



The South Asian

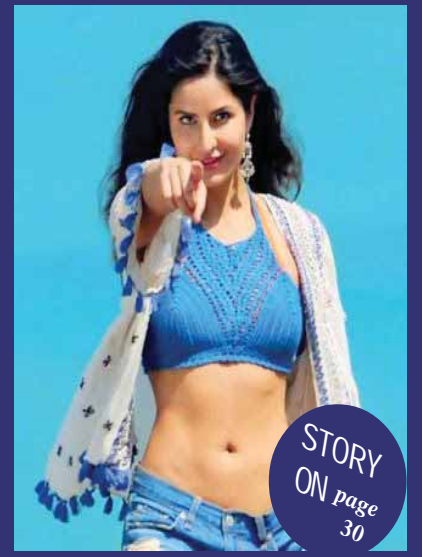
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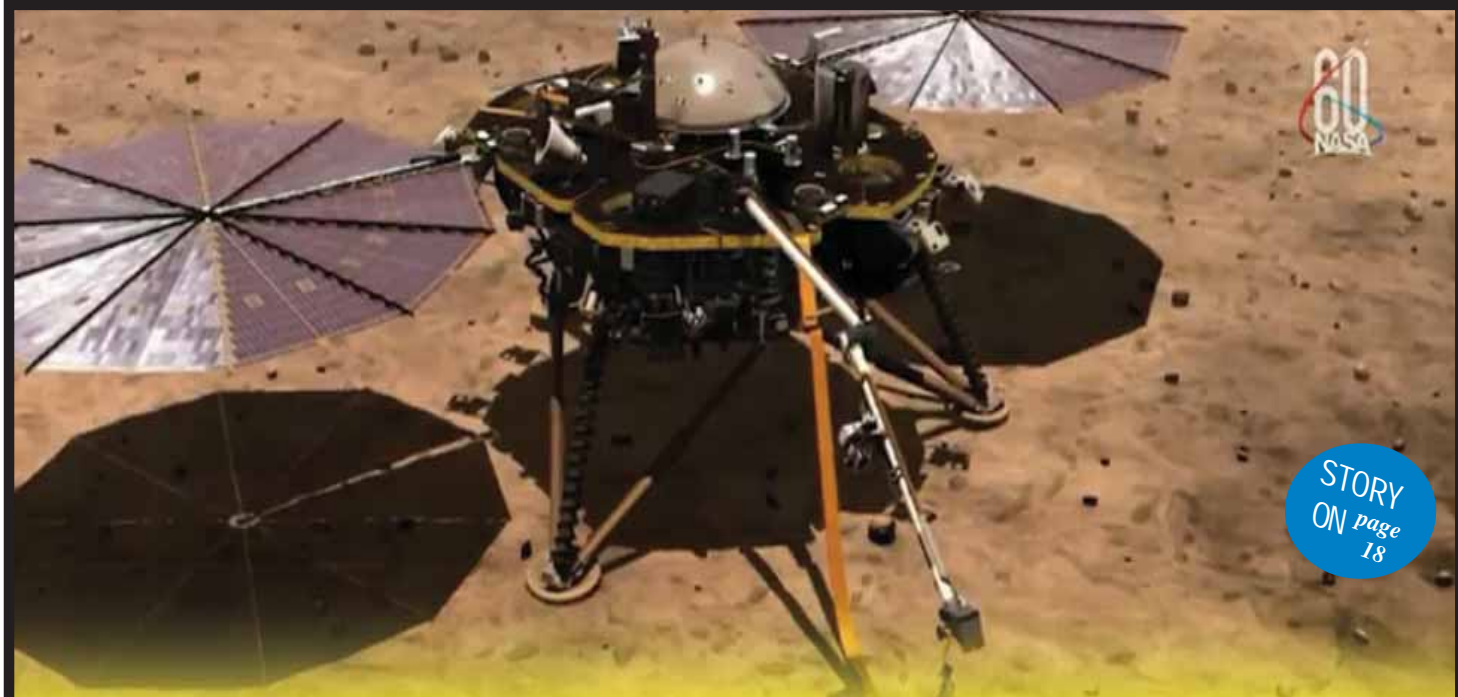
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Katrina Kaif's New Look



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STORY ON page 18

NASA Wowed With Mars landing

Why Indian media can't emulate the US media



STORY ON page 18

26/11: We are better prepared



STORY ON page 19

The healthiest nations in the world: Report of 149 countries

(Insider Bureau): The world's healthiest and unhealthiest countries have been revealed in a global league table. Singapore topped the charts of 149 countries followed by Luxembourg, while the bottom ten consisted solely of African nations. The UK, US and Australia did not feature in the top ten, according to the research by the Legatum Institute. Experts have today warned health improvements are starting to 'flat-line' - despite advances in recent decades. The report, published today, judged countries (Contd on Page 19)



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(See Full Page Advt. on Page 32)

150 Years of Mahatma Gandhi Celebration on Capitol Hill



New York (By Our Staff Reporter) Representatives of the partner Embassy of India, as part of the two-year celebrations marking the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, came together with various Indian-American community organizations, to celebrate 150 Years of Mahatma Gandhi on Capitol Hill on November 27, 2018. The event began with lighting of ceremonial lamp 'Diya' followed by remarks by Ambassador Navtej Sarna, Members of Congress - Representatives Ami Bera(D-CA), David Schweikert(R-AZ), Raja Krishnamoorthi(D-II).

Representatives of the partner Indian-American community organizations - Dr. Bharat Barai, Srimati Karuna from the Gandhi Memorial Center, Ms. Amy Hariani of the US-India Business Council, Mr. Bhupesh Mehta from the Jain International Trade Organization, Mr. Nissim Reuben Assistant Director at the American Jewish Committee and Ms. Mansi Patel from Indiaspora also addressed the gathering. The event was well-attended by Members of Congress, Congressional staff, Indian-American community and representatives from the media.



Upset Hindus urge Nordstrom to withdraw Lord Shiva vase & apologize

(Seattle) By our staff reporter- Upset Hindus are urging Seattle headquartered luxury department stores chain Nordstrom for immediate withdrawal of erect penis shaped vase named after Hindu deity Shiva; calling it highly inappropriate. Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada today, said that Lord Shiva and Shivalinga were highly revered in Hinduism and were meant to be worshipped in temples or home shrines and not used as a vase for holding cut flowers, which might end up as a decoration in toilet/bathroom/ etc. Inappropriate usage of Hindu deities or concepts or symbols for commercial or other agenda was not okay as it hurts the devotees.

Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, also urged Nordstrom Co-Presidents—Blake W. Nordstrom, Peter E. Nordstrom, Erik B. Nordstrom—to offer a formal apology. Hinduism was the oldest and third largest religion of the world with about 1.1 billion adherents and a rich philosophical thought and it should not be taken frivolously. Symbols of any faith, larger or smaller, should not be mishandled, Rajan Zed noted. Zed further said that such trivialization of Hindu deity was disturbing to the Hindus world over. Hindus were for free artistic expression and speech as much as anybody else if not more. But faith was something sacred and

attempts at trivializing it hurt the followers, Zed added. Shiva Ceramic Vase, described on Nordstrom website as— “this curvy, iconic vase in blush-pink ceramic makes a marvelous showcase for a spray of blooms.”, was priced at \$600. Lord Shiva, along with Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu, forms the great triad of Hindu deities. There are about three million Hindus in USA. Publicly traded Nordstrom, Inc.; with 380 stores in 40 states, Canada and Puerto Rico; and serving 96 countries online through Nordstrom.com; claims to be “a leading fashion retailer offering compelling clothing, shoes and accessories for men, women and children”. Founded in 1901, it states:



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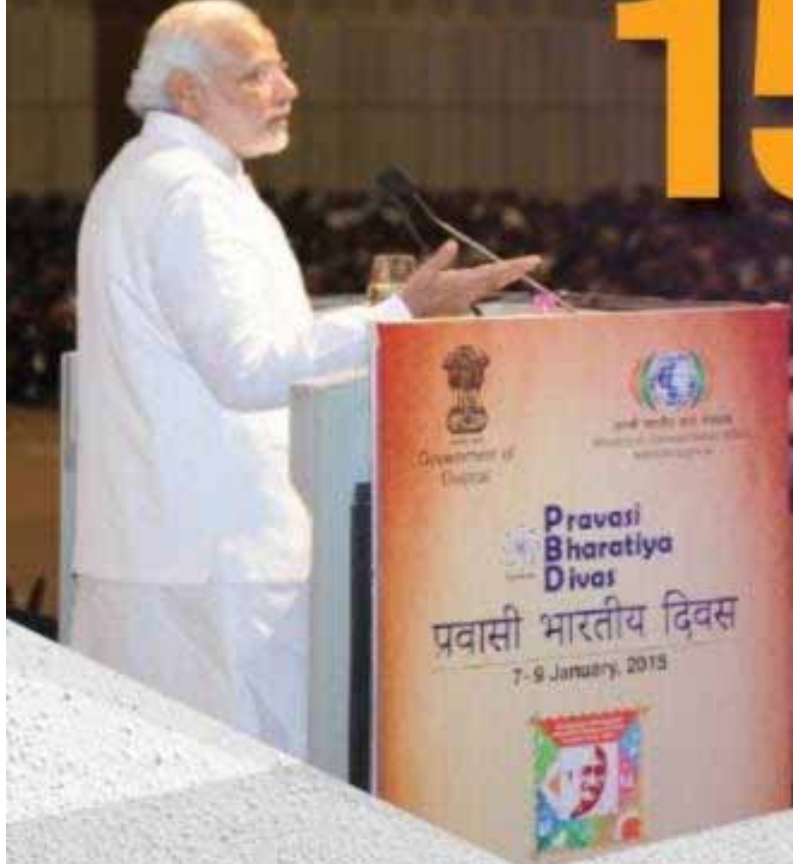


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- Day 3 : 23rd January 2019**
Valedictory Session & PBD Awards by Hon'ble President of India

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- Day 4 : 24th January 2019**
Kumbh Snan at Allahabad
- Day 5 : 25th January 2019**
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- Day 6 : 26th January 2019**
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Jaitley has restored the equilibrium between the government and RBI

Jaitley has shown the necessary determination and ability to reduce fiscal deficit from minus 4.48% in 2013 to minus 3.53% in 2017. He said, publicly, on 24 November, "We don't need any extra funds from any other institution to finance our fiscal deficit...I don't need it." But economic growth, he added, must not be stalled by restricting credit and liquidity.

Success, as the saying goes, has a thousand fathers and failure languishes as an orphan. But in contemporary media it is the problem which feeds frenetic headlines while the solution, or resolution, merely gets a passing nod before the collective rush to the next tangle. The deft, cool and coordinated manner in which finance minister Arun Jaitley finessed and then defused what could have blown up into the crisis of this winter, with debris flying into the next general election, has thereby received less credit than it merited. The omens were not happy. When Viral Acharya, deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India, lit a fuse by describing any

potential dilution of RBI's "independence" as "potentially catastrophic" the stage seemed set for an extended confrontation between RBI and government over enhanced liquidity for the small and medium sector, a key focus point of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for higher economic growth. RBI seemed to prefer a more conservative view of its autonomy and mandate, arguing that "price stability" was its primary concern and that fiscal prudence required a leash on its massive reserves, currently circa Rs 9.59 lakh crore. RBI's role in curbing inflation is well known, not least because it reminds us of it so often. But its mandate is more than that: "to maintain price

stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth". Ideally one should not be at the cost of the other. And this is where the Modi government's track record, managed by its finance minister, became a persuasive part of the administration argument. By 2013 inflation had spiralled to 10.92%. This was whittled to 6.37% in 2014, 5.88% in 2015, and 4.97% in 2017. In other words, inflation control has been one of the great success stories of this administration. A careful government rather than a profligate one was asking for greater liquidity. To imply that the prime minister or the finance minister would damage such hard-won credibility



on the eve of an election is a trifle absurd. Similarly, Jaitley has shown the necessary determination and ability to reduce fiscal deficit from minus 4.48% in 2013 to minus 3.53% in 2017. He said, publicly, on November 24, "We don't need any extra funds from any other institution to finance our

fiscal deficit...I don't need it." But economic growth, he added, must not be stalled by restricting credit and liquidity. Public life is what it says on the tin: public. Jaitley knew that it was not enough to win his case in the framework of power. He also had to win the argument in the roofless arena of political

debate. The Congress, which seems to be in autocue mood, reacting first and thinking later, decided to become a champion of RBI "independence". One serious problem that has arisen has been propelled by what should be called a slow transference of meaning.

To fix the unemployment problem, India must strengthen the manufacturing sector

Efforts to reduce the trade deficits must correct the imbalance between domestic absorption and domestic production; and manufacturing-led growth can ensure this

The Labour Bureau's last household survey (2015-16) reports India's unemployment rate at 3.6% (by the Usual Principal Subsidiary Status definition), a figure lower than that of several advanced economies. So why are jobs such a hot button issue? Dig a bit deeper and startling facts emerge. An examination of unemployment rates (UR) across different age groups shows that UR for the youth (age group 15-29 years) stood at 10.3%, considerably higher than that for the older job seekers (30-59 years) at 1%. Additionally, detailed analysis of the UR across different educational categories shows that the UR increases with educational qualifications. The UR for those with graduate and post graduate (and above) degrees was significantly high at 13.7% and 12.5% respectively. In contrast,

the UR for those who are not literate and are literate below primary level was less than 1% in 2015-16. A further disaggregated analysis of UR by age and educational qualification shows that UR for youth with graduate degrees and postgraduate and above degrees was close to 30%. These statistics reflect that India's youth, and the educated ones in particular, face a serious employment crisis — a predicament that is only likely to exacerbate as the young population gets more educated. India's educated aspirational youth are seeking well paying productive jobs commensurate with their educational qualifications. So where will these productive jobs come from? India's inability to create productive jobs for its rapidly rising young workforce stems largely from the failure of its manufacturing sector to

become an engine of job creation. Unlike other countries at similar levels of development, India has achieved spectacular growth rates without witnessing growth of its manufacturing sector. The share of manufacturing in GDP and employment has remained virtually stagnant at 15% and 12% respectively over the past three decades. The rapid service-led growth experience over the last decade has lent credence to the belief that not only has India leapfrogged the phase of manufacturing-led development and set out its own idiosyncratic path of structural transformation, but also that the idea of manufacturing-led growth is obsolete. This could not be further from the truth. Manufacturing generates the strongest forward and backward linkages across other sectors of the economy, which are important transmission links to growth and job creation. With a

strong multiplier effect, manufacturing has the potential to generate faster growth of employment in the organised sector than the services sector. Apart from generating direct employment, rapid manufacturing growth drives rapid growth of employment in other sectors too, as the production processes in manufacturing increase the demand for raw materials, energy, construction and services from a broad array of supplying industries. Additionally, manufacturing activity raises growth of non traded services through the income effect. The India Employment Report (2016) identifies another compelling reason for making a transition from service-led growth to manufacturing-led growth. Services-led growth has created a large imbalance between domestic absorption (requiring mainly goods) and domestic production (of mainly



services) that has led to unsustainably large trade deficits. Services exports simply cannot finance the required goods imports. A country cannot trade services for most of its goods. Efforts to reduce the trade deficits must correct this imbalance between domestic absorption and domestic production; and manufacturing-led growth can ensure this. As India's trade and current account deficit widens, this issue becomes more pertinent than ever before. There are many who argue that India has missed the manufacturing bus and

that automation and robotics will spell the end of manufacturing jobs. While it is true that workers are likely to be displaced by technological changes, it is also true that several new tasks and occupations will emerge, thereby creating a reinstatement effect. Importantly, in developing countries such as India, where labour costs are still relatively low and there are significant financial costs associated with adopting and implementing new technologies, the pace of automation is likely to be slower than in the advanced world.

The Election Commission can only be a neutral umpire

Political parties across the board have one mantra once elections are declared: winnability. During my years in the Election Commission, I asked many leaders why they gave tickets to contestants with criminal antecedents and did not prefer clean candidates. They would avoid my question or say they would be prepared to discuss it after elections were over. According to the figures compiled by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), the ongoing elections display the same trend. Criminality among candidates continues in the elections underway in five states. ADR has compiled figures for three. In Chhatisgarh, 130 candidates of 1079 face criminal cases, of whom 90 have been involved in heinous crimes. In Madhya Pradesh, 41% of recontesting Congress candidates and 71% of BJP face criminal cases. In Mizoram, 4% of the candidates have declared their criminal cases, of which half are for serious offences. When I was CEC, in preparation for the 2009 general elections, the commission established a number of 'non force' steps to create a level playing field, and keep violence and intimidation at bay. Not all candidates belonged to established political parties that had electoral machines backing them. Independent candidates, too, required the protection of the commission. These included a first time use of extensive videography. Whichever candidate, irrespective of party, pointed to polling stations where they harboured fears of intimidation or trouble, the commission reviewed the ground situation. If they were categorised as "sensitive", we provided the entire polling process on polling day. Over 80,000 cameras were used during

the five weeks of polling in 2009. Similarly, over 51,000 still cameras were also employed to photograph all those who entered 'sensitive' polling stations. This comprehensive record of events was used as evidence in the event of any election petition that was filed. The Returning Officers/ District Magistrates were made to ensure that all films or photographic evidence remained safe in their protective custody for six months after the election. Nor was this all. We also devised a new strategy of placing 'micro observers' at 'very sensitive' polling stations, where candidates apprehended that there may be trouble. These micro observers were placed under the charge of senior Observers. It may be recalled that the Observers, senior officials of the rank of Joint secretary to the Government of India, were first deployed by TN Seshan. For the 2009 general elections, almost 2000 observers were posted on duty almost one month before election day. Micro-observers were junior government servants usually drawn from the state (but not from the districts where the elections were taking place). They were stationed at a single (or a small cluster) of booths, for the entire duration of polling day, where the commission apprehended that there may be violence or large scale impersonation or some other equally disturbing development. Observers are invariably drawn from other states and, therefore, have no local ties. We employed over 2000 observers and over 50000 micro-observers during the polls. If 2009 was deemed both nationally and internationally as a peaceful election, then these were some of the contributing factors. Importantly, these measures undertaken continue to be maintained by the commission. Political parties and candidates alike are availing of them.

