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In the name of God

'How Many More Lives Have To Be Lost?'

Delhi: The Anatomy of a Riot

By Sai Bureau (New Delhi) : Riots, the deadliest the Indian capital of New Delhi has seen in a decade, have claimed more than 30 lives, including a policeman and an intelligence officer. Over 200 civilians were injured. At least two mosques were vandalized and torched by supporters of the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP); houses and shops of Muslims were gutted; and petrol pumps, tire markets, and innumerable vehicles were set afire during the three days of violence. Ironically, U.S. President Donald Trump, who was in India for his maiden visit, praised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "religious tolerance" even as the chaos unspooled.



- The Roots of the Delhi Riots: A Fiery Speech and an Ultimatum
- New Delhi Streets Turn Into Battleground, Hindus vs. Muslims
- As India Counts the Dead, Questions Swirl About Police Response
- In New Delhi, Days Of Deadly Violence And Riots
- 2020 Delhi Riots Nothing Like 1984

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'World Is Watching': US Lawmakers Take Note Of Delhi Violence



Reacting to the violence that has claimed at least 13 lives in the past a couple of days, US Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said the 'deadly surge of religious intolerance in India is horrifying'.

(News Agencies)- The violence over the amended citizenship act in India's capital New Delhi drew sharp reactions from US lawmakers with the mainstream media prominently reporting it along with the just-concluded visit of President Donald Trump. Reacting to the violence that has claimed at least 13 lives in the past a couple of days, US Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said the "deadly surge

of religious intolerance in India is horrifying". "Democracies should not tolerate division and discrimination or promote laws that undermine religious freedom," she said in a tweet, adding that the "world is watching". The Indian Parliament had passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) last year, resulting in a series of protests

across the country. Pramila Jayapal had last year introduced a Congressional resolution urging India to end the restrictions on communications in Jammu and Kashmir and preserve religious freedom for all residents. Congressman Alan Lowenthal too termed the violence a "tragic failure of moral leadership". "We must speak out in the face of threats to human rights in

India," he said. Democratic presidential candidate and Senator Elizabeth Warren also a swipe at the violence, saying, "It's important to strengthen relationships with democratic partners like India. But we must be able to speak truthfully about our values, including religious freedom and freedom of expression, and violence against peaceful protesters is never acceptable." Congresswoman Rashida Talib tweeted, "This week, Trump visited India but the real story should be the communal violence targeting Muslims in Delhi right now. We cannot be silent as this tide of anti-Muslim violence continues across India." The violence in Delhi prominently featured in the mainstream media.

The Washington Post reported, "The riots represent a serious escalation of tensions after months of protests in response to a controversial citizenship law and growing frictions between supporters and opponents of the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." "As President Trump toured India's capital, at least 11 people were killed in communal clashes that have upended a working-class neighborhood," The New York Times said. In a tweet, US Commission for International Religious Freedom said it is alarmed by reports of "deadly mob violence targeting Muslims in New Delhi". It urged the Modi government to rein in the mob and protect religious minorities.

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Bernie Sanders and his democratic socialist vision for America have my support

By : Joseph Betz

President Trump has called Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., a communist. Former Vice President Joe Biden warns the Democratic party that it must not become socialistic under the influence of Sanders, or it will surely lose the presidency to Trump. Both clearly believe, first, that the terms socialist and communist both name something evil and un-American, and, second, President Trump believes that socialism and communism are one and the same. However, both of these beliefs are wrong. We need to know and understand the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to correct these beliefs. Eleanor Roosevelt was the driving force in its creation. Socialists like Bernie believe that every human has, by nature, the right to food, clothing, shelter, a job with a living wage,



vacations, medical care, security in sickness and retirement and education. And each and every human has the justified claim to that amount of each of these which allows the full development of that person's potentialities. These are the rights in the second part of the UDHR and they are in the document because they define socialism, for they were proposed by Eastern Europe's socialistic countries in 1948. But socialists like Bernie are

democratic socialists. This means that they believe that every human has, by nature, the rights to freedoms of speech, movement, religion, political persuasion, freedoms to assemble, organize, protest and share in their own governance and the freedom from fear of the criminal law. These rights are roughly the protections of our Constitution's Bill of Rights. These rights are in the UDHR because the Western democracies put them there. They roughly

define democracy. So, a democratic socialist like Bernie is one who especially wants those persons who lack adequate food, shelter, employment, education and medical care to be guaranteed them through democratic political processes like the ones in our Constitution. A communist is also a socialist but is an autocratic socialist rather than a democratic one. Autocrats want government of the selfish, by the selfish, for the selfish. The autocrat

is often only one but surrounded and supported by well-compensated bullying adherents. The Soviet Union was autocratic and socialistic. Yes, the USSR guaranteed everyone a job, an apartment, free medical care and good education. But the guarantor was a dictator like Josef Stalin, who ran roughshod over the democratic freedoms of religion, speech, the press, assembly, dissent and protections from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and death. Thus the autocrat Stalin and his privileged Communist Party commissars provided some measure of material security to the people but at the horrible price of the erasure of their democratic freedoms. So, to be a socialist like Bernie is to act to provide the satisfaction of the basic needs of all, especially of those now lacking them, and to do so in our familiar American democratic way. That he is a socialist is

thus a good thing about him, and that he is a democratic socialist makes him even better. This is because he would provide for disadvantaged people's wants by working with them and their opposites, giving all of them the freedom to dissent, modify, even reject his means to his ends for them. A communist, in contrast, like Fidel Castro in Cuba, might provide jobs and education and medical care to an admirable degree. But the citizens who enjoy these benefits do so at the cost of losing their freedom to dissent or organize or seek an alternative government. Ordinary Americans - please listen to what Bernie wants for those like you, and listen to how he would achieve it for you. Then, please, please, read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially Articles 22 to 27, and be assured of his energetic commitment to realizing those rights for you.

The SC collegium must realise that it's supreme in the present framework

How the transfer of Justice Muralidhar pans out will tell us about the strength of the collegium system

The judicial collegium, which comprises the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court (SC), has disappointed us yet again by recommending the transfer of Justice S Muralidhar, one of the finest judges of the country, known for his independent views, as a judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. On Wednesday, the Centre notified the transfer. It can be argued that the transfer is intended for his own good and that Justice Muralidhar will eventually take over as Chief Justice in Chandigarh, once the current Chief Justice, Ravi Shanker Jha, is elevated to the Supreme Court (SC). It is assumed that once that happens, Justice Muralidhar as the senior-most judge will take over as Acting Chief Justice

until his formal orders as Chief Justice are issued. But this begs a tricky question: Why was he not directly appointed as a Chief Justice of a high court? Supposing when his turn comes to become the Chief Justice in Chandigarh, the government goes back on his appointment? What will then the collegium do? Will it turn weak as it did in the case of Akil Abdulhamid Kureshi (who was originally recommended as Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh)? The collegium headed by former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi transferred him to Tripura when the government demurred. Or will it dig in its heels and say that since there is no Memorandum of Procedure in place to decide on such issues, the collegium will

continue to decide appointments? The law is clear on the primacy of the collegium. In fact, the government has little role in the process of appointment and transfer of judges as has been held in Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association and Another vs. Union of India (popularly known as the Second Judges' Case) - Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1303 of 1987: "It has been indicated that the judiciary being best suited and having the best opportunity to assess the true worth of the candidates, the constitutional purpose of selecting the best available men for appointment as superior Judges is best served by ascribing to the judiciary, as a consultee, a more significant role in the process of appointment. The only question is of the extent of



such significance and the true meaning of the primacy of the role of the Chief Justice of India in this context," that judgment said. It added: "A homogenous mixture, which accords with the constitutional purpose and its ethos, indicates that it is the opinion of the judiciary 'symbolised by the view of the Chief Justice of India' which is given greater significance or primacy in

the matter of appointments. In other words, the view of the Chief Justice of India is to be expressed in the consultative process as truly reflective of the opinion of the judiciary, which means that it must necessary have the element of plurality in its formation. In actual practice, this is how the Chief Justice of India does, and is expected to function, so that the final opinion expressed by him is not

merely his individual opinion, but the collective opinion formed after taking into account the view of some other Judges who are traditionally associated with this function." I believe it is time for the collegium to reinvent and reassert itself. It is true that there may have been times under Justice Gogoi when it seemed to have turned it into an extension of the law ministry.

India did not achieve much from the Trump visit

The visit of the United States (US) President Donald Trump will be remembered for its extravaganza apart from the ostensible chemistry between the two leaders. The visit also resulted in upgrading the India-US partnership to the level of a "Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership". The \$3-billion defence deal saw India purchase Apache and MH-60R helicopters: A deal to benefit the US military establishment, and upgrading our security environment. Bilateral relationships bloom only when both sides understand and sympathise with each other's concerns. Let us list some of India's concerns that were left unaddressed by the US: First, we were hoping for a "big and comprehensive" trade deal, a win-win for both sides. That was not in the offing. Closing such a deal by the end of the year seems highly unlikely. Second, there was no forward movement in the outstanding H1B visa issue and a totalisation agreement. Third, Trump no longer regards India as a developing country. This provides him the rationale for removing India from the list of countries benefited by the "Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)," which allows for lower tariff for India's products exported to the US. Trump was not persuaded to revisit that issue.

Trump continues to repeat that India was the "highest tariff country" in the world, and that the US has to be treated fairly. The US wishlist includes lowering our tariffs and allowing for market access to US milk, dairy and meat products, a demand India has resisted so far. But our inability to source crude oil from Iran because of US sanctions has burdened us with increased costs for importing crude from the US. The president also hoped for larger investments of Indian businesses in the US and increased oil and gas supplies to bridge the gaping trade deficit. In fact, none of our national concerns have been addressed by the US. The president's hurricane visit was meant for his domestic Indian diaspora constituency to garner support from a community that has in the past tilted towards the Democrats. To say that the visit was extraordinary and that Modi is a "nice man who is doing a fantastic job" means little when looked at from the prism of our national interest. From the perspective of India's standing in this part of the world and Trump's endorsement of New Delhi's position, again the outcome was less than desirable. On Pakistan, Trump reiterated his willingness to mediate on Kashmir, chose not to

criticise Pakistan, claiming Prime Minister Imran Khan is his good friend. On the issue of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India, Trump said that the US could not be counted upon to take any action across 8,000 miles. Clearly, the US is not willing to take sides and India is left on its own to deal with Pakistan in the manner that it chooses. While we believe that we have the capacity to punish Pakistan for any misadventure in India, Trump's statement is hardly any reflection of the warmth of the relationship between the two countries. In fact, in all the actions of the US running up to the visit of the president and during his stay, one got the feeling that for him "America first" is a national commitment and friendship with India is conditional upon that. Given the fact that there is likelihood of an agreement between the US and the Taliban in Afghanistan, there was no clarity about India's role. Given such a deal, India's position is likely to become even more vulnerable. Trump gave a veiled warning with reference to the importance of a secure 5G wireless network. He called this network a technology tool "for freedom, progress, prosperity... where it could be even conceived as a conduit for suppression and censorship". We are aware that the US neither allowed ZTE nor Huawei to participate in its 5G wireless network. Trump's statement sought to guide our policy prescriptions by hinting at a possible threat to India's security if the 5G network were to be laid by Huawei or ZTE. President Trump knows where his country's national interest lies. He wants US troops out of Afghanistan as quickly as possible to make it a talking point in the upcoming presidential election. He has made no commitments on behalf of his administration in combating the increasing Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region. He is also aware that India is not a vassal State, which will willingly subjugate its national interest by allowing large-scale US naval presence in this part of the world. Trump wants the trade deficit to be reduced, Indian tariffs to be lowered and US goods, especially agricultural produce, to be accessible to Indian markets. On top of that, Trump will bat for expanding online networks of multinationals with deep American commercial interests. E-commerce is a new tool to capture one of the largest markets in the world. Has Trump moved even an inch in sympathising with India's national concerns? The chemistry between the two leaders is the government's single achievement.

Why it's important to get to the bottom of the Delhi violence



North-east Delhi was incident-free on Thursday, as people picked up the pieces of their lives and livelihoods after the worst communal violence Delhi has seen in at least three decades. While it would be too much to expect political parties not to politicise the issue - narratives and counter narratives are already at play - it is imperative that the home ministry, the National Security Adviser (whose entry seems to have played a major part in normalising the situation), Delhi Police, other law enforcement agencies, and the state government work together to answer key questions that could shed light on just what happened. Given that both the pro- and anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) groups whose clash sparked off the communal riots were extremely well organised - the pro-group was bussed in from neighbouring states, according to one theory; and both appear to have been well-armed - some of these questions have to do with the identity of the individuals and the organisations behind the protests, and the source of funding and arms. Were local leaders of political parties involved? As a corollary, it is also important to get to the underlying

motives. Was the motive, as some believe, to embarrass the Narendra Modi government during the visit of United States President Donald Trump? If so, who was behind the effort? Or was it to vitiate the situation in the national capital? And who could gain from that? There are other questions as well. For instance, on the role of hate speech in inciting the riots. While this may not have lit the spark, did it, for instance, heat things up to the extent that a fire was inevitable? Or on the role of the unresolved and open-ended protests against the CAA (with protesters sticking to their stand, the home ministry not keen on engaging, the courts, deferring both the larger issue of the law and the smaller one of a protest at Shaheen Bagh on a public road)? Some hard questions will also have to be asked about gaps in the police's intelligence-gathering and risk-assessment processes, and their near-glacial pace of response to initial skirmishes. After all, it is becoming clear that a better and faster response on Saturday, when the clashes started, may have prevented events of Monday and Tuesday, which saw the most casualties. Many of these are tough questions. Some are inconvenient. But we owe it to the 37 dead as of Thursday evening (across both Hindus and Muslims), the hundreds of injured, and the thousands whose livelihoods have been affected to ask them - and then, to sincerely try and answer them.



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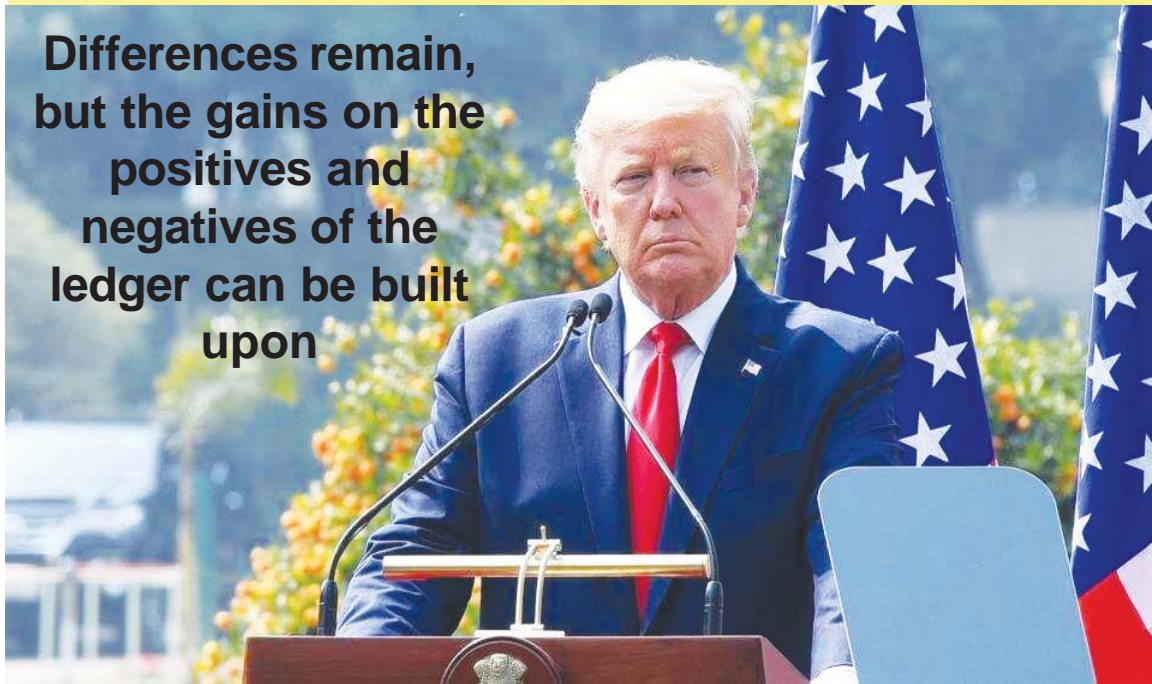
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The resilience of India-US relations

Differences remain, but the gains on the positives and negatives of the ledger can be built upon



As Donald Trump left India after his maiden visit as United States (US) president, what are we to make of the two-day spectacle? His trip was only the eighth by a serving US president, but he was also the fourth consecutive president to visit. The increased frequency of presidential travel to India captures the growing importance of the country for the US, and highlights the continued investments in the bilateral relationship by successive

leaders: Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, and Narendra Modi in India; Bill Clinton, George W Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump in the US.

The Trump visit differed from previous ones in several ways, most notably in featuring a major stadium event in Gujarat on Monday. The fact that Trump stayed on script while speaking to an audience of over one lakh, much as he had at the "Howdy Modi" event in Houston last year, was a further departure from the

controversy that often accompanies the US president in his international engagements. He struck many of the right notes with his hosts: "America loves India - America respects India - and Americans will always be true and loyal friends to the Indian people," he said. Trump drew contrasts with another large Asian country: "There's all the difference in the world between a country that seeks to claim power through coercion, intimidation,

aggression and a country that seeks to grow by setting its people free and unleashing their dreams, and that's India." Although he mentioned that his administration was "working with Pakistan to crack down on the terrorist organisations and militants that operate on the Pakistani border," he also expressed hope for "reduced tensions" and "greater stability" in South Asia.

The symbolism, ceremony, rapport between leaders, and political significance naturally received the most attention. Trump arrived in India in an election year, keen to project large and supportive crowds overseas. He hoped also to appeal to Indian-Americans, who have traditionally supported the Democratic Party. In India too, the visit assumed a political significance, given that public opinion surveys consistently reflect positive Indian attitudes to the US.

