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Paris Jackson reacts to 'Leaving Neverland' accusations



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Vol. 15 Issue 41 Friday 1 March to 7 March 2019 \$1 www.thesouthasianinsider.com thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

Yes, There's a Crisis at the Border



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Justin Trudeau tries to save face

(News Agencies) Toronto-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau insisted Thursday that there was nothing sinister about his role in a scandal swamping his government and threatening his reelection prospects. At a formal press conference, he spoke in detail for the first time about the episode. **Continued on Page 19**

Rahul leads Opposition in backing expose on Rafale deal

(News Agencies) New Delhi- on these files, including by The Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said The Hindu was being targeted for having been "brave" enough to expose the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Rafale deal. His comment came in the wake of the Centre's contention that the Rafale files had been "stolen" from the Defence Ministry and that publication of news reports based on these files, including by The Hindu, was a violation of the Official Secrets Act (OSA). Other Opposition leaders, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, also expressed disquiet over the government's threat to invoke the OSA, condemning it as a move to muzzle the media.



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Dilip Chauhan introduces Indian Heritage at US basketball game



During Diya Lighting Ceremony, Left: Co-Chair, Raj Shah, Ruchika Chauhan, Anil Shah, Dy. CG Shatrugna Sinha, Organizer Dilip Chauhan and Roopa Sridhar. Page no 2-3

Ex-Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano and wife Linda found guilty in bribery case

(By our staff reporter)- Long Island, New York - Former Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano and his wife, Linda, have been found guilty at their seven-week corruption retrial on Long Island — and each now faces as much as 20 years prison. In a late-morning split verdict



Friday, a jury found Mangano guilty of accepting hundreds

of thousands of dollars in bribes from ex-restaurant owner Harendra Singh in exchange for the once powerful pol's help in securing more than \$20 million in loans. Ed was cleared of a single count of extortion. He was also cleared of charges

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Bollyball Diplomacy

Dilip Chauhan introduces Indian Heritage at US basketball game

Community leaders and Indian Dy CG attend Nassau Veterans Coliseum game as Indian groups perform before the game – Prime Time and at half-time, it's such a great occasion for Indian Community to be a part of major basketball game at Nassau Coliseum



Indian American Community In Joyous Mood during Indian Heritage Night at NYCB LIVE's Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum



The game ball deliver ceremony was performed by the Winner of 2018 Miss Teen Bharat New York, Kahini Chauhan.



Kids Enjoying High5 Time with Player



Students of Navatman Art Institute Performing during Half Time



Students of Arya Dance Academy Performing during Prime Time.



Students of Arya Dance Academy Performing during Prime Time.

(By our staff reporter)-In a unique display of "Bollyball diplomacy", Dilip Chauhan, the former Deputy Comptroller of Nassau County, and Co-Chair Raj Shah created history recently by organizing an event where India's cultural prowess, especially the Indian cultural performances was on full display and the Indian community showed their commitment to a mainstream game. The event, Indian Heritage Night, was held on

Wednesday, February 27, at NYCB LIVE's Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Long Island, where -- for the first time -- Indian community was invited to jointly participate at a major basketball game between two big teams -- Long Island Nets and Delaware Blue Coats. It was the first time in the history of basketball in Nassau Coliseum that Indian groups performed at the Prime Time as well as during the half-time at Nassau Veterans Coliseum

gave a special permission to the media to cover the Indian segments of the event. Indians are rare as an audience at the Coliseum. But on this day large number of community members people turned out to watch the game and celebrate Indian culture as colorful clothes made the young children look like cultural ambassadors of India while a massive audience applauded their performance at the arena. The evening began with an

announcement by the Emcee. "Today's memorable event is a brainchild of Dilip Chauhan, the President of New York South Asian Chamber of Commerce. He has in a very unique and sophisticated way weaved this program to a grand success," he said, inviting Dilip Chauhan, along with Raj Shah, Indian Deputy CG Shatrughna Sinha, Ruchika Chauhan, Roopa Sridhar and Anil Shah to lit the traditional lamp.

After the Indian diplomat was joined by the prominent Indians in the lighting of lamp amid chanting of mantra, the audience to observe 30-seconds silence in the memory of the martyrs of the recent terror attack at Pulwama in Jammu & Kashmir. Then Dilip Chauhan was invited by the officials to address the august gathering in the arena. "It is an honor and privilege to welcome and greet you at the First



Students of Nartan Dance Academy Performing Folk Dance during Prime Time



Navatman Art Institute Performing During Half Time



Indian Kids with Players during American National Anthem



Sudhir Vaishnav Honored with Community Hero



Winner of 2018 Miss Teen Bharat New York, Kahini Chauhan at the Center Stage.



Students of Navatman Art Institute Performing During Half Time.



Students of Nartan Dance Academy Performing Folk Dance



RoopaJi, Ruchikaji, RashmiJi, Winner of 2018 Miss Teen Bharat New York, Kahini Chauhan, Dy.CG Shatrughna Sinha, Dr. Himanshu Pandya, Honoree Sudhir Vaishnav, Dilip Chauhan President of New York South Asian American Chamber of Commerce.



Sunil Hali Indian Express, Jai Singh Hum Hindustani, Dr. Himanshu Pandya President AAPI QLI, Sharanjit Singh Third Former Human Rights Commissioner Nassau County, Balwant Hothi PTC Punjabi

Indian Heritage Night in Nassau County. India's culture is rich, colorful and vibrant. We are delighted this evening to offer a taste of our heritage, our dance, costumes, traditions, purely to share with you and enjoy. It is my privilege to introduce you to the Organizer of Indian Heritage Night. Please welcome my co-chair Raj Shah and the Indian American Advisory Committee for putting this event together. Thanks to more than 20 Indian American Organizations for your support, honored guests and media," Dilip Chauhan said in his opening

remarks. "Today is indeed to each of you. This is a very special and something very personal to my heart. Each and everyone, if you are not celebrating the India Heritage Night at the Prestigious Nassau Coliseum," he added. Dilip Chauhan also used his speech as an opportunity to make an important appeal as he asked people to register themselves to vote. "I also wish to appeal

gathering, the Deputy Consul General of India said that it was a great venue to showcase rich heritage of India. "This kind of activities makes our relationship stronger. "The beauty of this event is such a large number of children and youth participation said Shatrughna Sinha. During the Prime Time, regional folk dances of India and Bollywood by young children as well as women groups were performed. The first performance was done by Arya Dance Academy. It was followed by a performance by the Nartan Rang Dance Academy.

AIA New York's Desi Next Valentine Dinner & Dance



(By a staff reporter)-The Association of Indians in America, NY Chapter (AIA-NY) organized their first Valentine Dinner & Dance Event under its recently launched "Desi Next" at beautiful venue Leonard's Palazzoin Long Island on Friday March 1st, 2019 to promote networking within young adults while having fun filled evening. Over 50 young couples attended the event and had a great time. Everybody was introduced with each other to encourage conversation between them and get to know each other while enjoying the funnyvalentine

games,couples photo booth, sit like Jay Sean of Bollywood fame, down dinner and dancing on the and bringing Neel Sethi, the vibrant tunes of renowned Hollywood child star of the DJ.Everybody enjoyed a lot and Disney movie "The Jungle Book", complimented the organization RonaldMcdonaldofMcdonald'sfame and the young team of Anuj, and above all launching of "Desi Atul & Rajeev for arranging Next" for the younger generation.We such fun filled event, which have been trying to continue to was a huge success. AIA NY expand and streng then youth Chapter has been striving development programs and hard to bring programs activities and have been working focused on young families towards energizing our youths, and their children with a view while understanding their to attract younger generation. To concerns, said Gobind Munjal, name a few, Activities like the the president of AIANY Chapter. Intercollegiate Dance We try to give the young adults Competition called "Naach the autonomy to build their Inferno", young singer artists programs that suits and attracts



the younger generation. Keeping young adults,where they can that in mind, AIA NY Chapter socialize, interact, address their launched "Desi Next" in January issues and concerns and develop 2017 to provide a platform for the programs to suit their need.

Veteran Indian American Journalist gets State Award



(By a staff reporter)-Dr Prakash M Swamy, a veteran journalist of 40 years and currently a

diplomatic correspondent at United Nations headquarters in New York, who gave a media scoop on Rajiv Gandhi assassination that he was killed by a human bomb, has been chosen for the Tamil Nadu Government's highest state award - Kalai Mamani (meaning connoisseur of arts)

Dr Swamy started his career at The Hindu as a staff reporter in the year 1978 and was sent to University of Florida, Gainesville, for master's degree in journalism under

Rotary International scholarship and subsequently was made principal correspondent and in charge of the international edition. He later joined India Today as bureau chief in 1991 and moved to Ananda Vikatan Group as executive editor in 1993. He took the circulation of Junior Vikatan to new heights and was praised by The New York Times for his fearless writings. "Swamy moved to the US in 1997 and worked in senior editorial positions in several Indian-American publications

such as India Abroad, The News India Times, The South Asian Insider, The Urban Indian and The Indian Express North American edition. He also served as New York and UN Correspondent for Press Trust of India. He was made a judge of Emmy Awards in New York and also serves as President of America Tamil Sangam. "He was recognized by the US Congress with special proclamations for his contribution to Indian-American ties and understanding. He was also honored in the New York and New

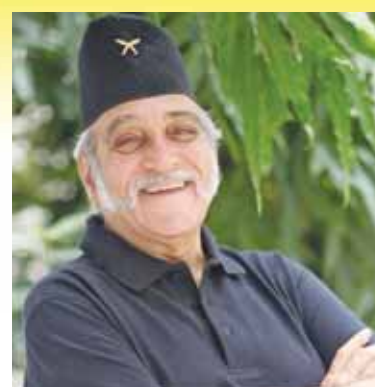
Jersey State Assemblies for his achievements. In India, he won "For The Sake of" and "Lifetime Achievement" awards of the Rotary International. "Recently America Tamil Sangam and his nonprofit organization Shri Vari Foundation Trust adopted two corporation schools in Mylapore, Chennai and built ten toilets for girl students besides improving the environment of the school premises. Other awardees include actors Prabhu Deva, Vijay Sethupathi, Santhanam, Karthik, Suri and Priya Mani.

Natya Darpan: A NJ-based annual short play festival to showcase social issues

(By a staff reporter)-Indian Heritage & Cultural Association (IHCA-NJ) is a volunteer based non-profit cultural organization, dedicated to promoting local talent and preserving the rich heritage of India in New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia area through showcasing of performing arts like classical music, dance, and theater. Since the last 4 years, IHCA-NJ has organized 'Natya-Darpan' a multi-lingual short play festival in New Jersey.

'Natya-Darpan' literally mean "the mirror of Society through performing arts". Each year, 6 to 8 highly acclaimed and award-winning US-based theater groups have been performing high-quality short plays in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and in English on social issues, including Women Empowerment, Immigration, Human Trafficking, LGBTQ Issues, Community Relationships, Mental illness and others. 'Natya-Darpan' has received an overwhelming

response in the years 2016, 2017 with a 'SOLD OUT' show in 2018. That program was partially funded by Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders for last 4 years. IHCA-NJ was founded by Dr Ashok Chaudhary in the year 2013. The main goal of the association is to bring a variety of highly talented professional local talent and communities together with the common bond of performing arts through different languages. IHCA-NJ membership is open to people of all ages, races,



religions and nationalities. A Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the IICT, India, Dr Chaudhary is an accomplished Scientist & Sr Manager with more than 25 years of experience overseeing research & development in Fortune 500 pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer, Merck & Siemens USA.

Absent US diplomacy, India and Pakistan stand at the precipice of war

We will surprise you. Wait for that surprise" was the message Maj. Gen. Asif Ghafoor, the director general of Pakistan Inter-Services Public Relations, had for his neighbors in India on Tuesday evening. It was a testy moment after an even testier day, one that served only to heighten existing tensions between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan. Even as President Donald Trump landed in Hanoi, Vietnam, for a landmark summit intended to tame nuclear-armed North Korea, the other side of Asia seemed poised for its own potential war -- and without an intervening power, such as the United States, interested in calming things down. Pakistan and India's most recent squabble began February 14 when an armed militant in the disputed territory of Kashmir (claimed by both countries) drove an explosive-laden vehicle into an Indian paramilitary convoy and killed at least 40 soldiers. India immediately blamed Pakistan for the attack. "We will give a befitting reply. Our neighbor will not be allowed to destabilize us," irate Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared as his government, which is up for re-election in May, asked the international community to isolate Pakistan. Despite these menacing moves, there were few significant statements from the international community -- except for the UN Security Council, which issued a rather weak condemnation of the violence. And while the European Union did urge the two countries to de-escalate tensions, it offered no diplomatic efforts to do just that. Not surprisingly, tensions escalated even further. In the early morning hours of Tuesday, the Indian air force entered into Pakistani airspace and dropped a payload of bombs. India claimed it had attacked a terrorist training camp and killed "a large number" of militants. For its part, Pakistan insisted the attack had hit an uninhabited forest, damaging only trees. Then, on Wednesday, Pakistan said it shot down two Indian fighter jets and arrested one pilot. India claimed Pakistan had only shot down one plane and that one pilot was missing. This escalation is reminiscent of the press conference in which Ghafoor, the major general, promised a surprise, telling Pakistanis to "get ready for every eventuality." Surprises promised by nuclear-armed nations bode poorly not only for their own populations but for the larger world. While India and Pakistan have been on the brink of nuclear battle before, other powers, notably the United States, have been engaged and present to serve as voices of calm and reason against the war-mongering rhetoric emerging from the countries themselves. In May 1999, during the Kargil conflict, which (like this one) traces back to the two countries' dispute over Kashmir, Pakistani commandos entered Indian territory in an attempt to

reclaim parts of the valley that Pakistan wanted at the time of partition in 1947. India promised dire consequences. Then, just like now, war seemed possible, and the United Nations, which has long urged a plebiscite in Kashmir, seemed unable to stop it. Thankfully, President Bill Clinton used his diplomatic skills to talk both countries off the ledge of nuclear oblivion. Then-Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was summoned to Washington. In a meeting recounted in riveting detail in the memoirs of then-Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Clinton sat Sharif down and invoked the Cuban missile crisis as an analogy to the situation in the Indian subcontinent. In the words of Talbott, "unlike Kennedy and Khrushchev in 1962, (Atal Bihari) Vajpayee (then the Indian Prime Minister) and Sharif did not realize how close they were to the brink, so there was an even greater risk that they would blindly stumble across it." It took Clinton's direct intervention for Sharif to admit that unless he withdrew his commandos, "it would be a catastrophe." The blind stumbling into war seems entirely within the realm of possibility in this moment, too. Even though the United States is present in the region, negotiating peace with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, there have been only two top-level forays into the conflict that we know of. On Tuesday, Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke to Pakistan Chief of Defense Gen. Zubair Mahmood Hayat and discussed the current tensions. And Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke with his counterparts in India and Pakistan, urging them to "prioritize direct communication and avoid further military activity." And while Dunford and Pompeo appear to have at least entered the fray -- at least in words, President Donald Trump has remained largely silent. Following the attack on Indian paramilitary personnel earlier this month, he said it was a "horrible situation" but that his administration would have a comment when "it was appropriate." "It would be wonderful," the President added, if "India and Pakistan were to get along." Indeed, it would be wonderful, but it seems unlikely, especially with the United States uninterested or unaware that it needs to play a key mediating role. Trump, likely diverted by his ambitions in North Korea and by the continuing accusations of obstruction of justice and corruption against members of his campaign and administration, seems unlikely to arrange a Clinton-esque meeting in which he insists that the parties involved recognize the scale of devastation at play.

