot" (My booth, most powerful) to galvanise party cadres at the ground level.

While distinguishing BJP from other parties, PM Modi said decisions in the party are not taken on the wishes of one person or one family. "We take decisions on the basis of what workers feel. While most parties in the country are family ruled, in the case of BJP, party itself is the parivar," Modi said answering a BJP worker's question on how party is different from other political outfits.

PM Modi began his interaction by offering tributes to late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray. He said the state government has approved Rs 100 crore for Balasaheb's memorial in Mumbai

## With bigger role, Priyanka Gandhi finally steps out of family bastions

For years at every party event, Congress workers would raise the pitch for an important organisational role for Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. As the chorus grew louder and media abuzz with speculation of her playing an active role in politics, Priyanka Gandhi would issue a statement ruling out any such move.

She had limited her role to managing the election campaigns of her mother and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi in Rae Bareilly, and brother and Congress president Rahul Gandhi in Amethi. She had even rejected the requests from Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders to step outside the family pocket borough of Rae Bareilly and Amethi to campaign in other constituencies of the state.

In August 2014, after the grand old party faced its worst ever drubbing in the country's electoral history, Priyanka Gandhi issued a statement dismissing as "conjecture" and "baseless rumours" the reports suggesting that she would take up general

secretary's post in the Congress. "The constant conjecture about my assuming various posts in the Congress party and the manner in which this issue is brought up at opportune moments is incorrect," she had said.

"I would be very grateful to all concerned if they desisted from encouraging such baseless rumours," she further said.

But that was 53 months ago. On Wednesday, Priyanka Gandhi, 47, finally took a plunge into active politics with her appointment as the Congress general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh East. The Congress president divided the party organisation in Uttar Pradesh, politically most important state in the country, into two units - East and West. He handed over the charge of Uttar Pradesh West to senior leader and party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha Jyotiraditya Scindia, who was elevated as the Congress general secretary.

Uttar Pradesh - which sends the highest number of 80 lawmakers to the 543-member Lok Sabha -

is crucial for government formation at the national level.

Organisational weaknesses had often been blamed for the Congress's poor show in Uttar Pradesh where the party is desperately seeking revival of its political fortunes after being thrown out of power in 1989.

The emergence of divisive 'Mandal-Mandir' politics and rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party or the BSP, which took away its crucial Dalit vote base, pushed the Congress to margins in the country's most populous state. Considered as a good orator and crowd puller with a striking resemblance to her grandmother and late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi is expected to galvanise the Congress cadre not only in the eastern part but across the state and also give a major boost to its revival efforts. Before Wednesday's announcement, Priyanka Gandhi had to issue rebuttals about her political role from time to time.

Ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Priyanka Gandhi had also denied a media report



suggesting that she was keen to contest from Varanasi against Narendra Modi, the then Gujarat chief minister and now Prime Minister but was held back by the Congress high command. "No one in my family would ever stop me from contesting an election. My brother, mother and husband would wholeheartedly support me if I wanted to contest," she had said.

In the past whenever reporters asked, Congress leaders maintained that a decision on her role in the party would be taken by Priyanka Gandhi along with Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

Priyanka Gandhi has always

taken a keen interest in the organisational affairs in Uttar Pradesh. She attended the party's strategy discussions on Uttar Pradesh for both the Lok Sabha and assembly elections. Her name also figured on the party's lists of 40 star campaigners for all elections in the state since 2012.

Priyanka Gandhi had been taking interest in the party events as well. She personally supervised the preparations for the party's 84th plenary at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in March last year. When she was upset over the arrangements on the first day of the session, senior Congress leaders ensured that the second day went off well.

In its bid to counter her aggressive campaigning, the BJP has often raked up the issue of the alleged land dealings of her husband Robert Vadra.

In 2012 for several months, she held weekly public 'darbar' in Delhi for the people from Rae Bareilly and Amethi. During the 2017 assembly elections, poll strategist Prashant Kishor had suggested that Priyanka Gandhi should lead the party's campaign but the Congress turned down the proposal.

However, she played a key role in stitching the alliance with the Samajwadi Party or the SP and took part in negotiations with the then UP chief minister Akhilesh Yadav regarding the tie-up. She had also dismissed speculation about her contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha elections from Rae Bareilly.

"There is no question of me contesting from Rae Bareilly...my mother will contest from there," she had said on the sidelines of a function held at the party headquarters on December 16, 2017 to formalise Rahul Gandhi's takeover as the Congress president.

### CBI books former Air India chief Arvind Jadhav in corruption case

They have been charged under IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy and Prevention of Corruption Act.

The agency alleged former CMD Arvind Jadhav had constituted an "illegal" promotion panel to recommend suitable candidates for promotions to the post of General Manager (Operations) during 2009-10.

The panel had recommended five persons, including Kathpalia, Singh and Bhasin, the officials said. Kathpalia was having a pending criminal case but was allegedly given vigilance clearance, the FIR alleged.

The agency alleged complaints were also pending against Singh and Bhasin, who were selected for the position.

"Jadhav...conspiracy with...Nakhwa had abused his official position in order to appoint her as a member of promotion panel committee and giving promotion to her without following due process for promotion," the CBI added.

### Jassi Sidhu honour killing: Canada extradites mother, uncle to India

Malkit Kaur Sidhu and Surjit Singh Badesha were taken from a facility in British Columbia (BC) and escorted to Vancouver airport by a team of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Thereafter, the team guarded them as they embarked upon the flight to India. They left on an Air Canada flight bound for New Delhi and reached India on Thursday morning.

After the proposed extradition took a dramatic turn in September 2017, the decks were finally cleared to proceed after the legal representatives of the pair did not file an appeal before the Supreme Court of Canada within the mandatory one-month period after a plea for staying the proceedings was rejected by the Court of Appeals in British Columbia last month.

Jassi, as she was better known, had travelled to India from her residence in Maple Ridge, BC, in 2000, and had eloped with Mithu, a marriage that her family did not approve of. Subsequently, Jassi was murdered in what is alleged to be a contract killing at the behest of family members.

The previous attempt to have Jassi's mother and uncle extradited was in September 2017, but that ended in dramatic fashion with the two returning

to their homes in BC even after being handed over a team of Punjab Police that was to take them from Toronto to India. After they were surrendered by Canadian authorities, their lawyers' plea was accepted by the British Columbia Court, although a final appeal before the Supreme Court earlier that year had already been vacated. The three-member Punjab Police team had to return without the accused.

Their lawyers had entered the plea for a stay of the extradition proceedings, but the three-judge BC Court panel denied the motion, though it did conclude that the surreptitious manner in which the 2017 extradition was attempted, without them being allowed to contact their legal representatives, did comprise an abuse of process but didn't prove sufficient grounds to permit a stay.

A team of Sangrur police, led by superintendent of police (SP investigation) Gurmeet Singh and two senior officials and women staff, reached Delhi late on Wednesday evening to arrest the accused. They were given custody of the duo on Thursday morning. DSP Amargarh Palwinder Singh Cheema said, "The paper work is under process in Delhi. They will be produced in Malerkotla court today."

## Touted as a top global destination for 2019, challenges remain

(Agencies)- A decade ago, it would have been almost inconceivable that Lonely Planet, the world's best-selling guide book, would choose the country as its top global tourism destination. With its violent politics and bloody insurgency, Sri Lanka was then very much a lonely country, with most of the northern and eastern regions inaccessible due to fighting.

But Lonely Planet has now bestowed this honor on Sri Lanka for 2019 -- and local tour operators are ecstatic. They remember rounds of booking cancellations whenever bombs went off on this scenic island, and many years of negative press about human rights violations and security fears.

All that began to change after the civil war ended in

2009. But in late 2018, their hopes for a tourism boom faltered when President Maithripala Sirisena dismissed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, provoking a constitutional crisis that threatened to renew civil strife. Political calm has now apparently returned, with the restoration of the prime minister and a semblance of stability.

Nonetheless, the Indian Ocean island has become a pawn in the great-power politics playing out between the U.S., China and India. In terms of tourism, the rise of China is already having an impact. Many Sri Lankans look to the West as a traditional source of tourists, but they are being supplanted by a growing tide of Chinese visitors.

# Sri Lanka recovers its tourism mojo



The heightened visitor influx threatens to undermine Sri Lanka's poster image as a relatively unspoiled destination -- although it is not just due to growing Chinese interest.

The popular Yala and Uda Walawe game reserves for example drew many more Western visitors than Chinese in the recent year-end holiday season, according to Ajantha Palihawadana, senior naturalist at the Rascals Kite Resort at Kalpitiya.

