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Singh Wins Influence

Jagmeet Singh provided rare glimpses of joy, humanity and grace in a brutish campaign to become one of the most influential people in Ottawa.



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Trudeau faces rough road as Canada's minority parties lay out their conditions

PM faces landscape that will require skill to pass legislation – and rivals who could unseat his government on a whim

(News Agencies) After eking out a win in the first major test of his popularity since sweeping to power in 2015, Justin Trudeau was given his first taste of minority government on Tuesday, as rival party leaders begin laying out their conditions for the Liberal leader to remain as Canada's prime minister. "Everything is on the table," Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the leftwing New Democratic party, told reporters. Singh, whose party could hold the balance of power in the next parliament, outlined his policy priorities, including affordable housing and healthcare. "I'm hoping that Mr Trudeau respects the fact that there's a minority government now, which means we've got to work together."

After winning 157 of 338 seats in the country's general election – despite losing the popular vote to the Conservative party – Trudeau now faces a landscape that will require deft political maneuvering to strike deals and pass legislation and rivals who could unseat his government on a whim. The result also shows a significantly weakened prime minister straining under both the heavy baggage of incumbency and extensive damage to his personal brand. "We seek hardship for none and prosperity for all, and if we unite around these common goals, I know we can achieve them," Trudeau told cheering supporters in Montreal, telling the crowd that that Canadians had sent a decisive message

of support for progressive policy on climate change and Indigenous issues. Despite his lofty rhetoric, the contrast with Trudeau's 2015 landslide was stark, especially given the immense political capital he has spent defending progressive policies. Early into his first term, Trudeau welcomed refugees fleeing war, appointed a gender balanced cabinet and legalized cannabis nationwide. But in recent months, as the prime minister has been dogged by scandal – including accusations that he improperly pressured his attorney general to abandon prosecution of a major engineering company and emergence of Trudeau in blackface – he has largely abandoned



his "sunny ways" vision of government. No single "slam dunk" reason explains why the prime minister's popularity has ebbed, said Lori Turnbull, a professor of political science at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. Turnout for the general election was lower than in 2015, meaning the "red wave" driven by first time voters flocking to Trudeau failed to materialize for a second time. "People took a chance on him four years ago and maybe didn't come back for a second time," said

Turnbull. For those who did come back, initial excitement has largely given way to frustration. "The Liberal record on the environment is always been pretty horrible, and it doesn't seem like he's going to change that," said Jonathan MacCalder, a Toronto voter who supported the prime minister in 2015. In a country heavily reliant on natural resources, Trudeau's efforts to strike a balance on the environment and economy have been criticized by both the right and the left.

His government brought in a carbon tax to fight the climate crisis – but also paid billions to rescue a stalled pipeline project. MacCalder said he felt Trudeau has lost much of his appeal – likening the prime minister to Barack Obama, the former US president who swapped boundless hope for a bleaker pragmatism in his second term – but he nonetheless voted for the Liberals on Monday. "I think: a good thing for the country and the ability to move forward," he said of the result.

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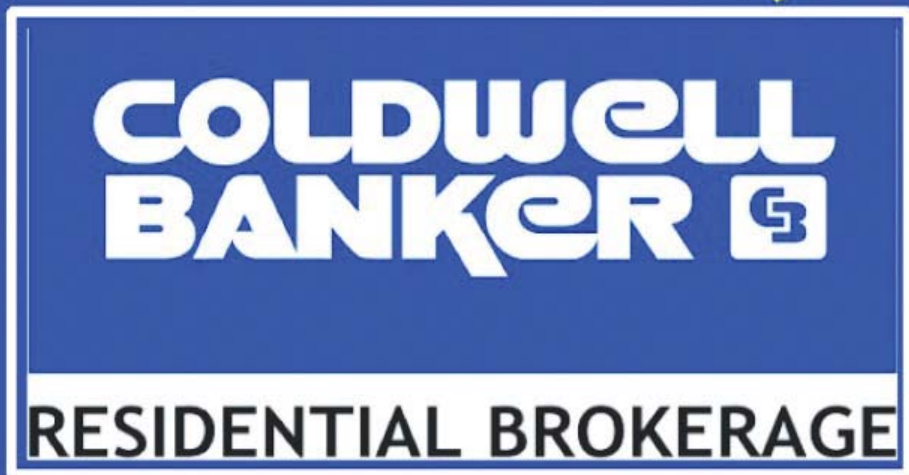
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Justin Trudeau's political setback

A surprise to the world, but not to Canada

For international observers, it may be stunning to see Trudeau's government reduced to a minority

(News Agencies) Canada's federal election campaign highlighted a struggle that caught the world by surprise. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was on the ropes throughout the campaign, just four years after his meteoric rise to power and global fandom, even though he ultimately managed to win a minority government. His struggles did not come as much of a surprise for Canadian progressives, however, who first helped propel him to those heights four years ago. Trudeau came to power with incredible fanfare after an election victory in October 2015 that saw Stephen Harper's Conservatives voted out.

Trudeau returned his party to power with a majority government by appealing to an electorate that was more than weary of almost a decade of right-wing Conservative rule.

The world sat up and took notice, in part because Trudeau's famous father, Pierre, had been swept to power in a similar fashion in 1968 amid a wave of what was known as Trudeaumania. That victory more than 50 years ago laid the foundation for 16 years of nearly uninterrupted Liberal rule under Pierre Trudeau, who was the architect of multiculturalism in Canada and further committed the country to peace-building and a rules-based international system. It's a vision many Canadians

came to embrace, but one that Harper's Conservatives, in power from 2006 to 2015, seemed determined to systematically replace. In this way, the election of Justin Trudeau seemed for many to be a repudiation of the Harper agenda and a return to the normalcy of Canada's past. Canada is back

At first, Trudeau seemed unable to disappoint. He could not have appeared a starker contrast from Harper, regarded by many Canadians as cold and uncharismatic. Youthful, charming and handsome, Trudeau's progressive messaging immediately stood apart from Harper's. His policies appeared to do so, too. This included immediately opening Canada up to tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, which Harper had initially appeared reluctant to do. Trudeau even went to Toronto's airport to welcome some of the first refugees, saying: "You are home."

Trudeau's Liberals emphasized a multicultural Canada that would be open to refugees. This diversity would be represented in their government, too. In contrast to some Conservative leadership candidates' embrace of Islamophobia and a "barbaric cultural practices tip line," Trudeau's government included a record number of Muslim MPs. Trudeau also became the first Canadian prime minister to march in a Pride parade.

Trudeau ran in 2015 on a message of environmental protection, support for Indigenous nations in Canada and global feminism. This included instituting a feminist foreign policy agenda and a reorientation of Canada's development aid programming on a Feminist International Assistance Policy. When asked why he established gender parity for his first cabinet, he famously retorted: "Because it's 2015." His government legalized cannabis sales and reversed Harper's anti-science restrictions on research. It increased immigration quotas and reasserted Canadian support for multilateral institutions and international law. This seemed like a return to form for Canada on the international stage and Trudeau emphasized this by saying: "Canada is back."

Canadians largely seemed happy with his leadership and his government rode high in the polls. His popularity only seemed to skyrocket at home and abroad with the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States in 2016. For liberals around the world, Trudeau seemed to represent everything the new president was not. Before long, Trudeau became a global symbol in the worldwide struggle against the rise of authoritarianism, populism and white nationalism. So what

happened? Why did Trudeau have to fight for his political life this election against the Conservatives, the New Democratic Party and a resurgent Bloc Québécois, a separatist party that only runs candidates in Québec? As often happens in Canada, questions about Trudeau's progressive credentials arose in the Middle East.

Being progressive in Canada often includes support for Palestinian rights. This was in part a result of Harper's very partisan pro-Israel approach to governance, which included a crackdown on Canadian advocates for Palestinian rights. Though Trudeau's Liberals did reinvest funds that Harper's Conservatives cut from Palestinian refugees, progressives quickly noticed how Trudeau and his government would go out of their way to attack Canadians who advocated for Palestinian rights. This was accompanied by robust diplomatic support for the policies of the right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel, who was the antithesis of everything Trudeau was supposed to represent.

In region after region, Liberal foreign policy appeared to come out of the Harper playbook. This included Canada's participation in a campaign to force regime change in oil-rich

Venezuela and approving record weapons sales to a notorious human rights violator, Saudi Arabia, as it wages a brutal war in Yemen.

Even Trudeau's feminist foreign policy seemed hollow. What good did it do for Yemeni women whose communities are being destroyed with Canadian weapons, Palestinian women shot for protesting the blockade on Gaza or Venezuelan women impoverished by a Canadian-backed economic blockade?

From his rapid retreat from a campaign pledge for proportional electoral representation to his odd fascination with fancy dress and concerns about the sincerity of his progressive credentials, cumulative questions arose about Trudeau domestically.

Two particular events, though, were critical to undoing his progressive brand.

First was his government's \$4.5 billion purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline from U.S.-based corporation Kinder Morgan. This was highly unpopular with environmentalists and the First Nations communities it would run through. This raised serious questions about Trudeau's commitment to fighting climate change and helping Indigenous Peoples, too. Second was his government's attempt to halt criminal proceedings

into Québec-based engineering firm SNC-Lavalin for overseas corruption. This led to the resignation from cabinet of Jody Wilson-Raybould, Canada's first Indigenous minister of justice. She complained she was pressured into considering a deferred prosecution agreement for SNC-Lavalin, and was joined in solidarity in her departure from cabinet by another of Trudeau's most prominent female ministers, Jane Philpott. Both were then pushed out of the Liberal caucus, topping off a scandal that raised questions about Trudeau's commitment to corporate good governance, women's empowerment and Indigenous leadership. The campaign trail emergence of images of a younger Trudeau in blackface was also shocking to progressive voters. The photos decidedly tarnished his image, both at home and abroad. Canada is a diverse country with a diverse electorate. Many Canadian voters, and the core Liberal constituency, still supported Trudeau. This kept him relevant in the 2019 election campaign. A late campaign endorsement by former U.S. president Barack Obama also served as a reminder of what Trudeau still symbolizes to many liberals around the world.

A humiliating night for Justin Trudeau

By any stretch of the imagination, Justin Trudeau, the steward of the family brand, had a humiliating election night.



(News Agencies) Not only was Trudeau's Liberal Party forced by voters to accept a demotion to a minority government -- grabbing just 157 of 338 seats in the House of Commons -- but about two-thirds of the country voted against him. His party's share of the popular vote clocked in at just 33.1% -- less than the 34.4% earned by the rival Conservative Party of Canada and its leader Andrew Scheer. (Despite receiving a greater

percentage of the vote, the Conservative Party picked up 36 fewer seats than the Liberals.) In order to have won a second majority, the Liberals would have had to hit or exceed the magic number of 170 seats. Trudeau went into Canada's 40-day election campaign with major headwinds blowing against him -- not least of which was the ascendancy of third parties in eastern Canada that were well positioned on election

night to force a minority coalition government. The Trudeau election juggernaut was also thrown off course midway through the campaign after photos surfaced showing him wearing blackface at multiple points when he was younger. Perhaps as a result of these setbacks, the Liberals lost many seats in western Canada, and in fact were completely wiped out in oil-rich Alberta and agriculture-dependent Saskatchewan, signaling

widespread displeasure there over the imposition of a punitive carbon tax, oil pipeline politics and arrogant indifference over their frustrations. After most of the votes were counted and the victory and concession speeches delivered, Canadians could not be blamed for feeling a nasty election hangover: the speeches by the three leaders came across as almost tone-deaf, with little to calm concerns that the country's divisions are getting even bigger. An extreme, but not entirely unrealistic, view might be that the ghosts of the past of separatist tendencies in Quebec and Alberta have been revived. If ignored by Trudeau and his coalition partners, that could bring very unwelcome instability for

years to come. In his post-election speech that came across as more of a campaign speech than an attempt at national healing, Trudeau seemed to have sensed western alienation, reminding Canadians in that region: "You are an essential part of our great country. I've heard your frustration and I want to be there to support you." For a minority Trudeau government to survive any confidence vote or pass major legislation, the Liberal leader will have to negotiate with the junior parties. Canada's international cooperation on such things as peacekeeping may be more difficult to achieve and that could end up leaving Canada diminished on the world stage. Moreover, minority governments in Canada usually have a shelf life of

less than 24 months, so Canadians will probably be headed back to the polls within two years. In some ways, Canada's 43rd election campaign was remarkable for being so unremarkable, right up until voting day on Monday. What I heard from many Canadians as I traveled across this vast country over the weekend is that they struggled to identify a single burning issue that influenced their ballot choice. "One thing was true throughout this campaign; voters, especially those on the left of centre, were uncertain about what they wanted. Even last week, with fewer than seven days until the election, just half of voters said they were locked into their top choice in this election," said the non-profit independent research foundation Angus Reid Institute.

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India's One-China policy is flawed. It must be reworked

It can't validate its claim over Arunachal Pradesh without recognising the historical independence of Tibet

Whenever the president of China visits India, the Indian police locates me, no matter where I am and throws me into the nearest central jail.

This time, when the Narendra Modi-Xi Jinping Chennai Connect was happening, I went to gatecrash the party. Imagine a scene. As the two Asian leaders meet for that iconic photograph, greet each other and raise their clenched fists together in front of the legendary Krishna Butterball, all of a sudden,

they hear a noise from behind the boulder. As the cameras hurriedly pan left, they see a man on the nearby cellphone tower unfurling a long red banner reading "Free Tibet" down the length of the tower and screaming the Free Tibet slogan at the top of his voice.

As with most things in life, this dream protest didn't materialise — I was arrested days before the summit.

I had done such protest stunts earlier, successfully, twice — by climbing the Oberoi hotel in 2002 in Bombay, and the Indian Institute of Science building tower in 2005 in Bangalore. This lone act helps in raising the real issue between the "new neighbours", India and China; the issue of 70 years of Chinese occupation of Tibet and its dangers to India. Indian security establishment officials tell me that is also why the Indian government gets the usual request from the Chinese embassy in Delhi to put me away every time there is such a visit. The post-arrest interaction with the police is most rewarding for me. I sit with police officers, and start my chai pe charcha on Tibet. The current narrative in India is only



concerned with the "China border", which started from the 1962 Chinese aggression in the Tawang region, and it got reinforced after the Doklam stand-off. India never had any borders with China; it was only after the Chinese occupation of Tibet that China appeared over the Himalayas. Neither the media-crafted narrative nor the organised education system gives any clear picture about Tibet — what lies behind the Himalayas, the real civilisational neighbour with whom India shares a 4,085km border. As India was emerging as an independent country, it organised the first Asian Relations Conference in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, and Tibet was present there as an independent country. Between 1947 and until the Chinese invasion, Tibet and India shared equal status as independent countries for three years. There was even an Indian high commissioner in Lhasa. With the founding of Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China in 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru's India calculated its interest was best served by convergence with China. India became one

of the first countries to recognise Tibet as a part of China, straining our previous cordial relations. Not keeping all the eggs in one basket, India continues to host the Dalai Lama and 100,000 Tibetan refugees here. As a newly founded communist country, the rise of China was supported by India in its early stage, and later, its growth was facilitated by the United States. India's blunt stand "Tibet is a part of China" from the 1954 Panchsheel agreement was later reiterated by Rajiv Gandhi during his 1988 Beijing visit. But Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government brought in a nuanced articulation in its 2003 statement saying "Tibetan Autonomous Region is a territorial part of People's Republic of China". Indian nationalism is often stumped when China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of "South Tibet". But this requires context. The Tawang region, the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, was part of Tibet until the agreement in 1914 resulted in the McMahon Line. This bifurcated the entire region of Tawang and made it a part of British India, with maps drawn and documents signed. The Dalai Lama

stands by this and has repeatedly reiterated it during his subsequent Tawang trips. India, therefore, has historical, legal and documentary evidence of this political move.

