

Deepika Padukone
 in 'Chhapaak'



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RSS seeks compensation from Rahul Gandhi



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Watch out for Amit Shah 2.0



(Insider Bureau) New Delhi - Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Amit Shah filed his nomination as the party's Lok Sabha candidate from Gandhinagar on Saturday. Mr Shah's nomination is from a seat laced with political symbolism; party elder LK Advani represented the constituency for decades. The BJP president is already a member of the Rajya Sabha, but his decision to throw his hat into electoral politics directly is filled with meaning about his future ambitions. The fact that he did so accompanied by both top BJP leaders, as well as a range of National Democratic Alliance partners, is also a signal of a new political avatar he is seeking to embrace. **Continued on Page 19**

Trump was right
Border arrests are surging



"Former Ranbaxy promoters will be jailed"



The Supreme Court on Friday served stern warning to ex-Ranbaxy promoters Malvinder Singh and Shivinder Singh stating that they will be sent to jail if they were found guilty of contempt.

(Insider Bureau) New Delhi - The Supreme Court on Friday served stern warning to former Ranbaxy promoters Malvinder Singh and Shivinder Singh stating that they will be sent to jail if they were found guilty of contempt, news agency PTI reported. The top court decided to go ahead with the contempt proceedings against them. The apex court expressed its dissatisfaction over

replies of the former Ranbaxy promoters on payment of Rs 3,500 crore arbitral award amount to a Japanese firm. The court has fixed April 11 as the next date of hearing on the contempt petition against the promoters. "You may be owning half of the world but there is no concrete
 (Contd on page 19)

AOC calls new campaign finance complaint 'bogus'

(Insider Bureau) Washington D.C. - Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., told Fox News Wednesday that new claims of campaign finance violations by her and her campaign manager were "bogus."



According to a complaint filed earlier Wednesday with the Federal Election Commission (FEC), Ocasio-Cortez and her then-campaign manager Saikat Chakrabarti created a "shadowy web" of political action committees (PACs) allowing them to raise more money than they otherwise could have mustered. "I mean, it's

conservative interest groups just filing bogus proposals," Ocasio-Cortez said while heading to a meeting of the House Financial Services Committee.
 (Contd on page 19)

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Bharara, Jindal, Harris: They are Americans first

Clearly, all three - Bharara, Jindal and Harris - want the Indian American community to release them from their expectations and let them pursue their plans. After all, how wrong and insensitive can it be to want to be just "American", which is who they are, essentially?

(By Yashwant Raj) - Preet Bharara was livid at the hammering he was getting in the media. And he told us, a few reporters gathered around a wooden table in a windowless room inside the offices of the US attorney for the Southern District of New York. But it was off the record, couldn't be reported. He has since gone public with his sentiments in his just published autobiography. Back in December 2013, at the height of an India-US row precipitated by the arrest of an Indian diplomat in New York, a case prosecuted by his office, Bharara, also a celebrated Wall Street crime-fighter at the time, was a fallen hero in Indian eyes. He was called "Uncle Tom", a pejorative for African Americans seen as too eager to please whites to win their approval, and some said he was working for his

"white masters". Indians were outraged that an Indian American - "one of us" - had thrown an Indian diplomat into jail (Bharara hadn't; his office handled only the prosecution end of it, he has said). And so were a large number of fellow Indian origin immigrants in the US, who saw him as a serial offender, recalling all the Indian Americans he had thrown behind bars, including former McKinsey boss, Rajat Gupta. They thought, Bharara writes in his autobiography, trying to make sense of an understandably tumultuous phase in his life, that even though this man hailed from India - he was born in Ferozepur - he seemed to be going out of his way to act "American". "The thing is," Bharara writes, "I am American." Bobby Jindal, former Indian American governor of Louisiana

who ran for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, faced a similar backlash, if not worse, for trying to mainstream himself with these words, in his launch address, on June 24, 2015: "I'm sick and tired of people dividing Americans. And I'm done with all this talk about hyphenated Americans. We are not Indian-Americans, Irish-Americans, African-Americans, rich Americans, or poor Americans. We are all Americans." He was savaged for it, starting the day after. A series of racially-charged jokes popped up online, all starting with the same five words: "Bobby Jindal is so white ...". His long-shot run was turned into a joke overnight by outraged Indian Americans. Many of them saw him as a selfish opportunist who bailed on the community after using its equity to advance his career, with donations and

volunteers. A few weeks ago, Kamala Harris, the California senator who is seeking the Democratic presidential ticket for 2020, rattled the Indian American community, which is still trying to reconcile its enthusiasm for her run, as an Indian American, with a growing realization that she doesn't see herself as one of them. Senator Harris is part Indian, from her mother's side, and part African American, on her father's. Asked by a reporter how would she identify herself given her Indian American heritage, she



said: as a "proud American". Clearly, all three - Bharara, Jindal and Harris - want the Indian American community to release them from their expectations and let them pursue their plans. After all, how wrong and insensitive can it be to want to be just "American", which is who they are, essentially?



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Is climate change fuelling political conflicts globally?

There is increasing academic evidence that climate change is leading to conflicts but national governments are yet to come up with policy prescriptions

(By a Staff Reporter) - Last week, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nation's weather agency, released its annual report, State of the Global Climate in 2018. It is alarming. The earth, the report said, is nearly 1 degree Celsius warmer than it was when the industrial age started, and extreme weather events hit 62 million people worldwide and forced two million to relocate as the climate crisis worsened in 2018. The media reportage on the WMO study has been extensive. Yet, there is one aspect that needs more intensive coverage. That is the "clear link", as the study puts it, that is now emerging between climate change and social instability. A broad range of work has established the link between climate change and migration. For instance, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad's faculty member Chinmay Tumbe's new book, India Moving: A History of Migration, has a great deal to say on how environmental degradation/ climate change-induced

migration (due to its impact on agriculture, weather events, groundwater sources or rising sea level) could lead to more Bangladeshis migrating to India. But the research on climate-induced conflict and migration is still a work in progress. There are two recent studies that throw light on the climate-social instability-migration challenge. One is a study by the School of International Development, University of East Anglia, UK, Climate, Conflict and Forced Migration. According to the researchers, this is one of the first studies that has now conclusively established a link between severe droughts (made more likely by global warming) and conflict in Arab Spring countries early this decade, forcing people to flee. The study, published in Global Environmental Change in January, used data from asylum applications in 157 countries from 2006-2015, together with an index that measures droughts, as well as figures tracking battle-related deaths, to establish a particular correlation between

climate stresses and conflict in parts of West Asia and North Africa from 2010-2012, when many countries were undergoing a political transformation during the Arab Spring uprisings. Those countries included Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. Take the instance of Syria. The UK study found that long-running droughts and water shortages caused by climate change resulted in repeated crop failures, forcing rural families to move to urban areas. This, in turn, led to overcrowding, unemployment and political unrest, and then the civil war. They also established a climatic link with conflicts that triggered migration in sub-Saharan Africa over the same three years, but not during other time periods. "[This is because] climate change will not cause conflict and subsequent asylum-seeking flows everywhere. But in a context of poor governance and a medium level of democracy, severe climate conditions can create conflict over scarce resources," co-author, Jesus Crespo Cuaresma, of the Vienna University of Economics and



Business told Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The second report is a 2018 study, Climate Change and Violent Conflict: Sparse Evidence from South Asia and Southeast Asia, by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The study said that as the effects of climate change on livelihoods become more pronounced, especially for people involved in agriculture and fishing in South and South-East Asia, support for rebel groups, and the Maoist movement in India, is likely to shoot up. Their findings from India show that rebel groups and government forces both find recruitment easier when drought is around the corner.

The authors of the report, Pernilla Nordqvist and Florian Krampe,

found that Maoists could use climate-related events to gain power in an ongoing conflict, and rebel groups more generally could increase their use of violence against civilians to ensure their groups' food security. It also adds that as climate change pushes up migration, it introduces the possibility of riots in urban areas over resources. To date, there is probably not much scientific evidence on the issue for national governments to put this at the top of their policy priorities' list. But with climate change becoming more and more pronounced, there is an urgent need to invest in research on climate-related violence because the challenge could be much graver than we think.

US approves sale of 24 MH 60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters to India for \$ 2.6 billion

Designed for hunting submarines as well as knocking out ships and conducting search-and-rescue operations at sea, the Lockheed Martin-built helicopters, would replenish India's aging fleet of British-made Sea King helicopters.

(By a Staff Reporter) - The United States on Tuesday announced it had cleared the sale of 24 MH-60R Seahawk choppers to India. The multi-mission helicopters can detect, track and attack submarines and surface ships. A defense department agency that deals with the sale of US military equipment to foreign countries has notified Congress of the sale that will cost \$2.6 billion, including other supporting equipment and ammunition, such as 10 Hellfire missiles, 38 advanced precision kill weapons system rockets; and 30 MK 54 torpedoes. The proposed sale will support US foreign policy and national security "by helping to strengthen the US-Indian

strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defensive partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region", the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said in a statement. The statement also noted that the helicopters will provide India the ability to "perform anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions along with the ability to perform secondary missions including vertical replenishment, search and rescue, and communications relay". "India will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and

to strengthen its homeland defense," the statement added. Lockheed Martin's Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems will be the lead contractor on the deal. India and the United States have been ramping up defense ties in recent years with joint military exercises, exchanges and exchanges. They held their first 2+2 ministerial last September, a simultaneous meeting for their defense and foreign ministers. They ended years of discussions and back-and-forth and signed two enabling agreement LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) and COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security



Agreement) in recent years to improve interoperability between their militaries. And they are likely to sign the third, BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement) soon. Defense trade between between the two countries has also shot up, and is expected to reach \$18 billion this year from zero until a decade ago. US department of defense leaders told lawmakers at a Congressional hearing last

week that the strategic partnership with India had continued to advance at a "historic pace" and the militaries of the two countries were working to increase interoperability and information-sharing capabilities. "The United States and India are natural partners on a range of political, economic, and security issues," said commander of the US Indo-Pacific command Admiral Philip S Davidson.

India and Pakistan's Crisis Means a New Arms Race

Strategic instability remains and New Delhi's attempt at calling Islamabad's nuclear bluff didn't work.

(By a Staff Reporter) - The latest India-Pakistan crisis has contested longstanding narratives on South Asia's crisis stability, conflict management and escalation control. The conventional wisdom on Pakistan's force posture asserts that given Pakistan's relative conventional weakness and its first-use doctrine, it is "nuclear trigger happy." In contrast, the events unfolding after the Pulwama attack has reinforced the perception that the threat of mutually assured destruction has deterred India and Pakistan from pursuing aggressive strategic options. It also shows that, at least initially, two nuclear-armed states can risk the pursuit of limited objectives under the nuclear threshold. Correspondingly, this crisis has put a lid on various misrepresentations regarding Pakistan's posture of Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) that was being only viewed through the lens of Pakistan's nuclear-capable Hatf-IX (NASR) short-range battlefield ballistic missile. Pakistan's FSD has thus been misconstrued to solely represent a nuclear war-fighting strategy, centered on the employment of NASR against

Indian military operations. During the past decade, this characterization was wholly embraced by Pakistani, Indian and Western scholars and officials alike. But this led to misperceptions about Pakistan's nuclear threshold and its consolidating conventional capabilities. The India-Pakistan border skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir are considered a routine phenomenon. However, in the wake of the February 14, 2019, Pulwama attack, India upped the ante and chose to vertically escalate by employing air power across the LoC and into Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Azad Kashmir (Jabba Top). It was the first practical manifestation of India's doctrinal evolution towards counterforce response through the Indian Air Force (IAF). Ostensibly a counter-terror strike, the IAF operation was dubbed as a "non-military preemptive action" by India. But in effect, New Delhi's airstrikes were primarily aimed at establishing a "new normal" which, once successful, could be replicated at other places against Pakistan at will. Also, the strikes

in Pakistan was a symbolic act with the aim of feeding domestic political constituencies ahead of India's elections. In doing so, however, New Delhi seriously underestimated Islamabad's conventional capability and resolve to give a matching response.

India had been preparing IAF for counter-force roles during the past decade through regular exercises such as the "Gaganshakti 2018"-designed to validate operational concepts for a short, intense two-front war against Pakistan and China. The training simulation also involved preparation for possible nuclear war, in addition to conventional and counterforce strikes in conjunction with the Indian Army and Navy. Moreover, the Gaganshakti 2018 exercise came on the heels of a Joint Doctrine unveiled in 2017 with the addition of the Land Warfare Doctrine in 2018. These reflect India's commitment to building warfighting capability for escalation dominance against Pakistan and China through the application of "Full Spectrum Conflict" that seeks to continue military operations even after the adversary's nuclear threshold is crossed. Thus, the February 26



attack on Pakistani territory was a tentative foray into testing India's doctrinal evolution.

What is certain is that the ensuing aerial engagement between the Indian and Pakistani air-forces was a seminal event between two rival air-forces operating in a net-centric environment, backed by Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACs), ground sensors and electronic warfare. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) was able to carry out its retaliatory strikes at six places across the LoC in Indian Occupied Kashmir on the morning of February 27 by employing stand-off weapons, effectively neutralizing India's formidable multi-layered Air Defence Ground Environment System and Integrated Air Defence System.

The intercepting IAF formation, comprised of eight aircraft (SU-30 MKI, Mirage 2000 and Mig-21 Bison aircraft) was backed by Phalcon AWACS, against the PAF's twenty-four aircraft strike formation (comprising JF-17s and ROSE Mirage-III/V aircraft) which were perceived to be inferior to the IAF front-line aircraft. The PAF force was also supported by Erieye and ZDK-03 AWACS.

The IAF was unable to destroy any Pakistani aircraft even though the PAF took on a much larger, better-equipped IAF backed by a seemingly formidable multi-layered air defense network. In the ensuing air-battle, PAF JF-17s shot down a Mig-21 Bison whose debris and pilot fell inside Pakistani territory. That pilot was taken into custody while an SU-30 MKI was also shot down.

US counters China on Masood Azhar

'Will use all resources to blacklist him'

The US state department said it will utilize all available avenues to ensure that the founder of Jaish-e-Mohammad is held accountable by the international community,

(By a Staff Reporter) - The United States on Tuesday stated it will "utilize all available resources" to ensure Jaish-e-Mohammad founder Masood Azhar, was held accountable countering Chinese charges that it has circumvented UN security council's sanctions committee to blacklist the Pakistan-based terrorist leader. "While we strongly prefer that UNSC designations take place through the committee process, the United States and its allies and partners, including those on the UN Security Council, will utilize all available avenues to ensure that the founder and

leader of the UN-designated terrorist organization JeM is held accountable by the international community," a US state department spokesperson said in a statement to Hindustan Times. The spokesperson also confirmed "that we circulated a draft UNSC resolution with U.K. and French support". The state department was responding to China criticizing the United States, France and the United Kingdom for moving a draft resolution at the UNSC as "not a constructive move" and that it "set a bad example". Beijing has said the process

should have stayed in the 1267 sanctions committee where progress had been made and that the United States was aware of it and yet it "insists on pushing" the UNSC draft resolution.

The United States, France and the United Kingdom moved a draft resolution at the UNSC last week after what they saw was China's failure to agree to the designation by removing the technical hold it had put three weeks ago on a proposal the three powers had moved before the sanction committee following the Pulwama attack on a CRPF



convoy that killed 40 troopers. They were understood to have agreed among themselves to give discussions with China some more days, but not weeks and month. They were prepared, at the same time, to escalate the issue to the full Security Council for an open debate and vote, to force China

to either agree or end up defending a known terrorist. China had blocked or put a hold on four proposals to list Azhar a 'global terrorist' so far.

The draft resolution set off "informal discussions", which could lead to that open debate, but not if the designation was cleared in the interim.

ADB lowers India's growth forecast on eve of RBI policy



enhanced income support to farmers and hikes in procurement prices for foodgrain, while interest rate cuts and soft food and fuel prices will bolster consumption in urban areas," ADB said in its annual Asian Development Outlook (ADO) released on Wednesday.

Since inflation is expected to remain below the central bank's target in the first half of 2019-20, it has opened up scope for further policy rate cuts, ADB said, a day before RBI unveils its first bi-monthly monetary policy decision of the current fiscal year.

ADB expects inflation in India to climb from 3.5% in 2018-19 to 4.3% in 2019-20, as food inflation accelerates with the increase in procurement prices paid to farmers, higher wages to agricultural workers, and higher fertilizer prices.

ADB also cautioned that its projection could see further revision if downside risks materialize.

(By a Staff Reporter) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has cut India's growth forecast to 7.2% for 2019-20 because of a slower-than-expected pickup in investment demand.

ADB, which had estimated 7.6% economic growth in December, is the first multilateral lending agency to slash India's growth estimate. Despite this, India will remain the fastest growing economy, as China is projected to grow at 6.3% in 2019, according to ADB's estimate. In February, India's statistics office revised its earlier growth forecast of 7.2% for 2018-19 to 7%.

With ADB's downgrade of India's growth estimates, the attention shifts to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which had earlier projected 7.4% and 7.5% growth, respectively.

The IMF will release its World Economic Outlook next week, which will contain India's growth estimates as well.

