



China is replacing America as Asia's military titan

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'For the first time, there's pro-incumbency wave in country': PM Modi in Varanasi



Varanasi goes to polls on May 19, the last round of seven-phase elections. The PM urged the workers to turn Varanasi elections into model exercise, forcing experts to make it a case study.

(News Agencies) New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking to BJP workers before filing nomination papers from Varanasi, said there was an unprecedented pro-incumbency wave in the country and urged partymen to not be arrogant. **Contd.on page 18**

Trump targets foreign travelers who overstay their U.S. visas



(News Agencies) Washington : The White House says it plans to crack down on the hundreds of thousands of foreign visitors who overstay their U.S. visas, a vast challenge that has largely escaped notice as the Trump administration has focused chiefly on blocking migrants on the southern border. Experts say so-called overstays by students, au pairs, tourists and others have far outpaced unauthorized border crossings in recent years and form a major portion of the estimated 10.7 million people in the country without permission. **Contd.on page 18**

Cleric 'mastermind' behind Sri Lanka attacks



(News Agencies) Colombo: - Over the past three years, radical Islamic cleric Zahran Hashim, alternately known as Mohammed Zahran, has amassed an online following of thousands for his hate-filled online sermons - sometimes delivered before a banner depicting the Sri Lanka government spokesperson Rajitha Senaratne said Monday that

authorities believe a small extremist group known as the National Thowfeek Jamaath (NTJ) - despite having generated little cause for concern with the exception of slashing Buddha statues in 2017 - were the orchestrators. Moreover, one of NJT's leaders Hashim may have had additional terrorist ties. ISIS - which was officially run out of its self-designated "caliphate" in Syria just weeks ago - also capitalized on the chance to insert itself into the narrative. According to the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), an ISIS media activist used the encrypted messenger app Telegram this week to publish photographs of three armed Sri Lankan men posing in front of the trademark black ISIS flag

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"Said in the heat of political campaigning", Rahul Gandhi's reply to The Supreme Court notice.



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Punjabi Press Club of New York, recently feted SP Singh Oberoi, a successful Businessman & Philanthropist, well known for rescuing many Punabi men on death row from prisons in middle east. Mr. Oberoi was on a personal visit to New York. Initiated by Balwant Singh Hothi, Punjabi Press Club organized a special event in honor of Mr. Oberoi. Honor ceremony was attended by most members of Punjabi Press in New York, including Television, Newspapers and Social media. Mr. Oberoi was presented a Plaq and Shawl to honor his work and commitment for the welfare of community in Punjab and overseas. **Photo Courtesy: Nisha/BJ Studio**



Asian American Affairs office established in Nassau County



Photo Courtesy: 1 Newsday
2 Onkar Singh/Facebook



(By our staff reporter) Mineola: During a recently held press conference, the creation of the Asian American Affairs office in Nassau County was announced. The Nassau County Legislature passed a law on Monday that will establish an Office of Asian-American Affairs. "This is a groundbreaking and historic act on the part of this legislature that recognizes

the leadership and contributions that the Asian American community is providing to this county currently," said Presiding Officer Richard Nicoletto (R-New Hyde Park). Nicoletto said that since 2005, the Asian-American population in Nassau County has grown by 40 percent, and it now makes up more than 10 percent of the county population.

"The Asian American population is as diverse as this county," said Nicoletto. "It is as diverse as this country, reaching people from different backgrounds, countries, cultures, heritages, languages." Nicoletto said that Asian-Americans already hold many leadership roles throughout the community, and this action will continue to increase the involve-

ment of Asian-Americans in Nassau County. Currently, there is an Asian American Advisory Committee that operates without a staff or budget. The Asian-American agency will take the place of this committee. The new agency will be funded and the executive director will be appointed by the county executive and approved by the Legislature.

Gayatri & other ancient Hindu mantras opened both Nevada Senate & Assembly



Rajan Zed reading invocation at Nevada State Assembly. Speaker Jason Frierson is standing next to him, while Chief Clerk Susan Furlong is in front of him.

(By our staff reporter) Both Nevada State Assembly and Senate in capital Carson City started their sessions on April 22 with ancient Hindu prayers; containing verses from world's oldest extant scripture. Hindu statesman Rajan Zed delivered these invocations from ancient Sanskrit scriptures before the Assembly and Senate. After Sanskrit delivery, he then read the English interpretation of the prayers. Sanskrit is considered a sacred language in Hinduism and root language of Indo-European languages. Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, is scheduled to open all the sessions of Nevada Senate and Assembly with prayers during this week of April 22-26. Rajan Zed today recited from Rig-Veda, the oldest scripture of the world still in common use; besides lines from Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita (Song of the Lord), both ancient Hindu texts. He started and ended the prayers with "Om", the mystical syllable con-

taining the universe, which in Hinduism is used to introduce and conclude religious work. Reciting from Brahadaranyakopanishad, Zed said "Asato ma sad gamaya, Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, Mrtyor mamrtam gamaya", which he then interpreted as "Lead us from the unreal to the real, Lead us from darkness to light, and Lead us from death to immortality." Reading from Bhagavad-Gita, he urged Assembly Members and Senators to keep the welfare of others always in mind. In the state of Nevada, Rajan Zed has already delivered Hindu invocations at City Councils of Las Vegas, Henderson, Sparks and Boulder City; in addition to Board of Commissioners of Clark, Douglas, Lyon counties and Carson City Board of Supervisors. Besides Nevada, he has also read opening prayers in United States Senate, US House of Representatives, various state senates and houses of representatives, county boards and city councils all over USA.

Long Island Ladies Council launched



(By our staff reporter) Mineola: A host of well known ladies of Long Island's Indian community have joined hands and launched an organization, to be called LILC (Long Island Ladies Council). Pinky Jaggi, will serve as President, while Jyoti Bhatia Gupta to be Co President and Sonia Anand is Vice President. Opening ceremony, including Oath and launch of LILC was held in Nassau County Legislature Hall on Thursday April 25th. Nassau County presiding Officer Richard Nicoletto, officiated the ceremony and swore oath to LILC officials.

Photo Courtesy: Dolly Nanda/Facebook



Vaisakhi Mela to be organized in Hicksville



(Photo Courtesy: Onkar Singh/Facebook)

(By our staff reporter) Long Island- A Vaisakhi Mela (Cultural Street Fair) will be held on May 19, 2019 in Hicksville. In a recently held community gathering; that also served as

a press conference, promoters of Vaisakhi Mela shared their plans with the gathering & members of the press. It was also claimed that this is the first time, a Vaisakhi Mela is

being organized in Hicksville. Prominent committee members of Vaisakhi Mela include Jasbir Jay Singh of Hum Hindustani, Onkar Singh & Bobby Sidana.

H-1B Visa Reaches Limit For 2020 Within Days Of New Financial Year

(Agencies)- The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said it has reached Congressionally-mandated 65,000 H-1B visa cap for the fiscal year 2020, after it started receiving the applications for the most sought-after work visa among foreign, including Indian, professionals. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows companies in the US to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The USCIS, the federal agency mandated with task of approving such applications, on Friday said "it has received a sufficient number of petitions projected as needed to reach the congressionally-mandated 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap for fiscal year 2020." The fiscal year begins October 1, 2019 and it the USCIS started receiving the visa

petitions from April 1. However, the agency did not revealed the number of petitions received by it in the first five days. The USCIS, said, it will next determine if it has received a sufficient number of petitions to meet the 20,000 H-1B visa US advanced degree exemption, known as the master's cap. The agency said it will reject and return visa fees for all unselected cap-subject petitions that are not prohibited multiple filings. It will continue to accept and process petitions that are otherwise exempt from the cap. Petitions filed for current H-1B workers who have been counted previously against the cap, and who still retain their cap number, are exempt from the FY 2020 H-1B, the USCIS said. It did not say if it would resort to computerised draw of lots as was the case in the last several years. Last year, the USCIS received 190,000 cap-subjected H-1B

petitions. In 2018, it received 199,000 applications while in 2017, 236,000 petitions in the first five days after it started receiving the applications. The USCIS received 232,972 H-1B cap-subject petitions in 2016 and in 2015, it received 172,581 cap-subjected petitions. This is the first season of H-1B petitions after the USCIS announced enforcing new rules for the most sought-after US work visa applications for foreign professionals. The new rules give preferences to those who have completed their post-graduation degree course from any US educational institutions. This year the USCIS has suspend the electronic registration requirement for the fiscal year 2020 cap season to complete user testing and ensure the system and process are fully functional. Under the new system, the USCIS first selects H-1B petitions submitted on behalf of all beneficiaries, including those that may be eligible for the advanced degree exemption.



Thereafter, the USCIS will select from the remaining eligible petitions, a number projected to reach the advanced degree exemption. Changing the order in which the USCIS counts these allocations will likely increase the number of petitions for beneficiaries with a master's or higher degree from a US institution of higher education to be selected under the H-1B numerical allocations. The USCIS says that the change will result in an estimated increase of up to

16 per cent (or 5,340 workers) in the number of selected petitions for H-1B beneficiaries with a master's degree or higher from a US institution of higher education. "These simple and smart changes are a positive benefit for employers, the foreign workers they seek to employ, and the agency's adjudicators, helping the H-1B visa program work better," USCIS Director L Francis Cissna had said in a statement.

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NRI Who Wanted to Vote Posted Ticket to India Online, Pranksters Cancelled it

(Agencies)- The right to vote is one of the most prized privileges for citizens in a democracy. And with elections currently underway in the world's largest democracy, citizens of India are as eager and excited as ever to exercise this right - an opportunity that usually comes only once in five years.

This is a tough time for Indian expats and NRIs residing in foreign countries as according to the law, NRIs can only vote if they are physically present at the



polling booth on the day of voting. However, a young man from Mangalore, living in Muscat, Oman, made a serious effort to cast his vote. He bought a plane ticket to India expressly so that he could come and cast his vote. Everything was set. However, Joystan Lobo, who belongs to Puttur in Karnataka, made one crucial mistake. He posted the ticket on social media. Lobo, who had booked the ticket to India in March itself, posted a video of himself with the ticket, encouraging others

from his hometown of Puttur to come and cast their votes in a similar fashion. However, within hours of the ticket's information being posted online, some miscreants cancelled the booking without the buyer's knowledge. According to reports in DaijiWorld, the unidentified miscreants must have found the ticket's information

including PNR details on a social media site, then gone to the online bookings portal. Since they had the flyer's details from his ticket, it must not have been very hard for the pranksters to cancel the ticket.

The ticket was cancelled on March 30 and Lobo only found out about the cancellation on April 1. Not to be deterred, however, the diligent elector instantly booked a second ticket to India and flew out of Oman on April 4, comfortably in time for the first phase of polling that began on April 11. Though Lobo lost over Rs 9,000 to compensate for the cancellation, he managed to come and cast his vote, nonetheless. This year's crucial elections will see 900 million voters cast their vote.

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Sri Lanka bombings carry a stark message for India

The main group behind the bombings, the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ), is an ideological offspring of the rapidly growing, Saudi-funded Tamil Nadu Thowheed Jamath (TNTJ)

The Sri Lanka bombings — one of the world's deadliest acts of terrorism — highlight the growing terrorist threat to democratic, secular states. Far from a concerted and sustained global war on terror, the anti-terrorism fight is being undermined by geopolitics. The global ideological movement fuelling terrorism is Wahhabi jihadism. Yet, the US-ordered total ban on Iranian oil exports from May 3 will reward this jihadism's financiers.

Despite specific and detailed Indian intelligence warnings, Sri Lanka failed to avert the bombings, in large part because of a divided and dysfunctional government. However, Sri Lanka was quick to detain the bombers' family members for questioning once the suicide killers were identified. By contrast, the Pulwama bomber's family members not only remained free but also gave media interviews rationalising the suicide attack.

Sri Lanka has a blood-soaked history, but the scale and intensity of the latest attacks were unprecedented. The coordinated bombings, in less than 30 minutes, killed more people than the 2008 Mumbai terrorist siege, which lasted nearly four days. Actually, in terms of sophisticated methods and synchronised lethality, they were eerily similar to the 1993 serial bombings that targeted Mumbai. Jihadists have long used India as a laboratory:

Major acts of terror first tried out in India and then replicated elsewhere include attacks on symbols of State authority, mid-air bombing of a commercial jetliner and coordinated strikes on a city transportation system.

The series of extraordinary steps Sri Lanka took after the bombings — blocking social media, imposing a daily dusk-to-dawn curfew, closing schools until April 29 and proclaiming an emergency law — may seem unthinkable in terrorism-scarred but rights-oriented India. But such measures were necessary to maintain control and to deter large-scale reprisal attacks against Muslims. Ironically, in the days leading up to the Sri Lanka bombings, the 2008 Mumbai attacks were back in the news in India because of Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Pragya Thakur's controversial comment on Hemant Karkare, the police officer gunned down in that siege. The irony of ironies is that those 26/11 attacks received more Indian attention this month than on their 10th anniversary five months ago. This underscores a troubling truth: Nothing draws the attention of Indians more than political controversy, however petty.

The Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana famously said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This is especially true of India, which — far from heeding the 26/11 lessons — doesn't

remember its martyrs. How many Indians know the name of Tukaram Omble, the "hero among heroes" of 26/11? An ex-army soldier, who became a police assistant sub-inspector, Omble — by ensuring terrorist Ajmal Kasab's capture alive — provided the clinching evidence of Pakistan's involvement in 26/11. Kasab was captured after the ambush killing of six cops, including Karkare and additional commissioner Ashok Kamte. Omble grabbed the barrel of Kasab's AK-47 and took a volley of fired bullets, allowing others to seize Kasab.

All the 10 Pakistani terrorists involved in 26/11 wore red string wristbands for Hindus that Pakistani-American David Headley got for them from Mumbai's Siddhivinayak Temple. But for Kasab's capture (and confession) helping to indisputably establish Pakistan's direct involvement, Pakistan's wicked plan was to portray 26/11 as exemplifying the rise of Hindu terrorism by capitalising on the then Manmohan Singh government's classification of the 2006-07 blasts in Malegaon, Ajmer Sharif, Mecca Masjid and Samjhauta Express as "Hindu terror". Omble's extraordinary bravery thus should never be forgotten. Nor the sacrifices of the other 26/11 martyrs awarded the Ashok Chakra — Sandeep Unnikrishnan, Gajender Singh, Vijay Salaskar, Karkare and Kamte. The 26/11 siege affected the national psyche more deeply than any other terrorist attack. Yet such is India's lack of a sense of remembrance that it laid the Kartarpur Corridor's cornerstone on the 10th anniversary of 26/11, with an oblivious Indian vice president calling it a "historic day". Pakistan couldn't have received a better gift from India.

Make no mistake: The Sri Lanka attacks hold major implications for Indian security, in part because the main group behind the bombings, the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ), is an ideological offspring of the rapidly growing, Saudi-funded Tamil Nadu Thowheed Jamath (TNTJ). The TNTJ, wedded to fanatical Wahhabism, rails against idolaters. It helped establish the Sri Lanka Thowheed Jamath, from which the bomber outfit NTJ emerged as a splinter.

Like the 2016 brutal Dhaka café attack, the Sri Lanka slaughter was carried out by educated Islamists from well-off families. And just as Bangladesh blamed Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for the attack, the NTJ has ties with ISI's front organisation, Lashkar-e-Taiba, which, through its Sri Lanka operations, has sought links with the TNTJ in India. NTJ leader Zaharan Hashim was inspired by fugitive Indian preacher Zakir Naik's sermons and received funds from Indian jihadists. It would be paradoxical if India, which tipped off Sri Lanka about the bombing plot, became a victim itself of Thowheed Jamat terror. First of all, it must outlaw the TNTJ.

(Brahma Chellaney, Hindustan Times)

The Sri Lanka bombings: A time of fear and uncertainty

The devastating bombings targeting churches and high-end hotels in Sri Lanka, which killed nearly 300 people, have shattered the calm that has existed in the island nation since the end of a bloody civil war almost a decade ago. More significantly, the attacks - blamed on a domestic radical Muslim group named National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) - exposed the political dysfunction within the government because of the animosity between President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. Sri Lankan ministers have now acknowledged that foreign intelligence agencies alerted Colombo about possible attacks by NTJ as early as April 4, but nothing seems to have been done to thwart them. Mr Wickremesinghe has even said neither he nor his ministers were kept informed about the advance information on attacks, and there are reports that the prime minister hasn't been allowed to attend meetings of the Security Council since last October.

The timing and selection of targets - churches and hotels filled with people celebrating Easter - are significant. The manner of the strikes by suicide bombers, all of them Sri Lankan citizens, suggests considerable planning and coordination went into the attacks. Though little is known of the NTJ, the group is not believed to have the capability to organise such bombings on its own. All of this has led counterterrorism experts to conclude that the NTJ was working closely with a foreign group. Some have even pointed



a finger at the Islamic State, especially in view of the targeting of Christians and similar attacks by the group in the Philippines and Indonesia. The Sri Lankan government's failure to rein in Buddhist hardliners who have targeted the Muslim minority in recent years has created the grounds for the radicalisation of young people. There have been reports of the increasing influence of Salafi ideology among Sri Lanka's Muslims and the growth of mosques and seminaries funded by West Asian nations. Dozens of Sri Lankan Muslims are believed to have joined Islamic State and at least one has died fighting in Syria.