Where was China when this decision was made? China had recently won its independence in 1911 after being occupied by the Manchu empire for over 250 years. And under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen, the Republic of China was being established. The fact that China did not sign the Simla Agreement has no bearing on the McMahon Line — the latter was a bilateral treaty (between British India and Tibet), and the Simla Agreement was trilateral (between British India, Tibet and China). The McMahon line keeps the peace between the Chinese and Indian military even today. In this backdrop, how does India hope to validate its claim over Arunachal without recognising Tibet, which gave away Tawang to India? Whether India supports the ongoing Tibetan freedom movement or not may be a strategic call, but without recognising the historical independence of Tibet, wouldn't India's

control over Arunachal Pradesh look like the Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin? Perhaps, if the Chinese push comes to shove, India may be forced to recognise the Tibetan government-in-exile and the Dalai Lama as the leader of Tibet. India and China emerged as Asian giants in the chaotic period of establishing their respective republics; India as a federal State, and China, modelled on the Soviet idea of the republic where nationalities are bundled together by coercion or by military occupation. India and China formulated the One-China, One-India policy. Today, India is a democracy and only has to deal with the Kashmir issue. But China is facing resistance movements in Tibet, East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Southern Mongolia. The five-month revolt in Hong Kong is also hugely significant for it shows the limits of Chinese power, and may be inspiring citizens inside China. Taiwan too remains a concern for Beijing. This makes Delhi's One-China policy absolutely lopsided in terms of diplomacy. India has to

remain silent on 60% of contested area under China's territorial control, and also its rule over Hong Kong and claims over Taiwan, while China has to stand with India only on Kashmir. And it does this too unfaithfully, as we have seen recently at the United Nations. The Bharatiya Janata Party government has a unique opportunity to finally carry out Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's policy statement that he wrote as a letter to Nehru, advising him to support Tibet, and take every precaution against "expansionist China". Will the Modi government act on Sardar Patel's words or remain satisfied with just his statue? The 12-day stay in central jail in Chennai was my 16th jail term. It was a great retreat and better than the one I had in Sewagram. As a Tibetan born in India, India is as much my country as Tibet. The Dalai Lama doesn't look at China as an enemy, but as nation afflicted with anger and greed. Whether China quits Tibet or not, the Buddha will not abandon the suffering. China is now stuck with us, our journey together is our path to freedom.

India's political vacuum

The BJP is popular. But the voter is also bereft of choices



If exit polls are any indicator, the Maharashtra and Haryana elections are set to throw up predictable results. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is likely to return to power, alone in Haryana, and, in alliance with the Shiv Sena, in Maharashtra. This will reinforce the pattern of dominance of the party, which was so clearly visible during the Lok Sabha results earlier this year. It will be seen as a vindication of the set of policies adopted by the Narendra Modi government since being re-elected. And it will also establish both Devendra Fadnavis and Manohar Lal Khattar as strong state-level leaders in their own right. But if the results indeed reflect the exit polls, the more significant takeaway is for the Opposition. Rarely in recent Indian democratic history has the electoral contest been as one-sided as it is now. But here is the surprise. Reports from both states have indicated that while Mr Modi remains popular, central schemes are effective, and BJP-led governments are credited with less corruption, there is also rising discontent among social groups. The economic slowdown is having an impact on the ground. The young are concerned about the absence of employment

opportunities. There is a dip in purchasing power. Farmers continue to complain about inadequate prices. Shopkeepers in markets in small towns and villages report a dip in sales. And there is a sense of unease that the government may not either be fully in control of the economic situation, or its measures are not yet having the desired impact.

Yet, the same voters who express their grievances are often quick to say that they will vote for the BJP. A key reason for this is what they perceive as the lack of a strong alternative and a sense of inevitability about the BJP's win. This is due to two factors. The first is the Opposition's weaknesses — the Congress' national leadership is discredited; it is seen as being on the wrong side of the nationalism debate; it suffers a crisis of credibility and communication; and its organisation is weak. The other is the BJP's shrewd politics, which has co-opted strong leaders from the other side or been selective about corruption cases to target them. The result is that voters are bereft of choices. The big question in Indian politics is who will eventually fill this vacuum.

A glimmer of hope in bilateral ties?

After several twists and turns, India and Pakistan have agreed to sign an agreement on the opening of a cross-border corridor. This will allow Indian pilgrims to visit Darbar Sahib gurdwara in Kartarpur to coincide with the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. The corridor will link Dera Baba Nanak at Gurdaspur in India to the gurdwara in Pakistan's Punjab where Guru Nanak spent the last years of his life. Given the poor state of bilateral ties, the fact that the two sides agreed on the pact is positive and must be welcomed. This is a unique pact as it will allow pilgrims to travel across the border without a visa. India has strongly opposed Pakistan's move to charge a service fee of \$20 from every pilgrim, which is currently the main point of difference between the two sides. Islamabad has argued this levy is necessary to cover its expenditure on infrastructure and various services to

be provided to the pilgrims. While this is true, the service fee is substantially higher than the current visa fee of about \$2. Indian security officials, however, continue to have genuine concerns about the pilgrims being exposed to the propaganda of pro-Khalistan elements. There is enough evidence in the public domain about the activities of these elements in Pakistan, which also roped them in for recent protests in Western capitals against the change of Jammu and Kashmir's special status. It will be unfortunate if Pakistan uses the Kartarpur Corridor to fish in troubled waters and cause instability for its political ends. On the other hand, if the corridor offers even the faintest glimmer of hope for taking the troubled bilateral relationship in a positive direction, that will be welcomed by many in both countries.



In the US, India's perception battle

Address the issues that are part of the American Left narrative

India's Kashmir policy has become a problem with the American Left, which is developing a narrative about the Narendra Modi government that is partly fallacious. Some of this was on display during the hearing on Kashmir by the United States House Foreign Relations subcommittee. The proceedings were largely symbolic, for the executive continues to dominate policy. Only 14 Congress representatives attended, eight of whom left by the second round. The State Department, reflecting the views of the Donald Trump administration, pushed back. There are three elements of the American Left narrative, which, for the sake of the larger relationship, New Delhi would do well to address. The first is the focus on the curtailment of civil liberties. India must emphasise that despite current challenges, the government plans to restore both democracy and civil rights in Jammu and Kashmir. The best way to do so would be to release political leaders, ease communication links, and hold elections. The second element is to underplay the role of terrorism and see Kashmir in isolation. India should continue to point out the devastation caused by terrorism in the region and its global implications. The good news is that even at the hearing, the move on

Article 370 was considered irreversible. The third element of the narrative is to link the Modi government with the nativist populism of Mr Trump and other Right-wing demagogues. While there are elements of the Bharatiya Janata Party's majoritarian political project that it must review — and it is challenged on this domestically — the party is a product of a deepening of Indian democracy. Its overwhelming electoral wins also have a lot to do with its embrace of what, in the West, would be considered a strong welfarist platform. Ignoring this creates a simplistic view of the current juncture in Indian politics. New Delhi should make the effort because the Left of the Democratic Party is on the rise. Two of the three leading Democratic presidential candidates identify with this wing. It is likely to see increased influence after congressional elections next November. India can resist and has resisted earlier pressure from the United States. But it remains the foreign partner that can contribute the most to India's rise. Pre-empting possible obstacles in the relationship, and sustaining bipartisan support for it, is in the interests of both countries.


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Why a weaker Congress is bad news for Opposition unity

For the Opposition to be stable and strong, there has to be a pivotal force which can bring together regional aspirations and translate state-level sentiments into a national-level unity to take on its adversaries.



(News Agencies) Now that the exit poll predictions are out for the Maharashtra and Haryana assembly elections, it looks like the Congress will have to wait longer to see its happier times.

Yes, the exit polls in India

have regularly been off the mark. But as all such polls indicate a common trend, win for NDA and defeat for the Congress and its allies, it's hard to ignore a sign of the times.

A possible win of the BJP in two key states will of course

consolidate its leadership position at the Centre. And in the Opposition's crumbling edifice, the results may mean more damage.

For the Opposition to be stable and strong, there has

to be a pivotal force which can bring together regional

aspirations and translate state-level sentiments into a national-level unity to take on its adversaries.

In 2004, the Congress (145) had just 7 seats more than the BJP (138), making it the automatic leader of a bunch of diverse regional powerhouses to form the first of its kind non-BJP coalition government that went on to run for 10 years.

But the Congress' clout with its allies and even potential supporters weakened in 2014 when the party bagged just 44 seats, insufficient for the party even to take the seat of the leader of the Opposition.

In the last five years, the

groups and sub-groups as different parties tried to create a leadership role for itself in the absence of a clear commander.

Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal, Telangana Rashtra Samithi, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party—all these parties have tried to form their own groups or pockets of influence and in many states, including Uttar Pradesh, the Congress failed to find a suitable partner to fight polls together in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

And in the first three months

of the new Lok Sabha, the unity is further shattered as the NDA, although in

minority in the Rajya Sabha, successfully cleared bills of triple talaq and bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, exposing the vulnerability in the Opposition ranks.

A strong Opposition party at the Centre can certainly change the way politics is being played out in the national theatre. The BJP could have faced a tougher Opposition headed by a strong national party. And the Congress, too, could have enjoyed a more assertive role and a larger maneuvering space in the Opposition bloc. Many parties would have dared not discount the Congress' ability to take on the BJP in these tough times.

By decriminalising abortion, N Ireland has finally upheld women's rights

Now, health workers do not have to worry about prosecution, and doctors will have to begin specialising in this service. All this does not mean that those opposed will not disrupt things, though the buffer zones, which will be in place outside hospitals, should help



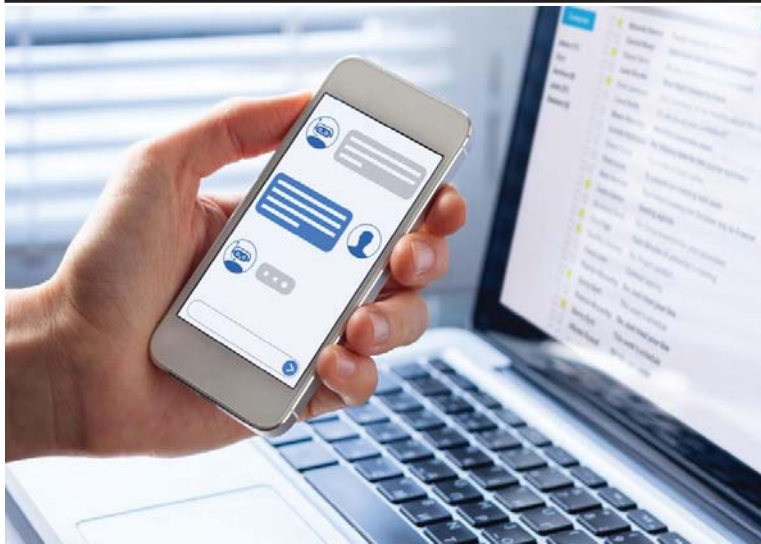
(News Agencies) The tragic death of an Indian woman, Savita Halappanavar, has influenced one of the most momentous changes in Northern Ireland's restrictive laws against abortion. She died when denied an abortion after a miscarriage in 2012. Her family's pleas were ignored by doctors on grounds of the illegality of termination, triggering a debate on

whether this was a violation of the Hippocratic oath. Last year, another woman won a legal challenge to travel to England for an abortion after she was diagnosed with foetal problems. Northern Ireland's laws so far prohibited abortion even in the case of incest and rape. So, the lifting of this 158-year ban on abortion in favour of

decriminalisation is nothing short of historic. Attempts to scuttle this move by the anti-choice parties failed, bringing to an end the harassment of women for seeking autonomy over their own bodies and choices. The 66% vote against criminalisation is also a triumph for Prime Minister Leo Varadkar who pushed for it, despite the political

consequences he could face. The State can now no longer intrude into the most personal of arenas. Now, health workers do not have to worry about prosecution, and doctors will have to begin specialising in this service. All this does not mean that those opposed will not disrupt things, though the buffer zones, which will be in place outside hospitals, should help.

This ought to send some signals to many in the United States who continue to oppose abortion on religious grounds to appease the extreme Right which seeks to deny women what is a basic right. Though the last political word on the issue may still be heard in Northern Ireland, there is no going back on this pro-women, pro-human rights move.



The interplay of AI, modern lives and literature

AI is a familiar trope from our favourite science fiction. But with its spread, there are new stories to be written

between then and now? In a turnaround few had anticipated, it was the Internet that rebirthed AI in the 21st century. Suddenly a word like algorithm, which I never imagined I'd encounter again after school, is back in our everyday vocabulary.

We're all acquainted with this AI in our day-to-day lives. We exchange words with our Siri, Alexa or Google Assistant; buy new products from uncannily accurate personalised ads; let our phones autofill our words or Facebook recognise us and our friends in photos. While AI hasn't turned out to "look like" us, now it knows more about us than even our real-life friends.

The human mind tends to impose humanoid models on everything. We imagine everything from gods to aliens to mermaids as variations of the human; we build cars with faces; we think our dogs are smiling. It's hard to imagine disembodied networks of numbers, codes and abstractions, controlled by governments and large corporations, to be AI in the same way we had imagined robotic "people".

The difference between good old-fashioned AI and modern AI is precisely the reimagination from the humanoid model to artificial

neural networks.

Neural networks are also eventually a humanoid model, but instead of our appearance or social behaviours, they replicate the circuits of neurons in the human brain. The older generation of AI scientists failed to give humanoid robots the "spark of life" that would spur them to start learning independently; so, current scientists have gone deeper into our anatomy, emulating the way our brains process information at all. In function, neural nets are sets of algorithms — mathematical formulae that can analyse previously existing data into patterns, and use those patterns to predict future outcomes. (that is, if a lot of people who enjoyed Book A also loved Book B, it's likely that the next fan of Book A will enjoy Book B as well. Or when someone types p-h-e-n-o, they're more likely to finish with -menon than -logy.) The predictions made by algorithms become more accurate with the larger amount of data they can analyse. As highly advanced algorithms, neural nets cannot present tangible outcomes if their input data set isn't sufficiently large. The concept of neural nets had existed since the 1940s, but

it was only with the enormous amount of data freely available on the Internet in the 2000s that neural-net technology started showing outstanding results. But here's the catch: "Freely available data" on the Internet is often the personal communications of millions of people; users like you and me who didn't even know that our data was being recorded and analysed by third parties. While scientific research has always been dictated by external factors like politics, marketability and so on, at no point in history has the research itself depended on turning millions of unaware people into research subjects. Neural nets are a delightfully efficient technology, but their biggest successes so far have all been opaque to the public, working for companies like Google, Amazon and Facebook. So these days when we talk about AI, the conversation is not only of relevance to a small group of scientists and investors. AI is already inside our homes and lives, gently recommending the next thing we choose to do, eat, wear, read, watch, say or believe. There are new AI stories to be written, and my Smart Compose knows what happens next in them.

(News Agencies) In September, I visited Berlin for the International Literature Festival, on a track titled Automatic Writing, which invited an international cohort of 30 science fiction authors, scientists, programmers, activists, philosophers and journalists to talk about Artificial Intelligence (AI). These cross-disciplinary conversations about AI have become increasingly common, and are currently one of the most exciting, but also widely misunderstood areas of public discourse.

AI is a familiar trope from some of our favourite science fiction. In those stories, AI is often a humanoid robot, engaging in interactions with people. Isaac Asimov published his fictitious, but widely quoted, Laws of Robotics in the 1942 story, Runaround. Alan Turing developed the Turing Test in 1950, involving a set of questions that distinguish machine intelligence

from human intelligence. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K Dick, published in 1968, is a novel about the moral dilemma of treating human-like robots as fellow humans or less. The humanoid-AI trope has been overlaid with real-life social inequalities like gender, race and class, as well as philosophical discourse on the essence of being human.

But scientific research on AI had nearly dropped to a standstill by the late 1980s. Scientists were making machines do complicated tasks, but never beyond repetitive ones. Disparate items ranging from 3D graphics to mechanised sex dolls looked a little more realistic, but nowhere close to be mistaken for people. AI technology didn't seem to be able to locate the breakthrough that would lead to those astonishingly human-like robots we were dreaming of decades before.

What revolutionised the field

Stubble or no stubble, Delhi's air pollution will continue to pinch

The air pollution levels in Delhi go up in the winter as particulate matter gets trapped at the ambient level due to negligible wind speed for dispersal, coupled with some contribution by farm fires in the northern plains of India.