"The recent pickup in investment growth is expected to continue, albeit at a slow pace. Growth in public investment is likely to be modest for lack of funds. Rural income and consumption will enjoy policy boosts from

China's Belt-and-Road Initiative Puts a Squeeze on Pakistan



(By a Staff Reporter) - In Pakistan, China and the U.S. are clashing over China's One Belt, One Road initiative. To understand what's at stake, it helps to take a look at why China is in Pakistan in the first place. ISLAMABAD- The huge Chinese global infrastructure building program known as the Belt-and-Road Initiative was supposed to help unleash an economic boom in close ally

Pakistan that was beneficial to both countries. Instead, Pakistan is now enmeshed in an economic crisis, putting the brakes on new building, with less than half of \$62 billion of Chinese projects carried out. The Chinese infrastructure, all built by Chinese state-owned companies, required the Pakistani government to guarantee repayments to Beijing.

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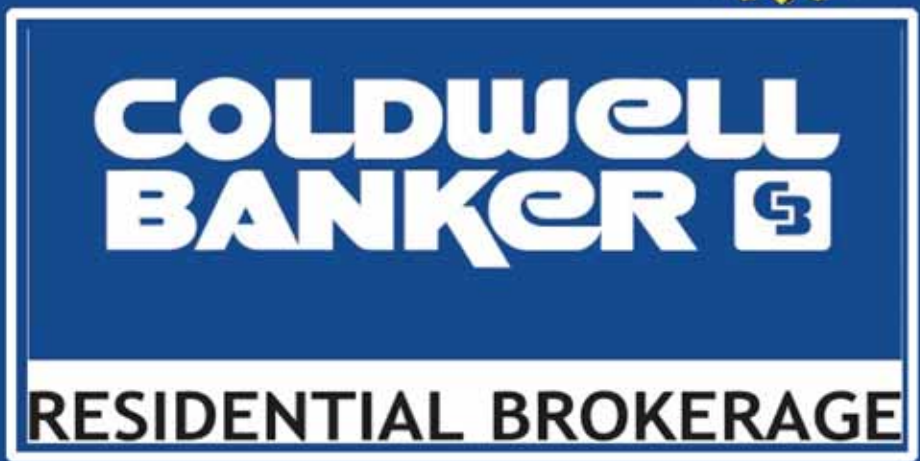
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Millennials need a dose of reality

Under President Trump, things are going very well in America. After experiencing 2.9 percent economic growth in 2018, we are currently enjoying structurally low unemployment, with historic lows for people of color, and close to 7 million jobs that have yet to be filled. Wages are up, inflation has remained in check and while there are always exceptions to the rule, overall, people should be feeling great, right? Well, millennials missed the memo and feel like they haven't participated in American prosperity at all, Charlotte Alter claims in a Time Magazine cover story on Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

Alter, who is herself a Harvard grad, the daughter of a famous journalist and TV producer and the sibling of a venture capitalist, unironically writes in a tweet: "People our age have never experienced American prosperity in our adult lives - which is why so many millennials are embracing Democratic socialism." This on the back of a quote from Ocasio-Cortez in the piece that says, "An entire generation, which is now becoming one of the largest electorates in America, came of age and never saw American prosperity," she says. "I have never seen that, or experienced it, really, in my adult life." Whether this is an attempt at gaslighting or pure delusion, in America, things are so good that many young people don't know the difference.

Ocasio-Cortez herself, who has spent most of her adulthood under the Obama administration, says that her current gig in Congress is, at age 29, her first full-time job - one that notably pays six figures. She attended a university that costs, according to estimates, more than \$70,000 per year for tuition, fees, room and board. Even her signature lipstick, which gets a shout-out in the piece, retails for \$22. This is hardly the profile of a person who is not enjoying prosperity. Leaving Americans' prosperity vs. most of the world aside, even versus days gone by, Americans are beyond blessed. In a report put together by the William J. O'Neil Center for Global Markets and Freedom at Southern Methodist University, they compared consumption, wealth, health, safety and more between 2018 and 2015. The data shows that consumption per capita has nearly doubled. People are spending less of their budget on food, clothing, shelter and utilities, and more on entertainment and recreation. The number of households with three or more Internet-connected devices went from zero to 90% and the working hours required to pay for gasoline to drive 1,000 miles decreased from 6.1 in 1980 to 2.7 in 2015. Statistics show that life expectancy has increased while the death rate has decreased. That includes a sharp fall in deaths from heart disease and cancer. The work week has decreased and output per hour worked has nearly doubled, while work deaths and

accidents have been cut sharply. When I was growing up, doing research meant spending hours going through microfiche at the library. Today, a supercomputer in your pocket - the smart phone - can connect you to almost all the information ever created in a matter of seconds. During my youth, an AIDS epidemic claimed the lives of young men by the thousands. Today, drug innovations can let one live a full life with HIV, and drugs can even be effective in its prevention. Prosperity has seeped into everyday life in a way that goes unappreciated. Millennials are the generation of instant gratification, where food is delivered to them on demand, they can stream entertainment programming to their personal device at any moment from everywhere and they don't even have to raise their hand to hail a cab or take the bus; setting up an Uber will get you transportation at a moment's notice.

This is all amazing progress and prosperity, unless you take it for granted. Delayed gratification has been studied as a predictor of success. My father lived with my grandmother from the late 1950s to early 1970s - until he was 35, so he could have enough money saved to buy a house and start a family. The reason people have been successful in America is that they worked hard, they sacrificed and ultimately, their delay of gratification over enough years allowed them to experience better outcomes in later years. The instant-gratification generation has forgotten that and expects you should enter adulthood with ease. They believe you should be able to live in any city - including those with limited space and policies that drive up prices - and have amazing living conditions right out of school. They are aghast that you might have to work extra hours if you took on extra debt or that you might forego an avocado toast brunch at the hip café and make your own meals in order to save for a home and family. Whether it comes from not appreciating a time that didn't have the prosperity of today or comparing themselves with select outliers who have done incredibly well - or perhaps just spreading the myth of "the other guy" - "I am doing OK, but I know a friend of a friend who isn't" - millennials are becoming susceptible to the push toward socialism, an economic system that has never produced prosperity. While they have a real-time, real-life example of a country destroyed by socialism in Venezuela to demonstrate its perils, millennials ignore the facts to live in their own strange fiction. All business cycles end and things will ultimately eventually turn down from here.

Carol Roth

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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Not pursuing the UNSC seat was Nehru's mistake

The wait for a more sincere offer than the ones in the 1950s hasn't borne fruit in more than six decades now

More than five decades after his death, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, continues to regularly feature in the national political discourse. One of the recent instances was when finance minister, Arun Jaitley, found a reason to blame Nehru in the backdrop of China blocking the move to get Pakistan-based terrorist, Masood Azhar, sanctioned by the United Nations (UN). Jaitley cited a letter (dated August 2, 1955) written by Nehru to chief ministers, in which he talks about informal suggestions that were made to India to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Nehru made it clear that though India

deserved a permanent seat in the UNSC, it won't grab it at the expense of China, which was also a candidate for the same seat. As a great country, Nehru argued, China should first find its rightful place in the UNSC and India's case could be considered separately.

Most historians defend Nehru's decision by claiming that the offer to India was not genuine. There is no way to fact check this claim. Since Nehru never entertained these offers - there was one by the US in 1950 and another by the Soviet Union in 1955 - any assertion on this count is purely speculative. For what it is worth, Anton Harder, a scholar who has studied the subject, claims that the US offer

should "be regarded as quite sincere". Historians then go on to describe the circumstances to justify and explain Nehru's call. Let us look into their arguments.

First, Nehru firmly believed that the task of developing India could only be achieved in a peaceful environment. The UN was a critical forum for fostering a cooperative attitude among nations and thus preventing the world from drifting into a war again. This is exactly where the League of Nations had failed. Nehru wanted the UN to succeed. India's admission into the UNSC would demand a revision of the UN charter and thus could destabilise the multilateral institution, which was still in its infancy. Second, Nehru

saw the absence of China in the UN as a big problem - something which could, again, lead to the failure of the UN and the onset of wars. In 1953, he said that by not recognising China, the UN had given a go by to the principle of universality and thus repeated the same mistake that led to the failure of League of Nations. With the memory of the Second World War still fresh, such concerns were eminently understandable. Nehru also thought, as Harder points out, that greater socialisation and integration of China would reduce causes of conflict. Third, the offer from the US came at a time when Washington was looking to shape the UN's decision-making in its favour. The



Soviet Union had walked out of the UN in January 1950 in protest against the US (and others) blocking the People's Republic of China from taking up the Nationalist China's seat in the UNSC. The US used the Soviet Union's absence to push resolutions against North Korea's aggression in the Korean War. Cutting its losses, the Soviet Union returned to its seat in August. The offer to India was made shortly after. India had voted with the US on two of the three resolutions passed on the Korean War in the Soviet Union's absence. The US thought further support against the communists could be achieved by dangling a carrot to India. This account definitely helps us look at the bigger picture comprising Nehru's view of the UN, the importance he laid on Chinese integration with the world and selfish motives behind the UNSC offer. But still it is not difficult to conclude that Nehru made a mistake, even if this is obvious only with the benefit of hindsight. Most of his apprehensions behind rejecting the offer proved to be far removed from reality.

2019's two parallel election campaigns

No election is a single-issue election. And so the problem isn't the fact that two principal sides are speaking of two different issues. The problem is they are not engaging adequately with each other on them

If you go by theory of representative democracy, elections provide an opportunity for a robust debate on principles that should guide the governance of the nation; policies that should be introduced or not; measures that should be taken to ensure security of life, liberty and property; and reforms that ought to be brought in to make lives better for all. Different political parties have different visions; they campaign on their respective platforms; they disagree and debate; and then it is up to the voter to decide which platform appeals to them the most. The party which is able to sell its ideas most effectively is elected, vested with power to frame laws and execute those policies, subject to constitutional restraints. Now compare it to practice. For anyone observing

Indian politics in general, and the Lok Sabha elections in particular, it would be clear that the two principal national parties -- the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress -- are not really debating the same issues. They are in fact running two parallel campaigns, and avoiding, as far as possible, getting into the terms of the campaign of the other side. What we have thus is almost two different elections, being fought in two different echo chambers, leaving the voters deprived of their right to a solid, informed debate.

How did we get here? After the outcome of the state elections at the end of last year, the BJP

recognised that it had a battle on its hands. It was clearly confronting anti-incumbency. The central government's economic policies, particularly demonetisation and the roll out of the Goods and Services Tax, had caused disruption and alienated people. Joblessness was a real concern. And the agrarian distress, reflected in the dip in farmer incomes, was real. The party's claims on rural welfare helped, but were not enough. It was in this backdrop that the Pulwama terror attack and the retaliatory Balakot strikes happened. The BJP's primary campaign plank in this election then turned to national security. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign speeches in the last three days have focused on how India has

finally the decisive leadership in place to take on terror emanating from Pakistan. His script is as follows: earlier governments were weak and cowardly; the era of restraint is over; if India is hit, India will enter Pakistani territory, and hit back ("with interest"); India is secure because he is PM; the opposition on the other hand is tacitly aligned with Pakistan, terrorists and anti national forces, and thus, the citizens must vote him back to power. There is an entirely different campaign on the ground as well. The Congress was jubilant after the state elections, and felt it had found a winning formula with its focus on unemployment and agrarian distress. Then came Pulwama -- and the party struggled with a response. Supporting the



government would help Modi claim credit; questioning it too much was not on in times of national crisis. Almost paralysed for three weeks, the Congress seemed to have lost its way. And then it went back to the promise party president Rahul Gandhi had made right before the budget in Chhattisgarh -- of ensuring a minimum income guarantee to the poorest Indians. It fleshed out the details and announced that 20% of India's poorest households, 50 million of them, would get ₹6,000 every month. Termed the NYAY scheme, Congress finally rediscovered its vocabulary. Gandhi went on the offensive, accused the PM of backing crony capitalists even as the Congress was with the poor of the country. No election is a single-issue election. And so the problem isn't the fact that two principal sides are speaking of two different issues. The problem is they are not engaging adequately with each other on them. The BJP's campaign strategists have decided that national security, and rural welfare in terms of asset creation, is the core message.

Planning Commission 2.0: A political challenge

If voted to power, Congress president Rahul Gandhi has promised to replace the NITI Aayog with a "lean" Planning Commission peopled with economists and experts. Gandhi has offered little in terms of his critique of the Aayog and how a new "lean" Commission will address failings of the past. However, his statement does serve as a reminder that the Niti Aayog has failed to live up to its promise. Dismantling the Planning Commission and replacing it with the Aayog was one of the most significant institutional reforms initiated by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government when it came to power in 2014. But five years later, the functioning of the Aayog raises

far more questions about its relevance than it has answered. The Planning Commission was in urgent need of reforms. The 1991 economic reforms had rendered the centralised plan process irrelevant. Moreover, in an era of coalition governments, the Commission provided a critical instrument through which New Delhi centralised policymaking. Central schemes (CS) that encroached on the states' constitutional responsibilities and promoted a one-size-fits-all implementation model emerged as the dominant model for transferring plan funds to states. States had long complained against this centralisation. Chief ministers deeply resented having to seek the Commission's approval for state plans and expenditures. As

chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi was particularly vocal in his critique, even suggesting the 14th Finance Commission recommend devolution of 50% tax revenues to states so they have greater discretion over spending.

The Aayog's primary mandate was to address these failings and reshape the federal compact. The Cabinet resolution establishing the Aayog made the case. "States of the Union", it argued, "do not want to be mere appendages of the Centre." The Aayog and its "Team India" was now responsible for developing a shared vision of development priorities, fostering co-operative federalism and creating a platform that brought states together in the national interest. But, unlike the Commission, the

Aayog was designed as a think tank expected to fulfill its mandate without financial powers. This presented a new conundrum for Centre-state fiscal relations. In a federal system, national governments have a legitimate responsibility to ensure all citizens receive a minimum standard of public services such as health, basic education, and sanitation. These are national goals for which the center may need to provide specific funds. In India, widespread regional disparities or what economist Vijay Kelkar defines as the "development imbalance" between states makes central funding of this nature particularly critical. For example, poor states like Bihar may require central funding to meet these goals more than

richer states. Managing this expenditure was a crucial role filled by the Commission through plan funds. Schemes were administered by line-departments but the Commission played a critical policy coordination function linking schemes to state plans and determining resource availability. Moreover, states could broadly predict the quantum of plan funds they were likely to receive, enabling somewhat predictable expenditure. In the absence of financial powers, the question of who would fulfill this role became relevant. The challenge also lay in creating fiscal instruments that ensured autonomy to states and got away from the failings of the commissions administration of funds.

The Congress's vision for the 2019 election

The Congress party unveiled its manifesto on Tuesday. Even though manifestos have been reduced to a ritual during elections, with parties investing little in them and most voters ignoring them, they have a special importance in a democratic set up. In theory, the entire election is fought on the basis of competing manifestos which reflect competing visions for governance. Any effort to bring back the election discourse to serious policy issues is most welcome. The Congress claims to have embarked on a participatory and inclusive process to draft the manifesto

and this can only bode well for the political system.

More substantively, there are two broad strands in the Congress manifesto. The first focuses primarily on the economy and livelihoods. Since the Gujarat elections of 2017, the party sensed that its most potent line of critique against the Narendra Modi government revolves around unemployment and agrarian distress. But the question that emerged was what the Congress would do about it. The manifesto has some - but not all - answers. As a welfare measure, the party has promised Nyuntam Aay Yojna (NYAY): A minimum

income of ₹6000 per month to 20% of India's poorest citizens. Details remain sketchy, however, and funding mechanisms or the mode of selecting beneficiaries are not clear. The party has also committed to filling government recruitments (a good step, but will it be enough?); and removing all regulations in starting an enterprise (again, a good idea because many permits are unnecessary, but is an entirely regulation-free process possible?). On agriculture, it has promised a kisan (farmer) budget and committed to converting non-payment of farm loans into a civil offence rather than a criminal



one. These are incremental steps, but what agricultural requires are far deeper structural changes. The second strand in the manifesto is constructing a

more liberal political order, with checks on State power. From dropping the sedition law, reviewing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA),

Systemic transformation in agriculture must put the farmer at the centre

I spent international women's day in Mangalagiri, in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, with Usha Rani. As a single mother for 17 years, she has raised two children (now in second-year college and in high school). Three years ago, she switched to natural farming. On less than half an acre, she practises multicropping, growing maize, banana, moringa, turmeric, chilli, gourd and guava. The products fetch her a premium in Vijayawada, up to two-and-a-half times per unit compared to what she would earn if the crops had been grown with chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Her input costs have fallen by half to a quarter. Usha has also

taken a loan of more than Rs 100,000 to build a store from where to sell her inoculants of natural fertilisers and pesticides. Her income (including from the shop) is nearly five times what she earned from conventional farming.

