

# The South Asian INSIDER

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Telangana



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## The Rise Of Uddhav Thackeray

*Uddhav Thackeray was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra at a grand function in Mumbai's Shivaji Park on Thursday. Donning a striking saffron-colored kurta-pyjama, Thackeray took oath. Now 59, Uddhav was happy pursuing his passion for wildlife photography when the Shiv Sena-BJP government came to power for the first time in 1995.*



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**Also Read :** Uddhav Thackeray: Reluctant politician who became Maharashtra CM **Page 23**  
BJP could be shrinking politically but is winning big time ideologically **Page 24**  
Congress created Shiv Sena to counter trade unions in 1960s: Jairam Ramesh **Page 25**



# The Delhi-DC dance on immigration



## A period of openness to tech workers is coming to a close across much of the West

(News Agencies) External affairs minister, S Jaishankar, told Parliament that almost a quarter of H-1 visa applications are now denied by United States authorities. Separately, Washington has recommended that the right of work of H-4 visa holders — spouses of H-1 visa holders — should be revoked. Restrictions are being put on the right to work of F and M student visa holders. The US, traditionally the most migrant-friendly nation in the world, is slowly lifting the drawbridge India repeatedly makes the argument to the US that the H-1 visa is mutually beneficial. The economics of this is unquestionable — even India benefits from the “brain circulation” between the two countries. But it runs counter to the dominant anti-immigrant narrative of the Donald Trump administration. Indians need to be realistic that a period of openness to tech workers and their ilk is coming to a close across much of the West. New Delhi has to be realistic about how much it can change this narrative. The US remains open to

thousands of tech workers who are brought in by big-tech firms, but is squeezing the ability of small outsourcers to sponsor workers. It remains open to tens of thousands of those in science and engineering, while closing the door on vocational trainees. Allowing H visa spouses to work was an unusual move followed by almost no other country, India included. It was unlikely to survive for long. New Delhi should consider blending immigration into its trade negotiations rather than depending solely on White House whims.

## After Dec 12 election, Britain’s new House of Commons likely to see more Indian-origin MPs

The 2017 election saw a record 12 Indian-origin MPs elected (seven Labour and five Conservative), but with the Conservative Party nominating candidates from the community in two of its strongholds, the number is likely to rise to at least 14.

(News Agencies) The December 12 general election in Britain is expected to result in a small increase in the number of Indian-origin MPs with at least three new faces entering the House of Commons, marking a new record for the participation of the community in British politics. The 2017 election saw a record 12 Indian-origin MPs elected (seven Labour and five Conservative), but with the Conservative Party nominating candidates from the community in two of its strongholds, the number is likely to rise to at least 14. The two new Conservative candidates are Claire Coutinho (Surrey East) and Gagan Mohindra (Hertfordshire South West). Coutinho has been advisor to Rishi



Sunak, chief secretary to the Treasury, while likely to be joined by Navendu Mishra, who has been nominated from its stronghold of Stockport. Son of parents from Uttar Pradesh, Mishra is sitting on a comfortable party majority in the Greater Manchester constituency. The Conservative Party has increased the number of Indian-origin candidates from 13 in 2017 to 18 — the highest among parties. Labour, which has been facing anger from the community over its stand on Kashmir, has reduced the number from 14 in 2017 to 10.

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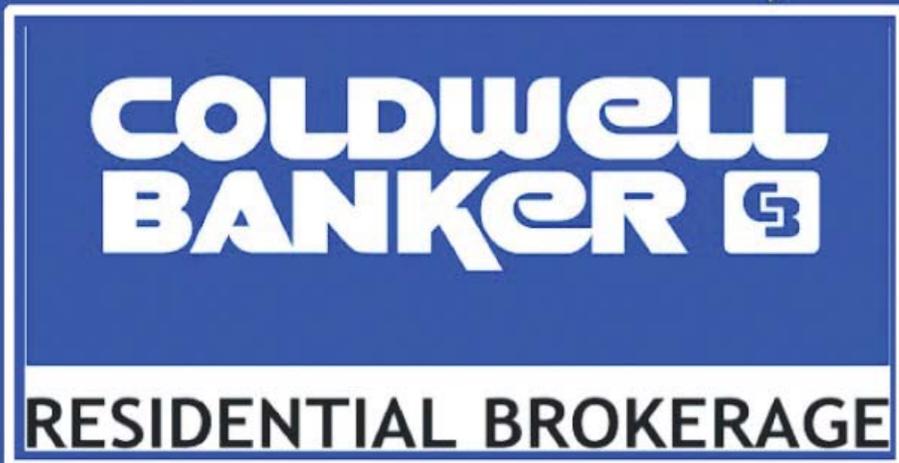


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# How 'Toxic' Indian Nationalist Politics Is Rearing Its Head In The UK Election

**WhatsApp memes accusing Labour of being "anti-Indian" and enabling grooming gangs circulate among voters – but will they affect the election result?**



(News Agencies) "Indian politics is now turning up on the streets of the UK," says Kuldeep,\* a British Sikh from west London. He says it is "toxic", "awful", and evidence that "sectarianism" is affecting British politics. He is talking amid an election campaign in which the UK arm of Indian PM Narendra Modi's nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has pledged to campaign for the Tories against Labour in more than 40 seats. It was sparked by a motion backed at Labour's annual

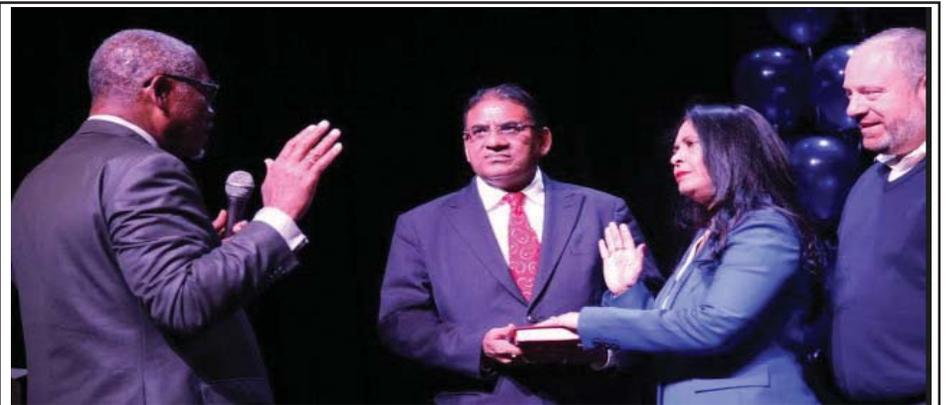
conference in September calling for the people of Kashmir to be given the right to determine their own future. Modi had stripped the disputed territory of its semi-autonomous status and put it into lockdown. Labour's move was seen by some, including the Overseas Friends of the BJP (UK), as "anti-Indian". The party has now been forced into a climbdown amid pleas from its own British Asian MPs. Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese has talked of "foreign interference" in the UK election and warned

against dividing communities. But does the Kashmir episode speak to a wider infiltration of Modi-style "Hindutva" (Hindu nationalism) and Islamophobia in British political debate? Messages are circulating among "all sorts of people in all sorts of chats" on WhatsApp in a way that was "not at all" seen in previous elections, according to Kuldeep. Although there is no way of knowing the scale of the messaging, WhatsApp's encrypted service has been used effectively by Modi's government in India to push propaganda to large groups of voters, and group chats are popular among British Indians. They include accusations that Labour is "against India", and include far-right style suggestions that the party is in some way responsible for grooming scandals across the UK,

which have often involved mainly Pakistani-origin men. Behind that, voters speak of Labour being "captured" by Muslims. Islamophobic hate crimes are on the rise under Modi in India. The situation has been exacerbated by selection rows, including

Jeremy Corbyn's ally Claudia Webbe being parachuted into outgoing MP Keith Vaz's heavily Asian, and Hindu, Leicester East seat. Again, WhatsApp messages have circulated describing it as a "slap in the face" for "Indians/

Hindus and Sikhs" and urging voters to back the local Tory candidate. Labour Friends of India, meanwhile, has criticised the party for selecting just one British Indian candidate in a seat the party is actually deemed likely to win.



The Daniel Patrick Moynihan Democratic Club of Queens has named Dr. Neeta Jain as its new elected President in a installation ceremony held on November 21 at the Hill Crest Jewish Center at a Democratic District Leader for Assembly District 25 Part B in Queens. Dr. Jain was installed by the officer, the Congressman Gregory W Meeks, the chairman of the Democratic organization of Queens and the emcee of the evening was NYC Council member Rory Lancman, Chairman of the Club. Dr. Neeta Jain in her opening remarks acknowledged all elected officials who were present at the ceremony for their time and support to reestablished The Daniel Patrick Moynihan Democratic Club She said that "This ceremony is a tribute to my father as he always encouraged me to serve the

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**ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ  
ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ**

ਬੰਗਲਾੜ: ਸ਼ਰਫ ਅਹਮਦ ਇਸ ਸਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਭਾਰ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਵੱਧ ਗਏ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਖਰਚੇ 27,000 ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਏ ਵੱਧ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਸ਼ਹੀ ਸੋਢੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲਾਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਭੇਜੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਖਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਘਟਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 20 ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਏ ਦਾ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਖਰਚੇ 27,000 ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਏ ਵੱਧ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਖਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਘਟਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

**ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਧਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖੋਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ**

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# 25-year-old Mysuru man shot dead in California motel, says family

As the legal procedure including the post mortem may take some time, the family has decided to perform the last rites in California itself.



(News Agencies) A 25-year-old man from Mysuru, reportedly shot dead by an unknown assailant, family members said on Saturday.

Saturday.

Abhishek Sudesh Bhat was temporarily looking after a motel in California, where he was shot on Thursday, Srivatsa, victim's cousin told PTI.

He was pursuing his masters from California State University in San Bernardino.

The incident occurred on Thursday between 11:30 am and 12:30 pm.

The person who came

for the next shift informed the family that Abhishek has been shot dead.

As the legal procedure including the post mortem may take some time, the family has decided to perform the last rites in California itself.

"Postmortem is still going on there after the investigation was completed. The Forensic Pathology will be reviewed next week.

There are many cases there. So, they are yet to schedule their postmortem on Abhishek," Srivatsa said.

"It may take some time... Abhishek's parents will travel to the US and perform the cremation there itself," he added.

The family has approached the authorities in California as well as the Indian Embassy there

besides the local authorities here and in Karnataka to expedite the legal procedure.

Asked about the any headway in the case and reason behind the killing, Srivatsa said it would not be proper to disclose anything about the progress made in the case. "All we can say now is one incident of shooting happened and one person died," the victim's cousin said.

# Indian-origin brothers smuggle drugs worth £5 million in chicken, face jail in UK

The National Crime Agency (NCA) said the group was led by Wasim Hussain and Nazarat Hussain, who have been jailed by the Birmingham Crown Court for a combined sentence of nearly 44 years. The Thakhar brothers are due to be sentenced on January 20.



(News Agencies) part of a Birmingham-based Brothers Manjinder Singh organised crime group that Thakhar and Davinder Singh Thakhar, who were

them in chicken shipments from the Netherlands, face jail after they pleaded guilty.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) said the group was led by Wasim Hussain and Nazarat Hussain, who have been jailed by the Birmingham Crown Court for a combined sentence of nearly 44 years. The Thakhar brothers are due to be sentenced on January 20.

Officials said that on

three occasions heroin and cocaine worth around £5 million was seized hidden in chicken shipments. The imports began in June 2016 and continued into 2017. After the first two seizures, the group set up a new company to try and cover their tracks. They would use genuine shipping companies to move loads from Rotterdam in the Netherlands to distribution hubs where they would be

collected by members of the group. The shipments were set up by Nazarat Hussain, who made regular trips to the Netherlands to meet suppliers. Following the interception of two chicken shipments and the arrests of two gang members, the gang switched tactics, using two corrupt baggage handlers to collect three kilos of high-purity cocaine off a flight from Brazil to

Heathrow. But NCA officials were watching their moves, and officers moved in to make arrests as one of the airport workers met Birmingham taxi driver Adnan Ahmed Malik just outside the airport. Three kilos of high-purity cocaine was found in a rucksack in the taxi. In June 2017 another shipment was dispatched from the Netherlands, but the drugs were removed by Dutch police, who were working with the NCA. When it arrived in Birmingham minus the drugs the group knew they had been busted. Wasim Hussain rang his main Dutch criminal contact in panic, telling him "throw your phone, throw everything, throw the SIM away." Wasim Hussain and Mohammed Shabir were arrested by NCA officers shortly afterwards. Colin Williams of the NCA said: "Throughout the course of this investigation, which has gone on for more than three years, we have systematically dismantled an organised crime group that was involved in the importation and distribution of class A drugs across the West Midlands". "As well as drugs, the gang also attempted to source firearms, presumably to be used to threaten others in support of their criminality".

## London Bridge attacker Usman Khan wanted 'first hand terror experience' in J-K

Usman Khan, 28, was convicted and jailed in 2012 for being part of a network of plots to assassinate Boris Johnson, who was then the mayor of London

(News Agencies) Usman Khan, the London Bridge attacker who was shot dead on Friday after killing two people, planned to set up a Madrasa and terror training camp near a mosque in Pakistan, and wanted to have 'first hand terrorist experience' in Jammu and Kashmir before returning to the UK. Details of Khan's plans and those of his accomplices were set out in a 2012 judgement at the Woolwich Crown Court, which jailed him for eight years. Khan, who wanted to set up the camp on land owned by his family and spent late teen years in Pakistan, was released on licence in December 2018, wearing an

electronic tag. Targets discussed by Khan and his accomplices based in London and Cardiff included Boris Johnson, who was then the mayor of London, the London Stock Exchange, and unleashing a Mumbai-style attack in the parliament complex in Westminster. Judge Alan Wilkie said: "The long, monitored, discussions of Usman Khan about the madrasa and his attitudes towards it and terrorism are highly eloquent of the seriousness of their purpose". "It is clear that this was a serious, long term, venture in terrorism the purpose of which was to establish and manage a terrorist training facility at the Madrasa,

to fundraise for its construction and operation by the use of various means, including fraud, and to recruit young British Muslims to go there and train, thereafter being available to commit terrorism abroad and at home". "Usman Khan and Nazam Hussain were to obtain that training and were, thereafter, to obtain first hand terrorist experience in Kashmir". Their plots were busted after intelligence agency MI5 tracked Khan and his accomplices before their arrest in December 2010. Releasing the identity of the London Bridge attacker early on Saturday, Neil Basu of Scotland Yard said: "We are now in a

position to confirm the identity of the suspect as 28-year-old Usman Khan (10.03.1991), who had been residing in the Staffordshire area". "This individual was known to authorities, having been convicted in 2012 for terrorism offences. He was released from prison in December 2018 on licence and clearly, a key line of enquiry now is to establish how he came to carry out this attack". David Anderson, independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, noted Khan's involvement in the plots in a report in July 2013. Based in Stoke-on-Trent, Khan was part of plots involving individuals in Cardiff and London.

# Pawar And Thackeray - The Super Chanakyas Of The Day

It proved to be a deadly duo - Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray today ensured that it was a short-stay government for the BJP in Maharashtra, establishing themselves at least for now as the Super Chanakyas of the protracted political crisis in the state, outwitting Amit Shah, the acknowledged expert in installing BJP governments in states where the mandate is fractured.

Uddhav Thackeray, 57 years old, often considered a political lightweight, is set to take over as Chief Minister, replacing Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP who logged about 80 hours in the office before his alliance with Sharad Pawar's nephew, Ajit, crashed this afternoon.

Considering the week he's had, it was natural for Thackeray to be tearful while hugging his son Aaditya in front of a portrait of his father Bal Thackeray, Sena founder, after Fadnavis said at a press conference at 3:30 pm that he was exiting office. The events unfolded quickly: the Supreme Court ruled with the Congress-Pawar-Sena combine for a floor test for Fadnavis to be held tomorrow; Sharad then met Ajit and persuaded him to ditch Team Fadnavis, making it clear that the bulk of their party's legislators remain loyal to him and not to Ajit. The message in any case had been delivered last evening when these legislators showed up with Pawar Senior at a five-star hotel where they joined lawmakers of the Congress and the Sena. Ajit, who had announced the party's support to Fadnavis and accepted the post of Deputy Minister, resigned. Meanwhile, the PM and Amit Shah met in Delhi and then conveyed to Fadnavis that he would have to step down rather than facing a guaranteed defeat in tomorrow's vote in the legislature.

The political comeback of the year 2019 is undoubtedly that of Sharad Pawar, 79, who will firmly hold the remote control of India's richest state, warring family baggage notwithstanding.

A roll call of the losers in my opinion includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who put his political capital on the line and tweeted support of the Fadnavis and Pawar government minutes after it was sworn in (he also used special powers to enable the end of President's Rule in Maharashtra without a cabinet meeting); Amit Shah, union Home Minister and BJP President who was outmaneuvered by Pawar; Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, who seemed to act as a rubber stamp of the centre (one could argue the same for President Ram Nath Kovind).

The BJP brazenly had Devendra Fadnavis sworn in at 7:50 am along with Ajit Pawar on Saturday morning. It appeared the game was up for the non-BJP combine. But Pawar steadily worked with Thackeray to maintain their unlikely alliance and to ensure nephew Ajit returned to do his bidding.

The Maharashtra outcome has for now bumped hard and bumped fast the political reputation of Modi and Shah, whose many successes have cloaked them in an image of invincibility. This is regularly buffed up by an obliging media. The opposition has gained India's richest state and will go in to the elections of Jharkhand and Delhi with an enhanced appetite and better credentials (everyone loves a winner). But our opposition is incapable of not losing the plot. The Congress party will now be part of a ruling alliance after barely bothering to fight the Maharashtra elections. It has turned into an accidental winner of a state where it still commands a vote share.

Expect the differences in the disparate alliance to pop up immediately. The three parties have vastly different ideologies; they stand united only by the will to keep out the BJP. It took the Sena, NCP and Congress so long to decide their common ground that the BJP nearly walked away with the prize. And let's not forget Karnataka, where the BJP managed to push out the Congress-HD Kumaraswamy government to make BS Yediyurappa the Chief Minister just four months ago.

Two things are important. The maximalist approach of Modi and Shah which has reduced all politics to an electoral zero sum game is resulting in actively alienating allies. The Sena broke its 30-year-old alliance with the BJP and chose ideologically incompatible and uncertain partners instead of Modi and Shah. The BJP is left with only two real allies - the Janata Dal (United) in Bihar and the Akali Dal in Punjab. And two, the anti-BJP combine has to find a way to function coherently even as investigative agencies are likely to be used to make the alliance wobble even more. Key to this will be the trust factor - so far, Thackeray has been wisely accepting much advice from Pawar. Sharad Pawar was served an Enforcement Directorate notice before the Maharashtra elections and that got the wildest politician in India to decide on the battle of his life. A picture of Pawar addressing a rally in pouring rain in Satara went viral and made for an emotional connect with voters. Pawar challenged Shah after the results by declaring "Amit Shah knows how to make governments without numbers. I want to see what he can do in Maharashtra." Pawar may take this round but not without a cost - the family battle for succession between nephew Ajit and his daughter Supriya Sule is now fully exposed.

Alliances like the one that will govern Maharashtra see shrinkage quickly. And Amit Shah never rests - nor does he take defeat lightly. Again, remember Karnataka. Maharashtra isn't checked off anyone's list just yet.

## London terrorist attack brings home a chilling reality

(Peter Bergen, CNN National Security Analyst)

(CNN)The terrorist attack in London on Friday -- in which two people were killed by what appears to be a lone suspect, according to British authorities -- is bound to raise questions about the UK Home Office's decision earlier this month to lower the terrorism threat level from "severe" to "substantial," the lowest point since August 2014.

The Joint Terrorism Analysis Center, which works closely with UK intelligence services, made the recommendation to lower the threat based on an evaluation of available intelligence along with an analysis of terrorist capabilities and intentions, according to the Home Office.

Surely the destruction of ISIS's physical caliphate in Syria and Iraq, the last vestiges of which were expunged in March, played a role in the assessment.

Indeed ISIS has seen a dramatic decline in the recruitment of "foreign fighters." In 2017, the US military said as many as 40,000 people from 120 countries including the UK had joined ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Today, that number has slowed to a trickle. Very few want to join the losing team. There has also been a sharp drop in terrorism deaths in Europe, from 150 in 2015 to 13 in 2018, according to European Union figures.