(News Agencies) Delhi gets trapped at the ambient level due to negligible wind speed for dispersal, coupled with some contribution by farm fires in the northern plains of India. The reason is simple—if there is no wind speed in Delhi to disperse particulates causing temperature inversion, how can there be wind bringing smoke pollutants from the northern plains. In such a scenario, the air pollution gets locally trapped even in the farm fire zones, which has high concentration of pollutants. Sadly, there is not much scientific data on the air pollution levels in the farm fire zones. Some scientists argue that due to its geological positioning Delhi

sees witnesses an air islanding impact. But, if that had to happen than towns in the foothills of the Himalayas such as Chandigarh and Dehradun should also have higher air pollution impact as they face higher islanding impact than Delhi and are closer to farm fire areas in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.

The Central Pollution Control Board's real-time air data from October 1 to October 18, 2019, of Delhi and towns in the farm fire regions of northern India does not support that argument that stubble burning causes major spike in the national capital's air pollution. During

this period, the stubble burning cases in Punjab and Haryana this year were almost same as in 2018, meaning that farms of Punjab and Haryana emitted same amount of smoke. But, the impact on



Delhi was much less. The reason could be found in the CPCB air pollution data. On national highway-1 (GT Karnal road), the average particulate matter (PM 2.5) air pollution level in Ambala between October 1 and 18

was 72.5 micrograms in cubic meter of air. At Karnal, the next major town on the highway, it increased to 96.24 and was 102.56 in Panipat. In south of Delhi in Haryana,

(Contd on page 22)

Ayodhya: Look back, move forward

The issue has haunted the nation. Citizens must now respect the court order, and live in harmony

(News Agencies) This was perhaps in 2011-12. When I entered the Prayagraj Express from Allahabad to Delhi, an old gentleman was sitting in front of me. I was settling down and arranging my luggage, when he asked if he had seen me somewhere. I looked at him closely, and felt that I had met him before as well. But the question was where. Then, it struck me. The old gentleman extended his hand and introduced himself as Palok Basu. "Oh dada!", I exclaimed spontaneously. Palok Basu was a justice in the Allahabad High Court, but he never gave up the bond of brotherhood with the people of the city. When I first met him, he was among the eminent jurists and theatre artistes in the city. Justice Basu was so warm-

hearted that he bridged the long gap between that meeting with him and our train encounter. I asked him why was he going to Delhi. He said he was trying to solve the Ayodhya issue, and travelled to Delhi often in this regard. Hearing this, the journalist in me became alert. I asked him several questions and he replied to all of them in detail. He was convinced that this long-pending matter would be resolved soon. Today, he is no longer with us, but his optimism comes to mind every now and again. After a week of this chance meeting with him, I mentioned this conversation at a gathering in Lutyens Delhi. Many members of Parliament from various parties were present there. Almost everyone agreed on

one thing — this was not possible. The reason? They all said the matter had become "political". We all know that the Ayodhya issue may have started as a result of faith, but since the time of the British, the shadow of politics has not been far from it. Instead of opening the creaking doors of history, the roots of the present situation can be tracked to events three decades ago. In 1986, a district court judge in Faizabad allowed Hindus to worship there by instructing the administration to unlock the doors of the temple. The foundation of this judgment was laid in 1949 when on the night of December 22-23, the statues of Lord Ram, Lakshman and Sita "appeared" on the site. The next week, a receiver was

deputed there after the confiscation of the property. You may recall that, in 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru was the prime minister and in 1986, Rajiv Gandhi's government was in power. This matter took another significant turn in 1990 when Lal Krishna Advani took out his famous rathayatra. On October 23, he was arrested in Samastipur, Bihar. This date will always be considered important in the history of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). After that, the response to it across the country made it clear that the matter had now gone beyond just an issue of the mandir and masjid, and gained enough significance to make or break a government. It is not just the Congress and the BJP which are involved in this game. The regional satraps

have also benefited from this. The orders for arresting Advani were issued by Lalu Prasad. Mulayam Singh Yadav was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh at that time. During his rule, the police had opened fire on people in Faizabad, killing 10. It has been many years since then. Lalu in Bihar and Mulayam in Uttar Pradesh subsequently enjoyed tremendous influence among minority community voters, and continue to do so today. After October 1990, the social structure of north India was upturned much in the manner that the earth trembles beneath the surface before a full-fledged earthquake. But the people did not seem to feel it. The earthquake surfaced on December 6, 1992 in the form of the demolition of the Babri

Masjid. After that, almost 2,000 people died in the riots which gripped the country. Property worth crores was destroyed or damaged. Needless to say, the blood of ordinary citizens is often the price for the fortunes of political leaders. That phase has now passed. Today, the apex court has to pronounce judgment on the issue. The wait for this makes one restless, but it is nevertheless an excellent opportunity for India. To pronounce judgments on disputes is the duty of the courts. But the responsibility of following those judgments falls on the citizens. The decision of the apex court may please one side and make the other unhappy. This is an opportunity for Indians living in the 21st century to send out the message that feelings of coexistence come naturally to us. During the long saga of this dispute, there were many phases when we stumbled. But after the judgment, if a positive effort is made by the leaders and the public, we can set an example for a world which often is plagued by many disputes. I will introduce you to a unique incident which is lost in the anonymous pages of history. Guru Hargobind Singh, after defeating the Mughals in 1634, built a mosque for the local Muslims. After Independence, the Nihang Sikhs took control of the mosque. For decades, the Sikhs worshipped the Guru Granth Sahib there, but in 2001, they formally signed an agreement and handed over the mosque to the Muslims again. Now, in this "Guru Ki Maseet" namaz is offered.

Ending the Brexit stalemate

The template of the deal is clear. But the politics of seeing it through is uncertain



(News Agencies) Prime Minister Boris Johnson is one vote in parliament away from the end of the Brexit tragedy. However, as Saturday's surprise parliamentary ambush of what he had hoped would

be the closing act showed, this last vote will remain elusive. The British leader has requested the European Union (EU) for another three-month extension for Britain's departure from the EU.

Brussels is expected to grant the reprieve. After all, Mr Johnson and the EU leaders now have the outline of a mutually acceptable deal. The core concession: A fudge on the customs status of Northern Ireland which would be de jure British but de facto European. In the meantime, Britain and the EU will work towards a zero-tariff trade agreement. London and Brussels will align their policies in some areas (climate), but not others (immigration). Mr Johnson had hoped to get this quickly cleared in parliament. But

years of poisonous Brexit infighting has meant the two-party system of the past has frayed at the edges. It was a rebel parliamentarian who forced Saturday's delay. Mr Johnson's deal has passed muster with the hard Right of his own party, but has cost him his Northern Irish allies. He needs to win over independent parliamentarians, and a chunk of the opposition Labour Party. Whatever happens, an early election triggered by the latest Brexit deal is almost certain. Indian

firms, among Britain's largest foreign investors, will be happy that the draft agreement points to a seamless British and EU trading relationship. It is probably safe to say the template for any final Brexit agreement has now been set, though the politics remains unsettled. Britain will be marginally economically the poorer, and the EU marginally weaker, for the decision. But ending this prolonged uncertainty has become the more important goal as far as Britain, India and the rest of the world is concerned.

Congress plans protest march over economic slowdown

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that “all-round mismanagement” by the government has resulted in the slowdown.



(News Agencies) The Janata Party-led central government over the series of protest marches in the last week of November against the Bharatiya

Gandhi are likely to take part in one such protest rally, to be held in Delhi. A Congress officebearer, who did not wish to be identified, said the protests were planned from October 15 to 25 but were delayed due to the assembly elections in Maharashtra and Haryana. There was no official announcement by the party on the postponement.

The Congress is also trying to reach out to opposition leaders to join the protests.

“Senior Congress leaders are going to engage with leaders of other opposition parties to explore if they will join us during the protests,” said a party MP, who asked not to be named.

In September, at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), chaired by Sonia Gandhi, it was decided that the party will start nationwide agitations against the Centre’s policies, which it said has led to the economic

slowdown.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that “all-round mismanagement” by the Narendra Modi government has resulted in the

slowdown. Singh had said that the state of the economy was deeply worrying and the 5% GDP growth in the first quarter of this financial year signals that India is in the midst of a prolonged slowdown.

The BJP had hit back at Singh and said he should instead “reflect on his own failures”. “Manmohan Singh should reflect on why he couldn’t maintain a strong economy and give an honest government, why he was so helpless that he had to obey orders from 10 Janpath and had no capacity to take his own decisions,” said commerce minister Piyush Goyal.

Zakir Musa’s successor among 3 militants killed in Kashmir encounter : Top cop

Zakir Musa, Kashmir’s most-wanted militant, was killed in a joint operation by the Army, CRPF and state police in south Kashmir’s Pulwama district on May 23 this year.



(Insider Bureau) Three militants of Ansar ul Gazwat ul Hind, a terror outfit linked to al Qaeda, were killed in an encounter in Tral area of Jammu and Kashmir’s Pulwama district, police said on Wednesday. Abdul Hameed Lelhari, named as successor to Ansar chief Zakir Musa in June this year, was one of the three men killed by security forces on Tuesday, said Jammu and Kashmir DGP Dilbag Singh. Zakir Rashid Bhat aka Zakir Musa, Kashmir’s most-wanted militant, was killed in a joint operation by the Army, CRPF and state police in south Kashmir’s Pulwama district on May 23 this year. Musa was affiliated with Pakistan-based militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen when it was led by Burhan Wani. In 2017, Musa formed his own outfit Ansar ul Gazwat ul Hind. DGP Dilbag Singh said that with the death of the three militants in the Tral encounter Ansar ul Gazwat ul Hind has been completely wiped out. The police had yesterday said that the terror module was involved in the killing of two brothers from the nomadic Gujjar community in August.

DGP Singh said that Pakistan is pushing militants into Jammu and Kashmir through its terror launch pads. “Pakistan Army and ISI [Pakistan’s spy agency Inter Services Intelligence] are involved in pushing in maximum number of militants towards the Indian side,” Singh said. The Jammu and Kashmir police chief also sought support from the public in the fight against terrorism. “We will be successful in our efforts to curb terrorism only when the local youth of Kashmir do not take the path of militancy and choose the path of peace,” Singh added.

18 terrorists killed, JeM launch pads destroyed in PoK strikes by Indian army: Officials

The officials added that all the terror launch pads housing Jaish-e-Mohammed and other jihadists were destroyed in the pin-point artillery firing by the Indian army – retaliatory action to indiscriminate and unprovoked Pakistani firing along the Line of Control.

(Insider Bureau) Officials in Indian security agencies that have assessed the impact of the Indian Army’s artillery assault on terror launch pads in Neelum Valley and three other places in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), said on condition of anonymity that at least 18 terrorists were killed along with 16 Pak Army personnel on October 19 and 20. The army hasn’t confirmed the number of dead. Hindustan Times couldn’t independently authenticate the numbers. The officials added that all the terror launch pads housing Jaish-e-Mohammed and other jihadists were destroyed in the pin-point artillery firing by the Indian army – retaliatory action to



indiscriminate and unprovoked Pakistani firing along the Line of Control. On Sunday, Army Chief General Bipin Rawat briefed Defence Minister Rajnath Singh twice about the Indian Army fire assault on PoK launch pads with the latter congratulating the former on the resolute

action, the officials said. Asking General Rawat to go public on the artillery firing, Rajnath Singh said that while no terror launch pads should be spared, care should be taken to ensure that the innocent civilian population is not targeted. Defence ministry officials said on condition

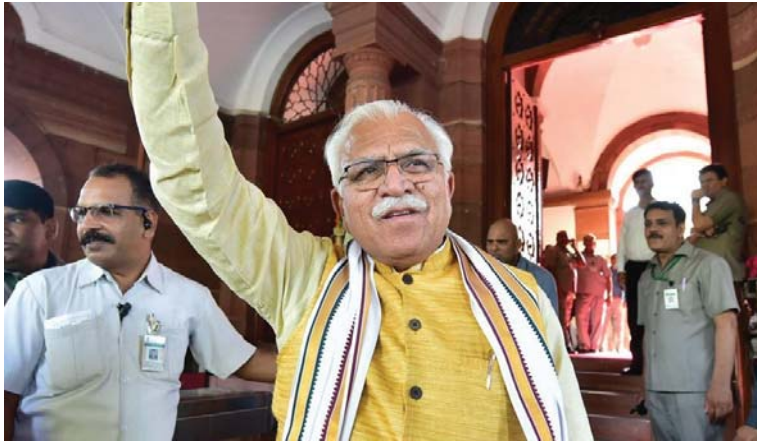
of anonymity that ammunition and ration depots of the Pakistani Army were also destroyed by 155 mm guns using precision long range ammunition. While four launch pads in Neelum Valley were hit, launch pads in Jura, Athamuqam and Kundalshahi were also decimated in the fire onslaught on wee hours of October 20, they added.

The Indian response came after the Pakistani Army targeted Indian positions and civil localities in Karnah sector killing two Indian soldiers and one civilian on Saturday night. On Sunday, the army mounted the artillery attack in retaliation to ceasefire violations meant to assist infiltrators, inflicting heavy terrorist casualties.



Haryana assembly election 2019 : Exit poll predicts hung assembly

A survey by India Today-Axis My India has suggested a neck and neck fight in Haryana and predicted it could have a hung assembly.



(Insider Bureau) A survey by India Today-Axis My India has suggested a neck and neck fight in Haryana and predicted it could have a hung assembly even as most exit polls have indicated that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would

ended on Monday, most other pollsters predicted that Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar was set to lead the government again.

The India Today-Axis My India exit poll results show the BJP would be marginally ahead of rival Congress with 32-44 seats. It has predicted 30-42 seats for the Congress. In the last assembly election, the BJP won 47 seats while the Congress had just 15 seats.

In terms of vote share, the India Today-Axis My India poll predicts 33 % for the BJP and 32 % for the Congress. The JJP it predicted would get 14

%. Region-wise, it predicted that the BJP would win 6 of the 14 seats in Ambala. The Congress is expected to win 7 seats and the JJP one. In the Faridabad region, it has given the BJP 5 of the 12 and the Congress 6. In Gurgaon, it predicted that the BJP would win 7 of the 11 seats, while the Congress and others would bag two seats each. In the Hisar region, the BJP and the Congress are likely to win 6 seats each. The JJP could win 5 seats in this region, it said. In Karnal, it predicted 4 for the Congress and 8 for the BJP. Khattar is a contestant from this region. The poll gave the Congress 10 out of 20 seats in

Rohtak, an area that is seen to be a stronghold of former chief minister and Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda. The poll gave the BJP 6 seats in Rohtak.

"We are of the firm belief that we will get 45-50 seats and the Congress will form the government comfortably. This survey is closer to the reality," said Haryana Congress leader Ved Prakash Vidrohi. He expressed confidence that the party would register a better performance than what this poll has suggested. Other polls have shown the BJP emerging as a clear winner. News 18-IPSOS has predicted the BJP would win 75 seats.

Centre announces ownership rights in unauthorised colonies, jabs Kejriwal

It is the most far-sighted revolutionary decision, said Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said at a media briefing after the cabinet meeting.

(Insider Bureau) At a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to give ownership rights to 40 lakh people living in national capital Delhi's unauthorised colonies. The ownership rights will be given to inhabitants of houses in these colonies irrespective of whether the houses were built on private or government land, Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Wednesday. The



only exception, he said, would be 67 affluent, but unauthorised colonies such as Sainik Farms, Mahendru Enclave and Anant Ram Dairy. "This is the biggest

decision taken at the meeting today, a historic decision to give ownership rights to people in these colonies," Union Information and Broadcasting Minister

Prakash Javdekar said at a media briefing on Wednesday. Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri called it the "most far-sighted revolutionary decision". Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had also announced a proposal to give ownership rights to people living in these colonies in July this year. Kejriwal had then said that the Aam Aadmi Party had received concurrence of the central government. The focus on ownership rights to people living in these 1,797 colonies comes months before the assembly elections in Delhi early next year. Hardeep Puri took the first shot at the Arvind Kejriwal government on Wednesday, holding the Aam Aadmi Party, or AAP government of dragging its feet.

deal to buy the support of rebel MLAs. The Uttarakhand HC had in September last week given a go-ahead to the agency to register a case against Rawat after it gave a report in a sealed cover based on its findings. Other than Harish Rawat, the CBI has named former cabinet minister in Uttarakhand government - Harak Singh Rawat and Umesh Kumar in its FIR registered for prevention of corruption act.