Clearly, the Sri Lankan government will have to get its act together, both to apprehend those responsible for Sunday's bombings and to prevent further attacks, though whether this will happen remains doubtful, given the breakdown of relations between Mr Wickremesinghe and Mr Sirisena. With elections due to be held in the country by December this year, Sri Lanka could witness more uncertainty and instability, something that could have far-reaching ramifications for India and especially the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

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Destroying our environment for short-term political gains suicidal

Instead of taking urgent and concrete steps to confront this health emergency, governments make it worse by shearing the city of its tree cover.



One evening in a private club in Gurugram, I asked one of our most erudite politicians, a guest speaker for that evening, why the environment was not a core issue in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. His answer was depressing but not shocking. He said issues such as air pollution, water and forests were important, but development had to come first. Yes, I said, but at what cost? I requested the politician to step out of the air-conditioned cocoon

of the club, and our lives, to breathe in the toxic air in the city we live in. Gurugram, one of the most developed and most polluted cities in the world, is also the place where the very air we breathe can kill us. In 2017, at least one in eight deaths in the country was attributed to air pollution. India has the highest child mortality rate due to toxic air, followed closely by water contamination.

Instead of taking urgent and concrete steps to

confront this health emergency, governments make it worse by shearing the city of its tree cover. Both in Delhi and Gurugram, thousands of trees have been destroyed with impunity. In Gurugram, more than 14,500 trees have been felled in the two years between 2016 and 2018, as per the official figures. The actual number can be higher. Nearly 13,000 trees have been cut down between 2015 and 2018 in Delhi only for government

projects.

The water crisis is scary too. Twenty-one of India's major cities will run out of water by 2020. Delhi-NCR is among those cities, as is Bangalore and Hyderabad. The fact of the matter is that India is facing an unprecedented environmental crisis that threatens our health, livelihood and development, all of which are dependent on natural resources. Yet no political party gives the environment due importance or even has the vision of safeguarding it. I have worked as a conservation journalist and conservationist for nearly two decades. I can say with confidence that while no government in this period, including the earlier United Progressive Alliance (UPA), has a stellar record of environmental concerns, the last five years have been the most destructive. Space limits me to list the reasons, but I will briefly elaborate on a few relevant issues.

In December 2017, the

government eased industrial, agricultural and pollution regulations for domestic use, have surplus thermal power plants, one of the most harmful sources of toxic emissions, allowing them to release pollutants in violation of the earlier limits. A year earlier, the environment ministry removed air and water pollution regulations and withdrew the need to assess the environmental impact for the construction industry, one of the main contributors to pollution in Delhi-NCR.

What especially worries me is the Bharatiya Janata Party's promise to fast-track the river-linking project, which will realign the natural flow of 37 of India's rivers and link them, as though they were pipes, by constructing canals. The idea is to dam the rivers and direct the flow into 'dry' rivers. For one, there is no concept of surplus water in rivers, each drop performs an ecological function, like recharging groundwater, influencing micro-climate, diluting pollutants. Besides, which of our rivers, already heavily over-exploited for

government eased industrial, agricultural and pollution regulations for domestic use, have surplus thermal power plants, one of the most harmful sources of toxic emissions, allowing them to release pollutants in violation of the earlier limits. A year earlier, the environment ministry removed air and water pollution regulations and withdrew the need to assess the environmental impact for the construction industry, one of the main contributors to pollution in Delhi-NCR.

The idea of linking rivers in a bid to solve our water crisis is hubristic, unscientific and a social and environmental disaster. Expected to cost a massive ₹5,60,000 crore, it will submerge at least 27 lakh hectares of land, drowning fertile lands, villages, homes, forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves. Why does this matter? Because, these are part of the common, collective natural heritage of the citizens of India. Forests bind soils, influence monsoons and climates, and nurture rivers - the bedrock on which our civilizations develop. Destroying our natural resources for short-term gains, which enrich a few, is suicidal. We are chopping the branch we are sitting on. So what should be our manifesto for our city? For that, stay tuned for my next column. (Perna Singh Bindra is a former member of the National Board for Wildlife. She is the author of *The Vanishing: India's Wildlife Crisis*.)

BJP has to get the national-local balance right

The BJP appears to face the burden of triple anti-incumbency since the local legislator, parliamentarian, and the state government is of the party in most of the states where it had done well last time.

After two phases of the Lok Sabha elections, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - the ideological parent and the organisational anchor of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - has sent out a cautious reminder to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party chief, Amit Shah. As the Hindustan Times reported on Sunday, the Sangh believes that it is time for the BJP to concentrate on "local issues"; the national security pitch, especially the Balakot strikes, have limited traction on the ground now; and the campaign rallies need more energy. The Sangh believes



that the fact that voter turnout has not increased - and has even dipped in places - compared to 2014 is a worrying signal for the party, since a higher

turnout has usually yielded greater dividends for the BJP. There are two ways to understand the election, and its possible outcome. All surveys, reportage and

anecdotal evidence suggest that Mr Modi remains by far the most popular national leader. He is the favourite to be PM. The reasons to support him

vary from perceptions of his strength and decisiveness to absence of alternatives or a fear of a weak coalition. But there is another simultaneous process underway. As soon as the election is broken down to constituencies, there is a somewhat different story. The BJP appears to face the burden of triple anti-incumbency since the local legislator, parliamentarian, and the state government is of the party in most of the states where it had done well last time. Many are unpopular. Rebels have stood in pockets. The opposition has stronger local candidates in many places. And bread and butter issues often dominate. Even Mr Modi supporters end up suggesting that while they

want him as PM, in their constituency, they would like to see another representative. The RSS warning stems from this second situation. As much as elections have got presidential, India remains a parliamentary system. And the only way for anyone to become PM is to have a majority of the MPs. Mr Modi's popularity is the BJP's strength, but will it be enough to offset all the local vulnerabilities of the party? Will only a national narrative be enough to neutralise concerns about the ineffectiveness or failures of delivery at the constituency level? The BJP may have an edge on the national story; but it is looking weak on the local front.

The perils of making nuclear deterrence your campaign rhetoric

In early 2002, when India ordered full military mobilisation as part of 'Operation Parakram' following the Jaish-e-Mohammed attack on Parliament, Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan responded with a mixture of fright and bravado. On January 12, Musharraf made a conciliatory speech, promised not to let his territory be used by any terrorist group. India didn't de-escalate. At that point, a substantial asymmetry still existed between the two armed forces, especially in the air. Musharraf betrayed his fear and desperation by repeatedly talking about nuclear weapons. To further his scaremongering, he would routinely launch one missile test after another. Each of these new missiles was named after some medieval Muslim invader of India. Ghorri, Ghazni, Abdali, Babur and you can Google if there were more.

Nirupama Rao, later India's ambassador to Beijing, Washington and foreign secretary, was at the time the spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs. At her usual daily briefing, she was asked for her reaction to these missile launches. Her reply is immortal and epic. All she said was, "We are not impressed." In four devastating words, she had made the world laugh at the Pakistani nuclear blackmail. She didn't bother holding forth on how India might respond to Pakistani nukes. Those things, everybody understands. So just respond to such idiotic threats with the contempt they deserve. The journalists at her briefing laughed. Next day, the Indian and global media stepped off the nuclear kerb. India had made its point without bothering to retaliate to juvenile nonsense with nonsense or wasting any missiles in tit-for-tat tests.

Musharraf was left frustrated and furious. At one of his media interactions just after, still seething at the insult, I'd presume, particularly by a woman, he said, "What does that lady mean she is not impressed? These are serious weapons." Or something to that effect. The lesson is simple, and enduring. A nuclear threat was held out in 2002, in a war-like environment by usual suspect Pakistan. It was neutralised with one, clever yet deterrent diplomatic statement. We call Pakistan the "usual suspect" because, since 1987, it has made a habit of using its nukes as a pre-emptive threat. It is true, regrettably, that Pakistan achieved weaponisation of its nukes earlier than India. In spite of conducting Pokharan-1 back in 1974, India had let its nuclear weapons programme languish. These days, it would be fashionable to blame only the



Gandhi dynasty for it. And Indira Gandhi did indeed waste much time and focus because of her Emergency. Following her, Morarji Desai was the only genuine and, frankly, disastrous pacifist in our history. He saw nuclear weapons and espionage as utterly immoral. Indira Gandhi's second term was consumed in internal strife, especially in Assam and Punjab. Rajiv Gandhi woke up to the threat and asymmetry during Exercise Brasstacks. He

launched the programme for full weaponisation. I have written in detail the story of how this came to fruition as the baton was passed between eight prime ministers. The first Pakistani nuclear threat, or just the suggestion of it in 1987, made India give up its strategic hesitations. The next blackmail from Pakistan came while the gap was still in its favour, in the summer of 1990. It is a well-documented story.

The route to Delhi passes through the Telugu states

With all the attention is focused on large states like as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and West Bengal, people forget that in both 2004 and 2009, it was the election outcome in the then undivided Andhra Pradesh (AP) and neighbouring Tamil Nadu that eventually shaped the national fortunes, giving a fillip to the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA). However, the historical presence and growth of strong, vocal, regional parties in both states has meant that the BJP has been unable to carve out political space for itself. In 2014, when Andhra Pradesh was divided into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which included coastal Andhra and

Royalaseema, the BJP could have made an attempt to build itself up, but chose to go with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). While it ended up with two seats - Vishakapatnam and Narasapuram - in AP, it won only the Secunderabad in Telangana. Its dependence on an ally to grow in the Telugu-speaking states has meant that when a partner walks out, the party has struggled to make a mark. Take the case of Telangana. After the TDP decided to part ways with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in March 2018 and join hands with the UPA to form a Mahakootami (grand alliance) in the 2018 Telangana assembly elections, the saffron party chose to contest alone. In

the 119-member assembly, it contested from 118 seats and lost deposits in 103. Again in both the Telugu-speaking states, the BJP has gone alone in the current round of polls. While the saffron party would be happy to retain even its current set of numbers, ground realities indicate it may not end up doing so. Which is why, it is all the more surprising, at how sanguine the NDA is about still getting support from the Telugu-speaking states, irrespective of the poll outcome. In Andhra, Jaganmohan Reddy's Yuva Jana Shramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) has been making not so subtle public overtures to the BJP. Jagan is fighting a number of cases of disproportionate assets and



embezzlement, which are being investigated by a slew of central agencies including the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate. While the YSRCP has always maintained that these cases are due to political vendetta, Jagan knows that it would be in his

interest to have the support of whoever rules at the Centre. However, following a bitter parting of ways with the Congress after it denied him the chief minister's post after his father's tragic death, Jagan's options are fairly limited.

Sex with the promise of marriage is not rape

He was a doctor, she was studying pharmacy. They met in 2009 and fell in love, or so she thought. They lived in different cities. He said he wanted to marry her. In April 2013, she boarded a train to come and meet him. They had sex. He dilly-dallied about marriage. In June, she learned that he had married someone else. She accused him of rape; he was arrested; and a long trial began. If rape is about consent -

or the lack of it - then can consent obtained on false information truly be consent? And if it's not true consent, then isn't it rape? This past week, the Supreme Court weighed in and said it was indeed. As many as 70-80% of the rape complaints received by Delhi's Rape Crisis Centre fall in this grey category, says Zeenat Malick, a lawyer who was with the centre until October 2018 and now has her own practice. "We need to

have some kind of separate provision for these types of cases where adult women agree to sex only because men have promised to marry them," she says. But the judgment is troubling on several counts. The first is to do with obtaining consent on false grounds. Disgusting as it is, is it rape? What if a man says he is a graduate but in actual fact failed his exam? What if he has lied

about his income? And what if he has every intention to marry but later changes his mind? By equating cheating with rape, we trivialise rape, which remains a horrific crime reported with depressing regularity from Kathua to Unnao. The judgment also makes an unstated assumption that premarital sex is not ok - unless accompanied by intent to marry. But sex is not a reward for marriage and every instance of

premarital sex need not end in marriage. Above all we have to ask: What do women hope to achieve when they file rape complaints against such men? Revenge? Marriage? Typically, says a criminal lawyer who asked not to be named, these cases end in a settlement - either money or marriage. But what is the value of a marriage conducted under the threat of jail?

65.61% Cast Vote In Third Phase Of LS Polls

One Killed In Bengal

(Agencies)- A high voter turnout, including over 80 per cent in Assam, was recorded in the third and largest phase of Lok Sabha elections Tuesday covering 116 constituencies amid complaints of EVM malfunctioning in many states and killing of a man outside a booth in West Bengal.

Election Commission officials in Delhi put the voting percentage at 65.61 at 8 pm. Final figures are likely to change as queues of voters were seen at several centres even after the scheduled time for voting ended.

Polling was also held in Anantnag seat in Jammu and Kashmir which saw a turnout of 13.61 per cent. Elections for this seat are being conducted in three phases.

The driver of a vehicle carrying ITBP troops back from their poll duty in Kokarnag area of south Kashmir was killed as it overturned after a mob hurled stones at it, officials said.

With Tuesday's polling, voting has been held in 302 Lok Sabha constituencies apart from

Anantnag.

In Gujarat, a turnout of 63.67 per cent was registered for the 26 seats. Key political leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah, party veteran L K Advani, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Congress leader Ahmed Patel cast their votes at different places in the state. Shah is contesting from Gandhinagar seat. The polling percentage was 71.67 in Kerala from where Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, party MP Shashi Tharoor and Union minister K Alphonse are among those who are trying their luck. In Karnataka, 67.56 per cent voters cast their votes in the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies with the Congress-JD(S) alliance and the BJP locked in a fierce contest. An estimated 61.35 per cent of voters exercised their franchise in the 10 Lok Sabha seats of Uttar Pradesh amid reports EVM snags at some booths. Prominent leaders in the fray in this phase are four members of SP patron Mulayam Singh Yadav's clan including him besides senior party leader Azam Khan and actor and BJP

candidate Jaya Prada. Mulayam's brother Shivpal Yadav and nephews Dharmendra Yadav and Akshay Yadav are also contesting. There were complaints of EVM malfunctioning at some booths and were attended to, Chief Electoral Officer L Venkateshwar Lu said in Lucknow. The Samajwadi Party lodged a complaint over the alleged malfunctioning of EVMs with the Election Commission, terming it criminal negligence. At a booth in Etah, the presiding officer was removed after people accused him of forcing them to cast their votes in favour of the SP. SP leader Ahmed Nafis was taken into custody for some hours in Kasganj in Etah after authorities anticipated breach of peace. SP MP Dharmendra Yadav, who is seeking re-election from Badaun, lodged a complaint against state minister Swami Prasad Maurya, claiming he was campaigning in the constituency for his daughter and BJP candidate Sanghmitra Maurya. A turnout of 58.98 was recorded in 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Maharashtra. State BJP



president Raosaheb Danve (Jalna) and NCP chief Sharad Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule (Baramati) are among the prominent candidates in the fray. The two Lok Sabha seats in neighbouring Goa registered an average 73.23 per cent voting. Chhattisgarh saw a turnout of 64.68 per cent. In West Bengal, a group of men attacked 52-year-old Tiyyarul Sheikh with sharp weapons following an altercation when he went to vote at a booth in Baligram Primary School under Bhagwangola police station limits in Murshidabad Lok Sabha constituency, police sources said. Congress candidate of Murshidabad Lok Sabha seat Abu Hena claimed Tiyyarul was a

party worker and was killed by TMC cadres. The Election Commission sought a report from the Murshidabad district magistrate. According to the latest data available from the Election Commission, an estimated 60.44 per cent polling was recorded in Odisha, 79.67 per cent in West Bengal, 80.73 per cent in Assam, 59.97 per cent in Bihar and 79.57 per cent in Tripura. Voting was also held in 42 assembly constituencies in Odisha. In the third phase of the general elections, polling is being held in six Lok Sabha seats in Odisha, four in Assam, five seats each in Bihar and West Bengal and a lone constituency in Tripura.

India to stop importing oil from Iran; make up lost volumes from alternate sources

(Agencies)- India will stop importing crude oil from Iran following the US move to end sanction waivers, and will use alternate supply sources such as Saudi Arabia to make up for the lost volumes, top officials and industry sources said on Tuesday.

The Trump administration Monday decided not to renew waiver that let countries like India buy Iranian oil without facing US sanctions.

"Until the waivers are not restored back, I don't think India can buy oil from Iran. We will stop importing oil from Iran," a top official said.

New Delhi is likely to press with the US government for continuation of beyond its expiry on May 2 in talks scheduled later this month, he said. "But

purchases cannot be made in anticipation. We will not be importing any oil from Iran."

India was the second biggest buyer of Iranian crude oil after China. It bought some 24 million tonnes of crude oil from Iran in the fiscal ended March 31 (2018-19). Iran supplied more than a tenth of its oil needs.

The shortfall will be made from alternate supply sources available in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and Mexico.

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in a tweet said "a robust plan for an adequate supply of crude oil to Indian refineries" is in place.

"There will be additional supplies from other major oil-producing countries; Indian refineries are fully prepared to meet the national demand for petrol, diesel & other petroleum products," he

said.

The oil ministry too in a statement said a plan was in place to ensure supplies of crude oil from May when the waiver ends.

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) Chairman Sanjiv Singh said refiners import crude oil from a wide range of sources and had been lining up alternate supplies for the past months.

The US was to take a decision on waiver extension this month and Indian refineries had prepared plans for all eventualities.

"We have alternate sources lined up to make up for any shortfall," he said.

US President Donald Trump last year withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, and revived a range

of sanctions against the Persian Gulf nation. It, however, granted a six-month waiver from sanctions to eight countries - China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy, and Greece - but with a condition that they would reduce their purchases of Iranian oil.

The waiver began in November 2018 and was to expire on May 2.

