

Facebook data breach: CEO Zuckerberg says it was a 'mistake', 'I'm sorry'

Vows tougher security steps to restrict developers' access to such information



Breaking his silence on the accusations of a serious data breach, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said "sorry" for the "mistake"

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): Facebook Inc chief executive Mark Zuckerberg apologized on Wednesday, March 21, for mistakes his company made in how it handled data belonging to 50 million of its users and promised tougher steps to restrict developers' access to such information.

The world's largest social media network is facing growing government scrutiny in Europe and the US about a whistleblower's allegations that London-based political consultancy Cambridge Analytica improperly accessed user information to build profiles on American voters that were later used to help elect US President Donald Trump in 2016. "This was a major breach of trust. I'm really sorry this happened." *contd on page 20*

Sadhguru calls for concerted action by all to save world's water bodies

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): Renowned spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev has welcomed the United Nations' initiative to launch a new decade to focus action on management of water resources, saying such effort is critical towards helping in the survival of future generations and calling for concerted action by all to save the world's water bodies.

Sadhguru, speaking at a special event on Water, Sanitation and Women's Empowerment during the current session of Commission on the Status of Women here, on March 21, said it is "appropriate" that at this moment the UN has taken the step to launch the 10 year action plan. "It is most *contd on page 20*



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev speaks at a Special Event on Water, Sanitation and Women's Empowerment during the current session of Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations, March 21. Photo / Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

Trump replaces national security adviser McMaster with John Bolton

WASHINGTON (TIP): Readers of The Indian Panorama will recall the news we published last week that President Trump had made up his mind to give marching orders to his national security adviser H.R. McMaster. And we have been proved right, as Trump ousted McMaster who is to be succeeded by John Bolton, a former ambassador. The president announced the news in a tweet on Thursday, March 22, saying that Bolton would take the job starting April 9, making him Trump's third national security adviser in the first 14 months of his presidency. In dismissing McMaster from the job, Trump praised the Army general for his "outstanding work" and said he would "always remain his friend." Bolton, 69, served in the George W. Bush administration in a key arms-control job. Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell said he was strongly *contd on page 20*

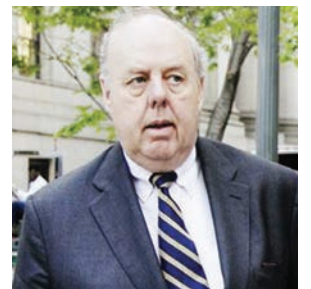


H.R. McMaster (left) and John Bolton (right)

John Dowd resigns as Trump's personal lawyer in Mueller probe

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump's personal lawyer, the lead outside attorney providing advice to the president on the Russia investigation led by special counsel Robert Mueller, said Thursday, March 22, that he has resigned.

In a brief statement to NBC News, attorney John Dowd confirmed his move and said, "I love the president and wish him very well." News of Dowd's resignation was first reported by The New York Times. *File photo*



John Dowd was for some time believed to be uncomfortable with Trump's impulsive behavior, and planning to quit

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US, CHINA EMBROILED IN A TRADE WAR

Trump slaps tariffs on Chinese imports; Beijing hits back

China retaliated with reciprocal tariffs on \$3 billion of imports from the U.S. immediately as US President Donald Trump slapped sanctions for the "theft" of intellectual property.



President Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping embroiled in a trade war

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Donald Trump on Thursday, March 22, imposed tariffs on Chinese imports to punish the country for its "unfair" seizure of American intellectual property, a move that could escalate the already tense trade relations between the world's two biggest economies. *contd on page 20*

Police: Austin bomber left 25-minute confession video on phone

AUSTIN, TEXAS (TIP): A CNN report says that as the Austin bomber sensed that authorities were closing in on him on Tuesday, March 20, night, he took out his cell phone and recorded a 25-minute video confessing to building the explosive devices -- but didn't explain why he targeted his victims, interim Austin police Chief Brian Manley said.

"It is the outcry of a very challenged young man talking about challenges in his life that led him to this point," the interim chief said. "I know everybody is interested in a motive and understanding why. And we're never going to be able to put a (rationale) behind these acts," Manley told reporters Wednesday, March 21 night.

The video made by Mark Anthony Conditt, whose string of package bombs killed two people and wounded five in Texas, was found on his cell phone when police recovered his body Wednesday morning. The cell phone was in Conditt's possession at the time of his death, police said.

Manley says that Conditt did not make any terror- or hate-related references in the confession.

Hours after he made the video, police found Conditt leaving a hotel. They followed him until they made a move to stop him from getting on an interstate and Conditt ended up in a ditch. Authorities say Conditt, 23, killed himself with his last explosive device.

Federal agents went to the bomber's home Wednesday while police interviewed his roommates, attempting to determine whether any bombs remained and if Conditt acted alone.



The Austin bomber 23-year-old Mark Anthony Conditt

Indian American Democrat Sameena Mustafa loses Illinois 5th District Primary

CHICAGO (TIP): Sameena Mustafa, an Indian American democrat who challenged incumbent Mike Quigley in the 5th Congressional District of Illinois, was defeated in the Democratic primary election held on Tuesday, March 20.

Mustafa finished second in the primary getting 23.87 percent votes against Quigley's 62.3 percent, thus eliminating her chances to become the first Indian American Muslim representative in the Congress.

Besides Mustafa, two other Democrats - Benjamin Thomas Wolf (9.66 percent) and Steve Schwartzberg (4.05 percent) - challenged Quigley, who's held that office for nearly a decade.

Mustafa is a real estate broker working with nonprofits and small businesses. She was also active in the city's comedy scene. In 2015 she cofounded Simmer Brown, a South Asian comedy collective.

She is graduate of Northwestern University.

Indian Origin Physiotherapist Jailed for Molesting Teen Girl in Singapore



Luke Degarajoo had touched the teenage girl inappropriately during a physiotherapy session at his clinic about a year ago. He was sentenced to 11 months' jail on March 21

SINGAPORE (TIP): An Indian-origin physiotherapist was sentenced to 11 months' jail and three strokes of the cane for molesting a 18-year-old patient during treatment.

Luke Manimaran Degarajoo, 43, had touched the teenage girl inappropriately during a physiotherapy session at his clinic about a year ago. He was sentenced on March 21.

The girl had visited Degarajoo at the clinic on March 25 last year seeking treatment for back and hip pain, according to a news report.

Degarajoo then directed her to a massage bed in a therapy room. During the massage, he asked the teenager to remove her top and loosen her shorts.

The victim complied as she thought it was part of the treatment. While massaging her, Degarajoo molested her twice after rolling down her underwear and shorts, the report said. "The victim felt uncomfortable by the contact but did not shout or ask for help as she was unsure if it was part of the treatment or not," Deputy Public Prosecutor Gail Wong said.

The message ended when the victim heard Degarajoo speaking to her friend who had glanced into the room and was surprised to find her nude.

After the session ended, he gave her a report detailing his assessment of her condition. The girl did not complain initially as she thought it was part of the treatment. But she finally told her friend about her ordeal when they left the clinic at around 7.40 pm (local time) before lodging a police report about four hours later. Degarajoo is out on SGD 10,000 bail after the court granted his request to defer his sentence as he had to settle some personal matters.

He will surrender himself at the State Courts on April 20 to begin serving his sentence, according to The Straits Times report.



Mustafa finished second to incumbent Mike Quigley

Indian Origin Chief of Scotland Yard Launches New Anti-Terror Campaign

LONDON (TIP): Scotland Yard's newly appointed Indian-origin counter-terrorism chief, Neil Basu, has launched a new campaign to urge the public to help in the fight against terrorism.

The Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner of Specialist Operations revealed that last year more than a fifth of reports from the public produced intelligence which is helpful to police.

"Since the beginning of 2017, we have foiled 10 Islamist and four right-wing terror plots, and there is no doubt in my mind that would have been impossible to do without relevant information from the public," Basu said at the launch of Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) campaign in London, March 20.

"We have been saying for some time now that communities defeat terrorism, and these figures demonstrate just how important members of the public are in the fight to keep our country safe," he noted.

According to the police data, of the nearly 31,000 public reports to the Met Police's Counter Terrorism (CT) Policing unit during 2017, more than 6,600 (21.2 per cent) resulted in useful intelligence information which is used by UK officers



Neil Basu, on March 20, launched the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) campaign in London

to inform live investigations or help build an intelligence picture of an individual or group.

Research carried out by CT Policing suggests that while more than 80 per cent of people are motivated to report suspicious activity or behavior, many are unclear exactly what they should be looking for.

The ACT campaign, accompanied by a 60-second film based on real life foiled plots, aims to educate the public about terrorist attack planning and reinforce

the message that any piece of information, no matter how small, could make the difference.

"Like other criminals, terrorists need to plan and that creates opportunities for police and the security services to discover and stop these attacks before they happen. But we need your help to exploit these opportunities, so if you see or hear something unusual or suspicious trust your instincts and ACT by reporting it in confidence by phone or online," Basu said.

He detailed some forms of suspicious activity, which could involve someone buying or storing chemicals, fertilizers or gas cylinders for no obvious reasons, or receiving deliveries for unusual items, or someone embracing extremist ideology, or searching for such material online.

UK Security Minister Ben Wallace added: "The police's fantastic ACT campaign is rightly highlighting the vital part that communities are playing in defending this country against terrorism.

"The public should remain alert, but not alarmed, and I urge anyone who is worried about suspicious behavior and activity to follow this advice and report their concerns to the police."

Indian origin Canadians Firoz Patel and Ferhan Patel Accused of Operating an Unlicensed Money Service Business and Money Laundering

Payza.com allegedly processed more than \$250 Million of proceeds from Ponzischemes, child pornography rings, and other criminal enterprises

WASHINGTON (TIP): Firoz Patel and Ferhan Patel, the founders and operators of Payza.com, AlertPay.com and Egopay.com, have been indicted by a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia on charges alleging they operated an Internet-based unlicensed money service business that processed more than \$250 million in transactions.

The announcement was made today, March 20, by U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu and Patrick J. Lechleitner, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations Washington, D.C.

The indictment was returned earlier this month and unsealed today, March 20, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Firoz Patel, 43, and Ferhan Patel, 37, who live in the area of Montreal, Québec, are charged with one count of conspiracy to operate an unlicensed money transmitting business and to violate anti-money laundering program requirements, one count of a money laundering conspiracy and one count of operating an unlicensed money transmitting business in the District of Columbia. If convicted, each of the brothers faces a maximum sentence of more than 25 years.

MH Pillars, Ltd., doing business as Payza, is charged with operating an unlicensed money transmitting business.

Ferhan Patel was arrested on March 18, 2018, in Detroit. He made his first appearance on March 19, 2018 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. He remains held pending further proceedings in the District of Columbia. His brother remains at large.

The indictment alleges that the criminal activity took place from in or about March 2012 until the present. The defendants, through Payza.com, are accused of operating a money transmitting business that operated without the necessary state licenses and knowingly transmitting funds that were derived from illegal activity. Despite receiving cease and desist letters from various states and being told by a consultant that operating



Feroz Patel (left) and Ferhan Patel Photo / Courtesy Montreal Gazette

a money transmission business without the necessary licenses was a crime, Firoz and Ferhan Patel continued their illegal activity, the indictment alleges.

The indictment alleges that the Patels, together with other co-conspirators, are responsible for transmitting over \$250 million throughout the United States and elsewhere. The investigation is continuing.

According to the indictment, Payza's customers included Ponzi schemes, pyramid schemes and a child pornography site. The Patels opened bank accounts in the United States and laundered their illegal proceeds through those accounts.

The indictment also seeks forfeiture of any property involved in these offenses or traceable to these offenses. In addition, the indictment seeks the specific forfeiture of approximately \$10 million that has already been seized and frozen.

Further information is available to the public at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/victim-witness-assistance/obopay-payza>.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal laws and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

This case is being investigated by Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, Washington Field office. It is being prosecuted and investigated by Assistant U.S. Attorney Zia Faruqui and Arvind K. Lal, Chief of the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section. Assistance has been provided by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John P. Marston and Diane Lucas; former Assistant U.S. Attorney Catherine K. Connelly; Paralegal Specialists C. Rosalind Pressley and Toni Donato; Victim/Witness Advocate Yvonne Bryant; Document Management Analyst Basizette Stribling; Legal Assistant Jessica McCormick; and Litigation Technology Specialists Ron Royal and Joshua Ellen. (Source: DOJ)

Indian American Singer Sowparnika's 'Faces' to be released on April 6

PRAKASH M SWAMY

LOS ANGELES (TIP): Los Angeles based Indian-American singer Sowparnika Raghuram is all set for the release of her solo debut EP titled "Faces" being released worldwide on April 6 this year. She is the daughter of popular Tamil hero Karan also known as Master Raghunath in South Indian movie circles.

"Faces" is an eclectic display of everything that influences me musically. It was written to show and express every side of me through a wide array of music while bringing out my deepest thoughts and emotions into words, "she says." A lot of these songs are about relationships, but in different situations, timelines and aspects of these relationships. The part that stands out is how these songs can apply to just about anyone in our lives - a friend, significant other, or even a family member."

Born in Chennai, Sowparnika began writing songs at the age of 15 as an artistic escape from the regularities of teenage life. Soon, her growing interest in songwriting and live performance pushed her to pursue her musical passion and follow her dreams to L.A. Her songwriting comes from a very vulnerable place as she aims to speak from the heart and write songs that everyone can relate to.

In 2013, she was accepted into the Los Angeles College of Music (LACM) to study under some of the industry's finest including Dorian Holley, Kasia 'KC' Livingston, Tierney Sutton, and many more. Upon receiving an Associate of Arts Degree in 2015, she began performing around L.A. at popular venues such as The Viper Room, House of Blues, etc.



Faces is an eclectic display of everything that influences me musically."

and began playing around at street fairs, corporate events, and other musical ventures.

Drawing from her experience of touring locally in India with worship leader Don Moen, she toured as a lead singer with the L.A. rock band 'The World Over' in 2017 around America. This helped her improve as a performer and find her love for it. In 2016, to broaden her musical knowledge, she decided to go back to LACM for a bachelor's degree.

Her voice is often branded as being unique due to her Indian timbre mixed with an American quality. Influenced by a wide array of musical styles and artists, she combines elements to find a sound of her own. She enjoys experimenting with different types of gear to add vocal effects to her sound both live and in the studio. The song order: I'll Find Me, Seasons Change, Erased, Someday, No Memories and Without You

The song ILL FIND ME starts off as her

doubting her abilities in songwriting but foreshadows a deeper quest as it progresses. The process of discovering her own challenges through the words she writes, through the words she uses to empower herself. It is about the struggles a lot of us face in how harshly we judge ourselves, how we question ourselves unnecessarily and fail to meet our full potential because of it. The journey is reflected in the structure of the song itself as it progresses from a simple folk song into a powerful anthem about finding oneself.

The SEASONS CHANGE is sharing a life with someone we love can be one of the most beautiful experiences in living our lives. But when the relationship ends unexpectedly, finding closure is one of the hardest things as you begin to wonder where it went wrong. This song expresses the pain of losing someone as you try to understand the

transition from them being your everything to some random face in a crowd.

ERASED: Being the shortest track on the record, 'Erased' stands out for its progressive story line about figuring out that exact moment your relationship fell apart. It's that instant when you try to wrap your head around the good moments; the moment that you never saw coming, when they tell you it's over; the moment they leave you for someone else; just that moment you wish you could just numb your heart and erase all the pain.

SOMEDAY is a song that I'm sure most of us can relate to. We often part ways with people in the heat of the moment over things that don't really matter. When we look back at these moments we often wonder if it was worth losing a friend over it. 'Someday' talks about that hope that you can both take it all back, get over it and understand what happened because you care for each other. With an upbeat intro and a loungey vibe, the song brings forth this concept in a light-hearted fashion.

No Memories goes through the process of letting go of the emotions you felt for someone after it's been a few years. Losing someone is one of the hardest things we go through, whether it be a friend, lover or a family member. With a moody electronic vibe, every beat wishes to leave behind the little things that still sting and remind you of the moments you shared together.

With a very simple concept, 'Without you' is a fun, upbeat take on all the toxic relationships we manage to get out of!! It rejoices how much freedom you really get when you cut out the people who just aren't right for you.

Indian couple from Nebraska sentenced to one year for staying illegally, harboring another illegal alien

OMAHA (TIP): An Indian couple, illegally staying in the US, was sentenced to one-year jail term for alien harboring. Vishnubhai Chaudhari, 50, and Leelabai Chaudhari,



44, of Kimball, Nebraska, were sentenced to one year and one day in federal prison on Monday, March 19, by the federal court in Omaha. The couple has pleaded guilty to alien harboring for financial gain and conspiracy to harbor an alien in December last year. They have also agreed to a stipulated judicial order of removal to India at the completion of their sentences and paid the victim \$40,000 in restitution as a condition of their guilty pleas.

The couple admitted to conspiring to harbor the victim, who was an illegal alien from India, at a Super 8 Motel in Kimball between October 2011 and February 2013, said a statement issued by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE).

The victim was forced to work long hours, seven days a week at the motel. He did manual labor, including cleaning rooms, shoveling snow and doing laundry.

Though the couple promised to pay him a salary, they cheated him by not making the payment. The defendants claimed to apply the victim's earned pay to a debt the victim owed. He was verbally abused and physically assaulted for not meeting the expectations of the couple. Leelabai Chaudhari slapped his face several times because he had failed to clean a bathtub to her standards, said the USICE statement.

Vishnubhai and Leelabai also tried to restrict the victim's movement and threatened to find him if he tried to escape. "Today's sentence, and the restitution awarded to the victim, sends a clear message that the Justice Department will use its full resources to prosecute defendants like this one who motivated by their greed violate our immigration laws and exploit a vulnerable individual who lacked immigration status," said Acting Assistant Attorney General John Gore of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division.

"This case is a reminder that labor exploitation occurs in the United States, not just overseas, and federal law targets those who profit from human trafficking and related crimes," said US Attorney Joe Kelly for the District of Nebraska. "This case is a testament that such conduct will be vigorously investigated and prosecuted in the District of Nebraska." This case was prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Olympia Michel and Shan Patel of the Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section and Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Frederick D. Franklin of the District of Nebraska. (Source: DOJ)

Indian American Ram Villivalam wins Illinois State Senate District 8 primary

CHICAGO (TIP): Former congressional aide Ram Villivalam won the Democratic primary for Illinois State Senate District 8, thereby running unopposed in the general election to be held on November 6, 2018.

Villivalam, who challenged 20-year incumbent Ira Silverstein, won the primary getting 13,350 votes that account to a total of 51.86 percent. Incumbent Ira Silverstein could secure only 29.05 percent, giving a clear majority to Villivalam. Other Democrats who ran for the election were Caroline McAteer-Fournier and David Zulkeywas, who could only secure 13.81 percent and 5.28 percent votes, respectively.

Interestingly, no Republican candidates filed to run for election and Villivalam will run unopposed.

The last date for a candidate to file papers was on December 4, 2017. Speaking to his supporters at the 90 Miles Cuban Cafe in Lincolnwood, the first-time candidate Ram Villivalam, declared victory over incumbent Ira Silverstein in the 8th District State Senate race.

"I am incredibly proud of - and humbled by - the coalition we've brought together and the work we've done over the last four months," Villivalam told a group of supporters gathered at 90 Miles Cuban Cafe in Lincolnwood. "This win belongs to each of you." The 8th Senate district has the highest concentration of Asian Americans in Illinois. It includes 21 Chicago neighborhoods, among them, all of Devon Ave.'s business district, popularly called "Little India" - and the suburbs of Lincolnwood, Skokie, Morton Grove, Niles, Des Plaines and Glenview.

"This campaign was never about me. It has always been about working together to empower and raise the voices of the voters of the 8th State Senate District, one conversation at a time. Today, those voters spoke clearly: they're ready for a new generation of effective progressive leadership. Thank you to my wife, Elizabeth, my family, my staff, and the hundreds of volunteers who have been a part of this campaign." Villivalam added.