But even when the UK Home Office announced it was lowering the terrorism threat level, it issued a warning that there were "around 800 live" counter terrorism investigations across the nation and that 24 terrorist plots had been thwarted since March 2017. Suspect in deadly stabbing near London Bridge had been released from jail 'for terror offenses on license,' sources say

So far, the British police has declared Friday's attack on London Bridge "a terrorist incident." The suspect, who wore a fake suicide vest, stabbed several victims on London Bridge before he was killed by police. Authorities have not ascribed a specific motivation to the suspect. But the incident bears a close resemblance to an attack in 2017. ISIS-inspired terrorists wearing fake suicide vests plowed a van into pedestrians on London Bridge before launching a knife attack at the neighboring Borough Market, killing eight people before they were shot dead by police.

Just as school shooters learn from other school shooters, terrorists learn from other terrorists. While British police have not described Friday's attack as jihadist terrorism, the similarities between the two attacks are striking. On Friday evening, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the incident has been contained "to the best of our knowledge," suggesting that the terrorist involved was not part of a larger group. On Friday evening, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the incident has been contained "to the best of our knowledge," suggesting that the terrorist involved was not part of a larger group. Get our free weekly newsletter Friday's attack highlights the persistent threat of "lone actor" terrorists who are often radicalized online by ISIS or other militant groups. But their capabilities for lethal action generally do not match those of trained terrorists, like the ones behind the 2015 attacks in Paris, who killed 130 people after training in Syria.

ISIS' territorial defeat earlier this year marks a significant victory given its role as a training ground for terrorists to carry out attacks in the West. What remains are "lone actors" who are often radicalized online. Given what we saw in London on Friday, they too can be lethal -- and in many ways, much harder to detect.



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# How India can eliminate the burning of crop waste

If farmers see economic gains in switching to alternative crops, they will be encouraged. Policies must ensure this



The burning of stubble left in the fields of north India after the harvesting of paddy causes a severe spike in air pollution. To farmers, this is the cheapest way of clearing their fields in a short period before the wheat crop's sowing season starts. However, severe air pollution leads to a health emergency. There is panic and outrage, the odd/even scheme is introduced, and schools are shut. In international media, the key takeaway is to avoid India.

Banning the burning, and implementing the ban effectively, is the obvious

response. However, the use of coercive State power against farmers for enforcing such a ban is just not feasible. The state governments know this. Weaning farmers away from growing paddy would do away with the problem. This has been advocated for some years now to conserve groundwater, which is being depleted rapidly and would result in a water crisis. It would reduce state subsidies in providing free electricity for irrigating such a water-intensive crop, and procuring it at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). With lower

subsidies, farmers' incomes could rise with the appropriate cropping pattern. But so far, this has been too difficult to attempt for the political leadership, and illustrates how difficult it is to change any entrenched subsidy regime.

It is unrealistic to expect farmers to forego income for the sake of the environment. However, if they see economic gains in switching to alternative crops and patterns, they will come forward. There is a successful example of triggering fundamental transformation in farm practices. The ITC, known

for its e-choupal initiative, ran a Baareh Mahine Hariyali (greenery for the whole year) programme in four districts of Uttar Pradesh last year. It saw the doubling of incomes among farmers who adopted the full programme. Farmers who adopted the programme partially saw incomes going up from between 30% to 70%. This led to a public-private partnership between ITC and Niti Aayog to take the programme to 27 districts in eight states. Here, an attractive solution was the use of Happy Seeder, where the stubble is cut and left on the field to mulch enriching the soil, and the wheat seed is planted. The government has a scheme to provide a 50% subsidy for the purchase of Happy Seeders by farmers, and this goes up to 80% if, say, 15 farmers form a cooperative.

There are other ideas, too. With some treatment, the crop residue could be used as cattle feed. But this has to make the journey from concept to the market. The other idea is to convert crop

waste into biofuel for use in transport. A Mahindra group Company has tied up with Indraprastha Gas Limited for this. Stubble can also be converted into bales for which there is potentially a niche market. If other usages emerge, as it is for bamboo, the potential becomes much larger. All these possibilities must be pursued. But the crisis needs an immediate solution. This sense of urgency has led to the idea of giving the farmer additional cash along with the MSP if the paddy waste is not burnt, to compensate him for the extra cost of not burning it. The subsidy required for full compensation is far too high.

There are solutions which will not require any subsidy. The crop waste can be converted into briquettes, which work as a substitute for coal. The National Thermal Power Corporation has successfully blended these with coal, to the extent of 10% in their thermal plants. The market-discovered price through procurement of

briquettes has not added to the cost of power. This, then, is a market-based solution that has worked. To scale it up to solve the problem fully over the next two to three years, it must be announced that the briquettes made from crop residue would be purchased at an attractive price for use in the thermal plants in north India. This price signal would drive market forces to deliver. Briquette-making plants, which do not cost much, would buy the crop waste from farmers at a price which earns them a reasonable amount after covering the cost of collecting the stubble and delivering it. Briquettes made would be sold to thermal plants, and it will give returns on investment. This will eliminate the burning of the crop waste in the next two to three years. Policies would need to be continuously calibrated to support the best outcome for farmers as well as the environment, factoring in technological progress and behavioural changes.

Ajay Shankar

## What China must learn from the recent elections

Hong Kong's dissent is evident. Xi Jinping must now choose a path of conciliation

Beijing now knows what Hong Kong locals really think of its heavy-handed rule. Unfortunately, China is unlikely to draw the right lessons from the defeat of its candidates in the recently held district council elections. Hong Kong's district councils handle local services, and their elections are generally ignored. Thanks to the unprecedented urban unrest in Hong Kong in the past six months, the present elections immediately became a contest between the Beijing-backed government and the protest movement. The latter won all but one of the 18 district councils and about 60% of the popular vote. This will have repercussions higher up: Nearly a tenth of Hong Kong's legislative council and a tenth of the electors



who choose the executive are district councillors. Beijing reportedly expected the pro-government candidates to win. Both the Hong Kong

and Chinese governments believed that locals would show their displeasure at the months of disruption, tear gas and violence. The voters did — but it was the

government which was at the receiving end. Beijing's claims that the protestors represented a small fringe group backed by foreign governments today ring

hollow. The question is what lesson China's leadership will take from the elections. Unfortunately, given the general tenor of the Xi

Jinping regime, wielding batons harder, firing more tear gas and making a larger number of arrests is the most likely path. Until now, China has tended to keep its guns holstered, in part because of the international repercussions, but also because Hong Kong is the gateway for over 60% of the capital that goes in and out of the country. There is a slender hope that Beijing may decide to choose the path of conciliation. This would mean easing Hong Kong's social inequities, opening the closed shop of its ruling plutocracy, and granting the city-state greater self-rule. On the day the district council elections were held, Hong Kong dissent was expressed peacefully through banners and speeches. Beijing should take note.

# How the Constitution was betrayed

In Maharashtra, there was a total breakdown of constitutional morality. All actors contributed to it



One of the fundamental features that distinguishes a society based on the rule of law from one ruled by gangs of robber barons is an emphasis on due process. Political power is not acquired in a free-for-all, in which the strongest party wins, but through a set of fair procedures. The document that sets out these procedures is the Constitution. However, no Constitution can cover every eventuality. A large part of the Constitution is unwritten. We call these “constitutional conventions” — norms and rules of behaviour that guide the conduct of powerful political players.

While the written Constitution governs and limits the actions of the government, constitutional conventions play an important role when it comes to the conduct of lawmakers, high constitutional functionaries, and that ambiguous time between the results of elections and the formation of the government. On most occasions, conventions are not required. If, for example, there is a clear mandate from the electorate in a state election, there is no problem. However, it is in more ambiguous times — of fractured mandates and fractious coalitions — that conventions come to the fore. But constitutional conventions are also fragile. Their continued existence relies upon the fact that constitutional functionaries and political actors act in good faith, and do not subordinate process to naked power play. And once constitutional conventions are broken, by their very nature, one breach perpetuates another.

The events in Maharashtra reflect a near-complete breakdown of constitutional conventions; a sordid set of events to which every player involved has contributed. After a fractured mandate, in which no single party claimed majority, differences emerged between the pre-election combine of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shiv Sena (which together had

a majority). Eventually, the Sena refused to support the BJP — which was the single-largest party — and the BJP, therefore, was unable to form the government. At this point, the correct course of action would have been for fresh elections to be called, as no party — or pre-election alliance — was in a position to secure a majority. However, the Sena was open to the idea of joining up with the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the other two parties in the fray. This raised serious issues of political morality, as the BJP-Sena and Congress-NCP combines had presented themselves to the

voters, and sought votes, as allies and opponents respectively. Be that as it may, the governor of the state invited the Sena and the NCP to attempt government formation — but inexplicably, reduced the time allotted to them. President’s rule was declared thereafter.

It is then that the breach of constitutional conventions grew more serious. On Friday evening, it was announced that the new Sena-NCP-Congress combine had reached an agreement. The next morning, at 5:47 AM, President’s rule in the state was revoked, and a BJP-NCP government was sworn in a few hours later. Revocation was done at the behest of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), which bypassed regular procedures (consultation with the Cabinet) by relying upon a Business Rule that was only meant to be used in an “emergency”. And the governor swore in the new government on the strength of a letter produced by Ajit Pawar — the then leader of the NCP legislative party, claiming that he had the support of all the NCP

Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs). However, both the veracity of the letter, and the extent of support for Ajit Pawar, were contested by the Sena-NCP-Congress combine, which immediately approached the Supreme Court for relief. In the meantime, a familiar drama played out, with prospective MLAs being taken to hotels to prevent “horse trading”.

It is, therefore, clear that whoever finally “wins” the political game, constitutional conventions have lost. They lost when electoral enemies switched sides, betraying the voters; they lost when the governor acted arbitrarily in allocating time to the claimants to prove their majority; they lost when the PMO bypassed due process to have President’s rule revoked in the early hours of the morning, which the President approved; and they lost when the governor equally hurriedly swore in the new government without objectively convincing himself of the numbers. As always, it was left to the Supreme Court to sort

out the mess. Sorting out political messes is not the court’s task and nor should it be; but in the circumstances — after a somewhat disappointing delay — the court ruled that a floor test must be conducted on November 27 (reducing by three days the time that the governor had given). The court’s order followed a line of precedent, and is a justified one. While the court cannot force political actors to follow constitutional conventions, it can at least minimise the scope for their flouting. An immediate floor test — that reduces the possibility of horse-trading — is the only solution that allows the court to tread a fine line between policing the democratic process, and taking over governance altogether. Unsurprisingly, the judgment soon triggered the resignation of Fadnavis, as it became clear that the numbers were not there — and perhaps never had been. But it is also clear that if the breakdown of constitutional conventions continues at this rate, very soon, the situation will be beyond even the court’s power to remedy.

**Gautam Bhatia**

## A lesson for the BJP in Maharashtra

It acted unwisely, and lost the moral high ground and power

With Devendra Fadnavis’ resignation as the Maharashtra chief minister (CM) on Tuesday afternoon, following the resignation of his deputy CM Ajit Pawar and the Supreme Court’s order to hold a floor test by Wednesday, a sordid political chapter in the state has drawn to an end. The episode has lessons for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) both at the Centre and in the state, as well as for Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari.

When BJP’s oldest ally, the Shiv Sena, walked away from the alliance, the BJP rightly told the governor it did not have the numbers to form the government and stayed away as the other parties sought to construct an alliance. At that point, the BJP had the moral high ground. It could argue that it was the single largest party, yet its pre-poll partner had betrayed the mandate. But over the past week, as the Sena, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Congress came close to an opportunistic pact, the BJP jumped right back in the game. Citing the support of Ajit Pawar,

then the NCP’s legislative party leader, it staked claim to form the government, with an only-too-eager Mr Koshiyari swearing in Mr Fadnavis and Mr Pawar on Saturday morning. As it became clear that Ajit Pawar was acting unilaterally, and did not have the sanction of his uncle, NCP’s chief, Sharad Pawar, the arithmetic seemed ranged against the BJP, eventually leading to Mr Fadnavis’ resignation.

The BJP now comes across as having acted unwisely. It no longer has the moral high ground — for it was willing to ally with a leader who it had relentlessly accused of corruption, merely for the sake of power. It showed haste in forming the government, because without Sharad Pawar, it would always have been difficult to get the numbers. Mr Koshiyari has come across as willing to act on behalf of the BJP, rather than as an independent constitutional functionary, by hastily swearing in the government. The BJP government at the Centre, too, bypassed process in recommending the revocation of President’s rule without holding



a Cabinet meeting, in the early hours of the morning. All this did not help, as Mr Fadnavis did not have the numbers, much like BS Yeddyurappa when he staked claim following the Karnataka elections in 2018, only to resign before the floor test. To be sure,

the Sena-NCP-Congress alliance represents the coming together of disparate partners, and it is not clear if it will deliver coherent governance or be stable. But it is the BJP which has the most to learn from the failure in Maharashtra.

# The peril of split verdicts

The shifting alliances, the incongruity between pre-poll rhetoric and post-poll tactics, the defections, the pursuit of narrow self-interest, and the violations of process do not paint a pretty picture

When Maharashtra, and the rest of the country, slept on Friday night, it appeared certain that Uddhav Thackeray of the Shiv Sena would become the state's next chief minister (CM). He, it seemed then, had the clear support of both the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and the Congress, which had come around after initial ambivalence.

When Maharashtra, and the rest of the country, woke up on Saturday morning, the state had a new CM. But it wasn't Thackeray. The last CM, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s Devendra Fadnavis, was back in power. Ajit Pawar, who was, till Saturday, the official leader of the NCP legislative party (and also happens to be the party patriarch Sharad Pawar's nephew) was the new deputy CM.

From the unlikely Sena-

NCP-Congress alliance within inches of grabbing power, Maharashtra suddenly appeared to have an equally unlikely BJP-NCP alliance saddled in power. The stunning twist in the tale — which no one saw coming, and perhaps less than a dozen individuals had an inkling of — shook the entire polity. But the story did not end there, and it continues to remain fluid.

The BJP claims that all 54 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of the NCP are backing the government, and it will comfortably cross the majority mark. Sharad Pawar claims that Ajit Pawar acted on his own; there are only 10-11 MLAs who have moved and that some of them are moving back; Fadnavis will fail to prove his majority on the floor of the house; and the NCP-Sena-Congress alliance will stay intact. The

Congress, which was initially suspicious of Sharad Pawar on Saturday morning, came around to giving him the benefit of doubt by the evening and is banking on him to turn the political wheels around once again.

Beyond the intrigue, the drama, and the family wars, the entire episode throws up several issues about the larger practice of Indian democracy.

The first issue is about the nature of a mandate. In recent years, voters in many states have decided to give a clear mandate to one party or leader. When that happens, there is a clear winner, the CM is strong, and the government is stable. But decisive verdicts have often created a situation where the winner becomes excessively strong and is perceived as functioning in an authoritarian manner. This is true of West Bengal

under Mamata Banerjee, Uttar Pradesh under Yogi Adityanath, or even Tamil Nadu under the late Jayalalithaa. At the same time, when voters have chosen to give fragmented verdicts, parties have had no choice but to work together in the spirit of accommodation. But this has generated political instability, encouraged horse-trading, weakened governance, and left the state more corrupt. This is, most recently, true of Karnataka.

One could argue that in Maharashtra, politically speaking, the clear verdict was in favour of the National Democratic Alliance (the BJP and the Sena together had a majority, and they did have a pre-poll alliance), but the rift between the two, left the door open for instability in a hung assembly. So here is the dilemma. Exceptionally strong verdicts potentially



lead to weakening of democracy, fragmented verdicts potentially lead to instability. What is happening in India's most important economic centre today is the latter.

The second issue is the role of ideology and interests in political decision-making. Maharashtra has shown, in recent weeks, the hollowness of claims of ideological commitment on both sides. This is ironical, for the government at the centre is among the most ideologically committed India has had in recent times, and the Opposition leaves no opportunity to claim it is fighting an ideological battle. But despite being tied together by Hindutva, the Sena left the BJP. Despite being a "secular formations", the NCP and the Congress conveniently backed the

Sena. Despite having accused the NCP in general, and Ajit Pawar in particular, of large-scale corruption, the BJP had no issues stitching an alliance with him and making him the deputy CM. No side comes out looking clean from the political churn. And unfortunately, things aren't settled yet.

But if ideology becomes secondary, it is interests, incentives and motivations which provide the primary explanation for actions. Here is what brought Uddhav Thackeray-Sharad Pawar-Sonia Gandhi together. The Sena feared being marginalised under the shadow of the BJP and could not resist the temptation to install its own CM; Sharad Pawar saw an opportunity to return to power, and he was unhappy at the BJP's

(Contd on page 22)

When it eventually did, it was in a dramatic overnight operation which brought all key players under a cloud of suspicion — Governor BS Koshiyari for the haste he demonstrated in the wee hours of Saturday, 23 November morning in administering the oath of office, the Prime Minister's Office for recommending the revocation of President's Rule at an unearthly hour by resorting to emergency procedures, chief minister and BJP's blue-eyed boy Devendra Fadnavis, and his surprise deputy from Nationalist Congress Party, Ajit Pawar, for setting aside serious differences and the latter's corruption charges.

Its most basic aspects were unclear: Did Governor Koshiyari verify the numbers claimed by Fadnavis-Pawar? How did they reach the majority mark of 145 in the 288-member Assembly with only 105 MLAs of BJP? On what basis did Ajit

## Has Shah's 'Chanakya Niti' Met its Match in Pawar and Thackeray?

It took a month after the Maharashtra Assembly election results were declared, on 24 October, for the state to have its new government.



Pawar promise 54 NCP legislators to Fadnavis given that nearly 50 of them demonstrated support to the NCP and its boss Sharad Pawar within hours? What authority could such a stealthily installed government have? Why, indeed, was stealth and skulduggery needed at all? What was the compelling factor for PM

Narendra Modi to use Rule 12 of the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules which are invoked in "extreme urgency of unforeseen contingency" to recommend revocation of the President's Rule? Why did President Kovind revoke it at 5:47 am, an unnatural hour for constitutional business by any

standards? Why was the swearing-in kept such a top secret?

The answers have been blowing in the wind for months now.

From Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Bihar to Goa and Karnataka, its single-minded, blind and amoral pursuit of power was evident. But Maharashtra may have served up a

match — a tough one from the looks of it.

The BJP's methods included using its unparalleled resources, impudence to set government agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation on its targeted Opposition leaders, and relying on its reach in large sections of

the media to craft a positive narrative.

Some senior journalists breathlessly anointed party president Amit Shah as "Chanakya" and his questionable methods as "Chanakya Niti", termed the breaking up other parties and trading of MLAs as "masterstrokes", and called the upstaging of state governments to grab power a "coup". It isn't that other parties like the Congress had not used similar methods earlier but the BJP has made it the norm rather than the exception. It isn't that the BJP did not try these methods in Maharashtra; they didn't work as successfully till Saturday, 23 November, as they did in other states. Two people, polar opposites and unlikely companions, stood between the BJP and power: NCP's Sharad Pawar, who made this election one of prestige after Fadnavis broke his party pre-election and wrote him off,

(Contd on page 22)

## Ajit Pawar reached out with support, says Devendra Fadnavis; BJP regrets the choice

Prodded about the unlikely alliance with Ajit Pawar who he would attack, Fadnavis said Ajit Pawar had initiated the discussion with the BJP to extend support to a Fadnavis-led government.



(News Agencies) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis handed over his resignation to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Tuesday evening, a sharp contrast to the quiet oath ceremony held at Raj Bhavan less than 80 hours earlier that had marked the beginning of his short-lived second term. Fadnavis, who had staked claim on the back of Nationalist

Congress Party (NCP) group leader Ajit Pawar's support, stepped down hours after Pawar drove down to his official residence on Tuesday morning and handed over his resignation letter. "Ajit Pawar met me in the morning today and said that for some reason, I cannot stay in this alliance, I have to resign. He has resigned. Because

of his resignation, we do not have the majority," Fadnavis told a crowded Press conference in state capital Mumbai. Fadnavis had convened the press conference, the first of his second term, to announce his resignation.