India had agreed to restrict its monthly purchase to 1.25 million tonnes to get the waiver. But since it had made robust purchases in the period prior to November 2018, India's overall crude oil imports from Iran totalled nearly 24 million tonnes in 2018-19 as compared to 22.6 million tonnes bought in the 2017-18.

"We have optional volumes (over

and above the term contracts) from a number of suppliers which we can exercise to make up for any shortfall from Iran," Singh said. "We can also go to the spot (or current) market to source crude."

"As far as Indian Oil is concerned, supplies will not be a problem. We have already lined up alternate sources," he said, adding the impact of the US decision may reflect on global oil prices which may temporarily go up.

IOC has the option to take 0.7 million tonnes of crude oil from Mexico on top of its committed purchase of 0.7 million tonnes during the year. From Saudi Arabia, it has an optional volume of 2 million tonnes on top of a term contract of 5.6 million tonnes.

Rahul Gandhi not to appear personally in contempt case: SC



(Agencies)- The Supreme Court Tuesday exempted Congress President Rahul Gandhi from personal appearance in the criminal contempt case in which notice was issued to him for his "chowkidar chor hai" remark

on Prime Minister Narendra Modi while referring to the Rafale judgment, which the apex court said was "incorrectly attributed" to it. "Personal presence of the alleged contemnor is dispensed with, for the present," a bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said in the order. The top court said it will hear on April 30 the criminal contempt petition filed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi against Gandhi along with the pending review petition against the December 14, 2018 verdict in the Rafale fighter jet deal.

It rejected Gandhi's plea to close the criminal contempt petition filed by Lekhi. After the order was pronounced, former Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Lekhi, had told reporters that issuance of notice by the Supreme Court to Gandhi would make him personally appear to give explanation about his statement. Hours after the hearing, the order of the bench, also comprising Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, was uploaded on the apex court website which made it clear that Gandhi's personal presence on April 30 has been dispensed with.

Actor Sunny Deol named BJP candidate from Punjab's Gurdaspur, Kirron Kher from Chandigarh




(Agencies)- Bollywood actor Sunny Deol on Tuesday joined the Bharatiya Janata Party. The actor-turned-politician will be contesting from Punjab's Gurdaspur, whereas Kirron Kher from Chandigarh.

"Like my father Dharmendra associated himself with Vajpayeeji, I am associating with Modiiji. He has done a lot for the country and he can take us forward. Country needs leaders like him," the 62-year-old leader said after joining the saffron party. He added that whatever he does, he would do it with all his heart. Welcoming him into the fold defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman said: "I am pleased to welcome a

firebrand actor, popular, very committed to his art, young brave artist Sunny Deol to the BJP." Recalling Deol family's long association with the BJP, party leader Piyush Goel recalled how Sunny Deol's father and veteran actor Dharmendra, despite being unwell at that time, agreed to contest from Bikaner in 2004 and won handsomely. Goel hoped Sunny Deol would leave his imprint on politics. Deol's father Dharmendra represented the Bikaner Lok Sabha seat from 2004 to 2009. In the current Lok Sabha elections, Dharmendra to campaign for his wife Hema Malini who is a sitting MP from Mathura.


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बूंद-बूंद को तरसेगा पाक




नई दिल्ली ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी

पुत्रवधवा जगदीश को जंग में भेजने के बाद मोदी सरकार ने बड़ा कदम उठाते हुए पाकिस्तान को जंग में भेजने के फैसले के पानी की बूंद को तरसेगा पाक का फैसला किया है। इस फैसले के बाद ही हम हिंदुस्तानी को जंग में भेजने के फैसले का फैसला किया है। इस फैसले के बाद ही हम हिंदुस्तानी को जंग में भेजने के फैसले का फैसला किया है।

नई दिल्ली ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी

पाकिस्तान के जंग में भेजने के फैसले के पानी की बूंद को तरसेगा पाक का फैसला किया है। इस फैसले के बाद ही हम हिंदुस्तानी को जंग में भेजने के फैसले का फैसला किया है। इस फैसले के बाद ही हम हिंदुस्तानी को जंग में भेजने के फैसले का फैसला किया है।

भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा घर निंबा

वाराणसी ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी

वाराणसी में भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा घर निंबा का कार्यक्रम हुआ। कार्यक्रम में भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी के सदस्यों ने घर निंबा का कार्यक्रम किया।

आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को अमेरिका ने एंटी देने से किया इंकार

अमेरिका ने आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को एंटी देने से किया इंकार। अमेरिका ने आईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को एंटी देने से किया इंकार।

Delhi court stays NBWs against Kejriwal, Sisodia

(Agencies)- A Delhi court on Wednesday stayed the non-bailable warrants against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia in a criminal defamation case of 2013.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Samar Vishal stayed their warrants on an application by them.

'Not supposed to appear'

They argued that they were not supposed to appear either in person or through their lawyer in the hearing on Tuesday.

The court had issued the warrants against them and Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav asking them to appear before on April 29 when it found that nobody was

present from their side in the hearing of the case.

Complainant advocate Surender Kumar Sharma has alleged in his complaint that he was asked by the AAP in 2013 to contest the Delhi Assembly election on a party ticket, but he later read an article in a leading daily quoting a party statement wherein it was claimed that he was being replaced since he had criminal cases pending against him.

He alleged that he was approached by the AAP to contest the elections as Mr. Kejriwal was pleased with his social work. He further said that he had filled in the application for contesting the polls on an AAP

ticket and was informed by Mr. Sisodia and Mr. Yadav that the Political Affairs Committee of the party had decided to give him the ticket, following which he started his campaign and incurred an expense of ₹5 lakh.

He had read articles in leading daily newspapers in which "derogatory and defamatory language" was used against him by the accused persons, which affected his reputation and his practice, the complainant said.

Summoning the three leaders, the court had said: "The press release published in newspapers as well as testimonies of witnesses reflect that defamatory remarks were published in newspapers, which affected the



reputation of complainant in society and lowered his reputation in the eyes of other members of the society."

"In the totality of facts and circumstances, considering the

deposition of complainant and other evidence on record, I find prima facie material to summon the accused persons for offence

under Sections 499/500/34 IPC," the court had further said.

Cruelty meted out to Pragya Thakur in jail not fair, says Ramdev

Ramdev was replying to a question about Thakur's remarks against the then Mumbai Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) Chief Hemant Karkare.

(Agencies)- Yoga guru Ramdev has come out in support of the BJP's Bhopal candidate and Malegaon blast case accused Pragya Singh Thakur, saying it was unfair to subject her to cruelty in jail for nine years on the basis of a suspicion. "Sadhvi Pragya was made to suffer rigorous imprisonment for nine years. There is nothing wrong in restraining her if she makes an inappropriate statement but the

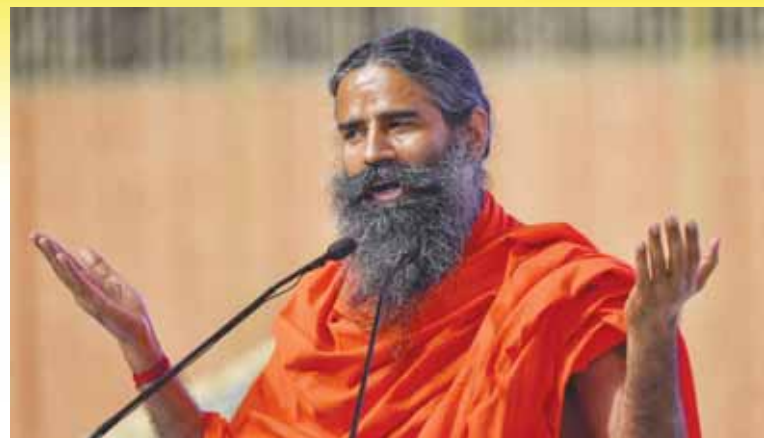
inhuman treatment given to her in the jail purely on the basis of suspicion was not fair," Ramdev told reporters in Haridwar on Monday.

He was replying to a question about Thakur's remarks against the then Mumbai Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) Chief Hemant Karkare, who died fighting terrorists during the 26/11 Mumbai attack. Karkare was investigating the 2008 Malegaon

blast case.

Addressing BJP workers in Bhopal, Thakur had claimed that Karkare died during the attacks as she "cursed" him for torturing her.

Describing himself as someone who doesn't belong to any particular political party, the yoga guru Monday said the country was facing all sorts of political, economic and religious challenges at present.



"After overcoming these challenges, the country will become a world leader by 2040," he claimed.

Ramdev further said it was wrong

to assume that poverty and unemployment were the only issues. "Ram and nationalism are equally important," he

added.

PM Modi's Mother, Wife Cast Votes As Gujarat Goes To Polls

(Agencies)- Jashodaben, the wife of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, cast her vote at a polling booth in Gujarat's Unjha in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections today. "Modi sahab has done a lot for the country, and he will do more," news agency ANI quoted her as saying minutes after she stepped out of the polling booth.

Nearly a hundred kilometres away, PM Modi's mother - Heeraben - also voted at a polling booth in the state's Gandhinagar district. Earlier that day, PM Modi had dropped by her house in Raysan village to seek her blessings.

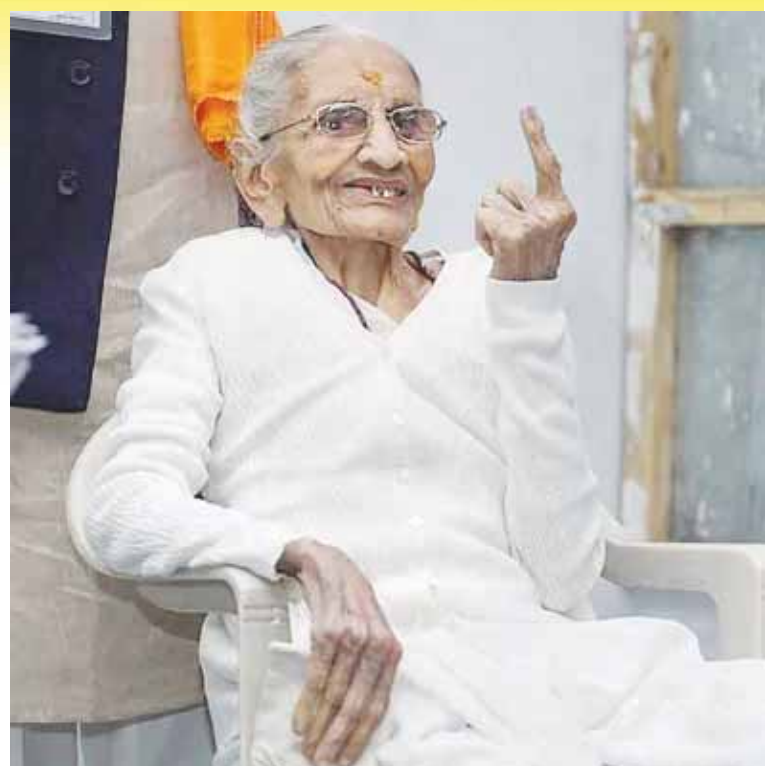
With PM Modi governing the nation from Delhi, his younger brother - Pankaj Modi - takes

care of Heeraben. She had hit the headlines during the demonetisation drive in 2016, after mediapersons found her standing in queue along with many others to withdraw cash from a bank.

The Prime Minister was born in a family of eight, with his father's earnings from a tea stall at the local railway station helping them make both ends meet. Assisting his father at the tea stall was fun, he said, because it gave him a chance to interact with people from places across the country. Although PM Modi used to contest from the Vadodara assembly constituency while he was still a state leader, he won the 2014 Lok Sabha polls from Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi. He is

contesting from the same seat this time.

BJP president Amit Shah is contesting from Gandhinagar, a seat that traditionally belonged to party veteran LK Advani. The Congress has fielded two-time legislator CJ Chavda against him in what is being dubbed as a David-versus-Goliath battle. While 371 candidates are contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Gujarat's 26 seats, 45 others have been fielded for the bypolls to four assembly constituencies. Over 4.41 crore people - 2.14 crore of them women - are eligible to vote in Gujarat this time. More than 51,000 polling stations have been set up across the state.



'Can't return to India due to health complications': Mehul Choksi in HC

In December 2018, Choksi had sought to quash the proceedings initiated against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Fugitive Economic Offender (FEO) Act, 2018, on medical grounds.



(By Our Staff Reporter)- Choksi had sought to quash the proceedings initiated against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Fugitive Economic Offender (FEO) Act, 2018, on medical grounds. In its FEO application to the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court, the ED said Choksi "has left the country under suspicious circumstance in the first week of January [2018] and deliberately avoided joining investigation in spite of issuance of summons for his appearance". Choksi countered the ED's claim by saying he was unable to return due to health complications and

submitted his medical record. Choksi's application was dismissed without considering its merits. On Wednesday, Choksi's plea before HC said, "The said averment is not true as the accused [Choksi] has not deliberately/intentionally refused to return but was unable to return because of his persisting medical conditions." He said he was advised against travel and required continuous monitoring by medical experts, but that the special court had failed to take this into consideration. Choksi's legal counsel, Vijay and Ashul Agarwal, submitted his detailed medical history along with 38 documents which included prescriptions from doctors who advised Choksi against travelling. His plea stated that Choksi has been diabetic for the past 20 years and has had several blocked arteries since 2012. "Petitioner [Choksi]

consulted doctors in India, who advised him that his heart disease would likely need treatment by stents or bypass surgery," it said, adding that Choksi had travelled abroad for medical reasons when he became breathless and fell ill. He then consulted doctors to his plea, there is also a clot in Choksi's brain which has led to further tests and angiograms. Upon their added complications advice, Choksi and "it is extremely impossible for him to undergo a successful surgery to travel on a long flight place two stents, but of 41 hours." Choksi doctors have advised became a citizen of Antigua and Barbuda against further surgical procedures. According in January 2018.

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HC asks Deepak Talwar's wife to move trial court with plea to be quizzed at home, not ED office

(By Our Staff Reporter)- The Delhi High Court Tuesday asked the wife of lobbyist Deepak Talwar, arrested in a money laundering case, to approach a trial court with her plea for direction to the ED to quiz her at her residence and not the agency's office. Justice A K Chawla noted that the anticipatory bail plea of Deepa Talwar is listed before a special court here for April 29 and she should first exhaust the remedy there. The counsel for Deepa Talwar, 62, withdrew the plea with a liberty to approach the special court with the same prayer after which the high court said the petition is "dismissed as withdrawn". Deepa Talwar, in her plea, said she was not named in the FIR lodged by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or the CBI either as an accused or otherwise and that she has never received any notice to join the investigation with the CBI at any point of time. The plea said the ED issued summons on February 21 and March 4,

asking her to join the probe and to appear in person at Lok Nayak Bhawan here. It said Deepa Talwar has replied to the summons through her counsel in which she undertook to join and cooperate with the investigation in accordance with the law. The court was informed by senior advocate Vikram Chaudhari that the agency had on Monday replied to her and further issued summons to her to appear before it on Tuesday. Advocates D P Singh and Amit Mahajan, representing the ED, said the Deepa Talwar is already protected by the special court's order till April 29 and nothing will be done against her till then. Deepa Talwar's plea said she filed an anticipatory bail plea in the trial court which had on April 11 directed that her liberty would be protected and no coercive measures would be initiated by the ED against her incase she joins the probe within two weeks from the date of issuance of a notice under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. It further said on April 15, she received summons at her



residence, directing her to appear before the respondents at their office on April 22, and on April 20, she returned here from abroad with the intent to join the probe with the ED. "Despite the petitioner through her replies time and again apprising ED authorities that as per the law of the land, a woman cannot be called to the office of a law enforcement agency in terms of Section 160 of CrPC, the respondents most unfortunately are adamant and not agreeing to abide by the

law," the petition alleged. Deepa Talwar sought court's direction to the ED that she be quizzed at her residence here and if needed, her statement be recorded there and not in the police station or agency's office. Deepak Talwar has been accused of criminal conspiracy, forgery and under various other sections of the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act for allegedly diverting Rs 90.72 crore worth of foreign funds meant for ambulances and other articles

received by his NGO from Europe's leading missile manufacturing company. His role in some aviation deals during the previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance's (UPA) regime at the Centre is under scanner as well. Deepak Talwar was booked by the ED and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in criminal cases of corruption, while the Income Tax Department charged him with tax evasion.

Lok Sabha Elections 2019 'Gives feeling of being in Pakistan': BJP's Giriraj Singh wants EC?to ban green flags



(By Our Staff Reporter)- Union minister and BJP leader Giriraj Singh courted yet another controversy on Tuesday when he called for a ban on green flags, which he said "tend to create hatred in the society and gives one a feeling of being in Pakistan". Talking to media persons in Begusarai on Tuesday, Singh demanded that the Election Commission ban green flag, claiming it gave an impression of Muslim-related political or religious institutions. "These

type of flags tend to create hatred in the society and gives one a feeling of being in Pakistan," he said. While the RJD and Congress were quick to hit back, NDA?constituents dismissed his remarks as "personal".