Villivalam's parents immigrated from India in the 1970s. He was born and raised on the Northwest side of Chicago, where he continues to live. The area is part of the 8th district. "As the son of Indian immigrants who came to this country to seek out a better quality of life and opportunities for their children, I feel the responsibility to step forward and speak out on the important issues that working and middle-class families are experiencing every day," Villivalam told the Bazaar earlier. He had also attacked his opponent, Silverstein, saying he was reprimanded by an independent inspector general for violating the legislative ethics act and behaving in a manner "unbecoming of a legislator." Villivalam's experience includes working as a legislative coordinator for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), where he fought to protect home care for seniors and people with disabilities, child care for working families, and Medicaid for those in need. Prior to that, Villivalam was the Outreach Director for Rep. Brad Schneider, D-IL, where he signed people up for the Affordable Care Act and put on job fairs.



Ram Villivalam won the Democratic primary for Illinois State Senate District 8, trouncing 20-year incumbent Ira Silverstein and 2 others

US northeast gets clobbered with fourth snowstorm in 3 weeks, thousands of flights cancelled

NEW YORK (TIP): Spring kicked off with a wallop of wintry weather along the East Coast as the fourth nor'easter in three weeks dumped more than a foot of snow in some places March 21.

The first full day of the season included scenes of snow falling on blooming daffodils in suburban Philadelphia, New Yorkers twisting to fix blown-out umbrellas, tractor-trailers stuck on snowy highways and kids making their first snowman of spring.

"I want warm! I'm done with the cold," said Yana Damoiseau, a pedestrian in New York City.

Airlines canceled more than 4,000 flights, tens of thousands of customers lost power from West Virginia northward, and school districts throughout the Northeast called off classes ahead of the storm. At least two traffic deaths were reported in New Jersey and on New York's Long Island.

Up to 8 inches of snow had fallen in some Philadelphia suburbs by the evening, and more than a foot near Allentown, Pennsylvania. New York had at least 5 inches and braced for a total of 6 to 12. Forecasters said Boston could get 6 inches as the storm moved into New England.

"Winter will not relent," said Pancho Ortega, who was clearing the sidewalk outside his soon-to-open restaurant in Philadelphia. "I don't like the shoveling part. I'm ready for it to kind of go away." Roberto Sims expressed frustration with how quickly his just-cleared Philadelphia sidewalks became snow-covered once again. "I give up and now the corner store doesn't have any salt left," he said. "I'll just have to take my chances and hope for someone else on the block to do it later."

The storm was just the latest to come off the assembly line in the Northeast since March 2. Many people's tolerance for wintry weather was already worn thin, after repeated power outages and lots of white-knuckle driving.

"I didn't think I'd still need to keep storm stuff in my car in late March, but what are you going to do?" Wilson Collins, of Toms River, New Jersey, said as he checked his car trunk to make sure he had a shovel, a blanket and other emergency items. "I just hope this is finally it." On the other side of the country, a storm brought heavy rain to California, and tens of thousands of people in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties were ordered to flee their homes because of the danger of mudslides on slopes burned by recent wildfires.

In New Jersey, some streets were flooded along the shore, including one in Point Pleasant Beach where a pair of ducks cruised back and forth through an intersection where a plastic garbage can bobbed in the waves. More than 1,200 flights in the New York City area alone were canceled, with a ripple effect on air travel around the country. On the ground, Amtrak scaled back service on the Northeast corridor between Washington and Boston, and some states banned trucks from major highways.

The storm also unloaded snow on Virginia and West Virginia as it pushed into the Northeast. Virginia reported more than 240 traffic accidents since midnight. In West Virginia, more than 5,000 customers were without power in the evening. (AP)

South Korea's Moon says three-way summit with North Korea, US possible

SEOUL (TIP): South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on March 21 a three-way summit with North Korea and the United States is possible and that talks should aim for an end to the nuclear threat on the Korean peninsula.

Moon is planning a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un next month after a flurry of diplomatic activity in Asia, Europe and the United States. U.S. President Donald Trump has also said he would meet Kim by the end of May.

"A North Korea-U.S. summit would be a historic event in itself following an inter-Korean summit," Moon said at the presidential Blue House in Seoul after a preparatory meeting for the inter-Korean summit.

"Depending on the location, it could be even more dramatic. And depending on progress, it may lead to a three-way summit between the South, North and the United States," he said.

Seoul officials are considering the border truce village of Panmunjom, where Moon and Kim are set for a one-day meeting, as the venue for talks between not only Kim and Moon but also a possible three-way meeting.

The rush of recent diplomatic contacts began in the lead-up to the Winter Olympics in South Korea last month and helped ease tensions on the Korean peninsula caused by North Korea's pursuit of its nuclear and missile programmes in defiance of United Nations Security Council sanctions.

Moon said the series of summits should aim for a "complete end" to the nuclear and peace issues on the Korean peninsula.

He said he has a "clear goal and vision", which is for the establishment of a lasting peace to replace the ceasefire signed at the end of the 1950-53 Korean war. It also includes the normalisation of North Korea-U.S. relations, the development of inter-Korean ties, and economic cooperation involving Pyongyang and Washington, he said.

"Whether the two Koreas live together or separately, we have to make it in a way that they prosper together and in peace, without interfering or causing damage to each other," Moon said.

South Korea and the United States will resume joint military drills next month, although the exercises are expected to overlap with the inter-Korean summit.

Seoul and Washington delayed the annual drills until after the Winter Olympics, helping to foster conditions for a restart of intra-Korea talks.



North Korea regularly denounces the drills as preparation for war but a South Korean special envoy has said Kim understood that the allies must continue their "routine" exercises. That exchange has not been confirmed.

The North's official KCNA news agency said on Wednesday a "dramatic atmosphere for reconciliation" has been created in cross-border ties and there has been also been a sign of change in North Korea-U.S. relations.

That was "thanks to the proactive measure and peace-loving proposal" made by Pyongyang, not Trump's campaign to put maximum pressure on the country, KCNA said in a commentary.

A Blue House official also said South Korea was in discussion with China and Japan for a three-way summit in Tokyo in early May. The three countries have not held such a meeting since November 2015, with relations soured by historical and territorial tension. (Reuters)

Hindus to push for Diwali holiday as Maryland's Montgomery Schools launches calendar survey

ROCKVILLE, MD (TIP): Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS); headquartered in Rockville, Maryland; is launching a survey to develop 2019-2020 school year academic calendar, and Diwali is included in possible holidays listed.

Although the participation in survey is voluntary, yet Hindu statesman Rajan Zed is urging all the current Hindu MCPS students and their parents and staff members to actively participate in providing the survey feedback (and persuade friends/sympathizers also to do the same), mentioning that it is "very important" for them that the school is closed on Diwali, most popular of Hindu festivals.

Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, in a statement in Nevada today, also urged all the current Hindu MCPS students and their parents and staff members to list other Hindu festivals also under the question: "Are there any other days that you (or your family) observe..."

Rajan Zed indicated that Diwali holiday in

MCPS would be a step in the positive direction in view of presence of a substantial number of Hindu students in the district; as it was important to meet the religious and spiritual needs of these pupils. Moreover, awareness about other religions thus created by such holidays like Diwali would make all MCPS students well-nurtured, well-balanced, and enlightened citizens of tomorrow.

Diwali fell on October 19 in 2017 and six New York school districts declared holiday for students on October 19, which included: East Meadow School District, East Williston Union Free School District, Half Hollow Hills Central School District, Herricks Union Free School District, Hicksville Union Free School District and Syosset Central School District. Mineola Union Free School District announced that no homework or examinations would be given on Diwali, reports suggest.

For 2017 in New Jersey; Glen Rock Public Schools announced closure of schools and

offices on Diwali; in West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District, schools were closed on October 19; and in Piscataway Township Schools, there was "No School for Students" on Diwali. And in the recent past, Millburn Township Public Schools announced Diwali day off for students for the next three years, reports add.

In 2017 Unionville-Chadds Ford School District headquartered in Kennett Square in Pennsylvania approved closure of schools on Diwali; while Harvard Public Schools in Massachusetts declared October 19 as "early release day". Board of Directors of Council Rock School District, headquartered in Newtown (Pennsylvania), in their meeting on February 15, unanimously approved 2018-2019 calendar which includes the addition of Diwali as an official school holiday, reports note.

Zed further said that it was important for Hindu families to celebrate Diwali day together at home with their children and they expected that MCPS would display how

respectful and accommodating it was to their faith by closing schools on Diwali.

Rajan Zed points out that Hinduism is rich in festivals and religious festivals are very dear and sacred to Hindus. Diwali, the festival of lights, aims at dispelling the darkness and lighting up the lives and symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

Christmas Eve through January 1, Friday before Easter and Monday after Easter are state-mandated school closures. The survey has been developed in consultation with Hanover Research, a market research firm.

Hinduism is oldest and third largest religion of the world with about 1.1 billion adherents and moksh (liberation) is its ultimate goal. There are about three million Hindus in USA.

About 161,936 students from 157 countries speaking 150 languages are reportedly enrolled in 205 schools of award-winning MCPS, 14th largest school district in USA spread in 497 square miles whose operating budget in FY 2018 was \$2.52 billion.

Indians rally across US to end green card backlog



WASHINGTON (TIP): Hundreds of Indian professionals held peaceful rallies across the US, demanding an end to the long and massive green card backlog by eliminating arbitrary per-country limit regulations.

Indian-Americans, most of whom are highly skilled and come to the US mainly on H-1B work visas are the worst sufferers of the current immigration system which imposes a seven per cent per-country quota on allotment of green cards or permanent legal residency.

As a result, the current wait period for Indian skilled immigrants for green card can be as long as 70 years.

The rallies, to urge lawmakers to support to end the per-country limit on legal permanent residency was held over the weekend in Arkansas, Kentucky and Oregon.

"As awareness builds on this topic among the American public and lawmakers, they are joining the chorus asking for reform to address the discriminatory green card backlogs impacting employment based green card applicants from India," said Seattle-based GCReforms, a recently created organisation by Indian-Americans for this purpose.

"The attendees spoke in one voice and the message was clear - it is unfair to discriminate against applicants from one country due to arbitrary per-country limit regulations. These limits were put in place when Lyndon Johnson was president of America and before even the first handheld calculator was invented - they do not work in this era," a media release said.

GCReforms expects to continue raising awareness in several other states in the coming weeks, and has been steadily gaining support from politicians, chieftains of business and the American public.

In the House of Representatives,

Indian-Americans, most of whom come to the US on H-1B work visas are the worst sufferers of the current immigration system

Current system imposes a seven per cent per-country quota on allotment of green cards or permanent legal residency

Wait period for Indian skilled immigrants for green card under current system can be as long as 70 years

remove per-country limits has been the best biggest bi-Partisan support in the current congress via Kevin Yoder's bill HR 392. Three in Four congress members supports this issue, yet the bill has not been brought to vote, GCReforms rued.

"It is high time Congress, Senate and White House addresses the green card backlog impacting 300,000 high-skilled immigrants who have made significant contributions to the US economy," GCReforms said.

Many Americans joined 'Break the Backlog Series' at Arkansas by GCReforms, 'Green Card Backlog Round Table' discussions in Bentonville, Arkansas to know more about the employment based green card wait times. Centerton Mayor Bill Edwards addresses the gathering and acknowledged the contributions of the Indian immigrant community.

Over 300 people gathered to show support for Indian high-skilled

immigrants who are stuck in the green card backlog during a campaign 'Break the Backlog' event series on Saturday at Capital building in Frankfort, Kentucky by GCReforms.

This is the most important issue for the Indian diaspora in the US, as it impacts many physicians, engineers, teachers, nurses and medical professionals, according to a press release from GC Reforms.

Many of these high-skilled immigrants who came to the Kentucky area for technology and other jobs are stuck in a potentially decades-long green card backlog.

The Nebraska event was addressed by Congressman Don Bacon.

Indians immensely contribute a lot to our Omaha community and our Nation, both culturally and by benefiting our economy through their hard work and efforts in education. Today they shared with me many of the shortcomings of our H-1B visa programme and the impact on their families and local employers. I look forward to being a strong voice in tackling these problems," he said.

Over 200 residents came together to raise awareness about the issue faced by high-skilled Indian immigrants and their families in Hillsboro, Oregon this Sunday at the event Break the Backlog event series by GCReforms.

Commissioner Malinowski, Indian community leaders Jaisen Mody, who is a General Manager at PGE, W Krishnamurthy spoke at the event on the need for fairness for all immigrants irrespective of where they came from.

According to Senate Republican Policy Committee, every year the US on an average allocates some 50,000 green cards through lottery for people from countries who do not get an opportunity to come to the US through the merit-based employment visas. (PTI)

Texas bombing suspect blows himself up, say police

ROUND ROCK (TIP): The suspect in the deadly bombings that terrorised Austin blew himself up on Wednesday as authorities closed in on him, bringing an end to a three-week manhunt. But police warned that more bombs could be out there.

The suspect's motive remained a mystery, along with whether he acted alone in the five bombings in the Texas capital and suburban San Antonio that killed two people and wounded four others.

Police zeroed in on the man in the last 24 to 36 hours and located his vehicle at a hotel in Round Rock.

Officers were waiting for armored vehicles to arrive before moving in for an arrest when his car began to drive away, police chief Brian Manley said. Authorities followed the vehicle, which ran into a ditch on the side of the road, he said. When members of the SWAT team approached, the suspect detonated an explosive device inside the vehicle, he said. The blast knocked one officer back, and a second officer fired his weapon, Manley said. The suspect was identified as Mark Anthony Conditt, of Pflugerville, Texas, according to the local CBS television affiliate and Austin American-Statesman newspaper, citing unnamed law enforcement sources.

Public records showed Conditt's age as 23. Officials had said the suspect was 24. He was unemployed. (Agencies)

'Sex and the City' star in race for New York governor



NEW YORK (TIP): Cynthia Nixon, the US actress who shot to fame as workaholic lawyer Miranda Hobbes on "Sex and the City," jumped into the race for New York governor on Monday, unveiling a progressive platform championing economic equality and eschewing big business.

The 51-year-old declared her candidacy with a two-minute campaign video posted on Twitter that showed her at home with her wife and children, riding the subway, taking one of her children to school and speaking at liberal political causes. The move confirmed speculation that Nixon would challenge incumbent Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo.

If elected, Nixon — who is a vocal opponent of President Donald Trump — would be New York state's first woman and first openly gay governor. The actress and liberal activist, who has campaigned for gay marriage, public schools and access to women's health care, announced that she was "sick of politicians who care more about headlines and power than they do about us." "Our leaders are letting us down. We are now the most unequal state in the entire country with both incredible wealth and extreme poverty.

Half the kids in our upstate cities live below the poverty line. How did we let this happen?" she said in the video. "Together we can win this fight," finished the New Yorkborn and raised Nixon. In 2004, Nixon accepted an Emmy award — the highest accolade in US television — for her role as Miranda Hobbes from Trump, the fellow celebrity-turned-politician whose presidency she publicly opposes.

New York goes to the polls on November 6. Despite stardom, Nixon remains a left-field candidate with Cuomo very much the favored contender ahead of the Democratic Party primary on September 13. A recent Siena College poll found that Cuomo is overwhelmingly favored by Democrats to Nixon by 66 to 19%. (AP)

PAK AMBASSADOR TO INDIA RETURN FROM ISLAMABAD

NEW DELHI (TIP): A week after he was called back for consultations amid raging row between India and Pakistan over harassment of diplomats, Pakistan High Commissioner to India Sohail Mahmood will return from Islamabad late in the evening and be present at Pakistan national day functions on Friday, a diplomat said.

The ambassador will host a series of events to mark the 'Pakistan National Day' at the country's mission in New Delhi, including a dinner reception. The envoy will also hoist the flag and deliver a speech, they said. Mahmood was called back to Islamabad for consultations after alleged incidents of "harassment" of its diplomatic staff in New Delhi with Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Muhammad Faisal claiming that the Indian government failed to take notice of the increasing incidents of intimidation of Pakistani diplomats, their families and staffers by its intelligence agencies.

India and Pakistan have accused each other of harassing diplomats and their families in Islamabad and New Delhi respectively.

Source: HT

India, China hold border meet to enhance mutual trust

NEW DELHI (TIP): India and China discussed on Thursday various confidence-building measures aimed at enhancing mutual trust and understanding between border personnel and decided to explore the possibility of exchange of visits and institutionalised dialogue mechanisms, said the external affairs ministry in a statement.

The statement was issued after the 11th round of the Working Mechanism on Consultation & Coordination for India-China Border Affairs (WMCC).

The ministry said the maintenance of peace in border areas with the neighbour is an important prerequisite for further development of India-China relations. The statement said the discussions were held in a "friendly and cordial" atmosphere.

"The two sides exchanged views on ways to improve border management. We underlined that maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas is an important prerequisite for further development of bilateral relations," the statement said.

The Indian delegation was led by Pranay Verma, joint secretary (East Asia) in MEA, while the Chinese team was led by Yi Xianliang, director general, Department of Boundary & Oceanic Affairs in the Chinese foreign ministry. They agreed to hold the next meeting at a mutually convenient time.

From April, tourists can stay at Taj Mahal only for 3 hours

AGRA (TIP): From April, there will be a three-hour cap on entry tickets to the Taj Mahal.

"At present, there is no time restriction for tourists visiting the Taj Mahal but things will change from April 1. The ticket issued from the monument would mention the time and tourists would be required to stay on the Taj premises only for three hours from the time mentioned. These three hours would not overlap with the closing time and the monument would be closed at the scheduled time," said Bhuwan Vikram Singh, superintending archaeologist for the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Agra.

Those visitors booking tickets online for the Taj Mahal would be required to specify the time slot of three hours and would be required to visit the monument only during this period. Visitors exceeding this time limit would be required to pay extra, said Singh.

"Besides, there will be zero value tickets for children up to 15 years of age. This is aimed at having a proper head count of those visiting the Taj Mahal in a day," said Singh.

He also clarified that no notification had been issued for an additional ticket of Rs 200 for those entering the main mausoleum of the Taj. "So far, no such notification has been issued. No extra money is to be paid for entry to the main mausoleum at the Taj. It would be implemented once the notification is issued," added Singh.

Source: HT



Sohail Mahmood

Arvind Kejriwal on apology spree: 3 down, 30 more to go?

NEW DELHI (TIP): Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has been eating humble pie.

Kejriwal's spree of apologies has generated mixed reactions, with some amused, some piqued and others downright infuriated.

The AAP chief, with 33 defamation cases against him in 22 states, has crossed three cases off his list by saying sorry to the complainants.

Kejriwal has tendered a series of apologies, starting with Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia, followed by Union minister Nitin Gadkari, and subsequently Congress leader Kapil Sibal and his son.

Deputy chief minister of Delhi and senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia justified the apologies. "We are here to work for public. If someone is hurt by our remarks, we will apologise. We do not have time for courts. We do not want to indulge in battle of ego," he said.

In contrast to the moral high ground by AAP leaders in Delhi, cracks appeared in party's Punjab unit after Kejriwal apologised to Majithia with AAP's Punjab chief Bhagwant Mann quitting from the post in protest. Lok Insaaf Party, AAP's alliance partner in Punjab, said it will snap ties with



Kejriwal-led party.

Kejriwal's apologies have provided readymade ammunition to the Opposition to target AAP. Congress, taking a dig at the Delhi Chief Minister, said that Kejriwal should change his name to "Arvind Sorry Kejriwal". Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari slammed Kejriwal for being a "regular and habitual offender". Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh dismissed Kejriwal's apology as an "antic".

Kejriwal's apology episode is the latest in a series of recent events that have earned the party criticism from several corners and could hurt its

public image in the long run.

However, things will be difficult for Kejriwal in the case involving Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

According to the sources, Kejriwal sent one of his newly inducted Rajya Sabha MPs as an emissary to Jaitley to discuss the possibility of an apology.

"The finance minister hasn't agreed with the apology proposal," a source said.

It's also learnt that Jaitley wanted to know whether Kejriwal could ensure apologies from other AAP leaders Sanjay Singh, Kumar Vishwas, Ashutosh, Raghav Chadha and Deepak Bajpai against whom defamation case has been filed.