Fadnavis was sworn-in as chief minister early on Saturday morning after the Centre revoked President's rule in an overnight move and took Fadnavis' claim that he had the numbers at its face value. "We decided to form the government because we thought that the entire NCP group will back us," Fadnavis explained. Prodded about the unlikely alliance with Ajit Pawar who he attacked, Fadnavis said Ajit Pawar had initiated the

discussion with the BJP to extend support to a Fadnavis-led government. "The government was formed as Ajit Pawar gave a letter of support of all 54 of his party MLAs," said Fadnavis. The BJP's official line, which was reflected in its letter to stake claim as well, was that the Nationalist Congress Party was its coalition partner and all the NCP's 54 legislators would support Fadnavis. That this wasn't the case became clear soon after when NCP boss Sharad Pawar removed his nephew Ajit Pawar from the party's legislature party chief's post. Two senior BJP leaders, however, said the deal with Pawar was that he would manage the support of at least 34 NCP

lawmakers. But it was becoming increasingly clear that NCP chief Sharad Pawar had managed to avoid a split in his party. It was a mistake, the two BJP leaders said. The first was to rely on Ajit Pawar and think that he could get the better than his uncle Sharad Pawar. "Because our entire bid was dependent on him getting at least 27 MLAs. We could have got a maximum of 20 Independent MLAs but breaking away Congress or Shiv Sena MLAs within such a short time became impossible," one of the two BJP leaders mentioned above said. The BJP next rested its hopes for the government's survival on

certain technicalities that sought to use Pawar's position as leader of his group to force his legislators to support Fadnavis or create confusion. As a group leader Pawar could have issued a whip to party MLAs to vote as per his bidding. However, the NCP checkmated this move by removing Pawar, appointing state chief Jayant Patil in his place and informing this change to both the governor as well as the Speaker's office. The BJP also intended to first get the Speaker elected to conduct the floor test and opt for a secret ballot as mandated in the Maharashtra legislature's rules to win the trust vote

## Maharashtra's political theatre is 'damaging' Indian politics

Maharashtra's chief minister, Devendra Fadnavis, has resigned just after three days in power. His departure came hours after India's Supreme Court ordered him to take a vote of confidence on Wednesday. What does the crisis tell us about Indian politics?

(Insider Bureau) British publisher Ernest Benn once said politics was the "art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying unsuitable remedies". Going by what is happening in Maharashtra, Benn's biting aphorism could apply both to the politics and institutions in the world's biggest democracy. A fractious impasse over forming a government after closely-fought state

elections in India's richest state - and home to Mumbai, its financial capital - has now snowballed into an unsavoury spectacle of competitive politics, sometimes bordering on the absurd. The elections to the 288-seat state assembly were not unexceptional. The vote had split four ways. Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP emerged as the single largest party (105 seats); and its long-time ally, Shiv Sena, (56

seats) came in as the second largest. The two main opposition parties - the regional Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress - picked up less than 100 seats between them. Clearly, the BJP-Sena were comfortably expected to form the government. Except, things unravelled very quickly and the Sena walked out of the alliance after fighting over the spoils of power. What followed was a sensational counter-

alliance against the BJP making a power bid, a split in an influential political family, alleged defections and attempts to poach rival lawmakers, corralled in resorts by their skittish parties. An early morning political coup followed by a hasty swearing in of a BJP-led government and appeals in the Supreme Court for a speedy vote of confidence completed this political soap opera. News networks who have reduced politics to B o l l y w o o d - l i k e



entertainment are gleefully crowing that the "movie isn't finished yet". Political alliances breaking up after elections is not uncommon. Post-election alliances to gain power are often time consuming. A week is a long time in politics, and a month - as in the case of Maharashtra - more so, and the impatience of the party with most seats in trying to cobble together a governing alliance is also not unknown. What, many believe, is surprising this time is the way the governor of a state - whose job is to designate the chief minister - hastily swore in the BJP with a new-found ally, who had defected from the opposition camp. (The government was sworn in early on Saturday

morning.) Political scientist Suhas Palshikar says the first "institution to fall was the governor's office". A landmark 1994 judgement by the top court makes it very clear that the majority of a government is subject to a floor test in the house, and the governor has no role in such a scenario. "Why within the early hours of the morning was that claim [by the BJP] accepted and acted upon? To complete the circle of institutional abdication, the [supreme] court, instead of following the precedent of imposing a stiff deadline for a floor test, chose to defer the hearing from Sunday to Monday to Tuesday," says Dr Palshikar. The implication is all this obviously benefitted the BJP, which rules India.

## India pollution: Supreme Court says world 'laughing' at smog issues

(Insider Bureau) India's Supreme Court has said the world is "laughing at India" over its air pollution issues. The court came down heavily on federal and state governments over what it sees as a failure to curb pollution levels. On Monday, one judge said: "Get explosives in 15 bags and kill them in one go. Why should people suffer this?" Thick pollution has blanketed parts of northern India for weeks, with Delhi recording "hazardous" air quality levels. On Monday, the air quality index figures in Delhi reached 339. A good level is considered anything between zero and 50. Levels are expected

to dip with rainfall predicted to hit the capital over the coming days. The judges said it held the federal and



local governments responsible for failing to control crop burning by farmers in Delhi and neighbouring states. At this time of year, farmers tend to burn crop stubble to clear

their fields, contributing to the high pollution levels. Vehicle fumes, as well as construction and industrial emissions, have also contributed to the smog over the past month. The court said the lifespan of millions of people had been shortened and that people in Delhi and the surrounding region are "suffocating" due to pollution. It called on Delhi's government to come up with a plan to install air purifying towers across the city within 10 days. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says a third of deaths from lung cancer and heart disease are due to air pollution.

# 'Indian food is terrible' tweet sparks hot debate about racism

A tweet from a US academic calling Indian food "terrible" has sparked a hot debate about cultural intolerance and racism in international cuisine.



(News Agencies) "Indian food is terrible and we pretend it isn't," said international affairs professor Tom Nichols. Critics called his comment a tasteless generalisation. The remark led to a wider discussion of the

immigrant experience and how many in the US have experienced racism in relation to food.

Mr Nichols - who teaches at the US Naval War College in Rhode Island - posted his opinion after another Twitter user had

asked for "controversial food opinions".

Critics were quick to respond. "Do you not have taste buds?" asked celebrity chef Padma Lakshmi.

"Imagine going through life this flavourless," wrote another commenter.

Preet Bharara, a former prosecutor from New York, tweeted: "Tom, I'll take you to a place. We need to bring the country together. #ButterChickenSummit." Mr Nichols' initial tweet led to a wider discussion about the way food plays into the immigrant experience.

Some noted that in the US, international food - sometimes called "ethnic food" - is often marketed as "cheap eats". Therefore many people are more familiar with pared-down, "Americanised" street dishes that lack authentic ingredients. "There is no 'Indian' food," wrote one commenter. "Also there is no curry flavour. There is no chai tea," she added, referring to the fact that chai is simply a word meaning "tea" in Hindi, and "curry" is a style of dish, rather than a flavouring. Others pointed out how

smell and flavour have long been prevalent in racist comments towards minorities, and accused Mr Nichols of intolerance.

First-generation American Saira Rao wrote: "Having white people trash Indian food is extremely triggering as an Indian who has been told that I smell weird, that my food smells weird and that Indians [expletive] on the street which is why everything we are smells bad." As the story drew attention in Indian media, the hashtag #MyFavoriteIndianFood started trending. US

presidential candidate Kamala Harris, whose mother's family hails from south India, shared a teaser for a cooking video with comedian Mindy Kaling using the hashtag. But some foodies dismissed the row outright saying simply: "I see someone on twitter has racist views on Indian food. Well, more for me then." Others took similar issue with a "controversial food" tweet from ABC senior reporter Terry Moran, who said: "Chinese food is tired. It's boring, gloppy, over-salted and utterly forgettable."

## Chaayos cafe: Indian cafe's facial recognition use sparks anger

(News Agencies) Indians have expressed concern after it emerged that a popular cafe chain - Chaayos - is using facial recognition software to bill customers. Nikhil Pahwa, the editor of media watchdog MediaNama, posted a video on Twitter after he said staff took his picture to bill him without consent.

"This is unnecessarily intrusive and there was no opt-out option, which is problematic," Mr Pahwa told the BBC. Chaayos defended its system, saying it was committed to protecting customers. "We are extremely conscious about our customer's data security and privacy," the company said in a statement to the BBC. The chain also said that customers could choose to opt out of using the facial recognition feature and instead use their phone numbers to pay bills.

However, Mr Pahwa told the BBC that the facial recognition system was a mandatory requirement for joining its loyalty programme. He added that his picture had been taken despite the fact he was not a part of it.

More worryingly, according to Mr Pahwa, Chaayos' terms and conditions - also seen by the BBC - says that customers "should not expect that personal information should always remain private".

The terms also say that by joining the loyalty programme, users authorise it to "disclose information to government authorities or competent authorities or credit bureaus or third persons".

However, in its statement, Chaayos said "there is no third party sharing of the data for any purpose. And Chaayos does not use or process this information for any other purpose". Mr Pahwa said his worry was that "customers are not made aware of the implications of giving out this data, so this is not informed consent."

## Activist who visited Sabarimala in Jan attacked with chili powder on way to shrine

*Bindu Ammini and Trupti Desai had come at the Kochi Police commissioner's office to seek security for their visit to the Sabarimala temple in Pathanamthitta district.*

(News Agencies) Bindu Ammini, one of the two women who had managed to enter Kerala's Sabarimala temple in January, was on Monday attacked with chili powder at the police commissioner's office in Kochi while she was on her way to the hilltop shrine along with rights activist Trupti Desai.

Bindu Ammini and Trupti Desai had come at the Kochi Police commissioner's office to seek security for their visit to the Sabarimala temple in Pathanamthitta district.

"Protesters tried to manhandle me," claimed Bindu as protesters swirled outside the Kochi Police commissioner's office.

Police have asked Trupti Desai to go back but she sought a written request. A senior police official, who didn't wish to be identified, said she is likely to be sent back to Pune in an evening flight. Protesters have vowed to block their entry to the hilltop shrine after Desai arrived at Kochi airport in the morning.

"There is no stay on the 2018 verdict which allowed women of all ages to worship at the temple," the Bhumata Brigade leader said earlier. "Today is the 70th Constitution day and an ideal day to break the age-old



taboo. If anyone blocks us, we will move court with a contempt plea. I already sent a communique to the state CM and DGP regarding my trip. It is their duty to provide protection to us," she said.

The Left-run government in Kerala has said it would not provide protection to women in traditionally-barred age group unless they get a court order. The Supreme Court lifted the centuries-old ban on female worshippers of menstruating age last year but it recently decided to refer review pleas against its judgement to a larger bench following which the state government has adopted a cautious approach and made it clear Sabarimala was not a place for activism. Police had earlier refused to give security cover to controversial activist Rehana Fathima to enter the

Lord Ayyappa temple in Sabarimala. Fathima, who is in her 30s, had made an attempt to enter the hill shrine in October last year with police protection but was forced to return in the wake of massive protests by devotees.

Trupti Desai said she will resort to a fast if she is not allowed to go up and force the police to give a written reply stating why she was blocked. There are no protests but reports suggest many workers of the Sabarimala Karma Samiti are waiting to block her from going ahead. Police are on alert and unlikely to allow them to trek to the temple. "There is no change in our stance. Pilgrims will block them," said Hindu Aikya Vedi leader RV Babu. He also asked the police not to repeat last year's incidents. "We are not aware of her trip. Let the police

and government decide it. We still feel that there is some lack of some clarity in the last verdict," said Travancore Devasom Board (TDB) president N Vasu. The TDB runs the hill temple. Police fear protest in Nilakkal and Pambha base camps as protesters slowly assembled in many areas.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has been supporting protesters, activists and others are trying to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere of the temple, said BJP. "We will not allow them to break age-old customs," said party leader Padmakumar. The Supreme Court's judgment in September 2018 upheld the right to equality of worship and allowed the entry of all women to the shrine, triggering widespread protests in Kerala. Traditionalists contend that the entry of female worshippers of childbearing age into the sanctum sanctorum in Sabarimala is sacrilege because Lord Ayyappa, the presiding deity, is celibate. Bindu Ammini and her friend Kanakdurga were the two women who had succeeded in praying inside the inner sanctum under police protection since the court's order last September even as about a dozen attempted to do so.



# India apprises US, others in UNSC of Pakistan conspiracy to embarrass Delhi

In the past two months, Pakistan, with the help of China has submitted proposals to designate six Indians as global terrorists.



(News Agencies) India has informed the US and its other friends in the UN Security Council (UNSC) about blatant attempts by Pakistan with the help of its all-weather ally China to, first, accuse Indian expats working in Afghanistan of terror crimes and then get them listed as global terrorists by the 1267 sanctions committee, back at India. Expats diplomats and officials in intelligence agencies said.

To date, the 1267 committee has listed 130 Pakistanis and 25 entities based in that country for their role in global terror. Following the May listing of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed's Masood Azhar, despite Pakistan's best efforts to prevent it, the country has been desperately trying to get back at India. Expats working on reconstruction projects in war-ravaged

Afghanistan are a soft target.

In the past two months, Pakistan, with the help of China has submitted proposals to designate six Indians as global terrorists. The most recent additions are Raghavchari Parthasarthy and B. Sudhakar Pediredla, both working as storekeepers for KEC International at Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan, the officials cited in the first instance added on condition of anonymity. Fearing the worst, Parthasarthy has been brought back to India but Sudhakar is yet to be traced. The company is involved in laying transmission lines and both men belong to Telangana.

While the US has blocked two proposals supported by China, four more Indian proposals are pending before the 1267 committee. The two blocked ones concern Venumadhav Dongara and Ajoy Mistry; the two others pending before the committee are Appaji Angara and Gobinda Patnaik Duggivalasa. And almost all of them have been accused of involvement in a terror attack in Peshawar. Both Angara and Duggivalasa are back in India, according to the officials. All of those brought back were evacuated, some overnight, by India from Kabul.

UN watchers say that separately, Pakistan is trying to get the terror lists

involving its nationals and entities reduced by citing them as killed or neutralized in drone attacks or counter-insurgency operations. At the same time, it is targeting India to show that its neighbour is no different when it comes to global terror. But apparently the play is not so simple.

Counter-terror operatives believe that this is a Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) ploy to weed out those who it believes are working for Indian security agencies in Afghanistan. A Pakistan controlled Afghanistan (via the Taliban) is also in the interest of Beijing as it will give stability to the Middle Kingdom's long

term strategic plans to reach Arabian Sea and mouth of Persian Gulf via the Karakoram Highway. According to Indian diplomats, the US and other allies in UNSC are watching the latest Pakistani game unfold in the 1267 and are expected to call out Islamabad for this blatant mischief. What is of larger concern is the backing of China for these proposals after US and France made it agree to the designation of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as terrorist by the 1267 committee last May 1. A terminally ill Azhar has now handed over the reins of the Sunni terrorist group to his younger brother Mufti Rauf Asghar.

## Devendra Fadnavis 1st CM in Maharashtra with shortest 2nd tenure

Ajit Pawar finally backed out of the alliance on Tuesday, after the Supreme Court ordered a floor test on Wednesday; the rest of his party MLAs had re-grouped under his uncle NCP chief Sharad Pawar, a day earlier.



(News Agencies) Devendra Fadnavis is likely to go down in the annals of Maharashtra history as the Chief Minister with the shortest second tenure, a mere three days. The BJP-led government helmed by Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar as his deputy was sworn in on Saturday morning Ajit Pawar finally backed out of the alliance on

Tuesday, after the Supreme Court ordered a floor test on Wednesday; the rest of his party MLAs had re-grouped under his uncle NCP chief Sharad Pawar, a day earlier.

"After the court verdict came this morning, Ajit Pawar met me and told me that for some reason he cannot continue in this government and he resigned.

After his resignation we do not have the numbers any more..We will be an efficient opposition," Fadnavis said in a media briefing before he headed to the Raj Bhavan to tender his resignation. "There has been no other government with such a short tenure in Maharashtra. In fact there has been no other instance where the Supreme

Court has had to intervene with guidelines on how to conduct a floor test (in the state). We have so far had stable governments though Chief Ministers have been changed as per party diktats," said Anant Kalse, former principal secretary of the Maharashtra Legislature Secretariat. The Congress' caretaker CM, P K Sawant served in the top job only for nine days in 1964, post the death of the incumbent CM Marotrao Kannamwar. The last time Maharashtra witnessed a similar potboiler was in 1978, and that too involved Sharad Pawar. "In 1978, Sharad Pawar split the Congress to form the government with the Janata Party. But, even that government lasted two years," said Prakash Pawar, a political analyst. Unlike his nephew, Sharad Pawar, proved his majority on the floor of the house in July 1978 to emerge as the state's youngest Chief Minister. The Progressive Democratic Front government led by him lasted until February 1980.

## I&B plans law to register news websites with RNI

(News Agencies) The Union Information and Broadcasting ministry is planning to bring in a legislation that will make it mandatory for news websites to get themselves registered with the Registrar of Newspapers of India (RNI).

According to a draft of the "Registration of Press and Periodicals (RPP)" Bill 2019 — put up by the I&B ministry on its website — "publishers of news on digital media shall register themselves with the Registrar of Newspapers of India in such manner and giving such particulars as may be prescribed".

The bill does not specify if it will require websites of newspapers registered with RNI to be registered separately. It defines "news on digital media" in a broad manner as any news content that "can be transmitted over the internet, computer or mobile networks and includes text, audio, video and graphics". Among other provisions, the act mandates that there will be a Press Registrar General. The Press Registrar General would be empowered to obtain annual statements from a printer and a periodical to verify the circulation figures and also to revise, revoke or suspend registration of a periodical.

The draft bill also provides for an Appellate Board. It would be called the Press and Registration Appellate Board, which will have the chairman of the Press Council of India as one of its members. There will be another member who would be nominated by the Press Council of India from among its members.

# 'Don't want to get between India-China power struggle': Sri Lanka president

**Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who is considered pro-China, said he wanted Sri Lanka to be a "neutral country" and work with all the countries.**

(News Agencies) Sri Lanka will work with India and it won't do anything that will harm its interests, newly elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has said ahead of his visit to New Delhi later this week.

Rajapaksa, who is considered pro-China, said he wanted Sri Lanka to be a "neutral country" and work with all the countries.

"We will work with India as a friendly country and won't do anything that will harm India's interests," said Rajapaksa, who will travel to New Delhi on November 29 on his first official trip abroad as Sri Lankan President.

"We want to be a neutral country," Rajapaksa, who was sworn in as Sri

Lanka's president last week, told Nitin Gokhale of BharatShakti.in and Strategic News International in an interview.

"We don't want to get in between the power struggles of superpowers... We are so small and we can't survive to get into this balancing acts," he said.

Rajapaksa said he wanted to work very closely with both India and China.

"We want to work with all the countries and we don't want to do anything which will harm any other country for that matter, we understand the importance of Indian concerns, so we cant engage in any activity which will threaten the security of India," he added.

Noting that the Indian

Ocean is an important place and plays an important role in the present day geopolitics, he said Sri Lanka was placed in a very strategic location and all the sea lanes are passing close to the country from east to west.

"So, these lanes should be free and no country should control these sea lanes," he said.

Asserting that Sri Lanka's involvement with China during the presidency of his elder brother Mahinda (from 2005-2015) was "purely commercial", he said, "I invite India, Singapore, Japan and Australia to come and invest here. Don't allow only China to invest." He vowed to create an investment friendly environment

in Sri Lanka.

Rajapaksa also said that giving away the Hambantota port to China on a 99-year lease was a mistake by the previous government headed by President Maithripala Sirisena.

"The deal has to be renegotiated," he said. "Giving a small loan for investment is a different thing but giving a strategic important economic harbour is not acceptable. That we should have controlled." China, which acquired Sri Lanka's Hambantota port in 2017 as a debt swap, has been ramping up its ties with the island nation and expanded its naval presence in the Indian Ocean with an estab-



lished logistics base in Djibouti.

"We want investments to help us but we will not do anything to get involved in military and geo-political rivalry," Rajapaksa said.

On allegations of him being "authoritarian" and "racist", the president said, "It's a wrong perception created during the civil war with the LTTE." "I am a disciplined person but that doesn't mean I am racist," he added.

The two brothers --

Mahinda and Gotabhaya -- led a decisive campaign that helped end the island nation's three decade-long civil war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

However, the brother-duo were accused of condoning sexual violence and extrajudicial killings allegedly by Lankan security forces during the civil war, which ended in May 2009 with the death of LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran.

## Here comes China's 'artificial sun', a likely source for clean, limitless en-

**The HL-2M Tokamak, China's next-generation "artificial sun," is expected to be operational in 2020 as installation work has gone smoothly since the delivery of the coil system in June.**



(News Agencies) Chinese scientists are close to deploying an "artificial sun" by 2020, state media has reported, adding that the device will be able to provide clean energy through controlled nuclear fusion.

