

# "No talks on Kartarpur Corridor until Pakistan clears issues"

**India conveys concerns to Pakistan over presence of Khalistani separatists on Kartarpur panel**



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# Flint water crisis shows the danger of a scientific dark age

(Insider Bureau) - After comedian Michelle Wolf ended her monologue at the 2018 White House Correspondents' Dinner with the resounding mic drop: "Flint still doesn't have clean water," a parade of celebrities, including Alyssa Milano, Susan Sarandon, Michael Moore and Omara Manigault, shared similar proclamations. Yet in our work alongside relief agencies over the last three years, we can attest that Flint's water system has been one of the most talked about, monitored and scrutinized in the world. In fact, after switching back to the relatively pure Lake Huron source water and committing over \$100 million of engineering interventions, Flint water has met all federal water safety standards for regulated contaminants -- including those for lead -- since January 2017.



Continued on Page 19

# New York Sues Sackler Family Members and Drug Distributors AG says Sackler family, Purdue Pharma behind the drug crisis



(Insider Bureau) - As investigators closed in on Purdue Pharma, the maker of the opioid painkiller OxyContin, more than a decade ago, members of the family that owns the company began shifting



The legal complaint, released at  
 Continued on Page 19

# US, China in bitter showdown at UN over sanctions on Masood Azhar



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# Past Govts Used Defence Deals as Their ATMs: PM Modi in Interview

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# Insurance

(See Full Page Advt. on Page 32)

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# Former Officers and Employees of Indiana Loan Packager and Servicer Charged

## \$10 Million Scheme to Defraud the SBA

(By a staff reporter)- Five former officers and employees of an Indiana loan packaging and servicing company were charged for their alleged roles in a 13-year-long conspiracy to defraud the Small Business Administration (SBA) in connection with its programs to guarantee loans made to small businesses.

Kerri Agee, aka Kerri Agee-Smith, 43, of Noblesville, Indiana, former president, chief executive officer and

founder of Banc-Serv Partners LLP (Banc-Serv); Kelly Isley, 38, of Westfield, Indiana, Banc-Serv's former chief operating officer; Matthew Smith, 50, of Westfield, Indiana, Banc-Serv's co-founder; Chad Griffin, 46, of Carmel, Indiana, Banc-Serv's former chief marketing officer; and Nicole Smith, aka Nicole Smith-Kelso, 42, of Indianapolis, Indiana, a former Banc-Serv employee, were charged in an indictment unsealed today with one count of

conspiracy to commit wire fraud affecting a financial institution and one count of conspiracy to make false statements in loan-guarantee applications and purchase requests. Additionally, Agee was charged with four counts of wire fraud and seven counts of making false statements in loan-guarantee applications and purchase requests; Isley was charged with three counts of wire fraud and four counts of making false statements in loan-guarantee applications

and purchase requests; Griffin was charged with one count of making false statements in loan-guarantee applications and purchase requests; and Nicole Smith was charged with three counts of wire fraud and four

counts of making false statements in loan-guarantee applications and purchase requests. The indictment further alleges that when a fraudulently guaranteed loan defaulted, the defendants caused other Banc-Serv employees to transmit requests to the SBA to purchase the defaulted loans from investors and lending institutions, thereby shifting losses on the ineligible loans to the SBA.

## Sushmita Sen Honored by Dilip Chauhan, former Nassau County Deputy Comptroller



New York's Nassau County Honored Former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen with Citation presented by Former Deputy Comptroller Dilip Chauhan

(By a staff reporter) New York - In an exclusive ceremony held at Leonard's Palazzo on Long Island, Miss Universe Sushmita Sen was recently honored by Former Deputy Comptroller Dilip Chauhan. Event was held to honor several accomplished women from different walks of life by Former Miss Universe Sushmita. Nassau County Legislator Joshua Lafazan recognized individuals with Citations, which were presented by Dilip Chauhan. "It's such a great honor and privilege to welcome and honor a Former Miss Universe", Dilip said, while Presenting Citations.

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# Trump a big winner & Russia a bigger loser



(By Ravi Batra)-The Robert Mueller Report, from a uniquely leak-proof investigation, was a huge win for President Trump, and a huge loss for Russian President Putin. President Trump flexed his constitutional muscles, presidential pardons, firing Mueller by firing DAG Rod Rosenstein or AG Jeff

Sessions, and by evading sitting for his legally required-deposition, itself a Hobson's Choice of crimes for him of either Perjury or Conspiracy, won for himself a non-exoneration, which is neither perjury or conspiracy, but a "cloud of doubt" for Democrats and a "winner's crown" for Republicans from a "witch

hunt." As for Russia, who took her victory lap in the Oval Office the morning after Comey's obstructive-firing in the person of FM Sergey Lavrov and persona non grata Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, she will be punished very hard. Ironically, had Americans been charged with conspiring with Russians, the punishment to Russia would be less - as had the Walls of Troy been breached, new bigger, taller and stronger walls would be built. But if Troy fell due to a Trojan Horse, only better & more guards would be needed. Now, President Putin will get the full

punishment of daring to "meddle so well," and Russia will get 100% of the punishment as if she did it without help from treasonous "Benedict Arnolds." Presidential-

history will judge President Trump a big winner in his face off with American rule of law, which was personified by Robert Mueller and his team, the finest example of integrity- soaked investigative prosecutors. Richard Nixon would be jealous and taking notes. As for 2020, anyone who rules out a Trump second term, needs a therapist."



# USCIS sought additional info for 60% H-1B applications last quarter

(By a staff reporter) Data released recently by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reflects a greater scrutiny of H-1B applications, with an increase in requests for evidence (RFEs). Data for the first quarter of US fiscal 2019 (that is, three months ended December 2018) shows that 60% of all completed H-1B cases had been issued RFEs. This is significant, considering that only 38% of all completed H-1B applications received RFEs during fiscal 2018 (12-month period ended September 30, 2018) and 21% in the previous fiscal.

By issuing an RFE, the agency seeks additional evidence before it adjudicates an H-1B application. If the evidence submitted, say to prove that the

job is a speciality occupation, does not satisfy USCIS officials, the application is rejected. RFEs cast an additional burden on sponsoring companies, in terms of time and cost.

In numerical terms, nearly 60,000-odd RFEs were sent during the first quarter of fiscal 2019 as opposed to 1.50 lakh during fiscal 2018 and 86,000 odd in fiscal 2017.

The IT sector dominated the top 30 employers that had sponsored H-1B applications for both 'initial' (new applications) and 'continued approvals' (visa extensions). Most impacted by the additional scrutiny were IT consultancy companies (including those headquartered in India), which saw a higher denial rate, especially for 'initial' H-1B applications. The win-rate for continued visas was

comparatively better. The denial rates for initial visa applications for Capgemini was 80%. It was 61% for Cognizant, which was the top employer. It ranged between 20% and 40% for firms headquartered in India. US headquartered non-consultancy firms such as Amazon, Microsoft, Intel, Google, Facebook and Apple, saw a denial rate of only around 1% for new visa applications. Total approval rate for these US firms (including for continued employment) was 98-99%. USCIS denied 54% of the initial H-1B petitions for Infosys while for Mindtree the denial rate was 40%. It was 23% for Wipro and the L&T group combined. TCS, the second largest employer of H-1B workers, fared better with a denial



rate of 22%. The top three reasons for denials of H-1B applications, according to USCIS, are inability by the sponsoring employer to establish that the position is a speciality

occupation, inability to substantiate a valid employer-employee relationship and lack of evidence of specific assignment at third party sites for the entire visa duration requested.

## WH receives proposed regulation to end work authorisation for spouses of H1B visa holders

(By a staff reporter)-The White House has formally received the proposed changes in the existing regulations to end the work authorisation for spouses of the holders of H-1B visas, the most sought-after among Indian IT professionals. The move that would impact over 90,000 spouses of H-1B visa holders, an overwhelming number of whom are Indians, was sent by the Department of Homeland Security to the White House Office of management for Budget on Wednesday, officials said.

The H-1B visa, most sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies

to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. It's now for the White House to take a final call on it, before a formal regulation could be issued and the Department of Homeland Security can inform a federal court, where a lawsuit on this issue is pending. Now White House would carry out its review of the proposed regulation, take inputs from various agencies, before taking a final call. The entire process could take from a

few weeks to several months. US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) which manages the programme said the proposed regulation was not final until the review and comment process was complete. USCIS is "reviewing all employment-based visa programs, including H-4 EADs. No decision about the regulation concerning the employment eligibility of certain H-4 spouses is final until the rulemaking process is complete," USCIS spokesperson Jessica Collins

As per the existing process, once White House gives its nod, the regulation would be published in federal register with a 30-day

comment period.

It is only after that the new changes can come into effect. The Trump administration is moving ahead with its proposed regulation, despite strong resistance from a group of US lawmakers including Senator Kamala Harris, and Silicon Valley companies who argue that

this is not only anti-women, but also prevents talented spouses of H-1B visa holders from working in the United States. Meanwhile, the US Court of Appeals, District of Columbia has extended the time for various stakeholders, including the Department of



Homeland Security to submit its responses on the lawsuit against it filed by the organisation Save Jobs USA. In September, Save Jobs USA which had filed the lawsuit urged the court to remove the abeyance and move forward with the case.

## Mississippi Man Pleads Guilty to Health Care Fraud, Money Laundering and Tax Evasion Charges for Role in \$200 Million Compounding Pharmacy Scheme

(By a staff reporter)-A Hattiesburg, Mississippi man pleaded guilty today for his role in a \$200 million compounding pharmacy scheme to defraud health care benefit programs, including TRICARE, which is the program that covers U.S. military service members and their families. Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Mike Hurst of the Southern District of Mississippi; Special Agent in Charge Christopher Freeze of the FBI's Jackson, Mississippi Field Office; Special Agent in Charge Thomas J. Holloman III of IRS Criminal

Investigation's (IRS-CI) Atlanta Field Office and Special Agent in Charge John F. Khin of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service's (DCIS) Southeast Field Office made the announcement. Glenn Doyle Beach Jr., 46, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering and tax evasion, before U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett of the Southern District of Mississippi. Beach was charged in May 2018 in a 26-count indictment and had been scheduled to begin trial today. He is scheduled to be sentenced on July 2, 2019.

"Glenn Doyle Beach and his co-conspirators stole hundreds of millions of dollars from federal health care programs, including TRICARE, which provides benefits to brave members of our military and their families," said Assistant Attorney General Benczkowski. "The Criminal Division remains dedicated to rooting out and punishing this kind of misconduct, and to protecting America's important health care programs from fraud and abuse." "While our men and women in uniform were defending the freedoms and values we hold dear, this defendant was selfishly stealing precious money and

resources from their military health care system, TRICARE, to the detriment of us all," said U.S. Attorney Hurst. "Our investigators and prosecutors are to be commended for their steely resolve in rooting out corruption and administering justice for victims. We will not stop until every last person involved in this criminal scheme has been brought to justice." "Fraud schemes of this magnitude disrupt the fabric of our health care system, ultimately damaging our nation's economy and costing taxpayers billions each year," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Freeze. "Today's guilty plea brings this case one

step closer to justice and proves that the collective resources of all partnering agencies will continue to expose these schemes and will actively seek justice for those who participate in them." Beach was an owner and the managing member of Advantage Pharmacy of Hattiesburg. At the hearing today, Beach admitted his role in a scheme to defraud health care benefit programs, including TRICARE, by marketing medications known as compounded medications, which ordinarily are medications that are specially combined or formulated to meet the individual needs of patients.



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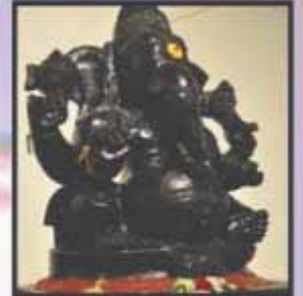
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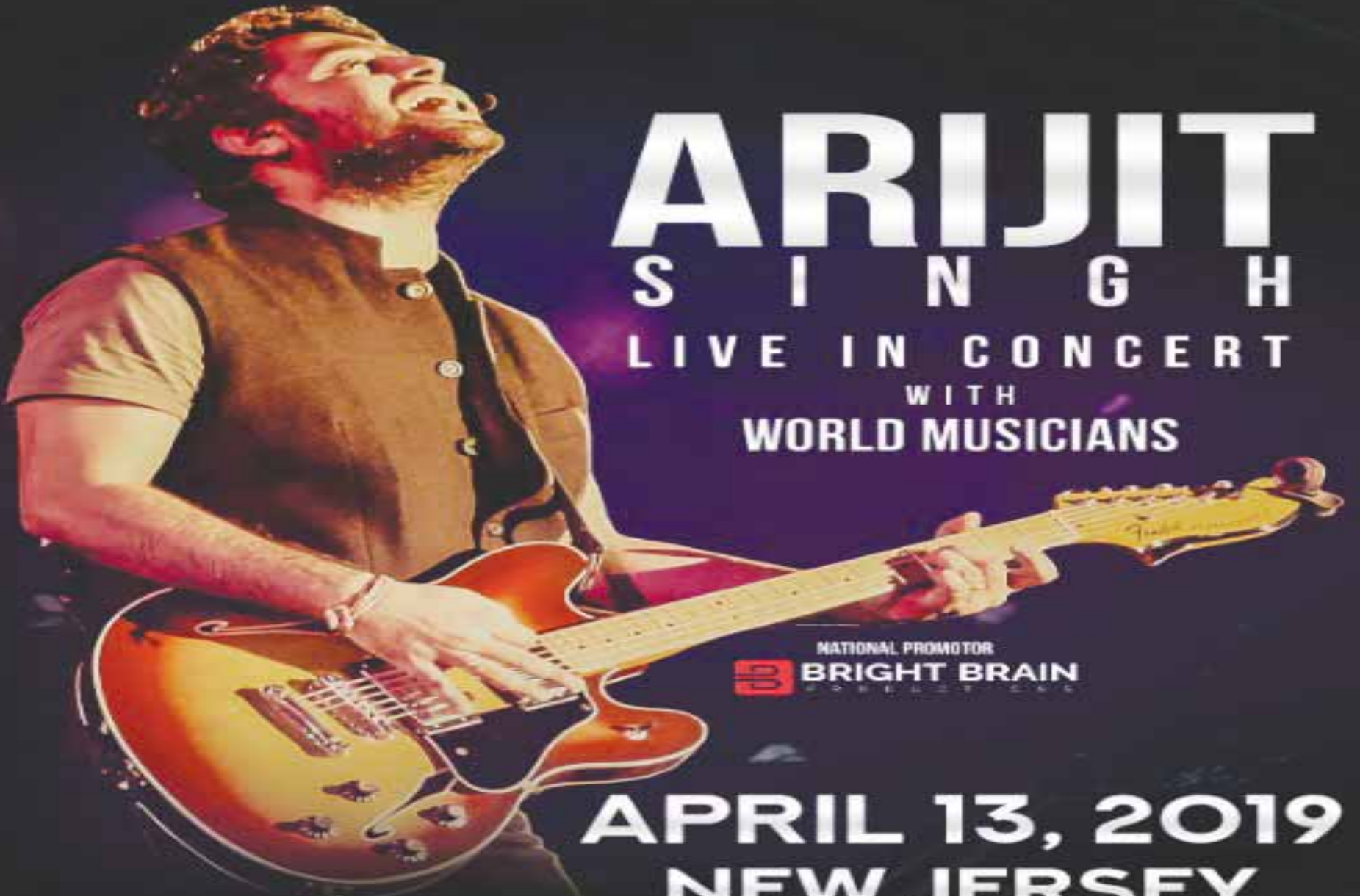
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## Jacinda Ardern's solidarity with Muslims should be the norm, not the exception

In the aftermath of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo terror attack which left 12 dead, world leaders flocked to the streets of Paris and partook in an iconic unity march to condemn the terrorist attack. Contrast this with the aftermath of the Christchurch mosques massacre just over a week ago, in which an alleged Australian white supremacist brutally gunned down 50 Muslims during prayer. In the wake of these senseless killings, a global gathering of world leaders did not occur in the streets of Christchurch. But a march of another, relatively larger magnitude did occur -- and it was led by one woman. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern quickly became a symbol of solidarity with the slain Muslims of Christchurch.

The nation's 38-year-old Prime Minister showed up for her people, for the victims and for their families in ways other leaders simply have not for their respective Muslim communities. The admirable stances she took on behalf of the New Zealand Muslim community there have raised the bar for what principled leadership should look like today. And they have begun to change the global narrative of animus toward Islam and Muslims. Ardern's firm and unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist nature of the attack stands in stark contrast with the narrative of those -- such as US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who, in the past, have appeared to base part of their political platforms on inciting anti-Muslim sentiment and associating Islam with terrorism.

A member of the progressive Labour Party, Ardern decided to act fast and stand with the victims' families a decision which drew widespread global attention and won the respect and admiration of Muslims. Sharing on Twitter the now-iconic photo of a somber Ardern in a black headscarf, which she donned the day after the attack as a sign of respect to Muslims, Bernice King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., wrote that Ardern "reflects the type of sincere, people-oriented leadership that the world needs to evolve from its current chaotic state." Indeed, Ardern's stances represent a far cry from the divisive tune of right-wing nationalist incitement against Islam and Muslims that has become all too normalized in global political discourse today. Meanwhile, in the days since the shooting, Ardern has announced the ban of all military-style semi-automatic weapons and assault rifles in New Zealand and visited Christchurch twice. In a parliamentary speech, she declared that she will not dignify the terrorist by ever mentioning his name, so

as not to give in to his pitiful and evident thirst for publicity. Setting a uniting tone of anger, grief and solidarity for all of New Zealand, she implored her countrymen and women to "speak the names of those who were lost rather than the name of the man who took them." Some might say it is easy to exhibit unifying and humanistic leadership in the aftershock of such a ghastly attack, especially in a peaceful country like New Zealand. One can easily criticize the pre-existing climate of microaggression and Islamophobia in New Zealand and Australia and ask what Ardern had done for the Muslim community before the attacks happened. Others have rightly questioned New Zealand's military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. These valid criticisms demand serious introspection and action on the part of Western politicians. And although Ardern's leadership has just set a new bar for a more compassionate, responsible and inclusive response to instances when Muslims are the primary victims of mass violence, it still falls short. Such a narrative must also seriously ask what role the "War on Terror"-- which has killed approximately half a million people in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan -- plays in the escalation of hate crimes, such as the Christchurch attack. Arden should use this moment to critique the ongoing military involvement by Western powers in Muslim-majority countries. Ideally, Ardern's empathy would not be considered unique or novel, but amid the highly divisive, "strong-man rhetoric" so ubiquitous in world politics today, her stance is powerful and potentially game-changing.