But this was also an opportunity to consolidate what is now a substantively richer relationship. The India-US security partnership witnessed another arms

purchase, bringing to seven the number of US military platforms that will feature in India's arsenal, many with components manufactured or assembled in India. Additionally, the signing of three significant defence cooperation agreements; upgraded bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral dialogues; and regularised military exercises involving all three services have solidified the defence relationship over the past few years. Coordination on connectivity infrastructure, maritime security, counterterrorism, and cyber security have all increased. Multilateral cooperation, notably at the United Nations Security Council, has improved, as demonstrated after last year's terrorist attack at Pulwama.

On the economic side, two-way trade in goods and services has increased; India is now the US' eighth-largest trade partner and the US is India's largest. Energy trade, in particular, has taken off.

The number of Indian students in the US and the number of US companies active in India have both grown. For most US-based tech giants, India is now one of their top three customer bases.

Delhi needs a strong police chief...

... and better policing. A national capital should have better law enforcement.

Many people have to take responsibility for the lawlessness witnessed in parts of Delhi over the past four days - itself the result of what's gone on in the city-state over several months. Some of the blame is the Union home ministry's. It manages Delhi Police, and has also not engaged with people protesting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or CAA, the flashpoint for much of the violence. Some of the blame is that of protesters, peaceful and violent, pro- and anti-CAA. For months, Shaheen Bagh has hosted a peaceful anti-CAA protest. It's probably the world's most successful Occupy movement, but the protesters, having made their point, are refusing to move to another location; blocking one of the

main roads linking Delhi to Noida. Their continued sit-in is a magnet for pro-CAA protesters, and Delhi has been just a spark away from a major incident. As for pro-CAA protesters, some of them seem to believe that they have the State's blessing and can indulge in violence with impunity (some of the actions of the police suggest they can). Then there are the violent anti-CAA protesters, whose violence isn't always a response, but sometimes a provocation. Some of the blame should be directed at political parties of all hues - of this, a disproportionate amount should be assigned to the Bharatiya Janata Party because it is in power at the Centre and best placed to do something. But much of the blame should be reserved for Delhi Police.



Time and again, it has been found wanting. Its assessment of situations has often gone wrong. Its planning has been inadequate. And its response has usually been the wrong one. Worse, its speed of response (or lack of it) has allowed situations to spiral out of control. For instance, on Day 1, it could have cleared Shaheen Bagh and

moved the protesters to an alternative site, if it wanted to, and in the more recent violence in north-east Delhi, signs of all not being well have been visible since Saturday. All point to a crisis of leadership and decision-making in the primary law enforcement agency in the national capital. It is expected

that SN Shrivastava, named special commissioner (law and order), Delhi Police on Tuesday, will take over as police chief after the current chief, who is on extension, retires at the end of the month. He will hopefully be up to task of handling the most important policing job in the country.

Trump minced no words on Pakistan's terrorism US's differing foreign policies

India-US must work on the Indo-Pacific strategy and China's regional assertion

Trump's visit was a success. But a trade deal remains elusive



part of the summit. Both Mr Modi and Mr Trump have partly built their political fortunes on an uncompromising stance towards Islamist terrorism. The trickier part has been concretising a broader strategic commitment to continue to work against Chinese regional assertion. Again, the summit language has been forthright with references to the Indo-Pacific, complete with the Blue Dot network and the financial structures designed to take on the Belt Road Initiative. There is an assumption Mr Trump is not interested in abstract concepts like the balance of power in Asia. However, he signed off on US national security and defence strategies that placed concerns about China front and centre. What India can now assume is that it can work with the US on the Indo-Pacific strategy without worry of presidential interference. Mr Trump has absorbed and accepted that on terrorism and great power rivalry, India is on the right side of the ledger - even if its tariffs are too high.



United States (US) President Donald Trump's state visit saw a renewal of vows on tackling terrorism with the joint statement listing a slew of Pakistan-sponsored terrorist groups and calling on Pakistan to "ensure that no territory under its control is used to launch terrorist attacks." Mr Trump agreed it was in the interests of both governments that any peace process in Afghanistan would preserve the "gains of the last 18 years". While he remains determined to end the US military presence in Afghanistan, it is hoped Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminded him of the consequences of such an action. Mr Trump likes to play up his role in the destruction of the Islamic State. Hopefully, this has now become twinned in his mind with India's struggle against Pakistan. Terrorism was a relatively easy

New Delhi, like every government, wonders how to handle a United States (US) president as unconventional as Donald Trump. With the conclusion of Mr Trump's State visit, the tentative claim can be made that the Narendra Modi government may have cracked the formula. Mr Trump agreed to come to the country despite being denied his overriding interest, a trade deal. If he incorporates the spectacle of Motera in his stump speech in the coming US election campaign, India will be a thread in the legend the president likes to weave about himself. The US government has two

foreign policies. One emanates from the Oval Office and reflects Mr Trump's worldview. It is characterised by narrow national interests, mercantilist economic relations and sees alliances and multilateral agreements as fetters. Then there is the worldview of the Washington establishment. Its policies uphold the idea of the US playing a major role in world affairs, building international institutions, and promoting cross-border trade. The policy gap between Mr Trump and Washington is large and widening. When the two Americas do not see eye to eye, the results can be disastrous for the country and the world.

'Affordable housing can be green too'

Linking sustainability with quality rather than pricing can create opportunities for upcoming housing projects, especially since India's socio-economic milieu warrants different perceptions of affordability.

At the Paris Climate Conference, India pledged to reduce the greenhouse emission (GHE) intensity of its gross domestic product by 33-35% over 2005 levels by 2030. One of the key sectors that need to be factored in to meet this target is the real estate. India's building stock is expected to double in the next 15 years and buildings are expected to emerge as the largest electricity consuming sector in the country. It is crucial that new buildings in the country are designed to be energy efficient and thermally comfortable.

In an interview with Hindustan Times, Sanjay Seth, CEO of GRIHA Council, speaks on why buyers and developers are still shying away from building and buying green homes, how to make affordable housing green; and what makes the GRIHA rating tool different from others.

KD: What is current status of the

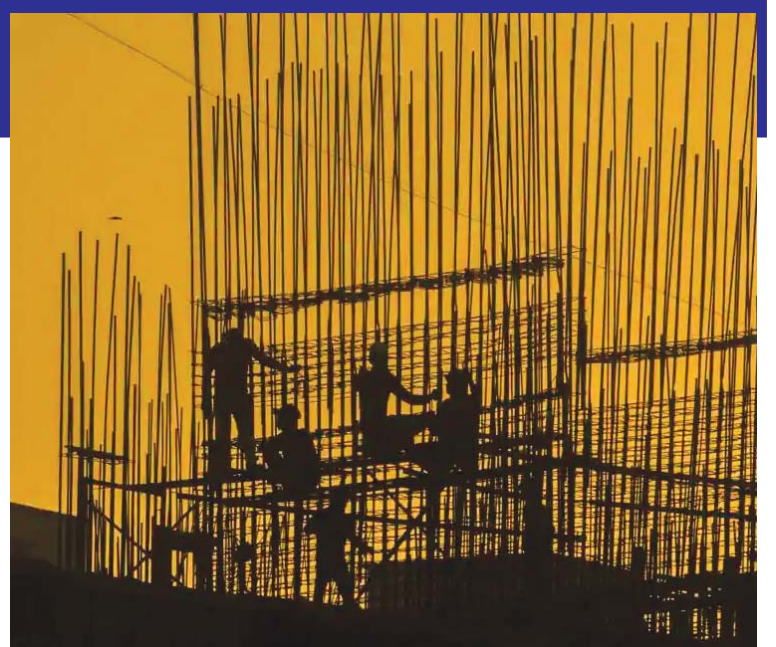
green building sector in India? SS: A minuscule part of India's built infrastructure is green buildings. However, one must understand that bulk of our infrastructure is yet to be built. So there is huge opportunity to make sure that we move on the correct green path. The Indian Green Building Council started with a modest 20,000 sq. ft. green built-up area in India in 2003. By 2019-end, there were more than 5,723 green building projects registered under it, accounting for over 7.09 billion sq. ft. But most of these projects that seek the green tag are commercial spaces. Only 5-7% of the green building stock is of housing projects.

KD: Why is there a slow uptake on green buildings?

SS: This is because green buildings are perceived to be more expensive. This is unfortunate. I agree that some elements of a green building (for

example, UPVC windows) are expensive. But when a building is planned, architects and civil engineers discuss the energy requirement, for example the number of air conditioners required. But once you plan for a natural lighting, better insulated walls, UPVC windows and solar panels, the energy requirement will come down. Once the requirement for connected load comes down, the back-up electricity costs will also come down. Then, if you have water harvesting, the water costs will also come down, and also recharging will help improve groundwater levels also.

The life of a building, as per law, is 66 years. But the reduced payback period will be extended throughout the building's life. People don't want to appreciate that the building will pay back for the rest of its life. In addition, also remember the electricity tariff keeps going up every year on the



basis of two parts: fixed cost and fuel cost. But such fluctuation will not affect the owner of a green building.

Second, the energy efficiency building code is new. When it was introduced in 2007, the code was used for the commercial sector first because MPs thought that there would be a cost in going green and they would not want to burden the common man with additional

costs. And they said that as and when there is a greater uptake for all this, they will release the regulation for the residential sector.

Although there is a regulatory framework in place, constructions are a state subject. So because of the urban local body by-laws, the implementation has to be at the state level. That becomes a problem and dilutes the effort.

In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena's political dilemma

It wants to maintain its Hindutva identity. It also wants to remain in power with 'secular' parties. This isn't easy

When the Shiv Sena snapped ties with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to form the government in Maharashtra with the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), it was evident that this would be an uneasy alliance. The Sena's political worldview revolved around Hindutva, placing it at odds with the "secular" political agenda of the Congress and the NCP.

Three months later, this tension is now out in the open, with its clearest manifestation in the differing positions of the coalition partners on the Bhima-Koregaon and Elgar Parishad cases. It has its roots in chief minister and Sena chief, Uddhav Thackeray, giving his consent to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to probe the Elgar Parishad case. The NCP, which holds the home department, is upset at the decision, and the Congress has also struck a note of dissent. But what is driving this difference in approach? The answer lies in the alleged involvement of fringe Hindutva groups in the Bhima-Koregaon violence.

On December 31, 2017, allegedly inflammatory speeches were given at the Elgar Parishad at Shaniwarwada in Pune. The conclave commemorated the battle of Bhima-Koregaon on January 1, 1818, where a small detachment of the British army, comprised largely of Dalits, held off a larger force of the Brahmin Peshwas. A day after the Parishad, there was violence against Dalits, who had thronged the Bhima-Koregaon war memorial in lakhs to pay their respects.

The Pune police booked and arrested Left-wing and civil society activists, who were accused of waging war against the State, and being involved in a plot to assassinate Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This sparked counter-accusations. Prakash Ambedkar, the chief of the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), and NCP leaders, blamed leaders of Hindutva outfits, Milind Ekbote and Sambhajirao Bhide "Guruji" for the Bhima-Koregaon violence.

Ekbote, who heads the Samasta Hindu Aghadi, comes from a

family affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He also contested the 2014 assembly elections from Pune as a Sena candidate. Ekbote was arrested for the violence and later released on bail.

However, it is Bhide and his group, Shivprathistan Hindustan, which present a bigger predicament for the Sena. As party leaders acknowledge in private, it is not possible for them to take a position against Bhide or any Hindutva activists, for it will be seen as a dilution of the Sena's commitment to Hindutva. This is despite the pressure from the NCP, which is keen to expand its base among Buddhist Dalits. Shivprathistan, which has a strong base in parts of Western Maharashtra, is among the most influential fringe Hindutva groups in the state. The group's popularity and outreach has been built around the personality of former RSS activist, Bhide "Guruji", whose austere lifestyle has struck an emotional chord with a section of young Hindus. Bhide is also known to be close to senior BJP leaders.



Shivprathistan employs the iconography of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who remains a powerful political symbol in the state. Aided by the use of social media, this has increased the ranks of "Dharkaris" (as Shivprathistan members are called).

The Congress and NCP leaders allege that while Left and Dalit activists were arrested for their alleged role in the Elgar Parishad case, Bhide has been treated leniently. They also complain that the Sena is toeing the line of the BJP on issues such as the Elgar Parishad and Bhima-Koregaon cases.

Though the Sena was born in 1966 as a nativist, sons of soil

party, which claimed to espouse the cause of the Maharashtrians in Mumbai, it took a formal turn towards Hindutva in the 1980s. Like most of its political positions, this was born more out of political expediency than any ideological conviction. Hindutva enabled the Sena to forge an alliance with the BJP in 1989. The late Bal Thackeray, the founder and supreme leader of the Sena till his death in 2012, even became the face of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in Maharashtra, edging out the BJP and the Sangh Parivar. The Sena, with its wide social base and militant cadre, also espoused the cause of Hindutva more virulently than the BJP.

Address the deepfake problem

Regulators such as the Election Commission must act before this becomes an unmanageable crisis

War and sex have been pivotal drivers of consumer tech in the past. Satellite navigation, penicillin, microwave ovens and superglue, all trace their origins to battlefield imperatives. It is also no coincidence that for a couple of decades, the flagship consumer electronics show at Las Vegas happened alongside the adult entertainment expo, usually in the same building. The Internet owes a great deal to the United States military for its inception as well as the pornography industry for its rapid diffusion. More lately, a third influencer has joined these two drivers of consumer tech - politics. Political actors worldwide have begun adopting new technological solutions to substantially shape public opinion. Both porn and politics are at the vanguard of consumer demand that drives digital technologies.

The Barack Obama campaign of

2008 marked the beginning of this trend, with the Republican opposition coming a cropper against the former's social media onslaught. Subsequent electoral battles have seen favoured technologies of the season emerge, including targeted digital marketing through social media posts and tweets, and constructed echo chambers of viral political opinion using personal messaging apps. The recent video of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politician speaking in doctored English, and with an accent that may appeal to a certain voter base, has sparked allegations of resort to "deepfake" for the first time in Indian politics. This episode forces the question: Will deepfakes become new and shiny tech tools at the disposal of the propaganda industry? Deepfake videos are a substantial advance over clumsy image morphs of the nineties. They are

the outcome of using an array of artificial intelligence and deep learning solutions, collectively termed generative adversarial networks (GANs), to believably mimic the real world, be it images, music, speech or prose. As it happened with Nancy Pelosi recently, the higher the public availability of video footages of an individual, stronger the possibility of algorithmically generating her fake videos. There are three major problems with deepfakes that render them particularly worrisome. The first problem relates to the compelling narrative created in our minds by the moving image. For sure, from fake news to phishing emails, the world wide web is a crucible of fraud and deception. Yet, deepfake videos trouble us because internally, we place differential levels of trust in what we read and what we view. While the former is an expression of something inside a person's



mind, the latter is an outcome of physical movement. Because we are conscious of the fact that we have many more data points to visually assess and repudiate a fake in the latter scenario, we also place more confidence in our judgment. A fake well done will, therefore, attract much less self-doubt. The second problem is that refuting deepfake videos becomes far more difficult because of the manner in which GANs operate to create such videos. Even videos and audio clips doctored using much less advanced technologies are not easy to refute because of the

technical processes of alteration. The problem becomes worse with GANs. These adversarial networks deploy the architecture of two neural networks pitted against each other. The generator network analyses datasets from the real world and generates new data that appears to belong to these analysed datasets, while the discriminator network evaluates the generated data for authenticity. Through multiple cat-and-mouse rounds between the two networks, the generated data attains high levels of authenticity, spawning synthetic data that nearly matches real data.

SP heavyweight Azam Khan sent to jail in forgery case along with wife and son

In September 2019, the court had issued summons to all three lawmakers, after taking cognizance of the charge sheet filed by Rampur police, in which all three have been charged with forgery and cheating.



(News Agencies)- Senior Samajwadi Party leader and Lok Sabha MP Mohd Azam Khan was sent to jail on Wednesday along with his wife Tazeen Fatima, MLA from Rampur and son Mohd Abdullah Azam, MLA from Suar, after their bail application in a case related to forgery of age-proof documents of Abdullah Azam were rejected by a local court. The next hearing in the case would be on March 2. Former UP minister Khan, appeared before the court on Wednesday with his family after he was declared an absconder and the local court issued a non-bailable warrant against him and ordered

attachment of his properties on Tuesday.

In September 2019, the court had issued summons to all three lawmakers, after taking cognizance of the charge sheet filed by Rampur police, in which all three have been charged with forgery and cheating.

The court had directed the SHO of Ganj Kotwali police station, under whose jurisdiction the family resides, to ensure compliance of its order. Thereafter, the court issued non-bailable warrants against the Khans when they failed to present themselves before it.

With charges ranging from land grabbing, stealing buffaloes, goats, books and power thefts,

Khan has more than 88 lawsuits pending against him.

On January 3, 2019, local BJP leader Akash Saxena had lodged a complaint alleging Azam and his wife helped their son in obtaining two fake birth certificates - one from Lucknow and another from Rampur - following which an FIR was registered at Ganj Kotwali.

The Rampur police have already filed a charge sheet against Abdullah Azam for allegedly possessing two birth certificates and PAN card.

An MLA from Suar assembly seat in Rampur, Abdullah's election was set aside by the Allahabad high court on December 16, last year, for

being under-age on a petition moved by Nawab Kazim Ali Khan. He had accused Abdullah of filing false and forged documents related to his proof of age.

"His (Abdullah's) date of birth as per his educational certificates is January 1, 1993, but according to the birth certificate issued by the Lucknow Nagar Nigam, it is September 30, 1990," said Kazim. Khan and his family have been charge-sheeted by Rampur police for providing false information for getting the passport made and then misusing it under Sections 420, 467, 468 and 471 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 121 (1) A under the Passport Act.