"The HL-2M Tokamak, China's next-generation "artificial sun," is expected to be operational in 2020 as installation work has gone smoothly since the delivery of the coil system in June,"

official news agency, Xinhua reported this week. The device works by replicating the natural reactions that occur in the sun using hydrogen and deuterium gases as fuels. "The new apparatus, with a more advanced structure and control mode, is expected to generate plasmas hotter than 200 million degrees Celsius," said Duan Xuru, head of the Southwestern Institute of Physics under the China

National Nuclear Corporation was quoted by Xinhua as saying.

The report added that the artificial sun will provide key technical support for China's participation in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, as well as the self-designing and building of fusion reactors. "China is among seven members funding ITER, an interna-

tional nuclear fusion research and engineering project that is building a tokamak nuclear fusion reactor in France, considered to be the world's largest magnetic confinement physics experiment," the Caixin news website reported. In 2018, the experimental advanced superconducting tokamak (EAST), or the country's first "Chinese artificial sun" achieved an electron temperature of over 100 million degrees in its core plasma, a key step towards the test running of fusion reactor, a lab in east China's Anhui province had said. "The ultimate goal of EAST is to create nuclear fusion like the Sun using deuterium abundant in the sea to provide a steady stream of clean energy," Gong Xianzu, director of the experiment, had then said.

## Video app TikTok unblocks teen who posted on China's Muslims

The video was removed for 50 minutes Wednesday due to a "human moderation error," according to a statement from Eric Han, an American who heads TikTok's U.S. content-moderation team. The site's guidelines don't preclude the video's content, Han



(News Agencies) Chinese-owned video app TikTok says it has unblocked a U.S. teenager and restored her viral video condemning China's treatment of its Muslim minority. The video was removed for 50 minutes Wednesday due to a "human moderation error," according to a statement from Eric Han, an American who heads TikTok's U.S. content-moderation team. The site's guidelines don't preclude the video's content, Han said.

TikTok is popular with millions of U.S. teens and young adults but several U.S. senators have raised

concerns about data collection and censorship on the site of content not in line with the Chinese government. The U.S. government has reportedly launched a national-security review of the site. The 40-second video, which news reports identified as the work of 17-year-old Feroza Aziz of New Jersey, starts off as an innocuous tutorial on how to get long eyelashes.

It then segues into an appeal for viewers to inform themselves of plight of the Muslim minority in China. "This is another Holocaust, yet no one is talking about it," Aziz says.

## Iraqi forces kill 45 protesters after Iranian consulate torched

At least 29 people died in the southern city of Nassiriya when troops opened fire on demonstrators who blocked a bridge before dawn on Thursday and later gathered outside a police station. Police and medical sources said dozens of others were wounded.



(News Agencies) Iraqi security forces shot dead at least 45 protesters on Thursday after demonstrators stormed and torched an Iranian consulate overnight, in what could mark a turning point in the uprising against the Tehran-backed authorities.

At least 29 people died in the southern city of Nassiriya when troops opened fire on demonstrators who blocked a bridge before dawn on Thursday and later gathered outside a police station. Police and medical sources said dozens of others were wounded.

Four people were killed in Baghdad, where security forces opened fire with live ammunition and rubber bullets against protesters near a bridge over the Tigris river, the sources said, and twelve died in clashes in Najaf.

In Nassiriya thousands of mourners took to the streets, defying a curfew to bury their dead after the mass shooting.

Video of protesters cheering in the night as flames billowed from the consulate were a stunning image after years in which Tehran's influence among Shi'ite Muslims in Arab states has been a defining factor in Middle East politics.

The bloodshed that followed was one of the most violent days since the uprising began at the start of

October, with anti-corruption demonstrations that swelled into a revolt against authorities seen by young demonstrators as stooges of Tehran.

Iran closed the Mehran border crossing to Iraq on Thursday night because of security reasons, the semi-official Mehr news agency reported, citing a local border official.

"With attention to the recent events and the unrest in the country of Iraq the Mehran border has been closed from tonight," Mojtaba Soleimani, the manager of the border post said, according to Mehr.

He said it was not clear when the border would reopen.

In Najaf, a city of ancient pilgrimage shrines that serves as seat of Iraq's powerful Shi'ite clergy, the Iranian consulate was reduced to a charred ruin after it was stormed overnight.

The protesters, overwhelmingly Shi'ite, accused the Iraqi authorities of turning against their own people to defend Iran.

"All the riot police in Najaf and the security forces started shooting at us as if we were burning Iraq as a whole," a protester who witnessed the burning of the consulate told Reuters, asking not to be identified.

Another protester, Ali, described the attack on the consulate as "a brave act and a reaction from the Iraqi

people. We don't want the Iranians".

But he predicted more violence: "There will be revenge from Iran, I'm sure. They're still here and the security forces are going to keep shooting at us."

Iran's foreign ministry condemned the attack and demanded "the Iraqi government's firm response to the aggressors".

So far, the authorities have been unyielding in response to the unrest, shooting dead hundreds of demonstrators with live ammunition and tear gas, while floating proposals for political reform that the protesters dismiss as trivial and cosmetic.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has so far rejected calls to resign, after meetings with senior politicians that were attended by the commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, the elite unit that directs its militia allies abroad. Abdul Mahdi on Thursday summoned a senior military commander in Dhi Qar province, where Nassiriya is located, to Baghdad to explain why the situation had deteriorated, a military statement said.

### "CUT THE HANDS"

In a statement that indicated more violence was to come, the military commander of the Popular

Mobilisation Forces (PMF), an umbrella group of paramilitary groups whose most powerful factions are close to Iran, suggested the overnight unrest in Najaf was a threat to Shi'ite clergy based in the city.

The paramilitary fighters would use full force against anyone who threatened Iraq's most senior Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis said in a statement posted on the PMF website. "We will cut the hand of anyone trying to get near al-Sistani," he said. Influential populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr issued a fresh call for the

government to resign, while warning those who torched the embassy that they risked provoking a violent backlash from the authorities. "Do not give them cover to end your revolution, and stay clear of religious sites," he said in a statement on Twitter. If the government does not resign, "this is the beginning of the end of Iraq," he said. Fanar Haddad, senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute, said the government and its paramilitary allies could use the consulate incident to justify crushing the demonstrations.

## Pakistan's former PM Nawaz Sharif to undergo bone marrow test in London: Re-

(News Agencies) Pakistan's ailing former prime minister Nawaz Sharif will undergo a bone marrow test for his cardiac and haematology complications, a media report said on Thursday. Sharif, 69, left for London on November 19 in an air ambulance for medical treatment after the Lahore High Court allowed him to travel abroad for four weeks. "The most important right now is his bone marrow test," his son Hussein Nawaz was quoted as saying by Dawn News. "My request is that everyone prays for his health," he said. Bone marrow tests can reveal whether an individual's bone marrow is healthy and

making normal amounts of blood cells. These procedures are used by doctors to diagnose and monitor blood and marrow diseases, including some cancers. Sharif's low platelet count condition, known as thrombocytopenia, has prompted doctors to test his bone marrow sample.

The Sharif family has previously said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme leader might be taken to the US for specialised treatment. Last week, Sharif's personal physician Dr Adnan Khan said that he will be hospitalised in the coming days to undergo an angiogram which will be fol-

lowed by a heart procedure.

The three-time prime minister has been diagnosed with an immune system disorder and doctors in Pakistan recommended that he should go abroad for treatment as his condition continued to deteriorate despite best possible care in the country. The former Pakistani premier was sentenced to seven years in prison in a corruption case in December last year. Since he was granted bail last month on medical grounds, his party and family members worked hard to get his name removed from a travel ban list to allow him to seek treatment abroad.



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# Benefit Gala Luncheon organized by Shri Navagraha Devasthanam of NA, Inc.

(By Our Staff Reporter) Shri Navagraha Devasthanam of NA, Inc. recently organized a Benefit GALA Luncheon at Leonard's Plazzo in Great Neck Long, New York. Gala was organized to support Sarvamangala Shri Saneeswara Temple NY, popularly known as Shani Bhagwan Temple in New Hyde Park. As per Temple President Shridhar Shanmugam, this is the only temple devoted to Shani Bhagwan in North America, outside of India. During the event a range of cultural and religious activities took place, including classical dances. Whose who of New York's community came to support the gala and took time to wish success to the temple. Prominent among those those who attended the event and were honored for their contribution to the cause of community were Congressman Tom Suozzi, Assemblywoman Michelle Solages, New York State Senator Kevin Thomas, Mrs. Umasen Gupa, Dr. Bobby Kalotee, Chairman, Nassau County Human Rights Commission, Dr. Sudhir Parikh of Parikh Worldwide Media, Sharanjit Singh Thind, Former Nassau County Human Rights Commissioner and Publisher of The South Asian Insider Weekly, Deepak Bansal Chairman IAAC, Max Thind of Greystone Games LLC and many others.



# So brilliant, so smart, says Trump honouring dog that helped kill Baghdadi

Introducing Conan as "probably the world's most famous dog", Trump said he had given the dog a plaque and called the canine commando "so brilliant, so smart".



(News Agencies) US President Donald Trump has honoured and lavished praise on Conan, the specially trained military service dog who helped American com-

mandoes in the raid that led to the death of Islamic State (IS) chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi (48) died on October 26 after the world's most wanted terrorist was chased by the US special forces along with military service dogs. He blew up his suicide vest in a tunnel following the US raid on his compound in Syria's Idlib province. Conan, a Belgian Malinois military service dog, was injured during the mission. The dog has since made a full recovery. The dog, along with his new handler, visited the White House on Monday and met President Trump in his Oval Office. It later appeared before the White House press corps in the Rose Garden along with Trump,

the First Lady Melania and Vice President Mike Pence. Introducing Conan as "probably the world's most famous dog", Trump said he had given the dog a plaque and called the canine commando "so brilliant, so smart". Conan was hailed by Trump as a "special" animal who helped execute a "flawless attack" on the ISIS leader. Trump also met with Special Forces involved in the attack in Northern Syria that resulted in the death of Baghdadi. The commandoes did not come out in

the public. "Al Baghdadi is gone, but it was a flawless attack," Trump told reporters. Trump said he had given Conan an award. He said: "The dog is incredible." He said both the soldiers and Conan did a "fantastic job". In his remarks, Trump repeatedly praised Conan's performance and described his breed as the "ultimate" at fighting and drug sniffing. He did not directly answer a question about whether he would adopt Conan, but he said that the dog

would not be retiring and had more time to serve. According to a White House official, Conan was not accompanied by his normal handler for this appearance since the handler participated in the Baghdadi raid and cannot appear publicly. Conan appeared to be very calm and composed, during his Rose Garden appearance. The canine, a four-year veteran of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) Canine Programme, has been a member of approximately 50 combat missions.

# 18th century jewellery, valuables worth billion euros stolen in German museum heist

Security camera footage showed two men breaking in through a grilled window, police said. The alarm sounded just before 5 a.m. local time (0359 GMT) and officers were there five minutes later. But the burglars had escaped.

(News Agencies) Thieves smashed display cases and grabbed priceless jewels from an eastern German museum in the early hours of Monday in a lightning raid on one of Europe's greatest collections of treasures, police said.

They forced their way into Dresden's Gruenes Gewoelbe, or Green Vault Museum and got away with at least three sets of early 18th century jewellery, including diamonds and rubies, museum staff told reporters.

Security camera footage showed two men breaking in through a grilled window, police said. The alarm sounded just before 5 a.m. local time (0359 GMT) and officers were there five minutes later. But the burglars had escaped.

"We are talking here of objects of immeasurable cultural value," museum director Dirk Syndram told a news



conference.

It would be impossible to sell such unique, identifiable items on the open market, added Marion Ackermann, director of museums in the surrounding state of Saxony.

"It would be a terrible thing," she said when asked whether the jewellery might be broken up or melted down. Its

cultural value far outstripped any material value, she added.

The haul was worth up to 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion), Bild newspaper reported earlier, without giving a source. It said a nearby electricity junction box had been set on fire, cutting the power supply to the whole area before the heist. Police

said the neighbourhood had suffered a power cut but it was unclear if it was linked to the crime. They were also investigating whether a burned-out car was linked to the raid.

## AUGUSTUS THE STRONG

"Two suspects can be seen on the recordings, but that doesn't mean there weren't other ac-

complices," said Volker Lange of Dresden's police force. The collection was founded in the 18th century by Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and later King of Poland, who commissioned ever more brilliant jewellery as part of his rivalry with France's King Louis XIV. One of its best known treasures - the 41-carat

Dresden "Green Diamond" - was away on loan to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art at the time of the break-in. Other exhibits in Dresden include a table-sized sculpture of an Indian royal court, made out of gold, silver, enamel, precious stones and pearls. Another is a 1701 golden coffee service by court jeweller Johann Melchior Dinglinger, decorated with lounging cherubs. The treasures of the Green Vault survived Allied bombing raids in World War Two, only to be carted off as war booty by the Soviet Union. They were returned to Dresden, the historic capital of the state of Saxony, in 1958. The theft was a blow to the whole state, its premier, Michael Kretschmer, said. "The works in the Green Vault and the Palace were built up by the people of Saxony with many centuries of hard work," he said.

# World-renowned US rock climber Brad Gobright falls to death in Mexico

**Gobright, 31, and fellow American Aidan Jacobson, 26, were climbing a route known as the Shining Path in the northern state of Nuevo Leon on Wednesday when they fell, the state's emergency response agency said in a statement.**

(News Agencies) A world-renowned rock climber, US national Brad Gobright, fell to his death while climbing a sheer rock face in northern Mexico, authorities said Thursday.

Gobright, 31, and fellow American Aidan Jacobson, 26, were climbing a route known as the Shining Path in the northern state

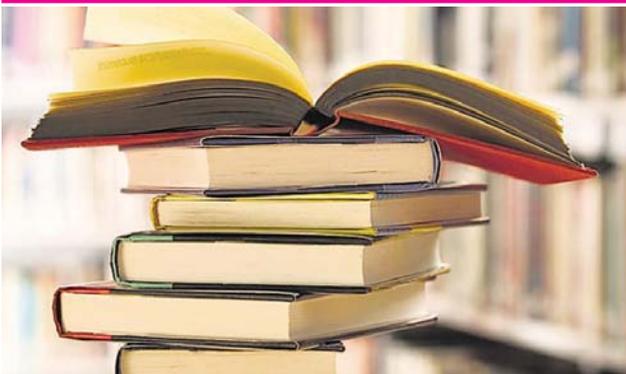
of Nuevo Leon on Wednesday when they fell, the state's emergency response agency said in a statement. Witnesses said the men had finished climbing the 900-meter (2,300-foot) summit and were rappelling back down when the accident occurred. Jacobson landed on a rock outcrop, but Gobright bounced off and fell

another 300 meters to his death, they said. "Jacobson suffered lesions on his right ankle and various parts of his body. He was treated at our base," the statement said. Gobright "lost his life after falling around 300 meters." The late rock climber was known for his gravity-defying solo ascents with no ropes.



## 250 students, including Indians, held from fake US university: Report

**Nearly 250 students were arrested or detained during January to July by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), taking up the total from 161 previously reported last March.**



from 161 previously reported last March, the news article by Detroit Free Press reported.

The DFP report added that the ICE said it had arrested 161 students till March and that figure had gone up to nearly 250 by July. And 80% of those arrested sought and were granted permission to deport themselves, the report said citing ICE.

An ICE spokesperson said in response to a request for clarification from HT that though the 250 arrests of former University of Farmington students occurred between January and July 2019, "the majority of them (took) place by mid-February 2019". Rahul Reddy, an immigration

attorney from Texas who had advised some of the affected students, told HT that he had not heard of any arrests. He said that out of the 600 enrolled at the fake university, nearly 350 had self-deported immediately. Of the remaining 250, most left for India, as the DFP report also stated, and the rest may either be in the process of being sent home or trying to stay on legally. The Indian government called the move by the ICE entrapment, which is illegal in India, and criticised the programme for enticing genuine students to a fake university with credible offers of course work and optional practical training.

(News Agencies) US investigators may have continued to arrest students enrolled in a fake university authorities had set up to check immigration fraud till July, an American news outlet has reported. Most of the students were from India.

An estimated 600 students were enrolled at the University of Farmington in Michigan,

which was set up by the Department of Homeland Security to entrap foreigners allegedly intending to stay in the US by enrolling themselves in US colleges and universities in a pay-to-stay scheme. Nearly 250 students were arrested or detained during January

to July by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), taking up the total

## Indian-American student sexually assaulted, killed; accused arrested

(News Agencies) Police have arrested a parolee for the killing of a 19-year-old college student of Indian descent last weekend.

The sophomore (second year student) who had wanted to become a healthcare professional, was found dead in the back of her car in the parking garage of the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC) on Saturday.

The alleged killer Donald Thurman, 26, was arrested hours later from a train station. The police have said he has confessed to the crime and he has been charged with first-degree murder, which is willful and premeditated killing punishable in Illinois state with life imprisonment, and sexual assault. He is scheduled to be produced in court later Tuesday.

Thurman was sentenced to six year in prison in 2016 for armed



robbery, and was released on parole last year. His parole was to end in 2021, according to reports.

UIC police Chief Kevin Booker told reporters video footage from university's cameras showed Thurman following the woman into the garage at 1:35 am Saturday and he was seen leaving 35 minutes later. The woman's family called the police at 11:00 am on Saturday. She was found unresponsive in the backseat of her family's car. Efforts to revive her failed and the medical examiner has said she died of strangulation, according to reports.

## Fired Navy leader highly critical of Donald Trump in SEAL case

**The extraordinary accusation came in an opinion piece published on The Washington Post's website Wednesday evening, three days after he was fired. Spencer called Trump's intervention in the case of Navy Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher "shocking" and unprecedented.**

(News Agencies) Richard Spencer, who was fired at Navy secretary for his handling of a SEAL war crimes case championed by President Donald Trump, wrote Wednesday that the commander in chief "has very little understanding" of how the American military works. The extraordinary accusation came in an

opinion piece published on The Washington Post's website Wednesday evening, three days after he was fired. Spencer called Trump's intervention in the case of Navy Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher "shocking" and unprecedented. Spencer was fired Sunday by Defense Secretary Mark Esper for working a private deal with

the White House to ensure that Gallagher be allowed to retire without losing his SEAL status. In his Post article, Spencer acknowledged his mistake, but also asserted that Trump's actions were detrimental to the military. Spencer said Trump had involved himself in the Gallagher case "almost from the start," by telephoning Spencer even before the

SEAL's court martial started to ask that Gallagher be moved out of confinement at a Navy brig. Spencer said he resisted Trump because the presiding judge had decided that confinement was important. Nonetheless, Trump ordered Spencer to transfer Gallagher from the brig to the equivalent of an enlisted barracks. Spencer said he believes Trump's



interest in the case stemmed partly from the way Gallagher's defense lawyers and others "worked to keep it front and center in the media." After Gallagher was acquitted of most charges but convicted of posing with the corpse of an Islamic State extremist in Iraq, he submitted his request to retire.



## *US Election: Why Tulsi Gabbard's 'Hindutva' Link Deserves Scrutiny*

**After Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu to run for US president, failed to qualify for the September 2019 Democratic presidential debates, many wrote her campaign off as a lost cause.**

Gabbard stuck it out. She pledged to soldier on until the Democratic Party's National Convention in July 2020. And she started making headlines — including about her alleged support from both Putin's Russia and India's Hindu nationalist movement.

The news isn't always positive but, as the saying goes, any press is good press. "Hillary Clinton suggests Russians are 'grooming' Tulsi Gabbard for third-party run," reported CNN in mid-October. Yet Gabbard shot back, calling Clinton "the queen of warmongers" and "embodiment of corruption". By mid-November, CNN was reporting that Gabbard actually received a boost after Clinton's attacks raised her profile nationally.

### **Tulsi Gabbard on the Rise, Passing Up Kamala Harris**

Gabbard is on the rise. While she is back in the debates, her poll numbers in early voting states like New Hampshire are steadily increasing — in NH, she has at times risen to fifth place out of a still-crowded Democratic primary of 18 candidates. She has also outlasted formerly top-tier candidates like Beto O'Rourke and, in NH, is outpolling candidates who have outraced her. For instance, Gabbard is passing up Kamala Harris, whose poll numbers crashed soon after the July debate in which Gabbard lashed out at her record as a prosecuting attorney. The Hawaiian congresswoman has only raised a quarter of the USD 36 million the Californian senator has pocketed. Yet Harris, the only Indian-American candidate, is not only sinking in the polls but has failed to galvanise Indian diaspora support. As India Abroad reported in April, Indian-American donations to Gabbard surpassed those to Harris by a margin of more than 3 to 1.