CBI books former Uttarakhand CM Harish Rawat in horse-trading case

The case is the outcome of a CBI probe into a purported video recorded in 2016 which showed the Congress leader Harish Rawat discussing money to win back the support of disgruntled MLAs who had crossed over to the BJP.



(Insider Bureau) The CBI Harish Rawat in connection with a 2016 sting video that showed him negotiating a

deal to buy the support of rebel MLAs. The Uttarakhand HC had in September last week given a go-ahead to the agency to register a case against Rawat after it gave a report in a sealed cover based on its findings. Other than Harish Rawat, the CBI has named former cabinet minister in Uttarakhand government - Harak Singh Rawat and Umesh Kumar in its FIR registered for prevention of corruption act.

Hindu Group Leader Kamlesh Tiwari Stabbed 15 Times, Shot In Face: Report

Kamlesh Tiwari Murder: Two deep stab wounds were found on his neck. A bullet was found on the back of Kamlesh Tiwari's skull but the entry wound was on the left side of his face.

(Insider Bureau) Hindu Samaj Party leader Kamlesh Tiwari, murdered on Friday at his home in Lucknow, was stabbed 15 times and shot in the face, according to the postmortem report. Two deep stab wounds were found on his neck. A bullet was found on the back of Kamlesh Tiwari's skull but the entry wound was on the left side of his face.

On October 18, two men called on Kamlesh Tiwari pretending that they wanted to give him a box of sweets for Diwali festival. When they entered his house, they attacked him and left him critically injured. He died on the way to hospital. Two main accused, Ashfaq Hussain (34) and Moinuddin Pathan (27), were arrested yesterday. They allegedly killed the Hindu group leader to avenge statements he apparently made against Prophet Mohammad in the past. The two, who were from Surat in Gujarat, were arrested by Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad from the Gujarat-Rajasthan border.

The box of sweets they had carried to Mr Tiwari's house - which had an address from Surat - was found. The two had allegedly checked into a Lucknow hotel on Thursday, a night before the murder, and registered themselves under their actual names and addresses. Police said they returned to their hotel room to dump their clothes and weapons before leaving the city. They reportedly went back to Surat, where their movements were tracked through their friends and relatives. The police had earlier arrested five suspects from different parts of the country -- Maulana Mohsin Sheikh, Rasheed Ahmed Pathan, Faizan and Sayyed Asim Ali.

Exercise 'utmost caution', India issues advisory to citizens visiting Turkey

The advisory, tweeted by the official handle of the Indian embassy in Turkey on Tuesday, said the government had been receiving queries from Indians travelling to Turkey "in view of the situation in the region".

(News Agencies) India has issued a travel advisory for its citizens visiting Turkey, advising them to exercise "utmost caution" days after New Delhi rapped Ankara for its criticism of the changes in Jammu and Kashmir.

The advisory, tweeted by the official handle of the Indian embassy in Turkey on Tuesday, said the government had been receiving queries from

Indians travelling to Turkey "in view of the situation in the region".

"Although there have been no reports of the untoward incident in the country so far involving Indian nationals, travellers are requested to exercise utmost caution while travelling to Turkey," the advisory said.

The advisory listed phone numbers of the Indian embassy in Ankara and

consulate in Istanbul for those requiring assistance.

The advisory was issued against the backdrop of escalating tensions between the US and Turkey after President Donald Trump decided to withdraw all American troops from Syria, a move described by many as a betrayal of Kurdish allies who had battled the Islamic State alongside

US forces.

It came days after India strongly criticised Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for raising the Kashmir issue during his speech at the UN General Assembly last month. Erdogan contended the world community had failed to "pay enough attention" to Kashmir, which he said was "besieged". Subsequently, India criticised Turkey's



military offensive in Syria, which resulted in tens of thousands of people fleeing their homes and stoked fears of the regrouping of the IS. The external affairs ministry said India was "deeply concerned at the unilateral military offensive by Turkey and added the action could "undermine stability in the region and the fight against terrorism".

Jailed Cong leader DK Shivakumar granted bail in money laundering case

DK Shivakumar had played a key role to shelter the Congress's Gujarat lawmakers ahead of a crucial Rajya Sabha election in 2017.



(News Agencies) Karnataka Congress leader DK Shivakumar, who is in Tihar jail in a money laundering case file by the Enforcement Directorate, was on Wednesday granted bail by the Delhi high court saying he cannot tamper with the evidence or influence

witnesses.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court granted bail to another Congress leader P Chidambaram, who was also in Tihar, in the INX Media case being probed by the CBI. The senior leader, however, still remains in ED custody as it is probing the money

laundering angle in the same case. Justice Suresh Kait said the Karnataka Congress leader was "entitled" for grant of bail as no material has been shown to indicate that he was a flight risk. The judge also said that Shivakumar, 57, cannot tamper with the evidence as the documents are with the investigating agencies. The court further said that he no longer was in power and there was no evidence to show that he or his family members or close associates attempted to influence witnesses. It however directed that he be released on bail on

furnishing a bond of Rs 25 lakh and two sureties of like amount. The other conditions laid down by the high court while granting him the relief include not leaving the country with the concerned trial court's permission, making himself available for interrogation when required and not to influence the witnesses. Earlier in the day, Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi met Shivakumar at Tihar Jail. She was accompanied by party leader Ambika Soni. DK Suresh, Congress MP and brother of

Shivakumar, told ANI that Gandhi told DK Shivakumar that the entire party is with him. "This is a political case and other such leaders are also being targeted. We have to overcome this," he said. Shivakumar was arrested by the ED on September 3 in the money laundering case. He is lodged in Tihar jail under judicial custody and had challenged the trial court's order denying him bail in the case. Shivakumar, a seven-time MLA in Karnataka, was booked along with Haumanthaiah -- an employee at Karnataka Bhavan in New Delhi-- and

others for alleged offences under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The case was based on a charge sheet filed by the Income Tax Department against them last year before a special court in Bengaluru on charges of alleged tax evasion and 'hawala' transactions worth crores of rupees. The I-T department has accused Shivakumar and his alleged associate S K Sharma of indulging in transactions involving huge amounts of unaccounted money on a regular basis through 'hawala' channels with the help of three other accused.

'My health fragile': Chidambaram moves bail plea in high court after SC order

Chidambaram's request for bail comes just a day after the SC granted him bail in a related case probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation, rejecting the Centre's argument that he could influence witnesses if set free.



(News Agencies) Former Union Minister P Chidambaram on Wednesday approached the Delhi High Court to seek bail in the INX Media case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate. Chidambaram's request for bail comes just a day after

the Supreme Court granted him bail in a related case probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation, rejecting the Centre's argument that he could influence witnesses if set free. The top court had also turned down Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's

plea that Chidambaram had the means to flee the country like other alleged economic offenders such as Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi. The senior politician also underlined that his health was fragile and had already suffered two bouts of illness. The petition said he had lost 5 kg during the two months that he had spent in custody. "It is submitted that with the onset of cold weather and the incidents of dengue etc, the petitioner's health is likely to become more vulnerable," he said. Chidambaram also told the court that he was arrested by the ED only on 16

October though he had requested the court to let him surrender a month earlier. But the Special Judge erred in rejecting his surrender request, Chidambaram's legal team argued in the petition for bail. The veteran Congress leader also reiterated that his arrest was malafide and only designed to harm his reputation. Pointing to the Supreme Court's order granting him bail on Tuesday, Chidambaram said it had been held by the top court that "a mere averment that the petitioner allegedly approached witnesses without any material basis

cannot be a reason to deny regular bail". The ex-union minister was first arrested by the CBI on 21 August in a 2017 case relating to alleged irregularities in the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) decision allowing INX Media to receive foreign direct investment in excess of the approved amount a decade earlier. The ED later registered a money laundering case on the basis of its probe in the CBI case. It was in this case that the Supreme Court granted him bail on Tuesday. But 74-year-old politician needs to get bail in the second case

investigated by the ED to be released. Chidambaram claimed that he had been falsely implicated by the federal agencies. "Not even an iota of evidence of any undisclosed bank account or undisclosed property or undisclosed shell company being owned/held by the petitioner has been found either by the CBI or the ED," he said. Pertinently, Chidambaram said the agencies had not confronted him with any documents or material concerning the alleged foreign accounts, foreign assets or the shell companies that he is alleged to be linked to.

Latest Moon flyby finds no trace of India's Chandrayaan-2 Vikram lander: NASA

Noah Edward Petro, the Project Scientist for the LRO mission said that the camera team carefully examined the images and employed the change detection technique – using a ratio of an image from prior to the landing attempt to the one acquired on October 14.



(News Agencies) NASA has found no evidence of captured during a latest flyby of its Moon orbiter of

the lunar region where India's ambitious mission attempted a soft landing, the US space agency said. On September 7, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) attempted a soft landing of Vikram on the uncharted lunar south pole, before losing communication with the lander. "The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter imaged the area of the targeted Chandrayaan-2

Vikram landing site on October 14 but did not observe any evidence of the lander," Noah Edward Petro, the Project Scientist for the LRO mission, told PTI in an exclusive email interaction. Petro said that the camera team carefully examined the images and employed the change detection technique -- using a ratio of an image from prior to the landing attempt to the one acquired on October 14. This approach, he said, is used for finding new meteorite impacts on the Moon that also helped locate the recent Beresheet lander. "It is possible that Vikram is located in a shadow or outside of the search area. Because of the low latitude, approximately 70 degrees south, the area is never completely free of Simpelius N and Manzinus C craters before losing communication with ISRO.

Situation peaceful at India-China border, says ITBP chief

ITBP chief SS? Deswal said there has not been any major incident of incursion by Chinese troops post Malappuram meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping.



(News Agencies) Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) director general S S Deswal said on Wednesday that there have been no recent incidents of "transgression" at the India-China border and the situation remains "peaceful". Addressing reporters at ITBP's annual conference in New Delhi,

Deswal said there has not been any major incident of incursion by Chinese troops post Malappuram meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping. "We [Indian and Chinese troops] patrol the same area. We sometimes come in front of each other but there has

been no incidents (of aggression). India and China have very good understanding and good mechanism to find solution to all the situations arising at the border. The border is absolutely safe". He added that "status quo" is maintained at Indo-China border by both sides.

Since the standoff between India and China at Doklam plateau in 2017, ITBP has constructed 25 new border outposts (BoPs) along the 3,488 km-long border manned by the force in the Himalayan range. In all, it now has 180 BoPs at the India-China border. With the increase in BoPs, number of troops has also slightly increased. Deswal said they are surveying more areas where more BoPs could be built. He said that infrastructure has improved at the border, particularly roads with construction of 56 new roads. "The effort has been to reach the zero point (the last point or BoP) using roads. Currently, 52 of our border outposts can only be reached and serviced by air," Deswal said.

Canadian MPs' villages celebrate poll results

Friends and families of Indo-Canadian MPs, with roots in Punjab, cheered their victories in their villages



(News Agencies) The 300 people visited the house of Sangha's in laws in Khurdpur village near Adampur to congratulate them. Sangha, who migrated to Canada with his family in 1995, had won for the first time in 2015. Maninder Singh Sidhu of the Liberal Party, who won the election from Brampton East, also belongs to Malsian Khas village. Jang Bahadur Singh, Maninder's uncle, said they had spoken to Maninder after the result was announced and he told them to celebrate.

Spurt in stubble burning with 1,400 cases over two days across Punjab

The sudden spurt has meant that till October 22, we have already had an increase of 25% in stubble burning cases over 3,214 cases reported in the corresponding period last year. Overall, 2018 saw 50,000 cases, which was a 10% fall over 2017.



(News Agencies) The start to the Diwali week could not have been worse this year, as far as stubble burning is concerned. On Monday and Tuesday, 1,400 cases were reported (over 50% of what had been reported this entire season, previously) taking the total for this kharif season to 4,036, the state remote sensing department said. On Monday, 825 cases were reported, and 570 on Tuesday. The sudden spurt has

meant that till October 22, we have already had an increase of 25% in stubble burning cases over 3,214 cases reported in the corresponding period last year. Overall, 2018 saw 50,000 cases, which was a 10% fall over 2017. The week's development, so far, correlates with the trend every Diwali (it was much later in the calendar last year) as surveillance comes to near-zero due to holidays. The impact of the stubble burning is

that much more this time of the year as Diwali crackers exacerbate the pollution and the damage to the environment. The state agriculture department claims that harvest started early this year as paddy sowing had also begun early. Each year, 200 lakh tonne straw is produced, of which only 50 lakh tonne is used ex-situ (without transport) as fodder and in biomass plant, the rest is vulnerable to be burnt.

'Everything's stuck': PMC Bank account holders face miseries

In Mulund, which has been worst hit by the PMC bank crisis, many of the over 15000 account holders in the area say they are struggling to meet daily expenses, let alone handle medical emergencies and wedding plans.



(News Agencies) No one in the Kotai family in Mulund in Mumbai's north west voted in the assembly elections held on Monday -- not because of apathy but in protest. The joint family has 18 voting-age people and each of them has an account with the local branch of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank, including 90-year-old Ghanshyam Das, the oldest of them. "Assets, earnings, pension -- everything is stuck," said Kamal Kotai,

his son. "Mulund had been set up as a rehabilitation colony for refugees from Pakistan. The first generation of Partition refugees like my father came here broke and he says that the third generation has been made broke by this scam," said Kotai. On October 14, the Reserve Bank of India increased their withdrawal limit to Rs 40,000 but it hasn't solved the problems of the account holders. For a vast majority of the 1.7 million depositors,

life continues to get harder by the day. It all started on September 23, when RBI curtailed the bank's operations, capping withdrawals to Rs 1000 once in six months. Shortly after, the bank's managing director, Joy Thomas, was arrested followed by two promoters of Housing Development Infrastructure Limited, Rakesh Wadhawan and Sarang Wadhawan, for their roles in the Rs 4335-crore loan fraud involving dummy firms and spurious audits. The

firms and the audits were key to the modus operandi used by the perpetrators of the fraud to loan money to a cash-strapped HDIL. Agencies investigating the fraud have seized some of the Wadhawan's assets including two business jets, many luxury sedans, and a luxurious farmhouse. In Mulund, which has been worst hit by the bank crisis, many of the over 15000 account holders in the area say they are struggling to meet daily expenses, let alone handle medical emergencies and wedding plans. Every morning, people queue up at their local branch to withdraw what they are allowed to and appeal for more. In the evenings, their sit before their television screens waiting for any news of further relief from RBI or assurance from the government. "We just can't understand why the government has been so insensitive. Not a single politician has shown up here, not even the political

leaders who represent the constituency," said Kotai. For days, he joined the protests outside RBI's headquarters. That's stopped, though. "The police won't allow us to gather there anymore." He has also posted many appeals on Twitter to a wide range of people and institutions. "Prime Minister, Chief minister, Economic Offences Wing, local MLA and even leaders of RSS. I asked people running our local RSS (Rashtriya Swayamseval Sangh) shakha (unit), 'Will you only come if there is a flood?'. In a flood, 2000 people are affected. But this scam has affected more than 10 million people," he said. Kotai and his father are RSS members and feel particularly betrayed by the lack of concern from the neighbourhood unit. "The BJP government said it was fighting black money. But why is it freezing white money earned by tax-paying middle-class professionals?," he asked.

On Tuesday, hundreds gathered in central Mumbai's Azad Maidan, waving placards that said 'Black Diwali', 'No Bail, Only Jail,' and 'Save PMC, Save us.' In a meeting with some of their representatives, RBI authorities said the account holders' money is safe. Back in Mulund, Samuel Lewis kept track of the protest via WhatsApp. A life coach who has also a "huge amount of savings" stuck in the bank, Lewis has been encouraging the community of affected depositors to share their feelings instead of suffering privately. "Overnight, without our consent, without any consultation, you froze our accounts bringing 1.7 million people down to their knees. Their dignity is not negotiable. We are being told that stringent action is being taken against those accountable, but why are we punished alongside? What is the difference then between the perpetrators and victims of this scam?"