Superpower competition is affecting the tourism industry in other ways. While rogue elephant attacks have increased due to human encroachment in jungle areas, attention is also being paid to another pachyderm, in this case the symbol of him as the new prime minister. It was only the resistance of the courts and parliament that eventually allowed Wickremesinghe to regain power. Despite the recent political disputes, Sri Lanka has plenty to offer tourists. The surfing has earned international accolades, particularly now that visitors can go to previously inaccessible locations such as Arugam Bay in the country's east. Although Chinese and Indian tourists are generally not interested in the surfing, they enjoy ecotourism and the delights of the local cuisine.

incorporating them, at least partially, into commercial tourism infrastructure plans, to generate revenue to help pay off the debts owed to China. It was to some extent the modification of such projects that helped provoke the recent political crisis. Rajapaksa, who favored the Chinese over Sri Lanka's traditional Western and Indian partners, collaborated with Sirisena to dismiss Wickremesinghe in October under questionable circumstances and appoint him as the new prime minister. It was only the resistance of the courts and parliament that eventually allowed Wickremesinghe to regain power. Despite the recent political disputes, Sri Lanka has plenty to offer tourists. The surfing has earned international accolades, particularly now that visitors can go to previously inaccessible locations such as Arugam Bay in the country's east. Although Chinese and Indian tourists are generally not interested in the surfing, they enjoy ecotourism and the delights of the local cuisine.

## India and China need to tackle structural problems

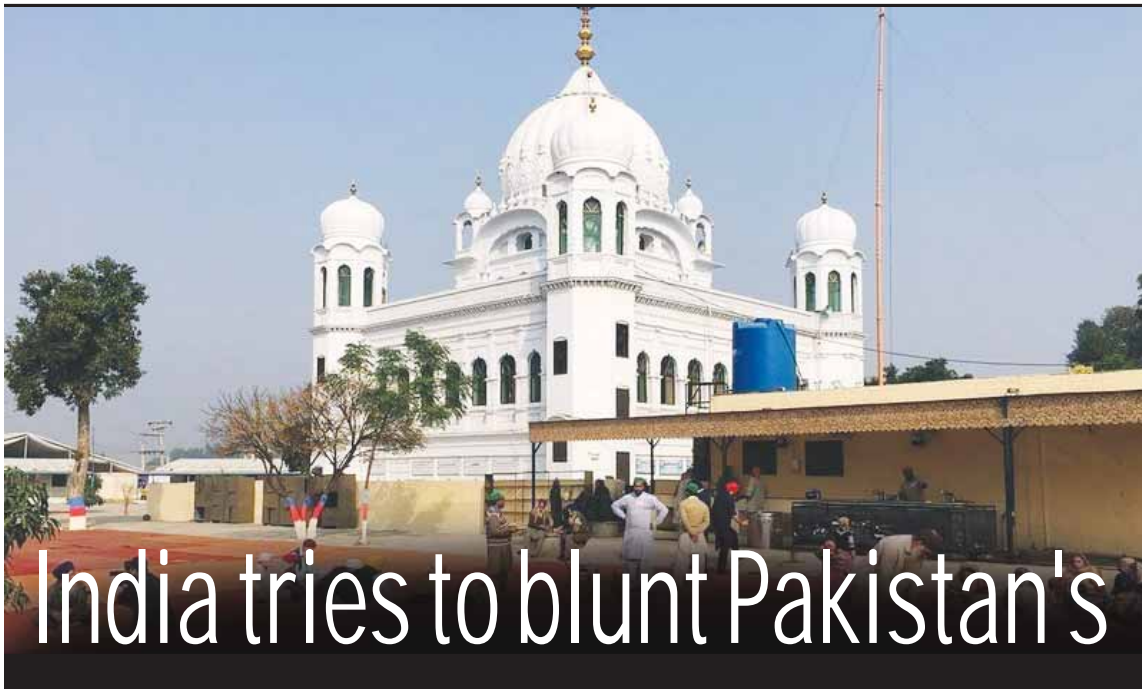
*New Delhi should continue with diplomacy but also prepare for the worst.*



(Agencies)-The informal summit between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Wuhan in April 2018 was supposed to "reset" the bilateral ties after the 73-day Doklam standoff in 2017. To some extent, Mr Modi and Mr Xi have been able to cool the tempers.

However, a leader-level initiative was never going to offset structural factors like territorial disputes that make the two Asian giants each other's adversary. As a result, both countries continue to prepare for a conflict that may break out notwithstanding the recent confidence-building measures. It is clear that

China is still smarting from its failure in Doklam to extend its road to the south in disputed territory. Since then, it has taken various measures to prevent a repeat. It has beefed up its presence to the north of the stand-off site. Tibet has seen a flurry of activity, including air force exercise and construction of expressways, heliports and airstrips. China is developing the world's first electromagnetic surface-to-surface rocket specifically meant for India. The idea is to use cheap systems such as rockets to overwhelm India's military (or possibly civilian) targets with improved accuracy afforded by electromagnetic catapult. China has also deployed vehicle-mounted howitzers in Tibet to enhance its high-altitude combat capability. India too has responded vigorously. It has adopted a more offensive posture on the China border. It is planning to deploy Akash missile systems along with attack helicopters and long range fighter aircraft in the eastern sector. Mr Modi inaugurated, with much fanfare, the five-kilometre long railroad bridge at Bogibeel in Assam, which will expedite troop movements to Arunachal Pradesh. The construction of other strategically important roads is being speeded up both in the eastern as well as the western sector. A plan to construct hardened shelters for India's aircraft stationed on the China border has also been green-lighted. This will help in case the electromagnetic rockets try to take out Su-30MKIs.



# India tries to blunt Pakistan's initiative, sends own invite

(Insider Bureau)-Wary of Pakistan's invitation to negotiations over the agreement on the planned Kartarpur Corridor, India on Tuesday asked Pakistani officials to visit New Delhi for talks on the issue and suggested Feb 26 and March 7 as the two possible dates for the meeting.

"India has also proposed two set of dates, 26 February and 7 March 2019, for the visit of Pakistan delegation to New Delhi to discuss and finalise the modalities so that the Indian pilgrims can visit the

holy Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib using the corridor at the earliest," the Indian external affairs ministry said in a statement issued in New Delhi.

The statement was issued in response to the draft agreement on Kartarpur Corridor shared by Pakistan with India on Monday and the accompanying invitation to initiation of negotiations for its finalisation.

By giving a counter-invitation to Pakistan instead of accepting its invitation for negotiations, India seemed to

be avoiding the tough choice between rejecting the proposal and accepting Islamabad's call for talks.

Pakistan had asked the Indian government to "urgently send a delegation to Islamabad" for negotiating the agreement. India has during PM Narendra Modi's tenure avoided resumption of dialogue with Pakistan on the pretext that its terrorism concerns are not being addressed. The Modi government has been particularly suspicious of Pakistani move to offer opening of Kartarpur Corridor

The Indian external affairs ministry further said that it had shared the coordinates of the zero point (crossing point) of the corridor along the International Border with Pakistan. This, it said, was done in line with "the decision taken by the Government of India on 22 November 2018 to expeditiously realise the long pending proposal to establish Kartarpur Corridor".

Pakistan's FO had while sharing the draft agreement and extending invitation to India said that its actions were in accordance with "Islamic principles that advocate respect for all religions and Pakistan's policy of promoting inter-faith harmony and religious tolerance and also in line with Quaid's vision of a peaceful neighbourhood."

Pakistan is to construct the nearly four-km-long corridor from the border to the Gurudwara in Kartarpur Sahib, whereas India is to develop the corridor from Dera Baba Nanak, in East Punjab's Gurdaspur district, to the international border.

on the occasion of the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, in November this year even though it accepted it out of its domestic political compulsions. The Indian government had sent two cabinet members - Minister for Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh - to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony of the project in November.

Later, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj claimed that the two ministers went to the Gurudwara 'to offer prayers' and had not been trapped by Pakistani 'googlies'. Her comments were

in response to Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's remarks that Prime Minister Imran had "bowled a googly at India by opening the Kartarpur border corridor."

Foreign Office spokesman Dr Mohammad Faisal, who is also Pakistan's focal person for negotiations on the Kartarpur Corridor agreement, talking to Dawn on the Indian invite said that it's clear to everyone that Islamabad's invitation came before Delhi invited it.

Once the corridor is operational, Sikh pilgrims from India would enjoy visa-free access to the shrine.

Published in Dawn, January 23rd, 2019

## Millions working in Pakistan's garment industry suffer abuse and labour rights violations: report

**HRW reports says government is failing to enforce laws that protect millions of workers from labour rights abuses.**

(Agencies)-Millions of workers in Pakistan's garment industry suffer abuse and labour rights violations, notes a recent report released by the Human Rights Watch (HRW).

"No Room to Bargain" Unfair and Abusive Labour Practices in Pakistan is largely based on interviews with more than a 100 people, including 118 garment workers from 25 factories, union leaders, government representatives, and labour rights advocates in Karachi, Lahore and Hafizabad, and documents a range of violations in Pakistan's garment factories that include:

" A failure to pay minimum wages and pensions.

" Suppression of independent labour unions.  
" Forced overtime.  
" Insufficient breaks.  
" Disregarding regulations requiring paid maternity.

The report also highlights widespread suppression of independent labour unions by factory owners, as well as the incompetence and inefficiencies of the government's labour inspection mechanisms.

The textile and garment sectors are important components of the country's manufacturing industry. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that the Garments, Textiles and Footwear sector in Pakistan

employed 4.2 million people in 2014-15.

The garment and textile sector contributes up to 8.5 percent of Pakistan's GDP and about 70 percent of total exports.

No Room to Bargain sheds light on the lives and the working conditions of abused and neglected workers in the garment industry, who often remain invisible and absent from the political agenda.

