

Defense Secretary James Mattis Submits Resignation, citing differences in viewpoints with the President



Defense Secretary James Mattis has resigned in view of differences of opinion with the President

WASHINGTON (TIP): Defense Secretary James Mattis will resign at the end of February, he informed President Trump in a letter Thursday, December 20. The defense secretary said he is stepping down because of the differences in viewpoints with Mr. Trump.

News of Mattis' impending departure comes the day after Mr. Trump's sudden announcement about Syria, a decision he made without consulting security officials in his administration. "Because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours on these and

contd on Page 32

Govt. of India to infuse Rs 83,000 cr in Public Sector Banks in next few months: Finance Minister Jaitley

SBI, Bank of Baroda, Indian Bank and Vijaya Bank may not need capital.

NEW DELHI (TIP): The government on Thursday, December 20, said it will enhance the capital infusion in public sector banks to Rs 83,000 crore, taking the total to Rs 1.06 lakh crore for the fiscal.

The capital will be pumped in over the next few months, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said, adding that the move will increase the lending capacity of public sector banks (PSBs) as well as help some of them come out of RBI's watchlist.

The government had earlier announced infusion of Rs 65,000 crore in PSBs in 2018-19, of which Rs 23,000 crore has already been disbursed, while Rs 42,000 crore is remaining.

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Finance Minister Arun Jaitley with Banking Secretary Rajeev Kumar addresses a press conference, in New Delhi on Thursday, December 20, 2018. Photo / Courtesy PTI

The INDIAN PANORAMA

New Year Special Edition

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Obama honored with RFK Human Rights Award

NEW YORK (TIP): President Barack Obama was honored Wednesday, December 12 night with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights "Ripple of Hope" award at a gala in New York.

"I'm very humbled by this honor. I'm not sure if you've heard but I've been on this hope kick for a while now," Obama said in his speech Wednesday to laughs from the audience. "I gave a big speech on hope. I ran a couple of campaigns. Hope. It's my kind of thing. ... So I'd like to thank all of you for officially validating my hope credentials." Later in his remarks, Obama said, "It can be tempting to succumb to the cynicism,

cond on page 2



Barack Obama, former US President speaking after receiving "Ripple of Hope" Award presented by Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights in Manhattan on 12th December 2018

Photo / Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

Dow falls below 23,000 for first time in 14 months

NEW YORK (TIP): Stocks tumbled Wednesday, December 19, as investors fretted over a growing list of concerns, including slowing economic growth, trade policy and the threat of a U.S. government shutdown.

The Dow lost 464 points, or 2 percent, to close at 22,860, the first time the blue-chip index has closed below 23,000 points since October of 2017. The Dow has lost nearly 1,700 points, or 7 percent, over the last six trading sessions.

The selling in the last two days came after the Federal Reserve raised interest rates for the fourth time this year and signaled it was likely to continue raising rates next year, although at a slower rate than it previously forecast.

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Rajasthan Global Convention 2019 to be held in Uniondale, New York July 3 to 7

Key attractions - Rajasthan Culture, Rajasthani Cuisine, Trade Shows, Business Networking, Spiritual Experience , and much more



NEW YORK (TIP): Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA) has been making continuous strides towards its

objective of promoting culture, values and heritage of Rajasthan for several decades. Resplendent in the hues of its noble and magnificent past, the historical importance and beauty of Rajasthan makes it one of the most spectacular and culturally vibrant destinations, making it even more important to showcase and bring unity and harmony among all cultures across the world.

Rajasthan Global Convention 2019, is conveniently planned, during the Independence Day weekend from July 3rd, 2019 To July 7th, 2019 and will shower the enhanced richness and culturally varied Rajasthan at the Marriott, Uniondale in the heart of Long Island, NY. With the strong objectives of uniting the communities in global world, improving the quality of standards for people living back home & home in United States, networking and exchange of resources, educational, social and charitable cause and contribution to the community-at-large and continued success of placing Rajasthan on the global map, the entire Indian & American community is invited to experience this historic event.

During the convention the community will experience the Reflections of Rajasthan - an extravagant showcase of Rajasthan's culturally enriched performances, artists, authentic Rajasthani Cuisine, laughter-comedy shows, fashion shows, magicians, Bollywood music, Trade Shows (shopping), Business Networking, Spiritual, Entrepreneurship & Leadership forums and much more.

Under the leadership of RANA President Elect Mr. Haridas Kotahwala, the convention plan was kicked off this past weekend at the residence of Mr. Naveen C. & Rajshree Shah and unanimously approved by the RANA Board in the presence of over 100 Prestigious organization & community leaders. Entire Community was overwhelmed at the thought of showcasing Rajasthan's cultural values and heritage at the door steps and committed their ongoing support to a culturally rich, yet noble cause.

For additional information contact
rajasthangularconvention2019@gmail.com.
(Based on a Press Release)

Indian Overseas Congress, USA, New Jersey Chapter, celebrates Congress victory in India Assembly Elections



EDISON (NJ) : As the results of the state elections in India poured in, the New Jersey Chapter of the Indian Overseas Congress Party sprung into its victory celebration at the Royal Albert Palace on Friday Dec.14, 2018. Mr. Harbachan Singh, Secretary-General of Indian Overseas Congress, USA hailed the crowd of over 100 celebrants and cheered on the Congress Party leader Shri Rahul Gandhi ji and paid a glowing tribute to the Chairman of the Overseas Congress Department of AICC Mr. Sam Pitroda, the Secretary of Indian Overseas Department, Himanshu Vijas jias well as Madhu Yaskhiji, Ex.MP. for their great leadership. He thanked everyone for their phenomenal work which had yielded the positive results.

Mr. George Abraham, Vice Chairman of IOC, USA congratulated everyone and thanked them for their efforts and especially the ones who have gone to India and campaigned for the party. He urged everyone to keep up their good work and encouraged them to work harder for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. He drew attention to the fact that the thin margin of victory in two states called for even greater vigilance and renewed double efforts.

Mr. Viru Patel, a prominent local elected official and Mr. Rajeshwar Reddy, a local leader, both of whom are also staunch Congress party leaders, also expressed their sincere appreciation to all the supporters. They complimented the hard work of all the voters who by

their positive vote has been able to address the growing dissatisfaction of the people. Mr. Harkesh Thakur conveyed the regards of Mr. Ram Gadula who could not be present due to unavoidable circumstances. Heand several other leaders who spoke, added that people were now convinced more than ever that only the Congress party under the leadership of Shri Rahul Gandhi ji can lead Congress to victory and save India's democracy in the upcoming election. The celebration was attended by other prominent leaders Mahesh Patel, Bharath Pij Patel, Dr. Jay Patel, Anil Patel, Ramakant Patel. Bharat Rana and many others. Thanks to media TV Asia H.R Shah, coverage by cameraman Madan.

Obama honored with RFK Human Rights Award

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the belief that hope is a fool's game for suckers." "And worse, at a time when the media is splintered and our leaders seem content to make up whatever facts they consider expedient, a lot of people have come to doubt even the very notion of a common ground, insisting the best we can do is to retreat into our respective corners, circle the wagons and then do battle with anybody who is not like ourselves," Obama said. "Bobby Kennedy's life reminds us to reject such cynicism."

Discovery CEO David Zaslav, Humana CEO Bruce Broussard and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy were also honored with this year's Ripple of Hope award.

"As Bobby Kennedy taught us, the thing about hope is that it travels through space *and* time, first splashing against the rocks, but eventually breaking down the walls of cruelty and injustice," Obama wrote on Twitter Wednesday night echoing his speech. "And if we do our best with the time we're given, others will take hope in our example."

Kerry Kennedy, the organization's president and daughter of Robert Kennedy, presented the 44th president with the award for those who have "demonstrated a commitment to social change."

"Bobby Kennedy was one of my heroes," Obama said in a statement back in August when it was first announced he'd be receiving the award. "He was someone who showed us the power of acting on our ideals, the idea that any of us can be one of the 'million different centers of energy and daring' that ultimately combine to change the world for the better."



RFK Human Rights president, Kerry Kennedy, speaking at the of the 50th Anniversary of "Ripple of Hope"

Photo /Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia



Seen in the picture are New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy with wife Tammy Snyder Murphy, Dr. Navin Mehta, Mrs. Mehta, Kenny Desai, Mrs. Desai, and H.R. Shah

Photo / Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the organization RFK Human Rights' founding and Kennedy's historic campaign for the White House.