There was another 'non-force' option that had been tried and tested to good effect. In the commission, we called it "vulnerability mapping". Its genesis was as follows. During the course of our preparations for the Assembly election in UP in 2007, our officials reported that there were several pockets of persons that were 'unable' to vote in earlier elections. We dispatched observers to find out why. The reason actually stared us in the face, but we had not recognised it. It was caused thus. The locality in question often belonged to scheduled caste dwellers. The polling station was often at the other end of the village or in another village. Since they had to walk through upper caste areas, they were often intimidated on the way. We prepared a survey in the run up to the Assembly election and found that about 25000 hamlets, or parts of them, were not casting their votes. We had the two choices. The first was to relocate the existing polling station to a more central spot. But a shift required the approval of all in the fray. The second was to allow the poll station to remain, and instead create an "auxiliary" station on the doorstep of the "deprived" areas. This is what we did. Many families voted without fear for the first time in years. We perfected this. By the 2009 general elections, we put up over 100,000 auxiliary stations throughout the country. It created a quiet revolution. The commission tries hard to level the playing field, by upholding the Model Code of Conduct as a fair umpire should. It has tried over long years to ban criminality from the electoral maidan, but that requires laws to be amended. Only Parliament can do that. Till that happens, the commission had been successful in outlawing erstwhile practices of booth capturing and violence.

The BJP? must not allow the festering Ayodhya issue to get out of hand

2018 isn't 1992, but it's hard to ignore the significant intensification in clamour for a Ram temple at Ayodhya over the past few months. A big show of strength by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh affiliate in Ayodhya on November 25 is to be followed by another event in the capital on November 9. From the RSS to the VHP to even the Shiv Sena, various groups and parties have become aggressive in their assertions that a temple has to be built. The Bharatiya Janata Party's President Amit Shah has said his party will wait for the Supreme Court's January hearing but that it would have built a temple in Ayodhya long ago if it had its way. The Shiv Sena, the BJP's fractious alliance partner, has said that the outcome of the 2019 elections hinges on the building of the temple. And RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has said the time for patience is over. The Congress, for its part, has been soft pedalling the issue with its embrace of



soft-Hindutva. Other parties, barring the All India Masjlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, have also steered clear of the issue. There are reports now that some Muslims have started moving out of Ayodhya. There has also been a lot of talk about how the temple has divine sanction and will come up irrespective of what the Supreme Court rules. The Supreme Court will hear the case as a title dispute, which is as it should be, but its decision to hear the case in January (and not October as it was supposed to) has, in some ways, resulted in all parties concerned upping the ante. Indeed, even the Prime Minister, in an election campaign meeting, alleged that pressure is being brought upon the court to push the case to after the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh state and the central government (both BJP ones) have to ensure that as much as they support the cause of a Ram temple, they have to ensure that law and order is maintained. For the BJP, this is a real test. The temple is an emotive issue with a large cohort of its constituents. Yet, if it pushes an ordinance at this stage, it would just be giving opponents a convenient political handle to beat it with. For now, all it can do is hope that the clamour for a temple does not get out of hand and that the court resolves the issue soon.



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The John Chau episode shows India's internal security is porous

The ease with which US evangelist John A Chau evaded onshore and offshore checks is shocking

The unlawful, and fatal, expedition of a young American evangelist adventurer to a remote island that is home to the world's last known pre-Neolithic tribe has highlighted India's lax internal security controls and the threat to endangered indigenous communities from interlopers. The episode also casts an unflattering light on the ministry of home affairs (MHA), which, to cover up its lapses, has sought to obscure the truth.

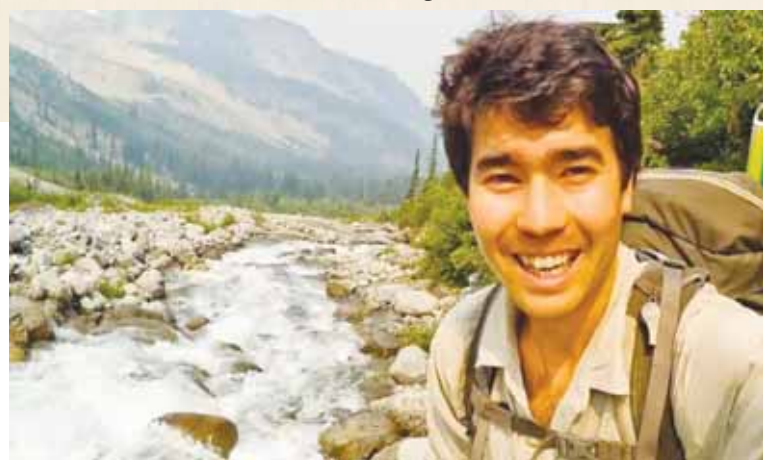
Although lionised as a martyr in the US evangelical media, John Allen Chau was a wilful intruder. He trespassed on a prohibited island to impose his religion on a tiny, highly endangered tribe whose seclusion and privacy are legally protected. Worse still, his repeated intrusions into their

peaceful, self-contented world might have exposed the Sentinelese — with no resistance to outsiders' common diseases and already on the brink of extinction — to deadly pathogens. One crazed man's conduct may have put an entire tribe's survival at risk.

On his first intrusion into their North Sentinel Island, the Sentinelese, setting an example for the so-called civilised world, did not subject Chau to Abu Ghraib-style torture or even detain him. Yet, undeterred by the tribe's warning not to return, a recalcitrant Chau over the next two days repeatedly came back to the island, disparaging it as "Satan's last stronghold", according to his own diary notes, released by his mother. The son

of a refugee father who fled China during the Cultural Revolution and converted to Christianity in the US, Chau described in his notes how he hid from Indian coastal patrols under cover of darkness to make his criminal forays into an island forbidden even to Indians and Indian forces.

The ease with which he broke Indian laws and evaded onshore and offshore checks is a sad commentary on India's internal security. The Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) chain is a critical asset for India's national security. Located just northwest of the Malacca Strait, the archipelago offers India control of a chokepoint that is China's greatest maritime vulnerability. A&N is also home to some of the world's most endangered tribes.



After the ravages of British colonial rule, when the archipelago's aboriginal communities were systematically decimated, only some tribes still survive. But their member numbers are dwindling. For example, the Jarawas, one of the first tribes to fall prey to British excesses, are vanishing, in an example of how contact with outsiders can doom an indigenous community.

Chau, instead of applying for a missionary visa, abused India's e-visa on arrival system for tourists by hiding his real purpose. He neither registered with the Foreigners Regional Registration Office nor sought the mandatory permission under the separate aborigine and forest protection laws before undertaking a mission he plotted through previous A&N visits. Yet, in isolated but militarily sensitive

Madhya Pradesh assembly election 2018: Will corruption, rural anger hurt BJP in the state?

The 2013 Madhya Pradesh elections were part of the poll-cycle which marked the beginning of the Modi wave. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) got two-thirds majority in the state. That is not the case anymore. Takkar (contest) has replaced hawa (wave) as the one-word descriptor for the November 28 election. However, most BJP workers we spoke to in Madhya Pradesh are confident that the party will be able to pull off a Gujarat-2017 like performance, where the BJP's seats came down but the party retained its majority, in Madhya Pradesh 2018. There are good reasons, rooted in both arithmetic and chemistry, why this might or

might not happen. Arithmetic shows that the Congress has a lot of ground to make up vis-à-vis the BJP. The latter won 165 seats in the 2013 elections, with an extraordinary strike rate of 72%. The average vote share of the BJP was 45% compared to 36% for the Congress. Shivraj Singh Chouhan is also relying on positive chemistry. Entrenched memories of poor provision of public goods such as electricity and roads under the Digvijaya Singh-led Congress government between 1998 and 2003 continue to haunt the opposition. Even Congress supporters across the states agreed that Singh's tenure was a disaster for the party. That 15 years of BJP rule have led to

development is a common view across the state. These two factors notwithstanding, the BJP will do well not to be complacent. There is a broad narrative among voters, Congress and BJP supporters alike, that the BJP government has been infiltrated by highly corrupt and non-performing local actors including MLAs. Shivraj agar jaroori hai to vidhayak majboori hai (The MLA is a compromise, if you want to see Shivraj as the chief minister) is the common narrative among BJP workers across the state. That the BJP has dropped 53 of its sitting MLAs (from a house of 230) this time corroborates this narrative. Widespread rural distress in the state, similar to



what was seen in Gujarat, is likely to add to the headwinds from local level anti-incumbency for the ruling party. In Gujarat, 2017, the Congress actually won a majority in rural areas, winning 67 out of the 126 rural seats in the state. It was urban seats which saved the BJP in the state.

Even in MP, the BJP has had a better foothold in urban seats. Statistics provided by the Trivedi Centre for Political Data (TCPD) at Ashoka University, show that the BJP had a strike rate of 93% in urban seats in Madhya Pradesh compared to just 69% in rural seats in the 2013 elections.

India needs a renewed debate on federalism

The controversy surrounding Governor Satyapal Malik's decision to dissolve the Jammu and Kashmir assembly — the dubious reasoning offered and the many questions this raised about New Delhi's role (including Tuesday's revelations that the decision was made to avoid interference from New Delhi) — raises important questions about the evolving nature of Centre-state relations and the dangers of the Modi government's deep centrist bias. It also highlights the urgent need for a renewed political debate on federalism and the institutional

framework through which Centre-state relations are negotiated.

The BJP's emergence as the dominant single party in 2014 and its subsequent consolidation of political power across India, after decades of coalition governments and regionalisation of politics, marked a turning point in India's federal trajectory. Since the 1990s, regional political parties began to play a significant role in reshaping India's federal character. As Yogendra Yadav argued, voters in the 1970s and 1980s voted in the assembly

elections as if they were choosing their prime minister; in the 1990s, voters began to vote for the Lok Sabha as if they were choosing their chief minister. With state dynamics dominating national politics, power, too, shifted away from Delhi.

2014 marked the first reversal of this trend. In these past four years, the BJP has actively sought to use its dominance in Delhi to recentralise political discourse and reassert New Delhi's power. Constitutional authorities, in particular the

governor, charged with mediating the federal bargain, have become an important instrument through which this goal of recentralisation is being fulfilled. From Delhi to Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and now J&K, the office of the governor is being routinely used to impose New Delhi's political will and encroach on state autonomy. It isn't just the BJP. The precedent was set by the Congress, which missed no opportunity to use the office of the governor for political gains. This raises a critical question

about India's federal architecture and its ability to keep New Delhi's centralising impulses in check. Adopted in the aftermath of Partition, our federal system is designed to have a strong centre or "quasi-federal" character where the Centre has wide-ranging powers including the imposition of President's Rule (PR). While necessary in 1947, this quasi-federal character has proved limited in its ability to curtail Central overreach, especially with single party dominant national governments, highlighting the urgency of reform.

Vijay Mallya is ready to pay his dues, lawyer tells PMLA court

Vijay Mallya — who is currently in London— has so far neither appeared in court, nor submitted any undertaking indicating he would join the process of law in India, the ED's counsel, DP Singh, told the court.

Vijay Mallya is willing to sign consent terms with the Indian government about paying his dues to creditors, the businessman's lawyer told a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court on Thursday.

The PMLA court began hearing a plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which wants to de-

clare Mallya a fugitive economic offender and confiscate his properties in India.

Mallya — who is currently in London — has so far neither appeared in court, nor submitted any undertaking indicating he would join the process of law in India, the ED's counsel, DP Singh, told the court.

Mallya's lawyer, Amit Desai, however argued that confiscating properties would not help authorities, as the properties would all end up in the consolidated funds of the government, and no one would have a claim over them. "The rights of creditors would go. Further, all the proceedings before various forums



Anti-Sterlite protests: CBI books unnamed TN cops, officials for conspiracy, dacoity

(Insider Bureau): The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday filed its second First Information Report (FIR) against unidentified police and revenue department officials in connection with the May 22 firing on anti-Sterlite protestors in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district. As many as 13 people were killed in the firing on residents protesting against the proposed expansion of a Sterlite copper plant over pollution concerns. The first FIR in the case was registered on October 8. HT has seen the FIR, which was filed following the Madras HC's August 14 order asking the CBI to probe the firing within four months. The court had questioned

the state's inaction against the police. The CBI has slapped charges of criminal conspiracy, robbery, dacoity and disobeying the law to cause injury against the unidentified police and revenue department officials allegedly responsible for the firing. The case has been registered on the basis of the CPI (Marxist) district secretary K Arjunan's complaint. "Perusal of written complaint dated May 29, 2018, discloses prima facie commission of offence...by unknown persons and public servants from police and revenue department," the FIR said. The 13 people were killed when the police fired on the protestors on the 100th day of protests seeking plant's closure.

and tribunals initiated by banks and the accused, over the rights to the properties, would also be infructuous," said Desai, adding that the creditors and other interested parties would be made to "run pillar to post to claim their money".

ED's counsel, Singh, however clarified that the centre only becomes an administrator of the assets, according to the rules of the Fugitive Economic Offenders' Act, under which the

ED wants to confiscate the properties.

But, Desai pointed out that the act doesn't apply to Mallya. "The confiscation will be in retrospect. In general law, the properties of an accused are confiscated only after he is held guilty of the crime. Here, under this law, Mallya has not even been tried, not a single witness has been examined, and we are jumping to attach his properties," Desai argued. "What if, tomorrow, Mallya is acquitted?"

Government can't remove CBI chief midterm, Alok Verma tells court

The case in the Supreme Court over the government divesting Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) director Alok Verma of his powers saw arguments on Thursday between the petitioners (including Verma) and the government (represented by the attorney general) on the scope of powers of the selection committee that appoints the CBI chief and whether divesting the CBI chief of his powers was tantamount to transferring him. Defending the government's decision, attorney general KK Venugopal said that the central government was the appointing authority in the case of the CBI director and it was not incumbent upon it to consult the selection committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the leader of Opposition and the Chief Justice of India (CJI) before divesting him of powers. Drawing a distinction between the roles played by the selection committee and the appointing authority, Venugopal contended that

the former's responsibility was to only recommend a suitable candidate with the final appointment being made by the government. "The committee selects a group of candidates for the appointment of director of CBI, and puts it up before the government. Then it is the government which appoints the right candidate out of these; selection does not mean appointment," Venugopal said.

Fali S Nariman, who appeared for Verma, said, "The legal provision dealing with conditions and terms of service of CBI director mandates that any such move can only be made with the approval of the selection committee. How could the government divest Alok Verma of his powers without convening the committee's meeting? If this is allowed, what happens to the autonomy and independence of CBI." Senior advocate Dushyant Dave representing Common Cause, an NGO, also

argued that the transfer should not have happened without consulting the committee. Responding to a query from Justice KM Joseph on whether the committee should be involved even if the "CBI director is caught red-handed", Nariman said that should be the case. Verma and his deputy at the agency, special director Rakesh Asthana, were both divested of their powers on the night of October 23 after an internecine battle between the two threw the agency into chaos. After Verma contested this legally, the Supreme Court asked the Central Vigilance Commission, which was probing a complaint against Verma by Asthana, to complete this within two weeks.

The attorney general also said that Verma remained the CBI director: "Verma stays in the house marked for the CBI director and also enjoys all the perks associated with his position, so where is the question of transfer?"

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Pak Army chief's handshake with pro-Khalistan leader at Kartarpur corridor event triggers row

Indian officials refused to formally comment on it, but said this was part of a game being played by Pakistan and rued that a religious occasion of such significance was being "manipulated" for such a purpose.