1. Complete lack of accountability for poor working conditions

Working conditions in smaller factories are usually worse than those in larger ones that are more likely to be inspected. However,



violations of labour rights including long working hours and extended temporary employment without job security or benefits even in large Pakistani factories, including some that supply garments to international retailers and brands, was well-documented.

2. Irregular hiring practice/ Absence of written contracts  
The use of verbal contracts is alarmingly widespread throughout the garment industry. Not having an employment contract makes it very difficult for workers to demand employment benefits or to enforce terms of employment. It is common

practice to hire workers on a "piece-rate" based on a production quota, this adds to worker insecurity because it takes away the guarantee of a fixed income. It is also often used as a disciplinary measure to enhance productivity.

3. Forced overtime  
Factories routinely compel workers to work beyond the legally permissible nine hours, and in many case without extra pay. The absence of a written contract and a formal appointment letter makes workers vulnerable to retaliation for refusing to work overtime

# Afghanistan may be a mess if US troops leave; they should leave anyway. Trump is right.

**The war in Afghanistan has become a multigenerational exercise in absurdity. Many of the soldiers now fighting were in diapers when the war began.**

(By Our Staff Reporter)-

When President Donald Trump announced that he would be withdrawing half of the U.S. troops serving in Afghanistan, the national security establishment was aghast. Afghanistan will become a failed state! The Taliban will expand their power! Chaos and disorder will follow! The critics might be right. The president should follow through anyway.

Aware the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable, Trump nevertheless now dithers. He is being pressured by military leaders who understandably want their sacrifices to have achieved something. And he is selfishly concerned with being blamed if the government in Kabul collapses on his watch.

But letting the Afghanistan War "muddle along" for so many years has been a grievous mistake. Roughly 2,400 U.S. service members and 4,000 American contractors have been killed there, including four just over Thanksgiving. As my old boss, John Kerry, asked a Senate committee in 1971, after returning from that other quagmire in Vietnam, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

The war in Afghanistan has become a multigenerational exercise in absurdity. Many of the soldiers now fighting and dying were in diapers when the war began. Yet almost two decades and more than a trillion dollars later, the U.S.-backed Afghan government controls only 55 percent of the nation's territory and 65 percent of its population. Rather than fading away, the Taliban are stronger than they've been at any time since they were ousted when the war began.

If our objective is the destruction of the Taliban, the war will be impossible to win militarily.

Don't take my word for it. The new U.S. general leading our mission in Afghanistan, Scott Miller, conceded to NBC News that "this is not going to be won militarily." Instability doesn't always mean insecurity

The decision to invade and occupy Afghanistan was steeped in outdated thinking from an earlier era. In the years leading up to the 9/11 attacks, U.S. foreign policy experts were obsessed with the danger posed

by "power vacuums" and "failing states," and the terrorist breeding

grounds they bore. The invasion and occupation of Afghanistan sought to deny al-

Qaeda a base for its operations. Yet most of al-Qaeda's leadership simply fled to Pakistan, and America got bogged down fighting the Taliban, who despite their radical ideology have never had designs on attacking the U.S. mainland. Now, when terrorism is more likely to be homegrown than coordinated from a remote mountain cave, the use of military occupations to disrupt terrorist havens is as antiquated as it is ineffective.

One thing we've learned is that American interventionism, however well intentioned, can create more power vacuums than it fills. Such was the case in Iraq and Libya. The threat of "failing states" has been exaggerated. Instability does not necessarily yield insecurity. And some of the biggest challenges to America's national security come from countries like North Korea, China and Russia, where the control by the central government is all too stable.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban are a fact of life. Instead of trying to defeat or destroy the Taliban, we should define success more in terms of brokering a political settlement - much like the one the Colombian government reached with FARC - that increases the prospects for peace for our Afghan partners

after we end our commitment there.

The only thing that can ultimately guarantee the independence and self-determination of the Afghan people is an Afghan government that has its own independence



security and prosperity of the world's foremost centers of economic activity, whereas Afghanistan is a desperately poor country with little strategic significance.

The political will to end the war in Afghanistan exists. One recent poll shows that fewer than half of Americans say the initial decision to use military force in Afghanistan was correct. Another new poll finds that a majority of Americans would support a presidential decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan within a year, while only about one in five would oppose it. And although some military leaders pressuring the president to stay might feel "pot committed" to the conflict, soldiers and veterans are even more likely than the general public to support a withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. Yet few leaders have taken a strong

stance toward ending the war. Democrats in particular find themselves in an awkward spot, historically skeptical but inclined to automatically oppose any Trump policy. They should follow the example of Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who displayed political courage by agreeing with the Trump administration's decision to withdraw troops. Let's take a break from partisan scorekeeping to, at last, curtail the worst excesses of the so-called War on Terror.

In 1966, in the middle of the Vietnam War, a Vermont senator named George Aiken urged President Lyndon Johnson to "declare victory and get out." Imagine the financial, geopolitical and human costs that could have been spared if we took his advice then. Let's take it now. Mark Hannah is a research fellow at the Eurasia Group Foundation and teaches at New York University. Follow him on Twitter: @ProfessorHannah



# Pakistan Turns to Gulf Countries to Keep Economy Afloat

(By Our Staff Reporter)-

Prime Minister Imran Khan has opened a new chapter in Pakistan's long history of using its strategic position to win foreign support-this time turning to Arab Gulf nations to help keep the economy afloat, Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

Saudi Arabia and its ally the United Arab Emirates have offered Pakistan over \$30 billion in loans and investments, with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman expected to visit in February to sign off on the kingdom's deals, according to Pakistani and Saudi officials.

The package will allow Khan, who came to power in July promising millions of jobs and the creation of a welfare state, to delay the politically painful prospect of borrowing from the International Monetary Fund.

The new government sees the Saudi investment plan as a sign that Khan's pledge to "open Pakistan for business" is working.

"This is our first major breakthrough," said Haroon Sharif, Pakistan's investment minister. "Saudi Arabia is taking a long-term strategic economic position here."

The plan includes a \$10 billion Saudi investment to build an oil refinery and petrochemicals complex-a move that appears to come at the expense of Saudi rival Iran, a neighbour of Pakistan that had hoped to become a major energy supplier.

Also in the mix is Qatar, which

is looking to build on its liquefied natural gas sales to Pakistan and also make investments. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have sought to isolate Qatar-but Khan accepted an invitation to visit the Gulf nation, meeting the ruler in Doha on Tuesday, a trip that could rile Riyadh and potentially fuel the bidding for Pakistani's favours. Islamabad says it wants that LNG supply on better terms. Pakistan had long relied on its alliance with the US to help keep its economy afloat; when that relationship soured in recent years, Khan's predecessor turned to China, signing on to a massive infrastructure plan that critics say was too expensive, with projects picked for political reasons.

Khan's government says it wants China to set up factories in Pakistan rather than build more infrastructure.

Now, Khan is turning to Gulf nations as key benefactors. He was one of the few high-profile international leaders to attend an investment summit called by the Saudi crown prince in October, when others shunned the event over the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Pakistan has close ties to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but hasn't previously received financial support on the scale now being promised. A \$20 billion investment package from Saudi Arabia would roughly match what China has already spent in Pakistan in its current infrastructure drive, though



China's programme amounts to up to \$62 billion altogether. Separately, the UAE is also working on a multibillion refinery investment plan, according to UAE and Pakistani officials.

In addition, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are set to provide immediate loans to Pakistan of up to \$12 billion, Pakistani officials say. Islamabad says there are no hidden geopolitical costs to the Saudi splurge. Pakistan has helped bring these two Gulf nations, which are also close US partners, into the peace process under way for Afghanistan. In recent years, Pakistan increased its soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia, for training local forces and bolstering defences.

The new loan pledges give Pakistan some breathing room as it battles a balance of

payments crisis. Khan's government inherited fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves and ballooning trade deficit, with experts predicting it needed a rapid IMF loan, which would require economic and financial reforms.

Talks with the IMF, running since October, are working toward a programme with conditions that the government could accept, Finance Minister Asad Umar told The Wall Street Journal.

"We would like to be in an IMF programme once we reach a programme which we think is in the interests of the Pakistan economy," Umar said.

An IMF team had been expected to return to Pakistan for final negotiations so that a programme could be passed by the Fund's board in mid-January. With the Gulf funds, the IMF loan

required is now expected to be much smaller. Economists say that an IMF programme would typically require an enforced slowdown in growth to restrain imports, increased taxes, higher prices for electricity and gas, and further depreciation in the currency. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves stand at just \$6.9 billion, according to the central bank, which covers only two months of imports. That is after \$2 billion so far received from Saudi Arabia. Khan has said that he wants to be a bridge for divisions in the Muslim world. The first visitor to his government when it took office last year was Iran's foreign minister. The prime minister has since twice visited both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while Emirati crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, visited Pakistan this month.