During the 2016 presidential election, Clinton was widely perceived as 'untrustworthy' and 'unethical', a perception that Gabbard plays upon. On the eve of the 20 November Democratic debate, Gabbard's attorneys accused Clinton of defamation, demanding she retract her 17 October description of the congresswoman as the "favourite of the Russians".

### **RSS 'Support' of Tulsi Gabbard**

Gabbard's demand has some standing. On 24 October, Fairness & Accuracy In

Reporting — a national media watch group — rubbished the allegations. "There is no evidence that Gabbard... is any kind of Russian agent," reported FAIR. Such "silly accusations," the group stated, are rather a nonsensical distraction from "the reality that Gabbard's most troubling attribute is her documented connection to the far-right Hindu nationalist, or Hindutva, movement known as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the parent organisation of India's ruling BJP party."

As she sought election and then re-election, Gabbard owed much of her success to support from the same leaders of overseas wings of the RSS and BJP who mobilised to get Modi into office. Even as evidence of this connection emerged over the past year, her campaign has entrenched her notoriously close relationship with Modi while reciting RSS/BJP talking points in defence of the Hindu nationalist movement.

### **Tulsi Gabbard 'Justifies' Article 370 Revocation in Kashmir**

Gabbard made a name for herself among American progressives in 2016 when she resigned from her powerful position on the Democratic National Committee to endorse socialist Bernie Sanders for president — a move that put her at odds with then Democratic front-runner Clinton. Today, however, she is at odds with Sanders not only as his opponent in the 2020 Democratic primary but on foreign policy issues. One conspicuous example is their contrasting positions on Kashmir. "I am also deeply concerned about the situation in Kashmir," said Sanders on 31 August 2019 — just three weeks after the abrogation of Article 370. Criticising the "communications blackout" and "crackdown in the name of 'security'," he declared, "India's action is unacceptable." "It is complex," said Gabbard when asked about Kashmir at an 8 September campaign rally. Referring to the 1990 exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, she said, "Many families were driven from their homes there, and fled, and have not been able to return home." Insisting that Kashmiri women previously had no rights to own property, she added, "The previous government had policies in place that made homosexuality illegal."

The result is that LGBTQ rights are "used as bait to target every voice decrying the changes to Article 370." This tactic was forcefully employed in October, for

instance, when masked protestors, shouting "Gay for J&K," shut down a London University panel on Kashmir.

### **Gabbard Absent from 'Howdy Modi', Indian Ambassador Comes to Her 'Rescue'**

None of the other Democratic presidential candidates have echoed Gabbard's BJP-esque rhetoric.

"I'm really concerned about what's happened in Kashmir," said O'Rourke in mid-September (before he dropped out). Elizabeth Warren, currently a front-runner, recently remarked, "The rights of the people of Kashmir must be respected." Even Harris warned that "we are all watching" and referred to the possible need to intervene to prevent any human rights abuses.

The 'Howdy Modi' rockstar reception on 22 September in Houston, Texas was supposed to be a propaganda bonanza for the BJP. As ANI reported, BJP Foreign Affairs Cell In-Charge, Vijay Chauthaiwale, "spearheaded the preparations." Over 60 "prominent US lawmakers, including... Tulsi Gabbard" were slated to attend, reported India Today.

The event ended in disarray. Ultimately, only 21 US congressional representatives attended. Only one of five Indian-American lawmakers — Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi — showed up.

Even Gabbard herself was a no-show, although her exit was clouded by confusion. Reports circulated that she dropped out in solidarity with fellow Hindu-American Congressman Ro Khanna's recent call to "reject Hindutva" — yet, reported DNA India, she "vehemently denied the claims." India's ambassador to the US, Harsh Shringla, rushed to her defence, calling her a "staunch supporter" of Modi. Issuing a welcome video, she apologised for missing Modi's rockstar reception "due to previously scheduled presidential campaign events." She added that a strong partnership with India can "bring about the ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" — a phrase (meaning "the world is one family") which professor Audrey Truschke noted has been adopted by Hindutva groups such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

In late October 2019, Gabbard announced that she won't seek re-election to US Congress. "I've always done my best to serve where I felt I could make the most impact," she declared. "I believe I can best

serve the people of Hawaii and our country as your President."

"I'm running for president to rebuild our Democratic party, take it out of the hands of the foreign policy establishment in Washington, the military industrial complex, and greedy corporate interests and truly put it in the hands of the people," she declared at the 20 November debate. Cashing in on her military service, she added, "I volunteered to deploy to Iraq where every single day I saw the terribly high human cost of war. No, I'm not going to put party interest first. I will put the interest of the American people above all else."

Her rhetoric is reminiscent of Donald Trump's "drain the swamp" slogan. It's a populist, anti-corruption, proletariat vs bourgeoisie message. Perhaps then it's not surprising that Gabbard's support base overlaps with Trump's — as one analysis of poll respondents revealed, her supporters "are more likely to have backed President Trump in 2016, hold conservative views or identify as Republican compared to voters backing the other candidates." Her no-holds-barred brawl with Clinton — who, as the 2016 Democratic nominee, was the subject of "lock her up" chants at Trump campaign rallies — has certainly won her fans on the Right. Even Trump's campaign has applauded her criticism of her own party. She is rising in the polls and remains standing as others who once appeared strong fall by the wayside. She faces long odds to secure the nomination, but that was also once true of Donald Trump. Whatever comes to pass, since she appears certain to stay in the presidential race at least until July 2020, her association with the international Hindutva movement deserves deeper scrutiny. In late October 2019, Gabbard announced that she won't seek re-election to US Congress. "I've always done my best to serve where I felt I could make the most impact," she declared. "I believe I can best

# Pawar vs Pawar: How uncle ended nephew's coup bid

*On Saturday morning, Ajit Pawar, 60, elected legislative party leader of the Nationalist Congress Party, surprised everyone by allying with Fadnavis to form a BJP-NCP government in the state, "for the sake of farmers" as he himself put it.*



When the story of the three-day old long Devendra Fadnavis-Ajit Pawar government is written, a substantial part of it will focus on how Sharad Pawar, 79, the grand old man of Maharashtra politics outwitted his ambitious nephew. On Saturday morning, Ajit Pawar, 60, elected legislative party leader of the Nationalist Congress Party, surprised everyone by allying with Fadnavis to form a BJP-NCP government in the state, "for the sake of farmers" as he himself put it.

Faced with the prospect of a split in the NCP and the family, party (and family) patriarch Sharad Pawar moved quickly.

"I have seen many such battles. It is not new for me," Sharad Pawar told the media on Monday after paying tributes to his political guru, the late YB Chavan at Karad in western Maharashtra.

Indeed, Sharad Pawar has, for many decades now, played a significant role in making or breaking governments in the state and splitting parties. Still, this case was different because the split was being engineered by his nephew, effectively No 2 in the party hierarchy, and the man widely seen as his political heir.

The BJP's attempt to form the government was entirely built around Ajit Pawar's ability to break the NCP. After all, he knew the NCP inside-out, was popular with a section of party workers, and at least a dozen legislators were his men. Late on Tuesday evening, Ajit Pawar met his uncle amid speculation that he may return to the party fold.

Sharad Pawar had to deal with several issues. The most significant was the personal shock of his favoured nephew switching sides.

"Ajit's rebellion was a shock for Pawar though he knew his nephew was unpredictable. However, he took no time to recover from the same and

quickly planned the next moves," a former NCP minister and close aide of Sharad Pawar said on condition of anonymity.

Early on Saturday morning, soon after his nephew's betrayal became evident, Sharad Pawar summoned senior leaders of the party and asked them to ensure that the majority of the 54 MLAs stayed loyal. He himself spoke to some of them over phone, the aide added.

Soon after, he called a meeting of the party's legislators at YB Chavan Centre at Nariman Point and passed a resolution removing Ajit Pawar as head of the NCP legislative unit; state NCP chief

Jayant Patil was appointed in his place. The meeting was attended by 41 MLAs. Soon after the meeting, this decision was conveyed to the state legislature's secretariat. Interestingly, the party had not communicated Ajit Pawar's election to the post to the secretariat. The communication effectively checkmated the possibility of Ajit Pawar's whip being applicable to the legislators. Once he was sure that majority of MLAs were with him, Sharad Pawar concentrated on getting the remaining 12 MLAs back into the fold. It took two days, but eventually he prevailed on 11 of them. Sharad Pawar, who had not displayed any public anger at his nephew, then started working on bringing Ajit Pawar back too. He sent senior leaders such as Chhagan Bhujbal, Jayant Patil, Dilip Walse-Patil and Sunil Tatkare to talk to his nephew. There were series of meetings that started on Saturday itself and went on through the three days, but Ajit Pawar remained firm in his stand. By Monday, though, it became clear that only one MLA remained

with him.

Even as this was happening, Sharad Pawar was aware of the possibility of the BJP approaching MLAs of all three parties, the NCP, Shiv Sena, and Congress. His response was to organise a meeting of all legislators of the three parties. "We are 162" was organised on Monday evening to send a clear message that we had the numbers and all three parties would stick together," said the Pawar aide. "Pawar knew it would become a major media event and send the right signal to friends and foes alike," he added. He also chose the platform to make it clear that Ajit's whip would not apply to the NCP MLAs. "The person (Ajit Pawar) has been removed from the post (as legislative unit head). He can't take any decision on our behalf, can't issue any orders," Pawar announced in front of 158 MLAs present at Hyatt hotel. "I have discussed this with parliament officers and retired officers of state legislature. I am willing to take personal responsibility for this," Pawar assured his legislators. Pawar

took a little over three days to tame his nephew, quell the rebellion and ensure that the BJP led government didn't last. Tuesday's Supreme Court order came in handy for him. The apex court asked Fadnavis to prove his majority within a day, ruled out secret ballot and directed that the speaker's election should not be held before the trust vote. Ajit Pawar resigned soon after. Fadnavis followed suit. By evening, the talk in NCP was that Ajit Pawar would apologise and return to the party. There was no confirmation on this, though and Ajit Pawar himself could not be reached for comment. "It looks like Ajit underestimated his uncle's hold over the party. Sharad Pawar defeated not just Ajit Pawar but Fadnavis and his bosses," said political analyst Prakash Bal. Significantly, the win will increase the NCP veteran's profile and importance in national politics. He has foiled the BJP's attempt to split his family and his party and ensured formation of a non-BJP government of three parties in crucial state like Maharashtra, analysts said.

## Recognising the climate crisis

The world, and India, face an existential threat. Wake up to it

Words matter. The impending catastrophe of our times—a drastic modification of the world's climate, and steeply rising global temperatures — seems minor when you call it a "climate change". The term does not correctly reflect the enormity of the existential threat. This is why, from today, Hindustan Times will call this emergency what it is — a "climate crisis".

Consider what is happening. Due to carbon emissions, global temperatures have warmed by 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It may not seem like a lot. But a world that is just a degree warmer has resulted in wildfires in California and Sydney, and annual wildfires in the Arctic. The five warmest years on record were the last five years, and with the 20 warmest occurring in the past 22 years, there is enough evidence to prove that the globe is not just warming, it is heating. All of this is already translating into huge costs in terms of lives and livelihoods. The Arctic is warming at 2-3 times than the global average, and summer months with no Arctic sea ice are a very real possibility. The global ocean has absorbed 90% of the world's excess heat since 1970. A warmer ocean means more extreme weather events, from a rise in the number of cyclones to devastated fish populations due to increased acidification of oceans,



from the death of coral reefs to collapsing ecosystems. The situation at home is as dire. India will see some of the worst outcomes of a warming world. Our coasts are threatened by rising sea levels and extreme weather events, while the loss of Himalayan glaciers will affect 580 million people in the Ganga river basin alone. About 177 million people live in India's low-lying coastal districts, where sea levels are slated to rise by over 1m by 2100. A recent paper in October stated how mega cities like Mumbai will be submerged in 30 years. And

within India, it will be the most marginalised of the communities who will pay the highest price. In 2018-19, as many as 2,400 Indians lost their lives to extreme weather events such as floods and cyclones. These events are increasing in both frequency and intensity. The crisis now calls for a sustained, multi-pronged approach, where the government, the private sector, universities, and local communities and individuals do their bit to reverse the tide. It is time to accept that this is not a mere change; it is not a problem. It is a crisis.

# What Happened In Maharashtra? All You Need To Know

Both the midnight plotters, Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar have resigned as CM and deputy CM, leaving Maharashtra's assembly wide open for tomorrow's floor test.



Maharashtra politics continues to give scripted political dramas a run for their money (is this real life or is this just Netflix?) with resignations, orders, blame and barbs flying thick and fast.

After the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance raised a hue and cry about the BJP's midnight play for Maharashtra's government on Saturday, the Supreme Court ordered a floor test to be held on Wednesday, 27 November.

However, even as both sides, BJP-Ajit Pawar and the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance claimed to have larger numbers than the other, NCP-defector-turned-BJP ally, Ajit Pawar, has announced his resignation as Maharashtra's deputy chief minister. Soon after this news, Devendra Fadnavis, who was sworn in as chief minister in an early morning ceremony at the Governor's residence around 7 am on 23 November, Saturday, has also announced his resignation. Seeming to throw in the hat, Fadnavis added the BJP will serve as Opposition.

After all this drama—including parties hiding away their MLAs in hotels across Mumbai and even parts of Rajasthan to prevent them from selling out—the question still remains: who will form the government in Maharashtra? Will the unlikely (and many predict, unstable) alliance of Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance get its day in the sun? So, what happened in Maharashtra? The BJP's midnight manoeuvring to form the government in Maharashtra has sparked political turmoil in the state, a dramatic change from the stagnant deadlock Maharashtra had been in since the Assembly election

results left it without a government.

At 5:47am on Saturday, President's Rule was revoked in Maharashtra, following which BJP's Devendra Fadnavis was sworn in as chief minister for a second time, with Ajit Pawar as his deputy.

Even as this news broke on the internet, newspapers across the country were being delivered to houses with front pages declaring Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray would be Maharashtra's next chief minister as part of a Shiv-Sena-NCP-Congress alliance.

As people speculated about the inner workings of the NCP, wondering if Ajit Pawar had revolted against party leader and his uncle, Sharad Pawar or if this had all been secretly orchestrated by the senior Pawar himself, Sharad Pawar and daughter Supriya Sule put the rumours to rest by declaring that Ajit had acted of his own accord.

By mid-day, the tense trio of Sharad Pawar, Uddhav and Aaditya Thackeray held a press conference, with a few "rebel" NCP MLAs standing behind them, and slammed the BJP's late night coup. Pawar Senior reiterated what he had already tweeted, saying he did not know of Ajit Pawar's plans and it was not done with his assent. He added that Ajit Pawar only had the support of ten to 11 NCP MLAs, adding that they'd be subject to anti-defection laws.

wo NCP MLAs, who had attended Devendra Fadnavis' early morning swearing-in ceremony, explained to reporters that they did not know what they were participating in until it was too late. They said they'd simply obeyed orders to go to the Governor's residence early on

Saturday morning and didn't know they had been called there to validate Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar's swearing in.

The two declared their fealty to Sharad Pawar and said they'd rushed to tell him what had happened at the governor's residence soon as they realised it.

Anti-Ajit Pawar sentiments also rose in the NCP with PTI reporting that party workers were seen throwing shoes at his portrait in Thane.

And Ajit Pawar was sacked

as the NCP legislature group leader later on the same day. The BJP, for its part, declared that it had the "electoral and moral" mandate to form a government in Maharashtra, PTI reported.

It dismissed concerns about its previous criticism of Ajit Pawar as "corrupt", simply saying that the "given situation" called for a stable government.

That hasn't stopped Twitter from unearthing an old video of Fadnavis on a stage,

declaring that Ajit Pawar would spend his days "chakki pissing, pissing, pissing" in jail.

As both sides continued to exchange barbs via press conferences, "sources" and Twitter, they also started playing a ridiculous game of hide-and-seek with NCP MLAs. By the end of the day, seven NCP MLAs who had defected to the BJP had defected back to Sharad Pawar's camp. Meanwhile, there were reports of nine

defector NCP MLAs being flown to New Delhi in a private jet, eventually turned into four of them returning to Sharad Pawar, TheWire reported. The drama continued on Sunday and Monday as the Congress hid away its MLAs in Rajasthan and the Shiv Sena and NCP's hunted members took over various hotels in Mumbai. Clearly, the unlikely trio was determined to not let the BJP pull off what it had already perfected in Karnataka and Goa earlier.

## Has Shah's 'Chanakya Niti' Met its Match in Pawar and Thackeray?

and Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray, who is fighting an existential battle for his party against BJP. Since 24 October, theirs has been a battle of nerves: BJP against Pawar-Thackeray, who eventually managed to get a reluctant Congress on their side. Within hours, the BJP checkmated this with its midnight and pre-dawn drama that ended with the swearing-in of Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar, Sharad's nephew. This time, it had broken not only a party but a close-knit family as well. Ajit Pawar, given the criminal cases against him, was the weak link in the Maha Vikas Aghadi. The impetuous and ambitious man seems to have succumbed to the BJP despite being part of all highly-confidential meetings of the Maha Vikas Aghadi. The Fadnavis-Pawar combination will undoubtedly do all it can to gather the numbers required for the floor test, including

pressurising NCP MLAs and attempting to poach those from Sena and Congress. With Pawar, there are no certainties but the impression is that he was taken by surprise on Saturday morning and has since taken steps to repair the Maha Vikas Aghadi's chances at power. How many of his MLAs stay loyal will be evident in the floor test in the Assembly. As things stand, the Supreme Court has asked to see two letters on Monday morning – the letter issued by Governor Koshiyari to Fadnavis inviting him to form the government and the letter of support of MLAs given by Fadnavis – before it presumably recommends the floor test. There was no reason why these letters could not have been shown on Sunday itself and the floor test ordered at the earliest. And, if floor test is the only legal remedy possible in this situation, there should have been

no reason to delay it by even a day. The time window allows the BJP – now Fadnavis-Ajit Pawar – to put the party's tried-and-tested methods to work. A day or two in hand allows them to get MLAs to crossover. So great is the apprehension of this happening in the Sena, NCP and Congress leadership that they checked their MLA contingents into resorts across Mumbai, cementing the trend of 'resort politics'. Should the MLAs fend off BJP's methods to vote against Fadnavis-Pawar in the Assembly and should this result in the fall of this government-by-stealth, the BJP's "Todfod Chanakya Niti" would be shown up for the morally hollow and democratically subversive method it is. Should Fadnavis-Pawar somehow sail through, Maharashtra would have at least shown that it is possible to fight back.

Smruti Koppikar,

## The peril of split verdicts

aggression in poaching leaders from his party and the pursuit of cases against them. The Congress feared its local leadership would rebel if it did not get on board, and smelled an opportunity to keep the BJP out, and a chance to rule one of India's richest states. And then here is what appears to have led to the BJP-Ajit Pawar pact. The BJP recognised that losing Maharashtra would be count as a big setback politically (remember the state sends the second largest number of Lok Sabha MPs and is the country's most important financial and industrial hub). It could also potentially weaken the NDA further and embolden smaller allies. Ajit Pawar, with or without his uncle's consent, appears to have been motivated by both the desire for power but also the fear of

corruption cases against him, which the Centre is in a position to expedite or slow down.

The final issue is of Constitution, convention and process. On Saturday, President Ram Nath Kovind spoke at a Governor's conference and highlighted their role in the constitutional system. But there is a widespread perception that state governors often become an adjunct of the party in power at the Centre. This was true during the era of the Congress rule; it is true now.

In the case of Maharashtra, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari's decision to give 48 hours to the BJP to stake claim to form the government — as opposed to the 24 hours he gave to the Sena and the NCP — and

his decision to recommend President's rule even when the political process was evolving, had drawn criticism earlier. On Friday-Saturday, the speed at which his office sent a report to the Centre to lay the basis for revoking President's rule, and the alacrity with which he conducted the swearing-in early in the morning, has raised eyebrows. It is open to question whether this promptness would have been shown if the government of the opposition was about to be formed.

Put it all together. The shifting alliances, the incongruity between pre-poll rhetoric and post-poll tactics, the defections, the pursuit of narrow self-interest, and the violations of process do not paint a pretty picture.

# Indian-origin teen sexually assaulted, killed in Chicago

**The woman came from Hyderabad and was an honours student at the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC). She was found dead in the back seat of a family-owned vehicle on Saturday.**

A 19-year-old Indian-origin student was sexually assaulted and strangled to death at a campus parking garage in Chicago by a man on parole, police said on Monday, according to reports. The woman came from Hyderabad and was an honours student at the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC). She was found dead in the back seat of a family-owned vehicle on Saturday. The 26-year-old assailant, Donald Thurman, was arrested on Sunday from a Chicago metro station. He is not associated with the university. On Monday, he was formally charged with first-degree murder and aggravated sexual assault. He is scheduled to appear before

a judge on Tuesday, media reports said. The medical examiner ruled the death a homicide by strangulation. According to the university, the victim was a sophomore (second year student) and kinesiology major.