She even told Trump (who the terrorist reportedly mentioned in his manifesto) that the best way the US could support New Zealanders during this difficult time is by offering "sympathy and love for all Muslim communities."

This recommendation speaks volumes: her discourse on solidarity with Muslims possesses the power to extend itself beyond Christchurch to reach vulnerable Muslim communities in places like the USA, Europe, India, Myanmar and China. On Friday, during the first weekly congregational prayer since the attack, Arden joined mourners for a two-minute silence for the slain after a national broadcast of the athan (the call to prayer), when she cited a moving hadith (saying) by the Prophet Muhammad.

## Being the anti-Trump isn't enough for Democratic candidates

President Richard Nixon, in the middle of the Watergate scandal, famously said, "People have got to know whether or not their President is a crook." In the case of Donald Trump, America has already weighed in on that issue. According to a recent Quinnipiac poll, "64% of voters said Trump had committed crimes before entering office." This is particularly astounding, given how difficult it is, in our hyperpartisan nation, to get nearly two-thirds of voters to agree on anything! (For the record, Trump denies any wrongdoing.) And sure, it would be tempting for the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates to capitalize on this, and make Trump's past actions (and tweets) their No. 1 issue during the Democratic primary contest. But they shouldn't. By now, American voters are very familiar with who Trump is. There's a reason why Trump has the highest disapproval rating of any modern president: almost 53%. Even Jimmy Carter, who lost re-election, only had a 39.3% disapproval rating at this point. Trump is flawed, but it's not enough for Democratic presidential candidates to point at that. What voters need to hear from them is how they'll be different from him -- where do they stand on the critical issues facing our country? And this is precisely where the candidates should focus their time, both in the primary and in the general election. In short, they need to give voters a reason to come out and vote for them. For example: Exit polls from November's midterm election found nearly 70% of voters said they "want major changes"

to our nation's health care system. And in the days before Trump's February 5, 2019, State of the Union, the top issue that voters wanted to hear Trump address was how he would improve our health care system. The good news for Democrats is that polls find that Americans view the Democratic Party as more likely to fix health care. In one 2018 midterm exit poll that asked respondents which party will better address coverage for pre-existing conditions, 58% named Democrats; 34% cited the Republican Party. And a November 2018 Gallup Poll found only 36% of Americans approved of how Trump was handling health care policy. If Democratic candidates can offer concrete solutions to pre-existing conditions, rising deductibles and soaring prescription drug costs, they will likely find they have a receptive audience. Beyond Trump's failure to deliver on health care, there's also his signature issue of immigration. A recent CNN poll found Trump's approval on immigration at only 39% -- while 58% gave him a thumbs down. That means Trump's fearmongering about immigrants and his obsession with a wall that he failed to get Mexico to pay for are not playing well with the American public. Democrats can turn this issue against Trump by offering a vision of immigration reform that is consistent with American values of compassion and diversity -- a stark contrast to Trump's. The same goes for foreign affairs. According to that same CNN poll, only 40% of Americans approve of Trump's handling of foreign policy, while 54% disapprove.



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# Opportunism will hurt democracy

***Representation is fine, but the idea of democracy shouldn't meet the same fate as the idea of India.***

India has been independent for 70 years now, and its story is under scrutiny now more than ever. Some feel that the years have been wasted, others think that they have been productive.

The idea of India mentioned by Jawaharlal Nehru while giving shape to India's independence was eclipsed the moment it came into being. The reason? No matter how sentimental people are about the concept of nationalism, when it comes to voting, they always put their cultural identity first. Therefore, our elections have become dependent on castes, communities, languages, dialects and regions. If you look at the activities surrounding the

elections for the 17th Lok Sabha, all the electoral equations are based on these very fundamental elements. For example, Omprakash Rajbhar does not have much base in his state's politics. He is a leader of a community which has influence in a particular area of eastern Uttar Pradesh. He is a minister in the Yogi government cabinet and often expresses his disagreement with the policies of the BJP thus creating a problem and at times challenges the image of the government. Despite this, he succeeded in securing government posts and facilities for many of the members of his party prior to the elections.

In the same manner, Anupriya Patel enjoyed

power during the Modi regime. But as elections drew nearer she also started throwing tantrums. As a result, she succeeded in getting two seats instead of one. Not only this, the BJP gave the JD(U) and LJP seats as they asked and had to sacrifice five seats in which the party was sure of victory. The same story was repeated in Maharashtra. Uddhav Thackeray never lost an opportunity to humiliate the BJP government in the last five years but he was also given the seats he wanted. Of course, the saffron party has no special affection for Nitish Kumar, Uddhav Thackeray or Ram Vilas Paswan. The underlining fact is that the BJP wants to win as many seats as it can and it does not want

to take any risks.

The Congress was also making the same efforts but it had to work much harder in this regard. It faced no problem in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra but the Congress is now forced to contest alone in Uttar Pradesh, a state which was once its stronghold. Not only this, in Bihar too it had to face the tantrums of the Rashtriya Janata Dal's Tejashwi Yadav. The Congress wanted to contest on 11 seats while Tejashwi was ready to give at the most eight seats. Not just that, he was leaving only those constituencies which, going by the social equations, were not going to prove beneficial for the UPA. Finally, they reached an understanding. It's needless to point out how



politically significant Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are. Out of the total of 543 Lok Sabha seats, these states have 25%, that is 127 seats. Out of them, the BJP and its allies occupy 111 seats. It was an opportunity for the Congress and its allies. They could reap the benefit of anti-incumbency of the governments at the Centre and the states. But the delay in striking alliances has made their task more difficult. Contesting elections alone in Uttar Pradesh may bear fruit in the long run, but will the Congress be able to

compensate for UP-Bihar in the nine states where it is in a direct fight against the BJP? Why do the national parties seem so helpless? The regional parties and personalities have given great importance to regional or caste-based aspirations that the national parties are compelled to strike a compromise with them. The BJP is contesting the elections in the name of Narendra Modi while the Congress wants to move ahead under the patronage of the Nehru-Gandhi family.

## ***The SC's Ayodhya mediation offer is pragmatic and wise***

***The apex court recognises the limitations of the judicial process, and attempts to secure its own legitimacy.***

The sight of lawyers in black and white robes arguing about civil procedure before judges seated on a pedestal, while the hapless litigant strains her ears to understand how her legal claim is being decided, has always been a curious advertisement for the rule of law in India. One the one hand, it holds the promise of applying neutral rules. But so alien is the language of rules and so befuddling the legal procedures for the common person, that the authenticity of a litigation-based rule of law has always remained suspect. The order of the Supreme Court sending the Ayodhya dispute to mediation is representative of this cultural hesitation regarding the rule of law. Equally tellingly, it is recognition of the salient fact that there

exist alternate approaches to adversarial litigation as a means of securing justice.

In substance, though not in form, the order is strikingly similar to the final judgment in the title suit in the Allahabad High Court. There, Hindu groups - those on behalf of Ram Lalla and the Nirmohi Akhada - asked for a declaration of title and possession of the disputed property where the Babri Masjid stood. This was contested by the Sunni Waqf Board and other Muslim groups. The Allahabad High Court held that the disputed property should be divided three ways - one each to the representative Hindu and Muslim groups, and one to the Nirmohi Akhada, which had traditionally been

the disputed property.

This was panchayati justice disguised as the application of legal rules. To be fair to the judges, from the evidence adduced, it could scarcely be stated with certainty that the property definitively belonged to one group or the other. This is because the basis of the legal claim was political all the way down - it required a look not only at archaeological evidence and documented histories (which are political in their own way) but also beliefs (whether indeed Ram was born at the specific spot where the mosque stood), which are not designed to be tested in a court of law. Add to this the protracted timelines, and it is difficult to come to a conclusive result regarding who exclusively owned the disputed

property, without making a political judgment. This is neither helpful for resolving the dispute nor for bolstering the legitimacy of a judicial process that is meant to be apolitical.

What transpired in the high court was a mediated settlement minus the healing that emanates from honest conversations in a formal mediation process. The Supreme Court's mediation order builds on this lived judicial history. It is both pragmatic, recognising the limitations of the judicial process, and wise, in attempting to secure its own legitimacy. It is, however, unfortunate that the same extent of pragmatism did not extend to the time period provided for mediation and choice of mediators. Setting a hard deadline of eight weeks gives rise to the impression



of mediation as a stopgap solution. This has given rise to all kinds of idle, but powerful, speculation of whom the judgment politically benefits. Giving the mediators a longer period to attempt to heal the wounds and find a mutually workable resolution would have given the process more of a fighting chance of success. This is linked to the criteria used for selecting mediators. Apparent from the choices made is the fact that the Supreme Court desired credibility, identity and mediation acumen. All three criteria are critical if

the mediation is to be conducted professionally and its results widely accepted. But a fourth criterion is equally key: impartiality. By selecting Sri Sri Ravi Shankar who satisfies the aforementioned three criteria, but has publicly stated that Muslims should give up their claims on Ayodhya "as a goodwill gesture", impartiality appears to be compromised. This has the potential to alienate not only Muslims, but also Hindus, if the outcome of the mediation is something that they do not substantively agree with.

## Who speaks for Muslims in Lok Sabha? The answer is quite tricky

Muslims are witnessing two contradictory trends in Indian democracy. Between 2001 and 2011, the share of Muslim population in India increased from 13.4% to 14.2%. This rise in share, however, has not led to a rise in share of Muslim members of Parliament (MPs) in Lok Sabha. In fact, the 2014 Lok Sabha had the lowest share of Muslim MPs in India. One of the biggest reasons for this was that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which got a majority in the 2014 elections, gave less than 2% of its tickets to Muslim candidates, and none of them were elected.

Should this be a matter of concern? The answer to this question depends on whether political representation for a

community is necessary for voicing its concerns in the legislature. One useful way to measure this is to look at the questions MPs ask about Muslims in India.

Using natural language processing algorithms, we were able to extract and analyse more than 1,800 questions about Muslims raised in the Question Hour in the last 20 years.

Muslim MPs have had a greater relative share in questions asked about Muslims in Lok Sabha. This means that the share of questions asked by them is much larger than their share of seats in the House. They also seem to ask different kinds of questions compared to non-Muslim MPs. And there are certain issues, such as concerns regarding Muslim women, which

are ignored by both Muslim and non-Muslim MPs.

Our analysis picked up 1,875 unique instances of questions raised about Muslims between 1999 and 2017. Muslim and non-Muslim MPs had a share of 22% and 78% in these questions. When seen with the fact that Muslim MPs did not make up more than 6% of Lok Sabha at any period, it shows that Muslim MPs have a larger relative share in questions concerning Muslims in the House.

Among issues concerning Muslims, questions about Haj had the biggest share, while violence against Muslims and welfare of Muslim prisoners had the smallest share in these questions. The most skewed Muslim versus non-Muslim division can be seen in questions

on Islamic terrorism, where non-Muslim MPs asked 97% of such questions. Non-Muslim MPs also had a larger share in questions about Haj.

Does the fact that Muslim MPs have a bigger share in questions about Muslim issues mean that they only raise issues of their own community in the Lok Sabha? Data suggests otherwise. Only 2% of all questions raised by Muslim MPs in the Lok Sabha are about Muslim issues. This figure was 0.3% for non-Muslim MPs.

To be sure, there is a difference between asking questions on an issue concerning Muslims and doing justice to the concerns of the community on that issue. The best example of this is education. Our analysis shows that 44% of the questions asked

by MPs in the Lok Sabha regarding Muslim education were focused on madrasas. This, when seen with the fact that barely 4% of Muslim students are enrolled in Madrasas (National Council for Applied Economic Research, 2005), suggests that interventions by MPs might not be highlighting the relevant issues for the community.

On the other hand, there are issues that, despite having a widespread currency among Muslims, are not given adequate attention by MPs. For example, a 2017 Gallup survey found that more than 85% of Indian Muslims support equal access for both genders in education, and think that women should be able to hold a job outside of the house.

## The mismatches in Indian politics

India has a parliamentary system. But there is a mismatch between the role defined for the parliamentarian and the expectations of the people. The constitutional scheme holds that Members of Parliament (MPs) essentially have to frame laws: people on the ground expect MPs to solve their daily problems, intervene in essentially municipal and district level issues, and improve their lives. There is a second mismatch. When the voter goes out to press the button, he is expected to elect only his local representative - admittedly on the party platform he represents. But in reality, since the

legislature and executive are conjoined in India, the voter is not just electing his MP but also his Prime Minister. This divergence - of an MP's role and expectations from him; of an election which is local but turns increasingly national - has made the role of parliamentarians very different in India's system.

It is in this larger backdrop that we should assess the selection of candidates, so far, by different parties. A caveat - Congress has released six lists, the BJP has named 184 candidates, but many more are yet to be declared. But initial trends give us a glimpse into a pattern. The Congress is playing on the front

foot, as Rahul Gandhi said it would, in battleground states like UP. In the seats where it is in the reckoning, the party is putting up strong candidates - even if these candidates hurt the prospects of the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party alliance. At the same time, while the Congress left many alliances till too late, the fact is it has stitched up multiple alliances in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. This has meant that it will contest on fewer seats than it did in the past in many pockets. But in all cases, the local candidate is essential in the Congress scheme of things since they

hope local arithmetic will overturn Narendra Modi's national campaign.

But the BJP's list is even more telling. In a state like UP, where the party suffers from triple anti-incumbency - since it is in power at the centre, has the state government, and has both the MP and mostly the MLAs any constituency - it has chosen to repeat the majority of its incumbents. This is always a fine balancing act for parties. Do you drop MPs and hope anti incumbency fades, or do you repeat incumbents, bank on his home and prevent a possible rebellion? While adopting the latter in key states like UP, the

BJP seems to have adopted the former strategy - of changing candidates - in states like Chhattisgarh where it is confronting a major challenge. This can be traced to the fact that in major states, the BJP hopes that the Modi campaign will push through local incumbents, but in some regions, it needs strong local faces. What is common to both parties so far however is the lack of gender diversity, and the fact that women constitute less than 15% of the list. This is even more incongruous when Naveen Patnaik has given 33% and Mamata Banerjee, 40% of their parties' tickets to women.

## The bankruptcy code should have been invoked Does India need two state-owned airlines?

There's only one answer to that question. It's a one-word answer, a word that begins with N and ends with O and has nothing in between.

Yet, pushed by the government - whatever be its reasons - India's State-owned banks have traded roughly Rs 8,500 crore in debt for a majority stake in Jet Airways. It's small consolation that chairman Naresh Goyal, who oversaw the airline's descent into a fiscal mire, and his wife have stepped down from the board (although Goyal and his family and associates will still own 25% of the stock).

Lenders led by India's largest

bank, the State-owned State Bank of India, now own 50.1% of the airline and are in the process of putting together a committee or team to run it. This is a government that started off in 2014 with the aim of selling the State-owned Air India and which, a few years ago, actually made a concerted attempt to do so (there were no takers). The logic behind the move was straightforward:

The government has no business running an airline. By the same logic, it has no business running two.

This is a retrograde step, simply because there is

already a mechanism to deal with a case like Jet's. This is a mechanism put in place by this very government - the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Any resolution of the crisis at Jet should have happened through this. It may have involved a change of ownership through a sale; or it could have even involved a break-up of the airline and the sale of its assets. The code has enough in it to protect the interests of everyone - suppliers and vendors, lessors, lenders, even employees. To be sure, the code needs some fine-tuning but this is something that will only



happen when it actually starts dealing with specific cases, and Jet's is a textbook sample of the kind of case where the IBC should have been invoked.

Instead, the government, through State-owned banks, is doing what it has done many times in the past: throwing good money after bad.



# Lok Sabha Elections 2019

## Jaya Prada, actor-turned-politician, joins BJP



( Agencies)-Actress Jaya Prada joined the BJP on Tuesday, fuelling speculations that the party may field her against Samajwadi Party veteran Azam Khan in Rampur, western Uttar Pradesh.

Jaya Prada and Azam Khan are arch-rivals and have fought each other bitterly during their stint in the Samajwadi Party.

Jaya Prada said she was joining the BJP as she was impressed with the work of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. She said joining the BJP was a key moment in her life.

She began her career with the Telugu Desam Party in 1994 and was a member of the Rajya Sabha from Andhra Pradesh. She crossed over to the Samajwadi Party after falling out with TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu.

A close confidant of then Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh, Jaya Prada successfully

contested the 2004 and 2009 parliamentary elections from Rampur.

She was expelled from the Samajwadi Party in 2010 for throwing her weight behind Amar Singh in a fight between him and the party leadership. They floated a regional party and contested the 2012 assembly election without much success. Jaya Prada joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal and fought the 2014 election from Bijnor. She stood fourth.

## Sushma Swaraj demands justice for Pak Hindu girls forced to convert, marry

( Agencies)- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Tuesday demanded that the two Pakistani Hindu girls, who were allegedly abducted, forcibly converted to Islam and married to Muslim men should be reunited with their families. Both the girls are minor.

"Forced conversion of Hindu girls in Pakistan: The age of the girls is not disputed. Raveena is only 13 and Reena is 15 years old. Even the Prime Minister on Naya Pakistan will not believe that girls of this tender age can voluntarily decide about their conversion to another religion and marriage," Swaraj tweeted taking a dig at Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's catchphrase to assert "new thinking" in his government. Khan has referred to 'Naya Pakistan' in his public speeches after coming to power in last year's parliamentary elections. Khan has also ordered probe into the incident.

Swaraj said, "Justice demands that both these girls



should be restored to their family immediately."

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, Islamabad High Court ordered the government to ensure protection to the minor girls and take over their custody. The two underage girls are sisters from Ghotki in Sindh. They were allegedly forcibly converted from Hinduism and married to Muslim men on the eve of Holi.

The incident came to public knowledge after the father and brother of the minor girls posted videos on social media giving details of the case. Civil society activists in Pakistan staged protests including one outside the Karachi Press Club on Sunday.

## For Congress's Rs 12k poll promise, fixing household income could be big hurdle

**Congress has set a minimum income guarantee line of Rs 12,000, akin to a poverty line. The party also assumes that any Indian household should meet this monthly income threshold to escape poverty.**

( Agencies)-The Congress's promise of a minimum income guarantee, details of which were revealed by the party on Monday, is the highest among some recent estimates of how much the poor could be given as income transfer by the government and what it would cost.