Past recipients of the Ripple of Hope award include Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton, Joe Biden, Al Gore, John Lewis, Robert De Niro, Taylor Swift and George Clooney.

(Source: CNN)

Five Non-Permanent Members of United Nations Security Council retire

Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Netherlands and Sweden will give up Seat by year end



UN Secretary-General, António Guterres (Center) with the P 5 members of the UN Security Council at a formal photo session with the rest of the non-permanent Council members at the UN Security Council chamber, December 18, 2018. The five outgoing members, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Netherlands and Sweden would be giving up their seat after completing 2-year term by end of the year. Photo / Jay Mandal-On Assignment

Community Celebrates the one and only Manjeet Singh

EDISON, NJ (TIP): On his 10th death anniversary, Manjeet Singh, a popular media person was remembered by his friends and admirers. A "celebration of friendship" was

organized by Friends of Manjeet Singh at TV Asia on December 17.

Speaker after speakers paid warm and loving tribute to a lively and sincere Manjeet

Singh who was much loved and admired.

Present on the occasion were his friends and admirers from media, and community leaders. Manjeet Singh's elder brother and his

wife were also present on the occasion.

Manjeet Singh's dear friend Mohammed Jaffer took memorable pictures of the event. Here are two of them .



Recalling friendship with Manjeet. Photos /Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

Indian Boy developed Mobile App at 9. At 13, owns Software Company in Dubai

Aadithyan Rajesh's Dubai company - 'Trinet Solutions' has a total of three employees.



Aadithyan Rajesh, a student from Kerala, was only nine years old when he developed his first mobile application as a hobby to beat boredom and also has been designing logos and websites for clients.

DUBAI (TIP): A 13-year-old Indian boy in Dubai, who developed his first mobile application four years ago, also owns a software development company, a media report said Sunday.

Aadithyan Rajesh, a student from Kerala, was only nine years old when he developed his first mobile application as a hobby to beat boredom and also has been designing logos and websites for clients.

The tech wizard, who started using a computer when he turned five, has finally launched his own company 'Trinet Solutions' at the age of 13, the Khaleej Times reported.

"I was born in Thiruvilla, Kerala, and my family moved here when I was five. The first website my dad showed me was BBC Typing, a website for kids where young students can learn typing," he told the Dubai-based English daily.

Trinet has a total of three employees, who are friends and students from Aadithyan's school.

"I need to be over the age of 18 to actually become an established company owner. However, we function like a company. We have worked with over 12 clients and have given them our design and coding services entirely for free," he said.

Indian-Origin Sikh Cab Driver's Attacker Jailed



Rory Benson has been sentenced to 15 months in prison for brutally attacking a 53-year-old Indian-origin Sikh taxi driver in Seattle last year.

NEW YORK (TIP): A US man has been sentenced to 15 months in prison for brutally attacking a 53-year-old Indian-origin Sikh taxi driver in Seattle last year.

Swarn Singh was assaulted with a deadly weapon by Rory Benson in December 2017, according to Sikhs civil rights group The Sikh Coalition. Benson, who pleaded guilty to assaulting him, was sentenced to 15 months in prison by a court in Seattle. *(Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news/)*

Three Indian-Origin Teens Among Time Magazine's 25 Most Influential

HOUSTON (TIP): Three Indian-origin students have been named among the 25 most influential teens of 2018 by Time magazine for making a mark in various spheres.

Indian-American Kavya Kopparapu, Rishab Jain, and British-Indian Amika George are among the group who have become an inspiration for youngsters across the world.

Rishabh Jain, who is in eighth standard and lives in Oregon, has developed an algorithm that can possibly be a cure to pancreatic cancer. The 14-year-old developed a software tool that, during simulations, was shown to help doctors zero in on the pancreas more accurately, ideally improving treatments, according to Time magazine.

18-year-old Kavya Kopparapu is a freshman at the Harvard University. She developed a deep-learning computer system that can scan slides of tissue from brain cancer patients looking for differences in density, color, texture and cellular alignment that are unique to that particular person's case.

She developed the system after learning how the survival rate of glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer, has not improved since the past 30 years.

According to Time magazine, her goal is "to develop targeted therapies that are also unique to the person."

Amika George, a 19-year-old, aims to convince policymakers to end "period poverty," as she calls it, by funding the



Indian-American Kavya Kopparapu, Rishab Jain, and British-Indian Amika George have been named among the 25 most influential teens of 2018 by Time Magazine

distribution of menstrual products to girls and women who cannot afford them.

"It really upsets me," she tells the magazine on learning that many girls in the UK were routinely missing school during their periods because they could not afford to buy menstrual products.

"The government knew this was happening on their watch, but they were refusing to find

a solution," she said.

She launched the #FreePeriods campaign as a response, gathering nearly 200,000 signatures on her petition to help eradicate period poverty; the movement eventually garnered the support of over a dozen UK policymakers, galvanizing the government to allocate funds to the issue for the first time.

Indian American to take over as the CEO of FedEx Express on Jan. 1, 2019

Raj Subramanian joins the elite group of Indian American blue chip company CEO's Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella, Shantanu Narayen Indra Nooyi



Trivandrum, India born Raj Subramanian will take over as the next President and CEO of FedEx Express on January 1, 2019.

Vice President, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer of FedEx Corp, will succeed David L. Cunningham, who will retire on December 31, 2018.

FedEx Express, based in Memphis, is the largest division within FedEx, which delivers packages and freight to more than 375 cities in 220 countries every day.

Subramanian will now join the likes of such prominent Indian American executives as Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, and Adobe Inc Chairman and CEO Shantanu Narayen who served as CEOs of major US companies. Former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi was a part of that elite company before she stepped down from her position earlier this year. The elite quartet of blue chip company CEO's are accountable for over 650,000 employees.

Born in Trivandrum, India, Subramanian earned his undergraduate degree in chemical engineering from the IIT Bombay in 1987. He went on to earn a master's in chemical engineering from the Syracuse University and an MBA from the University of Texas, Austin in 1989 and 1991 respectively. The 27-year FedEx veteran joined the company in 1991, quickly rising up the ranks, eventually becoming executive vice president of marketing and communications of FedEx Services in 2013 before the announcement of his promotion to take place next year.

Cunningham, who joined FedEx in 1982, will enjoy retirement after a 36-year-long career. Prior to assuming his former position of CEO, Cunningham was chief operating officer and president, international, for FedEx Express.

MEMPHIS

(TIP): Indian American Raj Subramanian will take over as the next President and CEO of FedEx Express on January 1, 2019.

Subramanian who currently serves as the Executive

Indian-Origin Executive named head of Facebook's Tool Workplace

SAN FRANCISCO

(TIP): Indian-origin executive Karandeep Anand will head Workplace, Facebook's two-year-old enterprise communication tool.

Mr Anand, who was earlier Head of Product for Facebook Marketplace and Payments services, would handle the Workplace product

team and report to Julien Codorniou who is its Vice President. "I'm excited to now be part of the journey of bringing Workplace to companies across the globe and help them unlock the potential of their biggest asset -- people," Mr Anand wrote on his LinkedIn profile.

Facebook launched Workplace in 2016 to help make companies more connected and productive.

Currently, more than 30,000 organizations are using Workplace worldwide -- including Walmart, Heineken, Spotify, Lyft and the Reliance Group.

"We're thrilled that Karandeep is joining Workplace as its new head of Workplace, effective immediately," a Facebook spokeswoman told the media.

"A company's culture is leading indicator of its success and the productivity of its work force. Workplace brings the power of shaping culture by connecting people at work in ways never imagined before," Mr Anand wrote.

Before joining Facebook, Mr Anand spent 15 years at Microsoft in various key roles.

Facebook in 2017 launched the desktop version of its Workplace Chat app that can be downloaded by anyone on PC, Mac, Android or iOS.

Workplace Chat includes video chat with a co-worker or group, screen sharing and file sharing.

"Workplace is one of the fastest growing Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) product and a key growth area for Facebook," said Mr Anand.

As Head of Product for Marketplace and Payments tools, Mr Anand's team was responsible for powering commerce across Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp.



Karandeep Anand has been chosen to head Workplace, Facebook's two-year-old enterprise communication tool.



