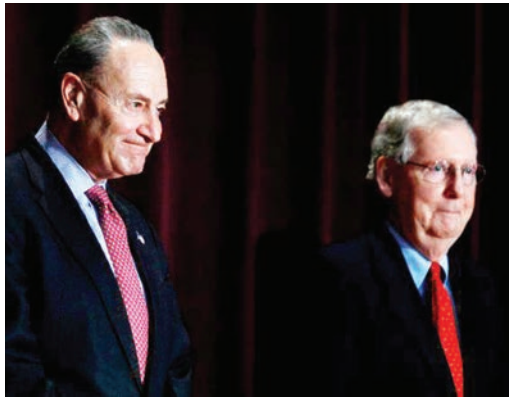


Congress Fails to Pass Immigration Bill, Leaving Dreamers in the Lurch

Schumer accuses President of 'torpedoing bipartisan efforts'



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer apparently failed in their effort to have a bill passed in the Senate

WASHINGTON (TIP): The rejection of four proposals in the Senate, coupled with a lack of consensus in the House, underscored the immense political pressures on Republicans and Democrats alike.

Weeks of intense negotiations for a bipartisan deal on immigration collapsed in Congress on Thursday, February 15, leaving thousands of young undocumented immigrants facing possible deportation after March 5 when DACA is set to end.

contd on page 20

Florida School Shooting: 17 gunned down, 14 wounded

White Supremacy Group Claims Nikolas Cruz as Member

INDRAJIT S SALUJA

PARKLAND, FLA (TIP): It was a horrific sight at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School here on February 14, the day of love, with 17 young students shot dead and another fourteen wounded, five with life-threatening injuries, according to hospital officials, in the worst shooting in a school in 2018. The shooting suspect-Nikolas Cruz is said to be an expelled student of the school. Cruz used a semiautomatic AR-15 rifle which, according to officials, he had bought legally to snuff out precious lives of students from the school he had been to. A pall of gloom descended on Parkland which once was described as the most peaceful place with a small community.

The authorities said the AR-15 rifle that Cruz used in the attack was purchased

contd on page 20



Anxious family members. (Inset) Nikolas Cruz, the suspected shooter. Photo of Cruz/ courtesy Broward County Jail

INDIA'S JEWELER TO HOLLYWOOD STARS ACCUSED OF MASSIVE BANK FRAUD

Nirav Modi accused of swindling \$1.8 billion, was with Narendra Modi at Davos on Jan 13, 2018



A group photo from Jan. 23, of the prime minister, some of his key bureaucrats, and Indian CEOs, including Nirav Modi (in red circle) at the world's biggest capitalist conclave in Switzerland. Nirav was also part of the 2016 delegation to Davos led by finance minister Arun Jaitley. Photo courtesy / PIB

NEW DELHI / MUMBAI (TIP): Nirav Modi, accused of pulling off possibly India's biggest bank fraud, was posing for pictures with prime minister Narendra Modi just a few weeks ago. The billionaire diamond merchant was part of the delegation of Indian businessmen and corporate leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos last month.

On Wednesday, Feb 14, Punjab National Bank (PNB), India's second-largest state-owned lender, informed stock exchanges that it had detected a massive \$1.77 billion fraud at one of its branches in Mumbai. The Central Bureau of Investigation, India's main investigative agency, first filed a case in this regard on Jan. 31. On Thursday, Feb. 15, the enforcement directorate, a

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DFW SAFF wows North Texas audiences with 4 days of ground-breaking programming



DALLAS (TIP): The 4th annual Dallas/Fort Worth South Asian Film Festival (DFW SAFF) entertained, engaged and enthralled more than one thousand North Texans who attended sold-out screenings of 19 shorts, documentaries and feature films over the four-day period (February 8 to 11 at Highland Park Village Theatre and AMC Village on the Parkway in Addison). Addison Mayor Joe Chow attended the festival and addressed the cinephiles who packed the opening night screening.

With one world premiere, six international premieres, two U.S. premieres, nine Texas premieres and one Dallas premiere, festival director and founder Jitin Hingorani says, "We received a lot of positive feedback about our programming this year, as the issues raised in our films ranged from father/son relationships to child slavery and sex education in India to teenage depression in the U.S. to the plight of South Asians living in Europe. At the end of the day, our audiences keep coming back because of the strong content we showcase, and we are already preparing to incorporate audience and jury awards in the 5th iteration of our festival."

Filmmakers and actors who attended the festival included:

- Priyanka Bose (DEVI)
- Suchitra Pillai (DANCE LIKE A MAN & THE VALLEY)
- Ayy Khan (THE VALLEY)
- Arshad Khan (ABU)
- Faraz Ansari (SISAK)
- Saila Kariat (THE VALLEY)
- Nishil Sheth (BHASMASUR)
- Siddhartha Jatla (LOVE AND SHUKLA)
- Sandeep Modi (CHUMBAK)
- Naren Kumar (CHUMBAK)
- Saurabh Bhav (CHUMBAK)
- Shawn Parikh (KHOL)
- Sangeeta Agrawal (FIVE O'CLOCK SHADOW)
- Sridhar Mirajkar (FIVE O'CLOCK SHADOW)
- Ash Chandler (Singer/Songwriter, Comedian & Actor)
- Victor Cruz (Actor & Producer)
- Zoe Arora (Singer/Songwriter)

contd on Page 3

INSIDE

- 8 Flying on wits alone, Modi's biases can involve India in Islamic world's quarrels
- 9 India's Tech Firms Must Re-invent or Perish
- 22 PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games: Punjabi 'Tadka' is missing

Appeals court declares Trump travel ban unconstitutional

4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond concluded that it 'second-guesses our nation's dedication to religious freedom and tolerance'

RICHMOND (TIP): President Donald Trump's latest travel ban on travelers from six largely Muslim countries is

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The ruling is the second time the 4th Circuit has rejected a travel ban ordered by President Trump



An Indian American dead and another critical in Georgia shootings

NEW YORK (TIP): Two Indian Americans, Parmjit Singh, 44, and Parthey Patel, 30, were the victims of a shooting that happened at two different gas stations and convenience stores in Rome, Georgia, according to a myajc.com report.

Singh was pronounced dead at the scene while Patel is still in critical condition, according to myajc.com.

Police say that Lamar Rashad Nicholson, 28, walked into the Hi-Tech Quick Stop on Burnett Ferry Road on the night of Feb. 6 a little before 9 p.m. and walked "right up to the counter pulls a gun out of his right pocket, fires 3 rounds, and runs out, he's in and out in under 12 seconds," Floyd County Police Sgt. William Wacker told Fox News. Police added that there was no robbery or altercation.

Ten minutes later, Nicholson got into his car, drove a mile and a half down the road and entered Elm Street Food and Beverage, another convenience store, stealing some money before shooting Patel, according to myajc.com.

"For whatever reason after he stuffed his pockets full of money he shot the clerk anyway," Rome Police Lt. John Walters told Fox News.

According to Fox News, while Patel was being rushed to the hospital, police spotted Nicholson in his car less than two miles away, along with a pistol and some money on the seat.

According to myajc.com, Nicholson was arrested on multiple charges including murder, aggravated robbery, aggravated assault, possession of a firearm while committing a crime and use of a firearm by a convicted felon though he was not charged with robbery in Singh's shooting; he is being held without bond in the Floyd County jail.

Nicholson, a convicted felon, was arrested just a few weeks ago for violently snatching up his 3-year-old daughter by the arm, according to a report from the Floyd County sheriff's office. He faced charges of child cruelty, disorderly conduct and simple battery in connection with that incident.

Friends of Singh, who was also known as "Remi," dropped off balloons and flowers in front of his store and prayed for his two children who are in high school.

"That's the sad part, they've got to grow up the rest of their lives without a dad because someone wanted to take their anger out on him," Michael Dykes, a friend, told Fox News.

Singh's brother-in-law, Harry Singh, remembered him as a "personable man who was friendly with everyone he met."

"Whenever we all sit down and have a family get-together, he's always the center of attention. He's the one who tells us stories and jokes," Harry Singh told myajc.com.

Harry told myajc.com that his brother-in-law started out driving limousines in New York before moving to Michigan to get into the convenience store business.

"He moved to Georgia about five years ago to be closer to family and ended up owning two stores in Rome, one on Martha Berry Boulevard and another on Burnett Ferry Road, where he died. He and his wife of 20 years had just bought a house, one of his lifetime goals. He was a very hardworking man and worked 14 hours a day," Harry told myajc.com.

Singh's customers paid a tribute to him on Facebook, remembering his as "a kind and polite man who enjoyed joking with his customers." Florence McCain, one of Singh's customers, told myajc.com that his family had just bought and renovated the Burnett Ferry store in September.

"They were just so nice, the whole family. I was kidding with him just a couple of weeks ago," McCain said. Daniela Comacho told myajc.com that she shopped at the Hi Tech Quick Stop specifically because of Singh's kindness. "I liked to go, not because it was close by but because of how nice of a person he was. He was always interested in knowing that everyone was having a good day," Comacho said.

Indian American artists to perform along with Pt Jasraj, Mishra brothers at 25th Mit's Heritage of Arts of South Asia Festival

NEW YORK (TIP): Renowned 'khyal' vocalist Pandit Jasraj and Mishra Brothers are among the musicians who are scheduled to perform at the 25th MIT's Heritage of the Arts of South Asia festival.

Pt Jasraj's performance is the highlight of the coming spring season, which begins from March 30. The Classical vocalist will take to the mic on May 19 at MIT's Kresge Auditorium.

Delhi-based brother duo Rajan and Sajan Mishra and Kolkata-based Kaushiki Chakraborty are also expected to perform at the music festival, known as MITHAS.

The line-up of the South Indian artistes is equally promising.

Senior vocalist and Padmabhushan T V Sankaranarayanan, in collaboration with the Learnquest Festival at Regis College, will give the open the festival, the same evening Chakraborty is scheduled to perform, MITHAS said in a statement.

Chaired by Anuradha Palakurthi, the festival allows students from elementary school through graduate school to attend all programmes for free.

"We are so far away from our homeland and we have a responsibility to carry this musical tradition forward," said Palakurthi, a widely acclaimed Boston-based singer who has performed and recorded with Bollywood giants such as Suresh Wadkar, Kumar Sanu, Hariharan and BappiLahiri.

"Growing up in India we benefitted from free



Pt. Jasraj, Mishra Brothers, Kaushiki Chakraborty

entry to classical shows at colleges because of organisations like Spic-MACAY, and I want to do the same for students music-lovers in Boston," said Palakurthi, who has also recorded an album with Ustad Nishad Khan of ImdadkhaniEtawah gharana.

Artistes such as Ali Akbar Khan, Zakir Hussain, HariprasadChaurasia, M Balamuralikrishna, TN Krishnan, T Viswanathan, V V Subrahmanyam, Sanjay

Subrahmanyam, TM Krishna and ChitraveenaRavikiran have performed at MITHAS in the past.

"When I look back at the work of MITHAS, I am amazed at how many people have come together to present so many of South Asia's finest artists in concerts and lectures," said George Ruckert, one of the founders of MITHAS, who came to MIT to teach music in 1991.

Indian American Started Her Own Turmeric Business to Help Indian Farmers

SACRAMENTO (TIP): Indian American Sana JaveriKadri has had a turmeric latte twice in her life. Both times were at wellness cafes, the first in Seattle and the second in Oakland. She was unable to finish either one. The drink was aggressively unpleasant.

Finding herself in a cultural terrain so far from what she knew in India, she had a mounting sense of frustration with turmeric's newfound status as a luxury product, race- and class-coded in a way that was at odds with the realities of the Indian farmers who harvested it so tirelessly.

For her, the battle began with turmeric.

The example she likes to give is, "if you think about coffee and cacao ten years ago, [they were] commodity crops-something that had a very low price that was produced in the global South and then consumed here in the West."

"With direct trade and working with farmers, the quality of coffee brought into the West has changed completely. The national prices in several coffee- and cacao-growing countries has gone up. So overall, this idea of direct trade and sustainable tracing of your product has been wonderful for these two crops. I'm trying to do the same thing for spices." Says Kadri

She further told Munchies, "If white women are going to consume turmeric, how do I make sure brown farmers make as much money off of it as possible? That was honestly the driving force for the first many months of Diaspora Co.: Let's just make this as profitable for India as possible."

The driving force behind her business is to put money into the hands of Indian farmers. But then it's also, in the marketing of it. Kadri reiterates, "I'm not your Ayurvedic healer selling you turmeric. I'm a queer woman of color selling you turmeric."

Kadri, 24, grew up in Mumbai, but moved to



"If white women are going to consume turmeric, how do I make sure brown farmers make as much money off of it as possible?"

California to attend Pomona College six years ago.

So she founded Diaspora Co. last August. You could consider it her way of addressing the injustice at the heart of turmeric's sudden stateside popularity. Diaspora Co. sells turmeric sourced directly from Vijayawada, a city in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

The turmeric is harvested by a fourth-generation turmeric farmer named Mr. Prabhu.

Prabhu's turmeric is a curcumin-rich heirloom pragati strain that JaveriKadri offers in tins and jars. Farmers like Prabhu often get the short end of the stick in the global spice trade, where supply chains can be so convoluted, with markups so excessive that these farmers often see very little profit. One kilogram of turmeric in India is about US \$0.35; in the States, JaveriKadri explained to me, it can cost roughly \$35.

DFW SAFF wows North Texas audiences with 4 days of ground-breaking programming

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Clockwise from top left: Opening Night Films WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY (feature) and MEHRAM (short), Centerpiece Film ABU and Closing Night Film CHUMBAK

For the complete festival lineup, including trailers & synopses, please go [HERE!](#)

JINGO Media, a Dallas and New York-based PR and events management company, created DFW SAFF four years ago, and in 2017, the festival was recognized by Texas Governor Greg Abbott as one of the "Most Innovative Small Businesses" in the state of Texas.

Wells Fargo has been the main sponsor of the festival since its inception. "At Wells Fargo, diversity and inclusion are a business imperative that lets us take advantage of the creativity and innovation that comes from multiple perspectives. It helps us understand our customers more fully, see business opportunities in new ways and succeed in serving the needs of all customers," said Region Bank President for Greater Dallas, Scott Wallace. "For this reason, we value and promote diversity in every aspect of our business and at every level of our organization. It is only fitting for us to be supporting and celebrating the South Asian culture of Dallas-Fort Worth, while embracing the amazing contributions and legacy of the South Asian artistic community through this incredible festival."

Other major sponsors included: Skypass Travel Group, Hotstar, Mercedes Benz of Plano, Town of Addison, Parish Episcopal School, UTD - Naveen Jindal School of Management, World Affairs Council, EarthxFilm, Margaret and Trammell Crow Collection of Asian Art & Dallas Film Commission.

For more information about the festival, please visit www.dfwsaff.com



Festival Coordinator Nisha Bhatt, Festival Director Jitin Hingorani, Artistic Director Ambica Dev



Actress Priyanka Bose (DEVI) with Director Faraz Ansari (SISAK)



Q&A with CHUMBAK team - From L to R: co-writer Saurabh Bhave, producer Naren Kumar, director Sandeep Modi and moderator Jim Falk (World Affairs Council)

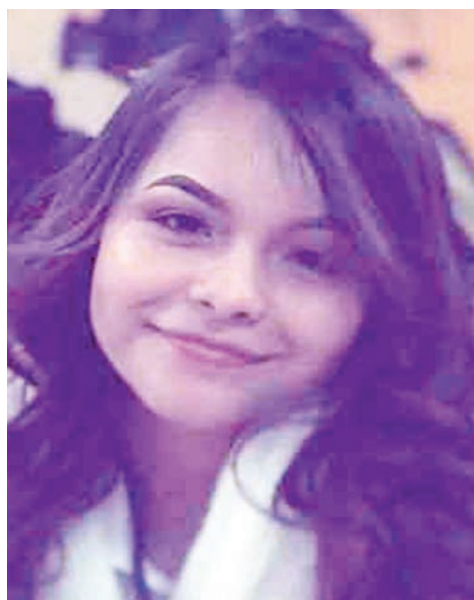


From L to R: Jitin Hingorani, Actress Suchitra Pillai (DANCE LIKE A MAN & THE VALLEY), Director Saila Kariat (THE VALLEY), AVS' Raju Sethi and Actor Alyk Khan (THE VALLEY)



From L to R: Jitin Hingorani, Director Faraz Ansari (SISAK), Actress Priyanka Bose (DEVI) and Actor/Writer/Producer Shawn Parikh (KHOL)

14-year-old Dallas girl killed in shooting



DALLAS (TIP): A 14-year-old girl who was shot and killed Monday night has been identified as a Dallas ISD freshman.

Natalie Hernandez was identified by the medical examiner as the victim in the shooting that took place just before 10 p.m. on Ormond Drive.

DISD officials said Hernandez was in the 9th grade at W.W. Samuell High School.

"Grief counselors are currently at the campus and will be there this week to assist with students who may be expressing their grief," the district said Tuesday afternoon.

Police officers were called to Umphress and South Buckner Road at about 9:45 p.m. where they found Hernandez and a 16-year-old boy shot. They discovered they had

driven themselves to the second location after witnesses said a dark-colored vehicle with four men inside drove up next to their vehicle and fired multiple shots.

Two other people were inside the victims' vehicle at the time of the shooting. One was questioned by police, and the other ran from the scene before officers arrived, police said.

Hernandez and the other victim were taken to Baylor University Medical Center, where Hernandez died. The boy is in stable condition.

MAN, WOMAN FOUND SHOT IN VEHICLE IN SOUTHEAST OAK CLIFF

TEXAS (TIP) :A man and a woman were found shot in a southeast Oak Cliff neighborhood on Feb 15 night.

Dallas police said they were called around 11:45 p.m. to a shooting in the 3200 block of Palo Alto Drive. They found the victims in a vehicle that had been driven up on a sidewalk in front of a home.

The man and woman, who have not been identified, were taken to Baylor Scott & White by Dallas Fire-Rescue. Their conditions were not released.

The Dallas Police Department is investigating the incident.

Police arrest 21-year-old wanted in deadly South Dallas shooting

DALLAS (TIP): Police have arrested a 21-year-old man wanted in a deadly shooting last week in South Dallas.

Quincy Jones was booked on Feb 15 night on a murder charge in the slaying of Fredrick Harris.

Harris, 38, was shot multiple times about 4:15

p.m. Feb. 8 in the 3000 block of Foreman Street. He was rushed to a hospital but died from his wounds.

Detectives questioned multiple witnesses and determined that Jones was the triggerman.

A motive for the shooting, and details about his arrest have yet to be released.

Jones remains in the Dallas County Jail in lieu of \$250,000 bail.

3 EMPLOYEES SHOT AT DALLAS CORNER STORE

DALLAS (TIP): Three employees were shot during an aggravated robbery at a Dallas corner grocery store Monday afternoon.

Police were called just after 1 p.m. to 4537 Elsie Faye Heggins Street, off Dolphin Road. A Google search identifies the location as TM Grocery Beer and Wine.

Three employees were found shot and were taken to the hospital. Two are expected to be OK, but the third is in critical condition, police said.

Two male suspects remain at-large. Police say they were wearing masks and one of them stole the store's cash till.



Trump's lawyer paid \$130,000 of own money to porn star

WASHINGTON (TIP): People are both baffled and amused to hear President Donald Trump's personal lawyer claim, February 13 that he paid \$130,000 of his own money to a porn star who allegedly had a sexual encounter with the President before his time in the White House.

Michael Cohen, personal lawyer of Trump said, in a statement: "In a private transaction in 2016, I used my own personal funds to facilitate a payment of \$130,000 to Ms. Stephanie Clifford. Neither the Trump Organization nor the Trump campaign was a party to the transaction with Ms. Clifford, and neither reimbursed me for the payment, either directly or indirectly."