Islamabad must now act decisively on terror

Widening the lens beyond Pulwama and Balakot reveals a broad coincidence with Prime Minister Imran Khan completing six months in power. Regionally, Pakistan found itself in the not unfamiliar position that the three neighbours with whom it has most in common - Afghanistan, Iran and India - all accusing it with the same charge: allowing terrorists to use territory it controls. A wide angle would also show a definite lowering of threshold by India when faced with the question of responding to terrorist attacks. The aftermath of major terrorist strikes has always been revealing of the state of India-Pakistan relations as a whole. Mumbai in November 2008 and Pathankot in January 2016 took place during a relative upswing in the relationship. Uri in September 2016 and Pulwama in February 2019 happened when things were at a low plateau. Both after Mumbai and Pathankot, a real effort was made by India to meet the Pakistan demand for "evidence". The term itself merits a pause. In Mumbai, there was a huge volume of information available confirming the complicity of Pakistan-based groups in the attack and in the conspiracy that planned it. This information was shared with Pakistan both in the immediate aftermath of the attack and in the months that followed. The expectation was that authorities in Pakistan would act on this information and convert it into evidence for presenting in their courts and securing convictions against the conspirators. What happened instead was perverse as every lacuna of the Pakistan criminal justice system was used to defeat the

object of the exercise. Defending these lacuna became upholding the sovereignty of Pakistan. Former PM Nawaz Sharif's complaint in the famous Dawn leaks case in October 2016 against the subversion of the Mumbai trail and on the free pass given to terrorist groups was precisely this and it led inevitably to his own downfall.

After Pathankot, the process was taken further. Inviting a Pakistan team to the site of the attack was to facilitate the process of conversion of information into evidence. It met a longstanding Pakistan demand that terrorist attacks should be investigated by it too. This was in many ways both a calling of the Pakistan bluff but would have also acted to safeguard the gains of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lahore visit in the previous month. A return visit by an Indian team could have signalled the beginning of a bilateral counter terrorism process. This was, however, subverted largely through an attempted change of narrative and the production of Kulbhushan Jadhav amid shrill charges of spying and India terrorism.

In this background, the response to the Uri terrorist attack and, even more emphatically, post-Pulwama represents a lowering of the Indian threshold and is recognised so internationally. It is accompanied by a growing concern about the possibilities of escalation. At the same time, there is an acute sense of frustration with Pakistani complicity, denial and recklessness when it comes to the protection extended to terrorist groups on grounds of sovereignty and self respect.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

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With polls round the corner, a new trade deal with the US is unlikely

On the investment front, India's recent rules on e-commerce have inconvenienced Walmart and Amazon, both US companies, and which run India's top two e-commerce market places. The change was made to placate India's small retailers.

India had adequate warning that the United States (US) could terminate important trade preferences to the country. The two countries haven't engaged in a trade war (yet), but there have been several skirmishes, and it has always been clear that President Donald Trump is a hawk when it comes to trade (as indeed, many of today's strong-minded and domestically-focused leaders are). What is the benefit of the generalised system of preferences (GSP), which Mr Trump, in a letter to Congress on Monday said he intended to terminate for India and Turkey after a 60-day notice period? GSP allows duty-free imports of

around 2,000 products, including textiles and auto parts. India is the biggest beneficiary of the programme and according to US government data, in 2017, \$5.7 billion of India's exports were under this preferential system.

In his letter to Congress, Mr Trump said the Indian government "has not assured the United States that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to the markets of India". Commerce secretary Anup Wadhawan told Reuters the move would not have much of an impact and added that India and the US have been trying to work out a trade deal. Mr

Wadhawan is right in terms of arithmetic - in 2017, India's exports to the US that came under GSP accounted for 1.9% of the country's overall exports.

It is also not clear whether the two countries will be able to address the two trade-related issues (and, in the background, an investment-related one) that prompted the US action. American dairy and medical devices companies have complained to their government about India not giving them access (in the case of the first) and capping prices (in the case of the second). India is unlikely to change its position on



either. Cows in the US are fed a diet that includes animal products and New Delhi is of the opinion that US dairy products are therefore "non-vegetarian". In the case of medical devices, the two countries seemed to have hammered out a deal with New Delhi agreeing to cap margins, and not prices, but clearly, medical devices manufacturers in the US

aren't entirely happy with this.

On the investment front, India's recent rules on e-commerce have inconvenienced Walmart and Amazon, both US companies, and which run India's top two e-commerce market places. The change was made to placate India's small retailers.

With elections around the corner in India, it is unlikely

that the government will have too much interest in hammering out a trade deal with the US - especially since the messaging from such a deal could hurt it politically - before the 50-day window, after which Mr Trump can end India's preferential treatment. This could perhaps be a task for the new government once it takes office in late May.

Time now for diplomacy to take over

It is necessary that India, along with the rest of the world, frees Islamabad from the clutches of Rawalpindi.

"Namaskar, I read your article, felt a little disappointed. The idea of revenge in the frenzy of war will give immediate satisfaction but not a permanent solution. Manmohan Singh did not take revenge but Kashmir became peaceful to a large extent. If the terror attacks did not stop even after that, then will Islamabad be attacked? The surgical strike is not the solution, it is the problem. But in this age, it's blasphemous to say so." This message was sent to me by a friend after reading my quick comment on the recent airstrike by the Indian Air Force. "Finally we have learnt to avenge the death of our sons" was the title of this article in which I had supported the airstrikes. I feel that self-defence is our right and that when

dialogue doesn't succeed then there is nothing wrong in taking up the arms. In fact, leaders from more than 50 countries expressed the same sentiment.

The world has changed rapidly in last few years. The new emerging equations have changed the old limitations of diplomatic courtesy. Twenty five years ago, who would have thought that China will be looking the US in the eye, that the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will be shaking hands with the US President, and that the Russian army will be conducting joint drills with the Pakistanis? Why should India continue to follow old dictums?

No matter what claims Pakistan makes, it cannot be denied that with the

airstrikes on February 26, and the way Pakistan's planes were forced to withdraw, India made it clear that we will not back off. India now is not going to stop. The Pakistani regime committed another mistake by making viral the photos of bloodied and wounded Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman. The whole country was consumed by a strong wave of anger and the ruling regime was also not left untouched by this sentiment. India made it clear that Varthaman should be returned immediately. Clearly, the backdoor efforts for peace were in full swing. Be it Pakistan's ally China or the self-declared custodian of the world the US, the conflict between two nuclear states that are large emerging markets

was not considered in the best interests of the world economy. To defuse the tension, the US President Donald Trump announced that some good news was about to come from India and Pakistan. He also said that there is hope of resolving the decades-old dispute between the two countries. Prime minister Imran Khan who was already offering talks did announce the



release of Varthaman. But we need to remember that in the excitement of his coming back we should not stray from our original goal. All of this started with the Pulwama terror attack. Masood Azhar, the architect of Pulwama massacre, is still safe under the protection of the Pakistani army. The US has declared a huge reward on Hafiz Saeed, but he is roaming free in Pakistan. India will have to increase

pressure on Pakistan to hand over Dawood Ibrahim, Saeed, Azhar and other anti-India elements. History is witness to the fact that incomplete battles have proved fatal to the winners. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government have definitely considered this fact. That is why in the first public speech after PM Khan's announcement, PM Modi said that the pilot project was completed. It is quite clear that New Delhi is ready to take this conflict to its conclusion. Past experience shows that Pakistan does not change its colours, even in defeat. Even after 1971 war, when Pakistan was divided into two, it did not stop spreading terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir.

China and India align in the monetary cosmos

China and India are leading the world. Kind of.

In the dovish tilt that's defined interest rates lately, only two noteworthy central banks have actually loosened monetary policy: the People's Bank of China and the Reserve Bank of India. Both have indicated there's more to come.

When people talk about Asia's two giants moving out front, they tend to be thinking about geopolitics, or the often-asserted retreat of American pre-eminence. They may also be talking about how the sheer size of these economies, backed by large populations, has grown. Few mention monetary policy.

The Federal Reserve's pause made it much easier for other central banks to follow, mostly

rhetorically, without seeing their currencies crumble. In one case, Japan, major easing remains in place. But the Bank of Japan hasn't undertaken fresh easing steps. Europe is prevaricating.

These other central banks aren't exactly vacant space. There's been lots of talk about the slowing world economy and acknowledgment that inflation isn't firing, to put it mildly. Risk management is on officials' lips, glasses that were once half-full have become half-empty and predilections to raise rates have been replaced by an overwhelming rush to ... wait and see.

It's remarkable given the lead major economies have taken - China and India by doing something, and the US by holding off - how few economists

see imminent steps elsewhere. That's despite China's slowdown reverberating through the region, tech industry woes hitting exports and a very pronounced bout of disinflation.

Take Malaysia, which sets interest rates this week. Of the more than 20 economists surveyed by Bloomberg News ahead of Bank Negara Malaysia's monthly decision Tuesday, a grand total of zero predict a nudge lower.

I'm not picking on Malaysia; it's just that this projection of stasis is emblematic of how conservative forecasting and policy feels. Why there isn't a clamour for a rate reduction in Indonesia, the Philippines or Thailand is perplexing to me.

What is the case for Malaysia to trim borrowing costs? Export

growth slowing, and there's that decline in consumer prices I wrote about. The government says the economy doesn't look anything like it did in 2009, when CPI last dropped. That's true. Yet it doesn't translate into an argument for doing nothing. It's entirely possible Malaysia's central bank will lay the ground for a move later in the year. Caution only makes India and China stand out more.

Not that monetary boffins in Beijing and New Delhi hatched grand plans to become the benchmark for interest-rate setting.

They must wish they didn't have to take these steps. The PBOC and RBI are responding to domestic circumstances, and global headwinds that have local ramifications. (Arguably, China's

slackening expansion is the primary global headwind.)

They are also big enough to take a degree of unilateral action, though the Fed's lean away from tighter policy helped. Questions about independence are worth airing: The PBOC isn't autonomous and India is on its third central banker during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's five-year term. That doesn't mean policy is wrong.

How often have we heard about a global order dominated by the US, China and India? There's been plenty of scepticism, rightly, about whether the last two are ready to lead on multiple fronts.

In the monetary cosmos, at least, it feels like there's alignment. We may have stumbled into the future.

To preserve life in Haryana, re-notify Aravallis as forests

James Cameron, the director of the globally acclaimed film *Avatar*, once said that his film was a lesson for humankind to stop damaging the environment. But blockbuster movies such as *Avatar*, the stark evidence of climate change around us, and green awareness campaigns have still not made us realise that we cannot any longer mess with our environment and that the human race must formulate strong policies to protect the environment. But we continue to pollute our skies, our oceans and rivers, denude our forests and exhaust our natural resources in the name of development. If the life-

sustaining systems of our planet get choked, who will be left to enjoy the fruits of this so-called development? It will be a hopeless future for us and our children.

For landlocked areas especially, forests are the most vital life-sustaining systems. They do much more than provide a green canopy. They purify the air, bind the soil, prevent floods, help in water recharge, and are home to some rare species of flora and fauna. Perhaps that is why they are called the healing forests.

For a city like Gurugram, where air pollution is high, porous ground surface is negligible and green belts are few and far

between, the presence of the Aravallis is the lifeline for the city's residents and the last vestige of hope for the city's fast-degrading environment.

Gurugram sadly is also a city where hungry real-estate developers are vying to grab every inch of land for construction and profiteering. This mountain range of India that majestically lines the skyline of the city has been under a constant threat. A few activists have been trying to save this precious cover through petitions and court orders. But they find themselves up against a powerful lobby.

Recently, in a blatantly irresponsible move, the 118-year-

old Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), which legally protects and preserves the Aravallis, was amended in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha, opening room for uninhibited construction in the Aravallis. Environmentalists are calling this amendment nothing short of an "ecological disaster". The Act protects areas 'not notified' under the Indian Forest Act as reserve or protected forest in Punjab and Haryana. In effect, the PLPA in Haryana extends protection to forests and trees on private lands, community lands, panchayat and municipal lands in both the Aravallis in South Haryana and the Shivaliks in North Haryana. The amendment

accords unlimited powers to the government to classify land as it pleases. This will legalise all the illegal transactions, mining and construction undertaken on these lands. At risk are 16,000 plus acres of forest in Gurugram and 10,000 plus acres of forest in Faridabad, as well as 10,000 acres of Shivalik hills around Chandigarh. Natural forests, such as the Aravallis and the Shivaliks, should be permanently protected for all times to come. After all, forest land cannot simply be treated as surplus land available to be utilised for expanding cities, mining or being cut up to build roads.

Get used to a thousand mini climate cuts

The northern part of India is experiencing an unusually long winter this year. On Sunday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said two more western disturbances (WDs), the 16th and 17th of this season, may bring rainfall and chilly winds to the northern plains and snowfall in western Himalayas on March 6 and 11. Delhi experienced its second coldest March day in 27 years on March 2, almost breaching yet another decades-old record after March 1 saw the coldest overall March temperature since 1979. In 2018, Delhi had witnessed the third coldest December in 50 years.