The university said in a statement that her family reported to the University Police on Saturday that she had not been heard from since Friday evening. Her phone was "pinged" to the Halsted Street Parking Garage, and police and family members responded to find her unresponsive in the back seat of a vehicle owned by her family. Efforts to revive her failed and the medical examiner has said she

died of strangulation, according to reports. Police then requested the FBI Evidence Response Team to assist it in the processing of the crime scene and to complete forensics on the vehicle. According to the university, police retrieved video footage from existing university cameras of the offender who was seen walking behind her on Saturday. UIC police chief Kevin Booker told reporters video footage from university's cameras showed Thurman following the woman into the garage at 1.35am on Saturday and he was seen leaving 35 minutes later, walking. Police then reviewed video footage from the Chicago Transit Authority, the

Chicago POD cameras, and its internal system to determine his travel patterns. Based on the observations, police detectives decided to watch the Blue line station during the hours that the offender had previously travelled on the Blue line. Her, who came to the US from Hyderabad, released a statement saying, "She was the beloved baby of our family. We grieve with hope. We hold no hatred towards the perpetrator, but our hope is no other girl would be harmed in this way and for a mother to never experience this type of heartache." Students of the university, who had gathered at the site

of the crime on Monday, expressed shock at the incident. "It's very shocking because I don't really hear things that often happening at this campus, but like I said, this is Chicago," Myles Turner, a UIC student told ABC7, referring to the city's high murder rates. Illinois records show Thurman was sentenced to six years in jail for a 2015 armed robbery conviction. He was released on parole in December 2018 after serving two years, Chicago Sun Times reported. His parole was to end in 2021, according to reports. Thurman was arrested on Sunday and taken into custody and subsequently gave a full confession to the crime.

## Uddhav Thackeray: Reluctant politician who is all set to become Maharashtra CM

Primarily interested in wildlife photography, Thackeray's first brush with politics was in 1985 when the party came to power in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

A graduate from the prestigious JJ Institute of Applied Art, Thackeray was involved in the campaign but his formal entry in the politics was in 1990 when he attended a party event in Mumbai. That was a full two years after his father had appointed Raj Thackeray as the youth wing chief of the party in 1988. The rivalry between the two grew from the mid-1990s. Thackeray was appointed the working president in January 2003. Ironically, the motion for his appointment was moved by Raj Thackeray to prevent any backlash from the latter's supporters. The Sena chief had to fight several internal battles including with his cousin, who eventually split the party in 2005. Though, he does not have the oratory skills and the charm of his father or cousin, Thackeray is seen a shrewd politician. He consolidated his position within the party by meeting regularly with local party workers and creating a

fresh set of loyalists around him, even as he continued to seek the guidance of some party veterans. After the death of Bal Thackeray in 2012, murmurs grew within the party that the mild mannered Thackeray would not be able to lead the party. Over the years, though, Thackeray had proved everyone wrong. He has managed to deal with tough challenges including the ascent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

In 2014, riding on the Modi wave that had brought it to power in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP snapped its long-standing alliance with the Sena ahead of that year's assembly polls. This was Thackeray's first major electoral challenge. At the

height of the Modi wave, the Sena managed to win 63 seats, which was an increase of 21 seats as compared to the 2009 polls. However realising that the need for keeping his flock together was bigger than taking a principled stand, he joined the BJP government even though his party felt it was given a raw deal. In 2019 too, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Thackeray chose to partner with the BJP, but claimed that this was a more equal alliance.

After the assembly elections, with the alliance securing enough seats to form a government, Thackeray insisted on a rotational chief ministership. When the BJP flatly refused the same, Uddhav got in touch

with its rivals, the Congress and the NCP to form an alternative government.

After a bruising battle to form the government, Thackeray is now on the cusp of becoming CM of the state, although this would mean leading an alliance of three parties and leading a cabinet full of political heavyweights from Congress and NCP.

If that isn't challenge enough, he also has to grow his party. "Uddhav Thackeray has managed to keep the party afloat, but if one looks at its vote share, it has not gone up. The party is not expanding. And he will also have to ensure that the government completes the full term," said Surendra Jondhale, a Mumbai-based political analyst.

## Maharashtra setback: As another state slips out of BJP's hand, saffron hues shrink from India's map

The BJP has been riding a roller coaster of political triumphs and defeats for the past five years. From holding power in only seven state assemblies in 2014 to a staggering 21 by 2018, the BJP swept the nation with the Modi wave. As the wave, named after PM Modi and credited to BJP's Chanakya Amit Shah, went across the nation, it took India's map on a colourful journey. In 2014, the saffron on India's map looked like patchwork on a fabric of predominately blues and greys with a splash of saffron. But by mid-2018, saffron dominated India's map with hints of blues and greys. In 2014, BJP ruled over Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Goa and Arunachal Pradesh - directly or with alliance partners. By September 2018, the only states BJP did

not rule were Tamil Nadu (AIADMK), Kerala (LDF), Karnataka (Congress), Mizoram (Congress), Punjab (Congress), Odisha (BJD), West Bengal (Trinamool Congress) and Telangana (TRS).

The graph was slow and steady, from seven in 2014 to 13 in 2015, 15 in 2016, 19 in 2017 and then 21 in 2018. But the buck stopped there.

Even though BJP continued to score victories and topple governments in the most unexpected corners of the country, such as Mizoram, it started losing in its bastions like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Alliance partner TDP broke off, taking Andhra out of BJP-led NDA's hands. Jammu and Kashmir was lost to President's Rule by December last.

## Former Outcome Health Executives Indicted In Billion-Dollar Fraud Scheme

Former CEO and founder Rishi Shah, cofounder Shradha Agarwal and former COO and CFO Brad Purdy were all charged with various counts of mail fraud, wire fraud and bank fraud related to the scheme. Former vice president Ashik Desai and two other former employees were charged with wire fraud.

Outcome Health places television screens and tablets inside doctors offices and waiting rooms, and then sells ads on those screens to clients looking

to get in front of patients. Ads by pharmaceutical companies, such as Biogen and Pfizer, made up the bulk of the company's sales.

According to the indictment, from 2011 to 2017 Shah and other executives allegedly sold pharmaceutical companies advertising space on screens that didn't exist. To conceal the fact that ad campaigns were often under-delivering, former executives falsified documents and inflated numbers on how frequently patients engaged with

Outcome Health's tablets.

The inflated purchase orders and engagement metrics led to Outcome Health overstating its revenue in 2015 and 2016, the indictment alleges. The overstated revenue number was allegedly used to raise a funding round from Goldman Sachs, Google-affiliated CapitalG and the investment company started by Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker, valuing the company at a stunning \$5.49 billion in 2017.

Outcome Health's current

CEO, Matt McNally, said that the misconduct occurred under previous management and that it is cooperating with the Justice Department's investigation. Private investment firm Littlejohn bought a majority stake in Outcome in May. Shah and Agarwal, who now work for a VC firm in Chicago called JumpStart Ventures, according to LinkedIn, did not immediately respond to request for comment from Forbes. Purdy and Desai could not be reached for comment.

# The rise of Uddhav Thackeray

**Uddhav Thackeray, now 59, was happy pursuing his passion for wildlife photography when the Shiv Sena-BJP government came to power for the first time in 1995.**

In the meeting room on the ground floor of his residence, Matoshree', in Mumbai, Uddhav Thackeray has a white acrylic stand on his table. It has the words 'I like people who get things done' inscribed on it. It's a simple exposition of the Shiv Sena chief's philosophy.

The youngest of Balasaheb Thackeray's three sons, Uddhav Thackeray, now 59, was happy pursuing his passion for wildlife photography when the Shiv Sena-BJP government came to power for the first time in 1995. A quiet person by nature, whenever party workers urged him to deliver a speech, he would pass on the responsibility to his charismatic cousin Raj.

However, when his eldest brother Bindumadhav died in a road accident in 1996, Thackeray came to stay with his father at Matoshree, where Smita Thackeray, wife of second brother Jaidev, called the shots.

Thackeray's interest in politics, however, began only in 1999 when the Sena-BJP lost to the Congress-Nationalist Congress Party combine. In the next five years, he emerged as Balasaheb's chosen heir and was appointed executive president of the party in 2003. Thackeray may have been shy and soft-spoken, but had very clear ideas. He was keen on rebuilding the Sena as a party that believed in inclusive development rather than being

known as a party of stone-pelters. In 2003, Thackeray launched a campaign called 'Mee Mumbaikar', aimed at including people of all religions and regions in the development of Mumbai. He also started touring the state in an attempt to widen his acceptability among the Shiv Sena leaders and cadre.

That became a point of contention between him and Raj, who expected Thackeray to stay away from his territory', consisting of Thane, Pune and Nashik. Around the same time, Thackeray began dictating terms to former chief minister Narayan Rane, asserting his authority in the party.

Both Rane and Raj quit the Sena in 2005. Thackeray

assumed full control of the party in late 2007 after Balasaheb stopped stepping out of Matoshree on account of ill health. Uddhav has freed the Sena of the gang of extortionists was Balasaheb's biggest compliment to his son.

With absolute control over the party and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Thackeray started implementing his vision for the city. He made the BMC construct tunnels instead of pipelines to carry drinking water and set up three pumping stations to prevent the city from flooding in the monsoons. It's a different matter that the stations prove useful only if the rainfall is moderate, and Thackeray and the BMC

become the subject of criticism whenever the city gets flooded.

Since 2009, Thackeray has also been rooting for loan waivers for Maharashtra's farmers. When Sharad Pawar was president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Thackeray criticised him for allowing day and night matches in the IPL while farmers were struggling to get electricity at night. I don't understand anything about farming, but I know how to wipe out farmers' sorrows, he says whenever asked about his vision for agriculture. Thackeray's opposition to a chemical refinery and nuclear power project in Konkan, however, have painted him as an anti-industry politician.

## BJP could be shrinking politically but is winning big time ideologically

**BJP is ruling fewer large, important states now but its big Hindutva ideas have won and face little opposition across the country.**

Like the proverbial 'half-full or half-empty' glass, you can look at the much-discussed India Today Group graphic showing the comparative swathes of saffron on the political map of India between 2017 and now. At first look, the graphic tells you that the BJP's reign over Indian states has declined to 40 per cent from 71 per cent in these two years. Just when you thought the party had reached the peak of its popularity and unassailable domination under Narendra Modi.

This, however, is the 'half-empty' perspective. The 'half-full' view is: Draw a similar map with Lok Sabha results from last May. What it would show is the dominant political reality: That in all of the north, the Hindi heartland, most of the coastal west and large parts of the east/Northeast, the BJP reigns unchallenged. A fresh general election may not have an outcome very different from May 2019. So, what are Modi's critics celebrating? Political reality, however, is complex, multi-layered and comes in many shades of saffron. Let's try lifting these layers:

• Narendra Modi, although a colossus in his own right, is no Indira Gandhi. Or, the other way of seeing it: The Indian voter has matured from the Indira era. She makes a clear distinction between voting choices for the Lok Sabha

and the Vidhan Sabha.

Just like Indira Gandhi, therefore, Modi can still swing a 'lamp-post' election (where a leader can get people to vote for even a lamp-post on his ticket), but only for the Lok Sabha, when seeking votes for himself. Unlike Indira, he cannot repeat the same magic for state assemblies. Maharashtra is a slightly complicated case, and we will return to it. Think Haryana. Within five months of the Lok Sabha elections, the party's vote fell by a neat 22 percentage points, to 36 per cent from 58, leaving it well short of a majority instead of the widely predicted near-clean sweep. This, in a state with a deep military and nationalist tradition, insignificant minority vote, and 11 weeks after the action on Article 370.

Now, check the data backwards. Even after the sweep of 2014, Modi wasn't often able to sweep a state, Uttar Pradesh in 2017 and smaller states such as Haryana, Uttarakhand, Himachal and Assam being notable exceptions. But there also was the debacle of Delhi in 2015 first, and Punjab subsequently. Gujarat (2017), which he should have won en passant, became a near-thing and stretched him fully. In Karnataka, despite anti-incumbency against the Congress and the embarrassing

compromises it made with the Ballari Brothers, the BJP finished well short. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh were lost later.

Now, flip these numbers. In each one of the states (barring Punjab) that the BJP lost or failed to decisively win, it swept the Lok Sabha polls. Even in Delhi, Rajasthan, MP and Chhattisgarh, where it had just lost to the AAP and the Congress. Let's see what follows.

• The most important takeaway is that, unlike in the Indira era, when one-party domination was accepted as a given, India has evolved into a much more federal nation. If the voter makes a clear distinction between choices made for the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha, it emboldens those who can hold their own, even if they aren't too hostile to the BJP, like Naveen Patnaik, K. Chandrashekar Rao, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, and going ahead, probably the DMK.

It gives its adversaries, like Arvind Kejriwal and Mamata Banerjee, heart. Her three bye-election victories this week, including two by landslide margins six months after she struggled in the Lok Sabha elections, underline the same voter discretion.

The third type of regional leader who'd smile is the BJP's own

partner. On top of this list is Nitish Kumar — remember, Bihar goes to the polls next year. But even Prafulla Kumar Mahanta in Assam might revive his opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Bill, and Dushyant Chautala can aspire to punch at a level above his 'weight' category.

Here is why even the count of 17 states currently under the BJP, as the graphic shows, is a half-truth. Some of these, notably Bihar and Haryana, are in partnership with allies who might have a radically different ideological view and vested interests. Some, like Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur, are essentially the political equivalent of leveraged buyouts. So, they aren't particularly BJP states. Sikkim and Mizoram are part of the NDA, but not the BJP's. The other, even less convenient unstated half of this truth is that today the BJP owns only three major states: Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka. The last one is fragile.

• Since the rise of the Modi-Shah paradigm, the BJP has followed a simple formula. Sweep the Hindi heartland, the two big western states, and you can rule India with a majority by just adding some little bits on the platter from here and there.

If this cannot be replicated in the states, you are stuck with

federalism. It means having to negotiate with chief ministers, accepting some give-and-take, living with the reality that hostile states will control their own police, law and order, and may even (like Mamata), refuse to carry forward your grand plans, even good ones like Ayushman Bharat. They can no longer be ordered around. You have to treat them with respect and deference, sometimes as equals. This requires a radical change in method and style. Because the 'cooperative federalism' that the prime minister often talks about is no longer a mere mantra, but an imperative.

• Take a close look at Maharashtra. Why the NCP and Congress went with the Shiv Sena has a simpler explanation: They were fighting for survival, and power, if undeserved. But why did the Shiv Sena break away? It was because it saw in the relentless expansion of the BJP in its state a rapid erosion of its own ideological space. Its rebellion is a straightforward immune reaction to single-party domination, even if it is like-minded. The Centre-state equation is more likely to return closer to the 25-year epoch of 1989-2014 now. The noises from Maharashtra are disconcerting: Opposition to bullet train, silly threats on the metro.

# Congress created Shiv Sena to counter trade unions in 1960s: Jairam Ramesh

Sharing the dais with political bigwigs at an India Today event in New Delhi on Thursday, Jairam Ramesh said that even though Congress and Shiv Sena may seem like old ideological opponents but it was two senior Congress leaders who were in many ways responsible for the creation of Shiv Sena.



Congress created Shiv Sena - a rumour which has been whispered behind closed doors and written on occasional social media posts - has received the stamp of a senior political leader. Speaking to India Today TV's Consulting Editor Rajdeep Sardesai, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said that Congress created the Shiv Sena in the 1960s to counter the trade unions, which ruled the Mumbai city at the time.

Sharing the dais with political bigwigs at an India Today event in New Delhi on Thursday, Ramesh said, SK Patil - a veteran Congress leader - was

thrice elected as Mayor of Bombay and was known as "the uncrowned king of Bombay". VP Naik was also a Congressman and the chief minister of Maharashtra from 1963 until 1975. SK Patil and VP Naik were at the helm of affairs in Mumbai during the establishment and formative years of Shiv Sena.

Giving further examples of Shiv Sena's 'history' with Congress, Jairam Ramesh said, "Let's not forget that in 1980, the first leader to come out in favour of Abdul Rehman Antule as chief minister of Maharashtra was Bal Thackeray. It was Bal Thackeray who broke ranks with NDA to support Pratibha Patil for the president-ship. He broke ranks with the NDA to support Pranab Mukherjee."

"There has been a degree of pragmatism on both sides. And the binding glue today is that we have a common enemy," Jairam Ramesh said. There has been several examples of the alleged bonhomie between Shiv Sena and Congress, which have been attributed as proof that Congress was behind Shiv Sena's foundation and rise, but it is for the time that a Congress leader came on a public platform and said it.

Why Congress needed Shiv Sena?

As author Sujata Anandan has said in her book Hindu Hriday Samrat, even as Mumbai is seen as a city owned by Shiv Sainiks today, it had belonged to the communist parties in the 1960s and the frequent strikes and demands by workers had tired Bombay's entrepreneurs to the core.

At the time, the left parties were the only political challenge to the Congress and both its leaders and the businessmen who funded the Congress wished to see the back of the communist trade unions whose domination even the Congress-sponsored trade unions had failed to break.

Over the years, several political commentators, including Sujata Anandan, have claimed that Congress covertly backed Shiv Sena with cash and overtly looked the other way when Shiv Sainiks overstepped the law.

Even as they looked ideological opponents at the surface, the two parties back each other up and remained close allies till the late 1980s.

After the Indira Gandhi government imposed Emergency, Bal Thackeray was among a few Opposition leaders to

support the move. In 1977, Bal Thackeray helped Congress leader late Murli Deora get elected as Mayor of Mumbai (then Bombay).

In 1980, when elections were held after the Janata Party experiment failed, Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena did not contest polls and extended support to Congress instead.

The Shiv Sena-BJP alliance came up in 1989 after an informal tie-up for 1984 polls. But joining hands with the BJP did not stop the Shiv Sena from supporting Pratibha Patil, a Congress nominee, in 2007 Presidential election.

Shiv Sena also backed Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee as President even as Congress had not made an appeal for the support.

Will this history of alleged bonhomie between Shiv Sena and Congress help strengthen their future ties, it remains to be seen.

# Kartarpur corridor is Army chief Bajwa's brainchild, will hurt India: Pakistan minister

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government earlier claimed that the Kartarpur corridor was the initiative of Prime Minister Khan.



Lahore: The opening of the historic Kartarpur corridor was the brainchild of Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and it will hurt India for ever, a top Pakistani minister claimed on Saturday, contradicting his government's assertion that the idea behind the initiative was of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

On November 9, Prime Minister Khan inaugurated the Kartarpur corridor to facilitate the visa-free entry of Indian Sikh pilgrims to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of founder of Sikhism Guru Nanak Dev. While inaugurating the corridor, Khan had told a gathering of over 12,000 devotees, including former prime

minister Manmohan Singh and cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu: "I had no idea of the importance this place holds. I found out a year ago. I am happy we could do this for you".

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government has claimed that the Kartarpur corridor was the initiative

of Prime Minister Khan.

However, Pakistan's Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid, a known motormouth considered to be a close aide of Prime Minister Khan, contradicted the government's claim on Saturday when he told reporters here that the opening of the corridor was the brainchild of Army chief General Bajwa and asserted that it will hurt India for ever.

"India will remember for ever the kind of wound inflicted on it by Gen Bajwa by opening Kartarpur corridor," he said.

"Gen Bajwa strongly hit India by opening the corridor. Through this project, Pakistan has created a new environment of peace and won itself love of the Sikh community," he said.

Rashid claimed that the Indian media "played

up" the issue of General Bajwa's extension.

"The Imran Khan government has three more years and Bajwa has got three years in extension and not six months. So our government will complete its tenure," he said, indirectly referring that General Bajwa is here to back prime minister Khan's government.

General Bajwa did not attend the Kartarpur Corridor's opening ceremony apparently to avoid any controversy.

In the ground breaking ceremony on November 28 last year, the hug of Congress leader Sidhu with General Bajwa had sparked a controversy.

The inauguration of the corridor came in the midst of frayed ties between India and Pakistan following New Delhi's August 5 decision to withdraw

Jammu and Kashmir's special status and bifurcate the State into two Union Territories.

Notwithstanding a chill in the bilateral ties over Kashmir, India and Pakistan after tough negotiations signed an agreement in October, paving the way for the inauguration of the Kartarpur corridor on November 9.