## The Guardian view on Bangladesh: when charity goes wrong

(Agencies)-Who carries the weight of a global supply chain? Whose lives are bound in its fetters? There is a grotesque quality to the Guardian's revelations of the conditions under which Bangladeshi women in the garment industry labour to make Western women feel charitable and empowered. The T-shirts made in Bangladesh will ultimately sell for £19.60, of which a little more than half, £11.60, will go to Comic Relief, to help champion equality for women. The celebrities who promote them, and whom the T-shirts in turn promote with their slogan "I wanna be a Spice Girl", are well-paid; the women who

make them are paid around 35p an hour and expected to sew up to 2,000 in the course of a working day, which is anything from eight to 16 hours long. To put it another way, a Bangladeshi seamstress would have to sew at least 7,000 T-shirts to afford the price charged for one in the west - and buying or wearing one is supposed to be a way of championing "equality and people power". No one suggests that the westerners involved are insincere. They genuinely want to improve the lives of women around the world, and Comic Relief has done really impressive work. The people who buy the shirts will be horrified by this

story. They would happily pay for their empowering T-shirts to be produced in conditions that actually empowered the workers who made them, as well as contributing to the empowerment of others elsewhere. Why is this so difficult? One answer lies in the vast gap between regulations and enforcement. The decent and generous impulses of people all around the world, and not just in the countries where the T-shirts are purchased, are expressed in political aspirations, and these in regulations and laws. But those are completely worthless if they are not enforced, and in

countries without democracy there's no enforcement that goes against the interests of the powerful. Not even the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, when 1,134 people were killed in a factory collapse, has changed enough.

Democracy is not a matter of elections. The Bangladeshi government of Sheikh Hasina has just won an election with her party, the Awami League, claiming 96% of the vote. 600,000 troops and police were deployed to oversee it, but on election day 17 people died. Few believe the results represent popular sentiment. But democracy requires more than

credible elections. It needs a robust civil society - free speech and powerful trade unions. Both are hard to find in Bangladesh today. Journalists and political dissidents have been ruthlessly persecuted; Islamists have murdered atheist bloggers. The factory where the exploitation has been exposed is owned by Shahriar Alam, a Bangladeshi foreign affairs minister, who told our reporter that he didn't think it was "right from a journalistic point of view to add [his] name to this story". Who can doubt his sincerity? He really doesn't want his name in the paper.

# Why Taxing the Bejesus Out of the Rich Might Be Useful, Even if It Doesn't Actually Raise Much Money

(Agencies)- What's the point of raising taxes on the rich? If you asked most Americans that question, my guess is you'd get a response that might sound something like this:

1. The government needs money.
  2. Rich people have all the money (or, at least, much more of it than they realistically need to live happy, healthy, Burberry-clad lives).
  3. Ergo, we should tax the rich.
- This answer has plenty going for it, including a whiff of common sense. But there's another important rationale, which is mostly popular these days among thinkers on the political left. The main reason to hike top tax rates, in this view, isn't to keep the deficit in check; it's simply to keep individuals from becoming too wealthy, because inequality is itself toxic for society.

That's the argument economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman laid out Tuesday in a New York Times op-ed. Their

hook, of course, is Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's idea to raise the top tax rate to 70 percent on incomes of more than \$10 million, which has sparked a monthlong debate about the virtues of soaking the rich. Saez's own work has featured heavily in that conversation; in 2011, he co-authored a well-regarded paper that suggested the economically optimal top tax rate would be 73 percent, research that has been cited by Paul Krugman, among others. In their Times piece, he and Zucman argue that "root justification" for slapping tax rates on multimillionaires "is not about collecting revenue." Rather, it's about combating inequality and "safeguarding democracy against oligarchy."

This is, suffice to say, a very different way of talking about taxation than what we typically hear in Washington, where the subject is treated as a necessary evil and hiking

rates on millionaires is framed in terms of making the affluent pay their "fair share." Saez and Zucman, like many on the left, don't think of the issue that way. Instead, they believe the ultra-rich themselves are a policy problem the government needs to address, because an "extreme concentration of wealth means an extreme concentration of economic and political power." (See: Sheldon Adelson, the Koch brothers, Michael Bloomberg, the Mercers, Tom Steyer, etc.) By this reasoning, high taxes are one solution—a tool for keeping the plutocracy in check. If they also happen to help the federal budget pencil out, that's just gravy.

What makes their argument especially interesting is how Saez and Zucman believe high taxes reduce inequality. It's not, as you might expect, because the government uses them to redistribute income. The economists note,

for instance, that the 90 percent tax rates of the 1950s only applied to a minuscule slice of Americans whose earnings amounted to about \$6.7 million or more in today's dollars. Conservatives often present this fact as evidence that those rates were a mostly symbolic sham. But Saez and Zucman suggest that the opposite was true. The fact that hardly anybody paid those rates was a sign of their near-total success: That few people faced the 90 percent top tax rates was not a bug; it was the feature that caused sky-high incomes to largely disappear. The point of high top marginal income tax

rates is to constrain the immoderate, and especially unmerited, accumulation of riches. From the 1930s to the 1980s, the United States came as close as any democratic country ever did to imposing a legal maximum income. The inequality of pretax income shrunk dramatically.

In other words, high tax rates discouraged Americans from trying to earn gigantic paydays, because after a certain point the IRS was just going to take 90 cents on the dollar. This, in and of itself, is not exactly an Earth-shattering theory.



## Bezos vs Ambani: The billionaire bout that had to happen

(News Agencies)-The battle for the Indian consumer was never going to be an all-American affair. Walmart Inc.'s splashy acquisition last year of Flipkart Online Services Pvt., the homegrown e-tailer giving Amazon.com Inc. a solid run for its money, might have given the impression of a two-horse race. But as I argued (here and here), billionaire Mukesh Ambani wasn't going to watch from the sidelines.

And last week India's richest man jumped right into the fray. Ambani, chairman of the petrochemicals-to-telecom conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd., has a four-legged plan to connect India's 30 million small retailers with consumers. One, neighborhood marts will be connected to Reliance Retail Ltd.'s footprint of almost 10,000 stores, offering them common inventory-

management, billing and tax platforms as well as low-cost payment terminals. That will give the expanded retail network formidable sourcing power.

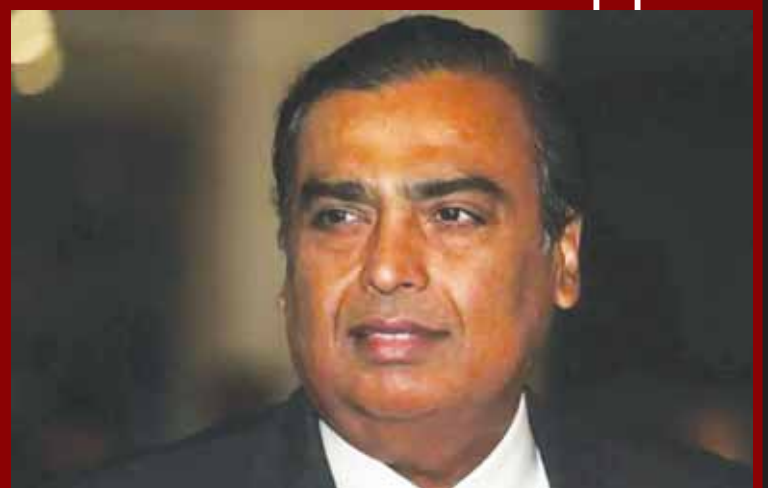
The second hook is Ambani's telecom business. Consumer e-commerce in India is dominated by the urban middle class. Out of the country's 500 million Internet users, almost 200 million live in rural areas where one out of four goes online less than once a month. No wonder the number of online consumers, while growing rapidly, is expected to be only about 120 million this year. Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. alone has 280 million digital subscribers.

The ubiquity of Jio as a 4G telecom carrier, and the revolution it has unleashed in lowering data prices, means even shops in villages and semi-rural towns can now

profitably transact with less affluent customers by using a hybrid offline-online model.

Third, Indians are watching almost 5 billion hours of video a month on their mobile phones and fiber broadband connections with Jio. That stickiness gives Ambani the heft to promote private-label fashion, currently housed under the brand AJIO.

Finally, Ambani's ability to influence policies in his home market shouldn't be underestimated. Just as Reliance gets ready to push ahead, the Indian government has tweaked its e-commerce rules and made them more onerous for Amazon and Walmart-Flipkart. Until now, foreign retailers had found ways around a low that allowed them to act only as pure marketplaces that don't stock their own inventories or offer



discounts. Now that the loopholes are being plugged starting next month, Ambani is pitching the idea that Indians' shopping data should be stored locally. Reliance Jio's digital investments have already exceeded \$40 billion. But in India's hyper-competitive telecom market, the average revenue it can get from users isn't even \$2 a month. One way

to make a carriage- and content-centered business spew out profits is to make it a triple play by throwing commerce into the mix, and lacing it with good, old-fashioned lobbying.