The IMD said the frequency of WDs this season was high because of the weakening of the polar vortex and it is more intense this time because of the higher temperature gradient, which is a result of the weakening of the polar vortex. The WD system develops due to a temperature difference between northern and southern latitudes. The number and intensity of the weather phenomena have surprised scientists, and many believe that such freak weather is the new normal in an age of climate change. In a report released on January 21, the IMD said that such freak

weather is going to rise in the coming two decades and there will be a cataclysmic fallout by 2040 if emissions are not contained. The report linked this trend to climate change because India's warming trends are very similar to the pattern of global warming. These findings are also in sync with last year's critical Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) "Global Warming of 1.5 degrees" report, whose co-author, Joyashree Roy, told *Hindustan Times*: "India may face serious consequences including severe heat stress in



big cities, high air pollution levels, salt-water intrusion in coastal areas triggered by rise in sea levels, and increased vulnerability to disasters in high mountain ecosystems." While the threat of a "cataclysmic fallout" looms large, expect a thousand more

mini climate cuts along the way. The policy prescription to avoid such recurring damages has been clear for a long time: lower emission, a push for sustainability in whatever we do and climate-proof cities and agriculture.

Indian American Women's Gala



(By a staff reporter)- As Town of Hempstead Supervisor Laura Gillen, Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Judi Bosworth, Nassau County Legislator Rose Walker, New York State Assembly woman Judy Griffin I (Among many other VIP's) walked into Akbar's Ballroom in Garden City, on Friday March 1, 2019., they all very well felt the pride and achievement in the air. The Grand ball room was full of so

many accomplished and elite, who's who of the society gathered for one singular purpose, to be the part of and to celebrate 8 the Outstanding Women's Achievements Gala, part of Women's History Month and International Women's Day Celebrations IAF (Indian American Forum) led by Indu Jaiswal, known for her strong commitment and dedication to the community cause was the

organizing force behind the gala. This year well known Community Leader Shammi Singh was the Chairperson of the Gala. And of course the hall was beautifully decorated with spring flowers theme courtesy Sunita Sadhnani of Glamorous Event Planners. Evening started with lighting of the lamp. Shammi Singh Chairperson, of Gala in her remarks welcomed all the guests congratulated all the honorees and praised their efforts

in achieving such success. American National Anthem sung by Gurbani Kaur Sethi and Indian National Anthem sung by Roopam Maini. Master of Ceremonies Mr Anuj Rihal and Chanbir Kaur Sethi made the evening enjoyable. Chanbir Kaur, Roopam Maini, Rohini Singh, Isha Rihal and Inesha Singh coordinated a brief Q&A; A session with the honorees discussing and emphasizing their

accomplishments. Mr Sant Singh and Mrs. Daman Chatwal congratulated all honorees and acknowledged the efforts of IAF Team.

Five distinguished women **Sonia k Bain, Sylinthia Burges, Dr Subhadra Nori, Manu Saluja, Stephanie Benedictus** who had excelled in their profession and community services were presented with Outstanding Women's achievements Awards.

Indian Army warns Pakistan against targeting civilians along LoC

Indian posts and civilians in select areas of Krishna Ghati and Sunderbani along the LoC were targeted in "intense and unprovoked" firing by mortars and heavy artillery guns since Tuesday, an Indian defence ministry statement said.



(Agencies)- The Indian Army on Wednesday warned Pakistan of "dire consequences" after its troops targeted Indian posts and civilian areas along the Line of Control (LoC) with heavy artillery as Islamabad's chief military spokesman put the onus for de-

escalation on New Delhi. Indian posts and civilians in select areas of Krishna Ghati and Sunderbani along the LoC were targeted in "intense and unprovoked" firing by mortars and heavy artillery guns since Tuesday, an Indian defence

ministry statement said. The Indian Army retaliated effectively and there were no casualties on the Indian side, it added. The statement said the overall situation along the LoC was "relatively calm" after India warned the Pakistan Army "not

to target civilian areas". A spokesperson said, "All actions taken by our defence forces are targeted towards counter-terrorism and terrorist infrastructure, away from civilian areas...to avoid civilian casualties. "We are maintaining strict vigil along the LoC and international border. Any further provocation or misadventure by Pakistan will be responded in a befitting manner with dire consequences," the spokesperson added. Pakistan's chief military spokesman Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor told CNN the two sides "came close" to war and the release of captured Indian pilot, Wing commander Abhinandan Varthaman, had brought them back from the brink. It is now "up to India" to take up Pakistan's "peace gesture and move forward towards de-escalation", he

said. "We feel the ball is in the Indian court. Should they decide to escalate more, the situation will go bad," Ghafoor said. Troops from the two countries were "eyeball to eyeball" on the LoC, though both sides had put in place safeguards, he added. Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi had said last week the government was in touch with the Jaish-e-Mohammed, the terror group which claimed the February suicide attack at Pulwama that triggered the latest stand-off, but Ghafoor said this "claim has not been made from within Pakistan because JeM does not exist in Pakistan". Ghafoor said action is not being taken against JeM "under anybody's pressure". He said it is in Pakistan's interest to crack down on terrorists.

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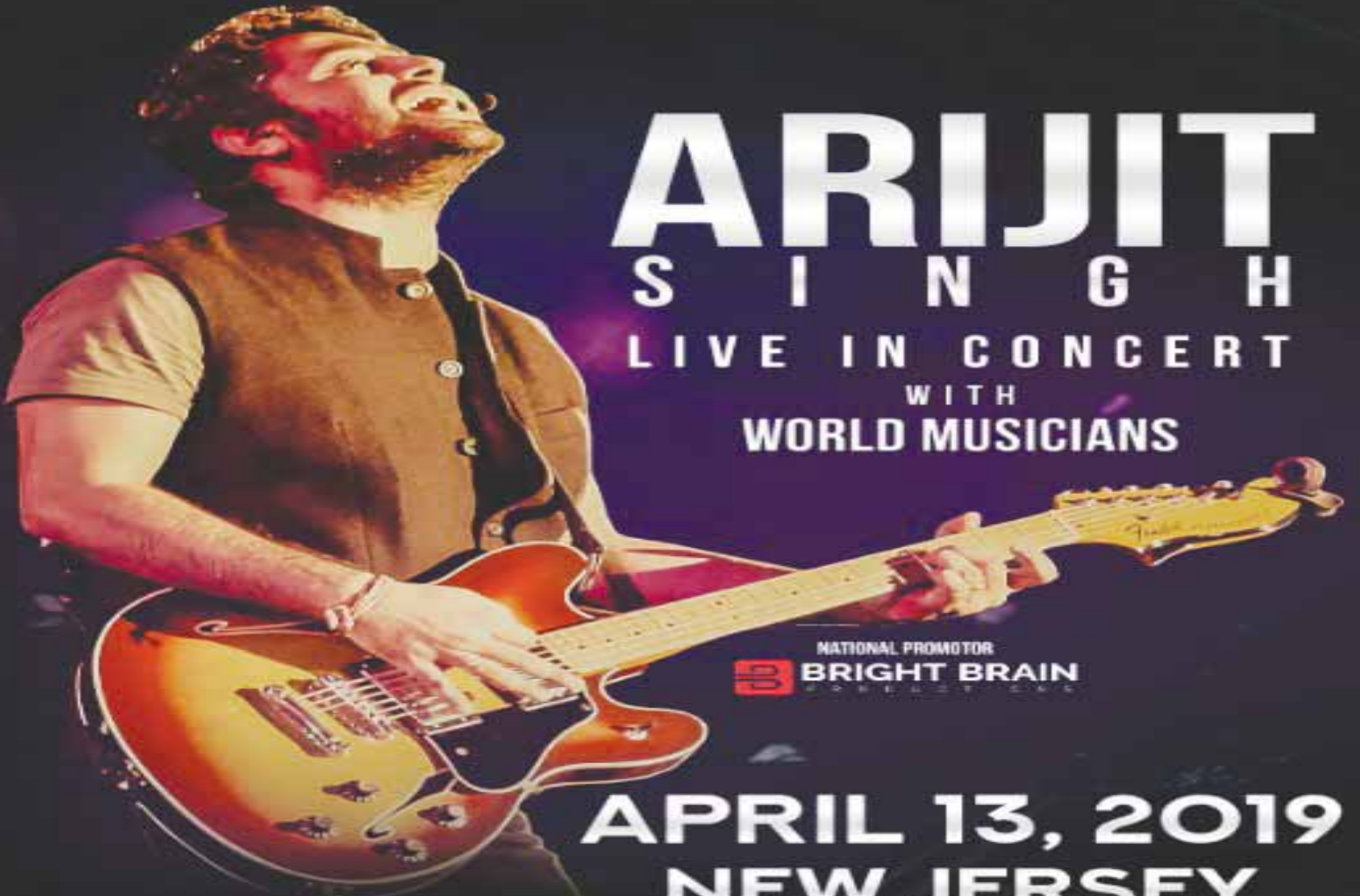
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Parliamentary panel asks Facebook to curb divisive posts on platforms

The panel, citing tensions between India and Pakistan following the February 14 Pulwama attack in Jammu and Kashmir that left at least 40 paramilitary troopers dead, is learnt to have asked Facebook to ensure there is no threat of information leakage though social media.



(By Our Staff Reporter)-A parliamentary panel on information technology on Wednesday asked social media giant Facebook to ensure that its platform and those of its photo-sharing site Instagram and messaging app WhatsApp are not misused to create divisions, incite violence, pose a threat to India's security, or let foreign powers meddle in the upcoming general election, people aware of the developments said. The panel also told Facebook, whose vice president for global public policy Joel Kaplan appeared before it on Wednesday, that protecting citizens' data was as much a priority as national security and asked the company to spell out in 10 days the steps it will take to meet the

objectives. According to a person aware of the development, Kaplan accepted that a need existed for corrective measures, which he said the company was ready to put in place. Kaplan, who was accompanied by Ajit Mohan, managing director of Facebook India, is learnt to have said the company would be in touch with the Election Commission and government ministries on information related to the identity and location of advertisers. The company said all information related to political advertisements will be put out on a special web page for users, the person said on the condition of anonymity. The panel, citing tensions between India and Pakistan following the February 14 Pulwama attack in Jammu and

Kashmir that left at least 40 paramilitary troopers dead, is learnt to have asked Facebook to ensure there is no threat of information leakage though social media. It is learnt that Facebook executives told the panel that it was a hybrid company, but could not give details about which regulatory framework could apply to its content, advertising and marketing operations in India. According to a second person, a few members referred to a UK parliamentary report on disinformation and fake news, which said the management structure of Facebook was opaque to those outside the business and seemed designed to conceal knowledge of and responsibility for specific decisions. A few members

also raised concerns over "speculative posts" put out by Facebook employees following the Pulwama attack and the subsequent strike carried out by the Indian airforce. When members pointed out that these posts had the potential to politicise a critical issue, Kaplan is learnt to have apologised. Panel members also raised the issue of pending complaints with the company. One member complained of having multiple accounts in his name. Kaplan said: "We are grateful to the honourable parliamentary committee for giving us the opportunity to show how we are preparing for the Indian elections and helping keep people safe."

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Prince Charles charity strikes new pact for girls' education in India

(Insider Bureau)- A charity founded by Britain's Prince Charles on Wednesday announced a new partnership with British Telecom (BT) to launch a three-year programme to use digital technology to help improve education and life skills for adolescent girls in India. British Asian Trust, founded by the royal in 2007 to fight poverty in South Asia, said the pact with one of the UK's leading telecom companies will explore the different ways technology can be used to break down social barriers and help enhance employability, health choices and autonomy for the target group of largely young girls in India. The programme will work in and around BT's India operations in Delhi, Gurugram, Bengaluru, and Kolkata, with the aim to help improve the education opportunities, health and skills of around 500,000 young

people. "The world of work has changed enormously during the 30 years BT has been in India. We recognise that digital technologies have the potential to transform opportunities for this and future generations of girls," said BT Group Chief Executive Philip Jansen. "We're delighted to be partnering with the British Asian Trust to deliver sustainable social impacts, and hope to galvanise our team of 10,500 BT people based in India to support this programme," he said. Working with innovators and sector leaders, the new partnership hopes to create a sustainable movement for change that will increase the opportunities available to girls between the ages of 10 and 19. According to official estimates, India's population includes 120 million adolescent girls, which is about 10 per cent of the population. The British Asian Trust notes from its work with local partners that many

of these girls have little control over their own futures and face multiple barriers to fulfilling their potential. The data indicates that India has the highest rate of teen pregnancy globally and 18 per cent of girls drop out before they finish secondary school; furthermore, 27 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 are married before the age of 18. Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive of the British Asian Trust, said: "At the British Asian Trust, we pride ourselves on taking an innovative approach to tackling development challenges. Brokering partnerships and promoting economic development through scalable solutions is at the heart of what we do. "We're delighted to find a partner in BT who shares this vision and excited to be working together with them on a programme that will directly improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of adolescent girls across India." The BT-British



Asian Trust partnership will work with partners on the ground to deliver the programme. Some of the organisations chosen include Breakthrough, which will work through schools as well as the government health system and communities to ensure that young women and men adopt positive gender norms to tackle gender-based discrimination. It will use digital media and tech to sensitise communities and girls about gender roles and health and hygiene services, and train teachers and frontline health

workers to improve services for girls. IT for Change will work with girls in schools through workshops and classroom-based training in rights-based perspectives on gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, and digital literacy. This will include creating digital labs in schools to train girls as well as teachers, and video clubs that enable girls to create digital learning materials that will be used for peer learning among other girls in Bengaluru.

Government's counter to Rafale plea: Papers were stolen

Arguing for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, attorney general KK Venugopal said at an open court hearing that the "documents relied on by the petitioners in their review petitions were stolen from the ministry and should not be relied on".

(Insider Bureau)- Brandishing the British-era Official Secrets Act, the government's top legal officer on Wednesday demanded that the Supreme Court turn down petitions seeking a review of its own December verdict rejecting a probe of the Rafale jet fighter deal, saying the petitioners' case rested on stolen papers acquired from "present or former employees" of the defence ministry.

Arguing for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, attorney general KK Venugopal said at an open court hearing that the "documents relied on by the petitioners in their review petitions were stolen from the ministry and should not be relied on".

"It's a criminal act on the part of petitioners to bring these documents with them. They have come with unclean hands," Venugopal said. "Defence is the most important matter of state and national security. They have been illegally obtained and the source

is not disclosed by the petitioners. It's a privileged document. These documents have made the cost of weapons public and has been taken from notes and has been put in the petition." The court questioned the attorney general's proposition on stolen documents. Justice KM Josph, part of the bench hearing the case, said, "There were allegations of corruption in the Bofors [gun deal of 1986] case. Now will you say the same thing that the criminal court should not look into any such document in the case? Here we have an open system. Are you going to take shelter under national security when the allegation is of grave crime or corruption?"