The agreement will allow 5,000 Indian pilgrims daily to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib where Guru Nanak spent last 18 years of his life.

In February 1999, the Kartarpur corridor was proposed by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee when he took a bus ride to Lahore during a peace initiative with Pakistan. It links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Kartarpur to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Gurdaspur district.

# Feeling depressed? Here's how your Instagram posts will reflect that

*Your photos can accurately depict your state of mind. So, if you are feeling depressed, chances are your Instagram posts feature darker filters like Inkwell and fewer images of people.*

(News Agencies) When you're feeling blue, your photos turn bluer too. And more gray and dark as well, with fewer faces shown. In other words, just like people can signal their sadness by body language and behaviour (think deep sighs and slumped shoulders), depression reveals itself in social media images. That's the conclusion of new research showing that computers, applying machine learning, can successfully detect depressed people from clues in their Instagram photos. The computer's detection rate of 70% is more reliable than the 42% success rate of general-practice doctors diagnosing depression in-person. Earlier research suggested that too much time on social media could make you feel

depressed. Another study delved on whether posting pictures on Instagram helped adolescents fight depression.

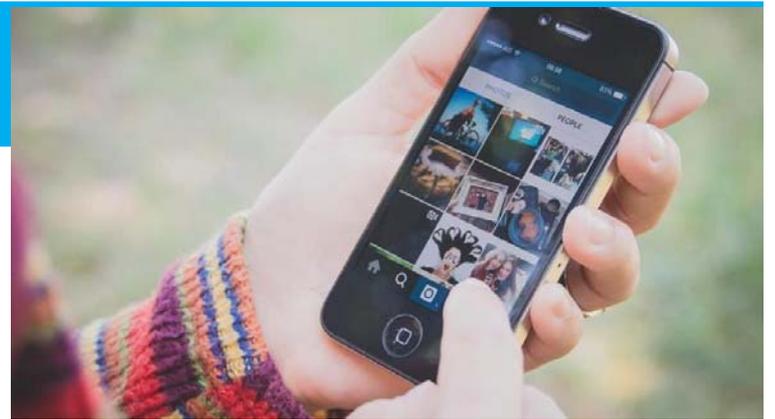
"This points toward a new method for early screening of depression and other emerging mental illnesses," said co-author Chris Danforth from the University of Vermont. "This algorithm can sometimes detect depression before a clinical diagnosis is made."

The scientists asked volunteers, recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk, to share their Instagram feed as well as their mental health history. From 166 people, they collected 43,950 photos. The study was designed so that about half of the participants reported having been clinically depressed in the last

three years.

Then they analyzed these photos, using insights from well-established psychology research, about people's preferences for brightness, colour, and shading. "Pixel analysis of the photos in our data-set revealed that depressed individuals tended to post photos that were on average, bluer, darker and grayer than those posted by healthy individuals," Danforth and Reese write in a blog post to accompany their new study.

They also found that healthy individuals chose Instagram filters like Valencia that gave their photos a warmer and brighter tone. Among depressed people, the most popular filter was



Inkwell, making the photo black-and-white. "In other words, people suffering from depression were more likely to favour a filter that literally drained all the colour out the images they wanted to share," the scientists write. Faces in photos also turned out to provide signals about depression. The researchers found that depressed people were more likely than healthy people to post a photo with

fewer faces on average than the healthy people's Instagram feeds. "Fewer faces may be an oblique indicator that depressed users interact in smaller settings," Danforth and Andrew Reece of Harvard University noted, which corresponds to other research linking depression to reduced social interaction — or it could be that depressed people take many self-portraits. "This 'sad-selfie' hypothesis remains untested," they wrote.

## Here Are 5 Simple Reasons Why I Don't Drink Alcohol



(News Agencies) Here are some questions that come my way regularly: "Why do you not drink?"; "Is it for religious reasons?"; "You are missing out on all the fun!"; "A night out is not fun if you remember it the next day"; "How can you live in London for almost 10 years and not drink!"; "You need alcohol to drop all inhibitions and have a good time"; "Research now suggests that you should drink wine every day."

My responses are worded differently based on my reflections at that moment.

1. "Research suggests that you should drink wine every day."

I can show you extensive research supporting both

drinking and not drinking alcohol, and the positive and negative implications of both choices. I will not comment on the medical and health implications of alcohol because the medical establishment itself doesn't seem to agree on it. The only thing that remains true and in accordance with Bharatiya scriptures is that anything in excess can only be detrimental to our body.

2. "Is it for religious reasons?"

One conversation can change your life. I have had several such a conversations with Brni. Nidhi Chaitanya ji of Chinmaya Mission. One such conversation with Nidhi ji was when I was just 13. We

were inside a jewellery shop while my parents were shopping, and I was discussing the changes I was seeing in my friends. Very tactfully, Nidhi ji made me arrive at the conclusion myself that if the nature of alcohol is intoxication then even to the smallest extent, why should I let anything control my mind? Religion is a means of gaining mastery over our minds. Bharatiya scriptures compare mind to a monkey. Why would I feed alcohol to the monkey, when I am trying to tame it? As if I don't face enough challenges already in trying to tame the mind! Thank you Nidhi ji

for letting my Guru Swami Chinmayananda be, through you, the moral compass of my life to date. And, thank you also for not spoon feeding me but empowering me to make my own choices.

3. "Everyone drinks! You can't network and socialise if you don't go along with the London pub culture."

So why would I drink? Peer pressure? I have somehow always attracted friends who love me for being myself and have never pressured me to drink. Of course, the option to drink was just not there for me, so I never let myself feel any pressure either. I was never going to do it and I think they knew. Thanks to the wonderful friends in my life.

The jobs I have held have involved networking, glamorous night outs, fashion awards and parties. But how would I build a relationship, business or personal, if I am not 100 % alert and can't find any other common ground to communicate and bond? And if I do, then why do I need that drink in my hand?

4. "A night out is not fun if you remember it the next day."

If I have a fun night, why

would I not want to remember it? I want to capture every memory of it and cherish it! And I think my closest friends can give enough evidence that I can be absolutely crazy and fun, though on my terms. I really don't need alcohol or anything similar to be fun, because if I need something external to be anything, it is not natural to me. It is not me.

5. "You need to have a drink to sing in that karaoke."

I don't need to have a drink to sing in that karaoke, to race down the Millennium Bridge, to build that crazy memory I will be telling the kids. I can do all the crazy things that people do and be even more innovative with it without alcohol. To truly drop my inhibitions, I don't need alcohol, I need vivek (discrimination) and vairagya (detachment). Being a part of the Bharatiya culture lineage, the Chinmayananda lineage, how can my standards not be the highest!

Having said that, I wouldn't dare judge any of my friends for drinking or making choices that I wouldn't make. Each one is on their own journey. Different strokes for different folks. And I love them all for who they are.

# Too much age gap may take a toll on your marriage, finds

**The findings suggest that marriages with large age gaps are less resilient in the face of economic setbacks as compared to those in which the age difference between spouses is not much.**

(News Agencies) Age may be no bar for most when it comes to love and matrimony, but a new study suggests that the contentment in such unions fades away over time.

The findings also suggest that marriages with large age gaps are less resilient in the face of economic downturns as compared to those in which the spouses are of the same age. Research from University of Colorado at Boulder, US,

revealed that men reported greater marital satisfaction when paired with a younger spouse, especially in the early years of marriage. Study author Terra McKinnish said that men who have younger wives are the most satisfied and men who are married to older wives are the least satisfied. "Women are also particularly dissatisfied when they're married to older husbands and particularly satisfied if they're married to younger

husbands," McKinnish added. That initial satisfaction erodes rapidly, however, after 6-10 years of marriage for the couples with a big age gap between the partners, say researchers. "Over time, McKinnish said. The people who are married to a much older or younger spouse tend to have larger declines in marital satisfaction over time compared to those who are married to spouses who are similar in age," McKinnish noted. One

mechanism for this decline could be how the age difference between spouses affects the couple's ability to respond to economic setbacks, such as a job loss, McKinnish said. The nationally representative sample was initially comprised of 7,682 households containing 19,914 individuals. The participants were re-surveyed every year with questions that measured various aspects of life



satisfaction. The results McKinnish said, is that suggested that when similarly-aged couples are more in sync on life decisions that affect both partners (having children; general spending habits) and thus, may be better equipped to adjust to a negative financial shock. The research appears online in the Journal of

## Quirky positions and scheduled orgasms

### 7 awesome things about married sex

*Simultaneous orgasms, expertly scheduling your sessions and no more sexually transmitted diseases – read on to know about the benefits of married*



(Insider Bureau) Getting married is like trading in the adoration of many for the sarcasm of one - Mae West (1893- 1980), American actress

We keep hearing marriage jokes at family gatherings, parties, on WhatsApp, basically everywhere. But for a moment let's talk about one of the things where marriage trumps the rest – married sex!

Married sex means that you get the sex without going through the painful process of overpriced drinks, cheesy pick up lines and high heels. In other words, all those on Tinder and other dating apps should be jealous of married couples and their sex lives!

Why, you ask? Read on and find out:  
1. Expert knowledge on each other's bodies

You know where your hands should go and where they shouldn't. Your better half knows what you prefer in bed, and what you'd rather avoid.

2. Scheduled sex

Expert knowledge about each other also means that you can schedule

when you want to have sex even at the last minute and actually do it! A quickie when you feel like it lets you get intimate and at the same time not waste a full 45 minutes for the act, especially when you need to get up early for office the next morning! Sex right after the matinee show on Sunday? Done! Don't be late!

3. Funny sex

There's no need to be afraid again while having sex! Trying and miserably failing at a new sex position or farting

by mistake during all that twisting and turning can be a secret joke between the both of you for the next few weeks.

4. One honey, so no worry

One of the best things about married sex? You won't be thinking does he/she really like me? Will they call back? Should I leave in the morning?

5. Say no to STDs!

Say goodbye to herpes, crabs and other deadly and familiar venereal diseases.

6. Arriving on time

We're not saying this will happen every time, but at least the more you sleep with your partner, you get better at recognizing each other's timing and pace and hence you orgasm together more often.

7. You keep getting better

Don't they say practice makes perfect? Well, then you can certainly get better since you're having sex with the same person!



## Erotica: Here's how to give meaning to your sex life after marriage

*According to psychotherapist and couples' sex expert Esther Perel, sex in the early stages of a relationship is often spontaneous, after marriage it becomes more of a 'creative enterprise.'*



(News Agencies) According to a recent study, exciting sex doesn't end when you take your vows, rather that is when a new chapter in your sexual history begins to take shape. According to psychotherapist and couples' sex expert Esther Perel, sex in the early stages of a relationship is often spontaneous, after marriage it becomes more of a 'creative enterprise,' but that's no bad thing, reports the Independent. Many couples believe it's essential to try and rekindle the flame or recapture the magic of when they first got together, but Perel believes that's an error, even though "the romantic ideology is tenacious, but the fact of the matter is ,it's impossible to recreate the feelings you both had when first getting to know each other, so it's a waste of time trying." Instead, one should focus on the positives brought about by being in a stable, committed relationship. She even added that you must give meaning to sex. Rather than hoping spontaneous sex will just happen, you must consider both your marriage and sex life as something that demands focus and attention. If you know what turns you on and off, you can use that knowledge to shape your sex life and be in control and see the magic take over.



# Think you're house is clean ?

## The air quality in your home tells a different story

University of Utah engineers from both the School of Computing and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering built a series of portable air quality monitors with Wi-Fi and connected them to a university server.

What if you could see the microscopic air pollutants in your home? In a new study, engineers have discovered that visualising how bad air quality is in your home can help mitigate pollution. They conducted a study to determine if homeowners change the way they live if they could visualise the air quality in their house. It turns out, their behaviour changes a lot. Lead author Jason Wiese said, "The idea behind this study was to help people understand

something about this invisible air quality in their home." During the day, the air pollution inside your home can be worse than outside due to activities such as vacuuming, cooking, dusting or running the clothes dryer. The results can cause health problems, especially for the young and elderly with asthma. University of Utah engineers from both the School of Computing and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering built a series of portable air quality

monitors with Wi-Fi and connected them to a university server.

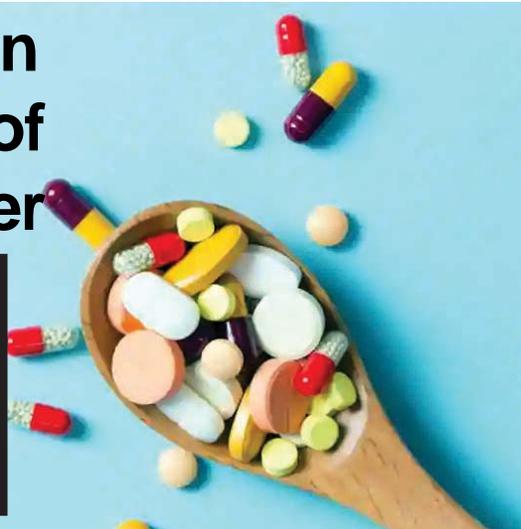
To help identify when there might be spikes in the air pollution, homeowners were given a voice-activated Google Home speaker so they could tell the server to label a particular moment in time when the air quality was being measured, such as when a person was cooking or vacuuming. Participants also were sent an SMS text message warning

them whenever the indoor air quality changed rapidly. During the study, researchers discovered some interesting trends from their system of sensors, which they called MAAV (Measure Air quality, Annotate data streams, and Visualize real-time PM2.5 levels). Researchers also learned that circumstances that made the air pollution worse differed in each home. Vacuuming in the home, for example, would cause different reactions to the air

quality. They also learned that if homeowners could visualize the air quality in their home, they always stayed on top of labelling and looking at the data. The study involves engineering in collaboration with other University of Utah scientists, including biomedical informatics and clinical asthma researchers. The full findings are present in Proceedings of the ACM on Interactive, Mobile, Wearable and Ubiquitous Tech.

## Pop an aspirin to lower risk of ovarian cancer

Taking a low-dose aspirin daily may help women lower their risk of developing ovarian cancer by 23%, suggests a new study.



Taking a low-dose of aspirin daily may help women lower their risk of developing ovarian cancer by 23%, suggests a new study. Ovarian cancer is the most fatal gynaecological cancer, largely due to lack of early detection strategies and is believed that the inflammation that occurs during ovulation plays a role in the development of this cancer. Aspirin is thought to lower cancer risk by reducing inflammation. The findings, led by researchers from H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Centre and Research Institute in the US, showed that low-dose aspirin use was associated with a lower risk of ovarian cancer while standard-dose aspirin use increased the risk, their findings revealed. Conversely, women who took non-aspirin anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve)—

at least 10 tablets per week for many years, had an increased risk of developing the disease. "We're not quite at the stage where we could make the recommendation that daily aspirin use lowers ovarian cancer risk. We need to do more research. But it is definitely something women should discuss with their physician," said Shelley Tworoger, Associate

Centre Director from the varsity. For this study, published in the journal JAMA Oncology, the team analysed data on more than 2,00,000 women among which 1,054 developed ovarian cancer. In addition, researchers looked at the participants' use of aspirin (325 milligrams), low-dose aspirin (100 milligrams or less), non-aspirin NSAIDs and acetaminophen.

## Sleep is good for brain health, helps your brain organise memories

Sleep is integral to good health. A new study shows that during your sleep, the brain reactivates memories.



Sleep helps to consolidate memories, as per a new study. Researchers from Ruhr-Universität Bochum and the University of Bonn have investigated the activity patterns that occur in the brain when people remember or forget things. They were interested in how the brain replays and stores during sleep what it had learned

before. The team recorded the brain activity of epilepsy patients who had electrodes implanted into their brain for the purpose of surgical planning. One result: During sleep, the brain even reactivates memory traces that it can no longer remember later on. For the experiment, the test participants were given a

series of pictures to memorise. They then took an afternoon nap. When looking at a picture, the activity in the brain shows a pattern that differs somewhat from picture to picture. The researchers were able to measure these differences in high-frequency activity fluctuations — called gamma band activity. They analysed brain activity not only during the learning task but also during sleep. They then tested which images the participants could remember after sleep and which they could not. The gamma band activity that was typical of certain motifs occurred not only when looking at the images, but also during sleep.

## World Smile Day: 5 mood-boosting foods to make you smile

You may think a slice of pizza or a bowl of chips will cheer you up. But the truth is that if you're looking for more sustainable boosts to your emotional well-being, there are better ways to eat yourself happy. There are food items that have been clinically proven to fight depression, lift energy, ease anxiety and generally make you feel good. On World Smile Day, October 5, here are five mood-boosting foods that

can influence your brain in a consistent, positive way and help cheer you up: **Chocolate** There's a very good reason we feel a bit happier after indulging in a piece or two. Chocolate releases mood-elevating chemicals, like theobromine, tyrosine, and tryptophan (serotonin), according to a study in National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). **Banana** Aside from their many

health benefits, bananas can be eaten to treat PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms or depression. The yellow fruit is high in tryptophan, which converts to serotonin — the mood lifting neurotransmitter — according to a study by the University of Maryland Medical Center. And, can also stabilise blood sugar and help you to relax. **Yoghurt** The probiotics found in yoghurt, aren't just great

for the stomach and immune health. They can also affect your brain functioning, increasing the mood-boosting neurotransmitters, says a study by NCBI **Green tea** Taking a sip of green tea will instantly give you that "ahh" feeling. Its L-theanine (amino acids) properties will help to calm and relax you. It can also help to improve mental fog. So if you're feeling a little low today, it's time to unwind.

**A** Mediterranean diet isn't the only secret to living a longer life. Eating red hot chilli peppers could help you live longer and prevent a stroke or heart disease. Over a 26-year study, those who ate them were found to be 13% less likely to die. Scientists at Vermont University in the US found that capsaicin in the chillies has a positive effect on our cells. Anti-ageing nutritionist Rick Hay says, "You can live to the age of 100 with the foods already in your kitchen, you just don't know it." Other tips for longevity:

# Foods that will help you live longer

Foods you have in your kitchen could help you live to the ripe old age of 100



## Leafy greens

Kale, broccoli and spinach help to target proteins called sirtuin. This slows cell-ageing and boosts your metabolism, helping to burn fat. **Rick says:** "Spinach is fabulous. It's also packed full of magnesium and iron for energy."



## Oily fish

Rich in Omega 3, this protects the heart and brain and fights cancer, arthritis and kidney disease. **Rick says:** "I'm a fan of fish oil supplements. You can't eat enough fish — they are a great way to top up on Omega 3."

## Beetroot

This superfood releases nitric oxide into the bloodstream making blood vessels expand, and lowering blood pressure. **Rick says:** "They say beetroot is the secret weapon of winning football teams — that's very plausible."



## Garlic and onion

These are rich in sulphur which aids muscle function and insulin production and helps produce the cleansing antioxidant glutathione. **Rick says:** "These are great for those with sluggish digestion. If you cleanse the body properly you're on the right track."

## Turmeric

Yellowy turmeric may help to prevent



any colour is usually good for you."

## Chickpeas; lentils

A study found that eating 3% more plant-based proteins like chickpeas and lentils cuts death risk by 10%. **Rick says:** "People think chicken and beef when they think protein — and then overeat."

## Cinnamon

This helps regulate your blood sugar as it lowers your insulin levels. **Rick says:** "This is great for diabetes sufferers."

## Watermelon

This is rich in lycopene, the red pigment in tomatoes. That makes it one of the best foods for lowering the risk of breast and prostate cancer as it interrupts the signals that cause cells to mutate and tumours to grow.

## Matcha Green Tea

The favourite tea of health-conscious stars like Gwyneth Paltrow, this contains the most cancer-fighting catechins.



## Red grapes and berries

They contain antioxidants called anthocyanins which slow the ageing process and can fight Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease. **Rick says:** "Don't spend a fortune on exotic berries like goji. Local berries will have the same effect." **-Daily Mirror**

## FORTUNE'S TALE

### INGREDIENTS

- Roast chicken ..... 1/2
- Cherry tomato ..... 10 g
- Bacon ..... 5 g
- Passion fruit ..... 10 g
- Romaine lettuce ..... 10 g
- Lolo rosso lettuce ..... 10 g
- Crab meat stick ..... 20 g

### Sauce / Seasoning:

- Mayonnaise ..... 15g
- Truffle oil ..... 5 g
- Thai chilli sauce ..... 10 g
- Lemon juice ..... 5 ml
- Five-spice ..... 100 g
- Salt ..... 50 g

### METHOD

- 1** Marinate the chicken with five-spice and salt; roast for 30 minutes at 150°C.
- 2** Roast the bacon until it gets crispy.
- 3** Debone the roast chicken and julienne.
- 4** Mix the mayonnaise and sweet chilli, and add the chicken to it.
- 5** Place the chicken on the plate and put all the ingredients over the chicken.
- 6** Garnish with cress (optional). Drizzle the truffle oil over it, and serve.