Pakistan on Wednesday justified its army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa greeting pro-Khalistan leader Gopal Singh Chawla on the sidelines of the Kartarpur corridor groundbreaking ceremony after a video emerged of the two men shaking hands. Chawla, known to be one of the main propagators of the Sikh movement that seeks a separate homeland for the community, has earlier stopped Indian diplomats from visiting a gurudwara in Lahore. He is believed to have ties to terrorist Hafiz Saeed, who is wanted in India. A spokesperson for the Pakistan army said Bajwa "met all guests at

the venue irrespective of identity". On Twitter, the military's media wing spokesperson, Major General Asif Ghafoor, said: "Indian media taking a myopic view is selectively showing Mr Gopal Chawla meeting COAS. Army Chief met all guests at the venue irrespective of identity. A peace initiative should not be subjected to propaganda." Chawla is a senior leader of the Pakistan Sikh Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee (PSGPC), and he was invited to all events involving the Sikh community, a Pakistani official told news agency Press Trust of India. The groundbreaking ceremony in Pakistan's

Punjab province was attended by federal and provincial ministers and foreign dignitaries. In Canada, the pro-Khalistan group, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), has announced that it plans to hold a convention to espouse the secessionist 2020 Referendum campaign, announced in London in August this year, at Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan if the proposed corridor for Sikh pilgrims between India and Pakistan is functional by then. While the original plan was to hold a major event at Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, SFJ's legal advisor Gurpatwant

Pannun told Hindustan Times that the opening of the corridor will allow the group access to a much larger number of pilgrims from India at Kartarpur Sahib than would be possible at the more distant Nankana Sahib. "Because now they have given access, people will come to Kartarpur Sahib. They will not be allowed to visit Nankana Sahib so we will have to do the convention at Kartarpur Sahib," Pannun said. In case the corridor is not open, SFJ will revert to the original plan of holding the convention at Nankana Sahib. The convention is being timed to coincide with the 550th birth anniversary of Guru



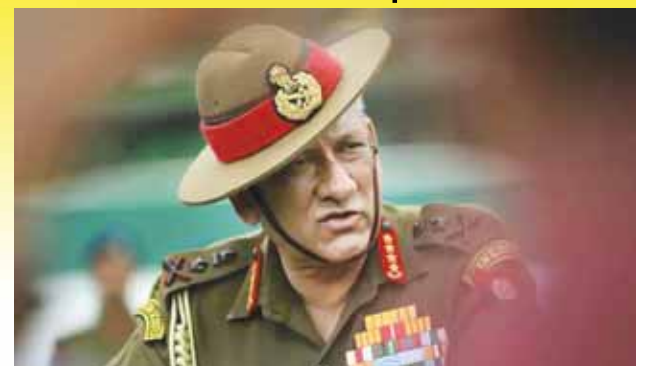
Nanak. Read: Kartarpur event a showcase for Navjot Sidhu-Imran Khan bromance Indian officials refused to formally comment on this latest provocative move by SFJ, but said this was part of a game being played by Pakistan and rued that a religious occasion of such significance was being "manipulated" for such a purpose. SFJ's office in Lahore will "coordinate" registration of "voters" for the non-binding referendum on creating a separate nation of Khalistan. SFJ also plans to sponsor and host 10,000 Sikhs from Punjab at the convention to "be educated and informed about Sikhs' right to self-determination under the UN Charter and Conventions" and to serve as "ambassadors" for the separatist referendum.

Pakistan using hybrid warfare against India: Army chief General Bipin Rawat

Bipin Rawat said the whole world was aware that terror camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir were being run by government agencies to cause disruptions in India and that all terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was state sponsored.

On a day Pakistan Kargil war. Prime Minister Imran Khan Delivering the 9th YB Chavan Memorial Lecture at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses on Addressing the Challenges of Hybrid Conflict in the 21st Century, Rawat said each act of cowardice in Jammu and Kashmir would be responded to with vigour and no sacrifice made by soldiers would go in vain. Rawat said the whole

world was aware that support from local population and infrastructure. "War is waged without declaring it, fought with proxies in collusion." General Bipin Rawat said hybrid operations last for a long time and the prime intent is to maintain deniability and that was what India was witnessing in Kashmir. "In the 21st century



technological advancements have added greater asymmetry to hybrid warfare. Irregulars can surprise conventional forces with hi-tech gadgets and weapons such as rockets, surface-to-air missiles, sophisticated communication systems and near-instant reach back to their state sponsors," he said. Responding to a question on whether India should go in for an offensive hybrid war, General Bipin Rawat said, "The stone that is thrown up comes and falls on your head...What happens to those people (the non-state actors) after the end state has been achieved?" Rawat advocated a calibrated offensive and defensive hybrid warfare strategy.

He said small but tech-savvy teams with intimate local knowledge and support could cause big disruptions. Rawat said the Pakistani military enjoyed supremacy in the country's internal affairs. "This means they can use all governmental agencies in coordination against us whenever they feel like. Therefore, this hybrid warfare is likely to endure just remaining below the conventional threshold."

Underlining the risks of using hybrid warfare, he said instigators ran the risk of losing control of the choreographed plan and that states practicing this often fall victims to these same tactics.

India, UK to remain important partners post-Brexit: Indian envoy

(News Agencies)The India-Britain partnership will remain strong irrespective of the direction the ongoing Brexit negotiations take, India's new High Commissioner to the UK, Ruchi Ghanshayam, has said. In one of her first addresses on the bilateral partnership since taking charge at the Indian High Commission in London last week, Ghanshayam told a gathering organised by the Indian Professionals Forum (IPF) at Chatham House that it was important that familiarity does not lead to complacency in the relationship. "The India-UK partnership is very old, it has stood the test of time and whatever happens to this Brexit process, whichever way it turns out, I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that India and the UK will remain important

partners," she said in her keynote address on the topic of 'Indo-UK Collaboration: Opportunities and Challenges'. The UK is set to exit the European Union on March 29, 2019. Lawmakers will debate Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal in Parliament on December 11. "The relationship is both special and deep. One of our greatest strengths is familiarity with one another. But the risk of familiarity is that we must guard against complacency. We must remain conscious of the need not to be complacent," the Indian envoy said. The IPF, a non-profit think tank for Indian diaspora-related policy advocacy and a members' club launched last year, followed up the keynote address with a focus on the prospects of India-UK collaboration in the health care sector.





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Imran Khan politicising 'pious' event, says govt on Pak PM's Kartarpur pitch

Imran Khan said it would be "madness" for the two nuclear-armed countries to think of war and that India and Pakistan should emulate the example of France and Germany, which came together in a union after wars and bloodshed.

Pakistan's civilian and military leadership are united in desiring better relations with India although Kashmir remains the key issue between the two sides, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Wednesday, cautioning that war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours was simply not an option.

Addressing a gathering that included Indian ministers Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Hardeep Singh Puri after the groundbreaking ceremony for the Pakistani section of the Kartarpur corridor, Khan said "determined leadership" is needed in both countries to settle the Kashmir issue.

In India, meanwhile, an official spokesperson took exception to what he described as an attempt by Khan to politicise "a pious occasion" with his mention of Kashmir. Chief of army staff General Bipin Rawat said the Kartarpur corridor should be seen in isolation. Khan also said it would be "madness" for the two nuclear-armed countries to think of war and that India and Pakistan should emulate the example of France and Germany, which came together in a union after wars and bloodshed. The Pakistani premier made the pitch for peace and better relations with India after the groundbreaking in

the presence of Pakistan Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa. Punjab state minister Navjot Sidhu, to whom Bajwa first spoke about the Kartarpur corridor in August, and Badal also addressed the gathering.

"Today in Pakistan, the prime minister, my party, all other political parties, the army and all institutions are on the same page. We want to move forward, we want a civilised relationship with India," Khan said in Urdu.

"We have one issue, and that is Kashmir. You tell me, humans have reached the moon. Which issue can't be solved by humans?...We only need determined leadership on both sides of the border," he said.

Khan, who didn't mention his Indian counterpart in his speech, questioned the criticism fellow cricketer-turned-politician Sidhu had faced in India after attending his swearing-in ceremony in August. "He (Sidhu) was talking of friendship between two countries that are nuclear-armed. We both have atomic weapons and there can't be a war. It is madness to think of war between two countries that have atomic weapons. Only a foolish individual can think anyone can win a nuclear war, everyone will lose," he added. India and Pakistan, Khan said,

won't be able to move forward till they break the chains of the past. Citing the example of France and Germany coming together after fighting many wars, he said: "If these countries can make a union, why can't we?"

Khan also reiterated a pledge he had made in his first speech after winning Pakistan's general election - that his country will take two steps of friendship for every one step taken by India.

The leadership in both countries needs strength, determination and a big vision to take things forward. "When there is determination, nothing is impossible...The people want peace and the leadership on both sides have to be on the same page," he said. One reason for wanting better ties with India is the poverty in the region, he said, adding: "A lot of poverty can be ended rapidly if the borders are opened and trade starts."

The corridor will connect Dera Baba Nanak in India and the Kartarpur Gurdwara, built at the site in Pakistan where Guru Nanak died, and allow visa-free visits by Indian pilgrims. Pakistan will build a bridge over the Ravi River as part of the corridor and create a border terminal, accommodation for pilgrims and other facilities at Kartarpur, a short dis-



tance from the border.

The distance between Dera Baba Nanak and Kartarpur is about 4 km though the circular route planned for the corridor means it will have a total length of about 7 km.

Hundreds of Indian Sikh pilgrims were part of the gathering, and Khan said, "If I had to explain the joy on your faces to my Muslim brothers and sisters, I would say it's like being 4 km from Medina (the city in Saudi Arabia where Prophet Mohammed is buried) and not being able to go in, and then you're allowed to go in."

Khan pledged that all facilities at Kartarpur will be in place for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak in 2019. Sidhu said Guru Nanak's philosophy was based on brotherhood and ending divisions. Badal, who became emotional during her speech, said the "peace corridor" will remove bitterness between the two countries. "If the Berlin Wall can fall, hatred and mistrust between India and Pakistan can be overcome in the name of Guru Nanak," she said. In response to queries on Khan's reference to

Kashmir, an official Indian spokesperson said: "It is deeply regrettable that the Prime Minister of Pakistan chose to politicise the pious occasion meant to realise the long pending demand of the Sikh community to develop a Kartarpur corridor by making unwarranted references to Jammu and Kashmir, which is an integral and inalienable part of India." "Pakistan is reminded that it must fulfil its international obligations and take effective and credible action to stop providing shelter and all kinds of support to cross-border terrorism from territories under its control," the spokesperson added. When asked whether the corridor was a sign of peace between India and Pakistan, General Rawat told reporters: "Kartarpur should be seen in isolation. Do not link it to anything else." He spoke after delivering the 9th Y B Chavan Memorial lecture in Delhi. "The whole world is aware that terror camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir are being run by governmental agencies that also plan disruptions in India," the army chief said.

44 violations by foreigners in Andamans; visit to North Sentinel island may soon be prohibited without permit

The Restricted Area Permit (RAP), which forbids people from visiting prohibited locations without permission, may be reimposed in the North Sentinel island where an American was killed by members of a highly protected and reclusive tribe, officials said Wednesday. The central government has also found that 44 incidents of violation of rules and regulations, other than RAP, by foreigners have taken place in the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the recent past, even as a delegation of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) will visit the union territory on December 4 to assess the situation arising after the killing of John Allen Chau by the Sentinelese tribes a couple of weeks ago. The Home Ministry has received

a report of the Andaman and Nicobar islands administration on the incident, a home ministry official said.

A worst-case scenario would be reimposition of the RAP in the North Sentinel island along with a few other islets, the official said. The North Sentinel island is one of 29 islands in the Andamans where till June foreigners had to take special permission -- the RAP -- before being allowed to visit them.

Even though RAP was withdrawn, any tourist is required to take permission from the forest department and the administration of the Andamans as it is protected under two other acts -- protection of aboriginal people and forest acts.

The home ministry has also found

that as many as 44 incidents of violation of rules and regulations by foreign tourists have taken place in the Andamans in the recent past. However, none of these incidents are related to the RAP, another official said.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the NCST, headed by its chairman Nand Kumar Sai will visit the Andamans on December 4 to take stock of the situation there arising after the killing of Chau.

The home ministry has also submitted a report to the NCST on the incident, the official said. The police said the slain American had enlisted the help of a local electronics engineer and water sports service provider and hired five fishermen to evade the patrolling teams of police, Coast Guard and Navy to approach the island.



For this, the local fishermen were paid around Rs 25,000 by Chau. Chau and the team had started on November 14 around 8 PM for the North Sentinel Island and reached there by midnight.

The next day, he moved to shore using his kayak which he towed with the fishing boat. After dropping him, the fishermen fixed their

timings and place to meet each other between the shoreline and their high sea fishing area.

In the morning of November 17, they saw a dead person being buried at the shore which from the silhouette of the body, clothing and circumstances appeared to be the body of Chau, the police said.

Kartarpur event a showcase for Navjot Sidhu-Imran Khan bromance

Punjab state minister Navjot Singh Sidhu was clearly the man of the match at the groundbreaking ceremony here for the Kartarpur corridor on Wednesday, with Prime Minister Imran Khan joking the former cricketer would easily win if he contested elections in Pakistan.



Sidhu was at Khan's side along with Indian ministers Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Hardeep Singh Puri, with Pakistan Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa standing behind, as the premier inaugurated work on the corridor. Sidhu later sat beside Khan and foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi at a public gathering, sharing smiles and pleasantries. Several speakers referred to Sidhu and every mention drew loud cheers from the audience, which included a large number of Indian and Pakistani Sikhs.

Bajwa first spoke of Pakistan's plans to open a corridor to Kartarpur Gurdwara when he met Sidhu at Khan's swearing-in in August, but the former cricketer faced criticism on his return to India for having hugged the Pakistan Army chief.

Pakistan's religious affairs minister Noor-ul-Haq Qadri referred to the "historic hug" in his speech and said: "If there were more such hugs, a lot of our problems would be solved." Sidhu, clad in a purple turban and matching kurta, was effusive in his praise of Khan in a speech peppered with several Punjabi couplets and passages from the Guru Granth Sahib. "When the history of the Kartarpur corridor is written, the name of Imran Khan will be written on the first page and in the first line." During his speech, Khan



said he was inspired by the verses recited by Sidhu. "I was affected by what Sidhu said. I didn't know he knows so much about Sufi poetry," he said. Khan also joked about Sidhu's electoral prospects in the country. "What crime did Sidhu commit by coming here? And Sidhu,

let me tell you one thing -- from what I've been seeing since yesterday, you can come and contest elections here in Pakistan and you will win, especially in Punjab," he said. Referring to the need for strong and determined leadership in India and Pakistan to resolve prob-

lems, Khan said there were two types of politicians -- those with big visions who take chances and those who are scared and worried about vote banks. "I hope that we will not have to wait till Sidhu becomes prime minister to have friendship between India and Pakistan," he said to loud laughter.

Threat of transfer remains, it's not in one's hands: J&K governor Satya Pal Malik

Satya Pal Malik said he was in Madhya Pradesh and was down with fever for the past two days. "But in politics, fever or injury is not taken note of and I returned to be part of this function which was very important for me, given the stature of the departed leader," he said.

Amid a ranging controversy over his remarks on dissolving the Jammu and Kashmir assembly, Governor Satya Pal Malik has said the threat of transfer remains as it is not in one's hands.

At a function organised to pay tributes to Congress leader and former minister Girdhari Lal Dogra on his 31st death anniversary here on Tuesday, he mentioned about the threat of transfer. "Girdhari Lal ji dedicated his life to the cause of the poor. As long as I am here, I will definitely come to pay my tributes to him... It (transfer) is not in one's hands. I will not lose my job but the threat of transfer remains," he said.

The transfer remark by the governor drew chuckles from the audience.

Malik said he was in Madhya Pradesh and was down with fever for the past two days. "But in politics, fever or injury is not taken note of and I returned to be part of this function which was very important for me, given the stature of the departed leader," he said.

Malik at another event on Saturday had said had he "looked to Delhi", he would have had to install a government led by Sajad Lone, a claim which the opposition said on Tuesday vindicated

its charge he was under pressure to put in place a "BJP-supported government".

Though there was no reaction from the Centre or the BJP to the claim made by Malik, who said history would have remembered him as a "dishonest man" if he had asked People's Conference leader Lone to form the government, the chiefs of Peoples Democratic Party and National Conference -- Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah -- complimented the governor for not taking "instructions" from Delhi thereby stopping the installation of a government of the "BJP and its proxies".

However, Lone claimed misrepresentation of facts and gross distortion of "certain events" and said "We remain committed to offering an alternative to the traditional political system of exploitation, arrogance, entitlement and blackmail and will leave no stone unturned to rid the state of the tyranny of dynastic misrule and despotism". Malik had abruptly dissolved the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly last week after the PDP staked claim to form a government with the backing of rival NC and the Congress. This was followed by another bid from the two-member People's Confer-

ence led by Lone which claimed the support of the BJP and 18 legislators from other parties. During a pre-convocation academic conclave of ITM University in Gwalior, he said, "Delhi ki taraf dekhta toh muje Lone ki sarkar banana padhti aur mein ithihas mein ek bayiman aadmi ke tor pe jana jata...(Had I looked to Delhi, I would have had to install a government led by Lone, and history would have remembered me as a dishonest man)." "Therefore, I ended up the matter. Whoever wants to scold, can do so now but I am convinced that



whatever I did, was right," he said in his address after noted journalist Ravish Kumar had pointed out in his speech about faulty fax machine.

Governor's rule was clamped in the state on June 19 for a six-month period following the col-

lapse of the PDP-BJP coalition government after the saffron party withdrew support. The state assembly was also kept in suspended animation so that political parties could explore the possibility of forming a new government.

Mamata a threat to national security, used Maoists to win power: BJP

Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is a threat to national security because she shelters infiltrators who smuggle arms, drugs and fake currency into the country, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya alleged on Thursday. "Bengal is a safe haven for infiltrators who smuggle in weapons, narcotics and fake Indian currency notes to destroy the nation. Mamata Banerjee uses them as vote bank. She is a threat to national security and needs to be dislodged from power not just for

the sake of Bengal but for India," Vijayvargiya alleged while talking to reporters on the sidelines of a party meeting in Midnapore town, about 150 km to the west of Kolkata. "We have proof of her links with Maoists whom she used to come to power. We will make it public at the right time. She used the Maoists and later killed them," he said in response to Banerjee's allegation that BJP is bringing in Maoists from neighbouring Jharkhand to attack her party workers. "When we make the evidences public,

people will know how Maoist leader Kishenji was killed," he added. Maoist commander Koteswara Rao, popularly known as Kishenji, was killed in an encounter with the police in West Midnapore district on November 14, 2011, months after Banerjee came to power overthrowing the Marxists. The Trinamool Congress reacted promptly. "As our chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, has already become the leading face of the opposition against anti-people policies of BJP and the Union government.