Just weeks before the 2016 election, Cohen reportedly created a private LLC to pay Clifford, otherwise known as Stormy Daniels, following an alleged July 2006 encounter with Trump, The Wall Street Journal reported in January.

The New York Times first reported that Cohen had said he made the payment himself.

Following initial reports last month that Cohen had made the payment, he said in a statement that Trump "vehemently denies" any encounter between the two.

In January, the organization Common Cause filed complaints with the Federal Election Commission and



Trump's lawyer paid \$130,000 of own money to porn star

the Justice Department, alleging that the reported payment to Clifford constituted a campaign finance violation. But on Tuesday, Cohen's statement denied that accusation and said the monetary exchange was "lawful" and "not a campaign contribution."

"The payment to Ms. Clifford was lawful and was not a campaign contribution or a campaign expenditure by anyone," Cohen said.

Cohen also said he filed a reply with the FEC, but that filing will not be public until the agency has resolved the matter.

When asked why he made the payment, Cohen told CNN: "Just because something isn't true doesn't mean that it can't cause you harm or damage. I will always protect Mr. Trump."

(Source: CNN)

ICE's Top Lawyer in Seattle Charged with Stealing Immigrants' Identities

Raphael A. Sanchez is accused of stealing the information of seven immigrants while their cases were under review by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement



SEATTLE (TIP): The chief counsel for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Seattle has been charged with stealing the identities of multiple immigrants for financial gain, says a Buzz Feed report Feb 14.

According to an indictment filed this week, ICE's top attorney in its Seattle office allegedly devised a plan to steal the identities of seven immigrants over a four-year period while their cases were being processed by the federal immigration agency.

The lawyer, Raphael A. Sanchez, faces one count of wire fraud and aggravated identity theft.

A Justice Department official told BuzzFeed News Sanchez resigned from the agency effective Monday, Feb 12, the same day the indictment against him was filed.

Sanchez used the identifying information of the seven immigrants to "defraud financial institutions" including American Express, Bank of America, Capital One, Citibank, Discover, and JPMorgan Chase, according to the charging document. He also allegedly used his official ICE email address to forward personal information of one of the victims, including an energy bill, a US residence card, and copy of a Chinese passport.

A spokeswoman with ICE's Seattle office referred all questions about the indictment and Sanchez's employment with the agency to the Department of Justice. According to the complaint, the case was spearheaded by the DOJ's Public Integrity Section in Washington, DC, which oversees corruption cases involving public officials.

(Source: BuzzFeed/ DOJ)

contd from Page 1

Appeals court declares...

"unconstitutionally tainted with animus toward Islam," a federal appeals court ruled on Thursday, Feb 15, delivering another blow to the policy.

In a 9-4 vote, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond said it examined statements made by Mr. Trump and other administration officials, as well as the presidential proclamation imposing the ban, and concluded that it "second-guesses our nation's dedication to religious freedom and tolerance". The 4th Circuit is the second federal appeals court to rule against the ban. In December, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found that Mr. Trump exceeded the scope of his authority with the latest ban. The 4th Circuit court upheld a ruling by a federal judge in Maryland who issued an injunction barring enforcement of the ban against people from Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen who have bona fide relationships with people in the U.S. The U.S. Supreme Court has already agreed to hear the travel ban case in April. In December, the high court said the ban could be fully enforced while appeals made their way through the courts.

In its ruling, the 4th Circuit said the ban has a "much broader deleterious effect" than banning certain foreign nationals. The ban, the court said, "denies the possibility of a complete, intact family to tens of thousands of Americans". "On a fundamental level, the Proclamation second-guesses our nation's dedication to religious freedom and tolerance," Chief Justice Roger Gregory wrote for the court in the majority opinion.

American Civil Liberties Union Deputy Legal Director Cecillia Wang, who argued the case before the court, said she was not surprised by the ruling. "The Constitution prohibits government actions hostile to a religion," Ms. Wang said.

The International Refugee Assistance Project, one of the groups challenging the ban, said the policy has had a "devastating impact" on U.S. families waiting to reunite with their family members and foreign students seeking educational opportunities in the U.S. "Today's ruling affirms that they are being unjustly targeted by this ban," said Mariko Hirose, the group's litigation director.

In a dissenting opinion, Judge Paul Niemeyer said the 4th Circuit's ruling was an attempt to "second-guess U.S. foreign policy, in particular, the president's discretionary decisions on immigration, implicating matters of national security". Mr. Niemeyer said the majority should have based its decision on the text of the presidential proclamation alone and not considered statements Trump made on the campaign trail and after he became president.

"At bottom, the danger of this new rule is that it will enable a court to justify its decision to strike down any executive action with which it disagrees. It need only find one statement that contradicts the official reasons given for a subsequent executive action and thereby pronounce that the official reasons were a pretext," Mr. Niemeyer wrote. The ruling was the second time the 4th Circuit has rejected a travel ban. In May, the court cited Mr. Trump's remarks on Muslim travelers while rejecting an earlier version of the ban, finding it "drips with religious intolerance, animus and discrimination". Mr. Trump announced his initial travel ban on citizens of certain Muslim-majority nations shortly after taking office in January, bringing havoc and protests to airports around the United States. A federal judge in Seattle soon blocked it, and courts since then have wrestled with the restrictions as the administration has rewritten them. The latest version blocks travelers from the listed countries to varying degrees, allowing for students from some, while blocking other business travelers and tourists, and allowing for admissions on a case-by-case basis.

(Source: AP)

US INTEL SEES SIGNS OF RUSSIAN MEDDLING IN MIDTERMS

WASHINGTON (TIP): Three of the nation's top intelligence officials confirmed Feb 12 that they have seen evidence of Russian meddling in the upcoming midterm elections part of what they say is Moscow's escalating cyber assault on American and European democracies.

"We have seen Russian activity and intentions to have an impact on the next election cycle," CIA Director Mike Pompeo told the Senate intelligence committee.

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats and Adm. Mike Rogers, the head of the National Security Agency, agreed that Russia's interference is ongoing. "This is not going to change or stop," Rogers said.

They didn't describe the activity, other than to say it was related to information warfare.

"This is pervasive," Coats said. "The Russians have a strategy that goes well beyond what is happening in the United States. While they have historically tried to do these types of things, clearly in 2016 they upped their game. They took advantage, a sophisticated advantage of social media. They are doing that not only in the United States but doing it throughout Europe and perhaps elsewhere." US intelligence concluded Moscow interfered in the 2016 presidential election, which has led to the current FBI investigation into possible Trump campaign connections. Russia denies the allegations and President Donald Trump has called the FBI probe a witch hunt.

The three testified in Congress on the same day that the intelligence community released its annual report on global threats. The report predicted Russian intelligence

agencies will disseminate more false information over Russian state-controlled media and through fake online personas to spread anti-American views and exacerbate social and political divides in the United States.

Pompeo had said earlier that he expected that Russia would insert itself in the midterms in which Republicans and Democrats will vie for control of the House and Senate. And last week, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told Fox News that the US is seeing "certain behaviors" of Russian meddling in elections in the Northern Hemisphere, including "in the US" this year. But the latest testimony actually confirmed that it is occurring.

Coats said the details of any meddling needs to be shared with the American people. He said there should be a national outcry — that people need to stand up and say, "We're not going to allow some Russian to tell us how to vote, how to run our country."

Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said it's been more than a year since the 2016 election, but the US still has no plan to battle foreign interference in elections. He criticized Trump for not issuing more sanctions against Russia in response to the meddling.

"He hasn't even tweeted a single concern," Warner said. It's unclear what the US is doing covertly to battle back. But Coats acknowledged that the US is "behind the curve" in coming up with policies to penalize those who hack America's critical infrastructure, interfere with elections, undermine the government or hit financial institutions. (AP)

Vatican seeks to defuse scandal, says pope meets victims

VATICAN CITY (TIP): The Vatican said on Feb 15 that Pope Francis meets frequently with victims of sexual abuse, seeking to defuse a mounting scandal over his unbridled support for a Chilean bishop accused by victims of witnessing and ignoring their abuse.

Spokesman Greg Burke said Francis meets in private with victims individually or in groups several times a month to "listen to them and try to help them to heal their serious wounds."

Yet at least one Chilean abuse victim, Juan Carlos Cruz, wondered if Francis had really heard what they said, given Francis' dismissal of Cruz's complaints that Chilean Bishop Juan Barros covered up his abuse. During a recent trip to Chile, Francis repeatedly called accusations against Barros by Cruz and other victims slander and said he was certain of Barros' innocence.

Cruz said on Thursday the problem of clerical abuse is global and has not stopped.

"It should be a priority, and not a false 'zero tolerance,'" he told The Associated Press, echoing Francis' frequent insistence that he has "zero tolerance" for abuse.

After his abuse comments sparked outrage, Francis was forced to do an about-face and send in a Vatican investigator to look into accusations against Barros, a protege of Chile's most notorious predator priest, the Rev. Fernando Karadima.

Archbishop Charles Scicluna, the



Vatican's respected former sex crimes investigator, begins his fact-finding mission on Saturday by meeting with Cruz, the main accuser against Barros.

Cruz and two other key whistleblowers have said Barros witnessed their abuse, ignored it and even participated in the psychological abuse that Karadima would then inflict on them when he sensed disobedience or disloyalty.

Barros has denied witnessing any abuse or covering it up.

Francis sparked outrage in 2015 when he appointed Barros, then Chile's military chaplain, to head the diocese of Osorno, Chile, over the objections of some members of the Chilean bishops' conference who were concerned about fallout from Karadima's actions.

Francis has said he overruled their

recommendation and rejected Barros' resignation twice because he said he couldn't in good faith remove him when he had no evidence of Barros' wrongdoing.

The AP, however, reported that Francis had received an eight-page letter from Cruz in April 2015 detailing his abuse and how Barros witnessed it and ignored it. Cruz had mailed similar versions of the letter to the pope and his ambassador in Santiago, but never received any response.

On Thursday, asked to respond to revelations of the pope's meetings with abuse victims, Cruz said if Francis truly did listen to victims, he would have learned how much they suffer, particularly when they are mistreated by their own pastors.

"We shouldn't have to wait until the media are banging on the door to do something," he said. (AP)

UK blames Russian military for 'malicious' cyberattack

LONDON (TIP): Britain says the Russian government was behind a cyberattack that hit businesses across Europe last year.

Foreign Minister Tariq Ahmad says "the UK government judges that the Russian government, specifically the Russian military, was responsible for the destructive NotPetya cyberattack of June 2017."

The fast-spreading outbreak of data-scrambling software centered on Ukraine, which is embroiled in a conflict with Moscow-backed separatists in the country's east. It spread to companies that do business with Ukraine, including US pharmaceutical company Merck, Danish shipping firm AP Moller-Maersk and FedEx subsidiary TNT.

Ahmad said Thursday that the "reckless" attack cost organizations hundreds of millions of dollars.

British Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson accused Russia of "undermining democracy, wrecking livelihoods by targeting critical infrastructure, and weaponizing information" with malicious cyberattacks. Russia has denied responsibility. (AP)

Vijay Mallya's Kingfisher Airlines loses court battle in UK, to pay \$90m in claims

LONDON/SINGAPORE: Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya has lost another legal battle linked to his now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines after the UK High Court awarded Singapore-based BOC Aviation an estimated \$90 million in claims.

The latest case involving the 62-year-old businessman, whose extradition case over alleged loan defaults amounting to around Rs 9,000 crores returns to Westminster Magistrates' Court in London on March 16, is related to the leasing of aircraft by Kingfisher Airlines dating back to 2014.

Justice Picken, in a judgment dated February 5 at the Business and Property Courts of the High Court in London, ruled that "the defendants have no real prospect of successfully defending the claim".

The defendants in the claim brought by BOC Aviation in Singapore and BOC Aviation (Ireland) Ltd have been named as Kingfisher Airlines Ltd and United Breweries (Holdings) Ltd.

"We are pleased with the judgment but would not like to comment further at this stage," said a spokesperson for BOC Aviation in Singapore.

The legal claim relates to a leasing agreement between Kingfisher Airlines and aircraft leasing company BOC Aviation involving four planes, of which three were delivered.

The delivery of the fourth was reportedly withheld due to unpaid amounts due in advance under the lease arrangement. BOC Aviation claims that the security deposit, which is a course of redress in such matters, was also inadequate to cover the payments that Kingfisher was "contractually bound" to make, resulting in the High Court claim in London.

In his order, Justice Picken awarded BOC Aviation the amount overdue along with interest payments and legal costs, which overall amounts to nearly \$90 million.

"The Second Defendant [United Breweries] shall be jointly and severally liable with the First Defendant [Kingfisher Airlines] to pay the Claimants [BOC Aviation] half of the said costs liability," the court order notes. (PTI)

China confirms first human case of H7N4 bird flu

HONG KONG (TIP): China has confirmed the first human case of H7N4 bird flu, prompting Hong Kong to issue a health warning for those travelling to the mainland during the busy Lunar New Year holiday.

The strain was identified in a 68-year-old woman from the eastern province of Jiangsu who was admitted to hospital after falling ill on December 25 but had since recovered, according to China's National Health and Family Planning Commission.

"She had contact with live poultry before the onset of symptoms," Hong Kong's Centre for Health Protection said late Wednesday after being informed of the case by Chinese authorities, who said the virus genes were of avian origin.

The world's first human cases of bird flu were reported in Hong Kong in 1997, when six people were killed by the H5N1 strain of the virus. Hundreds more have died worldwide in subsequent outbreaks, especially of highly-virulent strains like H7N9.

The semi-autonomous southern Chinese city is a high-risk area for the spread of communicable diseases because of its high population density and busy regional and international transport links.

"Travellers to the mainland or other affected areas must avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms," the Centre for Health Protection warned after the H7N4 strain was reported by China.

Authorities in China and Hong Kong did not provide further details on the H7N4 strain found in the woman, such as its virulence. An outbreak of this type of bird flu hit chickens in New South Wales, Australia, in 1997, according to World Health Organization records. (AFP)

Desperate to come home, Syrians brave IS mines in Raqa

RAQA (SYRIA) (TIP): Mohammed Kuraji returned to Syria's Raqa to prepare a homecoming but ended up organising a funeral. Stepping into his home, an unexploded mine detonated and killed his elderly father.

"It was terrifying. The blast was so strong that I couldn't hear," said the 26-year-old, who was also wounded in the incident two months ago.

The Islamic State group was ousted from its de facto Syrian capital Raqa in October, but it left mines scattered across the ravaged city.

Residents are desperate to return home, but they are being maimed and killed by unexploded -- and sometimes insidiously hidden -- ordnance.

Under piles of rubble, behind old refrigerator doors, in blown-out buildings, IS has sown death everywhere.

The explosives in Kuraji's home were triggered when his father leaned down to pick up a copy of the Koran.

"I was thrown back into the neighbour's house and a wall collapsed onto my father," said Kuraji, who has two young children.

He spoke to AFP from under a mountain of blankets, pulling back the covers to reveal his legs, set in place by splints and screws in his shins.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces ousted IS from Raqa in October, then handed the city over to the Raqa Civil Council.

But Raqa natives are complaining that demining firms hired by the RCC are taking too long, and have taken matters into their own hands.

Young men are charging up to \$100 to search and clear homes of mines -- a small fortune for war-weary Syrians.

"It's becoming a lucrative business. The officials are ignoring it, and we don't have the means," said resident Hamed Saleh, 28.

A large part of his home in Raqa is inaccessible because of mines.

"At any moment, even if a cat is just passing by, a bomb could go off. It's terrifying," said Saleh.

According to Human Rights Watch, local officials were receiving about 10 requests for house inspections for a single neighbourhood, every day.

But they were only able to clear about 10 cases per week across the entire city, the New York-based rights group said this week.

It documented at least 491 people, including 157 children, wounded in mine blasts, many of whom died.

Goh Mayama of the aid group Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said his clinic receives an average of six mine blast casualties a day on average in Raqa, about a quarter of whom die.

Demining operations in Raqa have been supported by the US-led coalition that backed the SDF's drive against IS.

In December, the SDF said it had demined half the city.

"The hospitals, public institutions, schools, power stations and bakeries are all demined," said SDF official Lokman Khalil. (AFP)

BURJ KHALIFA LIGHTS UP WITH TRICOLOR

DUBAI (TIP): Dubai's iconic skyscraper Burj Khalifa was on Feb 10 lit up in the colours of the Indian flag to mark Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second visit to the UAE.

The Indian tricolour was displayed every hour for UAE residents to admire and enjoy, according to the Dubai-based real estate development company Emaar.

"The Indian flag was showcased on Burj Khalifa on Feb 19 every hour from 7.15 pm to 11.15 pm," an Emaar representative was quoted as saying by the Khaleej Times.

The light show will coincide with Modi's second state visit to the UAE. Modi last visited the country in August 2015. On Saturday evening, landmarks in Abu Dhabi and Dubai were also lit up to the colors of the Indian flag.



Modi receives Grand Collar in Palestine



In a special recognition of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's contribution to relations between India and Palestine, President Abbas conferred the Grand Collar of the State of Palestine on him after the conclusion of their bilateral meeting. The Grand Collar is the Highest order given to foreign dignitaries- Kings, Heads of State/Government and persons of similar rank.

India, UAE sign five pacts as Modi meets crown prince of Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Saturday as the two sides signed five agreements including a historic pact awarding a consortium of Indian oil companies a 10% stake in offshore oil concession.

Modi, who arrived in Abu Dhabi from Jordan on the second leg of his three-nation tour, was received by Mohammed Bin Zayed and other members of the Royal family at the airport. The Prime Minister thanked the Crown Prince for the special gesture of receiving him at the airport and said his visit will have a positive impact on India-UAE ties.

An MOU between Indian Consortium (OVL, BPRL & IOCL) and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) was signed for the acquisition of a 10% participating interest in the Abu Dhabi's offshore Lower Zakum Concession, a statement issued by the Indian embassy here said. The concession will be for 40 years from 2018 to 2057. 60% of the participating interest will be retained by ADNOC and remaining 30% will be awarded to other international oil companies, the statement said.

"This is the first Indian Investment in upstream oil sector of UAE, transforming the traditional buyer-seller relationship to a long-term investor relationship," it added. To cooperate in the field of manpower, India and the UAE signed an MoU that aims to institutionalise the collaborative



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during talks with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

administration of contractual employment of Indian workers in the Gulf country.

Under the MoU, both the sides will work to integrate their labour related e-platforms for ending the existing malpractices, combat trafficking and organise collaborative programs for education and awareness of contractual workers. An MoU for technical cooperation in railways was also signed between the two sides. The MoU aims at cooperation in infrastructure sector especially railways.

"The MoU will facilitate development of joint projects, knowledge sharing, joint research and technology transfer. The MoU envisages formation of a Joint

Working Group for institutionalising the cooperation mechanism," the statement said.

To deepen bilateral cooperation in the field of finance, an MoU between Bombay Stock Exchange and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange was also signed. It aims at enhancing cooperation between both the countries in financial services industry. The MoU would facilitate investment in financial markets by investors from both the countries. An MoU between government of Jammu and Kashmir and DP World was also signed to establish multi-modal logistics park and hub in Jammu comprising warehouses and specialised storage solutions.

Modi inaugurates model of first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI (TIP): Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on Sunday, February 11, inaugurated the BAPS Hindu Mandir model, and thus officially launched the construction of the first BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Sadguru Pujya Ishwarcharandas Swami performed the foundation stone laying ceremony of the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi to be built on 55,000 square meters of land. The temple will be hand-carved by Indian temple artisans and assembled in the UAE. It is expected to be completed by 2020, and open to people of all religious backgrounds. The temple, inspired by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and blessed by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, will be a significant symbol of global peace and harmony.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for the first Hindu temple in the capital of the UAE, home to over three million people of Indian origin was live-streamed to the Dubai Opera House where the PM was interacting with Indian and Emirati dignitaries from all walks of life.

