

THE POWER OF ONE

"I would like all women to come forward and claim their rights which are equal to all the men and boys. And to all men and boys, join the gender equality cause, because this is not only good for your mothers, sisters, colleagues etc. It is good for you."

Ambassador Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary General & Deputy Executive Director, UN Women
Interview on Page 36

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India launches Cartos at 2 Series satellite, 29 others

SRIHARIKOTA (TIP): India on Friday, January 12, successfully launched weather observation satellite Cartosat 2 Series and 29 other spacecraft onboard its dependable Polar rocket from here.

The successful orbiting of the satellites by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV C-40 comes four months after the Indian space Research Organisation's mission to launch backup navigation spacecraft IRNSS-1H onboard PSLV-39 ended in a rare failure.

My heartiest congratulations to @isro and its scientists on the successful launch of PSLV today. This success in the New Year will bring benefits of the country's rapid strides in space technology to our citizens, farmers, fishermen etc.

- Narendra Modi (@narendramodi)
January 12, 2018

A jubilant ISRO Chairman A S Kiran Kumar announced that the Cartosat 2 Series satellite, the seventh in the series, a nano

contd on Page 66



PSLV-C40 roared into a clear sky after a perfect lift-off at 9.29 am on January 12

Photo / Courtesy ANI

PM Modi ranked among top 3 world leaders in survey

NEW YORK (TIP): Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Switzerland for Davos summit, an international survey has ranked him among the top three leaders of the world. An annual survey by Gallup International has put Prime Minister Modi at number three among the global leaders.



contd on Page 66

US can rejoin Paris pact: fairer deal might coax us back into climate agreement, says Trump



WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump said, January 11, his primary concern with the Paris climate accord was that it treated the United States unfairly and that if a better deal could be reached, Washington might be persuaded to rejoin the agreement.

contd on Page 66

US BILL PUSHES FOR MORE GREEN CARDS

Indian techies to benefit if 'Securing America's Future Act' is signed into law by Trump administration

WASHINGTON (TIP): A legislation backed by the Trump administration pushing for merit-based immigration and increasing the allotment of Green Cards by a hefty 45 per cent annually has been introduced in the House of Representatives, a move that could benefit Indian techies if signed into law.

500,000 Indians have been waiting in queue for Green Cards.

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Indian Americans welcome continuing H-1B visa extension



WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian Americans today welcomed the Trump Administration's decision of not blocking extensions to H-1B visas, saying the "devastating" move would have caused "unprecedented" brain drain and hurt American businesses.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services had yesterday said it was not considering any proposal that would force H-1B visa holders to leave the country. The announcement came days

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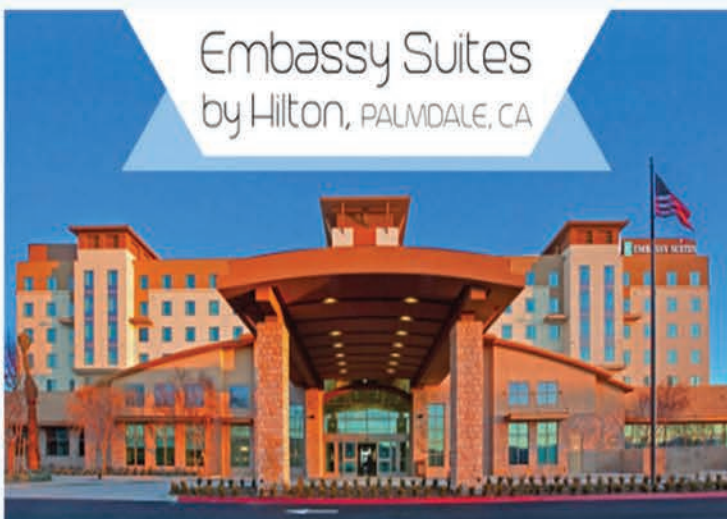
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Ministry of External Affairs
New Delhi
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Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay
Secretary (CPV & OIA)

MESSAGE

I am delighted to know that The Indian Panorama, New York is bringing out a Special Issue on the occasion of the New Year.

We start the New Year with new enthusiasm. This year, on the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas being celebrated on January 9, 2018, we are organizing a Conference of PIO-Parliamentarians at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, New Delhi. The Conference will provide an occasion to acknowledge their struggle. The Event has been conceived in line the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to strengthen the engagement with the Overseas Indians.

The one-day Conference will broadly have the Inaugural Session, two thematic Plenary Sessions and the Valedictory Session. The titles of the two Plenary Sessions are

प्रवासी सांसद: संघर्ष से संसद तक का सफर
PIO Parliamentarians : A journey from Struggle to Parliament &
वैश्विक स्तर पर उभरते भारत में प्रवासी सांसदों की भूमिका
'Resurgent India : Role of PIO Parliamentarians'

I have no doubt that the year 2018 will bring new glory to India as our Republic marches ahead with confidence. The role of Indian Diaspora in India's development is very significant. In the New Year, I hope that our overseas Indian brothers and sisters visit India and reconnect with the roots.

My best wishes to the entire team of The Indian Panorama for their continued efforts aimed at raising the profile of the Indian-origin community world-wide. I also wish the Indian community in the USA as well as citizens of the USA a very joyful 2018

DNYANESHWAR M. MULAY



सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India

Permanent Mission of India to
the United Nations, New York



Ambassador Syed
Akbaruddin

Permanent
Representative of India
to the UN, New York

MESSAGE

It is a pleasure to know that The Indian Panorama is publishing a special edition on the occasion of New Year 2018.

2017 has been a year of significant achievements for Indian diplomacy. As a large and diverse country in an increasingly globalized world, India is convinced that solutions to common problems facing the world cannot be found in isolation. Dialogue, partnership and greater convergence are, therefore, required to address long-standing problems and new challenges which are becoming increasingly global in nature.

India's deepening engagement with the United Nations is based on its steadfast commitment to multilateralism and dialogue as the key for achieving common goals of peace, security and development. In this regard, India is also assuming the leadership role.

The India-UN Development Partnership Fund set up in 2017 is aimed at helping the least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is another global initiative led by India that can play an important role in addressing the challenges posed by climate change.

India's commitment to peace and security is rooted in its civilizational ethos and it will continue to engage actively with other countries in the quest for lasting peace and sustainable development.

I congratulate Chief Editor Prof. Indrajit Saluja and his entire team for their commendable work in fostering friendship and understanding between India and the USA. I also extend to them and the readers of The Indian Panorama my warm greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

SYED AKBARUDDIN



सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India

Consulate General
of India, New York



Sandeep
Chakravorty
Consul General

MESSAGE

On this occasion of New Year, I wish all the readers of The Indian Panorama a very happy and prosperous 2018. Also I feel very glad that the message is appearing in the illustrated special issue of this English language weekly newspaper which is serving NRI's & Indian Americans for Asian News, Immigration & Diaspora News in the United States since 2006.

It is even more satisfying to know that though it is published from New York and Dallas, Texas, and distributed in the Tri-State area, Atlanta, Washington Metro area, Dallas, Sacramento and Seattle, it is accessible to readers all over the world online and is the 2nd most visited website by NRI's & Indian Americans.

Once again, I extend my heartiest greetings and best wishes for the New Year and hope that the Newspaper keeps on nurturing the deep traditional and family values undeniable for the existence of South Asian culture by disseminating the news and happenings pertaining to the South Asian culture in the future as well.

SANDEEP CHAKRAVORTY



सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India

Consulate General
of India



Neeta Bhushan
Consul General

MESSAGE

I am very happy to learn that the Indian Panorama is publishing an illustrated special edition on the occasion of New Year. I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations to them for this endeavor. The Indian Panorama which is a very informative and interesting weekly newspaper, has been publishing news about the Indian American diaspora on a regular basis and hence have been playing an important role in keeping the community members connected with each other.

I would like to convey my best wishes to the entire team for their hard work and commitment in bringing the community in various parts of the United States together. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Indian American diaspora in the United States and especially in the US Midwest region for their contribution to strengthening relations between the people of India and the US. I would also like to thank all readers and members of the community for their support to the various activities of the Consulate General of India in Chicago. I look forward to working with all for promoting greater friendship and partnership in the coming year.

I wish everyone a very happy New Year 2018.

NEETA BHUSHAN



HAB Bank
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New York



Saleem Iqbal
President & CEO

MESSAGE

On behalf of HAB BANK, I would like to extend our joyous greetings on New Year 2018.

May the New Year bring peace, joy, and prosperity to the entire Indian American Community living and working in the tri-state area.

As we celebrate the beginning of New Year, let us hope that it brings along new opportunities for us to work together and reach new heights of success and glory. On this happy occasion, we take pride in our achievements as a community in the U.S. despite the challenges that lie ahead and pray for prosperity in the New Year.

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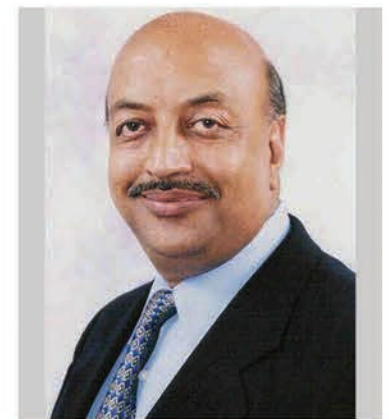
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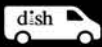
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**GUEST
COMMENT**

Relief on H-1B front: Tech companies must decrease dependence

US President Donald Trump's executive order, "Buy American and Hire American", set the tone for immigration policies and their implementation. This resulted in an increasingly protectionist stance and rising apprehensions about the future of people whose immigration status was short of permanent residency. Thus, there was a scare about the norm of granting extensions to H-1B visa-holders who were waiting for their Green Cards. The latest clarification from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has brought a smile on the faces of the nearly five lakh Indian citizens working in the US on H-1B visas. No longer do they have to face the prospect of having to leave the US even as their applications for extension are pending. The USCIS has gone a step further saying that even if there were changes in the H-1B visa rules, these would not hurt the existing workforce.

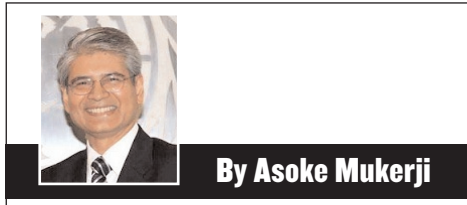
The USCIS stance acknowledges the mutual dependence of US IT companies and the tech workers of Indian origin, who are now to be seen at all levels, including the very top, of such organizations. Indian citizens are the biggest beneficiaries of H-1B visas, but this is directly related to the need of US companies for trained IT professionals. However, over the past few years, Indian companies have cut down the number of visas they seek in this category.

IT giants like Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and Wipro are meeting the challenges of such protectionism by hiring local professionals for their projects in the US. However, there is also a need to develop alternatives that would keep the army of IT professionals they have gainfully engaged. This would involve re-skilling them so that they can handle newer challenges, especially in artificial intelligence and machine learning. The government, while betting for the rights of Indian workers abroad, should also help to create an ecosystem that would encourage more innovation for domestic and professional workers returning from foreign shores. Only those - individuals or organizations - who adapt will survive the challenging environment that the IT workplace has become

(Tribune, India)

AS I SEE IT

Assertive Sovereignty or International Cooperation?



By Asoke Mukerji

The year that has just ended was marked by the vigorous reassertion of the principle of sovereignty in international relations. Implicitly, this has challenged the concept of international cooperation, enshrined in the UN Charter 70 years ago. Founding members of the UN, including India, which had suffered the ravages of war and conflict, focused on international cooperation to prevent another world war, while sustaining peace through equitable socio-economic development.

Of course, the principle of "sovereign equality" is one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations system. However, the growing trend among four of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the United States, China, Russia and the United Kingdom) to assert the primacy of sovereignty over the objectives of international cooperation can potentially alter contemporary global governance structures adversely.

President Donald Trump, in his maiden address to the UN General Assembly in September 2017, advocated a coalition of "strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty". This was endorsed by Russia. At the 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress in November 2017, President Xi Jinping of China asserted his country's commitment to *weiquan* or protection of rights, foremost of which was the right to sovereignty. Outside the United Nations, the United Kingdom, following its referendum in June 2016, been moving inexorably towards asserting its sovereignty in relationship to the European Union through the Brexit negotiations.

While the bigger powers look to give substance to their focus on assertive sovereignty through building up their militaries (and the economic sectors that sustain these militaries), the majority of the 193 countries that are represented in the UN General Assembly have been engaged in maximizing international cooperation to eradicate poverty and sustain their socio-economic development. Just two years before President Trump's speech, in September 2015, the UN General Assembly had adopted an ambitious road-map to achieve these objectives through the 17 specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the heart of Agenda 2030.

The overarching goal, SDG 1, is eradication of poverty. In 2013, about 10 per cent of the global population, or 767 million people, lived below the World Bank's poverty line of US\$1.90 a day. Of these, the majority were in sub-Saharan Africa (389 million) and South

Of course, the principle of "sovereign equality" is one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations system. However, the growing trend among four of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the United States, China, Russia and the United Kingdom) to assert the primacy of sovereignty over the objectives of international cooperation can potentially alter contemporary global governance structures adversely.

India has a key role, as well as core national interests, in implementing Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These interests are an integral part of the major initiative announced by Prime Minister Modi under the "sabka saath, sabka vikas" policy. Perhaps the best illustration of India's ground-based approach is in clean and renewable energy, which is an essential requirement for development.



'In international cooperation, no one loses sovereignty. Rather we all gain new sovereignty which we could no longer have as nation-states on our own in today's world.'

Asia (256 million). It is clear from this that eradication of poverty as a priority requires international cooperation, which allows the flow of investments, trade and people in a supportive atmosphere of peace and security. The fact that the most active United Nations peacekeeping operations today are in sub-Saharan Africa, where ironically the bulk of the peace-keeping troops are from South Asia, is an illustration of the challenges ahead.

Agenda 2030 was accompanied by two other important global decisions on international cooperation on sustainable development. One was a commitment to facilitate the use of appropriate cyber technologies for development and empowerment, especially to bridge the digital divides, as part of the High-Level Review of the Tunis Agenda of the UN. The second was the prioritization on replacing fossil-fuels with renewable energy for sustaining development, which was endorsed by the Paris Climate Change

Conference. Both these decisions were reached in December 2015.

India has a key role, as well as core national interests, in implementing Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These interests are an integral part of the major initiative announced by Prime Minister Modi under the "sabka saath, sabka vikas" policy. Perhaps the best illustration of India's ground-based approach is in clean and renewable energy, which is an essential requirement for development.

While the Agenda 2030 negotiations on clean energy (SDG 7) were underway at the United Nations, India had announced its national goal of generating 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022. This was followed up by India's bold initiative (endorsed by France) of proposing an International Solar Alliance (ISA) of 121 countries to accelerate investments, the transfer of appropriate technologies, and sharing of developmental experiences in using renewable energy for sustainable development. The ISA came into being on 6 December 2017, following the ratification of the treaty establishing the ISA as an inter-governmental organization by 15 countries. It is the only such international organization headquartered in India.

Developing economies like India are today at the center of effective international cooperation. They not only offer the markets for investments, but through the application of technology by skilled professionals successfully showcase an inter-connected (and inter-dependent) world.

The call to assertive sovereignty by raising new protectionist barriers to the flow of people, data, investments and technologies poses a direct challenge to effective and equitable international cooperation. The issue of sovereignty therefore needs to be placed in the context of the 21st century. As Germany aptly stated at the UN General Assembly in September 2017, "in international cooperation, no one loses sovereignty. Rather we all gain new sovereignty which we could no longer have as nation-states on our own in today's world."

(The author, a career diplomat, was India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from April 2013 to December 2015. He can be reached at 1955pram@gmail.com)

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TIRED TITAN: WHO, AFTER MODI?



BY VIRENDRA PANDIT

In 2014, when Narendra Modi, 64, became India's 16th Prime Minister, he, and many, believed and boasted that he would continue to helm the affairs at least until 2024, what with the decimated main Opposition party, the Indian National Congress, touching the nadir of its entire political existence since 1885. Managing to win a measly 44 seats, out of 543, in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament), the corruption-accused, Jurassic Era's Grand Old Party (GOP) had become laughing stock of the nation. Modi was the flavor of the season, the Knight-in-Shining-Armor, the Messiah...the very God Who Could Do No Wrong...

The 'belief' that the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by a 'youthful' and energetic Modi as the fulcrum of National Democratic Alliance (NDA), had finally arrived as an effective alternative to the Congress was further buttressed with the BJP winning a series of State Assembly elections across India, replacing the Congress



RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2015

File photo



Within three years, however, the BJP is huffing and puffing, tired of its own baggage of successes, whereas the much pilloried and humbled Congress is seen as rejuvenating like a fallen Arnold 'Terminator' Schwarzenegger being revived by his emergency batteries. If in the early 1960s, India faced the huge question mark, 'Who, after Nehru?', and in the 1970s, 'Who, after Indira Gandhi?' the year 2018 has arrived with 'Who, after Modi?'

everywhere. Indeed, a gloating Modi himself has been talking about how to make India celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of her Independence in 2022 and, hinting, how he will continue to helm India until 2024!

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For, all these three towering leaders, suffering with narcissism, would leave no second line of leaders who could replace or succeed them-but Mother India has been fecund enough to nurture a successor silently, even if via transitional leaders until the NextGen was crowned. So, Lal Bahadur Shastri succeeded Nehru while Indira was by her son Rajiv Gandhi. The Mother could, therefore, be trusted to be silently nurturing a successor to Modi as well! Next year, 2019, he will face the Lok Sabha election with a heavy baggage from the past; and his possible successor, if he loses the elections, is not visible yet!

But why has this huge question mark emerged in the last few weeks? Has the Modi rhetoric run its course? Has his mystic and charisma seen a steep and sudden decline? Since 2014, he strode like a Colossus across not only India's political firmament but also globally. He scripted many foreign policy firsts and successes, as millions of Indians looked with amazement at this fashion-designed Prime Minister making India proud both on national and global fronts. What has changed now, and so spectacularly?

In November 2014, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat compared Modi with the Mahabharata's Abhimanyu, Arjuna's valiant son who knew how to enter a Chakravyuha (the enemy's phalanx in concentric circles with openings only at opposite sides) but not how to come out of it, and was, therefore, slain by seven Kaurava warriors. Modi, buffeted as he is now encircled by seven

enemies, may have stepped into Abhimanyu's shoes!

His first enemy is, of course, the Indian economy. Only on January 5, the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) said the country's growth in economy in 2017-18 slowed down to a four-year low of 6.5%, dragged down by sluggish manufacturing and farm sectors and the impact of the rollout of demonetization and Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the last one year. Clearly, an overall job-loss, farm distress shown by farmers' suicides, youth unrest and the like have dragged down the people's confidence in the government's ability to deliver on its promises. Few, if any, are interested in what Moody's says about Modi.

A year on, the double whammy of demonetization and GST have begun to impact politics. In Modi's home state of Gujarat, the recent Assembly elections left the BJP with, at best, a pyrrhic victory with the saffron party winning only 99 of the 182 seats, lowest since 1995. This steep decline in Modi's image emboldened the BJP's own leaders to virtually blackmail the party leadership and extract their pound of flesh! Clearly, the Modi charisma began to fade, first of all, in his own state. Successful event managements, circus-like extravaganzas, and sound-and-light razzmatazz, all at the expense of the exchequer, cannot replace good politics!

His second enemy is India's upwardly mobile and irreverent youth, nearly 100 million of them unemployed due to a variety of reasons. While battling for Prime Ministership in 2013-14, Modi never tired of talking about this 'demographic dividend', what with 65% of the voters being in the 18-35-year age-group. He also drafted a series of plans for the youth, gave them dreams to live for and support him. But they remained pipedreams, and turned into nightmares for many. Empty promises disillusioned them, triggered youth rebellion, giving rise to the emergence of a formidable trio of Young Turks-Hardik Patel, Alpesh Thakore and Jignesh Mewani-in Modi's own Gujarat. Together, they left the BJP with its bloodiest nose in 22 years and produced green-shoots in a Congress that lay comatose for a long time.

With these three youths, the caste-centric politics of the 1990s has returned to India. This return to India's basic, chaotic politics is the third enemy of Modi, who seemed to have replaced the Mandal-Kamandal era of the BJP with his own brand of vikas-centric politics that sought to stress on socio-economic development. Due to lack of resources to fund development, his boastful brand of politics collapsed, first of all, in his home state of Gujarat in the December 2017 Assembly elections. The assertive-aspirational politics

of the caste-conscious youth, soon, found expression in neighboring BJP-ruled Maharashtra where the Dalits (Suppressed Castes) raised a banner of rebellion against the Upper Castes, they saw as represented by the BJP's Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Modi's fourth enemy is the coming Assembly elections in eight states in 2018. Three of them are large states-Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh-and are BJP-ruled for years where the saffron party is expected to face a strong anti-incumbency and reverses. This is due to the BJP evolving itself as an 'alternative' to the Congress, i.e. as corrupt! The fourth state, Karnataka, hub of India's IT revolution, also has little chances of going the BJP way. A caste-based social-re-engineering is now at work across the states and the "vote-banks" of yore are disintegrating everywhere, in the great socio-economic churning current in the cauldron called Modern India. Even the Muslims no longer remain a solid 'vote-bank' as Muslim women saw in the 'enemy' BJP their emancipators, thanks to its support to them on the divorce issue, as evidenced in Gujarat by their large vote for the saffron party!

With these new emerging trends reshaping Indian politics, Modi's fifth enemy is the likely revival of the erstwhile United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by a revived Congress under a combative Rahul Gandhi. If the BJP fails to win back the major states this year, and with one state slipping after another from the saffron fold, the NDA itself may come apart. Some of its current regional partners may even join the UPA bandwagon. Only a few months ago, the UPA seemed to be disintegrating what with Bihar's Nitish Kumar joining the NDA; no longer. India's politics has entered its most mercurial state and equations change quickly.

His sixth enemy is the overall disillusionment among the people with the political class as a whole. Modi came to power promising Achche Din (Better Days Ahead) and punishment to the corrupt UPA leaders but each one of them have been acquitted by the courts, and they are back hounding and howling at him. The general apathy of the voters for politicians of all hues, including Modi, was demonstrated by over 500,000 people who voted for the "None-Of-The-Above" (NOTA) option in Gujarat. This option, introduced by the Election Commission for the first time in an Assembly election, impacted the outcome in nearly 30 Assembly seats, out of 182, in Gujarat. It harmed both the BJP and the Congress as the number of NOTA votes were, in those 30 constituencies, more than the winning or losing margins.

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Bhagwat, who succeeded K S Sudarshan as the RSS chief in March 2009, has been junior to Modi in the Sangh Pariwar hierarchy and seen as the one unable to tame the man who now helms India from 7, Race Course Road in New Delhi. On the contrary, Bhagwat is seen as a Modi-acolyte and many of the RSS subsidiaries-the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) etc.-have, from time to time, raised the standard of rebellion ostensibly against the Government's failures to deliver on the promises and also, indirectly, against the Modi-Bhagwat stranglehold that may pull down the entire edifice built since the founding of the RSS in 1925. RSS is the "socio-cultural-spiritual" parent of the BJP, its political front, which is part of dozens of organizations having Hindutva ideological affinities with the Grand Master across India.

Hindu Americans welcome Jewish Federation offering free yoga in Massachusetts for "Peace of Mind"

NEW YORK (TIP): Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is offering free Chair Yoga to the community "for Flexibility, Mobility and Peace of Mind" in Pittsfield (Massachusetts) on January 8.



Announcement says: "Yoga is good for ALL BODIES." Linda Novick, professional level Kripalu Yoga teacher, is the instructor. Her approach to yoga "encourages everyone to listen and love their body". Yoga instruction will be followed by a kosher hot lunch.

Welcoming the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for offering free yoga, distinguished Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada Jan 6, urged all such community groups in USA to launch multi-beneficial yoga programs, including offering some free classes to low income enthusiasts.

Yoga, referred as "a living fossil", was a mental and physical discipline, for everybody to share and benefit from, whose traces went back to around 2,000 BCE to Indus Valley civilization, Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, noted.

Rajan Zed further said that yoga, although introduced and nourished by Hinduism, was a world heritage and liberation powerhouse to be utilized by all. According to Patanjali who codified it in Yoga Sutra, yoga was a methodical effort to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical.

According to US National Institutes of Health, yoga may help one to feel more relaxed, be more flexible, improve posture, breathe deeply, and get rid of stress. According to "2016 Yoga in America Study", about 37 million Americans (which included many celebrities) now practice yoga; and yoga is strongly correlated with having a positive self image. Yoga was the repository of something basic in the human soul and psyche, Zed added. "Guided by our Jewish values, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires brings together the Berkshire Jewish community". Judy Usow is the President of its Board of Directors.

Indian Doctor, 40, Jailed for Groping Teen Patients

Arun Aggarwal was arrested when he was allegedly trying to flee the country



Dr. Arun Aggarwal was part of a physicians group at Wright State University's Boonshoft School of Medicine who practiced at Dayton Children's Hospital. (File photo courtesy Dayton Daily News)

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Ohio based Indian doctor Arun Aggarwal, 40, was sentenced to 10 months behind bars on Thursday, January 4, after pleading guilty to four counts of gross sexual imposition.

Aggarwal, formerly a doctor at Dayton Children's Hospital in Ohio, inappropriately touched two teens during medical examination between 2013 and 2015, the government attorney said. Designated as a Tier I sex offender, Aggarwal was arrested when he was allegedly trying to flee the country. In a statement, the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Leon Daidone alleged that the local hospital did not report the incident to the police.

Aggarwal now faces deportation to India.

Indian American Dr. Sukant Misra is the new Vice Provost for International Affairs at Texas Tech University

LUBBOCK, TX (TIP): Indian American educator Dr. Sukanth Misra has been appointed as the new Vice Provost for the Office of International Affairs at Texas Tech University.

Misra has replaced Ambassador Tibor Nagy, who was serving as the Vice Provost since 2003. Misra began his new role on January 1, 2018.

"I am humbled and deeply honored to be selected to serve as the Vice Provost for International Affairs and provide leadership of the international mission for this great university," Misra said, Texas Tech University reported. "I have been with Texas Tech University for more than 23 years, and it has been thoroughly gratifying. One of the university's goals is to comprehensively internationalize our campus, and great strides have been made over the last few years toward this vision."

Misra said his priorities in the new position include the internationalization of the Texas Tech student body and the curricula to prepare productive citizens for the global community, the globalization of the university's research enterprise to empower faculty to innovate and the universalization of outreach efforts to promote long-term, sustainable development locally as well as in other countries.

Lawrence Schovanac, the Texas Tech president said, "Sukant Misra has done an excellent job in enhancing the recruitment and support of international students, as well as in the global branding of the university," he said.



Dr. Sukanth Misra has been appointed as the new Vice Provost for the Office of International Affairs at Texas Tech University

"Under Dr. Misra's leadership, I am confident the Office of International Affairs will continue to advance the globalization of Texas Tech, and provide excellent service and support to our international community on campus and in Lubbock."

Misra praised Nagy for his contributions to

Texas Tech's past internationalization accomplishments during his 14-year stint with the OIA.

"I have worked with Ambassador Nagy since he joined Texas Tech University, and over the years, we have developed a bond that is founded on both professional and personal levels," Misra said. "He has been an invaluable mentor and friend to me and was instrumental in making internationalization a priority for the university."

Prior to his current position, Misra has served as an Associate Vice Provost at Texas Tech University. He has also served as the Associate Dean for Research for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources from 2002 to 2014. Before joining the Texas Tech University, he was a researcher at the University of Georgia for three years. He has served in several local, state, regional, and national organizations involved in the advancement of higher education.

Misra completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in Analytical and Applied Economics from Utkal University in India. He then completed his doctorate in Agricultural Economics from Mississippi State University.

A recipient of more than \$2.2 million in external funding as a principal and co-principal investigator, Misra has published more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, technical and invited papers, and book chapters.

Indian American NJ Senator-Elect Vin Gopal joins fellow lawmakers and community in Fight Back against Trump Offshore Drilling Proposal



At the press conference on Jan 5, 2018. From L to R): Congressman Frank Pallone, Doug O'Malley, Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling, Senator-Elect Vin Gopal, U.S. Senator Robert Menendez, Amy Goldsmith

LONG BRANCH, NJ (TIP): NJ Senator-elect Vin Gopal, Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling and Assemblywoman Joann Downey were joined today, January 5, by Senator Menendez, Congressman Frank Pallone, Governor-Elect Phil Murphy and members of the shore community to speak out against a renewed effort by the Trump Administration to expand offshore drilling off the coast of New Jersey.

Legislators Houghtaling, Downey, and Gopal spoke fervently against the proposal, citing high risk for catastrophe and the severe impact an oil spill could have on New Jersey's \$44 billion tourism industry.

In August, Assembly Members Houghtaling and Downey submitted a letter in opposition of the plan to the Department of the Interior.

"We've seen environmental disaster over and over again, and so many of these catastrophes are directly linked to decisions like," said Houghtaling (D-Monmouth), "We have a multitude of

energy options available. The federal government needs to invest in our infrastructure, not put our environment and our economy at risk with dangerous moves like this."

"The risks are clear and so is the public's opposition," said Downey (D-Monmouth), "Year after year we're seeing oil spills around the country. As recent as April, thousands of gallons of oil were spilled in a once pristine bay of Alaska. Tens of thousands of New Jerseyans have voiced their opposition to this policy and the Trump Administration needs to heed those calls before they put us in danger."

"Not only could an oil spill be an environmental catastrophe, but, in New Jersey, it could be an economic catastrophe as well," said Gopal (D-Monmouth), "Thousands of small business owners and their employees rely on New Jersey's beaches and tourism for their livelihood. This is how they put food on the table and this policy puts that \$44 billion industry at risk."

Indian Girl Sherin Mathews Died of 'Homicidal Violence', Reveals Autopsy

DALLAS, TX (TIP): Sherin Mathews, the 3-year-old Indian girl whose body was found in a culvert in Dallas, died of "homicidal violence", according to her autopsy report. According to the police official who spoke to the WFAA TV



Sherin Mathews was reported missing by her Indian-American foster father on October 7, who said he had left her outside their house for not drinking her milk. Police found her body on October 22 in a culvert about 1 km from her home in suburban Dallas during a massive search for the toddler.

station, an exact cause of death could not be determined due to extensive decomposition.

Sherin Mathews was reported missing by her Indian-American foster father on October 7, who said he had left her outside their house for not drinking her milk. Police found her body on October 22 in a culvert about 1 km from her home in suburban Dallas during a massive search for the toddler. Wesley Mathews, her foster father, later changed his statement and said that she died after choking while he was forcing her to drink her milk.

The police later reported that Wesley Mathews bundled her "stiff and cold" body in the back of his car along with a bag of trash and hid the corpse in the culvert. A doctor testified before the court saying that Sherin showed signs of abuse, including a series of broken bones and injuries in various stages of healing.

Wesley Mathews was arrested in October and has been charged with injury to a child, a first-degree felony punishable by up to life in prison, and is being held on a \$1 million bond. He and his wife, Sini Mathews, have also lost all rights to see their biological daughter, who was put into foster care and later placed with a Houston family. Sherin Mathews was given a private burial, and the Dallas gravesite was later made public.

Indian Origin Olympian Alexi Singh Grewal sets a precedent, returns to roots to marry soul mate

PRABHJOT SINGH

JABALPUR (TIP): Olympic gold medalist Alexi Singh Grewal has always been in news headlines. Now he has set a new precedent. He married Jabalpur-based Manjit Kaur, a Botanist, to become the first-ever Olympic gold medalist (individual) to get married on the Indian soil. Interestingly the marriage, which was kept a low profile affair, took place on January 9, the day India celebrates Pravasi Bharatiya Divas - a day dedicated to People of Indian Origin. It was on this day that Father of the Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi, returned home from South Africa.

The 57-year-old US Born, 1984 Olympic Games road race champion is an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). His father, Jasjit Singh Grewal, came from India. The marriage was performed in accordance with Sikh traditions and rites at a simple ceremony in a Jabalpur Gurdwara in Central India where only family members, relatives and close friends were invited.

Alexi Singh Grewal is the first ever athlete of Indian origin to win an individual gold medal in Olympic Games. He won the tough road race (cycling) in Los Angeles Olympic Games. Twenty-four years later, the honor to win the first individual gold medal for India in Olympic Games went to Abhinav Bindra in the shooting. Abhinav won the gold in Beijing Olympic Games, 24 years after Alexi.

"I am happy to rediscover my roots," says Alexi Grewal, who has come to India to make it his second home. He had first visited India 20 years ago. His father, Jasjit Singh Grewal, himself a cyclist, groomed all his three sons - Alexi (Olympic champion), Ranjit and Rishi.

Ranjit and Rishi are into the mountain and national



A longtime friend of Alexi, PTC News Executive Director Prabhjot Singh (extreme right) represented the groom and signed the marriage certificate on behalf of Alexi

biking. Alexi has strong roots in India. His grandfather, Bhagwant Singh Grewal, was Minister of Education at Patiala State. Jasjit Singh Grewal was born in Simla (now Shimla). Manjeet, one of the sisters of Jasjit Grewal, happened to be Miss Simla while his other sister, Mohanjeet, who moved to France, is a fashion designer and had the

distinction of designing dresses for like of Jane Fonda and first lady of the US, wife of JF Kennedy. His third sister, Nirmaljeet, is settled in Delhi.

The family originally belongs to Patiala. Alexi Singh Grewal is keen to visit his ancestral homes in Patiala and also in Shimla.

His great-grandfather was Commander in Chief of Rewa Royalty.

Jasjit Singh Grewal married Martha Huber, a German, and settled in the US.

Talking of his marriage, Alexi says "we are two people from totally different cultures" and adds "we have found deep delights in each other's souls."

Manjit Grewal (nee Bhalla) is a research scholar and holds M.Sc. and M. Phil degrees. She is registered for Doctorate and worked as a scholar with the State Forest Research Institute. Her late father was a school teacher in Central Government. Later he taught Law at Jabalpur University. Though her father came from Amritsar and mother from Mohali, the family has now settled in Madhya Pradesh. She lives with her mother and brother.

Alexi is keen to work and train young Indian cyclists. He is toying with the idea of setting up a cycling academy also.

Soon after his arrival in India, he went on Nilgiri mission where he interacted with young and experienced cyclists.

Alexi and Manjit are now planning to visit Punjab and Kashmir. "I am keen to witness Rural Olympics at Kila Raipur. Rural games are something I look forward as I immerse myself in Indian culture."

(COURTESY PTC NEWS)

Indian American Dr. Rahul Gupta is the West Virginian of the Year

PRAKASH M SWAMY

MORGANTOWN (TIP): Dr. Rahul Gupta, State Health Officer and Commissioner for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Public Health, has been named as "West Virginian of the Year" 2017 by Charleston Gazette-Mail -the state's largest Pulitzer winning newspaper.

In the past, this honor has generally gone to governors, senators, celebrities such Jennifer Garner. He is perhaps the first immigrant to ever receive the coveted honor. Dr. Rahul Gupta is a family medicine doctor in Charleston, West Virginia. He received his medical degree from Delhi University College of Medical Sciences and has been in practice for more than 20 years.

Dr. Rahul Gupta serves as the West Virginia State Health Officer and Commissioner From 2009-2014 Dr. Gupta served as the health officer and executive director of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, the state's largest local health department. Additionally, Dr. Gupta served as the executive director and health officer of the Putnam County Health Department.

Prior to working in West Virginia, Dr. Gupta was an assistant professor of medicine at Meharry Medical College and clinical assistant professor of medicine at the Vanderbilt University School of medicine; both in Nashville, Tennessee. He also served as assistant professor of medicine at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

Dr. Rahul Gupta and his staff are working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on what he called a "post-autopsy autopsy." Gupta is compiling data to develop an overdose profile that identifies factors shared by the 881 West Virginians who fatally overdosed on drugs last year.

It's a huge undertaking. Gupta said he hopes the project will provide a blueprint for saving



Former West Virginia State Health Officer and Commissioner Dr. Rahul Gupta has been named "West Virginian of the Year".

lives. "We wanted to learn from people who passed away to avoid what's been happening year after year," Gupta said. "What we're finding out is that, while we may only have a single chance, there appear to be opportunities to prevent fatal overdoses in the state."

So far, Gupta and his researchers have discovered 86 percent of those who fatally overdosed had interacted with health care providers within the past dozen months - at places like a doctor's office, hospital emergency room or health clinic. Many of those had two or three interactions. All were opportunities to steer people into drug treatment.

Of those ages 25 to 34, about half of those who overdosed and died had spent time in jail during the previous 12-month period. "There might have been missed opportunities to work with them at the time of their release," Gupta said.

He said over 70 percent of West Virginians who fatally overdosed were covered by Medicaid within the past year. Also, 65 percent had received prescriptions for controlled substances like pain pills within a year of their death. About 40 percent had such prescriptions 30 days before they overdosed. West Virginia has the highest overdose death rate in the nation. This year's total is expected to surpass last year's record number of overdoses.

"Oftentimes, we end up just counting deaths," Gupta said. "But now we're trying to learn from those who passed away." This year, Gupta and his office also established a panel of public health experts to develop a "rapid opioid response plan." The plan is due in mid-January.

The office has distributed 16,000 doses of naloxone to emergency responders, developed standards for syringe exchange programs, set up an Office of Drug Control Policy and worked with a national group that represents health officials to share West Virginia's opioid-fighting efforts, such as the analysis of people who overdosed.

"The deaths are the most important piece we can do something about immediately," Gupta said. "It's an attempt to utilize an evidence-based, data-driven approach to reduce the overdose deaths."

The previous awardees include John Chambers, President and Chief Executive Officer of Cisco Systems, Okey L. Patteson and Arch A. Moore Jr., Governors, Adm. Felix B. Stump, Commander of Navy's Pacific Fleet, Senator Robert C. Byrd, Dr. James Harlow, Physicist, 16th President of West Virginia University, Sen. Jay Rockefeller, Legislator, Secretary Of State, Governor, U.S. Senator, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Harvard Professor, Elizabeth Hallanan, One of America's Few Female Federal Judges, Jennifer Garner, Actress and Catherine Johnson, recipient of Presidential Medal Of Freedom

Indian American Scientist honored by Google Doodle

SACRAMENTO (TIP): Har Gobind Khorana was an Indian American biochemist.

His research led to greater understanding of the makeup of human DNA.

In 1968, he received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Khorana would have been 96 years old on Tuesday, January 9.

Google honored his life and work on its homepage with a Google Doodle.

The image could be seen by Google users in 13 countries, including the United States, India, Argentina, Chile and Japan.

Khorana was born on January 9, 1922, in a small Indian village called Raipur. The area is now part of Pakistan.

As Google reports, Khorana's father helped his children learn to read and write. This was not common in poor, rural places like Raipur.

Khorana received scholarships to attend Punjab University where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The Indian government later gave Khorana a scholarship for him to do his doctoral studies in chemistry at the University of Liverpool in England.

Khorana went on to do research at universities around the world, including Canada and the United States. In 1968, he and two other researchers at the University of Wisconsin - Madison earned the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

," Google explains, "they discovered that the order of nucleotides in our DNA determines which amino acids are built. These amino acids form proteins, which carry out essential cell function."

In 1972, Khorana made another important scientific breakthrough when he built the first-ever synthetic gene.

Bangalore-based artist and designer Rohan Dahotre created the Google Doodle.

Today's Youth and Swami Vivekananda

BY ASHOK OJHA

As we remember Swami Vivekananda on his birthday we can't stop visualizing his youthful aura and his glowing personality. Swami ji underscored the ideals and high values for the youth to follow. First of all, his focus on patriotism remains very appealing for the young people. Swami ji reflected high energy and charm as he travelled far and wider. He always addressed the youth as torch bearers for the future.

"Young people should believe in themselves", Swami ji said. He pinpointed to self esteem which is most essential for all young people to build in themselves. He knew that youth power was the only hope for India's future. He called to the youth saying there was no alternative than to use your power and conquer the world. This conquest was very much Indian. It was not to be accomplished by use of the gun but by the force of knowledge.

Swami ji was a great proponent of Vedic philosophy. He asked the youth to sharpen their mind and invigorate their energy in the service of the Lord. "In our short lifespan the youth must rise and get involved in the welfare of humanity", he said focusing on the meaningful deeds in life. He pointed out that the only noble cause made life worth living was service to humanity. "In life, there is no place for fear and the young people should waste no time standing up and get busy in purposeful activities."

Swami ji's raw appeal to the younger generation ignited the nation half a century before it gained independence.

Since he belonged to the same generation that represented the youth, dynamism and vibrancy, Swami ji's words influenced people all over India. He continued to inspire the youth until his untimely death at the age of 39. By then he had developed a large following of disciples around the world.

Today the youth in India is facing many challenges. Swami ji's message is a guiding force for all. He told the youth to find



Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary falls on January 12. His birthday is celebrated in India as National Youth Day. The Indian Consulate in New York is organizing, for the first time, a celebration to mark his birth anniversary

purpose in life. "Life without a purpose was useless. We must set our objective first then decide a path to follow. With a clear purpose one can get engaged into activities that could drive your life to meaningful goals."

Swami Vivekananda attached more importance to self-confidence than even faith in God! He asked everyone to develop self-confidence and compared the lack of self-confidence with not believing in God. According to Swami ji the second principle of life was dedication. Swami ji asked the youth to dedicate themselves to a certain cause and work towards accomplishing the goals with dedication and patience. "Pursuing a challenge with utmost dedication is indeed a road to success for our youth."

Swami ji's clarion call to youth came in Chicago where he challenged the youth to 'Awake, Arise and continue moving until the goal is reached.' His Chicago lecture became world famous and increased the respect for India in the world arena. We are celebrating the birthday of Swami Vivekananda today on January 12 that reminds us his messages we should always remember. The youth of the world must continue to work together for a better world. Today there is a greater need to learn from Swami ji. He taught us to be organized and work as a team. In any professional field team work is necessary. The spirit of team work is important for today's youth to practice and follow, no matter what field of life they wished to pursue. Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission where team work for nation building was practiced. He organized the Sanyasis to work towards nation building.

Swami ji's social thinking and economic and political thoughts are useful even today. He called for religious harmony and appealed to people to avoid confrontation. Swami ji should be looked upon as a great humanitarian whose wisdom is inspiring to all.

(The author is a journalist and Hindiphile)

Why is Martin Luther King, Jr. Relevant Today?

BY ASHOK OJHA

Almost half a century ago Martin Luther King, Jr. shook the conscious of the United States of America by launching his movement to empower the poor, the discriminated and marginalized people. The nation was deeply divided between races and classes. King, a priest, challenged the administration of this country and vowed to establish the valued ingrained in the country's constitution.

People of all colors and shades identified with the values set by King and took part in his protest movements to demand equality and justice. We celebrate King's birthday on January 15 and find that his deeds continue to inspire us. As we celebrate the birthday of this great civil rights warrior we realize that his values and goals continue to be relevant and meaningful guiding force. In order to compel the nation change its path of progress King followed the strategies that Gandhi in India had implemented with success. Gandhi led his people to the road to freedom from the British rule. King led a movement very similar to what Gandhi had achieved three decades ago.

King's strategy of resistance through non-violence proved very effective. The positive results of Gandhi's strategy of non-violence sound logical to King. He was certain that violence was not the right path to achieve equality in USA. In order to convince the government in Washington D. C. King made inspiring speeches and led marches. He designed his movement against white supremacists same as Gandhi had asked his people to follow the path of civil disobedience against the British.

The two leaders were not afraid of sufferings that they invited through their campaigns. They were ready to face violent consequences of their actions. In the end they were certain to compel their opponents change their hearts and minds. Their goal was to establish the power of non-violence which was greater than the power of the gun.

Gandhi always combined faith in his principle of nonviolence.



Martin Luther King Day falls on Monday, January 15. The day celebrates Martin Luther King's role in civil rights and racial equality.

He was firm in his believe in seeking truth. 'Truth is God' was his mantra. King was a godly person, a Baptist minister of black Church who preached for God. He linked the power of God with the power of oppressed people and believed that freedom and equality belonged to them. Like Gandhi King was also a seeker

of Truth.

Inspired by the civil disobedience technic formulated by Gandhi, King asked his followers to boycott the use of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama. This was his experiment with truth. He was using the method of noncooperation with the system. His method was so much like that of Gandhi that people called him, 'The American Gandhi'.

However, Gandhi was fighting against the rulers who were outsiders. On the contrary King was bent upon forcing the federal government to do more for people. He knew that the federal government was able to find solutions for many problems that caused poverty and unemployment.

Neither Gandhi nor King was willing to compromise on their goals. Gandhi didn't accept anything less than 'total freedom'. King's fight for racial equality was aimed at equal rights for Black people. King's efforts were well rewarded with Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He focused his fight against poverty and Vietnam War. He targeted his fight on a broader scale to include elimination of poverty and social justice. He aimed at appealing to a broader audience of both Black and White masses.