Rajasthan assembly elections 2018: Mumbai businessman throws his hat in ring in Sikar

Rajasthan assembly elections 2018: After unsuccessfully seeking a ticket from Congress, Wahid Chowhan will contest as a candidate of the newly launched Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, started by BJP rebel and independent MLA from Khinswar, Hanuman Beniwal.

A quiet town on the national highway connecting Agra and Bikaner, Sikar is known for its 19th century temples and forts, Shekhawati-style frescoes, and for the past few decades, Wahid Chowhan. The 69-year-old businessman who was born in Sikar, and is settled in Mumbai, is known as a social reformer. This election season, he is also a poll hopeful.

After unsuccessfully seeking a ticket from Congress, Chowhan will contest as a candidate of the newly launched Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, started by Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) rebel and independent MLA from Khinswar, Hanuman Beniwal.

A charismatic Jat leader, Beniwal has made alliances with parties, including Ghanshyam Tiwari's Bharat Vahini Party to field 40 candidates in Rajasthan's 200 assembly seats. Chowhan is no stranger

to these parts. He started a school for girls in his home town back in the 1990s.

Now called the Excellence Knowledge City for Girls, and located on a six hectare campus, it offers free education, including books and uniforms, from nursery to graduation. It draws students from both, Muslim and Hindu communities.

Chowhan claims to have worked as a mason in Mumbai fixing roofs to fund his education. He started out as a businessman selling PVC pipes, and bought real estate in both, Mumbai and Goa. "But I was always keen to return to my roots and do something for people in Sikar," Chowhan said.

He sold a hotel that he owned in Goa, in 1997, to raise funds for the school. "Bringing Muslim girls to school was difficult. I was accused of spoiling them, and our culture," Chowhan said. "Today, people complain

their boys are not as qualified as girls."

This is Chowhan's second bid to contest the polls. He fought the 2013 election on Nationalist Congress Party ticket, but lost. "It is different equation this time. I am getting the support of Jats this time. They voted for the BJP in the last election," Chowhan said.

Jaipur based senior journalist and political analyst Narayan Bareth said that Chowhan is well-known across faiths for his work. "He has considerable following (because of his work with) girl students. He is contesting from a new party so its electoral impact cannot be assessed, but he is definitely creating a buzz."

"He has a pleasant personality, and he doesn't scare any community," Rajendra Rathore, a businessman in Sikar town, added.

Beniwal was travelling and could not speak despite attempts to contact him.

Jat, Muslim and Scheduled Castes together constitute about 1.7 lakh of Sikar's total electorate size of nearly 2.7 lakh. The area has 15,000 Rajputs, while Brahmins and Baniya are around 25,000 in number.





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Arun Jaitley, P Chidambaram spar over GDP revision

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated that India's GDP grew by 8.5 per cent in the financial year 2010-11 (April 2010 to March 2011) and not at 10.3 per cent as previously estimated.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday sprang to the defence of revised data showing economic growth under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government had outpaced the rate of expansion during the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime after his predecessor P Chidambaram slammed the new numbers as "a joke, bad joke and worse than a bad joke."

Meanwhile, Chidambaram's challenge to NITI Aayog's vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar to debate the amended data, which was released at a press conference on Wednesday by the federal policy think tank and the Central Statistics Office, was accepted by the latter. "Data based on facts and on the best global practices is rejected by the (Congress) Party because it takes away the last of its surviving arguments (that) 'my GDP growth was higher than yours,'" Jaitley wrote in a Facebook blog titled 'When The Data Speaks.'

Jaitley noted that Chidambaram had in 2015 welcomed changes effected in the

way growth in gross domestic product, or the value of economic output, is calculated.

For the last two years of the Congress-led UPA regime, in 2012-13, and 2013-14, growth was revised upwards, from 4.7% to an eventual 5.5% and from 5% to 6.4%, respectively.

Chidambaram said then that the new data establishes the fact that UPA had succeeded in reviving the economy before it bowed out of power in 2014. Data released on Wednesday, almost four years after India moved to a new way of calculating GDP, showed the compound annual growth rate in GDP at market prices (2011-12 series) under the Narendra Modi government was 7.3% between 2014-15 and 2017-18, higher than the 6.7% and 6.4% in the two terms of the UPA under Manmohan Singh. "Obviously, when the new (GDP) series is in place, it has to be used as a basis for backward revision. So what was revised from the year 2011-12 onwards is now being revised from 2004-05.

Consequently, the same

basis which improved the growth estimate in the last two years of the UPA Government somewhat downgraded it in the earlier years. Those who took after the new series in 2015 now consider the new series to be a "hatchet job" and a "bad joke". What humours some when data shows an upward trend depresses them if it moves in the reverse direction," Jaitley wrote. He defended the CSO, saying it had always functioned objectively and maintained an arms-length distance from the finance ministry. "No one in India has ever imputed motives to the CSO. The sooner the Congress Party realises that its policy paralysis pushed India into the Fragile 5, the better it will be for the Party and its leadership."

Fragile Five is a term coined by Morgan Stanley for Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey in 2013, when their currencies depreciated rapidly.

Jaitley told reporters later that the new "data is realistic. It is not fictional. And this formula (of calculating GDP?growth) is globally more comparable."

Chidambaram, on Wednesday, accused



NITI Aayog of doing a "hatchet job" by revising down the economic growth figures during the UPA's two terms. "Now that Niti Aayog has done the hatchet job, it is time to wind up the utterly worthless body," he said. "I wonder if Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar will agree to a debate on the data than telling journalists that their questions are 'undeserving of an answer,'" Chidambaram tweeted.

Kumar responded to the challenge on Thursday. "...challenge accepted. Let's discuss & dissect back series data. I gave 3 hrs of detailed interview yesterday & it is somewhat disingenuous of you to say that I asked the media to not ask questions. Do give more coherent reasons for our difficulty with new data," Kumar wrote in a tweet.

Through more tweets, Kumar also stressed that NITI Aayog uses data extensively for making logical policy recommendations and the data is always based on assessment and quality checks by eminent statisticians.

Kumar later told PTI that Niti Aayog had provided a platform to experts and statisticians to examine GDP back-series data. "GDP back-series data is a technical thing, it has a huge macroeconomic impact, so we have done it in a more macroeconomic manner," he said, adding that he was deeply pained by people who had politicised the data.

On comments made by the former finance minister, Kumar said: "Chidambaram has done a great disservice to officers of the CSO. CSO officials have done an amazingly technically detailed exercise".

polls showed India's economic growth probably moderated to 7.4% in the July-September quarter, weakening just as the Bharatiya Janata Party gets set for general elections due next year. That pace is still faster than China's, but a comedown from the more than two-year high of 8.2% set in the June quarter and some economists foresee the slowdown continuing though to the election at least.

"The economy is likely to slow down in the second half of the current fiscal year (ending in March)," A. Prasanna, chief economist at ICICI Securities Primary Dealership in Mumbai said. Prasanna was cautiously optimistic about the outlook, but much would depend on the election outcome. "Any signs of political uncertainty could affect market and business sentiment," he said.

JD(S)-Congress to discuss Karnataka cabinet expansion in Dec 3 meeting

The Congress offered Janata Dal (Secular)'s HD Kumaraswamy the chief ministerial post despite winning 80 seats. Kumaraswamy's party could manage just 37.

A meeting of Karnataka's ruling Janata Dal (Secular)-Congress coalition coordination committee will be held in Bengaluru on December 3 to discuss the possible cabinet expansion in the state.

The coalition government was formed even as the Bharatiya Janata Party emerged as the single largest party with 104 seats in a 224 member state assembly in May.

The Congress offered Janata Dal (Secular)'s HD Kumaraswamy the chief ministerial post despite winning 80 seats. Kumaraswamy's party could manage just 37.

The expansion is expected to take place after the completion of the assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Telangana and Mizoram on December 11.

The five-member panel

will also discuss appointments of chairpersons for different state boards.

A media report on Wednesday claiming that Kumaraswamy will step down on health grounds had triggered panic among his supporters. The chief minister's office and Kumaraswamy have since refuted the report. Congress legislature party leader and former chief minister Siddaramaiah heads the panel.

It includes Kumaraswamy, deputy chief minister G Parameshwara and Congress's Karnataka in-charge, KC Venugopal. Janata Dal (Secular)'s Kunwar Danish Ali is the panel's convener.

"I have convened the meeting of the coordination committee on December 3 to discuss the cabinet expansion and the appointments of heads of different boards," Ali said.

A 10-day Karnataka assem-



bly session has been also called in Belagavi in northern Karnataka from December 10. Belagavi is proposed to be made

Karnataka's second capital. An assembly complex was inaugurated there for the purpose in October 2012.



Nancy Pelosi moves one step closer to being speaker again as House

Democrats nominate her to take over the gavel in January – but there's still one more vote to go

Nancy Pelosi was nominated by fellow Democrats to be House speaker on Wednesday, but she still faces a showdown vote when the full House convenes in January.

Pelosi entered the closed-door caucus election in an unusual position – running unopposed for the nomination despite the clamor by some Democrats for new leadership. The lopsided 203-32 tally showed both the weakness of her opposition but also the challenges ahead.

The California Democrat has been deftly picking off opponents – including nine who announced their support as voting was underway – a trend she'll need to accelerate to reach the 218-vote threshold for election when Democrats take control of the chamber in the new year.

'Are there dissenters? Yes,' the California Democrat told reporters as the ballots were being counted. 'But I expect to have a powerful vote going forward.'

Pelosi was nominated by Rep. Joe Kennedy of Massachusetts, with no fewer than eight colleagues seconding the choice, including Rep. John Lewis of Georgia, the civil rights leader, and three newly elected lawmakers.

As House Democrats met in private in the Capitol, they

faced a simple 'yes' or 'no' choice.

A sign of the party's mood emerged early as the House Democrats elected Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York as caucus chairman, elevating the charismatic 48-year-old from the Congressional Black Caucus as a new generation of leaders pushes to the forefront.

His slim victory in that race, 123-113, over veteran Rep. Barbara Lee of California, another influential member of the Black Caucus, offered a window into the shifting landscape.

Flanked by top progressive leaders, Lee made her pitch during the closed session, drawing on the record number of women, including minority women, who ran for office and are entering the new Congress.

The majority, though, went to Jeffries who used his speech to remind Democrats of their core accomplishments – from passage of the Civil Rights Act to the Affordable Care Act – before pivoting to his vision for the future.

'I'm focused on standing up for everyone – white, black, Latino, Asian, Native American – every single American deserves us, here in the

United States Congress to work, Democrats and Republicans, on their behalf to make their life better,' he said afterward.

Democrats voted to return their entire top leadership team, including Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland in the No. 2 spot as majority leader and Rep. Jim Clyburn of South Carolina in the No. 3 spot as whip. They were running unopposed.

'The caucus is coming together,' Clyburn said.

In a letter to colleagues ahead of voting, Pelosi gave a nod to those clamoring for change.

'We all agree that history is in a hurry, and we need to accelerate the pace of change in Congress,' she wrote, noting the 'historic' class of new first-term lawmakers, the largest since Watergate, who led Democrats to the majority in the midterm election.

Pelosi's opponents had pledged to usher in a new era for Democrats. But one by one, the powerful California congresswoman picked off the would-be challengers and smoothed skeptics.

Ahead of voting Wednesday, a deal was reached with the Problem Solvers Caucus, a bipartisan group whose nine Democratic members were



withholding their support as they pushed for rules changes to allow a more open legislative process.

But another group against her, led by Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, Rep. Tim Ryan of Ohio and Rep. Kathleen Rice of New York, left the leader's office empty-handed. They asked Pelosi to publicly release her plans to transition out of leadership before the end of the next term in 2020. She declined, they said.

'There has to be some succession plan,' Rice said.

For now, there was no one willing, or able, to mount a serious campaign against her bid to re-

claim the speaker's job, which she held from 2007 to 2011, before the GOP took back the majority.

'You can't beat someone with no one,' said Rep.-elect Jahana Hayes, D-Conn. She said she came to Washington eager to hear from colleagues and 'hopeful that many candidates would step up to the plate.' But 'the only person that declared their intentions, spoke to me about their vision and asked me for my vote is Nancy Pelosi.'

Pelosi still lacks the votes she'll need in January, when the new Congress convenes, to ascend to the post.

US \$5 mn award for the 26/11 attackers is tokenism

India tried and hanged Ajmal Kasab. The US can and must push Pakistan to take tougher measures.



Mr Pompeo said. He called upon all countries (Pakistan in particular) to “uphold their UN Security Council obligations to implement sanctions against the terrorists responsible for this atrocity, including Lashkar-e-Tayba (LeT) and its affiliates”. Why does the US need to offer a reward for information that is already in the public domain? All that Washington needs to do is to go through the detailed interrogation reports of one of its own citizens. Pakistan-born American terrorist, David Coleman Headley, who admitted to visiting Mumbai at least seven times to videograph the targets that were chosen for the final assault, has given the names of all those who committed, conspired, aided and abetted the

terror strikes.

India would also have shared the detailed interrogation report of Ajmal Kasab, the lone terrorist who was caught alive in Mumbai. That, too, is proof of individuals and organisations responsible for the attack. Both Headley and Kasab have, in fact, corroborated each other on two important aspects of 26/11. One, that every major action of the LeT is executed only after the approval of its founder, Hafiz Saeed. Headley told the FBI and the NIA that Saeed knew about the Mumbai attacks and that the operation was launched only after his approval. Kasab, too, has detailed how Saeed supervised weapons training and complimented him for his aim. Two, both said the ISI handheld

the LeT through the planning.

Surely, America remembers that it had also issued a \$10-million bounty for Saeed in 2012. No one needs reminding that not only does the LeT founder continue to roam free; he also continues to threaten India and the US.

It is indeed an “affront to the families of the victims”, as Pompeo said, that the trial in Pakistan has become a sham. Zakiur Rahman Lakhvi, the LeT’s military commander, who was arrested soon after 26/11, not only fathered a child while in jail; he is now also out on bail. The fresh reward of \$5 million is mere tokenism, and it is 10 years too late. India tried and hanged Kasab. The US can — and must — push Pakistan to take tougher measures.

US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, urged Pakistan to take action against those responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, while also announcing a \$5-million reward for any information leading to the arrest or conviction in any country of any individual who committed, conspired, aided or abetted the audacious terror

strikes. The announcement came on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the assault, which left 166, including six Americans, dead.

“It is an affront to the families of the victims that after 10 years, those who planned the Mumbai attack have still not been convicted for their involvement,”

Trump's tirade against Pakistan could be a result of China's growing global ambitions

Much could still change, depending on whether the US proceeds with its foolish gambit of making peace with the Taliban to ensure Trump's objective of exiting Afghanistan. But Pakistan's days of being a dishonest broker in similar undertakings in the past, may be ending.

If you're known by the company you keep, Islamabad has excellent companions, in the sense of earning a Twitter tirade from the 45th president of the United States. Countries that have been abused by Donald Trump on social media could easily make for a quorum in the United Nations General

Assembly, and they range from China to those in Central America and Africa, as well as America's allies of the pre-Trump era, like Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

Unlike the others, though, Pakistan has often been in Trump's sights, from before he became president. Once in the

Oval Office, he has acted in culling aid to Islamabad. For years, India has complained about this form of bribe to keep Rawalpindi's generals behaviour merely bad, rather than worse, but Washington always retorted that New Delhi shouldn't view that as a zero sum game. Well, the sums involved were humongous, by Trump's reckoning, \$33 billion over 15 years.

While traditional allies of the US may have distanced themselves from many of Trump's tactics, Pakistan may not get a pass. And the reason is that Islamabad is being judged by the company it's keeping on a different front: China. The West increasingly recognises that Beijing's global ambitions and territorial greed outweigh the trade potential it presents, particularly as its economy sputters. Its meddling

in local politics from Australia to Canada and even the US has added to the simmering disquiet caused by the Belt and Road Initiative and internal quashing of human rights the way only an autocracy can accomplish. In Western capitals, Pakistan is, for obvious reasons, being viewed as a client state of China. Which, in itself, is an ironic position for Islamabad. It once operated in just that capacity vis-à-vis the US as Afghanistan became a theatre in the 1980s for the Cold War going hot, by proxy. Decades later, it's Beijing's baby and China just doesn't have the kind of influence the US possesses to insulate Pakistan. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan may protest being made a scapegoat, especially after it played its usual hand of offering up an Al Qaeda

figure, as it does periodically to curtail criticism, but the wares it had peddled so successfully for decades may finally be reaching their expiry date.

Much could still change, depending on whether the US proceeds with its foolish gambit of making peace with the Taliban to ensure Trump's objective of exiting Afghanistan. But Pakistan's days of being a dishonest broker in similar undertakings in the past may be ending. Even if there are periods of renewed patronage, the process of the country turning collateral damage in the 21st century version of the Cold War appears irreversible.

Although the American President is apt to change his mind as often as he disses CNN, this may finally be when the Twitter tiger's snarl may not be lacking teeth.



Why Indian media can't emulate the US media

To some this may be a lamentable conclusion but it's also God's own truth. Of course, our profession can boast of some journalists who, at the cost of their happiness or security, will stand up for their principles and refuse to bend, but they are rare. Last week Justice Markandey Katju answered a question that has frequently been put to me. Actually it's one that a lot of people have started to ask: 'Is the Indian media capable of standing up to Prime Minister Modi in the same way that the American media has stood up to President Trump?'