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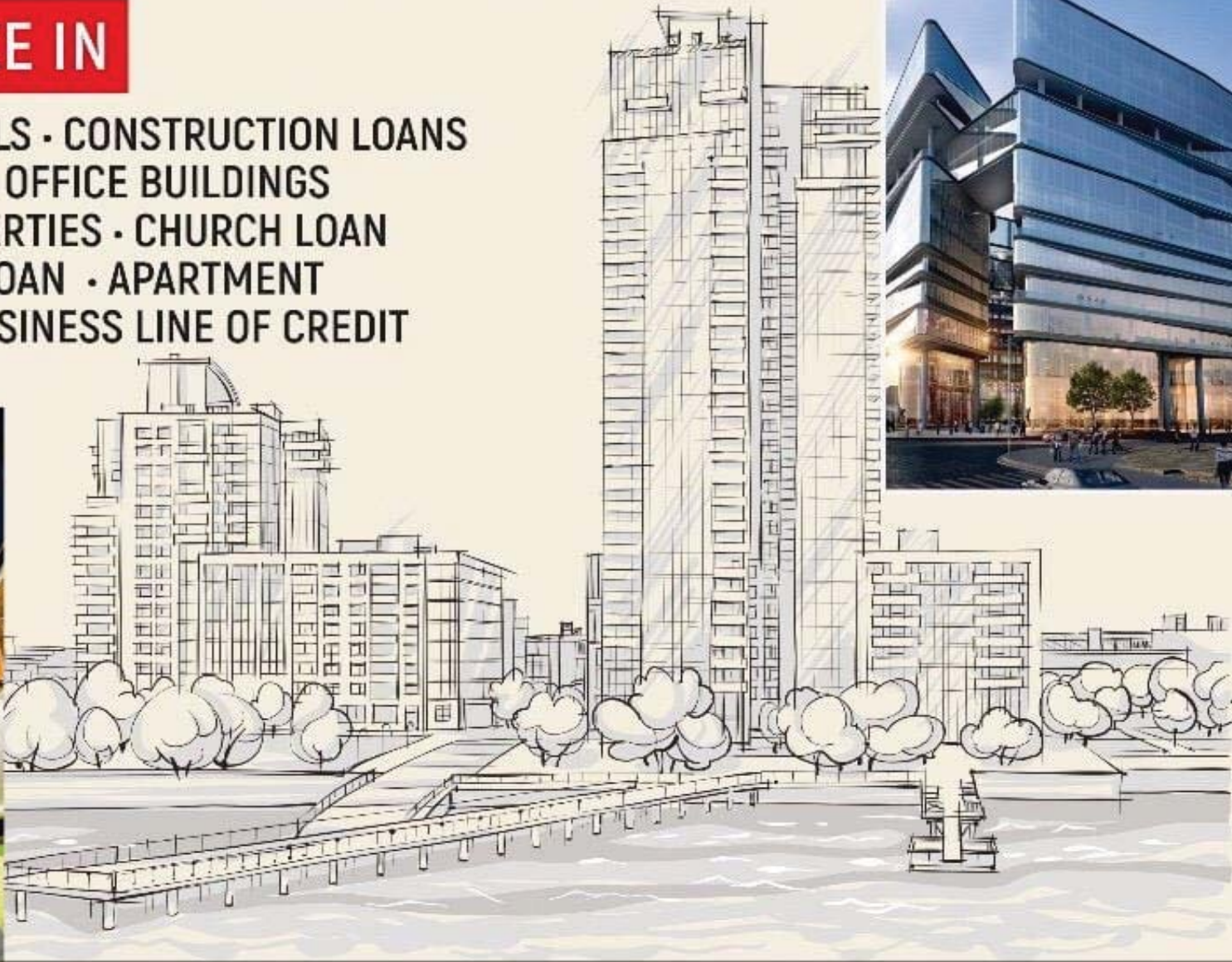
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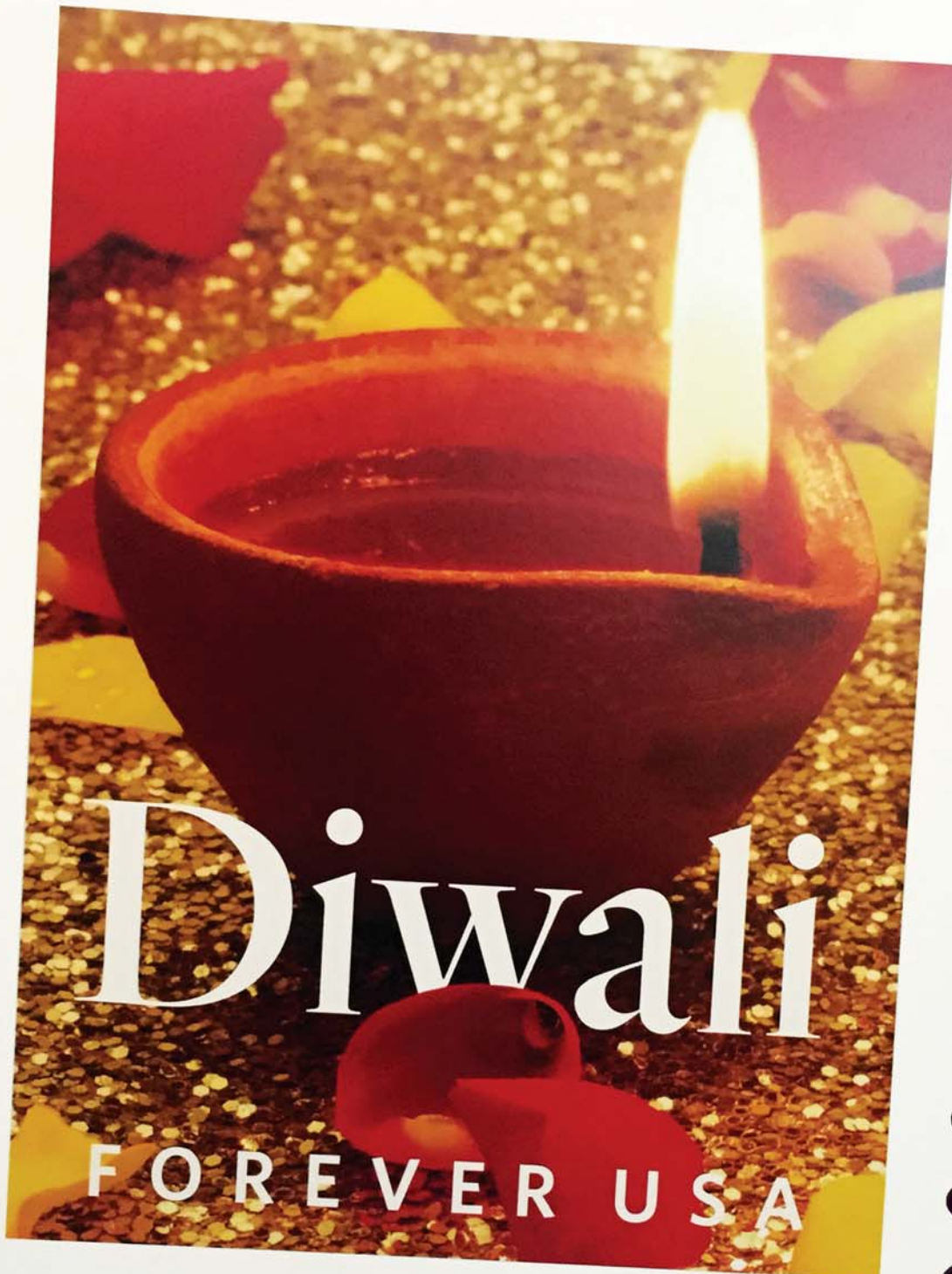
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Maryam admitted to Services Hospital



PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz was admitted to Services Hospital Lahore on Wednesday.

(News Agencies) According to a document issued by the Services Hospital Lahore Accident & Emergency Services, Maryam was admitted at 10:03pm in VVIP II. The same night, she met her father, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, at the hospital, sources within the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) said. The development had come after a request was sent by the PML-N to the Punjab Home Department asking for special permission to be granted. "It is already in your knowledge that Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, former three-time prime minister of Pakistan, is unwell and has been shifted to Services Hospital for treatment. "His daughter Maryam Nawaz Sharif is an undertrial prisoner at Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore. She has not been able to inquire about the health of her father. It is requested that special permission be granted to (her) to visit her ailing father to inquire about his health," read the letter. Earlier in the day, a request seeking permission to visit

Nawaz had been rejected by an accountability court in Lahore. Maryam had requested to be granted an hour to meet her father. The PML-N vice president had made the request during court proceedings in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case. During the proceedings, the court asked the NAB investigation officer when a reference would be filed in the case, to which he responded that the reference had entered the final stages of preparation and would be filed after approval from the NAB chairman. Accountability court judge Chaudhry Ameer Mohammad Khan meanwhile extended the judicial remand of Maryam and her cousin, Yousaf Abbas, till October 25. On Tuesday, doctors at the Lahore Services Hospital had termed Nawaz's condition as 'serious' despite the transfusion of three mega units of platelets within hours after his admission. According to the medical tests carried out yesterday, the platelet count of the former premier "dropped from 16,000 to a critical level of 2,000" when he was brought to hospital late on Monday night, prompting the medical board members to go for "immediate transfusion of the platelets to save his life", said one of the board members. NAB had shifted Nawaz to the Services Hospital late on Monday night after his personal physician, Dr Adnan Khan, had raised an alarm about his critical condition in the accountability watchdog's custody.

Pakistan to participate in four-party meeting on Afghan peace process in Moscow

(News Agencies) During a weekly press briefing, Dr Faisal said the FO's additional secretary for Afghanistan/West Asia will represent Pakistan at the meeting. "Pakistan has been a part of all efforts and processes so far to discuss and facilitate peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan. "Pakistan's role is particularly noteworthy in crystallising international convergence for a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan," the FO spokesperson said. In July, a round of the four-party meeting on the Afghan peace process was held in the Chinese capital. This had been the third meeting of the trilateral forum, which includes China, Russia, and the United States, but the first in which Pakistan was also involved. At the time, US

reconciliation envoy Zalmay Khalilzad had said the US, Russia, China and Pakistan had endorsed the need for a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in Afghanistan, which should start simultaneously with the intra-Afghan talks. However, last month, US President Donald Trump had halted the talks with the Taliban. Earlier this month, a high-level Afghan Taliban delegation visited Pakistan. The visit had coincided with Khalilzad's trip to Islamabad. In response to a question regarding the upcoming talks, Dr Faisal today said: "The next round is being held in Moscow at an opportune moment as it would provide an important opportunity to review the currently stalled peace process."



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No miraculous resurgence for NDP, but Singh wins influence

Jagmeet Singh provided rare glimpses of joy, humanity and grace in a brutish campaign to become one of the most influential people in Ottawa.



Only eight months ago, Jagmeet Singh's leadership was on such shaky ground that some New Democrats weren't exactly hoping that he'd lose the Burnaby South byelection, but they weren't exactly helping him win either. With the party in free-fall early in the year, some blamed Singh and darkly suggested that if he lost the byelection they just might have time to replace him before the election. But the doubts remained. Had New Democrats gone too far by choosing a leader whose Sikh faith is made tangible with his turban and kirpan? Many long-serving MPs retired with no rush of people wanting to take their places. Two-thirds of Canadians had a negative opinion of him. And, there were problems raising money. Today, Singh is the most popular of the federal leaders. More importantly, New Democrats are positioned to heavily influence national policy over the coming months and possibly years. It's not because Singh engineered a miraculous resurgence. In fact, by deadline, the party was on track to lose as many as 17 of the 44 seats it won in 2015. Still, he did more than most

imagined. Singh kept the NDP from being obliterated or overtaken by the Greens. He provided Canadians with glimpses of grace, humanity and even fun during a 40-day contest that was brutish, divisive, pocked with racism and often felt as if it were 40 days too long. Of course, there was also some luck. Both the Liberals and Conservatives collapsed. With no clear majority, the NDP (and the revived Bloc Quebecois) will determine how and for how long Canada will be governed in the coming months. Several party loyalists told me that there were two turning points in the campaign. The first was his emotional response to the news that Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau had masqueraded in blackface. When confronted with racism in the past, Singh admitted he'd fought back with his fists. But at this stage in his life, Singh said he was concerned about all the kids for whom it brought back memories of being hurt, hit, insulted or made to feel less. That's who Singh said he was thinking about. It's to them that Trudeau ought to apologize. The second key point was when Singh was the calm among the yellors and

fighters at the English-language debate. Singh disagrees. "It was the first day," he said on the weekend. "While the others were kind of fighting about who was worse or kind of criticizing each other and not really presenting an option, we were making a contrast. We were providing a choice that was hopeful." It wasn't until the campaign began that Canadians got to see who Singh is and see themselves reflected back. Among the most memorable moments was when he responded kindly to the polite face of Canadian racism — the grandfatherly Quebecer who confided to Singh that

he'd do a lot better if he'd just cut his turban off. Finding shared humanity is part of the NDP leader's spiritual practice. During the campaign, Canadians also saw a guy who seemed to be enjoying himself. That alone set him apart from Trudeau and Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer, who both struggled to find their groove.

"Without making it personal, they didn't seem to be having fun," Singh said. "And if you're not having fun, it either means that you don't believe in what you're doing or what you're saying. You don't think you have something worthwhile for people ... "The other folks weren't having fun because they were fighting about each other and saying who was worse and you're bad and I'm better and you're worse."

But as of today, the fun's over. The Liberals need help to govern. How much they need and what they're willing to do for it will have to wait until the seat count is finalized. Meantime, Singh will bide his time. He's already talked to B.C. Premier John Horgan



about his successful minority government and its agreement with its Green Party partners. But Singh won't say if that's what he wants. But Singh likes minority governments. In retrospect, it's no coincidence that Singh invoked Tommy Douglas's name when he released the party's platform in June with its emphasis on expanding health care to include drugs, dental costs as well as costs of eye and hearing care. Douglas introduced universal health care as premier of Saskatchewan.

But in the 1960s, Douglas led the federal NDP when it held the balance of power in Lester Pearson's minority governments. Those minority Parliaments resulted in national health care, the Canada Pension Plan, a new flag and the abolition of capital punishment. "Canadians know what we care about," Singh said over the weekend. "Those are the things that we talked about during the campaign. Those are the priorities that we would put forward. "And," he said, "we'll expect action on them."



US 'concerned' over Jammu and Kashmir, says Pakistan must stop terror

US acting assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs Alice Wells has said that the state department "remains concerned about the situation in the Kashmir Valley, where daily life for the nearly eight million residents has been severely impacted since August 5.

The US believes a dialogue between India and Pakistan is the most effective way to reduce bilateral tensions, but the success of such talks depends on Islamabad taking "sustained and irreversible steps" against terrorists on its soil, America's top diplomat for South Asia said on Tuesday.

US acting assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs Alice Wells said the US supports the Indian government's stated objectives for scrapping Jammu & Kashmir's (J&K) special status, such as increased economic development, but the state department "remains concerned about the situation in the Kashmir Valley, where daily life for the nearly eight million residents has been severely impacted since August 5 [when India scrapped the region's special status and put in place a security and communications lockdown that has now been partially lifted]."

Testifying in a hearing on the human rights situation in South Asia, including in Kashmir and Assam, convened by the US House committee on foreign affairs, Wells said that Pakistan's continued backing for groups engaged in cross-border terror was the "chief obstacle" to creating trust between the two sides.

"While conditions in Jammu and Ladakh have improved, the Valley has not returned to normal. The department has raised concerns with the Indian government regarding the detentions of local residents and political leaders, including three former Chief Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir. We have urged Indian authorities to respect human rights and restore full access to services,

including internet and mobile networks," she said.

Wells and assistant secretary Robert Destro of the US bureau of democracy and human rights faced pointed questions from members of Congress such as Ilhan Omar and Pramila Jayapal on the detention of people without charge, the lockdown in J&K, and the exclusion of 1.9 million people from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

In her statement at the hearing, Wells said the US believes a direct bilateral dialogue under the Simla Agreement "holds the most potential for reducing tensions". She said: "We believe the foundation of any successful dialogue between India and Pakistan is based on Pakistan taking sustained and irreversible steps against militants and terrorists in its territory."