CONTRIBUTED BY: Chef Charles Chee Kent Fui, Hakkassan

## WILD PRAWN CURRY WITH ONION AND WATER CHESTNUT



### INGREDIENTS

- Tiger/king prawns ..... 160 g
- Spring onion ..... 15 g
- Chillies ..... 2 g
- Almond (for garnish) ..... 3 g
- Curry leaves (for garnish) ..... 3 g
- Water chestnut ..... 20 g
- Chicken stock ..... 20ml

### Sauce

- Chillies ..... 5 g
- Butter ..... 10 g
- Curry leaf ..... 3 g
- Condensed milk ..... 10 g
- Curry powder ..... 15 g
- Ginger powder ..... 10 g
- Chicken powder ..... 5 g
- White pepper powder ..... 3 g
- Potato starch ..... 5 g

### METHOD

- 1** Dice all the vegetables; blend with condensed milk.
- 2** Take a mixing bowl, add butter and condensed milk; cover with cling-wrap and steam until the butter melts.
- 3** Put some oil in a pan; add the blended vegetables and stir for 10 minutes. Add butter and simmer on low flame for two minutes.
- 4** Put some oil in a pan and stir-fry all the ingredients for a few seconds. Then, add chicken stock and thicken the mixture with potato starch.
- 5** Place the prawns on the top of the sauce, and garnish with fried curry leaves, almond slices and Thai red chillies.

CONTRIBUTED BY: Chef Wang Yixuan, Yauatcha

## 'Marjaavaan' Review

## Sidharth Malhotra's Bulging Biceps Carry More Gravitas Than The Film's Plot



Milap Milan Zaveri is that Bollywood boy who has the rare fortune of being a writer/director in films as sensitive and gender-conscious as Mastizaade, Grand Masti, Kya Kool Hai Hum 3 and Hate Story 4. In short, Zaveri's IMDb page has films with as much depth as the Tinder bio of a Delhi dudebro. His latest outing is Marjaavaan, a film about two men who should've probably hooked up and released the tension instead of pretending to be mad at each other for no apparent reason. Other than queering the

heteronormativity of the gangster genre, a lot of innocent lives would've been spared, including that of the hapless spectator, who has to endure this over 2-hour-long revenge fest.

Sidharth Malhotra plays Raghu, an orphan adopted by Mumbai's tanker mafia, (Nasaar) who also runs a prostitution ring. Raghu is a faithful henchman who eliminates Nasaar's enemies through bombastic dialogues and masculine bravura. However, Nasaar's OG son, the vertically-challenged Vishnu (Riteish

Deshmukh), who, by his own admission is the devil's incarnate (LOL), feels slighted that Daddy is biased towards the ruggedly sexy Raghu and so he decides to get Raghu's mute girlfriend, Zoya, (Tara Sutaria) killed.... by Raghu himself. Chaos ensues.

That Marjaavaan is recycled trash from all the terrible movies of 80s is obvious. While those movies still had redeeming qualities, such as being fertile choices for ironic viewing, expect no such heroic deeds from Zaveri's Marjaavaan, a film so taken by its title that it keeps randomly repeating it in strange places (including the interval point where the title appears instead of the words 'intermission'). So bereft is this nightmare from originality, that it invokes 'Marjavaan' (the song from Fashion) in an introductory scene of the sex-worker-with-a-golden-heart (Rakul Preet Singh, wasted). In another instance, Deshmukh's

character is introduced with 'Teri Galiyan' the song from Ek Villain, where both him and Malhotra were pitted against one another and a woman was (yet again) violently killed to justify their angst.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Marjaavaan can't imagine a woman character who isn't a sex worker or an 'item girl' or someone being prepared for murder. Women in the film are devices for men to validate their machismo, vehicles who absorb brutal violence so the men can demonstrate their own. And how long will we keep writing parts where the woman's sole job is to trigger moral awakening for the tormented hero? Or tolerate repulsively vulgar songs where, before thrusting her body in a manner that satiates the male gaze, she says, "Kal Meri Shaadi Hai, Aaj Azaadi?"

As Marjaavaan's plot unfurls with the coherence that rivals a drunk man's gait, uninspiring and

exhausting action sequences cover the screen, where Malhotra bashes up everyone, a Muslim man is brutalised in a mosque, and a key character is flung off the ledge of his own house.

In what feels like a surreal experience, the scenes are often disjointed and characters appear out of nowhere to participate in sequences they've little contribution to. The background score takes the film more seriously than the film takes itself while Deshmukh, in a performance that's half-parody, half-lunacy, drops braindead lines such as, "Kabhi volcano dekha hai...." or "bandook kitni bhi badi ho, jaan lene wali goli choti hi hoti hai."

Sidharth Malhotra, who often looks disappointed in himself, carries a matchstick in his mouth and keeps playing with it as if it'll enflame his character with angst sorely lacking from his face. His bulging biceps, which the camera makes a point of

repeatedly zooming in on, carry more gravitas than his performance or the film's plot. While everyone in this film only talks in obnoxious parables and one-liners that send mixed-signals, it's a relief that Sutaria's character is mute, although she communicates exclusively through riddles, because, it's convenient, I suppose.

That she's from Kashmir and thinks the violence of the valley can be compared to Mumbai's mafia and how it's ruining the lives of the city's youth is the kind of politics you expect from someone who has Satyamev Jayte in his directing credits.

It's 2019 and we're still refurbishing archaic 80s trope we thought we were better without. One of the 'lines' from the film goes, "Duniya ka sabse khatarnak hathyar— dhai kilo ki bandook nahi, dedh kilo ka dimaag hota hai." It's time the filmmakers and writers who come up with such gems actually start believing in them too.

## 21 Bridges movie review

## Chadwick Boseman and the Russo Brothers reunite for run-of-the-mill thriller



21 Bridges

Director - Brian Kirk

Cast - Chadwick Boseman, Sienna Miller, JK Simmons, Stephan James, Taylor Kitsch

In what amounts to making a post-MeToo film from the perspective of an accused, 21 Bridges is a broad celebration of cops at a time when the discourse around police brutality in America is at an all-time

high. It takes the 'one bad apple' defence, and delivers it with the subtlety of a headshot.

Directed by Game of Thrones veteran Brian Kirk, produced by Avengers: Endgame duo Joe and Anthony Russo, and featuring Black Panther star Chadwick Boseman, 21 Bridges is a mediocre film with some admittedly bold ideas.

When several policemen are killed during a botched robbery, suave NYPD detective Andre Davis (Boseman) is tasked with tracking down the cop-killers — played by Stephan James and (rather depressingly, considering he was once touted to be the next big Hollywood leading man) Taylor Kitsch — in a race against time, as tempers rise and the

entire force calls for blood.

Despite borrowing liberally from the masculine films of Michael Mann — Kirk manages to tip his hat to both Collateral and Heat in a single scene — 21 Bridges is tonally, intellectually, and stylistically similar to the Liam Neeson brand of action films. The film's cat-and-mouse chase over a single night premise is reminiscent of Run All Night, and Boseman's big speech will remind you of the one Neeson delivered so memorably in Taken.

"We got twenty-one bridges in and out of Manhattan," he says, with the confidence of a man convinced it's going to become a meme. "Shut them down. Three rivers. Close them. Four tunnels. Block them. Stop every train and loop the subways. Then, we flood the island

with blue."

Andre knows that manhunts such as this are likely to fizzle out if the culprits aren't nabbed within a few hours of the crime. With Manhattan under lockdown, he plans on cornering the killers and draining them out like rats. In his quest, he's joined by a veteran cop played by JK Simmons, and a narcotics specialist played by Sienna Miller — both of whom make the most of their thinly written characters by drenching them with a dour weariness.

21 Bridges is the sort of movie that takes more pleasure in staging a stylish gunfight than properly developing its characters; and Kirk probably spent more time in lighting his shots than ironing out some of the script's more clunky bits.

For instance, was it necessary to make Andre the son of a cop who was killed in the line of duty? Did no one think it would be too on-the-nose to make Sienna Miller's character a single mother; a piece of exposition that is delivered, by the way, when her child's nanny calls her in the middle of a tense scene? Divorced from its poor writing and iffy politics, however, 21 Bridges is a relatively well-made movie. It's just not something that you'd want to make a trip to the theatre for. Perhaps like the Russos' upcoming film Dhaka, which stars another Avenger (Chris Hemsworth), it would have fared better on a streaming service. Certainly, that is where it will eventually be discovered, and potentially even enjoyed.

## Aamir Khan visits Golden Temple as he takes time off Laal Singh Chaddha shoot.

**Aamir Khan paid a visit to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, where he is shooting for his film, Laal Singh Chaddha.**

Actor Aamir Khan, who is all in excitement for his upcoming film-- Laal Singh Chaddha -- took some time off the shoot schedule to seek blessings at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, on Saturday. The Taare Zameen Par star was

seen in a casual attire sporting a complete bearded look.

Surrounded by other devotees, Aamir was seen in a blue T-shirt, beige pants and a white head scarf. Aamir plays a Sikh man in Laal Singh

Chaddha.

The actor, who was last seen in the Thugs of Hindostan, is pairing up with Kareena Kapoor Khan in Laal Singh Chaddha, which is the remake of 1994 American film Forrest Gump. The comedy-drama

film directed by Advait Chandan and bankrolled by Aamir Khan Productions along with Viacom18 Motion Pictures, Laal Singh Chaddha would mark as the third team-up of the 54-year-old actor and Kareena after giving two of



the critically appreciated Punjab. The buzz took over the media after he unveiled the teaser officially announced on March 14, 2019, by Aamir on the occasion of his birthday. The movie is reportedly shot in December 25, 2020.

## Katrina Kaif And Vicky Kaushal To Spend New Year's Eve Together: Reports

**Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal were photographed together at a Diwali party this year**

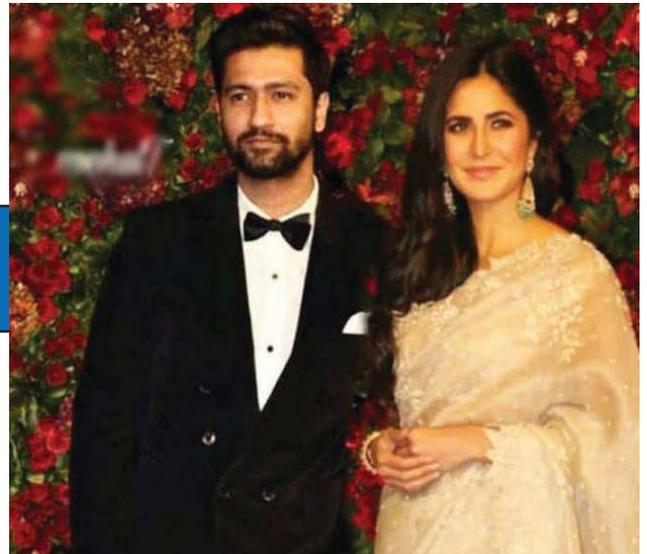
Bollywood actors Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal occupied the top spot on Tuesday's list of trends. The reason? A recent Mumbai Mirror report stated that the duo will be spending their New Year's Eve together. The report stated, "Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal have been finding themselves invited to the same events and

award shows all through the year. The two are quite serious about each other and are ready to be a little more open about their romance. More public appearances together are expected. But first, they have plans for a New Year's Eve getaway." Rumours about Vicky and Katrina's alleged romance began after they made an

appearance together at a Diwali party. As of now, neither Katrina Kaif nor Vicky Kaushal has addressed the rumours.

Last year, Katrina Kaif made an appearance on Karan Johar's talk show Koffee With Karan 6, wherein she said that she would "look good with Vicky Kaushal on screen." Vicky Kaushal appeared to

faint when he was told about Katrina's statement during the show. Katrina Kaif was last seen in Ali Abbas Zafar's Bharat, co-starring Salman Khan and Disha Patani. She will next be seen in Rohit Shetty's Sooryavanshi, alongside Akshay Kumar. The actress recently launched her beauty line KayByKatrina.



On the work front, Vicky Kaushal was last seen in Karan Johar's period drama Aditya Dhar's Uri: The Surgical Strike, for which he won the National Film Award for Best Actor. The actor will next be seen in Karan Johar's period drama Takht, the horror film Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship and Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw's biopic.

## With food, listen to your body not your mind, says Kirti Kulhari

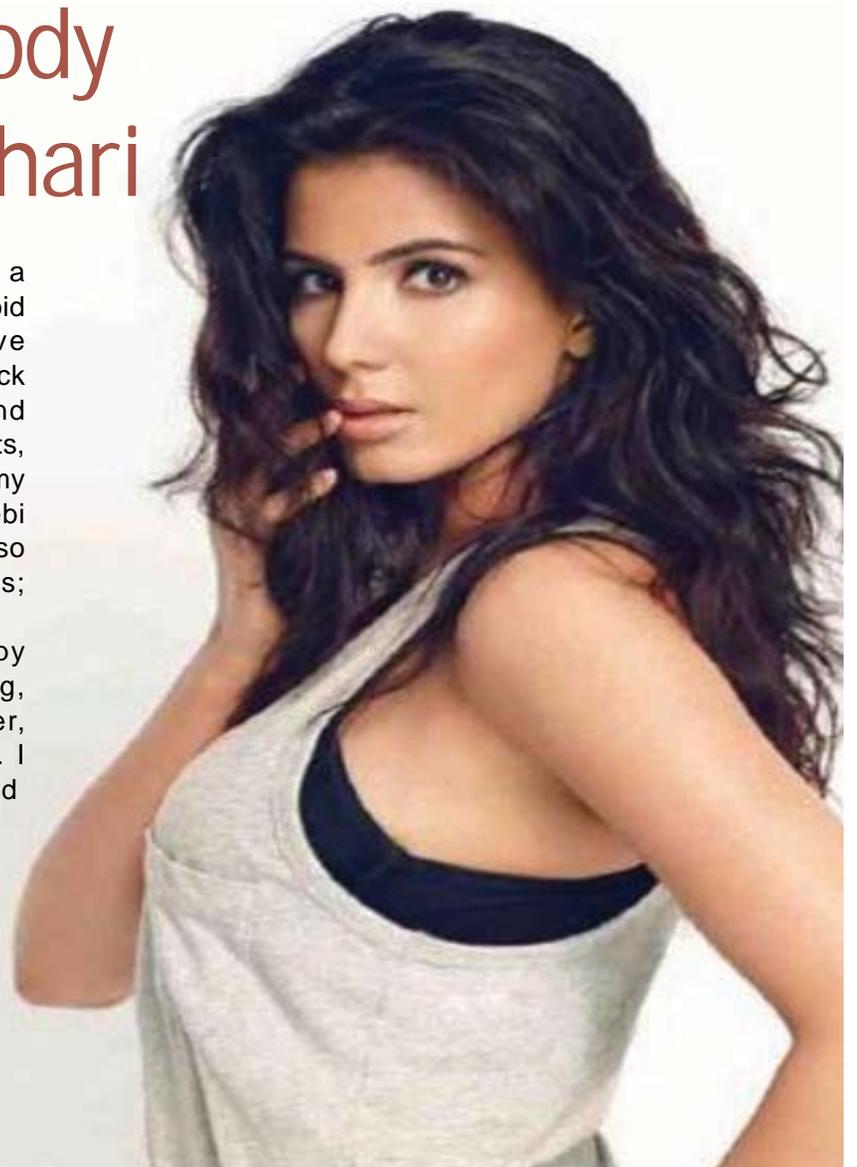
Kirti Kulhari, 36, started her career with the film Khichdi, then did the offbeat but critically acclaimed Shaitaan alongside Kalki Koechlin. In Pink, she stood out with a powerful performance. Then came Uri: The Surgical Strike and Mission Mangal. She has taken to the digital space as well, with Four More Shots Please! and Bard of Blood. Coming up is Bataasha, where she plays a musician. Here's a look at how she handles stress and keeps fit. My fitness mantra is exercise regularly; listen to your body and not your mind when it comes to food; and keep calm and focus on relaxation. Exercise makes me feel good instantly. I alternate between yoga, sports and weight-training. I love badminton and can play it anywhere,

anytime. My husband [actor Saahil Sehgal] and I both love yoga, so I also have downloaded various apps which we follow to do different asanas. I eat pretty much everything but believe in moderation. I love food and try not to deprive myself of that pleasure. I avoid junk food and have consciously cut down over the years on white sugar, white flour and fried stuff but there is a little bit of cheating every once in a while. I keep my food simple and home-cooked as far as possible. I eat salads and fruit daily. I have three or four meals a day. Breakfast is usually eggs with toast or poha or upma and some fruit. Lunch is rice or roti with dal, sabzi and salad, followed by buttermilk. Dinner is similar, sometimes accompanied by some

prawn or fish or chicken.

I eat out once or twice a week, but even then, I avoid unhealthy food. I love makhana, but I also snack on channa, peanuts and banana chips. I love sweets, so that is a challenge; my guilty pleasures are jalebi and motichur laddoo. I also love salted potato chips; they're irresistible.

I find aromatherapy candles very calming, especially lavender, mandarin and white tea. I love listening to music, and playing the harmonium and electronic tanpura as I am also studying Indian classical music. I love to travel and that simply recharges me. When shooting and travelling, my phone is something that I really stay away from.





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## Former Outcome Health Executives Indicted In Billion-Dollar Fraud Scheme



(News Agencies) Former executives and employees of Outcome Health, a Chicago-based health tech startup once valued at over \$5 billion, were indicted Monday in a scheme to defraud the company's clients and investors by inflating revenue and key metrics about how effective the company's product was, according to charges unsealed by the Justice Department. (Contd on page 23)



## Indian-origin teen sexually assaulted, killed in Chicago

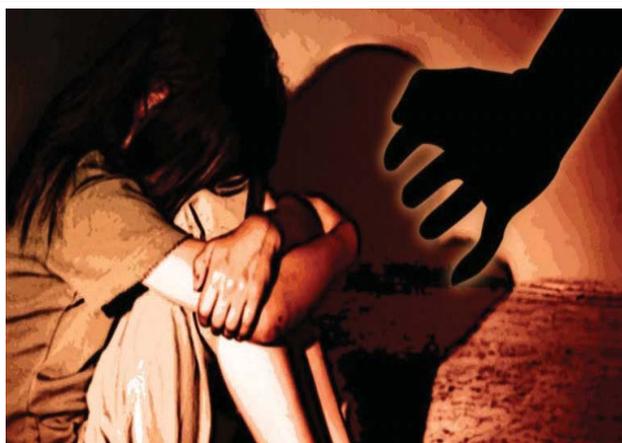
The woman came from Hyderabad and was an honours student at the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC). She was found dead in the back seat of a family-owned vehicle on Saturday.

(Contd on page 23)

## 8-year-old girl Raped at knifepoint in Gujrat

After examining the girl, doctors said the eight-year-old was also beaten up by the accused.

(News Agencies) In eight-year-old girl was kidnapped and raped at knifepoint in Rajkot, Gujarat, on Friday night when she was sleeping with her mother at a public park. The girl's mother told someone took her daughter to a secluded place, raped her and dumped her in the nearby bushes.



When the girl was recovered from the bushes early morning, she was severely injured. Following her medical examinations, doctors confirmed rape

and said the girl was beaten up by the accused. Meanwhile, police have collected some clues about the accused after screening CCTV footages

and are investigating the matter. The girl's mother works as a labourer. Police said the two were sleeping in a public garden in Thorala locality when an unidentified person took the child to a secluded area and raped her after threatening her with a knife. "Her mother lodged an FIR on Saturday morning," said an official of Thorala police station. Rajkot police commissioner has announced a reward of Rs 50,000 for information about the culprit, the official said. A case of kidnapping, rape, criminal intimidation and various sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act has been registered against the accused.

## Maharashtra setback: As another state slips out of BJP's hand, saffron hues shrink from India's map

With Maharashtra loss, the BJP, which once commanded over 71 per cent of India at the state level, has been reduced to just 40 per cent.

(News Agencies) Bharatiya Janata Party setback in Maharashtra may have kept the bigwigs like Prime Minister Narendra Modi



and political maverick Amit Shah out of the limelight but they sure have reasons to break a sweat. With the latest loss at the state-level political game, the BJP has been reduced to mere 40 per cent of the national landscape as compared to a whopping 71 per cent it commanded over in 2017. (Contd on page 23)

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