The finance minister had filed a Rs 10 crore defamation suit against Kejriwal and five other AAP leaders. A civil defamation case was filed in Delhi High Court and a criminal defamation suit was filed in lower court in Delhi. Besides, a separate defamation case was filed against Kejriwal after certain remarks were made by his lawyer Ram Jethmalani during the trial. Kejriwal wanted to take the apology route with Jaitley as the next hearings in the high court and lower court are respectively on 3 April and 8 April.

Sikh youth are being trained in terror activities at ISI facilities in Pak: MHA

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Home Ministry has conveyed to a parliamentary panel that Sikh youths are being trained at ISI facilities in Pakistan to carry out terror activities in India, and members of the community who are settled in Canada and other places are also being instigated against the country with false and malicious propaganda.

Top officials of the home ministry, led by the Union Home Secretary, told the Committee on Estimates, headed by senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi, that radicalisation of youths by terrorist groups through the misuse of internet and social media has emerged as a big challenge.

According to the report of the committee—'Central armed police forces and internal security challenges—evaluation and response mechanism'—which was tabled in Parliament on Monday, there have been some developments on the Sikh militancy front.

The "commanders" of terror groups based in Pakistan are under pressure from ISI to further the Pakistani spy agency's terror plans not only in Punjab but also in other parts of the country, it said.

"Sikh youth are being trained at ISI facilities in Pakistan. Interdictions and interrogations have revealed the use of jailed cadres, unemployed youth, criminals and smugglers by Pakistan-based Sikh terror groups for facilitating terror attacks," the report said.



Sikh youths based or settled in Europe, the US and Canada are also being misguided and instigated against India with false and malicious propaganda, but the situation is being watched closely by the central and state agencies and they are taking lawful action as and when required.

On the issue of new challenges which have emerged as a threat to internal security, the ministry, in a note furnished to the committee, voiced concern over radicalisation of youths by the terrorist groups through the misuse of internet and social media. "The problem is further accentuated by the fact that the terror groups have started using secure social media platforms and proxy servers etc. to avoid detection by intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

"Activities of radicalised people returning from conflict areas and threat of lone wolf attack are also a challenge,"

it said. The ministry told the panel that India continues to remain the prime focus of Pakistan-based terrorist outfits, particularly the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and a faction of Indian Mujahideen besides groups like SIMI and Al-Unmah.

Separately, there are indications regarding revival of JeM in Pakistan and renewed efforts of the said outfit to cause harm to India. Besides, the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda in Indian sub-continent have started posing new challenges to the existing security environment.

The ministry also said that violence by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) outfits continues to pose a threat to the internal security scenario in the country. "Since its formation in September 2004, CPI(Maoist) has emerged as the most potent among the LWE outfits active in the country," the report said.

Source: PTI

Iraq deaths: Cong moves privilege notice against Sushma, VK Singh

NEW DELHI (TIP): Congress members from Punjab on March 22 gave a breach of privilege notice in the Rajya Sabha against External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her colleague MoS VK Singh, accusing them of "deliberately misleading Parliament and the country on the status of 39 Indians who went missing in Iraq in 2014", reported The Tribune.

Moving the notice, MPs Ambika Soni, Shamsheer Singh Dullo and Partap Singh Bajwa said, "The External Affairs Minister and her colleague VK Singh deliberately misled families of 39 individuals who were slain in Mosul. For a period spanning between June 2014 and March 2018, the minister continued to state as a matter of fact that the individuals are not only alive, but that the government is also undertaking steps for their rescue. As such claims were made on the floor of Parliament and outside, this is a serious breach of Parliament privilege and a stringent action must be taken against the members for their gross acts of dereliction of public duty."

The Congress leaders said the government actively worked to conceal the truth from the families of those killed in Iraq. The trio said the information about the death of slain Indians came out at least seven months ago, but the government still did not disclose that. "It is a tragic and inexcusable breach of duty that the External Affairs Minister, being in possession of this information (of the killing of Indians), failed to share the same with the grieving families. In fact, it is now clear that the only reason the government has disclosed the information now is compulsion because the Iraqi government would have otherwise done so," they said.

Bajwa said, "It is also sad that Swaraj waited to come to Parliament to make the tragic announcement on March 20 when she knew it already. This could have been made known outside Parliament."

On March 20, Swaraj said that the 39 missing Indians in Iraq have been killed. She was speaking in Rajya Sabha.

Forty Indians, mostly from Punjab, were originally abducted by terrorist organisation Islamic State from Mosul, Iraq. One of them escaped by posing as a



Family members grieve by a portrait of one of the 39 Indian workers from Amritsar killed in Iraq by ISIS. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in Rajya Sabha stated that the 39 bodies exhumed from a mound in Badoosh in Iraq have been identified.



External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and MoS VK Singh.



Muslim from Bangladesh, Swaraj said in a statement in Rajya Sabha at 11 am, as soon as the House convened. The remaining 39 Indians were taken to Badoosh and killed. Swaraj said search operations led to a mound in Badoosh where locals said some bodies were buried by the ISIS. Deep penetration radars were used to establish that the mound indeed was a mass grave, she said, adding the Indian authorities requested their Iraqi counterpart to exhume the bodies.

The external affairs minister added that the mass grave had exactly 39 bodies, with distinctive features like long hair, non-Iraqi shoes and IDs. The bodies were then sent to Baghdad for DNA testing. DNA testing by Martyrs Foundation has established identity of 38 Indians while there has been 70 per cent matching of the DNA for the 39th person, she said. Minister of State for External Affairs V K Singh will be flying to Iraq to bring back the bodies on a special flight.

ANNA HAZARE BEGINS HUNGER STRIKE FOR LOKPAL

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU (TIP): Social activist Anna Hazare began an indefinite hunger strike against the Centre in Delhi on March 23, nearly seven years after his anti-corruption movement caught the imagination of millions of Indians and shook the then UPA government.



The venue of his protest will be the same iconic Ram Lila Maidan, where he had sat on a hunger strike in 2011 demanding that the then government set up a Lokpal to investigate cases of corruption.

This time, however, his target is the Narendra Modi-led BJP government.

Hazare has been pressing for setting up of the Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in the states, besides implementation of the Swaminathan Commission report, which has suggested ways to address the agrarian distress.

Hazare previously has accused the Union government of not appointing the Lokpal to investigate the cases of corruption, despite having a law in place.

"Anna will first visit the Rajghat and then come to the Ram Lila Maidan, where he will go on an indefinite strike," said an aide of Hazare.

The day, March 23, has been chosen on purpose as Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged to death on this day by the British, the aide said.

A core committee meeting of Hazare's trusted aides and representatives of farmers' organisations took place at the New Maharashtra Sadan on Thursday.

The 2011 anti-graft agitation by Hazare, which aimed at the increasing corruption cases that had surfaced during the UPA rule, had received the support of millions of people across the country.

Some of the main organisers of that anti-corruption movement later formed the Aam Aadmi Party, which now governs Delhi. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was one of Hazare's key aides.

The Delhi Traffic Police has issued an advisory warning to commuters to avoid taking routes towards Aruna Asaf Ali Road, Delhi Gate, Darya Ganj, New Delhi Railway Station, Ajmeri Gate, Paharganj, ITO, Rajghat, Minto Road, Vivekanand Marg, and JLN Marg. *Source: PTI*

Relief for Lalu son in murder case

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court today closed proceedings against former Bihar minister Tej Pratap, son of jailed RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav, in the murder case of a Siwan-based journalist.

The apex court had asked the CBI to investigate allegations relating to media reports featuring photographs and videos that showed Pratap, former Bihar health minister, along with two absconding accused, Mohd Kaif and Javed, who are presently in judicial custody in the Rajdeo Ranjan murder case.

The court ordered closure of proceedings against Tej Pratap and gave the slain journalist's widow the liberty to get her plea revised if some incriminating material surfaces. *Source: PTI*

Centre lifts Rs 10,000 cap on educational aid to martyrs' wards

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a move that will benefit over 3,200 students, the government has withdrawn a controversial order that capped educational aid to children of martyred and disabled soldiers at Rs 10,000 per month last year.

"Educational concession will continue without the cap of Rs 10,000 per month," an order issued by the finance ministry on March 21 stated. The government had faced a backlash from various quarters after the defence ministry instructed the three chiefs and the coast guard head in a letter dated September 13, 2017, that the combined amount of tuition fees and hostel charges for such wards be restricted to Rs 10,000 per month.

The new order said the educational concession will be admissible for pursuing studies in government and government-aided educational institutions. It can also be availed for studying in military/sainik schools and other educational institutions recognised by the central and state governments.

Every minute of parliament session cost Rs 2.5 lakh, says govt

NEW DELHI (TIP): As the government sought to step up efforts to end the stalemate, minister of state Vijay Goel said Rs 2.5 lakh is spent every minute to run Parliament.

The remarks came even as Goel, who is the MoS in Parliamentary Affairs, will be individually meeting Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, TDP's Y S Chowdhary and AIADMK's Navaneethakrishnan and V Maitreyan at their residences to end the stalemate in Rajya Sabha.

While government managers were meeting Opposition leaders in Parliament, the fresh move comes as the government wants to pass a clutch of bills pending in the House.

Both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were

witnessing protests since the start of the second leg of Budget Session from March 6 following protests by TDP MPs over Andhra Pradesh's special category and AIADMK MPs on setting up of Cauvery Management Board.

TDP and YSR Congress have also moved a no-confidence motion in Lok Sabha against NDA government but it could not be taken up as AIADMK and TRS MPs creating ruckus in the House. The opposition accused BJP of stage-managing these protests to avoid a debate on the no-trust motion.

"We are concerned that the House is not working. We are ready for discussion on any subject, including bank scams. The Opposition does not want discussion inside House but they go for TV debates.

They should debate inside House," Goel said while claiming that Rs 2.5 lakh is spent every minute for the functioning of the House. He did not elaborate how he arrived at this figure.

He said he will personally meet Opposition leaders.

Asked when he will meet leaders of Samajwadi Party and Trinamool Congress among others, he told DH, "first I am meeting Congress, TDP and AIADMK because they are in the forefront of protests. I will definitely meet others." On Thursday, the government had managed to convince protesting MPs in Rajya Sabha to pass Payment of Gratuity Bill. Sources said government reached out to parties and thrashed out a formula to allow the passage without discussion.



COMMENT

Prof I.S. Saluja

CONSULAR OUTREACH VERSUS
CKGS LOOT

Will the Consulate General of India in New York stop fleecing of users of consular services?

The Consulate General of India in New York, as elsewhere, under an initiative of External Affairs Ministry, crafted a plan, some 5 years ago, to deal with mounting complaints with regard to deficient Consular services being provided in Indian missions abroad. Organizations like GOPIO have over the years voiced the concerns of the vast non-resident Indian community. Year after years, GOPIO and other smaller organizations continued to register complaints and offer suggestions and solutions at both the local Consulate level and at the level of the government of India. And, after years of coaxing and cajoling, government of India decided to come up with a community relations plan, under which, among other things, Indian consulates will reach out to Indian community abroad to provide Consular services. The service providers, (in this case, Cox & King Global Services), were made a part of the exercise.

As part of the plan, a Consulate organizes, periodically, open house at different locations in its jurisdiction to listen to grievances of community and take care of their needs with regard to consular services they may need. At times, the consulates organized seminars, too, with a view to educating the community about the latest government of India policies with regard to a number of issues, including travel rules and requirements, and laws which concerned them which included property laws. Another role the outreach program played was building bridges through the community, with the American administration.

The Consular Outreach program has been helpful in bringing down the decibel level of the outcry of the community, but problems persist. There are many. And a solution to them may not be possible straightaway. However, there is one which needs immediate attention and can be taken care of without government of India needing to make a law.

While the Indian missions abroad are making all efforts to establish a rapport with the community through the outreach program and through opening their doors to community where all, without discrimination, are welcome, the service provider for New York Consulate CKGS has made community very unhappy.

A couple of weeks ago, a reader of The Indian Panorama called to complain that she was trying to contact CKGS helpline 888-585-5431 with a query about her husband's passport and the automated service said she will be required to pay at the rate of \$2.59 per minute of the call and that she should provide credit card details. She was taken aback that a service provider to the Consulate should be asking for fees to be paid for making an inquiry.

We made a call on the number provided by the lady (888-585-5431) and found the complainant lady was reporting correctly. We spoke with the local Manager Raghu Duindi who pleaded his ignorance about the phone charge but said he would look into it. We received two days later an email from a third party who referred to our conversation with CKGS manager on the subject, saying the call charge was a part of the contract. It was a surprise for us to have received this kind of explanation from a third party, unrelated to the issue. The explanation did not come from the CKGS, nor from the Indian Consulate in New York.

We decided to refer the issue to the Consul General. We forwarded the email received from the third party to the Consul General on February 21. The CG was good enough to convey that he would look into the complaint. On February 23, the CG informed us that the phone charge was valid under "the contract". The question now is: why should a customer be asked to pay for seeking information from the service provider? Where is the concept of "service"? Is it ethical on the part of the CKGS to ask for a payment for answering queries of its customers, or the government of India to allow the call charge? It is simply "atrocious", as a senior colleague from media put it, when we mentioned the issue to him. And, many members of the community we spoke to about the issue described the phone charge as "CKGS loot". Will the Consulate General of India take necessary steps to stop this fleecing of users of consular services?

AS I SEE IT

The neighborhood tangle: Opportunity lies
in harnessing its history and complexities

By G Parthasarthy

"While the Russians will continue to play second fiddle to China whenever it suits them, both Russia and India have an interest in keeping their relationship forward looking, given their common interest in developing a multipolar world order. Moscow needs to be told clearly that the US, Australia, Japan, India "Quad" is to primarily maintain a viable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific Region, even as we seek an increasingly cooperative partnership with Russia", says the author.

Given its size, potential and pride in its history, culture and democratic institutions, India has sought to retain its strategic autonomy, by maintaining a careful balance in its relationships with major centers of power—namely the US, Russia, China and the European Union. This has never been easy, given the inherent geopolitical rivalries between major centers of global power. An assertive China will not brook the thought of India having a vital interest in asserting its right to influence events, especially across the Indian Ocean Region.

While the US and powers like Japan regard the role of India as important in maintaining a viable balance of power in Asia, there are doubts and misgivings about Russia's approach towards India. Moscow's policies are driven largely by the relentless hostility of the US, to oppose and contain Russia's influence, even on its very doorstep in former Soviet Republics, which often have large Russian populations. Moscow has thus been literally driven into the arms of Beijing, resulting in a virtual Moscow-Beijing alliance, to counter American hegemony. Despite this, India has remained steadfast in endeavoring to maintain its strategic autonomy, by seeking to expand its relationship with Russia. This is being done internationally, by working with Moscow in forums like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the India-Russia, China triangle, which was initially promoted by Russia. India has also sought to complement Moscow's efforts to stabilize the secular Assad regime in Syria.

While limited connectivity has served as an obstacle to trade with Russia, the defense relationship between the two countries remains vibrant. The approximately 270 Russian Sukhoi 30 fighters are the main element of our Air Force's strike and air defense potential. The lethal Brahmos missile, multi barreled rocket launchers, around 900 T 90 Tanks, an aircraft carrier with Mig 29 aircraft, guided missile stealth frigates and even a leased Russian nuclear submarine, are all meant for frontline use. These are but a small portion of the vast amount of Russian defense equipment with our armed forces. New acquisitions underway from Russia include highly advanced S 400 air defense systems and a large fleet of light helicopters. Russian defense exports to India in recent years account for around 39 per cent of its total exports and far exceed exports to China, which unlike India, has successfully developed a vibrant defense industry, with significant export potential.

Russia and India have a mutual interest in carrying forward defense and security cooperation, with regular meetings and exchanges between their Defense Ministers and National Security Advisers and periodic joint military exercises. While some concern has been voiced about Russian arms supplies to Pakistan, the Russians are well aware of the fact that a cash-strapped Pakistan cannot afford to buy its frontline equipment, which is presently confined to purchase of some MI 35 attack helicopters. The Russians also know that the Indian market will be closed for the equipment they supply to Pakistan. The greater concern in New Delhi, however, arises from Russian readiness to join with China and Pakistan in seeking to give legitimacy to the Afghan Taliban. This is rather ironic, given the fact that approximately 14,000 Soviet soldiers were killed and more than 35,000 wounded in action between 1979 and 1989 against ISI backed radical Islamic armed Afghan groups. This effort to legitimize the Taliban has been neutralized, by the Afghan Government's insistence on direct talks with the Taliban.

While India's trade with Russia remains limited because of



India, Australia, US and Japan; that comprise the "quadrilateral" coalition held their first official talks in Manila, November 2017 File photo / Courtesy Indian Express

problems in connectivity, mutual cooperation in investments in the petro-chemical sector is substantial and significant. The recent \$ 12.9 billion deal for the acquisition of Essar Oil refinery by Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft, is one of the single biggest foreign investments in India. India's investments in Russia's oil and gas industry are presently around \$8 billion. They are likely to reach \$15 billion by 2020, with India set to acquire an almost 50% stake in Rosneft Siberian oil project. Moreover, there are substantial prospects for increasing Russian supplies of coal, diamonds, LNG and fertilizers to India. Interestingly, while the much touted 2014 Russian gas deal with China was expected to generate \$ 400 billion by gas sales to China, the drastic fall in gas prices is likely to reduce the returns by well over 60%. There is also considerable potential for Russia and India to reinforce each other; in executing energy and rail transportation projects in third countries, like Afghanistan and Vietnam. Russia and India are presently cooperating in the construction of the first nuclear power plant in Bangladesh.

It is evident that India cannot match China's economic power in its relations with Russia. One should, however, remember that there has been grave mutual distrust between Russia and China for centuries. The Russians view China's meteoric rise and its growing population, as a threat to their Siberian region and even to Vladivostok. The Soviet Union and Mao's China, loathed each other; from the very inception of Communist rule in China. Mao was kept waiting for months in 1949, before he got to call on Stalin, who met him only after he met Indian Ambassador Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, in January 1950. Mao made no secret about his contempt for both Stalin and Khrushchev. The two countries had several border skirmishes in 1968-1970, in which the Chinese were badly mauled. Just after the 1971 Bangladesh conflict, which saw the emergence of a US-China strategic nexus, the Indian Ambassador in Moscow was informed by a senior Communist Party functionary that the Soviet Union had deployed massive armored formations on the border with China, to deter Beijing from getting involved militarily, in the Bangladesh conflict.

These are historical and geopolitical realities that neither the Russians, nor the Chinese will forget easily. While the Russians will continue to play second fiddle to China whenever it suits them, both Russia and India have an interest in keeping their relationship forward looking, given their common interest in developing a multipolar world order. Moscow needs to be told clearly that the US, Australia, Japan, India "Quad" is to primarily maintain a viable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific Region, even as we seek an increasingly cooperative partnership with Russia.

(The author is a career diplomat)

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The Indian Panorama
P.O. Box No. 190067, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419,
Tel: 646-247-9458
Email: editor@theindianpanorama.com
DALLAS EDITION
P.O. BOX 121695, ARLINGTON, TX 76012
Lovlien Kaurr, VP & Bureau Chief

E-mail tipdallas01@gmail.com; Phone: 646-247-9458
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Religious freedom in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka: A Summary of Religious Freedom concerns in South Asia.

The South Asia working group's initial report to the International Religious Freedom Round-table



By Mike Ghose

There is a dire need to address the violations of religious and political freedoms in South Asia comprising the nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

A critical note - when a reference is made to the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, India, Russia or others, it is not "all" people of that faith or country. It is usually a small percent of disaffected people from among the majority who feel threatened about their future and their way

"The many millennia old caste systems and the 'unparalleled social abuse of untouchability (A.J. Toynbee)' are based on religious doctrines of Brahminical Hinduism. Thus, caste-based violations of human rights in India are expressions of the utter lack of religious freedom.

of life.