The RJD, which incidentally has a green flag, demanded a ban on Singh, who is contesting from Begusarai and CPI's Kanhaiya Kumar, besides others. RJD national spokesman Manoj Jha said Giriraj spat venom whenever he spoke. "He should be named Vishraj (the venom king) Singh instead of Giriraj Singh," said Jha, wondering how the national flag would look if green was removed from it. Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) spokesman Harkhu Jha said Singh's demand demonstrated his distorted mentality aimed at polarising voters on the basis of religion in his constituency. "He wanted to link religion with politics. The ECI must take note of it and act against him forthwith," said the Congress leader. JD(U) national spokesman KC Tyagi refused to

comment. However, JD(U)'s state spokesman Neeraj Kumar said his party was disassociating itself from his statement, which seemed to have been made in an individual capacity. "JD(U)'s flag is also predominantly green, which denotes environment and prosperity," said Kumar. LJP spokesman Arshad Ansari said his party would have definitely reacted had the remark come from Prime Minister Narendra Modi or BJP chief Amit Shah. LJP's national flag also carried green colour, he said. Chief electoral officer, Bihar, H R Srinivas, said he had not received any petition from Singh either in individual capacity or as the BJP candidate. "We will see if any such demand is formally made to the ECI," said the Bihar poll panel chief.

H-1B Visa: Canada Opens Doors For Skilled Indian Workers

(Insider Buearu)- Canada is soon becoming the go-to destination for skilled Indian IT workers, after the US is making norms tougher for H-1B visa holders. A large number of technology professionals on H-1B visas in the US are Indians. The US offers 85,000 H-1B visas every year. However, under President Donald Trump, US has been adding additional riders and conditions on the H-1B visa holders. Infosys Blames H1B Visa Denials For High Employee

Attrition. The Canadian government has set a target to invite 3,10,000 new permanent residents in 2018 and 3,30,000 in 2019, said a report in The Economic Times. The Canadian government's 'Building a Nation of Innovators' report said that 40,833 jobs and 3,625 applications have been approved. The data relates to high-skilled immigrants as of November 2018. H1B New Rule: White House Receives Proposal to End Work Authorisation for

Spouses of Visa Holders. Software workers are now opting to work in Canada and showing their preference for the country, despite them having an option to stay in the US, said a report. Besides, tech companies are also opening more offices in Canada. Though the average pay in Canada is less than the US, software professionals are making a beeline to work in Canada as immigration process is simpler and hassle free.



Prepare for the Iranian crude waiver to end

(By Our Staff Reporter)- The United States (US) has decided not to grant an extension to any country for importing Iranian crude from May 2. In November, the US had allowed eight countries to continue importing oil from Iran albeit in significantly reduced quantities. India was among the eight countries to have been granted the waiver. Three of the eight countries (Greece, Italy and Taiwan) have already brought their imports to zero. Among the rest, Japan and South Korea

don't rely much on Iranian crude. This leaves India, China and Turkey as the problem cases. New Delhi has still not given up hope. The government is hoping that the reduction to zero will not be imposed all of a sudden. After all, Iran was India's second largest oil exporter as recently as Q1FY19. The recent spike in crude prices are adding to the worries. But India has the experience of significantly reducing Iranian crude imports in the run up to 2015 Iran nuclear deal. However, the



Indian Pak professionals win UK Court of Appeal case over settlement rights



together for the purpose of the hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice in London, which ruled against UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid and found his approach was "legally flawed" to apply Paragraph 322(5) of the immigration rules related to conduct and character.

(Insider Buearu)- A group of Indian and Pakistani professionals on Tuesday won their appeal in the UK Court of Appeal against the British government's decision to reject their right to settle in the country over a controversial national security clause.

The four applicants, three of whom are Indian and one Pakistani, had been refused their Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK under a skilled visa category over perceived dishonesty in reporting their earnings to the UK's tax department.

Their case had been clubbed

"The formal result is that each of these four appeals will be allowed," concludes the judgment handed down by Lord Justice Underhill, Lord Justice Hickinbottom and Lord Justice Singh.

"The approach taken by the Secretary of State (Javid) in deciding to refuse the applications for leave to remain in each of these cases on paragraph 322 (5) grounds - which we take to have been his general approach in all earnings discrepancy cases - was legally flawed," the judgment notes.

imports never went to zero, which is what the US seems to be demanding now. This will be new territory. Some European nations are trying to find a way to continue doing business with Iran but haven't encountered much success. Most European companies would any day prefer keeping their access to American markets and financial system over whatever revenues they

make out of Iran.

India should be pragmatic enough to realise that Iranian crude is not worth risking the bilateral relationship with the US.

Oil, however, is just one part of the story. These stringent sanctions could also presage some deeper changes in the power balance of the region as well as internally in Iran.

The Arab countries are bound

to get stronger vis-à-vis the Iran-Syria axis. Despite all the rhetoric of civilisational ties with Iran, India's economic interests, too, are much deeper with the Arab states. And within Iran, economic hardship might weaken the moderate forces and catapult hardliners to power. India should be prepared for such power shifts in the region.

India is adequately prepared to deal with the impact of announcement by US to discontinue the Significant Reduction Exemption to all purchasers of crude oil from Iran

Washington DC (Insider Buearu)- "Government has noted the announcement by the US Government to discontinue the Significant Reduction Exemption to all purchasers of crude oil from Iran. We are adequately prepared to deal with the impact of this decision. Min-

istry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has already issued a statement in this regard. Government will continue to work with partner nations, including with the US, to find all possible ways to protect India's legitimate energy and economic security interests." In response to queries

on India's reaction to the announcement by the US to discontinue the Significant Reduction Exemption to all purchasers of crude oil from Iran, India's Ministry of External Affairs Official Spokesperson's responded with this statement released by press release to media.

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Celebrating Einstein, the scientist-statesman

His unique position as a scientist statesman creates a template for future scientists to follow

Many of science's most well-recognised symbols are related to one specific scientist. Be they equations ($E = mc^2$), theories (that one about relativity), or even the most popular idea of the mad scientist look. This person is Albert Einstein, who died this past week in 1955 (and whose most famous theory, the General Theory of Relativity, was published this month in 1914). Albert Einstein - the scientist, the philosopher, the public intellectual - left such a mark on the society he lived in that his name has become synonymous with brilliance. That he was primarily a scientist did not keep him out of the politics of his time. At the age of 35, he had the gumption to be one of only four signatories of a manifesto

against World War I. The reason this action is significant is because it was in opposition to another manifesto that defended the German war effort, which was signed by 93 of his peers. It was this steadfast dedication to world peace that led Einstein to collaborate with the British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, during the Cold War on what has come to be known as the Russell-Einstein manifesto. The manifesto recognised the dangers of nuclear weapons (even though he was part of the effort that led to their creation) and called for leaders around the world to seek peaceful resolutions to conflict. This manifesto resulted in the formation of the Pugwash

Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

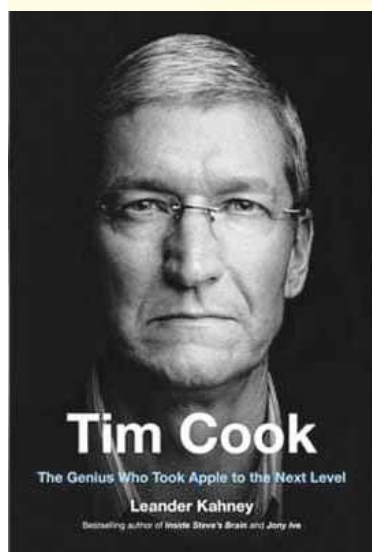
Einstein's public disagreements with Niels Bohr about quantum mechanics have deeply influenced the study of the philosophy of science. Even though they disagreed vehemently, Bohr and Einstein were known to be full of admiration for each other - a model for scientific disagreement and, indeed, public discourse. As scientists responsible for taking physics beyond the Newtonian understanding and into the quantum revolution, both Bohr and Einstein have played significant roles in establishing the new rules of physical sciences. Much of modern research - including on black holes -



continues to build on their work. It is not often that scientists become proper celebrities or are able to bring their scientific expertise to the common people. Einstein, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics (1921, "for his services to theoretical physics, and especially for his discovery

of the law of the photoelectric effect") was one of the few scientists who was able to bring high science into public prominence. Without it being about individual celebrity, the public discourse in our present times could use more serious and more rigorous participation by those who are considered experts in their fields. Einstein's unique position as a scientist statesman, whose word was taken as seriously by the international scientific community as well as by the international political establishment, creates a template for future scientists to follow.

An Empty Chair, Windows Covered By Post-Its: How World Mourned Steve Jobs



(Agencies)- Steve Jobs's death on October 5, 2011, shook the world. Just over a month after Cook took over as CEO, Jobs passed away at the age of fifty-six, eight years after his initial diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. He had defied all odds and lived for almost a decade with a disease that has a one-year survival rate of 20 percent and a five-year survival rate of just 7 percent. For so long,

people had believed that Jobs and Apple were indestructible. Apple was the company that always performed the impossible, whether that was a dramatic turnaround from near bankruptcy to astonishing corporate success in the late 1990s, unparalleled engineering feats with the iPod and iPhone, or the reinvention of the music industry with iTunes. This was all due to Jobs's influence. Apple was considered untouchable and its leader had become a mythological figure. Few people, it seemed, had entertained the thought that he would actually die. Jobs passed away the day after Apple unveiled the iPhone 4S at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. The 4S's big new feature was the AI voice assistant Siri, one of the final projects Jobs had been actively involved with

Book Review

at Apple. In the crowd at the conference was an empty seat marked "Reserved" for Jobs. He may have been missing in body, but his presence was felt, and the fact that there was a seat set aside for him was even more poignant, foreshadowing his passing away the very next day. The news of Jobs's death sent ripples of shock and mourning around the world. Never before had the death of a chief executive affected people so intensely. The reaction to his death was unprecedented - despite his often tyrannical leadership of one of the world's most valuable companies, he had maintained a positive public image. He was beloved. He died a few weeks

after the start of the Occupy Wall Street movement - a strike back against wealth inequality and "the 1 percent" - and yet he wasn't considered part of that group. People associated him with the beloved iPhones and iPods they carried with them daily, with the MacBooks and iMacs that gave them access to new, potentially world-changing tools. When he died, even Apple's longtime competitor Microsoft flew its flag at half-mast. President Barack Obama hailed Jobs as "among the greatest of American innovators - brave enough to think different, bold enough to believe he could change the world, and talented enough to do it." And the world agreed. Apple Stores around the world became shrines to Jobs, plastering their windows with fan-made signs and cards commemorating

the CEO who, they felt, was one of them. Flowers and candles littered sidewalks outside. Windows were covered in Post-it notes with heartfelt tributes. At the Apple Store in Palo Alto - Steve's hometown - the Post-it tributes completely covered both windows. This type of public mourning was unheard of for a corporate leader. The months following Jobs's death might have been a tragic time for Cook and those who knew and loved Jobs, but Apple's products were as popular as ever. The iPhone 4S exceeded the preorder and launch numbers of any previous iPhone, with more than four million selling in its first weekend alone. Preorders of Walter Isaacson's authorized biography of Jobs, a book that would have sold well at any time, also increased by an enormous 42,000 percent on Amazon following Jobs's death.



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Trump targets foreign travelers who overstay their U.S. visas

President Trump signed a memorandum late Monday threatening to ultimately suspend travel from countries with high rates of overstays, and possibly require foreign travelers to post "admission bonds" that would be repaid once they leave the country. Visitors "who abuse the visa process and decline to abide by the terms and conditions of their visas, including their visa departure dates, undermine the integrity of our immigration system and harm the national interest," Trump wrote. He offered few immediate concrete steps beyond directing the secretaries of Homeland Security and State to identify ways to combat non-immigrant visa overstays within 120 days. Nonetheless, the memo serves as a rare acknowledgement by the administration that many undocumented people in the country entered legally by ship or plane. Trump has chiefly focused his ire on Central Americans who crossed the border between ports of entry or entered to seek asylum. The largest number of visa overstays

are from Canada and Mexico, but 20 countries have overstay rates ranging from 10% to 41%, according to the White House.

"This has been an issue people have been trying to deal with for quite a long time," said Theresa Cardinal Brown, director of immigration and cross-border policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington-based think tank. "The majority of new additions are actually overstayers, not people crossing the border illegally."

Sarah Pierce, a policy analyst at the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute, called it "kind of surprising that an administration so active on immigration has taken this long" to focus on overstays.

"The memo itself doesn't do anything, but it does lay the groundwork for what potentially could be really strict enforcement around overstays," she added.

The latest Homeland Security Department data show that about 702,000 visitors who entered the country by sea or air in fiscal 2017 remained longer than allowed, according to a Government

Accountability Office review. By comparison, U.S. authorities apprehended 304,000 migrants at the southern border that year.

The Homeland Security data showed a handful of African countries had among the highest proportion of visa overstays, especially Eritrea, Chad, Liberia and Somalia.

The Republic of Djibouti, a tiny but strategically vital country on the Horn of Africa, had a suspected overstay rate of 41.6%, the highest proportion of any nation. Djibouti has a population of about 1 million people.

Nigeria, which has about 200 million people, had an overstay rate of 10.3%, but 19,046 overstays, far more than Djibouti.

Last year, Trump made disparaging remarks about African countries, expressing a preference for immigration from northern European countries like Norway. Brown, who worked for both the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, said it made sense for Trump to focus on countries with a high proportion of

overstays but a relatively small number in total.

"If we were to start talking about sanctions and visa denials to a country like Canada or Mexico, there would be a whole lot more national interests to consider than some of these countries in Africa," she said. "It'd be harder to do."

Trump's memo says if the countries with high overstay rates don't reduce them, the United States may toughen visa requirements or shorten visits.

Under current policy, countries with overstay rates of at least 2% are required to initiate public awareness campaigns warning against staying beyond permission, according to the White House.

Even as it focused on curbing overstays, the White House said the goal was to alleviate the "significant strain" overstays put on the Justice and Homeland Security departments, saying their resources "are currently needed to address the national emergency on our southern border."

More than 98% of foreign travelers leave the United States on time or abide by the terms of their visas, according to official figures. U.S. immigration law imposes up to a decade-long ban on visitors who overstay their visas by more than six months.

U.S. consular officers can deny visas to applicants seen as likely to exceed their permitted stay, and the State Department has undertaken steps to punish countries deemed uncooperative with U.S. immigration enforcement efforts.

Multiple Homeland Security agencies are charged with overseeing enforcement of immigration law, including overstays. Customs and Border Protection inspects all people seeking entry or applying for admission to the United

States. It takes travelers' biographic and biometric data in order to help identify suspected overstays.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement enforces immigration inside the country, and is primarily responsible for finding and removing those who overstay. Citizenship and Immigration Services processes documentation for non-immigrants and travelers, including visa extensions or changes to immigration status.

Still, with about 52 million visitors legally entering the United States each year, federal authorities have long faced challenges tracking overstays. Customs and Border Protection says its overstay data have been reliable only since 2015. With near-record numbers of asylum seekers and primarily Central American families arriving at the southern border in recent months, Trump has vowed to take a tougher approach to stop the inflow. He recently ousted several top Homeland Security officials, including Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and his own nominee to lead ICE. "Looking at everything this administration has done, it has leaned heavily on enforcing the immigration laws as they exist," Brown said. "Overstays are a part of immigration law that has not been significantly enforced."

Pierce said it was part of a pattern in which the administration, blocked both on the border and on interior enforcement, begins to look elsewhere for any action it can take on immigration. "I think the administration is really actively searching for other ways they can be effective," she said, "or at least be seen as trying to be effective, on immigration." (By MOLLY O'TOOLE for LATimes)

Sri Lanka attacks: Could lives have been saved?

India could have saved many of the lives lost in 26/11. Sri Lanka was unprepared as well, and will soon want to know why

One evening last month, as we left a cinema in the suburbs of Washington, I wanted to know the reaction of our local American friends. We had together watched Hotel Mumbai, a film inspired by the staff of one of the hotels targeted by terrorists in a massacre over several days in November 2008.

I wanted to ask what they thought. Instead, I was asking myself the question that has troubled us Indians since those terrible four days — November 26 to 29: Did India handle the attacks well, or at all? Did India respond as a nation that knew how to deal with terrorism, having previously seen attacks on the Akshardham temple and the Parliament? Could the killings have been prevented or minimised? Could the killers have been intercepted, and neutralised, shot, that is, off their dinghy mid-sea?

Questions that Sri Lankans will be asking now.

Through the film, scenes from that horrific night of November 26 (I was in New Delhi then), played in my head. I leaned over to our friend in the next seat, once, to point out Ajmal Kasab, the character as played on screen. But that was also the last time I spoke during the movie.

Watching the ill-equipped Mumbai police take position behind whatever they could find for cover, I was once again filled with dread. They were carrying 303 bolt-action rifles and handguns, while the terrorists were armed with AK-47 assault rifles, pistols, hand grenades, and bags of explosives. They responded bravely, of course, but they were outgunned and outmatched. The whole country breathed easier when they were joined by Marine Commandos and the National Security Guards. India was unprepared. "What we have found are instances of lack of: intelligent appreciation of threats, handling of intelligence, maintaining

high degree of efficiency in instruments specifically set up to deal with terrorist attacks and certainly lack of overt and visible leadership in carrying out operations to face multi-targeted attacks," said a high-level inquiry committee set up by the Maharashtra government to investigate the response of the security agencies.

"In fact," it added, reflecting the mood of the nation at the time, "the last factor has led to public anger and resentment, both against the political as well as the administrative establishments."

Sri Lankans are feeling that anger and resentment now, I think, and may read a similar report soon on why and how they lost more than 350 people, most or some of whom could have been saved. There were very specific intelligence alerts about the possibility of attacks, and the group of men who were planning it. Mumbai police had similar information in 2008 — not as accurate, but close — about Lashkar-e-Taiba's plans to target Taj Mahal Palace Hotel.