Agriculture in India needs to become more sustainable even as small and marginal farmers struggle to build resilience against many threats. First, they remain price-takers and economically vulnerable, beholden to traders who set prices, and with limited opportunities to sell at a time of their choice (due to poor storage). Further, decades of intensive

agriculture have added to water stress and declining soil health. Farmers rely on groundwater for more than 60% of irrigation needs. Chemical fertilisers, once a boon to boost soil nutrients, have been applied so intensively (particularly urea) that the long-term health of soils is now of deep concern. A changing climate compounds the risks. My colleague, Dr Vaibhav Chaturvedi, estimates that under a low-climate-impact scenario, average production across six crops (rice, wheat, maize, oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton fibres) would fall by 5% by 2030 and by a quarter by

2100 relative to business-as-usual. If crop production were even more sensitive to average warming, a high-climate-impact scenario results in 40% fall in production. Larger states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which cultivate sugarcane and oilseeds, may be most affected by associated economic losses. Systemic transformation in agricultural systems must put the farmer at the centre. Experiments with natural farming should be evaluated accordingly. Agriculturalist Subhash Palekar has tried to popularise the practice: treating seeds with natural inoculants, applying natural formulations to increase

soil microbial conditions, mulching the soil surface with organic material to reduce water evaporation, and soil aeration. Andhra Pradesh has made natural farming a statewide programme since 2016, reaching more than 354,000 farmers by the end of 2018. It plans to cover all six million farmers in nearly 13000 gram panchayats by 2024. Other states, including Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, have expressed interest. NITI Aayog has conducted briefings for representatives from many states. Elsewhere, Sikkim prides itself on becoming the first organic farming state in the world.

Lok Sabha Elections 2019

Cong's poll promise to amend AFSPA will weaken armed forces: Sitharaman

A day after the Congress released its manifesto, Union defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the proposal to amend the armed forces special powers act (AFSPA) was an insidious move and was aimed at weakening the armed forces.

(Agencies)- Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday slammed the Congress party's manifesto saying that its proposal to amend the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was insidious and was aimed at weakening the armed forces. The Congress manifesto, released on Tuesday in New Delhi by party president Rahul Gandhi, says if it is voted to power, it would "Amend the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in order to strike a balance between the powers of security forces and the human

rights of citizens and to remove immunity for enforced disappearance, sexual violence and torture."

Addressing a press conference, Sitharaman, said the Congress's manifesto clearly undermined the armed forces and if implemented would "make the armed forces hands and feet tied so that they cannot function".

"Is this right? It is an effort to weaken the armed forces. They are trying to dilute the immunity of our security forces," the defence minister said at a press briefing.

She said, "The armed forces are

fighting with their lives to protect this nation from those people who are playing like locals sometimes and creating terror among people... what is this amendment's object?"

Coming down hard on the proposed amendment, she said, "Why should it be presumed that the powers of the security forces are opposed to human rights. This is an attempt to weaken the armed forces. Congress's promise insidious."

She said that if the AFSPA is removed or amended as proposed by the Congress, "it will impact on the security doctrine,



both internally and externally". She also went on to question the Congress's recent statement after the Pulwama terror attack to get "martyr" status for those jawans who died on duty.

"Even now they get the status of battle casualty in armed

forces or operational casualty in paramilitary forces. They also all the benefits that are due to them," she said.

"Why does your manifesto not say anything about giving martyr status to the jawans killed in action?" she asked the Congress.

From 2004 shock defeat, BJP picks lessons for 2019 election

The saffron party is conscious of its defeat 15 years ago and has drawn six key lessons from the loss.

(Agencies)- Many in the opposition believe, and a few within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) fear, that the 2019 elections could end up resembling the 2004 elections. Going into the 2004 general election, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was popular; the BJP's publicity machine was in top gear; the opposition looked in tatters; all polls predicted a BJP return; and yet, the Congress emerged the single largest party, and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was born. The BJP was pushed out for a decade. Fifteen years later, Modi is popular; the BJP's machinery and organisation are formidable; the opposition starts with a disadvantage; yet, could India reject the incumbent? The outcome of the elections is, of course, unpredictable. But the BJP itself is acutely conscious of the 2004 experience. And it seems to have drawn six lessons from the experience for the current polls.

No complacency

The BJP believes that success at the end of 2003 in the state assembly elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Chhattisgarh had infused a sense of complacency in the

party. In fact, the wins prompted the late Pramod Mahajan to advise Vajpayee to call early elections, a decision that the then PM took, but was not entirely comfortable with. The party, much before polling took place, was already confident that it had won because of Vajpayee's popularity. It did not take Sonia Gandhi seriously as an opponent either.

Cut to the present. The setback in the state elections at the end of 2018 made the BJP cautious, and pushed it back to the drawing board. It took a series of steps - from the 10% reservation for economically weaker sections to farmer income support - to plug holes. It also recognised vulnerabilities, focused on alliances, stepped up its campaign, and deployed Modi on the ground weeks before the elections were formally announced. Party insiders say the leadership is optimistic about returning, but this time, there is no overconfidence.

Coordination with the RSS

There is a view that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was not enthused in 2004; the differences of the Sangh leadership with Vajpayee were known; and the Sangh cadres

did not actively work for the return of the BJP. A top BJP leader, however, rebutted this perception and said, "It is not true that the Sangh did not work. But there were coordination issues." In either case, what is clear is that the members of the ideological family - either because they felt the Vajpayee government did not deliver on the cultural agenda or was disappointed with its economic policies or felt it did not get enough space and voice in the dispensation - stayed a little aloof.

This time around, as reports by Smriti Kak Ramachandran in HT over the past six months have shown, there remains very close coordination between the government, party and the Sangh and its various affiliates. There may be some differences on policies, but the Sangh leadership is clear that it would like to see Modi return. The Sangh has never got the kind of access to state power that it has done over the past five years; individuals inspired by its worldview have exercised power at various levels; issues dear to it - from cow protection to a hard stance on Pakistan - have found policy sanction. Modi and Amit Shah have sought to



accommodate their concerns on personnel appointments; and "saffron terror" cases are things of the past. Expect the Sangh to invest all its energy in 2019.

Keeping core voter motivated The third lesson the BJP drew from the 2004 experience is keeping its core voter motivated. Leaders say that many traditional supporters just stayed home - either because they felt Vajpayee would return in any case, or were not enthused enough by the government's performance.

This was a fear that many in the party had soon after the setbacks in state elections last year. Upper castes were reported to be unhappy, primarily because the government had restored the provisions of the Prevention of Atrocities Act.

They also pointed out that the BJP had done little for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. Some had stayed

home, some had exercised the NOTA option, particularly in MP. The government, however, was quick to step in with its 10% reservation initiative to assuage the concerns of this constituency. Another core segment of supporters - small traders - were angry with the party for the disruption caused by both demonetisation and the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The government claims it has addressed some of their concerns by rationalising GST substantially.

But beyond the specific policy measures, the BJP thinks that the Balakot strikes will galvanise its base.

With a strong upsurge in nationalist sentiment, the party believes its core voters - middle class in urban centres; small traders from the Bania community; upper castes in the heartland - will come back.

In Goa, AAP promises to take up dual citizenship issue

The issue is likely to strike a chord with Goa's Catholic population which makes up a dominant chunk of the electorate in South Goa, from where Gomes is contesting. A majority of Goa's expats hail from the coastal regions of South Goa.



(Agencies)- The Aam Aadmi Party which is contesting both Goa's parliamentary seats has vowed to take up the issue of dual citizenship for the people of Goa, many of whom are eligible for Portuguese nationality, if they are voted to power. The party's state convener and candidate for the South Goa seat Elvis Gomes said that the issue had been pending for several decades since "the traditional parties have been taking our votes and not even bothering to look into this issue." Claiming that Goa was a 'unique case' Gomes said that "nobody can take away the fact" that Goans of a certain generation were Portuguese citizens by birth. Gomes said the party will "definitely examine what could be done". "We have been Portuguese citizens by

birth. Nobody can take it away from us. So here is a case-- it's a unique case -- they were born in a Portuguese nation, born as a citizen of Portugal. Thereafter, when liberation took place, by adoption they are Indians," Gomes said. "The AAP will definitely examine this. We can look into this issue, we can examine what can be done and if there is a will, there is a way," Gomes said. The issue is likely to strike a chord with Goa's Catholic population which makes up a dominant chunk of the electorate in South Goa, from where Gomes is contesting. A majority of Goa's expats hail from the coastal regions of South Goa. Goa has seen several villages turning empty as over the years Goans, especially Catholic Goans, have chosen to migrate to Europe. Unlike the British, Portugal considered its colonies in India -- Goa and the Union territories of Daman and Diu as integral parts of the republic and its citizens at par with the citizens in Portugal.

After the Indian army marched into Goa on December 19, 1961, they issued a decree stating that all residents of Goa would be deemed to have become citizens of India unless they voluntarily opt for the nationality of Portugal or any other country. Portugal, however, continues to recognize the citizenship allowing those born before 1961 and children up to three generations to reclaim their Portuguese citizenship. However, since Indian laws do not recognize dual citizenship, those opting for Portuguese citizenship have to renounce their Indian citizenship and lose their voting rights among other privileges, something they would rather retain. Claiming Portuguese citizenship is the preferred means for those wishing to migrate to Europe, especially to the UK, as a Portuguese passport helps those migrating to work without the need for going through the cumbersome process of applying for a work visa.

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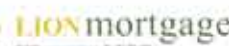
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Allahabad, Varanasi or...? UP Congress wants Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to contest polls

The Congress' local units in Prayagraj and Ayodhya have already flagged appeals to the Congress leadership urging it to field Priyanka from these constituencies. Many within the Congress are even betting on her to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi constituency.

(By Our Staff Reporter)- Even as the Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is keeping the suspense alive over the possibility of contesting Lok Sabha elections, it's raining offers for her from various parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Congress leaders claim that the demand for her to campaign and contest the election is increasing with each passing day.

"I haven't seen such a craze for a long time," said Aradhana Mishra, a Congress lawmaker from UP, who had accompanied Priyanka on her three-day political campaign on the Ganga.

"Wherever she goes there is a demand for her to contest elections," Mishra said, adding that Priyanka was expected to campaign for most of the party candidates.

The party's local units in Prayagraj and Ayodhya have already flagged appeals to the Congress leadership urging it to field Priyanka from these constituencies. Many within the Congress are even betting on her to take on Prime Minister Narendra

Modi from Varanasi constituency. This is the reason why the party's Varanasi unit has moved a formal proposal to the party leadership to field her from the key seat of east UP.

Priyanka had herself fuelled the buzz with her "why not Varanasi" quip while interacting with the Congress cadre who wanted her to contest from Rae Bareli, the constituency of her mother and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi. On March 28, when Priyanka was urged by her supporters to contest election from Rae Bareli or Amethi, she apparently responded in a lighter vein: "Why not Varanasi?"

The party's Allahabad unit has also passed a formal proposal urging the Congress leadership to field Priyanka from Phulpur, a traditional Congress bastion from where the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had contested and won.

The BJP leaders, however, laugh off any talk of 'Priyanka factor' making

an impression in Uttar Pradesh polls. Brajbhushan Sharan Singh, BJP's sitting MP from Kaiserganj, said she should first consider contesting election against him. "The Congress hasn't declared its candidate in Kaiserganj so far. Let the Congress field her from here, if they want," said Singh.

Congress leader Devendra Pratap Singh, who is lobbying for a party ticket from Kaiserganj, said it would be a no-contest for Priyanka from any seat she chooses across UP. Piyush Mishra, who was one of the coordinators of Priyanka's Ayodhya visit, said the kind of response she was drawing in UP despite the fact that the party had been out of power in the state for three decades, was heartening.

"Let the BJP laugh now. We will have the last laugh," a Congress leader said, adding that Priyanka had come to UP with a long-term goal that was beyond the Lok Sabha elections.

The BJP has also stepped up attack on Priyanka with chief minister Yogi

Adityanath, who had so far been avoiding a comment on the Congress general secretary, launching a frontal attack on her in his election rallies.





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In a first, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool campaigns in Chinese in Kolkata

This is the first time a party has planned to campaign in Chinese in Kolkata to address a small population of people of the Chinese origin settled in the city.

(Agencies)- Towards the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, a defining wall graffiti in Kolkata was the Maoist slogan "Chiner chairman amader chairman" (China's chairman is our chairman). Painted on many walls of the city by ultra Left leaders at night, the slogan was written in Bengali.

Almost half a century later, the China connection to the political landscape of Kolkata has appeared in a completely different avatar and different context. "Vote for Trinamool Congress" has appeared in about a dozen walls written in Chinese in Tangra in east Kolkata where the city's Chinatown is located.

This is the first time a party has planned to campaign in Chinese in Kolkata to address

a small population of people of the Chinese origin settled in the city.

The plan of West Bengal's ruling party is, however, more ambitious than slogans written in Chinese. Local Trinamool Congress councillor Faiz Ahmed Khan said they will also print leaflets in Chinese and circulate them among the local population in Tangra.

"If our candidate has time, we would also organise a street corner meeting, where our message will be delivered in the Chinese language. There are about 2,000 voters of Chinese origin in this part of Kolkata," said Khan.

Robert Hou, who owns a popular eatery at Tangra, painted the graffiti. "In every election, political parties campaign in this area, but this is the first time that a party

has got graffiti in Chinese script," 50-year-old Hou said.

This part of the city is within South Kolkata constituency where Mala Roy, a five-time councillor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, is the Trinamool candidate.

Almost all of them have a working knowledge of Bengali and Hindi but Trinamool leaders think that addressing them in their mother tongue may just lend extra warmth to the campaign.

The connection between Kolkata and the Chinese goes back a long way. Beginning with Yong Atchew, who came to Bengal in 1780 and set up a sugar plantation and sugar mill, Chinese workers started arriving in Kolkata in the late 18th century.

Traditionally they were engaged in tannery industry



and later branched into footwear, dentistry, laundries, piggeries and eateries. In the 1951 census, their number in Kolkata was recorded at 5,710.

Dotted with eateries that often sport dragon-architecture and the rustle of red silk, Chinatown is a defining part of Kolkata's gastronomic heritage.

Till a couple of decades ago, the area also used to accommodate most of the city's 300-plus tanneries that have shifted to the city's

outskirts following a Supreme Court order, lifting an overpowering mask of the stench from this area.

Voting in the South Kolkata Lok Sabha seat will take place in the last and seventh phase on May 19. The result will be declared on May 23. Abhijit Banerjee, head of China Bhavan the school of Chinese language in Visva-Bharati, said they have not heard of an election campaign in West Bengal in Chinese. Banerjee described it "as a broad cultural message" to the people of Chinese origin settled in the city.

Congress accuses BJP of indulging in cash for votes in Arunachal

Showing two videos, the authenticity of which cannot be verified, Surjewala said that on Tuesday night, around 10.30 pm, during a raid on Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu's convoy, the police recovered Rs 180 lakh in Rs 500 notes.

(Insider Bureau)- The seizure of Rs 1.8 crore from some vehicles in Arunachal Pradesh late on Tuesday night has set off a row after the Congress alleged that the money was found from cars linked to chief minister Pema Khandu and meant to bribe voters.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged the vehicles, from which the money was recovered, were part of the chief minister's convoy. The cash, he said, was being transported in vehicles from the Siang guest house at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh.

The searches were carried out on the complaint of local Youth Congress members, he said. "Was this part of Rs 80 lakh crore black money that the PM promised to bring back within 100 days of assuming power?" Randeep Surjewala said.

Arunachal's top election officer has confirmed the seizure but

said that he hadn't yet received a formal report from district officials.

"It is true that a cash amount of Rs 1.8 crore were recovered on Tuesday night from some vehicles. But we don't have the exact details yet. Since the Deputy Commissioner and police superintendent of East Siang district are busy with the Prime Minister's rally in Pasighat, they have not sent a report yet about the recovery. We would be able to get a clearer picture once the report is available by late afternoon," said Arunachal Pradesh chief electoral officer Kaling Tayeng.

Tayeng also refuted reports appearing in social media about the recovery of Rs 9 crore from some buses in Arunachal Pradesh as false.

Back in Delhi, Congress's Randeep Surjewala alleged, while showing two videos, the authenticity of which cannot be

verified, that the money was recovered around 10.30 pm on Tuesday night from Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu's convoy.

The videos show the money being removed from a car and also shows the registration plates of two cars apart from various police officers.

Having played the videos, Surjewala said, "The sensational disclosures and the two videos... prove a massive vote scandal... a midnight raid on a convoy of the Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu led to the recovery of Rs 180 lakh in 500 rupee notes."

Calling it a black day for democracy, Surjewala said, "Cash was transported in certain vehicles parked at the Siang guest house at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. Five vehicles were searched on the complaint of members of the Youth Congress."



He said that the cash was being counted in the presence of Election Commission's Expenditure officer Smrita Kaur Gill and DC Pasighat Kinny Singh and various police officers immediately after the raids.

Raising questions about the recovered money, Surjewala asked, "Was this part of the Rs 80 lakh crore black money that the PM had promised to bring back within 100 days of assuming power?"

Raising questions regarding the origin of the recovered money, he asked whether the cash was to be used for the PM's rally and to influence the people.

He questioned whether the PM had knowledge and had concurred in trying to influence the people in coming to the rally and supporting the BJP. Citing the People's Representation Act, 1951, he said that a case should be registered against the PM, the Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu and deputy chief minister as well as the state BJP chief Tapir Gao. Demanding the immediate sacking of the Arunachal chief minister, Surjewala also called for the cancellation of the candidature of BJP candidate and state party chief Tapir Gao from West Arunachal seat.



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'Find real culprits': HC frees 3 sentenced to death for minor's rape-murder

A bench of justices P N Prakash and B Pughalendi said there were blatant contradictions in the depositions of the witnesses and the post-mortem report and neither the trial court nor the defence counsel paid attention to them.