The Center for Pluralism offers a solution to counter that - We need to reassure each other in conflict, particularly those who may be troubled by the changing paradigms and demographics of the society that we are committed to safeguarding the way of life for everyone. As Citizens of a given nation, we uphold, protect, defend and celebrate the values of liberty and freedom enshrined in the Constitution. We acknowledge that not all constitutions have the element of freedom embedded in it - an example would be the rights of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan and rights of Arab Israelis.

There are pending issues that are simmering and may boil over one day. We hope to understand these issues and do our share of reporting them to the International Religious Freedom Round Table, an informal group.

This group will identify problems and offer recommendations and possible solutions, and they are;

Monitoring to ensure the individual rights of people are protected.

Facilitate democratic values and hoping for stable political and economic climate

Secure our long-term interests of the safety of Americans and their investments

Governor Sam Brownback, the newly appointed Ambassador for religious freedom, said in the inaugural reception. The essence of which was -if you want a nation to have peace, give the people their freedom, but if you push them to the corner, their anger will morph into extremism, and everyone will lose in the end.

Here is a summary; a detailed report is in the making and will be produced upon a request.

There is no doubt a lot of good things are happening, but our focus is how to identify exceptional violations of human rights and

"In Pakistan, the Hindu population is steadily declining as a percentage of the overall population with forced conversions. Christians are targeted with blasphemy and apostasy laws.

religious freedom.

India

The commissioners of USCRIF have been the denied visa to India to investigate, among other things; Sikh Genocide, Massacre of Muslims in Gujarat, the plight of Hindu Pundits and the caste system that mistreats the Dalits who are shamefully called untouchables. Most of the Hindu American organizations have an affiliation with the ruling party in India; we need them to stand up for the religious rights of the people and work on getting the Visas to the commissioners for an honest evaluation of the situation.

The policies of the government will lead to mass suicides by the farmers. The Farmers raise the cattle to sell and eke out a living. Now, they are afraid to sell the cattle for fear of being killed by the vigilantes and the Government does nothing. The Cows have gone astray and are eating the farmer's crops and eating trash on the streets - the cows are treated with disrespect and left on their own, its gross violation of animal rights.

In India currently, you do not have the freedom to eat, drink, wear or believe in the pursuit of your happiness.

A Dalit groom rode a horse on his wedding Baraat (Procession) in the state of Uttar Pradesh last month; the upper caste Hindus could not stomach the "neech -i.e., the low caste untouchable" ride above them and they ended beat him up. Last week an Adivasi (Tribal) Girl was burnt alive. The upper caste Hindus feel entitled to the Dalit women for their pleasures. It is an endless agony for the Dalits. They cannot even convert to other faiths to escape these attitudes due to enforced anti-conversion laws.

Here is a report from the Dalit Leaders in India.

"The many millennia old caste systems and the 'unparalleled social abuse of untouchability (A.J. Toynbee)' are based on religious doctrines of Brahminical Hinduism. Thus, caste-based violations of human rights in India are expressions of the utter lack of religious freedom.

This perilous situation is aggravated by anti-conversion laws that have been passed in many states of India. Their purpose is to prevent Dalits from converting to other religions where they would not be considered 'untouchable'.

<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/anti-conversion-laws/india.php>

The inferior status that Hinduism accords to Dalits, in spite of the equalities guaranteed by the constitution of the country, reflects in severe social, economic, and educational inequalities.

Dalits continue to suffer extreme

prejudice and deprivation, apart from institutional harassment. Violence against Dalits - public shaming, beatings, rape, murder - is a daily occurrence. The law enforcement agencies, police and the judiciary, largely remain mute spectators, if not actively conniving in the violence.

Statistics show that violence against Dalits has only increased in recent years. Religious freedom and equality thus remain a mirage for 200 million Dalits in India."

The Muslims are lynched and killed for doubt of possessing beef; fake encounters are common practice to trap the young Muslim boys; RSS (political Hindus in the guise of culture) set the bomb blasts in Mumbai and other places and blamed Muslims. Muzaffarnagar and other riots were created to pit Hindus against Indians.

"In Bangladesh, Atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, and Ahmadiyya Muslims live in apprehension; the Atheist bloggers have been killed. There is a deficiency of law and order.

Christian Nuns are raped; pastors are chased and beat up in the public. The Christians Churches are burned, and the couples are constantly harassed on Valentine's Day and Christmas Day. The Dalits are forced to convert back to Hinduism.

Justice to Sikhs is not done yet; mothers are still waiting for their unaccounted children from the Sikh Genocide of 84 where in three days, the extremists among Hindus butchered about 3000 Sikhs.

Blatant discrimination births frustration leading to violent expressions, when that happens the foreign investors will pull out, who wants to invest in a place where their investments are not secure. It's happened in India in the mid-60's, mid 70's and it has happened in South Africa. The consequences do not bring goodwill.

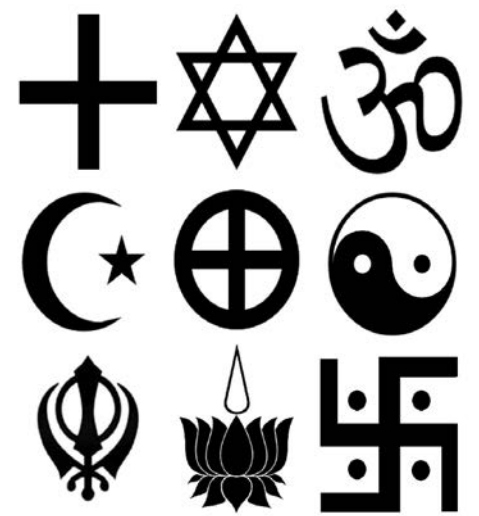
There is a significant crisis brewing in India, and the Supreme Court will render a judgment about the disputed land and authority to build or not build a Hindu temple, where a 500-year-old Muslim Mosque was razed to the ground.

The Supreme Court of India would review the documents if that Mosque were built razing a temple. The internationally famed Guru of Art of Living, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has sowed the seeds of discontentment. Instead of suggesting the public to respect the Supreme Court's decision, he has predicted civil war if the Court decides one way or the other. He has shown disrespect to the average Hindu and average Muslim who have demonstrated respect to the decisions of the Apex Court, several times in the recent past.

We pray that the Modi government and the State Government will offer strong safety protections to the public at least for a few months after December 5, 2018, the new date of the verdict.

Pakistan

Harassment of all minorities continues



unabated. Ahmadiyya Muslims are denied their right to call themselves Muslims. There are numerous billboards that proclaim that it is legitimate to kill Ahmadiyya. The Hindu population is steadily declining as a percentage of the overall population with forced conversions. Christians are targeted with blasphemy and apostasy laws; these are the fake encounters.

"In Sri Lanka, the ethnic violence continues between the Buddhists and Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims.

The Apostasy and Blasphemy laws were created to appease the tyrant kings and have no basis in the religion of Islam, and both are tools of oppression.

Bangladesh

The Atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, and Ahmadiyya Muslims live in apprehension; the Atheist bloggers have been killed. There is a deficiency of law and order.

Sri Lanka

The ethnic violence continues between the Buddhists and Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims. Sri Lanka's president declared a state of emergency Tuesday amid fears that anti-Muslim attacks in several central hill towns could spread. The emergency announcement came after Buddhist mobs swept through the cities outside Kandy, burning at least 11 Muslim-owned shops and homes. The attacks followed reports that a group of Muslims had killed a Buddhist man. Police fired tear gas into the crowds, and later announced a curfew in the town. The government will "act sternly against groups that are inciting religious hatred," Cabinet minister Rauff Hakeem said after a meeting with the president.

Nepal

It seems this nation is free from religious strife at this time, as it has undergone tumultuous political conflicts including a change in the form of Government from Monarchy to a democratic Republic.

A full report is available upon request to Mike Ghose.

(The author is Chair, South Asia working group - IRF Roundtable. He can be reached at Mike@CenterforPluralism.com/ Phone no. (214) 325-1916

MARTYRS OF INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev are luminous names in the history of India's struggle for freedom. The three were sentenced to death in Lahore conspiracy case and ordered to be hanged on 24 March, 1931. The schedule was forwarded by 11 hours and the three were hanged on 23 March, 1931 at 7.30 P.M. in Lahore jail.

When the British Govt implemented an act to suppress freedom struggle, it gave the British Police a free hand to carry out arrests without any permissions. In order to protest against this act, Bhagat Singh and his friends carried out a plan to use low intensity bomb inside the assembly hall and at the same time ensure that there are no deaths. Immediately after the bombing, Bhagat Singh and his friends voluntarily surrendered and taken to trial. They were charged with attempt to murder and sentenced to 14 years life in 1929.

Further investigation by the police led to discovery of other members, some of who turned into informants and helped police to connect Bhagat Singh with an alleged murder of a British Officer. Singh was again arrested and sent to another jail where he faced discrimination between British & Indian prisoners and that led to his protest in the form of hunger strike against the discrimination.

In the meantime, the ongoing investigation of framing Bhagat Singh for the alleged murder of a British Officer in the past was hastened by the Viceroy, Irwin in 1930. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev were sentenced to death and the execution date was fixed to 24th March 1931. The Congress and Gandhi made some attempts to save the lives but went in vain. Gandhi finally came to an agreement in the Gandhi-Irwin pact which gave the British the go-ahead with execution of Bhagat Singh and his friends.

On 17th March, a telegram was sent to Home Dept preponing the execution date to 23rd March, and was hanged to death at 7.30pm on 23rd March 1931.

The execution was a great blow to the sentiments of Indians who in turn were deeply moved and held demonstrations all over the country.

The sacrifice of such martyrs which motivated other freedom fighters to relentlessly persuade the movement which finally resulted in Indian Independence.

Every year, 23rd March is observed as Martyrs' Day in honor of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev. A salute to our martyrs for giving up their lives during freedom struggle so that subsequent generations could live in peace & prosperity.

BHAGAT SINGH

One of the most prominent revolutionaries of India, Bhagat Singh was born on 28 September 1907 in a Sikh family in the village of Banga in Layalpur district of present-day Pakistan.

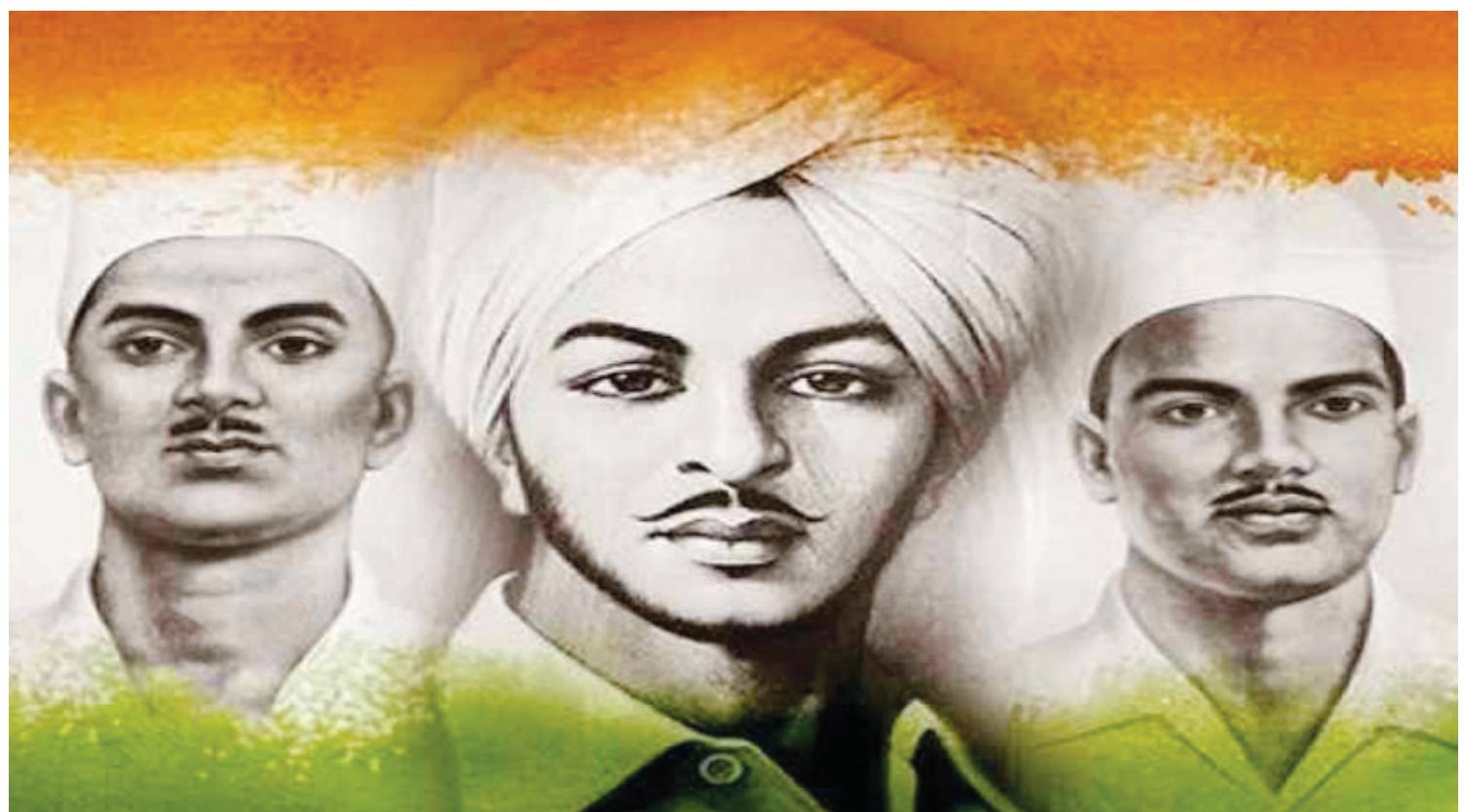
The third son of Sardar Kishan Singh and Vidyavati, Bhagat Singh's father and uncle were members of Ghadar party.

He was greatly attracted towards socialism. Believed to be one of India's earliest Marxists, Bhagat Singh was one of the leaders and founders of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). Bhagat Singh was deeply saddened by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.

Though he participated in the non-cooperation movement, he was disappointed when Gandhi called off the agitation after the Chauri Chaura incident. He studied at the National College in Lahore where he came into contact with other revolutionaries such as Bhagwati Charan, Sukhdev and others. He fled from home to escape early marriage and became a member of the organisation Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

RAJGURU

Shivaram Rajguru (1908-1931) was a great Indian freedom fighter who played a major role in the India's struggle for Independence. He is amongst those great Indian revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of country. His full name was Hari Shivaram Rajguru and was born into a Deshastha Brahmin family. Since his childhood days, he had witnessed the brutal



Sukhdev, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru

atrocities that the Imperial British Raj inflicted on India and her people. This instilled within him a strong urge to join hands with the revolutionaries in a bid for India's freedom struggle.

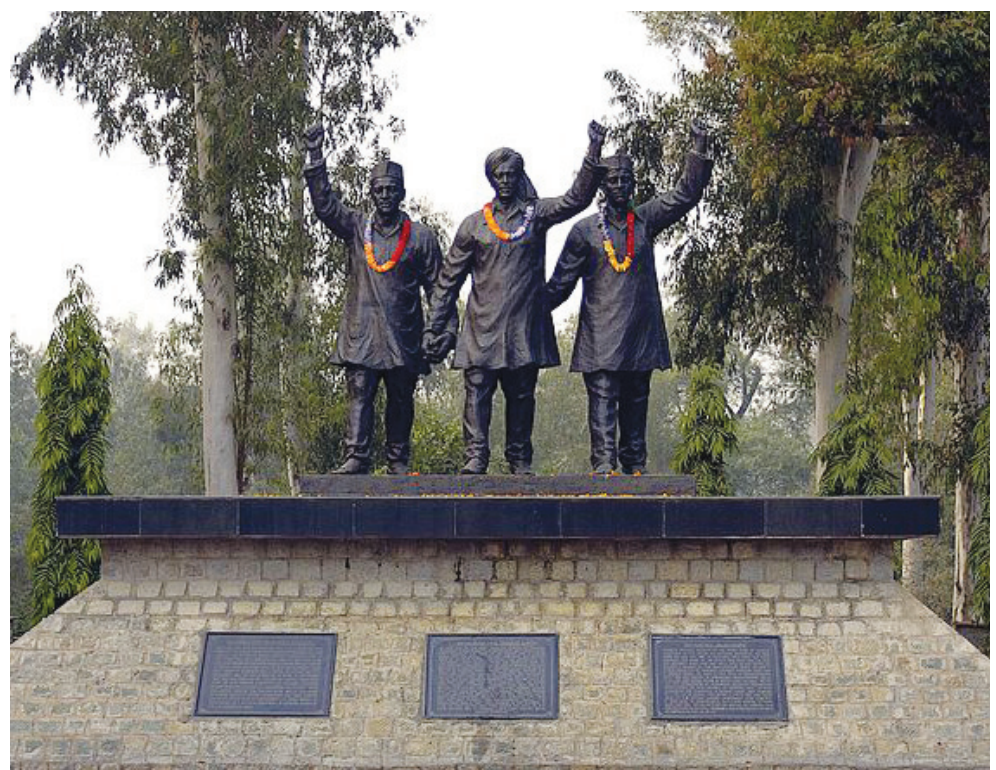
In the days of the Indian Freedom Movement, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) was an active force working against the British. Their main motive was to strike fear into the heart of the British regime. They simultaneously spread awareness amongst the people. They made them take notice of the growing domestic uprising when they dealt crucial blows with attacks like in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (December 18, 1928) and the bombing of the Central Assembly Hall in New Delhi (April 8, 1929).

SUKHDEV

Sukhdev (1907-1931) was a famous Indian revolutionary who played a major role in the India's struggle for Independence. He is amongst those great Indian freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their country. His full name is Sukhdev Thapar and he was born on 15th May, 1907.

His ancestral house is in Naughara Mohalla of Ludhiana city, Punjab, India. His father's name was Ram Lal. Since his childhood days, Sukhdev had witnessed the brutal atrocities that the Imperial British Raj had inflicted on India, which then led him to join the revolutionaries, vowing to set India free from the shackles of British dominion.

Sukhdev Thapar was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), and organized revolutionary cells in Punjab and other areas of North India. A devoted leader, he even went on to educate the youth at the National College in Lahore, greatly inspiring them about India's glorious past. He along with other renowned



Hussainiwala National Martyrs Memorial. The memorial marks the location on the banks of the Sutlej river where Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were cremated on 23 March 1931.

revolutionaries started the 'Naujawan Bharat Sabha' at Lahore that was an organization involved in various activities, mainly gearing the youth for the freedom struggle and putting an end to communalism.

Sukhdev himself took active part in several revolutionary activities like the 'Prison hunger strike' in 1929; however, he would always be remembered in the chronicles of the Indian Freedom Movement for his daring yet courageous attacks in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (18th December, 1928), that shook the very

foundation of the British Government. Sukhdev was the accomplice of Bhagat Singh and Shivaram Rajguru, who were involved in the assassination of Deputy Superintendent of Police, J.P. Saunders in 1928, thus avenging the death of veteran leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, owing to excessive police beating in the Conspiracy case. After the Central Assembly Hall bombings in New Delhi (8th April, 1929), Sukhdev and his accomplices were arrested and convicted of their crime, facing the death sentence as verdict.

At least 14 dead, several hurt in car bomb in Somali capital



MOGADISHU (TIP): At least 14 people were killed and 10 others wounded in a car bomb blast near a hotel in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, Somali officials said Thursday.

Capt. Mohamed Hussein said the explosion occurred near the Weheliye hotel on the busy Makka Almurkaramah road. The road has been a target of attacks in the past by the Somalia-based extremist group al-Shabab, the deadliest Islamic extremist group in Africa.

Most of the casualties were passers-by and traders, Hussein told The Associated Press. The toll of dead and wounded was announced by security ministry spokesman Abdulaziz Hildhiban.

Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the blast. The group frequently attacks Mogadishu's high-profile areas such as hotels and military checkpoints. A truck bombing in October killed 512 people in the country's deadliest-

ever attack. Only a few attacks since 9/11 have killed more people. Al-Shabab was blamed.

Thursday's blast comes almost exactly a month after two car bomb explosions in Mogadishu shattered a months-long period of calm in the city, killing at least 21 people.