The party has set a minimum income guarantee line of Rs 12,000, akin to a poverty line.

The party also assumes that any Indian household should meet this monthly income threshold to escape poverty.

According to details available so far, any deficit from the minimum income line, depending on where a household is placed on the income-distribution ladder, will be made good through an income transfer.

The programme promises the lowest quintile (or the poorest

20% households) a monthly income transfer of Rs 6,000, assuming this will pull them up to the level of at least Rs 12,000. According to party's calculations, the poorest 20% translates into 250 million people or 50 million households. Targeting the poorest quintile will ensure no household will have an income below Rs 12,000, according to the party's internal estimates.

There are two broad official estimates of poverty: the Suresh Tendulkar poverty line, in 2009, which was criticised for being set too low at Rs 4,050 per household per month in rural areas and Rs 4,950 in urban areas. It was reworked by the Rangarajan Committee in 2012. Neither poverty line, however, is now used for anti-poverty programmes. Rather, the government uses the Socio-Economic Caste Census

(SECC).

The number of households targeted by the Congress closely approximates that of the Rangarajan poverty estimates. According to the Rangarajan panel, about 29.5% of Indian population (or 269 million people) are below the poverty line, which was revised to Rs 4,800 a month for a household of five in rural areas and Rs 7,050 a month for a household of five in urban areas. Experts say it will be difficult to determine household incomes. Policymakers now use household consumption expenses as a proxy for income data. "Household income data at the national level doesn't exist. Such data do exist at the state level compiled by state statistical bureaus, which then have to be cleaned up by Central Statistics Office," said economist Amitabh



Kundu. People tend to their underreport incomes, he said.

"Income data are available. We do have a sense of the income distribution. How do you think inequality figures are arrived at? There is the Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy for instance. There is of course the SECC. That there is no official income data and therefore I can't embark on a final mission to finish poverty is the most ridiculous excuse," said Praveen Chakravarty, chairperson of the Congress's data analytics department. Congress president Rahul Gandhi has claimed there is fiscal space

available for the programme. Yet, there will be considerable debate on this. The government's spending and borrowings have to meet limits set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003

The Union government slammed the Congress promise as a poll gimmick. "Rahul Gandhi has talked about minimum income guarantee. Was Surprised. He has remembered the poor now? His grandmother had called for banishing poverty long ago. We thought poverty was gone," Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told ANI.

# Centre allocated most of mines to BJP-ruled states... we feel cheated', says Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel

**In an interview, CM Bhupesh Baghel spoke on the alleged corruption charges against former CM Raman Singh, the rise of Left-wing extremism and the state's poor mining revenue**

(Agencies)- 'The Congress, which won the 2018 Chhattisgarh assembly polls with a two-thirds majority, is now upbeat about its prospects in the state in the Lok Sabha elections. In an interview to Chetan Chauhan and Ritesh Mishra, CM Bhupesh Baghel spoke on the alleged corruption charges against former CM Raman Singh, the rise of Left-wing extremism and the state's poor mining revenue. Edited excerpts:

You have constituted SITs to investigate the policies of the previous government and the allegations against former CM Raman Singh. The BJP is saying Congress is doing vendetta politics.

During [the 2018 assembly] elections, we raised PDS [public distribution system] and other scams involving Raman Singh's family and promised to investigate them. When we were

in the Opposition, we raised questions about the Jheeram Ghati case [in which several top Congress leaders were killed by Maoists in May 2013], and promised to reinvestigate it. We are fulfilling all promises and doing more than that.

In Chhattisgarh, Rahul Gandhi attacked Raman Singh more than Modi. Does the Congress feel that by attacking him, the probability of winning the LS polls in the state will increase?

Rahul ji was initially attacking Narendra Modi on the Rafale deal... We noticed that size of Modi's picture on the BJP hoardings in Chhattisgarh reduced and Raman Singh became the main face. This was the first indication that the Modi factor was not working, and the BJP thought Singh's image will save them. It was then we asked Rahul ji to attack Singh and no senior BJP leader defended him.

Rahul Gandhi made the farm sector a main electoral issue. What steps have you taken to fulfil your poll promises?

We have waived farm loans of about two million farmers to the tune of Rs 11,000 crore ,without any upper limit. We have increased the paddy procurement rate to Rs 2,500 per quintal [from Rs 1,700 per quintal] , which is now the highest in the country. We have returned the [4,200 hectares] land acquired by the previous BJP government to the tribals of Bastar. The rest of the promises will be fulfilled after the LS polls.

What is your strategy for tackling Maoism?

See, when Chhattisgarh was formed [in 2000], the Maoists were only in three blocks. In the past 15 years of the BJP rule, they have spread to 14 districts. As more forces were deployed, the Maoists' number rose, clearly



showing that bullets-for-bullets is not the right strategy. We should work for the people living in Maoist areas and build trust with them. My government will talk with all stakeholders to build trust and find a solution to the Maoist issue. The present counteroffensive will continue till we prepare a new strategy. How do you plan to check illegal mining in the state?

We will take strict action against the illegal coal mining in the state. As far as illegal sand mining is concerned, we are making new rules and illegal sand mining will be checked.

What are your reservations about the Centre's mine allocation policy?

We feel cheated. If all the coal mines in Chhattisgarh would have been auctioned, we would have got a royalty of Rs 2,500 per tonne. But, the Centre allocated most of the mines to the BJP-ruled states under its mine developer-cum-operator (MDO) policy and therefore, we get royalty of just Rs 100 per tonne. I want to ask why the state government has been given the mine if a private player has to be appointed as actual miner?

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## मोदी का एलान-ए-जंग

# बूंद-बूंद को तरसेगा पाक

**नई दिल्ली ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी**  
 प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी सरकार ने बूंद बूंद जल्दी ही पाकिस्तान को जाने वाले अपने हिस्से के पानी को रोकने का फैसला किया है। इसके साथ ही इस पानी को जम्मा और आसानी से पकड़ कर उसे बाढ़ के कारण भी बिना खोए हुए पानी के फेंकने में मदद करेगा। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के द्वारा भारत के साथ भारत-पाक संबंधों को सुदृढ़ बनाने के लिए शुरू की गयी है।

मोदी सरकार ने कहा, 'हमारे पास पानी है, अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के द्वारा भारत के साथ भारत-पाक संबंधों को सुदृढ़ बनाने के लिए शुरू की गयी है।' इससे पहले पाकिस्तान ने भारत को, अणुबomber के बंधन में बंधा हुआ है। हमारे पास पानी है, अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के द्वारा भारत के साथ भारत-पाक संबंधों को सुदृढ़ बनाने के लिए शुरू की गयी है।

### नहीं बरस आ रहा पाकिस्तान, तीसरे दिन भी पानी नहीं बह रहा

जम्मू ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी  
 पाकिस्तान के साथ भारत के बीच पानी का बंटवारा जारी है। पाकिस्तान को पानी देने के लिए भारत सरकार ने एक बंधनपूर्ण एलान किया है। भारत सरकार ने कहा, 'हमारे पास पानी है, अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के द्वारा भारत के साथ भारत-पाक संबंधों को सुदृढ़ बनाने के लिए शुरू की गयी है।'

### भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा घर निका

वाराणसी ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी  
 भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा वाराणसी में एक घर निका किया गया है। इस घर निका के माध्यम से वाराणसी के लोगों को बेहतर सुविधा मिलेगी।

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

वाराणसी ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी  
 अमेरिकन सरकार ने एक महिला को आईएस से अलग करने से इंकार किया है। अमेरिकन सरकार ने कहा, 'हमें इस महिला को आईएस से अलग करने से इंकार किया है।'

# Nirav Modi extradition case in London court likely to begin on Friday

**Modi, 48, was denied bail on March 20 after being arrested the previous day on an arrest warrant issued by the court after home secretary Sajid Javid certified India's request to extradite him to face charges of bank fraud amounting to over Rs 14,000 crore.**



(By a Staff Reporter) - Fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi, lodged in the Wandsworth prison, is likely to appear in the Westminster Magistrates' Court on Friday via videolink to seek bail. It will mark the beginning of case management hearings as part of extradition proceedings. A team from India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is expected to be present in the court on Friday. Modi, 48, was denied bail on March 20 after being arrested the previous day on an arrest warrant issued by the court after home secretary Sajid Javid certified India's

request to extradite him to face charges of bank fraud amounting to over Rs 14,000 crore. Denying Modi bail is significant given the history of Indians sought to be extradited since the 1992 India-UK treaty. Almost all of them were granted bail, including former Dawood Ibrahim aide Iqbal Mirchi, as well as others such as Vijay Mallya, Sanjeev Chawla and Ravi Shankaran. Modi offered to pay 500,000 pounds security deposit for bail, but was denied due to what judge Marie Mallon called the "high value of amount involved in the allegations" and the likelihood of his

escaping. Extradition case of both Modi and Mallya relate to loans of around Rs 9,000 crore secured from a consortium of banks that includes IDBI and SBI in the Mallya case, and a fraud of over Rs 14,000 crore perpetrated on the Mumbai branch of the Punjab National Bank in Modi's case.

However, there are key differences in the nature of charges of financial impropriety. Mallya's main contention was that there is no prima facie case against him, since the inability of his Kingfisher Airlines to return loans

was due to a genuine business failure. After over a year of hearings, chief judge Emma Arbuthnot upheld India's case. In contrast, Modi's case may be decided over a shorter time-frame, given seemingly clearer charges of fraud against him, his co-accused and uncle Mehul Choksi, his family and some PNB officials, as outlined in CBI's charge sheet filed in Indian

courts. As in the Mallya case, Modi's defence team is likely to raise issues in court to prevent his extradition such as risk to his human rights in Indian jails, political persecution and alleged infirmities in the Indian judicial system that prevent delivery of justice. India successfully countered such claims in the court with documentary and visual evidence in the Mallya case.

## Lok Sabha elections 2019: BJD leans on welfare to counter BJP charge

**To understand the grip Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik has had over state politics for close to two decades, a gram panchayat (GP) office is a good place to begin.**

(By a Staff Reporter) - To understand the grip Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik has had over state politics for close to two decades, a gram panchayat (GP) office is a good place to begin. It is late morning and the Kapileswara GP office in Kendrapara district is witness to a steady stream of visitors. Banita Sutar's husband died in a road accident eight years ago. The family had then got a compensation of Rs 3 lakh. She is here to collect her monthly widow pension of Rs 300. Sutar is also the president of a self-help group (SHG) in her village. The government, under a scheme called Mission Shakti, empowered SHGs by offering seed money of Rs 15,000, mobile phones and regular training to all members who can then avail of loans at low interest for productive activities from January last year. Suttar also gets 10 kg of rice for Rs 10.

When asked what she thought of Patnaik, she said, "He works for the poor. We are with him." And what did she think of Prime Minister Narendra Modi? "He is good too." Between the two, whom

would she choose? "Naveen, no doubt." A little later in the day, Seba Swain of Baro village walks in. He is here to collect his pension. Swain, an agricultural labourer, receives rice at the same subsidised rate, and owns an acre of land. He has applied, under the new Kalia (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) scheme, for direct income assistance and is waiting for government support. Swain too is an ardent Biju Janata Dal (BJD) supporter. Kalia is a direct cash assistance scheme in which an estimated 3.7 million small and marginal farmers would get Rs25,000 as farm assistance over five agricultural seasons for purchase of inputs like seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and labour charges. Besides, another 900,000 landless agricultural labourers would get one-time assistance of Rs 12,500 for agricultural allied activities like livestock, fishery and horticulture-based activities towards livelihood support in three phases. So far over Rs 1,900 crore has been transferred to the bank accounts of farmers as the first instalment of Kalia. In



April, another Rs1,900 crore would be given to the farmers. More than any other group, women voters have been Patnaik's staunchest supporters since 2000, when he first came to power in the state. Organised under 600,000 SHGs, women voters have given the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) a decisive edge in election after election. This mix of social welfare and empowerment -- subsidised food, pensions, maternity allowance, support to women SHGs -- has helped construct an image of Patnaik as a pro-poor leader. And, it is this same image that is being challenged by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Its confidence largely stems from a dramatic improvement

in its performance in the Panchayat elections in early 2017, which established the saffron party as the primary challenger (The party won 297 zila parishad seats, compared to the BJD's 473 and the Congress's 60) and anti-incumbency against Patnaik's government. The Congress remains the third pole of the polity. "Though there should have been anti-incumbency against Naveen Patnaik after four successive terms, neither BJP nor Congress seem to be ready to match up to him," said Satya Prakash Das, professor at Sambalpur University. The challenge it was back in 2014 that Modi and BJP president Amit Shah decided to focus on the

eastern seaboard in general, but Odisha in particular. The calculation was two-fold. The BJP had peaked in north, west and central India; to make up for inevitable losses here, it needed to expand in newer territories in the east. Two, Odisha had seen the same government for four terms. There was no robust opposition. Modi was popular. And, the BJP thought it could make a dent. The face of this challenge was Union minister and Odisha leader Dharmendra Pradhan. The party focused on organisational expansion and claims to have committees across 36,000 booths. A big section of second and third-rung Congress leaders, particularly at the district level, switched sides.

# Speaker removes Abhay Chautala as leader of opposition in Haryana House

*The speaker said he will write to the state president of the Congress, which has a strength of 17 MLAs and has emerged as the principal opposition now, to forward the name of their legislator for the post of LOP. Currently, Kiran Choudhry is the Congress legislature party leader and is likely to be named as the LOP.*



(By Our Staff Reporter)- The Haryana assembly speaker on Tuesday removed Abhay Chautala as the leader of opposition after strength of party legislators dropped to 15 following resignations of two of its members. "The INLD MLA count has come down to 15 as I have accepted the resignations of Ranbir Gangwa and Kehar Singh Rawat. Abhay Chautala has been removed as the leader of opposition," said speaker Kanwar Pal. sdl;fks Hathin MLA Rawat and Nalwa

legislator Gangwa have switched sides to the BJP. "Gangwa and Rawat had submitted their resignations to my office before they joined the BJP. As there were holidays in between, I accepted their resignations now," he added. The speaker said he will write to the state president of the Congress, which has a strength of 17 MLAs and has emerged as the principal opposition now, to forward the name of their legislator for the post of LOP. Currently,

Kiran Choudhry is the Congress legislature party leader and is likely to be named as the LOP. Abhay, while announcing his resignation on Saturday, had also demanded disqualification of four INLD MLAs - Naina Chautala, Anoop Dhanak, Pirithi Nambardar and Randeep Phogat - who have sided with the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP), a breakaway outfit floated by his elder brother Ajay Chautala and his sons Hisar MP Dushyant Chautala and Digvijay Chautala. On fate of these four INLDs, the speaker said, "There is a process for this which will be initiated. These four MLAs will be asked to clear their stance. If they say they have joined the JJP, then appropriate action will be taken, but if they deny, then Abhay Chautala will be asked to give proof to substantiate his claims". In the 90-member assembly, the ruling BJP has 48 members. One member each belongs to the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Bahujan Samaj Party, five are Independents while one seat fell vacant after the demise of INLD leader Jaswinder Singh Sandhu earlier this year. INLD

secretary general RS Choudhry expressed disappointment over Abhay's removal. He said while Gangwa had defected to BJP on March 22 and Rawat on March 25 and told the newsmen that they had not resigned from the Vidhan

Sabha, the speaker insisted that they had resigned. The INLD had suffered a heavy defeat in the Jind bypolls in January, with party candidate Umed Singh Redhu forfeiting his security deposit.

## Death by mosquito not accident, can't claim insurance: SC

(Insider Bureau)-A disease caused or transmitted by insect bite/virus in the natural course of events would not be covered by the definition of an accident, the Supreme Court has held. A bench of justices DY Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta gave the ruling in a matter related to insurance cover for a bank employee who died due to malaria occasioned by a mosquito bite in Mozambique. The judges, however, said that in case the affliction or bodily condition may be regarded as an accident where its cause or course of transmission is unexpected and unforeseen. The bench was dealing with an appeal against the National Consumer Commission which rejected the Insurance company's contention that malaria due to mosquito bite is a disease and not an accident. After hearing the rival submissions and considering the provisions in the insurance policy, ruled in favour of the insurance company and held that in a place like Mozambique, death due to malaria from mosquito bite cannot be considered as death due to an accident

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# Serious allegations against ex-top cop: SC

**The Supreme Court on Monday said there were "very, very serious" allegations against former Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar in the Central Bureau of Investigation's status report on the Saradha chit fund scam.**

(Agencies)- The Supreme Court on Monday said there were "very, very serious" allegations against former Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar in the Central Bureau of Investigation's status report on the Saradha chit fund scam. A three-judge bench led by the Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said that "facts having serious bearings are disclosed in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) status report" and that the agency should file an application against Kumar in the next 10 days. The Central Bureau of Investigation filed the status report based on last month's

interrogation of Kumar, who is accused of tampering with evidence pertaining to the Saradha chit fund case.

The court also refused to drop contempt proceedings against the West Bengal home secretary and the director general of police for "wilful and deliberate violation" of apex court orders.

The CBI had last month filed a contempt petition against Rajeev Kumar, the state director general of police (DGP) and the home secretary, saying the three officials were not cooperating in the Saradha case investigation. In an affidavit filed in the top court on February 18, the probe agency alleged "even after the

CBI was entrusted with the investigation on 9.5.2014, Rajeev Kumar was not parting with the investigation material containing the evidence collected by the SIT [special investigation team] headed by him clearly in connivance with the main accused persons". "...It is submitted that in spite of the continuous insistence and follow-up by the CBI, Rajeev Kumar furnished only CDRs of the prime accused only on 28.6.2018.

The CDRs of the accused when analysed by the CBI were found to be tampered [with], doctored and material evidence had been destroyed," the affidavit read. Kumar, a 1989-batch Indian



Police Service officer, is known for his proximity to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee. He headed the SIT formed by the state government to probe the Saradha scam in April 2013. On February 3, Banerjee launched a 48-hour dharna in Kolkata in protest against the entry of a CBI team to Kumar's residence to question him in connection with the case. Subsequently, Kumar

had to face questioning in Shillong for five days between February 9 and 13 under directions by the top court. The Saradha Group, which operated in states such as West Bengal, Assam and Odisha, had collected ~200-300 billion from about 1.8 million depositors - mostly poor and lower middle-class people - before it collapsed in 2013.