With 5 questions, Sonia Gandhi launches sharp attack at Centre over Delhi violence

Congress president Sonia Gandhi also attacked Delhi government for failing to contain the violence.



(News Agencies)-Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday blamed both the Centre and the Delhi government for the violence in the national capital, and demanded immediate resignation of Union home minister Amit Shah for "colossal failure" to restore normalcy.

Addressing the media after a meeting of the party's working committee, the Congress' highest decision-making body, Sonia Gandhi said, "The violence was part of a systematic design; it was seen during Delhi Assembly elections too. The BJP leaders had vitiated the atmosphere of Delhi through their speeches during the elections."

"A BJP leader again made such a remark on Sunday when he gave a three-day ultimatum to the police," said Gandhi without naming BJP leader Kapil Mishra, who is under fire for remarks made in Northeast Delhi hours before violence broke out.

The Congress president also posed five questions for Centre: "Number 1, where was the Home Minister since Sunday and what was he doing? Number 2, where was the Delhi chief minister and what was he doing? Number 3, what information was shared by intelligence officials after Assembly polls and what action

was taken on that? Number 4, tell us about the number of policemen deployed in troubled areas when it was clear that situation was deteriorating, and finally, when the situation went out of hand, why wasn't the paramilitary force deployed?" said Gandhi in her first press conference in many years.

"It is the collective failure of the two governments that have resulted in a great tragedy in the capital city which threatens to become worse by the day," the CWC had said in a resolution adopted at its meeting held at the party headquarters in Delhi.

The meeting, chaired by Sonia Gandhi, was also attended by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and senior leaders AK Antony, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Jyotiraditya Scindia among others. However, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi was not present as he is currently abroad. The CWC resolution further said, "The Delhi Police has remained paralysed in the last 72 hours - 20 lives have been lost so far, including a head constable, and hundreds are in hospital, many with gunshot injuries."

The resolution termed the situation grave and sought urgent action, including asking the Delhi chief minister to remain visible in the affected areas and in constant communication with the people.

"Adequate security forces must be deployed immediately to bring the situation under control.

Northeast Delhi death toll climbs to 27; cops say 106 people arrested



(News Agencies)- Major clashes broke out between groups protesting in favour and against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in northeast Delhi on Sunday which progressed into full-fledged communal riots

At least 27 people, including one police man and an Intelligence Bureau officer, have been killed since Sunday in the violence that broke out in northeast Delhi, according to doctors from GTB (Guru Teg Bahadur) and Lok Nayak hospitals.

Major clashes broke out between groups protesting in favour and against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in northeast Delhi on Sunday which progressed into full-fledged communal riots.

Houses and vehicles in the area were torched and more than 250 people were injured in violence that took place in Jafrabad, Maujpur, Chand Bagh and other localities of Northeast Delhi.

Earlier today, the chief minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal demanded army deployment in the city to tackle the communal violence seen in the last three days.

"I again appeal to the home minister to call out the army to control the situation in Delhi," Kejriwal said in the assembly. The Delhi Police on Wednesday said that it has registered 18 FIRs so far in the northeast violence matter. Around 106 people have been arrested in connection with the incident, police further said.

Shaheen Bagh debate deteriorated into something else, says SC; puts off hearing

The two-judge bench of Supreme Court will hear the Shaheen Bagh case on March 23, when the court reopens after the Holi vacation.

(News Agencies)- A two-judge bench of the Supreme Court on Wednesday put off hearing on petitions that wanted people protesting at Shaheen Bagh against the amended citizenship law to be removed and the two-month long road blockade ended. Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and KM Joseph deferred the hearing after oral observations on the violence that has erupted in east Delhi over the last few days, holding that atmosphere isn't conducive at present to proceed with this case.

The two-judge bench will hear the case on March 23, when the court reopens after the Holi vacation.

"Colours of holi represent the difference in opinion which can co-exist", Justice SK Kaul remarked.

"The debate (around the Shaheen Bagh blockade) has deteriorated into something else. And this is only an unfortunate example," the judge observed, a reference to the violence that erupted in one pocket of east Delhi on Sunday and spread rapidly over the next two days.

By this morning, authorities said 20 people had been killed and over 250 injured.

"It is time for all parties and stakeholders to lower their temperatures," Justice SK Kaul added.

But the judges made it clear that they confine the hearing to Shaheen Bagh road blockade and not go into the violence in other parts of Delhi. The bench, however, described the violence in east Delhi as "really unfortunate" but "this bench will not go into that".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta



stated that police force should not be demoralised and pointed out that a police officer was nearly lynched. "I request your lordship not to get into all this", he said, on references to Delhi violence. The judges continued,

elaborating on what the bench felt had been the problem with the police response to the clashes that started on Sunday and escalated into a full-scale communal riot, Delhi's worst in at least three decades.

Intelligence Bureau officer, 26, killed in mob attack in Delhi's Chand Bagh, body dumped in drain



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal called the situation in Delhi "alarming", and urged the Centre to call in the army to stem the protests. The CM said he will be writing a letter to the Centre for the same.

and did not let anyone to come near Ankit, said his brother. His father Devendra Sharma is an Assistant Sub-Inspector with Delhi Police. "Such a tragic loss of life. The culprits must not be spared. 20 people have already lost their lives. So painful to watch people of Delhi suffering. Praying that we recover from this tragedy soon n work together to undo damage done to people n communities," Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Twitter, condoling Sharma's death. Sharma is the latest casualty in the violence which has so far claimed 20 lives and left more than 250 injured. The protest started on the weekend,

but escalated on Monday. The groups protesting for and against the CAA went on rampage on the streets of Jafrabad, Maujpur, Chand Bagh and other localities; they attacked the locals and pelted stones at policemen stationed there. Some vehicles and houses were also torched. The mob kept roaming on the road underneath the Jafrabad Metro station with swords and guns in hands. More than a dozen policemen were also injured while trying to control the mob. The city administration and Centre immediately sprung into action and ordered a series of steps to control the mayhem. The Delhi government activated the

peace committees and asked them to speak to the locals to shun violence. The Centre, which controls law and order in Delhi, deployed more policemen and clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal have made appeals for calm after reports of fresh violence on Wednesday morning. Security personnel, including paramilitary forces, conducted flag marches in the riot-hit areas and saw that the road where Ankit Sharma's body was found littered with stones and glass shards, giving an indication of the heavy stone pelting in the area.

(News Agencies)-An Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer was killed in Northeast Delhi on Tuesday, during the national capital's worst violence in last two decades. The incident came to light on Wednesday when the body of 26-year-old Ankit Sharma was pulled out of a drain in Chand Bagh. Sharma worked as security assistant in the IB, said his brother Ankur. He

returned from work at 4:30 pm on Tuesday and went out to see that was happening in the locality when he was caught by those who were protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA, his brother added. Sharma was stabbed and dumped in the drain, said Ankur, adding that the protesters caught his friends too who went to save Ankit. The protesters kept firing relentlessly

'Peace and harmony central to our ethos': PM Modi tweets on Delhi violence, appeals for calm

PM Modi underlined that it is necessary to maintain "calm and normalcy" at the earliest and said agencies on the ground were working to ensure "peace".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an appeal to the protesters in Delhi to remain calm and maintain peace and brotherhood at all times.

"Peace and harmony are central to our ethos. I appeal to my sisters and brothers of Delhi to maintain peace and brotherhood at all times. It is important that there is calm and normalcy is restored at the earliest," PM Modi said on Twitter. "Had an extensive review on the situation

prevailing in various parts of Delhi. Police and other agencies are working on the ground to ensure peace and normalcy," the Prime Minister further said in another tweet.

The tweets come hours after both Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court expressed disappointment over the functioning of Delhi Police. While the Supreme Court panned the police for "lack of professionalism", the Delhi high court said it is appalled by the

state of affairs of Delhi Police. The Opposition too had attacked the government for the loss of lives in Delhi. The Congress held a meeting of its highest decision-making body, the working committee, and blamed the Centre for the "colossal failure". The Centre has been regularly monitoring situation in Delhi with Home Minister Amit Shah holding three meetings in a span of 24 hours. National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval also took stock of the situation and even visited



the violence-hit areas along with Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik. Doval has been given the charge to oversee Delhi Police's efforts

to maintain peace in the area. Twenty people have been killed in the violence which began on Monday. More than 250 are injured.

Children will be taught not to watch porn sites: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar

The CM dwelt on the subject while replying to a discussion on the motion of thanks on the Governor's address to the joint session of state legislature on February 24, 2020.

(News Agencies)- Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday said that children would be taught to keep off from the porn sites, which he said was a leading cause of crime against women. The awareness drive would be carried under "Unnayan" scheme, already in action in the state-run schools across Bihar, he said. The CM dwelt on the subject while replying to a discussion on the motion of thanks on the Governor's address to the joint session of state legislature on February 24, 2020. Under the programme, students of 9th and 10th standards in state-run

schools are imparted lessons using information technology as supplement to classroom teaching in a bid to make learning more interesting as well as receptive. The Unnayan scheme, which was initially started in Banka district, has been extended across the state from September 5, 2019. "Dangerous and obscene contents are being watched on porn sites across the world. People are viewing vulgar stuff on mobile phone. Children are becoming victims of it... We are against porn sites and have written to the Centre for a complete ban on it," Kumar said. In the midst of nationwide

outrage over rising cases of gangrape across the country, Kumar had on December 16, 2019 written to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to ban all "porn sites and inappropriate content" available on internet. The chief minister also made rich reference of government's efforts in the field of environment protection and achievements under "seven resolves" of good governance. Talking about "Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali" environment campaign, Kumar said his government has taken a decision to hold debate and discussion on every first Tuesday of a month on



"environment protection and climate change" in schools, colleges and government institutions. Besides, painting and essay competition will be conducted in schools, he added. Some 2.51 crore saplings will be planted on a single day on Prithvi Diwas (Earth day) on August 9, 2020, with an objective to expand

state's green cover, he added. Kumar talked in detail about progress of the projects under the "seven resolves", majority of which have been completed while some others like piped drinking water and construction of concrete drainage will be finished by June this year.

IAF relief flight from China brings back 76 Indians, citizens from 7 nations



(News Agencies)- An IAF C17 transport aircraft evacuated a group of 112 Indians and foreign nationals from the coronavirus outbreak epicentre, Wuhan, early on Thursday ending a week-long wait for their anxious families back home and putting a close to a terse exchange between New Delhi and Beijing over delaying this

flight. Besides the Indians, the US-made IAF relief aircraft also evacuated more than dozen nationals from seven countries: Bangladesh, South Africa, Madagascar, Myanmar and Maldives, US and China. The majority among the foreigners were Bangladeshi students. A group of OCI card-holding Chinese citizens were

The people brought back are expected to undergo a 14-day quarantine in India like their previous batches to ensure that they are cleared of the COVID-19 virus.

also on the flight. "76 Indian nationals are returning home on this flight, which also has on board 23 nationals from Bangladesh, 6 from China, 2 each from Myanmar and Maldives and one each from South Africa, USA and Madagascar," Indian ambassador to China Vikram Misri said. The flight was delayed on Wednesday night after a group of passengers had to be repeatedly tested after they exhibited fever syndromes; all registered passengers were finally allowed to board the flight. All the evacuees are likely to go through mandatory 14-day quarantine at facilities set up in New Delhi. India has already

evacuated 647 nationals and seven Maldivians in two Air India flights in the first week of February. Earlier in the day, the Indian flight came in with 15 tonnes of medical supplies to aid China in its fight against covid-19 outbreak, which has so far killed 2718 people and infected 78196 more in mainland China. The relief flight was expected a week ago but had to be postponed because India received the clearance for the aircraft to land in Wuhan today only on Monday. An Indian government statement said the medical assistance comprised "...masks, gloves and other emergency medical equipment". "This assistance has been

provided in the wake of the Coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak in China and the request by China to provide supplies such as masks and medical equipment," it added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had written to President Xi Jinping on February 8, 2020 expressing India's solidarity "...with the people and Government of China and also offered assistance to China in this hour of need as a gift. The medical supplies will help augment China's efforts to control the outbreak of this infection which has been declared as a Public Health Emergency by the World Health Organisation," the statement added.

Woman gangraped by miscreants who had come to loot valuables

A woman was allegedly gang-raped by 7 persons during a dacoity incident in an abandoned stone crusher of Rourkela town, police said. Police said though the incident took place on February 23, the matter came to light after a complaint regarding the incident was lodged at the Brahmani Tarang police station on February 25 night. The miscreants had barged into a house near a stone crusher unit in Gotidhara area of Brahmani Tarang police station on night of February 23. The

miscreants first overpowered the caretaker of the stone crusher who was sleeping on the ground floor of the house and then sexually assaulted his wife who was fast asleep on the first floor of the building. The miscreants then decamped with goods worth lakhs of rupees. The woman, who has been admitted in a hospital is reported the incident after she recovered a little. Rourkela SP K Siva Subramani said no one have been arrested so far in the incident.

Police said though the incident took place on February 23, the matter came to light after a complaint regarding the incident was lodged at the Brahmani Tarang police station on February 25 night.



China cannot dictate terms to a free media in Nepal. Can PM Oli resist

As Beijing always took to diplomatic recourse, its objection to a critical article in a Nepali daily is unusual

(News Agencies)- On February 19, which coincided with the Democracy Day of Nepal, Nepali media faced an unusual situation emanating from a strongly worded statement from the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu. It said that an article reproduced by The Kathmandu Post on February 18 from The Korea Herald written by former United States ambassador to Nato, Ivo Daalder, was published with "malicious intention", and that it "deliberately smeared the efforts of the Chinese government and people" fighting the new coronavirus epidemic. The article critical of China's response to the Covid-19 also carried a picture of China's leader Mao Zedong on the country's 1,000-yuan banknote wearing a mask. The embassy accused the newspaper for having "viciously attacked the political system of China." But the statement did not end there. By personally targeting the Post's outgoing editor, Anup Kaphle, it said that there were "ulterior motives" behind the

consistent attacks on China, and that "It is regrettable that Mr Anup Kaphle, chief editor of The Kathmandu Post has always been biased on China-related issues." In most inappropriate and undiplomatic language, the statement further read, "This time he (Kaphle) went as far as disregarding the facts and becoming a parrot of some anti-China forces and, therefore, his ulterior purpose is destined to failure," adding without specifics, "The Chinese Embassy in Nepal has made solemn representations to the newspaper and himself and reserves the right of further action." The threat was immediately condemned by a group of 17 editors of Nepal's newspapers and magazines who said the statement violated "diplomatic norms."

This was unusual and surprising because so far China has always opted for diplomatic routes through the home and foreign ministries to express its unhappiness over certain events in Nepal. China is also considered to be a pragmatic

player in Nepal, and the public opinion is one of a "friendly and supportive" neighbour. Chinese ambassador to Nepal, How Yanqi, who is quite popular in the country due to her fluency in the Nepali language and her affection for Nepali music and culture, immediately tweeted the statement that provoked a fierce debate on the social media with many calling it a challenge to Nepal's sovereignty and an interference in the functioning of the free media. Some even asked what kind of backlash would be seen in Kathmandu if such a statement was issued by the Indian embassy given the past experiences and in light of India being perceived as an interfering neighbour. But there were strong opposing voices too that questioned the rationale of the article in the first place at a time when a close neighbour "is passing through a difficult time." But clearly this is a sign of high-handedness on the part of a diplomatic mission, emboldened by its high comfort



level with the ruling establishment in Kathmandu. This also highlights how Chinese engagement with a small country is leading to its diplomacy becoming arrogant. There is no evidence of such a statement from the Chinese embassy in Seoul where the article was first published. But in the case of Nepal, this stems from the efforts of the communist leaders to bend over backwards for China in order to replace over-dependency on India.

Nepal has over the last few years developed deeper bilateral ties with China, a country which had for decades limited its role as a friendly country and being happy with Nepal taking the One China policy and restricting activities of some 20,000 Tibetan refugees present in the country. But slowly,

and especially from 2015, the year Nepal was wrecked by the devastating earthquake followed by a border blockade due to anti-Constitution protests by the people of the Terai region, China-Nepal relations moved from a developmental partnership to a strategic one. From being a signatory to the Belt and Road Initiative, Nepal now has access to seven transit points and three land ports in China. Besides crucial infrastructure development in Nepal, the two neighbours have committed a cooperation in wide-ranging sectors from energy to culture, tourism, education, traditional medicine, and others, thereby making bilateral relations a comprehensive and an all-encompassing one.