Speaking on the occasion, Modi thanked the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his generous gift. "I believe this temple will not be only unique in terms of architecture and splendor, but will also give a message of 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam' to people across the world," he said.

Several thousand devotees from all over the world, well-wishers and guests participated in the ShilaPujan ceremony marking the first step in the construction of the traditional stone temple. Representatives of all Indian religious denominations and communities, as well as, representatives of the Jain, Sikh, Muslim, Christian and other faith communities also attended the auspicious ceremony. In particular, Pujya Shri Rakeshbhai, founder of the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission in Dharampur, India, participated in the Vedic rituals.

Speaking on the occasion, Pujya Brahmaviharidas swami, the spokesperson of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha said, "The generous gift of land for a Hindu Temple by the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating the mandir model and officially launching the project for the first Hindu Mandir in UAE.

Nahyan is a strong and sound message to the world that cultural and spiritual inclusiveness is the way forward for global harmony."

Commenting, the Consul General of India, Vipul, said, "This

is a historic event, rightly called the millennial moment. The first traditional stone temple built by the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha shall serve the needs of the entire community. Closely working with their hundreds of volunteers and saints, I know the selfless spirit with which they dedicate themselves. The temple and its activities shall be path-breaking for promoting love, tolerance and harmony in the UAE and the neighboring regions."

Also, Dr BR Shetty, Founder & Chairman of NMC Healthcare and Chairman of UAE Exchange, and a leading member of the temple committee said, "I am speechless. The generosity of the rulers of the UAE, the clarity of India's Prime Minister and the integrity and ability of the BAPS is incredible. We are soon going to have an iconic temple complex that will serve everyone for generations to come."

The temple will incorporate all aspects and features of a traditional Hindu temple as part of a fully functional, social, cultural and spiritual complex. The stones will be carved by temple artisans in India and assembled in the UAE. Expected to be completed by 2020, it shall also include a visitors' center, prayer halls, exhibitions, learning areas, sports area for children and youths, thematic gardens, water features, a food court, books and gift shop and other facilities.

Open to people of all beliefs and backgrounds, races and religions, this traditional temple will be a part of the UAE's mission of happiness and harmony by helping to foster love, tolerance, understanding and peaceful coexistence. It will facilitate the traditional practice of the Hindu faith and serve the over 3.3 million Indians residing in and the millions of international tourists annually visiting the UAE through interfaith dialogue, pluralism and universal human values. It will also nurture the children of today and future generations towards a brighter future.

Moreover, as a landmark addition to the UAE skyline, the temple will become a beacon of beauty, an oasis of peace, an ocean of spirituality and a home of harmony - a global symbol of faith and friendship.

CBI approaches Interpol to locate jewelry designer Nirav Modi

NEW DELHI (TIP): The CBI has approached the Interpol to locate billionaire jewellery designer Nirav Modi and his family who had left the country in the first week of January, weeks before the scam was reported to the agency, officials said.

Officials said the CBI approached the Interpol with a request for issuing Diffusion Notice which was aimed at locating an individual.

"This (diffusion) is less formal than a notice but is also used to request the arrest or location of an individual or additional information in relation to a police investigation. A diffusion is circulated directly by an NCB (CBI in this case) to the member countries of their choice, or to the entire Interpol membership and is simultaneously recorded in Interpol's Information System," the website of Interpol says.

The CBI was confident about getting a location of Modi and his family by Friday, they said.

Modi, who was alleged to have carried out fraudulent transactions worth over Rs 11,400 crore in Punjab National Bank, had left the country in the first week of January.



Nirav Modi

The 46-year old, who holds an Indian passport, left India on January 1, while his brother Nishal, a Belgian citizen, departed from the country on the same day.

However, whether they travelled together had to be probed, they said.

Modi's wife Ami, a US citizen, left on January 6 and his uncle and business partner Mehul Choksi, the promoter of Gitanjali jewellery chain, left on January 4, the officials said.

The CBI and the Enforcement

Directorate have approached the government seeking revocation of passports of Modi and Choksi.

The billionaire diamond merchant, a regular on the lists of rich and famous Indians since 2013, was booked by the CBI, along with wife, brother and Choksi on January 31, for allegedly cheating the state-run Punjab National Bank to the tune of Rs 280 crore.

The bank again approached the CBI within a fortnight of the first complaint giving details of more transactions which were over Rs 11,400 crore.

The question as to why the PNB did not send a complaint to the CBI and decided to give it in tranches is also under the scanner of the agency, they said.

The bank has claimed in three complaints to the CBI that so far it has detected 150 Letters of Undertaking (LoUs) which were fraudulently issued by its officials in connivance with Modi and the other accused in the case, the officials said.

An LoU is a letter of comfort issued by one bank to branches of other banks, based on which foreign branches offer credit to buyers. *Source: PTI*

GOVT CLEARS MEGA PURCHASE OF WEAPONS FOR ARMED FORCES



NEW DELHI (TIP): The Centre on Feb 13 approved the purchase of weapons worth about Rs 15,931 crore for the armed forces to help them deal with security challenges along the nation's disputed borders.

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council, which approved the "Capital Acquisition Proposals" of the army, air force and navy.

The shopping list cleared by DAC includes light machine guns (LMGs), assault rifles, sniper rifles and advanced torpedo decoy systems.

The DAC approved the large-scale purchase of weapons at a time when the armed forces are facing security challenges along India's disputed borders with Pakistan and China.

The procurement of "essential quantity" of LMGs through the Fast Track Procedure was approved at an estimated cost of over Rs 1,819 crore.

"This procurement will meet the operational requirement of the troops deployed on the borders. A concurrent proposal is being processed for the balance quantity to be procured under the 'Buy and Make (Indian)' categorisation," the Ministry of Defence (MoD) stated.

The DAC approved procurement of 7.4 lakh assault rifles. These rifles will be 'Made in India' under the 'Buy and Make (Indian)' category, through the Ordnance Factory Board and Private Industry at an estimated cost of Rs 12,280 crore.

"In the last one month, to equip the soldiers on the border with modern and more effective equipment, the DAC has fast-tracked procurement of the three main personal weapons - rifles, carbines and LMGs," the MoD stated.

The DAC also gave its nod to the procurement of 5,719 sniper rifles for the army and the air force at an estimated cost of Rs 982 crore.

The MoD officials said that high precision weapons would be bought with 'Buy Global' categorisation, while the ammunition for them would be initially procured and subsequently manufactured in India.

To enhance the anti-submarine warfare capabilities of the Navy's warships, the DAC approved procurement of 'Mareech' Advanced Torpedo Decoy Systems (ATDS).

The 'Mareech' ATDS has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation and has successfully completed extensive trial evaluations.

The 'Mareech' systems will be produced by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Bengaluru, at an estimated cost of Rs 850 crore.

The approvals for fast-track procurement of weapons came just after the deadly terror attacks on a military camp at Sunjuwan in Jammu and near a paramilitary camp at Karan Nagar in Kashmir.

The attacks were carried out by Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba, both based in Pakistan.

Apart from dealing with terrorism and infiltration attempts, the army is also retaliating against repeated violation of ceasefire by the soldiers and border guards of Pakistan along the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir.

The 72-day long face-off between the Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Doklam Plateau in western Bhutan from June 18 to August 28 brought to focus the protracted boundary dispute between the two nations.

The reports about fresh build-up by the PLA near the scene of the face-off as well as construction attempts and transgressions by the neighbouring country's soldiers elsewhere along the Line of Actual Control underlined the need for the army to be on its toes.

Priya Varrier beats Sunny Leone to become Google's most searched actress



NEW DELHI (TIP): Viral sensation Priya Prakash Varrier has taken down Sunny Leone to become Google's most searched actress.

The first song of Malayalam movie 'Oru Adaar Love' became viral on social media within few hours of its release because of Varrier's cute articulations and wink. Since then, the 18-year-old has become the talk of the town.

In the past few days, 'Priya Prakash' has been searched way more than Sunny Leone, who is known to perpetually trend on the search engine.

With a follower count of over three million on Instagram, Priya has become a social media sensation overnight.

Her sultry kohl eyes and a naughty wink have made the nation crazy. The girl whose smiling and winking video spammed almost all the newsfeeds is none other than Priya Prakash Varrier. The Malayalam actress, who is all set to make her debut in the film industry with the movie 'Oru Adaar Love,' became the national crush of India when the makers of the film released the movie's first song. A small clip from the movie's song started trending on the internet and #PriyaPrakashVarrier became a trend on social media handles. The new Malayalam beauty Priya Prakash Varrier is on a record-breaking spree. After melting every sakht launda of India, Priya has now set a unique record on social media worldwide.

The Biggest Dream

It seems like Priya Prakash Varrier is a huge fan of Dulquer Salmaan, the young superstar of Mollywood. The actress has revealed that her biggest dream is to come on screen with none other than Dulquer Salmaan.

SC SLAMS MP FOR MERE RS 6,500 TO RAPE VICTIMS

NEW DELHI (TIP): "You value a rape at Rs 6,500?" That was how a bench of Supreme Court justices reacted while reviewing an affidavit filed by the Madhya Pradesh government on utilisation of funds from the Nirbhaya scheme.

A bench comprising Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta took the government to task and asked whether it was doing "charity" by paying a meagre amount to rape victims.

"According to you (Madhya Pradesh) and your affidavit, on an average, you are paying Rs 6,000 to a rape victim. Are you doing a charity? How can you do so. ... You value a rape at Rs 6,500?"

"For Madhya Pradesh, the figures are fantastic. There are 1,951 rape victims in Madhya Pradesh and you are giving them Rs 6,000-Rs 6,500 each. Is that good, commendable? What is this," the bench asked, adding, "this is total insensitiveness".

Despite getting the maximum amount of allocation under the Nirbhaya Fund, Madhya Pradesh had only spent around Rs one crore on 1,951 rape victims.

The Nirbhaya Fund was set up by the Centre in 2013 after the December 16, 2012 gangrape and murder case in Delhi.

In January, the apex court directed all states and union territories to submit an affidavit on the amount received by them under the Nirbhaya scheme and the amount disbursed to victims of sexual assault. As many as 24 states and UTs are yet to file their affidavits, PTI reported.

During the hearing, when Haryana's counsel said they would file their affidavit, the bench observed, "If you have not filed affidavit, it is a very clear indication of what you feel for safety of women in your state".

"You take your time and tell the women in your state that you do not care for them," the bench said while observing that 24 states and UTs have not yet filed their affidavit as per the court's direction.

When the counsel representing one of the petitioners told the bench that they have so far received only one affidavit filed on behalf of Sikkim, the bench asked, "is this becoming a joke? If you are not interested in this case, tell us. On what basis you are saying that only one state has filed affidavit. You do not even see the office report?".

The counsel for Meghalaya told the bench that they have disbursed around Rs 30.55 lakh to 48 victims of sexual assault.





COMMENT

Prof I.S.Saluja

A 'good guy' with a gun against a 'bad guy' with a gun formula does not work, Mr. President

US needs to come out of its primitive view on guns

Another carnage, followed by a spate of condolences and condemnations. President of USA tweets he was sorry for the "terrible" shooting. 'My prayers and condolences to the families of the victims of the terrible Florida shooting.No child, teacher or anyone else should ever feel unsafe in an American school.' Easier said, Mr. President.

But, Mr. President, it is precisely what is happening. Have a look at the sheer number of shootings - 18 school shootings in 45 days. Florida massacre is one of the many tragedies in 2018. Wednesday's attack in Broward County which killed 17 and wounded 14 was the deadliest school shooting since the 2012 rampage that killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut.

Obviously, Americans are worried. They want safety of their children, not the condolences of POTUS or other lawmakers. They are rightly accusing their President of being soft on gun control. They see their President on the side of NRA, not on the side of the helpless people. And they understand well why a lawmaker will be on the side of NRA.

People want sensible gun laws in line with the 2nd Amendment. They do not want to see anybody and everybody carrying a gun which they believe and, rightly so, will be a weapon of offense, at any given point of time. They wonder why congress is not even talking about stepping up to prevent attacks like this.

More than the border wall and the security from illegally entering aliens, Americans need security from their own people who can easily lay their hands on guns because the law permits them to have them, which they may use to mow down innocent people.

How long will the lawmakers remain silent spectators to the butchery by gun wielding madmen? They were elected to protect, not to be instruments of torture and death. Wake up friends in the Congress and know what for you are there at the Capitol.

AS I SEE IT

Flying on wits alone, Modi's biases can involve India in Islamic world's quarrels



By KC Singh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is three months shy of entering the last year of his term. Post-Rajasthan wipe-out of his party in two Lok Sabha and one legislative byelection - of which even the Congress was confident of winning one - murmurs within the BJP are louder about state of the party and the nation. All leaders use foreign visits to bolster domestic standing as the pageant and protocol, carefully calibrated in advance, rarely goes off-script. But the exercise has diminishing returns once the electorate at home begins to wonder where the promised achhe din are. The recent foray of Modi into West Asia and the Gulf falls into that category.

A Palestine visit was expected after Modi's stand-alone visit to Israel and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's Indian sojourn last year, with fanfare, including the shutting down of Ahmedabad for street extravaganza. President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine Authority (PA) has been in power since the death of charismatic Yasser Arafat in 2004. There has, however, been no presidential election since 2005 nor parliamentary polls since 2006. His moral and political authority had dropped perceptively, particularly after his inability to implement the Cairo deal for gaining administrative control of Gaza, run by rivals Hamas. The continued siege of Gaza and sanctions have caused human misery and an explosive situation. Israel has been able to exploit the Palestinian disunity and civil war in Syria to stall any international push for West Asian settlement.

President Donald Trump opened his presidency by nominating his Jewish son-in-law Jared Kushner to obtain an Israel-Palestine peace deal. But his December 6 decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israeli capital ruffled Arab feathers. Abbas has employed it to reassert control over rival factions by espousing the popular argument that US sponsorship of peace process had now ended. India by sensibly voting for a UN resolution condemning US move kept its door open to the PA. Thus, Modi's visit was timed well as President Abbas was regaining lost authority. The \$50 million developmental aid should keep India's traditional relations with Palestinians on track. Hamas has, meanwhile, revived links with Iran, overcoming misunderstanding over Iran supporting the embattled Assad regime in Syria. Future course would depend on Abbas holding long-delayed elections to Palestinian parliament and his own office, acquiring control over Gaza and ameliorating the humanitarian crisis and the political fortunes of Netanyahu on way to being indicted for corruption. By its untimely step, the US handed the reward before obtaining Israeli compliance with UN

"This paradox in Modi foreign policy of selectively engaging Islamic nations, even ostentatiously hugging their leaders, while allowing the fringe at home to bait Muslims can only work fitfully or in the short run", says the author.



KEEP TO THE MIDDLE: India can't afford to be seen as playing one against the other

Security Council resolutions, including stopping construction of new settlements in occupied West Bank.

But by altering standard Indian formulations on the Palestinian issue, especially omitting mention of East Jerusalem as capital of Palestine, Modi succumbed to pro-Israel views in the RSS, which sees Israeli control over ancient lands of Judea and Samaria as analogous to their perception of Akhand Bharat as encompassing South Asia. They ignore that Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism, conceived Der Judenstaat or Jewish Homeland at the beginning of the 20th century as any place on earth to colonize with people of Jewish faith. Even Uganda was considered for resettlement to escape anti-Semitism in Russia and Europe. The World War I and Ottoman Turkey aligning with Germany opened the possibility of Britain allowing European Jews to return to Palestine, post-liberation from Ottoman control.

This paradox in Modi foreign policy of selectively engaging Islamic nations, even ostentatiously hugging their leaders, while allowing the fringe at home to bait Muslims can only work fitfully or in the short run. His second visit to the UAE was really pegged on laying the foundation stone of a temple in Abu Dhabi and a global summit at Dubai on governance. Hardly any world leaders were visible in the first row, other than local sheikhs. It was vintage Dubai marketing itself as a focal point for global commerce.

The UAE has had temples for decades, although not in the capital Abu Dhabi. The late president, Sheikh Zayed, father of Modi's host Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, had in 2001, when I was ambassador to the UAE, allotted land in the capital for a cremation ground, which was to have a small temple. When the then Home Minister LK Advani called on him and thanked him for this gesture, he replied that his family accepted religious pluralism. Thus, the

current gesture is a next step in an old tradition rather than some strategic leap in bilateral engagement. In fact, two English television channels, devoted even more vigorously than Doordarshan to spin BJP's accomplishments, broadcast a clip wrongly showing Sheikh Mohammed chanting 'Jai Sri Ram' at a function. As the adage goes with friends like these who needs enemies? The UAE embassy in Delhi and newspapers in the UAE reacted with indignation.

The Indian purchase of a share in an oilfield and ADNOC, Abu Dhabi's oil major, participating in Indian oil reserve are old decisions announced during Sheikh Mohammed's India trip. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are aligned against Iran, exacerbating the Shia-Sunni confrontation, thus splitting the six-member Gulf Coordination Council as, indeed, the Sunni world. Modi laying a wreath at the military memorial in Abu Dhabi, largely honoring the UAE's dead in their intervention in Yemen and thus in a war against Iranian allies Houthis, would be read by Iran's Revolutionary Guards as India taking sides. The forthcoming visit of Iran President Hassan Rouhani cannot alter that reality.

Leaders who preceded Modi, whether of the Congress or BJP, operated from a shared vision to retain strategic independence vis-a-vis great powers and not get embroiled in Islamic world's quarrels. Modi tends to play by ideological biases and hope that sequential and tactical moves will paper over strategic weakness in his approach. The UAE would like to create a fissure between India and Iran. Iran would like the reverse. Modi's last stop was Oman to meet Sultan Qaboos, the last surviving titan of Gulf politics. He has kept Oman neutral in the Gulf nations' quarrels created by gen-next leaders of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Hopefully, he would have passed that wisdom to his Indian guest.

(The author is a former Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India)

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India's Tech Firms Must Re-invent or Perish



By Vivek Wadhwa

There are literally \$100bn opportunities elsewhere in the digital space that India has the expertise and capacity to exploit - yet it shows no evidence that it is likely to take them. When I talk to Indian CEOs, they acknowledge the threats of digital transformation, and can see the opportunities for diversification. Yet they turn away from our conversations to focus on closing another legacy outsourcing deal - fiddling while Bangalore burns. (MINT)

You can see it in their faces, hear it in their voices. The Japanese and Koreans - on top of the world in the 1980s and 1990s - want the good old days back. When I meet Japanese and Korean companies these days I find their executives among the most attentive and determined of any in the world. Years of economic stagnation does that to you. Who doesn't want to escape from a malaise? Willing alone won't bring back the boom times - and I'm not yet ready to forecast a Northeast Asian renaissance. What I am ready to do is predict South Asian retrogression.

The complacency that caused Japan and South Korea to lose their edge at the end of the last millennium is about to afflict India. This is not to denigrate the talent base in the Subcontinent - Indian digital expertise remains world-class. It is a question of attitude, an unwillingness to face the reality of the industrial shift that is coming.

Much of India's IT wealth comes from western outsourcing of IT services - managing new and old world corporate IT systems and mainframes upon which they run. Yet about a decade ago, the balance of computing power started to change to favor individual users.

With the advent of tablets, apps and cloud computing, users have direct access to better technology than their IT departments can provide them. They can download cheap,

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elegant, and powerful apps on their smartphones that make their corporate systems look primitive. These modern-day apps do not require internal teams of people doing software development and maintenance - they are user-customizable and can be built by anyone with basic programming skills. And with secure cloud computing, companies are doing away with servers, so corporate data centers are shrinking while Amazon, Google, and Microsoft's data centers expand.