The Indian government is forcing Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to compete with one hand tied behind his back. He could still beat Ambani, but he won't be able to avoid getting bruised



# Huawei executive has strong case to fight extradition: Canadian envoy

(By Our Staff Reporter)- A top executive from Huawei Technologies Co Ltd [HWT.UL] being held in Canada can make "strong arguments" against extradition to the United States, in part due to President Donald Trump's politicization of the case, Canada's ambassador to China said. Canadian envoy John McCallum's comments to Chinese-language media, which were broadcast on Wednesday, are the most explicit sign yet from a Canadian official that Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, may not be sent to the United States. Meng was detained on Dec. 1 in

Vancouver at the request of the United States reut.rs/2HuT3WE over alleged violations of U.S. sanctions on Iran. She is currently under house arrest and China is demanding that she be freed reut.rs/2CDejnG. In a clip shown by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp, McCallum said Meng had "quite good arguments on her side," the first of which was "political involvement by comments from Donald Trump in her case." Trump told Reuters last month he would intervene in Meng's case if it served U.S. national security interests or helped close a trade deal with China. Canadian Foreign Minister

Chrystia Freeland quickly warned Washington not to politicize extradition cases. McCallum also said extradition "would not be a happy outcome," a comment that could irritate the Trump administration, which has generally cool relations with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government. Huawei declined to comment on McCallum's remarks. The envoy's comments, which were made in English on Tuesday, are potentially awkward for Canada's government, which insists it cannot intervene because of judicial independence. Trudeau sidestepped questions about the matter on Wednesday, telling reporters in Saskatchewan that under Canadian law Meng would have a chance to mount a strong defense. The Liberals may face a tough reelection fight this October against the opposition Conservative Party, which said McCallum's actions raised "questions of political interference." David Mulrone, an ex-Canadian ambassador to China, tweeted



that McCallum's comments were "almost impossible to understand." POSSIBLE OPTIONS McCallum noted Canada has not applied the same sanctions against Iran as the United States. "Canada does not sign onto these Iran sanctions. So I think she (Meng) has some strong arguments she can make before a judge," he said. The U.S. Justice Department has until Jan. 30 to file a formal extradition request and Canadian officials will then take up to a month to decide whether an extradition hearing is warranted. Legal experts say they expect a hearing to be held. "Canada respects its international legal commitments, including by honoring its extradition treaty with the United States," Freeland spokesman Adam Austen said in an email. Meng's arrest has hurt Canada's

relations with China, which subsequently detained two Canadians bit.ly/2Mrp80v last month, citing national security concerns. Additionally, a Chinese court later retried a Canadian who had been jailed for drug smuggling and sentenced him to death reut.rs/2RKgaRJ. McCallum said he saw three possible options for resolving the case. One would be Meng's extradition, which he said "would not be a happy outcome and that would take years" given that she could lodge legal appeals. The second would be for the United States to make a deal with China whereby the extradition request would be dropped. The third would be Meng's release by a Canadian court on the grounds the U.S. request was not warranted. McCallum, 68, a former Liberal cabinet minister, has made headlines in the past with offhand or colorful comments.



# YouTube's bet against big cable announces nationwide expansion

(News Agencies)- Google's TV streaming service for cord cutters, YouTube TV, is expanding nationwide. As more people ditch their costly cable subscriptions (or never sign up at all), YouTube is one of many companies trying to lure consumers with an online selection of channels and content that is less vast, but cheaper, than what typical cable TV offers. The \$40-a-month service will soon be available in 95 new U.S. markets, to cover a total of 195 regions, or 98 percent of U.S. households, the company said in a blog post Wednesday morning. YouTube TV includes livestreaming from more than 60 networks like CNN, ABC and Fox, including local affiliate coverage, premium networks, like Starz, for an

additional monthly charge and unlimited cloud DVR recording. YouTube has previously highlighted the availability of live sporting events as part of its bid against other services, and Wednesday's expansion announcement plays up how customers can use it to watch

the "Big Game." While Google has not disclosed subscriber numbers for YouTube TV since it launched in early 2017, the service reportedly increased from around 300,000 paying subscribers in January 2018 to 800,000 in July. It raised prices from \$35 to \$40 a month



in February last year. BTIG analyst Rich Greenfield said YouTube TV stands out from livestreaming alternatives like Sling, DirecTV Now, and Hulu + Live TV in part because of its automatic customization. "It knows when I wake up Sunday morning to show me that SNL was recorded last night, instead of what's on live first," he said. "It understands what I want to watch when I want to watch it, and that intelligence layer sets it apart from the other streaming services." While cable companies are feeling the effects of the surge

of new competing services - the industry lost more than a million subscribers in the third quarter of last year - new entrants are learning the tough economics of streaming. Disney is already losing more than \$1 billion in streaming through ESPN+ and its stake in Hulu, and YouTube TV is reportedly losing money on every subscriber. Still, the onslaught of news and new services continues: Viacom just agreed to acquire streaming service Pluto TV for \$340 million, and NBC announced last week that it plans to launch a new service in 2020.



# Sonam Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra opt for pop pantsuits

**The likes of Bollywood actors Sonam Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra and Janhvi Kapoor have been spotted wearing trouser suits in vibrant hues.**

There's a saying: "Dress as if you're already famous." If you were to take a cue from the fashion picks of the popular ladies of tinsel town, then a pop pantsuit is a must-have in your wardrobe à la Bollywood actors Sonam Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra and Janhvi Kapoor. Designer Rina Dhaka gives it a thumbs up. She says, "Colour, if set right, spells fun and is all about turning heads. Trouser suits always look great, and bright colours make it more 2018-19! They're perfect to make a statement, as the severity of the trouser suit will contrast with the sharpness of the colour."

If a pop hue is on your mind, then don't think of mixing colours. "For the current season, the way to wear it is one colour top to bottom," adds Dhaka.

To wear it right, three things should be kept in mind, says designer Nachiket Barve. "Firstly, the cut and fit has to be superb; secondly, the colour must complement your skin - bright colours suit everyone but those with lighter skin tones must stay away from neon green or they can look washed out. And if you're dusky,

own it! Don't try and look fairer using a lighter foundation, because then a pop pantsuit will not look befitting. Thirdly, the fabric must be high quality," he says.

When styling your trouser suit, remember that less is more. "Let the colour in your outfit be the highlight. Nude makeup with just

a hint of colour on the eyelid or lips will look good. For footwear, pick a pair of heels in neutral shades, or a metallic one," adds Barve.

Go easy on the bling, too. Gold hoops make for an ideal choice. A choker will look good on a plunging neckline.



## Shilpa Shetty's little black dress is just so stunning

**Shilpa Shetty was the definition of glamorous and sophisticated at the HT Palate Fest in Mumbai. Shilpa's dress by French label Jacquemus comes with a thigh-high slit and V neck. Even better? The actor radiates pure confidence in her designer dress.**

Shilpa Shetty attended the HT Palate Fest in Mumbai on Sunday, which meant another jaw-dropping look by the actor and reality TV judge. Shilpa Shetty stunned wearing a Jacquemus dress, priced at \$536 (approximately Rs 38,250). Shilpa's dress features a plunging V neck, a cinched tie-waist, flowing sleeves, a voluminous asymmetric hem and a front slit. While the design showed quite a lot of leg, the draped silhouette added movement to

the look and proved that baring skin can be quite elegant. Shilpa Shetty is probably one of the few women, who can wear a dress with thigh-high slit so effortlessly.

Take a look at Shilpa's full ensemble here: Shilpa Shetty accessorised her slouchy little black dress with a pair of statement barely-there heels, which added a sexy yet futuristic vibe to her classic look. Shilpa's transparent pumps are from UK-based shoe label, Office, and cost £49

(approximately Rs 4,500). But it was Shilpa's jewellery by Lara Morakhia that stole the show. Shilpa wore ornate floral silver rings and statement earrings that were handcrafted in real gold beads and pearls. Shilpa's top knot was the central point of her beauty look, which she couple with a light pink lipstick and radiating skin. Between her enviable figure and timeless black outfit, Shilpa Shetty's entire look is sexy, powerful, and ethereal.





## HC orders deferring MR vaccine campaign in Delhi after parents' objection

The vaccination drive, which was to start Wednesday, would cover more than 55.5 lakh children - between the ages of 9 months and 15 years - within five weeks

students as consent had not been taken from their wards. Appearing for the Delhi government, its standing counsel, Ramesh Singh, submitted that an "opt out" option could be created for the parents who do not want their wards to get the vaccination, which was objected to by the petitioners.

"Since it is apparent that the consent of the parents is not obtained and respondent are proceeded on the basis that the consent is not necessary, the campaign for administering the MR campaign is deferred till further orders from the court," the court said.

At least 220 million children from 30 states and union territories have already been vaccinated under the nationwide campaign that started in 2017.

"The campaign in Delhi, as in the other states, was based on

However, the Delhi government issued directions to compulsorily inject children in the age group of nine months to less than 15 years, with an admittedly "new vaccine", called the MR vaccine (to prevent disease of measles and rubella) and without taking into account the past vaccination history of the child, where in the child has already been vaccinated for the said diseases. The petition had sought restraining the government from forcibly administering the vaccination in the children. Measles affects an estimated 2.5 million children every year, killing nearly 49 thousand.

implied consent. In case of public health programmes, consent is said to be implied unless a person wants to opt out. People can refuse the vaccine, of course, we will not be forcing anybody," said Dr Suresh Seth, Delhi's state programme officer for immunisation.

The campaign is also underway in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, with only three more states - West Bengal, Sikkim, and Rajasthan - remaining to be covered.

"This is a unique situation; so far, none of the other states have had

a petition filed against the campaign, except for Kerala where too the court quashed it," said Dr Pankaj Bhatnagar of the World Health Organisation's National Polio Surveillance Programme, which is responsible for observing the coverage of the MR vaccine as well.

The plea filed by the students, through advocate Abhinav Mukherjee, had alleged that the Centre had mentioned that the vaccine would not be administered without informed consent of parents.