Wells added: "Restarting a productive bilateral dialogue requires building trust, and the chief obstacle remains Pakistan's continued support for extremist groups that engage in cross-border terrorism." She said there were historical precedents of India and Pakistan being able to make progress in talks, such as backchannel negotiations during 2006-07, when the two sides "reportedly made significant progress on a number of issues, including Kashmir".

Describing the ties between the US and India, Wells said: "It's not a relationship of dictation, it's a relationship of partnership." Responding to a question from a member of Congress on whether the current tensions between India and Pakistan could trigger a conflict, Wells said the US recognises the Indian government's characterisation of

the Indian Council for

Cultural Relations (ICCR) in collaboration with the Punjab government and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). Puri and ICCR President Vinay Sahasrabudhe accompanied the heads of missions.

Envoys of some of the countries, including Pakistan, China and the United Kingdom (UK), skipped the visit. Puri said, "Envoys of all the countries were invited for the visit. Busy schedule may be reason behind their absence".

The envoys were accorded a welcome at

the airport by Punjab minister Sukhbinder Singh Sarkaria, Amritsar MP Gurjit Singh Aujla, deputy commissioner Shivdular Singh Dhillon and commissioner of police Sukhchain Singh

Kashmir as an "internal problem" but added it was a "problem that has external consequences". "We take very seriously the escalation in rhetoric and contentions between two nuclear-armed countries. President [Donald] Trump has engaged both Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi and Prime Minister [Imran] Khan on multiple occasions... to express his concern over the tensions between the two countries and to offer his services to mediate if requested by both sides," she said. However, she said, a look at the broader issue of Kashmir has to take into account a "long history of terrorism... that's been encouraged and fanned by organisations present in Pakistan". The US has urged Pakistan to "implement what Prime Minister Khan has said needs to occur, which is the elimination of these non-state actors and

militant proxies and to ensure that they can't reach out across the border, undertake terrorist acts inside... what was the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and India proper", she said. Destro said the situation in Kashmir was a "humanitarian crisis", agreeing with a description offered by Representative Sheila Jackson, a Democrat who chairs the House Pakistan caucus. Jayapal, one of the four Indian-American members of the House of Representatives, who was born in India and whose parents still live there, said: "I was in India at the time (when the status of Kashmir was changed) and I have made clear my concerns about a communications blockade and the detentions," she said. "I recognize the situation is complex — and Pakistan is not without responsibility, (but) mutual commitment to human rights remain."

Wells described the release of small numbers of political leaders and the Supreme Court planning to hear petitions related to Kashmir on November 14 as "incremental" steps, and that the security situation remained tense. "We are concerned about reports of local and foreign militants attempting to intimidate local residents and business owners in order to stymie normal economic activity. The US supports the rights of Kashmiris to peacefully protest, but condemns the actions of terrorists who seek to use violence and fear to undermine dialogue," she said.

But Pakistan's harbouring of terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, which "seek to foment violence across the Line of Control", is "destabilising, and Pakistani authorities remain accountable for their actions", Wells added.

84 envoys take part in Guru Nanak's birth anniversary celebrations

Following the Union Cabinet's decision to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev across the globe, the ICCR had invited the envoys in New Delhi to visit the Golden Temple.

Nearly 84 heads of foreign missions from New Delhi, led by Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri, visited the Golden Temple on Tuesday to take part in celebrations of the 550th birth anniversary of Sikhism founder, Guru Nanak Dev.

The countries whose heads of foreign missions visited the shrine included Afghanistan, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, USA and Nepal. The visit was organised by the Indian Council for

Cultural Relations (ICCR) in collaboration with the Punjab government and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). Puri and ICCR President Vinay Sahasrabudhe accompanied the heads of missions.

Envoys of some of the countries, including Pakistan, China and the United Kingdom (UK), skipped the visit. Puri said, "Envoys of all the countries were invited for the visit. Busy schedule may be reason behind their absence". The envoys were accorded a welcome at



the airport by Punjab minister Sukhbinder Singh Sarkaria, Amritsar MP Gurjit Singh Aujla, deputy commissioner Shivdular Singh Dhillon and commissioner of police Sukhchain Singh

Gill. In a brief address, Puri said, "Motive of the bringing the envoys to the shrine was to disseminate Guru's message of brotherhood and world peace in the world."

Following the Union Cabinet's decision to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev across the globe, the ICCR had invited the envoys in New Delhi to visit the Golden Temple.

Donor who gave \$900K to Trump inaugural to plead guilty to illegal contributions

including \$900,000 to Trump's inaugural committee. Prosecutors said Zuberi funneled money from his clients through his company and into political campaigns in an effort to obscure the provenance of those funds.

While Zuberi has drawn attention for his substantial donation to Trump's inaugural committee, he has a history of

supporting candidates of both parties. Last campaign cycle, recipients have included Arizona Democrat Kyrsten Sinema, multiple California Democrats in House races and Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham and Rand Paul.

The documents released Tuesday do not specify which donations in particular were allegedly illegal.

Contributions in turn bought Zuberi "access to high-level foreign officials," a charging document states. Although prosecutors say the results were mostly "marginal," they note that some officials did agree to conform to Zuberi's "political positions" or comply with his "wishes."

Among the foreign nationals and representatives Zuberi

retained as clients were citizens of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Venezuela, prosecutors said, in addition to Sri Lankan government officials seeking to refurbish the country's tarnished reputation following a campaign against Tamil dissidents.

Zuberi, 49, agreed to plead guilty to one count of making nearly \$1 million in illegal campaign contributions,

which included using foreign funds to influence U.S. elections. He also agreed to plead guilty to one count of tax evasion and one count of falsifying records to hide his lobbying work.

Zuberi is expected to appear in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles on Oct. 30. He faces a maximum federal prison sentence of 15 years.

Stubble or no stubble, Delhi's air pollution will continue to pinch

The air pollution levels in Delhi go up in the winter as particulate matter gets trapped at the ambient level due to negligible wind speed for dispersal, coupled with some contribution by farm fires in the northern plains of India.

the pollution levels at Ballabgarh was 122.5 and on the eastern side, in Bahadurgarh, it was 103.25 micrograms in cubic meter of air. At the major stubble burning areas in Haryana in districts of Karnal, Kaithal, Jind and Rohtak, the PM 2.5 level was much less. In Kaithal, the average for the period was

not much increase in stubble burning cases this year as compared to 2018. In Punjab, till October 17, the government booked 1,198 cases against farmers for stubble burning as compared to 1,631 in 2018 and 2,927 in 2017. In Haryana's Panipat, Sonipat and Karnal districts, till October 18, 2019, about 1,200 cases have been registered against farmers as compared to 1,224 for the same period in 2018 and 1,788 in 2017. If the stubble burning was the real cause for Delhi's rise in air pollution, its impact should have been visible in the outskirts of the national capital, from where the smoke laden air from Haryana and Punjab would descend. The CPCB data shows that the pollution levels are higher in congested central parts of Delhi such as Punjabi Bagh, ITO and Kashmere Gate as compared to outskirts such as Narela in north, Mundka in west and Karni Singh Stadium

in south Delhi. For instance, PM 2.5 level in Narela between October 1 and October 18 was 142.5 micrograms in cubic meter of air, in Mundka it was 118.3 and in Karni Singh Stadium 114.5 whereas in Lajpat Nagar the average for the period was 210.4 and in Kashmere Gate 221.9. This data clearly shows that vehicular congestion is a major reason for spike in pollution levels during this season when dispersal of pollutants is poor and experts also agree. "Two factors are major contributors for air pollution in Delhi. Rising vehicular traffic and poor dust management," said Sunita Narain, director general of Centre for Science and Environment. "Air pollution rises during this period as dispersal of pollution is very low because of almost zero wind speed." Narain said that during festival season, there are more vehicles on the road, which

leads to increase in local generation of air pollutants.

"Poor management of dust and no landscaping around roads leads to further circulation of dust in ambient air leading to higher pollution levels. But, this also shows the bad state of our civic authorities," she said. The argument is not that Punjab and Haryana should not scientifically deal with the paddy stubble. It should to improve air quality in rural parts of the two agrarian states. Also, scientific management of stubble burning can add to the earning of farmers as several bio-renewable products can be produced from paddy stubble. But Delhi must not blame its inefficiency on someone else and refuse to deal with the in-house problem. Close to 80% of the capital's air pollutants are produced locally and the administration needs to implement several plans in place to deal with it.

US sees 'progress' in Kashmir, but remains 'deeply concerned'

The United States said on Thursday that while it has seen "progress" in Kashmir, it remains "deeply concerned" about the situation and would like India to release detainees and produce a "roadmap" on the restoration of economic and political normalcy. It also said Pakistan-based terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad are a "problem" as regards the situation in Kashmir, and the Khan government needs to follow it promises with action.

"We remain deeply concerned about the situation in the valley where daily life for nearly 8 million residents has been severely impacted since the decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status and to detain without charge political leaders and restrict communications," Alice Wells, the acting secretary of state for South and Central Asia, told reporters. But, there has been "progress", she added, "citing the restoration of services for 4 million postpaid mobile phone users. The US will, she stressed, "continue to press for the release of detainees, for the full restoration of everyday

services, but most importantly for a roadmap to the restoration of political and economic normalcy". Wells had faced sharp grilling from US lawmakers at a congressional hearing earlier in the week on the administration's policy on the Kashmir situation and whether it was doing enough to push India to remove restriction, restore phone and Internet services and protect human rights. The Trump administration has indeed been pushing India publicly and privately to speedily restore normalcy in the valley — Wells had called for "rapid action" on this front at the time of the UNGA meetings last month — while it has maintained that the decision to alter the constitutional status of the state is an "internal matter" for India, much to Pakistan's disappointment, which has argued that the changes are a violation of international laws. While the United States has also kept in its cross-hairs Pakistan-based terrorist groups that have created violence in the area and have been a "destabilizing" force, as Wells had told lawmakers at the hearing.

Haryana family feeding bull to recover gold jewellery eaten by the bovine

Sources said the family members ran from pillar to post after they checked the CCTV camera and identified the bull. After five hours they finally spotted the bull. Now, they have tied it an empty plot near the house and are feeding the bull daily and checking its droppings.

which she brought back into the house, he added. Sources said the family members ran from pillar to post after they checked the CCTV camera and identified the bull. After five hours they finally spotted the bull. Now, they have tied it an empty plot near the house and are feeding the bull daily and checking its dung. Raj said the family feared that someone could kill the bull

for the gold, so they have planned to send the bull to a cowshed with a family member, with the hope that a worker at the cowshed will find the ornaments and return them. HT spoke to Ravinder Sharma, retired director, research (DR) from Lala Lajpat Rai university of veterinary and animal sciences (LLRU) about what could be done to retrieve the

gold. He suggested that the family should first take the animal to the hospital for an X-ray. "This will confirm whether the animal has swallowed the gold or not. Depending on the location of the gold inside the bull, it will be clear if it can be retrieved through surgery. The matter is a bit complex, but the possibility of the jewels coming out with the stool is possible."

(News Agencies) A senior heart doctor filmed a junior colleague belly dancing during a work night out and then sent her the video of it with the message: 'I watch this every night before bed,' a tribunal has heard. Dr Dylmitr Rittoo, 59, allegedly left the unsuspecting woman 'mortified' after taking footage of her being given dance tuition during a staff leaving party before messaging the film via WhatsApp.

The woman, a foundation year one doctor known as Dr A, claimed she was subjected to inappropriate compliments or



Senior doctor, 59, filmed unsuspecting junior medic belly dancing at staff bash then sent her video on WhatsApp saying

contact by the consultant cardiologist while working at Arrowse Park Hospital in Upton on the Wirral in Merseyside. Over four months Dr Rittoo - who had worked at the hospital for 17 years - sent the woman links to his favourite Bollywood movies invited her to go holiday with him to Mauritius and would say how 'stunningly beautiful' she was. The woman sent professional replies to his work emails but Rittoo fired back with the message: 'OMG! You have discovered the reply icon on email!

'To celebrate I rushed out to the nearest temple to give thanks to the gods and then went to Liverpool to splash out on a new

BMW. 'Smile Face' happy'. Later it was alleged in one incident that he cupped her face in his hand while they were carrying out an ultrasound scan on a patient and then kissed her on the left cheek during a ward round. The unnamed medic was initially too scared to complain about Rittoo due to his seniority but he was eventually reported to senior colleagues at Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. This came after he allegedly sat down next to Dr A at a table and wrapped his legs around hers, before saying: 'I don't want you to do my research projects anymore.'

It was claimed the consultant

had also been rude to two male colleagues, shouting at them about patient diagnoses and telling one: 'Guidelines are made for people like you and to keep people safe from people like you. They do not apply to experts like me. You talk too much, you never shut up, that's why you don't improve.' The Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service in Manchester was told the incidents involving Dr A occurred between April and August 2015 after she was sent to the hospital on a placement. Georgina Goring, lawyer for the General Medical Council, said: 'She met Dr Rittoo and he asked if she wanted to be involved in his research projects and asked her

for her mobile telephone number and email address. 'Dr A went along with it, given he was a consultant and she didn't want to get off on the wrong foot. It began with a few WhatsApp messages and then sending her links to Bollywood songs via email.

'Some emails included comments such as 'one of my favourite songs', 'will I be in your prayers forever' and 'who knows what can happen at 3am in a nightclub'. 'Dr A's responses were always polite and professional throughout this conduct - her position remained the same, she felt it would be impolite to ignore his communications given his

seniority and her position within the department. During her placement, the cardiology department had gone to a dance evening as part of a leaving party. Dr Rittoo took a video including Dr A being taught some belly dancing. He then sent the video to her saying 'I watch this every night before bed.' She was mortified to receive this message. She attempted to laugh this off but had concerns as to whether he had sent this in a sexual context and she felt embarrassed.'

Cyclist Flipped Off Trump In Viral Pic, Lost Job. Now She's Running For Local Office



(News Agencies) STERLING, UNITED STATES: A viral photo taken in the fall of 2017 shows a cyclist flipping off Donald Trump's presidential convoy. The image cost Juli Briskman, the cyclist, her job. Two years later, Briskman has jumped headfirst into politics and is running for local office. Night has begun to fall in Loudoun County,

Virginia, and the growing shadows on Kartar Khalsa's front porch make it difficult for him to recognize the friendly blonde woman going door to door, handing out leaflets ahead of the November 5 local elections. "Oh, she's the one who flipped the president?" asked the turbaned yoga teacher, once the Democratic candidate had moved on to

Juli Briskman's gesture got a widely varied reception in a politically divided US. While some viewed her defiant finger as a sign of resistance, the photo also brought her insults and threats.

his neighbor's house. "Yeah, I heard that story," Khalsa said. "I heard that she lost her job, then I heard eventually that she was running for office... That's good. I like that energy." Trump "deserves it," he added, chuckling. Aside from a small bicycle-shaped pin worn above her heart, Briskman rarely mentions "the incident," as she delicately calls it.

On that Saturday in October 2017, the 52-year-old athlete showed Donald Trump exactly what she thought of him, as his imposing convoy of black SUVs passed her on the road outside the Trump National Golf Club.

Immortalized in an AFP photograph, the snapshot quickly went viral. But the image also cost Briskman her job as a marketing analyst for a United States government and military subcontractor. Briskman's gesture got a widely varied reception in a politically divided US. While some viewed her defiant finger as a sign of resistance, the photo also brought her insults and threats. She also sued her former employer for unfair dismissal, accusing it of violating her freedom of speech. But getting fired "did open a lot of doors in other ways," Briskman admitted, in her home in

Sterling, where she keeps a binder full of press clippings, cartoons and traces of televised appearances related to the incident. A single mother of two teens, Briskman quickly found a new job. Soon after, she was asked to run for county supervisor, a local office, on the Democratic ticket. It didn't take long for her to decide. Political engagement felt obvious to her, since she has been involved in her community for a long time. "I did feel a little bit of responsibility, (because) I was handed a megaphone," she explained. "I can't run against Trump, but I can run for this seat and make a difference right here."