Justice Katju's answer was no. I believe he's correct but I don't believe his reasons go far enough. There's a better and more convincing argument he's overlooked. Justice Katju's answer rests on two arguments. First, he believes public opinion is not mature and independent enough to stand up to supreme authorities such as the prime minister. At such moments it buckles and gives way. This is often true though there have been instances when public opinion has been firm and resolute. The Nirbhaya rape case and the

response to Gauri Lankesh's killing are two.

Justice Katju's second argument is that newspaper proprietors are unwilling to stand up to government pressure. They inevitably "kowtow". More often than not, this is because they have other businesses to protect. They know governments can be vicious and vengeful and they want to avoid provoking them. However, I believe there's a further, deeper and more comprehensive reason why the Indian media is unlikely to emulate the American. It's not because individual journalists – indeed, the vast majority of them – are willing to toe the governments line (although a few sadly are) and do not recognise the need to stand firm. It's because they lack economic security. If you challenge the government you run the risk of losing your job. Yet for many this is not just their livelihood but the anchor of their (and sometimes their families) existence. If standing up to the government means risking your security most people would think carefully and decide against it. This is where the American media differs.



Individual American journalists have the financial wherewithal to stand up for their principles and their conscience. We don't, which is why we're forced to compromise.

To some this may be a lamentable conclusion but it's also God's own truth. Of course, our profession can boast of some journalists who, at the cost of their happiness or security, will stand up for their principles and refuse to bend, but they are rare. They're men and women of exceptional character. The majority of us are different. We're

survivors and we need to carry on living. In fact, this is true of many Indian professions but it can create a poignant moral dilemma for journalists.

There are, of course, other failings that come in the way of the Indian media standing up to authority. But these aren't unique everywhere. Some journalists seek to be friends of the powerful, others allow their personal prejudices to determine their decisions and some are looking for favours that could advance their career or even launch new

ones. Yet this will change and it already is. The initial response to the Emergency was the first example. Bofors and the reaction to the Anti-Defamation Bill was another. Arguably the opposition to Hindutva and its champions is a third. What Justice Katju didn't ask is how would our courts respond if the government's behaviour is legally challenged by journalists. I'd like to believe our judges will be no different to their American counterparts. Justice Katju would know better but on this, alas, he was silent. I wonder why?

NASA wowed with Mars landing, but InSight's just getting started

Following a dramatic touchdown Monday, a new robot on the Red Planet has unfurled its solar arrays and is ready to get down to business.

Two days after landing on Mars, the NASA InSight lander is powered up, its solar arrays are working and it's already sending back selfies.

NASA pulled off its eighth landing of a spacecraft on the surface of the Red Planet as the world watched on Monday, but had to wait hours to learn if its power system was functioning.

"The InSight team can rest a little easier ... now that we know the spacecraft solar arrays are deployed and recharging the batteries," Tom Hoffman, InSight's project manager at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said in a statement. But flipping the switch is just the beginning.

The first few things the InSight lander did after its hot and harrowing six-minute descent through the Martian atmosphere included snapping a dusty but

still remarkable photo, then delivering a clear image of its landing site and beginning to unfurl its solar arrays.

The solar arrays will be critical to ensuring InSight can actually carry out its mission to explore the interior of Mars, listen for "Marsquakes" and figure out how many meteorites batter the Red Planet.

"With the arrays providing the energy we need to start the cool science operations, we are well on our way to thoroughly investigate what's inside of Mars for the very first time," Hoffman said following the landing.

The mission teams now will go over a checklist to make sure the lander, its on-board robotic arm and all its science instruments are in good health. The dust covers will come off its two cameras, clearing up the gritty view seen in InSight's first photo

and allowing for a detailed survey of that red ground to determine the best place to set down the instruments. Next, the robotic arm will position InSight's seismometer, called SEIS (Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure), and put a wind and thermal shield on top of it. With SEIS in place, next up will be the probes and "mole" that will dig as deep as 16 feet (4.9 meters) into the planet to measure internal temperature and to study Mars' guts.

Elizabeth Barrett, who heads InSight's instrument operations, told reporters Monday that the process of setting the instruments on the ground alone will take two to three months, followed by another month or two to drill and begin getting science data back. When it all comes together, the science portion of



the mission could begin in March 2019. "Landing was thrilling, but I'm looking forward to the drilling," InSight principal investigator Bruce Banerdt said in a statement. Once InSight's instruments are set up, they could return data for quite some time. "We should be listening for Marsquakes for at least two years, and we hope considerably longer," Tom Pike of Imperial College London, who was part of the team that designed the seismometer, said in a statement.

Banerdt says the broader goal of InSight is to better

understand not just Mars, but Earth and other planets. While evidence from the early years after Earth's formation has been erased by processes like weather and plate tectonics, those processes seem to be less active on Mars.

"On Mars, all those things that were formed [early] are still frozen in place," Banerdt said during Monday's press conference.

Unlike its rover cousins, InSight will be stuck in place, but it stands to be very active in shaping our understanding of Mars and the rest of the universe. Stay tuned.

10 years after 26/11: We are better prepared

India and Indians felt the 26/11 terror attacks in a way they had felt no attack before that. In one part, this had to do with the sheer brazenness of the attack. In another, it had to do with the targets. And in still another, it was because almost all of it played out live on 24x7 news television. As unfair as it is to compare tragedies, this was India's own 9/11, and the images of the Taj Mahal hotel burning were seared across the collective psyche of the nation.

As India remembers the 10th anniversary of 26/11 — it is an attack the nation, its leaders, and its people would do well to never forget — three questions need to be addressed.

One, whether another attack of this scale and magnitude can be mounted against targets across the country. The simple answer is yes. The 26/11 attacks, which happened a decade ago, were not particularly sophisticated from the point of view of weaponry or the modus operandi. Since

then, several technologies have become better, and also accessible to terror groups. The use of drones for such attacks, for instance, is a worrying and frightening prospect. Nor have the motives for terror attacks dissipated in the past 10 years. Pakistan continues to foster and support terror groups targeting India, and even those directly involved in the 26/11 attacks continue to thrive in that country. Back then, ISIS wasn't the force it is now. Put simply, the motives remain (and have only become stronger), as do the threats (which have only increased), and the limits of possibility for such attacks have expanded.

The second question is about whether such attacks can be prevented. No country can claim to possess the ability to prevent all terror strikes. True, many are foiled, but one in 10, 20, perhaps even 100 succeed. The odds are stacked against the defenders and in favour of the perpetrators. The former have to ensure none

of the attacks succeed; the latter needs to have just a fraction of their attempts succeed. The 26/11 attackers took the sea route; not surprisingly, the Indian Coast Guard has significantly strengthened its overall presence, and especially that in the Western region, where the number of ships in its fleet has increased from 74 in 2008 to 134 currently.

India's coastal areas, including those near big cities (both Chennai and Mumbai are on the coast and have busy and strategically important ports) are better protected now than they were in 2008, but they are not entirely safe (and perhaps, never will be). For instance, not all small boats have been fitted, as had been suggested after 26/11, with tracking and communication equipment. Still, the Coastal Surveillance Network envisaged after 26/11 is at least partly in place, although Mumbai police's own coastal police stations are nowhere near capable of doing what they are expected to. At a more macro level, the Natgrid, conceptualised as a sort of national intelligence database, and which was to connect 21 existing security databases, is in a state of suspended animation. The answer to this question is therefore: not all.

The third is about the responsiveness and response of the country's security agencies.



On that front, there is better news. The first responders are always likely to be the local law enforcement agencies. The 2008 attacks revealed that they were woefully equipped, and trained. That has improved now — from flak vests to automatic rifles and machine guns to even RPGs in some cases, local police departments are now better equipped than they were in 2008. Many of them also have specialised commando forces. Maharashtra, for instance, has its own elite unit, Force One.

The National Security Guard (NSG) has been training some of these units and also conducting drills for them, although it is worrying (and perhaps, a sign of inadequate planning) that many of the new commando units set up by police departments to handle 26/11 kind of situations have seen no action at all.

A recent audit by the NSG of the preparedness of these specialised units in dealing with such attacks has found that seven states (Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) are ready, while almost all others are not (the NSG has ranked their preparedness "average" or "below average"). As for the NSG itself, the delay in both taking the decision to send the unit, and the further delay in its actual deployment cost India dearly in the 26/11 attacks. Since then, India has worked on putting in place a better (and faster) decision making process and also worked to create regional deployment centres for the NSG. The country's security forces, then, can be expected to respond faster and better to an attack than they did that day in November 10 years ago.



The healthiest nations in the world: Report of 149 countries reveals Singapore tops the charts (and the UK, US and Australia aren't even in the top 10)

on their healthcare systems, level of disease, obesity rates and other measures. The annual prosperity index breaks down the best and worst places to live around the world for nine categories in total. One category is health. Australia was the best performing of the major Western countries, ranking 12th, according to the research by the London-based education charity. It was then followed by New Zealand (17th), Canada (21st), the UK (26th) and the US (35th).

Japan featured in the top ten healthiest countries, as did Qatar, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Switzerland, Austria, Sweden

and Norway all also featured in the top ten.

The quality of life of people globally is rising but the gaps between the best and worst is wider than ever, experts warn, showing huge inequalities in health, finance, politics, education and safety and security. On the entire index, the UK was rated the seventh most successful country in the world. But health is the country's achilles heel.

The US also struggled to do well in the health category, which was its second worst performing area — after safety and security in which it ranked 43rd.

The Central African Republic fared worst, with Chad, Guinea, Madagascar, Benin, Democratic

Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Niger and Uganda in tow.

'Having risen strongly at the beginning of the last decade, world health is now beginning to flat-line,' said the report.

'The long-term trends of rising life expectancy and increased access to basic sanitation continue, particularly noticeable in the Asia-Pacific region.

'But these effects have been offset by more people reporting health problems and higher reported incidences of sadness and worry.'

The ranking was produced by measuring life and death-related factors like life expectancy, perceptions of health problems, vaccination rates, tuberculosis,



obesity and diabetes.

And it also took into account feelings of joy, sadness, and worry, people's satisfaction with their country's healthcare, and

the quality of sanitation facilities. Big movers include Zimbabwe, which had the biggest increase in life expectancy, with it rising 15 years in the last decade.

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Khashoggi murder: US Senate passes measure to end support for Saudi-led coalition in Yemen

The measures passed 63-37 in a Republican-controlled chamber with the backing of some of President Trump's key allies, who have felt frustrated by what they is the president's willingness to overlook the role played by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

(Agencies):US Senate Republicans handed President Donald Trump a stinging rebuke Wednesday for his handling of the murder of a Saudi journalist when they voted to pass a congressional measure to end US support for Saudi-backed military coalition in Yemen. The measures passed 63-37 in a Republican-controlled chamber with the backing of some of President Trump's key allies, who have felt frustrated by what they is the president's willingness to overlook the role played by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"I changed my mind because I'm

Senate pissed." Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican who is a close adviser to Trump, said to reporters after the vote. "The way the administration has handled it is not acceptable." He had earlier planned to vote against the resolution.

The vote took place after a closed-door briefing by secretaries of state and defense Mike Pompeo and James Mattis, who failed to convince the lawmakers. Pompeo told reporters after the briefing that the resolution was "poorly timed" and passing it at time "undermines" the fragile peace talks, between Saudi backed coalition forces battling Iranian-supported Houthi rebels, that are to start shortly

in Sweden.

Asked about the CIA's assessment that Crown Prince Mohammad had ordered the killing, Pompeo said, "I do believe I've read every piece of intelligence. Unless it's come in in the last few hours, I think I have read it all. There is no direct reporting connecting the crown prince to the order to murder Jamal Khashoggi."

Senators had wanted to hear CIA director Gina Haspel at the hearing but the White House chose to send only Pompeo and Matties. The spy agency has disputed claims that the director was asked not to go to the hearing, and that she has indeed briefed some



lawmakers on the agency's assessment.

But this resolution, which seeks to end the war under War Powers Act, must pass the House of Representative to arrive at the

president's desk for enactment, neither of those two remaining stages is likely. Its passage in the senate would be a rebuke of the president and of ties with the Saudis, and no more.

Bareilly's 'Bolt' sprints past odds but official apathy still a hurdle

Deaf and mute by birth, Mehtab Hussain, in his 30s, is an athlete of international repute and has won a number of national and international tournaments, including Asia Pacific Deaf Games.

Mehtab Hussain, a daily wagger at a meat factory in Bareilly, is locally famous as 'Bolt'—the last name of Jamaican sprinter and nine-time Olympic gold medallist Usain Bolt – for his athletic prowess. Deaf and mute by birth, Hussain, in his 30s, is an athlete of international repute and has won a number of national and international tournaments, including Asia Pacific Deaf Games.

However, his sporting talent and achievements have failed to fetch him a job and the fame he deserves, thanks to official apathy. Despite overcoming his physical disability, financial constraints have forced him work at a local meat factory to support his family in Chak Mehmood area of Bareilly.

Gritty to the core, Hussain still wakes up at 4am and runs at least 10km a day to keep himself fit as he never knows when his financial condition permits him to participate in sporting events.

Hussain's mother Ashraf Jahan says, "As my

daughter was already suffering from hearing and speech impairment, we did not take long to understand that Hussain was also suffering from the same problem. He was only three then."

"His behaviour was very much like his sister. He hardly responded to any sound," she recalls. Hussain is the youngest among three brothers and a sister. Soon after Hussain's birth, his father Latafat Hussain, a teacher at a primary school, passed away. However, Ashraf Jahan didn't lose hope and got Hussain admitted to a school for differently-abled students in Bareilly where he showed much interest in athletics.

"During his school days, he never hired a rickshaw or public transport to reach his school which was 7 kms away. He always preferred to go by foot. Once he bought me a present from the money I gave him for conveyance," she recalls.

After winning innumerable interschool athletic championships, he participated in state-level championship in



Faizabad and stood first.

"I couldn't believe that I had overpowered all the other athletes there," says Hussain, using sign language. Winning the championship fetched him entry to national-level championship and he became a member of the All-India Sports Council for Deaf (AISCD), the apex body for sports for the deaf.

"I participated in national level athletic meet in West Bengal in 1995 and won the 400-metre relay. I was on cloud nine. This was what I wanted," says Hussain. The period from 1995-2000 proved to be the golden one for Hussain as during this time he participated in about 22

state and 19 national athletic meets.

In 2000, he was informed by AISCD that he has been selected in the 6th Asia Pacific for Deaf, to be held in Taiwan.

"I had to sell a piece of land for Rs 50,000 to bear the expenses. Representatives of the council assured us that the money we spent would be reimbursed but they did not keep their word," Ashraf Jahan says.

Hussain, who was the only player from the state to participate in the event, bagged third position in 5000-metre race. Later, Hussain received several calls from the council informing him about his

entry in several international championships but his financial condition did not permit him.

Showing letters from the council, Hussain says he got calls from Australia, Italy, Kuwait, Canada and Turkey but could not go there for the want of money.

"I don't have any problem in playing providing I get help from the government, which seems to be a distant dream," says Hussain. In the hope of playing for his state and country again, Hussain still continues to practice daily before leaving for his 12-hour shift in the meat factory.

Bangladesh to eject safety inspectors brought in after Rana Plaza disaster



An international inspection regime put in place after the collapse of a Bangladesh garment factory killed more than 1,100 people will be forced to leave the country on Friday, with activists warning of "profound and lasting" consequences for worker safety.

A restraining order imposed by the Bangladesh high court will come into force on 30 November, forcing the Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh to close its Dhaka office, limiting its ability to inspect thousands of factories supplying clothes for brands including H&M, Esprit and Primark.

The European parliament has expressed "serious concern" at the prospect of the Accord being ejected from Bangladesh, with around 1,450 factories covered

by the initiative still in need of urgent safety upgrades – including more than half without adequate fire alarm systems. Both Esprit and H&M have said the closure of the Accord's Dhaka office would be premature. "Rather than making the work easier [it] would make our jobs more difficult," Esprit said in a letter to its Bangladeshi suppliers.

"If the Bangladesh government is reckless enough to close the Accord's Dhaka office, the damage to the country's garment industry will be profound and lasting," said Scott Nova, the executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium, an independent labour group. The Accord is one of the two major international safety agreements that were established after the collapse of the Rana Plaza complex on the outskirts of Dhaka in April 2013. An estimated 1,134 workers

were killed in the deadliest manufacturing accident ever. Unions called it a "mass industrial homicide". Along with the second agreement, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, the Accord has overseen dramatic safety improvements in more than 2,300 of Bangladesh's garment factories, identifying and helping to fix more well over 100,000 safety issues in the past five years.

Though around half the factories that make up \$29bn industry are not covered by either agreement, deaths across the sector have fallen in the past five years from about 71 per year to 17, according to research from New York University's Stern Centre.

The initial five-year terms of the two safety regimes expired this year. The Accord negotiated an extension to 2021, but was ordered by the Bangladesh

high court to cease operations by the end of November over concerns it was not undergoing sufficient government scrutiny.

Rob Wayss, the executive director of the Accord, said he was "guardedly optimistic" the Bangladesh government would ask the high court to allow it stay in the country. "We're hopeful but not certain the government will make a submission to the court," he said. If the Accord is forced to leave on Friday, it would have to continue monitoring factories by pairing with international engineering firms to send inspectors in and out of the country – significantly slowing and limiting the scope of work that is already years behind schedule.