The Horn of Africa nation continues to struggle to counter the Islamic extremist group. Concerns have been high over plans to hand over the country's security to Somalia's own forces as a 21,000-strong African Union force begins a withdrawal that is expected to be complete in 2020.

The US military, which has stepped up efforts against al-Shabab in the past year with dozens of drone strikes, has said Somali forces are not yet ready. (AP)

'Poisoned spy's mental capacity likely to get compromised'

LONDON (TIP): A nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia may have left them with compromised mental capacity and it is unclear whether they will recover, a British judge said on Thursday in a ruling. PM May says they had been deliberately targeted with the toxin by Russia, a charge Moscow rejects. On Thursday, a court granted permission for blood samples to be taken from the Skripals for examination by chemical weapons inspectors. Judge David Williams said a consultant who is treating the Skripals said they were unable to communicate and it was not possible to say when or to what extent either may regain mental capacity.

"The precise effect of their exposure on their long term health remains unclear... tests indicate that their mental capacity might be compromised to an unknown... degree," Williams said. (Reuters)

Made in France? Britain's new Brexit passport goes to the EU

LONDON (TIP): Britain is set to make its first post-Brexit blue passport, a cherished symbol of independence for many who backed leaving the bloc, in EU member France, the chief executive of passport-making company De La Rue said on Thursday.

During often bitter campaigning during the June 2016 referendum on whether to leave the EU, which Britain joined in 1973, some Brexit supporters called for a return of the blue passports, issued from 1920 to 1988. The current burgundy document is made by British firm De La Rue in northern England. "I'm going to have to go and face those workers, look them in the whites of the eyes and try and explain to them why the British government thinks it's a sensible decision to buy French passports not British passports," Martin Sutherland told BBC radio.

Britain's interior ministry said it was running a fair and open competition to make sure the end result is a high quality and secure product offering best value for money to customers.

"We do not require passports to be manufactured in the UK," said a spokeswoman. "A proportion of blank passport books are currently manufactured overseas, and there are no security or operational reasons why this would not continue." (Reuters)

Suspicious package found near London HQ of Cambridge Analytica

LONDON (TIP): British police said a suspicious package had been found near the London headquarters of Cambridge Analytica on Thursday, prompting police to close nearby roads and evacuate the building.

"The building has been evacuated as a precaution," police said. "No injuries have been reported."

The London-based political consultancy has been at the centre of a storm this week after a whistleblower said the company had paid an academic to harvest the data of 50 million Facebook users to build profiles of American voters before the 2016 US election.

Russia: UK can't be trusted in spy investigation

MOSCOW (TIP): Russia's ambassador to the UK says Britain has a history of violating international law and can't be trusted in investigating the poisoning death of a former Russian spy in Britain.

Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko told reporters today that Britain has blamed Russia for the nerve agent attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia on March 4 in southwestern England but presented no evidence.

Yakovenko says his country "can't take British words for granted," and accused the UK of having a "bad record of violating international law and misleading the international community."

He says "history shows that British statements must be verified. We demand full transparency of the investigation and full cooperation with Russia," and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Kremlin has denounced British foreign secretary Boris Johnson's statement comparing the World Cup in Russia to the Olympics hosted by Nazi Germany as "utterly disgusting."

The tough response marks an escalating war of words between Moscow and London over the poisoning in southwestern England of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter with a military-grade nerve agent. Britain blamed the attack on Russia, which fiercely denied the accusations.

Johnson agreed Wednesday with a Labour lawmaker who likened the soccer World Cup hosted by Russia this summer to Adolf Hitler's use of the 1936 Olympics as propaganda for his regime.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov described it today as "the utterly disgusting statement which is unworthy of a foreign minister of any country." He called Johnson's words "insulting and unacceptable." (AP)

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VARUN AND KATRINA TO STAR IN REMO'S NEXT DANCE FILM

Katrina Kaif and Varun Dhawan are set to collaborate for the first time for director-choreographer Remo D'Souza's upcoming project, touted to be India's biggest dance film.

T-Series' Bhushan Kumar is producing the movie. Remo has previously worked with Varun in "ABCD 2" and the 30-year-old actor is excited to team up with him again.

"Working with Remo again for India's biggest dance film is huge. I performed once in New York with Katrina and it was electric. She's going to bring her A game so I need to get back into shape. Bhushan is not only a strong producer who has over a period of time built a great marketing and distribution machinery, he also contributes a lot creatively, especially in the music department. Varun said in a statement.

Katrina said she feels great to be a part of "India's ultimate dance film".

"I am super excited to be joining Remo's vision... Varun's passion is so wonderful; he works tirelessly to create magic... I can't wait to start this journey," she added.

The movie will also feature actor-choreographer-director Prabhu Deva besides Dharmesh Yelande, Raghav Juyal and Punit Pathak who had featured in "ABCD 2".

The project is expected to go on the floors this year and will release on November 8, 2019.

Source: PTI

FEELS GREAT TO BE 40, WILL CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES: RANI

Rani Mukerji on her 40th birthday recalled her journey in Bollywood and the actor said it was not an easy one as she had to prove her worth every single day.

The "Hichki" actor has penned a letter on the occasion and thanked all the filmmakers she worked within the past 22 years for giving her roles that challenged the social norms.

"It feels great to be 40! It feels great to have also worked for 22 years and having been incredibly lucky to get so much love and appreciation. Very rarely do we artists get material that can genuinely cause social change, cause change in attitude and thinking and I have been fortunate enough to get such content multiple times. I truly feel blessed.

"I thank all the film-makers who have trusted me with their characters. Your characters, your films, became my identity," Rani said in the letter.

Rani said she realised it very late that she was "born to be an actor" and that surviving in the film industry is tough as the actors, especially females, have to justify their existence every day.

"I realised very late that I was actually born to be an actor, that I was born to entertain. And I hope I have been able to do just that. As a woman, I must admit, it has not been an easy journey. I had to prove myself every day. Actresses have to prove themselves every day," Rani said.

The actor also addressed the stereotypes and myths that prevail and are particularly targeted at female actors in the industry in her letter.

"A woman has a short career span, a married woman's equity dies, women are not bankable commodities at the box office, 'female-centric' (I hate this word!!)



films are huge risks, a married actress who is also a mother is the final nail in the coffin of her dreams, ambitions and aspirations - these are some of the discriminatory stereotypes that we have to live with and try to overcome every single day," she said.

Rani said that contrary to males, female actors are judged every day on the basis of their looks, dancing skills, voice and how they carry themselves in public.

"For a woman, the disparity with a man is huge and glaring in this industry. We are judged for our looks, our dancing skills, our height, our voice, our acting, how we carry ourselves every time we step out of the house - we have to be the best and yet we are thought to be extremely dispensable. I have been asking my friends to talk about their weaknesses and how they overcame them," she added.

Source: PTI

Actor Katrina Kaif feels it's extremely important for people to empower women around them and says she now tries to actively support and encourage her contemporaries.

Katrina says a lot of things start with mindset change and "we need to think what we are doing for women around us".

"Recently, I've become more aware of this, even subconsciously, do we really support our contemporaries- in whatever industry you're in? I try to support women who are around me as much as I can in my work space. Sometimes a competitive mindset can actually stop you from doing that," Katrina told reporters here.

The Tiger Zinda Hai actor says she tries to do whatever she can within her capacity.

"Am I lifting up the women around me, am I doing what I can to support, encourage or to help them grow? Rather than just see what they can do for me, I do whatever I can to encourage them to better in their profession."

Katrina was speaking at an event of Educate Girls, of which she is the brand ambassador.

When asked about the perception that actors, especially female stars, don't have an opinion on important things, Katrina said

Competitive mindset can stop us from empowering our contemporaries: Katrina

people have an opinion but there is no compulsion that one has to always make a comment.

"I have seen it myself that when you talk about politics, matters regarding government, a lot of actors, because they are not in politics, don't feel the need to comment.

"There's a big difference between having an opinion at your home, and speaking about it on a public platform, or having an opinion about a social cause like this."

Katrina said if one does not want to talk about a certain topic, it does not mean that they are not aware of it.

"I can't speak about everyone because there are different situations and everyone is different. But many times, I don't feel like taking about a topic. It doesn't mean I don't have an opinion on it but maybe it is not the right time and place to talk about it."

Source: PTI





ANGELINA JOLIE: I LOVE AGEING AS IT MAKES ME LOOK LIKE MY MOTHER

Hollywood star Angelina Jolie said she loves 'seeing herself age' as it makes her look more like her mother.

The actor said ageing also makes her feel alive.

"I look in the mirror and I see that I look like my mother, and that warms me. I also see myself aging, and I love it because it means I'm alive - I'm living and getting older. Don't love having a random dark spot from a pregnancy, sure.

"I see my flaws. But what I see that I like isn't about a structure or an appearance. It's more that I see my family in my face. I see my age," Jolie told.

The 42-year-old actor has Maddox, 16, Pax, 14, Zahara, 13, Shiloh, 11, and nine-year-old twins Vivienne and Knox, with her ex-husband Brad Pitt

AMY SCHUMER SAYS ACTRESSES PLAN HUNGRY DAYS TO STAY THIN

Actress Amy Schumer says most women facing the cameras stay thin by planning 'hungry days' when they don't eat.

According to reports, Schumer spoke about the extreme way her actress friends use to get ready for the camera. She said some of her famous friends plan days in the calendar when they 'have to be hungry'.

They even decline invites to socialise so that they remain home and away from temptation. "That's totally typical for a lot of actresses. But I'm like, 'I'm not doing that', because those people aren't happy," Schumer said.

Schumer says she doesn't feel unhappy with her looks. "It's funny, I go to awards shows and I try to look my best and I look like how the costume designers look and I feel proud about that," she said.

Last month, Schumer got married to chef Chris Fischer following a whirlwind romance. Schumer is enjoying every second of her marriage to chef Chris Fischer, which she said 'feels good'.

The 36-year-old actor admitted that she has been misusing the wife moniker and said that it feels like a "novelty".

In an interview, Schumer said "I'm a wife as hell. But it's still like, a novelty. Somebody went to sit next to (Chris) and he's like, 'My wife is sitting here,' and then I got back and he was excited to tell me that he said that.

"I just have been really overusing it to a degree that's insane. Like, when it's completely uncalled for," Schumer said.

The 'Trainwreck' star also said that she is happy to have married Fischer early in their relationship.

"Part of the thing that's good about us getting married so quickly is that we're so in love. Every girl I know, if they get proposed to they're like, 'Oh now? Now that I can't have kids!'" she said.



Shame on you: Rihanna to Snapchat over controversial advertisement

Singer Rihanna has slammed messaging app Snapchat over an advertisement that sought to promote domestic violence and referenced her 2009 assault by Chris Brown.

The advertisement, made for the promotion of the mobile game 'Would You Rather?', asked users which of the artists they would prefer to hit.

"Slap Rihanna or punch Chris Brown," the tagline on the ad stated, apparently in reference to Brown's conviction for assaulting Rihanna in 2009 while they were dating.

The 30-year-old singer took to Instagram and posted a lengthy comment, saying she was "trying to figure out what the point was with this mess".

"Now Snapchat, I know you already know you ain't my favourite app out there! But I'm just trying to figure out what the point was with this mess!. I'd love to call it ignorance, but I know you ain't that dumb! You spent money to animate something that would intentionally bring shame to DV victims and made a joke of it!!!" she wrote.

"This isn't about my personal feelings, cause I don't have much of them but all the women, children and men that have been victims of DV in the past and especially the ones who haven't made it out yet you let us down! Shame on you. Throw the whole app-oligy away," she added. After receiving the ire of the fans from all, Snapchat had issued a public apology and removed the ad, days before the singer's outburst.



"The advert was reviewed and approved in error, as it violates our advertising guidelines. We immediately removed the ad last weekend, once we became aware. We are sorry that this happened," the company had said in a statement to BBC.
Source: PTI



I freaked out: Lara Croft's Alicia Vikander on quitting Instagram

Actor Alicia Vikander says the pressure of continuously posting pictures and videos on Instagram was too much for her to take.

The Tomb Raider star said she decided to leave the photosharing website just a month after joining it, reported Femalefirst.

"I did have Instagram. I already freaked out about a month in, like a (pressure) that I had to post things. So, no, I don't have an Instagram account anymore," Vikander, 29, said.

The actor, however, is in love with Google.

"My friends call me Mrs Google. I'm really good at Googling answers on anything, and I'm very good at planning travels," she said.

Pakistan gets first woman opposition leader in senate

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistani lawmaker Sherry Rehman made history on Thursday by becoming the first woman Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, the Upper House of parliament. Rehman, 57, belongs to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). She has served as Pakistan's ambassador to the US from 2011 to 2013 and was elected to the Senate in 2015.

Her candidacy was approved by PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who earlier said "PPP (is) ready to make history again". His slain mother and former two time PM Benazir Bhutto had served twice as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, the Lower House, in 1990s.

Rehman was declared as Leader of the Opposition after she secured support of majority 34 opposition senators in the house of 104 and defeated Azam Swati of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf. (PTI)

China's OBOR team in Nepal to promote business

KATHMANDU (TIP): A high-level Chinese delegation held talks with Nepal's business leaders and discussed investment opportunities in the country under the One Belt One Road initiative.

The 20-member delegation led by Shu Ya, founder of One Belt One Road (OBOR) International Platform of China held talks with the Nepalese business community on Monday on attracting Chinese investment in Nepal under the framework of the OBOR, according to sources close to OBOR-Nepal Chapter.

The OBOR International Trade and Investment Platform is a mutual exchange platform of global purchasers and suppliers established to promote Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious OBOR initiative.

Last year, Nepal inked a major deal with China to join the OBOR initiative to link Asia with Europe.

During the meeting, the representatives of Nepalese business community asked the OBOR delegation to increase investment in Nepal's energy and infrastructure sector as well as tourism and agriculture.

Bhawani Rana, Chairperson of Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), asked the delegation to contribute for Nepal's economic prosperity through increasing investment under the OBOR framework as the investment climate has improved significantly with the establishment of new communist government in Nepal.

Also, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between by the OBOR Platform Federation of Handicraft Association of Nepal with a view to promote Nepali handicraft products to China under the banner of OBOR Platform.

The Platform has earlier signed MoU with various trade related bodies to promote Nepal's Pashmina, wild honey, a Nepali wine and Himalayan Nettle. (PTI)

India condemns 'barbaric' terrorist attack in Kabul

NEW DELHI (TIP): India on Wednesday strongly condemned the "inhumane and barbaric" terrorist attack in Kabul and extended all possible assistance to the war-torn country.

In a statement, the External Affairs Ministry said it was not only an attack on the Afghan people but also an attack on their identity and culture.

"What makes this attack particularly reprehensible is the fact that the terrorists and their backers chose the festive day of Nauroz to carry out their heinous act," it said.

India stands ready to extend all possible assistance, including for the treatment of those injured, the ministry asserted.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the family members of the victims, and we wish quick and complete recovery to the injured," it added.

An Islamic State suicide bomber struck on the road to a Shiite shrine in Afghanistan's capital today, killing at least 29 people.

The Public Health Ministry said another 52 people were wounded in the attack, which was carried out by a bomber on foot. (PTI)

No positive response from Pakistan on South Asia strategy: Afghan NSA

WASHINGTON / ISLAMABAD

(TIP): : There has been no positive response from Pakistan on the South Asia strategy of Trump administration, which has a significant impact on the reduction of violence and capabilities of the terrorists in this war-torn country, a top Afghan official said today.

Welcoming the South Asia Strategy announced by President Donald Trump last August, Afghan National Security Adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar told a Washington audience that it already has a significant impact on the reduction of violence and capabilities of the terrorists and to create an enabling environment for our peace and reconciliation strategy.

The response from the region has been mixed, Atmar said in his remarks on "Progress on Peace and Stability in Afghanistan" at the US Institute of Peace.

"Unfortunately, we haven't had any positive response from Pakistan. Not any change in the policy that they are pursuing," he said.

Noting that the response from the wider region is slightly mixed, Atmar said while there is a regional consensus on peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, the consensus on how to fight the terrorists has broken slightly.

"Unfortunately, there are actors in the region that draw a distinction between good and bad terrorists. Unfortunately, another sign of that breakdown of consensus is that we all agreed to have state-to-state relations for counter terrorism. But there are those now who look at state to non-state actors relations for counter-terrorism with serious implications for all of us," Atmar said.

"Like that there are those who say that they work with the Taliban against Daish or against the ISIS. Not only this is unethical but also self-defeating in terms of policy. Without going into details of this we are in an environment where while we have made significant progress but we also have challenges primarily associated to the growth of the foreign



fighters and the weakening of regional cooperation," said the top Afghan official.

Atmar said Afghanistan faces threat from a nexus of violent extremism, transnational criminalized networks and state sponsorship of terrorists.

"It's not just a threat against Afghanistan. It's a threat against the region and by extension against the entire global community," he said.

Noting that this is a common thread from a common enemy which calls for a shared mission and responsibility, Atmar said it's not just the Taliban and the Haqqani

network that they are fighting.

"Increasingly we see foreign fighters associated with at least three categories of terrorist networks. The global terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda, Daes and ISIS-K. The regional terrorists such as IMU from Central Asia and China, and Pakistani terrorists such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jaish-e-Mohammed," he said.

All these categories of terrorists, he claimed, have symbiotic relationship among themselves.

Responding to a question on peace talks, Atmar said their primary focus is to encourage the Taliban through soft means.

"We agree on that, but add that there must be some disincentives when it comes to the reconcilable elements. And disincentives will have to be provided by Pakistan," he said.

"As long as the Taliban leaders have a safe haven in Pakistan and they are able to draw proceeds from drugs, there will always be an element of irreconcilable. That needs to be addressed," Atmar said.

Asserting that the Taliban must know that they cannot win militarily and therefore, Atmar said currently there hasn't been any official response from the Taliban yet to the peace offer. "They are still pondering, consulting each other. But the unfortunate fact is that there has been an increase in violence since the launch of the peace strategy and peace offer," he said. (PTI)

ONE OF NEPAL'S LAST DANCING BEARS DIES AFTER RESCUE

PATAN (TIP): One of Nepal's last known dancing bears that was recently rescued has died after being transferred to a zoo, an animal rights activist said on Wednesday, blaming the death on "negligence".

The two sloth bears were rescued in southern Nepal in December last year from a pair of itinerant street performers who used the animals for entertainment.

Shortly after their rescue, the bears, 19-year-old male Rangila and Sridevi, a 17-year-old female, were transferred to a zoo near the capital Kathmandu where they were put in cages on display.

A few weeks later, the female bear died.

"(We) were told that she had some problem in her liver and that it was jaundice," said Niraj Gautam of Jane Goodall Institute Nepal, who was involved in the rescue of the bears.

"These animals should have been thoroughly checked. There was nothing. That's the negligence we want to point out." Gautam said that the bears should have been given special care and medical attention to help them rehabilitate after years of abuse as performing animals.

The bears were kept in small cages that were not properly cleaned and were displaying behaviours that suggested they were distressed, Gautam added.

"It feels like all our work was in vain," he said.



The government defended the care the bears have received, saying the zoo is the only facility in Nepal able to house them.

The Jane Goodall Institute and the World Animal Protection rights group are lobbying Nepal's government to have the surviving bear transferred to a special sanctuary for rescued dancing bears in neighbouring India, where the tradition of using the animals for

entertainment was only finally stamped out in 2012.

"There are legal hurdles in transferring the animal to another country and the zoo is the only facility we have," said Gopal Prasad Bhattarai, deputy director of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

"The zoo is giving the best care they (are) capable of (giving) to the bear."

Nepal outlawed the practice of performing bears back in 1973, a year after it was officially banned in India, but the tradition lingered on in parts of the country's south.

Dancing bears are trained as cubs to dance on their hind legs. Their snouts are pierced with a heated rod so they can be controlled by the tug of a rope or chain.