In 1964, King received a Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent fight against racial inequality.

In the final years of his life, King's focus changed to include a resistance to widespread poverty and the Vietnam War. The latter alienated many of his liberal allies.

Today, civil disobedience continues to be a tool in a democratic society. Oppression of the poor has not stopped. Equality remains noble words in the constitution. King's philosophy and his path of democratic resistance guides those who believe in struggle for freedom. Gandhi and King experimented with truth and achieved it. But for the oppressed and the poor truth continues to be elusive. The principles of Gandhi and King are strong guiding force for the seekers of change. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. His death ignited riots in many US cities. His mission is yet to be fulfilled.

(The author is a journalist and Hindiphile)

Passengers hail Team Air India at JFK

PRAKASH M SWAMY (WHO TRAVELED ON AI-102 TO DELHI)

NEW YORK (TIP): Tormented by snow storm and suffering from nature's fury with a delayed flight for over 12 hours, India-bound passengers of Air India 102 to New Delhi en route to Mumbai from JFK Airport on Saturday found a caring and consoling soul in Vandana Sharma, Regional Manager (Americas) of Air India.

Sharma not only was sitting with the passengers throughout the agony communicating with the top officials of the Port Authority of NY-NJ, Air India headquarter and Ministry of Civil Aviation but ensured that the passengers were provided food and water. More than that, her soothing words and ever-smiling face in the face of adversity endeared her to the hearts of the passengers.

The unprecedented snow storm uprooted the schedules of Air India and caused untold suffering and hardship to passengers. The incoming flight from New Delhi Air India 101 that landed in JFK at 6:30 am on Saturday could not be brought to the gate. Passengers were forced to sit in the aircraft for over four hours after arrival. When there were no indications of getting a gate at terminal to disembark, Air India was forced to off-load the passengers and crew on the taxi-way in the cold subzero temperatures and bring them by bus to the terminal. Their agony did not end there. The baggage could not be taken out from the aircraft.

As a result of this and other contributing factors, the outbound aircraft was delayed for over 12 hours. The stranded passengers, though cursing their fate and timing of their travel, appreciated the commitment of the national carrier and cooperated with the airline staff. But the entire Air India team decided to stay put and stayed with the passengers for well over 72 hours without any rest.

There were anxious passengers asking questions repeatedly about their connecting flight, baggage claim and medical attention. Many were attending weddings back home and were upset to miss the auspicious occasions. One elderly lady sobbed, and Sharma went and hugged her and consoled her saying that she would ensure her safe departure and instruct Air India staff at Delhi airport to assist her to her destination.

A couple of young techies probed Sharma the reason for delay and wondered why Air India could not convince the Port



Vandana Sharma, Regional Manager (Americas) of Air India was present at JFK airport, going around, cheering up the stranded passengers, among whom the writer of the story was one.

Authority to expedite allotment of bay. She answered all their queries with conviction and smile. She was there to assist every single passenger and made them feel that the national carrier would not abandon them and be with them in the time of crisis.

The entire team stayed at the airport for the past four days surmounting the insurmountable. The JFK Terminal 4 Airport Authorities did not help Air India. None of the 360 plus passengers shouted or abused AI as they are aware the delays

and cancellations are due to nature's fury and human beings are helpless.

Problems hit Air India from all directions from denial of bay by JFK Terminal 4 Airport Authorities, to pipes bursting in the baggage hold area, and even oxygen pressure dropping as the arriving aircraft stood in extremely cold weather of minus 30 degrees in open for the whole day. The AI ground handling personnel could not take out the baggage from the incoming aircraft as aircraft did not come to gate. Equipment to get additional containers from warehouse was frozen.

Since Thursday's AI 102 was cancelled, both Thursdays and Fridays flights left on Friday, one after the other. The AI staff had to worry about security, crew fatigue, piling baggage, ordering food at right time, dealing with effects of bursting hot water pipes in baggage holds, frozen pipes for cleaning lavatories, lack of space for passengers to sit in the airport as the entire airport was swarmed with passengers.

Both the Air India staff and passengers were clueless as no one knew when the JFK Terminal 4 Airport Authorities would give clearance for departure gate. The Air India aircraft finally came to the gate by 9.00 PM. Passengers rejoiced to see the aircraft finally come to gate.

The entire Air India team right from Airport Manager Ashok Gupta, to Manager New York Anji, and the Dy. APM Amarjit Singh, Duty Manager Ms. Mildred Thivalapil pitched in and looked after passengers and all that had to be done. At hand also was AI Airport Security Manager Ajit Manvatkar who supervised the security arrangements of passengers and also ensured that the aircraft is safe and secured for travel. Vandana and Manvatkar saw off every single passenger standing near the door of the aircraft before they moved to other tasks at hand.

"We always blame Air India for the alleged poor service, but no one appreciates when they perform exceedingly well in times of crisis," said Neil Patel traveling to Surat. When reached for comments Vandana said she was simply doing her job to ensure that all the passengers were safe in the toughest times and reach their destinations with minimum difficulties. "Air India always treats passengers like an extended family and this is least we can do to make them feel at home in times of adverse nature's fury," she said with a justifiable pride on her face having accomplished the impossible.

FIA Executive Committee for 2018 Announced

Srujal Parikh is President and Daxa Amin, Secretary



From L to R: Daxa Amin, Chaavi Dharayan, Yashpal Soi, Himansu Bhatia, Srujal Parikh, Ramesh Patel, Haresh Shah, Alok Kumar, Ankur Vaidya

EDISON, NJ (TIP): Federation of Indian Associations NY/NJ/CT held a General Body meeting at Royal Albert's Palace, December 28th, 2017.

In the absence of President Andy Bhatia, Executive Vice President Srujal Parikh submitted an annual report. He spoke about various programs which were undertaken during 2017, which included, besides the India Day Parade, Consulate Outreach program and

community reception to outgoing and incoming Consul Generals. The report carried special mention and thanks of sponsors who have been generous in their support to FIA programs.

Earlier, Secretary Chhavi Dharayan welcomed Board of Directors in the absence of President Andy Bhatia.

FIA Chairman and Election Committee announced the new Executive Committee for

2018.

PRESIDENT: Srujal Parikh; Executive Vice President: Alok Kumar; Vice President: Chaavi Dharayan; Secretary: Daxa Amin; Joint Secretary: Haresh Shah; Treasurer: Himansu Bhatia; Imm. Past President: Andy Bhatia.

FIA President for 2018 Srujal Parikh assured the committee that he and his team will work with everyone to take FIA to the next level.

Chairman Crowley criticizes President Trump's \$18 Billion Border Wall



House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley has criticized President Trump's demand for a wall as illogical

WASHINGTON (TIP): House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley (D-NY) issued the following statement on the funding request from President Trump to build his border wall:

"President Trump has no interest in keeping Americans safe or overhauling our nation's fundamentally flawed immigration system. He is solely focused on building an illogical and unnecessary border wall to appease the anti-immigrant voices in his party.

"Spending \$18 billion on a useless border wall is a non-starter for House Democrats. We need to fund the government, extend health insurance programs for children, protect DREAMers, secure Americans' pensions, put forward a comprehensive overhaul for our broken immigration system that addresses border security concerns, and get back to work for the middle-class. We should not waste time on a completely impractical obsession that the President exploited for crass political reasons."

ISRO successfully launches its 100th satellite

CHENNAI (TIP): Indian Space Research Organisation on Jan 12 successfully launched its 100th satellite 'Cartosat-2' series from Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota.

The 44.4-metre tall Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C40) roared into a clear sky after a perfect lift-off at 9.29 a.m. after a 28-hour countdown. The 320-tonne rocket will eject the satellites one-by-one and deploy them into the earth's lower orbit about 17 minutes and 18 seconds after the lift-off.

As the Mission Readiness Review committee and Launch Authorisation Board cleared the countdown, the space body had on Thursday said, "The 28-hour countdown activity of PSLV-C40/Cartosat2 Series Satellite Mission has started at 05.29 hours IST today". At present, the scientists are involved in propellant filling operation to carry out various stages of the flight, it said.

Source: PTI

Vijay Mallya gets bail till April 2

LONDON (TIP): The extradition hearing of Indian businessman Vijay Mallya continued on Jan 11 as the defence sought to challenge the admissibility of certain evidence, used by the prosecution in its efforts to return Mallya to India based on allegations of fraud, and money laundering. The case has now been pushed back till late January at the earliest. Mallya is bailed till April 2, and the next hearing, in which the defence will continue to contest the admissibility of evidence, will continue within the next three weeks, at a date to be determined.

Modi to host Israeli PM in Ahmedabad

AHMEDABAD (TIP): After Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be the latest world leader to be hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad on January 17. Both leaders will hold an 8-km road show from the airport to the Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram. "As per the tentative schedule, PM Modi and Israeli premier Netanyahu would first visit the Sabarmati Ashram on January 17," Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani said on Thursday. They will also visit 'iCreate', an autonomous centre of excellence located at Bavla town near Ahmedabad. Later, they will visit the centre of excellence for agriculture in Sabarkantha district and will inaugurate a research facility for cultivation of dates in Kutch via remote control.

Passports may no longer be valid proof of address

PUNE (TIP): Passports may no longer be valid proof of address for a simple reason: they may not have the current last page with the address of the passport holder if the ministry of external affairs goes ahead with a proposal it is considering. An MEA spokesperson did not respond to an e-mail seeking comment but Surendera Kumar, under-secretary of policy and legal matters at the consular, passport and visa division of the ministry, confirmed that the change could happen when the "next series" of passports is being issued. "The decision to keep the last page of the passport blank has been taken" to protect the details contained, he explained.

JD Vaishampayan at the regional passport office in Pune would only say that "some changes may happen soon".

Currently, the first page of the passport has the photograph as well as other details of the passport holder; the address is printed on the last page.

Source: HT

Former HC judge Dhingra to head new SIT on 1984 anti-Sikh riots

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court on Jan 11 appointed the former Delhi High Court judge, Justice S.N. Dhingra, as chairman of its Special Investigation Team (SIT), to further investigate 186 cases in connection with the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The apex court decided to independently investigate these cases after an earlier SIT appointed by the Centre closed them.

The three-member SIT would also have Abhishek Dular, a 2006 IPS batch officer, and Rajdeep Singh, a retired IPS officer.

Hearing on March 19

The court directed the SIT to submit its first status report on the investigation in two months. The Bench directed the Centre to provide the SIT with all logistic assistance and posted the case for hearing on March 19, 2018.

The apex court decided to set up its own SIT during a hearing on January 10.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra reasoned in its order that



Justice S.N. Dhingra

"regard being had to the nature of the cases, we think it appropriate that a fresh SIT be constituted for carrying on further investigation".

The court wanted all the SIT members to be based in the National Capital. The decision to form the new SIT was based on a confidential report placed on record on December 11, 2017 by an apex court-appointed supervisory committee of two former SC judges, Justices K.S.

Radhakrishnan and J.M. Panchal.

This committee was tasked with vetting the investigation into 241 anti-Sikh riots cases closed by the government's SIT. These 186 cases are part of the 241 cases.

On August 16 last year, the SC decided to independently examine the investigation records of the 241 cases and confirm that there was nothing more to do on them.

A total of 3,325 people were killed in the 1984 riots in which Delhi alone accounted for 2,733 deaths, while the rest occurred in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and other states.

The government SIT was set up on February 12, 2015, following a recommendation by the Home Ministry-appointed Justice (retd) G.P. Mathur committee. This SIT was headed by Pramod Asthana, an IPS officer of the 1986 batch. It had Rakesh Kapoor, a retired District and Sessions judge, and Kumar Gyanesh, an additional deputy commissioner of the Delhi police, as its members.

Source: The Hindu

US AMBASSADOR TO INDIA, CALLS FOR STRENGTHENING OF TIES

NEW DELHI (TIP): US ambassador to India Kenneth Juster on Thursday called for strengthening economic ties between the world's oldest and largest democracies, which he said, would result in greater US commitment to India and the Indo-Pacific region and help iron out any major differences that may crop up between the two.

In a speech on India-US relations in New Delhi, Juster also said that the "America First" initiative of US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" programme were not at variance with each other.

Trade relations between the US and India have grown from \$20 billion in 2001 to \$115 billion in 2016. But the US complains that India still has many protective barriers in place, should deepen economic reforms and take steps to narrow its \$30 billion trade deficit with the US.

Referring to a strengthening of ties in the past 17 years, Juster said he believed the two countries had laid a strong foundation for a strategic partnership "that can have a significant, positive impact on the 21st century and beyond."



US ambassador to India Kenneth Juster in New Delhi on Thursday.

"It is now time to build upon this foundation in a flexible but purposive manner. ...It is now time to make sure that the strategic partnership is a durable partnership," Juster said.

On trade, Juster said that the US was "concerned about persistent trade deficits, including the one we have with India. We welcome steps by India to continue its reform agenda, expand market access, and further enhance the protection of intellectual property. And we want to work with India to expeditiously resolve trade and investment disputes."

Source: Livemint

LS speaker invites Indian diaspora to invest in India

NEW DELHI (TIP): Lauding the efforts of the Indian diaspora settled in the island nation of Seychelles, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan invited members of the diaspora there to take part and invest in the Make in India initiative.

The Lok Sabha Speaker is in Victoria, Seychelles to attend Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) between January 8 and 11.

At the conference, Ms. Mahajan spoke on the key theme of strengthening Parliamentary Research for effective functioning of Legislatures. On the sidelines of the summit, Ms. Mahajan, who is leading a parliamentary delegation, was felicitated by the Indian community there.

Speaking at the event, the Speaker said the Indian diaspora all over the world that is over 30 million is a powerful and energetic force. Urging them to share their skills, she reminded the audience the beginning of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

"In 2003, an initiative was taken by the then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji to celebrate the achievements of Indian Diaspora on January 9 every year as it coincided with the date which marks the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa in 1915," she said.

The Lok Sabha Speaker also assured Seychelles that India will share its expertise in broadcasting live Parliamentary proceedings and help set up a Parliamentary museum.

Why stay in south Mumbai, go patrol Pakistan border: Gadkari to navy officials

MUMBAI (TIP): Union minister Nitin Gadkari hit out at the Navy on Thursday, asking why its officials need to stay in posh South Mumbai and criticising it for opposing the construction of a jetty at Nariman Point.

"Actually, Navy is needed at the borders from where terrorists sneak in. Why does everyone (in the Navy) want to stay in South Mumbai? They (Navy) had come to me, asking for a plot (of land). I will not give even an inch of land. Please don't come to me again," Gadkari said.



The minister's public displeasure comes in the backdrop of the Navy declining permission for building a floating jetty at Malabar Hill in south Mumbai, where a floating

hotel and seaplane service are planned.

The Bombay high court had refused permission to a private company for the construction of the jetty because it did not have the no-objection certificate (NoC) from the Western Naval Command.

As part of Gadkari's plan to promote tourism, a private firm, Rashmi Development Private Limited, proposed to build a jetty to ferry its passengers to its five star floatel in the Arabian Sea.

"What has the Navy to do with Malabar Hill?...Everyone wants to

build quarters and flats on south Mumbai's prime land. We do respect you (Navy), but you should go to the Pakistan border and do patrolling," said the minister at a function where he laid the foundation stone for an international cruise terminal at Mumbai Port Trust.

Gadkari said he chairs a committee for stalled infrastructure projects, adding that projects are cleared "as soon as they come on the agenda".

"We are the government. The Navy and the defence ministry are not the government," he said.

Eye Foundation of America: Dedicated to elimination of avoidable blindness in children worldwide



BY PROF. INDRAJIT S SALUJA

Eye Foundation of America is dedicated to the elimination of avoidable blindness in children worldwide, and, in India. Dr. VK Raju, an internationally reputed ophthalmologist, is founder and president of the Eye Foundation of America.

EFA began its work in 1979 in Morgantown, West Virginia, USA. EFA grew out of his earlier work providing services and treatment near his birthplace in Rajahmundry, a town in Southeast India's Andhra Pradesh. Raju organized teams to go to remote areas and deliver eye care in areas where there otherwise were none. These traveling clinics were known as "eye camps." (Eye camps remain a standard part of the Foundation's services today.)



Dr. VK Raju, an internationally reputed ophthalmologist, is founder and president of the Eye Foundation of America

Raju dedicated virtually all the spare time he had outside his busy ophthalmological practice in West Virginia and used his own funds to cover many of the expenses. Eventually it became apparent that the lack of accessible, affordable eye care was very large and shared by an enormous number of people worldwide. In order to battle avoidable blindness on a global scale and to gain strength by partnering with other organizations, Raju created the 501 © 3 nonprofit organization that we know today as the Eye Foundation of America.

Today, Foundation has grown far beyond its original size and scope but never outgrew the vision of its founder, who continues to look ahead. EFA has built modern eye hospitals and trained ophthalmic assistants and other personnel to carry on our work. We provide workshops and fellowships for physicians and medical students throughout the world. We also conduct research to find better ways of preventing blindness, to learn how to distribute Vitamin A efficiently

His team has done wonders, considering the tremendous work done by them.

- * 2 million+ outpatients
- * 300 thousand+ eye surgeries
- * 25 thousand+ on children

This is completed by the Eye Foundation of America team since 1977 in India and 21 other developing countries. Additionally, the Eye Foundation of America lays great emphasis on teaching and training of health professionals who receive the Foundation's support at every level.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there

are as many as 1.4 million blind children worldwide who are affected. WHO reports that eighty percent of the world's 45 million blind people live in developing countries. The Eye Foundation of America's (EFA) mission is to go where the need is greatest - often rural and remote areas of developing countries where there is no medical care or where the cost of the care is prohibitive.

EFA provides medical eye care and treatment that is both affordable and accessible to all on equal terms, with the goal of eliminating avoidable blindness, especially in children. They take extra steps to ensure that our treatment is of the highest quality-comparable to that provided by the best hospitals in the world. EFA also delivers that care in ways that maintain each patient's self-respect and dignity.

EFA has treated Native Americans, wounded refugees in war-torn Afghanistan and Iraq, and have built eye hospitals in India-one with a wing devoted exclusively to children. They work in more than 14 countries and plan to extend that reach in the years ahead.

Although the Eye Foundation of America serves people of all ages, they have a special place in their heart for children because it is they who have the most to lose. Visually impaired or blind children grow up without the same advantages as sighted children. Unable to read and write, they often cannot support themselves as adults and become a burden on their families and communities.



Dr. Raju, a keen student of history, with the legendary historian Padma Bhushan Dr. Romila Thapar on one of his visits to Delhi

The Eye Foundation of America's Goutami Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh sponsors a free 6-month certificate program that trains local young men and women to become ophthalmic assistants. They pay them a living stipend during training and often hire graduates to staff hospitals. The career training helps them support themselves in places where jobs are difficult to find. Eighty percent of the graduates come from poor families.

The Goutami Eye Institute conducts workshops and other programs to teach its staff about new medical techniques and equipment. This program has been expanded to include physicians and medical practitioners from all over the world. Some workshops provide Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits. Fellowships available through Goutami Institute allow postgraduate physicians from India to further their education.

The commitment of Goutami towards training and education in eye care is spread across medical and non-medical spheres. Long-term fellowships for young post-

graduates and Short-term fellowships and observer ship for practicing ophthalmologists and periodic Continuing Medical Education programs with eminent national and international faculty are available for medical fraternity.

Training of Key Informants, like teachers, medical practitioners, primary health care workers, etc., in identifying and referring people, especially of children, with eye problems is done periodically.

Education of community on avoidable causes of blindness and visual impairment is undertaken in the form of patient information series on different eye ailments and through health talks.

It is to achieve this end that Dr. Raju, in collaboration with his daughter, Dr. Leela Raju, authored a book "Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History - India's Legacy". It is a masterpiece to be read by everyone who would like to know hoe medicine and surgery came out of India.

For his monumental work, Dr. VK Raju has been profusely recognized, honored and awarded. The latest recognition came his way early this year when he was admitted to Toledo University Global Medical Missions Hall of Fame for his efforts to eradicate blindness.

Dr. Raju has traveled round the world, attending conferences and meetings; speaking at various national and international meets; interacting with great minds to find solutions to the problems of health, particularly blindness among children. Most of his time is spent in traveling.

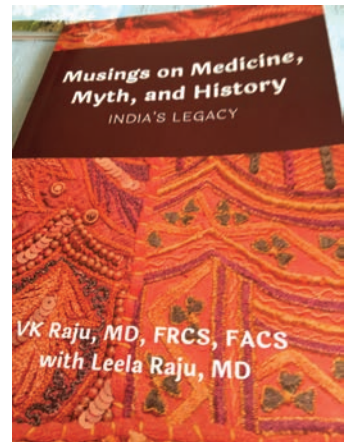
He is a keen student of history and admires the great historian Padma Bhushan Dr. Romila Thapar who he recently visited in Delhi and interacted with her on many issues of mutual interest.



Eye Foundation of America's Goutami Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh conducts workshops and other programs to teach its staff about new medical techniques and equipment

At the speed and the zeal, with which Dr. Raju is working to fulfil his mission of life to eradicate preventable blindness among children, it can be expected that he will set up more medical facilities, apart from the Goutami Hospital he is running at Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh, India. Of course, he alone cannot do it. He will need cooperation of government of India and people. Government of India could play a contributory role by providing certain facilities to set up such medical centers. And, people can contribute their bit by donating liberally to a humanitarian effort of great significance. I learn, Dr. Raju is already working on a plan to have a series of medical facilities in various States of India. It will be worthy of all lovers of humanity to chip in to support a historic mission of The Eye Foundation of America.

(The author is chief editor of the weekly English newspaper 'The Indian Panorama')



2017: A LOOK BACK



A year of Trump

On January 20, Republican billionaire Donald Trump, 70, was inaugurated as the 45th US president, vowing to follow a policy based on "America first". Suspicions of collusion between his election campaign and Russia, however, dogged the start of his term and through the year. Trump pulled out of several international agreements: on climate, free trade, immigration and UNESCO. And despite a year-long court battle, the Trump administration was able to enact a ban on travelers from six mainly Muslim countries: Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Although the latest version of the ban also covers people from North Korea and a selection of senior officials from Venezuela. Immigration and civil rights activists maintain it still essentially targets Muslims.



The Rohingya crisis

On August 25 the military in Buddhist-majority Myanmar launched a crackdown on Rohingyas after militants from the stateless Muslim minority ambushed security forces. Nearly 650,000 Rohingyas were forced to flee Myanmar and find refuge in Bangladesh. According to Medecins Sans Frontieres, at least 6,700 Rohingyas, including 730 children, were killed in the first month of violence that erupted in Rakhine in August. The UN and US denounced the "ethnic cleansing" while the UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein spoke of "elements of genocide".



Another year is out and has become a part of history, technically speaking, recent history. Like each year, 2017 was a mixed bag of events and issues which have had impact on the world population of 7.6 billion (estimated as of December 2017) across 7 continents and 195 countries. We look back at those events and issues which shaped the world in 2017 and will, inevitably be impacting the world events in 2018.



North Korea's nuclear escalation

The reclusive regime conducted its sixth and largest nuclear test on September 3. On November 29 leader Kim Jong-Un that stated a 'state nuclear force' has been completed with the test of a long-range missile able to deliver a nuclear warhead anywhere in the United States. Meanwhile, Washington threatened to 'utterly destroy' the regime 'if war comes'. On December 22 the UN Security Council imposes new sanctions against North Korea that restrict vital oil supplies.

Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital

In a break with international consensus, Trump sent shockwaves around the world when he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December. The decision triggered protests across the Muslim world and drew strong condemnation globally. The emergency session of UN General Assembly later declared Trump's declaration "null and void", with the motion being adopted by a decisive vote of 128 to 9, with 35 abstentions. The US remained defiant despite the vote, vowing to 'put our embassy in Jerusalem'.

Brexit all the way

On March 29 London launches the process to quit the European Union, as voted in a referendum nine months earlier. In a snap general election on June 8 Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservatives suffered a major setback and lost their majority. Brussels and London agreed on divorce terms on December 8.

A matter of referendum

Spain's wealthy north-eastern Catalonia region held a referendum for independence on October 1 which was deemed illegal by the central government. Madrid moved to assert control, but Catalan lawmakers voted on October 27 to declare independence. Madrid dismissed Catalonia's government and suspended its autonomy, also calling for regional elections. Deposed regional president Carles Puigdemont, charged with sedition and rebellion, took refuge in Belgium. On December 21 three pro-independence parties

defeated the central government in the elections. However, the centrist, anti-independence Ciudadanos party got the best individual result.

'#MeToo' hits out at harassment

Millions of whistle-blowers rallied around the #MeToo hashtag on social media in the wake of revelations of systematic abuses perpetrated by Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein and other men. On October 5, The New York Times published a bombshell investigative report: Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades. Allegations of sexual misconduct have since been levelled at a long list of personalities in film, television, journalism and politics around the world. Luminaries toppled from their perches included media stars Bill O Reilly, Matt Lauer and Charlie Rose, and several celebrity chefs and members of Congress. Most recently, Trump accusers also urged Congress to probe the harassment claims against the president.



Mugabe out

On November 21, Zimbabwe's veteran President Robert Mugabe resigned following a 37-year rule, after being abandoned by the military and his own party. The 93-year-old had clung on for a week after an army takeover and expulsion from his own ruling ZANU-PF party, but resigned shortly after parliament began an impeachment process seen as the only legal way to force him out. People danced, and car horns blared on the streets of Harare at news that the era of Mugabe - who led Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 - was finally over.

TERRORISM, NATURAL DISASTERS THAT WREAKED HAVOC IN 2017



Islamist attacks

Nations around the world were hit by Islamist terrorist attacks, starting with New Year's Day, when a gunman from Uzbekistan opened fire in a nightclub in Istanbul killing 39 people. The so-called Islamic State claimed responsibility. The gunman had trained in Afghanistan, according to Turkish authorities.

- On March 22, a man drove a car into pedestrians on a pavement along Westminster Bridge in London. Four people were killed. The perpetrator, a Briton who had converted to Islam, stabbed a police officer to death before being shot dead by the police.



- Two months later, a suicide bomber killed 22 people at an Ariana Grande concert at the Arena in Manchester. The dead included ten people aged under 20. Hundreds were injured.
- In early June, eight people were killed when a van struck pedestrians on London Bridge. After the van crashed, its three occupants ran to the nearby Borough Market area and began stabbing people in and around restaurants and pubs. Its three occupants were eventually shot dead by police.
- St Petersburg underground was the target of a suicide bomber on the third of April. Fifteen people died as a result of the attack.
- A few days later, an Uzbek asylum seeker killed seven people when he rammed a lorry into a crowded shopping street in Stockholm.
- In a similar attack in August, a van rammed into crowds on the Ramblas in Barcelona killing 15 people. On the same day, another person was killed in a terrorist attack in the coastal town of Cambrils.
- Following the same pattern, eight people were killed when a terrorist in a rental truck speeds down a popular cycle lane in lower Manhattan on October 31.
- Egypt too hit: in April, at least 27 people died in an explosion inside a church in the city of Tanta. Another blast killed at least 16 in front of a church in the coastal city of Alexandria. Both attacks were claimed by the so-called Islamic State. The deadliest attack occurred on November 24, when more than 300 people were killed by gunmen in a mosque during prayer in the city of Bir al-Abed, the main city in northern Sinai.

NATURAL DISASTERS



- Dozens were killed when category four hurricane Harvey hit Texas on August 25, paralyzing the city of Houston with torrential rain and winds exceeding 200 kilometers an hour.
- Irma, one of the strongest and most enduring hurricanes the Atlantic has ever seen, left a trail of deadly devastation, killing more than 130 people, as it tore through the Caribbean, the Gulf and Mexico and the southeastern United States.
- Hurricane Maria, regarded as the worst natural disaster on record in Dominica and Puerto Rico, caused catastrophic damage and triggered a major humanitarian crisis.
- In central Portugal, a series of deadly wildfires erupted across in June, killing at least 65, mostly in the Pedrógão Grande municipality, where a fire swept across a road filled with evacuees escaping in their cars.



- More wildfires in the Iberian Peninsula in October killed dozens more people in Portugal and Spain.
- In Galicia, fires reached the outskirts of the port city of Vigo, where two women were killed when their car was caught in the flames.
- In October, a series of wildfires tore through northern California, the deadliest in the Sunshine State's history. More than 40 people were killed and around 200 were injured. The wildfires were considered the costliest on record.
- In January, a major avalanche hit a luxury hotel above Rigopiano in central Italy, killing at least 29 people. The avalanche was the deadliest in Italy in a century. Rescue teams managed to dig through the cement ceiling to save survivors.



- On August 21, the Italian island of Ischia was hit by an earthquake that killed two people. Three brothers were miraculously saved from the rubble.
- In Mexico, earthquakes struck the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas on the 7th of September killing dozens of people. The Mexican president called them the "strongest earthquakes recorded in the country in a century".
- On September 19, a 7.1 magnitude quake hit the capital Mexico City bringing down dozens of buildings and killing more than 300 people.
- On November 12, a magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck the border region between Iraq and Iran, killing more than 500 people. Most of the casualties were in Iran's western province of Kermanshah. The damage was widespread as most homes were made from mud bricks and not suited to withstand earthquakes.



Natural disasters caused record \$306 billion in damage to the US in 2017

An Associated Press report published on January 8 in USA Today said that a trio of monster hurricanes and a ferocious wildfire season led to the costliest year for natural disasters on record in the U.S. in 2017, with nearly a third of a trillion dollars in damage, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Monday, January 9.

The U.S. endured 16 separate weather and climate disasters with losses that each exceeded \$1 billion last year, with total costs of about \$306 billion, a new record for the country. It broke the previous record set in 2005, when Hurricane Katrina and other disasters caused \$215 billion in damage to the U.S.

Last year's disasters killed 362 people in the U.S., including Puerto Rico, NOAA said. However, NOAA climatologist Adam Smith said the death toll could increase based on information that continues to come in from Puerto Rico.

It was also the most expensive hurricane season on record at \$265 billion and the costliest wildfire season on record at \$18 billion, Smith said.

The news comes only weeks after the House passed an \$81 billion disaster aid package. The Senate did not take up the bill and is working on its own version.

Hurricane Harvey racked up total damage costs of \$125 billion, second only to Hurricane Katrina in the 38-year period of record keeping for billion-dollar disasters. Rainfall from Harvey caused massive flooding that displaced more than 30,000 people and damaged or destroyed more than 200,000 homes and businesses, NOAA said.

Hurricanes Maria and Irma totaled \$90 billion and \$50 billion in damage, respectively. Maria now ranks as the third-costliest weather and climate disaster on record for the nation and Irma ranks as the fifth-costliest.

The total of last year's disaster costs is nearly the same as Denmark's gross domestic product, which the World Bank tallied at \$306.9 billion in 2016.

Climate change is "playing an increasing role in the increasing frequency of some types of extreme weather that lead to billion-dollar disasters, most notably the rise in vulnerability to drought, lengthening wildfire seasons and the potential for extremely heavy rainfall and inland flooding," Smith said.

Another expert, University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd, said that "while we have to be careful about knee-jerk cause-effect discussions, the National Academy of Science and recent peer-reviewed literature continue to show that some of today's extremes have climate change fingerprints on them."

The announcement came at the annual meeting of the American Meteorological Society in Austin.

As for temperatures in 2017, the U.S. sweltered through its 3rd-warmest year on record, trailing only 2012 and 2016, NOAA said.

For the third consecutive year, every state across the contiguous U.S. and Alaska was warmer than average.

Five states - Arizona, Georgia, New Mexico, North Carolina and South Carolina - experienced their warmest year on record. Thirty-two additional states, including Alaska, had annual temperatures that ranked among the 10 warmest on record. "While the weather can change on a dime, our climate is steadily warming," said Shaun Martin of the World Wildlife Fund. "Each year provides another piece of evidence in what science has already confirmed - the consequences of rising temperatures are putting people and wildlife at risk."

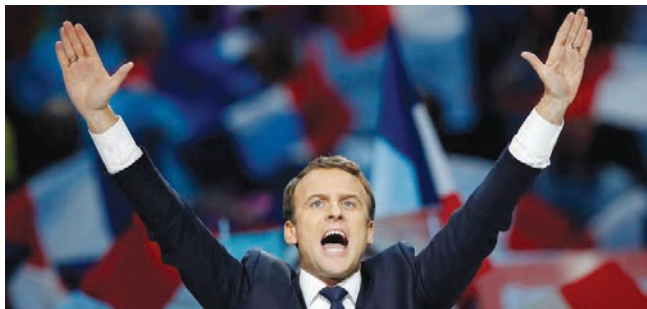
"In the U.S., we're seeing more severe droughts, wildfires, crop losses and more frequent coastal storms with deadly impacts," Martin added. Global temperature data for 2017 will be released on Jan. 18 by NOAA and NASA.

POLITICAL UPHEAVALS AROUND THE WORLD IN 2017

2017 witnessed a number of political changes with their ramifications in to the year 2018. Here are some significant ones.

Zimbabwe- Robert Mugabe removed

Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF removed Robert Mugabe as party leader after 37 years in power. On November 21, after a week under house arrest, Mugabe sent a letter to parliament saying he resigns as president. His heir and long-serving deputy, Emmerson Mnangagwa, was sworn in as president on November 24 and promised fresh elections.



France- Emmanuel Macron elected

In 2017, France voted for change. On May 7, 39-year old Emmanuel Macron became the youngest head of state in

France since Napoleon. Macron was elected on a pledge to bring reform both to his country and to the European Union.

Germany- Merkel Wins



In the Bundestag elections, Merkel won a fourth mandate but by a narrow margin and the far-right AfD got a record 12,5 % of votes.

Months of talks to try and form a coalition with the Greens and the Liberals failed. It was the worst result for the Conservatives in Germany since 1949.

Spain's worst post-war crisis

In Spain's biggest post-war crisis, the pro-independence majority in the Catalan parliament voted in favor of a unilateral declaration of independence in early September.



The Constitutional Court suspended the referendum law.

A referendum ballot was held in Catalonia on October 1. The vote was deemed illegal by authorities and police were sent in to remove polling booths.

The crackdown backfired on the government after pictures emerged of violence on the streets.

On October 27, the Catalan Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence from Spain in a secret ballot. The same day, the Spanish Senate approved article 155 of the constitution invoked by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to restore the rule of law in Catalonia and "ensure that elections can be held in normal circumstances".

That same evening, prime minister Mariano Rajoy announced the Catalan Parliament's dissolution and a regional election for December 21.

THE STORY OF THE YEAR: US INVESTIGATION INTO RUSSIAN MEDDLING IN 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Here's a look at investigations into Russian meddling during the 2016 presidential race between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Special counsel Robert Mueller and multiple congressional committees are looking into allegations that there was collusion between Russian operatives and Trump associates during the presidential campaign and transition.

Who's investigating election interference:

FBI - In July of 2016, the FBI launched a counterintelligence investigation into possible links between the Russian government and Trump campaign officials.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence - On January 13, 2017, the committee announced that it was conducting a probe of Russian meddling. The investigation was sparked by a declassified report from the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) that described a multifaceted effort led by Russian President Vladimir Putin to interfere with the election by releasing damaging information about Clinton to help Trump. The committee is led by Richard Burr (R-NC) and Mark Warner (D-VA).

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence - On January 25, 2017, the committee announced that it is investigating Russia's active measures during the presidential campaign as well as the underlying intelligence that led to the DNI's conclusions about Russia's intentions. The committee is led by Devin Nunes (R-CA) and Adam Schiff (D-CA). (Nunes stepped away from the probe temporarily after the Ethics Committee announced it was looking into allegations he made unauthorized



disclosures of classified information. When Nunes stepped away, Mike Conaway (R-TX) took his place. Even though Nunes said that he was formally stepping away from his role leading the investigation, he continues to review classified intelligence on Russia matters and he still has sway issuing subpoenas.)

The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on

Crime and Terrorism - On February 2, 2017, the subcommittee announced that it was conducting an inquiry into Russia's efforts to influence elections in the US and abroad. The subcommittee is led by Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform - On February 16, 2017, the committee requested information about former National Security Adviser Mike Flynn's paid speaking engagements overseas. The committee was questioning whether Flynn violated the emoluments clause of the Constitution, which bars government officials from accepting gifts from foreign governments without Congressional approval. After Trump fired FBI Director James Comey in May, the committee began looking into the circumstances surrounding the dismissal. The committee is led by Trey Gowdy (R-SC) and Elijah Cummings (D-MD).

The Senate Judiciary Committee - On May 17, 2017, the committee called on the White House and the FBI to turn over all memos related to the president's interactions with Comey. In addition to conducting an oversight investigation of Comey's dismissal, the committee has held hearings on the Foreign Agents Registration Act and attempts to influence the election. The committee has also interviewed Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr. and other witnesses behind closed doors.

Special Counsel - On May 17, 2017, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed former FBI Director Robert Mueller as special counsel to lead an investigation into Russian interference and related matters that could result in criminal prosecutions.



Ratko Mladic

LANDMARK WAR CRIMES RULING

In a landmark ruling, former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic was jailed for life by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

As the top military officer with command responsibility, Mladic was deemed by the ICTY to be responsible for the Siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica massacre.

More than 20 years after the Srebrenica massacre, Mladic was found guilty at the United Nations-backed international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague of 10 offences involving extermination, murder and persecution of civilian populations.

As he entered the courtroom, Mladic gave a broad smile and thumbs up to the cameras – a gesture that infuriated relatives of the victims. His defiance shifted into detachment as the judgment began: Mladic played with his fingers and nodded occasionally, looking initially relaxed. Mladic, 74, was chief of staff of Bosnian Serb forces from 1992 until 1996, during the ferocious civil wars and ethnic cleansing that followed the break-up of the Yugoslav state. The trial in The Hague, which took 530 days across more than four years, was arguably the most significant war crimes case in Europe since the Nuremberg trials, in part because of the scale of the atrocities involved. Almost 600 people gave evidence for the prosecution and defence, including survivors of the conflict.

SPORTING CONTROVERSIES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

The year 2017 had several such moments where disappointments and controversies shared equal space with the glorious achievements.

Usain Bolt fails to finish final race



Usain Bolt, fastest man in the world, entered the World Championships in London with a bid to hang his boots on a high. Instead, there were disappointments in store for him. The eight-time Olympics gold medallist had to be satisfied with a bronze in the 100m run, with the gold going to Justin Gatlin. In his final race, the 4x100m relay, Bolt suffered a muscle cramp and could not finish the dash.

Gianluigi Buffon's Italy fail to qualify for 2018 FIFA World Cup



For Italian legend Buffon, the 2018 World Cup was probably going to be his final international event. Instead, his team could not qualify for the main event for the first time since 1958. Italy lost to Sweden in the play-off as a teary-eyed Buffon announced his international retirement. However, he later said that he will always be available to play for Italy.

India's loss to Pak in Champions Trophy



Virat Kohli-led India cruised their way into the title clash after winning three out of four matches, with one of those coming against Pakistan. But it was the latter who had the last laugh in the final. Pakistan, living up to their unpredictable tag, notched 338/4 with Fakhar Zaman scoring 114. India were dismissed for a paltry 158.

Anil Kumble-Virat Kohli rift



After India's Champions Trophy final loss, the sport witnessed a dark chapter with stories of rift between captain Virat Kohli and then coach Anil Kumble. The latter went on record to say that his relationship with the former was 'untenable' and resigned from his post. Ravi Shastri was named successor to Kumble's post as India went on to reach new heights. However, the episode left bad taste in mouth.

India nearly miss the glory



Mithali Raj's team, only the second Indian side to enter ICC Women's World Cup final, were cruising towards a historic win in the title clash until Anya Shrubsole decided to change course of the match. Bowling first, India restricted England to 228/7 in 50 overs. While chasing, India cruised to 191/3 within 43 overs. But then Shrubsole (6/46) caused mayhem and India were all out for 219.

Donald Trump abuses NFL players



US president Donald Trump cooked up a storm as he described NFL players, who took a knee when US national anthem "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played, as "sons of bitches". He added that such players should be fired. Trump's comments were met with fiery criticism by the players as well as team owners.



Illie Nastase's racist comments

Illie Nastase, Romanian tennis great, was provisionally suspended by the International Tennis Federation and Wimbledon organisers The All England Club for racist comments on Serena Williams' unborn baby. "Let's see what colour it has. Chocolate with milk?" is what he said. He also made some sexist remarks on Anne Keothavong and Jo Konta.

PV Sindhu loses in World Championship final



PV Sindhu's rise has been one of the greatest stories in Indian sports in the last couple of years. So, it was natural that expectations were high from the Rio Olympics silver medallist in 2017. She reached the World Championships final facing Japanese Nozomi Okuhara. The Indian lost the match 21-19, 20-22, 22-20. It was not only final that she lost in 2017. She also went down in the title clashes of Hong Kong Open and Dubai Superseries finals.

Chris Froome in Doping net



Doping returned to haunt cycling when four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome came under doping net. He had twice the permissible amount of asthma medication in his system during the Vuelta race in September. Also, Russia was banned from Winter Olympics due to doping.

Justin Gatlin in doping controversy



American sprinter Gatlin got involved in fresh doping controversy when his coach Dennis Mitchell, according to a report, was said to have offered to provide false prescriptions to athletes for banned substances and smuggle those drugs into the United States. The World Championship 100m gold, who has twice been suspended for doping, sacked his coach after the allegations.

A MIX OF EVENTS WHICH HOGGED LIMELIGHT IN 2017



ANUSHKA AND VIRAT'S WEDDING

After months of speculation, Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli tied the knot on December 11, 2017, in Tuscany. They also had a mehendi ceremony and an engagement function. Sabyasachi was the designated designer for all three occasions for both the bride and the groom. After a brief honeymoon somewhere in Europe, the couple were in the Capital for their wedding reception on December 21.

POST DEMONETISATION BUDGET 2017

The 2017 Union Budget was presented by finance minister Arun Jaitley on February 1. It focused on 10 themes - farming sector, rural population, youth, poor and underprivileged health care, infrastructure, financial sector for stronger institutions, speedy accountability, public services, prudent fiscal management and tax administration. This was the first budget after demonetization Jaitley called demonetization a 'bold and decisive measure that will lead to higher GDP growth', while promising its effects won't spillover to the next fiscal. The merger of Railway Budget with Budget 2017 was historic, and it also stated that by 2019 all passenger coaches of railways would be fitted with bio-toilets. Jaitley also raised his 2017/18 federal deficit target to 3.2 per cent of the GDP.

CHRIS CORNELL & CHESTER BENNINGTON

Lead vocalist for of Soundgarden and Audioslave, Chris Cornell, was found dead in his Detroit hotel room on May 18, hours after performing at a Soundgarden concert. His death was ruled a suicide. Linkin Park's vocalist, Chester Bennington, was found dead on what would have been Cornell's 53rd birthday - July 20, 2017. He reportedly committed suicide by hanging.

INDIA-CHINA STANDOFF AT DOKLAM



The military border standoff between the Indian armed forces and the People's Liberation Army of China, over construction of a road in Doklam began on June 16, 2017. Chinese troops began extending an existing road southward in Doklam, a territory claimed by both China and India's ally Bhutan. On June 18, Indian troops entered Doklam to stop construction by Chinese troops. On June 30, India's ministry of external affairs gave its official position, charging China of changing status quo in violation of a 2012 understanding

between the two governments. On August 15, a melee allegedly broke out between Indian and Chinese soldiers near Pangong Lake. On August 28, both India and China announced that they had withdrawn all their troops from the face-off site in Doklam.

MODI EXPANDS CABINET



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third reshuffle of his Council of Ministers on February 3, 2017, showed 'delivery' and 'performance' over considerations of caste and politics. Nine new ministers of state made it to the Union Cabinet, while four existing ministers - Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Gopal, Dharmendra Pradhan and Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi - were promoted to cabinet rank as part of the PM's "Operation 2019" team for New India. Nirmala is the first woman to become the Defense Minister.

FIFA U-17 WORLD CUP HELD IN INDIA

The 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup was held in India for the first time, from October 6 to 28, 2017. The biennial international football tournament contested by men's under-17 national teams was won by England after they beat Spain in the final with a score of 5-2. India was placed in Group A with the USA, Ghana and Columbia, and didn't make it beyond the group stage.

GOODS AND SERVICE TAX IMPLEMENTED

This indirect tax was introduced in India on 1 July 2017, and was applicable throughout the country, replacing multiple cascading taxes levied by central and state governments. It was introduced as The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act 2017, following the passage of Constitution 122nd Amendment Act Bill. The GST is governed by a GST Council, chaired by the finance minister. A cess of 22 per cent or other rates on top of 28 per cent GST applies on items like aerated drinks, luxury cars, tobacco products, etc. GST replaced a slew of indirect taxes which included: central excise duty, services tax, additional customs duty, surcharges, state-level value added tax and Octroi, with a unified tax. India has adopted a dual GST model.