Gone are the multi-billion dollar outsourcing deals that the Indian outsourcers celebrated every month.

You can see the signs of stagnation in the layoffs that IT companies are making and in the slowdown in their hiring. You can see the agony in the faces of engineering graduates who are not getting job offers. Fortunately, the western contracts that are keeping the Indian IT sector alive will not disappear overnight. Company IT infrastructure takes decades to deconstruct and corporate IT strategy moves at the rate of molasses. There will be business

for Indian IT for a few years more. But the eventual outcome is set, no matter how much they would like to wish it away: today's IT industry will suffer a steep decline.

The same technology advances that have decimated the Indian advantage, however, offer a new opportunity that could allow the Indian information technology sector to reinvent itself, even gain the support of Americans who have been rallying against it: to help America modernize its aging infrastructure and enable it to bring manufacturing back from China. Technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence and inexpensive and powerful sensors enable development of smart cities and automated factories and a wholesale upgrading of national infrastructure. Artificial Intelligence technologies can help analyses massive amounts data and improve decision making in every industry sector.

There are literally \$100bn opportunities elsewhere in the digital space that India has the expertise and capacity to exploit, yet it

shows no evidence that it is likely to take them. Instead, many Indian executives seem happy to plough on with more of the same, listening to the warnings without changing course. They claim to be using artificial intelligence tools and entering new markets - but these are just press releases, for marketing purposes. There is a fundamental lack of understanding of the new technologies and appreciation of the emerging market opportunities.

The dramatic changes to strategy needed to take advantage of the new opportunities and the large-scale retraining of the workforce are not happening. What really worries me is that India IT companies face becoming the Kodaks of tomorrow - anchored to an outdated business model that is destroyed by disruption.

What I have been teaching executives of companies in Japan and Korea as well as the US and Europe is that to survive the disruptions that advancing technologies are about to cause, and to take advantage of the new trillion-dollar opportunities, companies need to disrupt themselves. They need to do to themselves what startups from other industries are about to do to them: take the offensive with new technologies and business models and enter new markets. They need to challenge the status quo and question the past; behave like startups rather than lumbering giants.

When I talk to Indian CEOs, they acknowledge the threats of digital transformation, and can see the opportunities for diversification. Yet they turn away from our conversations to focus on closing another legacy outsourcing deal - fiddling while Bangalore burns.

(The author is a Distinguished Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University at Silicon Valley and author of The Driver in the Driverless Car: How Our Technology Choices Will Create the Future)

OPED

Co-located Schools Transformed into Campus Communities



By Carmen Fariña

“Through the Co-located Campus Initiative, we work to improve the overall culture and climate across schools on campuses, and make sure resources are shared so teachers and kids can have access to more programs and opportunities. By coming together, individual schools are sharing best practices and strengthening campus culture - and the entire community is benefiting.”

Students learn best when there is collaboration between teachers, school staff and families. That's why I have always promoted collaboration over competition throughout my 52 years as a New York City educator. Collaboration looks different across classrooms and schools - it can be two teachers sharing best practices to strengthen lesson plans, or two principals in the same building finding ways for their students to share an advisory council or the lunchroom. Our classrooms are stronger when we collaborate, share resources and cultivate successful teaching practices.

Over the last four years, collaboration has played a critical role in improving instruction at schools across the City. Through the Showcase Program and the Learning Partners Program, educators from different schools come together to develop and strengthen approaches to teaching, identify ways to improve culture and climate, and hone ways to better serve English Language Learners.

And while collaboration across schools, districts and specialties is something I have championed, I noticed early on in my tenure as Chancellor that collaboration was lacking in some of the places where it made the most sense - our co-located campuses. There was one high school campus, Lehman, that was facing challenges. We heard from surrounding business owners and local elected officials got involved - something had to immediately change to improve the school climate on campus and in the surrounding area.

We brought the principals together and put a plan into action: Mark Rampersant, the DOE's Deputy CEO for Safety and Security, worked with the principals in the building to form partnerships between all of the schools, create a single bell schedule, form a campus-wide student advisory, combine professional development, and open advanced placement classes to all students on the campus. We saw results, including an increase in students

participating in advanced placement courses and taking advantage of afterschool programs as well as a decrease in suspensions. The campus celebrated their successes by hosting the first ever campus-wide prom. Based on this progress, we expanded our work to five additional campuses in the 2016-2017 school year.

Through the Co-located Campus Initiative, we work to improve the overall culture and climate across schools on campuses, and make sure resources are shared so teachers and kids can have access to more programs and opportunities. By coming together, individual schools are sharing best practices and strengthening campus culture - and the entire community is benefiting.

Campuses in the program are strengthening their communities and increasing their capacity to effectively operate campus-wide programs that give students the additional support they need. This includes College Access Centers that provide students with hands-on guidance through the college-application process, CTE courses, mental health clinics and even food pantries. For example, the Grand Street Campus in Brooklyn has a campus-wide band class that practices and performs together and is recognized citywide. Grand Street serves as a model for schools in the Co-located Campus Initiative



that are looking to leverage their campuses to strengthen arts programming.

Today, our Co-located Campus Initiative serves 138 schools and programs on 24 campuses across the City. I recently had the pleasure of visiting 10 showcase campuses, including George Washington in Manhattan, Evander Childs in the Bronx, Springfield in Queens, and Erasmus Hall in Brooklyn, and was thrilled to hear principals talk with a single voice, referring to "us," "we," and "our campus."

Our high school campuses and communities are stronger because students, educators and families are working together.

(The author is New York City Schools Chancellor)

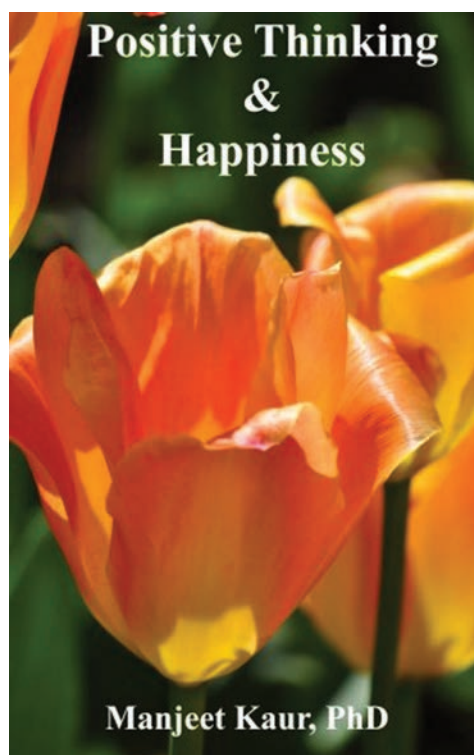
LET'S CONTROL OUR THOUGHTS BEFORE THEY CONTROL OUR LIVES



By Dr. Manjeet Kaur

I think, act and behave based on MY perceptions

The author of Positive Thinking & Happiness prescribes a recipe to enjoy a harmonious life, day after days.



In order to face the stresses of life and emerge a winner in challenging situations, it becomes important for us to feed our minds with loving positive thoughts and nourish the body and soul with meditation. Wisdom lies in opening the heart and mind and embracing all that comes with life. But where does this wisdom come from? Our brains! How do we feed that wisdom into our brains? For me, the answer has been by practicing positive thinking. Having positive thoughts and being optimistic leads to relaxation and happiness in life.

The old proverb - Practice makes perfect - applies very aptly to our health and wellness, which is governed by our brains. If we learn to control our minds, we can guide our brains to perceive positive in everything, including the positive and negative situations. Negative emotions create havoc in our body. In order to be disease-free, we need to send positive messages to our bodies so that our brain-body connection can create a path of relaxation and let the flow of energy within our bodies run smoothly without any bumps. To move forward, we need to concentrate on positive thoughts and emotions, and break away from the thoughts that tax our nervous system.

To think positive, the mind has to be under an individual's control, rather than controlling the individual. We control our minds. In any kind of situation, our thoughts are flooded with positive and negative emotions. Concentrating on the positive emotions leads to more self-control. When we are more in control of our emotions we are more stable emotionally, our senses are more alert, and we can look at things more positively. The mind can be trained through meditation to have faith in the positive

energy and spiritual power within each one of us; it can be trained to look at the positive side of situations and individuals alike. What comes out of this training is a HAPPY and RELAXED person. When we are in a positive and happy state of mind, the positive energy itself guides all our life decisions and paves the way to success. The power lies within us. We use only one percent of the powerful energy we are bestowed with; the rest remains unused. The more we use this positive energy, the more power we get to control our thoughts and guide them towards positive outcomes. If we connect to positive energy by practicing relaxation techniques and meditation, we can attract good fortune.

Life is a journey filled with joys and sorrows. Throughout life we come across different and difficult situations which we cannot simply ignore. We have to look at what makes us happy and adopt ways of life that will lead to a satisfying and fulfilling journey. Would one lay more emphasis on that which leads to negative emotions and makes life miserable, or would one search for how to deal with the situation in a way that will solve our problems and help us avoid these in the future? Once we tackle a stressful situation, it will no more be a challenge for us. The secret lies in accepting the challenging situation and gearing our thoughts towards positivism so that we are more in control of ourselves. Only then we can enhance problem solving skills to make rewarding decisions.

Advantages of Thinking Positive

1. Individuals who think positive are able to deal better with stress since they approach every situation with an optimistic attitude.
2. By thinking positive, we gain insight into optimal living, which optimizes our ability to deal with challenging situations and enhance positivism in all spheres of life.
3. Positive thoughts help us understand our emotions and psychological concepts at a deeper level.
4. Increase in positive emotions leads to well-being and helps us to live life to the fullest by always being happy.
5. Positive thinking leads to mental, physical, spiritual, and financial wellness and helps in acquiring a better understanding of individual and cultural differences.

We keep learning throughout our life; with learning we acquire new traits and characteristics that further nourish our consciousness and soul. Be it joy or sorrow, every human being experiences the emotions involved. When challenging life situations arise, we have to make choices to deal with those situations. If we give in, we have already failed the test. If we accept the challenging situation, look at the positive and move forward to tackle it, we have half won the battle.

Acceptance

Accepting situations and people is the first step towards problem solving. If we learn to accept both the joys, and sorrows of life, we will be in a better position to maintain a balance in our lives. When distressed, we should gather our thoughts and devise strategies which will lead to positive outcomes.

Why fret when it will negatively affect our health and only lead to regret?

It helps to surrender to life itself by accepting and being compassionate in healing the wounds it gives us. If we treat the wounds with love, the healing will be faster.

We build our own personalities based on past experiences. What and how we think, feel and act become lasting traits and build our unique personalities. If our love is stronger than our negative feelings, we will develop a loving

personality.

Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect. It means that you have decided to look beyond the imperfections.

- Gerard Way

Forgiveness

Forgiving others and ourselves is the next step to take after acceptance. Almost all our emotional experiences involve others. Many times, knowingly or unknowingly, we hurt our loved ones and also get hurt ourselves by others. In instances like this, learning to forgive heals the emotional wounds faster. Forgiveness takes us closer to achieving fulfillment and connecting further to the positive flow of energy inside us.

To err is human; to forgive, divine

- Alexander Pope

When we ourselves make mistakes, we should not hold grudges against others. I believe, by forgiving others, we forgive ourselves.

Optimism

The best way to keep ourselves going and deal with the stresses before they overcome us, is to look at the positive in every situation. See the good in every situation and be hopeful of the best results. Sometimes, it becomes very difficult to look at something positive in a very stressful situation. In cases like that, we need to remember that dwelling on the negatives and worrying too much about the outcomes will only weaken us and lead to illness and disease. If we think and look for the positive in this kind of stressful situation, we are sending a positive message throughout our body as well.

For myself I am an optimist - it does not seem to be much use being anything else.

- Sir Winston Churchill

Train the Brain

One of the greatest treasures humans have is the power of thinking. We have no control over what life throws at us, but we do have control over how we receive and respond to it. What guides us in that? Our BRAIN! The brain has to be trained to form positive habits by regular practice. To form a new habit, we need to break the old ones. In order to break the old habits, we have to practice the new habit for at least a month or so, to bring about a permanent change in our behavior and make the new habits a part of our lifestyle.

We can shape our lives to a great extent if we train our brains to practice positive thinking techniques regularly. Practice mindfulness, meditation and relaxation; the more we practice, the more relaxed and accepting we will become. It should become a way of life. The practice should be regular; if we stop, our mind might start wandering again. Just as we eat, drink and sleep regularly, we need to meditate as well so that we can control our minds and relax our brains, which in turn will relax our bodies and pave the way to mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Sometimes, even with regular practice, our minds might wander. Being human, we go through emotions all the time. The success of meditation lies in not becoming desperate and vulnerable, but instead continuously practicing relaxation techniques to calm and control the negative emotions, and enhance positive emotions. When faced with challenges, we need to accept them, control our emotions and work towards achieving positive outcomes.

Creativity

Being creative is the ability to be innovative by conceiving an idea from our imagination. Humans are gifted with the power of thinking. By using the ability to invent ideas with our fertile brains, we can use our imagination and

knowledge to come up with unique concepts. For example, if you like to cook, create innovative delicacies by trying new cooking techniques.

Making Dreams and Thoughts Come True

We all dream about achieving success in different spheres of life, but how many of us actually put these dreams and thoughts into action? Success comes to those who believe in fulfilling their dreams and working towards achieving their goals. Achieving fulfillment of dreams is easier than we think. In my experience, it is a simple process:

1. The first step is action. First and foremost, in order to tread the path of dream fulfillment, put thoughts into action. Get out of bed every morning with the thought: In order to achieve my goals, I need to first wake up and start working towards putting my dreams into action.
2. The second step is patience and persistence; keep working diligently till success is achieved, and even after you have reached your goals.

Motivation and Leadership

Leadership is a quality and process where an individual comes up with an idea, leads the way to action, convincing other people to follow. The leader, the person who starts the process takes the lead and influences others to follow, working together towards the attainment of a common goal or objective.

Most of us have come across situations in life where while in a group, someone poses a question to the group. Initially, people in the group might be reluctant to answer, but as soon as one person answers, others follow. The leader is this person who put his thinking into action and led the way to the discussion. We all have ideas, however; the leader is the person who puts that idea into action and leads the path, making way for others to tread.

Self Esteem

Abraham Maslow, a famous psychologist, came up with a pyramid where he placed needs according to hierarchy: physiological, safety and security, love and belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualization (Myers). The fourth need in this pyramid, self-esteem is the feeling of regard, approval, and respect for the self which may depend a lot on an individual's environment. When we are surrounded by people who love and admire us, a feeling of love and belongingness is generated, which further raises our morale. When our self-esteem is high, awareness of self brings joy and freedom into our lives. Our focus and concentration increase, and we become more involved in what we do, thus achieving success in academic, home, social and occupational fields.

About the author

Dr. Manjeet Kaur PhD (Psychology) is an author of the book "Positive Thinking and Happiness" which is available at Amazon. She is a career consultant, speaker, trainer, professor, wellness consultant and an internationally known speaker on optimal wellness, happiness, laughter/humor, stress management, weight management, and positive thinking. She has spent the last 15 years researching, reading, learning, mastering and applying stress management, happiness, and positive thinking techniques to understand human wellness and helped clients to achieve their fullest potential by practicing these techniques. Dr. Kaur teaches Psychology at various colleges and universities in USA and is well versed in developing specific need-based programs for individual client requirements. Dr. Manjeet is a frequent speaker on a wide array of health issues, and is frequently featured in print, radio, and television interviews in India and the United States.

Pakistan fully prepared for India's aggression: Mohammad Faisal

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan on Feb 15 said that it was fully prepared to defend itself in case of any "aggression" by India and asked New Delhi to stop blaming it without any concrete evidence.

Foreign Office spokesman Dr Mohammad Faisal made the comment while addressing a media briefing.

"If India is bent upon aggression, Pakistan is fully capable of defending itself. The Pakistani nation should not be taken for granted by anyone. If India wants peace then it should refrain from aggressive rhetoric with the sole objective of securing electoral wins," he said.

He said India has a "kneejerk" tendency to assign unilateral blame without evidence and it also blamed Pakistan for "spy pigeons and worse" but Pakistan strongly rejects the allegations.

He said a similar tendency was shown after Sunjwan camp attack and certain Indian police and defence officials, and media insinuated against Pakistan.

A group of heavily armed Jaish-e-Muhammad terrorists struck the sprawling camp of the 36 brigade of Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry in the early hours on February 10, triggering a gunbattle. Seven people were killed in the attack.

He also rejected the comments of Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman by saying that "the familiar tendency of apportioning blame on Pakistan, without concrete evidence, is regrettable". (PTI)

India wasted opportunity for normalisation of ties: Pak defence minister

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan's Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan has said that India has not only wasted the opportunity for normalisation of ties with Islamabad but also restricted the space for peace through its "hostile" stance, according to a media report.

The defence minister made the comments on Wednesday while announcing a policy statement in the Senate, Dawn News reported. "The unremittingly hostile, anti-Pakistan stance by the current Indian government has drastically reduced the space for any advocacy of peace," he said. Khan noted that the Indian government also "wasted the opportunity for making peace at a time when a political consensus existed within Pakistan for improving relations with India".

"Pakistan's perception of threat from India is not reflex; it is based upon a thorough assessment of Indian capacity to threaten Pakistan's military from an unprecedented forward position," he said and reminded that "the threat is calculated on capacity, not intent". The statement was made after Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman warned Pakistan after Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Muhammad terrorists attacked a military camp in Sunjuwan in Kashmir that left six soldiers and a civilian dead.

The paper also reported an escalation in ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary.

Violations of a 2003 ceasefire pact, "a key confidence building measure between India and Pakistan" have seen a spike in 2017 compared 2015 and 2016, it said. The pattern has continued this year and there have been more than 200 violations in the first six weeks of 2018, the report said. (PTI)

KP Sharma Oli sworn in as Nepal PM for second time

KATHMANDU (TIP): KP Sharma Oli was on Feb 15 sworn in as Nepal's prime minister for the second time, weeks after his Left alliance with former Maoist rebels swept the historic parliamentary polls, kindling hopes for much-needed political stability in the Himalayan nation.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari administered the oath of office and secrecy to 65-year-old Oli at a function held at President's Office, Shital Niwas, in Maharajgunj. He is the 41st prime minister of Nepal.

Known for his pro-China stance, Oli had served as the country's prime minister from October 11, 2015 to August 3, 2016.

His PM candidacy was supported by the UCPN-Maoists, Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal, and Madhesi Rights Forum-Democratic along with 13 other small parties.

Earlier, former prime minister and Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba had addressed the nation and submitted his resignation to the president.

Deuba was elected as the 40th Prime Minister on June 6 with the support from CPN (Maoist Centre) which is now a part of Left alliance and opting for merger with CPN-UML.

"The elections of three tiers of government have been successfully held under my leadership setting the foundation to long transition," Deuba said in the television address.

The Left alliance of the CPN-UML, led by Oli and CPN-Maoist Centre, led by Prachanda, secured almost two third majority in the Parliament during the parliamentary elections.

Oli's party CPN-UML secured 121 seats in the 275-member Parliament and became the largest party in the Parliament. The Nepali



Congress has 63 seats while the CPN-Maoist Centre has 53 seats.

The total strength of the CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist Centre was 174, sufficient to form a majority government at the Centre.

The Madhesi parties - Rastriya Janta Party Nepal has got 17 seats and Federal Socialist Party Nepal secured 16 seats in the parliamentary elections.

The elections were seen as the final step in Nepal's transition to a federal democracy following a decade-long civil war till 2006 that claimed more than 16,000 lives.

In 2015, when Nepal adopted a new Constitution that split it into seven states, dozens of people were killed in ethnic clashes over territory and rights.