## New island rules make green activists worried

**ANDAMANS allows eco-tourism projects 20 metres from high tide line**



(Insider Bureau)- The union environment ministry has notified island protection zone (IPZ) 2019 for Andaman and Nicobar, which allows eco-tourism projects 20 metres from the high tide line (HTL) in smaller islands like Baratang, Havelock and Car Nicobar, and at 50 metres in larger ones, and relaxed other norms, triggering concern among some green activists. The notification, published on March 8, relaxes development norms in the islands compared to the IPZ notification of 2011, which stipulated a no-development zone (NDZ) of 200 metres from the HTL for

all islands. This brings the norms for Andaman and Nicobar at par with coastal regulation zone (CRZ) norms for other islands close to the mainland and backwater islands where an NDZ only 20 metres from HTL has been stipulated. The Union cabinet had approved the CRZ notification 2018 in December, which relaxed a number of provisions in the CRZ 2011 to facilitate infrastructure development and construction on the coast, including easing floor area ratio (FAR) in coastal urban areas and slashing the NDZ in densely populated coastal rural areas to 50 metres from HTL as compared to 200 metres earlier. The IPZ 2019 notification,

which was issued a day before the model code of conduct for the duration of the general elections came into force on March 10, makes way for many other relaxations. It allows for eco-tourism activities like mangrove walks, tree huts and nature trails in island coastal regulation zone IA (classified as the most eco-sensitive region of the islands which includes turtle nesting grounds, marshes, coral reefs etc). The notification also allows for construction of roads, roads on stilts by reclaiming land in exceptional cases for defence installations, public utilities or strategic purposes in eco-sensitive zones. It states that

in case construction of such roads pass through mangroves, a minimum three times the mangrove area destroyed during the construction process shall be taken up for compensatory plantation of mangroves elsewhere.

These were not allowed under the IPZ 2011 notification which only permitted pipelines, transmission lines, trans-harbor links to be laid in the eco-sensitive zone. The new notification also allows a number of new activities in the inter-tidal zone between low tide line and HTL. This includes land reclamation and bunding for foreshore facilities like ports, harbours, jetties, wharves, quays, sea links etc, transfer of hazardous substances from ships to ports, manual mining of atomic minerals, and mining of sand for construction purposes with permission from local authorities in non-eco-sensitive sites. The 2011 notification allowed a few activities in the inter-tidal zone like construction of huts for fisher folk and other public facilities required for traditional inhabitants. "These amendments are dangerous. There was no public hearing here before this notification

was drafted. There are three luxury tourism projects also coming up on Long Island, Smith Island and Aves Island. Obviously these will have an impact on the fragile ecology of this region like our marine biodiversity including corals and turtle nesting sites. More importantly, how can we be sure that checks and balances will be introduced," said Zubair Ahmed, Port Blair-based environmental researcher.

Experts said the new notification was in line with the government's plans of opening up the "blue economy." Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu last week urged sustainable harnessing of ocean resources, including deep sea mining, at a meeting with National Institute of Oceanography scientists.

"The legal changes in the IPZ are aligned with the Niti Ayog's proposal for holistic development in the Islands which is being taken forward under the guidance of the Island Development Agency. The first phase of this proposal involves creation of jetties and other infrastructure for eco-tourism projects in ecologically fragile islands," said Kanchi Kohli, legal researcher with the Centre for Policy Research think tank.

## RBI slaps Rs 2 cr penalty on PNB for violating SWIFT norms

**The RBI has slapped a penalty of Rs 2 crore on Punjab National Bank (PNB) for non-compliance of regulatory directions with regard to SWIFT operations, the state-run lender said Tuesday.**

(Insider bureru)- The RBI has slapped a penalty of Rs 2 crore on Punjab National Bank (PNB) for non-compliance of regulatory directions with regard to SWIFT operations, the state-run lender said Tuesday.

SWIFT is a global messaging software used for transactions by financial entities. The massive Rs 14,000-crore fraud perpetrated by billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi and his

uncle Mehul Choksi at the PNB was a case of misuse of this messaging software.

In a regulatory filing, the PNB said the Reserve Bank in a letter dated March 25 has informed the bank about the penalty.

"In the matter of violations of regulatory directions by Punjab National Bank observed during assessment of implementation of SWIFT-related operational controls,

the Reserve Bank of India, (imposes) an aggregate penalty of Rs 20 million ... on Punjab National Bank," it said.

Earlier this year, the Reserve Bank had imposed penalties worth Rs 71 crore on 36 public, private and foreign banks for non-compliance with various directions on time-bound implementation and strengthening of SWIFT operations. However, the list



did not include PNB.

The major banks which were fined by the regulator included SBI, ICICI Bank, HSBC, Bank of Baroda, Citibank, Canara Bank and Yes Bank.

## If Rahul Gandhi contests from Wayanad, NDA ally BDJS may ask BJP to contest

**NDA ally Bharatiya Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS) on Tuesday said it is ready to give the Wayanad constituency in north Kerala to the BJP if Gandhi contests from there.**

(Insider bureru)- Amid confusion over Congress president Rahul Gandhi's probable second seat in south India, NDA ally Bharatiya Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS) on Tuesday said it is ready to give the Wayanad constituency in north Kerala to the BJP if Gandhi contests from there. The BDJS is a political outfit of the backward Ezhavas. Out of the 20 seats in Kerala, the BJP is contesting on 14, BDJS is contesting on five seats and Kerala Congress leader PC Thomas is contesting from one seat. "The BJP has alerted us about Wayanad. If

Rahul Gandhi is fighting from there we are ready to give up the seat for the BJP," said BDJS president Thushar Vellapally, who is seeking his maiden mandate from Thrissur. The BJP has made it clear that if Gandhi decides to contest from Wayanad, the party will field a strong candidate against him. Though many names are doing the rounds, a party functionary said a senior leader will be fielded from Wayanad. Party state president PS Sreedharan Pillai is among the probable candidates. "We won't give him an easy walkover. We will field a strong candidate," said

the leader who did not want to be identified.

Meanwhile, uncertainty continues over Rahul Gandhi's possible candidature from Wayanad. A senior Congress district functionary said the AICC has advised party workers to wait for a few days. The DCC has approached the party leadership saying that the uncertainty was affecting the morale of the grassroots workers even as rivals surged ahead in campaigning.

A top contender for the seat T Siddique had announced his withdrawal to make way for Gandhi. "There is no delay. It is a great honour for the state



if he contests from here. We are sure the party president will take a favorable decision soon," said Siddique. Opposition leader Ramesh Oommen Chandy also said they expected a favorable decision by Wednesday.

Malappuram DCC has passed a resolution requesting the Congress leadership to take a speedy decision on this. In many places in the constituency, enthusiastic workers have put up boards and hoardings to welcome the Congress president.

## Top Oxford honour for Nobel laureate Amartya Sen

(Insider bureru)- Nobel laureate Amartya Sen on Tuesday was awarded the Bodley Medal by the University of Oxford - an honour that goes back to 1646 - for his outstanding contribution in various fields, including literature, culture, science and communication. The medal is awarded by the university's Bodleian Libraries, some of the oldest and largest libraries in western Europe that houses rare manuscripts and collections linked to India. The medal was instituted in 1646 by Thomas Bodley, founder of the libraries. Sen, 85, received



the medal in Oxford during an event called the 'Founder's Lunch' from Chris Patten, chancellor of the university, and Richard Ovenden, librarian. "The Bodley Medal is awarded to those who have made outstanding contributions to the worlds in which the Bodleian Libraries is active, including literature, culture, science and

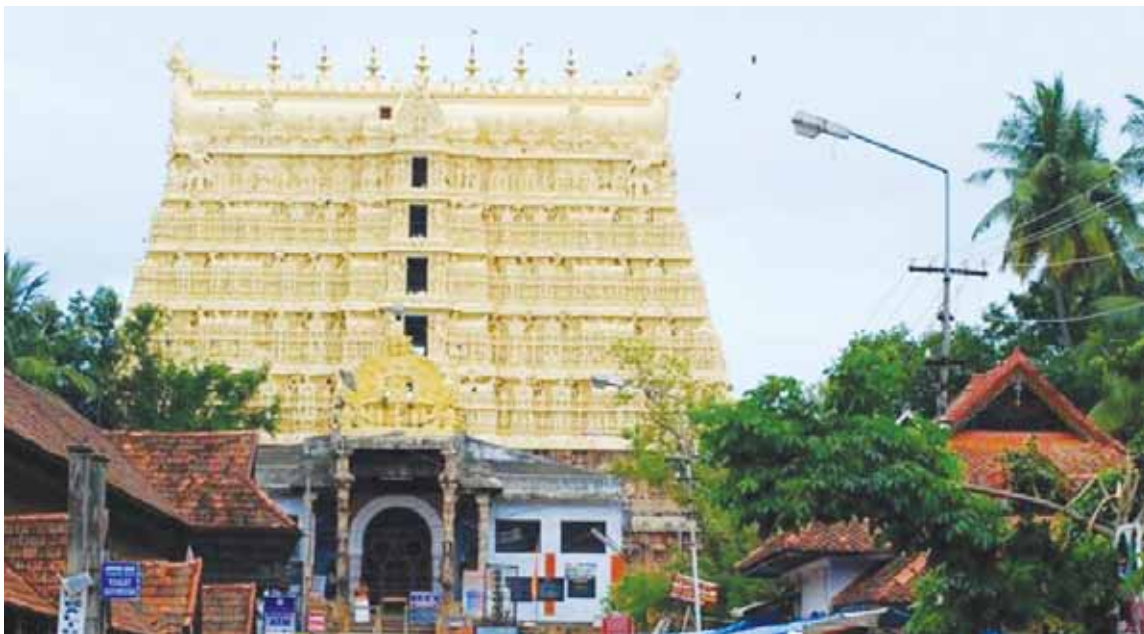
communication", a spokesperson for the libraries said. Another awardee in 2019 is Nobel-winning novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, who will receive it during the Oxford Literary Festival on April 3. Previous recipients of the medal include scientist Stephen Hawking, world-wide web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, naturalist David Attenborough, writers Hilary Mantel and Ian McEwan, and film director Richard Attenborough.

The Bodleian Library is the main library in the Bodleian Libraries group and is second in size only to the British Library. First opened in 1602, the group holds over 13 million printed items.



# Kerala forms SIT after drone buzzes over Padmanabha temple and police HQ

**Police suspect some anti-social elements have carried out the flights to create panic**



(Insider Bureau)- The Kerala police on Tuesday formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe an unidentified flying object (UFO), suspected to be a drone, which was sighted multiple times over the coastal


areas of the state capital in the last few days. On Monday night it was sighted again over the state police headquarters and the famed shrine Sree Padmanabha Swami temple, sending the cops into a

tizzy. One of the richest temples in the world Sree Padmanabha Swami shrine reportedly carries wealth amounting to Rs one lakh crore in its underground vaults. More than 300 commandos have been

guarding the temple since 2011 after one of its secret vaults was opened following a Supreme Court order. "We view this incident seriously and sought the help of central agencies. We have formed a special investigation team to probe this and making a list of all who are using drones," said Thiruvananthapuram police commissioner Sanjay Kumar Gurudin. He said the object was spotted several times in the last one week. Police have asked all drone camera users to submit details of their equipment and they suspect some anti-social elements have carried out the flights to create panic. Meanwhile, a Tamil Nadu-based agency which is carrying out a survey for a railway line connecting the upcoming Vizhinjam port to Thiruvananthapuram said one of

their drones lost control and later it was retrieved. But they said it happened last week. Police have summoned officials of the agency. "Drones are usually used in private functions like marriages. But they have no night vision facilities and can fly only up to 100-300 metres. But what we sighted reportedly has night vision facilities and it was sighted in five-seven kms radius," said a senior officer adding it was spotted flying closely to some of the vital installations like Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Southern Air Command and Sree Padmanabha Swami temple. Military intelligence and southern air command are also closely monitoring the incident, said the senior official. However, sources with the air command said their radars did not detect any unusual activity.


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# Jharkhand minister accused of assaulting woman in public

**The minister, however, denied the allegation terming it 'political conspiracy' against him. BJP workers also lodged a counter complaint at the same police station.**

(Insider bureu)-A woman lodged complaint of assault against the state agriculture minister Randhir Singh at Karmatand police station in Jamtara district, around 180-km south from capital Ranchi, on Tuesday.

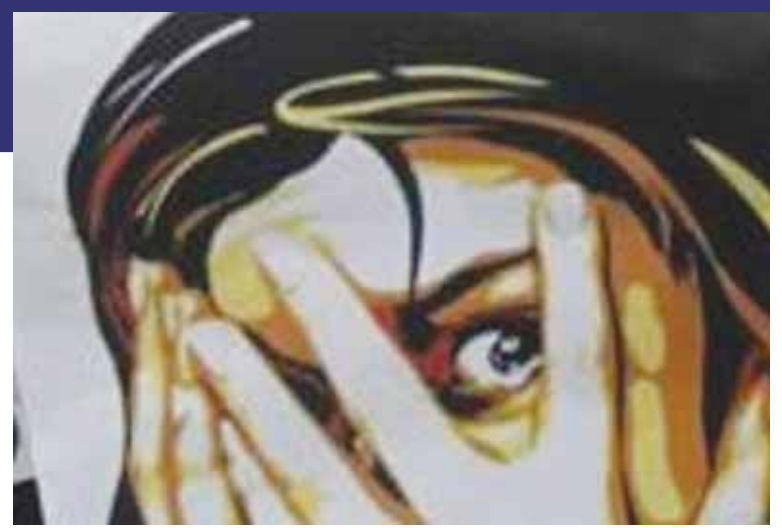
Pinky Kumari, Zila Parishad member from Sarath in Deoghar district, alleged that the BJP minister abused, slapped repeatedly and broke her eyeglasses amid hundreds of villagers during a religious function at Kalajharia village. The minister, however, denied the allegation terming it 'political conspiracy' against him. BJP workers also lodged a counter complaint at the same police station.

Jamtara sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Arvind Upadhyay said, "The complaints were lodged by both the parties against each other. We will investigate the

matter and then lodge an FIR." Kumari said she was at the religious event on villagers' invitation and when she was about to pick Kalash (metal pot) to participate in the religious procession, minister's workers came and asked her to leave the place. "They said the function was being organized by the minister. I told them that won't leave the place until villagers ask me to go. Then, they called up the minister. The minister came and started abusing me. He slapped me repeatedly and broke my eyeglasses. Then he left the place following the protest from the villagers," she alleged.

Kumari's younger brother Rahul Kumar, who was along with her during the incident, said, "My sister had been preparing to contest upcoming assembly polls. She was on

field visit to the village two days back where the villagers invited her for their annual religious function held on Tuesday. But, it did not go well with the BJP workers." "This is a political stunt to defame me. Actually, the lady slapped me and held my collar," Singh said. Singh, BJP legislator from Sarath, said, "Like every year, I participated in the religious event. When I was walking in the procession along with



others, I found few committee members arguing with each other. I went to stop them. She suddenly came and started

alleging me that I was creating an uproar. She held my collar. When I requested to leave her, she slapped me."



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# 'Danger not over yet, Pak's relations with India will be tense till Lok Sabha elections 2019': Imran Khan

*PM Imran Khan has said he believes Pakistan's relations with India will continue to be tense till the general elections in the neighbouring country, and Islamabad is prepared to counter "any aggression" because "the danger is not over".*

(By a Staff Reporter) - Prime Minister Imran Khan has said he believes Pakistan's relations with India will continue to be tense till the general elections in the neighbouring country, and Islamabad is prepared to counter "any aggression" because "the danger is not over". Khan made the remarks during a wide-ranging interaction with the media in Islamabad on Monday. Tensions between the two countries had spiked following a suicide attack by the

Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) at Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir that killed 40 paramilitary troops last month.

India retaliated for the Pulwama attack by conducting an air strike on a JeM base at Balakot in Pakistan, and this was followed by an aerial engagement along the Line of Control that resulted in the shooting down of an Indian jet fighter. The situation eased after Pakistan freed Wing

Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, the pilot of the downed jet.

According to a report in Dawn newspaper, Khan responded to a question about ties with India by saying: "The danger is not over. The situation will remain tense till forthcoming general elections in India. We are already prepared to avert any aggression from India."

Khan said his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi was "trying to cash in on the anti-Pakistan



narrative during his election campaign", the report added. He added there was no hope for improving relations with India at least until the elections. "Pakistan needs to be fully alert as threat by India is possible until their elections. The nation must not let down their guard," he was

quoted as saying by The Express Tribune. Khan also said that though Modi had sent a message on Pakistan Day, which was observed on March 23, he was pushing ahead with "war hysteria". There was no immediate response to Khan's remarks from Indian officials.

## China destroys thousands of maps showing Arunachal as part of India: Report

*Acting on a tip off, customs officials of Qingdao city in Shandong province raided an office and seized more than 800 boxes containing 28,908 world maps.*

(By a Staff Reporter) - Nearly 30,000 world maps showing Arunachal Pradesh as a part of India and Taiwan as a separate country were destroyed by customs authorities in a northeastern Chinese city last week. Reports said it was the largest such exercise in recent years and was carried out to protect China's "territorial integrity". The maps were in English and manufactured by a company in a Chinese province called, Anhui. Arunachal Pradesh is claimed by Beijing as a part of

China and depicted on its official maps as a part of south Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Beijing also considers Taiwan, a self-governing province to be eventually unified. Acting on a tip off, customs officials of Qingdao city in Shandong province raided an office and seized more than 800 boxes containing 28,908 world maps. "A total of 803 boxes of the 28,908 wrong maps were seized and destroyed, the largest amount to be disposed

of in recent years," the province's Natural Resources ministry said at a press conference, quoted by the news website Dazhongwang Qingdao reported.

The documents were taken to a secret location and shredded. "The maps were produced by a company in East China's Anhui Province and were on the way to being exported to an unspecified foreign country," the nationalistic tabloid, Global Times reported. "The problematic maps failed to show the correct territory of China and omitted south Tibet and the



island of Taiwan, the Qingdao government found after an examination of the maps," the report added. Relevant authorities have carried out checks on the domestic map market more than 100 times and have discovered and destroyed over 10,000

incorrect maps, preventing the sale in domestic and overseas markets. "Maps reflected national sovereignty and were a political statement", Ma Wei, from the Natural Resources ministry's geographical information centre, was quoted as saying.