IVANKA BECOMES TRUMP'S ADVISOR



Advisor to the US President Donald Trump, and also his daughter, Ivanka is an American TV personality, fashion designer, author and businesswoman. She resigned as executive vice president of the family-owned The Trump Organization and began serving in her father's presidential administration in March 2017. After advising her father in an unofficial capacity for the first two months of his administration, she was appointed advisor to the President on March 29, 2017.

KULBHUSHAN & THE INDIA-PAK TUSSLE

Kulbhushan Jadhav is an Indian national arrested in Pakistan over charges of terrorism and spying for Indian intelligence agency RAW. The Indian government says he's a former naval officer, but denies any current links with him, adding he was possibly abducted from Iran. On April 10, 2017, he was sentenced to death in Pakistan. On May 18, the International Court of Justice stayed the hanging, after India approached it. India has been requesting consular access to Kulbhushan while demanding a copy of the charge sheet and judgment. Pakistan has so far denied India's request 13 times.



LYNCHING BY MOBS OF COW VIGILANTES

In the last two years, ten Muslim men have been lynched across India by Hindu mobs on suspicion of eating beef or smuggling cows. On April 1, 2017, a dairy farmer going to Haryana with cows and calves was beaten to death by 200 cow vigilantes. In April-May 2017, two youths were publicly lynched in Assam for stealing cows. In June, a teen boy was stabbed to death by a mob on suspicion of carrying beef in a bag. In July, a Muslim dairy owner was killed by a mob of over 1,000, after a carcass was found near his home.

Continued on page 21

Continued from page 20



MANUSHI CHHILLAR WINS MISS WORLD

On November 18, 2017, Manushi Chhillar was crowned Miss World 2017 in China. She's the sixth Indian woman to win the crown. Born in Rohtak, she is pursuing a medical degree from a medical college in Sonapat. She was made brand ambassador for Anemia Free Haryana, and her 'Beauty with a Purpose campaign Project Shakti' was given government support of Rs 18 crore, by Haryana CM.

NITISH SWITCHES OVER TO THE NDA



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar has had quite a year. First, following the corruption charges against Tejashwi Yadav, the then deputy CM, Nitish asked Yadav to resign from the cabinet which was refused by RJD. So, to protect his clean image and zero tolerance towards corruption, Nitish resigned on July 26, 2017, ending the 'Grand Alliance'. But within 24 hours of his resignation as CM of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar, the JD(U) president was sworn in as CM of the NDA government on July 27.

VIOLENCE POST GURMEET VERDICT



Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh Insaan, a 'guru' who was heading Dera Sacha Sauda, was convicted of rape on two counts by a special CBI court in Panchkula on August 25, 2017. Violent protests broke out in nearby areas. On August 28, the CBI court sentenced him to 20 years in jail. His 'daughter', Honeypreet, was also arrested for planning the protests.



QUEEN PADMAVATI & THE CONTROVERSY

Padmini or Padmavati, was a 13th-14th century Indian queen. She is mentioned in Padmavat, an epic fictionalized poem by Malik Muhammad Jayasi. Film director Sanjay Leela Bhansali made a film titled Padmavati, with Deepika Padukone as the queen. The love scenes between Alauddin and Padmini in the film sparked protests from a Rajput caste organization. The film's release has been delayed.

RAM NATH KOVIND BECOMES PRESIDENT



Ram Nath Kovind was sworn in as the 14th President of India on June 25, 2017. He had served as the Governor of Bihar from 2015 to 2017, and was a Rajya Sabha MP from 1994 to 2006. Kovind was nominated as a presidential candidate by the ruling NDA coalition and won the 2017 presidential election, becoming the second Dalit to be elected to the post of President. Ram Nath Kovind received 65.65 per cent of the valid votes, against former Speaker of the Lok Sabha - Meira Kumar the Opposition's candidate.

TRIPLE TALAQ UNCONSTITUTIONAL



On 22 August 2017, the Indian Supreme Court deemed instant triple talaq (talaq-e-biddah) unconstitutional. This form of Islamic divorce has been used by Muslims in India, and allows any Muslim man to legally divorce his wife by stating the word talaq (Arabic word for divorce) three times in oral, written, or more recently electronic form. Three of the five judges in the panel concurred that the practice of triple talaq is unconstitutional.

WEST BENGAL'S 104-DAY STRIKE

Agitation in West Bengal's Darjeeling district for a separate Gorkhaland led to strikes and violence. The state government's announcement that Bengali language should be a compulsory subject in all schools in the state, on May 16, sparked protests. This was interpreted as an imposition of an alien culture by the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) administered area. After a cabinet meet, the Government clarified Bengali will be an optional subject in the hills. But the GJM leadership intensified protests, reviving the old demand for a separate state Gorkhaland. The situation worsened on June 15, after which the GJM called an indefinite strike in the region. Supporters met the Home Minister on September 19. On September 27, after 104 days, the strike was called off.

X-MEN: HUGH JACKMAN QUITS



X-Men fans will never see Hugh Jackman play Wolverine again, as the actor announced in November this year that he will no longer play the role after 17 years of 'being' Wolverine. The Australian actor made his breakthrough as the gruff, clawed mutant Wolverine in 2000's X-Men film and has since played the character eight times on screen. This year's Logan is the last movie to feature him as Wolverine.

YOGI ADITYANATH SWORN IN AS UP CM

BJP leader Yogi Adityanath was sworn in as the 21st chief minister of Uttar Pradesh on March 19, 2017. He was appointed CM after the BJP won the 2017 state assembly elections, in which he was a prominent campaigner. He was the MP from the Gorakhpur constituency, for five consecutive terms since 1998. He is also the Mahant or head priest of the Gorakhnath Math, a Hindu temple in Gorakhpur. He is also the founder of Hindu Yuva Vahini, a milita youth organization involved in communal violence.

Rahul Gandhi appointed Congress chief



Rahul Gandhi was formally appointed Congress president on Dec 16 in a function at party's official headquarters 24, Akbar Road in the national capital, Delhi. Gandhi was handed over the certificate of election as the new Congress president by party's Central Election Authority (CEA) headed by Lok Sabha MP Mullapally Ramachandran in the presence of his mother and predecessor Sonia Gandhi, sister Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra and her husband Robert Vadra, former prime minister Manmohan Singh and other senior party leaders. With this, 47-year-old Rahul Gandhi becomes the sixth leader from the Nehru-Gandhi family to occupy the top post in the party.

YEAR OF FAREWELLS

CELEBRITIES, ARTISTS, PUBLIC FIGURES WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2017

From politicians to cine stars and scientists to artists, 2017 saw the world mourn some very extraordinary lives. They are gone, but would not be forgotten anytime soon. Their work speaks volumes, their names etched in history — we may not see them around but in our hearts they will live on.

Shashi Kapoor



Veteran actor Shashi Kapoor breathed his last at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai on 4 December. According to reports, he was administered several rounds of dialysis while at the hospital and passed away due to a kidney problem. He was 79.

Shashi Kapoor is survived by his sons Karan and Kunal, and daughter Sanjna. Kapoor got married to English actor Jennifer Kendal in 1958, who unfortunately died of cancer in 1984.

Reema Lagoo

Bollywood's favourite new-age mom, Reema Lagoo, passed away on 18 May following a sudden cardiac arrest in Mumbai. The versatile actor who was a part of several theatre productions, TV shows and films was 59. She breathed her last at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital.

Vinod Khanna



Veteran actor Vinod Khanna passed away on 27 April 2017 in Mumbai. The actor, who was also an MP from Gurdaspur, had been reportedly suffering from cancer. He was 70.

Om Puri



Veteran actor and Padma Shri awardee Om Puri passed away at his Mumbai residence in the early hours of 6 January 2017, due to a cardiac attack. He was 67. One of India's finest actors, Puri was an alumnus of the prestigious National School of Drama, Film and Television Institute of India and was a part of several critically acclaimed films like Ardh Satya.

Arjan Singh

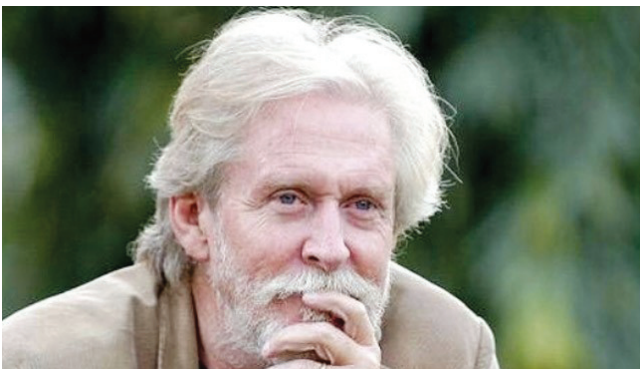
Arjan Singh, Marshal of the Indian Air Force, passed away on 16 September following a cardiac arrest. The legendary warrior was laid to rest with full state honours, including a



flypast by fighter jets in Delhi. He was 98.

IAF Marshal Arjan Singh is famous for his role in the 1965 India-Pakistan war.

Tom Alter



Veteran theatre and film personality Tom Alter lost his battle against skin cancer on 29 September. He breathed his last at his residence in Mumbai. He was 67. Alter is remembered for his work in television shows like Bharat Ek Khoj, Zabaan Sambhalke and Betaal Pachisi and several movies like Gandhi, Shatranj Ke Khilari, Kranti, Aashiqui and Parinda. In 2008, he was recognised with the Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian honour in India.

Rose Marie



Best known for her role as wisecracking, perennially single comedy writer Sally Rogers on the popular 1960s sitcom The Dick Van Dyke Show, Rose Marie brought us many laughs while portraying the character who earned her three Emmy nominations. She had one of the longest careers in showbiz, spanning nine decades. Baby Rose Marie, as she was called back in the 1920s, won her first talent show at just 3 years old. From there she went on to fame in radio, films, TV and Broadway. She delighted audiences for more than a decade as a participant on Hollywood Squares.

David Cassidy

Combining his love for singing and acting, David Cassidy found his dream job on The Partridge Family. He played Keith, one of five siblings who formed a rock 'n' roll band. His performance on the 1970s sitcom exposed his talent to the nation, providing him a stage to capture an enthusiastic teenage following. He went on to record albums and tour for decades until early this year, when he stopped for health reasons. He disclosed in February that he had dementia.

Hugh Hefner

Known as a ladies' man and a driving force behind a sex revolution, Playboy magazine creator Hugh Hefner never let age hold him back. The sometimes controversial media mogul, who always seemed to have young and attractive women



around him, published the first Playboy magazine in 1953 at the age of 27. Since then he and his Playboy empire have produced movies, developed a clothing line, opened resorts and much more.

Frank Vincent

Since ending his role as a mobster on HBO's The Sopranos in 2007, Frank Vincent continued his acting career right up until his death. Routinely playing tough guys throughout his acting career, Vincent had a recognizable look that fit the many different characters he played, including Billy Batts in Goodfellas.

Roger Moore

Making his 007 debut in Live and Let Die, Sir Roger Moore played suave and sophisticated British secret agent James Bond in seven films. His final appearance was in 1985's A View to a Kill. Although he went on to appear in several television shows and films, he became known for his charitable endeavors for UNICEF, for which he became a goodwill ambassador in 1991. He was made a Commander of the British Empire in 1999 and promoted to Knight Commander in 2003.

Gauri Lankesh

Bengaluru journalist and activist Gauri Lankesh was shot dead at her house by three unidentified men on September 5, 2017. She ran her own weekly called Gauri Lankesh Patrike. Protests over her death took place all across India. In January 2008, she had published an article criticizing BJP leaders Pralhad Joshi, Umesh Dushi, Shivanand Bhat and Venkatesh Mestry.

Mary Tyler Moore



She may have been a feminist icon to some, but it was pure talent that made Mary Tyler Moore one of the most beloved stars to ever appear on television.

The character she played on The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-77) — well-meaning, striving, brittle Mary Richards — became one of TV's most memorable single career women because of Moore's comedic skills, and also because she surrounded herself with other professionals who were among the best in the business.

Adam West

Despite the many incarnations of Batman seen in the last few decades in the movies and on television, for an older generation there is only one — the Adam West version. West, who died in June at age 88, wasn't always comfortable with his notoriety as TV's "Caped Crusader" from the campy Batman series of the 1960s, telling TV Guide in 1993 that he "hated" the Batman character for a time and blamed the show for difficulties he encountered finding other roles after the show ran its course in 1968. In recent years, he found new fame as a star voice on Seth MacFarlane's Family Guy as the town's mayor, named ... Adam West.

YEAR OF CONTENT-DRIVEN FILMS

2017 might have had mindless hits in 'Judwaa 2' and 'Golmaal Again,' but it has also seen content-driven films gaining momentum and garnering critical acclaim. Here are ten of the films that managed to catch the audience's fancy.

Shubh Mangal Savdhan

'Shubh Mangal Savdhan,' which had been R. Prasanna's remake of his Tamil film 'Kalyana Samayal Saadhnam,' had surprised audiences with its simplistic take on a tabooed sexual condition, without resorting to sledge. Ayushmann Khurrana and Bhumi Pednekar's believable acts were as effective as their performances in 'Dum Laga Ke Haisha'.

Lipstick Under My Burkha



Mired in controversy for the longest time, 'Lipstick Under My Burkha' was the unabashed celebration of feminist glory that we desperately needed. Helmed by Alankrita Shrivastava, the film starred a terrific ensemble in Konkona Sen Sharma, Ratna Pathak, Aahana Kumra, Plabita Borthakur among others.

Tumhari Sulu



Vidya Balan might have had flops in 'Kahaani: Durga Rani Singh' and 'Begum Jaan,' but the actress bounced back with Suresh Triveni's 'Tumhari Sulu,' big time. Playing an affable housewife, who serendipitously ends up being a night time radio jockey, Vidya charmed her way into people's hearts, with one of her career best portrayals.

Qarib Single

Qarib Qarib Single, Malayalam actress Parvathy's foray into Bollywood was celebrated for being one of the most realistic Bollywood romances in recent times. With her crackling chemistry with Irrfan Khan, who himself had one of the best written romantic roles in recent memory being adequately exploited, the film was bound to be greeted with open arms.

Newton



If 2017 were to be called a solitary actor's year, it would have to be Rajkumar Rao's. With as many as six diametrically different films releasing, his 'Newton' was among the most talked about films of the year. Shedding light on India's questionable electoral procedures, the film couldn't have released at a more opportune juncture. The Amit V. Masurkar directorial, was also India's official entry to the Oscars this year. Though it didn't make the cut eventually, the film has nothing to lose heart over.

Mukti Bhawan



'Mukti Bhawan' has to be among the most grossly underappreciated films of the year. The unanimously acclaimed tale on the complexities of life, was as much an allegorical epiphany of life as it was a euphemism for death. With Adil Hussain to lead the cast, the film drives home a point without trying too hard.

Kadvi Hawa



'Kadvi Hawa' was in no way a pleasant watch, but the issues raised were once that needed to be told. Sanjay Mishra, who's delivered many an acclaimed performance throughout his career, has probably yet to come in a turn as deeply disturbing as this one. Playing a blind man in a drought-ridden land, Sanjay forced the audience to empathize with his plight. He had able company in Ranvir Shorey.

A Death in the Gunj



Arguably the best film of the year, 'A Death in the Gunj' was a stunningly poetic study of a human's psychological descent into self-destruction. Konkona Sen Sharma's debut directorial didn't star her but had all the right actors in the right roles. With a career defining performance by protagonist Vikrant Massey, the film was unlike anything the industry had seen.

Trapped

Vikramaditya Motwane's stirring thriller released a year too late, but with a Hitchcockian treatment and a nerve-wreckingly brutal performance by Rajkumar Rao, the film delved into a genre of survivalism that had been hitherto unexplored in the industry. Trapped could very well be the thriller that ages well, to be counted among the best thrillers the country has seen yet.

Anaarkali of Aarah



'Anaarkali of Aarah,' one of the most striking Bollywood movies of the year with a female protagonist, gave Swara Bhaskar the best role of her career and the actress did not disappoint. With an able antagonist in Sanjay Mishra, her moving portrayal of a wronged erotic dancer won her accolades galore.

Hollywood's Best Movies of 2017

Wormwood



Errol Morris's *Wormwood* is a groundbreaking hybrid of non-fictional and fictional storytelling modes—although no matter how you classify it, it's the year's towering cinematic achievement. The filmmaker's second release of the year (after the charming *The B-Side: Elsa Dorfman's Portrait Photography*) recounts the tangled saga of Frank Olson, a government biochemist whose mysterious 1953 death out a New York City hotel room window was first deemed a suicide, then the byproduct of a CIA mind-control program, and then something more sinister still.

Lady Macbeth

Hell hath no fury like a woman oppressed, as is shockingly born out by William Oldroyd's phenomenal feature directing debut—an adaptation not of the Bard but, rather, of Nikolai Leskov's 1865 novel *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. In a breakout performance of coiled intensity and ruthless cunning, Florence Pugh is Katherine, a young woman sold into marriage to an older landowner (Paul Hilton), whose nastiness is only surpassed by that of his domineering father (Christopher Fairbank).

Dunkirk

Christopher Nolan dispenses with the exposition in favor of immersive aesthetics with *Dunkirk*, a dramatic account of the WWII evacuation of Dunkirk, France's beaches in 1941. Fractured between three interwoven time frames and perspectives (land, sea and air), and shot almost entirely in 70mm IMAX—which stands as the ideal format in which to see this overwhelmingly experiential work—Nolan's wartime tale cares little for character detail or contextual background.

Marjorie Prime

The year's most moving film, Michael Almereyda's adaptation of Jordan Harrison's Pulitzer Prize-nominated play takes a *Twilight Zone*-ish concept into surprisingly profound, poignant territory. At a seaside home, Marjorie (Lois Smith) spends her final days conversing with a holographic projection that resembles her late husband Walter (Jon Hamm), all as her daughter Tess (Geena Davis) and son-in-law Jon (Tim Robbins) cope with her failing health and their own personal and marital issues.

Columbus



As strikingly unique as the Indiana buildings its characters visit, *Columbus* is a boy-meets-girl tale that cares less for romance than for the unlikely, intrinsic ties that bind seemingly disparate souls. Arriving in Columbus to tend to his ailing, and estranged, architect father, Jin (John Cho) falls into a friendship with younger Casey (Haley Lu Richardson), who's set aside personal dreams in order to stay home and care for her recovering-addict mother (Michelle Forbes).

DAWN OF THE NEW YEAR

As the stroke of midnight rolled across the world's time zones, people gathered and took to the streets to celebrate the arrival of 2018. Fireworks erupted from Yogyakarta to Nairobi, and revelers gathered in Sydney, Dubai, Rio de Janeiro, New York, and thousands of other places, raising a glass, trying to keep warm, making resolutions, and wishing each other a **HAPPY NEW YEAR**



Sydney New Year's Eve is an annual multi-tiered event held every over Sydney Harbour, centring on the Sydney Harbour Bridge in Australia.



One of Europe's biggest street parties on New Year's Eve is celebrated between Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Column in Berlin.



New Year celebrations in Hong Kong.



Fireworks at Arc de Triomphe in Paris to ring in New Year.



New Years Eve 2018 in Moscow



Las Vegas



Times Square, New York



London Eye, Central London.



Rio de Janeiro.

Pak mum over action to be taken against Hafiz Saeed

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan today kept mum over what action it will take against Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed, but said it takes its "international obligations" very seriously.

Foreign Office spokesman Mohammad Faisal while replying to a question during his weekly briefing said Pakistan is serious to implement UN sanctions against listed individuals and groups including Saeed.

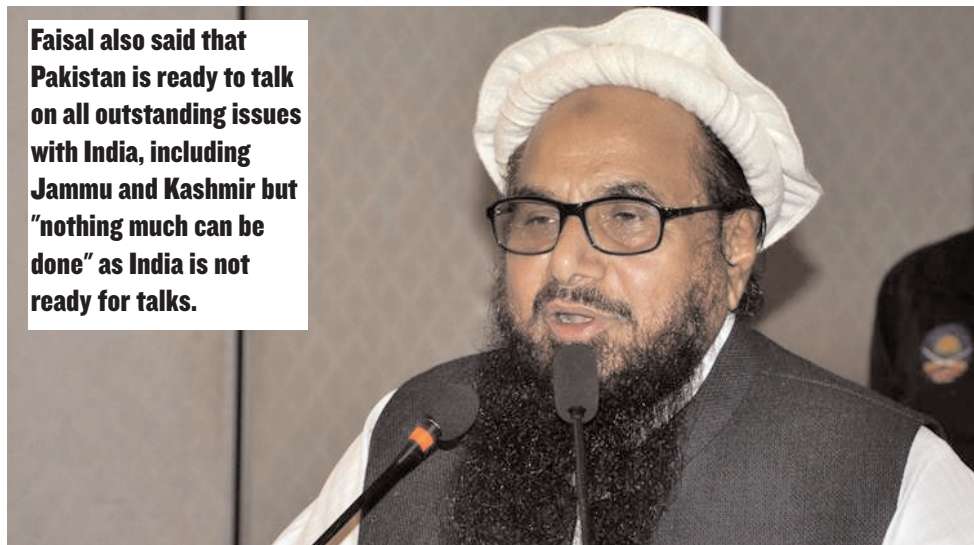
"As far as Hafiz Saeed is concerned, Pakistan takes its international obligations very seriously. We have been implementing the UN Security Council sanctions related to assets freeze, arms embargo and travel ban on all listed individuals and entities," he said.

The Foreign Office spokesman was asked about action being taken against the founder of the Lashkar-e-Taiba after a BBC report that he toured the UK in the 1990s to incite Muslims to become jihadis.

A BBC investigation has said that Saeed, one of the world's most wanted terror suspects, who now heads the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) group in Pakistan, had toured British mosques in 1995 and his visit was recorded in a magazine published by the LeT at the time.

Pakistan has banned the collection of donations by the JuD, the front organisation of banned outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba, as well as several other such organisations named in a list of banned outfits by the UN Security Council.

The decision was taken on January 1 when Trump accused Pakistan of giving nothing to



Faisal also said that Pakistan is ready to talk on all outstanding issues with India, including Jammu and Kashmir but "nothing much can be done" as India is not ready for talks.

the US but "lies and deceit" in return for \$33 billion aid and said Islamabad has provided "safe haven" to terrorists.

Faisal also said that Pakistan is ready to talk on all outstanding issues with India, including Jammu and Kashmir but "nothing much can be done" as India is not ready for talks.

"Pakistan has consistently maintained that the only way forward is through a comprehensive, result-oriented, uninterrupted, uninterrupted dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues. We are also ready to talk about the issue of terrorism, which is a global phenomenon, and calls for

global and concerted action," he said

To a question about India launching remote sensing satellite Cartosat-2 series along with 31 small satellites, he said all space technologies were inherently dual use and can be employed for both civilian and military purposes.

"All states have a legitimate right to pursue peaceful uses of space technologies. However, given the dual-use nature of such technologies, it is essential that such pursuits are not directed towards a buildup of destabilising military capabilities, which can negatively impact the regional strategic stability," he said. (PTI)

Bangladesh court upholds ban on Rohingya marriage

DHAKA (TIP): A Bangladesh court today upheld a government ruling banning marriage between its citizens and refugees from Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya minority, who have fled ethnic violence in the neighbouring country.

The High Court in Dhaka dismissed a legal challenge from a father whose son married a Rohingya teenager in a Muslim ceremony in September despite laws forbidding such unions.

Marriages with Rohingya were banned in 2014 to try to prevent hundreds of thousands of refugees living in Bangladesh from seeking a back door to citizenship.

Babul Hossain, whose 26-year-old son ran away with his new wife after they married, questioned the legality of the ruling that threatens a seven-year jail term for any Bangladeshi who weds a Rohingya refugee.

But the court rejected his plea and ordered he pay 100,000 taka (USD 1,200) in legal costs.

"The court rejected the petition and has upheld the administrative order, which bans marriage between Bangladeshi citizens and Rohingya people," deputy attorney general Motaher Hossain Saju told AFP. (AFP)

Cold wave claims 7 more lives in Nepal; toll reaches 24

KATHMANDU (TIP): Intense cold weather in Nepal has claimed seven more lives, taking to 24 the death toll due to severe winter conditions over the past week in southern part of the country, according to a media report.

More than half of the them, 14, were reported from Saptari district while five each in Rautahat and Siraha districts in the Tarai region, it said.

Seven people, including a 7-month-old child, lost their lives due to excessive cold in various municipalities of Saptari district last night, the Himalayan Times quoted senior police officials as saying.

The locals of Saptari have sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, demanding relief materials for those vulnerable to cold.

In Rautahat, two people died due to freezing cold last night, Superintendent of Police Yagya Binod Pokhrel said.

Rautahat District Administration Office said warm clothes and blankets were being distributed to the poor and in Dalit settlements of the district.

In Siraha, a five-year-old child died due to excessive cold, taking the number of deaths due to cold wave in the district to five, according to the report. (PTI)

11 killed, 25 wounded in Kabul suicide attack

KABUL (TIP): A suicide attacker blew himself up near a crowd of police and protesters in Kabul on Thursday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 25 others, officials said, in the latest deadly violence to bring carnage to the Afghan capital.

"A suicide attacker has detonated himself... close to a number of police who were trying to provide security for an ongoing protest," deputy interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi told AFP.

Health ministry spokesman Wahid Majroh told AFP that 11 bodies had been taken to hospitals around the city along with 25 wounded. (AFP)

Nepali woman suffocates in 'menstruation hut'

KATHMANDU (TIP): A young Nepali woman has died of suspected smoke inhalation while she was banished to a shed for menstruating under an ancient tradition banned more than a decade ago, police said Wednesday. Many communities in Nepal view menstruating women as impure and in some remote areas, they are forced to sleep in a hut away from the home, a practice known as chhaupadi. Gauri Bayak, 21, was found dead by her neighbours inside a smoke-filled hut on Monday morning in a village in the western district of Achham.

"She had lit a fire to keep herself warm and we suspect she suffocated and died of smoke inhalation," local police chief Dadhi Ram Neupane told AFP.

Police are waiting for the results of a postmortem to confirm the cause of death.

Chhaupadi is linked to Hinduism and considers women untouchable when they menstruate, as well as after childbirth.

Barred from touching food, religious icons, cattle and men, they are banished from the home and forced to sleep in basic huts.

The practice was banned in 2005 but is still followed in parts of Nepal, particularly in remote western regions.

Last year a teenager died after being bitten by a snake while sleeping in a shed and in 2016 two women died in separate incidents while following the ritual. Last year Nepal passed a new law criminalising chhaupadi. It will come into effect in August when anyone forcing a woman to follow the custom faces a three-month jail sentence and a 3,000 rupee (\$30) fine. Manju Mahat, a district women's rights official, said chhaupadi was "a clear violation of our human rights" and urged women's families to "take responsibility and stop this practice". (AFP)

Violent protests erupt over rape, murder of 8-year-old girl in Pakistan

LAHORE (TIP): An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped and murdered in Pakistan's Punjab province, triggering violent protests in which two people were killed in clashes with police. According to CCTV footage, the girl in Kasur district was abducted last week outside her home. "Last night the girl's body was found from a heap of garbage in Saddar area of the city," Regional Police Officer (Kasur) Zulffiqar Hameed said, adding the body had been sent for autopsy.

"Initial autopsy report suggests that the girl was strangled after rape," Hameed said.

The girl was staying with her relatives while her parents had gone to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Hijaz, Saudi Arabia, performed by Muslims that can be undertaken at any time of the year.

The police has taken four suspects into custody.

"We are trying to identify the person who was seen taking the girl along in the footage," he said. Riots erupted in Kasur over police inaction after reports of the alleged rape and murder of the girl began circulating on social media.

The protesters pelted stone at the police station, offices of district police officer and district coordination officer in Kasur as the city observed a complete shutter down to protest against the brutal murder. Widespread condemnation is pouring in from all mainstream leaders and national cricketers who are demanding immediate arrest of the culprits and exemplary punishment for them. Police are resorting to 'direct' and aerial firing to disperse the protesters.

"Two persons who suffered serious bullet injuries during the protest succumbed to their injuries," a rescue official said.

Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Mansoor Ali Shah took notice of the murder of the girl and sought report from the Punjab government.

Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said he would personally monitor this case and would not rest till culprits brought to justice. Ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif has directed his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif to immediately arrest the culprits and bring them to justice.

Ruling PML-N member Punjab Assembly Hina Butt submitted a privilege motion in the assembly, seeking justice for 11 other minor girls who were killed after rape in Kasur and adjoining areas during the last year. Opposition PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto has termed the brutal rape and murder of the girl as "shocking and a slap on the face of Sharifdom (Sharif brothers)" Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan, former military dictator Gen Pervez Musharraf, Maryam Nawaz and other politicians condemned the incident and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

Test cricketers Shoaib Malik, Mohammad Hafeez and Wahab Riaz tweeted that it was unbelievable that this brutal incident took place in Pakistan. "Our thoughts are with the parents of the girl," they said and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits. (PTI)



'Obama received gifts worth \$3,000 during his India visit in Jan 2015'

WASHINGTON (TIP): Former US president Barack Obama had received gifts worth about \$ 3,000 during his visit to India in 2015 as Chief Guest at the Republic Day Parade, according to the State Department.

Obama was the first US head of state who attended the parade in 2015.

According to the Department of State's Protocol Office, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented Obama telegram facsimile from the US to India's Constituent Assembly in 1946 and reproduction of the cover page of a report on India's Constitutional Debates.

Modi also presented him a framed photograph of Marian Anderson's radio interview in India and a hand-carved wooden Jali box with a small wooden latch and photo of Marian Anderson's radio interview in India on the lid.

Among other gifts from Modi were a CD set, title: All India Radio Interview with Marian Anderson, November 18 1957, New Delhi.

Obama also received a hand-carved black wooden Jali box with painting on the lid; blue Shahmina shawl, red Shahmina shawl and beige and cream coloured shahmina shawl. The State Department Protocol Office have estimated their value at \$ 1,231.

The Rajghat Samadhi Committee presented him a model spinning wheel with white tread looped around the wheel and a cloth scroll listing the Seven Social Sins as articulated by Mahatma Gandhi.

He also received a book on Mahatma Gandhi titled "An Autobiography--The Story of my Experiments with the Truth" and a bronze-coloured bust of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on a wood base. The gifts were estimated to be a value of \$ 929.01.

The then president Pranab Mukherjee presented Obama a book titled "Thoughts and Reflections", "Winged Wonders of Rashtrapati Bhavan RB Series 2012-2014" along with a Photobook, titled "State Visit of His Excellency Barack H Obama, President of the United States of America and Michelle Obama to India on January 25 to 27 January 2015".

Fate of pending bills to clear cloud on H-1B visa norms: TCS

MUMBAI / WASHINGTON (TIP): The largest software exporter TCS on Jan 11 welcomed the clarity on H-1B visaholders, but said pending bills in the US legislature continue to be an "immediate concern" to grapple with.

The company for which the US is the largest market, said there is a difference between the way it is reported and what is the reality on the ground.

"Immediate concern of H-1B+ is that there are a few more bills that are being talked about, but none of that has played out as of now," TCS human resources head Ajoy Mukherjee told reporters. The company will continue with its policy of planning in advance and continue with its steps like stepping up local hiring across, he added. There is a lot of planning, starting with application for the visas, that goes in during operations and it will have to be followed, he said. On the recent relief for techies, wherein the US stated no change in H-1B visa extension policy, Mukherjee welcomed the move for the clarity it brings in.

The US authorities on Tuesday had said the Trump administration was not considering any proposal that would force H-1B visaholders to leave the country. (PTI)

Trump uses slur to describe immigrants from Haiti, Africa

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump reportedly lashed out on Jan 11 in a meeting with lawmakers about immigration reform, demanding to know why the US should accept citizens from what he called "shithole" countries.

Trump sat down with senators and congressmen at the White House to discuss a proposed bipartisan deal that would limit immigrants from bringing family members into the country and restrict the green card visa lottery in exchange for shielding hundreds of thousands of young immigrants from deportation.

"Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" Trump said, according to people briefed on the meeting who spoke with The Washington Post.

The New York Times later reported the same comment, citing unnamed people with direct knowledge of the meeting.

The president was referring to African countries and Haiti, and then suggested the United States should welcome immigrants from places like Norway, whose prime minister met with Trump on Wednesday.

The comments alarmed and mystified the people attending the meeting.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham and Democratic Senator Dick Durbin came to the White House to outline their bipartisan compromise, but found themselves in the room with several Republican immigration hardliners.

Graham and Durbin are leading efforts to codify protections for so-called "dreamers," immigrants who came to the United States illegally as children.

In exchange, the deal would end extended family chain migration.

It also reportedly would cut the visa lottery program by half and prioritise certain countries in the system, instead of scrapping



it altogether as several Republicans have suggested as part of an agreement.

The president and lawmakers are in the midst of intense negotiations about how to shield nearly 800,000 "dreamers" from deportation. Last year, Trump scrapped the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that protected the immigrants, and set a deadline of March 5 for Congress to legislate a fix.

The White House did not deny the account of Trump's use of language, but instead suggested the president was "fighting for permanent solutions" that strengthen the nation, in part through the use of a merit-based immigration system.

"Certain Washington politicians choose to fight for foreign countries, but President

Trump will always fight for the American people," White House spokesman Raj Shah said in a statement.

"He will always reject temporary, weak and dangerous stopgap measures that threaten the lives of hardworking Americans, and undercut immigrants who seek a better life in the United States through a legal pathway."

Some Democrats seized on Trump's slur to suggest he is anti-immigrant.

"We always knew that President Trump doesn't like people from certain countries or people of certain colours," congressman Luis Guterrez said.

"We can now say with 100% confidence that the president is a racist who does not share the values enshrined in our Constitution." (AFP)

Search goes on for California mudslide victims; death toll at 17

MONTECITO (TIP): Hundreds of rescue workers slogged through knee-deep ooze and used long poles to probe for bodies Jan 11 as the search dragged on for victims of the mudslides that slammed this wealthy coastal town. Seventeen people were confirmed dead and 16 were missing.

Family members anxiously awaited word on loved ones who hadn't been heard from since the onslaught early Tuesday morning.

"It's just waiting and not knowing, and the more I haven't heard from them we have to find them," said Kelly Weimer, whose elderly parents' home was wrecked. The couple, Jim and Alice Mitchell, did not heed a voluntary evacuation warning and stayed home to celebrate Jim Mitchell's 89th birthday.

As search dogs clambered on heaps of wood that used to be homes, mud-spattered rescue teams from all over California worked their way through the ruins of Montecito, an enclave of 9,000 people northwest of Los Angeles that is home to celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey.

It was left covered with thick muck, boulders, wrecked cars, splintered lumber and tree limbs in a scene Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown likened to a World War I battlefield.

County officials said late Wednesday that the death toll stood at 17 and the number of missing had been lowered to 16. After a better



look at the damage, officials lowered the number of destroyed homes from 100 to 59 and raised the number of damaged ones from 300 to 446.

Overall, 28 people were injured. Twelve remained hospitalized, four in critical condition.

By Wednesday, some 500 searchers had covered about 75 percent of the inundated area, authorities said. They had a long slog ahead, filled with hazards seen and unseen.

"A lot of the street signs are gone, the roads

are impassable. It all has to be done on foot," said Deputy Dan Page, chief of a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department rescue team.

Rescue crews worked up to 12 hours a day and risked stepping on nails or shattered glass, or being exposed to raw sewage, or dealing with leaking gas, Page said.

"We've gotten multiple reports of rescuers falling through manholes that were covered with mud, swimming pools that were covered up with mud," said Anthony Buzzerio, a Los Angeles County fire battalion chief. (AP)

President Trump's ambitious agenda: 7 things to watch in 2018

President Trump may have big policy plans for 2018, but political distractions are likely to shadow prospects of big legislative achievements.



WASHINGTON (TIP) White House officials said Trump wants to rein in the threat from North Korea and list four top domestic priorities on his 2018 agenda: Repealing and replacing President Obama's 2010 health care law, welfare reform, immigration, and a new infrastructure plan.

"I would expect to see those four areas, as well as national security, which never goes away," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said.

Yet the Republican-controlled Congress has been struggling to pass some of Trump's major priorities since his election - and their challenges will only increase in 2018. The GOP's Senate bare majority will shrink when Alabama's newly elected senator, Democrat Doug Jones, is sworn in.

In January, lawmakers will have to confront a thicket of unfinished business. In their rush to get home for the holidays, the GOP-led Congress passed a short-term spending bill that expires Jan. 19.

Trump and GOP leaders will have to negotiate a longer-term spending deal before then to avert a government shutdown, and they will likely need Democratic support for that to pass. Other sticky issues on the January agenda include legislation aimed at stabilizing the Obamacare individual insurance markets and reauthorizing the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a contentious anti-terrorism law that gives law enforcement sweeping spy powers.

What's more, lawmakers will be consumed with their own 2018 mid-term elections - and the increasingly contentious Russia investigations. "As everybody in Washington knows, a midterm election year is a year when most legislation comes to a standstill," said David Cohen, a political science professor at the University of Akron. "Members of Congress are going to be obsessed with winning re-election," Cohen said, and will be more eager to campaign at home than be in Washington casting tough votes.

Here are seven key issues that Trump and Congress will confront:

North Korea

Trump will lobby China - and other countries - to twist the economic screws on North Korea, in the hopes of forcing that rogue nation to give up their nuclear weapons program.

Trump traveled to Asia to press that issue in November and declared North Korea a state sponsor of terror. Yet North Korea leader Kim Jong Un has more or less thumbed his nose at the effort, recently setting off another ballistic missile test, and continued threatening the U.S. and its allies.

As 2018 approaches, Trump and his advisers hope to settle the dispute diplomatically, but they have not ruled out the possibility

of a military strike.

Infrastructure

In his 2018 budget proposal, Trump sought \$200 billion over 10 years to spend on infrastructure, leveraging private-sector spending to focus federal dollars on "transformative" projects seen as priorities at both the federal and regional level.

That went nowhere in 2017, as Trump and the GOP-led Congress focused instead on trying to repeal Obamacare and enacting tax cuts. But the president plans to rev up that push early next year, with the hope that Democrats will cooperate.

Infrastructure spending is generally a bipartisan issue, and few dispute the need to improve the nation's highway and bridges. But Trump and Democrats have already outlined competing plans, and conservatives are likely to oppose any legislation that calls for massive new spending.

So, the fate of that will likely depend on Trump's willingness to cut a deal with Democrats and vice versa heading into a heated election year.

Health care

Trump insists he has not given up on his goal of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, President Obama's health reform law, even though Republicans in Congress could not muster enough votes to deliver on that long-promised goal this year. After Congress passed a massive tax bill in December that repealed Obamacare's individual mandate, Trump declared the law was "essentially" repealed and lawmakers would work together to find a replacement. (However, the law is barely touched, though the requirement that nearly everyone have insurance or pay a penalty at tax time was repealed effective in 2019.) Overhauling Obamacare will only get more complicated in 2018, as Republicans will have just 51 seats in the Senate. And the GOP's previous efforts to nix Obamacare sparked intense anger among voters who wanted to keep the coverage - something lawmakers may not want to reignite when many of them will be on the ballot.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., signaled little interest in taking another stab at the issue. "Well, we obviously were unable to completely repeal and replace with a 52-48 Senate," McConnell told NPR in a Dec. 21 interview. "We'll have to take a look at what that looks like with a 51-49 Senate. But I think we'll probably move on to other issues." Other Republicans pushed back, saying the GOP should not give up on that long-touted campaign promise.

Immigration

Congress has a March deadline to decide the fate of the so-called DREAMers, the approximately 700,000 immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally when they were children. Trump nixed an Obama-era program that shielded the DREAMers from deportation, but he also said Congress should figure out a legislative fix, so the young people aren't sent back to countries they did not grow up in.

Critics have called the Obama protections-known as DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals- a form of "amnesty" and suggested those young immigrants have taken jobs from Americans. But there's bipartisan support in Congress and in the public to grant the DREAMers legal status and even a path to citizenship. Whether Trump-who campaigned on a hardline anti-immigrant platform-will sign such a bill is unclear. He has sent



mixed signals on the issue, and he's also called for new restrictions on refugees and others seeking entry into the United States.

After the Dec. 12 arrest of a man who tried to set off a bomb in a New York commuter tunnel, Trump called for the end of "chain migration" and the diversity visa lottery programs.

Welfare reform

In announcing a new major legislative priority following the tax cut bill, Trump said welfare reform is "desperately needed in our country." A Trump budget proposal last year called for adding work requirements to some government programs and tightening eligibility requirements for low-income tax credits. "We want to get our people off of welfare and back to work," Trump said. "So important. It's out of control. It's out of control." Democrats say welfare reforms instituted two decades ago are working and that Trump wants to punch major holes in the social safety net.

Iran

Trump announced in October he would no longer certify that Iran is in compliance with an Obama-era deal, in which Tehran pledged to give up the means to make nuclear weapons while the U.S. and allies ease economic sanctions. Instead, Trump called on Congress to improve the agreement, and the fate of the Iran nuclear deal is likely to come to a head in 2018.

Supporters of the agreement fear Iran will walk away from the agreement and pursue nuclear weapons anyway, triggering a dangerous arms race in the Middle East.

The debt limit

The U.S. Treasury will run out of money to pay its bills sometime in the spring - unless Congress and the president agree on legislation to raise the nation's debt limit. The Treasury Department lost its authority to borrow any new money to pay the government's obligations on Dec. 9.

Officials are currently taking "extraordinary measures" to keep from defaulting on the government's current obligations, including Medicare benefits and the interest on the national debt. But the agency will run out of those accounting gimmicks in late March or early April, according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office. That could lead to a round of partisan fiscal brinkmanship with threats of defaulting on the government's debts. Conservatives have generally opposed increasing the nation's borrowing authority, so Trump will likely have to negotiate with Democrats to come to an agreement.

(Source: USA Today)

Indian American nonprofit Indiaspora names Sanjeev Joshipura as its executive director

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (TIP): The Indian American nonprofit Indiaspora has named Sanjeev Joshipura as its executive director. The announcement was made by the organization's founder and chairman of the board of directors MR Rangaswami.

Joshipura has been a director at Indiaspora since July 2016.

"I am honored that MR and the Board have placed their faith in me," he said. "It is my privilege to work for this organization, whose mission and values I truly believe in, and whose members I enjoy interacting with daily. Indiaspora has achieved a lot since its inception

in 2012, and I look forward eagerly to working with and leading the team to even greater heights moving forward."

Rangaswami said in a press release that the board was "very pleased" with Joshipura's performance since he joined the organization. "He has really helped take the organization to a new level, and we plan to continue professionalizing and institutionalizing Indiaspora with him in this leadership role," Rangaswami said.

Joshipura, a business and public policy consultant, has background in corporate, public policy and political realms. The Fairfax,

Virginia, resident has worked for Fortune 500 companies in both the United States and India.

His experience in the political arena includes managed a US Senate election campaign and working on Capitol Hill as an adviser to US Senators and Congressmen. He also served as the president of an international industry association.

Rangaswami said the organization is planning on recruiting more staff this year. "In 2017, Indiaspora instituted a membership model, in which we invite prominent Indian American and Indian leaders in diverse professions, to become members of the

organization," he said. "The Indian-American community and leading Indians have demonstrated great support for Indiaspora's mission, events and activities. We have included a remarkably high caliber of individuals as members, and we plan to continue growing our membership strategically. In keeping with our growing membership, new projects, and expansion of geographic scope, we plan to recruit more staff in 2018, significantly adding to our team's capabilities."

Indiaspora's mission is to transform "the success of Indian Americans into meaningful impact worldwide."

SPECIAL ARTICLES ON THE OCCASION OF CELEBRATION OF HINDI DAY ON JANUARY 13 AT THE INDIAN CONSULATE IN NEW YORK

A Legacy for Hindi Education in USA



By Ashok Ojha, Hindi Sangam Foundation

In the late Nineties and during the first decade of 21st century I worked in a publishing company dealing with readers reviews of newly published books. Those were the years of the onset of Internet age that was strengthening its grip on the electronic media. Print media was collapsing, readers were moving towards blogs, podcasts, newsletter and e-commerce.

I was among those feeling marginalized finding no option than to look for a new profession. The profession of teaching required face to face interaction with students in classroom. I came in contact with STARTALK program that proved to be an ideal system for teaching Hindi in the community using modern tools. The program offered teachers training opportunities at various universities. I was selected by the

University of Pennsylvania teacher training program for this training. On the other hand, we needed to collaborate with local schools and colleges for developing quality program under STARTALK. With the support from open minded community leaders like Upendra Chivukula, who was a member of NJ Assembly, I was able to launch our first short term Hindi program in a public university in 2010. Since then I achieved a number of milestones in my journey to promoting Hindi learning and its use in the community.

A large number of language experts support and encourage me. A growing number of Indian-American parents have supported our program by sending their children to study Hindi during the summer vacation. Most of these supporters don't speak Hindi but truly understand the importance of promoting its teaching in USA. We have the back and the ears of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, whose officials have quietly extended their support to our programs.