Justice SK Kaul, too, deflected the attorney's argument, saying if the document had been stolen the government should put its house in order. "It is one thing to say that these documents must be looked at with suspicion. But to say that we cannot even look at those documents may not be correct submission in law."

Chief Justice of India Gogoi said:

"We can understand the government saying that the petitioners have come with unclean hands and that they have got the documents through doubtful sources. But it is another thing to say that the court cannot consider them at all and that they are untouchable." Former Union ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie, and lawyer Prashant Bhushan have filed a petition seeking a review of the Supreme Court's December verdict, which found that there was "no occasion to doubt" the decision-making process behind the 2016 purchase of 36 jet fighters from Dassault Aviation of France in a ₹59,000 crore deal.

The petition says that the information that came into the public domain after the court's judgment proved that the government had "misled" the court on various counts.

Venugopal told the three-judge bench that the government may invoke the Official Secrets Act, a colonial era law that makes possession of secret official documents punishable with three



to 14 years of imprisonment. He said it also plans to prosecute the newspapers that published the documents along with Bhushan, who has relied on them. One document is an eight-page dissent note written by three domain experts in the Indian negotiating team that has already been published by The Hindu newspaper. Advocate Bhushan countered the attorney general's argument, saying that in past he had relied on documents given to him by whistle-blowers in the case related to alleged irregularities in the 2008 allocation of 2G telecom spectrum and licences and also the entry register at the residence

of former Central Bureau of Investigation director Ranjit Sinha, and the court had relied on these documents. The Centre also urged the Supreme Court to "exercise restraint" in its observations on the procurement of Rafale fighter jets, underlining that every statement by the top court will be used to target either the government or the Opposition. "Would it be appropriate for the court to decide an issue which will be used for political purpose? Any single sentence that falls from the court will destabilise either the government or the Opposition. All I am saying is exercise restraint," the attorney general said.



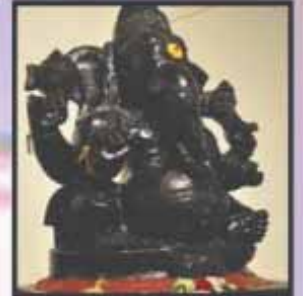
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Pak intel used JeM for attacks in India during my tenure: Musharraf

(Insider Bureau)- Former Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf has in an interview said that the Masood Azhar-led Jaish-e-Mohammad was instrumental in carrying out attacks on Indian soil during his tenure as head of the state.

In a telephonic interview given to Pakistan-based journalist Nadeem Malik, Musharraf welcomed the action being taken against the Jaish-e-Mohammad and said that it was the same organisation that had carried out two assassination attempts on him when he was president of Pakistan. A 2-minute clip of the interview was put out on Twitter on Malik's handle on March 5, 2019.

"This is a good move. I have always said that the JeM is a terrorist organisation and they only had carried out a suicide attack in an attempt to assassinate me. Action should be taken against them. I am happy the government is

taking a tough stand against them," he said. During his tenure as president, Musharraf had survived two assassination attempts. A suicide bomber had attempted to assassinate General Pervez Musharraf in December 2003 at Jhanda Chichi in Rawalpindi. Recalling the incident, Musharraf said that it was fortunate that he wasn't killed in the attempt.

"The attacker pressed the button a few seconds too late and I had crossed the bridge by that time," Musharraf said, adding that the action against the JeM was a right action and that it should have been done earlier.

Responding to a question as to why he himself had not taken any action against the Jaish leadership and the organisation when he was in power, Musharraf suggested that Pakistan's intelligence agencies were using the Jaish to carry out bombings in India.

"Those were different times. Our intelligence men were involved in a tit-for-tat between India and Pakistan. They were conducting bomb blasts in Pakistan and we were getting it done there (in India). This was continuing at that time and amid all of this, no major action was taken against the Jaish. And I also did not insist," Musharraf said.

On Tuesday, the Imran Khan-led Pakistan government ordered the detention of terrorist Masood Azhar's brother Abdul Rauf Asghar and 43 others linked to banned outfits in the country. The order for their detention was issued on Tuesday after a high-level meeting to review

the National Action Plan (NAP). The Pakistan government's move comes barely 10 days after an Indian air force strike on a Jaish-e-Mohammad training facility at Balakot in Pakistan on February 26. Pakistan is on a tight deadline with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) nudging it to stop terror funding and to act against the terror organisations operating



on its soil. In case Pakistan fails to keep its promises, it might find itself being moved from the 'grey' list to the 'black' list, making it even more difficult for Pakistan to get funding from international organisations such as the World Bank.

The Indian Air Force strike at Balakot had come barely 13 days after a suicide bombing at Pulwama had killed 40 CRPF jawans.

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1 suspected Maoist killed in gun battle with police in Kerala

Police said the exchange of fire continued till early hours of Thursday and they recovered the body of a suspected Maoist leader, who was later identified as CP Jaleel.

A suspected Maoist was killed and two others were injured in a gun battle with police in a forested area in Vythiri of Kerala's Wayanad district late on Wednesday, officials said on Thursday. Police said the exchange of fire continued till early hours of Thursday and they recovered the body of a suspected Maoist leader, who was later identified as CP Jaleel. One of the suspected Maoists, who was injured in the firing, is in police custody. Police said members of the rebel group came to a resort on Wednesday night to extort money and sought food for ten people. When they threatened to take the resort's guests as hostages, employees informed the police who

rushed to the spot. When police reached the report, they came under heavy firing from the rebels. Police said the death toll is likely to go up as many rebels were wounded in the firing and that they will search the forest areas for them. Senior officers have directed commandos of Thunderbolt, the special force to deal with Maoists, to proceed cautiously to avoid booby traps or mines in the forest. According to officials, some 'dalams' of the Western Ghats Zonal Committee of the Maoists have been active in the area and they noticed the movement of some of their senior leaders. Two years ago, two Maoists were killed in an ambush in the district.



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'Enough proof to prosecute PM'

Rahul Gandhi renews attack over Rafale row

Leading the party's charge, Rahul Gandhi alleged "the trail of corruption" in the Rafale fighter jet deal "begins and ends with" Modi.

(By a Staff Reporter) - The Congress Wednesday sought registration of an FIR against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "corruption" in the Rafale fighter jet deal, with party president Rahul Gandhi claiming that there "is now enough evidence" to prosecute him.

Leading the party's charge, Gandhi alleged "the trail of corruption" in the Rafale fighter jet deal "begins and ends with" Modi.

He also alleged "destruction of evidence" and "obvious cover-up" after the government told the Supreme Court on Wednesday that crucial files pertaining to the fighter jet deal with French firm Dassault Aviation were "stolen" from the Defence Ministry.

"There is now enough evidence to prosecute the PM in the Rafale Scam. The trail of corruption begins & ends with him. That crucial Rafale files incriminating him are now reported 'stolen' by the Govt, is destruction of evidence & an obvious coverup," he said on Twitter, using the hashtag "FIRagainstCorruptModi".

The Congress chief's attack came on a day the government said in the Supreme Court that documents related to the Rafale fighter jet deal have been stolen from the Defence Ministry and

threatened The Hindu newspaper with action under the Official Secrets Act for publishing articles based on them.

"The corruption and malfeasance in Rafale deal is out in the open. PM Modi misused his office to give benefits to Dassault Aviation and caused loss to the public exchequer," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala told reporters.

"It is now crystal clear that blatant and massive corruption has taken place in the Rafale deal. It is undoubtedly established that Modi misused his office as Prime Minister to grant undue benefit to Dassault Aviation and caused a loss to public exchequer.

"This is a clear cut case under Section 13 (1) (d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and different provisions of Indian Penal Code. Time has now come to register an FIR against PM Modi and every other individual so that a time-bound investigation takes place in this entire saga of Rafale corruption reaching the highest echelons of power," he said.

Citing a report of the Indian Negotiation Team (INT), now in the public domain, Surjewala said it was now crystal clear that Modi "misled Parliament and duped the country to cover up the

murky dealings and blatant corruption, besides, squandering away national security interests".

"This conspiracy has now been uncovered," he said, alleging that Modi did away with the 'bank guarantee' condition to cause a loss to the public exchequer and neither was the cost of India-specific enhancements included and nor was the cost of transfer of technology added.

The Congress has claimed that the cost of 36 Rafale aircraft finalised by the Modi dispensation was higher than that negotiated by the previous UPA government.

He said while calculating the price of 36 Rafale aircraft, the cost of India-specific enhancement, which is 1,300 Million Euros or Rs 9,750 crore, was not included. "Almost Rs 10,000 crore have to be paid and look at the angle of corruption further. When we were buying with the same specifications 126 Rafale aircraft during Congress Party regime, the cost of India-specific enhancements with same specification was 11.11 Million Euros or around Rs 82-83 crore. It has suddenly gone up...same India-specific enhancements...when Modi Ji buys 36 aircraft, it goes up 350 per cent to Rs 271 crore per aircraft.



US says it played 'essential role' in de-escalating India-Pakistan tensions

The United States said Tuesday it had played an "essential role" in de-escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

(By a Staff Reporter) - The United States said Tuesday it had played an "essential role" in de-escalating tensions on the sub-continent and that it continues to follow "very closely" reports that Pakistan used American-made military hardware - F-16s and missiles - in a retaliatory strike against India.

Phone calls by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Indian and Pakistani leaders last week "played an essential role in de-escalating tensions between the two sides", state department spokesperson Robert Palladino told reporters in response to a question at the daily briefing.

While in Hanoi, Vietnam for the second US-North Korean summit, Pompeo had spoken to

India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and NSA Ajit Doval and Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. These conversations took place after the Indian airstrike against a Jaish-e-Mohammad camp in Balakot, Pakistan, and after the Pakistani retaliatory action which resulted in the capture of Indian air force pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman.

It was on the morning after Pompeo's calls that President Donald Trump had said at a news conference in Hanoi that he had some "reasonably decent" news from India and Pakistan.

He didn't elaborate, but hours later, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced that Pakistan would release Varthaman as a "gesture

of peace" to India. Supporters of the prime minister have since said he deserves the Nobel Peace prize for it, unmindful of the international pressure that forced him to it.

The United States was slow to respond to the Pulwama attack - as was widely noted among experts and observers here - as its top officials reached Hanoi for the summit with North Korea's Kim Jong-un, a key foreign policy initiative of the Trump administration. But it was unequivocal of its support for India from the start and Pakistan's role in the attack calling upon it to deny safe haven to terrorists in line with its responsibilities as a member of the UN in multiple statements thereafter.

And as India weighed options on who to respond to the terrorists attack, with a military strike among them, American NSA John Bolton announced publicly he had conveyed to his Indian counterpart

US acknowledgment of India's right to self-defense.

The United States, along with other P-5 members France and Britain, pushed the UN Security Council to condemn the Pulwama attack in a "pathbreaking" statement that named Jaish-e-Mohammad and scored several firsts, despite stiff resistance from China.

Washington has since joined a French-led initiative at the UNSC, along with the United Kingdom, to designate JeM founder and leader Masood Azhar as a terrorist. This is the fourth such attempt, the previous

three were all foiled by China, battling for Pakistan. There is talk of a "Plan B" if Beijing blocked this move as well.

Palladino said "high-level contact has continued" both in New Delhi and Washington and "there's a lot of private diplomacy that's going on right now".

The spokesperson also said, in response to a question, the United States continues to follow "very closely" issues linked to Pakistan's use of F-16 and AMRAAMs (Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles). But he refused to elaborate saying that as a "matter of policy, we don't publicly comment on the contents of bilateral agreements that we have in this regard involving US defense technologies nor the communications that we have with other countries about that."

Yes, There's a Crisis at the Border

We interrupt the talk of the president "manufacturing" a crisis at the border with this hair-raising report about the crisis at the border.

Alarming new numbers about border apprehensions from U.S. Customs and Border Protection should puncture the lazy conventional wisdom about the border being under control, except in the lurid imagination of President Donald Trump.

All during the fight over a border wall, we were told by the media and progressives commentators

that the border is practically locked down because apprehensions are down from highs in the 2000s. Along with almost every other critic of the president, Steve Schmidt was outraged that "the president of the United States would manufacture out of whole cloth this crisis."

Being anti-Trump means never having to say you are sorry or you were wrong, so the latest evidence won't make an impression on anyone who blithely dismissed the idea of border crisis. But it should.

More than 76,000 migrants were apprehended crossing the southern border last month, the highest February in more than 10 years and the highest month of the Trump administration. The number of apprehensions tops any month during the 2014 border surge under President Barack Obama, which no one had a problem calling a crisis at the time.

Every indication is that the situation is going to get worse. We could be about to experience a migrant surge

worthy of Angela Merkel at her most open-handed, even though, in immigration terms, Viktor Orbán-the Hungarian prime minister who favors tough border enforcement-is president.

The commentary and fact-checks about there being no crisis have missed, or deliberately ignored, the changing nature of border apprehensions.

Yes, there were more overall apprehensions in the 2000s. But it was a different population, made up overwhelmingly of adult males from Mexico who might be apprehended trying to cross multiple times and were reliably returned home when they were caught. Now, we are apprehending people but not returning them.

Justin Trudeau tries to save face

He admitted to urging his former attorney general to reach an out-of-court settlement with a company from his home turf facing corruption charges. But he repeatedly said it was all in the name of protecting jobs and pensioners. "I continue to say there was no inappropriate pressure," he said. "There was no breakdown of our system, of the rule of law, of the integrity of our institutions." The damage from his former attorney general's accusations has been swift and significant. The fallout has divided Trudeau's party, cost him two cabinet members, prompted two parliamentary probes, forced the

resignation of a top aide and friend, and sent his personal poll numbers plummeting with an election months away. "This has been a tough few weeks," Trudeau said. Trudeau's version of events is that he simply stated to his former Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould the fact that the Quebec-based construction company, SNC-Lavalin, is a major employer. He also noted at the press conference that a leading public pension fund owns part of the company that is in legal jeopardy. "I wish she had come forward to me in the fall subsequent to that meeting to highlight that" she felt it was inappropriate that we continued

to discuss the matter throughout the fall, Trudeau said. "She did not." While Trudeau largely stuck to the points he wanted to make, he appeared less stiff than in recent public appearances where he was repeatedly peppered with questions about his handling of the affair. Trudeau repeatedly evaded stating whether he or his staff brought up both his and Quebec Liberals' electoral prospects during conversations with Wilson-Raybould, saying "there were detailed conversations on a broad range of things that were discussed" and "laid bare" in the testimonies of the last few days.