Still, 10 Pakistani terrorists trained and run by their military — belonging to Lashkar-e-Taiba, a proxy group supported and funded by the Pakistani government but proscribed by the United Nations — killed 166 people over four days, targeting six different venues from November 26 to 29.

Seven years before, on September 11, 2001, 19 men flew passenger planes loaded with travellers into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon on the outskirts of Washington killing 2,981 people. "The nation was unprepared," concluded the 9/11 Report ordered by the US government.

Sri Lanka was unprepared as well, and will want to know why.

(Yashwant Raj, Hindustan Times)

'For the first time, there's pro-incumbency wave in country': PM Modi in Varanasi

"Because of the hard work of workers, there is huge enthusiasm from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. First time there is a pro incumbency wave in the elections. Everywhere people are saying, 'abki baar...'" said PM Modi a day after his mega roadshow saw a huge turnout in Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency. Varanasi goes to polls on May 19, the last round of seven-phase elections.

Taking a swipe at the Congress, the PM advised workers to not be arrogant "because those who showed arrogance were reduced to 40 seats from 400 seats". The PM

urged the workers to turn Varanasi elections into model exercise, forcing experts to make it a case study. In his tips for the workers, the PM asked them to make sure women came out in large numbers. "Make sure women voters are 5 percent more than men." He also asked voters to target first-time voters, to welcome them with sweets. "Download Narendra Modi app and use it to woo first-time voters," he said. On a lighter note, he gave tips to workers on reducing poll expenses by visiting voters at their homes and partaking food, reading papers and watching TV — all free of cost.

China is replacing America as Asia's military titan

HONG KONG - In 1938, in the midst of a long campaign to bring China under Communist Party rule, revolutionary leader Mao Zedong wrote: "Whoever has an army has power." Xi Jinping, Mao's latest successor, has taken that dictum to heart.

He has donned camouflage fatigues, installed himself as commander-in-chief and taken control of the 2 million-strong Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army. It is the biggest overhaul of the PLA since Mao led it to victory in the nation's civil war and founded the People's Republic in 1949. Xi has accelerated the PLA's shift to naval power from a traditionally land-based force. He has broken up its vast, Maoist-era military bureaucracy. A new chain of command leads directly to Xi as chairman of the Central Military Commission, China's top military decision-making body. Operational leadership of naval, missile, air, ground and cyber forces has been separated from administration and training — a structure that Chinese and Western defense analysts say borrows from U.S. military organization. The Chinese leader isn't just

revolutionizing the PLA. Xi is making a series of moves that are transforming both China and the global order. He has abandoned reform architect Deng Xiaoping's injunction that China should hide its strength and bide its time. The waiting game is over. Xi's speeches are peppered with references to his "Chinese dream," where an ancient nation recovers from the humiliation of foreign invasion and retakes its rightful place as the dominant power in Asia. The effort includes signature shows of soft power: Xi's multibillion-dollar "Belt and Road" program to build a global trade and infrastructure network with China at its center, and his "Made in China 2025" plan to turn the country into a high-tech manufacturing giant. But the boldest stroke is his expansion of China's hard power, through his remaking of the PLA, the world's largest fighting force. At the core of this vision of national renewal is a loyal, corruption-free military that Xi demands must be prepared to fight and win. His push to project power abroad was accompanied by a power play at home. Xi has purged more than 100 generals accused of corruption or disloyalty, according to the official state-

controlled media. A raw demonstration of his authority came when state television broadcast a laudatory documentary series about the PLA, "Strong Military." In one scene in the 2017 series, an elderly man sits in a military court at a desk marked "defendant," looking frail in a navy-blue civilian jacket. It is Guo Boxiong, a former general and the most senior officer convicted in Xi's purge. He reads his confession to charges of bribery from a sheaf of papers gripped in both hands. "The Central Military Commission dealt with my case completely correctly," says Guo, who had once served as vice chairman of the body. "I must confess my guilt and take responsibility for it." Guo was sentenced to life in prison. In a series of stories, Reuters is exploring how the rapid and disruptive advance of Chinese hard power on Xi Jinping's watch has ended the era of unquestioned U.S. supremacy in Asia. In just over two decades, China has built a force of conventional missiles that rival or outperform those in the U.S. armory. China's shipyards have spawned the world's biggest navy, which now rules

the waves in East Asia. Beijing can now launch nuclear-armed missiles from an operational fleet of ballistic missile submarines, giving it a powerful second-strike capability. And the PLA is fortifying posts across vast expanses of the South China Sea, while stepping up preparations to recover Taiwan, by force if necessary.

This account of Xi and the PLA - which despite the "army" in its name comprises all military branches - is based on interviews with 17 current and former military officers from China, the United States, Taiwan and Australia. Many would only speak on condition of anonymity. It draws on the accounts of Chinese officials and people with ties to the senior leadership in Beijing who have known Xi Jinping and his family for decades and are familiar with his career as he rose through the party and government bureaucracy. It also relies on Chinese government publications describing Xi's political thinking, his speeches and official documentaries showcasing his leadership of the military.

Cleric 'mastermind' behind Sri Lanka attacks known for hate-filled online sermons, possible ISIS ties

claiming that the men - now all dead - carried out the bombings. "Pictures of some of the brothers who carried out the attacks in Sri Lanka, may Allah accept them," the photo caption declared. One of the featured individuals is believed to be Hashim, who is described as a "well-known preacher who has expressed ISIS sympathies in the past."

Why i leet isis : former Baghdadi friend and aide, others speak out "The ISIS claim of responsibility lends credence to the veracity of the assertion that the men depicted in the photographs were indeed among the perpetrators," MEMRI stated in its threat report, highlighting that the ISIS media wing Amaq also claimed responsibility. More than 30

members of Sri Lanka's minority Muslim population were documented to have fled abroad to fight with ISIS in Iraq and Syria in recent years, according to officials. Sri Lankan authorities suspect that there are "international terror groups which are behind the local terrorists," and are said to be investigating funding sources.

Officials also said Tuesday that they believe the onslaught was "in retaliation" to the New Zealand mosque terror attack that claimed the lives of fifty people in Christchurch last month. Nonetheless, Hashim had developed a reputation as a preacher who "copied" ISIS propaganda videos with his animated and vehement

postings who has long espoused vocal support for the world's most dangerous terrorist brand. The pro-ISIS "Al-Ghuraba" media channel in Sri Lanka, which operated across Facebook and YouTube as its primary platforms, reportedly featured his inflammatory videos. The videos often advocated the notion that only Muslims are acceptable rulers and he routinely railed against Christians, Buddhists, and Hindus. Unconfirmed local reports have since indicated he once studied in neighboring India; but became a controversial figure within the Muslim community and he prompted clashed with other students before dropping out.

Nassau lawmakers approve referendum for elected assessor; county executive vows veto

Nassau's legislature Monday narrowly approved a countywide referendum on whether to switch to an elected county tax assessor - setting up a confrontation with County Executive Laura Curran, who has vowed to veto the measure. "An elected assessor is not the way to go." "Let's be clear the county executive will be vetoing this legislation," said Deputy County Executive for Government Relations Michael Santeramo, testifying before lawmakers. "She does not support this legislation. Curran, a Democrat, has 30 days in which to issue her veto. After the meeting, Presiding Officer Richard Nicoletto (R-New Hyde Park) urged in a statement that the county executive "put politics aside to give the people a voice" and added, "should she veto, we will call a hearing as soon as possible to vote on an override."

Lawmakers also unanimously voted to opt out of the sale of recreational marijuana should

the state legalize the program. They also passed a bill creating an Office of Asian-American Affairs.

The assessor referendum bill passed the full legislature 10-7 after heated debate. Two legislators on the 19-member board were absent during the holiday week. But with Curran's anticipated veto - and all seven Democrats voting against the proposal - it's unlikely the referendum would be on the Nov. 5 ballot. A supermajority of 13 votes from lawmakers is needed to override the veto.

Republicans hold the body's majority with 11 members. They have called for changing the appointed assessor's position to an elected one, citing an "error-riddled" countywide reassessment of more than 400,000 properties currently underway. "No one has been held accountable," Nicoletto said of the county assessor's office. "An elected assessor would have to answer to the voters. An elected

assessor would have to be accessible and responsive to the people." Nicoletto noted the hundreds of residents who have turned out at public hearings and contacted legislators in their districts, saying they are confused by elements of the reassessment. Residents have especially questioned how their property values were calculated, he said.

But Democrats in the legislature have maintained an elected assessor would create more bureaucracy and have charged Republicans with using the bill for political gain. A referendum would put the hot-button issue of reassessment and property taxes in the minds of voters. All 19 Nassau legislators are up for re-election this November.

Minority Leader Legis. Kevan Abrahams (D-Freeport) was not present for the vote but came out against the bill in committee meetings.

"We are opposed to any proposal that stands to inject additional partisan politics and

bureaucracy into a process that demands only competence and professionalism," said William Biamonte, chief of staff for the Nassau Democrats. Nassau used to have an elected assessor, but in a 2008 referendum county residents voted to change to an appointed assessor.

SC issues contempt notice to Rahul Gandhi for remark on Rafale case

(Agencies)- The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued contempt notice to Congress president Rahul Gandhi for wrongly attributing the 'chowkidar chor hai' remark to the court's April 10 order in the Rafale deal case. A three-judge bench headed by Chief justice Ranjan Gogoi directed that the contempt petition filed by BJP leader Meenakshi Lekhi against Gandhi be listed for hearing on April 30, along with petitions seeking review of the court's December 14 verdict on the fighter jet deal. The bench also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Deepak Gupta, said that after hearing the Congress president's

lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi, the court deemed it fit to issue notice to Gandhi. Appearing for Lekhi, senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi submitted that Gandhi, in his response to the contempt plea, had on Monday admitted having made a wrong statement while talking to the media in Amethi on April 10. The Congress president had in his affidavit also disclosed that he had not read the order while making the remark, Rohatgi told the court. During the proceedings, Singhvi said, "Rahul Gandhi had been humble to admit his mistake and express his regret by filing a detailed affidavit on Monday."

Saudi Arabia beheads 37 prisoners for terrorism, pins bodies to pole

(Insider Bureau)- Saudi Arabia beheaded 37 Saudi citizens for what it said Tuesday were terrorism-related crimes, the Interior Ministry said, publicly pinning two of the bodies to a pole as a warning to others. The report said the executions were carried out by beheading and that two of the executed men's bodies were publicly pinned to a pole for several hours in a process that is not frequently used by the kingdom and has sparked controversy for its grisly display. The government defends such executions as a powerful tool for deterrence. The Interior

Ministry statement said those executed had adopted extremist ideologies and formed terrorist cells with the aim of spreading chaos and provoking sectarian strife. It said the individuals had been found guilty according to the law and ordered executed by the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, which specializes in terrorism trials, and the country's high court. The individuals were found guilty of attacking security installations with explosives, killing a number of security officers and cooperating with enemy organizations against the

interests of the country, the Interior Ministry said. The statement was carried across state-run media, including the Saudi news channel al-Ekhbariya. The statement read on the state-run news channel opened with a verse from the Quran that condemns attacks that aim to create strife and disharmony and warns of great punishment for those who carry out such attacks. Those executed hailed from Riyadh, Mecca, Medina and Asir, as well as Shiite Muslim populated areas of the Eastern Province and Qassim. The executions also took place



in those various regions. The statement named all those executed, which included several from large families and tribes in Saudi Arabia. The mass

execution that took place Tuesday was ratified by a royal decree. It comes a day after the Islamic State group said it was behind an attack on

Sunday on a Saudi security building in the town of Zulfi in which all four gunmen were killed and three security officers were wounded.

'This bloody day is our reward to you': Islamic State claims responsibility for Sri Lanka massacre



(Insider Bureau) - Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the Easter Sunday church and hotel bombings in Sri Lanka that killed at least 321 people and wounded more than 500.

The terror group's official al-Amaq news agency made the claim on its channel on the encrypted messaging app Telegram late Tuesday, according to multiple reports.

"The perpetrators of the attack that targeted nationals of the crusader alliance (anti-IS US-led coalition) and Christians in Sri Lanka the day before yesterday were Islamic State fighters," the brief message said, according to a translation by BBC journalist Faisal Irshaid.

It came after an unconfirmed video posted to social media earlier that day by an affiliated group strongly suggested IS was behind the attacks.

The video, purportedly from Al Ghuraba Media, which is not an official IS channel but is believed to be run by supporters of IS, featured the chilling message, "This bloody day is our reward to you."

It also showed photos of three of the alleged suicide bombers.

The men are named as Abul Barra, Abul Mukhtar and Abu Ubaida and appear in front of a black IS flag giving the one-finger salute. It came as Sri Lanka's defence minister Ruwan Wijewardene said the attacks were a "retaliation"

for last month's Christchurch mosque shooting.

"The preliminary investigations have revealed that what happened in Sri Lanka was in retaliation for the attack against Muslims in Christchurch," Mr Wijewardene told parliament on Tuesday afternoon.

On Monday, Sri Lankan authorities pinned the blame on homegrown extremist group National Thowheeth Jama'ath, but said it suspected the group had "international support".

"There was an international network without which these attacks could not have succeeded," government spokesman Rajitha Senarathne told a news conference.

"We are now investigating the international support for them, and their other links, how they produced the suicide bombers here, and how they produced bombs like this."

Mr Wijewardene said on Tuesday the investigations showed NTJ was linked to a little-known radical Islamist group in India called Jamaat-ul-

Mujahideen India, or JMI. "This National Thowheeth Jama'ath group which carried out the attacks had close links with JMI, it has now been revealed," he told parliament.

News agency AFP reports little is known about JMI other than it was established last year and is affiliated to a similarly named group in Bangladesh.

A senior Indian security official earlier told the Asia Times the video seemed to confirm IS was the international partner in the attack.

"We believe that the NTJ were only the foot soldiers and the controllers were some one else," they said. "These are preliminary findings, but there could be several layers of control on such a complex terror operation, involving many people."

Abu Ubaida's real name is Zahran Hashim, a Sri Lankan NTJ preacher who was named in an intelligence memo warning of the attack.

Hashim was a prolific online preacher known for his fiery sermons calling for death to infidels. Shortly after his name began

circulating online on the video.

Monday, YouTube removed his account "for violating YouTube's Terms of Service".

"It was basically a hate campaign against all non-Muslims," Muslim Council of Sri Lanka vice president Hilmy Ahamed told the Associated Press. "Basically, he was saying non-Muslims have to be eliminated."

The Times of India quoted an Indian intelligence officer giving credence to

"The given names are typical of how IS identifies its fighters after they pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi," the intelligence officer said. "But Ubaida figuring in these pictures, which have the same background, does indicate that NTJ had direct affiliation with IS. The trio is also seen giving the one-finger salute, a sign popular with IS operatives."

May plans to hold another Brexit vote

(Insider Bureau)- Theresa May is planning to bring her Brexit deal back for another vote - even as Tory MPs plan to change the rules of their party's leadership elections so they can oust her. The 1922 Committee of backbench Conservative MPs met last night but discussions on whether a time limit banning successive leadership votes should be changed from a year to six months was said to be was 'inconclusive'. The Prime Minister's party is furious that she has delayed



Brexit and are angry that they have to contest EU Parliament elections on 23 May, when they will probably lose heavily to Nigel Farage's Brexit Party.

The 16-year-old EVERYONE wants to meet

How politicians from Corbyn to Bercow are falling over themselves to praise Swedish climate activist as she meets MPs - minus Theresa May - for chats in the Commons

(Insider Bureau)-: Britain's most high-profile politicians rushed back from their holidays today to be photographed alongside a 16-year-old environmental activist who took the House of Commons by storm.

MPs including John Bercow, Jeremy Corbyn and Ed Miliband welcomed Greta Thunberg to Parliament, where she made a speech about climate change and got a rapturous round of applause. Miss Thunberg is the schoolgirl whose refusal to go to school because of global warming led to children around the world skipping classes in protest. She came to Britain on Sunday and spoke to protesters camping out in Marble Arch and causing chaos to London's transport networks.

Today, she met political leaders at Westminster, including Mr Corbyn, Vince Cable and Green Party MP Caroline Lucas at Parliament.

The 16-year-old told a packed room in the Palace of Westminster that her future and those of her fellow children had been 'sold'.

'We probably don't even have a future any more,' she said.

'That future has been sold so that a small number of people can make unimaginable amounts of money.

'It was stolen from us every time

you said 'the sky is the limit' and 'you only live once'.'

Miss Thunberg spoke alongside a panel of MPs, including Environment Secretary Michael Gove, Green MP Caroline Lucas, former Labour leader Ed Miliband and

Lib Dem MP Layla Moran.

The schoolgirl said she knew politicians did not want to listen, as she started to experience microphone problems.

She asked: 'Is this microphone on? Can anybody hear me? Is my English OK? I am starting to wonder.'

Environment Secretary Michael

Gove assured Miss Thunberg she had been heard as he admitted 'we have not done nearly enough'.

In a 'no-chairing stunt', opposition party leaders left an empty chair for the Prime



Minister at the meeting. Theresa May was in a cabinet meeting at the time.

Organisers of Miss Thunberg's event said that no response had been received to their invitation to the Prime Minister, but they were still hopeful she might attend at least part of the discussion.



Opening the talks, Miss Thunberg - who earlier met Commons Speaker John Bercow - told the MPs: 'We just want people to listen to the science.'

Ms Thunberg's visit to Parliament was organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group. Mrs May's

office said they did not know whether she had been invited.

Jeremy Corbyn tweeted: 'It was a pleasure welcoming UK youth climate strikers and Greta Thunberg to parliament.'