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday deferred the implementation of the 'Measles and Rubella vaccine immunisation campaign' (MR campaign) by the Delhi government stating that vaccination cannot be administered "forcibly" and without the consent of parents. The vaccination drive, which was to start Wednesday, would cover more than 55.5 lakh children - between the ages of 9 months and 15 years - within five weeks. "For now, we have deferred the vaccination campaign till the next hearing scheduled on January 21. We are studying

the order and looking at how to seek consent," said Dr Nutan Mundeja, Delhi's director general of health services.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru said that the petitioner's contention that giving the vaccines without the consent of the parents is "merited", adding that consent is the precondition for vaccinations.

The court's order came while hearing pleas by parents of a few minor students at city's schools alleging that the MR campaign is a "violation of the fundamental rights" of the

### *This is how you can counter the ill effects of long-time sitting*

If you wish to live longer, reduce your sitting time and replace it with just 30 minutes of physical activity.

These



are the findings of a recent study which appear in the American Journal of Epidemiology. The results highlight the importance of movement - regardless of its intensity or amount of time spent moving - for better health. "Our findings underscore an important public health message that physical activity of any intensity provides health benefits," said lead author Keith Diaz of Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. About one in four adults spends more than eight hours a day sitting, according to a recent study. In a previous paper, Diaz and his team discovered that adults who sat

for long stretches at a time - an hour or more without interruption - had a greater risk of early death than those who were sedentary for the same total amount of time but got up and moved around more often. They also found that people who sat for less than 30 minutes at a time had the lowest risk of early death, suggesting

that taking movement breaks every half-hour could lower your risk of death. But just how intense, and for how long, does the physical activity need to be to counter the ill effects of sitting? The study found that replacing just 30 minutes of sitting with low-intensity physical activity would lower the risk of early death by 17%, a statistically significant decrease. Swapping the same amount of sitting for moderate to vigorous activity would be twice as effective, cutting the risk of early death by 35%. The researchers also found that short bursts of activity - of just a minute or two - provided a health benefit.

## Even small amount of cannabis can alter brain

*Few studies have looked at the effects of the first few uses of a drug, said Hugh Garavan, a professor at the University of Vermont (UVM) in the US.*

Using even a small amount of cannabis may cause changes in the brain volume of teenagers, according to a study. The study, published in The Journal of Neuroscience, is the first to find evidence that an increase in grey matter volume in certain parts of the adolescent brain is a likely consequence of low-level marijuana use.

Few studies have looked at the effects of the first few uses of a drug, said Hugh Garavan, a professor at the University of Vermont (UVM) in the US. Most researchers focus on heavy marijuana users later in life and compare them against non-users. These new findings identify an important new area of focus.

"Consuming just one or two

joints seems to change grey matter volumes in these young adolescents," Garavan said.

The study included 46 children who reported having used cannabis once or twice by age 14. Their brains showed more grey matter volume in areas where cannabis binds, known as cannabinoid receptors, compared to the children who did not use the drug.

The biggest differences in grey matter were in the amygdala, which is involved in fear and other emotion-related processes, and in the hippocampus, involved in memory development and spatial abilities. The researchers ruled out the likelihood that the cannabis-using kids had pre-existing differences in grey matter thickness or that they had

specific personality traits that might correlate with the difference in brain makeup.

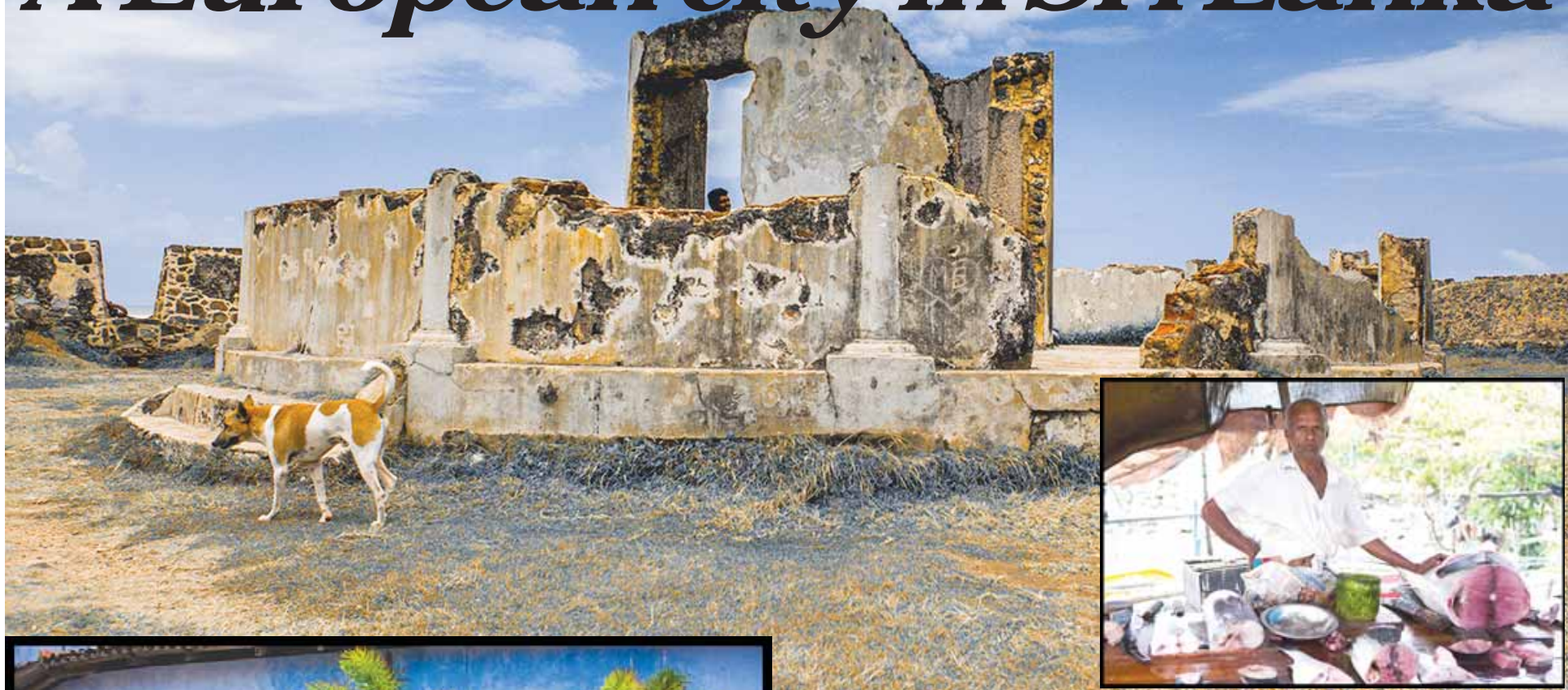
"The implication is that this is potentially a consequence of cannabis use," Garavan said.

"You are changing your brain with just one or two joints. Most people would likely assume that one or two joints would have no impact on the brain," he said.

However, the researchers said that what the increased brain matter volume means is unclear. Typically at that age, Garavan said, the adolescent brain undergoes a "pruning" process, where it gets thinner, rather than thicker as it refines its synaptic connections. "One possibility is they have actually disrupted that pruning process," Garavan added.

# Exploring Galle

## *A European city in Sri Lanka*



### A step into Sri Lanka's past

Step back into Sri Lanka's exotic past when visiting the ancient coastal town of Galle. This European walled enclave along the South Coast of Sri Lanka will evoke within you a frozen in time nostalgia.

Artists, writers, photographers and designers alike have been seduced by Galle's ambience for centuries. Its Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial past, offers everything a historical European city will offer, amidst its genuine Sri Lankan charm.

As a matter of fact, it is a perfect example of European architectural styles mixed in with South Asian traditions. A true atmosphere of the past.

It's a world within a world. Its quaint streets are representative of a living museum, still bustling with life millennia later, thus receiving World Heritage Status by UNESCO. Ancient mosques, churches, grand mansions, meditative temples and museums are hidden away within the coral and granite walls of the 16th-century Dutch fort. Stylish cafes, quirky boutiques and impeccably restored hotels dot its narrow cobble stone streets still bearing their original names.

The Fort is the slow beating heart of Galle's history.

The Fort Galle's core is the 300 year old Fort built in 1663 by the

Architecturally, it is genius. A storm water drainage system was introduced 200 years ago to prevent flooding in the fort.

The fort itself even withstood the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, whereas a few other buildings sadly suffered losses.

Flag Rock, once the Portuguese bastion is the ultimate sunset point. It can be found at the southernmost end of the Fort. Its not uncommon to find locals here, leaping into the water off the rocks. To commemorate the Portuguese, a coat-of-arms emblem can be found on the entrance with a rooster standing upon a rocky perch.

What to see Like any European

Dutch. Its wall enclave brims with attractions and surrounds three sides of the ocean. Here you can take in beautiful panoramic views of the peninsula and the sandy beaches.

Essentially it is a 90-hectare town that falls within a larger new city.

or Asian city, Galle has no shortage of things to do and see. Here are a few of the highlights.

### Galle Fort Hotel

Pop past the 18th century Galle Fort Hotel. You won't be disappointed. Originally, a Dutch mansion and warehouse, today it is a sought-after hotel boasting the finest examples of Dutch Architecture of its kind. The grand Palladian colonnade and the ceremonial arch at the entrance will take your breath away. What's more, UNESCO

has referred to this as a masterpiece of Cultural Heritage and conservation. By the same token, they have awarded the hotel the Asia Pacific Heritage Award of Distinction for its authenticity and historical value.