Dancing bears on the Indian subcontinent date back to the 13th century, when trainers belonging to the Muslim Qalandar tribe enjoyed royal patronage and performed before the rich and powerful. (AFP)

Bengaluru, mostly known for being the IT hub in Karnataka, is a city which has transformed from being very traditional to what it is now, a complete cosmopolitan! Nurturing a rich cultural and traditional heritage, the city has a plethora of options to see and savour. While most travellers talk about the nightlife, food and fun that this vibrant city offers, little do we know about its past and its forgotten landmarks. Mostly a Hindu-rich city in the past, Bengaluru has many historic and magnificent temples that are worth a visit.

For the not-so-religious, there are plenty of places to visit in Bangalore that are a must too.

DODDA GANESHANA GUDI (BULL TEMPLE)

Dodda Ganeshana Gudi also known by the name Bull Temple is believed to have emerged out of huge monolithic rock; the idol of Lord Ganesha is this temple's main attraction. It is believed by the locals, that all your prayers are heard and answered here, and your wishes are fulfilled in no time! Makes it a must-go temple isn't it? Another feather in its cap is its claim-to-fame for being the lucky mascot in most of the Kannada (local language of Karnataka) films! The second and bigger attraction here is the monolithic statue of the bull or what it is locally called as Nandi. Nandi is the sacred demi-god in Hindu mythology. The statue here is believed to be the biggest statue of Nandi in the world! It is located on top of a hillock, which can be trekked easily. This aside, the temple arena has a large park called the Bugle Rock garden, which offers lush green and fresh atmosphere to young and old alike!

GAVI GANGADHARESHWARA TEMPLE

Lord Shiva is the worshipped almighty here in this temple. Also known as Cave temple of South Bengaluru, its history dates to the 16th century AD, when the architect/founder of Bengaluru built it. The temple is built inside a cave located in the Gavipuram area of Bengaluru. The temple is famous for its monolithic pillars and structures in its courtyard. It is also believed that the temple has a secret tunnel that extends up to the sanctum sanctorum (Garbha Gudi) of the Shivagange Temple (around 50 km away, on the outskirts of Bengaluru). The temple sees a huge influx of devotees on the day of Makara Sankranti (usually falls on the 14th of January) when, in the evening, the sun shines directly on the deity's idol after passing through the horns of the bull (Nandi) that lies facing the almighty here. This is considered a miraculous phenomenon and has been a point of interest for several scientists to research upon.

KOTE VENKATARAMANA SWAMY TEMPLE

This magnificent temple is the abode of Lord Sri Venkateshwara. It is one of the very ancient temples of Karnataka and Bengaluru in particular. It is a huge temple and has a spacious courtyard. Built by Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar in the 1600s, this temple exemplifies the Dravidian and Vijayanagara architecture. There are many carvings of animals and scenes from ancient Hindu mythological stories. The other deities worshipped here are Anjaneya and Padmavathi (Lord Venkateshwara's wife). This temple sees unusual crowd gathering during the Vaikunta Ekadashi day (a festival dedicated to the lord of Vaikunta i.e. Venkateshwara). The temple shares its wall with the Tipu Sultan Summer palace on the K.R.(Krishna Rajendra) Road, near to the K.R. Market, in Bengaluru.

GODDESS BANASHANKARI TEMPLE

Recently renovated and glamorised to look better than the best of the temples in town,

this beautiful temple is the home for Goddess Banashankari (incarnation of Goddess Parvati). With a special aura, amidst the bustling and traffic-rich area of Banashankari, this temple has everything that a visitor would like to see and everything that a devotee has to feel. The devotees light oil lamps made of lemon peels, and offer it to the goddess, during the Rahukalam (time during the day which Hindus mostly consider inauspicious). This practice also continues on Tuesdays and Fridays. It is believed that doing this will fulfil the prayers of the devotees and also wipe away their sins. It is also believed that the goddess here is powerful enough to ward off any evil that is cast on you through any spell.

SRI SRINGERI SHANKARA MUTT

Shankara Mutt is the holy abode of Sri Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya Swamyji and the goddess Sri Sharadamba. This austere structure is an institution in itself. One of the many branches of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham in Sringeri, the ambience of the temple gives you a hair-raising experience. There are 3 parts in this temple complex—Sri Sharadamba Temple, Sri Adi Shankaracharya Temple and a prayer hall. The complex also has a book stall and a guesthouse. The temple gopuram is something that every visitor should observe. It has the carving of each of the Shankaracharyas till date on it. The complex is uncluttered and well maintained to reflect its belief of 'Shuddhi' (meaning cleansing). The mutt and the committee holds several cultural and musical events during the year, to which, everyone is welcome! The committee conducts classes to learn the Vedas (sacred Hindu texts), Upanishads (ancient Hindu texts pertaining to philosophy) and Sanskrit language. It is a treat to the eyes and the soul with a visit to this holy abode.

VENKATESHWARA TEMPLE

This is the temple of the lord of the seven mountains (Saptagirisha), Sri Venkateshwara. Lord Venkateshwara is one of the incarnations of Lord Sri Vishnu. The very name of Lord Venkateshwara flashes the temple of Tirupati to our minds. This temple is constructed in a similar manner, under the able guidance of the TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam) committee. The temple houses 7 deities—Lord Venkateshwara, Goddess Padmavati, Andal Ammavaru, Lord Rama, Goddess Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Lord Ganesha, Radha and Krishna. The stone carvings and the way the Pooja is performed here are kept mostly similar to the way it is done in Tirumala.

The temple has been recently built (in 2010) and is located in the Vyalikaval area of Bangalore (well within the old Bangalore locality). Temple is open to public all through the year and sees extreme crowd influx during Saturdays and on Vaikunta Ekadashi day. Through the booking centre within this campus, one can pre-book darshan and seva tickets for the main Balaji temple of TTD located in Tirumala.

ISKCON TEMPLE

One of the very famous Hindu temples in the city, ISKCON Temple has become the landmark location in north Bangalore. For many settled abroad, Hinduism and ISKCON are often synonymous. It is an institution for learning,

TEMPLE TOUR IN BANGALORE



practicing and preaching many Hindu beliefs. It is a one stop place for worshipping many gods—Lord Krishna, Radha, Govinda, Narasimha etc. The highlighting feature about ISKCON, Bangalore, is its famous Akshayapatra Foundation. They distribute free food for the children in government and government-aided

schools across India. This initiative is much appreciated world-wide and many foreigners have been funding this campaign too. The temple has a magnificent architecture spread over several acres of land. The temple is at an altitude higher than the road level and helps the passers-by to easily catch a glimpse of it while on their way.

BREAK THE BAD HABITS THAT IMPACT YOUR MARRIAGE

Research shows it takes just 21 days to form a habit. Seems so simple to start and stick with doing something good for yourself like working out, eating clean, not yelling at the kids, etc. But it also takes just 21 days to create the not so positive habits that over time can build up and breakdown a marriage. Habits both good and bad impact our day to day.

If you're involved with someone you truly love and respect, the last thing you want on your conscience is knowing that you allowed a fixable bad habit ruin your relationship. Here's what not to do.

ASSUMING YOU KNOW HOW YOUR PARTNER FEELS

Your partner walked in the room wearing a scowl, so naturally that meant they were unreasonably pissed at you for something you probably didn't do. Before you know it, you've launched into defense mode, and instead of helping to lift the bad vibes, you've managed to spread them around, making both you and your partner feel worse.

Making assumptions can be damaging to our relationships because they don't allow partners to share their side, which leaves them feeling unheard. As licensed marriage and family therapist Ashley Thorn tells the site, "[Y]ou're basically deciding a thought you're having is 'fact' when you don't have all the information."

NOT SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

It's totally normal to share aspects of your personal life with friends and family, but that doesn't mean they should become a third party in your relationship. If you make a habit of seeking out their input every time you and partner disagree or you routinely



reveal private information about your partner without their knowledge or consent, you should take steps to set better boundaries and focus on building trust in your relationship by keeping friends and family out of your love life.

REFUSING TO ACCEPT CRITICISM

It can be hard to take criticism from the one you love most, especially when you see all the shortcomings they have yet to work on. And absolutely no one wants to hear about all the ways they screw up constantly. But if you're partner is trying to give you some healthy feedback about where they see room for improvement in the relationship, ignoring their critiques could possibly lead them to have contempt for you, which can ultimately break down the bond you have.

NOT COMMUNICATING OPENLY ABOUT SEX

Little does your partner know, that supposedly ~amazing~ thing they do in bed is actually a major turn-off to you, but you're too uncomfortable to address

it. Whatever it takes, talking to your partner about your sex life is the only way to improve it. Otherwise, you'll continue to suffer in silence, and the unaddressed issue could potentially ruin what was once (and still could be!) a good thing.

SUPPRESSING YOUR ANGER

We get why you would want to bottle up your anger: Things are going great in between you and your significant other, and you don't want to ruin them by bringing up some unpleasant feelings that could lead to a tense disagreement. But as the Mayo Clinic points out, the outcome of being angry depends on how you deal with it.

KEEPING SCORE

Not only is this exhausting and nit-picky, but it implies that you don't trust your partner to carry their weight in the relationship. If you find it necessary to monitor everything they do (or don't do) in order to make sure you're being treated fairly, you could be the problem in your relationship.



COLOR YOUR HAIR NATURALLY

COFFEE

Coffee works great if you're looking to go darker, cover gray hairs, or add dimension to dark tresses. Simply brew a strong coffee (espresso works well), let it cool, and then mix one cup with a couple cups of leave-in conditioner and 2 tablespoons of coffee grounds.

Apply on clean hair and allow to sit for about an hour. If you use apple cider vinegar to rinse, it will help the color last longer. You may need to repeat the process a couple times to see noticeable results.

TEA

Like coffee, black tea can help you go darker, and can also help cover gray hairs. If you have lighter hair, though, there are other types of tea you can use. Chamomile, for example, is recommended for blondes, while rooibos may work for redheads.

Do keep in mind that tea works best with your natural color. You won't be able to turn blonde hair brunette. But black tea can darken blonde hair and chamomile can lighten it—especially if you sit in the sun while you have it in.

The longer you leave the tea on the hair, the more noticeable the color will be. You can also try repeated applications.

The key is to make the tea highly concentrated. Use 3-5 teabags (or about the same amount in loose-leaf tea) for two cups of water. You can apply the cooled tea to hair alone, or mix with conditioner (as noted in the coffee recipe). If you're seeking to cover grays, mix with some fresh or dried sage, which helps open up the hair follicles.

Leave on hair for at least an hour—more if you want more color. Some even put on a cap and wear the tea overnight, then rinse the following morning. Check your color to determine what intensity you need.

FOOD CORNER

PESHAWARI CHOLE

Ingredients

1 cup kabuli chana (white chick peas), 1 tbsp chana dal (split bengal gram), 2 big cardamoms, 25 mm stick cinnamon, (dalchini), 2 tea bags, 4 tbsp oil, 1 cup chopped onions, 1 1/2 tsp pomegranate (anardana) powder, 1 cup chopped tomatoes, 1 tsp finely chopped ginger (adrak), 2 tsp finely chopped, green chillies, 1 tsp coriander (dhania) powder, 1/2 tsp chilli powder, 1/2 tsp garam masala, 1 tsp chole masala, salt to taste

Method

- Clean, wash and soak the kabuli chana and chana dal overnight or for 6-8 hours.
- Drain, wash again, add 2 cups of water, big cardamom, cinnamon and teabags and pressure cook for 5 to 6 whistles or until the chana is well cooked.
- Allow the steam to escape before opening the lid.
- Strain and reserve the liquid but discard the tea bag. Keep the kabuli chana liquid aside separately.
- Heat the oil in a kadhai, add the onions and sauté till they turn translucent, while stirring continuously.
- Add the pomegranate powder and cook, till the onions turn dark brown while stirring continuously.



- Add the ginger, green chillies, tomatoes and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes.
- Add the cooked kabuli chana- chana dal, chole masala, the reserved liquid and salt and mix gently.
- Add the coriander powder, chilli powder and garam masala and sauté till the tomatoes are cooked and the mixture leaves oil.
- Serve hot with bhaturas.

DAL AMRITSARI

Ingredients

3/4 cup urad, 1 cup chopped onions, 1 tsp chopped ginger (adrak), salt to taste, 1/2 cup fresh cream, 1 tbsp oil, 1 tbsp ghee, 1 tsp ginger paste, 1 tsp garlic paste, 1 tsp finely chopped green chillies, 1/2 cup chopped tomatoes, 1/2 tsp chilli powder, 1/2 tsp turmeric powder (haldi), 1/2 tsp dried mango powder (amchur), 1/2 tsp coriander (dhania) powder, 1/2 tsp cumin seeds powder. 1/2 tsp Punjabi garam masala

Method

- Wash and soak the whole urad overnight. Drain, add 1/2 cup onions, ginger, salt and 2 1/2 cups of water and pressure cook for 15 to 20 minutes, over medium flame
- Whisk so as to mash the dal, add the cream and cook on low flame for 10 minutes so it thickens. Keep aside.
- Heat the oil and ghee in a small pan, add the remaining onions, ginger paste, garlic paste and green chillies and sauté till the onions turn translucent. Add the tomatoes and sauté for 3-4 minutes or till the mixture leaves oil. Add the chilli powder, turmeric powder, dry mango powder, coriander powder, cumin seeds powder, Punjabi garam masala and salt and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add it to the dal and simmer for 5 minutes.
- Serve hot garnished with coriander.

EXERCISING DURING PREGNANCY REDUCES TIME SPENT IN LABOUR

LONDON (TIP): Health starts in the womb and exercising is one of the best ways to give your baby a healthy start, also reducing your time spent in labour.

A new research conducted by the Technical University of Madrid and quoted by The Independent has discovered that it can also impact how long expectant mothers spend in labour.

The team of researchers, led by Professor Ruben Barakat, carried out a study with 508 healthy women by randomly assigning them into two groups: 253 women were put in the control group, while 255 women were placed in the exercise group.

Those in the exercise group were given a moderate aerobic exercise programme throughout their pregnancies, which they followed during three weekly sessions.

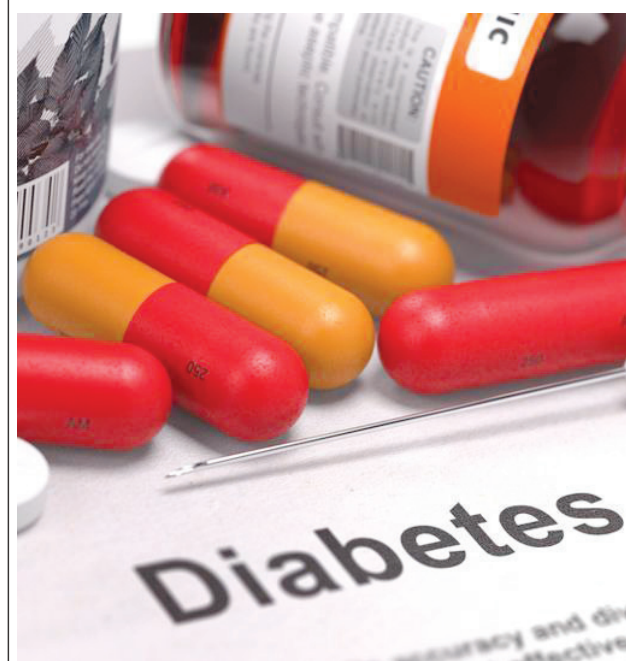
The researchers then analysed a number of factors while each woman gave birth, including the duration of each stage of labour, the mode of delivery, maternal weight gain, use of an epidural and the weight of the baby.

They came to the conclusion that the expectant mothers who were active in aerobic workouts during their pregnancies were more likely to spend less time in labour than the women who hadn't. The women in the exercise group were also less likely to use an epidural



during childbirth. Furthermore, neonate macrosomia, which is when a newborn is significantly larger than average, was more prevalent among the mothers in the control group. While exercising

during pregnancy may help mothers restore their fitness after giving birth, getting back into shape after carrying a baby for nine months is far easier said than done. *Source: ANI*



NEW DIABETES DRUG MAY HELP SHED EXTRA KILOS

NEW YORK (TIP): A compound which mimics a naturally occurring hormone that regulates appetite may help obese people lose weight, according to a study.

The compound, semaglutide, has a chemical structure very similar to the hormone glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1), which regulates both insulin secretion and appetite.

"This randomised study of weight loss induced with semaglutide in people with obesity but without diabetes has shown the highest weight reductions yet seen for any pharmaceutical intervention," said Patrick M O'Neil from the Medical University of South Carolina in the US.

The study, presented at Endocrine Society's annual meeting in Chicago, included 957 participants, 35 per cent of whom were male.

All participants had a body mass index (BMI) of at least 30, but did not have diabetes.

They were randomly assigned to seven different groups. Five groups received different doses of semaglutide (between 0.05 milligrammes (mg) and 0.4 mg) via injection once daily.

A sixth group received a placebo, and a seventh group received 3 mg of the diabetes drug liraglutide.

All participants received monthly diet and exercise counseling.

After one year, all participants receiving semaglutide had lost significantly more weight than those receiving placebo.

The higher the dose participants received, the greater their average weight loss, researchers said.

Participants who received 0.05 mg of semaglutide daily lost an average of 6.0 per cent of their body weight.

The 0.1 mg group lost an average of 8.6 per cent, while the 0.3 mg group lost an average of 11.2 per cent.

Those receiving a daily dose of 0.4 mg lost an average of 13.8 per cent, researchers found.

Those receiving liraglutide lost an average of 7.8 per cent of their body weight, while those in the placebo group lost only 2.3 per cent on average, they said.

Sixty-five per cent of participants who received 0.4 mg of semaglutide per day lost at least 10 per cent of their body weight, compared with 10 per cent of those in the placebo group and 34 per cent of the liraglutide group.

Source: PTI

Easy ways to improve your diet

LONDON (TIP): If you are finding it difficult to keep a check on your diet than it is time to improve it in a few easy ways.

Re-organise your kitchen

A simple hack to stop yourself from late night snacking is to move high-calorie foods to the back of the fridge, leaving the front free for healthier snacks like carrot sticks and hummus. Try storing any sweets, biscuits or chocolates in opaque containers. It's also a good idea to reorder your kitchen cupboards, moving smaller plates to the front, making them more accessible, as research has found that when you eat from a small plate, you tend to consume less food.

Ensure you have a balanced diet

When it comes to improving your diet, ensure you eat a balance of foods. You should make sure that you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, at least five times a day. Make sure that they are part of each meal, for example having a banana with breakfast, some green vegetables like spinach, or asparagus for lunch and ensure that half of your plate for dinner is also vegetables.

Also include starchy foods in your diet - potatoes with the skin on are a great option. Also try and make sure that your starchy foods are wholegrain, as these contain more vitamins and nutrients than the alternatives.



Drink plenty of water

There are many reasons why water is an essential component of our diet. Firstly, water assists the body in disposing off waste products, it also ensures a stable blood flow and provides your cells with the hydration they need in order to function properly.

Reduce sugar in your diet

An easy way to improve your diet is to reduce the amount of sugar you eat. When we're feeling tired or sluggish, we quite often reach for sugary foods to give us that quick boost. However, the truth is that sugar isn't great for the body. To

begin weaning your body off processed sugar, it's a good idea to start with a complete sugar detox for the first couple of days, as a way to reset your body, before slowly introducing natural sugars and unrefined carbohydrates for the remainder of the month.

If you are suffering from cravings, then try snacking on nuts and seeds as they are high in healthy fats and proteins that will keep you full for longer. Try also using alternative flavours, for example; a sprinkle of cinnamon on your porridge instead of the usual dollop of honey.

Source: IANS

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DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND



DR. SATISH ANAND
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National
E-Mail: sanandmd@gmail.com

GITANJLI ANAND
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)
E-mail: gitanjlianand@gmail.com

TWITTER LIKELY TO BAN CRYPTOCURRENCY ADS

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): After Facebook and Google, Twitter was now likely to ban cryptocurrency, token sales and Initial Coin Offerings (ICO) advertisements on its platform.



According to a Sky News report on Monday, the new Twitter policy will be implemented in two weeks.

"Twitter may also ban all ads for cryptocurrency exchanges, with some limited exceptions, when the policy is launched," the report added.