(Insider Bureau)- Slamming the trial court, police and prosecution for various lapses in a rape-cum-murder case, the Madras High Court Wednesday acquitted all three accused sentenced to death and directed the police to find out if any attempt was made to shield the real culprits.

A bench of justices P N Prakash and B Pughalendi said there were blatant contradictions in the depositions of the witnesses and the post-mortem report and neither the trial court nor the defence counsel paid attention to them.

While the post-mortem report did not establish rape, the medical examination of the accused too did not reveal that they had raped the girl, the bench said recording its concern about non-availability of quality legal service to underprivileged like the accused in this case.

The judges ordered the Tamil Nadu government to pay a compensation of Rs five lakh to the mother of the girl within three months.

It was passing orders on appeals by two of the accused and the referred lower court judgement for confirmation of death sentence on the three accused.

According to prosecution, the minor girl of a village in Theni district was kidnapped on December 1, 2014 from her house, raped and murdered.

In October last year, the trial court sentenced to death the three, arraigned as accused by the police.

In its order, the high court bench said the lapses on the part of the police were indubitably blame-worthy and not innocent.

The judges said they did not go through even the case diary and the original records available in

the court were enough to ferret out a can of worms.

"We would have noticed a worm pit had we accessed the case diary," they said, strongly criticising the prosecution.

The bench directed the Theni district superintendent of police to conduct an inquiry into the lapses noticed by the court and find out if any attempt had been made to shield the real culprits. The court also suggested departmental action against Inspector Rajaraman for the lapses.

Dwelling on non-availability of quality legal service to the under privileged, it said it was precisely the reason for third accused Kumaresan not filing an appeal against the death sentence though he was found to be impotent and yet charged with rape.

"While the rich were able to get



the best legal brains and successful criminal lawyers with the ability to suborn witnesses or protract trial, the poor are left to fend for themselves with poor quality legal service, and eventually justice becomes the biggest casualty," the bench said.

This was a classic case where the accused, facing rape and murder charges were deprived of quality legal assistance, resulting in the trial court believing the prosecution.


"It is unfortunate that the defence

lawyer did not even notice the destructive nature of the statement of the five witnesses, which were recorded, and did not even cross-examine the inspector," the bench said.

The court suggested it was time that the Bar Council of India bestowed attention on this grey area and take effective steps to address the malady.

The innocent accused had undergone trauma, it said and ordered them to be released immediately.


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Separate farm budget, no jail for loan defaults on Congress agenda

The party's 22-point farm and rural agenda focuses on greater state intervention and public investment in the sector hit by a long spell of poor returns.

(Insider bureau)- The Congress on Tuesday promised a separate agriculture budget, more loan waivers and decriminalisation of farm loan defaults as part of a string of interventions in a poll manifesto focused heavily on welfare and rural agenda. "The main issues in the country today are unemployment and farmer distress," said Congress chief Rahul Gandhi. The party's 22-point farm and rural agenda focuses on greater state intervention and public investment in the sector hit by a long spell of poor returns.

The Congress promised to make non-payment of loans by farmers a civil offence instead of a criminal one. This is in line with its sustained advocacy of a general loan amnesty to woo farmers, which has been central to the party's agricultural narrative. The

Congress promised farm loan waivers within 10 days of coming to power to address agrarian distress before wresting power from the Bharatiya Janata Party in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh in December last year. "Debt is a civil liability and we will not allow criminal proceedings to be instituted against a farmer who is unable to pay his/her debt," the manifesto reads. The party promised to double public investment in agriculture. Over a 33-year period, public capital formation in agriculture, a measure of investments, has declined from 3.9% of agri-GDP in 1980-81 to 2.2% in 2014-15, according to research by the think-tank, Icrier. However, subsidies on fertilisers, power, water and crop insurance etc have shot up from 2.8% to 8% during this period. A recent study



by economist Ashok Gulati showed that public investment had far greater reach in improving farm income than subsidies alone. For instance, every ~1 million (~10 lakh) invested on farm research potentially pulled 328 people out of poverty. Likewise, every rupee spent on agricultural R&D increased farm GDP by ~11.2. The Congress, if voted to power, also proposes to establish a set of new institutions, including a National Commission

on Agricultural Development and Planning. It indicated that it will rely on the Nehruvian model of statist planning in agricultural development. Asked what could be the benefits of a separate farm budget, economist Abhijit Sen said: "Not much." Sen, who oversaw agriculture at the Planning Commission during the previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance

government, said: "There are things like gender budgeting that usually are part of the main budget. But a separate agriculture budget is a bit of tamasha. The very simple reason is that agriculture is a complicated subject in which there is nothing much the Centre can do alone. A good agricultural programme cuts across many ministries and departments corresponding to these ministries in states."



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5 leopard cubs die in farm waste fire to kill a snake

The cubs were around 10 days old. Forest officials said the farmer suspected there was a snake in the trash and decided to burn it. Farmers usually burn waste before the harvesting of sugarcane.

(Insider Bureau)- Five leopard cubs were charred to death in a sugarcane farm in Ambegaon taluka of Pune district on Wednesday morning. According to forest officials, the cubs were killed after a farmer burnt trash suspecting there was a snake in it.

The cubs were around 10 days old. Forest officials said the farmer suspected there was a snake in the trash and

decided to burn it. Farmers usually burn waste before the harvesting of sugarcane. Forest officials believe that the mother of the cubs may have left them in the field when she went to search of food.

Prajot Palve, range forest officer of Ambegaon, said people have been deployed for night patrolling as the mother leopard may turn violent in her search of

them.

The farm workers are afraid of going back to work fearing an attack from the mother leopard, said forest officials. Decreasing forest cover means that leopards are often seen in sugarcane farms. Forest officials said leopards do deliver cubs in sugarcane fields and leave once the cubs grow up. If sugarcane harvesting starts before they grow up, there is



a possibility of their death due to such farm fires, the officials said. In March this year, two leopard cubs were rescued from the sugarcane fields in the same region.

Beer king Vijay Mallya may have to curb his \$24,000-a-week life

The banks are seeking to seize about 258,000 pounds held in Mallya's ICICI Bank UK Plc account. They have accused Mallya of willfully defaulting on debts of Kingfisher Airlines, which was founded in 2005 and folded in 2012. The UK resident is fighting his extradition to India to face criminal fraud charges.

(Insider Bureau)- Vijay Mallya, the ex-billionaire known as the "king of good times" in India, may have to prepare for a bout of relative austerity as he fights multiple lawsuits against creditors.

Mallya's lawyers told State Bank of India, which is among lenders owed 1.142 billion pounds (\$1.5 billion) by his defunct Kingfisher Airlines, that their client is willing to cut his spending to 29,500 pounds a month, SBI's lawyers told a London court

Wednesday. He is currently spending about 18,300 pounds a week.

The banks are seeking to seize about 258,000 pounds held in Mallya's ICICI Bank UK Plc account. They have accused Mallya of willfully defaulting on debts of Kingfisher Airlines, which was founded in 2005 and folded in 2012. The UK resident is fighting his extradition to India to face criminal fraud charges.

Mallya, who added a portfolio of real estate, yachts, Scotch

whisky and Formula 1 racing to his United Breweries Ltd. business over the last two decades, continues to live a "lavish lifestyle," according to a written application from SBI's lawyers. Mallya "is suffering no real hardship as would be understood by the man on the street," the lawyers said. He has other sources of income including a 7,500-pound monthly payment from Kingfisher Beer Europe Ltd. and his family's wealth, much of which is tied up in



trusts, SBI's lawyers said. Banks Battle Ex-Billionaire Over Superyachts, Cars, Artwork "Dr. Mallya continues to do all he can to support a court process in India which should see creditors paid off in full," Jonathan Isaacs, his lawyer,

said in an emailed statement. "No one creditor should be allowed to break rank and grab assets at the expense of all other creditors. Dr. Mallya meanwhile lives well within the court-ordered limits and looks forward to its conclusion in the coming months."

Lashkar militant arrested for theft of weapons in Srinagar

Danish Haneef Wani, a resident of Azad Basti Natipora and an active LeT militant, was arrested based on a specific input about his movements near Kursoo, Rajbagh in Srinagar.

(Insider Bureau)- A Lashkar-e-Taiba militant allegedly involved in stealing weapons from a Congress MLC's house last December, was arrested in Srinagar, police said on Wednesday.

Danish Haneef Wani, a resident of Azad Basti Natipora and an active LeT militant, was arrested based on a specific input about his movements near Kursoo, Rajbagh in Srinagar.

"We were tracking him and he was arrested by a special police team," Senior Superintendent of Police, Srinagar, Haseeb Mughal said.

Gunmen had looted four AK47

rifles from the official residence of Congress legislator, Mohammad Muzuffar Parry at Jawahar Nagar in Srinagar after allegedly overpowering a security guard on December 30, 2018.

The senior Congress leader was not present in his house then. He was in the winter capital Jammu along with his family at the time of the robbery.

"Wani is the main accused in the weapons loot case. He had joined LeT soon after looting weapons from the MLC's house," Mughal said.

In January, Wani's pictures posing with a gun had gone viral on social media. A police

spokesperson said that the militant had been questioned regarding the theft of weapons on 30 Dec, 2018.

"Further questioning of the arrested accused is on so as to advance the investigation in the case," he said.

The police had earlier arrested another LeT militant, Showket Ahmed Khan, a resident of Aarth-Narbal Budgam, in March this year. The second militant was also an accused in the same case. Four police personnel, who were guarding the official residence of the Congress legislator when the weapons were looted, were dismissed



from service for dereliction of duty. There have been a number of weapon snatching cases last year. In October, unidentified gunmen snatched two weapons from policemen guarding a retired police officer's house in Budgam. Earlier on September 28, 2018, a personal security officer (PSO) had stolen seven rifles and one pistol from

legislator Ajaz Ahmad Mir's residence in Srinagar. Mir was also not present at his residence and was in Jammu at that time. His SPO, Adil Bashir, later joined militant ranks. On September 30, militants had stolen an AK 47 rifle after attacking a police station in south Kashmir's Shopian district. A 23-year-old policeman, Saqib Mir, was killed in the attack.

Short of fighter planes, IAF eyes 21 MiG-29 jets and air-defence aircraft

IAF needs a minimum of 42 squadrons [each comprising 16-18 fighters], but has only 30. More squadrons will be decommissioned in the coming months. India is expected to get first Rafale fighter jets - the French-made medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) - in September 2019.

(By a Staff Reporter) - Desperately short of fighters, the Indian Air Force (IAF) is moving the government to buy an additional 21 Russian-made MiG-29 ground attack and air-defence aircraft, a senior official with knowledge of the development said.

IAF needs a minimum of 42 squadrons [each comprising 16-18 fighters], but has only 30. More squadrons will be decommissioned in the coming months. India is expected to get first Rafale fighter jets - the French-made medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) - in September 2019.

The Indian Air Force already has

three squadrons of MiG-29. All three are positioned along the western borders. The Indian Navy too uses the naval version of the MiG-29 fighters. They are positioned on the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

Earlier, in February 2019, a team of senior Indian Air Force officials rushed to Russia to examine the fleet of the MiG 29 fighters.

"The airframes are ready and Russia has promised to deliver all 21 fighters within 18 months," the senior IAF official who asked not to be named said. "The airframes are ready and available in Russia." The 21 MiG-29 are upgraded with a more effective radar system, controls, and

avionics systems, dorsal and wing tanks, and air-to-air refueling making the aircraft 4.5 generation fighters - the ones that first appeared on the scene between 1990 and 2000. It costs Rs 285-300 crore per fighter. "The price is extremely competitive," another senior defence ministry official said. "The endurance of the aircraft is now nearly 5 hours with the additional fuel tanks."

The Indian Air Force is also flagging its MiG-29 repair and maintenance facility, based in Ozar, Nashik, to the government as one of the positives.

"We do not need to set up a fresh facility to maintain the fighters.



In addition, the Ozar facility has ensured that at least 75% of the fleet is always available for operational deployment," the second official said. "Importantly,

the IAF already has crew and maintenance staff trained. Induction of the fighters will not require a fresh effort," the official added.

'Time to bring change': Transwoman files nomination from Ahmedabad East

(By a Staff Reporter) - A transgender person Naresh Jayshwal has decided to contest Lok Sabha elections as an independent candidate in Gujarat and filed her nomination papers on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old transgender person will contest from Ahmedabad East, where the Congress candidate is Gita Patel, a close aide of Patidar leader Hardik Patel. The Bharatiya Janata Party has not announced

its candidate from this constituency, which is currently represented by actor Paresh Rawal.

Jayshwal, a resident of Rakhial in the walled city area, is not fazed by her opponents. "I am still contesting to send across the message that it is now high time we bring about a change. The first and foremost criterion for electing a candidate should be the individual and not the party."

"I do not understand the buzz

around the BJP and the Congress. Both parties are hardly concerned about the problems of people," she added. Sitting MP, Rawal, a popular Bollywood actor, has expressed his unwillingness to contest this time. The BJP, which in recent elections have fielded a Brahmin candidate from this urban seat, has been weighing its options after the Congress fielded a Patidar candidate.

This will be the second electoral

battle for Naresh. She had contested in 2015 Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation elections and lost. "With each election, I am pushing the envelope," she said.

Last month, Aam Admi Party fielded Bhawani Ma, a transwoman associated with the recently-formed Kinnar Akhara, to contest from Prayagraj. Tamanna Simhadri, another transwoman, will contest as an independent candidate from



Manglagiri, Andhra Pradesh, against state legislator Nara Lokesh.

This is the first general elections since the Supreme Court passed the Nalsa versus Union of India judgement, which granted equal rights to transgender persons.

'Nobody can dilute AFSPA': Amit Shah in Udhampur

Amit Shah particularly dared Omar, who is National Conference vice-president, to try to revert to pre-1953 status and re-establish the post of prime minister in Jammu and Kashmir.

(By a Staff Reporter) - Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president Amit Shah on Wednesday hit out at the Congress over its stand on the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), saying nobody can dilute it as the saffron party will be standing like a rock in support of security forces. Addressing twin rallies in Udhampur and Sunderbani in Rajouri district in support of party candidates -- Union minister Jitendra Singh and sitting MP Jugal Kishore -- Shah also lambasted former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti for advocating a separate prime minister for the state and

threatening secession of J&K from India.

He particularly dared Omar, who is National Conference vice-president, to try to revert to pre-1953 status and re-establish the post of prime minister in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Omar Abdullah, get it loud and clear. Whether the BJP is in power or in opposition, nobody will be allowed to snatch J&K from India," said Shah.

Omar had recently said that if Article 35-A was tinkered with, then J&K may think of going back to the pre-'53 status when the state had its own prime minister, called Sadr-e-Riyasat. The contentious "special status" of J&K has been

challenged via a string of petitions before the Supreme Court.

"Congress and its leaders should be ashamed of it (announcing dilution of AFSPA and removing sedition act). Go drown yourself in a pool of water," Shah said, alleging the Congress manifesto promotes the interest of terrorists and anti-India forces.

Apart from AFSPA review, the Congress, has also proposed to omit Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code that defines the offence of 'sedition', saying it has been "misused" and become "redundant because of subsequent laws". On the anti-sedition law, Shah wondered who the Congress was trying to



"protect".

Warning Pakistan, he said: "If one bullet comes from there, we will send shells from here. We will give a befitting reply". He also described the BJP as a party that follows the ideals of Syama Prasad Mukherjee who made the supreme sacrifice in Kashmir.

Taking a dig at the Congress, NC and PDP, Shah claimed these parties went into mourning after air strikes at Balakot. "At a time when the entire country celebrated the counter terror offensive, there was grief in Pakistan and in the offices of the Congress, NC, and PDP," Shah claimed.

"Former Ranbaxy promoters" will be jailed"

plan as to how the arbitral amount would be realised. You said that somebody owed you Rs 6,000 crore. But this is neither here nor there," the bench was quoted as saying by PTI. Malvinder and Shivinder Singh have not paid up the Singaporean arbitration award of Rs 2,562 crore to Daiichi Sankyo. In March, the Supreme Court had asked the two former Ranbaxy promoters to apprise it how they propose to comply with the arbitral award passed against them by a Singapore tribunal. Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi-headed bench of the court had asked the Singh brothers to consult their financial and legal advisors and give a concrete plan on how they will comply with the tribunal's order. "You were the flag bearers of the pharma industry and it doesn't look good that you are appearing in court," the bench, also comprising justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, had then remarked. Japanese firm Daiichi Sankyo had approached the Supreme Court seeking to recover

Rs 3,500 crore, awarded to it by a Singapore tribunal in its case against Malvinder and Shivinder Singh. Daiichi Sankyo, in its contempt plea filed against the Singh brothers in the apex court, has said that it was promised some shares of Fortis Healthcare by them. Earlier in December last year, the top court had ordered status quo with regard to the sale of controlling stakes of Fortis Healthcare. The court had, however, refused to pass any interim order on pleas relating to the sale of controlling stakes of Fortis Healthcare to Malaysian IHH Healthcare Berhad. The board of Fortis Healthcare had approved in July last year a proposal from IHH Healthcare to invest Rs 4,000 crore by way of preferential allotment for a 31.1% stake. Daiichi had bought Ranbaxy in 2008. Later, it had moved the Singapore arbitration tribunal alleging that the Singh brothers had concealed information that Ranbaxy was facing probe by the US Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Justice, while selling its shares.