Tulsi Gabbard to Hillary Clinton: 'Step down from your throne'



(News Agencies) Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard assailed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a new campaign video on Tuesday. The video is Gabbard's latest response to Clinton's unsubstantiated suggestion that Gabbard was a "favorite of the Russians" in a recent interview. Clinton also claimed without evidence that Russians were "grooming her to be the third-party candidate" in the 2020 presidential election. "Hillary, your foreign policy was a disaster for our country and the world -- resulting in the deaths and injuries of so many of my brothers and sisters in uniform, devastating entire countries, millions of lives lost, refugee crises," and more, Gabbard said. "Yet despite the damage you have done to our country and the world, you want to continue your failed policies directly or indirectly through the Democratic nominee." She added: "It's time for you to acknowledge the damage you have caused and apologize for it. It is long past time for you to step down from your throne so the Democratic Party can lead with a new foreign policy which will actually be in the interests of and benefit the American people and the world." Gabbard, an Army veteran who served in the Iraq War, had Monday said she's open to having a "face-to-face" with Clinton. This, after fellow presidential hopefuls Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.; Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J.; former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, entrepreneur Andrew Yang and spiritual author Marianne Williamson pushed back on Clinton's suggestion that she's a secret Russian asset. Trump said of Gabbard. "These people are sick. There's something wrong with them." On Sunday, the congresswoman posted a video and said she would not be silenced by Clinton and "her gang of rich, powerful elite." "If they can falsely portray me as a traitor, then they can do it to anyone -- and in fact, that's exactly the message they want to get across to you," Gabbard said. "If you stand up to Hillary and the party power brokers -- if you stand up to the rich and powerful elite and the war machine, they will destroy you and discredit your message. But, here is the truth: They will not intimidate us. They will not silence us."

Rep. Katie Hill fights back amid claims she was involved in romantic 'throuple' with staffer



(News Agencies) Rep. Katie Hill, D-Calif., spoke out Tuesday amid claims she was having an affair and was taking part in an arranged "throuple," or a three-person couple, with her estranged husband and a female staffer. Last week, RedState reported that Hill, who is openly bisexual, had developed a "long-term sexual relationship" with the unnamed staffer from her congressional campaign, who ultimately entered into the "throuple" with Hill's husband, Kenny Heslep -- who later filed for divorce. The three of them, according to RedState's confidential sources, had taken multiple vacations together. The conservative blog obtained screenshots of several text messages between Hill and the staffer detailing the reported end of their three-person relationship earlier this year as well as legislative director and former campaign-finance director, for at least a year. Heslep was said to have shared his own screenshot of a text exchange he had with a friend who had heard about the affair, which he later deleted from his Facebook account. According to RedState, the alleged affair was why Heslep filed for divorce. Hill acknowledged to Fox News that she's going through a divorce and claimed her "abusive husband" has been "determined to try to humiliate me." "Intimate photos of me and another individual were published by Republican operatives on the internet without my consent," Hill said in a statement to Fox News. "I have notified Capitol Hill police who are investigating the situation and potential legal violations of those who posted and distributed the photos, and therefore will have no further comment on the digital materials." She continued, "I am disgusted that my opponents would seek to exploit such a private matter for political gain. This coordinated effort to try to destroy me and people close to me is despicable and will not succeed. I, like many women who have faced attacks like this before, am stronger than those who want me to be afraid." The freshman congresswoman also flatly denied having an affair with Kelly, adding that her estranged husband made the "vindictive claims." "Allegations that I have been involved in a relationship with Mr. Kelly are absolutely false," Hill told Fox News. "I am saddened that the deeply personal matter of my divorce has been brought into public view and the vindictive claims of my ex have now involved the lives and reputations of unrelated parties." "This smear campaign will not get in the way of the work I am doing every day to move our district and our country forward. I am truly grateful for the outpouring of support I have received from colleagues and constituents alike, and I know we will get through this together."

Mark Zuckerberg grilled by Congress over Libra and political ads policy

(News Agencies) Mark Zuckerberg conceded on Wednesday that there is a scenario in which Facebook might have to rethink its involvement in its controversial cryptocurrency project, Libra, if the currency does not receive appropriate US regulatory approval. In response to multiple questions on the matter during an hours-long grilling session on Capitol Hill, Zuckerberg said Facebook would be "forced to leave" the governance organization overseeing Libra if the group moves ahead with launching the digital currency without US policymaker approval. "If at the end of the day we don't receive the clearances," Zuckerberg said, "we will not be a part of the association." The acknowledgment could have major implications for Zuckerberg and Facebook. The company is betting that introducing Libra can help Facebook users transact with businesses directly, which in turn could "lead to higher prices for ads" on the platform, Zuckerberg said Wednesday. "We may see a positive business impact," he said. Zuckerberg returned to Capitol Hill to testify before the House Financial Services Committee over Facebook's plans for Libra. Within minutes, however, it became clear lawmakers would expand the focus of the hearing to include a wide range of concerns about Facebook. Maxine Waters, the chair of the committee, kicked off the hearing by listing off the company's history of running discriminatory housing ads, failing to protect consumer data and having its platform used for election interference. She also questioned Zuckerberg over his company's policy of not subjecting ads by political candidates to third-party fact-checking. "You're willing to step on anyone — your competitors, women and people of color, even our democracy," Waters said in her opening remarks. Zuckerberg attempted to defend Libra as necessary innovation for the financial services industry while acknowledging the concerns about Facebook in particular launching the effort. "I believe that this is something that needs to get built, but I get that I'm not the ideal messenger for this right now," Zuckerberg said. "We've faced a lot of issues over the past few years. I'm sure there are a lot of people who wish it was anyone but Facebook who proposed this."

*Happy
Diwali*



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Lucky is the country without a glorious history

What was notable about my trip to Canada was how little past achievements were invoked in the election campaign. No leader talked of Making Canada Great Again. Whosoever is the next PM is not going to promise to undo 800 years of slavery. Nor is he going to invoke World Wars I and II

I was in four countries in September. I began the month in my homeland, India, which once thought of itself as having shown the way to other ex-colonies by achieving independence through non-violence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Now, the history its leaders invoke goes much further into the past: The resistance of Prithviraj Chauhan and Shivaji to Muslim rulers, for some; the greatness of the Gupta empire, for others.

The ideological mentor of the men who now rule India is the late MS Golwalkar, who led the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh for a full 35 years. Among the dogmas of their former sarsanghchala that his followers have wholeheartedly adopted is that, because of their glorious past, Hindus are destined to lead the world in future. Golwalkar claimed that it "is the grand world-unifying thought of Hindus alone that can supply the abiding basis for human brotherhood". World leadership, he further claimed, "is a divine trust, we may say, given to the charge of the Hindus by Destiny".

I went from India to England, whose politicians, likewise, continually invoke the past achievements of their nation. Whether it is Britain as the home of the mother of parliaments, Britain as the cutting-edge of the Industrial Revolution, Britain as the birthplace of Shakespeare and Darwin, Britain as the lone country that resisted the Nazis in World War II—the self-image of this country is of having taught the world a great deal in the past; and it could teach the world a thing or two yet.

I ended September in the United States, whose current president won the election in 2016 promising to Make America Great Again. The belief that this is the country with the greatest history is fervently upheld by a majority of Americans. For romantic Americans, their country was never greater than in the time of their Founding Fathers, who won freedom from British imperialism and forged a pioneering charter for democracy. For progressive Americans, their country was especially great in the

time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal. For conservative Americans, their country was at its best when Ronald Reagan brought the Soviets to their knees and won the Cold War. For all their ideological differences, these Americans all believe that their country is, and always shall be, the Last, Best, Hope of Humankind.

I normally travel to the United States from London. This time I flew in from Canada. This, alone of the four countries that I visited in September, does not boast of having a fabulous or famously influential past. It was not the Canadians who gave the world zero, yoga, or plastic surgery; not the Canadians who invented the theory of evolution or electricity; not the Canadians who had built the world's richest democracy which was also home to the world's greatest universities producing a disproportionate share of Nobel Prizes.

I had been to Canada several times before. With every visit, I have grown fonder of the place. It has a quiet, understated, character

that is in striking contrast to its vainglorious southern neighbour. Canadians are not boastful; though in fact they have a great deal to boast about. They have good public universities and excellent public health care. They have gone from being a racist Whites-only society towards becoming properly multicultural. Their West Indian, South Asian, and Chinese immigrants are much better integrated than immigrants in other Western nations. Although their treatment of their own indigenous peoples is far from perfect, at least they feel guilty about it.

From my most recent trip to Canada, I concluded that nations that do not have a great history (real or mythical) to invoke may be luckier than those who do. For Boris Johnson to think of himself as Winston Churchill, or for Narendra Modi's followers to think of their leader as a new Shivaji, a new Hindu Hriday Samrat, can scarcely help solve the structural challenges that England or India face today. This idea of a fantastic and uniquely glorious past continues to

bedevil the fourth country I visited in September, the United States. And consider also Russia, with Vladimir Putin fancying himself as a new Peter the Great, or Turkey, with Recep Tayyip Erdogan thinking of himself as an Ottoman Sultan. Or of Iran, whose leaders have an excessive — and distracting — pride in their Persian past, or, most of all, of China, whose leaders are absolutely convinced that the greatness of their ancient civilisation makes their imminent emergence as the world's major superpower all the more likely.

Canadians are due to vote in a general election on Monday, October 21. When I was there in late September, campaigning was in full swing, with competitive politics on open display. The incumbent prime minister, a Liberal, was being accused of hypocrisy because of an act of casual racism he had once committed. The Liberals, in return, warned the voters that if the Conservatives were elected in their stead, public spending for health and education

would precipitously decline. Meanwhile, the National Democratic Party and the Greens urged Canadians to look outside the two main parties and consider their claims instead.

What was notable was how little past national achievements (real or mythical) were invoked in the election campaign. No leader talked of Making Canada Great Again. Whosoever is elected the next prime minister is not going to bow his head on the steps of the Canadian parliament and promise to undo 800 years of slavery. Nor is he going to invoke the World Wars I and II (although Canadian soldiers helped win them, something the British in particular needed to be reminded of). The Canadians can be understated and pragmatic because they don't have a great history to boast of. They can focus on building a more robust economy, a more caring society, on making their fine universities and hospitals even better. We have a lot to learn from them — even (or especially) though they don't tell us to.

By Ramachandra Guha

Radical warming in Siberia leaves millions on unstable ground

ON THE ZYRYANKA RIVER, Russia — Andrey Danilov eased his motorboat onto the gravel riverbank, where the bones of a woolly mammoth lay scattered on the beach. A putrid odor filled the air — the stench of ancient plants and animals decomposing after millennia entombed in a frozen purgatory.

"It smells like dead bodies," Danilov said. The skeletal remains were left behind by mammoth hunters hoping to strike it rich by pulling prehistoric ivory tusks from a vast underground layer of ice and frozen dirt called permafrost. It has been rapidly thawing as Siberia has warmed up faster than almost anywhere else on Earth. Scientists say the planet's warming must not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius — but Siberia's temperatures have already spiked far beyond that. A Washington Post analysis found that the region near the town of Zyryanka, in an enormous wedge of eastern Siberia called Yakutia, has warmed by more than 3 degrees Celsius since preindustrial times — roughly triple the global average.

The permafrost that once sustained farming — and upon which villages and cities are built — is in the midst of a great thaw, blanketing the region with swamps, lakes and odd bubbles of earth that render the land virtually useless.

"The warming got in the way of our good life," said Alexander Fedorov, deputy director of the Melnikov Permafrost Institute in the regional capital of Yakutsk. "With every year, things are

getting worse and worse."

For the 5.4 million people who live in Russia's permafrost zone, the new climate has disrupted their homes and their livelihoods. Rivers are rising and running faster, and entire neighborhoods are falling into them. Arable land for farming has plummeted by more than half, to just 120,000 acres in 2017.

In Yakutia, an area one-third the size of the United States, cattle and reindeer herding have plunged 20 percent as the animals increasingly battle to survive the warming climate's destruction of pastureland. Siberians who grew up learning to read nature's subtlest signals are being driven to migrate by a climate they no longer understand.

This migration from the countryside to cities and towns — also driven by factors such as low investment and spotty Internet — represents one of the most significant and little-noticed movements to date of climate refugees. The city of Yakutsk has seen its population surge 20 percent to more than 300,000 in the past decade.

And then there's that rotting smell.

As the permafrost thaws, animals and plants frozen for thousands of years begin to decompose and send a steady flow of carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere — accelerating climate change.

"The permafrost is thawing so fast," said Anna Liljedahl, an associate professor at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. "We scientists can't keep up anymore."

Against this backdrop, a booming cottage industry in mammoth hunting has taken hold. The long-frozen mammoth tusks — combined with Chinese demand for ivory — have imbued teetering local economies with a strike-it-rich ethos. Some people bask in instant money. But others watch in dismay as Siberia's way of life is washed away. The first sign of change was the birds.

Over the past several decades, never-before-seen species started to show up in the Upper Kolyma District, an area on the Arctic Circle in northeastern Siberia 1,000 miles west of Nome, Alaska. The new arrivals included the mallard duck and barn swallow, whose normal range was previously well to the south. A study published last year by Yakutsk scientist Roman Desyatkin said ornithologists in the region have identified 48 new bird species in the past half century, an increase of almost 20 percent in the known diversity of bird life. Then the land started to change.

Winters, though still brutal, turned milder — and shorter. Fed by the more rapidly thawing permafrost, rivers started flooding more, leaving some communities inaccessible for months and washing others away, along with the ground beneath them.

The village of Nelemnoye was cut off for three months in late 2017 when the lakes and rivers didn't fully freeze, stranding residents who use the frozen waters for transport. With the village in crisis, the government

dispatched a helicopter to take residents grocery shopping.

Claudia Shalugina, 63, used to teach at the three-story school in Zyryanka, a 90-minute motorboat ride downriver. Around 10 years ago, the Kolyma River washed away a section of Zyryanka, taking Shalugina's school with it. Satellite images show the loss of about 50 acres of land along the riverside, according to the geographic information firm Esri.

Smoking a cigarette on the porch of the village library, Shalugina offered her own analysis of the changing climate: "I think, 'Lord, it's probably going to be the end of the world.'"

Just downstream from where the Zyryanka River flows into the mighty Kolyma, three huge tractor-trailers stand abandoned on the forested riverbank. Weeds and wildflowers rise up around them. The frozen river, used as a winter ice road, suddenly became too risky to drive on. Spring had come early this year — again.

"It used to be man was in control," said Pyotr Kaurgin, head of the Chukchi indigenous community in the village of Kolymskoye, on the northern reaches of the Kolyma River. "Now nature is in control."

In the summer, huge blazes tore through Siberian boreal forests, unleashing yet more carbon into the atmosphere. Some scientists fear worsening northern fires are amplifying the permafrost damage. Meanwhile, six time zones away (but still in Siberia) on the Yamal Peninsula, monstrous

craters have opened up in the tundra. Scientists suspect they represent sudden explosions of methane gas freed by thawing permafrost.

Outside Zyryanka, a once-bustling farm has given way to a jumbled landscape of dips, bumps, and puddles. The mud road, what's left of it, banks and turns at head-spinning angles, until it runs into a widening pond.

"The earth is slowly sinking," horse farmer Vladi-mir Arkhipov said. "There's more and more water and less and less usable earth." The impact on farming has been catastrophic.

Arkhipov produces fermented mare's milk called kumys, a delicacy among the Sakha, a Turkic people who make up roughly half the population of Yakutia. Arkhipov also raises foals for meat, which in Sakha culture is sometimes consumed sliced thin, raw and frozen.

In the past five years, Arkhipov said, he has lost close to four of his 70-odd acres of hay fields to permafrost-related flooding — meaning he can feed three fewer horses in the winter. And during a freak blizzard in late 2017 — an increasingly common occurrence in the region as the climate changes, scientists say — 10 of his horses died.

Due to thawing permafrost — along with the demise of Soviet-era state farms — the area of cultivated land in Yakutia has plummeted by more than half since 1990. The region's cattle herds have shrunk by about 20 percent, to 188,100 head in 2017 from 233,300 in 2011.

Reindeer herds have also declined sharply.

Fedorov and other scientists say the degradation of crop and pastureland caused by the thawing permafrost helped bring about the collapse of the region's agriculture. Yegor Prokopyev, the retired head of Nelemnoye, says climate change is the latest shock to befall the Kolyma River region. There was communism and forced collective farming. Then capitalism and government cutbacks.