'Young people will be the most affected by climate change - seeing them take charge of their future is inspiring. Labour's

committed to working with young people campaigning to save our planet.'

Speaking at an event in London yesterday, Greta called on the UK to hold a general strike over climate change.

The schoolgirl then told Radio 4's Today programme this morning that there needs to be 'a level of panic' over climate change.

She added: 'If your house is on fire then that does require some level of panic. You don't sit talking about insurance claims and rebuilding - you do everything you can to put out the fire.'

The Nobel Peace Prize nominee is also expected to meet the leaders at around 11.30am on Tuesday before giving a speech at a meeting in Portcullis House at around 2pm.

How gonorrhoea can spread to your HANDS

Doctors release picture of tiny blisters on 20-year-old woman's fingers and wrist which led them to diagnose the STI

(Insider Bureau)-:If somebody told you they had gonorrhoea your first instinct would probably not be to look at their hands.

But that was exactly where the infection made itself known on one 20-year-old woman in Dallas, Texas.

She went to A&E after finding blisters on her hands, ankles, arms, legs, torso and scalp and was diagnosed with the STI.

The woman had been suffering from muscle aches, fever and ankle pain, and told doctors she had had sex without a condom with a new partner two weeks earlier.

An examination found blisters on the unidentified woman's wrist and fingers and led doctors to suspect she had gonorrhoea. In another unusual

symptom, she also had swollen, painful ankles, according to staff at the University of Texas's Southwestern Medical Center.

Almost certain she was infected with the Neisseria gonorrhoeae bacteria, medics prescribed her with antibiotics. Laboratory tests later confirmed the diagnosis.

Dr Melissa Mauskar, who wrote a case report in the New England Journal of Medicine, said: 'At

three months of follow-up, the patient was feeling well, with no recurrence of skin lesions or joint pain.'

Gonorrhoea is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections in the world, particularly among 15 to 24-year-olds. Around 78million people worldwide are diagnosed with gonorrhoea each year, according to the World Health

Organization.

More than 44,500 people in the UK caught the infection in 2017, along with 555,000 people in the

US. Although gonorrhoea is curable with antibiotics, if left untreated it can develop into what is called a disseminated infection

- one which has spread around the body. This can cause a wide range of symptoms which vary from patient to patient. Skin

lesions, including pustules (pus-filled lumps) like the ones the Texas woman presented with, are a possible effect of disseminated

gonorrhoea infection (DGI).

Around a quarter of patients with DGI suffer some sort of skin rash as their main symptom,

according to MedScape, while the majority of patients will have one.



Donald Trump will make three-day UK state visit in June and take part in D-Day 75th anniversary

(Insider Bureau)- British taxpayers are facing an £18million bill to host Donald Trump when the U.S. President makes a state visit in June.

The Government was accused of 'wasting taxpayers' money' on the 'pomp and ceremony' of an official trip after Trump and his wife Melania accepted the Queen's invitation.

His working visit last year attracted huge protests in London and additional policing costs ran into the millions.

The President's opponents have already vowed to 'bring out the baby blimp' - an inflatable caricature depicting Trump as an infant - for a second time this year.

Trump will be in Britain from June 3 to June 5 on his first state visit to the UK, which will see him

take part in D-Day commemorations.

Trump was promised the official trip by Theresa May after he was elected in 2016 but it was postponed amid protests against his policies in London.

He will hold a bilateral meeting with Mrs May during the trip and attend a ceremony in Portsmouth to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

However he will not get a carriage ride down The Mall because of security fears. Trump's two predecessors, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, also

honour of addressing Parliament, but Speaker John Bercow today would not confirm if this would take place.

The House of Lords speaker, Lord Fowler, Lord Speaker, said: 'No request to use Westminster Hall has so far been received. If a request is made then this would need to be considered by both the Speaker of the Commons and myself.'



met the Queen on state visits during their terms in the Oval Office.

Visiting heads of state are sometimes given the

'We would need to discuss the request. Clearly there is a strong case for a speech by the President particularly on such an important anniversary.'

The state visit is understood to be taking place at Buckingham Palace, where a state banquet will be held for Mr Trump.

But the president is not expected to stay at the palace because of renovations being



Buckingham Palace, but the visit is likely to follow the traditional format of an official open-air welcome featuring prestigious British regiments and lunch with the Queen.

It is not known which royals will be attending the events during the state visit.

Prince Harry's wife Meghan - a vocal opponent of Trump in the past - will be on maternity leave when he is in the UK, so is unlikely to be in attendance.

Mrs May said today: 'The UK and United States have a deep and enduring partnership that is rooted in our common history and shared interests.'

'We do more together than any two nations in the world and we

relationship in areas such as trade, investment, security and defence, and to discuss how we can build on these ties in the years ahead.'

A White House spokesman said of the visit: 'This state visit will reaffirm the steadfast and special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. 'In addition to meeting the Queen, the President will participate in a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Theresa May.'

'While in the United Kingdom, the President and First Lady will attend a ceremony in Portsmouth to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of D-Day, at one of the primary embarkation sites for the Allied operation that led to the liberation of Europe during World War II.'

Treasury's Mnuchin misses congressional deadline to hand over Trump tax returns

(Insider Bureau)- U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin failed to meet a final congressional deadline on Tuesday for turning over President Donald Trump's tax returns to lawmakers, setting the stage for a possible court battle between Congress and the administration. The outcome, which was widely expected, could prompt House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal to subpoena Trump's tax records as the opening salvo to a legal fight that may ultimately have to be settled by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Neal set a final 5 p.m. (2100 GMT) deadline for the Internal Revenue Service and Treasury to provide six years of Trump's individual

and business tax records. But the deadline passed without the panel receiving the documents.

After the deadline lapsed, Mnuchin released a letter to Neal in which he pledged to make "a final decision" on whether to provide Trump's tax records by May 6. It was the second time the administration had missed a House deadline for the tax returns since Neal requested them on April 3.

"Secretary Mnuchin notified me that once again, the IRS will miss the deadline for my ... request. I plan to consult with counsel about my next steps," Neal said in a statement.

In his letter, Mnuchin said he was still consulting with the

Justice Department about Neal's request, which he termed "unprecedented."

"The department cannot act upon your request unless and until it is determined to be consistent with the law," the Treasury secretary told Neal.

Democrats want Trump's returns as part of their investigations of possible conflicts of interest posed by his continued ownership of extensive business interests, even as he serves the public as president.

Republicans have condemned the request as a political "fishing expedition" by Democrats.

Trump broke with a decades-old precedent by refusing to release his tax returns as a presidential



candidate in 2016 or since being elected, saying he could not do so while his taxes were being audited.

But his former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, told a House panel in February that he did not believe Trump's taxes were under

audit. Cohen said the president feared that releasing his returns could lead to an audit and IRS tax penalties.

'NOT UP TO THE PRESIDENT' Earlier on Tuesday, the White House said Trump was unlikely to hand over his tax returns.

What obesity does to your brain

Fascinating scan reveals how an overweight woman has less grey matter than a skinnier one

(Insider Bureau)- Fascinating scans reveal obesity affects the structure of a person's brain.

A study that collected MRI scans of thousands of people of different sizes found those carrying dangerous amounts of weight have 'smaller volumes of important structures of the brain'. Less grey matter suggests a loss of nerve cells, while changes to white matter may affect how electrical signals are transmitted within the vital organ.

And since grey matter plays a role in our 'reward centre', these changes may make it difficult for obese people to control their weight, researchers claim.

Obesity is thought to lead to inflammation that damages brain tissue, however, this is unclear. The research was carried out by Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands and led by Dr Ilona Dekkers, a radiologist.

'We found that having higher levels of fat distributed over the body is associated with smaller volumes of important structures

of the brain, including grey matter structures that are located in the center of the brain,' Dr Dekkers said.

'Interestingly, we observed that these associations are different for men and women, suggesting that gender is an important modifier of the link between fat percentage and the size of specific brain structures.'

Obesity is a global concern, with 26 per cent of adults carrying dangerous amounts of weight in the UK in 2016, NHS statistics show.

And in the US, 39.8 per cent of adults were obese in 2015-to-2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To determine how obesity affects the brain, the researchers analysed the MRI scans of 12,087 participants of the UK Biobank study.

Since it started in 2006, Biobank has gathered the genetic information of half-a-million people, and aims to uncover how

DNA and lifestyle factors influence our risk of disease.

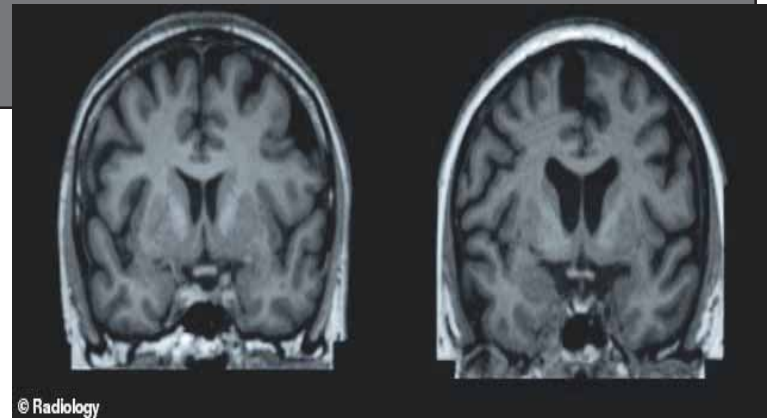
The scans were carried out with state-of-the-art technology that distinguishes between grey and white matter.

'MRI has shown to be an irreplaceable tool for understanding the link between neuroanatomical differences of the brain and behavior,' Dr Dekkers said.

In simple terms, grey matter contains the bulk of our nerve cells, while white matter is made up of long filaments that transmit electrical signals between neurones.

Results - published in the journal *Radiology* - revealed the participants' weight led to clear differences in the make-up of their brains.

'Our study shows that very large data collection of MRI data can lead to improved insight into exactly which brain structures are involved in all sorts of health outcomes, such as obesity,' Dr Dekkers said.



© Radiology

These outcomes were also sex related. The men with a higher total body fat percentage had a lower grey matter volume. They also had impaired structures that relate to 'reward circuitry' and movement.

Reward circuitry refers to a group of structures that are activated by a reinforcing stimulus, such as addictive drugs.

The results further revealed the larger female participants had reduced activity in their globus pallidus, which is a structure that regulates voluntary movement. For both men and women, a higher total body fat percentage increased the likelihood of microscopic changes to their brain's white matter.

But the study only looked at body fat percentage and did not distinguish between different types of fat, the researchers stress.

Of particular interest is the visceral white fat found around our internal abdominal organs, which increases our risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Study author Dr Hildo Lamb, professor of radiology, added: 'For future research, it would be of great interest whether differences in body fat distribution are related to differences in brain morphological structure.'

'Visceral fat is a known risk factor for metabolic disease and is linked to systemic low-grade inflammation.'

Maisie Williams thought her big 'Game of Thrones' sex scene was a prank



(Insider Bureau)- You weren't the only one surprised by that scene between Arya Stark and Gendry on "Game of Thrones."

The pair did the do on the episode of "Game of Thrones" which aired Sunday night and folks were not ready.

Maisie Williams, who portrays Arya, told EW she initially thought it was a joke because showrunners David Benioff and Dan Weiss have sent actors bogus scripts before to pull their legs.

"At first, I thought it was a prank," she said. "I was like, 'Yo, good one.' And [the showrunners were] like, 'No, we haven't done that this year.' Oh f***!"

Williams first learned of the scene from her bff Sophie Turner, who portrays Sansa Stark on the hit HBO series.

"I called Maisie and was like: 'Have you read it yet?'" Turner told EW. "And she's like, 'I'm midway through episode one.' And I'm like: This scene, this page, read it! This is awesome!

She was very happy."

'Game of Thrones' Episode 2 recap: Let's all sit by the fire before we die

By the time they got to the table read, Williams said she had some thoughts about her character getting busy with the character played by Joe Dempsie "I got to the read-through and I'm reading the scene and thought, 'Oh, we're actually going to do this. When do I shoot this? I need to go to the gym.' A whole list of things," Williams said.

Teen whose head was slammed into ground during arrest won't face charges, prosecutors say

(Insider Bureau)- Prosecutors won't file charges against the 15-year-old boy who was body slammed while he was being arrested by Broward County sheriff's deputies last week. A video of the arrest became viral. Broward State Attorney's Office announced the decision in a statement Tuesday after the teen and his family met with prosecutors.

He had been arrested on suspicion of assault, resisting arrest and trespassing, according to CNN affiliate WFOR-TV.

The attorney's office also said the investigation into the "sheriff's deputies' actions is ongoing."

The decision comes as two Broward County sheriff's deputies involved in the incident were suspended.

"As we continue to gather information in our internal investigation, I have decided to change the deputies' status

from restricted administrative assignment to a suspended status as our investigation continues," Broward County Sheriff Gregory Tony said.

Sgt. Gregory Lacerra and Deputy Christopher Krickovich had been placed on "restricted administrative assignment." They were ordered to surrender their sheriff's office identification cards and their official-issued weapons, the sheriff's office had said.

Authorities launched an internal affairs investigation after the video surfaced last week. It appears to show a Florida deputy spraying pepper spray in the face of a teen boy. As the teen appears to walk away with his hands on his face, the deputy follows him, grabs him and slams him to the ground.

Another deputy then jumps onto the boy's back, slams his face into the pavement more than once and punches the teen in the head.

When it comes to elaborate nuptials, few can rival the mega-weddings of India's super-rich.

Recent months have seen a slew of high-profile ceremonies, from a rare Bollywood-Hollywood union (Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas) to what could be one of history's most expensive weddings (when Isha Ambani, daughter of Asia's richest man, wed Anand Piramal, the son of a billionaire industrialist).

Eye-watering amounts of money were spent on haute couture bridal wear, food from the world's top chefs and opulent palace venues. Ambani and Piramal even splashed out on a private show by Beyoncé.

But it's not just India's elites. In a country where up to 12 million weddings take place a year, the growing middle classes are increasingly putting on lavish ceremonies to emphasize their status. Industry sources estimate that the country's wedding industry is worth \$40 billion to \$50 billion, representing significant growth from the widely-cited \$25.5 billion figure reported in 2012. Around half the gold bought in the country each year is for items used at wedding ceremonies.

While weddings can be expensive affairs in any country, in India they are especially important as symbols of strength and status, according to sociologist Parul Bhandari, a visiting scholar at St. Edmund's



Beyoncé, couture and palaces: India's growing taste for mega-weddings

College, University of Cambridge, who researches wedding cultures, marriage trends, gender and social class. For many societies, particularly India, marriages are more than simply a union between two individuals," she said in a phone interview. "A marriage marks the coming together of two families, lineages, and at times, larger groups like whole villages or communities ... Marriage is an important rite (of) passage that signals an individual and their family's status -- economic, social, political, royal.

"Pushing one's financial limits at a wedding can, of course, be seen as an attempt to achieve higher social status and respect

within the wider community.

"The Piramal-Ambani wedding constitutes, in every way, the epitome of a 'Big Fat Indian wedding,'" she added, referring to a term commonly used to describe high-profile weddings on social media. "(It) was indeed a show of power and money, as much as it was about

rituals and traditions."

According to Bhandari, the rise of extravagant ceremonies is linked to an "increasing penchant for consumerism (and) the influence of Bollywood."

For those who can afford to host in a spectacular palace, the Indian state of Rajasthan, renowned for its royal heritage, has proven an in-demand wedding



destination, according to Bhavnes Sawhney, director of Mumbai-based wedding planners Wedniksha. Its popularity may continue to grow following the publicity of the Ambani-Piramal and Chopra-Jonas weddings, both of which took place in the northwestern state.

Rajasthan is known to uphold many ancient traditions," Sawhney said. "And the grandeur of its royal forts and palaces not only serve as a beautiful backdrop but also give an authentic cultural touch to a ceremony." People are now going for quality instead of quantity," said Priyanka Gupta, head wedding planner at My Shaadi Wale Wedding, a Bangalore-based wedding planning company.

"Earlier, you might have up to a 1,000 guests, now people are cutting down to 200 to 250 of their closest (friends and family) and holding destination weddings (instead)." Gupta puts the average amount spent by an upper-class family at \$400 per guest, per day. She speculated that the Chopra-Jonas and Ambani-Piramal weddings may have cost up to \$2,000 per guest, per day.

Complex rituals

Regardless of a couple's social status, Indian weddings are often spread across several days, according to Sawhney. It is India's "cultural pride that gives rise to intricate planning," he said.

The big risk after Sri Lanka attacks

The first time I traveled to Sri Lanka, in 2010, a ghastly civil war had just ended. Military officers still manned checkpoints along major roads. Whether we were passengers in a rickety tuk-tuk in Colombo, the bustling, leafy capital, or riding in an air-conditioned car across the countryside, armed men in olive-green uniforms would routinely order us to stop. They would check for explosives or for any sign that the violence that had plagued the country over nearly three decades might again threaten the peace won at such an appalling cost.

Those scenes seemed relegated to the past -- until this week when terrorists killed hundreds of people, attacking churches and major hotels on Easter Sunday. At last count, more than 320 people are confirmed dead and

hundreds more injured.

A decade ago, it made sense to me that travel brochures routinely referred to the country as a "teardrop shaped island." Tears and Sri Lanka seemed to belong in the same sentence. I thought that had changed.