AOC calls new campaign finance complaint 'bogus'

The complaint also alleges that Chakrabarti, now Ocasio-Cortez's chief of staff, established a limited liability company (LLC) that offered Ocasio-Cortez and other Democratic candidates political consulting services at below-market rates, something the complaints says is in violation of FEC rules. At the same time, the complaint says, Chakrabarti served as Ocasio-Cortez's campaign manager, sat on the board of the Justice Democrats PAC and co-founded the Brand New Congress PAC. "While I agree with everyone from Alexandria Ocasio Cortez to [Rep.] Mark Meadows [R-N.C.]

that super PACs should be banned, for years I've noted that creating an LLC to funnel political money is worse than a super PAC because you never learn the donors to an LLC," says John Pudner, a former George W. Bush campaign and the executive director of the conservative campaign finance reform group Take Back Our Republic. According to the Center for Responsive Politics' OpenSecrets database, Ocasio-Cortez received \$5,000 from each of two left-wing PACs -- Justice Democrats and MoveOn.org -- following her primary win over incumbent Rep. Joe Crowley.

Trump's right. Border arrests are surging. Here's why.

President Donald Trump has been talking about a border crisis for three years. Now he has the numbers to prove it, with border arrests spiking to the highest levels in a decade as growing crowds of migrants from Central America try to enter the U.S. But he might be wrong about why it's happening. Trump is planning a visit to Calexico, Calif., on Friday as he blames Mexico for failing to stem the tide of migrants. Still, the forces driving Central American families and children northward are complex — and some think Trump's hard-line immigration rhetoric could be making the problem worse. Border officials encountered an estimated 100,000 migrants in March, with families making up the bulk of that, according to preliminary figures. The tally suggests border traffic could return to the higher levels of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s.

Migrants say they're fleeing Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador because they're facing violent crime, extortion, hunger and poor job prospects at home. Some border-watchers say smugglers are dropping their prices because they're competing with free "caravans" of migrants marching toward the border together. And others say migrants are choosing to make the crossing now because they fear that Trump's tough policies will make it harder to get across later.

"I don't think there's any one factor," said Stephanie Leutert, director of University of Texas Mexico Security Initiative. However, she said, the underlying reason "has to be that the conditions in Central America have not gotten better."

Trump responded last week with a threat to close the border — which he's now backed away

from — and to cut at least \$450 million in assistance to the Northern Triangle countries. His administration is pressing Congress for additional funding for border security and for legislation that makes it easier to detain and deport families and unaccompanied minors. And he declared a national emergency in February to access \$6.7 billion in noncongressionally approved funds to build a border wall.

But those measures don't address many of the reasons for the sudden surge in migration. The aid that Trump is threatening to cut is designed to mitigate some of the poverty and violence that compel Central Americans to flee. El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have some of the highest homicide rates in the world. Crimes such as extortion, kidnapping, gender-based violence and gang recruitment

continue to create instability.

"There's just a sense of hopelessness in the region," said Adriana Beltrán, a director at the Washington Office on Latin America. "If you are a victim of violence, a victim of extortion, or if you are living in impoverished conditions and you feel your government isn't addressing your needs ... you look for protection, for safety, or for better conditions elsewhere."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees conducted more than 400 interviews in January to determine the factors pushing migrants north. The interviews took place on an international bridge in Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico, just across the border from Guatemala.

A majority of those surveyed — 63 percent — said they had experienced violence or feared the threat of violence in their

home countries. Seventy percent said they would face a threat to their lives or be at risk of violence if they returned home.

Another major driver is a lack of access to food. The United Nations World Food Programme warned in August that drought had wiped out staple bean and maize crops on more than 1,000 square miles of farmland in the three countries, an area roughly equivalent to the state of Rhode Island. The organization said the crop losses would jeopardize the availability of food for roughly 2 million people.

RSS seeks compensation from Rahul Gandhi, Sitaram Yechury for dragging name in Gauri Lankesh murder

(Insider Bureau) - Days before the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, a Thane civil court has summoned Congress president Rahul Gandhi and CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury over a defamation suit filed by the RSS. The civil defamation suit was filed by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) member Vivek Champanerkar who hails from Thane. According to Champanerkar, RSS was defamed by both the two Opposition leaders in the days after the Gauri Lankesh murder of 2017 in Bengaluru.

Immediately after the journalist's murder, Gandhi had tweeted, "Anybody who speaks against the RSS/BJP is attacked & even killed. They want to impose only one ideology which is against the nature of India". Yechury too had addressed the media and made similar comments linking RSS to the murder while the investigating agencies are yet to establish any such connection.

Watch out for Amit Shah 2.0

Mr Shah came into national prominence because he shepherded the BJP campaign in Uttar Pradesh 2014, helping the party sweep the polls. The success, and his proximity to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, catapulted him to the top of the party. Since then, notwithstanding setbacks such as losses in Bihar, Delhi and more recently the three assembly elections at the end of 2018, Mr Shah has emerged as the key organisational strategist of the party, and the second most powerful politician in India. But it is clear that Mr Shah's ambitions do not end here. By directly entering the Lok Sabha fray, Mr Shah wants to

establish himself independently as a mass leader and not just a behind-the-scenes player. While this election is crucial for Mr Modi, it is perhaps just as crucial for Mr Shah. A defeat, although one is unlikely, will probably cause a major setback to his political career; a win will open up doors, including for senior cabinet responsibilities and future leadership. But what was as striking was that Mr Shah choose to portray an inclusive image in Gandhinagar on Saturday. This is the BJP's citadel; it needs no allies here. Yet, Uddhav Thackeray, who has had a rather acrimonious relationship with Mr Shah in the past; Ram Vilas Paswan;



and Parkash Singh Badal were there to show support. So were the BJP's top ministers Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley and Nitin Gadkari. Mr Shah has a reputation for being arrogant. But here he was clearly projecting himself as an accommodative leader with

friends. This is in tune with the BJP's own approach to allies in the past few months. Based on the recognition that it may need partners post polls, the party has stitched up multiple deals on generous terms to smaller players. Amit Shah 2.0 will be a key figure to watch out for in this election.

Wealthy estranged wife, 36, gets £26m of her 'highly controlling' husband

(Insider Bureau)- A wealthy wife locked in a bitter divorce fight has succeeded in having her husband, said to be worth £300m, face the prospect of jail after he failed to turn over financial information to her lawyers.

Leila Hammoud, 36, is in a protracted legal battle with her wealthy Omani ex, Talal Al Zawawi, 48.

She has already received a court award granting her £25m of his fortune but he has threatened not to pay it.

Ms Hammoud, who moved to London from the 'palace' in Muscat, Oman, that she shared with Mr Al Zawawi after they split in 2017, has spent hundreds of thousands of pounds fighting her ex in 'litigation of the utmost intensity'.

She wanted £50m from Mr Al Zawawi, whom a judge found owns a £300m slice of a family group of companies valued at over £2 billion, and whom his wife claims personally earns 'about £3.7m' a year. Now Mr Justice Williams in the family division of the High Court has imposed a three-month jail sentence on the husband for failing to obey an order to let his wife's lawyers have information about his finances.

The court heard Ms Hammoud say at an earlier hearing she had shared a 'palace' in Muscat with Mr Al Zawawi, as well as having a home in London and enjoying an opulent lifestyle during their 12-year marriage.

Mr Al Zawawi owned 15 per

cent of the Zawawi Group, which controls a huge portfolio of businesses including banking, construction and tourism. He inherited his share from his late father, politician and businessman Qais Bin Abdulmunim Al Zawawi, and it was worth around £300m, divorce judge Mr Justice Holman found.

Mr Al Zawawi has already obtained an Omani divorce from Ms Hammoud.

But she continued to fight on for a payout in London after saying that she would get no financial provision under Omani law.

And last month, Mr Justice Holman awarded her £25m, including more than £5m for a house and £75,000 for a car.

Mr Al Zawawi had claimed that his fortune was around

£34m and consisted of assets that were 'illiquid and unrealisable'.

Lawyers representing Ms Hammoud had asked the judge to impose an asset-freezing order. They said Mr Al Zawawi had not complied with earlier orders and suggested that he would not pay the £25 million.

The award came after Mr Justice Holman had slammed Mr Al Zawawi for his 'highly controlling behaviour' towards his ex, despite them being over 3,500 miles apart.

The judge criticised the husband for having instructed Ms Hammoud's chauffeur in London 'not to drive the wife anywhere alone in the car, unless she has the children with her and so it is a journey for



the purpose and benefit of the children'.

'It is the husband who pays the salary of the driver,' the judge explained.

'This, frankly, is highly controlling and in my view demeaning of the status of a recently divorced wife and mother of the children,' he continued, adding that he found the situation 'frankly absurd'.

'This of course has been the

historical pattern in this family. They do not drive themselves,' the judge noted.

Mr Al Zawawi said he banned the wife from taking solo trips in the chauffeur-driven car because of 'a tendency of the wife to smoke or vape in the cars in the presence of the drivers if the children are not there'.

Entrepreneur raking in £10,000 a month says he no longer needs to work



option agreement purchases' - which involve taking on a property 'because the owner can't sell it or it's in negative equity'. Nathan offers to pay the mortgage, bills, and take responsibility for

(Insider Bureau)- A 28-year-old entrepreneur claims he no longer needs to work after teaching himself to become a property tycoon by watching YouTube videos.

Nathan Winch said his property business turns over £10,000 a month from investments.

He has a small portfolio of cheap properties in Barnsley, South Yorkshire worth around £500,000, despite only having started devoting himself full-time to this venture in September 2018. In addition to owning nine properties, Nathan helps complete deals for

investors, sourcing properties and generating a 'finder's fee' for himself. He said he even earned £13,500 in a single morning by completing two property negotiations. Nathan credits his rapid success to watching 'property investor crash course' videos produced by Samuel Leeds - a famous multimillionaire property investor. Within the motivational videos, Youtuber Sam Leeds explains the best ways to make money from property deals. Nathan has since started to complete one of the strategies - 'lease

the repairs of the property before letting it out and keeping the rent.

After a set agreement period is up, Nathan has the option of buying the property and selling it at a profit - if house prices have risen - or return it to the original owner if house prices have gone down.

The determined businessman, from Barnsley, South Yorks., said he could now live off the monthly incomes from his portfolio without having to go into work - but believes his drive to keep achieving means he will never retire.

India Association of Long Island

Ticket: Adult \$35
Children 5-11, \$15
Sunday, April 14
12 - 4:30 pm
Lunch, **Cash Bar**

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What does May have to do to get her new Brexit delay?

The PM will meet Corbyn TODAY as she starts race against time to strike a cross-party deal ahead of showdown EU summit next week



(Insider Bureau)-

Theresa May will sit down for Brexit talks with Jeremy Corbyn today after she enraged her party by offering to find a consensus with the Labour leader.

Mr Corbyn and his senior aides will sit down with the Prime Minister in her Commons office this afternoon and see if they can finally find a compromise that allows the divorce deal to pass. Mrs May appears to have thrown out the political declaration she agreed with the EU on what the final UK-EU trade deal might look like - signalling she will accept a softer Brexit in the end to get Britain out of the bloc within weeks.

Mr Corbyn has agreed to the talks 'without limits' but few in Westminster see how the Tory and Labour positions can be successfully brought together.

The Tories have promised to leave the Single Market and Customs Union so they can end free movement of people and strike new trade deals after Brexit but Labour's policy is to keep a

customs union.

If the talks fail, Mrs May has promised to put options to Parliament and agreed to be bound by the result. In a second round of indicative votes on Monday night a customs union, Norway-style soft Brexit and second referendum were the leading options - but none got a majority of MPs.

The Prime Minister is in a race against time after deciding to avoid No Deal next Friday, April 12.

A new extension must be agreed with the EU at an emergency summit on Wednesday - with Britain's demands needing to be set out in a letter to EU Council President Donald Tusk early next week.

Mrs May's speech suggest she will ask for a new extension running at least for several months - but with a break clause if the deal can be passed in the next couple of weeks so Britain could avoid holding EU elections in May.

EU leaders must agree the terms

of any extension unanimously and Mrs May will get no say in what is actually decided after she has made her request.

What did Mrs May announce last night?

The Prime Minister said the divorce deal could not be changed but announced she would seek a new consensus with Jeremy Corbyn on the political declaration about the final UK-EU agreement.

She has effectively thrown out the second document and wants a new basis to renegotiate it with the EU. To make progress with Labour, it is inevitable this will for a softer Brexit than her current plan.

What is the first step?

Mrs May is due to meet Mr Corbyn later today in her Commons office. There is a race against time to see if there can be a new cross party agreement in time for an EU summit next week.

What does Mrs May's shift mean?

It suggests Mrs May has

abandoned all hope of winning over remaining Tory Brexiteers and the DUP on the terms of her current deal.

Striking a cross-party deal on the future relationship will require Mrs May to abandon many of her red lines - including potentially on free movement and striking trade deals.

To get an agreement with Labour, Mrs May will need to agree the political declaration should spell out a much softer Brexit than her current plans do. This might mean a permanent UK-EU customs union or even staying in the EU Single Market.

What if Mr Corbyn says No?

Mrs May said if she cannot cut a deal with Corbyn, she would ask Parliament to come up with

options - and promised to follow orders from MPs.

In a second round of indicative votes on Monday night a customs union, Norway-style soft Brexit and second referendum were the leading options - but none got a majority of MPs.

They would probably pass if the Tories whipped for them - but it would almost certainly mean ministers quitting the Government.

When will Brexit be?

It is hard to say - but it is unlikely to be next week on April 12. Mrs May said she would ask the EU for a new extension to Article 50 that is as 'short as possible' and ends when a deal is passed.

The PM clearly still wants to get out of the EU before European Parliament elections have to be held on May 22 but this is ultimately up to Brussels.

Will the EU agree to this?

It is hard to say. The EU has said it is open to further extension if there is a clear purpose and plan. Open ended talks on the future framework are unlikely to qualify.

A clear, negotiable goal for the future framework probably would do. The EU has always said it is open to Britain staying in the Single Market and Customs Union. When does it need to be sorted out? Mrs May must have a new plan in her pocket by the time she sees EU leaders next Wednesday. In practice, talks with Mr Corbyn must have concluded today or tomorrow to give time for MPs to have their say if she is to make demand to the EU ahead of next week's summit. What are rebel MPs doing today? Oliver Letwin secured control of the Commons agenda today, a third day after he staged indicative votes on Brexit yesterday and last Wednesday. Today the MPs have a different plan - to pass a draft law requiring the Government to seek a delay to Brexit if there is No Deal.

Ethiopian Airlines 737 crash report expected Thursday

Aviation regulators around the world grounded Boeing's 737 MAX last month following the Ethiopian Airways crash, which came less than five months after an October Lion Air crash that killed 189 people.

(Insider Bureau)- Ethiopian officials on Thursday are expected to release preliminary conclusions in the probe of last month's crash of a Boeing 737 that killed 157 people, two sources told AFP on Wednesday.

The report on the March 10 crash on the Ethiopian Airlines plane could be published late Thursday morning in Ethiopia, which would be in the middle of the night in the continental United States, said the sources close to the investigation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Aviation regulators around the world grounded Boeing's 737 MAX last month following the Ethiopian Airways crash, which came less than five months after an October Lion Air crash that killed 189 people.

Scrutiny has centered on an anti-stall system developed specifically for the planes that

has given pilots problems.

The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that pilots on the doomed Ethiopian plane initially followed emergency steps outlined by Boeing but still could not regain control.

The pilots shut off the anti-stall system, called the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System, but switched it back on because they could not regain control, The Journal reported, citing people briefed on the preliminary findings.

Seeking to win back public confidence in the planes, Boeing released photographs of its chief executive, who joined a test flight of a 737 MAX with the company's updated anti-stall system.

The Federal Aviation Administration said Monday that Boeing needed to undertake more work on the proposed fix before it could be submitted for review. Boeing distributed a cockpit photo



of Chief Executive Dennis Muilenburg wearing earphones and seated behind two pilots. A second shot showed the Boeing chief exiting the aircraft at Boeing Field in Washington state.

"The flight crew performed different scenarios that exercised various aspects of the software changes to test failure

conditions," the company said. "The software update worked as designed and the pilots landed safely at Boeing Field." Boeing said it planned to submit its proposal to the FAA in the coming weeks following "a thorough and disciplined approach to the development and testing" of the enhancements.

3 theories on why Donald Trump's lies don't seem to faze him (or his supporters)

(Insider Bureau)- On Tuesday, during a sit-down with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President Donald Trump said something that wasn't true. About his own father.

"My father is German -- was German," Trump said. "Born in a very wonderful place in Germany, so I have a great feeling for Germany."

Fred Trump was, of course, born in New York City. (His father, the President's grandfather, was born in Germany.) It's an easily checkable fact, but this is at least the third time that Trump has claimed that his father was born in Germany when he, well, wasn't.