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Mayor De Blasio Calls For Fair Cannabis Legalization That Promotes Equity And Opportunity For All

Report promotes small business development, redressing impacts of past criminalization and driving economic opportunity to historically marginalized communities

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Mayor Bill de Blasio endorsed, December 20, the safe and fair legalization of cannabis in New York. The Mayor also released his Task Force report on Cannabis Legalization, which calls for a strong, public health-focused regulatory framework and the empowerment of local government to prevent corporate greed, foster small businesses and meet the demands of New York City communities. The report also places great emphasis on the need to ensure that any marijuana industry in New York City right the wrongs of the past and promotes economic opportunity.

"I have been convinced that we can establish a regulatory framework that keeps our streets safe, rights the wrongs of the past, and gives economic opportunity to communities hit hardest by the war on drugs," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "I support legalization because we've developed a path forward that will help make our City fairer. I look forward to working with the State as to make this a reality." "As we go down the path toward legalization of marijuana in our city and state, let us recognize that it is not without risks," said First Lady Chirlane McCray, who leads the City's mental health and substance misuse efforts. "We must do everything we can to protect our city's young people and educate all New Yorkers about marijuana use. That's why this report is so important, and I urge state lawmakers use the recommendations as a guide for their work in the months ahead."

CricRealty Announces Cricket Stadiums in 8 major cities

NEW YORK/ ALLEN, TX (TIP): The CricRealty Company, Dallas announced, December 18, that the town of Allen, TX has been selected as one of 8 proposed sites for professional cricket stadiums. The multi-use facility will serve the growing need of pro-cricket while bringing urbanization and development to the area.

The two phased project has a 35-acre stadium facility that plans to house an International Cricket Council (ICC) certified Cricket ground, Training Facilities & Club house and a 25-acre parcel which will have a multi-use facility of offices, residences, commercial, entertainment centers and hotels.

The CricRealty Company has been working with strategic partners including Donnie Nelson & Thakkar Developers to develop the Cricket stadium & the multi-use facility.

The CricRealty company has also been working with JLL since 2016, to identify and develop cutting edge Cricket infrastructure in the United States. The group is developing similar stadiums in other markets including Atlanta, Chicago, Orlando, Washington DC, New Jersey, New York and California.

The group is looking to position itself as the key player in developing Cricket infrastructure in the United States.

"Our vision is to identify strategic locations to build such complexes and thus provide hi-end, easy access venues across the country to facilitate the game", said Steven V Maksin, of Moonbeam Capital, a key member of The CricRealty Company.

"My goal is to make America fall in love with cricket," said Jay Pandya, Chairman of



THE CRICREALTY COMPANY, DALLAS

The CricRealty Company. "Cricket is the second most popular sport in the world. There are an estimated 20 million cricket fans in the United States. Plus, the growing Indian-American population in North Texas makes this project a perfect location for professional cricket."

The launch of a professional league in the United States will require stadiums where games are played and practiced during off season. An existing infrastructure will help the eventual league save infrastructure costs and focus on developing the sport in the US.

"As we began planning this project, we identified an unmet need in North Texas for a stadium designed for global sports such as cricket," Sam Thakkar, CEO of the Perfect Group of Business, which includes Thakkar Developers. "We connected with The CricRealty Company and learnt about their plans to bring the first professional cricket stadium to Texas."

"We're thrilled to enter into this private-public partnership with The CricRealty Company, Dallas and Thakkar Developers to bring this unique project to Allen," said Allen Mayor Stephen Terrell. "With a new international visitor base, we look forward to a big boost in tourism spending-which benefits businesses and residents alike."

In addition to professional cricket, the stadium will also be suitable for Rugby, LaCrosse and Soccer. Construction on the site is expected to begin in 2019, with the first phase, including the stadium, expected to be completed in 2021.

ABOUT THAKKAR DEVELOPERS

Thakkar Developers, is a mixed-use developer that collaborates with best-in-class partners to acquire, finance and develop high-yield, diversified investment-grade assets. With a mission to bring communities - people and businesses - together to achieve a greater good, Thakkar strives for developments that create a sense of place and build community, and projects that leverage public-private partnerships to engender pride of ownership and create a lasting legacy.

ABOUT The CricRealty Company

The CricRealty Company, LLC is dedicated to acquiring, building, and strengthening a network of branded participatory and experience-based businesses engaged in sports & training. CricRealty focuses on emphasizing a positive consumer experience and instilling the core values of discipline, teamwork, safety, respect and integrity.

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Indian Overseas Congress, USA celebrates recent Congress victories in Indian Assembly Elections

QUEENS, NEW YORK (TIP): After celebrating in New Jersey the victory of the Congress Party in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the Indian Overseas Congress, USA held its main celebration event in New York on Sunday, December 16, 2018, where over 150 celebrants gathered to cheer on Shri Rahul Gandhi ji for his astounding victory.

Mr. Sam Pitroda ji, Chairman, Overseas Congress Department of the All India Congress Committee, facilitated the group via Facebook speech and said this victory is unique because it comes at a time when Rahul Gandhi, President of Congress, finishes his one year and that in just about one year the tides have turned and that the excitement is absolutely significant and that this victory adds to the energy and enthusiasm of the workers. He added that the real credit goes to all the party workers in India and to many of you who have gone to India and campaigned during elections. He stated that the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections would define the India of tomorrow. His energizing speech ended with a thunderous applaud at the celebration.

Mr. Harbachan Singh, Secretary-General of IOC, USA, and Chair of the By-Laws Committee led the toast to Sri Rahul Gandhi Ji and all the senior leaders in New Delhi for the astounding victory. He thanked and congratulated Mr. Sam Pitroda Ji, for his great speech including Mr. Himanshu Viyas ji and Mr. Madhu Yashki ji for galvanizing the Indian Overseas Congress support globally and prompting these victories.



Mr. George Abraham, Vice Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA congratulated all those who have contributed to these victories and urged everyone not to be carried away with these victories but focus their attention on the bigger prize, that is the 2019 general election outcome.

Mr. Mohinder Singh Gilzian, President of IOC, USA, and Chair of the Membership Committee, who had himself recently canvassed in in Rajasthan and Telangana, was jubilant throughout the event and expressed great satisfaction on the cooperative effort of all the operatives in India and abroad. He said he had noticed a lot of support building up in favor of the Congress party during his visit to India and

felt reassured of the forthcoming victories. He assured everyone that continued hard work would surely bag in the ultimate successes in the Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Rajendra Dichpally, General Secretary and Chair of the NRI Voting Committee, Mr. Phuman Singh, Sr. Vice President, IOC, USA, Mr. Ravinder Chopra, Chair of the Finance Committee, Ms. Shalu Suri, Chair of the Women's Committee, Mr. Gurmit Singh Gill, President of Punjab Chapter and Chair of the Campaign Committee, Mr. Charan Singh Prempura, President of Haryana Chapter, Mr. Sher Singh Madra, Co-Chair of the By-Laws Committee, Mr. Kalathil Varughese, Chair, Lobby in US. Committee, Mr. Jose George, Vice President, Ms, Malini Shah, Vice

President & Co-Chair of the Women's Committee, Ms. Jaya Sundaram, President of Tamil Nadu Chapter, Ms. Leela Maret, President of the Women's Forum, Mr. Satish Sharma, President of Punjab Chapter, Mr. John Joseph Vice President and Co-Chair of Chapter Consolidation Committee, Mr. Sawaran Singh, National Treasurer, Amir Rashid, President Bihar Chapter and Member, By-Laws Committee, Mr. Jasvir Singh Nawansher, Vice President, Mr. Prasad Kambapathy, Joint Secretary, Mr. Rajender Reddy, Koshy Oommen, also spoke.

(Press Release)

Bronx Borough President Diaz and Fat Joe award new sneakers to students

NEW YORK (TIP): Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and hip-hop legend Fat Joe distributed, December 20, new pairs of sneakers at four Bronx public schools as part of their new initiative to increase student performance in Bronx public schools. Administrators at each participating school-P.S. 146, M.S. 123, Accion Academy and I.S. 217 School of Performing Arts-chose one class which had been "most improved" academically from the start of the competition. Those students learned of their victory today and each received a brand new pair of sneakers from Fat Joe, a Bronx native, in recognition of their achievement.

Students in each class participated in this initiative from mid-October through the remainder of the Fall marking period. They were tasked with working together to improve overall outcomes within their classroom based on a variety of factors including student engagement, attendance and total number of books read, among others.