### Dutch Reformed Church & The Governor's House

The Dutch Reformed Church built in 1754 houses many antiquities that when visiting will merit an hour and a half of your time. Within, you will find a hexagonal shaped orthodox pulpit, a first of its kind in Sri Lanka. Engraved tombstones line the floors, and large tablets dedicated to British settlers can be found on the walls. The organ loft once held a cumbersome Dutch organ.

If you are feeling up for a treasure hunt, explore the underground tunnels running from here to the Governor's House.

The 18-metre high Galle Lighthouse stands tall on the eastern end of the Fort. It was built in 1939 by the British. If you would like to see some spectacular views of both the ocean and the land, climb to the top. It is also the very first lighthouse ever built in Sri Lanka.

Once you have explored the town's inner fortified walls, head to the fish market that can be found just outside the fort's main entrance. Rows of fishermen will be pulling in with their fresh produce from the day. The area is a delight for fish lovers. Museums and mansions Galle has a few notable museums.

The Galle National Museum, found in the oldest Dutch building in the fort, displays a few interesting archaeological and anthropological objects that give insight into cultures and rituals of the Southern Region.

What's more, you can even see some of the equipment the Dutch used to build their vessels back in the day, as well as the Dutch soldiers weapons and uniforms.

## Uri review:

# Vicky Kaushal leads an efficient but unimpressive attack

**Uri review: Vicky Kaushal leads an efficient but unimpressive attack. They may well have titled this film based on 2016 Surgical Strikes the Call Of Desi Duty. Rating: 2/5.**

Uri

Director - Aditya Dhar

Cast - Vicky Kaushal, Paresh Rawal, Yami Gautam, Kriti Kulhari, Rajit Kapoor, Mohit Raina, Swaroop Sampat

Rating - 2/5

Rajit Kapur plays the Prime Minister in Uri. Best remembered as truth-seeking sleuth Byomkesh Bakshi in the long-running television serial of the same name, the veteran actor finds a basic, bearded grace and stays understated as he chews thoughtfully on decisions about war and about the mothers of his soldiers. It is this man who signs off on everything, you see. In a movie about a successful military operation released in an election year, this celebration of credit cannot quite be considered coincidental.

Little, in fact, is left to chance in debutant director Aditya Dhar's film, a slick war feature about a revenge mission that never appears to pose a challenge.

There is a combat sequence around every corner - they may well have titled it Call Of Desi Duty - but the Indian Army are depicted as so valorous and well-prepared that the cartoonishly hook-nosed evil enemy never stands a chance.

Take Vicky Kaushal, playing gung-ho Major Vihaan Shergill, a well-built jawaan with a perpetually puffed chest, who not only decides strategy, outthinks intelligence agents and leads men into battle, but finds time to engage in one-on-one fighting with terrorists of all stripes. He moves with an oddly fey swing of the hips - like a GI Joe action figure who has worn out the rubber-band at his spine - yet fights like a heroic wrestler, all brave moves and war cries. His head may be weighed down by traditional genre tropes of ill mothers and widowed sisters, but on his lips are either orders or screams. Meanwhile, Paresh Rawal discusses artillery attacks with the tenderness of a ghazal-

loving uncle instructing novice chefs about slow-cooking a leg of lamb. "Halke halke badhaate rahiyega," he says about increasing firing across the line of control, playing a character visibly modelled on current National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. Rawal makes him a canny, cellphone-breaking man of action, one who spots very talented interns and gives them far too much to do, but the reliably fine actor makes it seem natural, even lines like "Son, you may have just won us the war." Uri is a decent looking film - though the cinematographer appears to have been told to highlight the lens-flare in every single shot of nighttime combat - and while the action is convincing, the proceedings are unmistakably dull. The film doesn't thump its chest as hard as the ones made by JP Dutta, but merely keeping its shirt on doesn't make this an actual movie. There is no tension to be



found here, and any attempts to manufacture breathlessness are childish. There is, for instance, a scene involving a Pakistani soldier who captures an Indian drone... only to believe it's a toy. While watching Uri, I kept wondering about the point of such a self-congratulatory film. The performances are mostly solid - the square jawed Mohit Raina and the lovely Swaroop Sampat stand out - and the action looks okay, but this is an uninteresting depiction of a best-case scenario. Then, as the Indian soldiers donned bright green night-vision goggles and strafed expertly outside a terrorist compound, it became clearer. This might be a boring

film, but it provides drama simply by showing Indian audiences that our military can be competent.

The target is unprepared, outnumbered and out of bullets. The Pakistani police, like our cops throughout the history of Indian cinema, arrive late to the scene. The Indian army, on the other hand, has everything under control. That efficiency may feel fantastical to an Indian audience, and Uri becomes therefore less a feature film and more an advertisement. Fantasies are about wish-fulfilment. Uri made me wish that Rajit Kapur, this soft-spoken man with no resemblance to Vivek Oberoi, was indeed our Prime Minister.

## Fyre movie review:

# Netflix's explosive new film lights up millennial culture

Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened

Director - Chris Smith

Rating - 4/5

Those of you expecting an hour-and-a-half of schadenfreude while watching Fyre, the explosive new documentary on Netflix, will likely be disappointed. Instead of tracing the chain of events that, in 2017, created a Lord of the Flies-like atmosphere on a Bahamian island, the documentary tries to understand how one man - the now convicted felon Billy McFarland - could dupe thousands of people of their money.

Many of you might remember being mildly amused at the news that emerged from the disastrous event, where hundreds of rich kids were flown down for what was promised to be an exclusive music festival, only to be greeted by a

mismanaged mess. Instead of the large villas they'd paid thousands of dollars for, they were told they'd be staying in tents - repurposed after the last hurricane - and instead of eating meals prepared by celebrity chefs, they were served cheese sandwiches in styrofoam containers. Unable to comprehend the unfairness, the rich kids adopted a mob mentality and began looting and pillaging the island, peeing on others' mattresses for no reason, and posting Instagram updates

As news of the scam spread, the festival's organisers fled the scene, leaving the rich kids trapped on the island, without the resourcefulness necessary to arrange for a way off it. "This is Darwinism at its finest," one comedian joked later.

Interestingly, the Fyre Festival wasn't the flagship event at all. It was merely a marketing ploy for

a different product - a music booking app conceptualised by McFarland, an entrepreneur with a spotty track record; a man who made up for his severe lack of charm by somehow convincing rich investors of the potential of his ideas.

The film brings together several of the men and women who worked closely with McFarland during the run-up to the event - social media experts and organisers and caterers and managers; all of them millennials themselves. The man who McFarland hired to handle logistics was a self-taught pilot; the guy in charge of booking talent had never booked anyone in his life. Each of the individuals featured in the film is very clear about their disapproval for McFarland's methods. According to them, it was clear that they were in over their heads, and many claim to have told



McFarland to pull the plug on several occasions. But Billy, in his own words, was 'selling a pipe-dream to the average loser'. It is later revealed that he was producing false documents to investors and duping them out of millions in order to fuel his hair-brained schemes. He was 'unflappable' in moments of conflict, according to one person, and utterly 'delusional' when it came to what he thought about himself. Director Chris Smith,

who knows a thing or two about delusion - he made the modern non-fiction classic, American Movie in 1999 - makes the canny choice to use bits of Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross' score from Gone Girl, a film about a psychopath who cons the media. Reznor and Ross previously won an Oscar for their score for The Social Network, another film about a millennial entrepreneur, who currently finds himself under the scrutiny of the law.