Why does he do it? Because facts have always been a fungible thing to Trump. He has, throughout his life, bent them to fit the narrative he is telling about himself. For most people, getting something factually wrong -- especially in a public setting -- is disconcerting and embarrassing. Trump doesn't have that gene. Facts are whatever he wants them to be. And they can change, depending on his own circumstances. He tells himself a story of his life in which he is always the hero, always the winner, and then repeats that story over and over again. He doesn't care if objective facts get in the way.

That is troubling, but not terribly hard to understand. What is more difficult to wrap your head around is why Trump's towering record of distortions and falsehoods seem to have zero effect on either a) his willingness to keep lying or b) how people perceive him. Those two ideas are intertwined, of course -- he lies because he feels he can do so without penalty -- and I have a few theories about the seeming total lack of concern among many people for a President who has said more than 9,000 false or misleading things in his first 802 days in office.

1) It's baked in the cake: It's not as though Donald Trump started bending (and

breaking) the truth when he was elected President. He spent much of the 2016 campaign doing almost exactly what he has done as President: Exaggerating, distorting and, at times, flat-out lying. And voters got that! Just 33% said he was "honest and trustworthy," according to exit polling in 2016. But even then, a number of them didn't seem to care. Almost two-thirds of voters (64%) said Trump was neither honest nor trustworthy, but of that group, one in five voted for Trump anyway!

The reality is that lots of voters -- especially those who voted for Trump -- never thought he was an honest guy. They knew he was lying about things -- from the extent of his wealth to his many alleged golf championships to bigger issues like his conduct with women. They didn't care. Or, more accurately, they cared about other things more.

2) All politicians lie: Time and time again during the 2016 campaign, when confronted with Trump's record of false statements, voters would tell reporters some version of this: Sure, Trump lies. But all politicians lie! At least he's honest about it! Yes, that makes very little sense -- particularly because Trump wasn't honest about all the times he didn't tell the truth; he refused to acknowledge them at all.

But what voters were saying -- even if they were saying it in a somewhat convoluted way -- was that Trump was so different, so weirdly transparent about his willingness to say anything and do anything to win that they kind-of believed he was genuine. Even if they knew he wasn't, by any traditional standard, honest. And that mattered because it differentiated him from the way people saw all other politicians: Liars but so smooth at it that you never knew. Always trying to pull the wool over your eyes, to serve you food they got from the trash can and tell you it was from a five-star restaurant. Trump's lies were so over-the-top, so -- in a way -- laughable, that

people found (and find) them endearing in an eye-roll-y, did-you-hear-what-he-said? way.

3) Many people don't trust the media: Trump didn't create distrust in the media. In 2016, just 32% of people told Gallup that they thought the media reported the news "fully, accurately and fairly." (That number, in late 2018, had risen back to 45%.) What Trump did do is weaponize the lingering distrust in ways we've never seen before. "Fake news" has become ubiquitous in the culture -- as an ironic punchline for some, sure, but nonetheless ubiquitous.

The rise of Fox News -- and its near-monopoly on conservative mind-share in the country -- has dovetailed with Trump's ascent and created both a political and economic model by which convincing people that the media isn't just unfair but is purposely not telling the truth is monetized for gain. Where we are in this country is that if someone at CNN says the sky is blue, a big chunk of Trump supporters will shout "fake news" while high-fiving. They revel in the idea that the mainstream media is totally obsessed with Trump, suffering from a severe case of TDS ("Trump Derangement Syndrome"). They don't even engage with the facts because those "facts" are coming from a messenger (the media) that they believe is dismissive of their way of life and their beliefs and will do anything -- including lying about the truth -- to accomplish some set of pie-in-the-sky liberal goals.

But the simplest reason for why Trump lies (and lies) is because he



Poor dam management led to Kerala's catastrophic floods, Amicus curie tells HC

The report said none of the 79 dams in Kerala were operated in accordance with flood control mechanisms and high reservoir storage and sudden release of water resulted in the state's worst floods.

(Insider Bureau)- In major jolt to the state government ahead of the of the general elections the Kerala High Court-appointed amicus curie submitted a report on Wednesday saying poor dam management led to last year's devastating flood and recommended a judicial probe. The opposition Congress has sought the removal of state power minister M M Mani and wanted the police to book him under

murder charges. In the flood which ravaged the state last August, killing more than 400 people and displacing at least 15 lakh people.

"Minister Mani should be booked on murder charges," said state opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala.

Mani refused to comment and vented his anger on reporters.

More than two-dozen petitions, including the one filed by Metro

Man E Sreedharan, came up before the court last year and it appointed amicus curie Jacob P Alex to examine reasons that led to the worst flood in a century. The 49-page report also recommended formation of an expert committee comprising hydrologists, dam-management experts and engineers to come up with a blueprint to contain such tragedies in future.

The report is damning. It said no

proper follow-up action and effective precautionary steps, especially for evacuating the affected and accommodating them in safe locations, were taken despite the red alert sounded by the disaster management authority and the Met office.

More shockingly, it said none of the 79 dams in the state were operated in accordance with flood control mechanisms. High reservoir storage and sudden release of water resulted in the tragedy. It said an inquiry by a

former judge or expert is required to get into minute details.

Soon after the flood E Sreedharan had written to the state government to constitute an experts' team for a technical study to find out reasons for the tragedy. He later approached the court when he failed to get any response. Many other petitions also said the government chose to sit quietly fearing the exposure of commissions and omissions of the higher-ups if a probe was ordered.

Vande Bharat Express to be guarded by squad equipped with action camera to check stone-pelting incidents

The initiative is a part of security beef up exercise which the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has launched to keep a check on the incidents of stone pelting on the train, which has now become quite frequent. Special patrolling squad equipped with action camera and heavy duty camcorders would now guard country's first semi-high speed train-Vande Bharat Express. The initiative is a part of security beef up exercise which the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has launched to keep a check on the incidents of stone pelting on the

train, which has now become quite frequent. "Initially, there used to be a regular patrolling squad. But now we have replaced the squad with the one armed with action camera and camcorders in order to capture the images of those engaged in the illegal act of stone pelting on the newly introduced train so that they could be identified and punished," said Amresh Kumar, senior divisional security commissioner RPF, Allahabad. So far, the train has been subjected to stone pelting around 6 times, suggests record with the

Railways. On December 20, 2018, during the trial run, the train was subjected to stone pelting for the first time. It was followed by another incident that was reported in February when the train was attacked by the stone pelters during its trial run in West UP. Similarly in March, some people pelted stone on the train while it was on Kanpur-Prayagraj route. It was followed by other incidents as well. Kumar said of the six incidents of stone pelting, four were reported under their jurisdiction. "It was after that we decided to depute special



squad onboard Vande Bharat Express," he said. "We have directed the squad to set the camera on video recording mode on either side of the train, soon after the train leaves Ghaziabad and heads towards Prayagraj, which is our section," he added.

Monsoon rains seen below normal this year: Skymet

The monsoon season delivers about 70 percent of India's annual rainfall and is key to the success of the farm sector in Asia's third-biggest economy.

(Insider Bureau)- Monsoon rains in India are expected to be below normal this year, the country's only private weather forecasting agency said on Wednesday, dampening prospects of higher farm and economic growth in the \$2.6 trillion economy. "The Pacific Ocean has become strongly warmer than average. The model projections call for 80 percent

chance of El Nino during March-May, dropping to 60 percent for June to August," Jatin Singh, managing director of Skymet, told reporters. "This means, it is going to be a devolving El Nino year, though retaining threshold values all through the season. Thus, monsoon 2019 is likely to be below normal." The monsoon season delivers

about 70 percent of India's annual rainfall and is key to the success of the farm sector in Asia's third-biggest economy. In February, Skymet said monsoon rains in India are expected to be normal this year. Indian's top government weather official said last month that monsoon is likely to be a robust and healthy one this year provided there isn't a surprise El Nino phenomenon.



India, US to take forward talks for key military pact

BECA will allow India to use US geospatial maps to get pinpoint military accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise and ballistic missiles.

(Insider Bureau)- India and the US are planning to revive the Defence Policy Group (DPG) between the two countries after a four-year gap, with a discussion on the text of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) one of the key items on the agenda, according to senior officials familiar with the matter. BECA will allow India to use US geospatial maps to get pinpoint military accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise and ballistic missiles. Along with Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), and Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), BECA is one of the foundational military

communication agreements between the two countries. LEMOA, which allows the Indian and American defence forces to use each other's facilities and establishes procedures of easier access of supplies and services required by them, was signed in 2016. COMCASA, which allows the US to transfer communication equipment to India that allow secure transmission of data and real-time information between the armed forces of the two countries, was sealed during last year's Two-Plus-Two talks in Washington. BECA is an important precursor to India acquiring armed unmanned aerial vehicles such as the Predator-B from the US. The

Pentagon in 2018 was ready to supply Predator-B, which uses spatial data for accurate strikes on enemy targets, to India. After speaking to officials in New Delhi and Washington, the Pentagon proposed to hold the DPG meeting this month, but a final decision is awaited by defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The last DPG, co-chaired by India's defence secretary and US Undersecretary of defence for policy, was held in 2015. The decision to revive the DPG was taken in the Two-Plus-Two meeting between the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries last September. If the DPG meeting is held in April, defence secretary Sanjay Mitra,



who was involved in inking COMCASA, will be meeting US undersecretary of defence for policy John Rood. According to officials in South Block, DPG will review the reports of existing sub-groups - Military Cooperation Group, Joint Technology Group, Senior Security Technology Group and the Defence Procurement and Production Group. However, the key item on agenda will be the BECA text. Although India initially had reservations to geospatial mapping on the grounds of national security, the Modi government has made up its mind to sign BECA provided its concerns are addressed. DPG will also only lay the future roadmap for joint advanced exercises between two countries, and look at the prospect of technological cooperation in building military hardware under Make in India, the officials added.

Anthony Madassary, the Jalandhar priest with Rs 40 crore business turnover

Fr Anthony, who was detained by police and income tax officials with alleged "unaccounted" cash totalling Rs 9.66 crore on Friday, runs a business with an annual turnover of Rs 40 crore.



(Agencies)- Father Anthony Madassary, 46, who heads the Franciscan Missionaries of Jesus in Jalandhar, is no ordinary priest.

Anthony, who was detained by police and income tax officials with alleged "unaccounted" cash totalling Rs 9.66 crore on Friday, runs a business with an annual turnover of Rs 40 crore. He runs a private firm, 'Sahodhaya', with three other priests, Father Jose, Father Paul and Father Scara Shine, as partners. They supply books and stationery to over 45 schools of the diocese, besides having interests in construction business and security services.

The priest, who claimed the money to be business proceeds, created a flutter by accusing that of the total Rs 16.65 crore taken from his house, the police declared only Rs 9.66 crore and misappropriated the rest. An inquiry has been ordered by DGP Dinkar Gupta into his allegations.

Son of a small farmer in Kerala's Kochi, the rise of Anthony, who came to Punjab 31 years ago, has been meteoric. He took over the Jalandhar Franciscan Missionaries of Jesus congregation in 2014 and started Sahodhaya to what he calls "generate employment for needy

people".

"I had taken permission from the bishop to start the company in 2008. At present, more than 500 employees are associated with it. We pay our taxes," he said, claiming income tax payments of Rs 70 lakh in 2017-18 and advance income tax of Rs 50 lakh in 2018-19.

The priest, who lives in a big house with huge lawns at Pratappura village, said the money was kept at his house because company employees had refused to go and deposit it in the bank due to the model code of conduct in view of the parliamentary polls.

"We have provided all relevant records to the income tax department," he claimed.

Though Anthony has denied the 'hawala' transaction charges, this is the second major controversy involving the Jalandhar diocese. Last year, Bishop Franco Mulakkal was arrested by the Kerala police for allegedly raping

a nun multiple times. He is currently out on bail granted by the Kerala high court.

Agnelo Grcias, acting bishop, Jalandhar diocese, in a statement said, "Some of our priests are running 'Sahodhya' in partnership with due permission. However, these firms are not run by our diocese. The venture is lawful."

Diabetes deaths due to air pollution highest in India

In 2017, exposure to PM 2.5 pollution was found to be the third leading risk factor globally for Type 2 diabetes-related deaths and disability after high blood sugar and excessive body weight

(Agencies)- The burden of Type 2 diabetes contributed by exposure to fine particulate pollution is the highest in India, according to the State of Global Air 2019 report released on Wednesday. Air pollution lowers insulin sensitivity, contributing to diabetes.

In 2017, exposure to PM 2.5 pollution was found to be the third leading risk factor globally for Type 2 diabetes-related deaths and disability after high blood sugar and excessive body weight.

Globally, such exposure contributed to about 2.76 lakh

deaths and 15.2 million life years lost to disability in 2017. This burden was highest in India, where it accounted for 55,000 deaths and 2.7 million life years lost, according to the report by Health Effects Institute (HEI) and Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation's Global Burden of Disease project. India was followed by China, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil. "PM 2.5 particles are endocrine disruptors. They can affect insulin secretion and insulin sensitivity. They can also damage the beta cells in the pancreas that produces insulin... the exact pathways are not known yet. But increasingly, research is showing these connections. So apart from poor diet, obesity etc., air pollution definitely plays a role in diabetes," said Dr Vishwanathan Mohan, diabetologist and chairman of Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialties Centre. Diabetes affected at least 65 million people in India in 2017, according to The Lancet Global Health study released last year. In 2017, diabetes accounted for more than one million deaths and 57 million life years lost globally - an increase of 175% and 141%, respectively, since 1990.



of households cooking with solid fuels in India has dipped from 76% in 2005 to 60% (846 million) in 2017, "due in part to a major government program to shift households from solid fuels to liquefied petroleum gas."

"India has initiated major steps to address pollution sources: the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Household LPG program, accelerated Bharat Stage VI vehicle standards, and the new National Clean Air Programme. These and future initiatives have the potential, if fully implemented as part of a sustained commitment to air quality, to result in significant health benefits in coming years," said Robert O'Keefe, vice president,

Health Effects Institute, Boston, US.

Exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution together contributed to over 1.2 million deaths in India and China in 2017, the report said. Globally, air pollution (PM 2.5, household and ozone emissions) is estimated to have contributed to about 4.9 million deaths - 8.7% of all deaths globally and 5.9% of all life years lost to disability. India and China have the highest health burden from air pollution, followed by Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nigeria.

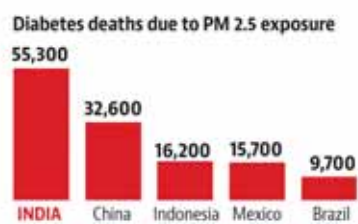
Since 1990, there has been a 68% jump in the number of deaths attributed to PM 2.5 exposure, with the largest spike between 1990 and 2010.

Battling a growing menace

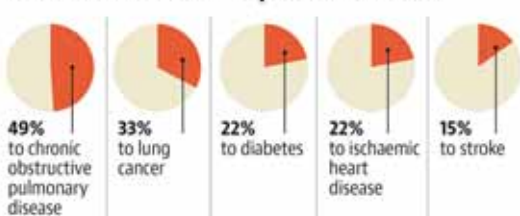
The State of Global Air 2019 report has revealed that 1.2 million Indians died due to ailments triggered by air pollution in 2017

Link to diabetes

The health burden of diabetes due to exposure to PM 2.5 pollution exposure was the highest in India in 2017



Deaths attributed to air pollution in India



Spike in deaths related to air pollution

Year	PM 2.5 exposure*	Deaths due to air pollution (outside & inside)
2013	92	11,93,000
2014	90	12,00,000
2015	89	12,17,000
2016	90	12,33,000
2017	91	12,41,000

*micrograms per cubic metres; Source: State of Global Air 2019

Vijay Mallya fights Indian banks' attempt to recover dues in UK

A consortium of Indian banks led by State Bank of India posed a legal battle against Vijay Mallya to get access to nearly 260,000 pounds in a UK bank account.

(Agencies)- mbattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya on Wednesday (April 3) faced yet another legal battle to prevent a consortium of Indian banks led by State Bank of India (SBI) getting access to nearly 260,000 pounds in a UK bank account. The 62-year-old is contesting an interim debt order obtained by the Indian banks in January this year, which relates to funds in the former Kingfisher Airlines boss' current account with ICICI Bank in London.

At a hearing before Master David Cook at the Queen's Bench Division of the court, Mallya's legal team sought a dismissal of the interim order. A judgment in the case is expected at a later date.

"The hearing concerns an interim third-party debt order obtained by the banks in January and relates

to funds worth just short of 260,000 pounds in Dr Mallya's current account with ICICI Bank in London," said a spokesperson for TLT LLP, the law firm representing the Indian banks.

"This is part of the banks' ongoing efforts to enforce the [Indian] Debt Recovery Tribunal judgment against Dr Mallya in the UK. Dr Mallya is opposing the application and asking that the court discharges the interim order. If it is made final, the funds will be released to the banks," the spokesperson explained.

The case is part of wider efforts by SBI and 12 other Indian banks - Bank of Baroda, Corporation Bank, Federal Bank Ltd, IDBI Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Punjab & Sind Bank, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of Mysore, UCO Bank, United Bank of India

and JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Co Pvt Ltd - to recover some of the funds owed to them as a result of unpaid loans by Mallya's now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines.

In a ruling in May last year, a UK High Court judge had refused to overturn a worldwide order freezing Mallya's assets and upheld an Indian court's ruling that the consortium of 13 Indian banks were entitled to recover funds amounting to nearly 1.145 billion pounds.