India must support its allies in Kabul

New Delhi must also expand its equities among different political constellations in Afghanistan



(News Agencies)-On February 21, India's ambassador to Kabul met Afghanistan's vice-president Amrullah Saleh to reiterate "India's commitment to working with the new government and democratic polity in strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership". The meeting was timed parallel to the announcement of the United States (US)-Afghan Taliban deal, commencement of the "reduction of violence" period, an expectation of intra-Afghan talks,

and President Donald Trump's India visit. Loaded with strategic intent, India's decision to support President Ashraf Ghani underlines the central driver of its Afghanistan policy: To strike a continuing strategic balance between Kabul and Islamabad. Over the last decade, in the light of Afghanistan's structural weakness vis-à-vis Pakistan, New Delhi has focused on supporting Kabul in its struggle to influence, however tenuously, the terms of talks with the Taliban. In this

context, India faced twin inter-related dilemmas. One, how to ensure political coherence in Kabul where the president and the (now former) CEO Abdullah Abdullah are at loggerheads? This is important, because a split in Afghanistan's mainstream body politic will weaken the government's hand in its negotiations with the Afghan Taliban. Two, should it engage with the Afghan Taliban or not? Regardless of Kabul's performance in the expected intra-Afghan dialogue, the Taliban is likely to become part of the government in some shape or form. On the first dilemma, India has firmly rejected Abdullah's idea of creating a parallel government with support from former vice-president Abdul Rashid Dostum. This decision, and its promptness, has little to do with the perceived legitimacy of the Independent Election Commission

of Afghanistan. It has to do with the fact that Ghani enjoys relatively more US support than Abdullah, has a team that India can trust to secure its interests better, and that New Delhi simply cannot afford Kabul's collapse days before the intra-Afghan talks begin. If anything, India will endeavour to strengthen Ghani's hand in the intra-Afghan talks. Short of putting boots on the ground, New Delhi might further increase political, diplomatic, financial, and intelligence support for Kabul in the coming weeks. During the negotiations phase, India is unlikely to find a better interlocutor than vice-president Saleh - an established Pakistan critic, a staunch India ally, and a tough negotiator with allies and adversaries alike. Even if the desire for political coherence in Kabul was necessary for India to support Ghani, the presence and actions of Dostum gave the decision strategic sufficiency. New Delhi has little to be wary of

Abdullah and his team given how closely aligned they have been to the country. But Dostum's posture brings back painful memories. In April 1992, the Jowzjani militia led by Dostum scuttled India's plan to secretly exfiltrate its ally and then-president Mohammad Najibullah. Shortly after, the mujahideen took over Kabul. In this context, Dostum's recent manoeuvres to dislocate the government are highly unwelcome, even if India retains sympathy for Abdullah and might be pressing him behind-the-scenes to stand-down. But the fact remains that there are limits to how much India can support Kabul given its capacity limitations, Kabul's administrative dysfunction, and its toxic dependency on external aid. So the second dilemma remains. What must India do about the imminent comeback of the Pakistan-backed Afghan Taliban; engage with it or not?

Ex-vice president Joe Biden wins key endorsement ahead of South Carolina primary



(News Agencies)- Senator Elizabeth Warren dominated a key debate for the seven Democrats in fray for the presidential nomination Tuesday night ahead of the pivotal South Carolina primary, but former Vice-President Joe Biden picked up a crucial endorsement the morning after, bolstering his chances in the heavily African-American state. Senator Bernie Sanders, the frontrunner who is seeking to consolidate his grip on the race, was the target of attacks from all rivals who questioned his

electability as a socialist, policies and, echoing a growing concern in the party, the impact his nomination will have on congressional races. "I'm hearing my name mentioned a little bit tonight," the senator said less than 15 minutes into the debate. "I wonder why." Warren attacked her rivals with the same studied aggression as in the previous debate, targeting billionaire Michael Bloomberg specially, But experts and commentators are asking if she can convert these performances into nominating

contest victories - she finished a poor fourth in Nevada after dominating the debate in the lead-up to it. She has not come close to the top in any of the four caucuses and primaries held so far. Warren is fighting to stay in the race, as former mayor Pete Buttigieg - who has fared better in the primaries with a tie and a close second finish; Senator Amy Klobuchar and billionaire Tom Steyer. Bloomberg has not contested any yet. Biden finished second in Nevada. But he is hoping to take charge of the race as the frontrunner he had been for a month until upstaged recently by Sanders. Heavily black state of South Carolina is where he plans to turn around his fortunes, and picked up the endorsement Wednesday of Jim Clyburn, a senior and influential African American congressman. "I know Joe. We know Joe. But most importantly, Joe knows us," Clyburn said, announcing his endorsement.

Novel coronavirus carrier faces jail for lying about location in Singapore



(News Agencies)-A Chinese national who contracted coronavirus has been charged by Singaporean authorities for allegedly giving false information about his whereabouts in the city-state and could face up to six months in jail. Singapore has won international praise for its fastidious approach in tackling the virus - which has included using police cameras to help track suspect carriers. The wealthy island state, an important regional financial centre and transport hub, has confirmed 91 cases so far. The health ministry on Wednesday said it had charged a 38-year-old man from Wuhan,

the Chinese city where the virus first surfaced late last year, and his wife who resides in Singapore for allegedly providing false information to authorities about their movements for contact tracing. The husband had been confirmed to be infected with the virus in late January, and has since recovered, while his wife had been quarantined due to her close contact with him. The health ministry said "detailed investigations" had established their true movements and they were charged "in view of the potentially serious repercussions of the false information...and the risk they could have posed to public health".

Pakistan confirms first two cases of coronavirus; says 'no need to panic'



(News Agencies)- Pakistan on Wednesday confirmed its first two cases of the novel coronavirus as the deadly infection reached the country despite hectic efforts to keep it away. Pakistan on Wednesday confirmed its first two cases of the novel coronavirus as the deadly infection reached the country despite hectic efforts to keep it away. "I can confirm first two cases of coronavirus in Pakistan. Both cases are being taken care of according to clinical standard

protocols & both of them are stable," Dr Zafar Mirza, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health, tweeted. He said there was "no need to panic" as the "things are under control." Mirza said that he was currently at the country's Taftan border crossing with Iran and would return to Islamabad on Thursday and address a press conference. His tweet came moments after the Sindh health department said that a 22-year young man had tested positive for the coronavirus in Karachi.

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In the name of God, Delhi: The Anatomy of a Riot

Several journalists who were covering the riots were beaten or heckled, their mobile phones and cameras snatched away. Some were asked to prove if they were Hindus and were let off only if they agreed not to write anything against the rioters.

The arson went on for three days before a shoot-at-sight order by the police was given in the riot-hit areas. However, according to eyewitnesses, despite the order, supporters of the BJP continued to gather and chant inflammatory slogans.

From Clashes to a Pogrom

The violence broke out in Jaffrabad, Babarpur, Brahmपुर, Gorakh Park, Maujpur, Bhajanpura, Kabir Nagar, Chand Bag, Gokulpuri, Karawal Nagar, Khajoori Khas, and Kardam Puri areas after BJP leader Kapil Mishra issued a "three-day ultimatum" to police to clear a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by women at the Jaffrabad Metro Station.

Mishra said, "We are giving Delhi Police three days to clear the roads in Jaffrabad and Chand Bagh. We won't listen to you [police] after this." The video of his speech went viral on social media; in the footage, a police officer could be seen standing beside Mishra and smiling while Mishra made the threat.

Women protesters had blocked the road at Jaffrabad on Saturday night to protest the controversial CAA and to support a strike called by Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad on Sunday. The protest at Jaffrabad was meant to replicate the women-led protest against the CAA, which has been going on for two months at Shaheen Bagh. Just before the New Delhi elections, several BJP leaders had given incendiary speeches against the anti-CAA protesters, calling them "traitors" and "terrorists." A majority of the protesters are Muslims.

Union Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, from the ruling BJP, raised the slogan of "Desh ke gaddaro ko, goli maaro s***o ko (shoot the traitors of India)" at a crowded election rally in Delhi. A few days later, BJP member of parliament Parvesh Verma addressed an election gathering by saying, "Lakhs of people gather there [Shaheen Bagh]. They will enter your

houses, rape your sisters and daughters, kill them. There's time today... Modi-Ji and Amit Shah won't come to save you tomorrow." In terms of repercussions, the MPs merely had their names dropped from the "star campaigners" list at the order of the Election Commission of India.

During the Delhi elections, the main poll plank of the BJP was to create a divide between the two religious communities, pitting Hindus and Muslims against one another. The party's social media campaign strategy focused on projecting the BJP as the protector of Hindus; as a corollary, anybody who opposes the CAA was painted as a traitor who should be driven out of the country. Union Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah went on to say, "When you press the button on February 8 [the polling day], do so with such anger that its current is felt at Shaheen Bagh." The BJP lost the elections to the incumbent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) but managed to retain eight seats out of 70. The recent riots broke out in the constituencies that the BJP had won in the Delhi elections.

Hours after his "ultimatum," the BJP's Mishra, infamous for his provocative speeches, tweeted asking people to assemble at Maujpur at 3 p.m. to "give an answer to Jaffrabad" just a kilometer away.

Supporters of the BJP gathered in large numbers with saffron flags (a symbol of Hinduism). They started raising slogans such as "Jai Shree Ram (Hail Lord Ram)," "Har Has Mahadev (Hail the Shiva)," "shoot the traitors," and "Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega wahi desh par raaj karega (Only those who talk of Hindu wellbeing will rule this country)." The harassment of Muslim residents of the locality, who had nothing to do with the CAA protests, started long before the actual stone-pelting began. Nobody knows who threw the first stone but soon, stone pelting started between both the groups from different communities. Police fired teargas but the violence did not stop.

Another video, fact-checked by AltNews, an independent platform that uses data forensics to verify viral content, showed police officers beating a group of

injured men lying on the road and forcing them to sing the national anthem. One of the officers who was recording a video egged a man, hardly conscious, to sing the national anthem "properly." The Delhi Police comes under the jurisdiction of the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), headed by the BJP's Amit Shah..

Several journalists reporting from the ground reported that the police did not stop the rioting BJP supporters and even provided them with cover while they continued to pelt stones, burn property, and attack people. Amit Mishra, a member of AAP, tweeted a video from Mustafabad where rioters were seen barging into homes chanting "Jai Shree Ram" even when shoot-at-sight orders were in force. In several localities, police were also seen breaking the CCTV cameras installed at street squares.

At least two mosques in Mustafabad were vandalized and attacked with stones. There were several children inside one of the mosques and they were rescued by the residents. Even the children had been beaten with rods and had serious injuries.

Of those who lost their lives, a few could be identified, including police head constable Rattan Lal, who died of a bullet injury. Two policemen have received grievous injuries.

Intelligence bureau officer Ankit Sharma's body was found in a drain. His father accused Tahir Hussain, an AAP councilor, of kidnaping and killing his son. The father of Rahul Solanki, another victim, blamed BJP leader Kapil Mishra for instigating violence in the area that claimed his son's life.

Supporters of the BJP blocked the main road, cutting the localities off, and did not let ambulances reach the riot-hit areas. Several local Hindu residents helped their Muslim neighbors by taking them to hospitals since the rioters only let Hindus pass.

A minor boy who had gone out to get food for his family was shot in the crossfire and had to wait for an ambulance for six hours with a bullet still in his body. A police vehicle finally took him to the hospital, where he had to wait again for treatment.

In several other localities, people were either locked inside their homes or were not able to return. In Gamri extension, near Khajoori

Khas, an 85-year-old woman burned to death when a mob of 100 rioters torched her house. Her family members managed to escape just in time but she was bedridden and could not be rescued.

Even as barbarity played out on the streets, there were hardly any steps taken by the leaders of AAP and the Congress to help people in the riot-hit areas. When members of the Jamia Coordination Committee gathered in front of the residence of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, police dispersed them with water cannons.

Over a dozen journalists were attacked and intimidated while they were covering the Delhi riots. Akash Napa of JK 24 was shot at by a mob at Maujpur and was admitted to the GTB Hospital with a bullet lodged in his body.

Saurabh Shukla, Arvind Gunasekar, and Runjhun Sharma of NDTV were surrounded by BJP supporters while they were filming a mosque being vandalized and burnt at Gokulpuri. Both Shukla and Gunasekar were beaten badly. Sharma was asked to leave but she refused and pleaded with the mob to let her colleagues go. It was only after the mob saw the Hindu names on the journalists' identity cards that they were let go - and even then Gunasekar was forced to delete the videos first.

"Hindu ho? Bach gaye (You are saved because you are Hindu)," was what a rioter told Shivnarayan Rajpurohit of Indian Express after he was attacked by a mob. His diary and phone were taken away, his glasses were broken, and he was slapped twice for reporting from a Hindu-dominated area.

"I was attacked by pro CAA protestors for reporting facts. A group of men armed with sticks and bricks cornered me to hit me, I pleaded them and ran for my life," tweeted Parvina Purkayastha of Times Now.

Sreya Chatterjee, a freelance journalist, tweeted: "Yes! I was on the ground where Pro-CAA protestors burned houses. Broke shops. Started pelting stones towards Anti-CAA protestors. This was before Anti-CAA protestors reacted."

Anindya Chattopadhyay, a photojournalist with Times of

India, wrote a first-person account in which he narrated how he was attacked by the rioters, who threatened to take off his pants to check if he was a Muslim.

Several other journalists were abused and intimidated and were asked to prove their religion. They reported extensively on how a clash turned into a riot and then a pogrom.

Trump Praises Modi for Religious Tolerance

Even as the violence raged in Delhi, U.S. President Trump was basking in the warm welcome from Prime Minister Modi.

The tryst of two political behemoths was meant to be a spectacle. Modi reciprocated the validation he received at the "Howdy Modi" event in September last year with "Namaste Trump," which ate away approximately \$13 million from Gujarat's annual budget.

For the event, Trump was welcomed at the world's largest cricket stadium, Motera, in Ahmedabad. While the two recounted their friendship during "Namaste Trump," a swathe of the northeastern side of India's capital burned.

The Trump welcome party continued unabated, despite the widespread violence.

"I don't want to say anything on CAA. It is up to India. I hope it will take the right decision for its people," Trump said in a press conference at the end of his two-day visit. When asked about the Delhi violence, he said he "didn't discuss individual attacks."

The Morning After

It was only after Trump's departure that the social media-savvy prime minister tweeted: "Peace and harmony are central to our ethos. I appeal to my sisters and brothers of Delhi to maintain peace and brotherhood at all times. It is important that there is calm and normalcy is restored at the earliest."

The delay is not as odd as it might seem. Modi likes to finish the task at hand before paying attention to other issues. After all, he made sure to complete shooting on the "Man vs Wild" television special with the team of the Discovery Channel even on the day 48 Central Reserve Police Force personnel lost their lives in Pulwama.

On Tuesday night, however, Home Minister Shah convened a

"high-level" meeting with his political opponent chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and Modi's national security adviser, Ajit Doval, was sent to the riot-hit areas to assess the situation.

Doval came back to say "the situation was under control," even when people kept reporting attacks and life in northeast Delhi was at a complete standstill. On Tuesday night, rumors of stone-pelting emerged from Laxmi Nagar area, a densely packed market area in east Delhi. BJP member of the legislative assembly Abhay Verma claimed he reached the spot to "diffuse tensions" but he along with his supports were seen marching in the area raising provocative slogans such as "shoot the traitors."

Rays of Hope

At a time when the riot-hit citizens have nowhere to go, several Gurdwaras in north Delhi, including the prominent Majnu Ka Tila Gurdwara, opened their door to people fleeing the violence.

In other localities, Hindu and Muslim residents stood up for each other. In Seelampur, Dalits blocked the roads against mobs and sheltered their Muslim neighbors.

In Bhajanpura, Chandbag, Hindu residents narrated how their Muslim neighbors saved a temple from being vandalized by outsiders. Rajendra Kumar Mishra, a resident of the area, told BBC that Chandbag is 70 percent Muslim households. Residents, both Hindus and Muslims, formed watch parties to save each other from violence.

In Brijpuri area, Hindu and Muslim residents took out a unity march condemning the violence and chanting slogans that they will not let their locality be destroyed.

As violent riots tore through the northeastern part of the city, several individuals came forward to provide shelter and medical assistance to injured people.

After all the government machinery had failed, it was Delhi High Court that

convened a midnight hearing at 12:30 a.m. on Wednesday and ordered the police to ensure the safe passage of injured victims to the hospitals.

The court convened at the residence of Justice Murlidhar after advocate Suroor Mander explained that 22 people were trapped in Al-Hind Hospital. On Wednesday morning, the court convened again and pulled up the Delhi police for their failure during the riots. The court also registered first information reports (FIRs) against the three BJP leaders, Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur, and Parvesh Verma, for inciting violence.

The court said it cannot "allow another 1984," referring to the anti-Sikh riots after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was killed. It ordered authorities to scale up efforts to help riot victims.

(By Soma Basu, for The Diplomat)

The Roots of the Delhi Riots: A Fiery Speech and an Ultimatum

A local Hindu politician told the police to evict a group of Muslim protesters or he and his men would. Now, 25 have died in some of the worst violence in years.

New Delhi - To many in the eastern Delhi neighborhood where a convulsion of religious violence erupted this week, it all began with one man. Kapil Mishra, a local politician with India's leading Hindu nationalist party, had just lost an election. Acquaintances in the area, which now feels like a war zone, said he had been looking for a way to bounce back.

Mr. Mishra, 39, is known for his outspoken views and flexible politics. As an upper-caste Hindu from a political family, he had worked for Amnesty International and Greenpeace, and risen in the ranks of one of India's most progressive political organizations. But several years ago he shifted allegiance across the political spectrum to the Bharatiya Janata Party, India's current governing party, which has deep

roots in Hindu supremacist ideology. On Sunday, he appeared at a rally against a group of protesters (most of them women) who were objecting to a new citizenship law widely seen as discriminatory toward Muslims. There he vented his anger in a fiery speech in which he issued an ultimatum to the police: either clear out the demonstrators, who were blocking a main road, or he and his followers would do it themselves. Within hours, the worst Hindu-Muslim violence in India in years was exploding. Gangs of Hindus and Muslims fought each other with swords and bats, shops burst into flames, chunks of bricks sailed through the air, and mobs rained blows on cornered men. Many Indians, including Hindus, believe that Mr. Mishra and his Hindu nationalist supporters have weaponized a very dangerous mood. In a Hindu majority nation, with a Hindu nationalist government that has allowed the killers of Muslims to go unpunished, fear has been growing that violent Hindu extremism could spin out of control.

"Kapil Mishra should be in jail," said Rupesh Bathla, a businessman who says he has known Mr. Mishra since they were teenagers. "He started communal riots. He planted hatred in other people's hearts."

By Wednesday, at least 25 people had died, hospital officials said, most from gunshot wounds. Several witnesses said that the live fire came from the direction of the police officers, and the dead included Hindus as well as Muslims.