The Bangladesh government has been pushing to be allowed to take over the inspection of the around 1,650 factories covered by the Accord.

The government says its industry has now become safer than those of its competitors in Vietnam, China and India, and control must be handed back. "We are a self-respecting nation," the Bangladesh commerce minister, Tofail Ahmed, said earlier this year. "There's no more need for the

Accord-Alliance."

But technical experts, as well as some major brands, say it is far from ready to do so. "The government, with the support of the ILO and others, has been building up its capacity for some time, but it would still be a challenge to take over the extra number of factories in such a short period of time," said Tuomo Poutiainen, the ILO's director in Bangladesh. "It would not be in the interests of the industry for that to happen."

Activist groups have questioned if the government can ever adequately inspect the factories, citing the fact many garment manufacturers also sit in parliament, and that the industry makes up 82% of the country's exports and therefore wields extraordinary clout.

"The government of Bangladesh has failed to provide any evidence that domestic institutions have the technical capacity and the political will to perform inspections and ensure remediation," said Christie Miedema, a spokeswoman for the Clean Clothes campaign, an alliance of labour unions and NGOs.

Brands have raised

concerns the closure of the Accord's local office could spark protests and activism in the west that would taint their Bangladesh operations.

"Activism in key market countries could make the Bangladesh brand toxic to consumers in spite of the tremendous improvements that we have achieved in recent years," wrote Luis Gonzaga, Esprit's head of global supply, in the letter to suppliers.

He also flagged the 180 brands who are signed up the Accord would come under pressure to withdraw business from factories who have failed to undertake sufficient safety repairs. "The uncertainty involved would be bad for everyone," he wrote.

But Rubana Huq, whose Mohammadi Group is one of the country's largest manufacturers, told the Guardian she thought it was unlikely any brands would leave the country over the decision, at least in the short term.

"Since Bangladesh is now the only manufacturing hub that offers brands a much higher degree of [safety] compliance, sourcing from Bangladesh will go on," she said. "No brand which sources substantially from Bangladesh can afford to shift quantities overnight."

India offers Maldives \$1bn in loans to help repay China debt



India is considering providing up to \$1 billion in loans to the Maldives to help it pay down its debt to China, but only if the island nation agrees to distance itself from Beijing, Indian government sources said.

India is in talks with the

Maldives, offering low-interest loans over several installments in exchange for stronger security ties, including the permanent deployment of Indian military personnel in the island nation, according to the sources.

The countries are expected

to iron out the details before Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, who took office on Nov. 17, visits India in December.

Under Solih's predecessor, Abdulla Yameen, the Maldives borrowed heavily from China to build bridges and housing as part of Beijing's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative. Yameen was even believed to have handed over some islands to China.

India, which sees the Indian Ocean as its own backyard, is alarmed by the possibility that China could build naval bases on

the islands. Negotiations appear to be going well. Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid and Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj agreed to cooperate on economic and security issues at a Monday meeting in New Delhi.

Abdulla "reiterated that the government of Maldives will be sensitive towards India's security and strategic concerns," the Indian Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding that India supports the Maldives "in ensuring fiscal and budgetary

stability."

There is no official data available on the Maldives' debt to China. "From the information I have, the debt to China alone is \$3 billion," which the government will work to pay off while developing the country, former President Mohamed Nasheed told reporters early this month. Nasheed, now a close aide to Solih, believes it would be impossible to repay this from the national coffers alone. The Maldives collects less than \$1 billion in taxes a year.

Solih, a veteran member of

Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party, unseated Yameen in an election in September. He is now cultivating closer ties with India, and plans to revise a free trade agreement signed with China under Yameen last year.

India is currently advancing a vision for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" along with Japan, the U.S. and Australia, while the U.S. has announced its own infrastructure investments in Asia to balance China's growing influence in the region.

The attack on China's consulate is more about Balochistan

India has joined other countries in condemning the militant attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi. New Delhi has termed it as a terror attack. However, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which has claimed credit for the attack, is not recognised as a terrorist organisation by India. The BLA had recently attempted to blow up a busload of Chinese workers. Other Baloch groups have also targeted the increasing Chinese presence in their province. The rival Baloch Liberation Front, for example, has carried out attacks against a number of Chinese construction projects. The real issue is not terrorism, or even China's controversial China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The source of the problem is Islamabad's decades of repression and marginalisation of the Baloch. Balochistan is experiencing its fifth wave of rebellion against the Pakistani government since Independence. The present rebellion has been no more successful than any previous insurgency. However there are three new elements to the Baloch rebellion that should be noted. One, the insurgency has expanded in terms of its tribal base but also begun attracting a new urbanised, de-tribalised

Baloch. Two, the Baloch nationalist narrative today merges resentment against Islamabad with the massive Chinese economic presence in their province. The Chinese mining and infrastructure projects are portrayed as a new effort to deprive the Baloch of their natural resource wealth and flood their province with outsiders. There is truth in both these claims, enough to make it difficult for the Chinese to claim otherwise. Finally, though the mainstream Baloch insurgent groups retain a secular nationalist outlook, some have become Islamicised and

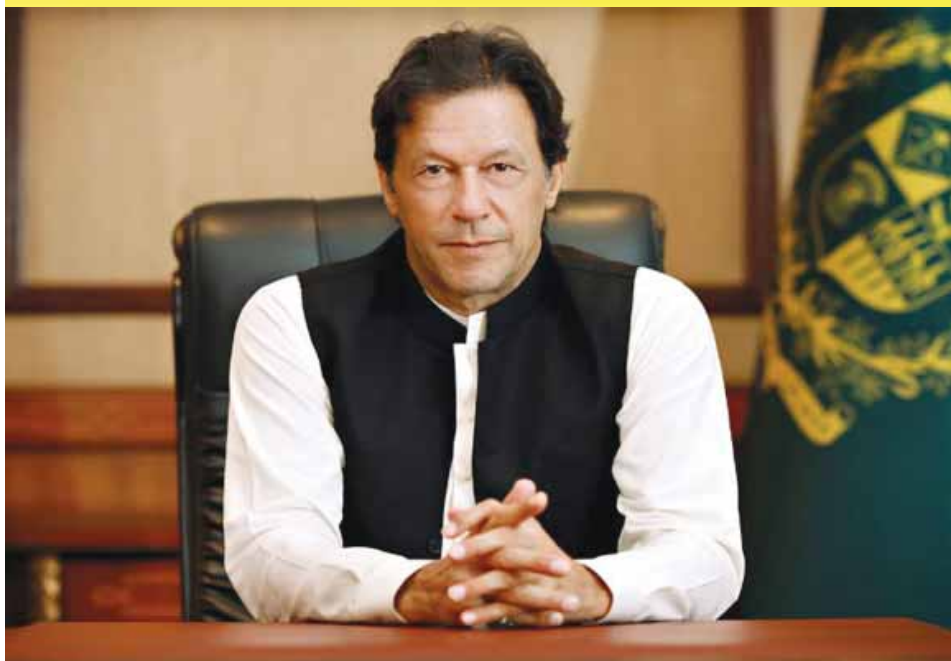


may eventually colour the future nature of the conflict. With Balochistan also becoming a battleground for the dirty trick departments of Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Iran, ideological extremism will become increasingly important. China has claimed its investments will help make the Baloch and their province more prosperous. Almost two-thirds of the

CPEC's total outlay is being spent in Balochistan. This may prove to be the case, but so long as thousands of Chinese workers and Pakistani soldiers are the human face of the corridor it will be seen as instrument of oppression. A sustainable solution would be for Beijing to persuade Islamabad to provide Balochistan greater political autonomy, giving

the Baloch a greater say in how and where outside investments take place. There is no sign that sort of empowerment is on the cards. Which is why the Chinese should brace themselves for a backlash that will become increasingly violent and, eventually, extract a human cost Beijing may find unpalatable for its own public.

"Army, Parties On Same Page, Want Civilised Ties With India": Imran Khan



(Agencies):Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan today said that his government and army both want a "civilised relationship" with India, and claimed that the Kashmir dispute can be resolved only through talks and a healthy respect for humanity. "We have one issue - Kashmir. Why can't we resolve this one issue? It needs will," the cricketer-turned-politician said at the launch of the Kartarpur corridor between the two countries. "Whenever I travelled to India, people would tell me that the Pakistan army is

not interested in peace... I am telling you that I, the PM, our party, other political parties, our army - we are all on the same page in wanting to establish a civilised relationship with India," Mr Khan said. His reference to Kashmir has upset New Delhi. "It is deeply regrettable that the Prime Minister of Pakistan chose to politicise the pious occasion meant to realise the long pending demand of the Sikh community to develop a Kartarpur corridor by making unwarranted reference to Jammu and

Kashmir which is an integral and inalienable part of India," the Foreign Ministry tweeted. In a grand ceremony attended by two Indian ministers and his cricket compatriot Navjot Singh Sidhu, Imran Khan devoted much of his speech in making a case for peace and "moving beyond blame games and scoring brownie points". Only "bewakoof (fools)" would speak of war between two nuclear powers like India and Pakistan, he said. "Everybody loses in a

nuclear war. Hatred will take us nowhere," he said. Referring to Kashmir, he cited the example of France and Germany, which were on opposite sides of the battleground during the Second World War, to make his case for peace.

The Pakistan Prime Minister also spoke in defence of Punjab Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu, who had faced criticism in India for accepting the invite to the groundbreaking ceremony. "What is the crime of a man who wants

to come here with the message of peace and love? You will see Sidhu's message of love triumph in the end, but I only hope we don't have to wait for him to be elected India's Prime Minister before the two countries become friends," he said.

Ravindra Wijegunaratne: Sri Lanka defence chief held over murders

(Agencies):Sri Lanka's top military officer has been remanded in custody, accused of covering up civil war-era murders. Chief of Defence Staff Ravindra Wijegunaratne appeared in court after warrants for his arrest were issued. Prosecutors say he protected the main suspect, a naval intelligence officer who allegedly murdered 11 young men in the final stages of the conflict with separatist Tamil rebels in 2008-9. The officer is in custody. Admiral Wijegunaratne denies the allegations. The court in the capital, Colombo, remanded him in custody until 5 Decem

Three warrants for his arrest were issued in early November, but it took the admiral until now to present himself before the magistrates court, dressed in his military uniform and flanked by navy officers and supporters. His application for bail was rejected. Several journalists say they were attacked while covering proceedings. ens of thousands of Tamils - and the rebel leadership - were killed at the end of the conflict, in which both sides were accused of atrocities. Human rights groups have long called for prosecutions, but there have been none so far. The naval officer the admiral

is accused of protecting was detained in August. The bodies of the 11 young men, most of them Tamils, have never been found. Police have previously said in court most of the abductions took place in Colombo in 2008-09, and were an attempt to extort ransom by a group led by some navy officers. The 26-year civil war left at least 100,000 people dead on both sides of the conflict. The Tamil Tigers said they were fighting for a homeland for minority Tamils in northern Sri Lanka. There are still no confirmed figures for tens of thousands of civilian deaths in the last months of battle.

There is no attempt to hide': Ivanka Trump defends use of private email

President's daughter denies comparisons with Hillary Clinton's use of a private server: 'My emails have not been deleted'

Ivanka Trump has defended her use of a personal email account for government business when she became an adviser in her father's White House.

"All of my emails are stored and preserved. There were no deletions. There is no attempt to hide," Donald Trump's daughter told ABC News in an interview aired on Wednesday morning. Trump insists daughter Ivanka's private email use for work was 'very innocent' Ivanka Trump reportedly used her personal account up to 100 times in 2017 to contact other Trump administration officials. The news drew immediate comparisons with Hillary Clinton's use of a private server as secretary of state, which still prompts Donald Trump's supporters to chant "lock her up" at rallies. The president apparently wanted Clinton prosecuted after he took the White House.

But on Wednesday Ivanka Trump insisted there was no comparison between the two cases. "In my case, all of my emails are on the White House server. There's no intent to circumvent," she told ABC.

"There's no equivalency to what my father's spoken about."

On the Clinton case, Ivanka Trump said: "There were mass deletions after a subpoena was issued. My emails have not been deleted. Nor was there anything of substance, nothing confidential that was within them. So there's no connection between the two things."

Republicans and Democrats in Congress have requested information from the White House to determine whether the first daughter complied with federal record keeping laws. Investigations into Clinton's use of private email dogged her presidential campaign and are believed to have contributed to her losing the 2016 election after she was admonished by the FBI. Donald Trump has also defended his daughter's use of personal email, saying all her messages have been logged as presidential records.

Ivanka Trump said in the interview that her email use violated no rules. "There is no restriction of using personal email," she said. "In fact, we're instructed that if we receive an email to our personal account that

could relate to government work, you simply just forward it to your government account so it can be archived." Ivanka Trump also said she has no fear of legal liability for herself or her family from the investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller into Russian interference in the 2016 election and allegations of collusion with Moscow by the Trump campaign.

"I know the facts as they relate to me and my family, and so I have nothing to be concerned about," she said. Trump said the investigation should be allowed to run its course, but echoed her father's view that it has gone on long enough.

"I think it should reach its conclusion. I think it's been a long time that this has been ongoing, but I want it to be done in a way in which nobody could question that it was hurried or rushed," she said. "And I think after this long period of time, we're well beyond that point, so I think it absolutely should reach its conclusion." This despite experts' views that for an investigation of this depth and scope, Mueller is moving very quickly.



Once feted, Saudi crown prince faces cold shoulder abroad

Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been on an Arab tour before he attends the Group of 20 summit in Argentina on Friday, where he faces world leaders who have strongly condemned Jamal Khashoggi's killing last month in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.



Once feted on the world stage, Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince faces the cold shoulder abroad as he struggles to shrug off the lingering stigma of a critical journalist's murder. Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been on an Arab

tour before he attends the Group of 20 summit in Argentina on Friday, where he faces world leaders who have strongly condemned Jamal Khashoggi's killing last month in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

The country's de facto ruler has brushed aside the international pressure, attempting to use the overseas visits -- followed by a whirlwind domestic tour -- to shore up his tarnished reputation and reinforce

relationships with allies. "The question is who among global leaders will agree to stand with him publicly," said H.A. Hellyer, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and the Royal United Services Institute in London. "I suspect his appearances will be carefully staged to avoid embarrassment." The prince faces the grim prospect of being treated as an "outcast" by some leaders at the two-day G-20 summit, said Bessma Momani, a professor at Canada's University of Waterloo. "Group photos may be unavoidable, but liberal democratic leaders from countries such as Germany and Canada will not want to be seen shaking his hand," Momani said. Former Spanish King Juan Carlos faced scathing domestic criticism over his handshake with the prince in Abu Dhabi, his first stop in a regional tour which

also included close allies Bahrain and Egypt as well as Tunisia. An image of the laughter-filled encounter at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix last Sunday was dubbed by a conservative Spanish daily as "the photo of shame".

But the 33-year-old prince, widely known as MBS, used the regional tour as something of a victory lap after US President Donald Trump -- who has praised Saudi Arabia as a "truly spectacular ally" -- threw his weight behind him. Trump's emphatic support came despite the Central Intelligence Agency's reported assessment that the prince -- who controls all major levers of power in the Saudi government -- was behind the killing. "It should come as no surprise that allies like Trump, China's Xi (Jinping) and Russia's (Vladimir) Putin will have no qualms in signalling that they are absolutely fine to continue doing business with MBS," said Momani.

The opening of the Kartarpur corridor is a positive step

If it was offended by the scaled-down participation, Pakistan did not show; it welcomed India's response. As Guru Nanak said: Everything happens by God's grace.

Instances of promises made and delivered are rare in the mostly fraught India-Pakistan relations. Much of the last seven decades since Partition has been a story of zero-sum games that have kept us apart. In that limited sense, the agreement to have a corridor linking Gurdaspur's Dera Baba Nanak to Kartarpur Sahib is a welcome augury. The 16th century shrine in what is now Pakistan's Narowal district was where the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak, breathed his last.

Located four kilometres away on the banks of the River Ravi, the revered shrine is visible from the Indian side. If all goes well, it will be easily accessible

to devotees for whom it has been a case of so near yet so far. Of as much satisfaction is the fact that the corridor entente has happened in the run-up to the 550th birthday of the first Sikh Guru. For his part, Pakistan Prime Minister, Imran Khan, took a personal interest in meeting the Sikh demand after Navjot Sidhu attended his swearing-in ceremony in Islamabad. Both practising politicians now, their friendship goes back to their cricketing days. Mr Sidhu earned goodwill in Pakistan but faced flak at home for attending Mr Khan's inaugural; more so for the hug he got and gave to Pakistan's army chief, Qamar Javed Bajwa, who conveyed to

him Islamabad's willingness to open the corridor to Kartarpur. That partisan political play has since translated into a race for claiming credit. The NDA, of which the Akali Dal is a part, wants to show itself as the deliverer of the long-pending Sikh demand. There were embarrassing moments for the Dal and the Congress at Monday's ground breaking ceremony performed by vice-president, Venkaiah Naidu, and Punjab chief minister, Amarinder Singh. But Amarinder Singh, invited by the Pakistan prime minister, refused to attend a similar ceremony across the border. By so deciding, he sought



to associate both with the faithful who are hopeful as also sharing the sceptics' fears that Islamabad's gesture could be a ploy to revive the Khalistan movement. The Centre's response to Mr Khan's invitation hasn't been any different. External affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj opted out, citing prior engagements. But two junior central ministers will travel to Pakistan: the Akali Dal's Harsimrat Kaur and the BJP's

Hardeep Puri. They're both Sikhs, the latter a former diplomat. As the one who first pushed the corridor proposal, Mr Sidhu won't be on the official delegation. He will travel to Pakistan as Mr Khan's friend. If it was offended by the scaled-down participation, Pakistan did not show; it welcomed India's response. As Guru Nanak said: Everything happens by God's grace.