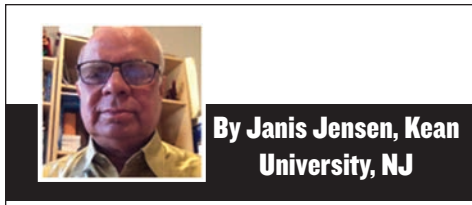
With the help of our ever powerful community and successful professionals



Hindi Sangam Foundation is moving towards fulfilling its mission to establish a K8 language school where Hindi will rule. Students will learn all subjects including Science and Math in Hindi up to the standards of six or eight after which English learning will be introduced. Research tells us that Bilingual students of immersion programs graduate from High School with top scores. They grow up as proud adults who reflect the

values of their native culture and qualities of the education system of the adopted land, in our case, India and the USA. Such students make both cultures proud of themselves—America, where they grew up and their native culture from where their parents or grandparents came from.

(Ashok Ojha, President, Hindi Sangam Foundation, is a New Jersey based journalist and teacher.)



By Janis Jensen, Kean University, NJ

NEW MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN US TARGETS TEACHING OF HINDI

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in the U.S. in the study of Hindi as an important world language due to India's emergence as a political and economic power in the global age. This is reflected in the current upward trend in student enrollment at the secondary and post-secondary levels by heritage students (irrespective of their home language, which may be Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, etc.) who recognize the growing demand for Hindi-speaking professionals in the business, scientific and health sectors. Enrollment is also on the rise for non-heritage students who see opportunities for the use of Hindi in the U.S., especially in local businesses in which there are a large concentration of people of Indian origin (hospitality workers, tax accountants, information technology), in addition to law and medical practice, and also worldwide due to India's economic ties across the globe.

Given the current trend and future projections for the growth of Hindi (the third most common language other than English spoken in homes in the states), leaders in the Hindi education field recognized the need to build capacity for the teaching of Hindi in the U.S. (where most Hindi teachers lack formal teacher preparation) that would support the training of a "new breed of teachers" prepared to teach Hindi to 21st century digital learners. These teachers would learn about research-based best practices for effective teaching of languages that include language learning in real world contexts and in contemporary

learning environments incorporating the use of current and emerging technologies. With well trained teachers, who actively engage students in learning Hindi for meaningful, real world purposes, the vision is to attract yet a greater percentage of students who "value" and wish to further pursue the study of Hindi for its long-term worth in our modern society. (It is well documented that instructional practices influence students' inclination to study the language and impact efforts to promote the teaching and learning of Hindi).

New Jersey based Kean University's program is the only master's degree program in Hindi and Urdu foreign language pedagogy in the U.S.

A Master's Degree Program in Hindi and Urdu Language Pedagogy was developed at Kean University with support by federal funding. This program is the only master's degree program in Hindi and Urdu foreign language pedagogy in the U.S. Although there are domestic institutions of higher education offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Hindi and Urdu as foreign languages, none of these institutions offer undergraduate/graduate Hindi/Urdu teacher preparation programs or a concentration in the field of Hindi/Urdu language-specific language pedagogy at the graduate level. Graduate level pedagogy programs are also non-existent in the Hindi/Urdu language field in other countries, including India and Pakistan. The program builds upon Kean's well

established reputation for teacher education due to its innovative approach to Hindi and Urdu teacher preparation and the potential development of a corpus of research lacking in the field of Hindi/Urdu language pedagogy.

The first cohort of MA students will graduate from the program in spring 2018. Applications are currently being accepted for the next cohort of students which begin the program in fall 2018 and are available online at <http://grad.kean.edu/masters-programs/hindi-and-urdu-language-pedagogy>

While the application deadline is June 1, 2018, interested individuals are encouraged to apply as early as possible as partial scholarships are available on a limited basis for the first 10 qualified applicants (subject to availability of federal funding on an annual basis). The program seeks applicants who are Native/Advanced speakers of Hindi or Urdu that reside in the U.S. and possess a Bachelor's Degree. Applicants should be willing to complete the 2-year 30-credit program which consists of seven online courses and four onsite courses (offered at the Kean University Union Campus for 3-weeks during 2-consecutive summers and include clinical practice). Upon completion of the program, graduates will be able to teach in private schools and/or government schools, colleges/universities and in heritage language community research-based best practices in language education; conduct research on second language-

specific pedagogy or in the field of Hindi/Urdu Second Language Acquisition leading to a doctoral program; and/or pursue Alternate Route teacher certification options available in NJ and in most states in order to teach in public school settings. For additional information, interested individuals

may contact Janis Jensen, Program Director, at jjensen@kean.edu.

(Janis Jensen is Program Director of STARTALK Language Initiatives at Kean University where she oversees Hindi/Urdu Student Summer Programs and the MA Degree Program in Hindi/Urdu Language Pedagogy.)



भारतीय कौमुलावास और हिंदी संगम फ़ाउंडेशन के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में आयोजित

हिंदी दिवस समारोह में आप सादर आमंत्रित हैं
Consul General of India, NY

and

Hindi Sangam Foundation



हिंदी संगम प्रतिष्ठान

request the pleasure of your company

at

HINDI DIWAS CELEBRATION

on

Saturday, January 13, 2018
11.00 AM – 2.00 P.M

Venue:

CGI Ballroom, 3 East, 64th Street, (Between Madison & Fifth Avenues), New York, NY 10065.

RSVP:

culture.newyork@mea.gov.in

Program:

11:00 - 11:10 - Welcome remarks by Consul General. Hon. Mr. Sandeep Chakravorty
11:10 - 11:20 - Presentation by Mr. Ashok Ojha, President, Hindi Sangam Foundation: 'Promoting Hindi Teaching in USA'.
11:20 - 11:40 - Key-note speech by Prof. Janis Jensen, Kean Univ, NJ-Topic: 'Expanding Hindi learning at K-16 level'.
11:40-12:00-Presentation by Prof. Jennifer Eddy: 'Expanding Hindi, a CUNY perspective'.
12:00 - 12:45 - Performances by students of Sangam-Franklin and other STARTALK students followed by prize distribution
12:45 - 02:00 - Lunch.

New security shield for Aadhaar meaningless: Chidambaram

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a scathing attack on the Modi government, Congress leader P Chidambaram on Jan 11 said the move to ring-fence Aadhaar was meaningless as millions have already shared their unique identity number with many service providers.

"Under compulsion, millions of persons have already shared Aadhaar number with many service providers. New security layer is like locking the stable after horses have bolted," Chidambaram, a former union home minister, said on Twitter.

On Wednesday, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) had announced a new two-layer system to protect personal data, under which citizens would no longer be required to share their unique IDs for verification purposes.

This was done to address privacy concerns after a news report claimed a breach in the Aadhaar database.

Under the new system, at the user-end, a person will have the choice not to share his Aadhaar number at the time of authentication.

Instead, a random 16-digit Virtual ID number could be generated and used in lieu of Aadhaar with authorised agencies like banks and telecom service providers.

Uttarakhand madrasas to teach Sanskrit as optional subject

DEHRADUN (TIP): The lower committee of Uttarakhand Madrasa Education Board (UMEB) has given its nod to a proposal seeking inclusion of Sanskrit and Computer Science as optional subjects in madrasas all over the state from the next academic session.

At present, madrasas in the state offer Maths, Science, Ayush and Social Science as optional subjects.

A six-member lower committee of the board on Wednesday cleared the proposal for inclusion of Sanskrit and Computer Science as optional subjects, UMEB deputy registrar Akhlaq Ahmad said.

The proposal will now be moved to the upper committee of the board for approval.

The approval to include Sanskrit in the syllabus comes days after the Madrasa Welfare Society of Uttarakhand approached the state government to include Sanskrit as one of the subjects in the syllabus. *Source: PTI*

PDP MLA courts controversy with 'militants are martyrs' remark

JAMMU (TIP): Ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) MLA Aijaz Ahmed courted controversy today by calling "Kashmiri militants" "martyrs" and "brothers", battling for talks with separatists, and cautioning against glorifying killing of terrorists.

"Terrorists, who are from Kashmir are martyrs. Yes, they are our brothers. They are our children," Aijaz, an MLA from South Kashmir's Wachi, said here, adding, "some of them are minors of the age of 14 who don't even know what they are doing. We should not glorify the killing of terrorists. It is our collective failure."

He said they are children, who have gone down the wrong track, and should be counselled and brought back.

"We should desist from glorifying the killings of 200 militants. Nearly one lakh people have been killed due to militancy in all these years. Let us bat for talks," Aijaz said outside the assembly here.

He urged the Centre's special representative for Kashmir Dineshwar Sharma to talk to everybody in the state. "He should talk to separatists and militants in Kashmir too," he said.

Aijaz sympathised with the security personnel killed in the state, saying, "We feel sad when our security forces are martyred as well. We should sympathise with the parents of jawans and with the parents of terrorists as well. We want to stop this bloodshed."

Asked about the recent incident when militants hurled a grenade on his residence, the PDP MLA said, "we believe in India and they believe in something else that is why I was attacked. It is a difference of ideology."



'Indo-Pak talks on terror can go on'

MEA confirms a meeting between the National Security Advisors of the two countries last month

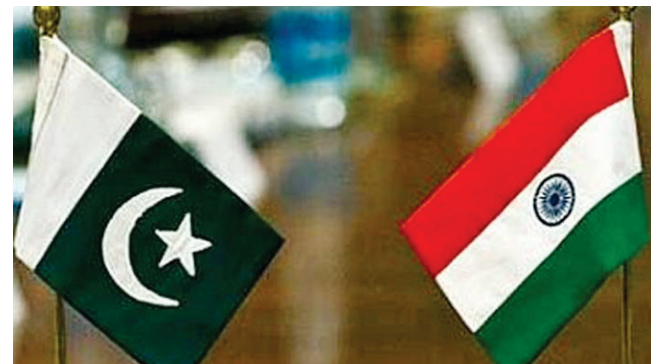
NEW DELHI (TIP): India and Pakistan can talk on cross-border terrorism, even though the two neighbours are not in a position to restore the structured dialogue as yet, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Jan 11.

"We have said terror and talks can't go together, but talks on terror can definitely go ahead," Raveesh Kumar, the External affairs ministry spokesperson, said, after confirming a meeting between the National Security Advisors of the two countries last month.

This is the first official confirmation of the behind-the-scenes meeting between NSAs Ajit Doval and retired Lt General Nasir Khan Janjua in Bangkok on December 26. The meeting took place a day after death row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadav met his mother and wife in Islamabad.

"The NSA talk had happened. They spoke on how to eliminate the scourge of cross-border terrorism. It was a pre-determined meeting, dates of which were decided in advance," Kumar said, refusing to answer whether the Jadav incident was discussed between the two NSAs in the second meeting since 2015.

He said the NSA talks was also like the existing operational dialogues like what exists between the Director General of Military Operations of the two armies or between the Border



Security Force and Pakistan Rangers. "I am agreeing that talks took place and our issue was eliminating terrorism from the region. We, of course, raised the issue of cross-border terrorism in those (NSA) talks," Kumar said.

The comprehensive dialogue between the two neighbours remains suspended since the January 2013 beheading of an Indian soldier close to the disputed boundary in Jammu and Kashmir. A subsequent effort to resume the dialogue also failed following a terror attack on Pathankot Air Force base in January 2016.

Sushma meets Maldives minister amid strained ties



External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj greets Mohamed Asim, Minister of Foreign Affairs & Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Maldives, ahead of a meeting, in New Delhi on Jan 11.

NEW DELHI (TIP): External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Jan 11 met her Maldivian counterpart Mohamed Asim to convey India's concerns on the island nation's recent Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China.

The visiting minister "reaffirmed his government's India-first policy and emphasised that Maldives attached the highest priority to its ties with India", the Ministry of External Affairs said in a press statement.

Asim is the first high-ranking official of the archipelago nation in Indian Ocean to visit India after President Abdulla Yameen's government in Male inked a Free Trade Agreement with China in December.

The FTA caused unease in India. While New Delhi did not publicly criticise Male, the southern neighbour was reminded through diplomatic channel that it was President Yameen's government in Maldives that had articulated its India-First policy.

According to the

agreement, China won't impose any taxes on fisheries imports from the island nation, and Maldives will not levy tax on goods imported from China.

"Discussions (between Swaraj and Asim) centred around strengthening of the development partnership between India and Maldives and enhancing defence and security cooperation. Sushma conveyed our commitment to achieving the full potential of our relationship in line with India's Neighbourhood First policy," said the MEA statement.

Asim, also the special envoy of the President of Maldives, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to invite him to Male. A planned prime ministerial visit in 2015 had to be cancelled due to political unrest in the island nation.

Modi accepted the invitation and affirmed that India would always be a reliable and close neighbour of Maldives, supporting it in its progress and security.

TAINTED MILLIONAIRE A BENEFICIARY OF FARM LOAN WAIVER IN PUNJAB



Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh

CHANDIGARH (TIP): Ironically, one of the beneficiaries of Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh's farm loan waiver scheme is a tainted millionaire, MD of Pearls Agrotech Corporation Limited (PACL), Sukhdev Singh, who is an accused in a case being probed by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate.

Singh has been in jail for some time now. He, along with others, is an accused in the Rs 45,000-crore chit fund scam and is alleged to have duped crores of investors. It has now come to light that Singh's name is in the list of beneficiaries of farm debt waiver and has been offered a relief of over Rs 1.74 lakh by the government. The amount may not be exponentially high, but the case of Sukhdev Singh underlines the urgent need to plug loopholes and initiate a course correction to the benefit of small and marginal farmers.

Capt's much flaunted farm debt waiver scheme was intended to provide relief to beleaguered debt ridden farmers with small land holdings who were unable to pay their debt and were being driven to suicide. Singh's name is at number 26 in the list of beneficiaries. He had taken a farm loan from a local cooperative society in district Ropar. Sources said, a probe is underway to look into the matter.

Last week, the ED attached properties of PACL worth Rs 472 crore in Australia. The agency is also probing the case against PACL and its subsidiaries under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

While Capt's loan waiver scheme is benefiting large number of farmers after relief cheques were rolled out early this week, its execution is ridden by controversies of flawed relief and genuine beneficiaries being left out. Some farmers with heavy loan debt are "benefited" with relief amounts as low as Rs 5 and Rs 7.

Reports from various parts of Punjab suggest that names of many small and marginal farmers who are under debt do not figure in the list of beneficiaries. The CMD of Pearls Golden Forest Limited (PGF) along with Sukhdev Singh of PACL and others were arrested after a case was registered by the CBI in February 2014 for acts of criminal conspiracy and cheating.

Do not Lose Hope in Trump, America's Expectations Can Still Come True



By A.D. Amar

In 2008, when I was contesting for the US Congress from the New Jersey's District 7, I met with many seasoned and intelligent politicians from both parties. They all agreed on one thing that America's problems were too big. They also agreed that they knew of no politician who had the capabilities to solve them.

When I focused on these problems, I found out that there were just two big sources of most of America's problems. They both had to do with the poor border control. One due to the lack of control of human inflow into the country and the second due to the lack of control of goods flowing in from all over the world. In other words, it is due to the illegal immigration and unchecked importation of goods. This is how America from being the world's biggest and best-quality producer became the biggest importer and became a laughing stock of those countries that imported to America and even those living in America, for its poor quality.

In the process, from being the richest country in the world, it needed to borrow money from almost all countries around the world, with our biggest creditors being those who sold their goods to us, such as China, Japan, Germany, Mexico, Canada, Korea, etc. Because of the large inflow of the low skill workers from poor countries, American wages fell. Americans lost their jobs and riches to those who had forced themselves in through the borders, mostly along the South. The unemployment costs increased on the states and, because most of the illegal immigrant businesses run underground, the tax base decreased. Furthermore, the increased school,

“ Since in office, Trump has given a very favorable treatment to many Indian Americans by appointing them in key Federal positions in his administration. He has also given India whatever it asked for. Additionally, Trump started to band with India in Asia-Pacific and other parts of the world against India's archenemies. Indian Americans definitely appreciate that”, says the author.

healthcare and other costs made the states and the Federal government operating in deficit.

I believed that if we fixed these two problems, we could revive our economy and, with that, our financial problems will disappear. Furthermore, as money comes back in the system, slowly but surely everything will come back. America's problems will disappear.

In 2015, when I decided to support Donald J. Trump for the US President and, on December 25, 2015, with a friend, decided to form a committee to promote Trump, I knew that Trump would be able to deliver what America needed to fix its problems. Therefore, with my friend and another colleague, in January 2016, I registered a PAC called Indian Americans for Trump 2016. I did so because I had faith in Trump's ability and temperament to be able to take on America's problems. I expected Trump's temperament as his big strength since the approaches of all other so called "normal" presidents had not succeeded in solving our problems, economic as well as foreign policy.

During the primary campaign period, according to the records of the Trump for President, I was one of the three academics to have endorsed Trump for President. The political action committee we formed and I led was the first Indian American group formed specifically to openly favor Trump for President. The PAC worked very hard, reached out to Indian Americans and others in many states to campaign for Trump. President Trump, after his victory, agreed that Indian Americans played a critical role in his victory.

Since in office, Trump has given a very

favorable treatment to many Indian Americans by appointing them in key Federal positions in his administration. He has also given India whatever it asked for. Additionally, Trump started to band with India in Asia-Pacific and other parts of the world against India's archenemies. Indian Americans definitely appreciate that.

Another issue is that the countries who are "our friends" believe in keep taking money from us whether we have it or not. The story is the same whether these were countries who would keep selling to us their products without buying anything from us, or these were the countries who were living on aid from America; they all disdained America if America tried to cut their stream of cash coming from the USA. Both these groups of countries believed that they had a right to those streams, whether it was Japan, Germany, South Korea, Canada, France, and many others in this class. On the other hand, these are the countries that had been living on the aid coming from the USA. They include Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, etc. They also believed that it was their right to receive these monies without any obligation. Trump already had bitter arguments on this with the leaders of these countries such as Angela Merkel of Germany and Khwaja Asif of Pakistan.

Another big problem that muddies up things in the USA is the political lobbies. They engage in pay-to-play. Politicians get contributions, and, in return, they do what the lobbyists want them to do. Many question why when Presidents were candidates, contesting for election, talked about these problems, but

accepted them on their election. Others said that these have been happening for so long that they have become the "American Way", America's tradition. Among other American Presidents, Obama criticized the practice and promised never to do that and promised to change them, but did not dare go against the lobbyists. In fact, he let them run the White House, such as David Axelrod and Rahm Immanuel. The presidents, who changed, as Obama did, did not want to take the "risk". They wanted to have their 8 years and retire, shifting the responsibility on the next President.

Trump has been in office less than a year. All voters are watching. So far, he has been doing all right. If election were held today, he will win. However, if illegal immigrants continue to stay in the country and others, somehow, are allowed to sneak in, and the unchecked importation of foreign goods is allowed to continue, America's problems will not go away. The stock market rise will be temporary and will make some rich, nevertheless, the problems will continue.

However, Trump's performance for the 2020 reelection will depend on his ability to handle the sources of America's biggest problems listed above. If he cannot handle the trade imbalances, the illegal immigrant problems, and the power of the lobbyists, it will be difficult for him to get votes of those who made him win in 2016, Indian Americans or not.

(The author is Professor of Management, Stillman School of Business, Seton Hall University. He can be reached at Ad.amar@shu.edu/ Tel: (973) 761 9684.)

The Arts are Here to Stay



By Carmen Fariña

When I accepted the job of Chancellor, I knew right away that the arts would be a focal point of my tenure. The arts are not an add-on or simply an extra-curricular activity - a rich arts curriculum strengthens school communities and teaches students skills and passion, cultivates hobbies and can instill confidence and creativity that students will keep with them for the rest of their lives.

This is evident at PS 111 in Queens. When I visited in September to celebrate the opening of a new cafeteria, I was stopped in my tracks by the sound of students belting at the top of their lungs. I instantly turned around to see where the noise was coming from. As I walked down the hallway, the singing became louder until finally I found the classroom - a group of 25 fourth grade students practicing scales. I interrupted and asked the teacher what they were working

on. It was still only the third week of school, but they were already rehearsing for their holiday concert in December. "We have a lot of work to do," the teacher said with a smile.

She was right, they had a long way to go. But that didn't matter, because every student in that classroom was beaming with joy. This was the music teacher's first year at the school and her class represented the culmination of hard work by the principal, Ms. Jaggon, to revamp the school's arts instruction.

Just two years ago, PS 111 was on the State's list of persistently dangerous schools. The school was also struggling to engage parents and morale was low. Needless to say, a drastic change was needed and the arts have played a critical part in that effort. The school now has a dance teacher and a new dance studio, a visual arts teacher, a music teacher and a theater teacher. Parents are excited to be in the building where student artwork hangs on every wall and a performance or concert happens with great frequency. Most importantly, students have become more confident, motivated and curious to try new things.

These are the types of investments that we're seeing schools make in every borough.

In fact, over the past two years, school-level spending in the arts has increased by over \$45 million. And this year, we have a record high-number of certified arts teachers in our schools - the highest in more than a decade, with nearly 3,000 citywide.

Schools like PS 111 are the reason this administration invests in the arts each year. Because we know that the arts help strengthen school communities, foster creativity and critical thinking skills and help create an inclusive environment for all students.

At PS 111, for example, one in five students is an English Language Learner and nearly 40 percent of students have special needs. The arts have played an even more important role in the lives of students like these and their families. This year, we've expanded arts programming for ELL students and students with disabilities to nearly 350 schools across the City, more than double the number of schools in 2014-15. These programs also help students learn English and become more confident and expressive.

When I look at schools like PS 111, I know that our investments in arts go beyond just teaching music, dance, visual arts or theater.

Our investments have built stronger ties between families and schools and have opened up new and exciting doors for students, helping them discover passions they never knew they had.

As we continue to make these investments in the arts, and cultivate partnerships with cultural institutions, I'm also proud that thousands of 7th graders have benefitted from "Teen Thursdays" where they enjoy the incredible museum offerings across our City. And for the first time, we're also providing some high schools with additional funding and support so that they can enhance their arts programs and attract more students through competitive auditions. As more schools spend their own resources on the arts programming, it is clear that the arts have become a pillar of instruction in our schools.

Now, after 52 years of working in New York City schools, I will be retiring in the coming months. It gives me great pride and satisfaction to see this reinvigorated passion for the arts from our youngest learners through high school. The arts are not a frill, and they are here to stay.

(The author is New York City Schools Chancellor)

Julian Assange denied diplomatic status by UK

LONDON (TIP): Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who has been holed up in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London to avoid arrest and extradition to the US, was today denied diplomatic status by the UK government.

The anti-secrecy group's chief has been based at the Ecuador embassy in central London since 2012 after he lost appeals against sexual assault charges in Sweden.

The request for diplomatic status was made on behalf of the 46-year-old campaigner by the Ecuadorean government, which has reportedly issued a passport to the Australian national after he had sought political asylum from the South American country five and a half years ago.

"The government of Ecuador recently requested diplomatic status for Assange here in the UK. The UK did not grant that request, nor are we in talks with Ecuador on this matter," said a spokesperson for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

"Ecuador knows that the way to resolve this issue is for Julian Assange to leave the embassy to face justice," the spokesperson added.

According to media reports from Ecuador earlier this week, Assange has been registered to the province of Pichincha, which covers the capital Quito.

The public database of the country's internal revenue service indicates that the travel document was delivered to Assange on December 21, indicating that the country is preparing for the campaigner's exit from his London hideout.

Ecuador foreign minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa has said that the



country is seeking a neutral third-party nation's mediation to revolve what she described as an "untenable" situation.

While the grant of a passport has not been officially confirmed, it is seen as part of a process to get Assange out of the UK by giving him a role at the embassy that confers diplomatic immunity.

The rape allegation against the computer programmer had followed a Wikileaks conference in Stockholm in 2010.

Assange has always denied the sexual assault allegations against him, claiming the sex was consensual and that the case was politically motivated to get him extradited to the US over massive Wikileaks dumps of secret US military reports that year.

Swedish prosecutors have since dropped their investigation into the allegations but Assange still faces arrest by Scotland Yard for breaching bail conditions if he steps outside the embassy.

Assange also fears he will be extradited to the US if he leaves the building over a sealed indictment ordering his arrest.

A United Nations panel had concluded in 2016 that Assange was under arbitrary detention. But the British government has maintained he must face justice in UK courts over his breach of bail conditions.

WikiLeaks is an international non-profit journalistic organisation that publishes secret information, news leaks and classified media from anonymous sources. (PTI)

'No deal' Brexit could cost Britain about 500,000 jobs, London mayor says

LONDON (TIP): Britain could lose almost 500,000 jobs and 50 billion pounds (\$67.41 billion) investment over the next 12 years if it fails to agree a trade deal with the European Union, according a report commissioned by London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

Cambridge Econometrics, an economics consultancy, looked at five different Brexit scenarios, from the hardest to the softest form of Brexit, and broke down the economic impact on nine industries, from construction to finance.

The study said that in a no-deal scenario, the industry that fares the worst will be financial and professional services, with as many as 119,000 fewer jobs nationwide.

"If the Government continue to mishandle the negotiations we could be heading for a lost decade of lower growth and lower employment," Khan said. "Ministers are fast running out of time to turn the negotiations around."

Britain and the EU will soon begin the much harder task of defining their future trading relationship, after settling the broad terms of their divorce settlement last month.

A stand-off between Britain and the EU over the future access to single market for London's vast financial services industry is shaping up to be one of the key Brexit battlegrounds before Britain is due to leave the bloc in March 2019. (Reuters)

Putin calls Kim Jong Un 'competent and mature' leader

MOSCOW (TIP): Russian President Vladimir Putin says North Korea's Kim Jong Un has shown himself to be a mature leader who is interested in calming down the tensions over its nuclear and long-range missile programs.

Meeting with top Russian media figures yesterday, Putin said Kim "is an absolutely competent and already mature politician" who has "solved his strategic task - he has a nuclear warhead and a global-range missile."

Now, in Putin's view, Kim is "cleaning up the situation, smoothing it, calming it." Kim and President Donald Trump have engaged in an increasingly sharp war of words as North Korea's weapons programs advance, each of them belittling the other. (AP)

Britain, France, Germany plead for US to preserve Iran deal

BRUSSELS (TIP): Britain, France, Germany and the European Union made a joint call to the United States to protect the Iran nuclear pact, saying Tehran had a right to benefit from the lifting of sanctions tied to it. On the eve of a deadline for the US president to decide whether to reimpose oil sanctions lifted under the deal, the foreign ministers of the three European powers and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini made their plea after their meeting in Brussels.

"The accord is essential and there is no alternative," France's Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told reporters. "We do not hide the other points of disagreement (with Iran) that exist." (Reuters)

China, Asia leaders discuss Mekong dam projects

PHNOM PENH (TIP): Leaders of nations along Southeast Asia's Mekong River gathered Jan 10 in Cambodia's capital amid a push by China to build more dams that are altering the water flow and raising environmental concerns.

The meeting was chaired by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, who were joined by leaders from Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

The stated goal of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation forum, created by China in 2015, is to promote sustainable development and boost the quality of life for the millions of people living in the Mekong subregion.

Known as the Lancang in China, the Mekong River is vital to Southeast Asia, where more than 60 million people rely on it and its tributaries for food, water and transport.

The world's 12th-longest river, the Mekong runs nearly 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) from the Tibetan Plateau down into mainland Southeast Asia before emptying into the South China Sea in Vietnam. The river's basin is home to up to 1,700 fish species, making it the most diverse basin after the Amazon and Congo.

Yet the river is also another potential source of regional tensions due to an increasing number of hydroelectric projects that are altering its flow and raising concerns of ecological damage. Vietnam, already locked in conflict with Beijing over territory in the South China Sea, says it is at particular risk of adverse effects. (AP)

China's new Silk Road hits political, financial hurdles

BEIJING: China's plan for a modern Silk Road of railways, ports and other facilities linking Asia with Europe hit a \$14 billion pothole in Pakistan.

Pakistan's relations with Beijing are so close that officials call China their "Iron Brother." Despite that, plans for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam were thrown into turmoil in November when the chairman of Pakistan's water authority said Beijing wanted an ownership stake in the hydropower project. He rejected that as against Pakistani interests.

China issued a denial but the official withdrew the dam from among dozens of projects being jointly developed by the two countries.

From Pakistan to Tanzania to Hungary, projects under President Xi Jinping's signature "Belt and Road Initiative" are being canceled, renegotiated or delayed due to disputes about costs or complaints host countries get too little out of projects built by Chinese companies and financed by loans from Beijing that must be repaid.

In some areas, Beijing is suffering a political backlash due to fears of domination by Asia's biggest economy.

"Pakistan is one of the countries that is in China's hip pocket, and for Pakistan to stand up and say, 'I'm not going to do this with you,' shows it's not as 'win-win' as China says it is," said Robert Koepf, an analyst in Hong Kong for the Economist Corporate Network, a research firm.

"Belt and Road," announced by Xi in 2013, is a loosely defined umbrella for Chinese-built or -financed projects across 65 countries from the South Pacific through Asia to Africa and Europe.

Other governments welcomed the initiative in a region the Asian Development Bank says needs more than \$26 trillion of infrastructure investment by 2030 to keep economies growing. Nations including Japan have given or lent billions of dollars for development, but China's venture is bigger and the only source of money for many projects.

Governments from Washington to Moscow to New Delhi are uneasy Beijing is trying to use its "Belt and Road" to develop a China-centered political structure that will erode their influence.

Among projects that have been derailed or disrupted, authorities in Nepal canceled plans in November for Chinese companies to build a \$2.5 billion dam after they concluded contracts for the Budhi Gandaki Hydro Electric Project violated rules requiring multiple bidders.

Consulting firm BMI Research has compiled a database of \$1.8 trillion of infrastructure investments across Asia, Africa and the Middle East that include Chinese money or other involvement. "It's probably too early to say at this point how much of the overall initiative will actually be implemented," said Christian Zhang, a BMI analyst.

The U.S. and Japanese governments express interest in building contracts or other potential opportunities. But they also are trying to develop alternative initiatives.

The stumbles for one of the world's most ambitious infrastructure ventures could help temper concerns Beijing will increase its strategic influence. (AP)

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WHAT TO WATCH IN 2018

AS THE NEW YEAR BEGINS, HERE ARE THE SMARTEST PREDICTIONS OF WHAT'S COMING IN POLITICS, TECH AND BUSINESS IN 2018.



The big picture: In many ways 2018 will mirror 2017. The world's largest economies will continue to grow in sync, the #MeToo movement will continue to topple men who behave badly from positions of power, and the North Korean nuclear threat will keep fueling international tensions. But new trends may emerge if the Democrats take the House in the midterm elections or media companies find a solution to the "fake news" epidemic

BY ERICA PANDEY

At home

Democrats will take back the House "by an eyelash" in the 2018 midterm elections, the Financial Times' Courtney Weaver predicts. It's typical for the party of the president to lose seats in the midterms, and the Republican Party could "lose big" given Trump's sub-50 approval rating. A Democrat majority in the House would also mean impeachment proceedings against Trump could gain ground in the new year.

Abroad

Trump's approach to China is about to change for several reasons, per Sinocism's Bill Bishop: the administration's National Security Strategy very clearly reframed the U.S. government's view of China in a confrontational way, the president believes China is still not doing enough on North Korea, and the administration's "America First" trade contingent is ascendant. Several trade actions are in the planning stages and they will likely hit soon.

Uneasy tension around the North Korean

nuclear threat will continue - or escalate. Trump tweeted on Dec. 28 that there won't be a "friendly solution" to the issue of North Korea if China violates UN sanctions against the rogue regime. And Admiral Mike Mullen, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said on ABC's This Week that the U.S. is closer "than ever before" to a nuclear confrontation with North Korea.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May will keep her job, per the Financial Times' Sebastian Payne. "Sealing a Brexit divorce deal has ensured short-term job security," Payne writes.

Zimbabwe won't hold free and fair elections in 2018 despite the end to Robert Mugabe's 37-year rule, FT's David Pilling predicts. And Al Jazeera's Barnaby Phillips writes, "Emmerson Mnangagwa will surely prove a more capable manager of Zimbabwe's economy than Mugabe, but there are plenty of reasons to fear he'll be just as ruthless and undemocratic."

The global economy

Synchronized growth will continue. This year, for the first time since the Great Recession, the world's leading economies grew

in sync. And that growth will hold into 2018, Goldman Sachs research economists predict. They're forecasting 4.0% GDP growth for the new year, up from a 3.7% projection for 2017.

Emerging markets will grow as well. Average GDP growth for emerging markets will reach 5%, up from 4.7% in 2017, per the Financial Times' James Kynge. "This will mostly be because Russia and Brazil, which have stumbled, will bounce back," Kynge writes.

In tech

Big Tech will get stronger: "Silicon Valley got raked over the coals in 2017 about sexism, security and its influence on national affairs. But it hasn't really grappled with the bigger problem: There's too much power in the hands of too few ... Expect to see tech giants flogging their "social good" efforts in the year ahead, but our trust won't be restored by watching them act like benevolent dictators," per the Washington Post's Gregory Fowler.

Bitcoin will keep dominating headlines with its dramatic crashes and booms. Goldman Sachs became the first major Wall Street institution to launch a trading desk for the

cryptocurrency in 2017, and, as more institutions venture into the crypto world, prices will rise accordingly, CNBC's Eric Jackson predicts.

Augmented reality will rise in prominence, Axios' Alayna Treene reports. "In the next few years, we're going to see AR develop significantly and start to break through to the mainstream. Once that happens, it will effect almost every aspect of daily life - from entertainment and work to education and transportation."

In media

Transparency will become "the antidote to fake news," Frontline's Raney Aronson-Rath tells Nieman Lab. Per Aronson-Rath, "We've seen Facebook make moves towards differentiating between verified and unverified stories. Twitter and Google, too. But the problem is massive, and these are just first steps."

The #MeToo movement will continue toppling powerful men who behave badly in media and every other industry. Here's a list of the 82 men accused of sexual harassment and assault in 2017. (Source: Axios)

365 days: A look at Donald Trump in the White House

The dawn of November 9, 2016, was one of great disbelief for the world's oldest democracy as the news was just beginning to sink in among Americans of Donald Trump's astounding victory in the presidential polls. A year on since that win, here's a look at Trump in the White House:

BY THE NUMBERS

- **Approval rating:** 37% Lower than any previous president in over 70 years
- **Economy:** 2.6% up in 2nd quarter of 2017. Trump had set a 3% target for long-term economic growth
- 21% rise in S&P 500, fourth largest 12-month gain following a presidential election since 19363.
- **Jobless rate:** 4.3% in July, lowest since early 2014
- **Tourist flow:** 4.3m decline in overseas tourist numbers to US, represents loss of \$7.4 billion revenue
- **Terror cases/ mass shootings:** 362, including the October 1 Las Vegas shooting, the worst such in US history, and the October 31 New York van attack

Trump on Twitter

1. Around 2,400 tweets since November 8, 2016. That's about 7 tweets a day
2. Key words used in tweets: Great - 456, Fake news/media - 167, Jobs - 94, Obamacare - 77



SOME INTERESTING TWEETS:

Donald J. Trump?
@realDonaldTrump
My use of social media is not Presidential - it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL. Make America Great Again!
5:41 PM · Jul 1, 2017
75,611 75,611 Replies 55,085 55,085 Retweets 193,178 193,178 likes
Twitter Ads info and privacy
Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump
Just heard Foreign Minister of North Korea speak at U.N.

If he echoes thoughts of Little Rocket Man, they won't be around much longer!

10:08 PM · Sep 23, 2017
49,288 49,288 Replies 36,800 36,800 Retweets 133,381 133,381 likes

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Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

CHAIN MIGRATION must end now! Some people come in, and they bring their whole family with them, who can be truly evil. NOT ACCEPTABLE!

6:03 PM · Nov 1, 2017
20,795 20,795 Replies 22,768 22,768 Retweets 76,320 76,320 likes

Twitter Ads info and privacy

Trump's wealth

1. Forbes said Trump's wealth dipped by \$600m to \$3.1bn in Sept 2017 since 2016
 2. He fell 92 spots on the latest list of the richest Americans
 3. The drop was put down mainly to a tough real estate market and an expensive poll campaign
- PM Modi and Trump have declared ties between Washington and New Delhi have "never been stronger". India is a key component in US plans to contain China. The White House has also pushed Pakistan to combat terrorism.

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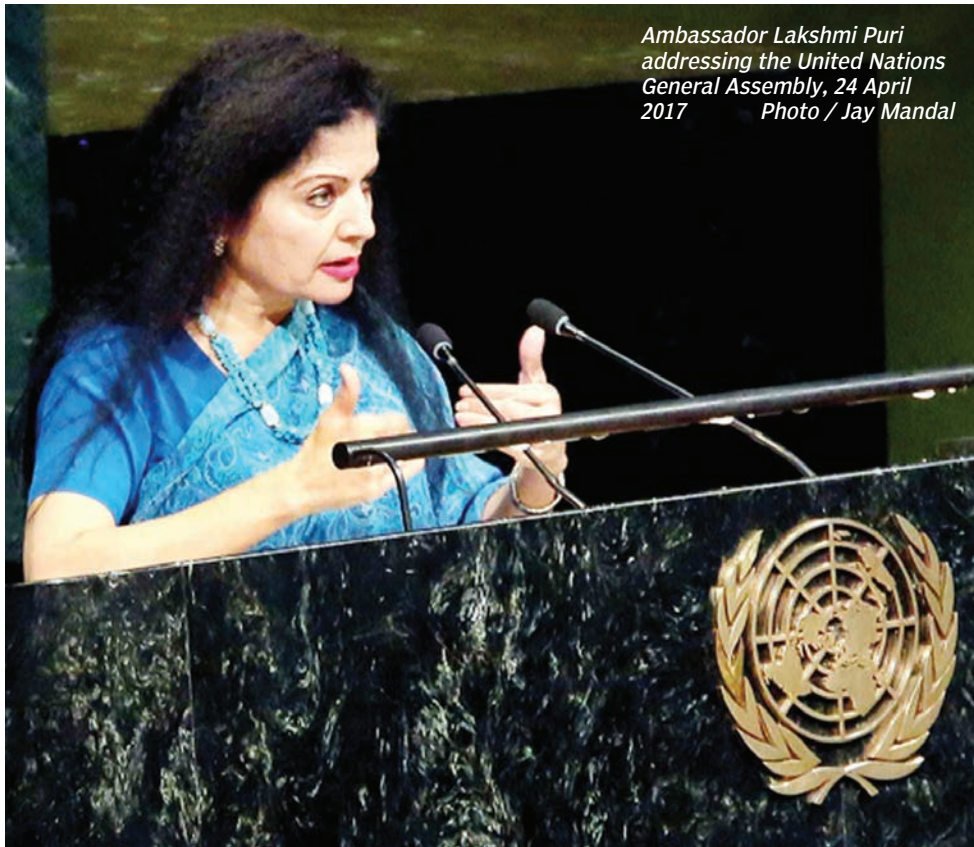
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 **OPINIO**

THE POWER OF ONE

AN INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR LAKSHMI PURI
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL & DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UN WOMEN

INTERVIEW BY PROF. INDRAJIT S SALUJA, CHIEF EDITOR, THE INDIAN PANORAMA



Ambassador Lakshmi Puri
addressing the United Nations
General Assembly, 24 April
2017 Photo / Jay Mandal



Farewell call with the
Secretary-General of the
United Nations, Antonio
Guterres, December 2017
Photo/ Mohammed
Jaffer-SnapsIndia

"The power of one is about passion, commitment and indomitable courage and keeping faith with the causes we serve no matter the difficulties and setbacks. It's about not giving up ever." Ambassador Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary General & Deputy Executive Director UN Women, had said, receiving her Diwali Power of One Award at the United Nations on December 11, 2017. The only woman among five diplomats to be honored, Ambassador Puri made her resolve known: "I will power on believing in the infinite possibility of all of us to achieve our infinite potential for good".

As this champion of gender equality prepared to leave the UN Women towards the end of January 2018 to go back to India, after having served the apex women's body of the United Nations since its inception in 2011, The Indian Panorama succeeded in securing her nod for an interview.



Receiving the Diwali Power of One Award, in recognition of powerful advocacy and leadership in ensuring the adoption of a dedicated goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5) within the Sustainable Development Goals, and championship of the cause, December 11, 2017
Photo /Jay Mandal

So, on a January 2 cold morning I reached her office in the iconic Daily News building on 42nd Street in New York City to speak with her. In a candid conversation with me she spoke passionately about her work at the UN Women - how much needed to be done, how much has been done, and how much more needs to be done - for gender equality, for emancipation of women, for empowerment of women. I could see a tigress in her when ready to pounce if she thought she was being challenged. During the conversation, at one or two points, she flipped at some remark which she considered was sexist or discriminatory.

I tried to wean her away from the subject so dear to her, to her personal life and succeeded but only briefly because she was possessed with thinking only of women and their rightful and dignified place in society.

Here are excerpts from the interview.

TIP: you have put your heart and soul in your work to care for the dignity of women as guided by your parents and that's what, I believe, you have instilled in your children. You are known to be a fiercely feminist personality. I would like my readers to know what is the role of UN Women when it comes to emancipation, ending bias and grantwomen their rights as human beings I will then come to my other question.

AMB: Un Women was founded in Jan. 2011, and I joined in March 2011. So, I am in the leadership team since the beginning and this forum is the only global advocate for gender equality, women's empowerment and women's right in every area. So, what does that mean? It means for us that international agreements and commitments made by govts. to uphold and advance gender equality and empowerment, norms and standards. And that has been UN women's and my own contribution. Because we have in place today historic gender equality compact on the part of international community which is reflected in the Beijing platform for action not only recommitted but taken forward.

Similarly, the UN's sustainable development agenda has made gender equality central to the agenda. And there is a sustainable goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women. So, we mobilized all countries to strongly support and take forward the goal. And that goal is about ending all forms of violence against women, child marriage, women trafficking, harmful practices like honor killing, sex selection, and everything. apart from that all harmful practices that we have in, including India, south Asia. So, this is a strong sustainable target.

Similarly, ending all forms discrimination, laws and practices. Women's economic empowerment equal ownership over productive resources. Similarly, parity in voice participation and leadership in all public life, economic and political life. That means in parliament, in the executive, in judiciary, in law enforcement, in public service, in corporations, everywhere. and, then it also involves universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Women need control over their bodies and their reproductive role. And, then, the goal also recognizes that women have to bear disproportionate role in domestic care. This is

But sexual harassment in work place is very pervasive. It is challenging to women who are coming out and participating in different sectors of political life and professions. So, all these stories are now coming out like "metoo" movement.

CONT ON PAGE 37

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really frontier pushing. 2/3rds of such work is done by women and in places like in India, it is higher which is without compensation and it also without opportunity, cost on education, income and employment, economic empowerment. So, valuing that, reducing that, redistributing that and provisioning that. so, these goals are something that were very hard to attain and that's something that I count that as my legacy - the whole gender equality, climate change, peace and security, the new urban agenda. My husband is the urban affairs minister in India, but we have been advocating before the govt. of India and implementing smart cities program and all the urban programs that they are doing. PM Modi is very much supportive of gender equality program and his new India campaign.



With Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, October 2017
Photo / PMO

TIP: I concur with what you are saying but centuries old cultural, social and patriarchal norms take time to change. Compared to US, there are not many women rising to top in Punjab or Africa. How tough do you think your ground is whether in Punjab or Africa?

AMB: Well, cultural, social, and patriarchal norms are critical and that is why we believe in movement building. and that is why I believe govt. of India's - bibi bachao, beti padhao - unless you start building culture and social norms around valuing the girl child that she is of equal value and also you dismantle all the patriarchal institutions and norms that devalue the child and aversion to the girl child, you are not going to get any change. So, movement building has to be done. This movement building has been going on through village councils. UN women has been working in India through women village councilors and zilla parishad councilors. Because they have got elected on quota and there are 1.5 million women councilors who are acting as staff. What we have do is to work with them, train them and demand rights and public services from authorities and also implementation of the programs that have been approved, money to be spent on programs that have been approved. So, our governance program is very successful program.

Women's economic empowerment, access to energy and water and sanitation are really important. But you have to target gender equality when you target these programs. And equally these programs will benefit gender equality in return. For example, the jan-dhan program, the access to finance, women's disadvantage in terms of owning property, lands and in Punjab this is prevalent in spite of having a law that prevents it and also to disincentivize the discrimination. So effective laws and policies and their effective implementation, movement building, and youth have to be part of all this.

On the youth side, we have this LEAP program - Leadership, empowerment, action and prevention of violence against women and partnership with women's organization, young men's organization and intergenerational dialog. So that is the youth part.

We are very successful in our "he or she" programs. men and boys have to be made champions of gender equality. Women have to stand up for their rights.

I have seen in India women are transmitting harmful, discriminatory patriarchal norms. So social transformation by women themselves is important. but men and boys have to be taught from the beginning.

TIP: That is where the problem is. When there are many women in the family, only then men are sensitive to feminist issues.