Though property belonging to Hindus was burned, the destruction was much heavier on the Muslim side. In Muslim areas, shop after shop was destroyed and entire markets were burned down. Dozens of Muslim residents have accused police officers of standing

passively by while the destruction was underway. On Wednesday, the few people out on the streets walked quietly past the blackened car hulks and smashed homes. The whiff of charred materials still hung in the air, in what some scholars said was an eerie echo of previous religious bloodletting in India.

"On the whole, the Delhi riots of this week are now beginning to look like a pogrom, à la Gujarat 2002 and Delhi 1984," said Ashutosh Varshney, the director of the Center for Contemporary South Asia at Brown University.

While the death toll is nowhere near that of those earlier bouts, the episodes shared a disturbing similarity, Mr. Varshney said, with "mobs unleashing savage violence while the cops look away, or join the mob, instead of neutrally intervening to crush the riot."

With the violence cooling down for the moment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hosted President Trump as the fighting raged, broke his silence on Wednesday after Mr. Trump had departed, urging people in a Twitter post to "maintain peace and brotherhood at all times."

He added, "Peace and harmony are central to our ethos." As night fell on Wednesday, a few sporadic attacks were reported, but no large-scale mayhem. The police, armed now with assault rifles, had been reinforced with paramilitary troops.

In the area that suffered the worst in the fighting, many residents laid blame on Mr. Mishra, who declined a request for an interview. But in a Twitter post, he said, "It's not a crime to ask for blocked roads to be opened. It's not a crime to tell the truth. I don't fear this massive hate campaign against me."

Mr. Mishra had said in his speech that he did not want to create trouble before Mr. Trump left the country on Tuesday night. But as Sunday evening approached, gangs of Hindu and Muslim men

began throwing rocks at one another, and that quickly spawned far greater violence.

At a court hearing on the riots on Wednesday, a judge pressed police officials about why they had not watched videos of Mr. Mishra's incendiary speech - an indication, the judge implied, that they had not seriously investigated the sources of the violence.

"This is really concerning," said the judge, S. Muralidhar, according to LiveLaw, a legal news website. "There are so many TVs in your office, how can a police officer say that he hasn't watched the videos? I'm really appalled by the state of affairs of the Delhi Police."

Mr. Mishra's supporters said the majority of people in the community had backed his effort to evict the protesters. "How could our kids get to school with those protesters blocking the road?" said Alok Kumar Gupta, a retired military officer who lives near the protest area. "Kapil Mishra was only trying to help."

But others wonder if Mr. Mishra was trying to make a name for himself in Hindu nationalist circles. He had been elected to the local assembly in Delhi in 2015 from the progressive Aam Aadmi Party, but eventually fell out with his colleagues and defected to Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P.

He then started espousing Hindu nationalist views and vilifying Muslims, more out of political expediency than true belief, argued Mr. Bathla, who claims to have known Mr. Mishra for 30 years.

"When he was younger he wasn't like that," he said. "He was chill." Just a few weeks before the Feb. 8 local assembly elections, Mr. Mishra posted what was widely viewed as an incendiary Twitter message, framing the contest as "India vs Pakistan."

After he lost the race, several people said he took the hard line against the mostly Muslim protesters as a way to

improve his standing in the B.J.P. "He wasn't getting much attention from the higher-ups," said Hasrat Ali, a legal officer who lives the same area where Mr. Mishra's family lived for many years. "This was all a plan to get a firmer position."

At least one other politician in Mr. Modi's party is now distancing himself from Mr. Mishra. "Whoever has done this, strict action must be taken," said the politician, Gautam Gambhir, a member of Parliament from the area. "Kapil Mishra's speech is not acceptable."

Protests against the new citizenship law, which makes it easier for non-Muslim migrants to become full-fledged Indian citizens, have flared intermittently since December. There has been a subtext of religious differences, with most of India's Muslims objecting to the law and many Hindus supporting it. But this past week was the first time the protests turned large numbers of Hindus and Muslims violently against one another. Most of India's Muslims distrust the B.J.P. and point to the sectarian killing frenzy that claimed the lives of more than 1,000 people, almost 800 of them Muslims, in Gujarat State in 2002 when Mr. Modi was its chief minister. Mr. Modi and his state government were accused of quietly ordering the police to stand by as the violence raged. He has denied those accusations, and in 2012, an investigative panel for the Supreme Court found no evidence to support them. But until he became prime minister in 2014, Mr. Modi was banned from entering the United States. And since he came to power, violence against Muslims, including mob lynchings, has increased sharply. Muslim families in northeast Delhi are now abandoning their homes. Several said in interviews that they no longer felt safe. Asgar Ali, whose grocery

shop was burned to the ground on Tuesday, said there was no difference between police officers and Hindu mobs. He said he was fleeing his home, where he had lived for 20 years, knowing that he might never return.

"I built this house with my blood and sweat," Mr. Ali said. "Now, I have been reduced to a homeless pauper. I have lost everything."

(By Jeffrey Gettleman, Suhasini Raj and Sameer Yasir for New York Times, Shalini Venugopal contributed reporting).

New Delhi Streets Turn Into Battleground, Hindus vs. Muslims

As President Trump toured India's capital, at least 11 people were killed in mob violence that upended a working-class neighborhood.

The police patrolling a road on Tuesday night after riots broke out in New Delhi. Credit...Atul Loke for The New York Times
NEW DELHI - A mob of Hindu men, their foreheads marked by a saffron stripe, angrily patrolled the streets carrying iron bars, clubs and a bright blue aluminum baseball bat. They were itching for a fight.

The streets in the New Delhi neighborhood were littered with scraps of bricks. All shops were closed and almost no women or children were out - except for two Hindu women brandishing sticks and threatening journalists.

Gangs of Hindus and Muslims have been clashing in the neighborhood, Maujpur, and surrounding areas since Sunday, killing at least 11 people, including a police officer bashed in the head with a rock.

While President Trump and his host, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, discussed geopolitics and lunched together in another part of the capital, thousands of furious residents faced off again, hurling petrol bombs, attacking vehicles, hospitalizing several journalists and drawing more and more police officers and paramilitary troops.

The violence is connected to the continuing protests against India's divisive citizenship law, but this was the first time that the protests have set off major bloodshed between Hindus and Muslims. It is an old and dangerous fault line, and any sign of communal violence raises alarm instantly.

"The situation is volatile and tense," said Alok Kumar, a senior police officer. "It's a mixed

neighborhood, and in seconds you can have crowds of tens of thousands. Even a small thing can lead to violence."

In the Muslim quarters, many people felt victimized and accused Mr. Modi's government of abandoning them. This is a longstanding grievance: that Mr. Modi's governing political party, which is rooted in a Hindu-nationalist worldview, has taken sides and abetted violent religious extremists.

Mr. Modi had choreographed Mr. Trump's visit as a demonstration of India's rising stature on the world stage, seeking to turn the page on months of street protests.

But demonstrations keep breaking out against the citizenship law, which makes it easier for migrants of every significant South Asian religion except Islam to become Indian citizens. Hundreds of thousands of Indian Muslims have protested, joined by students, academics, human rights activists and those worried about the country's direction. Many of them say the new law is a grave threat to India's traditions as a secular and inclusive nation.

Since last year's election handed Mr. Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party another term in power, many Indians feared a resurgence of communal violence, sparked by Hindu triumphalism and Muslim desperation. Until now, however, most of the demonstrations remained peaceful.

Maujpur is a working-class neighborhood about a half-hour's drive from the center of Delhi. Gray two- and three-story buildings stand along its roads, housing small factories and many migrant workers.

For the past several weeks, Muslim residents, many of them women, have been protesting the citizenship law. On Saturday night, they began to block a major road.

The next day, Kapil Mishra, a local leader from Mr. Modi's political party, showed up. He threatened to mobilize a mob to clear out the protesters. He said he did not want to create trouble while Mr. Trump was visiting, but he warned the police that as soon as Mr. Trump left India on Tuesday night, his followers would clear the streets if the police did not.

Tensions shot up. As Sunday evening approached, gangs of Hindu men and Muslim men

began throwing rocks at each other. This quickly degenerated into wider violence, with Hindu residents accusing Muslims of attacking Hindu statues and Muslim residents expressing fear that a Hindu mob was forming to get them.

Shoaib Ahmad, a Muslim businessman who makes a living repairing tires, said his shop was burned down Monday night by a Hindu mob as he stood on the roof of his house.

"All my dreams were destroyed in those flames," Mr. Ahmad said. What made it even worse, he said, was that police officers encouraged the mobs to burn down Muslims' property.

Images circulating on social media showed a group of Hindu men beating a Muslim man with sticks, leaving him on the ground, curled up in a ball and covered in blood. Several Muslim residents in Maujpur and adjacent neighborhoods said that police officers had stood by while they were attacked. In mob lynchings of Muslims in the recent past in other parts of India, many people have made similar accusations against officials in Mr. Modi's party, saying that the police officers under their command did not intervene.

India is about 80 percent Hindu and 14 percent Muslim.

A stretch of highway between Maujpur's Hindu neighborhood and a nearby Muslim-dominated area called Jaffrabad now serves as a no-man's land. It is lined by deserted shops, the asphalt marred by burn marks. Few people dare to walk through here. Several police officers conceded that they felt more comfortable deployed in the Hindu crowd that had gathered at one end of the buffer zone than with the Muslims massed at the other. While the Muslim crowd hoisted a big Indian flag, the Hindu crowd chanted religious slogans.

Members of a Hindu mob, armed with crude weapons, begged the police to let them attack Muslims. Give us permission, that's all you need to do," one mob leader said. "You just stand by and watch. We will make sure you don't get hurt. We'll settle the score." Then he used a slur to refer to Muslims.

This kind of communal violence has left a lasting mark on Mr. Modi's legacy. In 2002, when he was the chief minister of Gujarat State, sectarian riots left more than 1,000 people dead - almost 800 of them Muslims killed by Hindu mobs.

He and his state government were accused of quietly ordering the police to stand by as the violence raged. He has denied those accusations, and in 2012, an investigative panel for the Supreme Court found no evidence to charge him. But until he won the post of prime minister in 2014, he was banned from entering the United States because of the suspicion hanging over him.

This week, Delhi police officials, who ultimately report to Mr. Modi's home minister, Amit Shah, said they were determined to keep the Hindu and Muslim mobs apart. Mr. Kumar, the police official, said he was trying to organize a peace march between the two sides, but by nightfall that was nowhere close to happening. Mr. Shah said in a statement that the violence had been spontaneous, and he appealed for calm.

But the hatred on the streets was heavy. Several Hindu men said they felt Muslims did not belong in India.

"Why should they?" asked Rakesh Sharma, one of the Hindu men who had taken it upon themselves to chase outsiders from their neighborhood. "The Muslims have other countries they can go to, like Syria or Nigeria. They need to get out of India."

Many Muslims feared that once Mr. Trump left India, the violence would get even worse.

"It's a little quiet because Trump is here," said Mohammed Tahir, a rickshaw driver. "Their side is scared to give the prime minister a bad name."

"But as soon as Trump leaves," he said, "they will attack. They want to uproot us. But we won't let that happen. We were born here, we live here, this country is as much ours as theirs - and if we need to, we will all die here, together."

As India Counts the Dead, Questions Swirl About Police Response

Did the police fail to act as the country descended into its worst spasm of religious violence in years? Witnesses say officers stood by when Hindu mobs attacked Muslims.

New Delhi - The mob smashed through the gate and cut the electricity. The men stormed up the steps, chanting the name of a Hindu god and brandishing knives, chains, iron bars and pieces of pipe.

The Musharraf family, who are Muslim, locked themselves in a

dark room. The breadwinner, a 30-something rickshaw driver, threw himself under the bed and curled up in a wooden box. But the mob of more than 25 men found him. "Please, I'm also your brother," he pleaded and folded his hands in front of his chest, a gesture for mercy, according to several survivors. "I also have young kids, like you."

They clubbed him in the face and dragged him out. Family members, in hiding around the neighborhood, frantically called the police. No one came.

As India's worst spasm of religious violence in years entered its sixth day, with the death toll climbing to at least 38, questions are intensifying about why the New Delhi police failed to quell the bloodletting.

Since Sunday, gangs of Hindus and Muslims have clashed with crude weapons and homemade guns. Scores of homes, shops and cars have been set aflame. Many once-integrated communities are ripping apart along sectarian lines, with more accounts emerging of brazen religious targeting.

Witnesses have said that police officers, under the command of a Hindu nationalist governing party that has a long history of vilifying Muslims, intentionally stood back and let Hindu mobs slaughter Muslim civilians.

There are also growing concerns that President Trump's visit this week, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi had touted for weeks, drew away high-level attention and personnel, leaving neighborhoods completely exposed at a time of life or death.

Intelligence agents within the police services sent several alerts on Sunday asking for more forces to be deployed, but the chaos only grew, according to the Indian media. Delhi was preparing for Mr. Trump's arrival and thousands of police officers were deployed to line the roads on Monday as Mr. Trump's motorcade cruised into town.

"The whole city knew that riots were impending," said Harsh Mander, a human-rights activist who is pressing the courts to investigate the ringleaders. "Why didn't the police act?" At a court hearing on Thursday, in which Mr. Mander accused several members of the governing party of engaging in hate speech and inciting the killings, the government asked for more time to investigate.

Illegal immigrants from El Salvador, 20, and 19-year-old man, both enrolled in Maryland high schools, charged with raping 11-year-old girls

Coreas-Salamanca was living in Adelphi, Maryland and was in the US illegally, according to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

It's not clear when he arrived in the US or how long he has been living in the country for. CBP said he was a minor when he arrived to the US.

ICE has filed an immigration detainer with the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation.

He is accused of giving a 11-year-old girl a cell phone some time last year.

Using that phone he exchanged explicit text messages and photographs with the girl and arranged for sexual meetups.

The victim's father discovered the phone on Christmas Eve and found a trove of text messages describing 'vaginal intercourse, fellatio, and cunnilingus'.

The father reported to police a

text message where the suspect advised the victim that 'she bit his penis the last time she performed fellatio', according to court documents.

'Suspect Coreas-Salamanca's purpose in sending the text



message was to teach Victim A how to better perform fellatio,' the documents said.

The father reported the phone to police and cops seized the phone for forensic analysis.

Lopez emigrated from Honduras nearly three years ago and was

living with his uncle in Silver Spring, according to court documents.

He is accused of luring a different 11-year-old from a park near the Rollingwood Apartments in Silver Spring to his family's apartment.

Once there he told the girl to sit down on a bed and turned on Netflix before raping her, the victim told detectives.

Lopez, speaking through a Spanish

translator, argued to investigators that he led the victim by hand to his bedroom and the two had 'consensual vaginal intercourse', court documents say.

Both were denied bond in initial court appearances.

Coreas-Salamanca faces up to 55 years in prison whereas Lopez

faces 20 years.

Coreas-Salamanca faces a higher sentence because he is accused of repeatedly molesting his victim. When asked how many students aged 19, 20, of 21 are currently enrolled in the county public school system, the MCPS refused to comment. 'There is no data suggesting that being a high school student at 19, 20, or 21 makes a person more or less likely to commit a crime. Any suggestion otherwise is wrong and trying to make a connection there to students enrolled in our district is wrong,' spokeswoman Gboyinde Onijala said to WJLA. The two incidents in the same school district have sparked outrage among parents 'If the school system would not allow an employee or a volunteer to be back in the school while they're facing such serious charges, how does that change when it's a student? They're over 18. They are men. They just use a different badge to get into school,' Jennifer Gross, a Montgomery County resident, mother, and longtime advocate

for sexual assault prevention said.

'Will they be allowed to return to the classroom? Will they be allowed to be back in general education public high school?' she added.

'These are adult men. They are over the age of 18 and simply because you're enrolled in MCPS schools - or any other school system - does not change the fact that you're legally an adult,' she said. Last year, Montgomery County rolled back its sanctuary policies following a slew of arrests of undocumented immigrants linked to alleged rape or sexual abuse. In 2019, Democratic Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich issued an executive order that forbade county police from asking an individual about their immigration status and prohibited officials from cooperating with ICE agents. However, in November 2019 the county announced that ICE agents would be allowed access to certain areas of the Montgomery County jail to apprehend illegal aliens.

Centre, Police draw flak for Northeast Delhi violence: 10 points

demands the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

4.Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asks Union Home Minister Amit Shah to call in the army to instill confidence in people after violence erupted in two east Delhi localities. Kejriwal says the police have been unable to control the situation.

5.The body of a 26-year-old Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer Ankit Sharma is found in a drain in Chand Bagh.

6.The Delhi High Court while hearing a plea filed by retired bureaucrat Harsh Mander says that the police should not wait for court's direction and should take action on its own.

7.The Delhi High Court reprimands Delhi

Police for not booking people making provocative speeches, says it sent wrong message.

8.The Delhi High Court says authorities should reach out and show that there is security is for everyone in the national capital and that it can't let another 1984 scenario happen in the under its watch.

9.The Supreme Court rebukes Delhi Police for lack of professionalism in controlling the violence in the Northeast district of the national capital, questions why it waits for somebody's nod to act in accordance with law.

10.Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweets an appeal to remain calm and maintain peace and brotherhood at all times.

Every continent except Antarctica has reported coronavirus cases

Brazil announced its first case of coronavirus today, marking the first time the virus has been reported in South America.

The coronavirus outbreak — which started in the city of Wuhan in China — has now spread to six of the world's seven continents. It has not yet reached Antarctica.

Here's a look at the virus across the world:

Africa: Algeria confirmed its first case of coronavirus yesterday. Egypt has also reported a case.

Asia: The vast majority of cases — and deaths — are in mainland China. Cases have been reported throughout

Asia, with concentrations in South Korea and on board a cruise ship pocked in Japan. In the Middle East, Iran has reported least 139 cases. The total official number of deaths due to coronavirus in Iran stands at 15.

Australia: The country has confirmed a total of 22 cases of the novel coronavirus as of Saturday, officials said.