Pakistan must be held accountable for its actions

While India under PM Modi has made it a policy not to talk to Islamabad till it dismantles the existing terror network, it is time that countries which are victims of Pakistan's terror franchise form a coalition to combat this menace



In the run-up to the 2014 general elections, Ajit Doval, who would go on to become candidate Narendra Modi's National Security Advisor after the latter was elected — Doval was then at a think-tank the Vivekananda International Foundation — wrote a 25-page document called "National Security Vision" that talked about comprehensive national will and framed a strategy called "defensive offence" to prevent Pakistan-based terrorist groups from targeting India. Stating that the threat of terrorism

emanated mostly from Pakistan, the document recalled the savagery of the 26/11 Mumbai massacre which left 166 Indians, Americans and Israelis dead and around 304 seriously injured as 10 Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) fidayeen, or suicide attackers, mowed down innocents in Mumbai's Fort area in 2008. Ten years later, the answer to the question of whether India has been able to neutralise the Pakistan-based LeT or Jaish-e-Mohammed threat is a straightforward no with the 2016

Uri and Pathankot terror strikes virtually forcing the Modi government to go to war against Islamabad.

There is no denying that the terror threat has greatly diminished during the Modi regime, considering no less than 1,000 innocents lost their lives from 2005-2014 in at least 25 major strikes outside Jammu and Kashmir and the northeast. But it is also a fact that the Indian state has not been able to effectively address the threat posed by these groups with

Hafeez Saeed, Masood Azhar and Dawood Ibrahim continuing to be poster boys in Pakistan.

Despite the fact that LeT runs eight terrorist training camps in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and two in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the global terrorist group, with ties to Al Qaeda and with the goal of an Islamic Caliphate, has morphed into a mainstream political party in Pakistan — despite international condemnation and possible black-listing by the Financial Action Task Force.

The LeT today is a Pakistani brand with global labels such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Muslim Milli League, Tehreek-e-Azaadi Jammu and Kashmir (TAK), Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) and Al Muhammadiyah Students (AMS). It still runs terror training courses with degrees by the name of basic Daura-e-Aam, weaponised Daura-e-Khaas and advanced Daura-e-Lashkar for global terror recruits. So far in 2018, Indian security forces have killed at least 24 terrorists affiliated to LeT outfits. The group runs an industrial scale jihadist factory with no less than 20 launching pads along India's 814-kilometre Line of Control (LoC) with

Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir. After the 2016 Uri attack, National Investigating Agency (NIA) sleuths discovered that LeT issues standardised shoes, water bottles, GPS and weapons to all its cadre as if it were functioning as a division of the Pakistani Army.

The LeT was declared a proscribed terrorist organisation by the US (2001), the UK (2001), India (2002), Pakistan (2002), Australia (2002), and its leaders Saeed, 26/11 mastermind, Zaki Lakhvi, Haji Mohammed Ashraf and Mahmoud Bahaziq declared global terrorists after the Mumbai attacks. Saeed carries a \$10 million US bounty on his head since April 2012. On April 3, the US named Milli Muslim League and TAK as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) with MML's leader, Saifullah Khalid, being designated a global terrorist. Despite all these honorifics, Saeed is a toast of Pakistani military commanders. Ministers of the present Imran Khan regime have no qualms in sharing the stage with him. The 26/11 masterminds and handlers, including those from Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, are still at large, plotting more terror conspiracies against India.

Why Raw Honey and Not Just Honey?



This is not too difficult to understand as the word 'raw' clearly indicates being 'uncooked'. Sonia Sharma, Certified Nutritionist and Founder of Nature Organic who sources raw honey from the

Himalayan foothills tells me that honey in its raw state still has the essential prana or life force which is found in every other raw food.

"According to Ayurveda, it is this energy that gives raw honey its intense flavour. It is the purest form of nectar that has come out of the flowers and is just so potent. You'll know the difference when

you taste it. It leaves a slight tingle in your throat unlike regular honey which has no flavour or texture and is plain sweet. In the Charaka Samhita, an ancient text on Ayurveda, it has been written that raw honey which has been aged for a year has amazing therapeutic and detoxifying properties. The natural nutrients are known to rejuvenate the cells in the body. A lot of scientific studies have shown that applying heat to raw foods changes their molecular structure and in the process they may lose this life force," she explains.

In its pure form, raw honey contains all the enzymes, antioxidants and minerals most of which are destroyed on being treated with heat and more often than not, replaced with synthetic material to undertake mass production and give it a shelf life. Many of the beautiful, golden bottles sitting on supermarket shelves contain commercial honey that has been pasteurized (heated at about 70 degree Celsius followed by rapid cooling). This makes it easy to filter, handle



and package and gives the liquid a cleaner and smoother finish but a lot is lost in the process. Honey is made up of more than 70% sugars, less than 20% water and trace minerals. Think about it - Honey travels from the farms to the middlemen to one factory for processing and then another factory for packaging and by the time it reaches the stores all that is left are glucose and fructose plus added preservatives and stabilizers. The same old story of big business interests making it hard to maintain quality may leave a bad taste in the mouth.

"It was about four years ago that a person from Noida shared with me that he sells low-quality honey for Rs. 15 per kg to certain brands that use it to mix with their product to increase the volume and reduce the price. Thereafter, I visited the forests in Uttarakhand where a family of farmers have been involved in bee-keeping for generations and witnessed how real honey is made. You are not allowed inside the forest to prevent any form of contamination, but I have been told by the farmers that they place the bee hive in a spinning container and while it spins the honey falls off the comb and sticks to the walls from where it is scooped and delivered to us," shares Manav Chaddha, Co-Founder, Organica.

The thing about honest, real honey is that it not really 'pure' literally. "The raw honey that we source from the forest is filtered manually and no machinery or heat is used at any step. This is why you may find bee pollen or some fibers still in our honey but they don't really pose a problem to your health and also the colour or texture may be slightly different every time because honey is obtained through a natural process

that we cannot control. We add nothing to it - no artificial flavours or synthetic sugar. In fact, the farmers having been eating unfiltered honey for years now but that is little understood by the public. Sadly, the only qualities of honey that we refer to is that it should be smooth, shiny and sweet. But, that's not the case and when commercial honey looks and tastes the same each time, it raises doubts because it is far from what raw, natural honey would be," says Manav.

Unfiltered raw honey, which you get directly from the bee farm, does contain fine crystals and flecks of bee pollen, honeycomb bits and even broken bee wing fragments since it is extracted and cleaned by hand. It is cloudier, has high levels of antioxidants and crystallizes to a thick consistency very soon. Raw honey is alkaline in nature (unlike processed honey) which simply means that it does not ferment in the stomach and can be used to neutralize acid indigestion.

Back in the 1800s, honey came in a comb packed in a wooden box. Honey stored in the honeycomb was the purest, rawest form of honey. And there was no other alternative. As time went by, several things changed. Food safety laws were tightened and the natural honey that people had been eating for so many years was not considered safe anymore. Unfortunately, we lost a real treat. Today, suppliers of raw honey, keeping the needs and health of the consumers in mind, may only warm it slightly to allow the honey to flow for bottling and filter it to remove the unwanted particles.

Crystallization is a good thing

The crystallization of honey is actually a trait of pure, natural

honey. During crystallization the glucose sugar in honey separates from the water and turns into white crystals because it is an over-saturated sugar solution. The process of crystallization is known to preserve certain characteristics of your honey like flavour and quality. "People believe that crystallized honey has gone bad but honey never expires. If it is stored in a cool and dry place, it will naturally crystallize in a few months. Just place the jar in hot water for a few minutes and it will regain its original texture. The one that doesn't may have chemicals to increase its shelf life or the one that crystallizes partially at the bottom may be adulterated," adds Manav.

The recent controversies are a reflection of how food-safety procedures unfold in India and that adulteration is common. Honey can be easily adulterated with glucose solution or high-fructose corn syrup and ingredients you may never know. It's best to do your due diligence before buying and not always trust what you see. A simple trick that I use to check the quality of honey is to put some in a glass of water. Pure honey should remain solid and not dissolve when submerged in water.

Well-known raw food guru David Wolfe, in his book - 'Superfoods: The Food and Medicine of the Future', talks about raw honey being 'nature's richest source of live healing enzymes and that it increases reflexes, mental alertness and even IQ!' He suggests that all honeys should be eaten raw as cooked honey has no enzymes and wherever possible select organic honey packaged in glass.



New cases of HIV rise in Eastern Europe, decline in the West

Almost 160,000 people were diagnosed in Europe with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, according to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) regional office for Europe.

More than 130,000 people were newly diagnosed with HIV last year in Eastern Europe, the highest rate ever for the region, while the number of new cases in Western Europe declined, global public health experts said on Wednesday. European Union and European Economic Area countries saw a reduction in 2017 rates, mainly driven by a 20% drop since 2015 among men who have sex with men. That left Europe's overall increasing trend less steep than previously.

All told, almost 160,000 people were diagnosed in Europe with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, according to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) regional office for Europe. "It's hard to talk about good news in the face of another year of unacceptably high numbers of people infected with HIV," said Zsuzsanna Jakab, director of the WHO regional office. Calling on governments and health officials to recognise the seriousness of the situation, she urged them: "Scale up your response now." The United Nations AIDS agency UNAIDS warned in July that complacency was starting to stall the fight against the global epidemic, with the pace of progress not matching what is needed. Some 37 million people worldwide are infected with HIV.

Stay Healthy And Super Fit With Dried Fruits And These Healthy Bars

Dried fruits contain little to no fat. They also contain significant calories per serving, making them a natural source of energy for athletes. They are also a good supplement for people seeking to gain weight in a healthy way.



As healthy living has become a catchword these days, people have taken to eating dried fruits and health bars. Experts say these can give natural nutrients. V.V. Mani, Director, Operations, Unibic, and Suhasni Sampath, Co-Founder, Yoga Bars, explain how dry fruits and nuts used in health snack bars help the cause of healthy living:

Dried fruits generally contain more fiber than the same-sized serving of their fresh counterparts. Fiber helps in keeping your digestive system running smoothly.

The various dry fruits are packed naturally with a mix of nutritional elements like potassium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, iron, carotenoids, antioxidants, vitamins, dietary fiber, flavonoids, selenium and more apart from the good quality fat and protein that these provide. Dried fruits generally contain more fiber than the same-sized serving of their

fresh counterparts.

These help in various ways like increase of good cholesterol, reduction in bad cholesterol, maintaining blood pressure, blood sugar control, thyroid control, improving heart function, bowel

movement, skin health, hair control, cancer fighting properties, improving bone health, improved vision, easing digestion and fighting anaemia to name a few. Many of the dry fruits are low in glycemic index, and so, they help slow release of energy and control blood sugar.

Because most of the water is extracted from fruits, their nutrients are condensed into a small package. Dried fruits like apricots, raisins, prunes and figs contain high amounts of beta carotene, vitamin E, niacin, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium. Dried fruits contain little to no fat. They also contain significant calories per serving, making them a natural source of energy for athletes. They are also a good supplement for people seeking to gain weight in a healthy way. Dried fruits like apricots, raisins, prunes and figs contain high amounts of beta carotene, vitamin E, niacin, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium.



Obese children more likely to develop asthma than kids of a healthy weight, warns study

Parents, please take note. Your child's weight plays an important role in determining his or her asthma risk. Obese or overweight children are at an increased risk of asthma, a new study has found.

US Researchers say it is possible that weight gain is fuelling the rise in childhood asthma. Researchers discovered that obese youngsters were more

likely to develop the lung condition than children of a healthy weight. The findings suggest that the incidence of an asthma diagnosis among children with obesity was significantly higher than in those in a normal weight range and that 23-27% of new asthma cases were directly attributable to obesity.

"Paediatric

asthma is among the most prevalent childhood conditions and comes at a high cost to patients, families and the greater health system," said co-author Terri Finkel from Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando. "There are few preventable risk factors to reduce the incidence of asthma, but our data show that reducing the onset of childhood obesity could significantly lower the public health burden of asthma," Finkel added. For the study published in the journal Paediatrics, the research team analysed medical records of more than 500,000 children. The

researchers reviewed de-identified data of patients aged two to 17 without a history of asthma, receiving care from six paediatric academic medical centres between 2009 and 2015. Overweight or obese patients were matched with normal weight patients of the same age, gender, race, ethnicity, insurance type and location of care. The researchers found that

obesity among children with asthma appears to increase disease severity. Being overweight was identified as a modest risk factor for asthma, and the association was diminished when the most stringent definition of asthma was used.



How Priyanka Chopra played hide and seek with fashion



Ahead of the Priyanka Chopra-Nick Jonas wedding, we look at the actress's style evolution. She became the champion of adaptability when it came to diction, style and the craft. She knows she is sexy and we know it too now. The real Priyanka Chopra has finally spoken.

Over a period of time, Priyanka Chopra discovered fashion and fashion discovered her. When a young, shy PeeCee represented India for Miss World 2000, the confidence and attitude was noticed more than what she was wearing and how much she knew about style. That confidence and attitude never left her and over the years, she is one of those few Indian actresses who tried to reinvent herself rather than fading away in the crowd of actresses who gave up after a point of time and convinced themselves to be plus one in a big budget film.

Now, let's go down memory lane and revisit how it all began for Priyanka Chopra. Her body had the barbie-like perfection but she was clearly meant to more than a showpiece on and off-screen. In her first release *Andaaz* (2003), she was seen as a flamboyant, spoilt rich girl who wanted to own everything she ever wanted. Her body language was wild and she also crossed all the levels of overacting but, that's what who she is till date - a go-getter. A series of releases post that, Priyanka was mostly seen as someone who brings the commercial value to a film rather than owning it as an actress.

While many directors tried to make her look like a typical Indian girl, many failed to appreciate and recognise her

unconventional looks and her edgy personality that wanted more than just commercial hits and sharing screen space with the big guns in Bollywood. Farhan Akhtar's *Don* (2006) came out, she came close to playing Roma, a woman with a plan, played perfectly by 80s diva Zeenat Aman. The role was strong, over-sensitive yet a well-adjusted character. With Madhur Bhandarkar's *Fashion* (2008) and Karan Johar's *Dostana* (2008), we saw a different side of PeeCee where she not only owned the movie as a performer but also nailed it as a stylemaker. With films like Siddharth Anand's *Anjaana Anjaani*, and Vishal Bharadwaj's *Kaminey* (2009) and *Saat Khoon Maaf* (2011) we were bound to believe in her and especially, the spunk that she has and how she pulled it off. In the sequel to the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer, *Don 2* (2011), Priyanka dazzled the audience with her sexy demeanour and action sequences. Priyanka had arrived by then and she clearly had a plan. A plan to survive, a plan to matter.

As she started to embrace who she is on screen, Priyanka Chopra had also begun to embrace how she wanted to dress. PeeCee always had a spectacular body and that face was not traditionally beautiful but it had lots of charm and character. The hunger for more and more was visible in those persistent eyes. She gradually moved on from bandage dresses, corsets and off-shoulder patterns to silhouettes that complimented her edgy personality. Not that they looked bad on her, but she was mostly styled keeping her body in mind and not her personality. Her barbie-like hair

was rarely experimented with as the volume was a safe bet compared to going in a different direction with that sharp face and gorgeous eyes. Amid the Bollywood galore, her first single 'In my City' in 2012 and *Exotic* in 2013, the world saw the Priyanka Chopra the way she wanted to be seen. Free-spirited, over-ambitious and desirable.



Sara Ali Khan looks as beautiful as Kareena Kapoor in matching Raw Mango suit

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Sara Ali Khan took twinning to a whole new level with their shiny outfits. Kareena or Sara, whose brocade look from Raw Mango do you love more?

It's been a busy few days for Sara Ali Khan. The budding actor is showing off her fashion flair in head-turning looks, while promoting her debut film, *Kedarnath* with actor Sushant Singh Rajput. Instead of slipping into sleek short dresses or exaggerated wide-legged pants, Sara continues to put on a stylish display with her exciting ethnic Indian looks. On Tuesday, Sara again proved she has a penchant for traditional Indian ensembles. Wearing an unexpected brocade

kurta and cigarette-shaped trousers set from Raw Mango, Sara handled herself with as much finesse and grace as any seasoned celebrity. She accessorised her regal midnight blue outfit with Jadau chandbalis from Amrapali Jewels: Sara has spoken on multiple occasions about how close she is to her father, actor Saif Ali Khan's second wife, Kareena Kapoor Khan. But it's hard to imagine two women with personal styles more different than Sara and Kareena.