"These kids are seeing today that hard work really pays off and that with focus and intent they have the power to improve their academic performance. Having their schoolwork praised by a musical superstar who looms so large in our borough adds to our message that it is cool to get good grades and it is something they should aspire to, even outside of this competition. For a lot of these students, it was the push they needed to try harder in school," said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. "I want to thank Fat Joe for everything he has done for The Bronx and its students, and for partnering with my office on this initiative."

"I came from The Bronx and I was the class clown, but I loved sneakers so much that I know if we had had a contest like this my grades would've improved. Its Christmas time but this isn't a Christmas gift, because the kids worked hard to make this happen. I want take these results to sportswear brands, so we can prove that initiatives like this really work and other students can do this in New York City," said Fat Joe at the event. "I couldn't be more proud to work with Borough President Diaz and his office to make this happen."





COMMENT

Prof I.S. Saluja

India and Pakistan can be Friends: Give Peace a Chance

It was the dark period of militancy in Punjab in the 80's. I happened to be in a meeting of Senior Citizens of Ludhiana District with the then Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray, I recall having made a suggestion which I sincerely feel I should share with our readers.

On being asked what India can do to improve relations with the neighboring Pakistan which was often accused of encouraging militancy in Punjab, I pointed out that one way will be to promote people to people contact. People in both Pakistani and Indian Punjab have much in common in respect of language, culture, cuisine, customs. It will be easier for them to strike a chord.

As a confidence building exercise, I suggested government of India could take initiative in facilitating visits by people from both sides between Amritsar and Lahore.

A dawn to dusk visa may be issued to visitors. This beginning may result in promoting amity between people of both sides. And, as the scale of contacts went up, the quantum of goodwill and amity will also grow. But an angry Ray shot down the suggestion.

Even today, I firmly believe that the only way to promote peace in the region is to promote people to people contact. Instead of accusing each other of promoting terror or interference in the internal affairs, the leaders of both India and Pakistan will do well to focus on promoting people to people contact and lifting restrictions on travel between the two countries.

AS I SEE IT

The slow, tortuous path to justice: Sajjan Kumar's conviction



By Sanjay Hegde

Thirty-four years after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the killings of Sikhs that followed, a political leader who may have electorally benefitted from communal violence has been sentenced to imprisonment for life. The wheel of history has turned ever so slowly, as some believe, but its arc may have yet turned towards justice. The assassination of Indira Gandhi, on October 31, 1984, was a national tragedy. The anti-Sikh pogrom that followed in north India, with the worst violence taking place in Delhi, was a greater tragedy. But the greatest tragedy of all was the stonewalling of investigation by the law enforcement agencies, and the seeming deafness of the justice delivery system. The judgment reconstructs the scene of violence and all the waiting that followed.

Maze of inquiries

It took years of commissions of inquiry and other inquiries before six accused, including Sajjan Kumar, a formidable Congress leader in Delhi, who was a member of Parliament at the time, were sent up for trial sometime in 2010. Three years later, the trial court convicted five of the accused: three of them for the offences of armed rioting and murder, and two of them for the offence of armed rioting. Kumar stood acquitted by the trial court of all offences. Those convicted as well as the Central Bureau of Investigation appealed to the Delhi High Court. Now, the Bench of Justices S. Muralidhar and Vinod Goel has overturned the April 2013 judgment of the trial court and sent Kumar to prison for life. Their judgment carries the echo of the crimes committed in the days after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and failure to hold the guilty to account for so long.

The judgment finds: "The accused in this case have been brought to justice primarily on account of the courage and perseverance of three eyewitnesses. Jagdish Kaur whose husband, son and three cousins were the five killed; Jagsher Singh, another cousin of Jagdish Kaur, and Nirpreet Kaur who saw the Gurudwara being burnt down and her father being burnt alive by the raging mobs. It is only after the CBI entered the scene, that they were able to be assured and they spoke up. Admirably, they stuck firm to their truth at the trial."

Staying the course

As a result of their testimony, Sajjan Kumar now stands convicted for conspiracy to murder and for the abetment of murder, in the deaths of Kehar Singh and his 18-year-old son Gurpreet Singh, and the killings of Raghuvinder Singh, Narender Pal Singh, and

The Delhi High Court judgment convicting Sajjan Kumar reminds the country that it must not forget mass killings



A Sikh man is surrounded and beaten in Sikh Pogroms in Delhi in the first week of November 1984

Photo / Courtesy Punjab Beat

Kuldeep Singh - all members of the same family. I mention the names of the dead because the dead in communal violence should not lose their vestigial humanity by being simply reduced to a score of unnamed victims.

Kehar Singh's wife, Jagdish Kaur, was one of the principal witnesses against Sajjan Kumar. The other principal witness is her cousin Jagsher Singh, whose brothers Raghuvinder and Narender Pal Singh were also killed on November 1, 1984. The high court judgment notes Jagdish Kaur's recollection: "At around 9 am on 2nd November 1984, when she went to lodge a report at the PP, she saw that a public meeting was taking place which was attended by A-1 who was the local Member of Parliament (MP). She heard him declare, 'Sikh sala ek nahin bachna chahiye, jo Hindu bhai unko sharan deta hai, uska ghar bhi jala do aur unko bhi maro.'"

The judgment records Jagsher Singh's recollection that "around 10 p.m., he saw an Ambassador car which stopped at the turning onto Shiv Mandir Marg. He stated that 30-40 persons gathered around the car from which emerged A-1 who enquired as to whether 'they have done the work'. Thereafter, it is stated, A-1 approached the house of PW-6 (Jagsher Singh) to inspect it and came back and told the assembled mob that they had 'only broken the gate of the thekedars' house'. One of the members of the mob then allegedly informed him that 'the thekedars are being saved by the Hindus only'. Upon hearing this, A-1 is stated to have instructed the mob to burn the houses of the Hindus who were sheltering the Sikhs. He then left in his car."

The court rules: "To this Court, PW-1 [Jagdish Kaur] comes across as a fearless and truthful witness. Till she was absolutely certain that her making statements will serve a purpose, she did not come forward to do so. This is understandable given the fact that all previous attempts at securing justice for the victims had failed. The large number of acquittals in the cases demonstrated how the

investigation was completely botched-up. It also demonstrated the power and influence of the accused and how witnesses could easily be won over. The atmosphere of distrust created as a result of these developments would have dissuaded the victims from coming forward to speak about what they knew. In the context of these cases, the factum of delay cannot be used to the advantage of the accused but would, in fact, explain the minor contradictions and inconsistencies in the statements of the key eye-witnesses in the present case. Nothing in the deposition of PW-1 points to either untruthfulness or unreliability. Her evidence deserves acceptance."

A moment of reflection

Sajjan Kumar is not very different from many other politicians of this era, who use mob emotions to ride to power. However, he is probably the first to be held guilty of conspiring with the mob to cause the deaths of his constituents. It is for us as a country to ensure that mob violence yields no political dividends. If we as voters decide to electorally punish those who incite mobs, yield to them, or fail to stop their violence, the resort to politics of mass murders will simply stop. The judgment notes that "there has been a familiar pattern of mass killings in Mumbai in 1993, in Gujarat in 2002, in Kandhamal, Odisha in 2008, in Muzaffarnagar in U.P. in 2013 to name a few. Common to these mass crimes were the targeting of minorities and the attacks spearheaded by the dominant political actors being facilitated by the law enforcement agencies. The criminals responsible for the mass crimes have enjoyed political patronage and managed to evade prosecution and punishment."

It also says: "While it is undeniable that it has taken over three decades to bring the accused in this case to justice, and that our criminal justice system stands severely tested in that process, it is essential, in a democracy governed by the rule of law to be able to call out those responsible for such mass crimes. It is important to assure those countless victims waiting patiently that despite the challenges, truth will prevail and justice will be done."

While the 1984, 1993, 2002, 2008 and 2013 riots are painful episodes in our history, the judgments of the Delhi High Court of 2018 in the Sajjan Kumar and Hashimpura cases shine like good deeds in a naughty world. Milan Kundera wrote that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting". The judgment tells Kehar Singh, Gurpreet Singh, Raghuvinder Singh, Narender Pal Singh and Kuldeep Singh, that neither Jagdish Kaur nor India have as yet forgotten them.