AMB: Yes, it has to begin when you are a boy. Every father and mother must bring up their children in a gender equal way. Boys must learn in their textbooks in the way their teachers teach them about how women and girls are lower in dignity. The other day PM Modi said in "swacha Bharat abhiyan" - he talked about how everybody in the house leaves the woman to do the cleaning work. Why? It should be the responsibility of each one. So that kind of new culture respecting the dignity and equal rights of women has to be developed. Education is an important part, but prevention, protection, prosecution of perpetrators, ending violence against women and provision of multisectoral services- in all of that again, changing mindset and educating from the beginning is needed. We are now dealing with generations of people who have grown up on gender unequal basis and mindset that have stereotypes. So, we have to change that and to change that we have to work with them. and we have been working with them.

90% of the world is governed by men leaders and they are leading from the front.

You asked about Africa. We have worked with tribal leaders, advocating and championing. it has been successful.

Faith is another important thing. In Sikhism, women are always seen as equal. And, what has happened now? it is with all other religions including Hindus that we worship them on one side and on the other, we devalue them.

TIP: you spoke eloquently about women empowerment, ending violence against them, - coming back to USA, it is a very progressive country. So, what would be your reaction to the reports of sexual harassments by people in very high positions, including the president of the country. What do you feel about this country then?

AMB: In 2015, UN women did a global report with countries reporting how they have fared with Beijing platform in 12 different areas, ranging from economic empowerment to media about women. And, what conclusion we reached - this is recorded intergovernmentally - no country has achieved gender equality. Progress is there in last 20 years in all of the critical areas like labor force, participation in political life, recognizing that there is violence that is criminal, and it is to be ended and prosecute those who commit violence. It is just not violence, it is worst violation of women's human rights and it comes from a sense of entitlement, which is nothing but discrimination. So, no society is perfect on this and certainly not even the USA. Due to cases like "Nirbhaya" case or "MeToo" movement, there is a global consciousness.

Previously domestic violence was thought of as private matter. It is no more. It is criminal. So, we have now in more than 130 countries around the world criminalization of domestic violence. But sexual harassment in work place is very pervasive. It is challenging to women who are coming out and participating in different sectors of political life and professions. So, all these stories are now coming out like "metoo" movement. Many stories were not reported out of sense of shame but it is not valid. It is the perpetrator who should be in jail. There was also a fear of stigma like what would happen to my career.

So, the first sign to end the violence against women is to recognize that it is a global pandemic, where does it exist and who are the perpetrators; and no one will be immune. We need to hold people accountable.



Accepting the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award In recognition of her contribution to furthering the mission of the United Nations, her deep-seated commitment to human rights, as well as the global impact of her work, November 2016

TIP: Do you think, like reservation system, we should have a similar system in political and corporate world?

AMB: I entirely advocate what is in the Beijing platform and what is in the convention for ending all forms of discrimination against women. There is a rule for special temporary measures. it is not that these measures will be there forever, but when you level the playing field, you need some special measures to take those who are at the position of disadvantage now to the position of equality and once that has been achieved, then those measures will become irrelevant. So that is what we should aspire for.

Now to your question, even before going to corporate, we have been advocating, and achieved constitutional amendments in many countries whereby quotas have been set for parliaments but not yet in India. We are strongly advocating for "reservation bill" in India. There are electoral system challenges and diverse community cultures, but we are advocating reservation bill strongly and parliamentary seats for women for some time. I remember one case in a village panchayat near Jaipur when she stated that she was first nominated and now she defeated 15 other contestants on her own strength. She said people voted for her because she delivered - "I built roads, got schools opened, got projects opened".

It is not only women and girls that we do reservation for; it is for good governance.

TIP: so those girls are advocating requirements for themselves.

AMB: So, you need to bring us up to a level when we don't need any more help and also to a point where people recognize women's equal participation in governance.

That brings me to the corporate world. It is a major challenge. There are many countries - like Norway - that have special measures which state that any company that wants to be listed on stock exchange has to have 50 percent women on board. China and Japan are also working towards having women board members. So, it is a mandatory movement. There are movements

In order to build 50/50 progress by 2030, we have to take some measures. We are leading not only in India but many parts of the world, "Gender parity Democracy" movement.

CONT FROM PAGE 37

in India, European union and Germany as well.

In Australia, women owned business companies are given certain preferences. These kinds of incentives build women's management and governance capacity in the corporate sector as well. So, you need some measures to achieve that.



With Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, global champion of gender equality and UN Women; and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. June 2016

TIP: Even though India had Lady PM and President in politics, what about corporate sector?

AMB.: We have women CMs, ministers etc. We are taking many steps but not enough. This is a very slow progress. In order to build 50/50 progress by 2030, we have to take some measures. We are leading not only in India but many parts of the world, "Gender parity Democracy" movement.

We have great women's movement in India, many NGO leaders are women.

As UN organization, we have our first MOU with NYC and we have partnership program on all aspects of gender equality. Like NYC, we are working with many cities in the world. We also have safe and sustainable cities program which include 66 cities in the program and India has about 8 or 9 cities that participates in the gender equality program which includes many areas like transport, business etc.

Regarding your earlier question on women, apart from this norm setting and movement building, one major project has been how to build a knowledge hub. we want to bring out the facts for a "gender statistics revolution".

We need to know and bring out what is happening with women and girls - whether economic empowerment, violence etc. and we have this program called "making women and girls count". India is a pathfinder country. There are about now 20 countries that participating in this program. Now social media is also helping in that - gender statistics revolution.

We need to bring out the facts to make people outreach to bring about the emancipation of women. As Swami Vivekananda said - "arise, awake and stop not" - this whole knowledge is important and that is the basis of the revolution.

TIP: Is there a time frame for that?

AMB: We have set a time-frame of 2030. That is why the slogan is - "planet 50/50 by 2030". We are asking every country to step up.

TIP: Just like any country that violates UN resolutions, are there any sanctions for the country that violates the gender equality?

AMB: UN women is intergovernmental organization. There are no sanctions that can be placed but we work with every country to make them speed up the gender equality. In UAE we have opened an office. We are having dialog with Saudi Arabia and we have a very strong Arab office in Egypt that oversees all of the Arab world.

We are working in conflict countries, natural disasters, refugee countries, we are working on humanitarian response and resilience building, making sure that whatever humanitarian response is provided, there is a very strong focusing on differential and disproportionate response on women as they are more prone to exploitation.

We are very strapped and under-resourced. Original target was 1 billion, then it became 500 million and now we are struggling to reach 300 million. It has been a big challenge. We have tried to raise from philanthropist and private sectors, including India. We are doing everything, but governments are not forthcoming.

TIP: Regrading your 2030 target, do you think your organization needs more resources and extra power to meet the target?

AMB: Absolutely. This has been one of my regrets that the international community has been very strong in committing in terms of norms and standards to women's empowerment and gender equality, they have not setup institutions to take this forward. So, the financial commitment part has not been commensurate with declared political commitment. We are very strapped and under-resourced. Original target was 1 billion, then it became 500 million and now we are struggling to reach 300 million. It has been a big challenge. We have tried to raise from philanthropist and private sectors, including India. We are doing everything, but

governments are not forthcoming.

"Making Women and children count" is supported by Gates Foundation.

TIP: US president has decided to cut back funding for UN. So, are you also affected?

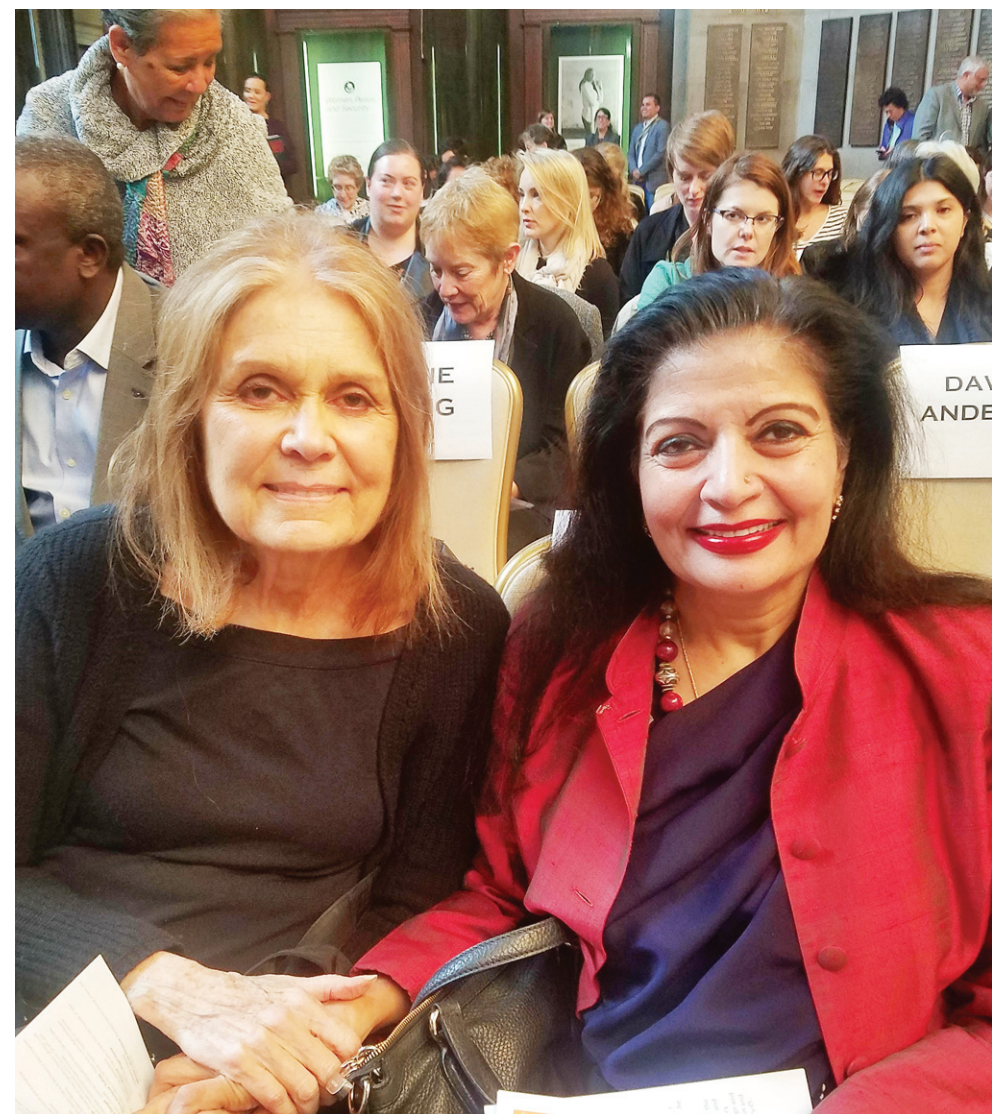
AMB: No, we were in fact very happy that in 2017 contribution from US increased by a million.

TIP: What about now?

AMB: In 2017 US govt. gave 8.5 million, 1 million more than the previous year.

TIP: How is India performing?

AMB: India, from the inception, has played a very stellar role and they are the only country contributing 1 million every year.



With the godmother of feminism, Gloria Steinem at the launch symposium of the Women, Peace and Security program at Columbia University, October 2017

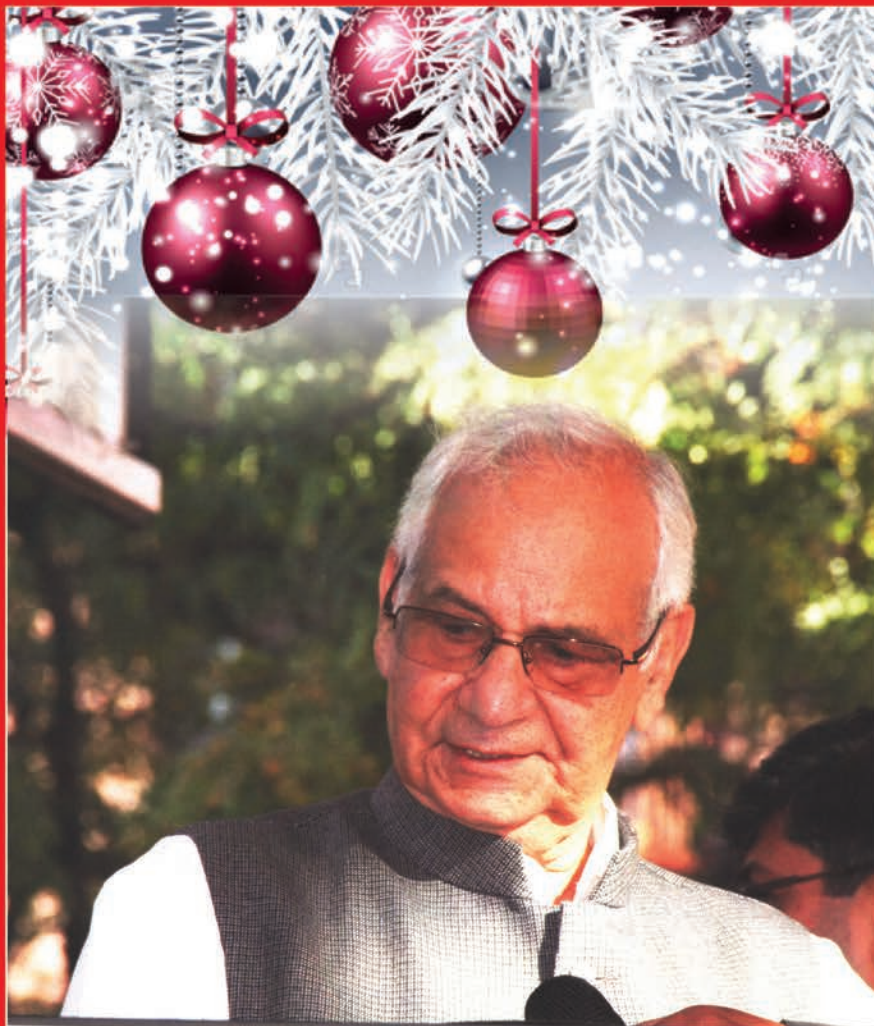
TIP: One last question. Your husband, Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri has been a wonderful diplomat. Now that he has chosen to go into politics, how do you look at the new avatar of your husband.

AMB: He always wanted to be in politics. He was in politics during his student days. He always wanted to break out of his civil service mantle and go into politics. After retirement, he chose to go into politics. I am very happy that he has assumed the role of minister for urban and housing development which is very critical in order to achieve all the 17 goals of sustainable development and he has my full support.

TIP: Before we close, would you like to say something to The Indian Panorama readers?

AMB: I would like all women to come forward and claim their rights which are equal to all the men and boys. And to all men and boys, join the gender equality cause, because this is not only good for your mothers, sisters, colleagues etc.; it is good for you.

I would like all women to come forward and claim their rights which are equal to all the men and boys. And to all men and boys, join the gender equality cause, because this is not only good for your mothers, sisters, colleagues etc.; it is good for you.



Shiv Dass, President of the Jackson Heights Indian Merchants' Association

Heartiest New Year Greetings to Readers of The Indian Panorama

For decades Shiv Dass has been a voice for the South Asian business community in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York. He is a business leader, a community organizer, and member of the local community board and has worked tirelessly to establish a positive and open relationship between the community and the elected officials, and in turn, he is often sought out by politicians seeking to get their message out.



Heartiest Greetings For a Happy, Healthy & Prosperous New year

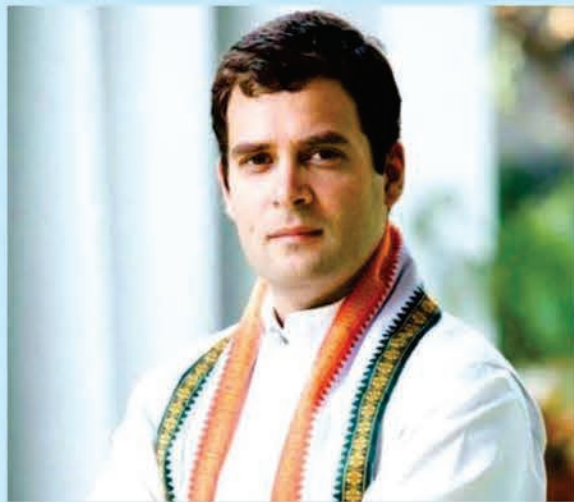
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- Past President and Board of Director, Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation
- Past President, Gujarati Samaj of New York



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Trump Tax Bill Is Pro-Growth & Pro-People



By Dave Makkar



“After more than three decades, Congress under President Trump, finally passed much-needed and long-overdue tax relief for millions of individuals, families and businesses. While the new tax bill is still not perfect, but it will go a long way in helping individuals, families, small to medium businesses as well as big corporations practically in every sector to be more competitive domestically as well as internationally. Consumers will receive much-needed tax relief and therefore, increase discretionary income. This Tax Bill will create still not too perfect but some what a fairer tax code that will trigger reinvestment in practically every state of America to create more jobs and better wages. This will boost the spending power of consumers and take America on the path of more prosperity”, says the author.

Personally, I have failed to understand the logics of Democrats that the Trump Tax Bill is anti-growth and anti-common person. The fact is this bill is pro-growth and pro-people. There is no doubt that the residents like me of high property and state tax states like New Jersey, New York, California etc. will be

affected to a certain extent because of the \$10,000 cap on property tax and state tax deduction but not a whole lot because of the doubling up of standard deduction.

As an resident of New Jersey since 1996, I can simply say if the property taxes are exorbitantly high; it is the residents that are to be blamed for allowing unionized politicians posing as Republicans & Democrats to govern 8.5 mil people in 8,000 sq. miles with 588 governments with over 10,000 elected/appointed politicians and 660,000 employees with no or little work. Unless the residents revolt to cut down the number of governments, elected/appointed politicians as well as the employees; they will see every year their property and state taxes going up to financially feed the monstrous size 588 governments of New Jersey.

Democrats are ignoring the fact that about 70 percent of Americans take the standard deduction. Trump Tax Bill has doubled that deduction to \$12,000 for individuals, 18,000 for heads of household, and \$24,000 for joint filers combined with some more generous 7 tax brackets and rates. It would mean less tax taken from most individuals' and families' paychecks. Child tax credit has been increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per child. A portion \$1,400 would be refundable. That is, taxpayers could get up to \$1,400 back from the government, even if they owed no tax. The Bill also raises the income limit for child credit, so families with higher incomes can qualify. Families also could claim a new, \$500 "family" tax credit for non-child dependents. That credit is non-refundable. The Bill would increase the amount that could be contributed to tax-favored ABLE savings accounts, designed to save for the needs of disabled adults and children. Contributions could also make the beneficiary of an ABLE account eligible for the saver's credit, intended to supplement savings for lower-income people. This Bill also provides a temporary break to low-earning people, applying the lowest, 10% rate to more of their taxable income (individuals would get an additional \$200 in income taxed at 10 percent; joint filers would get an additional \$400 taxed at that rate). For Tax payers subject to the alternative minimum tax, for individuals the exemption from current first \$54,300 has been raised to \$70,300. For married couples filing jointly the limit from \$54,500 has been raised to first \$109,400 of income. Under the new Tax Bill by one estimate, a family of four with an income of roughly \$73,000 would save \$1,500 each year in taxes. In nut shell under this Tax Bill, it would mean less tax taken from most individual's and families' paychecks.

Lower Property & state taxes deduction: A maximum \$10,000 deduction for state and local taxes could be split between property taxes, and either state income or sales taxes. That's compared with an unlimited deduction in the current tax code is certainly a setback for residents of high property & local tax states. This \$10,000 cap applies to both singles and married couples filing jointly, though married people filing separately could deduct a maximum of only \$5,000 each. People who run home businesses could still deduct the portion of state and local taxes, including property tax, that applies to that business. Interest on up to \$750,000 in mortgage debt on a newly purchased primary home could be deducted; that's a drop from the \$1 million allowed now. The interest on home-equity loans and line of credit would no longer be deductible, regardless of what it's used for.

Upper-Middle Class Tax payers/investors with passive income. Will get a significant tax break on a portion of qualifying income. According to a research paper authored by 13 tax experts notes, certain wealthy individuals might be able to incorporate themselves and pay tax on interest income at the corporate rate of 21 percent, not the top 37 percent they'd pay as individuals.

Coming to the rich, the heirs of wealthy people's surviving spouses would continue to pay no estate tax. The estate tax exemption would double; currently non-spousal heirs would avoid a 40 percent tax on the first \$5.49 million inherited from one individual and \$10.98 million inherited from two.

The main villain for the Tax Bill critics "The Corporations": Their tax rate would drop to 21 percent from a top 35 percent rate; decline of a whopping 40 percent! Also allows fully allowable deductions for capital expenses and lower levies on repatriating overseas profits.

Real Estate Businesses: can claim a new tax break that's planned for partnerships, limited liability companies and other so-called "pass-through" entities.

Technology: U.S. Tech companies are sitting on \$3.1 trillion in overseas earnings, according to an estimate from Goldman Sachs. The largest stockpile belongs to Apple at \$252 billion - 94% of its total cash. Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Google parent Alphabet Inc. and Oracle round out the top five, data compiled by Bloomberg show. One caveat is that the repatriation provision could generate a large tax bill. In Apple's case, a 14.5 percent rate would equate to \$36.6 billion in taxes, or about \$7 a share, according to Bloomberg Intelligence.

Banks: The earnings of big U.S. banks will be boosted by an average of 13 percent, according to Goldman Sachs. Leading the way will be Wells Fargo (17%) and PNC Financial Services Group Inc. (15%).

Autos: The industry's biggest companies, including General Motors and Ford, will benefit from the rate cut and the reduction on levies for repatriating overseas profits, according to UBS.

Consumer products/retail: Retailers are big winners from the rate cut because many generate all, or at least an overwhelming majority, of their income in the U.S. and pay the highest tax rates of any industry. Total sales from the nearly 3.8 million retail establishments in the United States reached about \$2.6 trillion in 2016. Retailers employ almost 29 million, and support more than 42 million jobs in the U.S. That increases the prospect for better wages for existing employees in this sector and more jobs.

Full and immediate deductions on capital expenditures could allow at least one retailer to not owe any federal taxes the next two years. Aaron's Inc., which leases televisions and refrigerators to consumers at more than 1,700 stores, will be able to use deductions on buying inventory, which are considered capital investments, to wipe out its tax bill in 2018 and 2019, according to Stifel Nicolaus & Co.

Chains and consumer brands also expect the tax bill to boost demand for their goods and services. Many of those companies rely on middle- and low-income shoppers for the bulk of their sales, and changes to individual taxes -- such as doubling the standard deduction -- will increase discretionary income.

Industrials: In machinery, trucking is likely to see the biggest impact, according to Jefferies. The corporate rate cut would give U.S. transportation companies of all sizes more money to upgrade their fleets with fuel-efficient vehicles. The bill's increased deductions for capital spending would add another incentive to buy new 18-wheelers, a potential boon for truck makers like Paccar Inc. and Navistar International Corp.

Energy: oil-and-gas companies will be big winners because they pay the second-highest effective tax rate of any sector, at 37 percent, according to Bloomberg Intelligence. But a number of oil explorers and equipment providers won't benefit because their operations are unprofitable.

Hospitals and insurers: The bill is estimated to boost insurance companies' profits by as much as 15 percent because they pay high rates, according to Ana Gupte, an analyst at Leerink Partners.

Pharmaceuticals: U.S. drugmakers will be one of the biggest beneficiaries of the repatriation portion of the bill. They've been sitting on billions of dollars in overseas earnings and can now bring home that cash at a reduced rate. Biotech and pharma companies will get a smaller tax credit for developing drugs for rare diseases. Under current law, they can deduct 50 percent of the cost of testing drugs for rare or orphan diseases that affect only small numbers of patients. The revised bill cuts that amount to 25 percent, raising government revenue by \$32.5 billion over a decade.

Chris Martin in his article "Hidden Benefit to U.S. Corporate Tax Cuts: Lower Utility Bills" in Bloomberg wrote that there's one place where every American may benefit from lower corporate income-tax rates: utility bills. An average consumer could see a reduction of about 5 percent off their monthly bill, according to Rhame.

After more than three decades, Congress under President Trump, finally passed much-needed and long-overdue tax relief for millions of individuals, families and businesses. While the new tax bill is still not perfect but it will go a long way in helping individuals, families, small to medium businesses as well as big corporations practically in every sector to be more competitive domestically as well as internationally. Consumers will receive much-needed tax relief and therefore, increase discretionary income. This will boost the spending power of consumers and take America on the path of more prosperity.

If we want sustained and continuous economic growth and prosperity for all with low levels of poverty, the corporations must come up with a solution for equitable distribution of nation's economic prosperity by voluntarily defining what should be the maximum or reasonable pay, perks and retirement packages for its executives. Corporations must stop creating high levels of economic inequalities by fraudulently defining the minimum wages for its workers that have if not equal; at least equitable contributions in creating the wealth for corporations and the nation. An Economy of exclusions, gross economic injustice with very high inequalities cannot continue forever because it can bring down the country with a massive class war between the "Haves" and the "Have Nots".

(Data Compiled from various sources)
(The author is a social activist and is a regular contributor to The Indian Panorama. He can be reached at davemakkar@yahoo.com)

DETOX TOXIC RELATIONSHIP FOR A NEW BEGINNING

Relationships that start out with the best of intentions and loving feelings can quickly turn toxic. It's difficult to change a dynamic when strong emotions are already involved, and even more difficult to escape from a toxic relationship when emotions have become warped. A toxic person may become obsessed and irrational, or even turn dangerous. They may no longer see a love situation logically.

Recognizing the signs that someone is emotionally toxic is not always easy. Often, we meet people when they're in a good state of being and then, after we've grown attached to them, they show their true colors. We all put on our "best face" in the beginning, but time peels away that protective mask to reveal our insecurities and faults. Sometimes, it's stress that brings out the worst in a person. Out of loyalty, we want to make the relationship work, remembering that person's potential for being good. The desire to hang in there through bad times is noble, but we can become badly hurt if we don't tread carefully.

Remember, the goal in relationships is to foster healthy, nurturing, uplifting human connections, and avoid poisonous relationships that drain you of joy and energy. When a relationship turns sour, pay close attention. If you listen to your instincts, you will know when to cut off someone whose obsession has become unhealthy. To find the strength and courage to go through with it, recognize your self-worth. Recognize, too, that you are doing the other person no favors by allowing the creation of bad karma between you. Let that person go their way and work on personal issues without you being enmeshed with him or her. And if it's you who is becoming too needy, clingy, or dependent on someone, you need to revisit what's within and find security in a relationship with yourself, your healthy ambitions and aspirations, and Spirit.

There are effective ways to detach from someone, and the process doesn't have to hurt. Breaking free of an obsessive, dysfunctional relationship takes time and effort on your



part. Here are five simple actions to take every day to help you let go:

STEP ONE: Start your day with empowerment. Say a quick prayer of empowerment each morning. Ask the Divine to make this a stress-free day and believe that it will be. Affirm to yourself as soon as you wake up that your happiness is not dependent on this person. Recite quotes that strengthen your independence and commitment to taking care of yourself and your needs. Instead of reverting your thoughts to this person, divert your attention by performing an activity centered around you and your own needs: go

to the salon, get a massage, etc. Perform any empowering activity that will refocus your attention on you

STEP TWO: Replace your obsession. Exchange your obsession for a much more positive activity. Every time you find yourself thinking of the person, force yourself to have more productive, positive thoughts. Contemplate a project, think about an upcoming event that excites you, or evaluate the outcome of a different concern. Tell yourself that you have bigger things to worry about than that petty person. The more you force yourself to think about something else, the more you train your

brain to function on other elements of life.

STEP THREE: Turn to others. This is not a time to isolate yourself. Rely on the support and compassion of friends and family, especially those who have experienced similar situations. It becomes easier to wean yourself off of a person when you open yourself up to others and allow their energies into your life. If you're in a toxic relationship, simply sitting down to talk to an uplifting person comes as a breath of fresh air.

STEP FOUR: Practice self-care. This is the time to take care of yourself. Invest in yourself and your needs. You are your own main priority. There's nothing wrong with a bit of self-pampering; exercise regularly, take care of your health, splurge on one item, reinvent your look—anything to make yourself feel happy and confident in your attractiveness and worth! In this way, you learn to appreciate yourself enough to rise above the dominant influence of a single person.

STEP FIVE: Get into a new routine. In the beginning phases, you'll need to distract yourself, even force yourself to look the other way when all you want to see is this person. This is admittedly the hardest part, but once you do develop new habits the process becomes much easier. By performing new activities that are unrelated to the person in question, you rewire the neurons in your brain to form new patterns of thought. Daily activities help with this. Take up a new hobby, join a club—anything positive to fill your schedule and keep busy. Don't give yourself time to obsess. Then, make these new activities part of a new, everyday routine. Rebuild your life around other priorities.

Dysfunctional relationships can greatly damage our well-being. But learning to detach and cleanse from the toxicity of a turbulent relationship restores inner peace and emotional balance. Practice these five steps to cleanse your spirit and regain trust in the power of positive relationships.

FOOD CORNER

Ingredients

For the chicken marinade

1 pound chicken with bone cut into medium pieces, 2 tablespoons ginger-garlic paste, 2 tablespoons red chilli powder, divided, 1/2 tablespoon turmeric powder, Salt

For the spice paste

2 tablespoons fresh grated coconut, 1 cup water, 1 teaspoon sesame seeds, 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, 1 teaspoon coriander seeds, 6 dry Kashmiri chillis, 5 peppercorns, 1/2 inch stick cinnamon, 3 cloves

For the curry

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, 3 slit green chillies, 3 bay leaves, 1 medium onion chopped fine,

Method

Mix the ginger-garlic paste, turmeric powder, salt, and 1 tablespoon of the red chilli powder. Apply on chicken and set aside while you prepare the spice paste and curry. For the spice paste, heat the cast iron skillet until it's smoking. Turn the heat down. Except for the coconut and water, toast all the ingredients until they release their aroma, about 15 seconds, stirring constantly so they don't burn. Set aside to cool. Once cool, blend with the coconut and 3 tablespoons water till it forms a smooth paste. Set aside.

Heat oil until it's shimmering in the heavy-bottomed (and lidded)

CHICKEN CURRY



saucepan. Turn heat down. Add green chillies and bay leaves. Stir until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Add the onions and keep stirring until soft but not brown, about 5 minutes. Add the spice paste and keep stirring until fragrant and until oil floats on top, about ten minutes. Add the marinated chicken pieces, stir until they are coated in the spice mix, about 5 minutes. Add the remaining water to thin out the mixture for more gravy. Season with salt, stir once and close the lid. Turn the heat to medium. Cook for about 15 minutes, until chicken is tender. Open lid, stir and serve hot with fluffy white rice.

MAN'S SCENT CAUSE YOU TO DRINK MORE ALCOHOL

According to a recent study, the mere scent of a man can make a woman drink more alcohol than usual. The scientists from the Department of Psychology at the University of South Florida recruited 103 women from the ages of 21 and 31 and told them they were taking part in a consumer survey for men's cologne and drinks, reports the Independent.

The female participants believed they were taking part in a consumer survey for men's cologne and drinks. They were presented with fragrance strips that had been sprayed with either manufactured androstene, a pheromone found in boar's saliva, or plain water. Over the course of 10 minutes, those who smelt the pheromone drank a tenth more than the control group who were given the water "cologne."

The researchers concluded that male scents might instigate drinking because there is a cultural association between drinking alcohol and having sex. The researchers concluded by saying, "We inferred that detection of male sexual scents, even in the absence of awareness, may instigate drinking because of the longstanding cultural association between alcohol use and sex."

Source: ANI

The researchers say that male scents might instigate drinking because there is a cultural association between drinking alcohol and having sex.

SUPPLEMENTS CAN'T HELP PREVENT FRACTURES: STUDY

Supplements containing calcium, vitamin D or both may not protect older adults against hip fracture and other bone breaks, a study claims. Practice guidelines recommend calcium and vitamin D supplements for older people to prevent fractures in those with osteoporosis, according to the study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

Previous studies have come to mixed conclusions about an association between supplements and fracture risk, researchers said. The study conducted by researchers at the Tianjin Hospital in China included 51,145 adults over the age of 50 who lived in their communities and not institutions, such as nursing homes and residential care facilities.

The adults participated in 33 randomised clinical trials comparing supplement use (calcium, vitamin D or both) with placebo or no treatment and new fractures. The study found that supplements were not associated with less risk for new fractures, regardless of the dose, the sex of the patient, their fracture history, calcium intake in their



diet or baseline vitamin D blood concentrations.

"These findings do not support routine use of supplements containing

calcium, vitamin D, or both by older community-dwelling adults for prevention of fracture," the researchers said. *Source: PTI*

Diabetes: Scientists create pain-free insulin patches



If you are one of those who are suffering from diabetes, then we might have some important news for you. In a new research, a group of scientists have created the special patch which stimulates the body's own insulin production - and is completely pain-free.

According to Daily Express, the game-changing invention delivers a natural substance extracted from brown algae - completely removing the need for painful and unpleasant daily injections. Patients would apply the patch once a week and it would automatically stimulate the body to produce the required insulin. The patch would work by delivering a naturally produced substance, derived from brown algae, via microneedles.

Dr Richard Leapman, scientific director of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) in Maryland, US, where the patch has been developed, said, "This experimental

approach could be a way to take advantage of the fact that persons with type 2 diabetes can still produce some insulin. A weekly microneedle patch application would also be less complicated and painful than routines that require frequent blood testing."

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) estimates around 371 million people in the world suffer from diabetes so this new patch will be very welcome. The easier delivery method may mean more people get treated and prevent diabetes related conditions such as blindness, heart attacks and amputations. At the moment they have to undergo injections to regulate insulin levels. However, according to the research team, insulin therapy is still not managed well in half of all cases. So they argue that the new patch would offer a viable and painless alternative and unlike insulin injections, it need not be applied so often.

Source: ANI

Poor sleep may put you at high risk of Alzheimer's disease

Chronic poor sleep may contribute to cognitive decline, according to a study that shows wakeful brain produces more of the Alzheimer's protein amyloid beta than its waste-disposal system can handle.

Levels of the protein rise, potentially setting off a sequence of changes to the brain that can end with dementia, researchers said.

"This study is the clearest demonstration in humans that sleep disruption leads to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease through an amyloid beta mechanism," said Randall Bateman, from the Washington University School of Medicine, St Louis in the US. "The study showed that it was due to overproduction of amyloid beta during sleep deprivation," Bateman said.

For the research published in the journal *Annals of Neurology*, the scientists studied eight people aged between 30 to 60 years with no sleep or cognitive problems. The participants were assigned randomly to one of three scenarios: having a normal night's sleep without any sleep aids; staying up all night; or sleeping after treatment with sodium oxybate, a prescription medication for sleep disorders.

Source: PTI

CHANGING YOUR MEAL SCHEDULE CAN HELP LOSE WEIGHT

Trying to lose weight? Changing your eating schedule — such as having an early dinner or even skipping it — can help reduce hunger pangs and boost fat burning.

"Eating only during a much smaller window of time than people are typically used to may help with weight loss," said Courtney Peterson, an associate professor at University of Alabama at Birmingham in the US.

"We found that eating between 8 am and 2 pm followed by an 18-hour daily fast kept appetite levels more even throughout the day, in comparison to eating between 8 am and 8 pm, which is what the average American does," said Peterson.

The study is the first human test of early time-restricted feeding (eTRF). This meal-timing strategy reduced swings in hunger and altered fat and carbohydrate burning patterns, which may help with losing weight.

With eTRF, people eat their last meal by the mid-afternoon and do not eat again until breakfast the next morning.

The research suggests that eating a very early dinner, or even skipping dinner, may have some benefits for losing weight, although further studies need to take place to confirm that theory.

Previous animal studies showed that eTRF helped rodents burn more fat.

The human body has an internal clock, and many aspects of metabolism are at their optimal functioning in the morning.

Therefore, eating in alignment with the body's circadian clock by eating earlier in the day may positively influence health.

This first test of eTRF in humans follows rodent studies of this approach to weight loss, which previously found that eTRF reduced body fat and decreased the risk of chronic diseases in rodents.

During the human study, researchers followed 11 men and women with excess weight over four days of eating between 8 am and 2 pm, and four days of eating between 8 am and 8 pm.

Researchers then tested the impact of eTRF on calories burned, fat burned and appetite.

Participants tried both eating schedules, ate the same number of calories both times and completed all testing under supervision.

Researchers found that, although eTRF did not affect how many total calories participants burned, it reduced daily hunger swings and increased fat burning during several hours at night.

It also improved metabolic flexibility, which is the body's ability to switch between burning carbs and burning fats.

Whether eTRF helps with long-term weight loss or improves other aspects of health is still unknown. A larger, more comprehensive study will need to take place to find out, Peterson said.

Source: PTI



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SPACEX LAUNCHES SECRETIVE ZUMA SPACECRAFT



NEW YORK (TIP): SpaceX began the New Year with a mystery-shrouded mission to deliver a government spacecraft, called Zuma, into orbit, the media reported.

After more than a month of delays, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket vaulted toward the skies at 8 pm on Sunday with the secretive payload. It launched from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida, reports CNN.

The space exploration firm, which is headed by Tesla (TSLA) CEO Elon Musk, had initially scheduled the Zuma mission last November.

SpaceX gave a couple reasons for the schedule changes.

The company said it delayed the mission for "fairing testing". The fairing is the very top portion of the rocket that houses the payload. "Extreme weather" also slowed down the firm's launch preparations.

Last week, SpaceX finally declared that both the rocket and the payload were "healthy" and ready for launch.

On Sunday, Zuma was delivered to low-Earth orbit, which is typically defined as any orbital path less than about 1,200 miles above the Earth's surface, according to NASA.

Zuma's destination was not disclosed, CNN reported.

When asked about the project in November, Northrop Grumman (NOC) -- the Virginia-based aerospace and defence company that built the spacecraft--declined to give any details about which arm of the government funded it.

"The US government assigned Northrop Grumman the responsibility of acquiring launch services for this mission," the company said in a statement.

"Northrop Grumman realizes this is a monumental responsibility and we have taken great care to ensure the most affordable and lowest risk scenario for Zuma." SpaceX completed a record 18 launches last year, and it plans to do even more this year, according to spokesman James Gleeson.

Later this month, the company plans to debut its latest invention: the Falcon Heavy, a monstrous rocket will have three times the thrust of the Falcon 9. *Source: IANS*

Saturn's moon Titan sports Earth-like features

Using data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft, astronomers have created a global map of Saturn's moon Titan and found that its geographical features are similar to those seen on the Earth.

The map combines all of the Titan topography data from multiple sources. It revealed several new features on Titan, including new mountains, none higher than 700 meters.

The map also provides a global view of the highs and lows of Titan's topography, which enabled the scientists to confirm that two locations in the equatorial region of Titan are in fact depressions that could be either ancient, dried seas or cryovolcanic flows.

It revealed that Titan is a little bit flatter—more oblate—than was previously known, which suggests there is more variability in the thickness of Titan's crust than previously thought.

"The main point of the work was to create a map for use by the scientific community," said Paul Corlies, from Cornell University in the in the US.

The data set can be downloaded in the form of the data that was observed, as well as that data plus interpolated data that was not observed.

The map will be important for those modelling Titan's climate, studying Titan's shape and gravity, and testing interior models, as well as for those seeking to understand morphologic landforms on Titan.

Another study found three important results using the new map's topographical data.

Researchers also found that Titan's three seas share a common equipotential surface, meaning they form a sea level, just as Earth's oceans do.

Source: PTI

SOON, SELF-HEALING ROBOTS THAT MIMIC BIOLOGICAL MUSCLES

Scientists are developing next generation of robots made from soft materials that are more similar to biological systems.

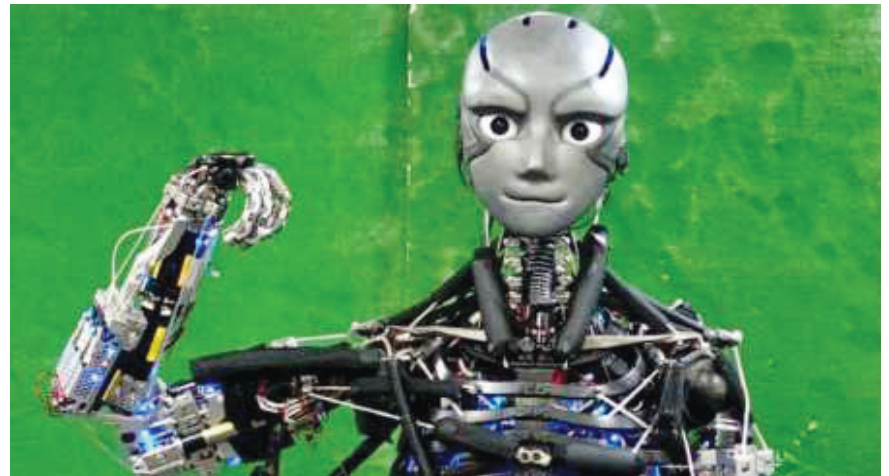
Such soft robots contain tremendous potential for future applications as they adapt to dynamic environments and are well-suited to closely interact with humans, said researchers from the University of Colorado in the US.

The group has developed a new class of soft, electrically activated devices capable of mimicking the expansion and contraction of natural muscles.

These devices, which can be constructed from a wide range of low-cost materials, are able to self-sense their movements and self-heal from electrical damage, representing a major advance in soft robotics.

The newly developed hydraulically amplified self-healing electrostatic (HASEL) actuators eschew the bulky, rigid pistons and motors of conventional robots for soft structures that react to applied voltage with a wide range of motions.

According to the study published in the journal *Science Robotics*, the soft devices can perform a variety of tasks,



including grasping delicate objects such as a raspberry and a raw egg, as well as lifting heavy objects.

HASEL actuators exceed or match the strength, speed and efficiency of biological muscle and their versatility may enable artificial muscles for human-like robots and a next generation of prosthetic limbs.

"We draw our inspiration from the astonishing capabilities of biological muscle," said Christoph Keplinger, from

the University of Colorado.

"HASEL actuators synergise the strengths of soft fluidic and soft electrostatic actuators, and thus combine versatility and performance like no other artificial muscle before," Keplinger said.

"Just like biological muscle, HASEL actuators can reproduce the adaptability of an octopus arm, the speed of a hummingbird and the strength of an elephant," Keplinger said. *Source: PTI*

CES2018: ACER SWIFT 7, THE 'WORLD'S THINNEST WINDOWS 10 LAPTOP' LAUNCHED

Expanding its laptop line-up, Taiwanese hardware and electronics brand Acer on Monday launched four new devices at the ongoing "Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2018".

At 8.98-mm thickness, "Swift 7" is the world's thinnest laptop that runs Windows 10. It is powered by Intel Core i7 processor and features an all-day battery life and 4G LTE connection, the company said in a statement.

"Building on the engineering breakthroughs from the previous generation, the new 'Swift 7' steps up the game with an even slimmer chassis, powerful performance and always-on 4G LTE connectivity for professionals on the go," said Jerry Kao, President of IT Products Business of Acer Inc.

The Acer "Swift 7" will be available in North America in March with prices starting at \$1,699 and in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in April with prices starting at 1,699 euros.

The company also announced "Spin 3" (SP314-51) laptop which features a 360-degree dual-torque hinge that makes it easy to convert into a laptop, tablet, display and even provides a space-saving tent mode.

It sports the 8th-Gen Intel Core processor and provides 12 hours of battery life.

The Acer "Spin 3" will be available in North America in February with prices starting at \$599 and in EMEA in January with prices starting at 649 euros. Featuring Windows 10 OS, the 15-inch "Nitro 5" gaming laptop is targeted towards mainstream users.

"With performance to effortlessly power mainstream titles, the Acer 'Nitro 5' houses essential technologies that casual gamers value most," said Jerry Hou, General Manager, Consumer Notebooks, IT Products Business, Acer Inc.

The device features the latest-generation "AMD Radeon RX560" graphics. The Acer Nitro 5 will be available in North America in April with prices starting at \$799 and in EMEA in April at 1,099 euros.

Acer "Chromebook 11" offers a 11.6-inch display. "The new Acer 'Chromebook 11' will deliver strong performance with all the benefits of Chrome OS at an excellent value," said James Lin, General Manager, Commercial and Detachable Notebooks, IT Products Business, Acer Inc. *Source: IANS*



HP recalls 50,000 laptop batteries

Global PC and printer giant HP Inc has issued a worldwide voluntary recall of 50,000 Lithium-ion batteries sold as accessories or used as replacements through HP or an authorised HP service provider over the danger of fire and overheating.

This includes affected devices shipped between December 2015 and December 2017.

"The quality and safety of all HP products is our top priority. We recently learned that batteries provided by one of our suppliers for certain notebook computers and mobile workstations present a potential safety concern," the company wrote in a blog post on Friday. "We are taking immediate action to address this issue including a voluntary recall and replacement of the batteries. This action pertains to 0.1 per cent of the HP systems sold globally over the past two years," the PC major added.