Rahul leads Opposition in backing expose on Rafale deal

Climate of fear: Naidu "Instead of coming clean on the alleged irregularities of the Rafale deal brought out by The Hindu and Mr. N. Ram, the Modi govt. is trying to silence the press through unconstitutional means by creating a climate of fear. It signals an imminent possibility of the breakdown of democracy," Mr. Naidu tweeted.

Ms. Banerjee said in a post on Twitter, "I strongly condemn threats by BJP govt. to one of India's most senior & respected editors, N. Ram. Invoking Official Secrets Act to threaten journalists is a shame. They cannot curb freedom & rights of the press as per their convenience."

On Wednesday, Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal told the Supreme Court that the "secret" documents published by The Hindu on the purchase of Rafale jets were "stolen" from the

Ministry of Defence, probably by former employees. The government was thinking of taking "criminal action" under the OSA as the publication of the documents had put national security at risk, he contended.

BSP chief Mayawati said the Rafale issue had now become more than just an issue of corruption and instead a matter of national security following the government's "sensational disclosure" that documents had been stolen.

"Very strange & irresponsible chowkidari. Is national security & interest in safe hands? Think long & loud," Ms. Mayawati tweeted. Addressing a press conference at the Congress headquarters, Mr. Gandhi said parallel negotiations by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had not only delayed the delivery of the combat jets but also inflated the price.

'It gets real personal, real fast': Dems fear targeting Trump kids could backfire

Democrats, in fact, would prefer to let federal prosecutors handle the family while they take on the president themselves. Yet Trump's family members - including Donald Jr., Eric, Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner - are so deeply involved in his business and presidency that it likely would be impossible to take a completely hands-off approach. "Getting to family members I think is dangerous," said Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), a senior member of the House Oversight and Reform Committee. "Only because it gets real personal, real fast. And it risks backfiring." "Maybe at some point we have to call them in," Connolly added, "but I'd rather let prosecutors look at that." Those concerns have more to do with political optics than investigative necessities: Democrats fear that the appearance of going after

Trump's children is the one thing that could elicit sympathy for a president who has attacked Democratic investigations as "a big, fat, fishing expedition desperately in search of a crime" and "presidential harassment."

A Democratic source said Oversight Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) has privately expressed reservations about directly investigating Trump's adult children. Last week, Cummings said the committee would follow up on all potential leads from former Trump attorney Michael Cohen's bombshell testimony before the panel. Cummings is expected to seek interviews with individuals implicated in Cohen's testimony.

Cummings declined to comment. The Oversight panel is battling with the White House over the process for approving Kushner's security clearance, including whether Trump

intervened in getting the clearance approved. The White House has refused to turn over documents related to Kushner's clearance, and the committee is likely to issue a subpoena as early as next week, according to Democratic sources. Ivanka Trump could soon find herself ensnared in that probe, the Oversight chief said. Moreover, the House Judiciary Committee has demanded documents from Kushner, Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump and dozens of others as part of a sweeping probe into allegations of obstruction of justice, corruption and abuses of power. Cohen gave lawmakers a road map for their myriad investigations into Trump and his inner circle. He name-dropped several individuals who purportedly have knowledge of crimes Cohen has pleaded guilty to and crimes that he said the president committed.

Ex-Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano and wife Linda found guilty in bribery case

that alleged he swung to Singh a lucrative contract to provide bread and rolls to the county jail, and a second contract to feed the county's emergency workers after Hurricane Sandy. But he could still go to prison for two decades under the one top-count conviction. The same jury found Linda guilty of four of the five counts against her: two for obstructing justice and two for making false statements, all to cover up the bribe scheme. Ed was also convicted of a single obstruction charge. She, too, faces a potential two-decade prison term. Their sentencing date has not yet been set. The two are maintaining their innocence, and said they will

appeal the verdicts in the case, which proved an embarrassment for Mayor de Blasio. At both this trial and last year's mistrial, Singh testified under a cooperation agreement that he was a big donor and had the mayor at his beck-and-call. Outside the courthouse with his sobbing wife by his side, a seemingly shaken Ed told reporters Linda should never have been charged, and denied ever illegally taking money from anyone. "That is very hurtful to us, right through the heart. Hurtful that Linda has to go through any of this," he said. "I'm very proud of my service as county executive and I would not, and could not, be bribed."



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Democrats blast Nielsen over border policies

(Insider Bureau)- House Democrats on Wednesday sparred with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen over whether illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border justifies the national emergency declared last month by President Donald Trump. During a three-hour hearing before the House Homeland Security Committee, Democratic lawmakers also pressed Nielsen over the administration's practice of separating families. Thousands of migrant families were split apart from April to June under Trump's "zero tolerance" enforcement strategy. Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) slammed Nielsen for

not providing the committee with documents related to family separation and the treatment of children in custody. He also asserted that Trump used "an emergency that does not exist" to obtain funds for a border wall outside the will of Congress.

"The president wants to build a wall so there is something to point to," he said.

The hearing comes amid a pitched political battle over Trump's decision to declare a national emergency after Congress declined to provide \$5.7 billion to build a border wall. The House voted last week to block the emergency declaration, and the Senate is expected to do the same later this month. Trump has said he will veto the bill, and neither the House nor the Senate appears to have sufficient votes to override.

A spate of lawsuits have argued that Trump exceeded his authority by declaring the emergency. While plaintiffs in those cases have sought to block

Trump's declaration, no courts have taken that step yet.

In opening remarks at the hearing Wednesday, Nielsen said that the situation along the southern border is a "humanitarian catastrophe," and described the area as a conduit for criminals, drugs and human trafficking.

"This chain of human misery is getting worse," she said, citing recent statistics that show a spike in border arrests, a metric used to estimate crossings.

Border Patrol arrested 66,450 migrants at the southwest border in February, the highest single-month total since March 2009. Since October, monthly arrests have averaged 53,600, the highest rate since 2008 but still far below arrest rates in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In one exchange Wednesday, Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.) pressed Nielsen to acknowledge that the current level of arrests remains far below historic highs - and that Trump spoke falsely when he said during a January visit to South Texas that there

have "never [been] so many apprehensions ever in our history."

Langevin cited Customs and Border Protection statistics that show 1.6 million border arrests in fiscal year 2000 - far above the 397,000 arrests recorded last year.

Nielsen said she did not "know the full context" of Trump's statement, and emphasized instead that arrests of family members have reached the highest level on record. CBP has been tracking such records only since fiscal 2012.

"In some categories," Nielsen said, "we have had record-breaking apprehensions."

Langevin, though, slammed Trump's claims as "deceitful." White House officials watched Nielsen's appearance closely and were pleased with it, saying she did a stellar job representing the administration.

"She held her own," one former DHS official who served under Trump told POLITICO. "It's tough [because] Trump speaks in

generalist terms and committees deal in specifics."

Nielsen also won accolades from House Republicans, several of whom praised Trump's emergency declaration.

"I think it is a crisis," said Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas), who chaired the committee in the last session of Congress. "I think the president's correct in saying it's an emergency and that we need dire action now." McCaul added that Nielsen shouldn't shoulder responsibility for the continued arrival of migrants at the border because U.S. asylum laws serve as a "magnet" for people trekking to the U.S.

"It's not your fault," he told Nielsen. "It's Congress that's failed to act to solve this problem." Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), ranking member of the committee, said he supported an "all of the above" approach to border security that includes manpower, technology and barriers.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg outlines new 'privacy-focused vision'

(Insider Bureau)- Embroiled in too many data scandals to count, Facebook now says it's shifting toward a 'privacy-focused' future. In lengthy blog post on Wednesday, CEO Mark Zuckerberg detailed a plan to bring end-to-end encryption to Messenger, WhatsApp, and Instagram messaging services - confirming previous reports that the firm planned to stitch the three together.

The Facebook boss acknowledged the site's reputation, which has been tarnished in recent years as a result of its lax-approach to the protection of its users' information, and promised to rebuild its services on the principle of privacy.

Zuckerberg also said he's working to ensure your online activity won't come back to haunt you later in life.

Ultimately, the CEO says the firm is striving to make interactions across Facebook 'a

fundamentally more private experience.'

I believe the future of communication will increasingly shift to private, encrypted services where people can be confident what they say to each other stays secure and their messages and content won't stick around forever,' Zuckerberg wrote in the March 6 post.

'This is the future I hope we will help bring about.'

The Facebook CEO's post detailing his 'privacy-focused vision' comes just days after a tweet from Emojipedia founder Jeremy Burge revealed the site allows users to search for specific profiles using phone numbers provided for two-factor authentication.

And, just a week prior, a Wall Street Journal investigation revealed Facebook has been collecting 'highly sensitive information' from at least a dozen apps without users'

consent.

In perhaps its best-known privacy scandal, Facebook came under fire in 2018 when it was revealed political consultancy firm Cambridge Analytica was given access to the data of 87 million users.

Zuckerberg is now promising to apply the same privacy principles it used in WhatsApp to all of its services moving forward.

In a multi-year plan, Zuckerberg says Facebook will merge its messaging services - WhatsApp, Instagram Direct, and Facebook Messenger - in a way that allows users to communicate across all three apps.

All will be equipped with end-to-end encryption to keep out anyone who isn't the intended reader, including 'hackers, criminals, over-reaching governments, or even the people operating the services they're



using,' Zuckerberg said.

While WhatsApp already has end-to-end encryption, Facebook's other messaging platforms do not.

Facebook and Instagram will still operate like 'the digital equivalent of a town square,' allowing users to openly share content as they choose, the CEO said.

'I understand that many people don't think Facebook can or would even want to build this kind

of privacy-focused platform -- because frankly we don't currently have a strong reputation for building privacy protective services, and we've historically focused on tools for more open sharing,' Zuckerberg said.

'But we've repeatedly shown that we can evolve to build the services that people really want, including in private messaging and stories.'

Getting the chop! Dollar Tree to close nearly 400 Family Dollar stores and rebrand 200 more after reporting losses of \$2.3 BILLION

(Insider Bureau)- Dollar Tree Inc has announced plans to close 390 Family Dollar stores after reporting losses of \$2.3 billion.

The company announced the plans as it wrote off \$2.7 billion, or nearly a third of the value of the struggling discount chain it bought for \$9 billion four years ago.

It also announced 200 other stores will be rebranded under the Dollar Tree name.

Though Family Dollar has remodeled some stores and expanded its product range, same-store sales growth has been nearly flat on average in the past two years, pushing down the parent company's shares seven per cent in the last 12 months.

CNBC reports that on an unadjusted basis the company had a fourth-quarter loss of \$2.31

billion.

The company said it would shut 390 Family Dollar stores, besides planned remodeling of 1,000 stores this year to add \$1-only items. Dollar Tree had already closed 122 Family Dollar stores in the fiscal year ending February 2.

Chief Executive Officer Gary Philbin said in Wednesday's statement: 'We are confident we are taking the appropriate steps to reposition our Family Dollar brand for increasing profitability as business initiatives gain traction in the back half of fiscal 2019.'

The rebranded locations will reportedly get expanded freezer sections and even sell alcohol. They will also reportedly include a \$1 Dollar Tree merchandise section.

Dollar Tree Inc. acquired Family Dollar in 2015 for

almost \$9 billion. The move was expected to bolster its business and better compete with chains like Walmart and rival Dollar General Corp.

Hedge fund investor Starboard Value LP in January urged Dollar Tree to explore all alternatives for its Family Dollar business, including a sale, after years of weakness that has hurt the company's overall profitability.

The Chesapeake, Virginia-based company, which took a \$2.73 billion one-time charge for the decline in the chain's value in the fourth quarter, also said it would explore pricing some goods above the \$1-mark, as Starboard has demanded.

Jeffrey Smith, CEO of Starboard Value, wrote to the company in January,



saying: 'Dollar Tree significantly overpaid for Family Dollar, and this business is proving to be a meaningful distraction.'

Shares of the company rose two per cent as it reported better-than-expected fourth-quarter same-store sales, along with the results of its full strategic assessment of the Family Dollar

business.

Same-store sales rose 1.4 percent at the smaller chain in the fourth quarter, the strongest in a year and pushing overall numbers up 2.4 percent, above an average analyst estimate of 1.5 percent rise, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.

The restructuring will weigh on operating income in the

first half of 2019 fiscal year, it said, but lead to material improvement in the second half.

The company forecast first quarter earnings of \$1.05-\$1.15 per share, below analysts' expectation of \$1.29 per share. It said its forecast takes into account a possible rise in U.S. tariff on Chinese products to 25 percent in 2019.

U.S. trade deficit in goods hits record high of \$891 billion in 2018 despite Trump's pledge to reduce the gap

(Insider Bureau)- The U.S. goods trade deficit surged to a record high in 2018 as strong domestic demand fueled by lower taxes pulled in imports, despite the Trump administration's 'America First' policies, including tariffs, aimed at shrinking the trade gap.

President Donald Trump is pursuing a protectionist trade agenda to shield U.S. manufacturing from what he says is unfair foreign competition.

Trump, who has dubbed himself 'the tariff man,' pledged on both the campaign trail and as president to reduce the deficit by shutting out more unfairly traded imports and renegotiating free trade agreements.

The Commerce Department said on Wednesday that a 12.4 per cent jump in the goods

deficit in December had contributed to the record \$891.3 billion goods trade shortfall last year. The overall trade deficit surged 12.5 per cent to \$621.0 billion in 2018, the largest since 2008.

'The trade deficit exploded last year despite the Trump administration efforts to make America great again, and the trend is unlikely to get any better in 2019,' said Chris Rupkey chief economist at MUFG in New York.

The White House has argued that reducing the trade deficit would boost its goal of 3 percent on a sustainable basis. The government also sought to stimulate the economy with a \$1.5 trillion tax cut package, which jolted both consumer and business spending, helping to lift imported goods to a record

\$2.6 trillion in 2018.

The United States last year imposed tariffs on \$250 billion worth of goods imported from China, with Beijing hitting back with duties on \$110 billion worth of American products, including soybeans and other commodities. Trump has delayed tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports as negotiations to resolve the eight-month trade war continue.

Businesses likely stocked up on imports in anticipation of further duties on Chinese goods, which ironically contributed to the deterioration in the trade deficit last year.