## 'No sprinklers, two fire exits': Dhaka tower fire toll rises

*Minister calls deadly Dhaka blaze 'murder' after officials say building lacked proper fire exits and fire equipment.*

The death toll from a horrific blaze that ripped through a Dhaka high-rise building has climbed to 25, Bangladeshi police said, as government officials vowed tough action to improve lax safety standards. Speaking to reporters on Friday, Mostaq Ahmed, deputy commissioner of the Gulshan division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the victims had been identified and "24 have been handed over to their families". The blaze on Thursday left hundreds of people trapped

inside the 22-storey FR tower screaming for help as horrified onlookers massed outside.

Some of those stuck inside made it to safety by sliding down cables on the side of the building, but others took their chances and jumped in a bid to escape the smoke and heat. Six people leaped to their deaths. More than 70 people were taken to hospital for treatment in the wake of the fire. On Friday, firefighters completed the process of combing through the gutted and

blackened floors of the building. Ahmed, of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said there was no immediate indication if others are missing. "Still we are checking, if someone comes to us we will verify," he said. Aatur Rahman, a restaurant worker who rushed to the scene when the fire broke out, said the image of people jumping from the building would haunt him forever. "I could hear the screams of people trapped inside the building," he told Al Jazeera. "Soon after the fire spread on the seventh, eighth

and ninth floors, people started breaking window panes to get out. "Then I witnessed the most horrible scene - people falling from the top floors while trying to climb down the wires in the building. I saw two people falling down. Abdulla Al Faruq Tomal, a 32-year-old who worked on the 11th floor of the FR Tower, was among the 25 victims. His wife, Sanjidha Ovi, said Tomal called her soon after the fire broke out. "He telephoned me and said he had found a safe zone inside the building. The last time he called,

he said he was on the 15th floor and that the smoke from the fire had reached that floor. I told him to go to the roof, but he said there was 'no scope' to do so," Ovi told Al Jazeera. "We have two children. I don't know what will happen to them," she said, choking up. Shammi Akhter said her 27-year-old brother Fazle Rabbi had died of smoke inhalation. "I received my brother's dead body on Friday at the morgue," Akhter told Al Jazeera. "He was supposed to get married in this year."

# "No talks on Kartarpur Corridor until Pakistan clears issues"

The second meeting between India and Pakistan scheduled for April 2 to discuss the Kartarpur Corridor details may be postponed over security concerns and "gaps in position," said a senior officer who did not wish to be named. India said it has "shared concerns and sought clarifications" after reports suggested that a pro-Khalistani leader was one of the members appointed by Pakistan to a committee to help Indian pilgrims to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur.

Reports said that Pakistan's minister for information Chaudhry Fawad Hussain had on Wednesday announced a ten-member committee that includes Khalistani leader Gopal Singh Chawla. "India has also shared concerns and sought clarifications on reports that controversial elements have been appointed by Pakistan to a committee to be associated with the Kartarpur Corridor. It has been conveyed that the next meeting on the modalities can be scheduled at an appropriate time after receiving Pakistan's response," the ministry of external affairs said in a statement. Sources said that Pakistan's deputy high commissioner was called in by India to seek clarification from the neighbouring country on the issues raised. The next round of talks was scheduled to be held on April 2 at

the Wagah border. "There won't be any meeting till clarifications are provided. The meeting is only for a substantive outcome and not optics," a source said. "We are keen on early resolution but cannot let up national security concerns," the source said. Chawla is known as one of the main propagators of the Sikh movement seeking a separate homeland for the community. He is reported to be the general secretary of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

His name had cropped up in the investigations into the grenade attack on the Nirankari Bhawan in Amritsar in which three were killed in November last year. Chawla is also reported to have prevented Indian diplomats from visiting a gurdwara in Lahore. The statement also said that India has sought clarifications from Pakistan on key proposals put forward by New Delhi at the last meeting held in Attari to discuss the modalities of the Kartarpur Corridor. "Meanwhile, in order to take forward the infrastructure development for the Corridor in an expeditious manner, India has proposed to hold another meeting of technical experts in mid-April to resolve outstanding issues at the zero point agreed to at the last meeting," it said. Officials from Pakistan and India had held a meeting earlier in March to discuss

the technical issues regarding the proposed corridor to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur in no man's land on the border in Dera Baba Nanak. India and Pakistan agreed to set up the border crossing linking Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in

Kartarpur, the final resting place of Guru Nanak, to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district in November last year. Kartarpur is located in Pakistan's Narowal district across the Ravi, about 4km from the Dera Baba Nanak. "The

government of India remains committed to realise the long pending demand of the Indian pilgrims to visit the holy Gurudwara Kartarpur Sahib using the Corridor in a safe, secure, smooth and easy manner," the statement said.

## Fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi denied bail again by London Court

**The court's order came after the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) told the court that Nirav Modi should not be granted bail because he posed a significant flight risk and had even issued death threats to witnesses related to his fraud and money laundering case.**

The Westminster Magistrates Court on Friday denied bail to fugitive Indian diamantaire Nirav Modi for the second time after the prosecution raised the prospect of him fleeing the UK, influencing witnesses and destroying evidence in the high-profile case. Toby Cadman, lawyer for the Crown Prosecution Service, acting on behalf of India, made several revelations about Modi while urging chief judge Emma Arbuthnot to deny him bail. He was first denied bail after his arrest on March 19. Modi was returned to the Wandsworth jail, where he will remain until the next hearing on April 26. The revelations included Modi applying for a citizenship-by-investment scheme in Vanuatu by seeking to invest \$200,000 in 2017, which was rejected; Modi living in London since January 2018 in a central London flat on rent, and Modi allegedly threatening to kill witness Ashish Lad. India has informed the court that Modi will be lodged

in the Arthur Road jail in Mumbai, if extradited. It also highlighted the high value of fraud involved, up to \$2 billion through 144 letters of understanding from the Mumbai branch of the Punjab National Bank. The judge set April 26 as the next date of hearing in the extradition case, when Modi will appear by video-link from the Wandsworth jail. He was produced in court on Friday and sat impassively, following the proceedings, dressed in a white shirt and dark trousers, flanked by a policeman. Arbuthnot, who heard and ruled in the extradition case of businessman Vijay Mallya, began the proceedings by asking the lawyers if they had a sense of déjà vu. Last month, UK home secretary Sajid Javid signed an order to extradite Mallya, wanted in India to face charges of financial irregularities running into thousands of crores of rupees. The beleaguered liquor tycoon has filed an appeal against the decision.

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# 'Let's just get the goods'

**Pelosi rallies dejected Dems post-Mueller**



(Insider Bureau)- Speaker Nancy Pelosi sought to rally House Democrats behind closed doors Tuesday morning in the aftermath of special counsel Robert Mueller's 22-month investigation. "Be calm. Take a deep breath. Don't become like them. We have to handle this professionally, officially, patriotically, strategically," Pelosi said, referring to Republicans, during a closed-door meeting with House Democrats. Pelosi's comments came after the chairs of six key

committees demanded that Attorney General William Barr hand over Mueller's entire report by next Tuesday, a formal request that followed a four-page memo from Barr summarizing Mueller's findings. According to Barr, Mueller was unable to establish that Trump associates conspired with Russians during the 2016 presidential campaign and he left unresolved the key issue of whether President Donald Trump obstructed justice. "The president was not exonerated," Pelosi told

Democrats, referring to Trump's claim on Sunday that Mueller's report amounted to a "total exoneration."

Democrats are demanding that Barr turn over all of the underlying evidence that Mueller uncovered so they can use it as part of their own wide-ranging investigations, which focus on allegations of obstruction of justice, abuse of power, corruption and foreign influence.

"If any of us have foreign governments approach us with information about our

opponents, we should go straight to the FBI," Pelosi joked, according to Rep. Annie Kuster (D-N.H.), who recounted Pelosi's remarks to POLITICO. It was a reference to Russian outreach to Trump campaign officials during the 2016 campaign. She also projected optimism, telling lawmakers: "Some people are viewing it as the glass half empty. I think it is half full."

Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee have suggested that the panel would move to issue a

subpoena for the Mueller report if Barr refuses to turn it over by April 2. Lawmakers said on Tuesday that they expect Barr to send Congress a heavily redacted version of the highly anticipated report. The panel has already called on the attorney general to testify about his involvement in crafting the four-page summary released Sunday. A Justice Department official said the Barr review will be done in a matter of "weeks not months."

On the Senate side, Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said he planned to speak with Barr later Tuesday about releasing a version of the special counsel's report to Congress. Graham wants Barr to come before his committee, too.

House Democrats sought to highlight the fact that Barr declined to recommend a criminal prosecution of Trump for obstruction of justice, noting his previously expressed view that a president could not obstruct justice. "We have not seen the report. We've only gotten a summary that was created by a man who

was appointed by the president, who clearly said before his appointment that he didn't believe a sitting president could be charged, if you will, with obstruction of justice," said Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.), a member of the Judiciary Committee. The Judiciary panel unanimously approved a measure later Tuesday calling on the Justice Department to turn over documents about the origins of its obstruction probe into Trump. The Republican-authored resolution was introduced before Mueller completed his inquiry, but Democrats said they, too, wanted to know more about why then-FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe chose to launch that investigation. Democrats insisted they aren't singularly focused on the Mueller investigation and the other probes their committees are conducting, noting that the House is taking up legislation this week on the gender pay gap, the Trump administration's transgender troop ban, health care and climate change. "At this point, the ball is in the court of the attorney general," House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) told reporters.

## Avenatti lashes out at Nike one day after arrest

(Insider Bureau)- Attorney Michael Avenatti accused sportswear giant Nike on Tuesday of illegally arranging payments to high school basketball players, leveling his allegations in a series of tweets posted one day after federal prosecutors brought explosive charges against the lawyer for alleged attempts to extort millions of dollars from the company. The high-profile celebrity attorney, who rocketed into the national spotlight last year while representing adult film actress Stormy Daniels in her case against President Donald Trump, was arrested Monday and indicted simultaneously on separate charges of financial crimes in New

York and Los Angeles. Avenatti on Tuesday tweeted that he was "anxious for people to see what really happened." "We never attempted to extort Nike & when the evidence is disclosed, the public will learn the truth about Nike's crime & coverup," he wrote. According to federal prosecutors in New York, Avenatti met with Nike lawyers last week and threatened to unleash a storm of negative publicity before the company's quarterly earnings call and the NCAA men's basketball tournament. Avenatti represented a basketball coach of a California amateur team who allegedly had evidence of Nike employees authorizing secret payments

to top high school players. Avenatti and his unnamed co-conspirator - reported to be Mark Geragos, another trial attorney known to represent celebrities like Michael Jackson and Jussie Smollett - said they would go public with the information unless Nike paid them more than \$20 million, according to court documents. In a second tweet Tuesday, Avenatti posted a CBS Sports article reporting that Nike's basketball league for elite youth had been served with a subpoena as federal prosecutors investigate potential schemes to funnel money to promising young players to increase the likelihood of apparel contracts if they go pro. Nike said in a statement

Tuesday that it has been cooperating with officials in the NCAA investigation for over a year. Avenatti claimed this was untrue and accused the company of "trying to divert attention from their own crimes." Avenatti was released on \$300,000 bond after appearing in New York federal court Monday evening and told reporters he expects to be "fully exonerated." The attorney also faces separate bank and wire fraud charges in Los Angeles. The latest scandals are not the first hits Avenatti's reputation has taken since he became a regular presence on the national stage. He was arrested, but not charged, on suspicion of domestic



violence in November, and he had public spats with Daniels until the two parted ways earlier this month. His former law firm, Eagan Avenatti, has filed for bankruptcy more than once. Avenatti has been a fervent critic of Trump throughout his presidency and at one point was a frequent face on cable TV

shows, offering combative rhetoric about the White House. While representing Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, he put a spotlight on hush-money payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign and former Trump attorney Michael Cohen's role in facilitating the exchange.

# Judiciary Committee seeks obstruction of justice probe records from DOJ

(Insider Bureau)- The House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday unanimously approved legislation demanding more details from the Justice Department on the obstruction of justice investigation into President Donald Trump.

The straightforward result belied an odd partisan dance that led a Democratic panel to embrace a GOP proposal on one of the most divisive issues in Washington. Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.), the top Republican on the Judiciary Committee, introduced the measure last week - before it was known that special counsel Robert Mueller would be finalizing his investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election. Though Mueller's findings remain secret, Attorney General William Barr indicated Mueller opted not to charge Trump or any associates with conspiring with Russians.

Mueller also explicitly chose to "not exonerate" Trump from an obstruction of justice inquiry, Barr revealed, and Democrats have

clamored for Barr to provide the full report to Congress to understand how Mueller arrived at that decision.

Collins' measure calls for details about the origins of the obstruction probe, which was opened by former FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe. The proposal also seeks information about conversations between McCabe and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein about "wearing a recording device or preparing in any way to record the President."

"I certainly do not oppose efforts to learn more about whether, in fact, such discussions occurred and, if so, what prompted such alarm among Mr. Rosenstein and Mr. McCabe, as well as other FBI officials, that they would consider these unprecedented actions," said House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.). "Therefore, I will not oppose this resolution."

Republicans have long argued that McCabe was part of a corrupt group of Justice Department

officials who leveraged their investigative powers to undermine Trump, and they have been seeking information about McCabe and Rosenstein's interactions for months. McCabe was fired from the FBI hours before he was set to retire last year after the inspector general of the Justice Department determined he lied to investigators about his interactions with media.

Collins said his resolution was part of "showing the thinking and actions of the individuals who fueled investigations of President Trump for collusion and obstruction." "The path forward requires us to identify the origins of an investigation that deceitfully undermined America's faith in our democracy and distracted us from our actual enemy," Collins said.

Collins has backed efforts to reveal more details of the Mueller report and has lately been releasing the transcripts of interviews conducted by lawmakers last year with figures



involved in the Russia and Democrats have argued the GOP inquiries were really efforts to undermine the investigations into Trump. But following Mueller's report they sensed a moment to embrace the GOP call for information as part of their broader call for more details from the Justice Department.

"I would not have been supportive of the underlying resolution had the Mueller report not come to a resolution," said Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.)

In fact, the rare kumbaya moment for the committee followed a staff-level discussion late last week in which Democrats revealed they'd be backing the Collins measure. According to Republican Committee sources, Collins' office offered to reschedule the motion so that Democrats could add it to the docket of a future markup, since they expected debate on the measure would be brief. Ultimately, Democrats kept the matter on Tuesday's schedule and the measure passed 22-0.

## Looming 2020 deadline triggers wild chase for cash

**'We have two really big online behemoths, then we have the rest,' said one Democrat.**

(Insider Bureau)- Democratic presidential candidates are on a white-knuckle ride to March 31, the quarterly reporting deadline that will signal who's rolling in cash and who's scraping just to establish viability.

All too conscious that the numbers they report will be viewed as either a show of strength or the first sign of weakness, the campaigns are furiously chasing dollars to bulk up their totals, while quietly managing expectations behind the scenes with staffers, supporters and the media.

"For candidates who got in early it will be a much more significant test than those who have only just jumped into the race in the last few weeks," said Joel Benenson, a former top adviser to President Barack Obama and the chief strategist for Hillary Clinton in 2016. "Rightly or wrongly, the political press is going to treat the filings as the first 'ballot.' So, it's important both for optics, but also as a warning light for campaigns that

have performed less well than others." The Federal Election Commission deadline looms especially large this year. In a crowded field in which it's difficult to draw sharp distinctions between candidates, the first campaign finance report of the election cycle promises the first quantifiable measure to assess how the nascent campaigns are faring. Equally important, the totals will likely accelerate and harden impressions of a multitiered field, divided between those with the resources to last deep into the primary season and those whose prospects are more reliant on capturing momentum. Every campaign is feeling the pressure to produce. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) is pumping out email after email to supporters, designed to squeeze out every last dollar. Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) has stepped up her fundraising, scheduling a flurry of fundraisers in her home state of California, as well as stops in Washington, Florida and New York. Joe Biden is thought to be delaying a

possible launch until after the deadline, so he doesn't have to report a weak fundraising figure. In preparation for the first filing period, virtually every 2020 presidential candidate saw a boost in Facebook spending last week. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), who spent the most on the platform last week, spent nearly double what she had spent for the rest of 2019 combined.

Officials for several campaigns told POLITICO that internal discussions about how to message the campaign's first major milepost have been underway for some time.

Some who expect to be out-raised suggested they'll cite other metrics pulled from their campaign finance reports to show progress - such as the expanding size of their staff operations. Others are attempting to lower expectations given the breadth of the candidate field, or are discussing strategies to help their staffs tune out the noise they expect around the March 31 date.

## Trump says Mueller acted honorably in Russia probe

(Insider Bureau)- President Donald Trump said Monday that he believes Robert Mueller acted honorably during his Russia probe - seemingly reversing nearly two years of verbal attacks on the special counsel. Trump, after giving a prepared statement with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was asked whether Mueller acted honorably throughout his investigation into whether Russia colluded with Trump's presidential campaign. "Yes he did," the president replied. Trump for nearly two years has consistently criticized Mueller, claiming his probe is a "witch hunt" and that Mueller's team is composed of "13 angry Democrats." Late last year, Trump offered one of his sharpest attacks, tweeting that the special counsel's team was a "disgrace to our Nation." "The inner workings of the Mueller investigation are a total mess. They have found no collusion and have gone absolutely nuts," he tweeted in November. "They are a disgrace to our Nation and don't care how many lives the ruin," Trump continued. "These are Angry People, including the highly conflicted Bob Mueller,

who worked for Obama for 8 years. They won't even look at all of the bad acts and crimes on the other side. A TOTAL WITCH HUNT LIKE NO OTHER IN AMERICAN HISTORY!" Attorney General William Barr on Sunday released a 4-page summary of Mueller's report which concludes Trump's presidential campaign did not collude with Russia. Barr's summary also states that he does not believe there is enough evidence that Trump obstructed justice. The White House has since said that Trump is completely vindicated and exonerated. Democratic lawmakers, however, have called for the full report to be released. Trump has previously said Mueller's report should be made public, but that he would leave the ultimate decision on its release up to Barr. The president repeated that position Monday during an exchange with reporters in the Oval Office. "It wouldn't bother me at all," Trump said when asked about releasing the Mueller report. "It's up to the attorney general. It wouldn't bother me at all."