## Aryan's Facebook account hacked, posts message

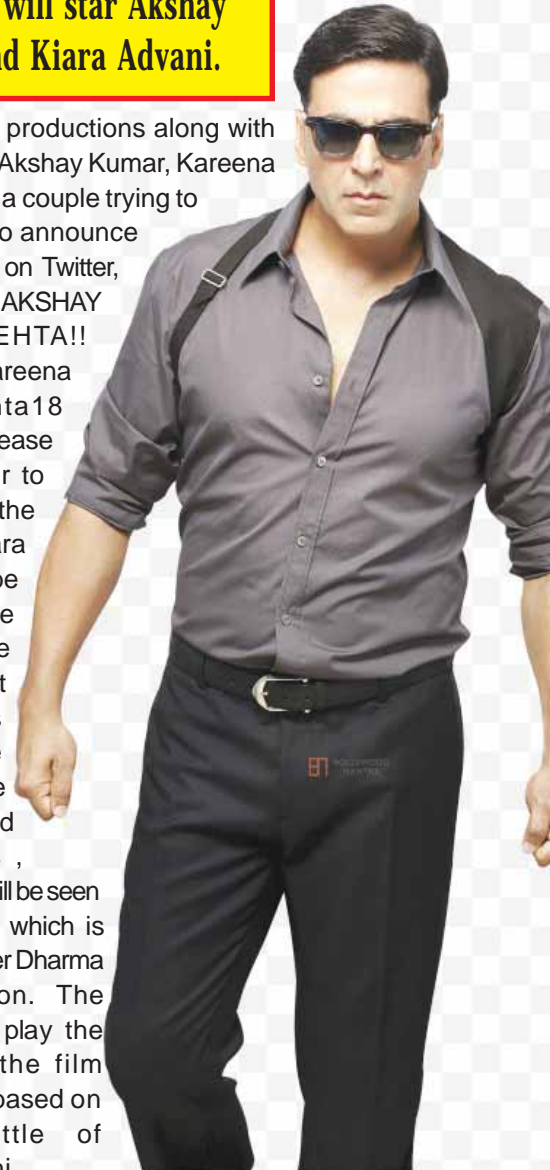


The Facebook account of Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan has been hacked. The star kid posted a message to confirm this. Actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan informed his followers that his Facebook account has been hacked. Aryan, who is studying at University of Southern California, posted a message on Instagram, "Facebook hacked please ignore anything from it." The 21-year old has close to 1 million followers on Instagram. Earlier, social media accounts of Shahid Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Rishi Kapoor, Abhishek Bachchan, Mahesh Bhatt, Karan Johar, Shruti Haasan and Ali Zafar have been hacked. While Aryan is media shy and has made it clear that he doesn't want to pursue acting, speculation about his debut refuses to die down. Shah Rukh's close friend, filmmaker Karan Johar had earlier said that he will launch Aryan in Bollywood. Talking to Hindustan Times earlier, Shah Rukh had said, "It's very sweet of them [his industry friends], and they have the right. If Aryan decides to be an actor, it will only be an honour for him to work with directors of that calibre. But I think he wants to be a filmmaker. Aryan is studying to be a filmmaker and a writer, while Suhana wants to be an actor."

## Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor's Good News gets a new release date, due on September 6

**Good News is produced by Karan Johar and will star Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor, Diljeet Dosanjh and Kiara Advani.**

Good News is one of the many upcoming Karan Johar productions along with Kalank, Student of the Year 2 and Takht. The film, starring Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Diljeet Dosanjh and Kiara Advani, is about a couple trying to get pregnant. On Monday, Karan Johar took to Twitter to announce the release date of the film as September 6. He wrote on Twitter, "#GOODNEWS releases on the 6th of September, 2019!!! AKSHAY KAREENA DILJIT KIARA!!! Directed by RAJ MEHTA!! #capeofgoodfilms @DharmaMovies @akshaykumar #kareena @diljitdosanjh @Advani\_Kiara @apoorvamehta18 @ShashankKhaitan." Initially, the film was expected to release in July, however, the film has now been pushed further to September. Good News is directed by Raj Mehta and the shoot for the film had begun in 2018 with Diljeet and Kiara working on their portions. Kareena and Akshay, who will be paired opposite each other in the film, began work on the film on January 20 in Mumbai. Kareena and Akshay have previously worked in films such as Ajnabee, Kambakkht Ishq, Tashan, Aitraaz and Bewafaa. While Kareena is taking it one project at a time and has Takht in the



pipeline after Good News, Akshay will be seen in Kesari, which is yet another Dharma Production. The actor will play the lead in the film which is based on the Battle of Saragarhi.

# Kangana Ranaut reveals

**a man pinched her butt in public, says women have to be responsible for their safety**



Kangana Ranaut has opened up about the #MeToo movement in India and how it changed the landscape, ahead of the release of her film, Manikarnika. Kangana plays Rani Laxmibai in the film, that she has also co-directed. Kangana, who had accused her Queen

director Vikas Bahl of inappropriate behaviour earlier, says people and their attitudes have changed after influential celebs were accused during the #MeToo movement. "People will think twice now because of certain things that were reported. Earlier, everyone

knew about some five-six names, but no one was doing anything about it. Today, they are out there exposed. Though that may not seem enough, it has some significance," she said. Supporting Rani Mukerji's stance that women should be taught martial arts to keep themselves safe, Kangana

said a woman needs to be responsible for her own safety. She said it was sad that Rani was trolled for her comments. "Maybe Rani was not able to articulate herself, but if you see the way she leads her life, she is the epitome of women's empowerment. Anyone who knows her wouldn't find her weak or timid. There are people who talk a lot, but they don't necessarily live up to it," Kangana said. During journalist Rajeev Masand's roundtable, Rani had said that "it is important for women to believe in themselves and say that if they don't want it to happen, it will not happen". When actor Deepika Padukone, also a part of the discussion, had said not everyone is

constructed that way, Rani had said, "Those are the women we need to talk to and tell them, you guys need to change." Kangana, citing her own experience, also reiterated that you cannot expect another person to be responsible for your safety. "I was pinched on my butt in the middle of a group and that person was right there, looking at me. It was not even sexual, it was like 'I did exactly what I was not supposed to do'. And looking me in the eye like 'what are you going to do now?' So, what do you expect?" "I think somewhere we should tell the girls that there are a few

rules. Don't say 'maybe,' when you want to say 'no', it's important. Your safety doesn't mean you can do taekwondo and karate. It also means you go to someone who can save you; it may be a teacher, an uncle you trust, a friend, or the Mumbai Police, or go to the media, find a journalist and expose them," she added.



# Dancing On Ice's

**Gemma Collins is 'locked in furious backstage row with judge Jason Gardiner before RAGING at host Holly Willoughby for joking about diva scandal'**



Gemma Collins is said to have been locked in an argument with Dol judge Jason Gardiner and hit out at Holly Willoughby behind the scenes on Sunday's show. As reports surfaced surrounding her behaviour, she went on to thank her fans for their support following a 'tough week' on Dancing On Ice.

Alongside an Instagram video of host Piers Morgan praising her on Monday, the TOWIE star penned: 'Thank you to everyone who supported me its been a tough

week @thepiersmorgan @gmb #teamcollins .... #next .... #boring.'

A source told The Sun: 'Gemma was furious backstage - but so was Jason. They're both very strong-minded so there was no chance either of them would back down after the show.'

'Behind the scenes the atmosphere is even more toxic now... Two of the most prominent people on the show are at war.' It has also been reported that Gemma is yet to receive an apology from Holly after she called the reality star 'unprofessional' during her DOI appearance.

Insisting she's focusing on her stint, an insider told the publication: 'Gemma hasn't got an apology from Phil or Holly yet, but she's happy to let it go and concentrate on the skating now.'

'MailOnline contacted representatives for Gemma, Jason and ITV for further comment. Sunday's instalment of Dancing On Ice saw judge Jason branded 'a bully', with the show receiving 80 complaints after its transmission.

Gemma stood up to Jason after he called her 'more Anna Nicole Smith than Marilyn Monroe' during her performance with partner Matt Evers. Jason's scathing remarks - which also come after Jason went to The Sun to badmouth TOWIE's Gemma earlier in the week - were met with a wash of criticism on Twitter, with viewers calling for the talent show judge to be fired over it.

Elsewhere, broadcasting watchdog Ofcom received a mixture of complaints, some aimed toward Jason and some toward Gemma. 50 complaints objected to Gemma's 'outburst', while 33 viewers objected to comments from the judges and presenters towards her.

However, earlier that day American skater Matt, 42, confirmed Gemma had skipped most of her rehearsal sessions last week. During an interview on Heart Breakfast, he told hosts Jamie Theakston and Lucy Horobin: 'First and foremost I will defend Jason, yeah. There wasn't a lot of content, I didn't have a lot of rehearsal time with her this week, so he was absolutely correct.'



# Inside Jodie Marsh's rustic-meets-Gothic home

**Glamour model and bodybuilder boasts bedroom 'fit for a princess', shag pile rugs and skull ornaments galore (including one she keeps EGGS in)**



She's known for her quirky tastes - from her outfits to her men (and women). And glamour girl-turned-bodybuilder Jodie Marsh has proven that her eccentric flair translates into her choices of home décor too.

The 40-year-old ex-Celebrity Big Brother star showcases a rustic-meets-Gothic finesse when it comes to interior design. She has decked her beamed cottage out with traditional items - and the odd ornamental skull for good measure, including one in the kitchen which she stores eggs in. Others dotted around the property include a framed diamante skull and a skull with a motorcycle helmet on it.

oddie's home boasts comfort - from the shag-pile laden living room to the plushly decorated

bedrooms. In one - up in the roof - Jodie has decorated in pinks and creams, her bed piled high with comfy pillows and cushions, a lamp on each side-table. The tall roof is majestic with its high-arching beams, and the walls are covered with cream wallpaper with a bird of paradise motif.

Jodie says herself that she likes her bedroom to 'make me feel like a princess'. Another boudoir is bedecked in white and blue - a leafy pattern on the walls and a bedspread to match.

At Christmastime, the glamour girl puts trees up in each bedroom, as well as the rest of the house, the first going up last year in mid-October.

Also lapping up the luxury are Jodie's pets - namely her cats

who enjoy sprawling around on the various grey and cream cushions and throws, as well as their multi-leveled feline playground. Jodie adds to the decadence with crystal chandeliers, a miniature jukebox in the kitchen and vintage mirrors in black ornamental frames.

She enjoys foliage too - decorating the place with orchids and sprawling green plants. Her cosy living room is made all the more private with statement white shutters and her kitchen continues the rustic theme with its low beams and wooden cabinetry. Always the willing hostess, Jodie boasts a cute dining room, which she hosted Christmas dinner at last year, allowing her creativity out onto the place settings too.



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