The goods trade deficit with China increased 11.6 percent to an all-time high of \$419.2 billion in 2018. The United States, which also slapped duties on imported steel, aluminum, solar panels and washing

machines, had record imports from 60 countries in 2018, led by China, Mexico and Germany.

'Perhaps Donald Trump will now discover that tweets and bluster alone won't dramatically shrink the trade deficit,' said Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing in Washington.

'The administration's fiscal policies have helped to boost the trade deficit.' While goods exports hit a record \$1.7 trillion in 2018, they declined in the last three months of the year, weighed by the U.S.-China trade dispute, slowing global demand and a strong dollar, which is making American-made goods less competitive on the international market. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies, while U.S.

Treasury prices rose. Stocks on Wall Street were trading lower as investors awaited fresh developments on the trade negotiations.

Economists expect exports to remain weak even if Washington and Beijing strike a trade deal. 'That will take time and if the Chinese growth is as soft as most economists believe, it is hard to see how they can ramp up demand for U.S. products very much this year,' said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pennsylvania.

A 1.9 percent drop in exports of goods and services drove the trade deficit in December to \$59.8 billion, the largest since October 2008. Imports of goods and services increased 2.1 percent to \$264.9 billion in

December.

When adjusted for inflation, the goods trade deficit surged \$10.0 billion to a record \$91.6 billion in December.

The jump in the so-called real goods trade deficit suggests that the drag from trade on fourth-quarter gross domestic product growth was probably bigger than the 0.22 percentage point estimated by the government last week. Economists expect the government will revise down fourth-quarter GDP growth to a 2.3 percent annualized rate from the 2.6 percent it reported last Thursday.

Other data on Wednesday suggested some slowing in the labor market, though the pace of job gains remains more than enough to drive the unemployment rate down.



Awkward: How Trump's past donations could haunt 2020 Dems

He was an unapologetic imperialist, who believed that India could never become a nation, that Indians should remain forever under the British yoke.

(Insider Bureau)- Donations from Trump and his family add another wrinkle to a Democratic primary where candidates are trumpeting their distance from the president. Kamala Harris received money from Donald Trump as recently as six years ago. Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner hosted a Park Avenue fundraiser for Cory Booker. Kirsten Gillibrand took in Trump family donations three times across a seven-year period - and then gave a similar amount of money to a nonprofit years later after the president mocked her in a tweet.

As the president gears up for his re-election fight, donor records show that six of the declared or potential Democrats itching to take him on have themselves been the beneficiaries of his - or his daughter's - largesse. Harris, Booker and Gillibrand - along with Joe Biden, John Kerry and Terry McAuliffe - all share a common bond of receiving Trump family donations, adding another wrinkle to a crowded primary where candidates are expected to trumpet their distance from the president.

An ideological shapeshifter whose decades in the public eye have spanned stints as a Republican, Democrat, Reform Party candidate and independent, Trump has donated across the spectrum from the establishment left to the far right. The recipients include both Senate Minority Leader Chuck

Schumer (D-N.Y.) and politically exiled Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa). Many of Donald Trump's donations fall into two categories: contributions to local pols and officials with whom he wanted to curry favor, or one-offs to prominent players on the national stage.

But he strayed outside his usual New York and New Jersey turf to give Harris two donations totaling \$6,000 in 2011 and 2013, when she was already considered a rising Democratic star as California attorney general.

Those were two of several contributions he made to state attorneys general who were investigating or had previously investigated Trump University.

Harris also landed \$2,000 from Ivanka Trump for her re-election campaign, and another \$2,000 from future Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin when she ran for Senate in 2016.

Trump historians who have studied his family and real estate career said he learned his political worldview from his father - and in a New York City industry where greasing politicians for favorable zoning exemptions or tax abatements was par for the course.

"This was completely irrespective of anything to do with principles, political perspectives," said Gwenda Blair, a Columbia University journalism professor who wrote "The Trumps: Three Generations That Built an

Empire." "It was about levers of power, period. And this has not changed. This has never changed."

Spokespeople for the Trump re-election campaign, Biden and McAuliffe declined to comment on the record. Other campaigns did not respond to multiple requests for comment. The Harris campaign told The Sacramento Bee that Harris gave away the \$6,000 from Donald Trump to a nonprofit in 2015 - and that she never met with him or gave him special treatment.

Whether their prior financial entanglements could surface as attack lines against Trump or any of these Democrats remains to be seen. In 2016, Trump won over crowds by insisting that his wealth inoculated him from undue external pressures. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) tried to turn Trump's contributions to Harris and other California Democrats into a cudgel, but Trump was already cruising to the nomination by the state's late primary.

During the primary campaign, in fact, Trump touted his donations to opponents. "It's interesting: I was looking at the ones I'm running against. I've contributed to most of them. Can you believe it?" he said in an Iowa stop. "I've given to Democrats. I've given to Hillary. I've given to everybody! Because that was my job. I gotta give to them. Because when I want something, I get it. When I

call, they kiss my ass." Clinton, on the other hand, took tremendous flak for her sources of money, and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) bashed her repeatedly for giving paid speeches to Wall Street firms. And with the Democratic Party's insurgency on the left this year - and a long list of contenders for the nomination - financial litmus tests could once again come into play.

Harris, for one - among the early front-runners and a lightning rod for some Twitter backers of Sanders - has attracted some negative liberal attention for her donations from Trump and Mnuchin. The Black Socialists of America tweeted disapprovingly; a meme popped up last month.

Nobody in the burgeoning Democratic 2020 field has taken as much from the Trumps as McAuliffe and Booker. McAuliffe landed \$25,000 from Trump in

his failed Virginia gubernatorial primary bid in 2009. (He won four years later.)

Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, now top advisers to the president, each sent Booker \$10,400 in 2013. They bundled \$41,000 and hosted a fundraiser for his Senate campaign that year.

Kushner hails from a prominent New Jersey Democratic family; his brother, Joshua, made identical donations to Booker. (Joshua Kushner has also given to former Rep. Beto O'Rourke and Rep. Seth Moulton, who are both considering White House runs.)

But in the wake of Trump's 2016 election, some Democrats began to look askance at the money they once took from his family.

In 2017, Booker reflected on the support from Ivanka Trump and Kushner in an interview with BuzzFeed's "Another Round" podcast. The headline:

Paris Jackson reacts to 'Leaving Neverland' accusations, urges calm: 'Chillax my dudes'



(Insider Bureau)- Michael Jackson's daughter, Paris, weighed in Thursday on the allegations made against her father in the Leaving Neverland documentary.

Jackson has been fairly mum on the HBO documentary, which details allegations of child molestation against the "King of Pop" by Wade Robson and James "Jimmy" Safechuck during their childhood. The late singer's family has vehemently denied the allegations. The 20-year-old's response came in a thread on Twitter, which began when she wrote that "injustices are frustrating," but encouraged others to instead try reacting calmly. In a follow-up tweet, she suggested that people should "think about the bigger picture." COREY FELDMAN DENIES MICHAEL JACKSON TOUCHED HIM INAPPROPRIATELY AMID 'LEAVING NEVERLAND'

MOLESTATION CLAIMS

But someone responded to the model's comment, telling her that "The bigger picture is your father's legacy ruined and his name smeared forever but whatever though." Jackson countered, posing whether "love and peace and trying to carry that message out" should be what they focused on instead.

"tabloids and lies are the bigger picture? I'll pray for you," she wrote. "No, they want to tear his name down and stop playing his music but it's cool like who cares that he died for this," the individual replied. Appearing to stick up for her father, Jackson wrote that "they do that to everyone with a good heart and tries to make a difference but do you really think that it's possible to tear his name down?"

"like do you truly believe they stand a chance?" she continued. "relax and have peace."

White Supremacists Have a New Strategy

Extremist groups, fearing a crackdown, have launched a stealthy propaganda offensive.

(Agencies)- American white supremacists are facing a dilemma: They want to share their hateful ideology, but they don't want to face the consequences. They want to find an audience for their racism and anti-Semitism, but they don't want to get caught. Under increased scrutiny from law enforcement and the media, how do they disseminate their racist ideas and recruit new members, but also limit the risk of doxing, firing and ostracism that comes with public exposure?

Within the past few months, they seem to have landed on an answer that keeps their groups in the spotlight while shielding the individual identities of their members: far more propaganda efforts and fewer pre-announced public events.

There's a very good chance you've seen a white supremacist flyer or banner in the past year. Data collected by the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism shows a staggering 182 percent increase of propaganda incidents in 2018,

with 1,187 cases reported, compared with 421 in 2017. This is the highest number of reported propaganda efforts on record.

And the messages are everywhere: Hanging from freeway overpasses, stuck to utility poles, plastered to shop windows or left on the windshields of parked cars. They're even found tucked into books inside neighborhood book swap boxes, libraries and book stores.

In 2018, white supremacist groups - most notably alt-right mainstays Identity Evropa and Patriot Front - continued to post propaganda on college and university campuses. These efforts, which were not insignificant, were overshadowed by the dramatic increase of their off-campus propaganda. Joined by the Loyal White Knights, a Nazified Klan group, they leveled their attention on urban areas, especially in California, Texas, Colorado, New York, Illinois, Florida and Virginia.

If you know what you're looking at, the white supremacists'

banners, stickers and flyers clearly convey racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. But the messaging is not always overtly hateful. Identity Evropa often posts flyers that appear to be innocuous paeans to Western European art. Patriot Front leans heavily on red, white and blue signage with mainstream conservative messaging, including "America First" and "Fake news - don't buy it." When they gather for events, Patriot Front members are far less circumspect about their racism, frequently shouting "Blood and Soil!" - a callback to a Nazi slogan.

The placement of propaganda is often calibrated to elicit a response from a specific community. One flyer campaign by the Daily Stormer Book Clubs, launched after right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones was de-platformed by social media sites, targeted Jewish institutions in multiple states with anti-Semitic flyers accusing Jews of censoring free speech. In another case, a Northern



California synagogue was threatened with flyers from the neo-Nazi Atomwaffen Division that warned, "There is no escaping the day of the rope," and "The kikes are all done!" And Jews aren't the only group that has been targeted. Throughout 2018, Patriot Front targeted LGBT resource centers, newspaper publishers, journalists, a human rights law office and a gay political candidate with propaganda messages including, "Better Dead Than Red" and "Patriotism with Teeth."

Under-the-radar events and stealth propaganda efforts alike shield white supremacists from public exposure and, notably, public displays of opposition. They also provide the groups with invaluable marketing materials. Non-public situations are easily controlled, and easily manipulated after the fact. The photos and videos from flyering and events are largely shared online, particularly by the alt-right groups, which make up the youngest and most tech-savvy subset of the white supremacist movement.

Tensions flare as Dems struggle to calm furor over Omar

Lawmakers clashed behind closed doors, with some complaining that Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her leadership team had failed to handle the escalating political crisis.

(Agencies)- House Democratic leaders are struggling to contain the controversy over Rep. Ilhan Omar's comments about Israel, with the caucus fighting behind closed doors over whether - and how - to respond.

Tensions ran high at a caucus meeting Wednesday as some Democrats privately vented that Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her leadership team had failed to adequately respond to the escalating political crisis, with too little outreach to their own rank and file. Freshman Rep. Jahana Hayes of Connecticut stood up and confronted Pelosi directly, arguing that she shouldn't have to learn about the official Democratic Caucus response from MSNBC. Hayes said she now has to vote on a resolution that she's barely read, without a private briefing from leadership, according to five sources.

Pelosi countered that the

Democratic measure to condemn anti-Semitism is not final, though text had been circulating and a vote had been tentatively planned for Wednesday. That vote was postponed amid a last-minute backlash from progressives in the caucus.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) later told reporters that leadership hadn't decided whether a vote on the resolution would take place this week, adding, "We're working on language."

Pelosi also said Democratic leaders were forced to respond quickly over the weekend - a task made trickier with Omar on a congressional delegation trip to East Africa over the weekend.

As Hayes was then talking to another member, Pelosi said, "Well if you're not going to listen to me, I'm done talking," then set down the microphone and walked out of the room, the sources said.

A senior Democratic aide disputed that it was a tense exchange, saying Pelosi was merely trying to explain why things unfolded the way they did over the past few days.

Hayes later said in an interview that she didn't hear Pelosi responding to her and had already started to walk out of the room.

"I'm not interested in legislating through the media and social media," Hayes said, noting when she received a copy of the draft resolution it wasn't even clear which lawmakers were the lead authors. "I know that leadership has the ability to tighten up the process and do something about it." That moment of frustration reflects widespread anxiety in the caucus over how to handle the latest bout of remarks from Omar - one of the first Muslim women to serve in Congress - after she suggested that pro-Israel



advocates had "allegiance" to Israel. The remarks offended multiple top Democrats, who said it alluded to painful, decades-old stereotypes that Jews had "dual loyalties." Multiple Jewish lawmakers, including Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.) stood up in the caucus meeting to explain why Omar's latest remarks were so offensive and potentially dangerous. But other Democrats - including a Jewish lawmaker - stood up to defend Omar and say they didn't see the remarks as deeply

offensive. Omar did not speak in the meeting, multiple sources said, although she was spotted chatting with some Democrats one-on-one and received hugs from others.

Democratic leaders, including Pelosi, are attempting to soothe relations within the caucus after abruptly halting plans to vote on a measure condemning anti-Semitism, which some lawmakers complained would have gone too far in targeting Omar.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee is now rushing to rewrite that resolution to

Tokyo court grants ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn bail



reputation for securing acquittals for high-profile clients in a country where almost all court cases end in conviction, offered greater surveillance of Ghosn and a limit on his electronic communications to win bail.

But the court had previously shown no inclination to end the lengthy pre-trial detention, which has drawn some criticism internationally and from rights groups. Prosecutors have defended his detention while they investigate three charges of financial misconduct, two involving alleged under-reporting of his salary and a third over a complex scheme in which Ghosn allegedly sought to transfer his losses to Nissan's books. And they are likely to appeal the bail decision, though the courts have previously ruled against the prosecutors when they sought to extend Ghosn's detention as allegations against him were being investigated.