# House fails to override Trump's veto over national emergency wall fight

(Insider Bureau)- The House failed Tuesday to override President Donald Trump's veto after both chambers of Congress sought to overturn his national emergency declaration to build more border wall. The vote was 248-181, with 14 Republicans voting with Democrats to support the override. It was a steep hill to climb for opponents of Trump's national emergency as the House would have needed two-thirds of its members to back the veto override. Thirteen Republicans voted for the resolution in the first place.

"Today, Congressional Democrats attempted to block the President's National Emergency Defense Declaration -- they failed," White House spokesman Hogan

Gidley said in a statement after the vote. "Democrats continue to ignore the reality that our porous southern border is a magnet for illegal immigration, child smugglers, human traffickers, drug cartels, gangs and many other criminals. This national security and humanitarian crisis endangers every American and cannot be described as anything other than a National Emergency."

Both chambers of Congress had passed a resolution to overturn Trump's national emergency declaration to fund more border wall, which would use billions from the Treasury and Defense departments after Congress rejected giving Trump the full amount of border wall

money he requested for the year.

The decision sparked criticism from Republicans and Democrats alike, many of whom argued the national emergency action would violate the Constitution.

The House easily passed the resolution of disapproval in February. A few weeks later, 12 Senate Republicans joined with Senate Democrats to pass it, marking a sharp rebuke from members of the President's own party on a key issue to his base. The President vetoed the bill one day after it cleared the Senate.

"Congress has the freedom to pass this resolution and I have the duty to veto it," Trump said from the Oval Office before officially sending



the measure back to Congress without his approval.

House Democrats, meanwhile, were quick to announce they would hold an override vote on March 26. "The House and Senate resoundingly rejected the President's lawless power grab, yet the President has chosen to continue to defy the Constitution, the

Congress and the will of the American people," Pelosi said in a statement at the time. But the House faced a high hurdle, needing a two-thirds majority -- rather than a simple majority -- to override the veto. The House first passed the bill 245-182.

House Democratic leaders were under no illusion that the veto

override would pass. Speaker Nancy Pelosi said last week that the point of the vote is to make it clear the new Democratic-controlled House won't tolerate the President's persistence for a border wall.

"Whether we can succeed with the number of votes is not the point," Pelosi said at an event in New York.

## Key cooperating witnesses in college admissions scam sign plea agreements

(Insider Bureau)-Mark Riddell and Rudy Meredith, two of the main cooperating witnesses in the college admissions scandal, have signed plea agreements with prosecutors in exchange for lesser sentences, according to court documents. Riddell and Meredith represent the two prongs at the heart of the scheme: cheating on standardized tests and bribing college coaches to falsely classify an applicant as a recruited athlete, clearing a path to admission. Meredith, the former women's soccer coach at

Yale University, admitted to accepting bribes in exchange for designating prospective students as recruits on the soccer team, according to the plea agreement. Riddell, the former director of college entrance exam preparation at IMG Academy, a private college prep school in Florida, admitted he took tests in place of students, provided answers for their tests and corrected answers after the students completed their exams, the plea agreement says. IMG has suspended him indefinitely. Both were part of

the sprawling college admissions scandal that prosecutors revealed two weeks ago that charged 50 people, including 33 wealthy parents, of carrying out a scheme to get students fraudulently into elite universities. The mastermind of the scheme, Rick Singer, is also cooperating with prosecutors. He pleaded guilty March 12 in federal court to racketeering, money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruction of



justice. Meredith was the first parent in exchange for helping the three to begin cooperating get the parent's daughter after he was caught in an FBI admitted to Yale as an athlete, sting soliciting a bribe from a according to court documents.

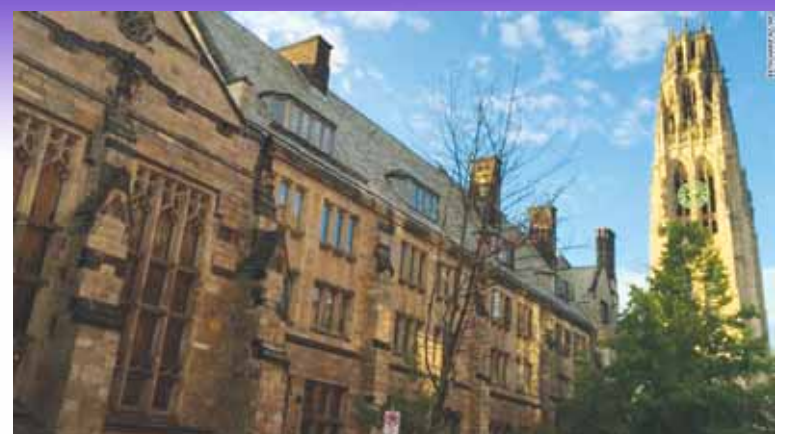
## Yale rescinds admission of a student whose family paid \$1.2 million to get her in

(Insider Bureau)-Yale University has rescinded the admission of a student who was admitted as part of the ongoing college admissions scandal, the first instance of a school doing so since the scheme became public two weeks ago. Yale has said two people applied to the university with fraudulent athletic endorsements from women's soccer coach Rudy Meredith. One was denied admission despite the endorsement, and the other was admitted and was attending Yale, the university said on its website. A Yale

spokesman did not provide any more information on the student. The decision comes as Yale, USC, UCLA and other major universities deal with the fallout from the sprawling scandal. Prosecutors have arrested 50 people, including 33 wealthy parents, for carrying out a scheme to cheat on standardized tests and/or bribe college coaches, who then helped the prospective students gain admission by falsely claiming they were athletic recruits. The mastermind of the scheme, Rick Singer, is cooperating with

prosecutors and has pleaded guilty to charges of racketeering, money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to defraud the US and obstruction of justice.

Meredith is also cooperating with prosecutors and has agreed to plead guilty to honest services wire fraud and related charges, according to court documents. Little is known about the identity of the Yale student who was admitted. The student is identified in court documents only as "Yale Applicant 1." As part of the scheme, Singer helped create a false athletic



profile for the student, court documents state. Singer sent that fake profile to Meredith, who then falsely designated the applicant as a women's soccer recruit to help her gain admission to Yale, according to a criminal indictment.

# Cold War is back

**Bannon helps revive U.S. committee to target 'aggressive totalitarian foe' China**

(Insider Bureau)- A group of Washington policy advisers and former U.S. government officials including Steve Bannon have revived a cold war-era advocacy organization to take aim at China, which it called "an aggressive totalitarian foe." The Committee on the Present Danger: China, or CPDC, will be launched to facilitate "public education and advocacy against the full array of conventional and non-conventional dangers" posed by the ruling Chinese Communist Party, the group said in an announcement on Monday. The committee's latest iteration underscores the growth of opposition to Beijing in Washington's policymaking circles, which has helped to fuel a bilateral tariff war started by President Donald Trump last year and a new law that will tighten oversight of Chinese investments in the United States. The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was first established in the early 1950s as a bulwark against the influence of communism in the U.S. The group disbanded after some



leading members were drafted into the administration of Dwight Eisenhower, but in 1976 was reformed by U.S. foreign policy hawks to counter the Soviet Union during the cold war. The committee members warned at a press event in Washington on Monday that China had posed a broad range of threats to the U.S.: expanding military power, strengthening strategic nuclear capability, stealing U.S. technology, repressing religions, human rights and minority groups, initiating "chemical warfare" by being the prime source of fentanyl reaching the

U.S. and influencing U.S. campuses and corporations. "As with the Soviet Union in the past, communist China represents an existential and ideological threat to the United States and to the idea of freedom - one that requires a new American consensus regarding the policies and priorities required to defeat this threat," the committee's announcement said. The group's vice-chairman, Frank Gaffney, a defense adviser to former president Ronald Reagan, said the committee hoped to "set the stage for a series of national debates about

China" to address the threats the country posed. Gaffney has spent much of his time since leaving government in the 1980s propagating stridently anti-Islamic views.

Even if Beijing faithfully kept its commitments under a trade agreement that Washington is trying to negotiate with China, the U.S. would still face serious threats in other areas and must address those, Gaffney said.

"China's arsenal for global supremacy includes economic, informational, political and military warfare," read a statement by James Fanell, a former U.S. Navy intelligence official focusing on Pacific security affairs. The U.S. "has witnessed already China's expansion into the vacuum of a diminishing U.S. presence in East Asia," he said.

Fanell argued that Washington needed to regain a military deterrence position in the Indo-Pacific. "We already have slipped," he said. "If we fall any further, we may not recover."

Sasha Gong, also a member of

the new CPD, said China was "waging an ideological war" against the U.S., which was "losing ground" and should consider it "as urgent as military defense."

"We are disarming ourselves; meanwhile Chinese are taking our ground, broadcasting here, taking our people and winning hearts and minds," said Gong, adding that the U.S. response to China's aggression was "very inadequate."

Gong is the former chief of Voice of America's Mandarin service. She was sacked by the U.S. government-funded broadcaster along with two others in November for their involvement in a live-streamed 2017 interview with Chinese fugitive tycoon Guo Wengui, who has used social media to make corruption accusations against senior Chinese officials including Vice-President Wang Qishan. In a faxed reply to the South China Morning Post, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it had not heard about the organization and that it was a "dead end" to revisit the cold war-era zero-sum mindset. "We have repeatedly stated our stances with regard to the 'China threat' cliché," the ministry said. "We hope some people in the United States view China's development in proper perspective, stop groundless accusations and defamation against China, and instead, be more engaged in deeds that would benefit China-U.S. relations, the peace, stability and prosperity of the world," the ministry said.

Although the committee boasts a roster of China experts, it also features a number of U.S. public figures not known primarily as authorities on the country's affairs.

The founders of the committee also include Bannon, the former White House chief strategist and co-founder of far-right news outlet Breitbart, which he described in an interview with American magazine Mother Jones as a "platform for the alt-right".

Bannon is also known for being a former vice-president of Cambridge Analytica, the now-defunct data analysis firm that harvested the data of millions of Facebook users to predict and influence political movements.

## Jagan offered Rs 1500 cr to Congress high command to become CM: Farooq Abdullah

**National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah has said that YSR?Congress chief YS?Jaganmohan Reddy was ready to pay Rs 1,500 crore to the Congress high command if he was promised chief ministerial berth.**



Former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday alleged that YSR Congress president YS Jaganmohan Reddy had offered to pay Rs 1,500 crore to the Congress high command if he was made the chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh after the death of his father YS Rajasekhara Reddy in 2009. Abdullah, the National

Conference leader, made this sensational claim at an election rally that he addressed to seek support for Telugu Desam Party president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at Kadapa in the state. He said after YSR's death, Jagan had come to him and requested his help (in convincing the Congress high command). "Reddy told me he was ready to

offer Rs 1,500 crore to the high command if he was made the chief minister of the then combined Andhra Pradesh," he said.

He wondered from how Jagan had made so much money. "Did he have any treasure hidden somewhere? Definitely, it must have been looted from others. If such people are elected as the chief minister, they would only concentrate on swindling money. Beware of such leaders," Abdullah cautioned. Repeated attempts to reach out to YSRC general secretary and Rajya Sabha member V Vijay Sai Reddy, who has been with the party since its inception, for his reaction on Abdullah's allegations proved futile.

On situation emerging after Pulwama terror attack, Abdullah said India should maintain good

relations with the neighbouring countries including Pakistan, rather than adopting a confrontationist approach.

He invoked former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to say, "You can change your friends but, you cannot choose your neighbours." Abdullah said the Modi government should make efforts to find peace with the neighbours. "If we maintain good relations with our neighbours, both will grow. Otherwise, both will suffer," he said. He accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of whipping up emotions of the people before every election. "In the last election, they raised the issue of Ram Mandir. Now, they are not talking about it," he said.

Abdullah regretted that India at present had not been the same it was during the Gandhi regime.

# If You Thought Mueller Had Settled Matters, Think Again

**In today's Washington, even the rule of law goes through the partisan wringer.**

(Agencies)- If special counsel Robert Mueller had reached the opposite conclusion-that there was a criminal conspiracy between Donald Trump and the Russians to tilt the 2016 election-that would mean that a sitting U.S. president would be credibly accused of something very close to treason. The fact that a respected and diligent prosecutor determined that not to be the case should be regarded even by people who loathe Trump as a good thing, no?

The path to Mueller's conclusion, of course, was so littered with troubling evidence that it took him and his investigators two years to walk it, and along the way they proved criminal deceit by several of Trump's closest associates. He and other agencies of government have also proved beyond serious dispute that a hostile foreign power manipulated a very close election in ways that possibly, or even

probably, affected the outcome. Even people who love Trump should regard these as bad things, no?

The answer to both questions seems indeed to be no. Or, if yes, only in the most sullen and grudging way. We can't all seem to agree that it's a good thing the president didn't conspire with Russia, nor can we all admit that the Kremlin may have helped elect Trump.

Twenty-four hours after Attorney General William Barr announced his summary of Mueller's findings, Washington's main players continued to stew and snarl in ways that suggest the historical significance of his inquiry will lie partly in his conclusion but just as much in the fractious way it is being received.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said he wants to keep investigating-this time, the people who promoted the Russia

investigation in the first place. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said his fellow Californian, Democrat Adam Schiff, who has been outspoken in alleging Trump-Russia collusion, should resign as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee; at the White House, Kellyanne Conway said he should quit Congress altogether. Meanwhile, Democrats in Congress and on the presidential trail sounded a consistent refrain: They won't buy conclusions from the Mueller probe until they see his full report, not simply Barr's summary.

By all appearances, Mueller delivered on his end of the bargain: His investigation was thoroughly professional. Yet the notion that this would bring finality to an argument was plainly a fantasy floating down from an earlier age.

Forty-five years ago, after



Watergate resulted in Richard Nixon's resignation, even Republicans joined in the ritual sermonizing about how the episode proved the primacy of law. No doubt even in those days there was ample pretense beneath the piety-of course Democrats were gloating and Republicans were plotting payback. But the very fact that they bothered to pretend revealed a basic respect that American political culture was on the level. These days, the one point on which warring sides all seem to agree is that American political

culture in the Trump era is fundamentally not on the level. The real conspiracy was between Democrats and the media to promote a bogus narrative against Trump. Or the real conspiracy is Barr's bland summary of Mueller's findings-instead of turning over to Congress the actual report-and his refusal to pursue an obstruction case against his boss, despite Mueller's view, as Barr described it, that the evidence points in both directions and "does not exonerate" the president.

## Donald Trump just made sure health care will decide the 2020 election

(Agencies)- Just 24 hours removed from arguably his best day as President, Donald Trump picked a political fight he cannot win. On Monday night, the Trump administration announced that it now supports a ruling from a Texas judge that would invalidate the entire Affordable Care Act -- aka Obamacare -- a move that almost certainly will push the fight over how health care is delivered in this country to the Supreme Court. "The Department of Justice has determined that the district court's comprehensive opinion came to the correct conclusion and will support it on appeal," said Kerri Kupec, a spokesperson for the Justice Department. That decision, which caught even many Trump allies by surprise, again thrusts the health care issue to the center of the political debate, and virtually ensures that the 2020 election -- like the 2018, 2016, 2014, 2012 and 2010 elections before it -- will turn on the ACA. It's a baffling move for Trump, who spent most of Monday basking in the glow of a series of conclusions, according to Attorney General Bill Barr, in

special counsel Robert Mueller's report that were about as favorable as the President could have hoped for: That the special counsel did not establish that anyone in Trump's campaign conspired with the Russian government in 2016 election interference, and that there was not sufficient evidence for Barr to establish an obstruction of justice charge against the President. Switching the spotlight of the national debate from Russia to health care so quickly would be risky under any circumstances but is particularly problematic given that a) the past five elections have shown that people care deeply about and vote on the issue of health care and b) getting rid of Obamacare is not a broadly popular view with the American public. Trump indicated Tuesday that he planned to take that view head-on: "The Republican Party will become 'The Party of Healthcare!'" he tweeted.

In a February, Kaiser Family Foundation poll on the ACA, 50% approved of it while 37% disapproved. In fact, since



President Barack Obama left office in January 2017, his signature legislative accomplishment -- and the one that bears his name -- has grown steadily more popular. Since May 2017, according to Kaiser data, more people have approved of Obamacare than disapprove -- a sea change from most of the previous five years, when the law was consistently underwater in terms of approval. Many of the provisions of the law that have long been the most popular -- allowing kids to stay on their parents' insurance through age 26, no discrimination by insurance companies because

of a patient's preexisting conditions -- remain in effect. The least popular provision -- the individual mandate that forced everyone in the country to have some sort of health care -- was effectively eliminated by congressional Republicans (and Trump) in their 2017 tax law. Those numbers explain why House Democrats ran hundreds upon hundreds of TV ads during the 2018 midterm elections making the case that Republicans, if they had their way, would have eliminated Obamacare altogether. "Republicans will do absolutely anything to divert

attention away from their votes to take away Americans' health care," then House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-California) said in the days leading up to the midterms. And, following Democrats' takeover of the House in 2018, Pelosi was just as clear; "Health care was on the ballot, and health care won," she said.

The data back up Pelosi's position. More than 4 in 10 voters in 2018 said that health care was their top priority in the election, according to exit polling. Democrats won those health care voters by 52 points. 52!