According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, affected models include HP "ProBooks" (64x G2 and G3 series, 65x G2 and G3 series), HPx360 310 G2, HP "Envy" m6, HP "Pavilion" x360, HP 11, HP "ZBook" (17 G3, 17 G4, and "Studio" G3) mobile workstations. Batteries sold as replacement or accessories for the HP "XBook Studio G4" mobile workstation are also named in the commission report.

Source: IANS

100% FDI in single-brand retail via automatic route gets cabinet nod

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Union cabinet on Jan 10 allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in single-brand retail without prior government approval and liberalized local sourcing norms—steps that could benefit companies like Swedish furniture retailer IKEA of Sweden AB and fashion house Hennes and Mauritz AB (H&M).

Although 100% FDI is already permitted in single-brand retail, only up to 49% was allowed through the so-called automatic route and investment above that needed government approval. Wednesday's decision smoothens the way for new entrants to start retail operations in the country.

The cabinet eased the local sourcing rule for foreign single-brand retailers; such entities are not required to meet the 30% target for local sourcing by their Indian units for five years if they are already doing so for their global operations, it said. So far they have been required to source locally 30% of the value of goods purchased for their Indian business initially as an average of five years; later they were required to meet the requirement on a yearly basis.

IKEA, which has ambitious business plans for India, and H&M are among the potential beneficiaries of the new sourcing norms.

The government did not define the 'state-of-the-art' and 'cutting-edge technology' it has previously said would be required of high-tech companies to open single-brand stores. The current FDI policy says that local sourcing norms will not apply for up to three years after the opening of the first store for single-brand retailers of products having 'state-of-art' and 'cutting-edge' technologies and where local sourcing is not possible. The government has rejected the application of Apple Inc. to open stores under that provision, holding that its technology is not 'cutting edge'.

In August, the government set up a committee under department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) secretary Ramesh Abhishek to clearly define these two terms. The recommendations of the committee have not been made public yet.



The move is aimed at providing a more investor-friendly climate to foreign players.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Move to attract more FDI to boost economic growth and create jobs
- Most of the retail sector stocks surge in Wednesday's session
- Foreign airlines can invest up to 49% under approval route in Air India

Retail experts hold that while the FDI relaxation will remove entry barriers for foreign single brand retail companies altogether, more important concerns regarding local sourcing and FDI in multi-brand retail remain.

"It (the relaxation) is not a very big deal because the problem in single brand retail has not been with the clearance process but with the sourcing norms," said Arvind Singhal, chairman at consulting firm Technopak Advisors Pvt. Ltd. "Even the new decision regarding the sourcing will not make much of a difference and will benefit only a handful of companies. Because of the 30% sourcing norms, a lot of foreign companies face problems and may not look at India as a potential market."

Aashish Kasad, India region tax leader for consumer products and retail at EY India, said there had been an expectation of the government liberalizing FDI norms for multi-brand retail to enable large international retailers to invest and in India bring the latest technologies and

retail formats to the country. That remains an unfinished part of the agenda.

Goldie Dhama, partner at PwC India, said the liberalisation of norms was a progressive move in the direction of improving the 'ease of doing business' in India. "Allowing incremental sourcing undertaken by overseas group companies to be counted towards the 30% sourcing commitment for the initial five years will provide single-brand retail trading companies the flexibility and time to align their retail and sourcing business," he said.

Large global retailers would be seriously considering entering India or accelerating their entry plans because of the new sourcing rule.

"We will see more fashion, beauty and personal care, baby product brands coming to India as well as existing brands strengthening their position. This new development would strengthen their business case for India entry," he added.

Source: Livemint

TRUMP TOWERS TO PUMP IN RS 1,200 CRORE IN GURUGRAM



NEW DELHI (TIP): Global realty brand 'Trump Towers' will make its debut in North India through real estate firms M3M India and Tribeca Developers, which launched a luxury residential project today under the marquee in Gurugram entailing investments of Rs 1,200 crore.

M3M and Tribeca will develop 250 ultra luxury residences under a brand licence from The Trump Organisation, which is currently led by Donald Trump Jr, son of US President Donald Trump.

In the first phase of sale, the apartments which will have three and four bedroom options, will be sold in a price range of Rs 5 crore to Rs 10 crore. The size of the flats is from 3,500 sq ft to 6,000 sq ft. This is the fourth Trump Tower project in India after Pune, Mumbai and Kolkata.

"We are launching today the most luxurious project in North India 'Trump Towers Delhi NCR'," M3M India Director Pankaj Bansal said. With an aim to woo customers, he said, "About an initial 100 buyers will fly to the US where Donald Trump Jr will host them."

Trump Organization Executive Vice-President Donald Trump Jr said in a statement: "With its stunning architecture, beautiful interior options and lavish amenity spaces, our goal is to bring the best of the Trump brand and luxury living to Gurugram."

Source: PTI

Toyota recalls 600,000 vehicles in US due to airbag problem



WASHINGTON (TIP): Toyota Motor North America announced on Tuesday it was expanding its safety recall involving Takata front passenger airbag inflators as required by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The expansion involves approximately 601,300 additional vehicles in the UN, Xinhua quoted a Toyota spokesperson as saying. Takata and its US entity TK Holdings Inc filed for bankruptcy in June. The Japanese auto-parts giant said it was recalling more than 100 million of its air bag inflators across the world through the end of 2019.

By the end of November 2017, 19 automakers had recalled 46 million Takata inflators in 34 million US vehicles, according to NHTSA.

Takata agreed in 2016 to plead guilty to wire fraud and pay a total of \$1 billion in criminal penalties to resolve a US Justice Department investigation.

Source: IANS

HC rejects McDonald's plea against NCLT notice

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Delhi High Court has dismissed McDonald's plea challenging the show-cause notice issued to it by the NCLT on a contempt plea filed by its estranged Indian partner Vikram Bakshi. Justice RK Gauba rejected McDonald's plea and said the reasons for it will follow soon in the judgment, which is not yet available. McDonald's had contended that in the absence of rules for conduct of contempt action under section 425 of the Companies Act read with the Contempt of Court Act, such proceedings would deprive it and others of their fundamental rights.

ESSAR PORTS TO INVEST \$500M IN MOZAMBIQUE

MUMBAI (TIP): Ports arm of the embattled Essar Group today said it will invest \$500 million over the next 30 months to expand capacities at its two existing domestic projects and also build a new coal terminal in Mozambique.

"We'll be investing \$500 million to increase our capacity at Hazira and Salaya, and also build a new coal handling terminal in Mozambique," Essar Ports chief executive and managing director Rajiv Agarwal told reporters here.

He said the investment will be completed over the next two-and-a-half years and will take its cargo capacity to around 150 million tonne per annum (mtpa) 110 mtpa that it will be ending FY18 with.

For coal exports, Mozambique has built a rail network of 550 km till an existing port, where Essar Ports will be



building the new terminal, he said, adding this will be its only facility outside the country.

The port currently operates four assets-at Hazira and Salaya on the West Coast, and Vishakhapatnam and Paradip on the East Coast.

The company is aiming to close FY18 with a net profit Rs 320 crore on an income of Rs 1,350 crore, he said.

Agarwal said the balance sheet of the company will be healthy with a net debt of Rs 2,600 crore by the year to March, but will increase to Rs 4,000 crore by FY19, which will be 2.5 times the targeted pretax profit of Rs 1,300 crore.

It is also negotiating with the Gujarat Maritime Board for adding a large capacity addition at the Salaya Port, which may entail investments of over Rs 10,000 crore to raise the dry bulk potential and a few berths for liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquid cargo handling, he said. Agarwal reiterated that the company is looking at a multi-location LNG handling capacity and named Hazira as one of the other locations where it can have it.

The company will close FY18 with a cargo handling of 42 mtpa and aims to increase to 60 mtpa in FY19.

Source: PTI

THE BIG DIVIDE

Sports, the biggest entertainment industry, has fissures deep inside



By Prabhjot Singh

Every two years, the galaxy of world sports gathers at a pre-determined venue - a city, a state or a country - not only to have another go at the Olympic motto - Citius, Altius, and Fortius - but also to remind underdeveloped and developed nations that they are still unequal in what we all are made to believe that Olympic family is of "equals". (Use Box 8 here)

If after Russia doping bothers any other nation than India remains high on the list. On the eve of 2016 Rio Olympics, Nar Singh Yadav had got clearance from the authorities at home but World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has challenged that clearance.

Nar Singh Yadav arrived in Rio to compete in wrestling but left the Indian officials red-faced as the WADA held him guilty and imposed a ban on him. Indian athletes, weightlifters, and wrestlers have faced allegations of taking performance-enhancing substances, including banned steroids and other types of synthetic food.

For a long time, India had been engaging services of coaches and trainers from Russia or other member nations of the erstwhile Soviet bloc. The world, especially the Western bloc, has been up in arms against Russia. But for last-minute clearance, the Russian athletes would have watched the Rio games from sidelines. Anyways, it is a cold war that looks unending. Can sports be clean? It is not drugs alone. Match-fixing for one. After all TV coverage of sports is the biggest entertainer.

Less than 10 percent of the nations may have garnered 90 percent of the total medals since the start of modern Olympics in 1896 and still, poverty-ridden nations manage to send fewer athletes and more officials to get themselves counted in the mega sporting events held once in every two years

In 120 years, Olympic Games have yet to find a home in Africa. It was only in 2016, that they reached South America for the first time and left the shores of a proud member of BRICS financially shattered. Before Brazil, Greece, too, had paid a heavy penalty for clamoring to be a host of Modern Olympics.

2018 is the year when winter version of Olympics will return to Asia, this time to South Korea, a country that had successfully conducted the 1988 summer edition of the Games as well. Needless to say, Japan, China and Korea are till now the only nations who have been bestowed the honor of holding the Olympics - summer or winter. In 2020, summer Olympic games will return to Tokyo, Japan, after 56 years.

Olympics hosting has come to be identified as the strongest



Medals from 2016 Rio Olympic Games

parameter to judge fiscal health or development of a nation although Greece (2004) and Brazil (2016) were exceptions. Greece got them as a poor compensation for failure to get the Centennial games in 1996 and Brazil got it as no South American nation or emerging economies had the privilege to hold the Games before.

2018 is a year that will witness several other important continental and inter-continental multi-sport events. In April, Gold Coast in Australia will be the venue of Commonwealth games. It is a major gathering of sports fraternity of member nations of erstwhile British colonies in which a handful of developed nations like Australia, England, Canada and New Zealand keep rest of the old British colonies limited to participation only.

Nations of the Asian continent will have their mega sporting event in Indonesia (Jakarta) in August-September 2018. Here again, top 10 percent nations, as in Olympics and Commonwealth Games, share 90 percent of the medals and leave the remainder for the rest 90 percent nations.

And most important of all events of 2018 will be FIFA World Cup to be played in Russia. Without getting into the background of FIFA politics and scandals that rocked allotment of major soccer (football) events, this biggest money spinner featuring top-notch soccer teams will have the sporting World on the edge.

Soccer, unlike Olympics, has travelled to different continents. Brazil, South Africa and Germany, to name a few,

WINTER OLYMPICS, PYEONGCHANG, KOREA



February 9 to 25

Total Medals 259

Events:

- Alpine Skiing
- Biathlon

- Bobsleigh
- Cross Country Skiing
- Curling
- Figure Skating
- Freestyle Skiing
- Ice Hockey
- Luge
- Nordic Combined
- Short Track Speed skating
- Skeleton
- Ski Jumping
- Snowboard
- Speed Skating

In the 2014 edition of Winter Olympics held at Sochi in Russia, there were 2780 athletes, representing 88 nations and there were 98 events.

Commonwealth Games, Gold Coast, Australia

April 4 to 15

Nations and territories 70

Participants 6600

Most medals by any single nation: Australia 852



18.8.18 Asian Games, Jakarta, Indonesia

August 18 to September 2.

462 events

40 sports



FIFA World Cup 2018

Russia June 14- July 15
32 nations, 12 venues

Group A - Russia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Uruguay

Group B - Portugal, Spain, Morocco, Iran

Group C - France, Australia, Peru, Denmark

Group D - Argentina, Iceland, Croatia, Nigeria

Group E - Brazil, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Serbia

Group F - Germany, Mexico, Sweden, South Korea

Group G - Belgium, Panama, Tunisia, England

Group H - Poland, Senegal, Colombia, Japan



Rio, an Olympics with a difference

Every four years, the galaxy of world sports assembles for one of biggest sports parties called Pinnacle of sports that leaves many poor and developing nations guessing why they cannot produce champions like Michael Phelps. And why they should remain without a single medal even after 120 years of Olympics especially when a country like the US crossed 1000 Olympic medal mark.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) that governs the sports world over claims it provides even playing field to all its 200-odd members for participation in the Olympic games. If 80 per cent on total Olympic medals since 1896 have gone to a select band of 20-odd countries, how the IOC could be blamed for it. If 15 to 20 percent of total IOC member nations have not won even a single medal to date, how the governing body of the sport can be blamed for it.

Olympics are an event of unequal. Countries fighting poverty cannot compete with countries from which they expect charities to alleviate the misery of their starving people.

Many countries cannot think of providing the basic infrastructure, including synthetic playing surfaces, modern technology in training their athletes or use medical and health advances in training their teams. As such even if they have best of athletes, they cannot compete with advanced nations for want of funds, infrastructure, and technology.

As one of the biggest entertainer of the world, sport has been assuming the role of a financial swinger. It cost Brazil a whopping 10, 6 billion dollars to host this mega event. Piqued by an economic turndown, the hosts had no choice but to do severe flab slashing to hold the most economical games of modern times.

Facilities were reduced to bare minimum and some of the essential and conventional parts of the games got sacrificed. For example, there were no Cultural Olympics as has been the convention.

Rio also cautioned the world against global warming by dedicating a part of the opening ceremony to the environmental hazard of global warming. It wanted to send a strong message on maintaining ecological balance by putting small children carrying plants in their hands with each contingent at what the organizers described a cool opening ceremony.

Whatever be the case, Olympics have become massive and beyond the control of poor or developing nations. South America had to wait for 120 years to get first opportunity to host them and Africa may take another 100 years to join the select band of Olympic cities. It is, after all, a game of the big and the rich.

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If Arcelor Mittal, owned by an Indian Lakshmi Mittal, is the world's largest steel manufacturing company, and then India is justified in demanding the introduction of medal of Steel for the fourth positioned players and teams in Olympic games.

After all Nita Ambani was elected as an independent member of the International Olympic Committee. And the IOC recognizes the need to have on its board those eminent people who have made a mark in business and other fields.

Why not a medal for the fourth position as those getting first, second and third positions get Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. Had it been so, India would not have ended some of the Olympic games, including Rome, without a medal.

Conventionally, Olympiad is a four-year cycle.

Have Lakshmi Mittal on the board of the IOC and he would sponsor Steel medal for the future Olympic games. With his sponsorship, countries like India would be saved blushes of ending Olympics medal less.

In Rio, India would have won three Steel medals before it got its first bronze in women's wrestling. India had been a member of the elite band that ended not one but many Olympic competitions with a wooden spoon. In the 2012 Olympic games, India finished 12th and last in hockey to get the coveted wooden spoon.

In Rio, the United States completed a rare honor of completing 1000 gold medal haul in Olympics, an achievement that may not be equaled in near future. On the other hand, India has 26 medals, including 9 gold, to its credit in 116-year-old history in the Olympic games.

Fiji won its first gold medal ever in Rugby Sevens in Rio. There are many countries that are still hoping for their first medal in Olympics even after 120 years. The introduction of the fourth medal may fulfil aspirations of some of these medal-starved nations.

have held the World Cups. Only this year, India, nowhere in world rankings, played host to the U-19 World Cup that saw England returning home with the Cup after a splendid 5-2 win over Spain in the final. The hosts, India, as expected ended winless.

This blatant inequality in sporting prowess of nations on different continents looks endless. There may be endless reasons. Development or finance may be quoted as main ones.

But somewhere, these poor or upcoming nations have to understand that "bigger nations have been savoring or enjoying Olympic picnics at their cost." For how long competitions between few equals majority of fewer equals would continue.

Kenya or Jamaica may produce world champions or Olympic record holders in middle and long distance running and rule the track events in all major competitions, but it may not be easy for them to control the International Olympic Committee or the World Athletic body.

Divide in the world of sports may not be vertical but it is apparent that some lobbies always remain active against those who had been challenging the then powers before. Not many would forget great "doping controversy" that vaulted newspaper headlines just before the 2016 Rio Olympic Games could start.

Russian Olympic Committee and many of its athletes were on the hit list. Many athletes were not cleared for participation primarily because they were accused of taking performance enhancing substitutes banned by the International Olympic Committee. The Agency assigned to keep sports free of dopers

- WADA - are based in Montreal. It has been allowed to continue its headquarters in the Canadian city for coming years as well.

Now when the Winter Olympics in South Korea is just months away, the IOC has exploded another bombshell. The Russians are not allowed to represent their National Olympic Committee. The Russian athletes, who are without any taint, are not debarred but they would compete either under the IOC banner or as free athletes.

The IOC has also banned Deputy Prime Minister from the Olympic movement. He, however, has decided to contest the ban.

Is doping limited to Russians only?

There is much more to it than what appears to a naked eye. Irrespective of political or national alignments, we all believe that Olympics bring together all nations, all athletes irrespective of their caste creed, religion or region together. Still one feels there is something that is keeping sports fraternity divided internally though on the surface it may appear as a big unified family.

Financial or physical health notwithstanding, another major factor of the invisible divide of sporting world has been the infrastructure. 1980 was the watershed. When the US gave a call for the boycott of the summer Olympic Games in Moscow, the war had come in open.

The then Soviet Union-led East Bloc had made significant advances in the field of sports training, especially in the areas of sports psychology, training, diet and sports medicine. This was one reason that the nations owing allegiance to East Bloc were far superior to their opponents in sports like Gymnastics, swimming, athletics, weightlifting, wrestling, and boxing.

A major section of sports scientists worked on the development of performance-enhancing substances to which the Western Bloc had no counter. Instead, the Western world focused much more on development in synthetic surfaces, wood paved way for graphite, carbon and other materials that added to speed, strength and power of play.

So, the war over supremacy in sports not only engulfed the East Bloc but also left it shredded and isolated. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and break up of East Bloc, Russia remained the whipping boy. Isolated, as it has been over the years, mainly because of the charges of "doing" that it could not refute. Not only Russia but countries that depended largely upon trainers and sports sciences from member nations of erstwhile East Bloc also became the target of the war waged in the name of "doping". India, for example, had a large number of trainers and sports medicine experts from Russia, virtually faced suspension or even expulsion from International Sports Federations as its athletes were testing

Of new members admitted to the International Olympic Committee in Rio, there were four men and four women. They included Anant Singh, a South African, and a film producer. He is the producer of Place of Weeping, 1984, besides having produced films like The Long Run, More Than Just a Game and Once in a Lifetime.

Nita Ambani's claim to IOC membership stems from her Reliance Foundation that has been working with NBA Junior Programmed besides promoting football, basketball and cricket at grassroots level. She also owns Mumbai Indians. Reliance may not have a team in football, hockey, basketball or cricket as other industrial houses have but it claims it is working with children in sports and cover over 2200 schools in 18 cities. So, IOC Elite Club had its strength raised from 90 to 99 before Rio games started.

destroyed, they suggested that there were cheaper and scalable ways to capture the main greenhouse gas - Carbon. Further, it can help to reduce its concentration in the atmosphere to delay global warming.

Politics apart, the ceremony was also more about sportsmen of yesteryears as not only legendary Kenyan runner Kep Keino was felicitated with Olympic Order, but also the Mayor of Rio, Carlos Nuzman, and the IOC President, Thomas Bach, also recalled their feats as Olympians. Nuzman played volleyball for Brazil in 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Thomas Bach won fencing gold in the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Contrary to that no Olympian has ever come to head Indian Olympic Association though Raja Randhir Singh, an Olympian shooter, remained its General Secretary for many years. The Chief Executive of the 2012 Olympic games in London was also an Olympian athlete Sebastian Coe.

Brazil may have been the target of adverse Western media criticism on eve of the first ever Olympics in South America, yet turn out at various venues, including Opening ceremony, has been beyond expectations of many.

India has not only sent its biggest ever contingent to any Olympic games in 120 years, a lot many sports enthusiasts owing allegiance to India, turned up to watch the Games. A galaxy of former Olympians, including Avatar Singh Sohal and Nazleen Shah (hockey), many others had come on their own to witness these games. And Government, as in the past,

There have been striking similarities between the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2016 Rio Olympic games. While the 2008 games were the first in Asia outside Japan and South

Korea, the 2016 games have been the first ever of the South American continent. Both Beijing and Rio remained pre-games target of strong adverse publicity by Western media. Beijing was targeted for its polluted air or foggy sky and Rio was assailed for being the breeding ground of Zika virus.

Slums of both Beijing and Rio also remained subjects of severe criticism. The Chinese authorities had attempted to hide their slums from the world eye by building walls around them, the Brazilians had to buy peace with strong Favela community to keep the games incident free.

Favelas of Rio are notorious for their crime and as drug joints. Both - the Beijing and the Rio - were successful in their efforts. As all the pre-games adverse publicity build-up was not enough, the Western media did attempt last minute assaults on the host cities, both in 2008 and 2016. In 2008, some of the American athletes came wearing masks to launch a veiled attack on the Chinese authorities for holding the games in polluted Beijing. In Rio, the Americans threatened to anchor a ship in the Brazilian waters on the pretext of providing secure abode for their athletes.

To prove their point about assailable street crime in Rio, a few American athletes reported an attempted daylight gunpoint robbery during the games. They held that their taxi was stopped, and armed men tried to rob them. Like Beijing where American athletes subsequently apologized for wearing masks on their arrival, in Rio, too, the American athletes were sorry for making up the robbery incident after Brazilian authorities decided to book them for a false complaint. A couple of other reports during the Rio games, including one about a Media bus being fired upon, also could not be substantiated.

Like Beijing, Rio also had the games conducted in the congenial, incident-free and friendly atmosphere. Brazilians, like Chinese, felt proud of proving the biased media wrong by holding the games successfully. After earth summit and the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Brazil has given the world a message that it is no more a push over but an emerging economic power as a part of BRICS.

positive for prohibited performance-enhancing substances. The case of an Indian wrestler not only refused participation but also given a long-term ban in Rio was a big shame

Other than wrestlers, our weightlifters, including women lifters, have blotted the name of the country after testing positive for banned substances. And for all these embarrassments, fingers are raised towards coaches and trainers from Russia who remained associated with Indian national teams for a long time since 1982 Asian Games.

Whatever be the reasons, not many still see the invisible divide in the world of sports. India is an example. It still looks at Russia in many sports, including wrestling.

India, generally identified with the Russian lobby, has, however, started distancing itself from the East Bloc and chosen to tread the middle path. It may be the reason that it could swing many votes of the Western world in the last election of the International Hockey Federation (FIH). Dr Narendra Dhruv Batra, an influential businessman from Jammu and now settled in Delhi, has not only become the first Indian but also the first Asian to head the International Hockey Federation. He recently added another feather to his cap when he was elected President of the controversies-riddled Indian Olympic Association.

contd on Page 48

Brazil and Olympic games

Its tottering economy and deteriorating fiscal health notwithstanding, Brazil chose the opening ceremony of 31st Olympic games to caution the world against impending threats of global warming.

Normally, opening ceremonies or events like Olympic Games are used more to showcase art, culture, infrastructure and social ethos of the host nation, Rio made a healthy deviation?

Admitting budgetary constraints, the organizers claimed that the colorful start to the games after a grueling four-hour ceremony, three-fourths of which was consumed in the parade of participating athletes, was cool. Through this cool ceremony they doled out to world global warming warning.

For a while, the focus shifted from sports to the environment. Rightly so, the world had to take this warning seriously. Not only that, the producers of the opening ceremony wanted the audience worldwide to take note of our planet maintaining that humanity by its actions was profoundly impacting the balance of life on earth. Some of the effects were irreversible.

Going a step beyond, they used plants and flower bedecked cycle rickshaws and a child carrying a plant was with each of the participating contingents was to highlight the deteriorating ecosystem.

Preserving the forests or replacing those that have been

brought a horde of non-sportsmen as official delegates.

Nearly 50 journalists and an equal number of volunteers besides a substantial section of Indian Diaspora, too, descended on Rio. Many members of the expatriate Indian community from Canada, US and England were noticeable.

Just a month before the start of Games, the Indian community in general and, Punjabi community in particular, opened Brazil's first Gurdwara at Sao Paulo. This is in addition to two gurdwaras of American Sikhs.

Contrary to critical media reports about the high incidence of robberies, snatchings and daylight robberies on streets of Rio, locals are generally warm, friendly, helpful and hospitable. They would go out of their way to help visitors and outsiders.

Needless to say, the authorities did not take any chances. The military was deployed in strength. At places, one could see tanks and also mounted security men patrolling areas. Some of the Favelas - notorious for snatchings and robberies - have been fenced. The Government had declared the month of Olympics as zero tolerance periods for anti-social activities.

Now as an afterthought, it appears, Brazil had one of the best Olympic games ever held with a limited Budget. In all, it cost this leader of BRICS 10.6 billion US dollars, a worthy investment as it added prestige to its successful conduct of World Earth Summit and the FIFA World Cup in the immediate past.

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His election to the top position may have been the cumulative effect of the series of international events, including the consecutive Finals of World Hockey League for Men and the 2016 Junior World Cup being hosted by India.

Criticism apart, Indian hockey has started looking up as it has started finishing on podium more often than ever before. In 2017 alone, for example, India achieved a rare double winning the Asia Cup Hockey title, both for men and women, besides finishing with a bronze in the 2017 Odisha Hockey World League Final at Bhubaneswar. It was a major achievement as the top eight teams of the World were in the competition.

Come 2018 and India would be the host again of the World Cup Hockey Tournament for Men, second time in eight years. Last it held this prestigious event was in 2010 in New Delhi.

In team games, it is not only hockey but cricket that has been holding aloft the tricolor. Led by mercurial Virat Kohli, who recently got married to Bollywood star, Anushka, India men and women did pretty well. Indian women finished runners-up in the World Cup in London.

Indian men's cricket team won 14 series in the year 2017 and beat almost every top team, including Australia, New Zealand, England, West Indies, Sri Lanka and south Africa.

In the individual sports, where Indian players, both men and women, have started creating place for themselves among podium finishers, Badminton has been one sport that scripted their success story. After PV Sindhu ended with silver in Rio Olympics, Indian shuttlers have been cornering glory in all leading tournaments.

Besides PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal, it is Kidambi Srikanth, HS Prannoy and B Sai Praneeth who have been hawking media headlines with their performances.

These performances are not enough for a nation with 1.2 billion people. We are still not in top 20 of the world, what to talk of getting into top 10. For the slow progress upwards, there have been reasons. The big divide may be the one. It continues to find itself in a piquant situation as it neither belongs to the developed nations nor to the developing nations. As an emerging economic power, it is yet to credit itself with a stable position. To be among the top runners in world of sports,

Rio, an Olympics with a difference

Every four years, the galaxy of world sports assembles for one of biggest sports parties called Pinnacle of sports that leaves many poor and developing nations guessing why they cannot produce champions like Michael Phelps. And why they should remain without a single medal even after 120 years of Olympics especially when a country like the US crossed 1000 Olympic medal mark.

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Rio also cautioned the world against global warming by dedicating a part of the opening ceremony to the environmental hazard of global warming. It wanted to send a strong message on maintaining ecological balance by putting small children carrying plants in their hands with each contingent at what the organizers described a cool opening ceremony.

Whatever be the case, Olympics have become massive and beyond the control of poor or developing nations. South America had to wait for 120 years to get first opportunity to host them and Africa may take another 100 years to join the select band of Olympic cities. It is, after all, a game of the big and the rich.

Mind Boggling or baffling. Whatever. A majority of Indian athletes perform far below their individual best in the Olympic games. Of 115-odd members of the Indian contingent in Rio barring few exceptions, all performed much below their personal best. Athletes, archers, shooters, weightlifters, boxers, hockey players, wrestlers, judokas, table tennis and tennis players, and golfers are all in this category of below par performers. Exceptions are far and few. They can be counted on fingertips.

PV Sindhu tops the small list of players who gave their best and did the nation a proud. Sakshi Malik (wrestling), Deepa Karmakar (gymnast), Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna (mixed doubles in tennis), Srikanth Kadambi (badminton), Abhinav Bindra, Gurpreet Singh and Faraz Khan (shooting). Seven out of 118 had until the penultimate day finished among top nine in 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

How would one explain the performance of those who either got disqualified or left their contests incomplete? And then there were some who got scratched for making all foul throws, jumps, and lifts. A thrower clearing 18 meters plus back home makes all three foul throws with a best heave of below 14 meters has the suffix of Olympian tagged to his or her name. In athletics, for example, barring the steeplechase, where Lalita Babbar, who improved upon her national record in the qualifying round, could not repeat that performance in the final. Is competing in Olympics a mental block for Indian athletes. Why should they perform below their own best or their performances back home are jacked up to show more and more qualifications for Olympic Games? Otherwise, there cannot be a reason for 90 percent of our athletes performing below their own best.



A maast nation

After the summer Olympic games debacle, India's appetite for controversies never gets satiated. There was a serious goof up in Paralympics, too. Do our officials accompanying national squads go on foreign jaunts just for maasti or do they discharge any duties and responsibilities. Every time athletes complain that officials were conspicuous by their absence at the time of an event or for filing an official protest.

One of India's medal prospects in Javelin throw event, Sundar Singh Gurjar, was disqualified for his failure to respond to the pre-event roll call. Able-bodied Sundar Singh Gurjar was a pre-event favorite.



However, at the time of the event, while he was inside the stadium, he failed to acknowledge his presence. It is customary, before the start of an event, for every athlete to acknowledge his or her presence by raising his or her hand. Reports suggest that none of the officials accompanying the Indian contingent in Rio was there to alert Sundar Singh Gurjar, who had lost one of his hands in a mishap.

Since he did not respond to his roll call he was not only debarred from competing but was also disqualified from the event. Though Devendra Singh Jhajharia won gold, his second in Paralympics in Javelin throw, yet Sundar episode deprived India of a certain medal. Sundar's record has been better than that of Devendra

Jhajharia. It is not to belittle Devendra's golden throw, yet Sundar cannot be solely held responsible for his disqualification. The then Union Sports Minister Vijay Goel sought a report on the unfortunate incident but does it provide any reprieve to our special athlete who may have brought honors to the country in event of his participation. It is intriguing that we specialize in ordering or holding useless enquiries as nothing substantial ever comes out of any of these enquiries. No heads roll and passing the blame game starts. Other than this sad episode, India did well so in Paralympics winning two gold medals, a silver and a bronze.

Deepa Malik was the first to win a medal for India. In the shot put, she got silver. Wife of an Army officer and mother of two, Deepa set the ball rolling. Two male jumpers Thangavelu Mariyappan and Varun Singh Bhati - who ended with gold and a bronze in high jump event, followed her medal winning feat. Then came Devendra Jhajharia's gold in the javelin throw.

If after Russia doping bothers any other nation than India remains high on the list. On the eve of 2016 Rio Olympics, Nar Singh Yadav had got clearance from the authorities at home but World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has challenged that clearance.

Nar Singh Yadav arrived in Rio to compete in wrestling but left the Indian officials red-faced as the WADA held him guilty and imposed a ban on him. Indian athletes, weightlifters, and wrestlers have faced allegations of taking performance-enhancing substances, including banned steroids and other types of synthetic food.

For a long time, India had been engaging services of coaches and trainers from Russia or other member nations of the erstwhile Soviet bloc. The world, especially the Western bloc, has been up in arms against Russia. But for last-minute clearance, the Russian athletes would have watched the Rio games from sidelines. Anyways, it is a cold war that looks unending. Can sports be clean? It is not drugs alone. Match-fixing for one. After all TV coverage of sports is the biggest entertainer.

India has to pull up its sleeves and prove itself as a major economic power.

India may have distanced itself from the socialist group but still it needs "Perestroika" for a lead position in the world of sports.

(The author is PTC News Executive Director. He is a well-known sports commentator and has attended most international sporting events. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)



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KATRINA OVERWHELMED ON 'TIGER ZINDA HAI' SUCCESS

Katrina Kaif is on cloud nine over the record-breaking run of her latest release "Tiger Zinda Hai", calling it an "overwhelming and extremely satisfying" feeling.

The 34-year-old actor, who reprised her role as super-spy Zoya opposite Salman Khan's Tiger in the Ali Abbas Zafar-directed film, said she is glad the audiences loved the film.

"It feels incredible. When we set out to make 'Tiger Zinda Hai', we knew that we had a very good script in hand and Ali has done an outstanding job in translating the script to a mind-blowing film that is entertaining audiences of every age-group and across the nation.

"As an actor, I always want to be part of movies that audiences thoroughly enjoy and the feedback that I'm getting from audiences is overwhelming and extremely satisfying," Katrina said in a statement.

The sequel to the 2012 movie has raced past 173-crore in barely five days. It recorded the biggest ever single day collection in the history of Bollywood by earning 45.53 crore nett on day three.

"Tiger Zinda Hai" also went on to record the highest ever three-day weekend, followed by the biggest ever four-day extended holiday weekend.

Source: PTI

I AM NOT RESTRICTING MYSELF AS AN ACTOR, SAYS KRITI SANON

Actor Kriti Sanon says after spending four years in the film industry and starring in films such as "Dilwale" and "Bareilly Ki Barfi" she has improved a lot as a performer.

The actor, who hails from Delhi, said to create her own space in films without and any support system "feels great".

"The fact that I had never thought of becoming an actor in the first place when I was doing B-Tech... then coming to a completely new city, where I knew no one and now to having done four films and have been able to (have) space of myself on my own, it does feel great.

"With every film I feel I have grown as a person and as actor. I learnt a lot on my job as I had no real training of being an actor. When I look back at my films and roles and the approach towards work it is different now then what it was earlier. For me growth is more important," Kriti told PTI.

The 27-year-old added that she is open to take risks if the role interests her.

"Whatever opportunities I get I should like it. I am not restricting myself as an actor, I want to play different kind of characters but I should like the offers."

For Kriti it has been a mixed year as her first release "Raabta" did not do well at the box office but "Bareilly Ki Barfi" was appreciated.

"I take it all as an experience, whether it is 'Raabta' or 'Bareilly Ki Barfi' both the films have been special to me as an actor. I believed in both the films.

"I learnt a lot while working on these two films. What matters to me is the experience I had and whether I have moved ahead with some positivity or learning. As I am not from a film background so I am always learning something on my job," she said.



Kriti said working on both the films was a learning experience for her and the praise she received for her work in the movies has made her more confident as an actor.

"When your work gets appreciated, you feel more confident to take up roles that you have not done before, do something that you have not done before." Source: PTI

MOVIE REVIEW



MODI KAKA KA GAON

CAST: VIKAS MAHANTE, CHANDRAMANI,
PHOOL JHA, ZEBAN KHAN

The movie is loosely inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda. Vikas Mahante Worked as a lead role as a Indian Prime minister. Apart from him, Film-makers casts Rohit Raj, Chandramani, Swarnim, Zeba Anujam, and Sarvagya for prominent roles. Tushar Amrish Goel Directed movie is produced by Suresh Jha.

Modi Kaka Ka Gaon is based on the working style and development agenda of the Narendra Modi. It sheds light on how Prime Minister Modi removes all the obstacles that come in the way of India's development. It also showcases the how he workes on Swachh Bharat mission and how they face the issues like Uri Attack,

Surgical Strike, and Demonetisation. We can say that the story of this Movie is not a biopic on Modi, but it has been inspired by the Prime Minister's vision for the country's progress.

Apart from this the producer of the movie earlier said, "I am keen that the work of the great leader should be highlighted since some people are making false propoganda and harming the country's interests" In the first phase, the film Modi Kaka Ka Gaon is released for around 600 screens in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, East Punjab and Uttarakhand. However, the rest of the country will be covered soon after release in these states.

The CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani had declined to certify the film and set a precondition to giving the No-Objection Certificate as they said the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Election Commission of India (ECI) will clear it. After which the producer wrote the letter PMO and ECI, but they did not respond. Then Jha moved the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) and won the case there in October.



SARAH PAULSON WANTS TO PLAY CHEETAH IN 'WONDER WOMAN 2'

Actor Sarah Paulson has shown interest in playing the character of Cheetah in the sequel to DC's "Wonder Woman".

Actor Gal Gadot portrayed the titular role in the Patty Jenkins-directed superhero film. Actors Danny Huston and David Thewlis played her nemesis in the film, which also featured Chris Pine, Connie Nielsen and Robin Wright.

A fan on Twitter suggested to Jenkins that Paulson or actor Charlize Theron are perfect fit for Wonder Woman's nemesis Cheetah.

"Hey Patty Jenkins, Giving that WonderWoman's rogues gallery is small, will you use her most famous villain 'Cheetah' in the sequel?"

"I also think that Sarah Paulson or Charlize Theron would be perfect for this character if you did use her?" the fan asked.

To this, Paulson replied in affirmative.

"Yes please Patty Jenkins," wrote Paulson.

Gadot will be back in "Wonder Woman" sequel, which will have her facing off against the Soviet Union during the 1980s. Jenkins will also be back to helm the project. *Source: PTI*

I WAS CALLED FAT WHILE FILMING A MOVIE, SAYS JULIANNE HOUGH

Actor-dancer Julianne Hough, known for her fit frame, has revealed that she was called "fat every day" during a filming of a movie.

In an interview to Redbook magazine, the 29-year-old star, said there was a time in her life when she compared herself to everyone around.

"I was very self-accepting growing up, then something switched in middle school. I would compare myself to everyone ... and later I did a film where I basically was told I was fat every day, yet I was the skinniest I'd ever been.

"Now, when I'm self-conscious, I'll do something completely crazy or goofy to get out of my own head - something fun that reminds me of the freedom I felt as a kid before all that happened," Hough said.

She did not reveal which movie she was talking about.

Hough made her film debut at age 11, playing a Hogwarts schoolgirl in the first Harry Potter movie, "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," which was released in 2001.

Her next film role came in 2010 at age 22, she played a dancer in the Christina Aguilera and Cher dance drama film "Burlesque".

Hough went on to star in films such as "Footloose", "Rock of Ages", "Safe Haven" and "Dirty Grandpa", as well as FOX's hit "Grease Live!" musical, and recently filmed the movie "Bigger", in which she plays pin-up model-turned-fitness pioneer Betty Weider. The drama is set for release next year.

Source: PTI



MOVIE REVIEW

THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

STARRING: AUSTYN JOHNSON, CAMERON SEELY, DIAHANN CARROLL, FREDRIC LEHNE, GAYLE RANKIN, HUGH JACKMAN, JACQUELINE HONULIK

DIRECTOR: MICHAEL GRACEY

You know that feeling when you're famished and you spot a bowl of juicy fruits, which you hurriedly bite into, just to realise it is all plastic? The Greatest Showman brings you the same disappointment within the first 30 minutes. For a musical that aims to be grand and touching, what ultimately stands out is its artificiality. The sets look like they are made to raise funds for a school dance, the acrobatics are heavily infused with CGI, and the singing is as auto-tuned as Justin Bieber's performance in Mumbai.

Although the film is based on the life of P.T. Barnum, the showman who enthralled America, it is by no means a biographical motion picture. It aims to be a dreamy and inspiring rags to riches story and then a lesson in what greed can do. But in the pursuit of being a saccharine and preachy fairy tale, what works for the film is the empowerment of characters on the

fringes, who make their presence felt through excessive foot stomping and powerfully loud vocals. There's a lady with beard, a man covered with tattoos, the shortest man on earth, and in the same league - people of colour. But that's America in the 1800s for you.

Barnum empowers these "freaks" for business purposes and then sidelines them as he moves on to appease the high brow audiences, only to understand the importance of loyalty later. The film explores, very superficially, the distinction between high and low brow art, but misses out on discussing the apparent bowdlerisation that takes place in the process. Perhaps that's expecting too much from an auto-tuned musical. The Greatest Showman provides ample ground for Hugh Jackman to let himself loose, unlike his serious self in the 2012 Academy Award nominated musical, Les Misérables. The sincerity in his acting, dancing and singing is fairly evident, but unfortunately, so is the effort. With several musicals on his résumé, you would expect Zac Efron to be at his charming best as a good-willed, privileged business partner. But beyond his deep blue eyes, there's very little the actor has to offer in his musical comeback.

Alongside being a savvy and passionate businessman and an entertainer, P.T. Barnum was also a conman. The fattest man on earth wasn't the fattest, the oldest lady wasn't the oldest, but who cared as long as he convincingly sold it to you. If only the film was as entrepreneurial as him, it would successfully take us into a make-believe world, despite not being the greatest.



Egypt sets March 26-28 as presidential election date

CAIRO (TIP): Egypt will hold a presidential election on March 26-28, with the incumbent Abdel Fattah al-Sisi widely expected to seek a second term in office.

Sisi, who won a landslide victory after he led the military overthrow of elected President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, has yet to announce his candidacy.

Candidates must submit their official bids to the commission between Jan 20-29. Announcing the date, the national election commission said a run-off would be held on April 24-26 if needed.

It will be Egypt's third election since the 2011 uprising which ended strongman Hosni Mubarak's long rule.

Sisi's most serious potential challenger, former prime minister Ahmed Shafik, recalled his candidacy on Sunday saying his time back in Egypt has led him to reconsider the decision.

Shafik returned to Egypt from the United Arab Emirates in December after announcing his intention to run, setting off a firestorm of criticism from state-aligned media.

"Exercise your right to run for office and vote, do your duty of choosing the president of your country, your voice will certainly make a difference," Lasheen Ibrahim, the judge heading the commission, said at a news conference in Cairo. First round results will be announced on April 2 and, in the event of a run-off, on May 1. (Reuters)

Arab League to hold meeting on Jerusalem next month

CAIRO (TIP): The Arab League will meet on Feb. 1 to discuss how to counter US President Donald Trump's move last month to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Egypt's state news agency MENA said on Jan 10.

Six Arab foreign ministers who met in Amman last week said Arab states would embark on a diplomatic drive to persuade the United Nations to recognise a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital on territory captured by Israel in the 1967 war.

Arab foreign ministers said in an emergency meeting held following Trump's decision on December 6 that the move would spur violence throughout the region. They described Trump's announcement as a "dangerous violation of international law" which had no legal impact.

In recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, Trump reversed decades of US policy, imperilling Middle East peace efforts and upsetting the Arab world and Western allies alike. The status of Jerusalem - home to sites holy to the Muslim, Jewish and Christian religions - is one of the biggest obstacles to reaching a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. (Reuters)

Pope urges effort to rebuild trust in North Korea, Syria

VATICAN (TIP): Pope Francis is urging international efforts to rebuild trust on the Korean peninsula and in Syria, using his annual foreign policy address to press his demand that political leaders put the dignity of their people before war, profits or power.

In a wide-ranging speech today to ambassadors from some 185 nations, Francis reaffirmed the need to respect the status quo of Jerusalem and refrain from any initiative that exacerbates hostilities. (AP)

Syrian rebels declare counter attack in Idlib province

BEIRUT/AMMAN (TIP): Rebels launched a counter attack against Syrian government forces and their allies in Idlib province on Jan 11, seeking to roll back an advance that is fuelling tension with neighbouring Turkey.

Fighting raged in the area, where a government offensive backed by Iran-backed militia has gathered pace in the last two weeks, according to rebels and a military news service run by the Lebanese group Hezbollah, which is fighting on the government side.

Idlib province is the biggest chunk of Syria still held by rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad, with a population swollen by Syrians who have fled government advances in other parts of the country. Assad has defeated rebels in many parts of western Syria with critical help from Russia and Iran.

The recent military escalation in western Syria has included an unprecedented attack by a squadron of drones on Russian military bases and has cast a shadow over Moscow's efforts to convene a Syria peace congress later this month.

The Hezbollah-run news service said the army and its allies were repelling a "fierce assault" by the Nusra Front, formerly al Qaeda's affiliate in the Syrian war, and groups linked to it.

Rebels fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) said in a statement they had set up a joint operations room to repel the offensive and to take back areas seized by the government in northeastern Hama and southern Idlib.

"The operation is to hit the belly of the regime deep into liberated territories and to encircle their advancing forces," said Abdul Hakim al Rahamon, a senior official in Jaish al Nasr, an FSA faction taking part.

Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an alliance led by the



Nusra Front, the dominant force in Idlib, said it had already made gains.

"With Allah's blessings we drew plans and prepared ourselves and are encircling them," said Abu al Naji, a commander from Tahrir al Sham. "We have killed many."

Rebels said they had captured some 15 villages and seized 60 government fighters. A Syrian military source denied this and dismissed rebel talk of a counter attack as propaganda. The source said fierce battles were however underway in the area and army advances were continuing.

Rebel sources said warplanes had struck Khan Sheikhoun and Saraqeb, two major population centres in Idlib province that are among several towns that have been targeted in the latest offensive.