(Agencies)- A Tokyo court on Tuesday granted ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn bail in a shock decision that could see the auto tycoon freed after more than three months of detention. The court set the bail at one billion yen (USD 9 million), but prosecutors are likely to appeal the decision and could even file additional allegations against Ghosn to keep him from leaving detention. It was the latest twist in a case that has kept Japan and the business world gripped since the tycoon's shock arrest on November 19 over suspicions of financial misconduct. The court has

previously said Ghosn's continued detention was justified because he posed a flight risk and could seek to tamper with evidence. Ghosn and his lawyers have argued that neither of those is the case, and he even offered to wear a tracking bracelet and hire guards to monitor his whereabouts, pledging to stay in Japan. The surprise decision came after Ghosn's new lead defence lawyer, Junichiro Hironaka, told reporters he had filed a "convincing" application for bail that contained fresh elements. Hironaka, who has a

Asia still leads the world when it comes to minting billionaires

(Agencies)- Asia will see the fastest billionaire population growth in the world over the next four years, despite economic uncertainties in the region triggered by the China-US trade war.

The number of Asian billionaires will rise by 27 percent to 1,003 between 2018 and 2023, making up more than a third of the world's total billionaire population of 2,696, according to a report released Wednesday by Knight Frank LLP. The billionaire population growth rates for North America and Europe are 17 percent and 18 percent respectively.

Asia will also see the biggest increase in ultra-high net worth individuals (people with net assets of \$30 million or more). India leads the world with an expected 39 percent surge, followed by the Philippines and China. But while the rich may be getting richer, they're also becoming more cautious. An increasing number of individuals

in Asia plan to keep more of their wealth in cash and less in assets exposed to market cycles such as gold or bonds. Property remains a mainstay of their portfolios, the Knight Frank report found: real estate comprises around 23 percent, slightly higher than the global average. "We are seeing a re-balancing of portfolios away from equities toward more defensive asset classes," said Nicholas Holt, Knight Frank Asia Pacific's head of research. "While cash, gold and private equity are likely to be increasingly targeted, investment-grade property with strong tenant covenants will also see significant interest over the next 12 months."

Investors in the Philippines were most likely to put more money into real estate, the survey found, while 40 percent of respondents in Australia, in the midst of a property-market downturn, expected allocations to real estate to decrease over the coming 12 months.

Vijay Mallya's defiance prompts Sebi to seek amendments to Companies Act

In a proposal, Sebi has now proposed that the Companies Act should also clearly mention that a person should vacate the office of a director if it orders his or her disqualification.

(Agencies)- Capital markets regulator Sebi has asked the government to amend the Companies Act to ensure that a director declared by it as a disqualified person should immediately vacate the position, a plea triggered by defaulter businessman Vijay Mallya's reluctance to do so. Under the Companies Act, the office of a director becomes vacant in case of he or she being disqualified by an order of a court or a tribunal, among other reasons, but there is no explicit mention of an order by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), which is mandated with regulation of thousands of listed firms in India. In a proposal, Sebi has now proposed that the Companies Act should also clearly mention that a person should vacate the office of a director if it orders his or her disqualification. Officials said the finance ministry is in agreement with Sebi on the

proposed amendment and has asked the regulator to get it approved by its board and subsequently forward it to the corporate affairs ministry, which is the nodal ministry for the Companies Act. In its proposal, Sebi has referred to its interim order dated January 25, 2017, through which the regulator had barred Mallya and six others from holding directorship in any listed company till further directions. The Sebi order followed a probe into alleged illegal fund diversions at United Spirits Ltd, an erstwhile firm of business group headed by Mallya which he had later sold to global liquor giant Diageo. Mallya and others were also barred from the securities markets in the same order. However, Mallya did not comply with the order by not stepping down as a director of United Breweries Ltd, another listed company of his group, for months. Soon after the Sebi

order, Mallya had also criticised Sebi in a series of tweets and had said the allegations of fund diversion were baseless and had alleged that he was a target of "witch hunt". After refusing to quit the United Breweries Board for months, Mallya finally ceased to be its director in August 2017, presumably after pressure from other directors. In case of United Spirits, he was asked by the new owner Diageo in April 2015 itself to quit the board for alleged fund diversion. Mallya is facing a number of cases against him, including of loan default, and a court in the UK has already ordered his extradition back to India and the same was also approved by the British government last month. Subsequently, 63-year-old Mallya, who had left India in March 2016 for the UK, has also filed an application for permission to appeal against the extradition order. Explaining its rationale for seeking changes in the Companies Act, Sebi has said the fact that



Mallya failed to comply with its direction has brought forward a "legal conundrum" in respect of whether Sebi has the power to enforce its direction when a director refuses to comply with the same. At present, Sebi's direction restraining a person from acting as a director is not a ground for vacation of his or her directorship under the existing provisions of Section 167 of the Companies Act, 2013. Further, Sections 164, 167 and 169 of the Companies Act, dealing with appointment, vacancy and removal of directors, are administered only by the central government through the Corporate Affairs Ministry. "These provisions have

not been delegated to Sebi for administering them in respect of the listed companies," the official said, citing the regulator's proposal for the amendment in the law. While Sebi is empowered to initiate adjudication proceedings under the Sebi Act for non-compliance of its directions in such cases, it can only be a penal proceeding for non-compliance and not for enforcement of the direction. In view of these concerns, Sebi has proposed that the issue can be resolved by amending the Section 167 of the Companies Act to include "order of Sebi" as one of the grounds for vacation of office of a director.



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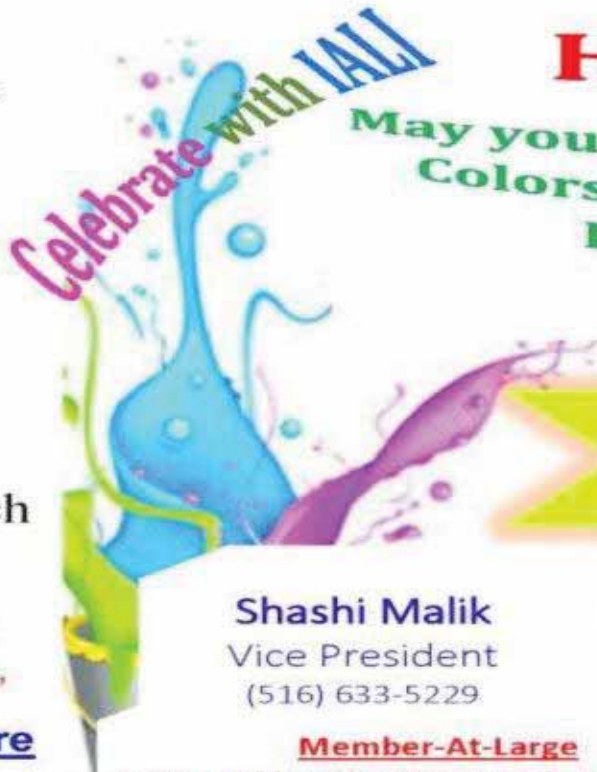
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Futuristic lab at National Cancer Institute in Haryana can test 60,000 samples 24x7

The centralised lab at the National Cancer Institute in Jhajjar has a capacity to test 60,000 samples a day and run 24x7.

With its fully robotic automation track, stand-alone instrumentation, integrated workflow, and chrome and white interiors, the Robotic Core Laboratory at National Cancer Institute (NCI) at Haryana's Jhajjar looks more like the deck of the Starship Enterprise than a clinical laboratory at a cancer hospital.

The centralised lab has a capacity to test 60,000 samples a day and run 24x7. It has an expanded menu of tests, including genetic screening for mutations and molecular diagnostic for personalised medicine, which does away with the need to send samples to peripheral labs.

The advantage is twofold. "It allows us to run a large number

of patient samples to deal with the huge patient load and run the lab 24x7 rather than just during the daytime. Patients can get the tests done anytime of the day and night. Standardised testing protocols, workflow management and automated calibration reduces manual errors and has a shorter, consistent and predictable turnaround time, which means most diagnostics results are available within two hours of sample collection," said Dr G K Rath, head, NCI.

The automation also lowers manpower requirement and frees up technicians to work in shifts around the clock.

Pneumatic chutes are used to propel containers with ampoules containing samples for testing between stations through

networks of tubes using compressed air. "The Core Lab is station 101 and 102, so people just need to punch in station number and the ampule reaches us from different departments in 30 seconds. One of the chutes has an auto-unloader, so I don't even have to physically take out the ampoule from the chute," said Jasbir Bhardwaj, a lab technician who has asked for a transfer to NCI Jhajjar from AIIMS New Delhi to learn how stuff works in futuristic labs.

The samples are barcoded at source by the nurse who collects them and the diagnostic results are directly uploaded on lab informatics system, which can be accessed by clinicians across the hospitals. "There is no need to send reports. It's



super simplified and completely paperless," said Dr Rath.

"The lab focuses on processes, digitisation and intelligent software that make diagnostics faster, simpler and more accurate, lowering the need for collecting multiple samples from patients," said Dr Rath. "It saves 48,000 man hours of work per year, which can be up to 80% less effort than what is required in a traditional lab of a 700-plus

bed hospital." The lab technicians on the shift are not threatened by the automation. "The machine runs 24x7 but we have to be here to run quality-control checks and validate samples. We don't have to waste time on sample transport, capping, sorting, sending reports and making registry entries," said Dinesh Kumar, another lab technician.

Large study again confirms MMR vaccine doesn't cause autism

The authors, from the Statens Serum Institut, the University of Copenhagen and Stand University School of Medicine, point out that their study comes to the same conclusion as a 2002 study that followed 537,000 Danish children.



A study following more than 650,000 Danish children for over a decade has led researchers to the same conclusion as previous efforts: the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine does not increase a child's risk of autism.

The study, which followed all Danish children born between 1999 and 2010 until 2013, compared the number of vaccinated and unvaccinated kids who were diagnosed with autism, and found no difference

"We found no support for the hypothesis of increased risk for

autism after MMR vaccination in a nationwide unselected population of Danish children," researchers wrote in the US journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The authors, from the Statens Serum Institut, the University of Copenhagen and Stand University School of Medicine, point out that their study comes to the same conclusion as a 2002 study that followed 537,000 Danish children.

And they cite 10 other studies on childhood vaccines, including

six on the MMR vaccine, which also found no links between vaccination and autism.

In comparison to the hundreds of thousands of children studied for years whose data researchers say shows no link between the MMR vaccine and autism, the 1998 study that anti-vaccine proponents still often cite to claim a link included only 12 children.

That study was retracted by the medical journal that published it and the author, who had falsified the results, lost his medical license.

Poor cognition raises bad oral health in elderly

The study included 4,416 adults aged 50 years and above. According to previous studies, older adults with just 10-19 teeth are at a higher risk of malnutrition in addition to higher rates of weight loss and lower appetite.



Older adults with poor cognitive function are found to have impaired oral health and a higher risk of tooth loss later, says a study. According to the study, there was a clear association between cognitive function and tooth loss when cognitive function score was categorised into quintiles.

The study, published in the *Community Dentistry & Oral Epidemiology*, showed people in the lowest quintile reflecting poorer cognitive function had 39% higher odds of tooth loss than those in the highest quintile.

"Our study suggested a close link between cognitive

function and oral health in older adults," said Jianhua Wu, Researcher at the University of Leeds in Britain.

"The findings indicate that an improvement in cognitive function could potentially improve oral health and reduce the risk of tooth loss in the ageing population," said Wu.

The study included 4,416 adults aged 50 years and above. According to previous studies, older adults with just 10-19 teeth are at a higher risk of malnutrition in addition to higher rates of weight loss and lower appetite. They are also at increased risk for dementia and/or depression.

Louis Vuitton ends Paris fashion week with night in two museums

Despite all the talk of innovation, there was lots of the classic luxury casual looks -- and classics with a casual luxury touch.

Designer Nicolas Ghesquiere had teased that his Louis Vuitton Paris fashion week show late Tuesday would be a "shock".

He wasn't kidding. While guests had been invited to the Louvre Museum in the centre of the French capital, when they took their seats they actually found themselves in the Pompidou Centre, a kilometre away to the east. This wasn't some sort teleporter trick from "Star Trek". Ghesquiere had recreated the groundbreaking architecture of the Pompidou's modern art galleries inside the Louvre -- "a museum inside a museum" -- to demonstrate the shock of the new.

And his clothes for autumn/winter were just as tricky, mixing stripes, checks, floral and all sorts of prints and patterns in what the New York Times's Vanessa Friedman quickly called a "good taste, bad taste mash up". On the last of nine packed days of shows, it was hard for some exhausted fashionistas to get their heads round, particularly as many had shed a silent tear earlier in the day as the late Karl Lagerfeld's final collection was shown at Chanel.

But Ghesquiere had warned that change was a-coming in a tongue-in-cheek social media teaser video from his "muse", American actress and model Indya Moore, the transgender star of the US television series "Pose". "I was busy admiring myself being admired by myself," Moore drawled archly in what may have been a swipe at the latest trendy modern tribe, the autosexuals.

No need to panic

Excessive self-regard is not something fashion designers as smart as Ghesquiere

could be accused of.

Before the shareholders of the world's richest fashion brand start panicking, there was method to this.

In fact, the pick 'n' mix pattern palate was an homage to what Ghesquiere called the "sartorial melting pot" of the still rather rough-edged shopping district near the Pompidou Centre, where the timelessly tasteful wardrobe codes of upper class Parisians rub up uneasily against the more eclectic street style of the youthful multicultural suburbs.

"It's an incredible mix which converges towards this epicentre" near the Chatelet transport hub, Ghesquiere said.

"That is where I am taking Louis Vuitton today: a house of multiple expressions," he added.

The supernova of Hollywood stars on the show's front row who have hitched themselves to the Vuitton wagon -- Emma Stone, Jennifer Connolly, Lea Seydoux and Swedish Oscar winner Alicia Vikander -- definitely dug it.

Supermodel Karlie Kloss also seemed to lap up the mash-up mix of inspirations from Mondrian to Cubism to futuristic street, typified by the black leather swimming hats.

A big shouldered floral kaftan coat with a stripey interior somehow worked, and there was plenty of expensively sleek black leather also in the mix for the woman who likes to keep it rock 'n' roll.

Despite all the talk of innovation, there was lots of the classic luxury casual looks -- and classics with a casual luxury touch - that has won Ghesquiere such a fan club, one that extends to the nearby Elysee Palace and France's first lady Brigitte Macron.



Leaving Neverland movie review

HBO destroys Michael Jackson's legacy with unforgettable bravery

HBO crucifies Michael Jackson's legacy with brave first-person account of two men, who allege that the King of Pop abused them when they were children. Rating: 4/5.