# Anil Ambani thanks brother Mukesh, Nita for clearing RCom dues

**In a surprise twist, the embattled former billionaire thanked his brother Mukesh, and his sister-in-law, after Reliance Communications Ltd. made the required 5.5 billion rupee (\$80 million) payment to Ericsson.**

(Agencies)- Embattled billionaire Anil Ambani Monday warded off a possible jail term as RCom cleared dues of a Swedish service provider at the eleventh hour with money received from elder brother Mukesh and his wife Nita, whom he thanked for standing by him in trying times and extending "timely support". Anil's heavily debt-laden Reliance Communications made a Rs 550 crore payment, including interest, to Ericsson just a day before expiry of the deadline set by the Supreme Court to clear dues or face a three-month jail term. Soon after making the payment, RCom announced termination of a Rs 17,000 crore deal to sell telecom assets like spectrum, fibre and tower to Mukesh's Reliance Jio, citing delays in approvals from the government and lenders. Anil, whose businesses in telecom and power sectors went into heavy debt in the face of regulatory headwinds and

intense competition, thanked Mukesh and his wife Nita for bailing him out. "My sincere and heartfelt thanks to my respected elder brother, Mukesh, and Nita, for standing by me during these trying times, and demonstrating the importance of staying true to our strong family values by extending this timely support," a late night statement issued by Anil's firm quoted him as saying. Anil said he and his family "are grateful" and "deeply touched with this gesture" that they "have moved beyond the past". In the statement, RCom said Rs 550 crore dues to Ericsson, including interest dues, has been made in compliance with the Supreme Court judgement. However, the company did not give details about the source of funds but cited "timely support" from Mukesh in the trying times. The two brothers had fought a bitter public battle after his father Dhirubhai died without leaving a will. They split his businesses

between themselves, with Anil getting telecom and power while Mukesh retained oil and petrochemical businesses. The split did not end the feud and the two bickered over commitment of Mukesh' Reliance Industries for supply of gas to Anil's power plants. In 2008, Anil's RCom wanted to merge with South Africa's MTN but the move was thwarted by Mukesh citing his holding right of first refusal. Since then, the two brothers scrapped a no-compete agreement and Mukesh re-entered telecom business in 2016 offering free voice call for life and data at dirt cheap prices. As debt grew, RCom, in December 2017, entered into a deal with Jio to sell spectrum and other assets such as fibre network and telecom towers for an estimated Rs 17,000 crore. But the deal could not progress amid regulatory hurdles faced as the Department of



Telecommunications wanted a written assurance on who would pay for RCom's dues such as spectrum fee. Jio refused to make a commitment to pay for such fee and lenders to RCom also played hardball, resulting in the deal falling through. In separate statements, RCom and Jio announced scrapping of the deal, citing delays in getting approvals from the government and lenders. "The said transactions have become incapable of being consummated in accordance with the terms thereof, on account of various factors and developments since the execution of the said

agreements nearly 15 months ago...", RCom said. Jio said the master agreement for acquisition of certain specific assets of RCom and the spectrum trading agreement for change in allotment of certain specific spectrum stand terminated. This, it said, also follows the Board of Directors of RCom passing a resolution to seek fast track resolution through bankruptcy court and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on February 4 restricting the sale, transfer or alienation of any movable or immovable property of RCom.

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# 'Double standards' Vijay Mallya tweet attacks Centre after Jet Airways loan

**Vijay Mallya pointed out in a series of tweets that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government did nothing for him even though he invested crores of rupees into his now defunct Kingfisher Airlines.**

(Agencies)- Fugitive liquor baron Vijay Mallya has tweeted again offering to return the money he owns several banks as he hit out at the NDA government for its "double standards" for not helping him out. Vijay Mallya pointed out in a series of tweets that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government did nothing for him even though he invested crores of rupees into his now defunct Kingfisher Airlines, a day after a consortium of lenders led by the State Bank of India took control of Jet Airways to save the airline from bankruptcy.

"I invested over 4000 crores into Kingfisher Airlines to save the Company and its employees. Not recognised and instead

slammed in every possible way. The same PSU Banks let India's finest airline with the best employees and connectivity fail ruthlessly. Double standards under NDA," Vijay Mallya tweeted on Tuesday.

Mallya also questioned the BJP's criticism of the United Progressive Alliance government under Manmohan Singh for its efforts to bail out his Kingfisher Airlines.

"BJP spokesman eloquently read out my letters to PM Manmohan Singh and alleged that PSU Banks under the UPA Government had wrongly supported Kingfisher Airlines. Media decimated me for writing to the current PM. I wonder what has changed now under the NDA

Government," Mallya said.

The controversial businessman, who is contesting India's extradition bid in UK courts, once again urged banks to take his money against the loans extended to his companies.

"And I repeat once again that I have placed liquid assets before the Hon'ble Karnataka High Court to pay off the PSU Banks and all other creditors. Why do the Banks not take my money. It will help them to save Jet Airways if nothing else," he said. The 63-year-old businessman is on bail on an extradition warrant executed by Scotland Yard in April 2017 after Indian authorities brought fraud and money laundering charges amounting to Rs 9,000 crore against him.



Mallya flew out of India to the United Kingdom in March 2016 around the same time, the government says, agencies closed in on him for bank fraud. On January 5, Vijay Mallya became the first Indian businessman to be declared a

fugitive economic offender by a special court in Mumbai.

A fugitive economic offender is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for committing an offence and who has left India to avoid criminal prosecution.

## Raghuram Rajan raises doubts about India growing at 7%, says cloud over GDP data needs to be cleared

**Rajan, who has also served as Chief Economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said he had no idea what statistics are pointing at currently and "a revamp" was needed "to really figure out what India's true growth rate is".**

(Agencies)- Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan Tuesday expressed doubts over Indian economy growing at 7 per cent when not enough jobs were being created and said the current cloud over the GDP numbers must be cleared by appointing an impartial body to look at the data.

Rajan, who has also served as Chief Economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said he had no idea what statistics are pointing at currently and "a revamp" was needed "to really figure out what India's true growth rate is".

"I know one minister (in the Narendra Modi government) has said (that) how can we be growing at 7 per cent and not have jobs. Well, one possibility is that we are not growing at 7 per cent," he told CNBC TV18. He did not name the minister.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has been stoutly defending the growth data saying an economy

cannot be growing at 7-8 per cent without creating jobs. He has also stated that no major social agitation indicates it hasn't been jobless growth.

Rajan, who was Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor between September 2013 and September 2016, said a stronger broad-based growth is needed that creates more jobs.

On doubts being raised by some over economic data after revision in growth rate, he said a clean up act is needed and an impartial body appointed to look at the numbers.

"I just think that we need now to essentially clean up, find out what in fact is the source of confusion with the new GDP numbers, with the revisions etc. I would say setting up an impartial body to look at it is an important step to resorting confidence," he said.

The impartial body may throwback the same numbers but "we absolutely need better

confidence in our GDP numbers now given the back and forth we have had".

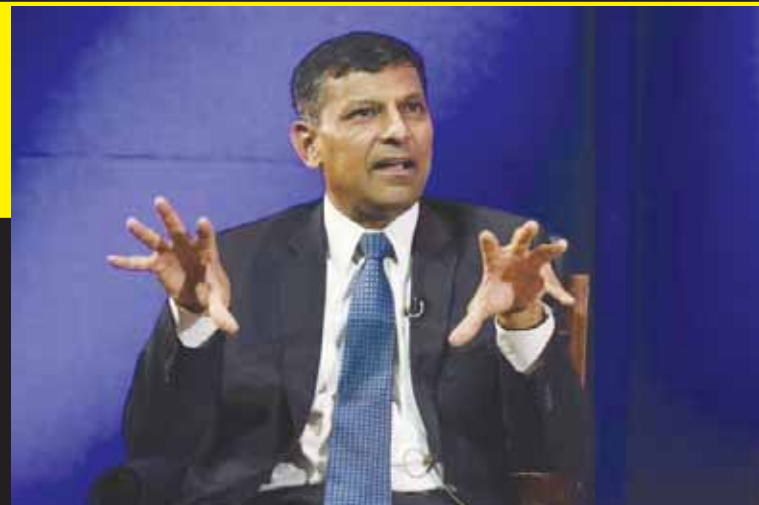
In November 2018, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) lowered the GDP growth for previous Congress-led UPA by recalibrating national accounts.

After this, the four years of the current government showed higher average growth than that achieved during the UPA.

Last month, the government revised the economic growth rate upwards to 7.2 per cent for 2017-18 from 6.7 per cent estimated earlier.

Questions have been raised about the government not making public the NSSO labour survey that reportedly put unemployment rate in 2017 at a 45-year high.

Earlier this month, a group of 108 economists and social scientists said that lately, the Indian statistics and the institutions associated with it have however come under a



cloud for being influenced and indeed even controlled by political considerations.

"In fact, any statistics that cast an iota of doubt on the achievement of the government seem to get revised or suppressed on the basis of some questionable methodology," the group had said in a statement.

Jaitley had countered them saying 70 per cent of them were compulsive contrarians, a term he had coined to thrash opponents of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government earlier.

Rajan, who is on a tour to promote his new book 'The Third

Pillar', said a broad-based growth that creates meaningful jobs for people was needed.

"We need stronger broad-based growth, which primarily for most people means good jobs. What we need to do is focus on how do we create good jobs for the vast number of people who are leaving schools, who are leaving agriculture, who are leaving universities, in such a way that they can expand India's growth," he said. "Lot of people have said the population dividend should not become a population curse. This is the time when we need to make sure that in fact doesn't happen," he added.

# Eating breakfast with parents linked with positive body image for teenagers: Study

**According to a recent study, consistently eating breakfast as a family can also promote positive body image for children and adolescents.**



A family that eats together, stays together, and now, according to a recent study, consistently eating breakfast as a family can also promote positive body image for children and adolescents.

The study suggests that parents hoping to raise teenagers with positive body image might just find helpful tools in the kitchen every morning.

"We know that developing healthy behaviours in adolescence such

as eating breakfast every day and eating family meals can have long-term effects into adulthood. Children and adolescents are under a lot of pressure from social media and pop culture when it comes to physical appearance.

Having a healthy relationship with food from eating breakfast and spending meal time with family might have a significant impact on well-being," said Virginia Ramseyer, one of the lead researchers.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 12,000 students in more than 300 schools in all 50 states and Washington D.C. They looked at data related to eating behaviours, including frequency of eating breakfast and eating meals with a parent.

The researchers found that eating breakfast during the week more frequently was associated with positive body image. Just over half of the sample reported eating breakfast five days a week;

however, nearly 17 per cent reported never eating breakfast. More than 30 per cent reported eating breakfast fewer than five times a week. The researchers also found that boys were more likely to eat breakfast than girls. Additionally, the researchers found that children were much more likely to have a positive body image if they regularly ate breakfast with a parent.

"We know that the health behaviours of a parent can have long-term effects on a child. Results of this study suggest that positive interactions with food-- such as eating breakfast and having family meals together-- could be associated with body image," Ramseyer asserted.

## Treating diabetes may prevent Alzheimer's disease

**Scientists consider Alzheimer's as the result of a cascade of multiple problems including factors ranging from pollution exposure and genetics to heart and metabolic diseases.**



## Eating this food will not just benefit your diet but also the environment

**Including these foods like lentils, okra, sweet potato, moringa and more in your diet will benefit not just your health but the planet, too**

Earlier this year, a list of 50 chosen food items was put out, as a means to guide sustainable ways of living. In the report, Peter Gregory, research advisor, Crops For the Future, stated, "Diversified diets not only improve human health but benefit the environment through diversified production systems that encourage wildlife and more sustainable use of resources." These days, many are open to changing their eating pattern and lifestyle to save the environment from further degradation.

Pooja Thacker, dietician, explains the benefits of the Indian food items that made it to this list.

**Ragi**  
The reddish brown colour of ragi has important phenols like gallic acid and ferulic acid, It also has anthocynins, flavonoids and is anti-tumourigenic. These factors help in reducing blood sugar levels. It is also one of the richest sources of calcium. Ragi is good

for menopausal women as it helps in handling mood swings and osteoporosis issues. As it has a little bitter aftertaste, one can consume it as desserts. Ragi can also be added to batter of idli or chapati to make it soft.

**Wild Rice**  
These grains are black in colour and rich in folate and magnesium, which help in improving bone health and boosting immunity. It is a heart-friendly grain due to its folate content. It also helps prevent birth defects. It has a chewy texture, and an earthy and nutty taste. It can be cooked and consumed like regular rice.

**Moong**  
It is a good source of easily digestible protein. Moong is a rich source of glutamine, which helps to maintain gut immunity and to fight infections. It is also good for neuro functioning in infants. Its arginine helps in release of nitric oxide and causes vasodilation, which is a big factor in preventing heart diseases. Also, sprouting

of moong helps in improving its vitamin C level. Combine rice and moong in the ratio of 7:3 to make a healthy and balanced meal.

**Spelt**  
It is similar to wheat but the husk is hard, which makes it rich in minerals such as zinc and B-complex vitamins including B3, B2, and B1. It has a nutty flavour and absorbs a lot of water. It can also be used in place of maida in pasta, biscuits, noodles, cakes and other bakery items. But beware, it is not a gluten-free grain.

**Sesame**  
It has sesamin and sesamol, which are fibre-rich sources that help in reducing the cholesterol levels in the body. It is also rich in vitamin E, hence it is beneficial for skin and hair. It helps in maintaining their glow and protects them from external factors. Use it as cooking or tempering oil. You can also opt to drizzle it over salads in place of olive oil.

Treating Type-2 diabetes may prevent people from developing Alzheimer's disease, says a new study. Patients with untreated diabetes develop signs of Alzheimer's disease 1.6 times faster than people who did not have diabetes, according to the study published in the journal Diabetes Care. Scientists consider Alzheimer's as the result of a cascade of multiple problems including factors ranging from pollution exposure and genetics to heart and metabolic diseases. "It is possible that the medicines for treating diabetes might make a difference in the progression of brain degeneration," said Daniel A. Nation, Associate Professor at University of Southern California. "But it's unclear how exactly those medications might

slow or prevent the onset of Alzheimer's disease, so that is something we need to investigate," he added. For the study, the researchers analysed data on nearly 1,300 people aged 55 and older. Data included biomarkers for diabetes and vascular disease, brain scans and a range of health indicators, including performance on memory tests. Among 900 of those patients, more than 50 had Type-2 diabetes who did not receive any treatment, whereas nearly 70 were undergoing treatment. In addition, nearly 530 participants had normal blood sugar levels while 250 had prediabetes. "Our findings emphasise the importance of catching diabetes or other metabolic diseases in adults as early as possible," Nation said.

# Top 5 beard care guide for this season

***Is it too hot to keep a beard? Is it too itchy? Here's an expert guide on how to keep your beard cool during summers.***

If there's one question that irritates the beardsmen of today is when someone repeatedly asks them, "How can you keep a beard in summers"? Although maintaining a beard during summertime can be tough, it's not an impossible task. We got in touch with hair experts Rod Anker and Jawed Habib and dermatologist Rajat Khandari who tell us what it takes to keep your beard cool in the scorching heat.

1) Clean thy beard: If you want your beard to be healthy, clean your beard two times a day.

The sweat, hot temperature and dampness in this weather can hamper your skin causing irritation, bad odour and dryness. Therefore, use a beard wash that contains a blend of natural oils to hydrate and replenish your skin. However, do not wash your beard in excess as it might make your beard dry and abrasive. 2) Moisturize thy beard: In summers, your beard hair tends to be coarse, which causes irritation. Use a beard moisturiser to combat beard itching. You can opt for a moisturiser that contains ingredients like aloe, chamomile,

and tea tree oil.

3) Hydrate thy beard: Dehydration is quite common in hot summers. When your beard is dehydrated, it becomes dry and brittle. Hence, for a healthy beard, adequate hydration is a necessity.

4) Soften thy beard: A soft beard is easy to maintain. Use a beard oil or conditioner to keep your beard hair soft and cool during the summer season.

5) Trim thy beard: A heavy beard can lead to an itchy skin or even acne. It would be preferable to trim the beard as a trimmed beard is easier to maintain.



## Fashion trends 2019 *How to experiment with different styles this Spring*

***With spring in full glory it's time to make your wardrobe au courant with the latest trends. Here are some styles you can experiment with.***



is wearing a shredded cord blue kurta teamed with green pants from Rimzim Dadu. The orange heels are amping up the entire look.

Neon nation

Neon green is the newest colour trend of 2019. They are shockingly bright but if you style it right, you wouldn't look like a highlighter for sure. Here, Puneet Baid is wearing a figure-hugging neon t-shirt with a pair of floral pants from Sahil Aneja. Model Monika Negi is wearing a multifunctional skirt with her sleeveless neon t-shirt from NoughtOne.

Feline dreams

Unleash your animal instinct and pick the hottest trend of the season. Model Daphi is wearing a leopard print jumpsuit

from Shivan & Narresh and her hair has been tied in a slick ponytail. Model Adarsh Raj is wearing his leopard print shirt with olive flared pants from Dhruv Vaish.

Pastel play

As you pick colours for the season, make sure you invest in buying clothes in pastel shades as they are cheery and delightful to look at. Model Sachin Kabir is wearing a striped pastel shirt with matching pastel blue pants. Namrata is wearing a pastel pink angrakha with a skirt from Good Earth.

Easy Handloom

Do your bit to promote local artisans and weavers. Designers are promoting handlooms by making trendy clothes

catering to the millennial. Here, model Gaurav Chaudhary is wearing a yellow jacket and flared pants with a checkered shirt from Antar Agni and Pero. Model Namrata Chandra is seen in a red jacket with lungi skirt from Pero. Spring flowers adorn as a crown on Namrata's head for a vivacious vibe.

Multicoloured magic

Let the blooming flowers set your mood right as you pick multicoloured pieces for spring. Model Rishabh Thakur is wearing a multicoloured belted jacket from Shivan & Narresh and denims from Sahil Aneja. Model Mandeep Kaur is wearing a multicoloured striped jumpsuit from Siddhartha Bansal.

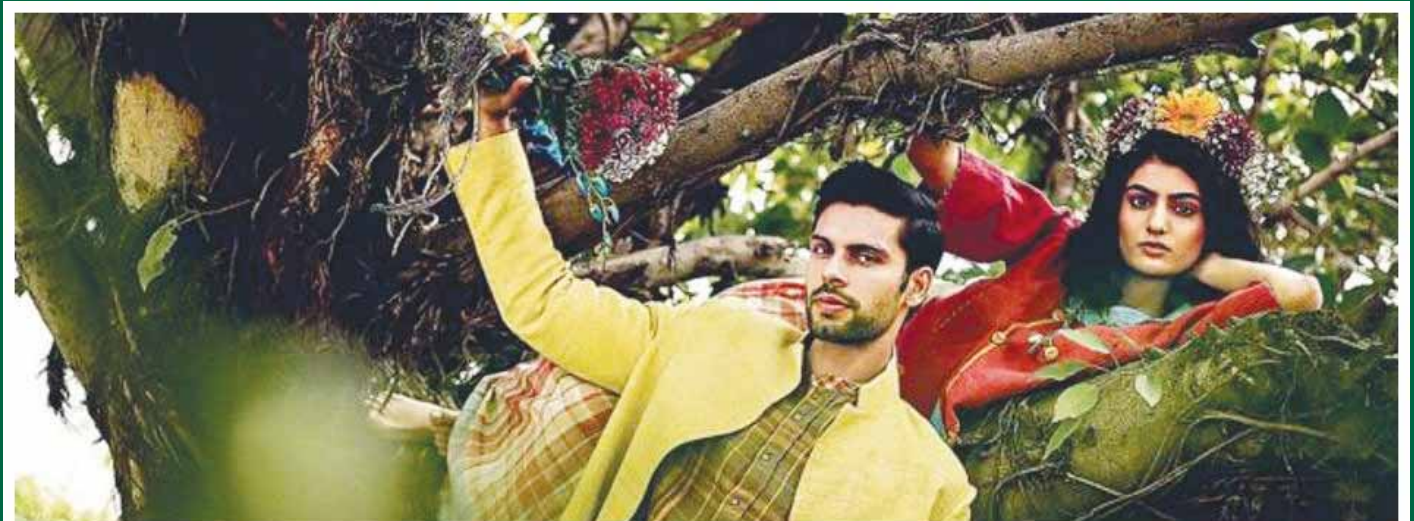
With spring in full glory it's time to make your wardrobe au courant with the latest trends. Here are some styles you can experiment with.