The latest push by the army and its allies has alarmed Turkey which has been

deploying forces inside northern Idlib and setting up bases which it says are part of agreements with Iran and Russia over a deescalation zone in Idlib.

The Turkish government said the Idlib offensive was endangering the effort to reach a resolution of the conflict and accused the Syrian government of using the pretext of fighting militants to wage a widescale attack.

Ankara is concerned that wider fighting in the province could bring tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing from the battlefields on its borders far beyond the numbers now fleeing.

Many Syrians living in rebel-held areas see Turkey's military intervention as a bulwark against a relentless bombing campaign by Syrian and Russian airforces they blame for killing and injuring hundreds of civilians in urban areas in recent months, away from the frontlines. (Reuters)

8 earthquakes strike along Iran-Iraq border, rattle Baghdad

TEHRAN (IRAN) (TIP): A series of eight earthquakes hit the Iran-Iraq border area and rattled even Baghdad and parts of the Iraqi countryside on Jan 11, apparently aftershocks of a temblor in November that killed over 530 people. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage.

The US Geological Survey said seven of the quakes struck near the Iraqi city of Mandali and an eighth struck near Mehran in western Iran. All struck within an hour of each other, beginning at 0659 GMT.

Seven had a preliminary magnitude of at least 5, while the eighth earthquake was a magnitude 4. Earthquakes of magnitude 5 and up to 5.9 are classified as moderate.

Iranian authorities offered similar figures for the earthquakes on state television. All the information could change as scientists examine the data.

Iranian state television said online that people rushed into the streets as the temblors hit. In Baghdad, people felt a quake shake the Iraqi capital, followed by what felt like aftershocks.

All the earthquakes struck at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), according to the USGS. Earthquakes at magnitude 5 can cause considerable damage. The temblors also all were very shallow, which causes more ground shaking and potential damage, particularly in places without strict building codes.

In November, a major 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck the same region, killing over 530 people and injuring thousands in Iran alone. In Iraq, nine people were killed and 550 were injured, all in the country's northern Kurdish region, according to the United Nations.

Randy Baldwin, a geophysicist with the USGS' National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado, said the earthquakes all appeared to be aftershocks from the November temblor.

The area is located in the sparsely populated and remote Zagros Mountains that divide Iraq and Iran and is home to many shallow faults, he said.

"It's ongoing activity there," Baldwin told The Associated Press. "If there was a stressed fault that's ready to move, they happen like that until the stresses are relieved, so it's not too unusual."

Iran sits on major fault lines and is prone to near-daily earthquakes. In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake flattened the historic city of Bam, killing 26,000 people. (AP)

Iran warns world to prepare for US nuke deal withdrawal

TEHRAN: Iran warned the world today to prepare for the possible withdrawal of the United States from the landmark nuclear deal agreed in 2015.

"The international community must be prepared for the US possibly pulling out of the JCPOA," said deputy foreign minister Abbas Araghchi, using the technical name for the nuclear deal.

Iran signed the accord in 2015 with six world powers, agreeing to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of many international sanctions.

US President Donald Trump openly despises the deal - a central foreign policy achievement of his predecessor Barack Obama - but has so far continued to waive the nuclear-related sanctions at regular intervals as required to stay in compliance.

The next deadline for Trump to waive sanctions falls on Friday.

"It's been more than a year that the US president has sought to destroy the JCPOA with all his efforts," said Araghchi, speaking at the Tehran Security Conference.

"We in Iran are prepared for any scenario. The international community and our region will be the biggest loser, since a successful experience in the international arena will be lost," he added. "Our region will not become a safer region without the JCPOA."

A withdrawal by the US will lead to an "appropriate and heavy response," added foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi. "The US administration will definitely regret it," he said on state television. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is due to travel for talks with the European parties to the deal - Britain, France, Germany and the EU - at the end of the week. Zarif denied reports that the talks would focus on the recent protests in Iran that claimed 21 lives, saying such claims were "baseless and unfounded". "Given the importance of JCPOA these days, and in particular considering the US destructive policies, based on talks we've had, we agreed to have a consultative meeting between Iran and the three European Union members," said Zarif, according to state broadcaster IRIB. (AFP)

GURU GOBIND SINGH, THE TENTH SIKH GURU

THE INDIAN PANORAMA celebrates the 350th birth anniversary of warrior, poet, philosopher and creator of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh. His followers – the Sikhs today number around 27 million worldwide, and Sikhism is the youngest and the fifth largest religion of the world

The tenth and the last Guru or Prophet-teacher of the Sikh faith, was born Gobind Rai Sodhi on Poh7, 1723 sk/22 December 1666 at Patna, in Bihar. His father, Guru Teg Bahadur, the Ninth Guru, was then traveling across Bengal and Assam. Returning to Patna in 1670, he directed his family to return to the Punjab. On the site of the house at Patna in which Gobind Rai was born and where he spent his early childhood now stands a sacred shrine, Takht Sri Harimandar Sahib, one of the five most honored seats of religious authority (takht, lit. throne) for the Sikhs.

SON OF A MARTYR

He was only nine when he became the Tenth Sikh Guru. He ascended after his father Guru Teg Bahadur accepted martyrdom in the hands of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to protect the Kashmiri Hindus.

SCHOLAR AND WARRIOR

As a child, Guru Gobind Singh learned many languages including Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi, Braj, Gurmukhi and Persian. He also learned martial arts to become adept in combat.

TO THE HILLS

Guru Gobind's hometown was the city of Anandpur Sahib in the present Rupnagar district in Punjab. He left the town due to a scuffle with Bhim Chand and proceeded to Nahan, a place in the hills of Himachal Pradesh, following an invitation of Mat Prakash, the king of Sirmaur.

PREACHING IN HILLS

From Nahan, Guru Gobind Singh proceeded to Paonta, a town beside the river Yamuna in South Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh. There, he founded the Paonta Sahib Gurdwara and preached about the Sikh principles. Paonta Sahib remains an important pilgrim site for Sikhs. Guru Gobindji also wrote texts and had a substantial number of followers within three years, the time he spent there.

A FIGHTER

In September 1688, at the age of 19, Guru Gobind Singh fought the Battle of Bhangani against an allied force of Bhim Chand, Garwal king Fateh Khan and other local kings of the Sivalik Hills. The battle lasted for a day and thousands of lives were lost. The Guru came out victorious. A description of the battle can be found in Bichitra Natak or Bachittar Natak, a part of the Dasham Granth, which is a religious text attributed to Guru Gobind Singh.

RETURN TO HOME

In November 1688, Guru Gobind returned to Anandpur Sahib, which became known as Chak Nanaki, agreeing upon an invitation from the dowager queen of Bilaspur.

FOUNDER OF KHALSA

On March 30 in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh gathered his followers to his home in Anandpur Sahib. He asked for a volunteer to sacrifice his head for his brothers. Daya Ram offered his head and the Guru took him inside a tent and later emerged with a bloody sword. He again asked for a volunteer and repeated the feat. This went on for three more times. At last, Guru emerged from the tent with the five volunteers and five headless goats were found in the tent. These five Sikh volunteers were named as Panj Pyaare or 'five beloved ones' by the Guru.

The five volunteers were Daya Ram, also known as Bhai Daya Singh; Dharam Das, also known as Bhai Dharam Singh; Himmat Rai, also known as Bhai Himmat Singh; Mohkam Chand, also known as Bhai



Mohkam Singh; and Sahib Chand, also known as Bhai Sahib Singh. They were the first Sikhs.

KHALSA, THE WAY OF LIFE

At the gathering of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Vani - "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh". He named all his followers with the title Singh, meaning lion. He also founded the principles of Khalsa or the Five 'K's.

The five 'K's are the five principles of life that are to be followed by a Khalsa. These include Kesh or hair, which means to leave the hair uncut to show acceptance to the form God intended humans to be; Kangha or wooden comb, as a symbol of cleanliness; Kara or iron bracelet, as a mark to remind a Khalsa of self-restraint; Kacchera or knee-length shorts, to be worn by a Khalsa for being always ready to go into battle on horseback; and Kirpan, a sword to defend oneself and the poor, the weak and the oppressed from all religions,

castes and creeds.

FIGHTING THE MUGHALS

After repeated conflicts with Garwali and Mughal leaders, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb in Persian, which was later famously named as Zafarnama or the Epistle of Victory, reminding him of the misdeed the Mughals had done to the Sikhs. He fought against the Mughals later in battle of Muktsar in 1705.

PASSING THE LEGACY

After Aurangzeb's death, Guru Gobind Singh no longer remained an adversary to the Mughals. The next Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah was friendly with Guru Gobind at first. He even named the Guru as Hind Ka Pir or the Saint of India. But later on, Bahadur Shah was influenced by Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sirhind, to attack the Sikh community. Wazir Khan sent two Pathan assassins Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg to attack the Guru during his sleep at



Nanded, the Guru's resting place. They stabbed Guru Gobind Singh in his sleep. The Guru killed Jamshed, the attacker, with his sword, while other Sikh brothers killed Beg.

Guru Gobind Singh named Guru Granth Sahib, the religious text of the Khalsas and the Sikhs, as the next Guru of the two communities. He left his bodily form and on October 7 in 1708.

Following are a few of Guru Gobind Singh's teachings pinched from the 52 Hukams that can be incorporated in our daily lives:

Kisae dee ninda, chugalee, atae eirkhaa nahee karnee

Do not gossip, nor slander, or be spiteful to anyone.

Dhan, javaanee, tae kul jaat da abhimaan naee karnaa (Nanak daadak tahe duae goath. Saak guroo Sikhian sang hoath)

Do not be proud of riches, youthfulness or lineage. (Regardless of maternal and paternal caste or heritage, all of the Guru's Sikhs are siblings of one family.)

Dushman naal saam, daam, bhaed, aadiak, upaa vartnae ate uprant udh karnaa

When dealing with enemies, practice diplomacy, employ a variety of tactics, and exhaust all techniques before engaging in warfare.

Pardaesee, lorvaan, dukhee, apung manukh dee yataahshkat seva karnee

Do as much possible to serve and aid foreigners, those in need, or in trouble.

Putaree da dhan bikh jananaa
Realise that considering a daughter as property is poison.

Dasvand denaa
Donate a tenth of your earnings.

Panj Kakaar dee rehith drirh kar rukhnee
Follow the discipline of The Five Ks strictly. Adhere resolutely to the five articles of faith.

Shabad da abhiaas karnaa
Practice the sacred hymns to life.

Sat Saroop Satgur daa dhian dharnaa
Contemplate and assimilate the beautiful truth of the True Enlightener.

Guru Granth Sahib Jee noo Guru mananaa

Believe in and accept Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the Guide to enlightenment.

Kaarjaan dae arambh vich ardaas karnee
When undertaking any task, first perform the prayer of Ardas.



Eye Foundation of America

World without childhood blindness

Eye Foundation of America: Work Began 1977
(World without childhood blindness)

Combating avoidable blindness in India and the developing world: Efforts since 1977



Indian Express Press, 1977 Morgantown, WV and Vijayawada in India come together to prevent blindness



Indian Express Press, 1977 Morgantown, WV and Vijayawada in India come together to prevent blindness



India Abroad, 1980 "Doctor on Vacation Serves the Poor"



India Abroad, 2011 "Exploring New Frontiers in Philanthropy"



Indian Express, 1981 "One Town; Two Town"



Indian Express, 1986 "Doctor's Gesture for Eye Hospital"



2013 VK Raju receives Dr. Nathan Davis International Excellence in Medicine Award; AMA Foundation



India Abroad, 2013 "Support A Cause"



Eye Foundation of America 2016 Global Health Summit Journal Presented to PM Modi by AAPI



Eye Foundation of America

World without childhood blindness



"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children"-Nelson Mandela



Dominion Post, 2000 "It is a great feeling Dr. Raju donates LASIK fee to Eye Foundation of America."-Dr. & Mrs. Alan Hess



2013 Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Award at House of Lords



Deccan Chronicle, 2007 "NRI with a Difference"



Ophthalmology Times, 2003 "Volunteer physicians combat blindness in rural India."



Ophthalmology Times, 2002 "Exchange program opens eyes for a developing nation."



AAPI, 2003 "One Man's Crusade Against Blindness"



"Combating childhood blindness is the most cost effective health interventions." - World Bank



Hindu, 2007 "A Ray of Hope for Affected Children"

Makar Sankranti or Sankranti is a popular Indian festival. It is celebrated in many parts of the country and also in some other parts of the world with great zeal and enthusiasm.

It is a harvest festival which is basically celebrated in the Hindu communities. In Indian, the states of Bihar, Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu celebrate the festival with great fervor and gusto. In Tamil Nadu, the festival is known as Pongal, in Assam as Bhogali Bihu, in Punjab as Lohiri, in Gujarat and Rajasthan as Uttarayan.

Outside India, the festival is given due importance in countries like Nepal where it is celebrated as Maghe Sakranti or Maghi, in Thailand where it is named as Songkran and in Myanmar where it is called Thingyan. The festival of Makar Sankranti marks the day when the sun begins its northward journey and enters the sign of Makar (the Capricorn) from the Tropic of Cancer. It is like the movement of sun from Dakshinayana (south) to Uttarayana (north) hemisphere.

It is one of the few chosen Indian Hindu festivals which has a fixed date. This day falls on the 14th of January every year according to the Hindu Solar Calendar. The festival is considered to be a day from where onwards all the auspicious ritualistic ceremonies can be solemnized in any Hindu family. This is thus considered as the holy phase of transition. Sankranti means transmigration of Sun from one zodiac in Indian astrology to the other.

As per Hindu customary beliefs, there are 12 such Sankrantis in all. But the festival is celebrated only on the occasion of Makara Sankranti i.e. the transition of the Sun from Sagittarius ('Dhanu' Rashi) to Capricorn ('Makara' Rashi). In this case, the zodiacs are measured sidereally, and not tropically, in order to account the Earth's precession.

That is why the festival falls about 21 days after the tropical winter solstice which lies between December 20 and 23rd. Here the sun marks the starting of Uttarayana, which means northern progress of Sun. Makar Sankranti holds special significance as on this day the solar calendar measures the day and night to be of equal durations on this day. From this day onwards, the days become longer and warmer.

It is the day when people of northern hemisphere, the northward path of the sun marks the period when the sun is getting closer to them. The importance of the day was signified by the Aryans who started celebrating this day as an auspicious day for festivities.

The reason behind this may be the fact that it marked the onset of harvest season. Even in the epic of Mahabharata, an episode mentions how people in that era also considered the day as auspicious.

Bhishma Pitamah even after being wounded in the Mahabharata war lingered on till Uttarayan set in, so that he can attain heavenly abode in auspicious times. It is said that death on this day brings Moksha or salvation to the deceased.

Significance

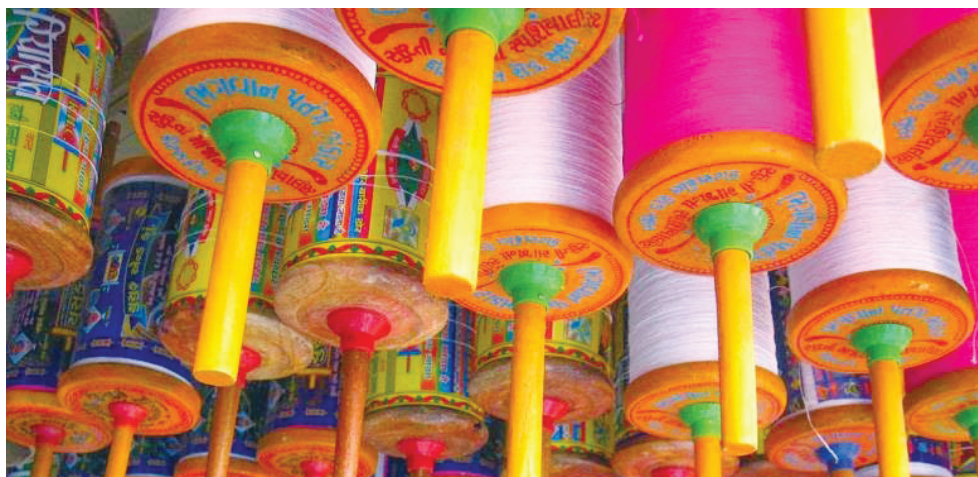
The day signifies the beginning of the summer and the harvest season. It also signifies the northward journey of Sun which is called 'Uttarayan'. People discard old things for new ones, forget old enmities and pray to god and offer food to their ancestors with the start of the harvesting season and end of the winter months. People attend holy fairs like the 'Kumbh Mela' in Prayag and the 'Gangasagar Mela' at the junction of River Ganges and the Bay of Bengal and take a dip in the holy waters to wash off their sins.

Makar sankranti story

Capricorn is the sign of Saturn (shani); the sun on this day enters the sign of Saturn. The sun is the father of Saturn and as per Hindu

MAKAR SANKRANTI

Makar Sankranti is the holiest of the 12 Sankrantis for the Hindus in North India. The day is celebrated in various forms in different parts of India, though



mythology, father (sun) and son (shani) don't get along well. But on this day, the father goes to meet his son. Both Saturn and Sun are mighty planets whose auspicious blessings can make humans achieve great success. Hence on Makar Sankranti, people pray to both sun and saturn. In the era of Mahabharat, Bhishma Pitamah had a blessing of wish death. Although lying on the bed of arrows, he did not sacrifice his life in dakshinayan and waited for the sun to go in uttarayan to discard his body. It is believed

that people who die in uttarayan get a place in Krishna Lok, and get moksha. Another story is that on this day King Bhagirath brought Ganga to earth, thus providing moksha to 60,000 sons of Maharaj Sagar.

Spiritual importance

On Makar Sankranti from sunrise to sunset, the environment is full of chaitanya or divine consciousness. Thus a seeker doing sadhana (spiritual practice) can derive the maximum benefit of the increased chaitanya.

Due to the chaitanya, tejtattva (absolute fire principle) also increases in seekers. This day is very conducive for sadhana.

FAIRS and FESTIVALS

On this day, many fairs are held in different regions of India. The biggest fair is held at Ganga Sagar in West Bengal, where River Ganga enters the sea thousands of pilgrims and sadhus come here for the holy bath on Makar Sankranti. The bullock festival, cattle fair is held at different places on this day, where camels, horses and bullocks are sold and purchased. A famous and unique fair is held at Rajgir in Bihar.

SURYA MANTRA: On the day of Makar Sankranti, surya mantra japa should be done and the sun should be worshipped. The mantra to be recited is: "Om Hreem Hreem Hroumm Sah Suryaya Namah."

Makar Sankranti is also called Pongal by Tamilians for whom it ushers in the new year. The day begins with surya pongal or sun worship. The newly harvested corn is then cooked for the first time. Sankranti is celebrated all over South Asia with some regional variations. It is known by different names with different customs, like Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Uttarayan in Gujarat, Bhogali Bihu in Assam, Shishir Sakranti in Kashmir, Makar Sankranti in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Haryana. Not just in India, it is celebrated in Nepal as Maghe Sankranti, in Myanmar as Thingyan, in Cambodia as Moha Sagkran, and in Sri Lanka as Uzhavar Pongal.

During this holy festival, we learn to feel oneness with all creations, we learn to be unselfish and to tread the path of love, purity and forgiveness. We learn that our real wealth is the goodwill and friendship of those around us, the land on which our food grows, and the animals that help make our work easier.

The kite flying festival

The tradition of kite flying has been followed over generations in the Indian society and the history of kite flying is described very exquisitely in the Kite Museum in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The festivals attract expert kite-makers and flyers not only from cities of India but also from all around the world.

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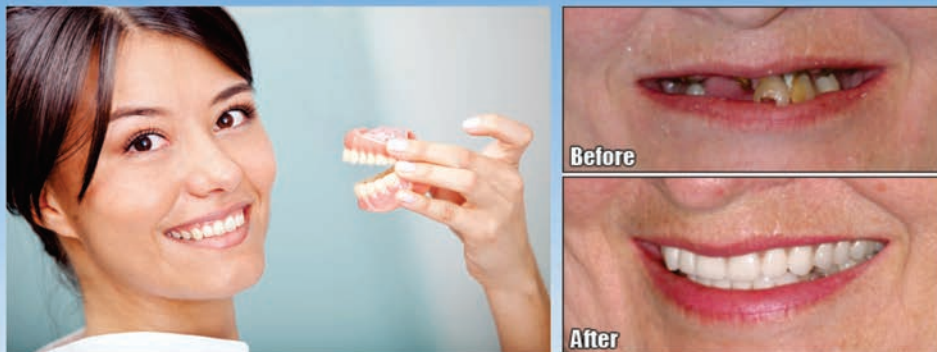
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Harvard Tamil Chair is the biggest scam: E-mail founder Ayyadurai

PRAKASH M SWAMY

NEW YORK (TIP): U.S. Senate Candidate, inventor of e-mail and tech guru Dr. Shiva Ayyadurai has exposed Harvard University's attempt to pilfer trillions of dollars worth of indigenous artifacts through the sale of a "Harvard Tamil Chair" professorship.

Harvard sought to collect \$6 Million from the Tamil Diaspora worldwide, who had no idea of Harvard's business model of selling professorships to fund its \$35 Billion hedge fund investments. Tamil is the oldest surviving language with the richest body of poetry, art, and literature known to humankind, along with hundreds of thousands of sacred artifacts codified in palm leaf manuscripts embodying the scientific, technological and medical knowledge spanning at least 5,000 years of the Tamilians, the indigenous people of the Indian subcontinent, who today primarily reside in Tamil Nadu in India.

According to Dr. Ayyadurai, "The fundraising effort in the name of setting up a Tamil Chair is a ruse that exemplifies Harvard's habitual exploitation of indigenous people. This is an egregious example akin to a burglar asking you to pay money to buy a rickety ladder to rob your own home. Harvard is asking Tamilians to pay \$6 million for a professorship that will be used to rob their own historic artifacts worth trillions of dollars representing the 'Holy Grail' of the world's most highly-prized indigenous knowledge." Harvard will then proceed to use access to those artifacts to rewrite and hegemonies Tamil history, an unfortunate and recurrent process that Harvard has done for far too long to many indigenous cultures.

Harvard's financial statements reveal that the university is fundamentally a tax-exempt Wall Street hedge fund with cash and investments of nearly \$35 Billion. In 2016 alone, Harvard's capital marketing campaign raised \$7 Billion, with its hedge fund in 2017 yielding \$2 billion in gross profits. The operating budget further reveals that professors and administrators effectively serve as business development staff to attract wealthy donors to fund Chairs and professorships that finance their lucrative hedge fund. In 2017, as the Boston Globe reported, Harvard's seven top hedge fund managers earned a total of nearly \$58 million in compensation.

The reason behind the appointment of Naushard Cader, President - The Harvard University Alumni Financial Markets Forum as Special Coordinator with unlimited power has come to light now.

Ayyadurai said, "As these numbers indicate, Harvard is a hedge fund masquerading as a University, which perpetuates this facade by reinvesting large portions of its hedge fund proceeds to unleash propaganda that it is a 'world-renowned' institution of higher learning and scholarliness dedicated to advancing humankind. This branding attracts financing from well-meaning folks, compelled to 'join the club' so their children get preferential treatment when applying to Harvard and access to Harvard's insider network. This dynamic is rarely discussed in the mainstream media."

Nearly one-third of the students admitted to Harvard are beneficiaries of a well-documented legacy and preferential admission system that is not merit-based but on "who you know" or who donated money.

Dr. Ayyadurai's leadership in opposing the "Harvard Tamil Chair" has led to significant discussions on social media. Questions are being raised about why Harvard exists. Does

"The fundraising effort in the name of setting up a Tamil Chair is a ruse that exemplifies Harvard's habitual exploitation of indigenous people. This is an egregious example akin to a burglar asking you to pay money to buy a rickety ladder to rob your own home. Harvard is asking Tamilians to pay \$6 million for a professorship that will be used to rob their own historic artifacts worth trillions of dollars representing the 'Holy Grail' of the world's most highly-prized indigenous knowledge." - Dr. Shiva Ayyadurai

Harvard exist as a center of research and learning? Or, does Harvard exist to enrich itself through its hedge fund activities? Given the historic value of Tamil, why didn't Harvard fund Tamil studies with its own \$6 million, particularly given that the amount would be a paltry sum (which would be less than one-tenth of one-percent of the \$7 billion Harvard raised from its recent 2016 capital campaign)?

Dr. Vijay Janakiraman, the co-founder of the Harvard Tamil Chair effort to raise the \$6 million, claimed he was unaware of Harvard's business practices until his recent phone conversation with Dr. Ayyadurai, who shared with him that Harvard is not only a hedge fund but also an institution that thrives on racism, corruption and exploitation of indigenous people. Dr. Janakiraman admitted he had naively believed that by donating money to Harvard, he was helping in the preservation and dissemination of the Tamil language.

Harvard has a track record of destroying indigenous peoples' heritage and culture by seizing control of their property, intellectual and otherwise. In 2011, an exposé revealed that Harvard used its hedge fund cash to take over land in Africa leading to forcible displacement of indigenous farmers. The Harvard Tamil Chair would have offered a gateway for Harvard to exercise control over the rare and ancient palm leaf manuscripts - the intellectual property of the indigenous people of Tamil Nadu.

Harvard's abusive treatment of Dr. Subramanian Swamy further exemplifies how they treat an indigenous Tamil scholar, who was dismissed for challenging Harvard's party line. In contrast, Harvard uses its hedge fund profits to hire and retain Elizabeth Warren, who has never challenged Harvard's exploitative practices. In fact, it paid her an exorbitant sum of \$350,000 per year for teaching just one course.

The Harvard Office of the President was complicit with Warren, who shoplifted Native American identity in order to not just advance her career but also to benefit Harvard from Federal grants by misleading the government that they had a Native American on their staff. Warren went on to increase her net worth to over \$10 million while the average net worth of African-Americans, segregated in Warren's and Harvard's own backyard in Cambridge and Boston, spiraled downward, as reported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, to a meager and unbelievable \$8

Dr. Ayyadurai's timely involvement, fortunately, has been a relief to Tamilians worldwide, who are pleased that Dr. Janakiraman, after listening to Dr. Ayyadurai, decided to stop funding Harvard. Dr. Janakiraman told Dr. Ayyadurai, "You are the expert. Tell me what to do and provide me guidance."

Dr. Ayyadurai's plan involves galvanizing the Tamil population globally to build the first online Tamil University at TamilNadu.com, a media property Dr. Ayyadurai has owned since 1993 and will donate to the cause. The finest Tamil software engineers worldwide are volunteering to build a 21st century digital platform that will deliver the Tamil language to all who seek to learn it, across various skill

levels. This approach will be far different than "Harvard Tamil Chair" that would have provided, at best, a rudimentary pre-kindergarten knowledge in Tamil language.

The online video of Jonathan Ripley of Harvard University purportedly teaching Tamil language is evidence of this. The vocabulary in his lessons is limited to a few words - yes, no, this, that, what, hand, leg, tooth, stone, bag, and milk - which is nothing more than baby-talk. The TamilNadu.Com platform will further provide universal access to the ancient manuscripts to advance all humanity, in contrast to enabling Harvard's predatory practices.

There is also growing evidence that people behind the Harvard effort appear to be Hebrew language chauvinists in academia and their allies who seek to deliberately cover up the preeminence of the Tamil language by ensuring that they control the historical narrative of Tamil and reduce it to some "goo goo ga ga" language. A comparison of the Hebrew script with the Tamil Brahmi script will confirm that Hebrew script is based on the older Brahmi script, an uncomfortable fact for the Hebrew chauvinists who suppress this fact. Dr. Ayyadurai stated,

"Harvard is a predatory institution that leeches of taxpayers and needs to be busted up and returned to the public to serve as a community college, as it was originally intended. Their teaching model is medieval and dead, relying on egomaniacal professors who think they know better than the rest of us. The Department of Justice must investigate the racial and religious composition of Harvard's faculty to determine if any single group is overrepresented due to its chauvinist hiring practices.

The Pro-LTTE and anti-Brahmin Tamil outfit in the US - Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA) and Tamil Nadu Foundation that raises funds for several projects in Tamil Nadu have been on the forefront collecting millions of dollars in fund raising all over the US as they saw the Harvard project as revival of Dravidian culture in the US.

V. A. Shiva Ayyadurai is an Indian-born American scientist and entrepreneur notable for his claim to be the inventor of email, based on the electronic mail software called "EMAIL" he wrote as a New Jersey high school student in the late 1970s. Ayyadurai also produced two controversial reports: the first questioning the working conditions of India's largest scientific agency; the second questioning the safety of genetically modified soybeans. Ayyadurai holds four degrees from

MIT including a Ph.D. in biological engineering, and is a Fulbright grant recipient. He is a candidate in the 2018 US Senate election in Massachusetts.

To raise funds to the tune of \$ 6 Million, prominent Tamils in the US have formed Tamil Chair Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization (Tax-ID 47-5021758) registered in the state of Maryland (USA) that is currently working on fund raising for

Harvard Tamil Chair

The Board consists of - Dr Vijay Janakiraman, Hollidaysburg, Pa; Mrs. Vaidehi



Dr. Shiva Ayyadurai, inventor of e-mail and tech guru has alleged pilferage of millions of dollars by Harvard University

Herbert, Kilauea, Hawaii; Sornam Sankar of Ellicott City, MD; Appadurai Muthulingam, Markham, Canada; Siva Illanko, Stouffville, Canada, Dr Sundaresan Sambandam, Cranston, RI; Paul Pandian, Dallas, TX; Kumar Kumarappan, Fremont, CA; Dr. Arumugam Murukiah, Chennai and Dr Varadarajan Raghuraman, North York, Canada. Mrs. Suja Chandrasekaran, Chief Information Officer at Kimberly-Clark and B.Karthikeyan Executive Director at Thriveni Earthmovers Private Limited, Salem, Tamil Nadu and G.Balachandran, a retired I.A.S officer of Tamil Nadu, probably biggest donors were made Members of the Advisory Council - Harvard Tamil Chair

Over 4791 donors have given \$5,310,556.24 of the total estimated collection of \$4, 854,995.09. The major donors are: Government of Tamil Nadu \$1,537,929.18; Vijay and Malliga Janakiraman \$510,000; Sundaresan and Vijayalakshmi Sambandam \$507,850; Paul & Geetha Pandian \$ 203,685; Arumugam Murukiah of Humetis Technologies \$100,000; Sky Mining Services, LLC \$100,000; Mr. V.P. Parama Lingam \$75,376.30 and Fetna Tampa event \$55,298.86; Bala Swaminathan \$52,200; G Balachandran \$41,200; Velammal Educational Trust of Madurai \$38,473.93; Valluvan Tamil Academy \$36,760.; Anbarasu Natchimuthu \$25,000; Dr.Kanthilal \$25,000; Dr. Sembu & Amutha Kanthilal \$25,000.;

Prominent film personalities from Tamil Nadu have opened up their wallets - ; Actor Kamal Haasan \$30,501.75, Actor Vishal Krishna \$15,114.87; Actor R. Suriya -Akaram Foundation \$15,293.63, director Rajanayagam Shanmugraja Mysskin \$386.00.

Several Tamil associations and patrons from outside the US have donated and they include Delhi Tamil Sangam \$3095, K.A.Manoharan, Tamil Valarchi Mandra Arakattalai, Hosur, Tamil Nadu \$1,550; Tamil Nadu Teachers Cooperative Trust - (Asiriyar kootani) \$1526. Tamil Arts and Culture Association Inc, Sydney, Australia \$1025.29; Mr. Jawaahar Tirupapuliur \$499.

However, none of the top Tamil CEOs or Silicon Valley business leaders including Indra Nooyi, CEO of Pepsico, Tennis ace and Hollywood Producer Vijay Amritraj has donated a penny to set up Harvard Tamil Chair as they have understood the purpose behind the collection and how the funds will be deployed other than for promoting Tamil. Ranjon Tandon and his wife Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon, sister of Pepsico CEO Indra Nooyi have donated \$100 Million gift to support engineering at NYU.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS LAY BARE THEIR VISION OF 2018

Community organizations are powerful engines of action. From culture to politics, they are the ones to bring the community together in a meaningful relationship, promoting amity and cordiality among the community members, projecting Indian values -social, cultural, religious and moral. They also play an effective role in bringing the mainstream American communities closer to their groups. And, on top of it, they are the bridges between their country of origin and the country of their adoption. These organizations, in fact, empower the community.

The Indian Panorama approached some of these organizations to know from them about their vision of 2018. We are glad that most responded. And response, indeed, has been, overwhelming. We wish to carry all responses, but find it difficult to carry them all in one go. We are, therefore, serializing. We request our friends who do not find their response published to wait for the next issue of The Indian Panorama on January 19.

Meanwhile, we wish our readers a happy Makar Sankranti and a boisterous Lohri, which is what this festival is. Balle, Balle, Balle!!!



Diwali - the Metaphor - is now Global



By Ravi Batra

On December 5, 2016, now-Deputy Minister Andrei Dapkunas of Belarus, proudly declared in the United Nations Trusteeship Council chamber that "Diwali is now global" at an event entitled: "Small Stamp For A Great Festival (of lights) - Celebrating the living heritage of a billion people and honoring the 7-year-long quest of a woman to have it immortalized in a stamp - USPS 'Diwali' Stamp Dedication Ceremony."

That moment was ostensibly to celebrate the history-making achievement of getting the Forever Diwali Stamp and honor Diwali Stamp and Ranju Batra's 7-year successful journey of getting it. Yet, the number and identity of countries and speakers supporting the event was itself history-making. In addition to Belarus and India as Co-Organizers, there were 22 additional nations as co-sponsors: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal, Panama, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Vietnam and P.O. state of Palestine. The Speakers were led by Acting President of the UN General Assembly Mwabe Patricia Kasese-Bota, India's Permanent Representative Syed Akbaruddin, Belarus' then-Minister Valentin Rybakov, Kazakhstan's now-Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakmanov, United States Postal Service Postmaster Kevin J. Crocilla, Diwali Stamp Project chair Ranju Batra, and National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs chair Ravi Batra.

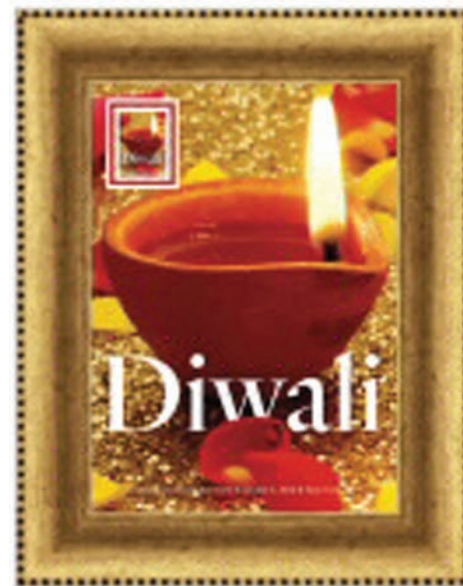
Yet the remarks made by every diplomat at that event, nurtured the Declaration of Diwali having gone global into a seed of "Global Diwali - the Metaphor": Victory of Light over Darkness, Good over Evil, Hope over Despair. Aside from each speaker reflecting upon

Diwali's message being the core goal of the United Nations Charter, Amb. Syed Akbaruddin's public warmth and ease of sharing the essential message of Diwali with the world was the runway, from which each speaker took off. Indeed, Minister Abdrakmanov spoke of the power of Diwali's message as well as the "soft" power of stamps, as they travel around the world. Minister Rybakov joined in those sentiments, and explicitly spoke of Ranju's respectful inclusive grassroots efforts as the "Power of One." At the conclusion of the honorific event, nobody, I think, then realized that a moment of pregnant pause, incubating future-history, had been created.

Indeed, during the gestational period that followed, and multiple promptings of one type or another later, resulted in Ranju creating a NGO in 2017 - Diwali Foundation USA, to promote use of only respectful and inclusive process to achieve goals, and support the essential and vital work of the United Nations to help form a more perfect world. Soon thereafter, the Diwali Foundation USA's Power of One Awards - Oscars of Diplomacy - were established to honor, in the main, former or soon-to-be-former Permanent Representatives and High Ranking members of the UN Secretariat.

On December 11, 2017, the inaugural Power of One Awards were bestowed upon globally exceptional diplomats: Egypt's H.E. Maged Abdelaziz, Moldova's H.E. Ion Botnaru, India's H.E. Lakshmi Puri, United Kingdom's H.E. Matthew Rycroft, Lebanon's H.E. Nawaf Salam and Ukraine's H.E. Yuriy Sergeyev.

These Awards 24 nations officially supported this event - Belarus, Georgia and India as Co-Organizers, and Co-Sponsors Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Botswana, Cyprus, France, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malta, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Permanent Observer State of Palestine, and International Atomic Energy Agency-NY. In addition, there were several more Permanent Representatives of additional nations gracing



the event to give personal support. Also gracing the event was India's Counsel General Sandeep Chakravorty and his wife, Taruna.

Speaking at the Awards event were Amb. Rybakov, Chef de Cabinet to PGA Lajcak Amb Frantisek Ruzicka, Amb. Akbaruddin, Amb. Kaha Imnadze, Amb. Sabri Boukadoum, Amb. Kairat Umarov, Diwali Foundation USA chair Ranju Batra, and Ravi Batra.

Each of the speakers and Awardees extolled Diwali's message of victory of Good, Light & Hope and how that is the core goal of the United Nations.

Amb. Umarov, acknowledging the Diwali Stamp and the now-annual Diwali Foundation USA's Awards, invited an effort towards a UNGA Resolution establishing Diwali Day at the UN.

At the awards event, Ranju Batra said, "[a]t the core of our purpose, is the concept of harmonious inclusion. Respect of all peoples and all cultures, serves as the only proven path to a peaceful and just society. Diwali Stamp proves it. May God bless each nation, so every person is blessed too. That will make Diwali - Global."

Diwali is currently an official holiday in Fiji, Guyana, India, Pakistan, Malaysia,

Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Representing the United States of America, Amb. Nikki Haley provided most welcome co-sponsorship to the Diwali Foundation USA's Power of One Awards honoring exceptional diplomats and UN's core goal.

While Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya may have started the religious Diwali Diya tradition, it is the metaphoric message of Diwali that has universal application to all of humanity. It's worth pondering that all religions, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, to name a few, only when comprehended beyond religiosity have the most impact. Pope Francis is a perfect example of teaching religion to the faithful, and reaching out to many more, when freed of religious dogma, focusing instead on achieving a safe and just society for all.

The path to achieving Diwali - metaphorically - is to converse with Plato, Thomas Becket - the unadorned father of separation of Church & State, the Barons at Runnymede who secured the Magna Carta from King John, but most of all, with Thomas Jefferson - who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the culmination of humanity's architectural self-governance recipe for a near-perfect society, the United States Constitution. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is a warning that governments must remain "for the people," and not for the elite-governing class. The Jewish Sage Hillel stated the Golden Rule: "That which is hateful to you, do not unto another: This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary..." In the holy Bible, Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12; and in the holy Quran(2), the Golden Rule is at Q:4:36, 13:22, 41:34, 28:54, 42:40.

Diwali has gone Global in the United Nations Trusteeship Council chamber, because nations that are majority-Christian, majority-Muslim and majority-Jewish support the victory of Good over Evil, Light over Darkness and Hope over Despair. In fact, when fully achieved, Utopia will have been achieved, and every human being aware of being blessed.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS LAY BARE THEIR VISION OF 2018

Indo-US Democracy Foundation



By George Abraham

The Indo-US Democracy foundation was launched on Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday (November 14) in 2007 to focus on democracy, human rights, constitutional law combined with policy research and analysis to help the world's largest democracy, India and the oldest democracy the United States.

It was important that some of us came together on that day to remember and pay homage to Nehru and his great legacy not only towards gaining India's independence but also for laying a strong foundation of a pluralistic and forward-looking India.

Undoubtedly, Nehru helped to build

institutions that stood the test of time. The emerging nations during that period such as Yugoslavia, Egypt, and Ghana failed in this regard, and results are quite evident for all of us to see. Nehru's vision and leadership were critical in shaping India as we know it today. According to 'Journey of a Nation', edited by Anand Sharma, Nehru laid the foundation of a self-reliant, productive and confident India, creating many of its Institutions leaving an indelible stamp on every aspect of the country.

After the Second World War, people around the world expressed a sigh of relief. The war was over; let the nations focus their energy on to socio-economic development. New technologies ushered us into a new era where Internet cut distances between two points, and we have been transformed into a global village. Naturally, one would hope that people are more educated, more civilized and better integrated into societies wherever they may be.

However, the reverse has happened. What we

see today in the world are more division, further polarization, and widespread conflicts. Today, democracy and freedom are threatened world over by authoritarianism often closely bordering on fascism. Half a century after Nehru's death, the current leadership of India is busy trying to downplay his legacy for political expediency and to re-create a nation away from the democratic and secular tradition he has championed. For those of us who are fortunate enough to live in this country, we also see elements of ultra-nationalism raising their ugly heads.

That is the reason why some of the human rights activists, others in the Media and the Academia who believe in freedom and liberty and the rule of law decided to create a Think Tank where we could analyze the developing trends and inform the public of the increasing danger to our way of life.

In today's India, media is being muzzled, journalists and rational thinkers are being

murdered, educational institutions are saffronized with regressive curriculums and programs, dietary habits of the public are being regulated, and religious freedom of the minorities are increasingly challenged by extremist forces.

We as NRIs need to defend freedom and democracy here in America; however, if we are silent on the threat to democracy back at home while defending it only when we are on the foreign soil would simply tantamount to be dubious the least or just plain hypocrisy.

IUDF believes that no one should be denied basic human rights including freedom of religion, speech, and assembly; that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Therefore, let us come together and work hard to strengthen democracy and freedom everywhere especially in our adopted land as well as the homeland. By supporting this Think Tank, you will be doing just that.



By Dr. V.K. Raju

Eye Foundation of America, founded in 1971 is a not-for-profit body, engaged in the mammoth task of preventing blindness among children. Its Founder and Chairman Dr. V.K. Raju who is an internationally acclaimed ophthalmologist dreams of a world without childhood blindness. - EDITOR

My crusade for the past four decades has been to achieve my vision of a world without childhood blindness. In pursuit of this vision, I created the Eye Foundation of America (EFA), a non-profit organization. In 1977, I began traveling home to India to offer my services as an ophthalmologist to those who could not afford, or access desperately needed eye care. These preventive services and medical and surgical interventions were delivered the form of eye camps in the early days, and the EFA was initially founded to allow for easier transfer of state-of-the-art equipment and medicine from the United States to India. As the Foundation matured, it became so much more. The EFA is now a global organization responsible for treating millions of patients, performing hundreds of thousands of surgeries, and training



hundreds of eye care professionals to join in the global fight against avoidable blindness. Our work spans 25 countries over several continents.

We treat the aged and the young, but children hold a special place in our hearts. The EFA has helped to build two hospitals in India; one of those hospitals, the Goutami Eye Institute, has a wing dedicated to children and a one-of-a-kind program to screen newborn babies for congenital problems that can lead to blindness if not treated. Despite these vast accomplishments, however, our work is only just beginning. The EFA has future plans to build an international service and research eye hospital for children in India, the Green Eye Hospital, where no child will be denied treatment and children from around the world can come to receive services.

If blindness is preventable, then let us do it big. And, someday, hopefully soon, a world without childhood blindness will become a reality.

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ASSOCIATION OF INDIANS IN AMERICA (AIA) VISION STATEMENT



By Gobind Munjal,
President

After having served successfully for the past 15 years in AIA, NY Chapter as well as in other prominent community based organizations like; IALI, as its President, I am now the President of a 50 years old prestigious organization, Association of Indians in America (AIA), NY Chapter.

As President of AIA, NY Chapter, we recently celebrated our 30th Deepavali Festival

on Oct 1, 2017 at the iconic South Street Seaport, which was a huge success with record breaking crowd and media coverage, especially attracting the younger generation, which has been our recent aim and objective. Spectacular fireworks in the east river are unique to AIA Diwali only. AIA, NY Chapter has been a contributing factor in starting Diwali celebrations in White House & City Halls, issuing the Diwali postal stamp, suspension of alternative street parking etc.

My vision is to expand the youth programs and membership drive for the youths and get them involved, as youths are the lifeline of all non-profit organizations. I expressed my commitment to upholding AIA's objective of "Indian Heritage and American Commitment" thru expanded program such as Desi Next, a forum for the younger generation, commitment to various Philanthropic projects to serve the Indian community, the Children Diwali program in libraries & Museums, recognition of Diwali holiday in Public Schools, Educational and Health Seminars for the Seniors and Senior housing, etc.

In an effort to realize this vision, we have been successful in forming Desi Next, and did a very successful program attracting about 150 young people along with their small children. Now we would like to strengthen the Desi Next Forum and its activities and the membership drive for the youths. To expand our philanthropic projects here and in India, we are planning to do a fundraiser in June 2018. We are also working on recognition of Diwali holiday in Public Schools with NYC Mayor and Governor's office.