TLT LLP has been representing the banks in their efforts to recover their dues as part of the worldwide freezing order, including a bankruptcy petition aimed at seizing his assets to recover dues filed at the end of last year. Mallya had been granted 20,000 pounds in weekly allowance as a result of



the worldwide freeze order after his legal team made representations to the court to hike the initial 5,000 pounds weekly allowance. Mallya, meanwhile, remains on bail after his extradition was ordered by Westminster Magistrates' Court in London in December last year

and signed off by UK home secretary Sajid Javid in February. He has since filed an application in the UK High Court seeking leave to appeal against that order, with the papers now awaiting a judge's ruling on whether it should be rejected or can move to a hearing stage.

ਵਾਅਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ, ਕਰਕੇ ਵਿਖਾਵਾਂਗੇ

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Govt, RBI will have to bring new rules: Amitabh Kant on SC order on NPA circular

Niti Aayog chief executive Amitabh Kant said such a move ensuring timely repayment and resolution of stressed assets is essential for long-term growth.

(Agencies)- The government and the Reserve Bank will have to bring in a new set of regulations to ensure that borrowers repay their debt on time following the Supreme Court striking down an earlier rule of the monetary authority, Niti Aayog chief executive Amitabh Kant said Wednesday. Amidst a rash of announcements over income support schemes, the bureaucrat also stressed on the need to ensuring higher growth to fund such dole-outs.

With the Supreme Court striking down (the February 12, 2018 RBI circular on NPAs) as ultra vires, the issue needs to be relooked by both the RBI and government to arrive at a new regulation that will ensure that financial discipline from borrowers should continue, he told reporters. Speaking on the side-lines of a conference of the world federation stock exchanges here, Kant said such a move ensuring timely repayment and resolution of stressed assets is essential for long-term growth. Kant said a lot

of work has been done by the government and the RBI to bring in financial discipline and good regulation to end crony capitalism. In what is being seen as a jolt to the bad assets resolution framework, the Supreme Court Tuesday quashed the stringent RBI circular which mandated banks to recognise even one-day defaults and finding a resolution within 180 days failing which the account in question has to be sent to bankruptcy courts if it is Rs 2,000 crore and above.

The unexpected ruling by a single judge bench of Rohinton Nariman has put a big question mark on the resolution of 70 large accounts which together owe the system over Rs 3.8 lakh crore. The ruling came on a petition filed by 34 power companies which alone owe Rs 2.3 lakh crore to banks. Legal and industry experts have voiced concern over the order, stating that there was a marked change in borrowers behaviour after the circular was issued which would now change for the worse.

Meanwhile, on the rash of announcements on income support like the Congress promise of ensuring an annual income of Rs 72,000 each to 20 crore families through the Nyay scheme, which would involve an outgo of Rs 3.6 lakh crore per annum, Kant flagged the need to look at growth. You cannot have redistribution without growth. If you don't grow higher you will not have surpluses to put into these schemes, he said, adding the country needs to grow at 9-10 percent as against the present 7 percent, to generate such surpluses.

While delivering his speech, he said radical reforms will be required to accelerate growth from the present levels. We will have to focus more on manufacturing that will result in higher exports which deliver higher margins per unit of sale, he said, adding such a move will also create jobs as we cannot grow without jobs. Agriculture will also need to be focused on, Kant said, and called for scrapping the APMC and Essential Commodities Acts.

Jet Airways defers March salary payment to its 16,000 employees



(Agencies)- Earlier, the airline had been delaying the salaries of its pilots, engineers and senior staff since August who have not been paid since January. Cash-starved Jet Airways Wednesday deferred the March salary payment to its employees, citing "complexities" involved in the finalisation of the debt-recast plan, under which the SBI-led consortium of lenders has taken over the management control of the airline. Earlier, the airline had been delaying the salaries of its pilots, engineers and senior staff since August who have not been paid since January. The company has over 16,000 employees on its payroll. "Given the complexities of such (finalisation of the resolution

plan) processes, it has taken us longer than expected. However, we continue to strive and are in continuous deliberations with the lenders and institutions to find a solution. "In light of the current situation, please note that salaries for March 2019 will be deferred," Jet Airways chief people officer Rahul Taneja said in a communication to staff on Wednesday. Though the management did not give a specific date for payment, it said the company will provide an update on the issue on April 9. On March 25, Jet Airways board had approved a resolution plan formulated by SBI-led domestic lenders, under which had agreed to infuse an emergency funding of Rs 1,500 crore into the airline, and convert the same into equity worth 50.1 percent for a notional value of just Re 1 each share.

Now, control who adds you to a Whatsapp group chat

(Agencies)- WhatsApp on Wednesday announced a major change in its privacy settings that allows users to decide who can add them to groups. Previously, users could be added to a WhatsApp group without their consent. At present, over 200 million people in the country use WhatsApp, a messaging platform that is used widely across both urban and rural India.

"WhatsApp groups continue to connect family, friends, co-workers, classmates and more. As people turn to groups for important conversations, users have asked for more control over their experience. Today, we're introducing a new privacy setting and invite system to help you decide who can add you to groups," WhatsApp said in a blog post.

Users can access the privacy

settings to select one of three options-"nobody", "my contacts" or "everyone". "Nobody" prevents anyone from adding the user to any group, while "my contacts" allows people who are on the contacts list to add the user to any group. In both cases, the user will receive a private invite through an individual chat message, giving him or her the choice to join the group. The invite expires in three days.

"With these new features, users will have more control over the group messages they receive," WhatsApp added.

The new privacy settings began rolling out to some users from Wednesday, and will be available worldwide in the weeks ahead to those using the latest version of WhatsApp.

Among many other concerns around misinformation and privacy, the Indian government

had been asking WhatsApp to ensure consent of users before they are added to group chats.

WhatsApp recently announced the launch of an India-focused fact-checking feature to combat fake news and rumours in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections. Users can now report unconfirmed information or rumours they have received to a WhatsApp number (+91-9643-000-888) and check its authenticity. The initiative comes shortly after Facebook, which owns WhatsApp, took down over 700 pages linked to individuals that it said were associated with the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party for spamming other users.

Last year, WhatsApp faced severe criticism over lynching incidents that allegedly were the result of fake news shared on the platform.



Under pressure to curb fake messages, the US company of WhatsApp India. It also named Komal Lahiri as the grievance officer for India.

Expert nutrition tips: When just your diet is not enough

Fresh fruits and vegetables provide adequate nutrients if they are picked when ripe and eaten immediately. Today that is not possible as they are picked before they are ripe and then treated with chemicals to 'appear' ripe but do not have the nutritional value of ripe vegetables.

Our food production methods coupled with the burgeoning of the fast food industry and poor cooking methods play a key role in depriving our bodies of important nutrients. When nutrient deficiencies interact with high levels of stress and little or no exercise, they result in lifestyle diseases like type 2 diabetes, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, etc. It is clear from the growing incidence of lifestyle diseases that the food that we eat today does not provide us with optimum nutrients required to maintain a positive state of health.

Fresh fruits and vegetables provide adequate nutrients if they are picked when ripe and eaten immediately. Today that is not possible as they are picked before they are ripe and then treated with chemicals to 'appear' ripe but do not have the nutritional value of ripe vegetables. These 'fresh' fruits

and vegetables lose more nutrients as they travel from the farm to your kitchen.

Once in the kitchen, we overcook, deep fry, mishmash our food and even reheat the leftovers thus causing nutritional disasters. Such food has less than 25% of the original nutrient value left in it. Therefore, we cannot think of getting adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals only through food. Micronutrient deficiencies over a period of time reflect in terms of falling hair, lacklustre skin, weight gain, uncontrollable hunger, sugar cravings, low energy levels, mood swings, skin rash, etc.

The polishing of rice into 'polished white rice' and the refining of wheat into 'maida' adds to the probability of multi-nutrient deficiencies. Such food not only fails to nourish us, but also robs us of other nutrients in order to get metabolised, creating a

shortage of chromium, B-complex, magnesium and zinc in the body. As we age, our capacity to assimilate nutrients decreases due to inadequate hydrochloric acid. Frequent intake of antibiotics upset the intestinal flora creating a shortage of beneficial bacteria. Many people don't like taking vitamin and mineral supplements, as they want to get everything from the diet. I truly wish this was possible, but this route just doesn't work in this modern world. Today, we are exposed to more environmental pollutants than ever before. Cigarette smoke, smog, chemicals in our drinking water, increased alcohol intake etc., cause more free radical generation in our body and our food does not give us enough antioxidants to defend ourselves against these toxins. Therefore, there is a need to take vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.



How to get adequate antioxidants into your body?:

The best way to get your antioxidants is to drink freshly prepared vegetable juices such as Barley grass, carrot, coriander, cucumber, mint, pomegranate, spinach, tomato and wheatgrass.

Also take supplements containing vitamin A, C, E and selenium. Choose fresh fruits over canned juices. Avoid boiling or overcooking your vegetables. You must steam, stir-fry, lightly

cook or eat them raw. Consume omega-3 supplements as they reduce the damage caused by pollutants. These fats are found in the alsi seeds, fish, soybeans, pumpkin seeds, and almonds. Avoid polyunsaturated-fatty-acids-based oils derived from sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, cottonseed, and corn which can turn rancid easily. Instead try to use mustard oil, sesame oil and olive oil that are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids.

Gazing at coffee reminders can arouse your brain

The study, published in the journal Consciousness and Cognition, looks at an effect called priming, through which exposure to even subtle cues can influence our thoughts and behaviour.



Eastern cultures "to see if there was an association between coffee and arousal such that if we simply exposed people to coffee-related cues, their physiological arousal would increase, as it would if they had actually drunk coffee," he noted. They found that participants exposed to coffee-related cues perceived time as shorter and thought in more concrete, precise terms.

"People who experience physiological arousal -- again, in this case as the result of priming and not drinking coffee itself -- see the world in more specific, detailed terms," Maglio said. "This has a number of implications for how people process information and make judgements and decisions." However, the study noted that the association between coffee and arousal is not as strong in less coffee-dominated cultures.

Finding it hard to concentrate? Just looking at something that reminds us of coffee can cause our minds to become more alert and attentive, according to a new study.

"Coffee is one of the most popular beverages and a lot is known about its physical effects," said Sam Maglio, Associate Professor at the University of Toronto in Canada. However, much less is known about its psychological meaning - in other words, how even seeing

reminders of it can influence how we think, Maglio added. The study, published in the journal Consciousness and Cognition, looks at an effect called priming, through which exposure to even subtle cues can influence our thoughts and behaviour.

"People often encounter coffee-related cues, or think about coffee without actually ingesting it," Maglio said.

The team used a mix of participants from Western and

Wearable biosensors help wound healing process by imitating skin

Biosensors are analytical devices that combine a biological component with a physiochemical detector to observe and analyse a chemical substance and its reaction in the body.

Researchers have developed biosensors that are structured similarly to that of the skin's microarchitecture and helps in the process of wound healing. The research was published in the Journal of Biosensors and Bioelectronics. "We eventually hope that these sensors and engineering accomplishments can help advance healthcare applications and provide a better quantitative understanding in disease progression, wound care, general health, fitness monitoring and more," said Matthew Brown, a PhD student, Binghamton University. Biosensors are analytical devices that combine a biological component with a physiochemical detector to observe and analyse a chemical substance and its reaction in the body. Conventional biosensor technology, while a great

advancement in the medical field, still has limitations to overcome and improvements to be made to enhance their functionality. Researchers developed a skin-inspired, open-mesh electromechanical sensor that is capable of monitoring lactate and oxygen on the skin. "We are focused on developing next-generation platforms that can integrate with biological tissue (e.g. skin, neural and cardiac tissue)," said Brown. This wearable sensor is equipped with gold sensor cables capable of exhibiting similar mechanics to that of skin elasticity. The researchers hope to create a new mode of sensor that will meld seamlessly with the wearer's body to maximize body analysis to help understand chemical and physiological information.

Luxury consumers open to sustainability premium

The significance of the trend was underlined by projections that the global garment industry will expand by two-thirds by 2030, while be responsible for one-quarter of the global carbon footprint by 2050, up from 2 percent in 2015.

Fashion industry experts say luxury consumers are expressing a willingness to spend more for garments whose production doesn't harm the environment or exploit workers, a sign they said of a new era of sustainability in fashion. McKinsey & Company consultancy said at an Italian Fashion Chamber round-table Tuesday that 70 percent of consumers were willing to pay some premium for items produced sustainably, based on responses of 90 department store buyers in 25 countries responsible for 50 billion euros in annual purchases. The significance of the trend was underlined by projections that the global garment industry will expand by two-thirds by 2030, while be responsible for one-quarter of the global carbon

footprint by 2050, up from 2 percent in 2015.

The round-table brought together experts in ethical finance and labor practices alongside industry players and innovators in sustainable technologies in the fashion industry, which is recognized as the second-most polluting sector in the world after the oil industry. Environmental, social and governance issues were identified as key drivers defining luxury brands' commitment to sustainability, but speakers also pressed the need for diversity in fashion boardrooms and creativity teams. The diversity call was against the backdrop of recent consumer backlashes against Prada and Gucci for producing items that recalled blackface, and against Dolce & Gabbana in China after one of the designers made

insulting remarks.

Livia Firth, creative director of the Eco-age consultancy, said that despite the fashion world's global nature, a recent report found that ethnic minorities held just 11 percent of board seats on the 15 largest publicly traded fashion companies. Firth said the case for making the fashion industry more inclusive was moral and ethical, but also made business sense, citing reports from Harvard Business Review and McKinsey that found that "the most technically and culturally diverse boards are significantly more likely to deliver higher profits and generate more sales." While the fast-fashion industry is considered the main driver in the rapid expansion of the textile industry, Kerry Kennedy, president of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights



foundation said that the luxury industry could help raise standards that would put "downward pressure" on fast-fashion. She called on fashion houses to publish on their websites the factories where their items are made and to create a "rigorous" best-practice program for garment factory inspectors, which she said still does not exist despite a global outcry after the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh killing more than 1,300 garment workers. "I think sustainability would also benefit from a clarity over

terms," she said.

She also called on investors in the industry to make sustainability part of their criteria.

"Sustainability is about corporations or their investors asking themselves this question: What is the impact of environmental degradation, human rights violations or corruption on investment outcome for shareholders," she said. "If you make an investment and you fail to consider these issues, you are investing in a ticking bomb and at some point that bomb is going to explode."

Who wore this Atelier Zuhra signature style better

The mirror mosaic pattern is an on-going trend as seen on various Bollywood celebrities.



One of the most significant trends this season as seen on red carpets throughout the globe is that of gowns with a mirror mosaic pattern. A number of Bollywood celebrities have opted for this style on

various occasions, the most recent one being Sonakshi Sinha at the HT India's Most Stylish awards 2019. Alia Bhatt, Sonam Kapoor, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Janhvi Kapoor have all been seen in mirror detail

gowns by the famous Dubai fashion house Atelier Zuhra. However, all the leading ladies went for totally different gown styles but the mirror mosaic bodice stood out in all the outfits. Sonakshi Sinha opted for a blue

gown with a mirror bodice and a feathery skirt at HT India's Most Stylish 2019. She completed her look with vintage curls and accessorised with a diamond necklace and a pair of diamond earrings. Aishwarya Rai wore a fitted red gown with mirror embellishments, full sleeves and a short train. The actor opted for smokey eye make-up, full dark eyebrows and bright red lipstick. The Fanny Khan actor styled her hair in a sleek straight look. She wore minimal accessories which included rings and a bracelet. Alia Bhatt chose a strapless silver gown with a fitted bodice covered in mirrors which ended in a flowy skirt. The Kalank actor chose to style her hair in a bun and added silver

accessories to it. She kept her make-up minimal and fresh but added a lot of highlighter glow to her face. Janhvi Kapoor recently wore this trend as a red outfit with a strapless fitted bodice covered in mirrors which ended in a full ball gown skirt. The skirt had an abstract floral pattern embellished with tiny mirrors. The Dhadak actor finished her look with bold red lips and a sleek bun. A similar look was worn by her sister Sonam Kapoor. However, Sonam had chosen a gold gown and she completed her look with a gold headband. Kareena Kapoor's version of the mirror dress is different from the rest as she wore a straight fitted dress which had mirror mosaics all over. The sleeveless dress ended at her ankles and she styled it with strappy silver heels. She opted for straight hair, smokey eyes and no accessories.

The Highwaymen movie review

Kevin Costner, Woody Harrelson's Netflix film is like a Bonnie & Clyde sequel no one asked for

Kevin Costner and Woody Harrelson's Netflix gangster movie is an off-putting celebration of gun culture and right-wing conservatism.

The Highwaymen

Director - John Lee Hancock

Cast - Kevin Costner, Woody Harrelson, Thomas Mann, Kathy Bates

Rating - 2/5

With Netflix's *The Highwaymen*, director John Lee Hancock continues his odd streak of making films in complete disconnect with our times. Based on the infamous gangster couple *Bonnie & Clyde*, Hancock comes up with the decidedly problematic idea of telling the story from the perspective of the law enforcement officers who shot them down, in an off-putting celebration of gun culture and right-wing conservatism.