With her down-to-earth demeanour and girl-next-door charm, Sara makes everything she wears look effortless and fabulous at the same time, while Kareena proves being a modern style icon is all about taking fashion risks. Yet both Sara and Kareena have stepped out in almost identical Raw Mango ensembles. In May, while promoting her film *Veere Di Wedding*, Kareena packed an extremely glamorous wardrobe, which included a pretty kurta set



from Raw Mango. She paired her brown and gold brocade kurta with a pair of brown cropped pants and gold juttis from Fizzy Goblet. Like Sara, Kareena too opted to let go off a dupatta to help keep the focus on her high-shine outfit. To finish, the star went with nude lips, soft smoky eyes and swept her hair back in a loose low ponytail with soft waves. Sara took her styling cues from Kareena and kept the rest of her look simple to let the bold hue of her brocade

separates do the talking. Sara's simple hair and make-up helped balance the glamour of her Raw mango design. While she wore glossy nude lips, unlike Kareena, Sara left her hair open. While there's no doubt that both ladies look incredible, what isn't so clear is which star wore Raw Mango best. Do you prefer the relaxed vibe in the brown and gold suit Kareena wore, or Sara's sophisticated, polished head-to-toe brocade version?



Les Moonves was fired this year for 'forcing Showgirls actress to perform oral sex on him' in 1995

Bobbie Phillips told *The New York Times* that Les Moonves forced her to perform oral sex on him during a 1995 meeting

her and his other clients on CBS.

He also said that one day after she met Moonves, Dauer informed Phillips that the executive had called to say he had lined up producers interested in meeting the woman. Phillips broke down in tears and refused according to Dauer, saying she never wanted to see Moonves again or meet with any of the producers.

Then, a year ago, word got out about a possible piece being written about Moonves past, and their CBS head allegedly grew concerned that Phillips would be the focus. Once the CBS board learned that Moonves offered Phillips work to stay silent he was booted, and now Phillips has also filed a \$15 million lawsuit. In addition to trying to silence her, Phillips is accusing Moonves of defaming her by stating the encounter was consensual.

Moonves 'reopened these wounds, causing medical injuries and effectively ending her acting career' said Phillips' lawyer.

The CBS board realized - after learning that Moonves tried to find Phillips a job - that they needed to remove Moonves from his position according to emails that were seen by the Times, but were still prepared to let him leave with half of his \$180 million severance package. A deal was put in place that would pay Moonves out the rest of the money if an investigation cleared him, and a new release announcing the decision was being drafted when

The New Yorker called to fact check a story that contained on-the-record allegations from six new women. The board realized at that time there was no way to let Moonves leave with any money until the investigation was complete, and voted to terminate his employment on the Sunday, just hours after The New Yorker published its story.

Some had hoped that vote could have come before the release of the story, but there was not enough time.

Les Moonves lost his job after it was discovered he tried to stop a woman from sharing possible allegations of sexual misconduct by giving her a role on a CBS series, reports *The New York Times*.

Bobbie Phillips was trying to break into the industry back in 1995 when she met Moonves at his office to discuss possible work, a fact that both parties and Phillips' agent acknowledge to be true.

Halfway through that meeting, Phillips claims that Moonves exposed himself and said 'look how hard you make me.'

That is when he allegedly forced himself into her mouth, stating: 'Be my girlfriend and I'll put you on any show.'

Moonves denies ever forcing Phillips to perform oral sex, but

does not deny that the sex act took place. The two were interrupted halfway through when Moonves received a phone call, at which point Phillips said she fled from the office.

'I felt my blood rushing in my body,' said Phillips.

'I was vibrating. I can still feel it.' She then recalled grabbing a baseball bat in the corner of the room, saying: 'All I could think was that I wanted to use the baseball bat to knock his head off.'

Moonves began to worry about the incident approximately a year ago according to Phillips' agent Marv Dauer, and became increasingly concerned over time. 'If Bobbie talks, I'm, finished,' he wrote in a text to Dauer. Dauer is upfront about the fact that he used his knowledge of the Phillips scandal to try and get work for



Bhaiiji Superhit movie review

Sunny Deol rocks a surprisingly fun film

Bhaiiji Superhit

Director - Neeraj Pathak

Cast - Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Ameesha Patel, Arshad Warsi, Shreyas Talpade

Rating - 3/5

There is an adage about Hindi films — made popular by producers and publicists of said films — that entertaining movies require the viewer to 'leave their brains at home.' It is an infuriating line meant to justify not only broad buffoonery, but plot-holes and lazy writing, as filmmakers blame the audience for thinking when they should merely roll over and be tickled. Bhaiiji Superhit addresses this line of thought with an early scene where Sunny Deol tosses a brain into the air and smashes it with his infamous hand. Leave your brains behind, this film threatens, or else...

That approach is taken by many a deafening film about machismo and item numbers, but Bhaiiji Superhit crucially knows how silly it is, and celebrates it. Unlike a Dabangg or Rowdy Rathore or Singham that amp up the melodrama and pretend their hackneyed rape/revenge plots actually matter, this film revels in its lunacy and piles cliché on top of cliché. Director Neeraj Pathak knows he's making a spoof, and Sunny Deol is in on the joke. Those films literally exist to make the hero look good, whereas here Deol clowns around, draped in technicolor velvet as if styled by Ranveer Singh. (Plus, unlike obscenely expensive monstrosities like Ghajini and Wanted, this is clearly less wasteful.)

Much of the credit goes to Deol's preposterously infectious smile.

In the film's first action sequence he throws a spectacular double-punch wearing a tender coconut on each hand like a green boxing glove — I promise you this is unforgettable, and should be immortalised as a GIF — and later there are times he slaps other characters so hard he nearly loses his own balance. Yet that smile remains dashing and that charm easy, so it's fun to watch Deol as the titular Bhaiiji who likes smashing anything in earshot, brings down buildings with a click of a ballpoint pen and wants to win his pretty wife back at all costs. This aforementioned wife, played fittingly by Preity Zinta, wants also to return at all costs but wants her husband to jump through tighter hoops first, which leads Bhaiiji to kidnap an opportunistic filmmaker to get a



movie made about his romance. It's all tomfoolery, narrated by the inimitable Vijay Raaz and starring gifted comic actors like Pankaj Tripathi, Sanjai Mishra and Arshad Warsi. Warsi plays

the name-dropping filmmaker who — very realistically — goes out of his way on the sets to make sure the film's writer doesn't make money or get any credit.

It may not be smooth sailing for Rajinikanth's '2.0' movie

2.0's trailer hasn't really generated the buzz it should have, and the movie hasn't made massive profits with the sale of ancillary rights before its release

New Delhi: At a budget of ₹510 crore, Rajinikanth's science fiction movie 2.0 is easily the most expensive Indian film till date. But the S. Shankar directed venture that hits theatres Thursday after much delay is unlikely to have it easy.

For one, after the failure of Yash Raj Films' action adventure Thugs of Hindostan, euphoria around the idea of the big-screen spectacle has taken a beating. "Thugs was the biggest offering of the year with Aamir Khan and Amitabh Bachchan coming together, and the fact that it was a Diwali release from YRF, one of the biggest banners. This clearly proves audiences are in no mood to spend money on a bad film, no matter whom it comes from," said a trade expert on condition of anonymity.

While YRF has recovered its investment for Thugs of Hindostan from ancillary rights, theatre owners have incurred losses as theatrical business did not match expectations, said the trade expert. YRF got exhibitors to pay a minimum guarantee of nearly ₹15-16 crore (per theatre) before release and the earnings of the film have resulted in a 60-70% loss for them.

"The buzz around 2.0 is not as high as Enthiran (the first instalment released in 2010)," said

Rakesh Gowthaman, managing director of Vettri Theatres in Chennai.

"That film was high on star value with Rajinikanth and Aishwarya Rai coming together. Plus, Rajni was in the best phase of his career then whereas his recent films haven't really fared well and his entry into politics hasn't been accepted wholeheartedly either," added the trade expert quoted above.

Clearly, 2.0's content will have to speak for itself. The film's trailer hasn't really generated the buzz it should have, and, contrary to reports, the movie hasn't made massive profits with the sale of ancillary rights before its release. While the satellite TV rights have gone to the Zee Network for ₹110 crore, about ₹80 crore has come from Karan Johar's Dharma Productions for distribution rights of the Hindi version.

Producers Lyca Productions are still in the process of selling distribution rights for other languages, but trade experts say that all put together, pre-release revenue will not exceed ₹250 crore. That leaves more than half the investment still to be recovered. The movie will not only have to cross at least ₹100 crore on day one but sustain thereafter to break-even.

Also while comparisons with

the Baahubali franchise may be inevitable, those two films came within two years of each other, unlike 2.0 that comes eight years after Enthiran.

"The burden of Baahubali's investment was borne by two movies, not one. Plus, that was a more conventional genre—mythology, tradition and family values," said Atul Mohan, editor of trade magazine Complete Cinema.

Lyca did not respond to Mint's queries, but industry experts point out that the company is not marketing the film aggressively. Apart from a trailer launch, online contests, poster releases, in-cinema, print and television advertising and a singular interview with Rajinikanth on Zee Tamil for Diwali, the campaign has been low key.

To be sure, there is much going for the movie. Siddharth Bhardwaj, chief marketing officer and head of enterprise sales, UFO Moviez India Ltd, said Lyca is targeting a screen count higher than the 6,500 notched up by Baahubali 2: The Conclusion in 2017 in India alone, the highest for an Indian film so far.

Overseas too, 2.0 should take up around 2,000 screens, an unprecedented number. Lyca is also encouraging theatre owners to opt for upgraded 3D technol-



ogy for audiences to view the VFX-heavy film in full glory. "I think audiences are intelligent enough to see how the film is pushing the envelope in terms of production values," said film distributor and exhibitor Akshaye Rathi who expects Rs20 crore from the Hindi version of the film on day one and about Rs55-60 crore from the Tamil version. "Plus, the presence of Akshay Kumar (as the antagonist) ensures that it caters equally to the north and south." Gowthaman added the lukewarm buzz around the movie may work for it in the long run. At least in Tamil Nadu, which is Rajinikanth's mainstay, it is the first wide solo release since Vijay's Sarkar that came for Diwali and will enjoy an uninterrupted two to three-week window after-

wards. "It's too early to say if the film will ultimately recover its investment, the opening certainly will not cover and the content has to speak. But at



Priyanka Chopra, Sophie Turner look great in traditional Indian suits at family puja

Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas kicked off their exciting wedding weekend with a dinner party in Mumbai on Monday. And on Wednesday the soon-to-be married couple and their family and friends all gathered to celebrate their upcoming nuptials with a traditional puja at the Mumbai home of Priyanka's mother, Dr. Madhu Chopra. Priyanka, who wore a heavily embellished sky blue suit, was spotted entering her mother's home for the puja, while mingling with her Nick's brother Joe Jonas



and his fiancé Sophie Turner. Priyanka completed the ensemble with statement sunglasses, shoulder-grazing earrings and, of course, the Tiffany & Co. diamond that Nick proposed with. Meanwhile, Nick was spotted in an embroidered pink

kurta, paired cream pyjamas. You were probably expecting the groom's family to wear something traditional Indian for the lavish wedding festivities in Jodhpur between on November 29 and December 2. But for the puja, not only Nick, even Sophie and Joe surprised everyone by wearing ethnic Indian outfits. While Sophie rocked a red suit embellished with beads and embroidery with a bright yellow dupatta, Joe and Nick wore coordinating blue and pink kurta pyjama sets for the special occasion:

Kedarnath: A Riveting Story of Love, Courage & Fate

Releasing worldwide on 7th December 2018 through Packyourbag Films

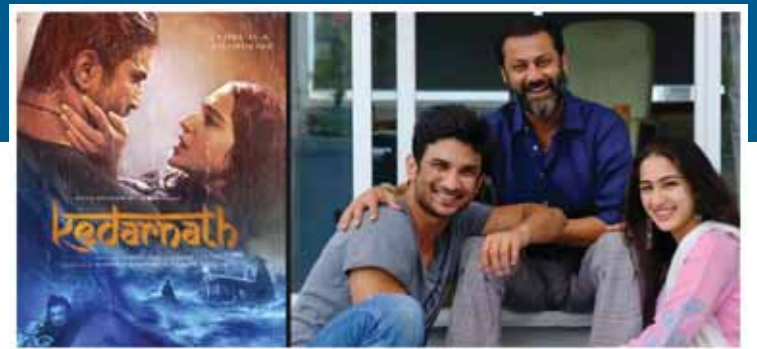
Deep in the valleys of the Himalayas lies the abode of Lord Shiva, the Kedarnath Temple. A juxtaposition between tranquillity and uncertainty, Kedarnath has withstood the test of time. Now RSVP Movies brings to audiences worldwide a cinematic ensemble of love, courage and fate with their forthcoming co-production KEDARNATH, a potent combination of love and religion, of passion and spirituality, releasing in cinemas on 7th December 2018 through Packyourbag Films.

Directed by acclaimed director Abhishek Kapoor (Rock On!!!), KEDARNATH brings together on

screen Sushant Singh Rajput, who made his debut 5 years ago in Abhishek Kapoor's multi-award-winning film Kai Poi Che, and debutant Sara Ali Khan. With her charming demeanour and arresting screen presence, Sara Ali Khan is poised to make a stellar debut in Kedarnath. The lead stars are joined by a strong supporting cast comprising Nitish Bharadwaj, Alka Amin, Sonali Sachdev, Pooja Gor and Nishant Dahiya.

The film is set on a 14-kilometre pilgrimage from Gauri Kund to Kedarnath, the 2000-year-old holy temple of Lord Shiva. Mansoor (Sushant Singh

Rajput), a reserved and reticent Pithoo (porter) helps pilgrims make an arduous journey upwards to the temple town. His world turns around when he meets the beautiful and rebellious Mukku (Sara Ali Khan) who draws him into a whirlwind of intense love. As their relationship grows closer along the journey, they face many obstacles, including familial disapproval and contrasting backgrounds. Their love story is intertwined with the devastating Uttarakhand floods of 2013, which took the lives of several thousand habitants and devastated the region. In the wake of the atrocity, the couple are forced



to survive against the elements and face the ultimate test of their love. The anticipation around Kedarnath's release is heightened following the overwhelming response it's trailer garnered, supported by an unanimous endorsement from audiences worldwide on Sushant and Sara's on-screen chemistry. The films' songs, which have been penned by Amitabh Bhattacharya and directed by Amit Trivedi, have also

populated radio airwaves with melodious hits like the foot-tapping, wedding dance track 'Sweetheart', the a powerful devotional song 'Namo, Namo' and the innocent love song 'Qaafirana'.

Kedarnath promises to transport audiences on a romantic journey filled with sacrifice, heart-warming moments and emotions which evoke a willingness to do anything and everything for love.

Youtube Original Award Winning Documentary

'The Price of Free Premieres on Soulpancake's Youtube Channel

YouTube Original documentary The Price of Free launches TODAY November 27, 2018 free for fans around the world on SoulPancake's YouTube Channel. From YouTube, Participant Media and Concordia Studio, the award-winning film follows Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi and his team of leaders around the world through gripping secret raids and quests for missing children.

The Price of Free amplifies the voice of Kailash Satyarthi, a tireless global child rights activist, to accelerate the reach and impact of his efforts to end child slavery.

The launch coincides with #GivingTuesday, where YouTube Creators Jay Shetty and Kati Morton will join the campaign to help raise money in support of the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foun-

dation. See Official YouTube blog post here.

Mr. Satyarthi states, "The film is a humble tribute to my colleagues Dhoomdas, Adarsh Kishore and Kalu Kumar, who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty without demur, selflessly fighting for children's rights till their last breath. I call upon everyone to watch this film and work with us in creating a world where all children are free, healthy, safe and educated."

Co-produced and co-financed by Participant Media and Concordia Studio, the film premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize. Working with partners YouTube, Participant, Concordia, the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation,

SoulPancake and the 100 Million Campaign's Global Day of Action on Nov 14, the campaign will provide audiences across the U.S. and worldwide with an opportunity to understand and reflect on why millions of children are trapped in child labor and slavery providing pathways for those audiences to invest, advocate and lead change in their community and around the world. 'The Price of Free' comes from rising director Derek Doneen and is produced by Davis Guggenheim ("An Inconvenient Truth", "He Named Me Malala") and Sarah Anthony and co-produced by Purnima Raghunath. Executive Producers include Jeff Skoll, Diane Weyermann, Elise Pearlstein, Laurene Powell Jobs, Shannon Dill and Jonathan Silberberg.



Bharat: Seen Katrina Kaif's New Look Yet 'You're Killing Us,' Says The Internet

Katrina Kaif just dropped an oh-so-amazing photo of herself from what appears to be the sets of Bharat on Instagram and netizens just can't keep calm. That's because Katrina offered a proper glimpse of her new look, which she had teased in her previous Instagram post. In the photo, Katrina sports curly hair as she poses for the click - we got glimpses of this new look of hers a few times in the past. Remember the viral photo of Salman Khan and Katrina and the brand new poster of Bharat, also featuring the two (you can only see her

curly hair as the stars' complete looks were not revealed)? For the new photo, Katrina opted for a simple caption - she simply added the dancing girl emoji. While Katrina Kaif is painting Instagram red, her fans are busy approving her look for Bharat. Nitya Mehra, who directed Katrina Kaif in Baar Baar Dekho, wrote: "Just return to us like this only," while casting director Shanoo Sharma added: "I love it". "You are totally slaying it with that hairstyle," read a comment while another added: "You are a dream. This

Bharat look is killing us."

Check out Katrina's viral post here, which garnered over 6 lakh likes in just 4 hours! Katrina Kaif and Salman Khan are currently shooting for Bharat in New Delhi, where the team landed on Saturday. Costume designer Ashley Rebello also shared a new photo of Salman Khan from the sets while just a few hours after that, a new photo of Katrina arrived on her Instagram. Ahead of the national capital, the film's team were busy with the Jalandhar schedule, where the Wagah Border was recreated.



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