(The author is a senior advocate of the Supreme Court) (Source: The Hindu)

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2019 General Elections in India Likely to Result in a Hung Parliament



By Ven Parameswaran

Modi, Mayawati, Rahul likely in Prime Ministerial race

Modi won the general elections in 2014 with only 31% of votes. Today, his opposition is ruling Punjab, Delhi, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra, Telangana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, representing majority of 535 parliamentary seats. Even in his home state of Gujarat, Modi's party won only marginally. For ambitious political leaders of these States Mayawati-Samajwadi coalition could be very attractive to defeat Modi. Such an outcome could create power in the center for Modi's opposition, even excluding the Congress.

“

It's too early to write off Modi's prospects. He remains a popular figure and powerful orator, and his party is India's best funded and best organized. Yet it is clear Modi's tax-and-spend model of development is failing to enthuse voters.

Tuesday's results suggest discontent in the Hindi heartland, a region that in 2014 gave the BJP two-thirds of its parliamentary seats. Simply put, Modinomics is not working. When Modi was elected, he promised to invigorate the economy by providing "maximum governance" with "minimum government" and replacing red tape that would have allowed market forces to play a larger role in India's inefficient economy.”

”

It could be anybody's guess. But what appears for now, the 2019 general elections are more likely to throw up a hung parliament. Modi as Prime Minister for another term may not be a certainty. A dark horse like Mayawati could be the Prime Minister. Rahul Gandhi may also not be ruled out.

In the recent elections held in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, Modi's BJP crashed to unexpected electoral defeats. The Congress has won in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and fell just short of an outright majority in Madhya Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are widely regarded as BJP strongholds. To put the results in context, India's main opposition party has been consistently losing elections since it was routed in the seismic 2014 elections that brought Modi to power, winning less than 20% of the popular vote and securing only 44 of the 543 seats. Prior to its latest victories, the Congress was in power in only two large states.

The BJP won 62 of the 65 parliamentary seats in these three key states in the last general elections. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are also part of a bellwether region - the Northern Hindi speaking heartland of India - that gave the BJP and its allies 203 of the 225 seats that they won in 2014. So the Congress's robust performance - it gained 163 assembly seats here since 2013 state polls - is a shot in the arm for the party. It will bolster the morale of party workers, make it more acceptable to skeptical regional allies, and boost the image of its leader Rahul Gandhi. It will also send out the significant message that Modi's BJP is not invincible and can be defeated. All this will help Congress gain some much-needed momentum in the run-up to next year's crucial elections. However, these state polls may be an unreliable barometer for next year's big elections.

There was considerable anti-incumbency against the BJP in these states - the party was trying for a record fourth term in both Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. People in Rajasthan have a consistent record of voting out the incumbent after one term. The BJP workers can take solace from the fact that the party still put up a spirited fight in two of the three states, despite the formidable odds of anti-incumbency. Secondly, the majority of seats in three states witnessed bipolar contests between the BJP and the Congress. In general elections, regional parties will hold the key. Next year much will depend on the kind of strategic regional alliances the Congress is able to stitch up and sustain in different states. Thirdly, one of the BJP's greatest strengths is having capable leaders in several states, many of whom who have completed more than one term. Hobbled by dynastic politics, the Congress has failed to groom young local leaders, depending mainly on the charisma of the Nehru dynasty. Also, the Congress appears to lack political imagination and has been unable to produce a powerful alternative to the BJP.

"It seems to be courting on anti-incumbency to do the work, a complacent attitude that has made the BJP competitive in areas where it has gathered genuine discontent, against the lack of development outcome, unemployment and rural distress," says political scientist Gilles Verniers of Ashoka University.

In their new book, *Ideology and Identity*, political scientists Pradeep K Chhibber and Rahul Verma from the University of California, argue that India "is no longer led by a Western oriented elite, and citizens have voted into power politicians closer to their roots, politicians who represent small town socially conservative values, in the BJP or regional parties". This is a shift of power to a "more conservative and vernacular elite" which seems to have escaped the Congress.

WHAT REMAINS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR IS THAT THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTION WILL BE A REFERENDUM ON MODI, AND, WHO CAN LEAD IN WINNING COALITIONS AND FORM THE GOVERNMENT?

Modi's grandiose promises - specially to create more jobs and increase incomes of farmers - have begun to bite. Lack of jobs and declining farm incomes will be the deciding issues next year, although whether the farmers will vote as an "angry bloc" against what is now being perceived as an "arrogant" government will become clear closer to the Summer polls.

But the failure to offer an alternative narrative of hope to the people will make it difficult for the Congress and its often fractious allies to mount a credible challenge to Modi, who still remains the BJP's star vote-catcher.



Likely Prime Ministerial candidates in 2019 general elections- Modi, Rahul Gandhi, Mayawati

MAYAWATI COULD EMERGE AS THE HERO OF THE OPPOSITION TO MODI

Mayawati is central to opposition plans to take government because rising sectarian tensions have led to increased Dalit support. A woman who represents millions of India's poorest citizens (India has 300 million poor) is now India's most sought after politician. Mayawati, an icon of the country's traditionally oppressed Dalits who were once known as "untouchables," is central to opposition efforts to prevent Prime Minister Modi's reelection in 2019. With rising sectarian tensions leading to stronger political unity among Dalits - a swing force that consists of about 16.6 percent or 200 million of India's population - many parties are turning to Mayawati to forge an alliance ahead of general election.

Mayawati, who was the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh may be a front runner for Prime Minister if there is a hung parliament and neither Modi's BJP nor Rahul Gandhi's main opposition Congress Party can form government, said Ajoy Bose, a Delhi based political analyst who wrote a biography of the 62-year-old.

"Almost from a position of political oblivion, there are signs of the resurrection of Mayawati," said Bose. "She has definitely regained ground dramatically. There is a possibility that she could even be a Prime Ministerial candidate - the whole idea of having such a prominent Dalit leader as Prime Minister will be tempting for a lot of other parties as it will give them some edge."

In Uttar Pradesh, which holds the key to forming the national government, Modi's ruling National Democratic Alliance would lose 35 seats compared to the 2014 elections if Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party joined forces, according to one poll. Similarly, Congress could make sizeable gains in the State if it joins hands with those parties. Another survey, from India Today, predicted an alliance of opposition parties would come out neck and neck with Modi's ruling coalition.

Modi won in the general elections in 2014 with only 31% of votes. Today, his opposition is ruling Punjab, Delhi, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra, Telangana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh representing majority of 535 parliamentary seats. Even in his home state, Modi's party won only marginally. For ambitious political leaders of these States Mayawati-Samajwadi coalition could be very attractive to defeat Modi. Such an outcome could create power in the center for Modi's opposition even excluding the Congress.

Sadanand Dhume of the WSJ wrote: "It's too early to write off Modi's prospects. He remains a popular figure and powerful orator, and his party is India's best funded and best organized. Yet it is clear Modi's tax-and-spend model of development is failing to enthuse voters. Tuesday's results suggest discontent in the Hindi heartland, a region that in 2014 gave the BJP two-thirds of its parliamentary seats. Simply put, Modinomics is not working. When Modi was elected, he promised to invigorate the economy by providing "maximum governance" with "minimum government" and replacing red tape that would have allowed market forces to play a larger role in India's inefficient economy."

(Ven Parameswaran of Scarsdale, N.Y. is a Senior Adviser to the Imagindia Institute, a think tank in New Delhi)

Jinnah House in Mumbai belongs to Pakistan, says Foreign Office

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan asserted on Thursday that Jinnah House in Mumbai belonged to it and any attempt by India to take the building under its control will not be accepted, days after External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said her ministry is in the process of getting the bungalow transferred in its name.

The sea-facing bungalow on Malabar Hill in Mumbai was designed by architect Claude Batley in European style and Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah lived there in the late 1930s. Pakistan had demanded in recent years that the property should be handed over to it for housing its Mumbai consulate.

"We have a claim over it (Jinnah House) and we do not accept that anyone tries to take custody of it. They (Indians) have already accepted that it belongs to Pakistan. We have record of it. They (Indians) have accepted that it belong to Pakistan," Foreign Office spokesperson Mohammad Faisal told reporters here. Asked if Pakistan would consider to hand over Kartarpur land to India in a swap deal, Faisal said: "Absolutely not...It is gesture for Sikh minority community made on their request to provide a visa free corridor to facilitate visit to a religious shrine." (ET)

US set aside its nuclear proliferation concerns of Pakistan for support in Afghanistan

KABUL (TIP): The US acceded to Pakistan's demand, supported by China, to "set aside" its concerns over Islamabad's secretive nuclear weapons programme in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, according to the latest documents declassified from the era.