The Highwaymen plays almost like a fan-made sequel/spin-off to Arthur Penn's classic *Bonnie and Clyde* - which is odd, considering how actively it challenges everything that the 1967 classic stands for.

While that film was seen as a watershed moment for Hollywood - it helped usher in a new wave of American counterculture cinema - the *Highwaymen* almost comes across as a conservative retort whose tagline could easily have been 'Make America Great Again'. How dare murderous outlaws be deified in public, the film asks. How can two criminals who evaded the law for years, and went on a cross-country rampage which saw at least nine policemen die at their hands, be lauded as Robin Hood-type figures?

Bonnie and Clyde were a new kind of criminal; armed with state-of-the-art machine guns, a formidable Ford V-8, and a sense of liberation that seemed at odds with the Depression era. So when the Texas government announces that the manhunt would in part be conducted by former Texas Ranger Frank Hamer - a relic of the past by most accounts - there

is a vocal protest by some of the force's younger members.

Flashing shiny radios and toothy grins, they mock Frank (played by the only man who plays such characters these days, Kevin Costner) for his cowboy methods of conducting an investigation, which involves stakeouts, foot chases and as fetishised in one cringe-worthy scene, purchasing a truckload of guns.

Hancock and his writer, John Fusco, spend an uncomfortably long time on this scene, which begins with Costner strutting into a weapons shop, grunting authoritatively at the comically meek shop owner, and walking out minutes later with enough ammunition to supply a small army.

The guns in this scene - and later ones as well - are shot in a manner similar to how Quentin Tarantino shoots ladies' feet, or



how Michael Bay shoots their butts. They're stylishly lit, both inside their squeaky clean glass cabinets and cradled in the hands of Costner.

This is in stark contrast to how Hancock portrays *Bonnie and Clyde*, whose faces are rarely, if ever, seen - at least until the film's final, suitably bloody moments. They're shown as comically evil psychopaths, which goes against the folk-hero persona that has been established over decades of storytelling.

But American culture has a history of putting outlaws on a

pedestal - from the Wild West's Jesse James and Billy the Kid, to John Dillinger and Al Capone during the Public Enemy era, to a certain politician now. Curiously, they're all seen (and shown) as the voice of the common man.

And so, in an age when there's daily discourse on police brutality and mass shootings, the *Highwaymen* decides that now is the best time to tell the story of a couple of policemen who emptied 130 rounds into two twenty-somethings, and then paraded their punctured bodies as a sign of victory.

Notebook movie review

Kashmir is the real attraction of Zaheer Iqbal, Pranutan Bahl film

The chief attraction in this film is Kashmir. Music, which is the soul of any Bollywood romance is below par in this dull romance.

Notebook

Cast: Zaheer Iqbal, Pranutan Bahl

Director: Nitin Kakkar

Rating: 2.5/5

There are perhaps only a few places on Earth that are as achingly beautiful as Kashmir -- the Dal Lake with boats snaking around, conifers calling out to the sky and a history that has blood splattered all over it. Set in the Valley, this is how *Notebook* begins as well -- with the death of an innocent, all seen through the haze of a dream.

The film establishes its ambitions early on -- it touches upon displacement and death, terror and a generation forced to live under the shadow of guns. However, it is in the execution that it falters; having touched on these important subjects, it

rushes off to tie it all neatly into a romance. *Notebook* is just not the film that can carry it all off; it splutters and the effort becomes obvious. Zaheer Iqbal's Kabir Kaul is a displaced Kashmiri Pandit who returns to his roots, and to a school his father once established. A misfit anywhere but in Kashmir - his home, Kabir is a replacement for Pranutan Bahl's Firdaus who left the post at the school a while back.

His guide and only friend at this school, set in the middle of nowhere, is a diary kept by Firdaus. As he deals with frogs in Sintex water tanks and a handful of apple-cheeked pupils who refuse to warm up to him, Firdaus' story of finding herself runs parallel to his narrative.

He falls in love with Firdaus without ever meeting her - quite

a departure from the millennial love stories Bollywood regularly churns out - only to find out that she is getting married in a few days. The two share hardly a few frames together as the notes exchanged through the diary are their only communication. A fundamentalist father who wants to push his academically brilliant son into militancy is how Kashmir's political situation is reflected in the film.

The film's two leads being launched by Salman Khan hardly get any time together; the romance is unremarkable but a gorgeous Kashmir and a gaggle of children are used intelligently by director Nitin Kakkar. After last year's *Laila Majnu*, *Notebook* has again been shot entirely in Kashmir and cinematographer Manoj Kumar Khatoji has



ensured every frame is bursting with beauty. The visual portrayal will stay with you long after you forget the sub-par love story.

After *Loveyatri* and *Hero*, the best thing we can say about Salman Khan's latest protege, Zaheer Iqbal is that he is not Aayush Sharma. He may have acquitted himself in a masala movie but the epistolary romance is beyond his ken. Pranutan offers a restrained performance but rough edges do creep in.

Inspired by the Thai film, *My Teacher's Diary*, the film begins well but starts slackening in pace. A good idea, it is the execution that falters. The second half especially could have done with some editing and better narrative tools than convenient twists that you can see coming a mile off. *Notebook*'s music - the soul of any romance that aims to launch newcomers - is its biggest letdown.

Deepika Padukone snapped filming Chhapaak in full makeup as acid attack survivor

Actor Deepika Padukone was surrounded by fans as she shot for her upcoming film Chhapaak in New Delhi, in full makeup as an acid attack survivor.



(Insider Bureau) - Actor Deepika Padukone was photographed in Delhi, shooting for her upcoming film Chhapaak in full prosthetics. Pictures of the actor, getting out of a car, were shared online.

Wearing yellow, the actor can be seen trying to duck behind an umbrella, surrounded by fans. The photographs appear to have been taken in the Connaught Place area of the capital. Deepika also waves to the gathered crowd, as she stands next to a white SUV.

Deepika plays acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal in the film, directed by Meghna Gulzar and co-starring Vikrant Massey.

The actor shared her look from the film in March, to warm reception by fans and the industry. Actor Kangana Ranaut's sister, Rangoli Chandel, herself an acid attack survivor, wrote on Twitter that she will be the film's biggest cheerleader.

Deepika had shared another update from the film on Tuesday, posting an image of film's script on Instagram and captioning it, "The only kinda homework I've ever enjoyed! #chhapaak."

The picture shows a pencil, eraser, ruler and a highlighter along with the script. The film's tagline 'a journey of trauma and triumph' is also written under the film's title.

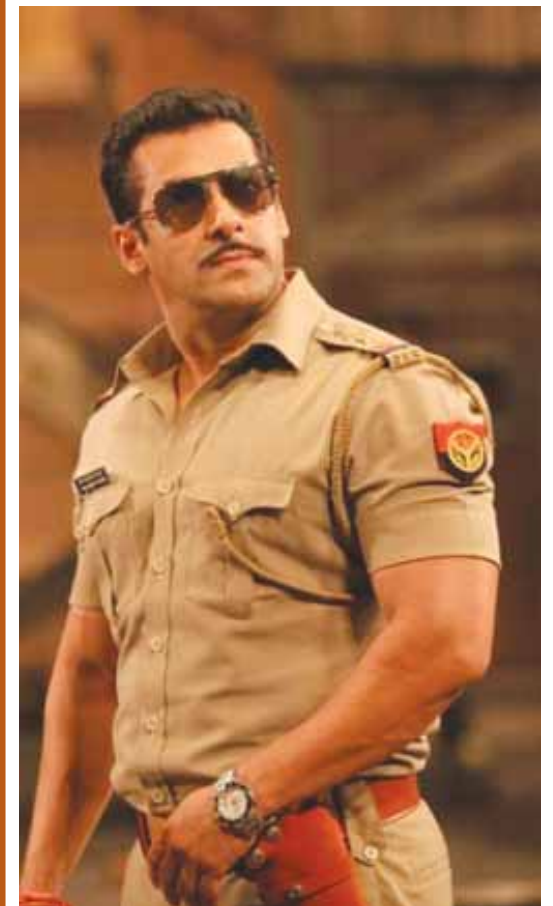
Meghna had previously teased that fans

can expect to see a completely new Deepika in the film. "You won't be seeing Deepika, you know. You will be seeing a disfigured Deepika," the filmmaker said at a Chennai event. "There is an uncanny similarity between the survivor and Deepika."

Laxmi has expressed her approval of Deepika being cast in the role. Speaking with Hindustan Times, she had said, "I am so happy that Deepika is playing the role. I have no right to judge her. How can I judge someone for something which I can't do. She has played wonderful characters on screen and I believe she will give her best."

Chhapaak will be released on January 10, 2020.

Salman Khan says hi to Madhya Pradesh at Dabangg 3 shoot, fans go crazy.



(Insider Bureau) - Salman Khan, who is currently shooting for Dabangg3 in Madhya Pradesh, thanked fans and police for their support. The Bhaijaan of Bollywood took to various social media platforms to share a video of him thanking fans on the ghats of Narmada. The actor shared a picture of him from ghats yesterday. In the video, Salman Khan is seen waving at fans who had come to have a glimpse of the actor. The fans can be seen shouting Salman's name, while police taking care of his security. Salman Khan wrote, "Namaste, Salaam Alaikum, Hello and a big thank you to all my fans & the police of #madhyapradesh #maheshwar #dabangg3."

Kangana Ranaut: Ranbir Kapoor is 37, Alia Bhatt is 27. They are young or dumb?

Kangana Ranaut recently lashed out at Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt and said that the two Brahmastra stars are too old to be called young actors.

(Insider Bureau) - Kangana Ranaut is known to speak her mind. The actress, however, has often landed in trouble for her pointed statements at Bollywood celebs.

Now, Kangana has once again targeted Alia Bhatt. This time around, Alia Bhatt's boyfriend Ranbir Kapoor is also on the receiving end of Kangana's wrath. In her latest interview with a daily, Kangana said that Ranbir and Alia are both too old to be called young actors.

When Kangana was asked why she loved picking on people, she said, "I do only that when I am rubbed the wrong way. And what is this thing of calling them young... Ranbir Kapoor is, what, 37 years old, young kid of the generation and Alia Bhatt just turned 27... my mother had three children at 27. This is absolutely unfair... bachche hai, ki dumb hai ki kya hai..."

In the same interview, Kangana also went on to say that actors don't shy away from talking about

their sex life, but are reluctant to talk about issues of national importance. She said, "If we are asking about your sex life, that you are okay to discuss, put the pictures on Instagram, who I am f***ing, who I am not f***ing, that is fine; but about the country, 'it's my personal choice'."

In the past, the actress has targeted many actors including big guns like Aamir Khan and of course Karan Johar. Who can forget the infamous Koffee With Karan episode where Kangana



raised the issue of nepotism! The episode triggered a never-ending fight between the two, with Kangana still taking digs at Karan

Johar. At the India Today Conclave this year, Kangana recalled the time when KJo had called her 'jobless'.

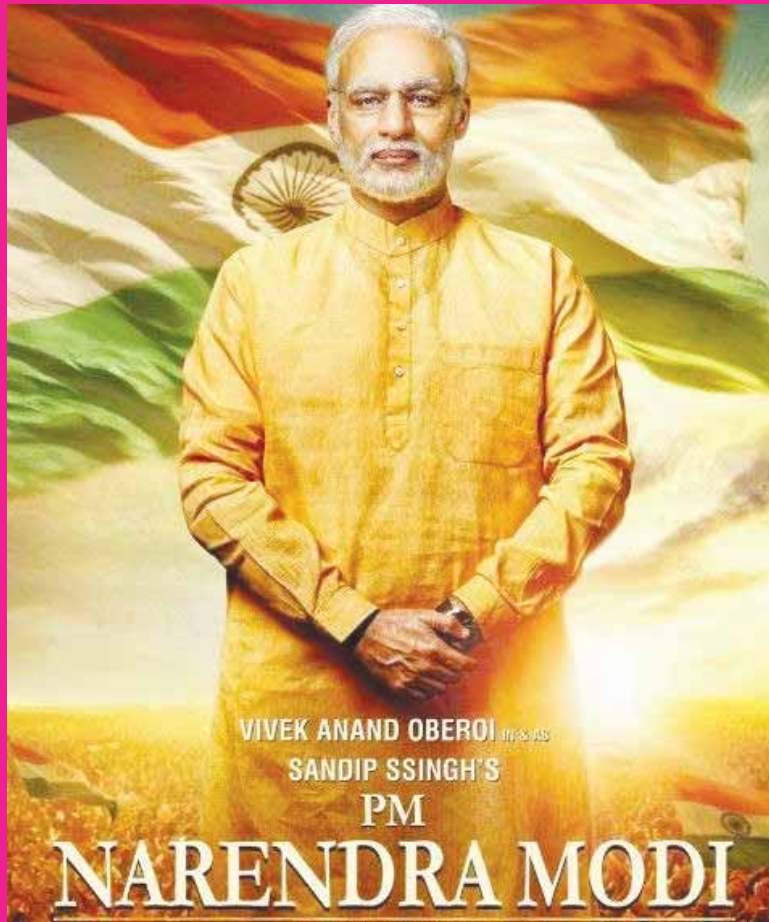
PM Narendra Modi biopic delayed

April 12 new release date for Vivek Oberoi film

(Insider Bureau) - Troubles for PM Narendra Modi, the biopic on the life of the Indian Prime Minister, don't seem to be ending. The Vivek Oberoi film has now been delayed by a week, say our sources. PM Narendra Modi, directed by Omung Kumar, was supposed to hit the screens on April 5 this year, but it has now been pushed to April 12, which was its original release date.

The film ran into controversies for allegedly violating the model code of conduct, that kicked in on March 12, a month before India goes to polls. The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections in India kickstarts on April 11. The Opposition raised objections to the release of PM Narendra Modi on April 5, a week before the elections.

While the Examining Committee (EC) said on Wednesday afternoon that it has no objection to the release of the film, looks like it has asked for a few changes in it. Before the EC's verdict, a petition was filed in the Bombay High Court seeking a stay on the release of the film. The Examining Committee has given a go-ahead to PM Narendra Modi and demanded changes in the film.



Theatres in Delhi say that the shows that were allocated to PM Narendra Modi have now been assigned to Akshay Kumar's Kesari.

A Special Leave Petition (SLP) was also filed in the Supreme Court today, challenging the Bombay High Court order and seeking a stay on release of film PM Narendra Modi. The Bombay High Court, on April 2, had disposed off the PIL seeking a stay on the film's release.

The film, directed by Omung Kumar, is now likely to hit the screens on April 12, but there is no official confirmation from the team yet. Meanwhile, Vivek Oberoi told India Today Television yesterday that he did not consider PM Narendra Modi a propaganda film. "It is just a coincidence that the film is releasing ahead of the election. It is not a propaganda film. I am an individual who has a credible body of work over the last 18 years, more than 45 films and more than 26-27 awards. So I stand my ground there. I don't need to make him appear as a hero. He is a hero to billions of people across the world," said the actor.

Karan Johar attacks Kangana Ranaut again: I don't love nepotism. Someone else does



(Insider Bureau) - There seems to be no end to the nepotism debate. Filmmaker Karan Johar has again taken a dig at actress Kangana Ranaut by choosing to say "someone else loves the subject" on being asked about nepotism at an event.

Kangana had famously called Karan a flag-bearer of nepotism in Bollywood, sparking a debate that has stretched out for long.

During an interaction with YouTuber Bhuvan Bam at the YouTube fan fest, Karan was asked why does he love the subject nepotism so much.

Known for his quick wit, Karan said, without taking any name, "No, I don't love this subject... Someone else loves the topic. Main bolunga toh log bolte hain ki main bolta hun (If I say something, people say that I talk a lot). So I will continue doing my work and let the other person do the talking about it."

Kangana had on Karan's chat show accused the filmmaker of favouring the star kids in the industry.

Alia Bhatt, Kalki Koechlin, Jim Sarbh join Soni Razdan for No Fathers in Kashmir special screening.

(Insider Bureau) - The Bhatt family came out in full strength for the screening of Soni Razdan-starrer No Fathers In Kashmir on Wednesday evening with Alia Bhatt, Pooja Bhatt and Mahesh Bhatt watching the film and then posing for family photos. Directed by Ashvin Kumar who also features in the film, No Fathers In Kashmir is a love story set in the backdrop of Kashmir where two 16-year-olds are in search of their missing fathers and stumble upon a dark secret in the process. Soni essays the role of a Kashmiri mother whose only son is picked up by the armed forces and disappears thereafter.

Actors Kalki Koechlin, Jim Sarbh and Swara Bhaskar were also spotted at the

Explaining what drew her to the film, Soni had earlier said, "When Ashvin first sent me the script, I was immediately drawn to the compelling story he had. And it's so refreshing to see a filmmaker who's writing a story about Kashmir that isn't just a love story or some kind of action drama. This is a film which speaks the truth and shows the reality. Being half Kashmiri, it's always special for me



to shoot in The Valley and to be there with the locals. They're all very warm people who are very hospitable and genteel, and always welcome everyone with an open heart." No Fathers in Kashmir stars Zara Webb, Shivam Raina, Ashvin

Kumar, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Maya Sarao, Soni Razdan and Anshuman Jha. After a long battle with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), the movie finally hits theatres on Friday, April 5.



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