Leaving Neverland
Director - Dan Reed
Rating - 4/5

It's astonishing that Leaving Neverland got made, especially since similarly risky films have historically had a rather difficult time. Only a few years ago, director Amy Berg's *An Open Secret*, which claimed to have resounding new information about filmmaker Bryan Singer's history of child abuse, was buried by Hollywood. It remains unreleased. Singer, meanwhile, has since directed his fourth *X-Men* movie and the multiple Oscar-winning box office smash, *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

I remember *An Open Secret* making exactly the same kind of noise in its festival run as *Leaving Neverland* did at Sundance this year. Both films promised unquestionable new proof that would end all debate about their subjects' innocence; both films boasted shocking

first-person testimony, and were heaved along by solid buzz. I have not seen *An Open Secret*, but I can imagine the sort of impact it could have had if it not been blacklisted. Perhaps Singer would not have been allowed to direct *Rhapsody*, and thereby not cash in the reported \$40 million paycheque he received for it.

It remains to be seen what sort of impact *Leaving Neverland* will have on Michael Jackson's legacy. MJ certainly has more defenders than Singer - he remains the world's highest earning dead celebrity - and his fans' dedication towards him has historically been proven during the well-publicised trials he has been through. *Leaving Neverland*, which was aired on HBO in two 2-hour parts over the weekend, is neither an indictment nor is it particularly journalistic. It is a staunchly one-sided account of Jackson's alleged history of child sexual abuse, as told by two

brave men who only recently decided to step forward with their stories. To make matters more complicated, one of them - the famed choreographer Wade Robson - had testified in defence of Jackson at both his previous trials. Robson first became acquainted with Jackson as a seven-year-old. Like so many children his age at the time, he worshipped the King of Pop - he'd plastered his walls with Jackson's posters and taught himself all his signature dance moves. The film's other subject is Jimmy Savechuck, who was in many ways inspired to come forward with his own story after watching Robson go public with his. Like most accusers, both men have been pilloried by the public, who have questioned everything from their intentions to their reasons for not having said anything earlier. *Leaving Neverland* isn't an easy watch, but no sane person would expect



it to be. For four unrelenting hours, it forces you to confront your emotions as Robson and Savechuck - framed mostly in close-ups - go into deeply agonising details about what Jackson allegedly did to them. I see no point in repeating their allegations here. It is not my story to tell, and nor does it have any place in a review of this film. In fact, reviewing *Leaving Neverland* feels just as uncomfortable. Am I supposed to tell you whether or not you should watch this film, a horrific story about the most terrible tragedy that could

befall a human being, based on whether or not I found its subjects compelling or believable enough? Would a star rating suffice? While the filmmaking in *Leaving Neverland* is always rather rudimentary - talking heads are intercut with (frequently repeated) archive footage - it is impossible to look away. Regardless of how well-versed you are with Jackson's history, the level-headed manner in which the film conducts itself adds to its credibility, as does Robson and Savechuck's inherent forthrightness.

Luka Chuppi review:

Pankaj Tripathi is the unlikely victim of this Kartik Aaryan, Kriti Sanon comedy

The Kartik Aaryan, Kriti Sanon film takes an important topic and squanders it away. The film has its moments but you have to wait for them. Rating: 2.5/5.

Luka Chuppi
Director - Laxman Utekar
Cast - Kartik Aaryan, Kriti Sanon, Aparshakti Khurana, Pankaj Tripathi
Rating - 2.5

There is something about Pankaj Tripathi. His presence in a film/web series/advertisement/music video/on a juice stall poster makes you believe that whatever he is a part of will be wholesome and fulsome. You want to order that glass of mix juice because you believe it will be a more honest glass of mix juice. You hope that the political parties don't find out about this superpower of Pankaj Tripathi's because who knows how they will use it.

And it is when *Luka Chuppi* takes Pankaj Tripathi, dresses him up in red trousers, a yellow

shirt and green sunglasses; saddles him with a clichéd role and worse dialogues, that you want to give up. Tripathi still manages to carry it off - with great power comes great responsibility, and our actor knows it - but just about.

In the above two paragraphs lies the inherent problem with *Luka Chuppi* - it takes good material and excellent performers and turns them into caricatures. Sure, it has its moments and the second half is largely enjoyable, but you have to wait for the fun. After a slew of excellent small-town dramas, my expectations are high and my patience thin. At the heart of the story is the moral policing in India and the refusal of our self-appointed moral guardians to allow any kind of sexual agency to the youth over

their own lives. Film actor Nazeem Khan (Abhinav Shukla) becomes the enemy number one of the Sanskriti Raksha Manch - the name is self explanatory - after he accepts that he is in a live-in relationship. They can't beat up Khan for destroying our sanskriti, so they do the next best thing - attack defenceless lovers in the by-lanes of Mathura. Heading this organization is Vinay Pathak's Vishnu Trivedi, whose religious grandstanding is in the hope of winning the upcoming election. Rashmi (Kriti Sanon) is his daughter, who has returned home to Mathura after finishing her journalism course in Delhi. Kartik Aaryan's Guddu, with his spiked hair and the reputation of being a one-star kalaakar, is the star of the local news channel. The two soon



become a team, joined by Aparshakti Khurana's Abbas - the channel's cameraman. The trio scours Mathura -- doing a vox pop of sorts to understand what people largely feel about the divisive topic of live-in relationships; the best comments come from where we least expect it - a man clad in saffron. Love soon blossoms between Kriti and Kartik, but instead of taking the saat pheras, Rashmi wants to test their compatibility via a live-in.

It is left to Abbas to find a way for the young lovers to find a

sanctuary outside the confines of a small-town. They head to Gwalior - pronounced 'Gawalior', as is the wont in the region -- on the pretext of conducting a journalism project and take an apartment, without telling their families. The thorn in Guddu's flesh is his meddlesome relative Babulal (Pankaj Tripathi) who finds his love nest and brings the entire family - parents, brothers, sister-in-law and nephew -- there. A quickly made-up tale of the two being married spirals out of control as Rashmi's father gets involved.

Kalank first poster:

Varun Dhawan plays the fearless Zafar, Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha share pics

Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha and Dharma Productions have shared the first look of the upcoming period drama.

Actors Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt and Sonakshi Sinha have shared the first poster for their upcoming ensemble drama, Kalank. On Wednesday, producer Karan Johar had teased a big reveal for Thursday. The first poster reveals Varun's character's name as Zafar. "It's been a hell of a journey playing this gem of a character. So guys, meet Zafar," Varun wrote in a Twitter post. Sharing the same poster, Alia wrote on Twitter, "Fearless in love. Fearless for love. Super happy to present Zafar!" Meanwhile, Sonakshi's post came with the caption, "The flamboyant hero of our larger-than-life world. Presenting Zafar!"



Karan in his Wednesday post had written that Kalank was a "A film that was born in my heart and mind 15 years ago...a film I passionately believe in...the last film my father worked on before he left us....it was his dream to see

this film come through....I couldn't fulfil his dream then....my spirit was broken....but today his wish has found a relationship with celluloid....the story of turbulent relationships and eternal love has found a voice....the film has been woven,nurtured and visualised by ABHISHEK VARMAN....and the film is KALANK! Set in the 40's but it's heart lives on.....TOMORROW the journey begins.....am excited ...anxious and emotional about this one...I do hope you join us on our path to undying love." The film also stars Madhuri Dixit, Sanjay Dutt, Aditya Roy Kapur and

others. Madhuri was signed for Kalank after Sridevi's death, who was originally supposed to star opposite Sanjay Dutt. "When I was on the sets, I looked at it as just another role. But, yes, I was extremely emotional when Karan (Johar) asked me to take up her role. I hope I make her proud," Madhuri had earlier told DNA. Varun and Alia have previously worked together in their debut movie Student of the Year, Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania and Badrinath Ki Dulhania; Kalank is their fourth movie together. Speaking about working with Alia on Kalank, Varun wrote in an Instagram post, "It's my fourth film with Alia Bhatt. Wow, and it always feels like it's new. She is amazing in the film but one thing she has done great is run very well, and I'm proud of her. Lol. She knows she is my favourite but Shanaya, Kavya, Vaidehi and... wait for it, you guys are going to be as blown away as I was by her.



Superstar Akshay Kumar makes his digital streaming debut with Amazon's

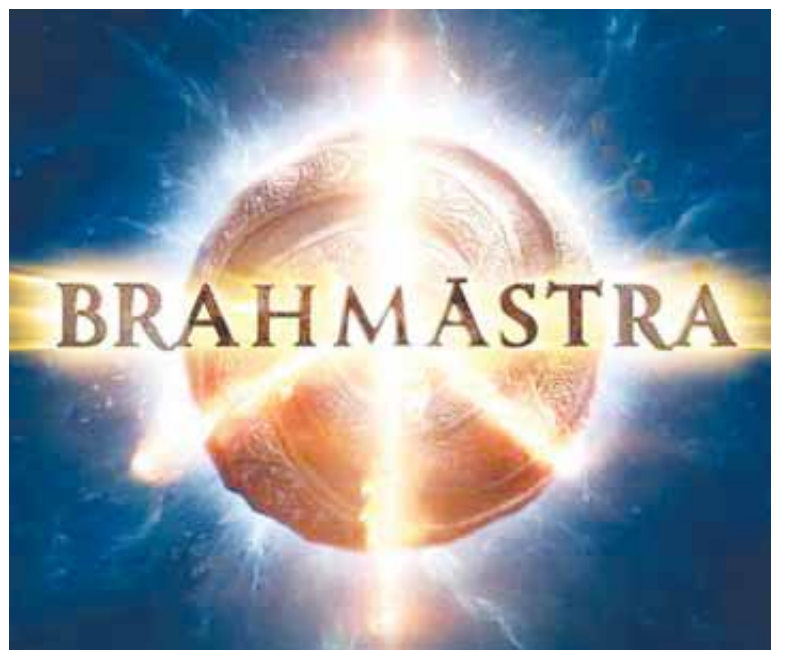


Global, March 5, 2019: Amazon Prime Video today announced Indian Superstar, Akshay Kumar, as lead actor in Amazon's upcoming action-packed Prime Original thriller series, THE END (working title). Coming from

Abundantia Entertainment, the creators of critically acclaimed Prime Original Series,Breathe, the show, also the streaming debut of Akshay Kumar, marks the second collaboration between Amazon Prime Video and

Abundantia Entertainment. The new series will be a globe-spanning, latest offering to the actor'sfans across 200 countries and territories upon its release exclusively on Amazon Prime Video. The multi-season show, THE END (working title), is presently under active development and aims to appeal to fans of the action-thriller genre worldwide. Being envisioned at an unprecedented scale and cinematic experience, the show promises to bring in the next level of the action genre.Jennifer Salke, Head, Amazon Studios, said, "The scale at which THE END (working title) is being conceived is enormous and speaks of our passion for creating breakout programming across genres.

BRAHMASTRA



The most anticipated were on hand for the exclusive reveal. 150 drones lit up the night sky to premiere the logo for the film ever to unveil its logo at Kumbh Mela in India and stars Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor plus director Ayan Mukerji

were on hand for the exclusive reveal. 150 drones lit up the night sky to premiere the logo for the magnum opus which also stars Amitabh Bachchan and releases in theaters across North America this Christmas.



Kim Kardashian leaves NOTHING to the imagination

She is a fashion icon who has touched down in one of the most stylish cities in the world.

And Kim Kardashian left nothing to the imagination as she slipped into a racy semi-sheer bodysuit for an evening stroll in Paris on Wednesday. The reality star, 38, exposed her braless cleavage and her scanty underwear in the eye-popping golden garment, which was decorated with leopard print markings. The transparent top revealed the mother-of-three's ample cleavage, with her modesty just preserved by black velvet panels. The

brunette beauty also revealed her honed midriff in the scanty garment. Oozing confidence as she strolled along, the star also flashed her high-cut underwear and lean legs as she strutted along in vertiginous heels. Her raven tresses were styled in soft waves and the glamourpuss opted for a rich palette of make-up to complete her ensemble. Providing some coverage from the chilly temperatures, the star slipped on a black velvet coat which gaped open to reveal the full jaw-



dropping look as she walked along. Kim's outing was not the first time she has returned to Paris after her horrific ordeal in late 2016, when she was robbed at gunpoint by a gang of thieves. The star was robbed by five armed men wearing ski masks and clothes with police markings. At around 3am, the robbers entered the building after the concierge let them in. Handcuffed and at gunpoint, he then led them to the starlet's flat. Kim reportedly 'begged for her life' and told the gunmen she had children at home when two of them entered her room and held the gun to her head. The men stole a jewellery box worth •6 million (\$6.7 million/ £5.24 million) and a ring worth •4 million (\$4.5 million/ £3.5 million), prompting fears that the valuables were personal ones, and not just jewellery Kim was borrowing for fashion week. Following the ordeal Kim immediately flew back to the US by private jet, and did not return to France in June 2018, to attend Paris Fashion Week's Spring/Summer 2018 Louis Vuitton Show. On Keeping Up With The Kardashians Kim spoke candidly about her decision to return to the city, saying: 'I have so many special memories in Paris. I hope that this trip will just be so good that I can start to remember all the magical things about Paris and why Kanye and I fell in love with it.' The fashion icon also said that she was nervous upon first arriving at the Fashion Show, but upon completing her trip said she would head back to France for a longer visit.

Katie Price 'could be forced to sell her country mansion in Sussex after £2.1m debt is revealed'



Katie Price could reportedly be forced to sell her country mansion in Sussex to pay off a £2.1m debt reports The Sun.

Files allegedly sent to Companies House show the former glamour model, 40, is millions in debt, after narrowly avoiding bankruptcy last year.

It was reported that in a new agreement with creditors, if her bill remain unpaid after four years, her nine-bedroom mansion will be put up for auction to pay the debt.

The agreement is said to have set up after her company, Jordan Trading, went into liquidation.

The star will only have to pay back 41 per cent of her total debts (£856, 358) in monthly instalments over five years,

They added: 'Most people will wonder how she has managed to avoid bankruptcy with an agreement which lets her get away without paying 59 per cent of what she owes.'

MailOnline has contacted Katie's representative for comment.

The star purchased her £2million Horsham home in 2014, shortly after tying the knot with her now estranged husband Kieran Hayler, 31.

At the beginning of December 2018, she avoided bankruptcy after coming to an agreement over her tax bill and a close pal allegedly loaned the star £22,000 to bail her out.

Katie's case was heard at a specialist insolvency

and companies court in Central London, which estimated her total debts ranged from £250,000 to £500,000.

She was not at the court for the hearing, which lasted less than two minutes.





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