Up to 100,000 people died in a horrific civil war that ended in 2009. All wars are awful, but there was something particularly macabre about Sri Lanka's -- with its wave of suicide bombings by the fanatical Tamil Tigers; with its gruesome final battle -- a civilian massacre by the government; with the still-visible scars in Jaffna, the capital of the

Northern Province, and the rest of the battered war zones, where the radical members of the Tamil minority launched their brutal bid for independence, drawing a crushing response from the

state.

I returned over the years, witnessing a country emerge from tragedy. On my most recent trip, 16 months ago, I stayed at Colombo's lively Cinnamon Grand Hotel, one of the targets of the Easter Sunday attacks. I had breakfast every day -- fish curry and chilled coconut juice -- in the same restaurant where a suicide bomber detonated his explosives. I watched the lavish weddings in the cavernous rear lobby, soaking up performances from traditional Sinhalese musicians and trying to understand the symbolism of the rituals.

I rejoiced as a witness to Sri Lankans enjoying the fruits of peace: a normal life.

For the rest of the world, peace meant that the wonders of the small island in the crosscurrents



of history were open and inviting. Tourists started arriving by the millions. But all was not well on the island known before independence as Ceylon, and before that as Serendib, the inspiration for the word "serendipity."

After the war, Sri Lanka moved haltingly along the path of transitional justice, drawing

international support but also criticism. Separately, domestic political battles reached dangerous levels. Last year, a constitutional clash between rival politicians left the country with competing prime ministers amid warnings that the country risked plunging back into a bloodbath. The police canceled vacations just in case.

GE's WMC Mortgage unit, felled by financial crisis, files Chapter 11 bankruptcy

General Electric Co on Tuesday put the remnants of its WMC Mortgage unit into bankruptcy, 11 days after paying a \$1.5 billion U.S. fine over defective subprime mortgages issued by WMC before the 2008 financial crisis. The Chapter 11 filing affords "finality" for WMC, given its limited cash - \$175,000- and support from GE, and the threat of further claims, WMC Chief Executive Mark Asdourian said in a filing with the U.S. bankruptcy court in Wilmington, Delaware.

WMC was bought by General Electric's GE Capital unit in 2004, and originated more than \$65 billion of mortgage loans from 2005 to 2007. It halted originations in 2007

because of the collapse of the U.S. housing and financial markets. WMC sold most of its assets that December to DLJ Capital.

Tuesday's filing is part of GE's effort to address liabilities incurred through many years of expansion under prior management, while improving profitability and cash flow.

"This filing is another important step in the de-risking of GE Capital," a GE spokeswoman said in a statement about WMC's bankruptcy. "GE and GE Capital are not part of the filing and the case has no adverse impact on our business operations."

WMC said the bankruptcy would help it complete a \$198 million settlement over its packaging in 2006 of 5,000 mortgage loans into securities sold to investors.

It said that would resolve the last of 14 lawsuits it faced over residential mortgage-backed securities, following \$870 million of settlements of the



other 13 lawsuits.

The \$1.5 billion civil settlement on April 12 resolved U.S. Department of Justice claims

that GE concealed the poor quality of WMC's loans and WMC's lax fraud controls. GE did not admit wrongdoing.

The case is In re WMC Mortgage LLC, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of Delaware, No. 19-bk-10879.

Jet is case of throwing good money after bad

The insolvency and bankruptcy code may be the answer to the airline's crisis

A wave of sentimental nostalgia greeted the news of Jet Airways' temporary grounding after banks (which now effectively own it) preferred to wait for its sale instead of pumping in more money.

In truth, the airline, which turned 25 last year, has been, for at least a decade, unrecognisable from the one that delighted Indians with its service standards in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Indeed, until it hit an air pocket of its own, rival IndiGo's service quality was better, and usually cost less.

That there are bidders for the airline, including a foreign airline which is already a significant shareholder (Etihad), and a private equity firm (TPG), is heartening, especially because, with Rs 8500 crore of debt that needs to be paid off, and more money needed to run the airline, Jet isn't exactly an attractive purchase. As with many airlines, competition, fuel costs, and unfavourable foreign exchange equations have wreaked havoc on Jet. And, as with many Indian



companies, ambition and mismanagement have played a part too.

The banks are now in charge, and Naresh Goyal, the man who founded the airline, is out of the picture, after sensibly having withdrawn his own bid for the airline. A sale (as long as it isn't a distress one) could help banks recover most of the money Jet owes them, and will, hopefully, protect the jobs of thousands of employees who have served Jet well over the years. The buyer will have to invest a significant amount of money and also be patient in terms of returns, but

Jet does have a brand.

If that doesn't happen, Jet will probably become a case for the National Company Law Tribunal under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). This newspaper has already argued that the banks should not have taken control, that the government should not have encouraged them to do so, and that IBC should have been the preferred avenue for resolution once it was clear that even the slightest chance of the airline's revival involved throwing good money after bad. It may come to that in the end.

India tells China to be sensitive to its concerns

(Insider Bureau) -India on Monday told China to be sensitive to its concerns as Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale met Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi here, with whom he is likely to raise the issue of blacklisting Pakistan-based terrorist Masood Azhar. Gokhale is on two-day China visit to meet Wang, also China's Foreign Minister, and is expected to convince Beijing not to block a resolution to declare Azhar an international terrorist at a UN panel.

Azhar, a dreaded terrorist, is wanted for plotting deadly attacks in India. His terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility for carrying out a suicide bombing in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama on February 14 that killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force troopers.

China has repeatedly blocked all such resolutions by India, the US, Britain and France by placing a "technical hold" on them at the UN 1267 sanctions committee.

Last month, Beijing's placed its latest "technical hold" on the US-sponsored resolution against Azhar, a move that India called "disappointing".

"We will work together with the Chinese side to deepen mutual understanding, strengthen mutual trust to implements the decisions that are taken by the leaders and do it in a manner where we are sensitive to each other's concerns," Gokhale said while meeting Wang and Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou. Gokhale, who was also India's former Ambassador to China, said both sides were working to implement what was agreed between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Wuhan summit last year.

"It's been a year since our leaders met in Wuhan and my colleagues, Vice (Foreign) Minister Kong Xuanyou and I have been following up on efforts to see that to implement the understandings that were reached at the meeting.

"Last year, we had very brisk political exchanges including your visit to Delhi for the first high-level meeting between for people to people exchange was an important development. And my Minister (Foreign) looks forward to coming for the second meeting in China later this year," he added.

Is your snack bar really healthy?



(Agencies) It seems harmless enough and does its best to tell you how healthy it is. But if I were you, I'd be suspicious of the average snack bar. I am referring to the granola bars, protein bars, health bars or fruit bars. Even The New York Times said in a recent article that they can be as calorific as dessert.

What started off as an innocuous effort to add more fibre and nuts to your daily diet has now become a multibillion

dollar industry, where the last thing you're getting is health. To understand how healthy your snack bar is, read the nutritional label: you'd be surprised.

To me, an ideal snack bar should be brimming with the goodness of nuts, seeds and healthy ingredients that are not so fat and calorie-dense. Have you thought of making your own?

- **Add more seeds** : Pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, flaxseeds, watermelon seeds, sunflower seeds - experiment with the abundance of this fundamental snack bar ingredient. Apart from containing good fats, seeds are fantastic sources of fibre, protein, minerals like zinc and vitamins like Vitamin E. They add a fabulous texture and taste that you will feel in every bite.

- **Reduce the nuts**: Ensure that the seeds to nuts ratio leans more heavily in favour of seeds. Nuts like almonds,

cashew, walnuts and macadamia, while healthy, are calorie-dense and need to be used sparingly. A tiny handful per bar should suffice, and abstain from high-fat nuts like cashews.

- **Puffs**: For added texture and benefits, you could also try quinoa puffs, rice puffs, wheat puffs and other similar foods.

- **Dates to bind**: Commercially made snack bars use caramelised sugar or syrups for binding, but it's better not to use sugar because it will completely negate the good work. How about exploiting the sticky and gooey texture of dates or figs? It's flavourful and natural.

- **Season**: Go creative with seasoning like sea salt or even sprinkles of paprika if you really like it tangy. At the end of the day, it's your bar. And only you can raise it.

Who should pay on the first date?



(Agencies) Most of us are attuned to paying whenever we go out for a date. But with the rules of dating changing and women wanting to be in charge in various situations, it sometimes becomes tricky to decode who will pay for the dinner on your first few dates. So here are few things you can follow to avoid that awkward situation:

Go to an informal and affordable place

This works almost all the times. The very fact that the restaurant you go to is not too expensive and has a causal air to it, will keep you more relaxed. And paying the bill will not be an issue since it will not hamper your pockets. On the other hand, even if the girl offers to pay, it won't be too harsh on the guy's part to let the girl handle the expensive dinner.

Think you're the one paying the bill

Be ready to pay unless the girl really insists to pay. Many a times, there are formal efforts to show they are willing to pay, but you should go ahead with splitting the bill or letting her pay only if she insists a second or third time. In such cases, it is better to let her do the formality as it might just work in your favor.

She calls the shots while ordering

In most cases, if the girl wants you to pay, she would not be careful with what she orders. But if she orders something which you don't really endorse or want to have, then don't push to pay too much. While you might want to be open enough to pay for her expensive choices, in most cases it would be better for you to split or let her pay in such instances.

Third time's the trickiest

So if doesn't offer to pay even after a few dates, chances are she never will. In such a situation, it is entirely your call. Some guys like to pamper their date by paying the bills all the time. But some might like to be treated differently and expect their girlfriends to pay too. In this case, you can be the best to call the shots.

Hangry, are you?

(Agencies) Science agrees that 'hanger' is a real physiological reaction and not just useful slang. How can you manage your raging tummy?

Ever notice kids getting cranky as mealtime approaches? 'Hangry' is the latest portmanteau term (hungry+angry) to join the dictionary of urban slang. Kids though are not the only ones susceptible to fits of rage as their blood sugar drops. If you find yourself getting crotchety as a meeting drags into lunch or if you miss a snack, here's how you can get through it without losing your cool.

Why we get hangry?

"Hanger is a survival technique built into our system from the time we were hunters. And it's not just specific to human beings - you'll notice that a hungry animal is an angry animal. If an organism was laid-back and took it easy when it was hungry, letting everyone else eat first, it would die," says psychiatrist Dr Hozefa A Bhinderwala. When you are hungry, your blood sugar level drops. This happens because the nutrients in your food get converted into simple sugars, amino acids and free fatty acids,

distributed to the blood and passed along to your organs. With time, after a meal, the density of sugar in the bloodstream reduces. Your body responds to this dip by releasing the adrenaline hormones epinephrine and norepinephrine, which can cause jitters, jumpiness, and anger. We tell you three simple ways to fight hanger.

How to handle it?

Hanger is your body communicating with you, so make sure you listen. Dr Bhinderwala says, "The biggest problem is that most people ignore their basic physiological drives. Plain and simple awareness can bring about a big change."

Try this: Keep a diary/ journal to identify these complex emotions as they occur and to also record your eating patterns and timings. You might want to include questions such as, "What were my emotions before, during and after the meal?" You can deal with hanger using the mindfulness meditation technique. Close your eyes and slowly become mindful of the sensations that arise in your body. Accept your vulnerability and release any resentment you might feel towards



the sensations.

Try this: With one hand on the chest and the other on the belly, take a deep breath through the nose, ensuring the diaphragm inflates with enough air to create a stretch in the lungs. Deep diaphragm breathing is a technique used by those who fast. The point of a snack is to hold you over, maintain your blood sugar, and supply your body with the vitamins and minerals it needs till the next meal. People often forget this because they associate snacking with something crunchy, salty, sweet or processed, but fast foods are used up equally fast by the body and you'll be hungry again soon.

Try this: Keep nutrient-rich foods like walnuts, roasted chickpea, berries, granola, etc. in your bag or pocket. Munch on them before you get really hungry, and have them with water. This should keep you going till you eat again.

Gulp it down: 5 simple ways to trick yourself into drinking water

(Agencies) **Make it appealing** Ever noticed how you are motivated to hit the gym when you are wearing cute workout clothes, or how you feel more inclined to spend time at your desk if it is less cluttered? This technique also works when it comes to water. Pick a cute water bottle, or a chic pitcher to keep yourself excited about drinking from it through the day.

Add natural flavours Make your own 'spa water' by adding slices of fruit, or herbs - a practice that also has the benefit of making water look aesthetically pleasing. Try mint, lemon, watermelon, raspberries, thyme, or cucumber.

Treat it like an appetiser To control your appetite, and eat smaller portions, make it a point to drink a glass of water before every meal. Often, our bodies

confuse hunger with thirst, and you may find yourself satisfied — or at least, less ravenous — after sipping some H₂O. Cheers to a slimming tactic that doesn't include cardio.

Use the water app

Both, Waterlogged for iPhone, and Carbodroid for Androids, help you follow your daily H₂O progress, and even send you friendly reminders to keep sipping.



Mauritian herbs found to stop growth of cancer cells

The researchers have found that the herb contains natural chemical compounds to inhibit the propagation of cancer cells.

A recent study has claimed that the extracts of the endemic Mauritian medicinal herb stop the proliferation of oesophageal squamous carcinoma cells, one of the most deadly types of cancer.

The details were published in the *Journal of Acta Naturae*.

The researchers have found that the herb contains natural chemical compounds to inhibit the propagation of cancer cells. The herb restrains the cancer stage transition in malignant tumour cells. Having studied the medicinal herbs of Mauritius, scientists may have accomplished an important step.

"About one-third of the local plants are used in traditional medicine, but there is still a lack of scientific evidence of their therapeutic potential, while genocide of nature is most evident on such small pieces of a lost paradise. In particular, further study of the active compounds from the

leaves extracts prototypes of the future drugs to treat oesophageal cancer and other deadly diseases," said Alexander Kagansky, the Head of the Center.

The lead scientist noted that oesophageal cancer is a growing global concern due to the diets and other detrimental side effects of modern lifestyles, technologies, and culture. At present, there is not enough effective means of its treatment, while the existing radiotherapy, chemotherapy resection may prolong lives by a few months, usually spent in tremendous suffering.

The aggressive disease prevents eating, digestion, and come along with a very negative prognosis.

Oesophageal squamous carcinoma together with adenocarcinoma is the sixth main death causes in the global oncological practice. Less than 15 per cent of patients survives for five years

from the time of the diagnosis.

On average, people with such diagnoses live less than a year. These types of cancer are treated with broad-spectrum chemo. The drugs are extremely toxic and evoke a number of side effects worsening the patients' quality of life.

At the same time, the efficacy of current chemotherapy for this disease is not very assuring, to say the least. More than half of all anti-cancer drugs employing today were developed from natural sources.

At the same time, most of the world's population treats cancer by means of thousands of herb species that have been known to traditional medicine for centuries, each of those coming with many different naturally chemistries, evolved for use in nature for millions of years.

Taking into the account the centuries-old human understanding of nature, modern biomedicine



needs to develop new anti-cancer compounds from a wide range of natural sources, such as plants, fungi, bacteria, insects, and marine organisms.

Alexander Kagansky emphasized that the future of global medicine depends on the saving of the planet's biodiversity. He reminded that currently, the total number of living species is steadily declining.

The scientist pointed out that they are devastated at an incredible rate at which species are being erased from existence as a re-

sult of human 'progressive' activities.

So far these unique species do not grow anywhere else on the planet; a few additional five-star hotels, bank building, or a golf-course could end up their existence once and for all.

"Our research should serve the benefit of humanity and show by evidence that on the mechanistic level people depend on natural chemistries, which will reward us by reducing deaths and suffering of ourselves, our parents, and children", the scientist said.

Men act less interested in sex than they really are

The findings published in the journal *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* suggest men and women's real intentions may be different from the signals they send each other.

Men sometimes act way less interested in sex than they really are, perhaps because of the assumption that giving an impression of wanting to have sex with anyone, anytime, is definitely not what most women are looking for, suggests new research.

"Men who are overly eager do not come across as attractive," said study co-author Leif Edward Ottesen Kennair, Professor at Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The findings published in the journal *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* suggest men and women's real intentions may be different from the signals they send each other. For the



study, researchers collected two rounds of data from students at NTNU. The survey included questions like when they last met with a potential sexual partner, and whether they eventually ended up having sex.

Researchers found women were much more likely to have sex if they thought the potential partner was attractive. The most important factor in whether men had sex was how many sexual partners they have had previously. This could contribute to their being perceived as sexually attractive and available. "It's really the same reason for both men and women -- the man's sex appeal -- that decides whether they end up having sex," Kennair said. Men who reported being the most interested in having sex reduced their signals of interest more. Women, on the other hand, might pretend to be a little more interested than they actually are. "We think this may be to keep the man's attention a little longer," Kennair said.

Parents using both e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes are more motivated to quit



Parents who smoke both e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes may be more open to quitting smoking as compared to parents who only smoke traditional cigarettes, a study has revealed.

"Our findings suggest that smoking parents who start using e-cigarettes may have done so out of a desire to quit smoking," said Emara Nabi-Burza, lead author of the study published in *Academic Pediatrics*. "However, many of them end up becoming dual users of cigarettes and e-cigarettes, maintaining their addiction to nicotine and also exposing their children to e-cigarette aerosols, which contain hazardous substances," Nabi-Burza added. Jonathan Winickoff, senior

author of the *Academic Pediatrics* said, "While e-cigarettes emit numerous toxins in addition to nicotine and still pose health risks, nicotine replacement therapy in the form of gum, lozenges or patches has proven effectiveness in supporting smoking cessation and eliminating nicotine exposure to infants and children." The current study is an outgrowth of the CEASE (Clinical Effort Against Secondhand Smoke Exposure) programme, which trains pediatric office staff members to ask the parents of patients whether anyone uses tobacco products in their homes or cars and to provide assistance to help those who smoke to quit.