Following the adoption of the new Constitution, the ethnic Madhesi group,

mostly of Indian-origin, protested for months, saying they were not getting enough territory in one of the provinces and were also facing discrimination.

The polls are said to be a step forward in cementing democracy and providing political stability to Nepal, which has seen 10 prime ministers in as many years.

Oli had served as deputy prime minister during the then interim government led by Girija Prasad Koirala in 2006 after the successful conclusion of the second Peoples Movement. He was elected as a member of Parliament in the House of Representatives for the first time from Jhapa district in 1991.

He had also served as minister of home affairs in 1994-1995. He was re-elected to the House of Representatives from Jhapa electorate in 1999. (PTI)

Afghan Taliban say they want to end war through dialogue

KABUL (TIP): The Taliban said on Wednesday, in a rare statement to the American people, they wanted to end Afghanistan's 17-year war through talks, while warning the message should not be seen as a sign of weakness and the fight against US forces would go on.

A more aggressive US strategy in Afghanistan including a surge in air strikes introduced by President Donald Trump in August has pushed the Taliban back from several district centres and two provincial capitals.

But the terrorists control large parts of the countryside and have responded to the more aggressive US strategy with two attacks in Kabul in the past few weeks, killing nearly 150 people.

The attacks have toughened both the US and Afghan governments' stand against initiating talks with the insurgents, although neither side seems capable of winning the conflict.

"Our preference is to solve the Afghan issue through peaceful dialogue," the Taliban said.

The Taliban, fighting to oust foreign forces and defeat the US-backed government, said the United States must end its "occupation" and accept the Taliban right to form a government "consistent with the beliefs of our people".

In their statement, the Taliban did not mention a January 27 raid on a top Kabul hotel, in which more than 30 people were killed, nor a bomb attack on a crowded street a week later that killed more than 100. They claimed both attacks.

The terrorists only mentioned the Afghan government to deride it on various grounds. A government spokesman declined to comment on the statement.

'Louder than words'

A spokesman for Afghanistan's NATO-led military mission said the recent Taliban attacks on civilians demonstrated they were not ready to enter "good-faith peace negotiations" while the government had on numerous occasions made clear it was willing to begin a peace process.

"The Taliban statement alone does not show willingness to engage in peace talks. The recent attacks speak louder than these words," said the spokesman, Captain Tom Gresback.

The Taliban said it was not too late for the American people to realise the Taliban can solve problems with every side "through healthy politics and dialogue", adding the chances for dialogue were "not exhausted".

Preliminary talks on ending the war that kills thousands of people each year have stalled.

But low-level contacts between the government, international groups including the United Nations and groups close to the Taliban have continued even as the insurgency has escalated.

Progress has been blocked by the deep mistrust between the government and the Taliban, as well as uncertainty about the role of neighbours including Pakistan, which Afghanistan has long accused of aiding the insurgents. Pakistan rejects accusations that it sponsors the Taliban.

The Taliban said their willingness to play a "constructive role in finding a peaceful solution" should not be taken as a sign of weakness. (Reuters)

Rajapaksa's party expected to win Lanka local government polls

COLOMBO: Former Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa led SLPP is expected to win the local government elections based on the results so far.

According to unofficial results from various districts where polls were held yesterday, Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Party (SLPP) is expected to win a majority of the 340 councils. There are 24 municipal councils, 41 urban councils and 275 pradeshiya sabhas, the legislative bodies that preside over the third-tier municipalities in the country. In the first officially declared result coming from the Tamil-minority dominated north, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) won the Manthai east local council in the Mullaitivu district with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) coming second.

In another official result from the south, Rajapaksa's SLPP has won the southern Galle district's Ambalangoda council, winning 10 seats while rival parties shared rest of the 10 seats.

The government had postponed the elections for over 330 local councils in the island nation since 2015 for electoral reforms.

In order to postpone the polls by a year, the government proposed an amendment to the Constitution to hold elections for all nine provincial councils on a single day.

The Supreme Court in September ruled that the proposed 20th Amendment to the Constitution to hold council elections on a single day requires two-third parliamentary majority and a nationwide referendum. (PTI)



PRIYANKA CHOPRA TO RETURN WITH 'QUANTICO' ON APRIL 28

The third season of Priyanka Chopra's TV show "Quantico" is all set to air on April 28.

The 35-year-old actor will reprise her role as FBI agent Alex Parrish in the new installment of the ABC series.

The show, which won Priyanka a People's Choice Award, will also see Jake McLaughlin, Johanna Braddy, Russell Tovey and Blair Underwood reprise their respective roles.

Season three will see Alex going back to navigating the dangerous waters of the CIA that she left behind three years ago, when she retired to Italy.

The new spell will premier in India from April 28 every Saturday at 9pm on Star World and Star World HD.

Besides "Quantico", Priyanka has Hollywood projects such as "A Kid Like Jake" and "Isn't It Romantic?" in her kitty.

Source: PTI

YOU CAN NOT REPLICATE SOMEONE LIKE MADHURI DIXIT: JACQUELINE



Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez, who will be seen recreating Madhuri Dixit's superhit song Ek Do Teen in Baaghi 2, has said the song is her tribute to the Bollywood's dancing diva.

Asked if there was any pressure when she first heard that she was going to recreate Madhuri's iconic song, Jacqueline said, "I think that was my first stress that how can we recreate something so iconic like 'is it even possible'. It made a lot easier for me when I understood that it's not possible, we are not trying to match up to what Madhuri Dixit and Saroj (Khan) ji did."

"We are honestly here as big fans of their work and more than anything, this is honestly a tribute to the amazing, iconic number that they gave to us. For me as an actress, this is such an honour and a lot of my actress friends were like, 'we are so jealous that you doing 'Ek do teen'. So for any girl this would be a dream song to do," she added.

The actor, who interacted with media after wrapping up the song on Saturday at Yash Raj Films studios, also said that she feels blessed to get an opportunity to dance on the foot-tapping number from the 1988 film Tezaab for Baaghi 2.

"I feel really blessed that I have been given this opportunity by director Ahmed Khan, Sajid Nadiadwala and master ji Ganesh Acharya. I always knew that I never ever would be able to match up Madhuri Dixit and that's not even something I am going to even attempt because you can not replicate someone like Madhuri Dixit. There is only one Madhuri Dixit and I know that this is just my tribute to her," she said.

Baaghi 2, starring Tiger Shroff, is the sequel to the 2016 film Baaghi. The film, which also stars Disha Patani, is produced by Nadiadwala under the banner name Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment and presented by Fox Star Studios. It will release on March 30.

Did she contact Madhuri to take some tips? "I have connected with Madhuri ji. We will be chatting little more about how the song went once it done because right now, I am under lot of stress. My only focus over the past week has been this one song and of course, they (Madhuri and Saroj Khan) will be the first persons to whom we will show the song. We have already taken their blessings," Jacqueline said.

Source: IANS

Now 'Manikarnika' faces allegations of distorting history

Controversy over films based on historical characters fails to die down in Rajasthan as yet another right-wing fringe group Sarva Brahmin Mahasabha has demanded the state government to immediately stop the shooting of the Kangana Ranaut starrer 'Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi'.

The film appears to be heading the "Padmaavat" way, as the group alleged the team of the period drama filming a love song in which Rani Laxmibai romances a British agent of the erstwhile East India Company, a claim which producer Kamal Jain denied.

"We have come to know that the filmmakers are shooting for a love song in which Rani Laxmibai is seen with a British agent of East India Company.

"We suspect that the producers are making the film based on the controversial book, Rani, written by Jaishree Mishra, state president of the group Suresh Mishra said.

He said the protest would escalate if the administration failed to ensure that no historical facts are distorted in the epic biographical film.



Kangana Ranaut's Rani Laxmibai look from Manikarnika sets.

Shooting would be allowed only after the film owners give an undertaking that no controversial scene would be shown in the

movie, he said.

"We will meet the governor and home minister and if the government does not

react to our demands, protests will be escalated within three days," he added.

Mishra said that he had written to Jain on January 9 asking him to share the profile of the writers and the historians the producers had consulted.

"In order to check that the issue doesn't blow up like Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Padmaavat', the government must ensure that nothing controversial is shown in the movie," he said.

When asked about the accusations, producer Jain told PTI that there were "no romantic scene as claimed" by the group and the team had not received any letter as yet.

"There is nothing objectionable in the film. There is no romantic scene as claimed. We are making a story on a great leader like Rani Laxmibai, the story revolves around her and her journey.

"It hurts when people say things like this against a woman who fought for the country. We have nothing to hide, anyone can come and talk to us. We haven't got any letter yet. We do not fear anything as we know what we are showing in the film," he said. Source: PTI



RITA ORA JOINS 'DETECTIVE PIKACHU'

Rita Ora is all set to join the world of Pokemon.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the 'Fifty Shades Freed' star has joined the upcoming film 'Detective Pikachu', which stars Ryan Reynolds as the titular yellow electric sleuth.

However, the details of her role are still under wraps.

The movie based on the game franchise also features Justice Smith, who will be seen in the upcoming 'Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom', 'Big Little Lies' actress Kathryn Newton, Ken Watanabe, Bill Nighy, and Suki Waterhouse.

Legendary Entertainment's live-action Pokemon movie, which is being directed by Rob Letterman and produced by Mary Parent and Cale Boyter, is currently shooting. *Source: ANI*

YOU ARE NOT MY FRIEND: KIM CATTRALL BLASTS SARAH JESSICA PARKER



Hollywood actor Kim Cattrall vented her anger at former *Sex and the City* co-star Sarah Jessica Parker, saying she was not her friend. The two had reportedly been at odds since filming the show together, with the demise of any prospects for a third *Sex and the City* film bringing the animosity back to the surface, reports hollywoodreporter.com.

Cattrall took to Instagram to vent her anger on Saturday. "I don't need your love or support at this tragic time Sarah Jessica Parker," she posted. In the caption, she called Parker a "hypocrite" and "cruel".

She said, "Let me make this very clear. (If I haven't already) You are not my family. You are not my friend. So I'm writing to tell you one last time to stop exploiting our tragedy in order to restore your 'nice girl' persona."

According to hollywoodreporter.com, Cattrall was likely referring to the recent death of her brother Chris, which Parker discussed at the Paley Centre for media's An Evening With the Cast of *Divorce* in New York on Thursday.

Parker had also left a message of condolence on Cattrall's Instagram post announcing her brother's passing, as had

Cynthia Nixon, one of Cattrall and Parker's other *Sex and the City* co-stars. On Instagram, Cattrall also linked to a New York Post article from October entitled "Inside the mean-girls culture that destroyed *Sex and the City*".

In the article, a clique that excluded Cattrall is described as having been formed on the set of *Sex and the City* particularly after creator and producer Darren Star left and Parker's friend Michael Patrick King took over, which led to Cattrall's reluctance to participate in the first *Sex and the City* film. *Source: IANS*



'Friends' beauty Jennifer Aniston turns 49, but still looks 25

Hollywood's actress Jennifer Aniston who played Rachel Green in popular American sitcom 'Friends' has turned 49 but still looks 25. When not working, Aniston, who is married to actor Justin Theroux, enjoy a quiet life at the Los Angeles home, which the couple designed together.

Reportedly, "They love and respect each other and do spend a lot of time apart. For them, it is a healthy part of their romance." Although not very active with her film or television appearances, Aniston can be seen almost everyday on our television sets in the numerous reruns of the hit comedy show.

Aniston was born in California, to Greek actor John Aniston and English actress Nancy Dow. Jennifer had her initial taste of acting at age 11 when she joined a drama club. She began her professional training as a drama student at New York's School of Performing Arts, 'Fame' school.

Hints at 'Friends' reunion

Actress Jennifer Aniston has hinted at the possibility of a "Friends" reunion, almost 15 years

after the popular show ended.

The actress talked about the show during an appearance on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show", reports an entertainment website.

The actress also gave some details on her new TV series with actress Reese Witherspoon. But the conversation didn't stick to her new show -- it focused on an old one "Friends".

After performing the clap from the "Friends" theme song "I'll be there for you", DeGeneres asked Aniston what everyone has always been wondering about a reunion: "Is it even in the realm of possibility?"

The Emmy award-winning actress played it cool and said: "Anything is a possibility, Ellen. Anything! Right? I mean, George Clooney got married... That's like an anything can happen."

"Friends" had a successful run on TV from 1994 to 2004, starring Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry and David Schwimmer.

Spread over 10 seasons, the sitcom revolves around six friends living in Manhattan.

Shivratri is observed as the "night of Shiva", the Hindu god, who is referred as "the destroyer of evil." This special day is not for celebrations and merry-making but to worship Lord Shiva, introspect and become meditative. While Shivratri comes once every month, Maha Shivratri or the "great night of Shiva" comes once in a year, just before the arrival of Spring season in the month of February or March. Its date keeps changing every year as it is related to the lunar calendar.

How Is Shivratri Celebrated?

There are certain perceptions about the festival. While some head to Shiva temples or go on pilgrimage to Jyotirlingams, some celebrate it as the day to observe stillness by chanting of shiva mantra "Om Namah Shivaya", praying to Lord Shiva, keeping fast, practicing yoga, meditation and self-restraint. The ardent devotees keep awake all night, also called "jaagaran".

The major Jyotirlinga Shiva temples of India - in Varanasi and Somnatha - are frequented on Maha Shivaratri by the Shiva devotees. It is also celebrated in the temples all over Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

What Is Significance Of Shivratri?

There are several legends around Maha Shivratri. According to a legend, Maha Shivaratri was the day when Shiva drank poisonous negativity to protect the world. Another legend says that it is the night when Shiva performs the heavenly dance of creation, preservation and destruction, while some believe that this is the night when Shiva and Parvati got married.

The History of Shivratri

Puranas contain many stories and legends describing the origin of this festival.

According to one, during the samudra manthan, a pot of poison emerged from the ocean. This terrified the Gods and demons as the poison was capable of destroying the entire world, and they ran to Shiva for help. To protect the world from its evil effects, Shiva drank the deathly poison but held it in his throat instead of swallowing it. This made his throat turn blue, and he was given the name Neelakantha, the blue-throated one. Shivaratri is the celebration of this event by which Shiva saved the world.

According to another legend in the Shiva Purana, once the other two of the triads of Hindu Gods, Brahma and Vishnu, were fighting over who was the superior of the two. Horrified at the intensity of the battle, the other gods asked Shiva to intervene. To make them realize the futility of their fight, Shiva assumed the form of a huge column of fire in between Brahma and Vishnu. Awestruck by its magnitude, they decided to find one end each to establish supremacy over the other. Brahma assumed the form of a swan and went upwards and Vishnu as Varaha went into the earth. But light has no limit and though they searched for thousands of miles, neither could find the end. On his journey upwards, Brahma came across a Ketaki flower wafting down slowly. When asked where she had come from, the Ketaki replied that she had been placed at the top of the fiery column as an offering. Unable to find the uppermost limit, Brahma decided to end his search and take the flower as a witness.

At this, the angry Shiva revealed his true form. He punished Brahma for telling a lie, and cursed him that no one would ever pray to him. The Ketaki flower too was banned from being used as an offering for any worship, as she had testified falsely. Since it was on the 14th day in the dark half of the month of Phalguna that Shiva first manifested himself in the form of a Linga, the day is especially auspicious and is celebrated as Mahashivaratri. Worshipping Shiva on this

MAHA SHIVRATRI: THE 'GREAT NIGHT OF SHIVA'



day is believed to bestow one with happiness and prosperity.

A legend explains the all-night worship of Shiva on Shivratri. There was once a poor tribal man who was great devotee of Shiva. One day he went deep into the forest to collect firewood. However he lost his way and could not return home before nightfall. As darkness fell, he heard the growls of wild animals. Terrified, he climbed onto the nearest tree for shelter till day-break. Perched amongst the branches, he was afraid he would doze and fall off the tree. To stay awake, he decided to pluck a leaf at a time from the tree and drop it, while chanting the name of Shiva. At dawn, he realized that he had dropped a thousand leaves onto a Linga to keep himself awake, the tribal plucked one leaf at a time from the tree and dropped it below which he had not seen in the dark. The tree happened to be a wood apple or bel tree. This unwitting all-night worship pleased Shiva, by whose grace the tribal was rewarded with divine bliss. This story is also recited on Mahashivaratri by devotees on fast. After observing the all-night fast, devotees eat the Prasad offered to Shiva.

There is another possible reason for the origin of the all-night worship. Being a moonless night, people worshipped the god who wears the crescent moon as an adornment in his hair, Shiva. This was probably to ensure that the moon rose the next night.

Immediately after Mahashivaratri, almost like a miracle, the trees are full of flowers as if to announce that after winter, the fertility of the earth has been rejuvenated. And this perhaps is the reason why the Linga is worshipped throughout India as a symbol of fertility. The festivities differ in various parts

of India.

Traditions and Customs of Shivaratri

Various traditions and customs related to Shivaratri Festival are dutifully followed by the worshippers of Lord Shiva. Devotees observe strict fast in honor of Shiva, though many go on a diet of fruits and milk some do not consume even a drop of water. Devotees strongly believe that sincere worship of Lord Shiva on the auspicious day of Shivaratri, absolves a person of sins and liberates him from the cycle of birth and death. Shivaratri is considered especially auspicious for women. While married women pray for the well being of their husbands unmarried women pray for a husband like Lord Shiva, who is regarded as the ideal husband.

To mark the Shivratri festival, devotees

wake up early and take a ritual bath, preferably in river Ganga. After wearing fresh new clothes devotees visit the nearest Shiva temple to give ritual bath to the Shiva Lingum with milk, honey, water etc.

On Shivaratri, worship of Lord Shiva continues all through the day and night. Every three hours priests perform ritual pooja of Shiva lingam by bathing it with milk, yoghurt, honey, ghee, sugar and water amidst the chanting of 'Om Namah Shivaya' and ringing of temple bells. Nightlong vigil or jaagran is also observed in Shiva temples where large number of devotees spend the night singing hymns and devotional songs in praise of Lord Shiva. It is only on the following morning that devotees break their fast by partaking prasad offered to the deity.

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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.'

MOST ROMANTIC SPOTS IN HYDERABAD YOU NEVER KNEW

When it comes to romantic things to do in Hyderabad, choices are myriad! There are numerous romantic places in Hyderabad as well as a humongous list of things to do here for couples. The city of beautiful palaces, lakes and buildings, Hyderabad will give you a lot of choices. Depending on your interests and inclination, you can soak in the magnificence of the Chowmahalla and Falaknuma palaces, take in the natural beauty of the Durgam Chruvu and Hussain Sagar lakes, or simply drive along the Necklace Road. Food lovers can feast at Olive Bistro, Coco's or Dialogue in the Dark. If you just want to relax with your loved one, then unwind with a massage at the city's excellent spas or simply head to a nearby resort for a quick getaway.

Hyderabad is an old city with a soul, and places to visit with your special one in Hyderabad are many. They may not be your conventional romantic places, but with so much of heritage romancing the city and romancing your love life becomes one. The grandeur of the Charminar makes for a terrific backdrop to the city's many heady experiences. Here in Hyderabad, you will find that time passes fast, and yet there is always some scope to slow things down and enjoy the little things in life with your loved one.

ALTITUDE LOUNGE BAR

Altitude makes the most of its ringside view of the Hussain Sagar Lake from its vantage eight floor position. For beverages, apart from classics like Singapore Sling, Sex on the Beach, etc, do browse through the Altitude specials. French 75, a bubbly concoction of gin, lime juice and sparkling wine are specially recommended. Ditto for Aviation made of gin, cherry liqueur and lemon juice. Other than crumb fried ravioli, olive and cheese platters, there are enough other munchies, like Karare Paneer or the innovatively named Hawker's Chilli Fritters for veggies and Calamari Fritters for those who like their meats. If you want something more substantial, the English classic Fish and Chips, NZ Lamb Rack are what you should pick if you are a carnivore. For herbivores, the Green Peas Risotto and penne with Tomatoes are excellent main course options.