Europe: Europe's biggest outbreak is in Italy, where over 320 have been infected and 12 have died.

North America: At least 59 Americans have tested positive for coronavirus, US health officials say. Cases have also been reported in Canada.

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TO INDIA/WORLDWIDE

Protesters must pay for damage to public property

ruled that all losses caused to property be recovered from the Dera. To date, though, no recovery has been made.

India has no central legislation governing recovery of damages, except for the 2009 Supreme Court (SC) guidelines asking respective high courts to appoint a sitting/retired judge as claims commissioner to adjudicate on damages. Then in October 2018, the SC took cognisance of incidents of vandalism and rampage carried out by violent mobs in the name of protests, pronouncing that individuals and organisers will be held accountable for criminal and civil liability for creating such nuisance.

The court said individuals who are responsible for initiating, promoting, instigating an act of violence, which results in loss of life or damage to public or private property, will be held accountable and these individuals will have to compensate the victims. The court also laid down the procedure for recovery of damages and it hoped that a bill, regarding the recovery of damages pending since 2015,

will be taken to its logical end. At present, action against rioters is limited to the toothless Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984, which prescribes a jail term and fine for convicts but has no provision for recovery for damages. The UP administration, in its recent action, is relying on a 2010 Allahabad High Court judgment that empowered the government



to set up a competent authority to accept damage claims, hear all concerned, and pass orders within 30 days.

India's history of public protests derives its legitimacy from the Mahatma's path of civil disobedience and non-violent protests, that were an integral

part of our freedom struggle. This legacy, continued and intensified over the year and the acceptance of bandhs, and hartals, often as unplanned public holidays, became part of people's lives in many parts of the country. In fact agitations and disruptions are so steeped into our culture that we often make a virtue of it.

Scores of agitations in the recent past have caused damage to

public property but states have made little or no attempt at recovery. Assocham estimated damage to public and private property worth ~1,800-~2,000 crore, during the Jat stir in Haryana in 2016. The Patidar agitation in Gujarat in 2015 took its toll as vandals torched 660

government vehicles and 1,822 public buildings. Kerala was the epicentre of the Sabarimala protests in 2018, when 49 State-owned buses were damaged.

Rajasthan witnessed many incidents of vandalism and arson around the release of the movie, Padmavat, in 2017, and then again during the Gujjar community's quota stir, early last year. The 2016 Cauvery riots in Karnataka saw more than 30 state transport buses being damaged. Last month, even as the government introduced the CAA in Parliament, West Bengal erupted, and the Indian Railways lost an estimated ~80 crore worth of property in four days. Of course, this cost does not account for the disruption and inconvenience to citizens, not directly involved in these agitations.

Clearly it is time for harsher measures with punitive consequences where both protesters and their leaders - one could call them instigators - are held accountable. The United States has state-wise laws with heightened penalties for protesters who block traffic and authorises law enforcement

agencies to recover costs from protesters who damage or obstruct "critical infrastructure". The public utilities that come under the classification of critical infrastructure include oil and gas pipelines; electricity transmission towers, railways and public transport vehicles.

It is about time India modified its 36-year-old Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act to reflect the new reality. Every organiser of a protest must make a clear declaration ensuring his followers will not damage public property and if they do, must be held financially liable.

Facial recognition technology and the databases (of chronic troublemakers) that power them can help the police nail down vandals in a manner that can stand court scrutiny. With the increased deployment of surveillance cameras, protest organisers and frontline leaders could be monitored, subject to privacy laws. It is about time India upgrades the Mahatma's satyagraha to a better version. We cannot afford unhindered damage to public property with no accountability.

A fifth of Europeans believe a secret Jewish cabal runs the world, damning report into anti-Semitism reveals



(News Agencies)- A fifth of Europeans believe that a secretive Jewish cabal controls world politics and economics, a damning report on anti-Semitism has found.

The same number also believe that Jews 'exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own needs', a survey commissioned the Action and Protection League

revealed.

The figures were published as Jewish leaders called on European governments to take on a bigger role in curbing rising anti-Semitism on the continent.

It comes just days after a far-right terror attack in Germany targeting Turkish people, by a killer who had also confessed his belief in various anti-Semitic

conspiracies. The survey also found a quarter of respondents agreed with the statement: 'Israel's policies make me understand why some people hate Jews'.

More than a third agreed with the assertion that 'during World War II, people from our nation suffered as much as Jews.'

The survey also concluded that

Holocaust revisionism and belief in classic anti-Semitic stereotypes was more common in the east, while anti-Israel sentiment including anti-Semitic beliefs were more common in the west.

The Hungary-based Action and Protection League commissioned the survey, which was presented at the European Jewish Association's conference in Paris on Monday.

Researchers interviewed 1,000 people in 16 European countries including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Poland between December last year and January this year. The European Jewish Association have now called on all European leaders to adopt its action plan to combat anti-Semitism.

The plan includes adopting the the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism, which saw Labour leader Jeremy

Corbyn criticised after he initially refused to adopt it in full.

Other elements of the plan include appointing a special envoy on combating anti-Semitism; mandating schools include lessons on anti-Semitism; and legislating bans on anti-Semitic symbols in public, including Nazi imagery. Rabbi Menachem Margolin, chairman of the association, said: 'We as Jewish communities cannot eradicate anti-Semitism on our own.'

'After 20 years dealing with this subject, I've come to the understanding that no matter how many schools we visit, and no matter how many delegations we bring to Auschwitz, it's all just a drop in the bucket.'

'Therefore we realized that the way to fight anti-Semitism is to pass on the responsibility to European governments.'

The survey comes against a backdrop of data which shows rising anti-Semitism across Europe.

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Court says Trump administration can withhold money from NYC, 7 states in 'sanctuary cities' fight



measures.

The federal appeals court ruling comes amid an ongoing feud between the Trump administration and so-called "sanctuary cities," which limit cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. Over recent weeks, the administration has stepped up its fight against sanctuary jurisdictions and taken measures like barring New York residents from enrolling in certain Trusted Traveler programs, such as Global Entry. Judge Reena Raggi, writing on behalf of the unanimous 3-judge panel, acknowledged the divisive

nature of the issue at hand, writing: "The case implicates several of the most divisive issues confronting our country and, consequently, filling daily news headlines: national immigration policy, the enforcement of immigration laws, the status of illegal aliens in this country, and the ability of States and localities to adopt policies on such matters contrary to, or at odds with, those of the federal government." The city of New York is a plaintiff in the lawsuit, along with New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Washington, Massachusetts, Virginia and Rhode Island. In July 2017, then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that applicants for Edward Byrne

Memorial Justice Assistance Grants would have to comply with federal immigration enforcement. States pushed back and sued over the move. Lower courts have blocked the Justice Department from adding new requirements for the policing grants. In April 2018, the 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling in favor of the city of Chicago. But Raggi noted in Wednesday's ruling that the conditions on federal grants put forth by the administration in part help the government enforce national immigration laws and rejected the notion that the conditions "intrude on powers reserved to the States."

(News Agencies)- The Trump administration can withhold federal money from seven states, as well as New York City, over their cooperation on immigration enforcement, a federal appeals court ruled Wednesday. The decision by the 2nd US Circuit

Court of Appeals reversed a lower court ruling that blocked the Justice Department from withholding a key law enforcement grant the department said was available only to cities that complied with specific immigration enforcement

Chris Cillizza's winners and losers from the 10th presidential debate

(News Agencies)- The 10th Democratic debate -- this one in Charleston, South Carolina -- is in the books.

It was an incredibly contentious affair, with candidates shouting at (and over) one another as they scrambled to draw contrasts with each other in advance of the critical South Carolina primary on Saturday.

WINNERS

* Pete Buttigieg: The former South Bend, Indiana, mayor was at his absolute best in this debate. He found several occasions to make direct contrasts with Bernie Sanders -- most notably on the dangers for Democrats of nominating a democratic socialist and the differences in their health care plans -- which is a win in and of

itself. Buttigieg also flashed a sense of humor when plugging his website to encourage donations, which was a welcome moment of levity in a debate defined by people shouting at one another at very close range. If voters were looking for a Sanders alternative who looked like he could be commander in chief in this debate, Buttigieg made a very good case for himself.

* Joe Biden: Biden turned his outrage meter WAY up in this debate. He hammered Tom Steyer on the billionaire's support for private prisons, a move aimed at trying to peel away black voters from Steyer in advance of the South Carolina primary. He cast Sanders as a dangerous risk for the Democratic Party to take, with potentially disastrous

down-ballot consequences. If Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-South Carolina) was looking for energy out of Biden before making a formal endorsement decision -- Clyburn will announce his choice Wednesday morning -- he got it from the former vice president. Biden is still not a terribly good debater, however. He repeatedly stumbled as he tried to make his points. He kept claiming he wrote every bill -- or close to it -- anyone on the stage cited. He repeatedly complained about the rules of the debate -- not a good look. But on the whole, there was more good than bad here for Biden.* Amy Klobuchar: As she has done in nearly every debate, the Minnesota senator did more with fewer opportunities than



almost any other candidate on stage. She repeatedly sought to be a voice of reason (and calm) as everyone around her just kept shouting. She also delivered a series of solid policy proposals - outlining her views on domestic and foreign policy to many voters who may have just been getting to know her and what she

believes. Klobuchar wasn't as sharp -- or as much of a standout -- as she was in the debate just before the New Hampshire primary. But in a debate defined by the bad, she was a bright spot.* Bernie Sanders: The Vermont senator got hit with a few hard punches to which he had no response.

Two California students go on trial in Italy over fatal stabbing of newlywed policeman during botched cocaine bust



(News Agencies)-Two American students have appeared in Italian court on the first day of their trial over the fatal stabbing of a policeman during a botched drug bust last year.

Finnegan Lee Elder, 20, and Gabriel Natale-Hjorth, 19, are charged with killing newlywed officer Mario Cerciello Rega, 35, who was stabbed 11 times last July. The two men from California,

who had been on vacation in Rome and were teenagers at the time, face life sentences if convicted. The pair listened expressionless today as the judge read them trial procedures in a packed courtroom. Prime suspect Elder swaggered arrogantly into the crowded courtroom as his heart-broken parents watched from the public gallery filled with news crews from around the world. As he was led out during a break, Elder looked at his parents and held up his hand showing his fingers crossed. Co-defendant Gabriel Natale-Hjorth appeared wide-eyed and terrified as he

was led into court by armed prison officers a few seconds later. His Italian-born father was also in court. Dressed in a plaid, checked shirt, jeans and sneakers, Elder looked around him as he took in the extent of the media spectacle his alleged crimes have created in Italy. Natale-Hjorth was more smartly dressed in an opened-neck white shirt, black sweater and tan trousers. Both men had short-cut hair and had shaved their adolescent faces. Elder, now aged 20, and Natale-Hjorth, 19, are charged with the murder of the Carabinieri deputy

brigadier who died from stabs wounds in the early hours of July 26. The pair are also charged with attempted extortion, resisting arrest and injuring Rega's partner, Andrea Varriale. Opening the proceedings at Rome's Criminal Court, Judge Marina Finiti welcomed the 12-strong jury into court, each dressed in a red, green and white sash, the colors of the Italian tricolor flag. Officer Rega's widow Maria Rosaria Esilio was also in court for the beginning of the trial, which is expected to last months.

Trump concludes India visit without major agreements



President Donald Trump concluded a showy state visit to India on Tuesday with plenty of impressive photos but without major announcements on trade or security. Trump departed having cemented his close friendship with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, upon whom he

lavished praise during public appearances over the course of his 36-hour visit. But Trump was frank that Modi puts up a tough trade fight and that their disagreements on tariffs and deficits wouldn't be resolved in the near-term. And he made no reference when standing

alongside Modi of the contentious situation gripping India over the status of Muslims in the Hindu-majority society. Hours before Trump arrived in the Indian capital, violent clashes between supporters and opponents of Modi's Hindu nationalist stance left more than seven people dead. Trump's visit will be remembered more for the images it produced: a crowd topping 100,000 cheering for him at a campaign-like stadium rally, a softly lit tour of the Taj Mahal, and multiple homages to Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian independence leader famous for his humility. "This has been a very special visit -- unforgettable, extraordinary," Trump said alongside Modi during an afternoon statement from the

gardens of Hyderabad House. "What can you say? Very, very wonderful to be with you." The pair didn't answer questions; Modi does not make himself available for news conferences in his own country. Trump convened his own news conference later in the day where he repeated his praise of the Indian leader. Tempered expectations - There were tempered expectations heading into Trump's visit for major breakthroughs on trade or other matters. Trump acknowledged before he departed that a trade deal wasn't likely before November's presidential election. Trump said during his raucous rally in northwestern Gujarat State on Monday that talks were

still in their early stages. "I am optimistic that, working together, the prime minister and I can reach a fantastic deal that's good and even great for both of our countries," Trump said. "Except that he's a very tough negotiator." Trump is eager to reduce the trade deficit with India, and has applied tariffs on steel and aluminum that set off a cascade of retaliatory actions. Trump eventually stripped the country of preferential trade status, igniting anger among Indian officials. He said Tuesday he was "optimistic" a trade pact could be reached eventually, and claimed ties between the US and India had reached historic strength.

Despite No Major Deal During Trump's Visit To India, There Was Progress

Tanvi Madan (@tanvi_madan) is a senior fellow in the Project on International Order and Strategy and director of the India Project at the Brookings Institution. She is the author of *Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped U.S.-India Relations During the Cold War*. Following President Trump's two-day trip to India, his first official visit to the country, there's been some debate about its value. This is not unusual for U.S.-India leader-level trips, which - more so than in the case of other countries - seem to be measured on the basis of whether they produce a big deal. That may be the result of the last big deal - a U.S.-India civil nuclear initiative laying the groundwork for the two countries' current strategic partnership.

Those hoping this time for a big deal - specifically, a trade one - will be disappointed. Trade negotiators had moved some way to reaching a mini-agreement, but had not been able to get it over the finish line. Those concerned - whether from a strategic, economic or democracy and human rights perspective - about internal developments in India will also be disappointed. Trump mentioned the importance of Indian diversity multiple times in his speech on Monday and acknowledged that concerns about religious freedom and India's months-long detention of political leaders in Kashmir were discussed privately. But he refused to publicly comment on the Hindu-Muslim violence that

erupted in Delhi during his trip - the worst in decades, resulting in at least 20 deaths - and seemed to support what he said was Modi's desire for "people to have religious freedom." Nonetheless, for those worried about trade frictions, primarily over tariffs and the trade deficit, harming strategic cooperation, there is cause for relief. To assuage Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized growing economic ties and a reduced trade deficit. Indian CEOs highlighted their investments in developing skills and manufacturing in the U.S., and their effort to keep Chinese equipment out of India's 5G network. A joint statement released Tuesday seems to point to a "phase one" trade deal in the



near future, and suggested progress on consultations that would help keep China's telecom giant, Huawei, out of India's 5G infrastructure. President Trump also noted that the two sides would work toward a more comprehensive trade agreement at the end of the year. Those looking for continuity in the

two-decades-long trend toward greater strategic cooperation between the two democracies will also find reason for optimism. Spurred by shared concerns about terrorism and a rising China's actions in the region, the U.S. and India have deepened defense and security ties over the last three years.

What did the Trump-Modi 'bromance' achieve?

US President Donald Trump expected 10 million people to welcome him in India on his first state visit. It didn't happen, but everything else seems to have gone according to the script. The optics of the trip were crucial both for him and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Mr Trump wanted to show people in the US that he was hugely popular abroad and that he was capable of negotiating good deals out of a country he once described as the "king of tariffs". On the other hand, the Indian PM desperately needed some good headlines after being under the spotlight due to his controversial

decision to revoke Kashmir's autonomy and the ongoing protests against his new citizenship law. In the end, both leaders had their wishes fulfilled despite not agreeing on a much talked-about trade agreement. Looking beyond the song and dance and pleasantries, here are some of the key diplomatic takeaways. Good optics The first day of the visit was all about optics - tens of thousands, if not ten million, lined up the streets to greet him on his way from the Ahmedabad airport to the Motera cricket stadium in

Gujarat, the home state of Mr Modi. At the stadium, he addressed more than 100,000 people. He evoked Bollywood, cricket and saints - good enough topics to get Indians interested. "Seven Trump claims about India fact-checked It was a good speech - not just for the people in the stadium but also for his election campaign back home. The videos from the "Namaste (hello) Trump" event have already been used by his campaign. And he also said some soothing words for Mr Modi. Tanvi Madan, senior fellow at the Brookings

Institution, says the trip will help Mr Modi fight negative headlines. "Mr Trump described him as a calm person, a great leader and somebody who works for his people. Mr Modi will take these compliments happily," she says. These words matter - specially at a time when Mr Modi's leadership is being questioned after violent protests over the citizenship act killed at least 13 people in Delhi in recent days. The deal that didn't happen A trade deal was always going to be tough given the two countries were engaged in a bitter tariff war just last year. Mr

Trump would have loved to sign a deal that would help bridge the US \$25.2bn (£19.3bn) trade deficit with India. But Ms Madan says it's not all doom and gloom. "The visit will at least push India down the trade hit list of the Trump administration as negotiations continue for the trade deal," she says. Ms Madan believes that the visit has been a success because "you can't expect a nuclear deal every time". She adds that Mr Trump is known to be unpredictable but he has "largely stayed with the script this time".

A snowy hot springs where clothing is optional after dark



If you are a bit of an exhibitionist and can handle the exposed snowy shuffle from the snow-covered chairs down to the pool, this is the wintry night time soak for you.

During the day, clothing is required at Strawberry Park Hot Springs, about a 15-minute drive from downtown Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

A small mountain town known for its ski resort and multiple springs, Steamboat got its name from one spring that once sounded like a steamboat steam engine. Local folklore says that construction of the railroad in the early 1900s silenced the steamboat sound.