Denim

We are seeing various interpretations of denims that look sophisticated. Here, model Kunal Sareen is wearing a raincoat-style denim outerwear paired with denim pants and multicoloured sneakers.

Injecting technicolours

Bold colours are never a bad idea. Colour-blocking is going to be a hit in the coming seasons too. Model Srishti



## How to Train Your Dragon The Hidden World

# Dear Dreamworks, please don't make another

**How to Train Your Dragon The Hidden World movie review: Dreamworks concludes its most heartfelt series on an emotionally satisfying note. Here's hoping they stop. Rating: 3.5/5.**

How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World

Director - Dean DeBlois

Cast - Jay Baruchel, America Ferrera, F Murray Abraham, Craig Ferguson, Cate Blanchett, Jonah Hill, Kit Harington

Rating - 3.5/5

It's a little serendipitous that How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World is being released in India in the same week that Disney debuted the first trailer for Toy Story 4. There are several similarities between the two film series, not at all limited to their thematic connections, but also in the more abstract sense - what the films mean to an entire generation that has grown up with them, and more worryingly, what they might become.

I am still in contemplating whether or not there is any point in watching Toy Story 4, which is perhaps the most unnecessary sequel ever made in the history of cinema. The

risks are simply too large. A childhood (and the reputation of a perfect trilogy) is at stake. I've been Jason Bourne-ed before.

How to Train Your Dragon isn't as precious as the Toy Story movies, but to the children who grew up with it - as I did with Toy Story - it can be. Almost a decade has passed since the first HTTYD, and the legions of 10-year-olds who must've dragged their parents to watch it in 2010 are now probably adults - like Hiccup in the film.

This unusually long gap between instalments probably wasn't what Dreamworks intended, especially in an era when the goal with blockbuster filmmaking seems to be to churn out sequels as quickly as possible, before audiences get distracted. But as it turns out, the delay has been a blessing in disguise, adding unexpected emotional heft to Hiccup and his dragon Toothless' journey, in a very Antoine Doinel/

Before Sunrise/Harry Potter way. In the Hidden World, Hiccup has cultivated a human-dragon utopia - the only one of its kind - much to the fear and jealousy of a group of warlords, who are paranoid that Hiccup is sitting on too much power. The warlords hire an infamous dragon hunter named Grimmel to capture Toothless, by luring him with a female Night Fury. To evade Grimmel (F Murray Abraham, less blood curdlingly terrifying as Djimon Hounsou's Drago Bludvist from the second film) and the warlords, Hiccup decides to go on a quest to find the Hidden World, about which his late father Stoic used to tell him stories as a child.

What follows is a less spectacular but enjoyable entry in the series, defined by writer-director Dean DeBlois' mythic take on the story, which sets it apart from other Dreamworks franchises. Dreamworks is in



many ways the Marvel to Pixar's DC - less serious, more reliant on popular stars and more vibrant.

Perhaps the biggest indicator for how the times have changed since the first film is in the casting. A decade ago, hiring the biggest names in comedy made all sorts of sense, especially if they were graduates of the Judd Apatow school of success; as Jay Baruchel, Jonah Hill, Christopher Mintz-Plasse and Kristen Wiig were. A decade ago, thanks to Ugly Betty, America Ferrera was huge, Craig Ferguson was killing it on late

night TV, and Gerard Butler was poised to become our next great action star. This movie itself has been years in the making, as is evidenced in the character of Tuffnut, who has been given a larger role, but is no longer voiced by TJ Miller. Miller's star had risen considerably in recent years thanks to his role in HBO's Silicon Valley (hence the expanded role), but recent sexual harassment allegations (not to mention reports of him being a bully on set, and that fake bomb threat that he called in once) presumably led to him being removed.

## Photograph

### Sanya Malhotra, Nawazuddin Siddiqui star in a poetic film about a dreamy city. 4.5 stars

**Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Sanya Malhotra star Ritesh Batra's new film, a homecoming for the filmmaker, who has worked with Robert Redford and Julia Roberts. Rating: 4.5 stars**

Photograph

Director: Ritesh Batra

Cast: Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sanya Malhotra

Rating: 4.5/5

They say the camera never lies. This is, quite obviously, a lie. The camera is a tool of glorification, vilification and investigation as much as it is an instrument of accuracy. Ritesh Batra's new film Photograph features a streetside photographer - one who sells the conceit that standing by a monument is itself monumental - and the film tells the story of a girl who allows her plainness to define her. One afternoon, a photograph flatters her. The lie is as white as the back of a picture. As pictures go, this looks exceptional. Cinematographer Ben Kutchins shoots Mumbai by frequently

composing frames that look like still photographs. It is a film smitten with the city, capturing the round central counters of the General Post Office with a lovely aerial shot, reminiscent of the way we'd seen the Library Of Congress in All The President's Men. As the girl surprised by her own picture would attest, it is indeed all about the beholder. Her name is Miloni - meaning 'achiever' - and she is a student so good that her picture is on the hoarding of a coaching institute, complete with a clip-art crown on her head. Yet she has never been made to feel special. She is taken aback by the new picture, passing it around to students minding the Ps and Qs of Chartered Accountancy, friends as surprised as her. A suitor, disappointed by the girl across

from him, tells her she looks great... in the picture. Her reaction to the picture is that of disbelief - and of trust. That tourist-hunting photographer has found something in her, making her feel less plain. The photographer, Rafi, is a creature of routine, who buys a kulfi at the very end of the month and has his patter memorised: his spiel includes a line about the way time will fade but the sunlight on your face will stay, in this photograph. Miloni, on a rare impulse, indulges him, but before he can give her the near-instant picture, before he can - in his words - 'cover today in plastic,' she has vanished. He has other problems. A belligerent grandmother is holding him to ransom, halting her medication till he chooses a bride. Backed



into a corner, he sends her the unclaimed picture, claiming this girl is the one for him, thrilling the lady who now wants to spend time with the girl. This is a situation straight out of classic comedy - but the thing about Mumbai is that it doesn't always feel like a comedy, and the thing about hurt. Batra is a keen and insightful observer, and Miloni is an arresting character. When she

sucks on a gola on a Mumbai waterfront, Rafi predicts she'll fall ill and, lo and behold, a couple of scenes later, she's sick. She lives a life so sanitised and bland that when - playacting as Rafi's make-believe girlfriend 'Noorie' - the grandmother enquires about her parents, she concocts a gruesome story of them having died under a collapsing masjid wall. She pretends she has wounds so she can pretend to feel pain.

# Salman Khan poses with Jacqueline Fernandez, her doppelganger Amanda Cerny at Notebook screening

***Jacqueline Fernandez recently invited her doppelganger Amanda Cerny to visit her in Mumbai and they were soon spotted posing with Salman Khan.***

(Insider Bureau) - Just a day after Jacqueline Fernandez shared pictures with her doppelganger Amanda Cerny, a new picture has surfaced online that shows her Kick co-star Salman Khan posing along with Amanda and her. A user shared the picture and revealed that the trio were clicked at a special screening of Salman's home production, Notebook.

In the picture, Amanda gives a flying kiss while Jacqueline pouts for the camera as Salman smiles, caught between the two ladies.

On Wednesday, Jacqueline had asked Amanda to come and meet her in Mumbai, to which Amanda had a quick reply. Amanda then shared her plans of a Mumbai trip. Amanda lives in Germany and has a fan following of her own with more than 24 million followers on Instagram. Last year, Amanda had posted a video on Instagram where she said she will post

a message on Salman's page stating why she should feature in his next movie. Jacqueline was last seen opposite Salman Khan in Race 3,



which managed to survive at the box office but was criticised by critics. She will now be seen alongside Sushant Singh Rajput in the action-thriller, Drive. The film is being directed by Tarun Mansukhani and also stars Pankaj Tripathi, Boman Irani and Sonal Chauhan. It is scheduled to release on June 28 this year.

## ***Chhapaak: Deepika Padukone is jumping with joy after positive reactions to first look***

(Insider Bureau) - Actor Deepika Padukone is on cloud nine after receiving a wonderful response to her first look from the film, Chhapaak. The actor plays an acid attack survivor called Malti in the film, the first look of which was shared a few days ago. Deepika shared a boomerang video of herself in her Instagram stories to share her happiness. The actor can be seen jumping with excitement outside her vanity van in the video. Deepika is seen



with a disfigured face in the first look of the film. The actor had shared it with the caption, "A character that will stay with me forever...#Malti." Chhapaak is being directed by Meghna Gulzar of Raazi fame and is based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal. Several Bollywood stars and Laxmi herself had praised her look. Deepika's husband Ranveer Singh was among the first ones to comment on the look.

## ***Tamannaah Bhatia confesses she would love to go on a date with Vicky Kaushal***

***Actor Tamannaah Bhatia has spoken about the #MeToo movement and expressed concern saying that it should have been treated on a more serious note.***

(Insider Bureau) - Actor Tamannaah Bhatia had recently joked about relaxing the no-kiss clause in her contract for Hrithik Roshan. The actor has now revealed that if she would have to go on a date with a Bollywood actor, she would like to choose Vicky Kaushal. In an interview to Pinkvilla, Tamannaah also spoke about the MeToo movement claiming it to be turning into a 'PR ploy'. The Baahubali actor said, "You

know there were different allegations made on different people and I think the whole idea of #MeToo movement was to get people to talk about it and share their experiences. If there is an experience that someone had and if they are talking about, it takes a lot of courage to do that. But somewhere I feel me too movement lost its gush because it became more of a PR ploy which shouldn't have been. It should have been given its due

respect and should have been treated with more serious sense and more serious note," she added.

Earlier in an interview to Deccan Chronicle, Tamannaah had shared her experience of working with Sajid Khan, who was accused of sexual harassment by several women. She had said, "He never treated me in any bad way and I was completely comfortable working with him. Everyone has a different



experience and everybody is entitled to their own opinion and experience. If Vidya has had a bad experience, it's normal for her to react like that."

She had also called the entertainment professional and had said, "Nobody forces you and in my case, I was very specific when I started my career. I had that clarity. It is my perspective and I stick to that and nobody can force you in the film industry or the worldwide. When people say I was forced to do it, I don't understand that because you are a mature individual and you can make a choice."

## Demi Rose catches the eye as she slips her killer curves into low-cut beaded dress during her 24th birthday celebrations in London

(Insider Bureau) - She recently treated herself to a refreshing trip to Israel for her 24th birthday. And Demi Rose was back on home turf as she celebrated her milestone with pals at Knightsbridge's *Ciro* Pizza Pomodoro restaurant, before heading to *The Box Club* in Soho, London, on Wednesday evening. The model ensured she garnered attention on her special day as she rocked a cream and black midi dress, embellished with beaded petal detailing throughout. Highlighting her famously curvaceous figure, the Instagram sensation exhibited her eye-popping cleavage in the perilously low-cut number. The brunette bombshell maintained the two-tone theme with her choice of footwear as she rocked a pair of black platform heels, featuring a perspex strap. Demi toted a sophisticated chain-strap handbag and added a pop of colour to her look with a fresh red manicure. With her glossy tresses styled into

beachy waves, the vixen complemented her out-of-this-world beauty with fluttery false lashes, blush-swept cheeks and nude lipgloss for the perfect pout.

She started her special day by thanking her fans for their ongoing support as she shared a jaw-dropping snap of herself clad in a skimpy white bikini from her recent trip to Israel. Whilst stood in the murky waters of the *Dead Sea*, the model smiled at the camera, with her long brunette locks elegantly cascading down her shoulders.

She captioned the stunning shot: '24 today! I feel so happy, grateful to be here and blessed to have what I have. My friends, the love that's in my life and the support I have got given from you all along my years.'

'I'm ready to take on another year and what it may bring. Thank you for all your birthday wishes! Love you guys.'

Meanwhile, Demi has revealed that a move to LA could be in the works due to her acting desires.

Speaking to *The Sun*, she revealed: 'Movies have always been a passion of

mine since I went to stage school. But another ambition is to become a *Bond Girl*, as I love the style and glamour of those films'.

Kylie Jenner lookalike Demi was first propelled into the spotlight when she was linked to the reality star's ex, rapper Tyga, after they split. The star has since gained a huge following on Instagram and she is known to display her incredible curves in a number of risqué ensembles. So, of course, she was more than happy to divulge the secrets to her sensationally curvy figure in an exclusive chat with *MailOnline*. In September, Demi revealed: 'I try to keep as healthy as I can. With travelling, it's hard to work out, I travel across the world but try to keep my routine... Everyone says I'm the healthiest person they know. The fattiest thing I will ever eat is nuts and peanut butter...' My figure just gains weight so fast. Any bad thing I eat my body isn't used to it and just puts on the weight. That means no birthday cake!...



## Kylie Jenner 'quit filming Keeping Up With The Kardashians as she grieved for Jordyn Woods friendship'

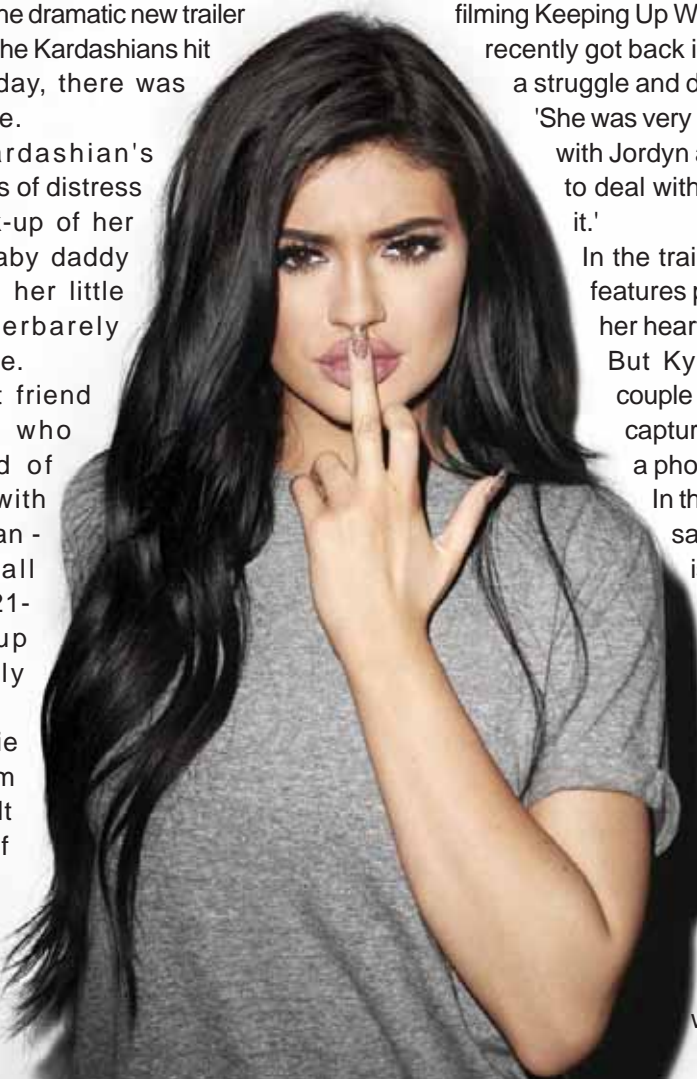
(Insider Bureau) - As the dramatic new trailer for *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* hit screens on Wednesday, there was one notable absence.

Amid Khloe Kardashian's eloquent outpourings of distress following the break-up of her relationship with baby daddy Tristan Thompson, her little sister Kylie Jenner barely made an appearance.

It was Kylie's best friend Jordyn Woods who hastened the end of Khloe's romance with serial cheater Tristan - a fact that by all accounts left the 21-year-old make-up millionaire deeply distressed.

And as a result, Kylie took a break from filming as she dealt with her feelings of betrayal.

A source commenting on the absence explained to *Us Weekly*: 'Kylie took a little break from



filming *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* and recently got back into filming and it's been a struggle and difficult.

'She was very upset about the situation with Jordyn and also just didn't want to deal with it and have to address it.'

In the trailer, a devastated Khloe features prominently, pouring out her heart.

But Kylie is only seen for a couple of seconds, with footage captured as she is prepped for a photoshoot.

In the voiceover we hear her say: 'I just hope that there is a light at the end of this tunnel but I just don't see it now.'

However it is unclear when this was captured.

The trailer also includes some throwback footage from Kylie and Jordyn's long and intense friendship, showing the two being celebrated by Kris Jenner, who raises a toast to them at a family gathering.

## Alex Jones displays her baby bump in casual denim dungarees and yellow coat as she leaves *The One Show*



(Insider Bureau) - She's expecting her second child with husband Charlie Thompson. And Alex Jones looked like she couldn't wait to get home and rest up following another busy evening hosting *The One Show* on Wednesday, leaving the BBC studios in central London. The presenter, 42, was showing off her baby bump in a pair of denim dungarees, embracing a casual look. The Welsh star prioritised comfort in a pair of trainers and carried her essentials in a leather shoulder bag. The star wore her brunette bob in sleek, straight style and ported natural make-up. Last week, Alex was left incredibly flustered when she mistakenly believed co-host Matt Baker had asked a guest about their genitalia. The blunder happened as the pair chatted with Valerie Singleton, who hosted *Blue Peter* for 10 years. Speaking about her time on the children's show, Matt turned to Valerie, 81, and asked 'where do you keep your badge?' But Alex misheard the last part of the question, and clamped a hand over her mouth as she squealed: 'It sounds so rude'. Undeterred, Valerie responded: 'I've got a lovely big board with loads of badges on it' which led to Alex collapsing in a heap of giggles.



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