TAKE A NIGHT CRUISE ON THE HUSSAIN SAGAR LAKE

Situated between Hyderabad and Secunderabad, this large lake is one of the city's most picturesque sights. It was built on one of the tributaries of the Musi river in 1562, during the reign of Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah. Its biggest attraction is the 16 metre Buddha stone statue installed in the middle of the lake, one of the largest freestanding Buddha statues in the world. Visitors can hire a boat to the statue from Lumbini Park, an amusement park located on the banks of the lake. The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation also provides water scooters and speed boats, and organises a dining cruise on the lake.

RECREATE A ROYAL ROMANCE AT THE FALAKNUMA PALACE

The former residence of the Nizam of Hyderabad, this palatial Taj hotel is located in a sprawling 32 acre estate of gardens and fountains. The name Falaknuma means 'mirror of the sky', a reference to its hilly location. Perched at a height of 2,000 feet



above Hyderabad, it offers panoramic views of the city. Although it was originally commissioned by Nawab Vikar Ul-Umra, the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, it also caught the fancy of the seventh Nizam and was taken over by him in 1895.

The hotel has 60 plush rooms, while its regal interiors have chandeliers, stained glass windows, antique furniture, marble staircases, statues and murals. Book-lovers must check out the Palace Library's collection of rare manuscripts and books. Dining highlights include Adaa restaurant for traditional Hyderabadi fare and Celeste for Italian and Mediterranean food. Guests can also sample dishes from the royal kitchen, with the programs such as 'Shikhar ka Khaana' and 'Shahi Dastarkhaan'. Don't forget to take the heritage walk organised by the hotel, which guides you through the palace's history.

DRIVE ALONG NECKLACE ROAD

A drive along this long boulevard, popularly known as Necklace road, is a great way to unwind in an otherwise hectic metropolis. The Necklace Road inherits its name from the way the road curves around Hyderabad's Tank Bund, resembling a beautiful necklace when seen from the sky. This long stretch of road connects NTR Gardens and Lumbini Park in Hyderabad to Sanjeevaiah Park in Secunderabad. Necklace Road is lined with lush gardens offering splendid views of the city of Hyderabad. People's Plaza is one of the many recreational areas on this stretch, busy all throughout the year hosting exhibitions and music shows.

GO FOR A ROMANTIC PICNIC AT DURGAM CHRUVU

The ideal getaway for nature lovers, Durgam Chruvu is a beautiful emerald lake tucked between Jubilee Hills and Madhapur in Hyderabad. It is popularly known as Secret Lake, because of its partially hidden location between the boulders of the Deccan Plateau. A serene and picturesque spot, it has facilities for boating and fishing, but you can simply have a romantic picnic for two on its banks. The surrounding gardens are beautifully landscaped and add to the charm of the lake. There's a 2 km-long walkway around the lake, as well as a rock garden, a floating fountain and artificial waterfall. *Source: HappyTrips*

TAKE CARE OF YOUR CURLY & WAVY HAIR

Curly hair deserves its reputation for needing a lot more care than straight hair, because it is easily affected by changes in humidity, split ends can be more of a problem and, you never far away from a frizz! How you care for your hair depends on the type of curly hair you have, so, if you love your curly hair and you want to know the best way to care for it, here are some tips on how to take care of curly hair.

Skip Daily Shampooing

Curly hair doesn't need to be shampooed everyday. Frequently shampooing your hair can stretch and stress the strands and make the curls dry. However, conditioner is your friend! Even if you don't shampoo every day, make sure you apply conditioner everyday.

Use A Shampoo That Suits Your Hair

You shouldn't cleanse your hairs with a harsh shampoo! Doing this can certainly cause severe damage to your hair. Use a mild shampoo suitable for your hair that will refresh your hair and scalp without stripping away too much of its natural moisture and oils.

Slow Down The Process

There is a routine to be followed when you wash your hair. Constant rubbing, scrubbing, swirling or piling your hair on top of your head while shampooing can be disastrous for curls. Instead divide your hairs into sections and then wash it slowly. This way you can ensure that your hair is washed thoroughly and you haven't caused any damage to it.

Avoid Hot Water

Hot water can actually be the worst decision for your hair! We know that a cold water shampoo and rinse isn't the most luxurious hair washing option but cold water will snap the cuticles shut, which will in turn lock in moisture and make your hair shinier and reduce the



frizz.

Comb Correctly

It's important that you comb your hair to make sure it's tangle free. Invest in the best possible quality comb. When detangling your hair after shampooing, use a very wide-tooth comb and detangle gently, section by section! Always detangle your hair when it's wet as it is protected with a coat of conditioner.

Don't dry curly hair with a towel

Never rub your curly hair too vigorously with a towel to dry it, that's a sure way to get frizzy hair. Blot it dry gently with a towel, or even better, use an old T-shirt in the place of a towel and this will reduce the risk of frizz even more.

Use a wide toothed comb

Next good tip on how to take care of curly

hair is to avoid ever brushing curly hair, because this will separate the curls and create the hair frizz. Use a wide toothed comb instead and, working from the bottom up, gently detangle the hair.

Don't believe the salt spray myth

Some people advise that using a salt spray on curly hair will texture the hair and give the curl better definition. Don't believe a word of it! Salt is bad news for any hair type, because it dries out the hair and anyone who has ever swum in the sea will know this.

Moisturise your hair

Another tip on how to take care of curly hair is to moisturise. Curly hair needs extra moisture, so be sure to use a good conditioner regularly. Cover each and every strand of hair with conditioner and let it sit for at least five or ten minutes before rinsing out.



How to wear dark lipstick

Smooth your surface

Dark lipstick shades can be testy. Even the most premium of brands can sometimes leave you with patchy and dry lips. We've all been there! The best way to insure that you are getting the best color payoff from your lippie is to prime the surface first. Most lipstick brands offer amazing lip scrubs and exfoliates but those can run a pretty penny. So, why not make your own? All you need is some raw sugar, honey and coconut oil. Turn your ingredients to a nice thick paste and rub in circular motions on your lips. Watch as the dead and dry skin on your lips disappears, leaving you with a perfectly smooth surface for any dark lipstick.

Dry those lips

While moist and plumped lips are what every girl hopes to achieve, when it comes to dark lipstick, keep the moisture at bay. This is especially true if you are planning on using a matte lipstick. This may seem counterintuitive, because matte lippies can be so drying, but there is method to our madness. After you scrub your lips, apply a thick lip balm and go about finishing the rest of your makeup. By the time your eyeliner is done, your lips will have absorbed most of the moisture from the balm. Remove the balm and all moisture completely from your lips before applying lipstick. This will help give the lipstick a perfect surface to cling to, which will make it last longer.

Compliment your skin tone

Complimenting your skin tone is another important tip on how to wear dark lipstick like a pro. Choose the best dark lipstick shade, depending on how deep or light your skin tone is. While blue toned lipsticks look great for deeper shades, they can really wash out pale ladies. Lighter skin tones can really benefit from a deep red or cherry shade. A great lipstick option for all skin tones is one that has an orange undertone. If you are a more olive tone, look for dark plum and merlot shaded lipsticks.

FOOD CORNER

DAL NAWABI

Ingredients

1 cup mix dal, onions and tomatoes (both finely chopped), 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste, 1 tsp red chilli powder, tsp ghee, salt to taste, 1/4 tsp turmeric powder, 3-4 drops of lemon juice

Method

(For the spice paste)

2 cloves, 1 cardamom, 1 piece of cinnamon, 2 tsp poppy seeds, 1 tsp turmeric, 1 piece of mace, Fry all the ingredients and keep aside to cool. Once cool, mix in the grinder.

(For the tadka)

2 tsp oil, 1 tsp cumin seeds, 2 whole red chillies

Method

(For dal and tadka)

- Heat ghee in the cooker, add ginger-garlic paste and onions and fry until golden.
- Add tomatoes, turmeric powder, red



chilli powder and salt and fry for ten minutes.

- Add powdered powdered masala, lentils and water as needed. cook till 2-3 whistles. Add lemon juice and keep it covered for 1-2 minutes.
- Heat oil in the pan and simmer cumin and red chili powder.
- Pour this tadka into pulses and serve hot. Wasn't it absolutely fun to cook this dish? We can assure you that every guest at your party will savour every morsel of rice or roti along with the dal nawabi that you

KAJU-PANEER PULAV

Upgrade your regular pulav with some paneer, cashew nuts and whole indian spices. It's easy to make, tastes amazing and is a perfect dish for dinner and even for parties and weekend get-togethers.

Ingredients

3 cups of rice (cooked)
1/2 cup of cashews (fried)
200 gms paneer (cut into 1 inch pieces)
Salt to taste
8-10 whole black pepper
2 cloves
2 bay leaves
1 piece of cinnamon
Ghee (as per requirement)
Oil to fry

Method



- Heat some oil in the pan and fry the paneer till it turns golden.
- Heat some ghee in another pan, add all the whole spices and fry it until it starts to release scent.
- Add rice and fry for another 2-3 minutes.
- Serve hot after mixing fried paneer and cashew nuts into the rice.

TWEAKING GUT BACTERIA MAY CUT OBESITY, DIABETES RISK

WASHINGTON (TIP): The gut microbiome — a “garden” of bacterial, viral and fungal genes — may play a substantial role in development of obesity and diabetes in humans, say scientists.

The findings, published in the journal *Mucosal Immunology*, highlights the potential to prevent obesity and diabetes by manipulating levels and ratios of gut bacteria, and modifying the chemical and biological pathways for metabolism-activating genes.

“This study adds to our understanding of how bacteria may cause obesity, and we found particular types of bacteria in mice that were strongly linked to metabolic syndrome,” said David Hackam, surgeon-in-chief at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center in the US.

“With this new knowledge we can look for ways to control the responsible bacteria or related genes and hopefully prevent obesity in children and adults,” said Hackam.

Metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions including obesity around the waist, high blood sugar and increased blood pressure, is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

While no precise cause for metabolic syndrome is known, previous studies of Toll-like receptor 4 (TLR4), a protein that receives chemical signals to activate inflammation, have suggested that TLR4 may be responsible in part for its development.

How and why TLR4 may be responsible for metabolic syndrome, however, has been unclear, said Hackam.



The researchers fed both groups of mice “standard chow,” or food with 22 percent fat calories, for 21 weeks.

Compared to normal mice, those lacking TLR4 showed a series of symptoms consistent with metabolic syndrome, such as significant weight gain, increased body and liver fat, and insulin resistance.

The researchers then fed both groups of mice a high-fat diet composed of 60 percent fat calories for 21 weeks to find out whether diet would affect the development of metabolic syndrome.

The genetically modified mice gained significantly more in weight and had greater body and liver fat than the normal mice.

To confirm the role of TLR4 expression in the intestinal epithelium, the researchers genetically modified three more groups of mice: one group expressed TLR4 only in the intestinal epithelium, another group lacked TLR4

in all body cells and the third group lacked TLR4 only in white blood cells.

Compared with normal mice, belly and small intestine fat was higher in mice lacking TLR4 only in the intestinal epithelium.

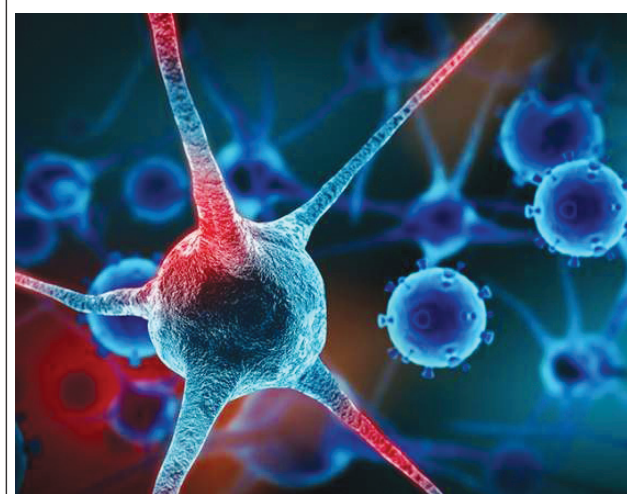
This provides further evidence that deleting TLR4 specifically from the intestinal epithelium is required for developing metabolic syndrome.

To investigate the role the bacterial makeup of the gut had on the mice, researchers administered antibiotics to the normal and TLR4 intestinal epithelium-deficient mice.

Antibiotics significantly reduced the amount of bacteria in the intestinal tract and prevented all symptoms of metabolic syndrome in the mice that lacked TLR4 in their intestinal epitheliums.

This demonstrates that bacterial levels can be manipulated to prevent the development of metabolic syndrome, researchers said.

Source: PTI



NEW MOLECULE THAT CAN FIGHT CANCER IDENTIFIED

LONDON (TIP): Scientists have identified a molecule that can rapidly kill tumour cells and could potentially be used to develop new cancer therapies.

Humans need the chemical element selenium for good health. The selenium-containing enzyme thioredoxin reductase 1 (TrxR1) can be used to support the growth of cells and to protect them from harmful forms of oxygen radicals that cause oxidative stress.

Selenium intake has long been connected with cancer, although the correlation between selenium and cancer growth is extremely complex and not fully understood.

Raised levels of TrxR1 can be seen in several forms of cancer and are linked to worse prognoses in head and neck, lung and breast cancers.

Researchers analysed almost 400,000 molecules in the search for new and more specific TrxR1 inhibitors than those previously available.

They discovered three molecules that met their search criteria. Sure enough, when tested, these same molecules also proved to be active as cancer medicines.

The researchers were able to treat over 60 types of cancer cells under laboratory conditions. Normal cells were, however, much less sensitive to these molecules.

“This effectiveness against cancer may be a result of cancer cells’ seemingly greater sensitivity to oxidative stress when compared to normal cells, which in turn can be utilised in cancer therapy,” said Elias Arner, from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden.

Researchers also found that rapid tumouricidal effects when treating head and neck or breast cancers in mice, without obvious side-effects.

The new molecules have yet to be tested on humans, but it is already known that several different cancer medicines currently in use, including cisplatin and melfalan, inhibit TrxR1, researchers said.

Thus far, whether or not this inhibition of the enzyme is important to the effectiveness of these medicines has remained unknown, but this study suggests that this might well be the case.

Researchers now intend to further develop the new TrxR1 inhibitors to offer a new form of cancer therapy.

“My hope is that we will be able to develop new treatments, effective against multiple forms of cancer but with few side-effects,” said Arner, who led the study published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*.

“This seems to work in mouse models and we are therefore hopeful that this principle for treatment can be developed for humans, even if this will require many years of further research,” he said.

Source: PTI

Eating slowly may help you lose weight

TOKYO (TIP): Trying to shed those extra kilos? Chewing slowly and refraining from eating for two hours before bedtime may help, scientists say.

Changes in eating habits were strongly associated with lower obesity and weight (BMI), and smaller waist circumference, according to researchers from Kyushu University in Japan.

The findings are based on health insurance data for nearly 60,000 people with diabetes in Japan who submitted claims and had regular health check-ups between 2008 and 2013.

The data included information on the dates of consultations and treatments, while the check-ups included measurements of weight (BMI) and waist circumference, and the results of tests for blood chemistry, urine, and liver function.

During the check-ups, participants were quizzed about their lifestyle, including their eating and sleep habits as well as alcohol and tobacco use.

They were specifically asked about their eating speed, which was categorised as fast, normal or slow.

They were asked whether they did any of the following three or more times a week: eat dinner within two hours of going to sleep; snack after dinner; and skip breakfast.

More than a third (36.5 per cent) of participants had one check-up over the six years, while just under a third (29.5 per cent) had two. One in five (20 per cent) had three.

At the start of the study, some 22,070 people routinely wolfed down their food; 33,455 ate at a normal speed; and 4,192 lingered over every mouthful.

The slow-eaters tended to be healthier and to have a healthier lifestyle than either the fast or normal speed eaters.

Around half of the total sample changed their eating speed over the course of the six years.

All the aspects of eating and sleeping habits studied, as well as alcohol consumption and previous obesity—defined as a BMI of 25 kilograms per square metres were significantly



associated with obesity. After taking account of potentially influential factors, the results showed that compared with those who tended to gobble up their food, those who ate at a normal speed were 29 per cent less likely to be obese, rising to 42 per cent for those who ate slowly.

Although absolute reductions in waist circumference—an indicator of a potentially harmful midriff bulge—were small, they were greater among the slow and normal speed eaters.

Snacking after dinner and eating within two hours of going to sleep three or more times a week were also strongly linked to changes in BMI. However, skipping breakfast was not.

Source: PTI

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NOT OUR JOB TO RECRUIT JOURNALISTS FOR CONTENT, SAYS FACEBOOK



SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): In a clear message to news publishers, a top Facebook executive has emphasised that it is not their job to recruit people from media organisations for the content on the social media platform.

At the "Code Media 2018" conference in California organised by the famous tech portal ReCode, Facebook's Head of News Partnerships Campbell Brown said "her job is to make sure there is quality news on Facebook".

But "my job is not to go recruit people from news organisations to put their stuff on Facebook," she was quoted as saying in *The Verge* late on Tuesday.

Facebook hired former NBC and CNN anchor Brown to lead its news partnership team last year.

When asked about why Brazil's largest newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* had stopped publishing content to its six million Facebook followers, she said: "This didn't come as a big surprise to me quite honestly".

"Folha hadn't been publishing regularly on Facebook for a while, she said. And in any case, it wasn't her job to persuade them," the report added.

"Publishers who want to be on Facebook...have a business model that works. If anyone feels this isn't the right platform for them, they should not be on Facebook," she was quoted as saying.

Facebook in October launched a new programme that would allow publishers to sell subscriptions to their news sites on Facebook.

At the event, Brown also announced a deal with Apple to commence the go-ahead of the subscription service programme in the Facebook iOS app.

Facebook recently rolled out an update to its News Feed that will prioritise local news that have a direct impact on the users and they can discover what's happening in their area.

The update comes after the social media giant announced changes to News Feed that showed posts from friends and high-quality news sources.

Users can choose which news sources, including local or national publications that they want to see at the top of their feed with the social media giant's "See First" feature.

According to Alex Hardiman, Head of News Product and Brown, there are no constraints on which publishers are eligible, which means large local publishers will benefit, as well as publishers that focus on niche topics like local sports, arts and human interest stories.

Source: IANS

NEW SNAPCHAT DRAWS IRE OF OVER 6 LAKH USERS

LONDON (TIP): Snapchat's latest redesign, which was released last week, has not gone down well with many users. This is evident from the fact that an online petition calling for removal of the new update has attracted more than 6 lakh signatures.

The "Remove the new Snapchat update" petition, which is hosted on Change.org, was authored by Australian user Nic Rumsey, the *Guardian* reported on Tuesday.

The popular photo-sharing app's latest redesign focused on separating "media content" from that of "friends" among an array of other interface changes.

With the new changes, Snapchat Stories, which are videos and photos shared among users that vanish after one day, also now appear with individual Snaps and direct messages.

"Many users have found that it has not made the app easier to use but has in fact made many features more difficult," the petition reads.

"There is a general level of annoyance among users and many have decided to use a VPN app to go back to the old Snapchat, as that's how annoying this new update has become.

Source: IANS

New age-detecting system to make your smartphone childproof

WASHINGTON (TIP): Your smartphone may soon be able to tell if your toddler is swiping the screen and automatically block apps that are off-limits for kids.