But once the sun dips below the snow-capped mountains and everything goes dark, you can

slither out of your suit.

"That's something that we hope to only see - or not see - after dark," Joe Stepan, Strawberry Park's general manager, told CNN Travel. "The nighttime hours come around, we make sure there are no kids around, and it [clothing] is totally optional."

The property doesn't have any specific numbers on how often the laid-back policy is taken

advantage of, "but it is approved of," Stepan says.

Keeping it natural

Even though clothes are required during the day, the all-natural theme is evident in the park's stone-built pools, walls and wooden railings.

"We want to keep the rustic atmosphere. We want people to be able to enjoy the hot springs as if they were in the natural

environment somewhere out in the middle of the woods."

It's all built tucked into the top of the valley surrounded by snow-covered aspens and fir trees.

"We've got 40 acres here that happens to have some of the best hot springs around, and we have developed a park in a very minimalistic fashion," Stepan says.

Every building on the property, built out of wood and stone, blends into the valley.

You pay at an old vintage camper before descending to the springs (\$15-\$20). On your way down, there is a changing hut where you can put on your suit for the kid-friendly hours.

If you plan on staying to soak disrobed at night, make sure to bring a flashlight, as the place

has hardly any artificial lights.

The surrounding snow dampens most of the ambient noise.

The only thing you hear, as you immerse yourself in the warm water, is the water cascading down the series of pools from the top of the springs to the creek bed below.

Cooling 150 degrees

It's essentially a gravity-fed system, says Stepan.

Each of the pools is dammed by big stones nestled into the mountainside. "The main spring comes out of the ground at 150 degrees and feeds the hottest pool that we have." The cold water creek flowing through the valley is about 40 degrees and is used to regulate the temperature of the pools, so they aren't dangerously hot.

Five hikers rescued on their way back from 'Into the Wild' bus in Alaska



Five Italian hikers were rescued on Alaska's Stampede Trail as they were returning from visiting the abandoned bus made famous by the book and film "Into the Wild."

The International Emergency Response Coordination Center first received an alert about a

medical emergency Saturday morning, according to Alaska State Troopers.

"Searchers from Tri-Valley Fire Department and AST responded on snow machines and located the group approximately 13 miles in from the Stampede Road trailhead," AST said in a

statement.

One of the hikers was treated for severe frostbite to his feet.

Tri-Valley Fire Chief Brad Randall told the Anchorage Daily News he believed the group was in the area at least overnight. Temperatures were about 5-10 degrees Saturday morning,

Randall told the newspaper.

The nearly 20-mile trail leading up to the abandoned Fairbanks Bus 142, known as the "Magic Bus," has become somewhat of a pilgrimage for hikers ever since Jon Krakauer's book "Into the Wild" was published in 1996. A movie based on the book was released in 2007.

The nonfiction book chronicles the life of Christopher McCandless, who grew up in an affluent suburb of Washington. But after graduating from Emory University in 1990, he left behind his comfortable life and headed west without telling his friends and family members.

In April 1992, McCandless hitchhiked to Alaska, where a man dropped him off at the head of the Stampede Trail, according to the book. A few

days later, he came upon the abandoned bus and lived there for about three months before deciding to head back to civilization.

As he attempted to make his way back, he arrived at a crossing of the Teklanika River. But because the river was running fast and high from the rain and snowmelt from glaciers, he was unable to make his way across, according to Krakauer.

Defeated, he turned around and headed back toward the bus, where he survived for about a month before he died in August 1992.

Hikers from around the world attempt to retrace McCandless' steps every year, but many fail and have to be rescued. Some even die.

Scientists discover animal that can live without oxygen



The tiny, less than 10-celled parasite *Henneguya salminicola* lives in salmon muscle, according to the finding published on Tuesday in the journal PNAS. Scientists have

discovered an animal that does not need oxygen to produce energy needed for its survival, a finding that changes one of science's assumptions about the animal world. The tiny, less than

10-celled parasite *Henneguya salminicola* lives in salmon muscle, according to the finding published on Tuesday in the journal PNAS. As it evolved, the animal, which is a relative of jellyfish and corals, gave up breathing and consuming oxygen -- or became anaerobic -- to produce energy. "Aerobic respiration was thought to be ubiquitous in animals, but now we confirmed that this is not the case," said Dorothee Huchon, a professor at Tel Aviv University (TAU) in Israel. "Our discovery shows that evolution can go in strange directions. Aerobic respiration is a major source of energy, and yet we found an

animal that gave up this critical pathway," Huchon said.

Some other organisms like fungi, amoebas or ciliate lineages in anaerobic environments have lost the ability to breathe over time, the researchers said.

The new study demonstrates that the same can happen to an animal -- possibly because the parasite happens to live in an anaerobic environment, they said. The researchers noted that the parasite's anaerobic nature was an accidental discovery.

While assembling the *Henneguya* genome, Huchon found that it did not include a mitochondrial genome.

The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell where oxygen is captured to make energy, so its absence indicated that the animal was not breathing oxygen. Until the new discovery, there was debate regarding the possibility that organisms belonging to the animal kingdom could survive in anaerobic environments, the researchers said. The assumption that all animals are breathing oxygen was based, among other things, on the fact that animals are multicellular, highly developed organisms, which first appeared on the Earth when oxygen levels rose, they said.

Bluetooth just got its most important update in 20 years

(News Agencies)- Bluetooth will soon roll out some of the technology's biggest improvements in its nearly 20-year history.

The group of companies that sets the Bluetooth standard introduced Bluetooth LE Audio at this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. LE, which stands for low energy, is an improvement of Bluetooth's current technology, called Classic. LE offers several new features, including higher-quality audio, the ability to stream audio to multiple pieces of technology and improvements for hearing

aids. The new technology also

increases gadgets' battery life. Bluetooth LE operates on a newer audio signal compared to its classic technology. The new

version allows LE Audio to implement new features, including support for multi-stream audio. That would make it easier for multiple people to listen to the same audio source at once. It could also enable Bluetooth broadcast, in which a venue like a mall or a concert hall could beam music to anyone who with a set of headphones. It's similar to the music sharing option that Apple (AAPL) introduced last

year. People with hearing aids will also receive improvements because LE Audio will soon support the devices. The new audio "will enable the development of Bluetooth hearing aids that bring all the benefits of Bluetooth audio to the growing number of people with hearing loss," the company said in a press release.

Your old headphones won't support the new technology, though. LE Audio can't be updated through software, and it requires new hardware updates that will be released later this year.



Drones. Disinfecting robots. Supercomputers. The coronavirus outbreak is a test for China's tech industry



China has spent decades nurturing its tech sector. Now, faced with a massive public health crisis, Beijing is pushing its tech companies to join the fight against the novel coronavirus. The country's tech giants have responded to the outbreak by deploying autonomous vehicles to bring supplies to medical workers, fitting drones with thermal cameras to improve

detection of the virus and lending their computing power to help develop a vaccine. It's not clear how much tech can help control the virus, which has now infected at least 79,000 people worldwide and killed more than 2,600, mostly in mainland China. And some of the efforts put forth so far are limited in size and scope. But Beijing has made clear that fighting the virus is a national priority that requires collective

action.

The government has long stressed technological innovation as an important pillar of growth, and Beijing has spent billions of dollars on subsidies, loans and bonds designed to spur advancements in artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles and other areas as it works to develop a tech sector that can compete with Silicon Valley.

"The fight against the epidemic cannot be achieved without the support of science and technology," Chinese President Xi Jinping said earlier this month, according to state news agency Xinhua.

He added that China should ramp up clinical research for vaccines and antiviral drugs, as well as expand online shopping options for the tens of millions of people who are staying indoors to prevent the disease's spread.

The Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology on Thursday called on the tech sector for help, suggesting that robots, temperature screening machines and devices that can help reduce human contact should be deployed.

China's technological rise China's efforts to create its own Silicon Valley date to the 1980s, when authorities began designating parts of the country as "high-tech development zones" focused on consumer electronics and biotech, among other fields. Those 168 zones reported more than 33 trillion yuan (\$4.7 trillion) in revenue in 2018, according to official statistics.

Tech is also the linchpin of Beijing's "Made in China 2025" initiative, a plan to shift the economy from manufacturing to high-tech sectors. The mandate

entailed investing billions of dollars of government funding into areas such as wireless communications, microchips and robotics.

The focus on tech has worked. China was home to nine of the world's 20 most valuable tech companies in 2018 - a big leap over the two it claimed five years earlier, according to a report by venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins.

As China now fights the coronavirus, technology won't be the "dominating factor" that stops the outbreak, according to Danny Mu, a Beijing-based analyst of emerging technologies at Forrester.

But he said the sector has its uses, including offering digital services like food delivery and mobile payments that help people "better face the epidemic."

Move over, kale: Mushrooms are the new grocery aisle celebrities



Move over, kale. There's a new celebrity in the produce aisle: mushrooms. People are scooping up mushrooms so quickly that producers are scrambling to keep pace with burgeoning demand. "We haven't run out as yet, but we're definitely trying hard to keep up," said Gale Ferranto, who helps run her family's third-generation business, Bella Mushroom Farms, in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Chester County, about a two-hour drive southwest from New York City, is the epicenter of mushroom production in the United States. "We call it the Mushroom Mecca," said Ferranto. The area accounts for more than 60% of all domestic mushroom production coming from more than 50 local family-owned

farms. Ferranto's farm produces five million pounds of mushrooms annually, packaged under its Buona Foods brand and other private labels for grocery store chains like Stop & Shop and Giant Food. "It's not going to be easy, but we are upping our game to grow more mushroom crops a year from now," she said.

Monthly US mushroom production has surged to an all-time high, according to industry trade group American Mushroom Institute. Store prices for mushrooms have also ticked up. The average selling price for a pound of fresh mushrooms increased to \$4.19 in December 2019, up from \$4.03 from a year ago, according to market research firm IRI. "The push by consumers to eat healthier by

pivoting to plant-based foods is a big part of mushroom's popularity," said Lori Harrison, spokeswoman for the American Mushroom Institute. Plant-based diets are in vogue, fueling demand for meat alternative items like the Impossible Burger and innovations such as cauliflower rice and cauliflower bread. "Growing recognition of the health and nutritional value of mushrooms along with their year-long availability and culinary versatility have contributed to increased customer demand," Walmart (WMT), the nation's largest grocer, said in a statement to CNN Business. Mushrooms are packed with vitamins and minerals. "They are fat-free, low calorie, low sodium, gluten free," said Harrison. "They are versatile, you can eat them

cooked or raw, and they fit any healthy eating plan you have for breakfast, lunch or dinner." Although button mushrooms remain the most commonly consumed variety, Harrison said demand is picking up for specialty varieties, such as shiitake, crimini and oyster mushrooms. Albertsons said shoppers seem to be doing just that. "What we're seeing with mushrooms is customers buying more mushroom varieties, beyond the traditional white and brown mushrooms," said Christine Wilcox, spokeswoman for the supermarket chain. Then there are some unconventional products with mushrooms as an ingredient: There's mushroom tea, mushroom jerky and "shroom" crackers. Meanwhile,

the mushroom "blended" burger continues to pop up on menus nationwide. Growing mushrooms on site

Some grocery stores are keeping up with demand by growing mushrooms on site. Entrepreneurs Adam DeMartino and Andrew Carter are cofounders of Smallhold, a startup in Brooklyn, New York that's developed portable indoor mushrooms farming units for stores, restaurants and hotels. The average unit is six feet tall, four feet wide and three feet deep but the setup can be configured in different ways. Each unit can produce 40 to 60 pounds of mushrooms a week. "We've built the company around the growing demand for mushrooms," said DeMartino. The automated units are designed to grow organic specialty mushrooms like pink and blue oyster mushrooms and shiitake mushrooms in a highly-controlled and monitored environment. "Part of the appeal of these units is that mushrooms are delicate in nature. When you cram them into boxes for shipping, it affects their quality," said DeMartino.

Cutting salt likely to prevent future heart disease, even if you're not at risk now

Heart disease is the number one killer of people worldwide. What's the leading cause of heart disease? High blood pressure, which is often triggered by high sodium (salt) intake in the food we eat. Hypertension is also the leading cause of stroke, heart failure and kidney disease. Yet even if we never salted another dish again in our lives, we would likely still be eating too much sodium every day. That's because it's added to manufactured foods for flavor, texture and color as well as a preservative. A new meta-analysis of 133 clinically randomized trials on lowering salt intake, published Monday in the British journal BMJ, found strong evidence about what would happen if the salt in the foods we eat was cut back. Not only did cutting dietary sodium reduce blood pressure in those with existing hypertension, it also reduced blood pressure in people who were not yet at risk. The greater the reduction in salt intake, the greater the fall in blood



pressure, the research found. That's huge in the world of prevention, said cardiologist Dr. Icilma Fergus from New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, who was not involved in the research. "The importance of this study is that it shows that the reduction in sodium results in blood pressure reduction widely across multiple populations, not just in populations

who were initially deemed as salt sensitive, such as African Americans," Fergus said. That's especially significant considering the revised guidelines from the American Heart Association, Fergus said. Hypertension used to be diagnosed when the top number (systolic) was 140 and the bottom number (diastolic) was 90. Now you're considered

hypertensive if your blood pressure is 130/80. "At 130/90 you already begin to see changes in the vasculature (blood vessels) of the kidneys and some hardening of the arteries," Fergus said. "So having blood pressure in the lower range is beneficial." An even bigger benefit for at-risk populations In addition to the

finding that reducing salt in food brings down blood pressure across populations, the research discovered an even larger fall in blood pressure for those highest at risk, such as the elderly, those with existing high blood pressure and African Americans. In the United Kingdom, blacks are three to four times more likely to have high blood pressure and twice as likely to die from stroke, according to World Action on Salt, a UK advocacy group concerned with salt's effects on health. The American Heart Association says that in the US, more than 40% of African American men and women have high blood pressure. African Americans are also more likely to develop hypertension early in life, where prevention can make an impact. The new meta-analysis was done by international researchers from the Queen Mary University of London, the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine, and Action on Salt.

Thappad movie review

Taapsee Pannu film is a scorching indictment of everything that's wrong with us

Thappad movie review: Taapsee Pannu and Anubhav Sinha's film will stay with you and make you question the status quo. One of the most powerful films to come out this year.

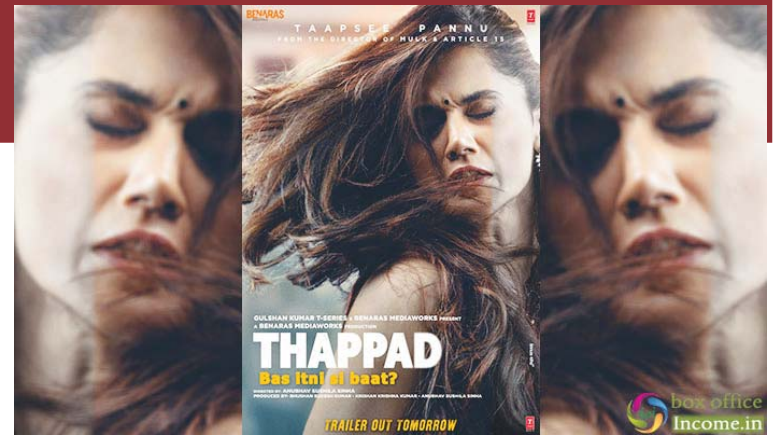
Thappad

Cast: Taapsee Pannu, Pavail Gulati, Kumud Mishra, Ratna Pathak Shah, Tanvi Azmi
Director: Anubhav Sinha

There is a fine line between making a film on a real story and making one that tells a real story. Taapsee Pannu starrer Thappad firmly falls in the latter category. A powerful and impactful film, Thappad makes you angry and uncomfortable, and, at the same time, it makes you question the everyday misogyny that you willingly 'adjust to' in real life. Director Anubhav Sinha refuses to normalise issues that are taken for granted in a regular setup, instead he asserts and reasserts that even if it is 'just one slap', why and how can a man get away with it so easily? And he doesn't do so with just

Taapsee's story, but shows multiple women across strata facing similar struggles in different forms. However, the multiple stories don't take away from the continuity of Thappad and Amrita's story but amplify it. I loved how Sinha captures the nuances of his story and his characters. You don't feel that you are watching a film in theatre; instead you relate to Taapsee's Amrita - a strong-headed girl who despite being a trained classical dancer chooses to be a full-time homemaker. From kitchen to the bedroom, she's a doting wife whose life revolves around her career-oriented and highly ambitious husband, Vikram (Pavail Gulati) and taking care of her ailing grandmother (Tanvi Azmi). Amrita's universe turns upside down when Vikram slaps

her at a party to celebrate his promotion. When he realizes that his dreams maybe nipped in the bud due to office politics, he vents out on his wife in public. In that moment, Amrita realizes it wasn't 'just one slap' but there are so many more other unfair silent slaps that she had been ignoring for so long. Will she be able to put her self-esteem over love? Will she forgive Vikram and move on like women are expected to? Will she give her marriage another chance? Thappad delves on all this and more in quite an engaging manner. At 2 hours 21 minutes, the film may seem a bit long, but the story moves at a decent pace and keeps you engaged. Through his protagonist's journey, Sinha shakes your dormant conscience and forces you to have a dialogue



with yourself. The patriarchal norms that we have conditioned to submit to and everyday misogyny that we accept without question are shown for what they are. Whether it's telling women, 'Shaadi mein yeh sab chalta hai' or 'Thoda bardasht karna seekhna chahiye autaron ko', the dialogues just re-emphasise what we have heard time and again. Don't forget a dialogue where one of Vikram's colleagues justifies his action saying, 'When you're truly in love,

thodi bahut maar peet toh is expression of love only na'. Yes, that did make me cringe and took me back to the debate Shahid Kapoor-starrer Kabir Singh that started last year. Taapsee Pannu delivers a spectacular performance as a submissive and vulnerable wife whose life could have been poles apart if she chosen a different path. Despite playing this restrained character, you see her fiery and feisty side onscreen at many places.