Google last week announced that it will ban advertisements for cryptocurrencies and other "speculative financial products" across its ad platforms.

The ban on such advertisements will come into force from June.

"We updated several policies to address ads in unregulated or speculative financial products like binary options, cryptocurrency, foreign exchange markets and contracts for difference (or CFDs)," Scott Spencer, Google's Director of Sustainable Ads, said in a blog post.

"In June 2018, Google will update the financial services policy to restrict the advertisement of contracts for difference, rolling spot forex and financial spread betting," Google said.

In 2017, Google took down more than 3.2 billion ads that violated its advertising policies.

Google also blocked 79 million ads in its network for attempting to send people to malware-laden sites and removed 400,000 of these unsafe sites last year.

In January, social media giant Facebook banned all ads promoting cryptocurrencies, including Bitcoin and ICOs.

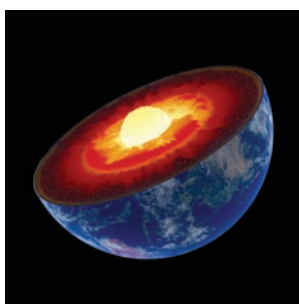
The new policy prohibits ads that promote financial products and services that are frequently associated with misleading or deceptive promotional practices, Facebook said in a statement.

"We want people to continue to discover and learn about new products and services through Facebook ads without fear of scams or deception.

"That said, there are many companies who are advertising binary options, ICOs and cryptocurrencies that are not currently operating in good faith," said Rob Leathern, Product Management Director at Facebook. *Source: IANS*

WATER MAY EXIST IN EARTH'S LOWER MANTLE: STUDY

WASHINGTON (TIP): Water may be more common than expected at extreme depths within Earth's lower mantle—approaching 640 kilometres and possibly beyond, a study of diamonds from across the world has found.



The oceans have been measured to a maximum depth of 11 kilometres, though water is known to exist well below the oceans. Just how deep this hidden water reaches, and how much of it exists, are the subjects of ongoing research.

The study, published in the journal *Science*, explored microscopic pockets of a trapped form of crystallized water molecules in diamond samples from locations in Africa and China.

The tiny traces of crystallised water, trapped in spaces called inclusions that measure just a few microns in length, contain the molecular signature of ice.

This crystallised water likely formed from liquid water existing at very high pressures, researchers said.

The structure and chemical studies helped the scientists to determine the pressures and temperatures at which the diamonds formed.

This allowed the scientists from US Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab) in the US to estimate the depths of their formation.

Many of the studied diamonds from a random sampling seemed to originate from deep inside the Earth, within and even beyond the transition zone sandwiched between Earth's upper and lower mantles, said Oliver Tschauner, from the University of Nevada in the US. *Source: PTI*

NEW 3D-PRINTED STETHOSCOPE COULD SAVE LIVES IN WAR ZONES

TORONTO (TIP): Physicians in remote parts of the world can now 3D print a clinically validated stethoscope with recycled plastic, thanks to scientists who have designed a device template that could save lives during wartime when medical supplies are scarce.

"As far as we know this is the first open-source medical device that has been clinically validated and is widely available," said Tarek Loubani, associate professor at University of Western Ontario in Canada.

Loubani spent time working as a physician in hospitals in Gaza during wartime when medical supplies were often scarce.

"We wanted physicians and allied health care professionals to be able to have something that was high quality. This study found that the acoustic quality was the same in our stethoscope as in a premium brand stethoscope," he said.

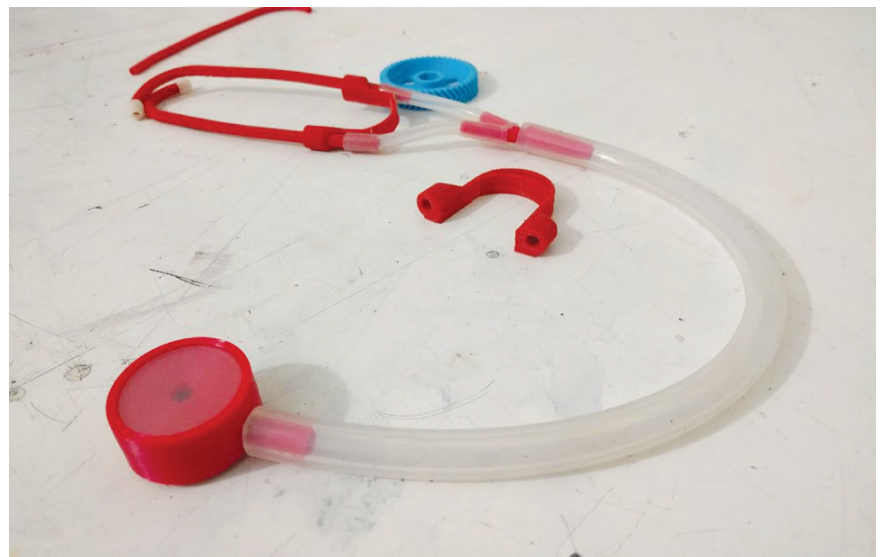
The idea to 3D print a stethoscope was born while playing with a toy stethoscope and noticing it performed its function quite well.

That led researchers to design an open-access template for a 3D printed stethoscope that could be created using recycled plastic.

The stethoscope, called the Glia model, was made using free open source software to keep costs low and allow others to easily access the code.

With the Glia template, the stethoscope can be made in less than three hours and costs less than \$3 to produce.

Anyone with a 3D printer and access to ABS—a plastic used to make garden



chairs and Lego—can create the device. The results of the study, published online today in the journal *PLOS ONE*, show it has the same acoustic quality as the best stethoscopes on the market.

"Use of the open source approach in every aspect of this project contributes powerfully to the body of medical device research," said Gabriella Coleman, PhD, noted scholar on technology and open source software.

"This research gives a guide for others to create medical-grade open access devices that can reduce costs and ultimately save lives," said Coleman.

The device is currently in clinical use by physicians and allied health professionals in Gaza and is also being tested at the London Health Sciences Centre in Ontario, Canada.

Loubani said stethoscopes may not be seen as vital for diagnosis and treatment

in places such as London, where physicians rely heavily on ultrasound, CT and other diagnostic technologies.

However, in war torn and low-income communities, the stethoscope is a necessary tool.

"Stethoscope utility goes up as other resources go down. In London, if someone gets shot, I can use an ultrasound to look inside and see if there is a life-threatening air pocket called a pneumothorax," Loubani said.

"In Gaza, ultrasounds are not available in emergency departments, or are dilapidated, so the stethoscope becomes an inexpensive tool that allows us to make life-saving decisions," he said.

The hope now is to create templates for other medical devices that can be made or improved on-site in locations with scarce resources. *Source: PTI*

New mobile application can reduce stroke risk

LONDON (TIP): Scientists have developed a new mobile application that can detect atrial fibrillation that causes strokes.

The mobile application can save lives all over the world as timely diagnosis of atrial fibrillation is crucial for effective stroke prevention.

The researchers studied 300 patients with heart problems, half of who had atrial fibrillation. They managed to identify the patients with atrial fibrillation from the other group with a smart phone. The mobile application detected which patients had atrial fibrillation even with a 96 per cent accuracy. In other words, the application recognised automatically near all cases with atrial fibrillation and the number of false alarms was very low.

"The results are also significant in that the group included different kinds of patients, some of whom had heart failure, coronary disease, and ventricular extrasystole at the same time," said Tero Koivisto from the University of Turku in Finland. According to the study, published in the journal *Circulation*, the application



has been under development for quite some time—it took seven years of careful research to achieve it.

Detecting atrial fibrillation has been a worldwide medical challenge for years, but affordable solutions available for all have been lacking.

"Most smart phones have an accelerometer. As nearly everyone has a smart phone, we decided to develop a simple application that could be used in the detection. In the future, everyone who owns a smart phone can detect atrial fibrillation," said Koivisto. *Source: PTI*

Facebook Messenger gives more control to group administrators

Making it easier to control large groups on Messenger, Facebook on Wednesday introduced a feature that gives the administrators more powers where they will be able to approve and remove members and promote or demote any other person in the group chat.

"Since 2.5 million new groups were created on Messenger every day last year, we're excited to start rolling out new, widely requested Messenger features that make your group chat experience more robust and seamless," Drew Moxon, Product Manager, Messenger, wrote in a blog post on Wednesday.

"Admin privileges allow you to approve new members before they join your group chat. This is especially helpful in large group chats with people you may not yet be connected to," Moxon added.

Source: IANS

After PNB, SBI, now Union Bank of India hit by bank fraud

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a Rs1,394.43 crore bank fraud case against Hyderabad-based Totem Infrastructure Ltd on a complaint by state-run Union Bank of India.

"The CBI registered a case today (Thursday) on a complaint by Union Bank of India against Totem Infrastructure and its promoters and directors Tottempudi Salalith and his wife Tottempudi Kavita of Hyderabad," a person familiar with the developments said.

The number of bank fraud cases has been piling up after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) directed banks to file complaints against erring companies. The latest case comes just a day after the investigating agency filed a case of loan fraud against Kanishk Gold Pvt. Ltd on a complaint by State Bank of India (SBI).

Union Bank of India's industrial finance branch of Hyderabad filed the complaint against Totem for cheating the bank to an extent of Rs313.84 crore.

"Totem Infrastructure took a loan from a consortium of eight banks, including Union Bank, wherein the total outstanding dues stand at Rs1,394.43 crore. This account became NPA (non-performing asset) on 30 June 2012," the person added.

The agency said that Union Bank of India had only recently filed a complaint with the agency against Totem Infrastructure.

It was alleged in the complaint by Union Bank that "the company had diverted funds by opening accounts



outside the consortium and through payments of wages by showing excess expenditure and inflated stocks. The entire sale proceeds were not allegedly routed through the dealing branches of consortium banks."

Union Bank of India declined to comment on the matter.

CBI said that it had tracked the promoters down and "have located the accused at a new place of residence and searches are underway".

Other persons familiar with the case also confirmed that Totem Infrastructure was engaged in infrastructure projects, wherein "they took subcontracts from Larsen and Toubro Ltd, Irocon International Ltd and similar companies."

In a statement, CBI added that "the said private company (Totem) based at Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, was in the business of

EPC (engineering procurement and construction) contractor engaged in road projects, water works, building structures and also undertook works as a sub contractor to various companies."

Totem Infrastructure did not respond to Mint's calls or messages.

On Wednesday, CBI registered a case against Chennai-based Kanishk Gold and its promoters Bhoopesh and Neeta Jain for allegedly defrauding State Bank of India (SBI) and 13 other banks to the tune of Rs824.15 crore, while also issuing lookout circulars against the accused.

"The CBI, on Thursday, conducted two fresh searches (locations not disclosed) and questioned Bhoopesh Jain and Neeta Jain in connection with the case and lookout circulars have been issued against those who have been accused," the person cited above added. *Source: Livemint*

CANARA BANK SHARES END 4% LOWER AS CBI FILES CHARGE SHEET AGAINST EX-CMD



NEW DELHI (TIP): Shares of Canara Bank ended nearly 4 per cent lower on Tuesday after the CBI charged former Chairman-cum-Managing Director RK Dubey and two of the then executive directors of the company of cheating and forgery.

The stock declined 3.84 per cent to end at Rs 254.15 on BSE. During the day, it tumbled 5.41 per cent to Rs 250.

At NSE, shares of the company lost 3.78 per cent to close at Rs 254.20.

In terms of equity volume, 8.32 lakh shares of the company were traded on BSE and over one crore shares changed hands at NSE during the day.

The company's market valuation dipped Rs 605.87 crore to Rs 15,180.13 crore.

The CBI yesterday charged former CMD RK Dubey and two of the then executive directors of Canara Bank of cheating and forgery in the alleged loan default of over Rs 68 crore sanctioned in 2013, officials said.

In its charge sheet filed at special CBI court in Tis Hazari, the CBI has slapped charges of criminal conspiracy, cheating, forgery and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act on the then CMD RK Dubey, then executive directors Ashok Kumar Gupta and V S Krishna Kumar, and two directors of Occasion Silver Pvt Ltd Kapil Gupta and Raj Kumar Gupta, besides the company. *Source: PTI*

US Fed raises key interest rate amid stronger growth outlook

WASHINGTON (TIP): Federal Reserve officials, meeting for the first time under Chairman Jerome Powell, raised the benchmark lending rate by a quarter-point, and forecast a steeper path of hikes in 2019 and 2020, citing an improving economic outlook. Policy makers continued to project a total of three increases this year.



Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell

"The economic outlook has strengthened in recent months," the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee said in a statement Wednesday in Washington. Officials repeated previous language that they anticipate "further gradual adjustments in the stance of monetary policy."

The upward revision in their rate path suggests Fed officials are looking through soft first-quarter economic reports and expect a lift this year and next from tax cuts passed by Republicans in December. Financial conditions have tightened since late January as investors look for signs that the central bank might raise rates at a faster pace, while forecasters predict stronger U.S. growth and tight labour markets.

"The job market remains strong, the economy continues to expand, and inflation appears to be moving toward the FOMC's 2 percent longer running goal," Powell said in a press conference that he kept somewhat shorter than those conducted by his predecessor, Janet Yellen. Powell said he's "carefully considering" expanding the number of such briefings where he explains Fed decision, cautioning that he wanted to be sure that didn't send any signals about the path of policy. The vote to lift the federal funds rate target range to 1.5% to 1.75% was a unanimous 8-0.

The latest set of quarterly forecasts forecasts showed that policy makers were divided over the outlook for the benchmark interest rate in 2018. Seven officials projected at least four quarter-point hikes would be appropriate this year, while eight expected three or fewer increases to be warranted.

AIR INDIA RESCHEDULES INDIA-BOUND FLIGHTS FROM US

NEW DELHI (TIP): Air India has rescheduled couple of India-bound flights from the US on Wednesday due to inclement weather in northeastern America, the airline said in a tweet.

Air India's London-Newark flights (both directions) have been cancelled along with the Newark-Ahmedabad flight.

Flight No. AI 102 from New York to New Delhi has been rescheduled and its revised time of departure is 12.15PM on March 22. The departure timings of flight No. AI 144 from Newark to Mumbai has also been rescheduled to 11AM on March 22.

The airline has cancelled its Newark-Ahmedabad flight for the day along with the London-Newark flight on both ways.

It tweeted that re-booking and



The flights were scheduled due to inclement weather and the airlines announced that re-booking and cancellation could be done without any penalty.

cancellation can be done without any penalty.

A low-pressure system moving across the southeastern US is expected to

develop into a storm, which will bring rain and snow across the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, US media reports said.

Source: PTI

Nirav Modi indirectly challenging case through his firm: ED

NEW DELHI (TIP): Nirav Modi, facing a probe in the over Rs 12, 600 crore Punjab National Bank fraud case, is "indirectly" challenging the money laundering case lodged against him in connection with the scam, the Enforcement Directorate told the Delhi High Court.

The submission that Nirav Modi was "indirectly" challenging the case through his company Firestar Diamonds, was made by the ED before a bench of Justices S Muralidhar and I S Mehta. Additional Solicitor General Sandeep Sethi,

representing the ED, said Modi, who has been absconding, was trying to abuse the process of law by moving the plea through his company. Firestar Diamond International Private Ltd, which is one of the accused in the money laundering case, has sought an interim stay of the ED proceedings in the matter.

The ED, in its affidavit has contended that the application for interim orders was "not maintainable" as it was "premature" and "misconceived". It has also said that "grave miscarriage of justice" will be

caused to the probe, which is at a nascent stage, if the company's plea for stay of further proceedings is granted. "The purpose of the application is to hinder the investigation," the ED said.

"Nirav Modi is the director of the petitioner company since incorporation, and is signatory to the memorandum and articles of the petitioner. He has not joined investigation pursuant to summons issued by the ED or even by the CBI. His communication has expressed that he does not intend to join investigation."

contd from page 1

Sadhguru calls for...

vital and it's important that we make this into a success (for) the survival of this generation," he said.

Concerned about the slow progress in implementing international agreed goals on water and sanitation, the United Nations General Assembly will launch a new decade to focus action on sustainable development and the management of water resources at an all-day event at the UN Headquarters on World Water Day, commemorated today.

The Decade, which will run from 2018-2028, calls for a greater focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives and on the implementation and promotion of related programs and projects, as well as on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Sadhguru, founder of the Isha Foundation, said if concerted action to save water bodies is taken now, then in 15-25 years communities can bring back the rivers of this world by at least 20 per cent. However, if action is delayed, it will take 100-150 years to have the same impact. "If we don't act now, the recovery will take much, much longer...We are rapidly moving to a place where turning around will be very difficult," he said, referring to the dire water situation across Asia and Africa.

With rivers in India having depleted by 60 per cent and across the world by about 35 per cent, Sadhguru called on people and communities to join hands for efforts towards water conservation, including through overhauling irrigation systems and putting enabling government policies in place.

He said given that agriculture in India consumes 80 per cent of the country's water, emphasis should be given on creating more vegetation.

"Agriculture has become an aggressive process...One of the immediate corrective steps we can take is to increase vegetation. Without vegetation there is no way we can hold water in the soil. We don't have enough vegetation for the number of people that we have right now," he said.

He stressed that through his work, his focus is to bring back as much vegetation as possible, particularly around water bodies.

He pointed out that women are the first and most to suffer when water becomes scarce, as it impacts several aspects of their daily routines, including access to toilets. Underlining the "very significant role" women can play in efforts towards water conservation, Sadhguru said women are "natural conservationists" as in families, conservation, whether economical or physical, is done by women. "Women can play a pivotal role in water resources management, agriculture and allied industries if they are empowered to take more economic decisions." Sadhguru had launched a nationwide campaign 'Rally for Rivers' in India, traveling across 16 states in 30 days with the message of rejuvenating India's rivers by maintaining a minimum of one-kilometer tree cover on riversides. (Source: PTI)

Facebook data breach...

We have a basic responsibility to protect people's data," Zuckerberg said in an interview with CNN, breaking a public silence since the scandal erupted at the weekend.

Editorial: Towards zero privacy

Zuckerberg said in a post on Facebook the company "made mistakes, there's more to do, and we need to step up and do it." He said the social network planned to conduct an investigation of thousands of apps that have used Facebook's platform, restrict developer access to data, and give members a tool that lets them to disable access to their Facebook data more easily.

His plans did not represent a big reduction of advertisers' ability to use Facebook data, which is the company's lifeblood.

Zuckerberg said he was open to additional government regulation and happy to testify before the US Congress if he was the right person. "I'm not sure we shouldn't be regulated.... I actually think the question is more what is the right regulation rather than yes or no, should it be regulated?... People should know who is buying the ads that they see on Facebook."

Zuckerberg said Facebook was committed to stopping interference in the US midterm election in November and elections in India and Brazil. Zuckerberg, in an interview with The New York Times, referred to the artificial intelligence (AI) tools deployed by Facebook to detect fake accounts trying to manipulate news and influence the elections.

Such a tool was deployed for the first time in the French elections in 2017. "The new AI tools we built after the 2016 elections found, I think, more than 30,000 fake accounts that we believe were linked to Russian sources who were trying to do the same kind of tactics they did in the US in the 2016 election. We were able to disable them and prevent that from happening on a large scale in France," he said.

This is for the first time that Zuckerberg has publicly talked about Facebook being allegedly used for influencing polls. "I feel a lot better about the systems now. At the same time, I think Russia and other governments are going to get more sophisticated in what they do, too. So, we need to make sure that we up our game," he said.

"This is a massive focus for us to make sure we're dialed in for not only the 2018 elections in the US, but the Indian elections, the Brazilian elections, and a number of other elections that are going on this year that are really important," Zuckerberg said.

He said there is a lot of hard work that the Facebook needs to do to make it harder for nations like Russia to do poll interference. - Agencies FB to Enhance security for India elections Zuckerberg said Facebook is enhancing security features to ensure integrity of upcoming key elections in countries like India on its platform, as the social media giant faced flak over a major data breach scandal by a UK firm linked to Donald Trump's poll campaign.