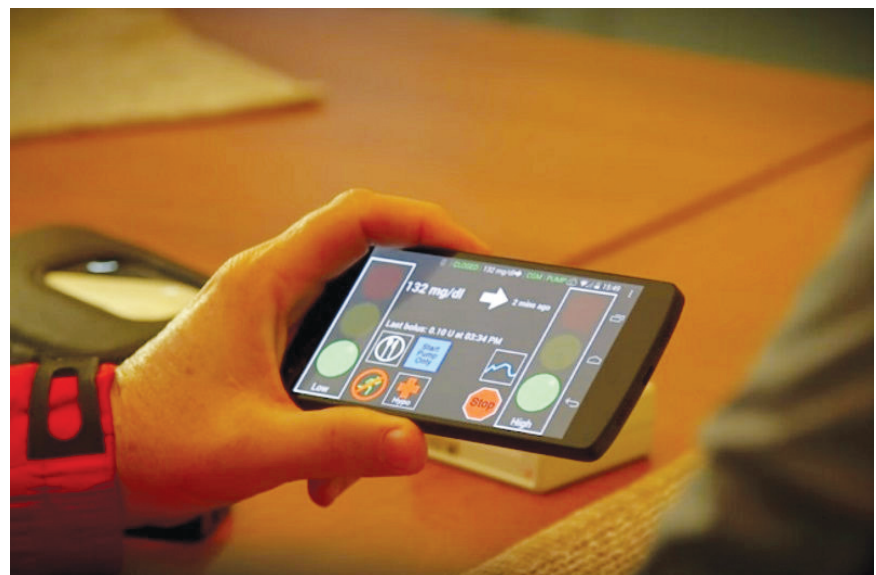
A number of existing smartphone apps aim to control kids' activity on phones, but could be disabled by tech-savvy children.

Researchers from University of South Carolina in the US and Zhejiang University in China found that automated age-range detection would prevent kids from stumbling upon an inappropriate website or get into a work e-mail account.

The researchers observed two big differences between how children and adults swipe phone screens.

Since kids have smaller hands and shorter fingertips than adults, they often touch a smaller area on the screen and make shorter swipes, said Xiaopeng Li, a graduate student at the University of South Carolina. Children also tend to swipe their fingers more sluggishly across the screen, and they are slower to switch from swiping to tapping.

To gather data on these differences, researchers built a simple app, the 'MIT



Technology Review' reported.

They asked a group of kids between the ages of three and 11, and a group of adults between 22 and 60 to use it.

The app had participants unlock an Android phone and then play a numbers-based game on it, so that the researchers could record a variety of taps and swipes.

They also tracked things like the amount of pressure applied by a user's finger and the area it encompassed.

The resulting data was used to train an age-detecting algorithm that they say is 84 per cent accurate with just one swipe on the screen—a figure that goes up to 97 per cent after eight swipes.

Source: PTI

New device could charge your gadgets with body movements

WASHINGTON (TIP): Searching for a power outlet to charge your devices may soon become a thing of the past, as scientists have developed a small metallic tab that can generate electricity from simple body movements.

"No one likes being tethered to a power outlet or lugging around a portable charger. The human body is an abundant source of energy. We thought - why not harness it to produce our own power?" said Qiaoqiang Gan, associate professor at University at Buffalo in the US.

Triboelectric charging occurs when certain materials become electrically charged after coming into contact with a different material. Most everyday static electricity is triboelectric.

Researchers have proposed numerous nanogenerators that utilise the triboelectric effect; however, most are difficult to manufacture (requiring complex lithography) or are not cost effective.

The tab - a triboelectric nanogenerator - that researchers including those from Chinese Academy of Science (CAS) are developing addresses both of those concerns.

It consists of two thin layers of gold, with polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) - a silicon-based polymer used in contact lenses - sandwiched in between.

Key to the device is that one layer of gold is stretched, causing it to crumple upon release and create what looks like a miniature mountain range.

When that force is reapplied, for example from a finger bending, the motion leads to friction between the gold layers and PDMS.

"This causes electrons to flow back and forth between the gold layers. The more friction, the greater the amount of power is produced," said Yun Xu, professor at CAS.

The tab - measuring 1.5 centimeters long and 1 centimeter wide - delivered a maximum voltage of 124 volts, a maximum current of 10 microamps and a maximum power density of 0.22 milliwatts per square centimeter.

That is enough to light 48 red LED lights simultaneously, although it is cannot quickly charge smartphones, according to the study published in the journal *Nano Energy*.

The team plans to use larger pieces of gold, which when stretched and folded together are expected to deliver even more electricity.

Researchers are also working on developing a portable battery to store energy produced by the tab. They envision the system serving as a power source for various wearable and self-powered electronic devices.

Source: PTI

FUTURE CITIES MIGHT BE BUILT WITH VOLCANIC ASH



BOSTON (TIP): Fine volcanic ash can be used as a sustainable additive in concrete, and significantly reduce the energy spent in building infrastructure, a study has found.

Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US found that, by replacing a certain percentage of traditional cement with volcanic ash, they can reduce a concrete structure's "embodied energy"—the total energy that goes into making concrete.

According to their calculations, it takes 16 per cent less energy to construct a pilot neighbourhood with 26 concrete buildings made with 50 per cent volcanic ash, compared with the energy it takes to make the same structures entirely of traditional Portland cement.

When they ground volcanic ash down to increasingly small particle sizes, the researchers found that a mixture of the finer powder and cement produced stronger concrete structures, compared with those made from cement alone.

However, the process of grinding volcanic ash down to such fine particles requires energy, which in turn increases the resulting structure's embodied energy, researchers said.

There is, then, a tradeoff between a concrete structure's strength and its embodied energy, when volcanic ash is used.

Based on experiments with various concrete and volcanic ash mixtures, and calculations of the resulting structure's embodied energy, the researchers have mapped out the relationship between strength and embodied energy.

Engineers can use this relationship as a blueprint of sorts to help them choose, for instance, the per cent of cement they would want to replace with volcanic ash to produce a given structure, researchers said.

Source: PTI

American businesses eyeing India optimistically: Navtej Sarna

WASHINGTON (TIP): There is "optimism and excitement" among American businesses about India and they are eager to tap the opportunities for FDI in the country in sectors like healthcare after the latest budget, India's envoy to the US has said.

Navtej Sarna, who is on a maiden trip to San Francisco and Los Angeles, addressed the Indian-American community in Los Angeles and applauded their dynamism and philanthropy.

He also had a series of meetings with top business executives, think tanks and community leaders.

Top among them included meeting with the Walt Disney chairman, Andy Bird, and vice president Alan Braverman, meeting with Ciscos John Chambers, a round table with the prestigious Bay Area Council and another one organised by US India Strategic and Partnership Forum.

Referring to his visit to Disney and his meeting with its chairman and vice president, Sarna said they are very excited about India and the work they do in the country "from movies to their digital application and content creation. There is tremendous sense of optimism and excitement (among American businesses)," Sarna said.

American businesses, he said, are uniformly positive about India's reforms and excited about the new opportunities like the one in healthcare sector that has come up in the latest budget, India's top diplomat to the United States has said.

"They (American business leaders) are uniformly positive about Prime Minister's reforms. They are very excited about the fact that we have



opened up FDI in so many areas," he said.

The businesses are also very excited with the GST. They are looking at the healthcare with excitement.

"Start ups are particularly a very good area of cooperation. The ambassador said referring to his meetings with the American businesses in the west coast."

Virtually every sector of the economy is open to foreign direct investment, Sarna said in his address to the Bay Area Council.

India, which has attracted US\$60 billion in foreign direct investment is today the most favoured destination for FDI.

India with its US\$ 1.5 trillion plan in infrastructure sector offers great opportunities for American companies, he said.

In his address to the community

leaders, Sarna said India is witnessing transformational changes.

"Today we are the fastest growing economy in the world. We are set to become a US\$ 5 trillion economy in 2025. We will become the third largest consumer market in 2025," he said.

There is a huge burgeoning and rich middle class, whose purchasing power has increased hugely, Sarna said.

While in San Francisco, Sarna also visited Gadar Memorial -- an iconic moment from India's freedom struggle.

Early this week, he also visited Bancroft, Doe and the South/Southeast Asia at Berkeley Library in University of California.

Well known as a Sikh scholar of eminence, Sarna during his visit viewed parts of the South Asians in North America Collection, which is housed in Bancroft, and other Library holdings on Sikhism.

Source: PTI

US SLAMS INDIA FOR HIGH IMPORT TARIFFS ON HARLEY-DAVIDSON



WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Donald Trump on Feb 14 slammed India for a high import tariff on Harley-Davidson motorcycle, calling it "unfair", even as New Delhi slashed customs duty on imported motorcycles from high-end brands to 50%.

Trump, during a discussion with members of the Congress over steel industry, also threatened to increase the tariff on import of Indian motorcycles to the US.

He said the recent decision of the Indian government to reduce the tariff from 75% to 50% was not enough and asked that it should be reciprocal, as the US imposes "zero tax" on the import of motorcycles.

"We have so many countries where we made a product, they make a product, ...We pay a tremendous tax to get into their countries — motorcycles, Harley Davidson — it goes into a certain country. I won't mention the fact that it happens to be India, in this case," Trump said amid laughter from the audience.

In fact, he also indirectly referred to the recent conversation he had with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard.

"And a great gentleman called me from India and he said, we have just reduced the tariff on motorcycles, reduced it down to 50% from 75, and even 100%," Trump said in an apparent reference to his last week's conversation with Prime Minister Modi.

"We have — if you are Harley Davidson, you have 50 to 75% tax, tariff to get your motorcycle, your product in. And yet they sell thousands and thousands of motorcycles, which a lot of people don't know, from India into the United States. You know what our tax is? Nothing," he told the lawmakers and his other Cabinet colleagues.

Trump once again pitched for a "reciprocal tax" on countries that he says abuse their trade relationships with the US. "So, I say, we should have reciprocal taxes for a case like that. I'm not blaming India. I think it's great that they can get away with it. I don't know why people allowed them to get away with it. But there's an example that's very unfair. I think we should have a reciprocal tax," he said. Source: PTI

Japan economy grows for 8th quarter, longest since 1980s

TOKYO (TIP): Japan's economy grew for the eighth straight quarter at the end of 2017, government data showed on Wednesday, the longest period of expansion since the boom days of the late 1980s.

Gross domestic product in the fourth quarter of last year rose 0.1 per cent from the previous three months, the Cabinet Office said. But the growth fell short of market expectations for a rise of 0.2 per cent and represented a slowdown from the 0.6 per cent in the preceding July-September quarter.

At an annualised rate, the world's third largest economy grew 0.5 per cent.

The gains were driven by upturns in consumer spending as well as increased investment by Japanese firms on equipment and facilities.

Exports rose but imports increased at a faster pace.

The continuing economic growth is good news for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has been trying to fire up the economy with his pro-spending policy.

The Japanese economy has enjoyed a period of export-driven growth, helped by a recovering global economy.

It has also got a shot in the arm from domestic demand spurred by infrastructure upgrades ahead of the 2020 Olympic Games.

However, with wage growth and consumption persistently lukewarm, the world's third-largest economy is still battling deflation. Source: AFP

US President Trump threatens China with sanctions on trade imbalance

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Donald Trump has threatened China with sanctions for trade imbalance and policies that are hurting the American industry, a move that could result in increasing chances of a trade war between two of the world's largest economies.

Warning China, Trump said Beijing has decimated the American steel and aluminium industry and he is "considering all options".

"My administration is now reviewing the reports and considering all options. And part of the options would be tariffs coming in," Trump said.

"As they dump steel, they pay tariffs — substantial tariffs — which means the US would actually make a lot of money, and probably steel industry and aluminum industry would come back into our country. Right now, it's decimated," Trump told lawmakers and members of his Cabinet during a White House meeting.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, he said, submitted the result of the investigations to him this month. "It'll



make a decision, and I will make a decision that reflects the best interests of the US, including the need to address overproduction in China and other countries. You have countries that are so overproducing, and what they're doing is they are dumping it on us. And you look at empty factories, steel factories, and plants, and it's a very sad thing to look at," Trump said.

Trump said the US has a trade deficit with China which is now \$504 billion. "We're not going to allow that. We're talking to them right now, very strongly. It's a big percentage of our deficits. And the money that we've lost and the jobs that we've lost to China, it's unthinkable that people allowed

DON'T DISRUPT GLOBAL ECONOMY, WARNS CHINA

BEIJING (TIP): US trade sanctions will hit the world economy, Beijing warned on Feb 14, after President Donald Trump threatened to impose fresh tariffs on imports from China. Trump said he was "considering all options," including tariffs and quotas, after he accused China of decimating the American steel and aluminium industries. Washington has already imposed a range of tariffs on Chinese-made goods, sparking fears of a tit-for-tat trade war between the world's top two economies as China also threatens to take action.

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said "any sign of unilateralism or protectionism will ... worsen global trade issues and will hurt the recovering momentum of the world economy". Source: AFP

contd from Page 1

Florida School...

legally, at Sunrise Tactical Supply in Florida, according to a federal law enforcement official. "No laws were violated in the procurement of this weapon," said Peter J. Forcelli, the special agent in charge for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Miami. In Florida, an AR-15 is easier to buy than a handgun.

The 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz, set off a fire alarm to draw students out of classrooms shortly before the day ended. The suspect was taken into custody without incident about a mile away from the school. He was charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder Thursday, February 15. He appeared before a judge in Broward County via video conference, clad in an orange jumpsuit and shackled around his hands, feet and waist.

After Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2012 in which 20 first graders and six adults were killed, more than 400 people have been shot in over 200 school shootings. Since then, there have been at least 239 school shootings nationwide. In those incidents, 438 people were shot, 138 of whom were killed.

The data used here is from the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit that began tracking school shootings in 2014, about a year after Sandy Hook.

A white nationalist group claims the suspected gunman as a member.

According to The Associated Press, Jordan Jereb, the leader of Republic of Florida, said that his group wants Florida to become its own white ethno-state. He said his group holds "spontaneous random demonstrations" and tries not to participate in the modern world.

Jereb also said Cruz had "trouble with a girl" and he believed the timing of the attack, carried out on Valentine's Day, wasn't a coincidence.

The latest tragedy has made many demand stricter gun control laws. They are convinced that President Trump's argument that a good man with gun can tackle a bad man with gun is not a solution to the problem. It remains to be seen how the movement to have some kind of gun control gets the support of lawmakers, many of whom depend heavily on National Rifle Association (NRA) money. Here are some Republican politicians sorrowing the shootings, who took money from NRA.

Marco Rubio: 'Today is that terrible day you pray never comes' - \$3,303,355 reportedly accepted from NRA

Cory Gardner: 'I am heartbroken for the students... in this tragedy' - \$3,879,064

Rob Portman: 'Heartbreaking news out of Florida. Jane and I send our prayers' - \$3,061,941

Bill Cassidy: 'Praying for the students, teachers and first responders' - \$2,861,047

Thom Tillis: 'Tragic news out of Florida. Please keep the victims... in your thoughts and prayers' - \$4,418,012

Ken Buck: 'Praying today for the students and all those impacted' - \$800,544

With lawmakers in the pocket of NRA, how do we expect a legislation which hurts NRA?

Over to Americans and the lawmakers.

Congress Fails to Pass...

Immigration has proved intractable for years, vexing lawmakers and presidents of both parties. Breaking the stalemate in an election year seemed even more unlikely.

In a sharp rebuke, the Republican-led Senate blocked an immigration plan backed by President Trump, with the bill mustering just 39 votes. It highlighted the divisions even within GOP ranks, with some wary that granting legal status to undocumented immigrants would amount to amnesty.

The House offered no answers, with conservatives threatening Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) unless he pushes a bill that provides only temporary work permits for dreamers, while also imposing border-security measures and restrictions on legal immigration that go beyond what Trump has proposed.

"I don't think the president helped very much, but the bottom line is the demagogues won again on the left and the right," said Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.).

How the Trump administration and Congress will resolve the fate of dreamers - undocumented immigrants who were brought into the country as children - remained unclear Thursday, but several senators said they hoped a solution could be included in a sweeping spending plan that must be passed by March 23.

Proposals have been floated by senators in both parties to temporarily extend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program - which is set to end on March 5 - and provide some funding to begin border-security construction projects. Courts in California and New York have

issued temporary injunctions requiring the administration to extend DACA.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) blamed Trump, who had tweeted moments before the votes that the bipartisan plan was a "total catastrophe" that faced the threat of a veto.

"If he would stop torpedoing bipartisan efforts, a good bill would pass," Schumer said.

McConnell has told others that any bill he could pass in the Senate would be unlikely to earn Trump's support.

Senators rejected a watered-down bipartisan plan by Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.) to grant legal status to dreamers and provide billions of dollars to boost border security - but not immediately as Trump requested. The plan failed 52 to 47, short of the 60 votes needed.

Senators also rejected a bill by Sen. Patrick J. Toomey (R-Pa.) to punish "sanctuary" municipalities that refuse to help enforce immigration laws. That bill failed 54 to 45.

Much of the Senate's attention was on the third option, a bipartisan plan to legalize the same number of undocumented immigrants and appropriate \$25 billion for southern-border-security construction projects over the next decade - not immediately as Trump wants. That bill also would curb family-based immigration programs but not to the extent Trump is seeking, and it said nothing about the diversity visa lottery program.

The bipartisan proposal laid bare how difficult it can be for members of both parties to try striking a deal. United We Dream - a dreamer advocacy group that works closely with Democrats - and the White House had aggressively lobbied against the measure.

The frustration of bipartisan negotiators was evident. Before the vote, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who had helped broker the deal, was heard in the well of the chamber chastising Laura Dove, the top Republican parliamentary expert, over the names of senators listed as being involved in the legislation.

The Democratic leader had not been part of writing the bill, but his name was included in official notices because of the complex rules regarding how amendments are considered.

As the two clashed, Collins brandished her cellphone to show Dove the messages proving that copies of the legislation did not include Schumer's name.

"You're supposed to be a fair broker," Collins said as she walked away from Dove. "It was wrong. It was really wrong."

The bipartisan plan failed 54 to 45.

Finally, senators rejected the Trump plan, which would have granted legal status to 1.8 million young immigrants, spent at least \$25 billion to bolster security along the U.S.-Mexico border, revamped family-based legal migration programs and ended a diversity lottery system used by immigrants from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

The vote was 39 to 60, well short of the 60 yes votes needed to move ahead. Three moderate Democrats voted for the proposal, but 14 GOP senators voted against it, including Sen. Ted Cruz (Tex.), who had blasted the proposal as being "to the left from President Obama's position."

Ahead of the votes, the White House mobilized a full-fledged effort to scuttle the bipartisan immigration plan that was emerging as the best hope for a legislative deal.

On Capitol Hill, attention is likely to shift to the House, which could take up the issue after next week's Presidents' Day recess.

A bill sponsored by Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) and Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Tex.) has the backing of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus and other conservatives who want to stake out a position further to the right of the White House proposal to guard against future concessions.

The bill includes new resources for immigration enforcement away from the border; a crackdown on "sanctuary cities" - jurisdictions that do not cooperate with federal immigration enforcement authorities; and a requirement that employers use "E-Verify," a federal database, to check whether their employees are authorized to work in the United States.

"We have the bill that's consistent with what the American people elected us to do," said Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), a co-founder of the Freedom Caucus. But it is not at all clear that the bill, which has no Democratic support, can win enough Republican votes to pass the House. **(Source: Reports)**

India's Jeweler to...

specialized financial crime investigation agency, reportedly raided at least 10 properties owned by Nirav Modi. In the picture above, Nirav Modi is seen standing next to Rajnish Kumar, chairman of India's largest state-owned lender, State Bank of India (SBI), which also gave a loan to the diamond



merchant based on PNB's guarantee

This is the second case of a massive alleged fraud to explode during the tenure of the Modi government. In February 2016, another billionaire Vijay Mallya, who was also a member of parliament, was accused of laundering money away from Indian state-owned banks, leaving them with unpaid dues of about Rs9,000 crore.