The documents, which were released by the State Department, reveal that then Pakistani dictator General Zia-ul Haq and Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping were successful in extracting this price from the US in lieu of Islamabad's support to America against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In addition to the US turning a blind eye to Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, Deng also convinced the US to start giving more military and financial aid to Pakistan, according to the US Foreign Relations 1977-1980 volume on Afghanistan.

The voluminous document indicates that both Zia and Deng successfully convinced the then Carter administration that India under former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would be pro-Soviet. "There are limits on our ability to aid Pakistan because of their nuclear explosive programme.

Deng applauded the US decision as he was successfully able to convince the Carter administration on this issue. "That is a very good approach. Pakistan has its own reasons for developing a nuclear programme. We ourselves oppose the Pakistan effort on nuclear weapons because we believe it meaningless to spend money on such a programme," he said. "Pakistan has its own arguments, ie, India has exploded a nuclear device but the world has not seemed to complain about this. So now you have decided to put this aside and solve the question of military and economic aid to Pakistan. We applaud this decision," Deng said.

He also convinced the US to not equate India and Pakistan when it comes to giving aid. (PTI)

Pakistan deep state halts probe against ISI-backed terror: GSR

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan's deep state regularly halts investigation by the police against terror groups that ISI nurtures against India, alleges a US-based geo-politics journal Global Security Review (GSR).

A recent article, Pakistan's ISI Contributes to Regional Instability, penned by analyst Alexandra Gilliard cites the example of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen terror operative Sehran Sheikh, arrested on December 7 in Kashmir, to bring to light the murky relationship between Pakistan's deep state and terror organisations in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

GSR, quoting unnamed Pakistan's police officials, also claims that ISI officers regularly halt investigations involving terrorist groups they support.

ISI's goal, according to GSR, is to promote Pakistan's regional hegemony while wreaking havoc on the national security interests of both India and Afghanistan. ISI's continued covert support for extremists has fostered a growing radical community and new splinter groups that have spread throughout the region, the journal further claims.

"The ISI directorate has enjoyed unparalleled power since its creation in 1948. As the ISI DG is selected by the military branch, the agency has remained steeped in army and military affairs for seventy years. From its outset, the ISI has backed terrorist organizations that provide strategic depth



within India and greater influence in Afghanistan," claims Gilliard.

"After former President Pervez Musharraf's pledge to join the War on Terror, the ISI vacillated between continued sponsorship of extremist groups in support of its interests and cracking down on radical anti-ISI groups within Pakistan. Ultimately, due to inconsistencies in its counterterrorism campaign, Pakistan's intelligence agency was quietly listed as a terrorist organisation in US military documents, instructing that ISI officers be

treated the same as terrorists," writes Gilliard.

"The ISI is plagued by a persistent hesitancy to destroy terrorist groups, instead hoping to nurture them and use them in the future against Pakistan's regional rival, India...the Taliban vies for more control, the ISI has provided it with military aid to ensure Afghanistan remains in a state of perpetual instability. Should the Taliban gain power, Pakistan will have a staunch ally in the region, with the potential to form a strategic partnership. writes Gilliard. (ET)

Sri Lanka President Names New Cabinet To End Political Crisis



Wickremesinghe as prime minister on Sunday after the Supreme Court threw out his attempt to dissolve parliament and hold early elections in the Indian Ocean nation.

"The forming of the cabinet was delayed because the president wanted to retain media and the police," government spokesman Rajitha Senarathne said as the new cabinet was announced.

"He conceded the media ministry, but will retain control over the police for a little longer."

No law and order minister was named in the new cabinet and Sirisena, who also serves as defence minister, will take responsibility for the police.

The key posts of finance minister and foreign minister remained unchanged from Wickremesinghe's deposed government. Mangala Samaraweera stays as finance minister and Tilak Marapana as foreign chief.

Sirisena sparked the political crisis on October 26 when he sacked Wickremesinghe in a bid to name nationalist firebrand Mahinda Rajapakse as prime minister. He had to backtrack in the face of opposition from the legislature, where he had no majority, and Sri Lankan courts.

Shortly after giving Wickremesinghe his job back on Sunday, Sirisena made it clear that working with the new government would be difficult.

"I still believe that I should not have made Ranil Wickremesinghe the prime minister, but I bow to the wishes of the majority in parliament," Sirisena said.

"But, I don't know how far we will succeed in fulfilling the wishes of our people."

Sirisena came to power in 2015 with the help of Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP), but personal and political clashes came to a head with the October sacking.

The 69-year-old Wickremesinghe refused to give way to former president Rajapakse, leaving the country with two claimants to the prime minister's post and no functioning government.

The Sri Lankan parliament backed Wickremesinghe's claim that his dismissal was illegal, voting six times against Rajapakse during tumultuous sessions that at times erupted into brawls. (NDTV)

COLOMBO (TIP): Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena named a 30-member cabinet Thursday to end a crippling seven-week power struggle with his prime minister, but only after a final tussle over who should control the police.

Sirisena reinstated Ranil

Nepal Finally Looks Beyond India and China

KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal for a long time has heavily invested its time and energy to deal with India and China, the regional giants and Nepal's only two bordering countries. But now Kathmandu has started to reach out to its old allies, which are being newly considered as key development partners. Mainly after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, the success of any Nepali government was measured on the basis of its ability to keep cordial relations with India and China. Successive governments paid little or no attention to engaging with old partners like the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and other European countries. Kathmandu has likewise not paid sufficient attention to Gulf countries, which host millions of Nepali migrant workers. These workers face a lot of problems related to their wages and safety.

In its election manifesto, the Left Alliance – now the ruling party – pledged to take measures to revisit foreign policy. Sure enough, the new government formed under Communist Party of Nepal Chairman K.P. Sharma Oli has started to reach out to other countries beyond India and China, earning a positive reaction in Nepal's political and diplomatic circles. At the same time, there are criticisms that the Oli government is focusing only on bilateral visits instead of formulating clear policies.

All Nepali prime ministers since 1990 have focused their attention on drawing the support of India and China to ascend to power, which also invited foreign interference in the internal political affairs of Nepal. In the 30-year long Panchayat era, Nepal's monarchy reached out to other countries beyond India and China. After 1990, Nepali politicians paid few bilateral and official visits to other powerful countries. (The Diplomat)

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AAPI to launch a 9-City Jai Ho Musical Dhamaka by Bollywood singer Sukhwinder Singh in May 2019

ATLANTA, GA (TIP): After mesmerizing musical lovers all across the world with his enchanting voice, Sukhwinder Singh, the top Bollywood singer is now on AAPI's Nine-City Jai Ho Musical Dhamaka next Spring, performing in thirteen cities around the United States. Organized by the American Association of Physicians of Indian origin (AAPI), the spectacular musical program combined with educational and networking opportunities for AAPI members, supporters and sponsors, is being organized with the objective of bringing CME and non-CME sponsored medical lectures, exhibits, Gala Dinner, community outreach talks and lively musical nite in each of the 9 cities across the country.

"Following the past successes of multi-city musical tours organized by AAPI, I am inspired by the concept and how such events have helped in strengthening the relationship between the AAPI Chapters and national office, in addition to help raise funds for the many noble programs for AAPI and the local Chapters" says Dr. Naresh Parikh, President of AAPI.

"The concept of this program to bring together various local Chapters closer has been in my mind for several months. National coordinators of the program, Drs. Narendra Kumar, Hemant Dhingra, Raj Bhayani, Amit Chkrabarty, Anjana Samadder, and Gautam Samaddar, as well as the entire AAPI team and leadership enthusiastically received this idea and the net result of our collaboration and dialogue is the 9-city grand mega concert." Dr. Dhingra, who has close relationship with the Entertainment Industry, worked with Neha and her team to present an evening of cultural entertainment in each of these thirteen cities.

Senior leadership and several past Presidents and leaders of AAPI have extended their whole-hearted support in organizing this mega event across the nation, Dr. Parikh says. "I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Narendra Kumar, Dr. Vinod Shah, Dr. Ravi Jahagirdar, Dr. Ajay Lodha, Dr. Jayesh Shah, and Dr. Vinod Koli, all past Presidents of AAPI, for their senior advisory role in making this meg event a grand success."