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan movie review

Ayushmann Khurrana jabs at homophobia in delightful film



Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan review: Ayushmann Khurrana stars in an important film that talks about an important subject conveyed in the simplest manner without sounding preachy at any given point.

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan
Director - Hitesh Kewalya
Cast - Ayushmann Khurrana, Jitendra Kumar, Neena Gupta, Gajraj Rao

A serious subject doesn't need a serious treatment -- a fact that Ayushmann Khurrana's Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan not just understands but revels in. Touted to be a quirky take on same-sex love, the film traces the journey of a gay couple - Aman Tripathi (Jeetendra Kumar) and Kartik Singh (Khurrana) - and their struggle to get acceptance of the Tripathi family.

Writer-director Hitesh Kewalya

handles the sensitive subject gracefully, and with a generous dose of laughter. Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan's real win is how thoroughly it eschews stereotypes and never cracks a joke at the expense of one's sexuality; instead it is the opposition of the family which is mined for laughter.

The film takes on homophobia, and not homosexuality. Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan effectively showcases the reluctance of the family to embrace their son's sexuality; they prefer to live in denial. For instance, Aman's scientist father,

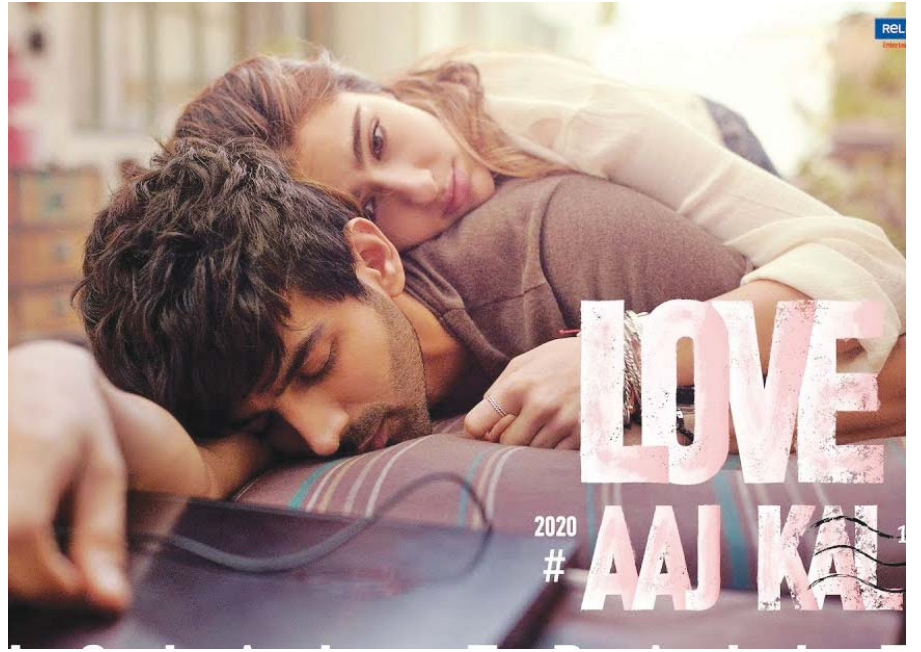
played by Gajraj Rao, literally throws up on seeing his son kissing his boyfriend, and there is disgust on his face each time he sees Aman and Kartik together. Even when his mother, played by Neena Gupta, realises her son's sexual orientation, she believes it to be an illness, a disorder and assures him that they'll get him treated as medical science is so advanced today. I particularly liked how the film jumps right into it without wasting time on peripherals. The introduction scene sets the mood, establishing the characters and the storyline. Aman and Kartik are shown as a happy gay couple living together in Delhi. Back home in Allahabad, Aman's parents are oblivious to their son's sexual preferences and are trying to set him up with a pretty girl, Kusum (Pankhuri Awasthy). It's during a train journey for a wedding that Tripathi family gets to know of

Aman and Kartik's relationship. And the rest of the film is about the duo convincing the family, breaking stereotypes along the way and working towards a 'happy ending' they feel they deserve by all means. Full credit goes to Kewalya for writing some genuinely hilarious dialogues that crack you up every now and then. Some of them include - 'Policy mature ho jaati hai beti nahi', 'Chhat hai ya meri sautan, jab dekho chhad kar baith jaate hain', 'Iss desh mein bachhe phatne ke liye paida hote hain phaadne ke liye nahi'. While the first half has them in abundance, the second half lacks the comic flair. Also, there are quite a few intelligent references to Amitabh Bachchan - Kaun Banega Crorepati, iconic dialogue from Deewar and the Jai-Veeru song from Sholay - that are bound to catch your attention. In one of the scenes, Ayushmann says, 'Aur tab mujhe pata chala ki Amitabh

Bachchan bante nahi, Amitabh Bachchan to hotay hain'. Ayushmann has ticked yet another box on his checklist with this film. He is in form, and convincingly pulls off his flamboyant character without losing grip even for once. The scene where he questions the lyrics of the nursery rhyme, Jack and Jill, and asks why can't Jack go with Johnny, is quite powerful and has the potential to become the gay anthem in the future. Jitendra's character is the perfect foil to Ayushmann -- subtle, grounded and a man of few words. When he comes out to his parents, he explains love with references to dopamine, hypothalamus and oxytocin - a little bit of a disconnect there for the audience if they don't know what exactly those mean. What works the best is Aman and Kartik's onscreen chemistry and their endearing moments together.

Box office report: Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan to Love Aaj Kal, nothing could light up BO like Tanhaji

The year 2020 started with a bang as Tanhaji lit up the box office, February hasn't been that kind as Love Aaj Kal Bhoot and Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan could not get the cash registers ringing for more than a week.



After a prosperous beginning of the year 2020 with a Rs 270 crore plus film, Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior, February appeared to be a comparatively tougher month for the movie business. Despite the Valentine's Day mood, neither Imtiaz Ali's romantic film Love Aaj Kal nor the high on glamour film Malang could hold the ground for more than a week. Though Ayushmann Khurrana and Jitendra Kumar's same-sex love story Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan looked hopeful amid positive reviews, it too seems to be on the verge of fizzling out during its first week. With Taapsee Pannu's Thappad still among upcoming releases this month, the fortunes may change. Taapsee plays the central role in Thappad, which is expected to open at around Rs 2-3 crore. The Anubhav Sinha film will certainly have to earn a solid word of mouth to turn the tables. Tanhaji gave 2020 a blockbuster opening January began on a high note with Ajay Devgn's 100th film turning out to be the biggest blockbuster of his career, with a domestic collections of Rs 276 crore. The period drama went on to dominate the entire month as well as the following month while subsequent films released and died down under its dominance. It had released alongside Deepika Padukone's Chhapaak, which wrapped at Rs 34 crore

amid the JNU controversy surrounding the actor. Street Dancer 3D vs Panga The Republic Day weekend witnessed two major releases: Varun Dhawan and Shraddha Kapoor's dance film Street Dance 3D and Kangana Ranaut's Panga. While the former did an average business of Rs 68.17 crore, Kangana's film collected Rs 28.80 crore. A week later, Saif Ali Khan's Jawaani Jaaneman failed to reap benefits from the positive reviews and also wrapped up at a little over Rs 28 crore. Malang takes over February began on a promising note with Mohit Suri's suspense thriller, Malang on February 7. The film rode high on expectations for Aditya Roy Kapur and Disha Patani's scorching chemistry and registered a decent opening of Rs 6.71 crore. The film went on to earn a little over Rs 50 crore. Imtiaz Ali's Love Aaj Kal was the much-anticipated Valentine's Day release of the year but couldn't click with the audience. It recorded the highest opening of the month with collections of Rs 12 crore but died a quick death at the ticket counters at just Rs 34 crore. On being asked about what keeping cine lovers away from movie theatres, film trade analyst Girish Johar told Hindustan Times, "Love Aaj Kal did get a push on Valentine's Day, but after that but it couldn't capitalise on the mood during the weekend. Same was the case with other

releases. The content of any of the films that released this month haven't been appreciated by the audience. The audience now goes to watch the film only if the content is good and is up to their expectations. They are not watching them just for the sake of watching a film. I feel the films couldn't match up to the expectations of the audiences

this month. The social media game of films is so strong these days that until the film is not good, the audience doesn't fight for it." It was Shubh Mangal only during the opening weekend Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan came as a ray of hope last Friday as it got a thumbs up from the critics and the audience. The film opened at Rs 9.55 crore and

went up to collect Rs 12 crore on its first Sunday but fell with a thud during the week. It currently stands at a domestic total of Rs 39.60 crore. Vicky Kaushal's Bhoot Part One The Haunted Ship too failed to keep the ship afloat. After an average opening of Rs 5.10 crore, it collected just Rs 20.78 crore in its first five days.

How The Dead Ship In "Bhoot" Came Alive On Screen

The most challenging and exciting aspect of "Bhoot" was the ship. So getting the ship to look and feel authentic was the key. "We spent a lot of time on research, referencing and scouting real ships to get the right vibe. Anybody who hasn't worked or been on a cargo ship does not know what it's like to experience the enormous size and the claustrophobia. I wanted everyone who saw this film to actually feel like they are present and trapped there," he added. The production head for the film elaborated: "We were very careful in how we designed the interiors of the cargo ship. Keeping it as real as possible while being shooting friendly as well. The overall production design for "Bhoot" had to deliver a sense of unease and fear throughout the film. So as the designer, I had to even start looking at a regular space, for example a home or an office, from that perspective. One way to do that is by creating a colour palette which would set the mood for the scene you are shooting. Even though the scene didn't necessarily have a



scare, but the underlying feeling of fear had to always be present." The outcome, he said was satisfactory. "Eventually, the best feeling is when your director, actor and the crew walk into the set and love it. I remember Vicky saying "Bhai kya set banaya hai!" The director Bhanu Pratap Singh couldn't believe the size of the entire thing!" In the horror film, Vicky plays a bereaved shipping officer. The film also features Bhumi Pednekar in a special role. The story revolves around an abandoned ship named Sea Bird that lies abandoned along the coast. The film is directed by Bhanu Pratap Singh and produced by Dharma Productions. Talking about the production process of "Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship", Kanwar said: "The process for this film was different from the get-go. It wasn't something I have done before. Authentic horror is a genre every production designer would dream of working on." "Firstly, the vision for the film has to be absolutely clear for all the departments.

Sofia Vergara is new America's Got Talent judge as Heidi Klum returns to NBC show after Gabrielle Union controversy



She just wrapped production on the final season of ABC's sitcom *Modern Family* after 11 seasons. And on Thursday, it was announced that Sofia Vergara will be the new judge on NBC's *America's Got Talent*. Vergara, 47, joins returning judge Heidi Klum, 46, who

most recently was a judge on *AGT: Champions*. The two replace Gabrielle Union and Julianne Hough who were fired as judges after just one season. Vergara and Klum join longtime judges Howie Mandel and Simon Cowell, who is also the show's creator and executive producer,

for the 15th season of the talent competition. Terry Crews is also coming back as host. In a statement, Colombian-born Vergara said: 'I'm so happy to join my new family on *AGT*. This is a new and exciting next chapter for me and I'm extremely proud to be the first Latin judge on the show.' 'Sofia's infectious energy and sharp wit will blend perfectly with returning favorites Heidi, Simon, Howie, and Terry,' Meredith Ahr, president of NBC Entertainment's alternative and reality group, said in a statement. 'As both a respected actress and successful entrepreneur, she embodies the

American dream that is synonymous with *AGT*'s transformative stage,' Ahr added. Klum, who was on the show from 2013 to 2018 and then did two seasons of *AGT: Champions*, also shared her delight at her continued association with the franchise. 'I'm so excited to be back at *AGT* with Simon, Howie and Terry. The fact that Sofia Vergara is joining us is the icing on an already delicious cake,' she said. The German model and TV personality came under fire in January after saying she never witnessed 'anything that was weird or hurtful' while working on *AGT* and 'only had an amazing

experience'. Her defense of the series came after Union's accusations of a 'toxic culture' at the show made headlines and prompted an investigation by the network. She later clarified her remarks, telling *People*: 'I can only speak of my own truth, and by no means is that meant to negate or question Gabrielle's truth.... I am aware that my experience may not be the same as Gabrielle's.' Union joined the talent competition as a judge for its 14th season, which aired last year, along with former *DWTS* personality Julianne Hough. Neither were invited back for season 15.

Harvey Weinstein accuser Rose McGowan says won't be satisfied 'until he's dead'



Actor Rose McGowan, who accused producer Harvey Weinstein of rape, has said that she feels locked in a battle, which won't end until one of them dies. McGowan appeared on Evan Ross Katz's podcast a day after his conviction for sexual assault and rape. "Probably not until he's dead now," McGowan said when Katz asked if Weinstein's trial was providing her a sense of closure. "I feel like he and I are strapped in this battle together until one of us is dead. That's how it goes.

I energetically, we're like just locked. It's a really disgusting feeling. I just would love to be able to be like other people and live my life. That would be really nice, you know?" In 2017, McGowan had accused Weinstein of raping her. She provided a detailed account in her 2018 book, *Brave*. Weinstein was convicted of sexually assaulting former production assistant Mimi Haleyi in 2006 and raping former aspiring actor Jessica Mann in 2013. Jurors acquitted Weinstein on the two

top charges, predatory sexual assault, which carried a maximum life sentence. McGowan reacted to the verdict on social media, and wrote, "Today we can exhale. The stinky trash is gone. Thank you to the brave women testifying who took it on the chin to get us over the finish line. Endlessly proud of them. Today the world is safer because he's not on the streets. Today the world is also smarter than it was pre-2017." McGowan continued, "Did you know only 2% of rapes lead to conviction? How messed up is it that it's an insane privilege to see anything bad happen to your rapist, let alone them go to jail? More work to be done for sure, but today I can say that due to the strengths of many, the prosecutor's tenacity, the jury who did better than most, and especially the women who took the stand, there is a monster off the streets.

Liam Neeson says he's 'not a fan' of superhero movies, despite appearing in *Batman Begins*



Hollywood actor Liam Neeson has never understood the allure of starring in superhero movies because spending hours in the gym to "pump" up his muscles doesn't appeal to him. The *Taken* star famously portrayed Batman's arch enemy Ra's al Ghul, also known as Henri Ducard, in 2005's *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight Rises* in 2012, but modern superhero blockbusters aren't on the top of his watch list. "I'm really not a huge fan of the genre," Neeson said to *US news* show *Entertainment Tonight*. "I think it's Hollywood with all the bells and whistles and

the technical achievements and stuff -- which I admire -- but I have no desire to go into the gym for three hours every day to pump myself up to squeeze into a Velcro suit with a cape. I admire the actors and I know some of the actors who do it -- and do it fantastically. It's just not my genre, it really isn't," he added. Neeson says he enjoyed experiencing the use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) when he portrayed Qui-Gon Jinn in *Star Wars: Episode One -- The Phantom Menace*, and although it pushed him as an actor, he found the special effects work tiring.



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Move over, kale



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Protesters must pay for damage to public property



penalised 450 people accused of vandalising public and private property and causing inconvenience to the public. The politics of the issue notwithstanding, this is one of the few cases of punitive action. This issue has long been brushed under the carpet and organisers and participants of protests and bandhs mostly get off scot-free, sometimes getting away with a few hours of detention and having minor charges slapped on them. The only other instance of strong punitive action for vandalising public property was against the Dera Sacha Sauda, whose followers went on a rampage and destroyed properties across Haryana and Punjab in 2017, following the arrest of the head of the cult, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. The Punjab and Haryana High Court had

(News Agencies)- The ongoing protests at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh and continued agitations elsewhere in the city and the country over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or the CAA have brought to the fore the debate over the impact of agitations

and the resultant disruption to normal life. While agitators point to their fundamental right to protest, the plight of the people affected by agitations and their right to continue with normal activity often get ignored. Last month the Uttar Pradesh police

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Centre, Police draw flak for Northeast Delhi violence



(News Agencies)- As the death toll in the riots in northeast Delhi rose to 22 on Wednesday, the police which had come under fire for its failure to stop the clashes from spreading, tried to get its act together to restore some semblance of order in the riot-hit areas where supporters of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and those opposing it, clashed. The police also came under fire in the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court. Here are 10 major developments in the last 24 hours: 1. In an urgent midnight hearing, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday orders police to ensure safe passage and emergency treatment to injured people stuck in north east Delhi's AI Hind hospital. 2. Delhi police and paramilitary troops stage flag marches in Maujpur and Babarpur, two of the areas hit by the riots. 3. The Congress describes the riots as a "colossal failure" of the government and

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A fifth of Europeans believe a secret Jewish cabal runs the world, damning report into anti-Semitism reveals



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Illegal immigrant from El Salvador, 20, and 19-year-old man, both enrolled in Maryland high schools, charged with raping 11-year-old girls

(News Agencies)-Two Maryland public high school students, aged 19 and 20, have been arrested for allegedly raping different 11-year-old girls off campus in separate incidents. Jonathan Coreas-Salamanca, 20, and Ivan Reyes Lopez, 19, have both been charged each with second-degree rape. Coreas-Salamanca faces additional counts of sexual abuse of a minor and third-degree sexual offense. Coreas-Salamanca, a Salvadorian national living in the US illegally, was arrested at Montgomery Blair High



where he is a student. Both students had immigrated to the US and were enrolled in the Montgomery County Public School system. Montgomery County made headlines last year for their sanctuary city policies, but have since rolled back on them, allowing ICE to cooperate with police under certain circumstances.

School in Silver Spring, where he was enrolled as a student, on February 13. Six days later cops arrested Lopez at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School,

According to Maryland state law, any resident between five and 21 is entitled to a free public education.

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