Mallya managed to escape to the UK before Indian law enforcement agencies could nab him. If Nirav Modi has indeed fled India as news reports suggest, there will be a lot for the Modi government to explain, again.

If this person had fled India before the FIR on Jan 31, then he is here, photographed at Davos with PM, a week before the FIR, after having escaped from India? Modi govt must clarify. #NiravModi #PublicMoneyLoot pic.twitter.com/gQQnKQnJDo

Sitaram Yechury (@SitaramYechury) February 15, 2018

Meanwhile, Hari Prasad SV, the man who Congress says informed the Prime Minister's Office about the alleged fraud perpetrated by billionaire jewelry designer Nirav Modi in July 2016, said, Feb 15, that he approached the Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigation and several other bodies against the accused but to no avail, reported ANI.

"Wrote to PMO in 2016 requesting them to undertake detailed investigation in the matter after we did not get any response from ED, CBI, SEBI, and Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Later, I got a mail from RoC that my case is closed," ANI quoted the Bengaluru jeweler as saying.

He claimed that he had opened a franchise store with Mehul Choksi, the MD of Gitanjali Group, with an investment of Rs 10 crore.

"As per the agreement, he was supposed to give us gold worth Rs 10 crore, but he gave us gold worth Rs 5 crore only. We finally filed two FIRs against him," Prasad said.

The Congress, on Feb 15, criticized the PM for failing to take timely action against Nirav Modi.

"Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, was made aware of this entire fraud by one Shri Hari Prasad by way of a written complaint filed on 26th July 2016 and acknowledged by PMO," said party spokesperson Randeep Surjewala, adding that "no action was taken" and the "bank lost the money and the accused escaped."

Nirav Modi, his wife, brother, and business partner Mehul Choksi were booked by the CBI on January 31, for allegedly cheating state-run Punjab National Bank of Rs 280 crore.

The bank later sent two more complaints to the CBI, saying the scam was worth more than Rs 11,400 crore.

Modi grew up in Antwerp, Belgium, in a diamond-dealing family. In 1990, at the age of 19, he moved to Mumbai.

Nine years later, Modi started his own company, Firestar Diamond Ltd., selling loose stones. He employed fewer than a dozen people at the time. By last year, the number was more than 2,000.

He said he came to realize the margins were better in retail.

Firestar Group, the parent company Modi controls as a majority shareholder, saw its revenue grow over three years from 103 billion rupees (about \$1.6 billion at current rates) to some 147 billion rupees (\$2.3 billion) by the 2016-17 fiscal year, according to figures previously provided by the company.

In 2010, Modi launched an eponymous jewelry business branded NIRAV MODI, in capitals, with the tagline "Haut Diamantaire". New boutiques in Las Vegas and Hawaii have since been added to a stable that stretches from New York to London to Beijing.

He became a man whose diamond necklaces were sold, with his name attached, by Sotheby's. "Pure feminine elegance," says a Hong Kong auction catalogue note of one 85.33 carat diamond necklace.

The auction house posted an online slideshow of jewelry-on-stars at the 2017 Oscars and highlighted supermodel Karlie Kloss having "a major Nirav Modi moment with her diamond 'Mughal' choker."

But the celebrity links could be starting to break. A spokesperson for Chopra, the film star, said in a statement: "She is currently seeking legal opinion with respect to terminating her contract with the brand in light of allegations of financial fraud against Nirav Modi."

(With inputs from agency reports)



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: February 19 - February 25, 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 love to make money and you make a lot of it quite effortlessly, as the new moon in your own sign initiates a trend of gains. Money continues to flow into your coffers through rents, leases, loans and promissory notes. A good bank balance makes you feel secure. You may have to spend a lot of time on negotiations and deals; and buying / selling of assets and making acquisitions.

Taurus:

It is definitely money that is in focus this period. A strong financial foundation is what you hanker after, as it gives you a feeling of security. You do this through prudent and long-term investment in land, property, assets and stock holdings. This will give you the necessary push to achieve success and, in the process, develop your identity too. Everything falls smoothly into place like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, almost pre-ordained and without any great effort on your part.

Gemini:

You have been working very hard past period and could have neglected your emotional relationships in the bargain. Romantic manners now come into sharp focus and you bond with your partner in a powerful way. You feel good about it and this, fortunately, infuses a feel-good factor which also colors your ties with your colleagues, co-workers, siblings and even extended family. The mood is contagious, and everyone is happy.

Cancer:

Carpe Diem! (Seize the day) This is the motto that truly defines this exciting time in your life. Drink to life and savor each mouthful to the fullest, says Ganesha. You can have it all, if you want. Love, romantic relations, fun and games, partying, socializing, get-togethers - yes, all these appeal to you and fill your plate till it is overflowing. Relationships, both personal and professional, give you great pleasure and benefit you in manifold ways.

Leo:

The theme of relationships is taken further this period and you focus strongly on communicating with your loved one. You do not generally enjoy going too deep into any issue but at this stage in your life, you do just that. They do say God is in the details, don't they? This is also the time to make yourself more visible, perhaps even the right time to update that resume, says Ganesha. There could be travel, new collaborations and much professional success

Virgo:

Developing and maintaining relationships is the definite trend for this period, and you may have already seen strong indications of this since last period. You will continue to strengthen your professional relationships through good communication and a thoughtful attitude. Thanks to the changed perspective and your efforts, you will also see immediate rewards. It is a happy period by any account.

Libra:

Two themes run parallel this period. On one hand, you add to your resources through loans, funds, rent, leases, legacies and inheritances. On the other hand, as you seek an intense connection with your partner or beloved, the possibility of a strengthened emotional bond charges you with adrenaline. You are filled with passion. There are many colors on your palette to dip into.

Scorpio:

Fun, frolic, friendships, finances - these 4 Fs have demanded your fair share of attention in the past period and you have gone all out to do them justice. Now, you want to take things easy and rest a bit. There is the danger of going to the other extreme - from intense activity to absolute indolence. Other-worldly matters bubble up, urging you to search within and get the answers to esoteric questions.

Sagittarius:

You can't be kept down for too long and you think your goals and targets afresh for the period to come. Life beckons and you push ahead with your characteristic forthrightness. Hard work, creativity, innovation and optimism color your actions as you make brilliant progress. Communications, contacts, correspondence - these 3 Cs are the main trend for this period, not just in your work but even in all your personal and intimate relationships.

Capricorn:

You realize the need to organize your time and work routine as you push ahead with the goals set last period. You introduce systems, streamline procedures and increase your efficiency at the workplace. This endears you to your colleagues and subordinates. Yes, its action time and you may find yourself tackling many projects at one go and multitasking furiously and successfully. There will be travel, expansion and growth.

Aquarius:

The attention you have given to relationships over the past period has opened your eyes to the great value they have in your life. It is no longer enough for you to think only about yourself, your personal goals and ambitions. You have to include others in your dreams. There are high expectations from spouse / partner / older relatives / children / colleagues and workmates, and this could stretch your time and resources.

Pisces:

The moon in your sign makes you want to shine in the world. You aim to be the best you can in your work and in your relationships and also want to be the center of attraction. A strong self - image and a successful persona is what you want to project, especially to those who look up to you. Money makes both personal relationships and family interactions sweeter and you enjoy domestic bliss. You are filled with contentment as you go about your work and domestic affairs.



Special Report by
Prabhjot Singh in
PyeongChang

PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games



PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games: Punjabi 'Tadka' is missing

In to the second week of competitions in biting windy cold, the 23rd Winter Olympic Games in the mountainous PyeongChang in South Korea are still without any sign of Punjabi flavor. Known for their quick adaptability and tremendous corporal endurance, the global Punjabi community, has not taken fancy to winter sports.

Canada is a strong contender for gold medals in Ice Hockey, both in men's and women's sections. But neither their men nor their women team has any player of Punjabi origin. Look at Canada's men's field hockey team. It is never complete without a Punjabi boy in it. Why not in Ice Hockey?

Interestingly, no other sporting event appears complete without Punjabi "tadka". Though nearly 3000 athletes from 95 nations are here, there is hardly any one of Punjabi origin. There are four South Asians, including India's Shiva Keshavan, competing here. Besides Shiva, born to Indian father and Italian mother, there is Jagdish Singh in cross country skiing, representing India. And then there are two Pakistanis - Mohammed Karim and Syed.

If one looks at track record of Punjabi immigrants, they have done very well, making a mark for themselves, in the new countries of their residence. From trade, business, industry, agriculture, education, technology and politics, besides others, they have scripted many success stories.

Punjabis are credited with taking field hockey across all five continents but coming to Ice Hockey, they appear to be very late starters.

Last month, when Canada's most successful and celebrated woman hockey player, Hayley Wickenheiser, came to India build a women's hockey team, she went to Let and Ladakh and not Punjab. She was there for almost a fortnight and hopes to take Indian women's Ice Hockey team to Canada to participate in a Hockey Festival.

With a mandate to make the Wickenheiser Women World Hockey Festival (Wickfest) tournament accessible to teams even in the most remote parts of the world, Hayley



Wickenheiser considers the progress of humanity as a social responsibility and she is using hockey as the medium through which to unite the world and bring people together through sport. With the facilitation of Team India's participation in WickFest, she and her team are tapping in to a nation which boasts a population of 1.324 billion and uniting it with a community that is among the largest visible minority presences here in Canada. This initiative also allows Canada to lead by example as a country that sets the global bar for equality and empowerment of women.

But when we come to men, Punjabi immigrants, who have made a mark in winter

sports in general and Ice Hockey in particular, are countable on finger tips.

Hockey Night in Canada: Punjabi, for example, has made Harnarayan Singh a popular name not only in Canada but worldwide.

Singh, whose great-grandfather one was one the first Sikhs to immigrate to Canada, says he'd always dreamed of becoming a hockey announcer.

"You know, I was obsessed with the sport, and you know, growing up in a small town in southern Alberta where there weren't any other visible minorities, hockey was the icebreaker for me amongst my classmates," he

recalls. Hockey Night in Canada: Punjabi has helped spread the sport in the country's large Punjabi community. After English and French, it's the next most common language in Canada.

"People find that they havemore camaraderie amongst their colleagues at work because they're able to participate in those conversations about last night's game," he told an interviewer, saying "We also have amongst the immigrant families, and the grandkids born here have a natural inclination to liking hockey. And because of the broadcasts now in Punjabi, they're able to understand the game and three generations are watching hockey together, it's a tradition now in their family household."

Harnarayan Singh attended broadcasting school in Canada to become a hockey announcer.

"It's amazing, I mean it proves that it's not just fun and entertaining, it's bridging the gap between immigrants and their new country, and it's a great way to show how multiculturalism can work," he says.

Like Singh, many in sports hope to see Punjabi players in the NHL as they have done in NBL. Minorities of any kind are a rarity in typical North American sports, but there is already an uptick of young Punjabi kids signing up for ice hockey, basketball and baseball. There is Jhujhar Khaira, a 24-year-old 6'4" Punjabi boy playing for Edmonton Oilers as a Left winger. Another youngster Akash Bains is also knocking at doors of NHL after playing for Everett Silver Tips Hockey Club. S. Khaira is another Punjabi youngster on the horizon. Incidentally they all come from British Columbia.

Will 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing see Punjabi "tadka"?



Olympics throw up many new champions

Olympics, the biggest sporting event, sieve out the best. Many new champions emerge surpassing the best of their opponents. At times they rewrite new records. But are there many events in Winter Olympic Games where new records could be rewritten.

There are some events, especially in speed skating, where speed and time are measurable. And in figure skating points awarded are counted towards deciding winners. But unlike summer Games, Olympic or World Records equaled or surpassed during Winter Olympic Games are far and few.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Winter Olympic Games are still more natural and human controlled than the technology driven summer Olympic Games. While summer Olympics besides moving indoors into air-conditioned halls, with synthetic surfaces and high tech measuring gadgets have become highly competitive with minutest details taken to choose the best, it is still, in many cases in Winter Olympic Games, judging is left to human eye and adjudication. Competitions, especially snow events are held in the open natural environs though most of the events on ice have already moved indoors.

The current Winter Olympic Games are the first that are governed or covered by 5G tech environs but still the playing or competition



India has been participating for the last six editions, thanks to its sole Luge player, Shiva Keshavan.

conditions are all natural where human intervention is minimal.

The Games may be the coldest ever with temperatures running as low as minus 12 degrees Celsius with strong chilly winds, and yet the Koreans have demonstrated their tremendous technological advancement, both in the conduct of the opening ceremony and the competitions thereafter.

Each Olympic throws up new heroes and heroines.

Here in PyeongChang, of six new nations making debut, four are from tropical world. And the Nigerians are making the cut with the first ever women's Bobsleigh team for a tropical country.

Participation of tropical countries in Winter Olympic Games has been rising. India, for example, has been participating for last six editions, thanks to its sole Luge player, Shiva Keshavan.

At Sochi in the last edition of Winter

Olympic Games, Jennifer Jones, Kaitlyn Lawes, Jill Officer, and Dawn McEwen comprised a female Team Canada that made curling history, methodically marching to gold with nary a blemish on their resume: 11-0 and the second Canadian female team to ever win gold in the event.

Meet Noriaki Kasai (Japan), who was placed eighth in men's normal hill ski jumping, hopes to win a medal here in his eighth Olympic Games. He does not want to give up and hopes to be there when the Olympic Games return to Japan in 2026, his 10th. For India's Shiva Keshavan, PyeongChang has been his sixth in a row.

Another unique record was set at Sochi. A change in name did not mean a change in result for Russia's Viktor Ahn, formerly Ahn Hyun-soo of South Korea. Racing for his new national flag, Ahn won three golds and a bronze in short track. That gave him eight career medals in the sport, matching the record held by Apolo Ohno (USA). It did, however, also give him six career golds, the most ever for a short track skater.

At Sochi, with a bronze in the men's luge singles, Armin "Il Cannibale" Zoeggeler (Italy) had won a medal in every men's singles luge even since Lillehammer 1994. The six medals have been the longest individual winning streak at the Olympics.

Politics, Sports go hand in hand

Politics is an integral part of human life. Whenever two or more people get together and get involved in any animated discussion on any subject politics starts. And Olympics, the biggest sporting extravaganza, that brings people from all nationalities, ethnicities, economic, religious and linguistic backgrounds, politics is but natural to happen.

Though Olympics are supposed to be an opportunity to "contribute to building a peaceful and better world" through bringing countries together in the name of friendly sports, yet they have their own limitations or politics. Be it keeping out one nation or the other or ban one or more group of athletes on one pretext or the other. The sacred Olympic mission, however, has frequently been undermined by real-world politics, and this year is one of the best examples of that.

Politics in sports or sports politics may be two entirely different domains but politics remains the common denominator. There may be endless examples of staunch political rivals rubbing shoulders together in controlling sports. And, Olympics are no different.

From North Korea to ban on Russia for violating Doping controls, politics in the ongoing PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games, have spread to other areas, including conduct and uttering of other World leaders or their actions.

Much of this year's tension comes with the fact that North Korea is competing in the games in the first time in 8 years. The move came after tensions escalated between North Korea and the rest of the world in the wake of a series of North Korean missile tests along with the news their nuclear program has progressed at an alarming rate.

Long before the opening ceremony of the Games on February 9, politics were on the center stage.

A day before the opening ceremony, the US Vice President Mike Pence, who headed the US delegation to the games, snubbed North Korean delegate Kim Yong Nam by not shaking hands with Yong at a dinner with political leaders, when he shook everyone else's hand.

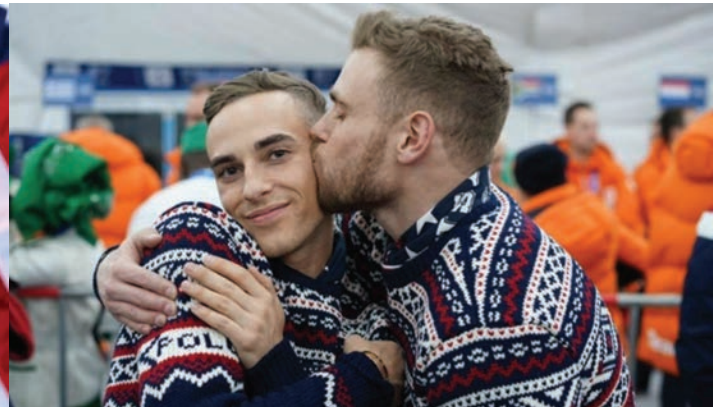
The snub came a day before Pence announced new sanctions against North Korea alongside Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

By remaining seated during the unified Korean team's parade, he became a direct target of criticism as it was taken more of a disrespect to the host nation than the controversy back home over NFL players not paying respect to national anthem. There was wide criticism in some circles when players knelt or remained seated during the national anthem at NFL Games. The comments made by President Donald Trump on the issue hawked headlines. Even Mike Pence himself had done the same thing during a game between Indianapolis Colts and the San Francisco 49ers.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his wife shook



Vice President Mike Pence got involved in a political tug of war with two out gay American athletes, skater Adam Rippon and skier Gus Kenworthy.



hands with Kim Yong Nam at the opening ceremony. This is the first time since the Korean war that South Korea has welcomed a North Korean delegation. The handshake was a significant diplomatic signal.

What made the political analysts sit up and take cognizance when the US President refused to stand up or even clap when a unified Korean contingent during the parade at the opening ceremony. It was taken as an insult both to the hosts South Korea and its athletes.

South and North Korea have fielded a unified women's hockey team for the Games. For the sake of records, South Korea was ranked last in the sport coming into the Games. As such the performance of the team would be far from embarrassing.

Despite diplomatic efforts by the President of South Korea, many of the Koreans are not very happy as they have been creating online petitions and protesting about North Korea's inclusion.

They are also unhappy that whenever they switch on TV sets, they find too much of the North Korean delegation.

The US Vice President Mike Pence is also involved in a political tug of war with two out gay American athletes, skater Adam Rippon and skier Gus Kenworthy.

In an interview in January, ice-skater Adam Rippon was quite in media saying that he was not interested in meeting Mike Pence ahead of his performance because he "funded gay conversion therapy"

He went further, assailing Pence and Trump for their policies and statements, especially when President Trump labelled some nations as "shit holes".

Skier Gus Kenworthy spoke out against Pence's role on Ellen in February, calling it "a bad fit."

In response, Pence tweeted saying that "don't let fake news

distract you."

Kenworthy, however, took the controversy forward by posting a picture of him and Rippon, captioned " I feel incredibly honored to be here in Korea competing for the US and I'm so proud to be representing the LGBTQ community alongside this amazing guy! Eat your heart out, Pence."

The reports of a meeting between the Vice President and Rippon for putting the debate to an end were denied.

Mike Pence is known for supporting anti-LGBT legislation.

Another development that smacks of politics and tormenting the Olympic movement has been the ban on Russia. Only select Russian athletes from the Olympic powerhouse have been allowed to compete in the games here as Ad Hoc Commission of the Court of Arbitration for Sports dismissed appeals from over 50 athletes and coaches against the participation ban imposed on them by the International Olympic Committee. The charge against the Russian athletes has been that there was State sponsored violation of the Doping control at the last edition of the Games held in Sochi. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) found evidence of systemic tampering with urine samples at the Sochi games.

Russian athletes allowed to participate in PyeongChang took part in the opening ceremony parade without the Russian flag. Instead, they have been allowed Olympic Athlete Russia banner.

In the last edition of summer Olympic Games at Rio, there were "Refugee" athletes. But none from that group is here. Perhaps "Refugee" athletes do not play Winter sports.

(The author, Executive Editor, PTC News, is currently in PyeongChang for the 2018 Olympic Games)

(Articles / Courtesy PTC News)



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