The Cities where the mega shows planned to be held include: Atlanta, San Francisco; Los Angeles; New Jersey, Columbus, OH, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Boston, Washington, DC, Orlando, Charlotte, Dallas, and Houston.

Sukhwinder Singh, an internationally recognized Bollywood playback artist, best known for singing "Chaiyya," for which he won the Best Male Playback Award at the 1999 Filmfare Awards, in association with composer A.R. Rahman has resulted in numerous hit songs. The list includes Chaiyya from Dil Se, Ramta Jogi, Ni Main Samajh Gayee, Taal Se Taal Mila and Nahin Samne from Taal, Ruth Aa Gayee Re, Raat Ki Daldal Hain



Sukhwinder Singh, the top Bollywood singer is now on AAPI's Nine-City Jai Ho Musical Dhamaka next Spring, performing in thirteen cities around the United States

and Yeh Jo Zindagi Hain from Earth, Jaane Tu Mera Kya Hai from Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na, Aayo Re Sakhi, Bhangari Morori and Piya Ho from Water, Chinnamma Chilakkamma from Meenaxi, Thok De Killi from Raavan and the most popular Jai Ho from Slumdog Millionaire.

The song "Jai Ho", sung by Singh, composed by A.R. Rahman and written by Gulzar, was nominated as a Critics' Choice Award for Best Song and won an Oscar Academy Award for Best Original Song. It also won the Grammy Award for Best Song Written for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Media in 2010.

Dr. Hemant Dhingra, Entertainment Chair of AAPI provided a detailed description of the planned 9-City Tour by popular Bollywood star, Sukhwinder, which is a way to raise funds for AAPI and its many local Chapters. The event will have its finale with Sonu Nigam joining the 60 member live artists in Atlanta, GA.

"Entertainment was only just one component of the entire program," Dr. Parikh adds. The idea is to put together mini seminars, networking and strengthening the relationship between members and the national office. "Due to popular demand from several physicians on the need for enhancing scientific component at AAPI meetings and allowing greater number of members to participate, AAPI is now organizing the 13-city programs to make it easy for physicians to participate locally avoiding extensive travel and time away from practice,"

he explains.

"Many of our industry partners liked this concept where they could get prime time with a few hundred doctors for product promotion/theater, non CME lectures, exhibits, booths," Dr. Raj Bhayani, national coordinator of the event, says. "These multi-city mini-seminars are a novel concept for education and recreation that will raise funds for the local chapters of AAPI, the national AAPI and the AAPI Charitable Foundation."

Describing the process leading to the Tour, Dr. Suresh Reddy, President-Elect of AAPI, recalls, "Realizing that it takes a lot of coordination and tremendous effort, we were successful in involving dozens of AAPI office-bearers of various Chapters and Executive Committee members. Each of them is committed to work hard, coordinate with the local leadership, while committing to have the funds raised would be given to AAPI, the local Chapters, and the many philanthropic endeavors organized by AAPI and its Charitable Foundation."

AAPI has established itself as the most successful and premiere ethnic medical organization in the United States. AAPI-Charitable Foundation, the crest jewel of AAPI, is committed to serve the poorest of the poor in remote areas of India and USA.

Since 1992, the Foundation has been providing an infrastructure support system for needy patients in India with two main goals: enabling AAPI members to commit their time and resources to support the clinics for the indigent; and to monitor effectively the clinics' progress and be accountable for the overall success of the project.

The Seminars and workshops will be led by accomplished faculty of leading Cardiologists, Cardiovascular Surgeons and Psychiatrists. Each of the nine medical educational programs is expected to have an audience of 250-400 Physicians, which will be followed by annual gala event and entertainment with an expected 2,500+ audience at each location.

Dr. Parikh promises to "make this event both transparent and successful, and we hope it becomes an annual event. Many of our industry partners have also shown great interest in this concept, where they can receive prime time with a few hundred doctors for product promotion, theater, non-CME lectures, exhibits and booths. Because of this, we hope to have a significant number of national sponsors for this program."

This extensive Musical/Educational Tour program put together by Dr. Parikh and his Team is a step towards reaching the message of AAPI across the globe and help AAPI realize its noble mission. For more details on the Musical Tour and for sponsorship opportunities, please visit: <http://www.aapiusa.org>

UN to vote Friday to approve advance monitors for Yemen truce

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): The United Nations Security Council is due to vote on Friday to endorse a ceasefire agreed by the warring parties in Yemen's Hodeidah region and authorize an advance UN team to begin monitoring the deal, diplomats said.

The 15-member council has spent several days wrangling over a British-drafted text and the United States, unhappy with Britain's efforts, came up with its own version on Thursday. The council will vote on Britain's draft and Washington is not expected to put its text to a vote, diplomats said.

The US mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. "It is rather unusual to see similar but competing drafts put forward by allies, rather than suggesting amendments to existing drafts. But these are unusual times," said a senior UN diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Our focus must be on getting swift adoption to support U.N. efforts and the

The draft resolution, seen by Reuters, authorizes UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to deploy - for an initial 30 days - an advance team to begin monitoring and to support and facilitate the deal between the warring parties.

agreement between the parties," the diplomat said. A resolution needs nine votes in favor and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, France or Britain to pass.

After a week of UN-sponsored peace talks in Sweden, the Iranian-aligned Houthi group and Saudi-backed Yemen government foes agreed last week to stop fighting in the Red Sea city of Hodeidah and withdraw forces. The truce began on Tuesday.

The draft resolution, seen by Reuters, authorizes UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to deploy - for an initial 30 days - an

advance team to begin monitoring and to support and facilitate the deal between the warring parties. It also asks Guterres to submit proposals by the end of the month on substantive monitoring operations for the ceasefire and mutual redeployment of forces; support for the management of and inspections at the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa; and strengthening of the U.N. presence in the Hodeidah region.

Guterres would report weekly to the Security Council on implementation of the deal, according to the draft resolution. The

text condemns "the supply, from whatever source, of weapons and associated materiel in contravention of the arms embargo." The United States had wanted to name Iran, but Russia objected, diplomats said. Iran has repeatedly denied accusations that it has supplied weapons to Yemen's Houthis. The conflict has pushed impoverished Yemen to the verge of famine, and millions of people rely on food aid. More than 80 percent of Yemen's imports used to come through Hodeidah port, but that has slowed to a trickle. The draft resolution "calls on the government of Yemen and the Houthis to remove bureaucratic impediments to flows of commercial and humanitarian supplies, including fuel, and on the parties to ensure effective and sustained functioning of all of Yemen's ports." The text circulated to council members by the United States - and seen by Reuters - mirrored the British language focused on the ceasefire deal and authorizing U.N. support. (Reuters)

AAPI's 37th Annual Convention will be held in Atlanta

ATLANTA, GA (TIP): "The 37th Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) will be held at the fabulous Omni Atlanta at CNN Center and Georgia World Congress Centre (GWCC) in Atlanta from July 3 to 7, 2019," Dr. Naresh Parikh, President of AAPI, announced here at a kick off meeting.

Attended by the members of convention leadership and various Committee Teams for the convention, the event on Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 at the Georgia World Congress Centre, showed the enthusiasm and commitment of the AAPI leadership and the local organizing committee headed by Dr. Sreeni Gangasani, Vice Chair of AAPI BOT and Convention Chair.

Other prominent leaders who had attended the kick off meeting included, Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, Vice President, AAPI; Dr. Syamala Erramilli, President of GAPI; Dr. Asha Parikh, Chair of GAPI BOT; Convention Co-chairs: Dr. Raghu Lolabattu, Dr. Piyush Patel, Dr. Subodh Agrawal and several Convention Team members.

"Exhibitors and Corporate Partners will remain their priority as they work together to provide a world class forum for increased interactions between physicians, sponsors, exhibitors," said Dr. Sreeni Gangasani. "The annual convention this year is being organized by AAPI's Georgia Chapter. A pool of dedicated AAPI leaders are working hard to make the Convention a unique event for all the participants."

Dr. Asha Parikh said, "The 2019 AAPI Annual Convention & Scientific Assembly offers an exciting venue to interact with leading physicians, health professionals, academicians, and scientists of Indian origin. Physicians and healthcare professionals from across the country will convene and participate in the scholarly exchange of medical advances, to encourage legislative priorities and to develop health policy agendas in the coming year."