Mark Zuckerberg says he is "sure someone's trying" to use Facebook to meddle with US mid-term polls in Nov

"I'm sure someone's trying," he said when asked about the possibility of meddling happening right now

"I'm sure that there's v2, version two, of whatever the Russian effort was in 2016, I'm sure they're working on that," he said

Meanwhile, Facebook shares fell 1.5 per cent in premarket trading on Thursday, March 22, as the apology failed to quell Wall Street nerves

The company has lost nearly \$46 billion of its stock market value over the past three days

Investors fear that any failure to protect personal data could deter advertisers and users and invite tougher regulation for the social media giant

Trump replaces national..

encouraged to take Bolton by Vice President Richard B. Cheney, who shared Bolton's belief in American military power.

On March 13, Trump had fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and signaled in recent days that a shake-up at the top levels of his administration was not over.

"I'm really at a point where we're getting very close to having the Cabinet and other things that I want," Trump told reporters after Tillerson was fired.

US, China embroiled in...

Trump directed the US trade representative to level tariffs on about \$60 billion of Chinese imports after a seven-month probe into the intellectual property theft, which has been a longstanding point of contention in US-China trade relations.

"We have a tremendous intellectual property theft problem. It's going to make us a much stronger, much richer nation," Trump said. "This has been long in the making," Trump told reporters at the ceremony in the White House while signing his memorandums targeting China's economic actions.

Trump's action comes a day after US Trade Representative concluded its Special 301 investigation against China and presented its report to him. The USTR report concluded that China uses foreign ownership restrictions, including joint venture requirements, equity limitations and other investment restrictions to require or pressure technology transfer from US companies to Chinese entities.

"This requires taking effective action to confront China over its state-led efforts to force, strong-arm, and even steal US technology and intellectual property," said US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

Trump said his Section 301 trade action could be about \$60 billion. He instructed USTR to publish a proposed list of products and any tariff increases within 15 days and to pursue dispute settlement in the World Trade Organization to address China's discriminatory technology licensing practices.

He also has directed the Treasury Secretary to address concerns about investment in the US directed or facilitated by China in industries or technologies deemed important to the country. Trump said America's trade deficit with China was a whopping \$504 billion per annum.

China which had earlier said it will not sit back idly in case US imposed tariffs, in a quick counter action announced plans for imposing reciprocal tariffs on \$3 billion of imports from the U.S. including products from steel to pork.

Bloomberg, in a late evening breaking news, March 22 saw the Chinese retaliation as "the arrival of a trade war" between the US and China.

In a statement Friday, March 23, hours after Trump instructed U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to slap tariffs on at least \$50 billion in Chinese imports, China's Commerce Ministry said it plans a 25 percent tariff on U.S. pork imports and recycled aluminum, and 15 percent tariffs on American steel pipes, fruit and wine.

China will also pursue legal action against the U.S. at the World Trade Organization, the statement said, and called for dialogue to resolve the dispute.

Policy makers across the world are warning of a brewing trade war that could undermine the broadest global recovery in years. Meanwhile, business groups representing companies ranging from Walmart Inc. to Amazon.com Inc. are warning U.S. tariffs could raise prices for consumers and sideswipe stock prices.

(With inputs from PTI)

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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 MARCH 26 - APRIL 01, 2018

Aries:

Ganesha says the period starts with a reality check. You realize that your plate is filled with activities and that you are in for a hard slog. You are also ambitious, and money is honey. While you are not the flamboyant type and don't necessarily believe in ostentation, you know very well that money sponsors your dreams. They understand that work is important to you and they see the tangibles that money can buy. You like a happy home and want to get them whatever they desire.

Taurus:

The hard work continues. There is travel and collaborations and spectacular gains. You are smart, polite, diplomatic, shrewd and tactful, and your lives are normally packed with secret meetings, rendezvous, clandestine love affairs, journeys and experiences of all kinds which may startle the average person. You simply manage to outsmart the opposition and you do it so deftly that they may not even be aware of it.

Gemini:

The twin themes of progress and expansion continue. There will also be many distractions of the domestic kind; there may be health and money issues to straighten out in the family and, possibly, some altercations which need your sober and mature erudition to defuse. You continue with the momentum of the past period and make good progress too. There is no harm in apologizing if you have to; in fact, it makes you an even bigger person!

Cancer:

You are on the treadmill of life in almost all spheres; from work, to family to entertainment. Your self - belief and confidence are at a high and you have the magic touch; there is success in almost everything you do. You may also indulge in religious rituals and go on a pilgrimage. You feel that you are invincible and there is power, success, energy and enthusiasm pushing you forward. You carry Ganesha's blessings wherever you go.

Leo:

You are filled with new ideas and your imagination runs riot. You also start thinking of the dark areas of life and get into unnecessary negativity and depression which you have to guard against. You think of unhappy moments in the past and fret about them. Please remember that the past is spilt milk and there is nothing that you can do about it. You know something is amiss but can't put your finger on it.

Virgo:

You are straightening out and begin to see things more clearly. You realize your role in the larger scheme of things and understand your responsibilities clearly. If you have a family, there are duties towards them from which you cannot run away. There are also work pressures and you begin to understand and accept all this. This is a vital learning experience. Now your focus is clear and there is no stopping now. There is also money to be made and you see the writing on the wall.

Libra:

There is full of strenuous activity. You are fully involved in work and manage to make remarkable progress. All your inherent cunning comes into play while signing documents and entering new business deals which work out in your favor. You entertain lavishly and make many purchases for the home and office. You may also consider shifting into a larger, newer and brighter home, or may even shift into an upscale new office.

Scorpio:

You are racing away like a Formula 1 car. There is tremendous growth in all areas of activity, and some truly interesting and promising offers and opportunities will come your way. You are ambitious, energetic and ebullient and make the most of the situation. You grab everything that is offered and strike hard which is a good thing because fortune is now shining on you. Ganesha warns you to be careful and moor yourself till the tempest passes.

Sagittarius:

You continue on an upward swing and make steady progress. All that you embark on at this stage leads to success. There is also an expansive phase of emotions and sensitivity and you will react to the slightest affronts which are not really necessary. You are on the boil and steaming away from no apparent reason. There will be happiness with children, and there may also be an addition to the family.

Capricorn:

You spread yourself in many directions and use all the diplomacy and wisdom in your command to emerge trumps. You meet up with old acquaintances and they enjoy your soft, loving nature full of sympathy and empathy for the ills of the world. You bask in all the attention and just love it as you are a non-violent, non-confrontationist sort of person and would rather make friends than enemies. It suits you perfectly to sit on the fence in most matters and still worm your way through!

Aquarius:

This is a period in which you make carefully calculated progress. There are many work challenges that require your attention to the fine print. There is some entertainment thrown in but very little time for leisure as such. You count pennies and make wise investments and there will be a lot of buying and selling. If you gamble or speculate in the market, chances are that you make substantial profit. At least, it keeps you focused and occupied and distracts you from unwanted escapades.

Pisces:

Your career focus is steadfast, and nothing deters you from laughing all the way to the bank. You enjoy the sound of money and the blossoming bank statements. They fill you with security and joy and you get ambitious and greedy for more money and power. You make purchases for the family and there is happiness all around. Love continues to desert you, but you are not perturbed. Instead, you spend time with old associates and colleagues and let yourself loose in friendship, bonhomie and gaiety.

T20 TRI-SERIES

India win tri-series after Karthik blitz

COLOMBO (TIP): India survived late drama in a pulsating final to clinch the Twenty20 tri-series after Dinesh Karthik smashed the final ball for a six to secure their thrilling four-wicket victory against a gallant Bangladesh side on March 18.

With India needing 34 runs off the last two overs, Karthik hammered 29 not out off just eight deliveries, his third six sealing India's third, and the most hard-earned, victory over Bangladesh in the tournament.

Put into bat, Bangladesh made 166-8, a total they owe largely to number three batsman Sabbir Rahman who made 77 after their top order collapsed.

Chasing 167 to win, India lost openers Shikhar Dhawan and number three Suresh Raina early but skipper Rohit Sharma batted comfortably to score 56 and keep India's chase on track.

He and KL Rahul (24) found it easy going against the Bangladesh bowlers until Sharma went for a fatal slog-sweep of Nazmul Islam, departing with three sixes and four boundaries to his name.

Mustafizur Rahman then bowled a masterly 18th over, when his first five balls at Vijay Shankar yielded only one run and Manish Pandey (28) perished off the sixth trying to accelerate the contest.

Next man in Karthik exploded immediately, hitting the first ball he faced for a six and plundering 22 runs off that over from Rubel Hossain to turn the match on its head.

Needing 12 runs off the last over from Soumya Sarkar, Shankar fell to the fifth delivery with India still five runs away.

Karthik nonchalantly hit the final ball for a six to trigger wild celebration by a young India team which had rested regular skipper



Indian cricketer Dinesh Karthik (2nd R) reacts after hitting a six in the last ball to defeat Bangladesh by 4 wickets during the final Nidahas Twenty20 Tri-Series in Colombo.

Virat Kohli and stumper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, among others.

Interim captain Sharma had earlier opted to bowl after winning the toss, influenced partly by the fact that chasing teams had won five of the six matches prior to the final.

Bangladesh suffered early jolts and slumped to 68 for four midway through their

innings after leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (3-18) struck three blows, dismissing Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar and Mushfiqur Rahim.

Sabbir took the onus on himself to rescue Bangladesh and he got some support from Mahmudulla who made 21.

Even though wickets kept tumbling at the other end, Sabbir brought up his half-century

off 37 balls to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Paceman Jaydev Unadkat struck twice in the penultimate over of the Bangladesh innings, dismissing Sabbir and Rubel Hossain.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz made 19 not out off seven balls to help Bangladesh cross the 150-mark. *Source: Reuters*

All out for 58, England left red-faced in pink-ball Test

AUCKLAND (TIP): Captain Kane Williamson's unbeaten 91 set New Zealand up for a commanding lead after England were bowled out for one of their lowest scores in the first Test here on Thursday. At stumps on Day 1 in the first day-night Test in New Zealand, the Black Caps were 175/3, 117 runs ahead with seven wickets in hand.

England were left red-faced when they failed to cope with a swing bowling masterclass by Trent Boult and Tim Southee to be all out for just 58 in 20.4 overs. They were flirting with the world-record low of 26, set by New Zealand on the same ground against England in 1955, until No. 9 batsman Craig Overton spared their blushes with an unbeaten 33. Apart from Stuart Broad taking his 400th Test wicket, it was a bleak day for the tourists, who registered their sixth lowest total in Tests.

But for New Zealand, Williamson commanded the Test from the moment he won the toss and opted to bowl. He featured in the field with a superb diving catch in the gully to remove Broad, and ended the day closing in on New Zealand's record for Test centuries. He currently shares the record of 17 centuries with Ross Taylor and the late Martin Crowe.

Williamson went to the middle after the early dismissal of Jeet Raval, when New Zealand were 8/1, and put on 84 with Tom Latham for the second wicket. Latham made a patient 26 off 112 deliveries but was dismissed in the first over after dinner to give Broad his milestone scalp.

Boult, who finished the England innings with a career-best 6/32, started their downfall when he had



England's captain Joe Root reacts as his team's miserable day unfolds.

Alastair Cook out for five in the fifth over. A steady stream of batsmen going to and from the crease followed, five of them departing with a duck and only Mark Stoneman (11), along with Overton, reaching double figures.

After Cook, Boult claimed Joe Root for a six-ball duck, Dawid Malan for two, Ben Stokes — who faced eight deliveries on his return to Test cricket — for a duck, Chris Woakes (5) and James Anderson (1). Southee, who finished with 4/25, kept up the carnage with the wickets of Stoneman, Jonny Bairstow, Moeen Ali and Stuart Broad, who were each dismissed without scoring. *Source: AFP*

SHAMI CLEARED OF CORRUPTION CHARGE, GIVEN CENTRAL CONTRACT

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Indian cricket board (BCCI) has approved Mohammed Shami's central contract after its anti-corruption unit (ACU) exonerated him of corruption charges levelled by his wife Hasin Jahan.

Shami has been given a Grade B contract (worth Rs 3 crore annually), and he's now free to play in the Indian Premier League.

BCCI had decided to hold back Shami's contract after his wife made a series of allegations against him, including a charge of possible match-fixing. Shami had denied all the allegations.

The Committee of Administrators (CoA) had asked ACU chief Neeraj Kumar to investigate whether the bowler had accepted money from a Pakistani woman, as claimed by his wife. "Based on the conclusions in the report, CoA is of the view that no further actions/proceedings under the BCCI anti-corruption code are warranted in the matter," the press release said. *Source: PTI*

WOMEN'S T20 TRI-SERIES: AUSTRALIA BEAT INDIA BY 6 WICKETS

MUMBAI (TIP): Australian women maintained their stranglehold on India with a record-equalling six-wicket victory in the opening encounter of the T20 Tri-Series, here on Thursday.

The Southern Stars thus maintained their unbeaten record on tour having outclassed the hosts 3-0 in the ODI series.

While the format changed from 50 to 20 overs but the familiar middle-order collapse still continued. Opener Smriti Mandhana once again struck a stylish 67 off 41 balls, helping India post a decent total of 152 for five in 20 overs.

In reply, Australia equalled their highest-ever chase in shortest format, comfortably winning in 18.1 overs despite a fine effort by veteran Jhulan Goswami (3/30), who unfortunately lacked support from the other end.

The biggest problem was that save Goswami, the other two seamers Shikha Pandey (0/25 in 2 overs) and Rumeli Dhar (0/28 in 2.1 overs).

Indian bowlers bowled too many boundary-balls with as many 21 fours and six were taken off them. Chasing 153, Australia women were in trouble at one point of time 29 for 2 as Goswami struck in her first and the third over, cleaning up keeper-opener Alyssa Healy (4) and Ashleigh Gardner (15). *Source: PTI*

RAM NAVAMI: THE BIRTH OF LORD RAMA

Lord Rama was born on Navami Tithi during Shukla Paksha of Chaitra month. Each year this day is celebrated as birthday of Lord Rama. Lord Rama was born during Madhyahna period which is middle of Hindu day. Madhyahna which prevails for six Ghatis (approximately 2 hours and 24 minutes) is the most auspicious time to perform Rama Navami Puja rituals. The mid-point of Madhyahna marks the moment when Shri Rama was born and temples symbolize this moment as birth moment of Lord Rama. The chanting of Shri Rama and celebration reaches its peak during this time.

Hindu people celebrate it as a 9 days festival by organizing the Akhand Paath of the Ramacharitamanas, religious bhajan, havan, ritual kirtan and distribution of prasad after the puja and Aarti at 9th day. Devotees make the statue of the Lord Rama in infant form and make prayer in front of the God. As Lord Rama was the 7th avatar of the Vishnu born among common people to remove their problems, people decorate temples and other religious places to make the traditional prayers and offerings of fruits flowers in order to get their problems removed and lot of prosperity and success. They get together at this day to chant Vedic mantras, Aarti and lots of religious songs.

Most of the devotees celebrate this festival by making fast for whole nine days or first and last day of the Navratri to get the full blessings. South Indians celebrate this festival as a wedding anniversary of the Lord Rama from Mata Sita. All the temples get decorated throughout the south region to celebrate the Navratri. However, people in the Mithila and Ayodhya celebrate the wedding anniversary at Vivaha Panchami according to the Valmiki Ramayana. A grand celebration of the Ram Navami takes place by the thousands of devotees in the Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh; Sitamarhi, Bihar; Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, Bhadrachalam, Andhra Pradesh and etc. At some places (like Ayodhya, Varanasi and etc), the Rathayatra means the chariot procession (Shobha yatra) of the Lord Rama, Mata Sita, Lakshman and God Hanuman is carried out by the thousands of people after taking a holy dip in the sacred river, Sarayu or Ganga.

RAM NAVAMI HISTORY

Ramayana is the great and religious Epic of the Hindu religion, tells the history of King Dasharatha and his son Rama of the Ayodhya. Once, there was an emperor in the Treta Yuga called King Dasharatha who had three wives (Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi). He had no children and was very sorry for a future emperor of the Ayodhya. One day he was suggested by the great Rishi named Vasistha to perform the Puthra Kamesti Yagna to fulfill his desire for a child.

He was suggested to specially invite the Maharshi Rishyasringa in order to perform yagna. After performing the yagna, he was given a bowl of the divine Kheer by the Yagneshwara. He was requested to offer that bowl of Kheer to his all three wives. Some days after eating that Kheer, all his wives get conceived. At the day of Navami (at 9th day) in the Chaitra month at noon Kausalya gave birth to Rama, Kaikeyi to Bharata and Sumitra to twin boys named Lakshmana and Shatrughna.

Kausalya's son Rama was the 7th avatar of the Lord Vishnu who took birth to come to the Earth to finish Adharma and maintain the Dharma. Lord Rama had protected his devotees from the attack of rascals. He had vanquished Adharma from the earth and maintained the Dharma all over the earth by destroying all the Asura including Ravana. People of the Ayodhya were very happy from his new King Rama and started celebrating his birthday every year with big joy and enthusiasm as Ram Navami which is still

traditionally and religiously celebrated all over the India by the people of Hindu religion.

RAM NAVAMI CELEBRATIONS

People of the Hindu religion located in the South region of the India generally perform the Kalyanotsavam means marriage celebration of the Lord Rama. They celebrate it at the day of Navami having the statue of Hindu deities called Rama and Sita in their houses. They perform a procession on the streets taking statues of the deities at the end of day to celebrate the Ram Navami. It is celebrated by different names at different place such as in the Maharashtra it is celebrated by the name Chaitra Navratri, in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka or Tamil Nadu it is celebrated by the name Vasanthotsava and etc.

People celebrate this festival by decorating the statues of the Lord Rama, Lakshman, Mata Sita and Lord Hanuman. They prepare the sweets, sweet drinks, prasad to perform the puja, they invite Pandit Ji to perform havan and katha, they read religious songs, mantras and Aarti at the end of puja to remove the bad powers from their houses and welcome the good power and energies to their house. They also pray for the good future and health of their children and other family members.

They make fast for whole nine days or last day of the Navratri to perform the holy annual puja. They read the holy Hindu religious Epic called Ramayana; worship Rama and Sita to get the peace and happiness in their life. They offer Morning Prayer to the Hindu God, Surya Dev after having a holy bath in the early morning. People offer puja to the Lakshman, Mata Sita and God Hanuman with the Lord Rama as all of them were devoted heartily to each other.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RAM NAVAMI

Ram Navami festival is the festival of great importance for the people of Hindu religion. Celebrating the festival of Ram Navami on the 9th day of Chaitra month indicates the removal of bad powers and entrance of divine power on the earth. To remove the Asura power on the earth in order to maintain the Dharma, Lord Vishnu had to born on the earth as a son of the Ayodhya King Dasharatha. Ram Navami is a ritual celebration for the people of Hindu religion which they celebrate enthusiastically for their soul and body purification. Lord Rama came to the earth to perform a special responsibility means to destroy the demon Ravana in order to maintain the Dharma.

This festival celebration indicates the victory of goodness and defeat of evil power and establishment of the Dharma after removal of Adharma. Ram Navami festival celebration starts with the Jal offering in the early morning to the Hindu God, Sun to get blessings from the supreme power as people beliefs the God Sun as an ancestor of the Lord Rama. People involve in singing the devotional songs for whole day as well as listening the recitations from the various Hindu religious books. Vedic mantras are chanted by the religious people of the community at this occasion.

Keeping fast at this day has another significance of getting body and mind purified. At some place, people perform a religious and cultural event called Ramlila



to reveal the history of Ram Navami in front of people. People play the whole history of the life of Lord Rama through their dramatic performances. Chariot processing is a grand and ritual event of the Ram Navami festival to show the peaceful Ram Rajya in which people decorate the statues of the Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman in a well manner to start

processing on the streets.

Generally, people like to have a holy bath in the Saryu River of the Ayodhya in the belief of the complete purification of the body and soul. South Indian people celebrate this occasion as a wedding anniversary of the Rama and Sita which symbolizes enhancing the love bondage between husband and wife.

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718 - 271 - 1906

arish.sahani@gmail.com



'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.'



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