Please look for AIA's 31st Deepavali Festival on Oct 7, 2018 by visiting our website www.theaiany.org

Vision 2020 for Indian Diaspora Council (IDC)



By Ashook Ramsaran

The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) is global, non-political, secular, non-profit organization established in 1997 with the objective to embrace, engage and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity, with a centrally located secretariat and a global country wise network of chapters and affiliates in 21

countries, and collaborating with governments, institutions, organizations and agencies to achieve its objectives.

Near term goals include: (February 2018) Forum on Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality & Harassment - including recognition of 100th anniversary of Women's Suffrage in New York State, USA; (Year 2018) Co-naming of street in Queens, New York as a tribute to late Ramesh D. Kalicharran, a pioneer and icon among Indo-Caribbean in USA; (March 2018) IDC International in collaboration with USA, Canada, UK and Caribbean organizations for "Cheddi Jagan Centennial Commemoration 2018: A centennial tribute to the late Dr. Cheddi B. Jagan, commemorating his life, legacy and

influence on the people of Guyana, the Caribbean and globally; (July 2018) Commemorating the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela on the 100th birthday, with linkage to Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr; (September 2018) Forum on more progressive co-existence of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) in multi-ethnic societies.

IDC's long term goals are: Indian Diaspora Cultural Centre (IDCC); Indian Diaspora World Convention 2018 (site of IDCC); Indian Diaspora Entrepreneurship & Economic Empowerment; Indian Diaspora Global Country-wise Census (IDGC); British, French, Dutch Acknowledgement of Indian

Indenture ship (Support for Indian Diaspora Cultural Centre, Archival Documents & Virtual Museum)

IDC's strength and ability to achieve its goals are based on an increasingly robust combination of its secretariat, chapters and affiliates in 21 countries collaborating with various governments, institutions, organizations and agencies, including financial supporters, well wishes and memorandum of agreements (MOUs) with organizations globally.

(Ashook Ramsaran is founder/president of the Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) and immediate past president of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO International).

Whither Education in Maharashtra?

Vinod Tawade: A failed Education Minister or an Amateurish Experimenter in Education System?

BY KISHOR SATWICK

Maharashtra Education Minister Vinod Tawade has again bowled a bad delivery. Under his initiative, the HSC Board has proposed two sets of test papers for Std. XII exam to be conducted in 2019 - A tough question paper for those desirous to pursue medical and engineering degrees and an easy one for the rest. The new paper pattern is already being implemented for class XI.

According to the changed pattern, students will be given fewer choices on questions thus making it tougher to omit to study chapters or topics from a particular subject. The aim was to follow the CBSE pattern and prepare students for National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) and Joint Entrance Exam (JEE).

The justification given by Vinod Tawade is: "In NEET and JEE exams, you don't have the option to choose what topic to study. You have to study everything. But if you are not going for these exams, then you could perhaps leave out certain topics. Out of roughly 15 lakh students who appear for class XII exams, only 5,000 go to medical colleges and 60,000 to engineering colleges. The rest go for a BSc degree. So, I have made this suggestion and the educationists are deliberating on this. We will take a decision on this before the next academic year begins."

It is known fact that level of examination depth in HSC is less than that in CBSC. Hence, students passing from HSC find it difficult to compete in NEET conducted by CBSC. The same goes for JEE. To increase the competitiveness of the Maharashtra Students is the call of the day. Earlier Congress/NCP Government had realized this and they had



Doubts have often been raised about the competence of the Maharashtra Education Minister Vinod Tawade who has allegedly adopted weird education policies

made the exam pattern competitive. However, the present Education Minister has been diluting even the syllabus ever since he has occupied that Chair.

A bizarre idea has come to the fertile brain of Education Minister. The Learned Education Minister of Maharashtra further concludes that only 5,000 students go for medical degrees and rest do not go. The Learned Minister does not understand that it is not the case that only 5,000 students opt for medical education; rather the situation is because in Maharashtra, only 5,000 medical seats are available for admission, only 5,000 students can go for medical degrees. Instead of increasing the medical infrastructure in the State so that more students can go for medical education and fill the vacuum in health sector, the Minister is tinkering with the

examination pattern promoting mediocrity. If one sees the admissions in engineering colleges, the figure of 60,000 quoted by Vinod Tawade is far from reality. As per DTE, Maharashtra, about 1,20,000 students took admissions in Engineering colleges in the Maharashtra State in 2017 as against the capacity of 2,10,000 seats. That left about 42% of the total seats vacant. According to DTE, while more students appeared for the MH-CET this year, compared to the past few years, there weren't too many top scores when the results were announced on June 3. Just 1% of the applicants scored above 75% in the exam. This clearly shows the syllabus and the exam pattern need to be redesigned to increase the intelligence and the competitiveness of the students and not to make them mediocre.

This move is strongly opposed by the

Academicians.

Anil Deshmukh, president, Maharashtra State Federation of Junior College Teachers' Organization says: "How can there be two papers? Asking students to decide if they are going to give entrances at the time of giving HSC is not a cogent suggestion."

Dr Ashok Wadia, Principal, Jai Hind College pointed out, "Students only know they have to give exams. The coaching class lobby has raised the bogey of failures as they streamline their coaching to how students can get more marks by studying most likely topics. Students have to study everything. Can a physics student say I can study the topic of 'light' but not 'heat'?"

But Learned Education Minister of Maharashtra thinks Yes; a student can learn 'light' but not 'heat'. Considering this danger, the SC took away the medical entrance from the States to Centre and there is one NEET conducted by CBSC. If left to the likes of Vinod Tawade, we would have Neuro Surgeons who had left brain as option in their medical education.

Mr. Vinod Tawade, the syllabus - whether for SSC - HSC or Engineering - should be such that it produces knowledgeable students/professionals. Industry is already complaining that 60% of the BE/B.Tech degree holders are unemployable. It is simply because of people like Vinod Tawade who encourage students to leave the topics for option thereby weakening their basic educational foundation by producing mediocrity.

It is said a mediocre produces a mediocre. It is high time we had some professional as Education Minister in Maharashtra.

(The author is a Mumbai based social activist)

AN OPEN APPEAL TO NEW NYC SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON

BY ALBERT BALDEO

Dear Speaker Johnson:

"For of those to whom much is given, much is required."-President John F. Kennedy

Congratulations on your elevation as the second most powerful person in NYC government! Indeed, the discrimination you overcome for being openly gay and HIV-positive has fortified you for the fights ahead. Your history and the issues that you have worked have stood in solidarity with communities of color, the marginalized and the vulnerable. Like you said, "That is where you come from. That is what my life's work has been about."

We also applaud your statement that, "The problems and challenges we continue to face are of historic proportions. Overflowing homeless shelters, mom and pops unable to compete with deep-pocketed chain stores and a failing transit system are just three of our problems."

You should put a stop to the over criminalization of New Yorkers, like stop making criminals of poor people who cannot afford the fare to travel to work on the trains. You should roll back the senseless e-bike ban because it helps immigrant workers get by. Transform this city into a beacon that's in solidarity with poor and working-class New Yorkers, including increasing your audit and scrutiny of the many failing city agencies that routinely waste and abuse our tax dollars, while preserving it as a "sanctuary city."

The mayor has promised us more senior centers, better schools, hospitals, city services and personnel and transparency in how benefits are awarded. Hold his feet to the fire.



You also said that, "I would support us putting up a significant amount of money," referring to city funding for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, a stance that Mayor Bill de Blasio has resisted. "But there needs to be accountability involved so we know how that money is being spent, and that it's being spent wisely and that the projects remain on time." (NY Times 2/2/18).

Mr. Speaker, we urge you to address these and other issues speedily, not least here in

Queens. The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is in breach of their public commitment and obligation to complete the wheelchair-accessible elevator in the Richmond Hill/Ozone Park community at the fulcrum Lefferts Boulevard and Liberty Avenue subway stop. This \$29 million project, commenced since 2014, was scheduled to be finished since the end of 2016, but unpalatable excuses abound each time we enquire about the constantly deferred completion date,

making it a virtual "pie in the sky!"

MTA will also benefit from increased revenues, and its procrastination raises serious concerns, including the forced closure of the adjacent main stairway, affects businesses, the local economy, and congests traffic. Seniors, pregnant mothers, kids, the physically challenged, students, workers, indeed, everyone in our tax paying community would benefit greatly from this elevator which makes mobility and travel easier.

Affected communities deserve to have this project completed. Moreover, the fencing, construction and accumulating garbage are an eye sore, and a danger to public safety. This delinquent entity must recognize that it is failing in its duty to make access easier for residents with disabilities, contrary to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Indeed, the nonprofit Center for Independence of the Disabled New York just filed a lawsuit against the MTA for lack of elevator access citywide. Why must Richmond Hill/Ozone Park residents be forced to expend resources and bring a class action law suit against the MTA when it feeds off the public trough of our taxes?

As a matter of customer obligation and due compliance with our laws, this project is long overdue, and must be completed now!

(Albert Baldeo is a civil rights activist and community advocate, As the President of the Baldeo Foundation and Queens Justice Center, he has continued to fight for equal rights, dignity and inclusion in the decision-making process. He can be contacted at the Baldeo Foundation: AlBaldeo@aol.com or (718) 529-2300)

VINAYAKI: STORY OF THE FEMALE AVATAR OF LORD GANESHA

Tucked away in one of the shrines of the Thanumalayan temple in Kanyakumari district is the stone sculpture of a little-known goddess. Seated cross-legged in Sukhasana, the slender, four-armed goddess has a battle-axe in her upper-left hand and a conch in the lower left hand. In her two right hands, she carries a vase and a staff, around which she entwines her long trunk. This is the female elephant-headed goddess, Vinayaki or Ganeshini, whose origins have been ignored by most writings on Hindu mythology.

This depiction of the elephant-headed goddess in the 1,300-year-old temple is among the few rare representations of the deity. "It is one among many other idols but is special," said C Santhalingam, a retired archaeologist. "When you go around the temple for pradarsana, you can see the goddess in the north eastern side of the temple. It is an idol of interest, since a similar sculpture is rare to find."

Goddess in obscurity

Every year, Hindus across the country celebrate the birth of their beloved elephant-headed god Ganesh in the Bhadrapada month of the Hindu calendar, which usually begins at the end of August. Revered as the remover of all obstacles, countless songs, stories and imagery celebrate him as one of the most popular deities in Hindu mythology. But the same level of adulation has never been given to Vinayaki, who was often regarded as Ganesh's consort.

"From the beginning, the goddess' entry in myths is so overshadowed by the popularity of her consort Ganesh that she is frequently ignored or known by various Puranic names," wrote Balaji Mundkur in his research paper on the goddess, titled The Enigma of Vainayaki. "In contrast to the immense popularity of the images of Ganesh, she is not often represented by an icon, not even in human form. She is at no historical period given as much personal adoration as is accorded to Devi as Shiva's shakti."

According to Mundkur, Vainayaki is one of the least encountered deities in religious literature. She is not even known by a consistent name – her names are all feminine versions of the elephant god – Gajanani, Vighneshi, Gajarupa. "Though the origins of this goddess are mysterious, there is little doubt that her lineage parallels that of the many theriomorphic divinities and godlings of Hinduism whose roots go back to pre-vedic times," he wrote.

Mundkur also wrote that the earliest mention of Vinayaki occurred in the Matsya Purana compiled in 550 AD, where she is listed among 200 other goddesses as Shiva's various forms.

The earliest representation of the elephant goddess was found in Rairh in Rajasthan, a damaged terracotta sculpture, dated to have been made earlier than the 5th century. The rest of the representations appeared only after the 10th century BCE.

Another representation of the goddess is found in the tantric temple Chausath Yogini in Hirapur, Odisha. Here, she is one of the 64 Yoginis, a sacred feminine force. According to Prithvi K Agrawala in the book Goddess Vinayaki: The Female Ganesha, the figure of the goddess stands in a rare dance pose. "She is dancing in the catura pose with her legs bending inside in dance movements on the toes," he wrote.



Though the figure has eroded over time, such that the emblems in her hands are no longer visible, the graceful posture of the pot-bellied goddess standing on a boar is discernible. Some other rare sculptures of Vinayaki have been found in temples in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

But the most commonly acknowledged version of Vinayaki's significance, was the she was the female form, or shakti, of Ganesh.

Goddess lore in Hinduism

According to Devdutt Pattnaik's narration, a demon named Andhaka wanted Parvati to be his wife. Shiva attempted to kill him, but the only way he could die was if not a drop of blood fell to the ground. Parvathi then called for help from the shaktis of every divine being, including Vaishavi, who was Vishnu's shakti, Indrani who is Indra's shakti and Brahmini, who is Brahma's shakti. Here, Ganesh's shakti also emerged to drink the blood of Andhaka before it touched the ground.

In other interpretations, the images are said to represent Malini, who was Parvati's elephant-headed companion and Ganesh's nursemaid.

The fourth day after every new moon is celebrated as Vinayaki chaturthi, a day significant for Lord Ganesha but named after his female form.

With so little literature on this female deity, it is unsurprising that many have not heard of the female representation of Ganesh. When Janaki Srinivasan posted about the female avatar of Ganesha on Facebook last week along with photos of the goddess, she received several astonished reactions. Her post was shared over 500 times. "In these times when a single form of tradition is forced down our throats, let us remind ourselves of the wonderfully diverse cultures that form our inheritance," wrote Srinivasan.

Source: Scroll.in



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'If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it? Indian alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one.'



Shree Ganeshaya Namah

Bejan Daruwalla is world's most famous astrologer today. He appears regularly on world wide TV shows. Bejan who has been a professor in English, has authored a number of books on astrology. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 29, 2012, lunched one of Bejan's books, '2012- End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of journals and newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama (New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.



Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at info@bejandaruwalla.com and on phone 011-91-8141234275 www.bejandaruwalla.com

Weekly Horoscope: January 8 - 14, 2018

Ganesha says in digital terms speed + space + spirituality + showmanship = Sagittarius.

Add to it the great divide between illusion / reality, evolution / revolution, freedom / captivity, knowledge / wisdom. The archer pierces the eye of the Sun and hits infinity.

Finally, Sagittarius is all about freedom. Sagittarius is both fast and furious.

Aries:

Ganesha says you are on the fastest trajectory to success. You are lucky, and the breaks come your way with ease. There is no struggle as you find yourself at the right place at the right time. There is perfect timing and you have to thank Ganesha for it. Of course, like I keep saying, it all depends on the individual horoscope and the positioning of your planets. But these are the general trends. Your determination to succeed has been mind-boggling and you put in the required effort too.

Taurus:

You continue making headway and also find inner peace and a sense of balance. This helps you make quick and correct decisions and breast the tape ahead of the competition like Asafa Powell in the 100 meters. You are ruthless and move with direction and determination, ready for the kill. Nothing and no one can stand in your path. With great achievements come greater confidence and self-belief.

Gemini:

There is all-round and sustained growth as you move ahead with a ferocity and determination not normally associated with you. You surprise everyone and zero in on both social standing and advancement at work. Your life is filled with passion and the hormones are raging. You grow at every level, acquire wisdom, consolidate your gains and reap the harvest. There are the usual attendant stresses, but they are not enough to distract you from the forward march.

Cancer:

There is shift here, and you slow down having achieved a lot and mowed down the opposition. You look at doing some concrete inner work and spending valuable and pleasing time with near and dear ones. You are not really in Mother Teresa mode, but you are also not as hell-bent on work expansion as you were earlier. You have set foot on Everest itself and there is no going further for now.

Leo:

You are going great guns and are active and energized. Your emotional, spiritual and intellectual faculties are pronounced. You look at religion, the occult sciences, philosophy, law, psychology, and the afterlife. You have the time and resources now to indulge in these interests and desires. You are filled with passion too, but it is a passion for knowledge. There is a new path to your life and you want to examine it closely.

Virgo:

Many good things happen to you in an oblique way. There is a renewing of social ties and strengthening of old and new acquaintances and friendships. You are also filled with a sense of altruism and philanthropy, empathy for the less fortunate, and donate generously to all causes. And it is not just for tax benefits. The feeling is genuine. You counsel and mentor those who need it and lend a helping hand wherever it is needed.

Libra:

You have been growing in many profound ways and you keen to sustain this growth. You spread out to many areas of study and look for masters and seers. Your interests stretch to the occult, psychology, religion, philosophy and other related areas. There is also hard work to be put in at the office. A lot of diplomacy will also be required in domestic matters to keep the peace at home. You realize that it is not easy doing it all and it may get tiring and irksome.

Scorpio:

You are living larger than king size, if there can be such a way to live. You gamble with your heart and feelings without discretion and discrimination and no one can stop you. Work takes a back seat and family life could also suffer. Your near and dear ones feel that you have been taken away from them. There may be domestic squabbles and conflicts to handle as well. You may also get arrogant, haughty and inconsiderate and hurt a lot of people in the process.

Sagittarius:

Your life is action packed like James Bond. Just like win 007, the fun element will also be thrown into the ring and you have to pick up the gauntlet. You are stretched in many directions and every sphere of your life will be galvanized into action mode. There are all kinds of activities, from romance to adventure, hush-hush wheeling and dealing, new projects and collaborations, travel to distant places and a vibrant and active social life.

Capricorn:

This is a thoughtful phase and you indulge in some serious planning. You meet all kind of demands and responsibilities and your mind is hyperactive. You get introspective and may even go on pilgrimage. You want to spend time with the true essence of existence. You want to develop as a complete human being and everything esoteric excites you. Luck also shines on you and throws up many opportunities for growth, renewal, revival, rejuvenation and change.

Aquarius:

You are a people's person and look closely at personal associations and interactions. You are friendly, sociable and well-meaning and often make sincere efforts to get along with everyone, even with those you really dislike. You are generally bold and upfront and can make enemies, but in this phase, you control your tongue and keep your personal views and opinions to yourself like an international diplomat.

Pisces:

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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

India launches Cartos...

satellite and 28 commercial payloads were successfully injected into the orbit one by one by the PSLV C-40, in the space of about 17.33 minutes since lift-off.

A micro satellite of India would be orbited after about 90 minutes following the re-ignition of the fourth stage, Kumar said.

International customer satellites are three micro and 25 nano-satellites from six countries -- Canada, Finland, France, Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Earlier, at the end of the 28-hours countdown, the 44.4-meter-tall PSLV-C40 in its 42nd flight, lifted off at 9.29 am and soared into a cloudy sky from the first launch pad.

The opening mission of 2018 was considered crucial for ISRO as the previous PSLV launch came as a setback to scientists as the backup navigation satellite IRNSS-1H could not be placed in orbit following a snag in the final leg of the PSLV-C39 mission in August last year.

The heat shield of the rocket did not separate in the final leg of the launch sequence, trapping the satellite in the fourth stage of the rocket.

A visibly relieved Kiran Kumar, on his final mission as the chief of the space agency, said he was happy to provide Cartosat 2 Series as a New Year gift for the country.

"ISRO is starting 2018 with the successful launch... all customer satellites (besides Cartosat and nanosat) released and the microsat after one hour. So far Cartosat performance is satisfactory," he said at the mission control room.

Referring to the previous launch, he said it had heat shield problem and an ISRO committee had addressed it and taken steps to ensure the vehicle was 'robust'. (Source: PTI)

US Bill pushes for more...

120,000 of these cards are available annually at present in the US

175,000 will be the count after 45% raise if Bill is signed as law. The legislation 'Securing America's Future Act', if passed by Congress and signed into law by US President Donald Trump, will end the diversity visa program and reduce the overall immigration levels from currently averaging 1.05 million to 260,000 a year.

Indian-American technology professionals, who come to the US mainly on H-1B visas and opt for Green Cards or legal permanent residence status, are expected to be a major beneficiary of the 'Securing America's Futures Act'. As per unofficial estimate, there are nearly 500,000 Indians waiting in the queue for Green Cards and have to seek annual extensions of their H-1B visas. Many wait for decades to get Green Cards. The H-1B program offers temporary US visas that allow companies to hire highly skilled foreign professionals working in areas with shortages of qualified American workers.

The increase in the number of Green Cards per annum is likely to reduce their wait period drastically. Having a Green Card, officially known as a Permanent Resident Card, allows a person to live and work permanently in the US. However, the elimination of chain migration is likely to badly affect those Indian-Americans who are planning to bring their other family members to the US.

Securing America's Future Act eliminates Green Card program for relatives, other than spouses and minor children.

A merit-based immigration system, the Trump administration feels would admit the best and the brightest around the world while making it harder for people to come to the country illegally.

Observers say this could benefit technically-qualified people from countries like India and China.

The legislation creates a workable agricultural guest worker program to grow the US economy, authors of the legislation said. In a late-night statement, the White House said the legislation "would accomplish the President's core priorities for the American people". (Source: PTI)

PM Modi ranked among...

The respondents in the survey, which was conducted among the people across 50 countries, had rated Prime Minister Modi ahead of China's Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Theresa May, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu amongst others.

The top ranking in the survey went to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, followed by French president Emmanuel Macron.

Prime Minister Modi will be on a two-day visit to Davos, Switzerland, to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting between January 22 and 23. (Source: ANI)

US can rejoin Paris...

"It treated the US very unfairly," Trump said during a news conference with Norwegian PM Erna Solberg. He said he had no problem with agreeing to a climate deal, but the Paris accord was "a bad deal. So, we could conceivably go back in." However, he did not indicate any move in that direction.

In June, Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement on climate change and decided to renegotiate the deal that was agreed upon by over 190 countries during the previous Obama administration.

Defending his decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Trump said: "The Paris Agreement as drawn and as we signed was very unfair to the United States. It put great penalties on us. It made it very difficult for us to deal in terms of business. It took away a lot of our asset values." "Frankly, it's an agreement that I have no problem with, but I had a problem with the agreement that they signed, because, as usual, they made a bad deal," Trump told a news conference with Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg.

"So, we could conceivably go back in," Trump said, stressing his administration's commitment to environmental issues, "clean water, clean air", but added "we also want businesses that can compete".

Trump justified his decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate accord, saying there was a "tremendous" penalty for using the country's rich in gas and coal and oil and that hurt American businesses.

The US has appeared to be so far globally isolated on this issue, but Trump strongly defended his decision. Trump insisted that his administration feels very strongly about the environment.

"I feel very strongly about the environment. Our EPA (environment protection agency) and our EPA commissioners are very, very powerful, in the sense that they want to have clean water, clean air, but we also want businesses that can compete," he said.

"The Paris Accord really would have taken away our competitive edge, and we're not going to let that happen. I'm not going to let that happen," Trump asserted. - PTI

Climate accord goals

The Paris agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping the global temperature rise in this century well below 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5° Celsius

The landmark agreement, which entered into force last November, calls on countries to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future, and to adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change

Indian Americans...

after reports emerged that the Trump administration was considering tightening H-1B visa rules that could lead to deportation of 7,50,000 Indians.

"I welcome the decision by the US Citizenship and Immigration Service to allow H-1B visa holders to continue to apply for visa extensions while awaiting their green cards," Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

"While we must continue to invest in developing the skills of our domestic workforce, this decision avoids hurting American businesses and workers, while keeping families together in the process," he said in a statement.

Krishnamoorthi said when a proposal to terminate H-1B extensions arose from within the Trump administration, his office and others opposed it because it would have hurt American businesses, American workers and the American economy, as well as tear apart families.

"In short, that proposal was un-American. I am glad that the Trump administration listened to us and others," he said.

Suhag Shukla, Hindu American Foundation (HAF) executive director and Legal Counsel, said, "the results would've been devastating. Devastating to these law abiding, tax paying workers and their families who have made America their home. Devastating for America by causing an unprecedented brain drain of skilled workers and potential entrepreneurs."

He said soon after US President Donald Trump began raking up the H-1B visa issue, the HAF lobbied and asked members of the Congress to ensure they voice their concern with the administration.

"We're grateful for the swift response by Representatives Tulsi Gabbard and Kevin Yoder in expressing to the administration the detrimental impact the proposed changes would have on the American economy and credibility, US-India relations, and families of skilled workers," Shukla said.

"It is a welcome relief for hundreds of thousands in our community," he said.

(Source: PTI)

CONTD FROM PAGE 9

Tired Titan: Who, after...

And his seventh enemy is from within: the disgruntled Sangh Pariwar (Saffron Brotherhood) and its many constituents. In 2014, the entire Pariwar, with over 25 million workers, had helped Modi climb the steps of Raisina Hills in New Delhi and take oath as the Prime Minister of an aspirational India. Three years down the line, with few results to show on the ground, his promises galore remain hollow, his bravado seems melting away, his 56-inch chest losing muscle. His recent election speeches in Gujarat showed him as a tired titan. Promising a better future, he emerged from Bharat but surrendered to India.

But it is not Modi, the Abhimanyu, who alone may lose out. His "Krishna", Mohan Bhagwat, having travelled with Modi so far and shielded him unconditionally, may also face heat from within the RSS rank-and-file for putting all the Hindutva eggs in Modi's Nehru jacket.

Their relationship, to say the least, is interesting. Bhagwat, who succeeded K S Sudarshan as the RSS chief in March 2009, has been junior to Modi in the Sangh Pariwar hierarchy and seen as the one unable to tame the man who now helms India from 7, Race Course Road in New Delhi. On the contrary, Bhagwat is seen as a Modi-acolyte and many of the RSS subsidiaries-the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) etc-have, from time to time, raised the standard of rebellion ostensibly against the Government's failures to deliver on the promises and also, indirectly, against the Modi-Bhagwat stranglehold that may pull down the entire edifice built since the founding of the RSS in 1925. RSS is the "socio-cultural-spiritual" parent of the BJP, its political front, which is part of dozens of organizations having Hindutva ideological affinities with the Grand Master across India.

In a way, Modi himself may have undermined Bhagwat's authority. In TV interviews, Modi had boasted in 2014 about his relations with Mohan's father, Madhukar Rao, thus indirectly hinting that he (Modi) was senior to the Bhagwat Junior in the RSS hierarchy!

It is this internal dynamics of the RSS that helped bring Modi to power in 2014. And it is this internal dynamics of the RSS that may also defeat him at the hustings in 2019, what with most of the RSS workers remaining aloof from elections, as in Gujarat recently. In 2014, the RSS had Modi to support. Who will it support in 2019?

(The author is a journalist since 1983 and has worked with newspapers, news agencies and magazines in English and Hindi languages. He has contributed articles on diverse subjects. Currently, he is working as Consulting Editor with Business Line, the business daily of The Hindu Group of Publications in India. He is based in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India. He can be reached at virendra.pandit@gmail.com)



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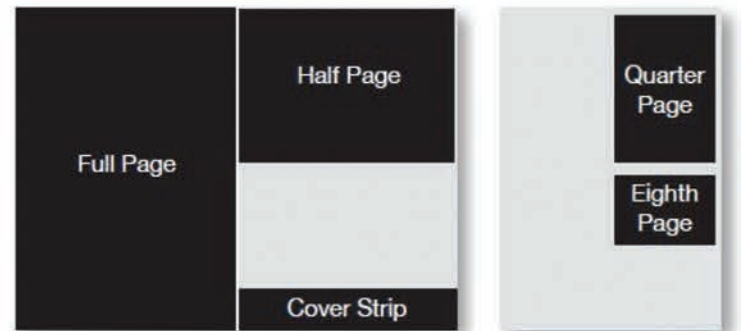


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LOHRI, THE HARVEST FESTIVAL OF PUNJAB

Lohri is one of the most popular festivals of North-West India

In India, there is no one time of the year that can be regarded as the 'only' festive season. As the world is just getting into work mode post the New Year celebrations, we are all set to celebrate series of festivals around the country, beginning with the harvest festival. Celebrated with different names such as Lohri, Pongal, Bihu among others, each region acknowledge the gifts of nature and say thanks for a bountiful harvest.

In Punjab and Haryana, the harvest festival is known as Lohri. It is one of the most celebrated festivals in the region. The festivity is a way to solemnize harvesting of the Rabi (winter) crops and enjoying the traditional folk songs and dances and amazing food.

Significance

Celebrated on January 13 every year, it commemorates the passing of the winter solstice. According to popular belief, Lohri represents the longest night before the winter solstice as it was originally celebrated on the night before winter solstice followed by the shortest day of the year which is observed in Magh, in the Hindu lunar calendar. Though Punjab is known for its wheat productions, this festival is related to sugarcane cultivation in the region. The traditional time to harvest sugarcane crops is January, thus Lohri is seen by some to be a harvest festival. Punjabi farmers also see the day after Lohri (Maghi) as the financial New Year.

Food

Sugarcane products such as gur (jaggery) and gachak are essential to Lohri, so are the nuts that are harvested during this time of the year. The other important food item of Lohri is radish which can be harvested between October and January. Eating mustard leaves and spinach on Lohri is an important ancient tradition followed by all. Mustard is cultivated mainly in the cold winter months because the crop is suitable for such climatic conditions. Traditionally people eat gajak, sarson da saag, makki di roti, radish, ground nuts and jaggery on this day. Part of the festival food also includes ritual to eat "til rice" which is made by mixing sesame seeds, rice and gur.

Rituals

Lohri is a means to commemorate fertility and the joy of life. Harvested fields and farmyards lit up with lights and bonfires are the central part of the celebrations. Right through the bitter winter day, people go around collecting dry twigs and branches to make a bonfire. The bigger the bonfire the better is Lohri celebration.

In the morning, children go from door to door singing and demanding the Lohri 'loot' in the form of money and eatables like til (sesame) seeds, peanuts, jaggery, or sweets like gajak, rewri.

In the evening, people circle around (parikrama) the bonfire and throw puffed rice, popcorn and other munchies into the fire, shouting "Aadar aye dilather jaye" (May honor come and poverty vanish!), and sing popular folk songs. This is a prayer to Agni, the fire god asking for his blessing for prosperity and fertility of the land. The fire signifies the spark of life and prayers are said for goodwill and abundant crops.

On this day people wear new clothes and gifts and sweets are exchanged. The courtyard and rooms of the house are swept and sprinkled with water. Often newlyweds wear jewelry and the newborns are given little combs to hold as part of rituals.

People throw sugarcane sticks into the fire as an offering, and an aroma of burning sugar spreads in the atmosphere. Women also light fireworks. People sing and dance Bhangra till the early hours of the morning. Traditionally, women do not join in Bhangra,



they hold a separate bonfire in their courtyard doing the graceful Gidda dance.

Legends

Among the most popular tales in Punjab, the legend of Dulla Bhatti is most prominently associated with Lohri. Lohri is also associated with weddings, many famous Lohri songs are based on the old love story of Dulla Bhatti- the tale of a man who rescued a girl from her cruel abductors and adopted her and went onto arranging her marriage as if she were his own daughter. The gallant songs urge the youth to protect the honour of their sisters and daughters and punish those who try to dishonor them.

Honoring and praying to Sun god is also an essential part of the festivity. Young, unmarried girls assemble and visit households in the neighborhood to ask cow-dung needed for the bonfire and chant prayers for the Sun god. The mantra is to invoke the Sun God to send them enough heat that the winter cold would not harm them. And, in acknowledgement they chant this mantra orbiting the fire. Lohri fire is the

homage to the sun. There is a legend amongst some that Lohri comes from the word 'loh', which means the light and the warmth of fire.

Puja date and time

Lohri is celebrated in the month of Paush and it's observed on the last day of this Hindu month, that is on January 13, in the Gregorian calendar. It is, actually, celebrated a day before Maghi, as it marks the end of the winter season. As the sun sets, the bonfire is lit and anytime after the sunset is suitable for the auspicious rituals.

Story of Dulla Bhatti

A great person named Dulla Bhatti is remembered during Lohri. People sing songs in praise of Dulla Bhatti a bravo of Punjab. Dulla Bhatti had done good deeds in time of Mughal emperor Akabar. He looted rich and donated it to poor. He saved many girls of Sandal Bar region who were sold in Middle East as slaves. Dulla Bhatti married of the girls to boys with dowries. Later two married girls from them named Sundri and Mundi

became theme of the folktales.

Rituals and celebrations

On the day of Lohri, children go door to door and sing songs. They gather food item like til, gur, peanuts, popcorn, gachchak and crystal sugar. The things are called Lohri and each household gives such food items to kids without a miss because it is believed to be auspicious.

In the evening, people make an idol of Goddess from cattle's dung in some region of Punjab. They lit fire beneath the idol. Some people just gather cow dung and wooden sticks for bonfire. Things like sugar candy, till and gur are tossed in the bonfire. They also pray and move around the bonfire. Some people pour milk and water around bonfire and pray Sun God to bless them with warmth and brightness. Things of Lohri like til, gur, peanuts and popcorns are distributed to all guests. People enjoy the event with singing and dancing around bonfire until the fire give out.

Lohri becomes special ceremony for the families with newly married couples or child birth. In some region of Punjab, the event is celebrated as a family get-together. Friends and families attend Lohri with great joy and enthusiasm. They wear bright and fine attire and special meal of Makki di Roti and Sarso da Saag is arranged as part of menu. They perform Bhangra and Gidda dances with beats of the Dhol.

Sindhi people also celebrate the festival with Lal Loi name. Children collect wooden sticks from relatives' houses and make bon fire during night of the festival. People spent the evening with fun of dancing, singing and playing near bonfire. The festival is gaining popularity day by day in Sindhi community. In Andhra Pradesh the day before Makar Sankranti is called Bhogi. The Bhogi is similar to Lohri as people make bonfire of old and useless household things. The bonfire is a symbol of removal of negative and bad thought from their heart and soul. The bon fire is known as Rudra Gita Gyana Yagya.

FROM SIKKIM TO KERALA: DON'T MISS THESE FESTIVALS

Winter is already here. But if you prefer spending your time snuggled inside your cosy blanket, it is a criminal waste of great weather. Here's a brilliant way to make the most of these months: Plan an extraordinary journey to witness the finest culture of the country. Goomo, India's travel tech platform has curated a special list of these lovely mainstream festivals that you must put in your itinerary this holiday season.

Rajasthan

CAMEL FAIR: Winter brings out the best in some places, and Rajasthan is one such royal destination that gets prettier with the onset of winter. Apart from visiting the majestic havelis and breathtaking forts of the state, visit the desert land to revel in art, culture and festivals. Catch a glimpse of the spectacular camel performances, intriguing local folklores, extravagant firework display and more at the Camel Fair in Bikaner. The two-day affair scheduled from January 13-14, 2018 will mesmerise you with its splendour and make for a perfect getaway during the winter.

JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL: Several literary fests take place in and around India. However, the Jaipur Literary Festival scheduled from January 24-29, 2018 at the Pink City of India is the world's largest free event of its kind that will see renowned personalities including historians, politicians, humanitarians and business leaders grace attendees with their presence. The literary fest, with its stimulating conversations held in the backdrop of the famous Diggi Palace will offer a unique cultural and intellectual experience.

DESERT FESTIVAL: Witness the Thar Desert come to life at the three-day extravaganza of Jaisalmer Desert festival. Scheduled from January 29-31, 2018, this is the time when the celebrations of the festival lighten up the desert with colour, enthusiasm, and happiness. The traditional and bright costumes, the folk music recitals, competitions like camel races, tug-of-war, moustache competition, gymnastic stunts along with mouth-watering food and artifacts make it an absolute must-visit destination during the winter.

SUFI SPIRIT FESTIVAL: Rajasthan is definitely much more than its historic forts and palaces. The Sufi Spirit Festival at Nagaur with soothing music, dance and poetry and good food is sure to offer an unforgettable experience. Touted to be one of the most exhilarating music spectacles in the country, the Sufi Festival brings together brilliant artists from across India and around the world in a stunning royal setting. Scheduled from February 12-15, 2018 at the Nagaur fort and from February 16-18 at the Mehrangarh fort, Jodhpur, this event is sure to transport you to a different world altogether.

Kerala

THEYYAM: While Kerala is an epitome of tranquility and oozes picturesque beauty, its festivals, too, stand out for their grandeur and uniqueness. One offbeat festival of Kerala is Theyyam that originated in North Kerala. Scheduled to take place from February 23-26, 2018 in the Kasargod district of Kerala, the popular ritual dance, Theyyam represents a host of Gods and Goddesses dancing to the sounds of musical instruments like chenda, elathalam, kurumkuzal and veekuchenda. The big and bright red headgear, heavy make-up, huge masks and flamboyant costumes make it one of the best visual art forms to be discovered in God's Own Country.

Gujarat

RANN UTSAV: With its ancient temples and wildlife sanctuaries, Gujarat definitely is a treasure trove of architecture and history. Well, give them a miss and head to the desert of Kutch to experience a grand cultural fiesta. The ongoing India Rann Utsav is a melange of music, dance and craft. The white sands and full bloom moon make for picture-perfect scenery, especially in the winter months. Therefore, treat yourself to the cultural performances of traditional dancers, Kutch food, camel-back safari and more at the Gujarat's Rann Utsav that ends on February 20, 2018.

KITE FESTIVAL: From stunt kites, rokkakus, deltas, miniature kites and inflatables, scan the skies during the renowned Ahmedabad International Kite Festival scheduled from January 7-15, 2018. Every nook and cranny of Ahmedabad's streets and lanes will be full of makeshift shops selling kites of different colours and hues, sizes, and shapes.



Come, witness the marvelous kite flying skills and incredibly artistic kites take to the skies during the festival. Do not forget to shop for beautiful handicrafts, knick-knacks, clothes, and spices sold at the time of the festival. Also, enjoy the local delicacies on offer for visitors, tourists, and locals alike.

Sikkim

LOSAR: The Northeast states have a medley of fascinating

festivals full of colours and that are rich in cultural history. When it comes to Sikkim, a visit to the Tibetan areas in the tiny Indian hill state is a must. In February, Tibetans celebrate the New Year, also known as Losar, with much gaiety and fervour. At the Pemayangste Monastery, tourists can witness the New Year celebrations, where certain special rituals are performed along with traditional dance forms. Catch all the action live at Gangtok for two days, from February 16-18, 2018. *Source: ANI*

South Africa beat India by 72 runs in low-scoring match

CAPE TOWN (TIP): India suffered a massive defeat against South Africa in a low-scoring first Test at Newlands, Cape Town on Jan 8.

Chasing 208 for a victory, India's famed batting line-up had no answers to South African fast bowlers and were bundled out for 135 in their second innings.

Seamer Vernon Philander took career-best figures as rampant South Africa claimed a 72-run victory over India in a gripping match to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

On a lively wicket, Philander was the chief destroyer recording figures of 6-42 for his first five-wicket haul in Tests since 2013.

India had looked to seize control of the Test when they bowled South Africa out for 130 in the morning session, but found the home attack on the seamer-friendly wicket too much of a challenge.

After day three had been a washout, 18 wickets fell in 64 overs on Monday, all going to seamers.

South Africa resumed on 65 for two, but were only able to double their score before they lost their last eight wickets.

Mohammed Shami (3-28) and debutant Jasprit Bumrah (3-39) were the pick of the Indian bowlers and there were two wickets



Vernon Philander produced career-best figures as South Africa crushed India by 72 runs on just the fourth day of the opening Test in Cape Town. The Proteas, thus, go 1-0 up in the three-match series.

for Bhuvneshwar Kumar (2-33).

Only an attacking 35 from De Villiers stemmed the tide to a degree before he was the last man out.

South Africa, without injured seamer Dale Steyn who will miss the rest of the series with a heel problem, weathered a first-wicket stand of 30 for India in reply,

before the wickets began to fall at regular intervals.

Shikhar Dhawan (16) sparred a rising deliver from Morne Morkel (2-39) to gully.

Philander picked up his first wicket as Murali Vijay (13) edged to third slip.

Cheteshwar Pujara (four) became Morkel's second victim with the score on 39, before Indian captain Virat Kohli (28) took the attack to the South Africans.

He was undone playing across a straight delivery from Philander.

Rohit Sharma (10) was bowled off the inside edge by Philander before the tourists' first-innings hero Hardik Pandya edged Kagiso Rabada to De Villiers in the slips.

Rabada claimed the wicket of Wriddhiman Saha (eight) with the last ball before tea.

Philander then took three wickets in four balls to seal victory after a seventh-wicket stand of 49 between top-scorer Ravichandran Ashwin (37) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (13 not out) had briefly sent jitters through the Newlands crowd.

South Africa are hosting India in a three-Test series this month, with matches to come in Pretoria, starting on Saturday, and Johannesburg. *Source: Reuters*

Australia clinch The Ashes 4-0

SYDNEY (TIP): Australia ruthlessly extinguished England's resistance to claim an innings victory in the fifth Ashes Test and complete a 4-0 series rout on the final day in Sydney on Monday. The beleaguered tourists, with skipper Joe Root weakened by a stomach bug and unable to continue batting, dissolved after lunch, losing their last four wickets for their fourth comprehensive defeat of the series. "It has been a great couple of months. The cricket that we have played in the last couple of months has been outstanding," Australia skipper Steve Smith said.

"We have just been able to get on top and win those key moments and not let them back in the game which is crucial."

Pat Cummins led the Australian offensive in Sydney with four wickets for 39 to finish man-of-the-match and the leading wicket taker in the series with 23. "To get through the five Tests and end the series here at home. I couldn't asked for much more," said an ecstatic Cummins.

England finished at 180 for nine off 88.1 overs as Australia won by an innings and 123 runs. It followed comprehensive losses on the troubled five-Test tour in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. The fourth Test was drawn in Melbourne. Stricken Root did not come out to bat after lunch as he continued to experience discomfort after his overnight stomach bug.

"He is asleep. He has a gastro bug and he has not been too well through the night and the heat yesterday didn't help. He is asleep in the dressing-room trying to recover," said vice-captain Jimmy Anderson, deputising for Root at the post-match presentations.

"To be honest we have been outplayed in the key moments of each game," he added.

"We have been in the games to an extent but just not been able to capitalise on any opportunities. Australia have



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played great in this series."

Cummins struck twice in three balls after lunch, trapping Jonny Bairstow leg before wicket for 38 and having Stuart Broad caught behind off a brutish bouncer for four. Mason Crane got another Cummins bouncer which he gloved to wicketkeeper Tim Paine for two and Anderson was caught behind off Josh Hazlewood for two to end the innings. Root went to hospital overnight with England Cricket initially saying he had "severe dehydration" after fielding and batting in intense heat on Sunday.

But team officials corrected earlier statements and said Root was instead weakened by the effects of a gastroenteritis bug. He came out to bat on the dismissal of Moeen Ali for 13 an hour into the final day's play and reached his fifth half-century of the series, but was unable to convert any of them to a century.

England's remote chances of saving the Test disappeared when Root failed to

appear at the crease after lunch. Spinner Nathan Lyon claimed Moeen's wicket for the seventh time in the series when he trapped him leg before in the morning session, which Moeen did not review. Lyon took three wickets for 54 off 35 overs.

The Australians took a grip on the final Test with a massive 303-run innings lead and then reduced the battle-weary tourists to 93 for four at the close on the fourth day. All five Tests went into the fifth day.

Brief scores:

England 346 (Joe Root 83, Dawid Malan 62; Mitchell Starc 2 for 47, Pat Cummins 4 for 80, Josh Hazlewood 2 for 65) and 180 (Joe Root 58 retired out; Nathan Lyon 4 for 39) lost to Australia 649 for 7 decl. (Usman Khawaja 171, Shaun Marsh 156*; Moeen Ali 2 for 170) by an innings and 123 runs.

Player of the Match: Pat Cummins

Player of the Series: Steven Smith

Source: AFP

Asian Games bronze medalist wrestler Sukhchain Singh Cheema dies in road accident



Sukhchain Singh Cheema was awarded Dronacharya Award in 2004. (Sukhchain Singh Cheema/Facebook)

PATIALA (TIP): Famous wrestler and double bronze medalist in 1974 Tehran Asian Games Sukhchain Singh Cheema was killed in a road accident near Patiala bypass on Wednesday.

The 67-year old wrestler was returning home from his farm in Bhanri village on Wednesday evening when the accident occurred, police said. The accident took place near Shermajra chowk.

A car coming from the direction of Rajpura rammed into Cheema's vehicle, which turned turtle. He succumbed to his injuries in the local hospital.

Cheema, a Dronacharya awardee, is survived by his wife and two sons.

Cheema was the son of 'Rustum-e-Hind' wrestler Kesar Singh Cheema. Sukhchain, who was running a Rustem-e-Hind Akhara in Patiala, had bagged double bronze medals during Tehran Asian Games in 1974. He won medals in both freestyle and Greco-Roman style category.

Cheema's son Palwinder Singh Cheema who is a DSP in Punjab police, was also 'Rustum-e-Hind'.

Meanwhile, the local government, cultural affairs & tourism minister, Punjab Navjot Singh Sidhu has expressed profound grief at the demise of Cheema.

Condoling the demise, the minister said that Cheema belonged to a family of illustrious sportsmen and his father Rustum-E-Hind Kesar Singh Cheema was an Olympian and son Arjuna Awardee Olympian Palwinder Singh Cheema is a 2002 Commonwealth Games gold medallist in the 120 kg category.



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