How Indian fashion goes back to its roots

With World Heritage Day just gone by, HT City chronicles fashion's return to age-old decadence



and temples. However, a section of stylists opine that the vintage-inspired campaigns are a bit overdone. "The Maharani look is a tad done to death, I feel. Having said that, I'd suggest embrace heritage, but yet look of the moment. Today's brides and their entourage of bridesmaids want to dance, drink and have fun at the weddings," says stylist Mohit Rai.

Channel your inner Maharani
Rework the classics and invest in a timeless wardrobe. Choose one statement jewel piece and rework the entire ensemble around it, for example a pair of chand baalis. Add kohl-eyes and rouge lips for the great finish. A classic chignon bun or a French knot bun works best. Raid your mom's closet and give a spin to her treasured handwoven saris.

Muted chanderis, glistening Kanjeevarams and regal Paithanis to intricate pattern Patolas are your go-to bets. Upgrade the look with a well-fitted, sleeve-less blouse and statement herloom jewels. In terms of handbags, a vintage beaded minaudiere or a quilted bag will be perfect to punctuate to look. Key heritage trends Models shot in vintage structures like palaces Statement jadai jewellery and floral pieces Aviator sunglasses complementing the bridal ensemble Experiential created for clients rooted in traditions A focus on indigenous festivals

April 18 is observed as World Heritage Day each year to celebrate and promote the cultural heritage across the world, thanks to the efforts of the International Council on

Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). And heritage is something which is having a moment of sorts in Indian fashion too. Over the last few years, several India design houses



attempted to create a sensorial impact with their powerful take on the bridal trends thus taking us back to our roots. Designers have recreated a parallel universe, which reignite the Maharani regalia, and also speak at length about the history of the rich silk and brocaded textiles. A section of homegrown labels has focused on creating beautiful experience at their flagship stores rooted in our cultures and customs for their clients. Think models looking like they walked out of the Impressionist artworks or the soul-searing imagery reminiscent of a Raja Ravi Varma painting. Picture Chanderi saris shot against the vibrant city of Vrindavan bringing to mind the

abandon of Holi. One sees statement lehengas teamed with diaphanous dupattas, which have a conversation with aviator sunnies, as models cut a fine figure in the foyer of a palace.

Either the models' hair is artfully dishevelled or slickly tied into a chignon. All in all the key bridal pieces radiate the quintessential appeal of the late Maharani Gayatri Devi with contemporary touches. Stylist Allia Al Rufai sees it as a key trend. "The heritage-inspired vocabulary has always been Sabyasachi's core style. On the other hand, Raw Mango reaches out to their clientele on a cultural level. Guess designers know their customers very well. It's a lady, who's well read, and someone who appreciates the arts," says Allia, who recently styled Anushka Sharma for a magazine inspired by a vintage Maharani look. As a designer, their goal has

been to be representative of India's potential - as makers, design thinkers, innovators and as a scalable homegrown brand rooted in Indian culture. "We have always believed that music, dance, food are all integral part of the social fabric in India, and the idea is to incorporate local elements not just in our design and spaces, but also the curation of events that engages people on a more personal level," says designer Sanjay Garg. There are labels which have made their

handwoven textile offerings - the real hero of their visual language. More than selling the merchandise, the shift has been to craft a unique way of storytelling - either a long-forgotten tradition or a local festival. "There's always a sense of time travel in most of the recent campaigns. It could be Indian Baroque or something derived from Italian Renaissance," says stylist Isha Bhansali. Designer Gaurav Khanijo's recently-unveiled menswear campaign shot against the backdrop of the holy town of Pushkar too airs a choir echoing the poetry of the ghaats



Guava Island movie review

Unearth Donald Glover, Rihanna's obscure gem from the depths of Amazon Prime

Guava Island movie review: Donald Glover unleashes his musical alter ego Childish Gambino in ambitious Amazon film, also starring Rihanna and Black Panther's Letitia Wright. Rating: 4/5.

Guava Island

Director - Hiro Murai

Cast - Donald Glover, Rihanna, Letitia Wright, Nonso Anozie

Rating - 4/5

A year after it was reported that Donald Glover and Rihanna were working on a secret project together in Cuba, the results are ready to be shown to the world. Guava Island isn't the duet album that many would've expected, nor is it a concert documentary. It's a narrative film - at 55 minutes barely long enough to be called a feature - that adds to the aura of Glover's alter ego, Childish Gambino, and reasserts his stature as one of America's foremost creative artistes.

Guava Island, on the surface, appears to be just the sort of passion project that is afforded to filmmakers after massive early success, but upon further inspection reveals itself to be a densely layered work of art.

Glover and his Atlanta director Hiro Murai (who makes his feature debut with Guava Island) present their very unique brand of social and cultural criticism, wrapped as always in a (distractingly) vibrant package. In Atlanta, they swept away the superficiality that is usually associated with hip-hop, and told a realistic story about what it is like to be a black man in America. Guava Island peels back the layers of artifice that have obscured the world's vision of the USA, and reveals the ugly truth inside.

Unexpectedly but appropriately, Guava Island is a companion piece to Jordan Peele's recent horror picture, *Us* - dense with symbolism and metaphor.

It's a fable of sorts, about gods and mortals, love and war. "A very, very long time ago, long before the birds, cars, and even coffee beans, the seven gods of the seven lands created the

duelling truths: love and war," Rihanna's character says in the film's animated opening segment, before adding, rather sagely, "but wherever there is love, war will follow."

The gods then decided that humans would need a place away from these elements - 'a small island, in the centre of the world' - and they called it 'Guava'. And it is on this mystical island that our story takes place.

Attracted by the island's magical qualities, the Red family took over its resources, and its people, subjecting them to a lifetime of servitude. Everyone on the island is made to work in some capacity for the evil corporation, and forced to wear red uniforms; their identity and culture wiped clean. And along comes Deni, a messiah figure of sorts, played by Glover. He is a musician - an artistic, creative rebuke to everything that the Red family stands for. The film spends a day



in the life of Deni; his story is told with tragic, almost genius parallels to Ryan Coogler's *Fruitvale Station*.

But Guava Island successfully veils its darkness - much like how the Red family buries the islanders' inherent creativity - by breaking out into regular musical numbers. Perhaps one of the most forceful moments of the film is when Glover's character launches into a provocative takedown of his country.

"America is a concept," he says to a factory co-worker with aspirations of emigrating there one day; "To get rich, you have to make someone else richer."

And then Glover erupts into a reprisal of his groundbreaking 2018 song, *This is America*, set to the clashing and clanging beats of factory equipment, his iconic dancing exuding an almost warlike intensity.

This reminded me of *Us*' 'We are Americans' scene. Like Peele's film, Guava Island also uses visual motifs to great effect - the colours red and blue, in particular, perhaps signify the duality of American politics - and deep symbolism - Nonso Anozie's villainous character surrounds himself with caged birds, while Deni is often likened to a free spirit.

The Curse of the Weeping Woman movie review

New Conjuring spin-off may be better than the originals

The Curse of the Weeping Woman movie review: The Conjuring spin-off unearths the Mexican folklore of La Llorona, for a film that might be better than the originals.

The Curse of the Weeping Woman

Director - Michael Chavez

Cast - Linda Cardellini, Raymond Cruz, Patricia Velásquez

Rating - 2.5/5

The tagline they've given *The Curse of the Weeping Woman* - 'She wants your children,' yelled as if in all-caps - does a disservice to the film, which is way mellower than anything the *Conjuring* series has ever produced. Not only is the tagline tacky, it's also quite inaccurate - the Weeping Woman doesn't limit herself to taking others' children, you'd be surprised to learn, but she is also partial to riverside strolls and Gothic makeup (which she spoils every time she weeps). The *Curse of the Weeping Woman* movie

review: The *Conjuring* spin-off unearths the Mexican folklore of *La Llorona*, for a film that might be better than the originals. Based on a popular (I'm told) Mexican folk tale called *La Llorona*, which literally translates to 'Weeping Woman', the film has been renamed here to suit our easily confused tastes. But the exotic flavour that is lost in translation is heightened by debutant director Michael Chavez's obvious love for his culture. It is easily the most cinematic instalment of the *Conjuring* series, not as reliant on empty jump scares and cheap scare tactics that the other films in the franchise so often use as a crutch. Floorboards still creak with annoying regularity, and the windows rattle like there's a perpetual storm brewing, but Chavez is surprisingly restrained

- until his contractual obligation to dress his film in *Conjuring* clothes compels him to ruin everything. In that regard, both he and the titular spook of his film are alike. Like the Weeping Woman, who legend claims killed her two children by drowning them in a river, Chavez around the halfway mark also takes his film by the scruff of the neck, and violently murders it with his own hands. For around 45 minutes, I was convinced the *Conjuring* series had outdone itself. Despite the larger populace's adoration for this franchise, I've never appreciated its brand of 'horror', which favours momentary fright over sustained terror. And my opinion was only aggravated after the most recent instalment, *The Nun*, which was the absolute worst.



Unfortunately, the *Curse of the Weeping Woman* is never able to live up to its phenomenal title and admittedly excellent premise. What begins as a very specific tale of haunting and possession, wonderfully shot by Michael Burgess and impressively performed by a strong cast led by Linda Cardellini, turns into a by-the-numbers horror film, in which problems are solved not by application of the mind, but by

screaming real loud and pointing crucifixes in their general direction. The *Conjuring* series is the rare interconnected franchise that worked, after every studio scrambled to replicate the success of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* and fell flat on their face. The trademarks are all there, as they have to be, I suppose. Children in peril, hapless mothers, things that go 'boo' in the dark - the *Curse of the Weeping Woman* has it all.

Kalank, Kesari, Gully Boy box office fight: How have 2019 films fared on extended weekend?



Abhishek Varman's opulent period drama Kalank has failed to draw the audience to the theatres, even though it boasted of a stellar cast including Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditya Roy Kapur, Madhuri Dixit and Sanjay Dutt. Despite being one of the most anticipated Bollywood films of 2019, the slow pace and lacklustre screenplay rang the death knell for the film. Kalank, which released in 4000 screens countrywide on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, could not make the most of its extended weekend. Though the film, made on a staggering budget of Rs 80 crore, earned Rs 21.60 crore to become the biggest opener of 2019, it could not retain its momentum and could only rake in Rs 66.03 crore in its five-day weekend. Here is a day-to-day breakdown of Kalank extended weekend collection:

Day 1 - Wednesday (April 17) - Rs 21.60 crore
 Day 2 - Thursday (April 18) - Rs 11.45 crore
 Day 3 - Friday (April 19) - Rs 11.60 crore
 Day 4 - Saturday (April 20) - Rs 9.75 crore
 Day 5 - Sunday (April 21) - Rs 11.63 crore
 Total extended weekend collection - Rs 66.03 crore



Shobhaa De On "Kalank" I Agree With Its Song "Tabah Ho Gaye"

(Insider Buearu)-I was so desperate to catch "Kalank", I kept calling the neighbourhood multiplex to confirm timings. Imagine, I had temporarily forgotten that one of my daughters was heavily pregnant (full-term) and the possibility of her being rushed to Breach Candy Hospital for the delivery was distinct! Such was my excitement. It must have been so infectious that when pregnant daughter declared this was possibly her last chance to watch "Kalank" at a theatre, I promptly booked a ticket for her, too. Oh dear, oh dear. We rushed to catch the show, hoping the baby would stay in for the next three hours. But within minutes of watching Alia/Roop chasing colour-coordinated kites across village terraces, clad in the sort of lehenga a guest would wear to a society mehendi, I knew it was

a kati patang we were in for - a movie that was blowing in the wind like a lost kite. Despite the initial disappointment, I told myself, wonderful things awaited us...I mean, look at the star cast! Yeah. Look at it! Pretty impressive, huh? Well, sure. By the time I was introduced to the principal characters one by one (in between dances galore), I was totally bewildered. What was this? A period film? If yes, which period exactly? The opulent sets provided no clues. Were we in Mohenjo Daro? No? Ottoman Empire? Lekh Tandon's 1966 "Amrapali"? But that didn't look like Vyjayanthimala. Ooops...it was Madhuri! And Alia - maybe she was still in "Raazi" mode? (Same sort of role, different hero, similar costumes.) Okay...what was

Aditya Roy Kapur doing in the film? And why was he dressed like Sachin Pilot? Hadn't Sonakshi played a ditto role (dying, dying, dead) in another movie ("Lootera", 2013)? Then along came Varun Dhawan (lots of money saved here on costumes - he is bare-chested for the most part), playing the rakish lover boy, popping phallic-looking swords into a red-hot furnace. Sizzling! The chemistry between him and the swords, I mean. Sanjay Dutt loped in as a media tycoon - a man who wears sherwanis to bed and looks morose throughout. Wait - I have forgotten the one character who I actually liked - Kunal Khemu's. It was the only sincere performance in a movie mounted like a soulless Fashion Week finale-all grandeur and no heart.



Katrina Kaif pens emotional post on Bharat: I cannot wait for everyone to see the film

Katrina Kaif penned an emotional post on her Bharat character Kumud Raina and said that the journey has been an exciting one for her. Bharat will hit the screens on June 5.

The trailer of Bharat starring Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif in the lead roles hit the web a few days ago and already became quite the sensation on social media. The film traces Salman Khan's life through decades and his love story with "Madam sir", played by Katrina Kaif. The film has been directed by Ali Abbas



Zafar. The trio had previously worked together in Tiger Zinda Hai, which had crossed over Rs 350 crore. Katrina penned

an emotional post on Instagram, as she bid her character from Bharat adieu. She wrote, "Kumud Raina 1975 I had the most incredible time working on this character, the whole journey has been the most exciting for me yet , after working with @aliabbaszafar in three films. Cant wait for everyone to see the film."



Megan Barton Hanson threatens to spill out of her skintight scarlet dress

at *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* premiere... as she runs into former love rival Vanessa Bauer



She recently vowed plastic surgery made her happier. And Megan Barton Hanson showed off her killer, cosmetically-enhanced curves at the *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* premiere, in London on Wednesday. The *Love Island* bombshell, 24, cupped her breasts with her hands as her generous cleavage threatened to spill out of her tight-fitting red dress.

It was evident Megan was delighted to be among the crowd of reality stars with invitations to the London premiere of the movie. *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*

spares no horrifying details of serial killer Ted Bundy's life after he held a reign of terror killing as many as 30 women.

The chilling movie is told from the point of view of his long-standing girlfriend Elizabeth Kloepfer, known to Ted as Liz. Zac Efron gives a convincing portrayal of the charming yet troubled Ted while Lily Collins takes on the role of his warm-hearted and loving girlfriend. The thriller opens with the picture-perfect early days of their romance before the serial killer embarks on a barbaric murder spree.

Among the stars, Megan once again crossed paths with her former love rival Vanessa Bauer on the red carpet.



Shah Rukh Khan to play a villain in Vijay's *Thalapathy 63*?

There has been much buzz about Shah Rukh Khan's extended cameo in Atlee's film *Thalapathy 63*.

(Insider Buearu)- There has been much buzz about Shah Rukh Khan making a cameo in Atlee's *Thalapathy 63*, which also stars Vijay. People are still not sure about what exactly he would be doing in the film. According to a portal, he would be playing a villain. "SRK has a prominent character that he's playing in *Thalapathy 63*. It's not like his other cameos. In fact, he is the main villain who comes in the picture only towards the climax. He has a good 15 minutes odd role, fighting Vijay. The makers wanted a leading face from the Hindi film industry to shoot for the role and when Atlee approached Shah Rukh for it, he agreed on principle to do it," a source has been quoted as saying.

Reportedly, SRK will soon be shooting the scenes for *Thalapathy 63*. "It's a four-five day shoot and the team is figuring whether to film the



scenes in Chennai or in Mumbai itself," the source added.

The rumours about SRK working with Atlee began when they were spotted together at an IPL match, recently. Apparently, the duo are planning to work on a Hindi film too.

SRK was last seen in the film *Zero*, which bombed miserably at the box office. The actor opened up about it, at a recent media interaction at the Beijing International Film Festival in China.

"Unfortunately *Zero* itself wasn't received too well back home in India, maybe I made the wrong film, maybe I did not do the right storytelling so I am a little wary how it will be received here and I hope people here will like it," he said. Also See | *Zero* director Aanand L Rai on film's failure: Need to understand what went wrong

Avengers Endgame first reviews: Everything you have been waiting for, say emotional fans

The world premiere of *Avengers Endgame* was held yesterday in Los Angeles, and the first reactions have started trickling in. Fans have hailed it as an astonishing and amazing film, and a tearjerker.



(Insider Buearu)- The moment we've all been waiting for is almost here. *Avengers Endgame* hits the screens on April 26, and fans are hyper-ventilating. In the previous film, *Infinity War*, Thanos eradicated half the world with just a snap of his fingers. Will their heroes survive and defeat Thanos, the Mad Titan? And will they bring back the fallen? The world premiere of the *Avengers Endgame* was held yesterday in Los Angeles in the US and

the first reactions to the epic finale are here. Clearly, there wasn't a dry eye in the house and many have called it beyond epic. Here are the reactions. One Twitter user wrote, "Bring the tissues - #AvengersEndgame is a tearjerker. From the opening moments that reckon with the fallout of The Snap to a heartbreaking twenty minute cello solo that I gotta say Chris Evans absolutely nails, this movie is more emotional than any Marvel, or superhero film, ever."



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