His grandfather, a peasant, was declared an enemy of the working class and sent to one of this region's many gulag prison camps.

"As soon as you start getting used to something, they'll come up with something else, and you have to adapt to everything all over again," Prokopyev said.

The idea that warming brings disaster is ingrained in the tradition of the Sakha people of Yakutia, the region laced by the Zyryanka and Kolyma rivers. An old Sakha prophecy says: "They will survive until the day when the Arctic Ocean melts."

Village elders recalled the phrase after an episode of catastrophic flooding in 2005, according to Susan Crate, an anthropologist at George Mason University, who has long studied climate change in Siberia. The radical transformation underway here, she said, should serve as a warning to people in every corner of the globe. "Changing our ways is imminent," Crate said.

Here's how abuse by mothers affects infant brain

The scientists analysed the social behaviours and brains of rat pups that were exposed to a week of daily rough handling in their nest by their mothers, the study may help understand the mechanism behind psychological trauma due to parental abuse.



Researchers have found the extent of brain damage in newborn rats from short-term abuse by their mothers, an advance that may help understand the mechanism behind psychological trauma due to parental abuse. The study, published in the journal PNAS, revealed how the presence of an abusive parent can trigger behavioural problems beyond just the stress it created in the infant. While earlier studies had revealed that parental abuse in rats was linked to shrinkage in the brain's amygdala and hippocampus -- parts of the brain that process fear and

while the pairing of stress with the presence of an abusive mother was required to restrict growth of the amygdala, and to prompt her pups to unnaturally keep their distance and limit their time spent together.

The scientists analysed the social behaviours and brains of rat pups that were exposed to a week of daily rough handling in their nest by their mothers, and compared these observations with those of rat pups from three other groups: Those that were injected with stress-inducing drugs when they were alone with a nurturing mother, a group of rats that were with an anaesthetised mother showing no maternal behaviour, and those that lived with a still object.

The researchers induced rough handling by

withholding sufficient nesting materials that new rodent mothers normally access to the infant brain found for their pups in the wild -- a common methodology for recreating abusive behaviour in rats. The results of the study revealed that the abused rat pups were hesitant to stay with the mother and nurse, and did so for shorter periods of time whether their mother was awake or not. These effects were replicated when the researchers injected unabused pups with stress hormone corticosterone. According to the researchers, the negative impact from abuse could be reduced by chemically blocking the stress hormone's action in the infant brain, and by exposing stressed rat pups to non-abusive mothers.

Female movie characters more prone to stereotypes than their male counterparts



Many commercial films worldwide continue to express womanhood in a stereotypical manner than men, said a new study. According to the researchers, women were found to be more prone to expressing passive emotions, such as sadness, fear and surprise. In

contrast, male characters in the same films were more likely to demonstrate active emotions, such as anger and hatred. "Our research confirmed that many commercial films depict women from a stereotypical perspective," said the study's author Byungjoo

Lee, a professor at the KAIST College in South Korea. For the findings, the research team proposed an advanced system that used computer vision technology to automatically analyse the visual information of each frame of a film. This allowed the system to more accurately and practically evaluate the degrees to which female and male characters were discriminatingly depicted in a film in quantitative terms and further enabled the revealing of gender bias that conventional analysis methods could not yet detect. The researchers analysed 40 films from Hollywood and South Korea released between 2017 and 2018. They downsampled the films from 24 to 3 frames per

second and used Microsoft's Face API facial recognition technology and object detection technology YOLO9000 to verify the details of the characters and their surrounding objects in the scenes. Using the new system, the team computed eight quantitative indices that described the representation of a particular gender in the films. They were: Emotional diversity, spatial staticity, spatial occupancy, temporal occupancy, mean age, intellectual image, emphasis on appearance, and type and frequency of surrounding objects. The type and frequency of surrounding objects index revealed that female

characters and automobiles were tracked together only 55.7 per cent as much as that of male characters, while they were more likely to appear with furniture and in a household, with 123.9 per cent probability. In cases of temporal occupancy and mean age, female characters appeared less frequently in films than male at the rate of 56 per cent, and were on an average younger in 79.1 per cent of the cases. These two indices were especially conspicuous in Korean films. The study is scheduled to be presented at the 22nd ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW) in Texas on November 11.

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Here's how to shield your home from Diwali smoke. Key tips to follow

This festive season, protect your home from air pollution causing numerous health issues and be safe this Diwali. Essential ideas to follow.

The ambient air pollution in Indian cities, especially Delhi and other northern regions, have been reported to be one of the worst in the world. Come Diwali and the air quality further deteriorates because of a culmination of various factors at the same time -- incessant burning of firecrackers, burning of crop stubble, cooling of temperatures causing inversion and change in wind directions. While a toxic haze overlays the city for days, we often deceive ourselves by staying indoors, shutting all doors and windows, until the smog clears, thinking we're safe from the effects of pollution. However, what we are unaware of is that air quality inside homes, offices and other indoor environments can be equally harmful leading to several health risks, especially because we spend about 90 per cent of our time indoors. While our homes are already exposed to

pollutants due to the use of synthetic building and furnishing materials, use of chemical products including personal care and cleaning goods, emissions from cooking (even LPG), tobacco smoke, entry of outdoor air into the house further aggravates the situation. Also, urban housing these days are notorious for having restricted ventilation.

According to the World Health Organisation, air pollution is responsible for one-third of global deaths from stroke, lung cancer and heart disease. Exposure to such toxic air is linked to numerous health effects from minor ones like headaches, nausea, irritation of the eyes, nose and throat to more acute conditions like asthma, bronchitis, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), cancer, and even mental disorders like dementia and Alzheimer's. To shield yourself from the detrimental reactions of indoor air pollution, take these precautions.

1. Install an air



cleaning system

The easiest way to ventilate a home is by opening the windows. But, when the air outside is already polluted, this is probably not a good idea. An alternate option would be to install portable or central air cleaning systems, which studies have shown can effectively reduce air pollutants, both caused by indoor elements as well as for particles that have penetrated from outside. However, air purifiers of substandard qualities can do more harm than good. Products with HEPA or high-efficiency particulate arresting air filters are the best.

2. Wear a face mask

Face masks can be

effective to a certain extent in shielding micro-particles from entering and causing damage to the lungs. Use a face mask which has air filtration devices, which are better than cloth or surgical masks. The latter is ineffective against pollutants like PM 2.5. N95 or N99 masks are considered to be more beneficial in fending off pollutants. But make sure you wear them right, ensuring it covers both the nose and the mouth.

3. Go green

House plants not only liven up the interiors, but also improve air quality and make spaces healthier. Indoor plants remove pollutants from the air by absorbing

harmful gases through their leaves and roots. The microorganisms that live in the soil of potted plants also play an instrumental role in neutralizing VOCs and other pollutants. Plants also help improve our mood and bring a sense of calm to our living spaces. Some of the most common air purifying plants are Money Plant, Areca Palm, Mother-in-Law's Tongue or Snake Plant. The Money Plant removes formaldehyde and carbon monoxide (CO) from the air and helps in increasing Areca Palms are easy on the eye and help keep your home safe. As they grow, these palms work like air purifiers by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. Snake Plant is a must-have in your home. This plant absorbs harmful toxins such as xylene, carbon monoxide, benzene and formaldehyde from the air. And it is a night plant as it reduces CO2 at night. Living in urban areas, we have all become accustomed to crying foul over the air quality during the winter season. But it is time we took some control over the situation by assessing our own actions and footprint. Get an air cleaner to protect your loved ones for sure, but let us not go overboard this Diwali by buying and gifting indiscriminately - at the end of the day, consumerism is at the heart of the problems we face. Let us be careful with our actions and I wish all our readers a green and happy Diwali. This article has been written by Barun Aggarwal an indoor air quality expert and CEO of BreatheEasy Consultants Pvt Ltd. It is a personalized piece, accordingly in the end, it says - "Let us be careful with our actions and I wish all our readers a green and happy Diwali."





Celebrating Diwali, The Festival Of Lights



Though there are more than 100 Indian festivals observed annually, few are as anticipated or as popular as Diwali. Also known as Deepavali, or the Festival of Lights, the five-day celebration extends across many cultures and beliefs and is commemorated by almost a billion people worldwide. Though Diwali always falls between October and November, the festival's exact date changes in accordance with the Hindu lunar calendar. The 2019 festivities will begin on Friday, October 25, with Dhanteras. The name is derived from the words "wealth" (Dhan) and "thirteen" (Teras), the day of the lunar month the celebration takes place. Dedicated to Lakshmi, the

Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity, the day is celebrated with special prayers to obtain blessings for the welfare, success, and well-being of loved ones. Devotees also welcome the deity into their homes by decorating entrances with colorful lanterns and traditional temporary designs, or rangolis, created using materials like colored rice, lentils, flowers, and powder. Since purchasing something valuable, preferably gold or silver, on this day is considered auspicious, many treat themselves to fine jewelry. Those who cannot afford an indulgence, seek out cheaper items such as clothes or household goods. The second day of the festival is called Kali Chaudas, or Narak

Chaturdashi. For some, the day provides an opportunity to drive away demons or evil spirits from homes and businesses through traditional rituals. Non-believers celebrate the day as Choti (small) Diwali and use it as an excuse to start the festivities early with feasts and fireworks. The third day, which marks Diwali, is when the biggest celebrations occur. Revelers begin early in the morning with a visit to a place of worship, such as a temple, to seek the blessings of the deities. They then get together with relatives and friends to exchange gifts and sweets, specially made for the occasion. Many even extend their Dhanteras shopping spree and head to malls to seek out Diwali bargains. As the sun sets, festival observers worldwide light up their homes with glittering diyas (small oil lamps) and enjoy delicious traditional foods with their loved ones. For residents of India, the real fun usually begins in the late evening when entire neighborhoods take to the streets to light up the skies with colorful fireworks. However, this year's celebrations may be somewhat dampened due to a 2018 Supreme Court

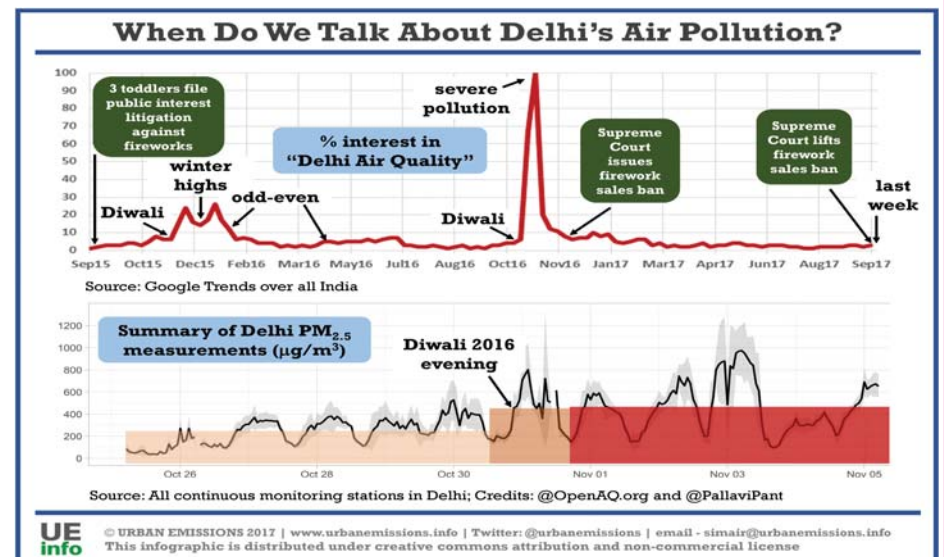
ruling, which banned the use of conventional fireworks to reduce air pollution. Instead, the government is urging citizens to use the newly-introduced environmentally-friendly fireworks, which purportedly reduce emissions by 30%. But given that there currently only three varieties available, the Indian skies may not sparkle as brightly this Diwali.

The festival's folklore varies by region. Some believe Diwali was first celebrated by the residents of the northern Indian city of Ayodhya to mark the return of their King Rama, his wife Sita, and his brother Lakshmana after a 14-year-long exile imposed by the

king's mother. Others believe it began following the taming of a goddess who, unable to control demons through conventional warfare, started a rampage that threatened to not only destroy the evil spirits but also wipe out every living creature on Earth. It was only after her husband, Lord Shiva, intervened that she stopped. Though the tales differ, they all celebrate the victory of good over evil!

The festival's fourth day is celebrated in many different ways. In the state of Gujarat, October 28, 2019, will mark the beginning of the year 2076. The 57-year difference between the Hindu and the

more familiar Gregorian calendar is the result of the shorter lunar calendar cycles. In northern India, the day is widely celebrated as Govardhan Puja in honor of Lord Krishna. According to an ancient myth, the Hindu god lifted the "Govardhan Hill" in his hometown of Mathura to shelter the residents from a flood caused by Indra, the god of rain, who was upset because the locals had stopped worshipping him. Devotees commemorate the occasion by offering Krishna a "mountain" of delicious food.





Diwali Decor Guide

Decoration ideas to make your home a dazzling paradise this festive season

As per the traditions, societies across India light their houses up with shimmering lights and bright colours using string lights.



Diwali is close in time from Dhanteras to Bhai and everybody is in a festive mood. Forethoughts as to how to celebrate Diwali, what to wear on the occasion and what to cook for the family, must be crossing your mind. But most importantly,

of course, diyas are used for in-house décor. The planning of decor has to be on-point to ensure that the house neither looks too lit-up nor dull. To help you in the heavy-duty task of planning the home décor for the festivities, we brainstormed some ideas. Go ahead and check them out.

Floral Décor

Flowers have the power to soothe one's mind and using them for décor will surely add to the festive energy.

Homemade Crafts

If you are short on budget, you can always



use the discarded things and make unique craft items for décor. Don't believe us. Check these designs out.

Diyas, Lanterns and Candles

Diya and lanterns are an intrinsic part of Diwali décor.

Rangoli Designs

A good rangoli design can make anyone stop and stare, and admire the skill of the person who made it.





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84 envoys take part in Guru Nanak's birth anniversary celebrations

Following the Union Cabinet's decision to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev across the globe, the ICCR had invited the envoys in New Delhi to visit the Golden Temple.



(Contd on page 22)



US 'concerned' over Jammu and Kashmir, says Pakistan must stop terror

(Contd on page 22)

Haryana family feeding bull to recover gold jewellery eaten by the bovine

Sources said the family members ran from pillar to post after they checked the CCTV camera and identified the bull. After five hours they finally spotted the bull. Now, they have tied it in an empty plot near the house and are feeding the bull daily and checking its droppings.



(News Agencies) A family in Kalanwali town in Haryana's district Sirsa is waiting for a bull to pass over the past three days, with the hope that it will also pass the gold along with the excreta. "We have been checking the dung to recover the gold. It's a dirty job, but we have no other option," says Janak Raj, as the jewels belong

to Raj's wife and daughter-in-law. Janak, a businessman in Kalanwali, said that after his wife and daughter-in-law came back from a wedding they kept the ornaments in a bowl in the kitchen. "My aged mother cut some vegetables and used the same bowl to discard the leftovers," he said. His mother then threw the leafy contents of the bowl outside the house which was eaten up by a bull roaming outside, but she spotted an earring on the floor nearby,

(Contd on page 22)

Donor who gave \$900K to Trump inaugural to plead guilty to illegal contributions

(News Agencies) OAKLAND — A California investor who donated cumulative millions to political campaigns and President Donald Trump's inaugural committee has agreed to plead guilty to making illegal contributions and failing to disclose his lobbying work as a foreign agent. In a plea agreement and related documents unveiled by federal prosecutors on Tuesday, Imaad Shah Zuberi acknowledged that he promised international clients and representatives of foreign governments that he would be able to mold U.S. foreign policy in ways that



would generate profit. He used his venture capital firm Avenue Ventures to generate millions in revenues, much of which he kept for his personal benefit. "Mr. Zuberi's multi-faceted scheme allowed him to line his pockets by concealing the fact that he was representing foreign clients, obtaining access for clients by making a long series of illegal contributions, and skimming money paid by his clients," United States Attorney Nick Hanna said in a statement. Some of the money Zuberi raised through those promises he channeled into political campaigns, federal prosecutors charge: more than \$3 million to Democratic and Republican candidates,

(Contd on page 22)