Dr. Naresh Parikh, President of AAPI, announcing AAPI's 37th Annual Convention, December 2

Many of the physicians who will attend this convention have excelled in different specialties and subspecialties and occupy high positions as faculty members of medical schools, heads of departments, and executives of hospital staff.

"The AAPI Convention provides an opportunity for delegates to meet directly with these physicians who are leaders in their fields and play an integral part in the decision-making process regarding new products and services," said Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda. In addition to consumers of medical and pharmaceutical products, devices and equipment, practice-related services, financial services, office supplies, etc., can also meet senior members of management who influence such health care facilities. The 37th AAPI Atlanta Convention is where you can reach your target audience of several thousand under one roof. Register now and aggrandize your marketing plans.

According to Dr. Syamala Erramilli, the

AAPI convention will offer over 12 hours of CME credits. Scientific presentations, exhibits, and product theatre presentations will highlight the newest advances inpatient care, medical technology, and practice management issues across multiple medical specialties. In a paradigm shift, the convention will explore a Symposium and/or Workshop format that will focus on current issues in the clinical management of chronic disease conditions to include evidence-based guidelines, latest therapies, and hot topics. They will also include 1-2 sessions that will count for Ethics CME that can fulfil mandatory medical license renewal requirements in most states.

This convention has been always one of the much awaited events of the year; there will be an Educational session with CME by world renowned faculty, full entertainment by Bollywood celebrities, many religious/cultural Activities and many more.

AAPI convention offers customized and exclusive sponsorship packages to meet the

needs of sponsors and supporters. There are many Exciting A-Z Registration Packages like Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Diamond Ranging from \$50,000 - \$250,000.

Exhibiting with AAPI gives an opportunity to access nearly 2,000 health professionals who are leaders and decision-makers regarding new products and services, Access to national and international health policy advisors. The physicians attending this convention have excelled in different specialties and subspecialties and occupy high positions as faculty members of medical schools, heads of departments, and executives of hospital staff.

AAPI represents the interests of 80,000 physicians including 20,000 medical students, residents, and fellows. Over 2,500 attendees along with guests are expected to gather at the 37th Annual AAPI Convention in Atlanta, GA. The Team has discussed all the exciting news, updates, action plans for the upcoming event, assigned and confirmed the roles and responsibilities of members in the team. Early Bird Specials for AAPI members to save on the cost for registering early on to attend the convention will be announced shortly.

AAPI was founded in 1982 by a group of concerned Indian American medical professionals with a simple goal, to deal with the challenges around immigration and licensing issues facing by foreign medical graduates and to design a level field for them. It is the largest non-profit ethnic medical organization in the United States, one out of seven patient encounters in America is with an Indian American physician. AAPI serves as an umbrella organization with a network of over 160 component chapters including alumni, regional, state, and specialty organizations.

"Physicians and healthcare professionals from across the country and internationally will convene and participate in the scholarly exchange of medical advances, to develop health policy agendas, and to encourage legislative priorities in the coming year. We look forward to seeing you all in Atlanta, Georgia!" said Dr. Naresh Parikh. For more details, and sponsorship opportunities, please visit: www.aapiconvention.org and www.aapiusa.org

(Press Release issued by Ajay Ghosh)

A Grand celebration in Chicago unveils the essence & spirit of Christmas

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): With the symphonic choir presenting melodious Christmas carols eclipsed only by the grand entry of huge convoy of Kerala Drum beats headed by fully attired dancing Santa Claus kicked-off a spectacular Christmas Nite Banquet at the colorfully decked Meadows Club on December 14, 2018 in Rolling Meadows, IL.

The mesmerizing high-decibel sounds of Kerala drum beats reverberating the hall joyfully unveiled the grand evening of great festive fervor which was followed by dazzling dance performances and musical carols each heartwarmingly unveiled the profoundly beautiful story of Christmas spectacularly depicted through songs, dance and music.

The Christmas Nite Banquet hosted under the aegis of South Asian Christian Cultural Association [SACCA] attracted a great host of elected officials headed by U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, State Senator-elect Ram Villivalam, Oakbrook Mayor Dr. Gopal Lalimalani, Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath, Air-India's Chief Malini Vaidyanathan, Redberri Corp CEO Deepakant Vyas joined by large number of business and community leaders including SBI Manager Amit Jhngnan, PM Mortgage CEO Ashok Lakshmanan, Joyallukas Jewelers Manager Justin Joseph, SBI-VP Deepa Nath, Ajeet Singh, Harish Kolasani, Prachi Jaitley and Dhitu Bhagvakar.

The glittering banquet set off in motion with lamp lighting ceremony lead by U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi who in his remarks applauded the organizers and extolled the spirit of Christmas, which he



U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, State Senator-elect Ram Villivalam, Bishop Angadiath and dignitaries with hosts: Gladson Varghese, Keerthi Ravoori, Emanuel Neela, Satish Dadepogu & Vasanth Charles

emphasized, fosters peace, goodwill and love. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi who inspired a new generation of new leaders added that he would like to see a public figure emerging from the south Indian Christian community. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi publicly acknowledged and thanked Gladson Varghese and Keerthi Kumar Ravoori and his team for hosting this grand event celebrating the essence of Christmas.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi presented special plaques of appreciation to Mr. Ashok Lakshmanan, Mr. Amit Jhngnan, State Bank of India and Joseph of Joyallukas Jewelry. Malini Vaidyanathan of Air-India was honored with floral bouquets for her outstanding support to the community events and projects.

State Senator Ram Villivalam [elect] presented seasons' greetings and thanked the

community for all the support he has received in his electoral victory as the new State Senator in the 8th Senatorial district.

The highlight of the evening was ethereally melodious carols and anthems presented by the acclaimed St. Thomas Marthoma Church choir with over 30 singers directed by Choir Director Jacob George in a repertoire performance enhanced by candlelit ambience with a sparkling collection of timeless carols evoked sustained applause and some standing ovation. Young dancers who put grace, beauty and emotions in their dances illustrating the story of Christmas beautifully presented the evening's dance presentations from Kala Dance Academy choreographed by Ruth Varghese and Surya Dance Academy.

Earlier, Gladson Varghese, Chairman welcomed the elected officials and thanked

the gathering of families of all faiths for unitedly celebrating Christmas with a greater sense of appreciation, love and understanding. Keerthi Kumar Ravoori, Banquet Convener presiding over the evening's banquet served as the emcee, introduced the chief guests, and elected officials. Keerthi Ravoori called the Christmas banquet a celebration of inter-faith unity during this festive season. Emmanuel Neela, President SACCA presented seasonal remarks and outlined future programs; while Vasanth Charles presented an overview of the history of South Asian Christian Cultural Assn [SACCA] and Satish Dadepogu proposed a vote of thanks. Margaret Sanyogita Charles, Shirley Kalvakota & Persis Dadepogu led the lamp-lighting ceremony and intermittently took to the stage in the honoring ceremonies presenting shawl and flower bouquets to Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi in appreciation of his gracious presence and support; to State Senator [elect] Ram Villivalam on his recent electoral victory and to Shree Guruswamy for presenting beautiful cultural dance presentations and Oakbrook Mayor Dr. Gopal Lalimalani. Johnson Kodipally, Merari Bushpaka, Vijay, Michael Konda, Tony Chettupally, Mohit, and Sheetal & Komal Panchal presented the Telugu carols; while Rev. Rajamani Gonu, Rev. Dr. David Vidyasagar, Rev. Omega Verma, Dan Williams, and Prem presented the closing Christmas Skit with musical score by Michael Konda.

(Photograph and Press release by Asian Media USA)

In twist to 'Hanuman is Dalit' row, BJP leader Bukkal Nawab says he was a Muslim

LUCKNOW (TIP): In an interesting twist to the debate over Lord Hanuman after Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath termed the God a Dalit, his party colleague and MLC Bukkal Nawab on Thursday said the deity was "actually a Muslim".

"Lord Hanuman belongs to all, and as far as I think, Hanuman ji was actually a Muslim," Nawab, who left the Samajwadi Party to join the BJP when the Yogi Adityanath government came to power, told reporters in Lucknow.

He argued that the deity's name is very similar to names among Muslims and many of them are named after him.

"Hamara manna hai Hanuman ji Musalman thhe. Isliye Musalmanon ke andar jo naam rakha jata hai... Rehman, Ramzan, Farman, Zishan, Qurban... Jitne bhi naam rakhe jaate hain, woh karib karib unhi par rakhe jaate hain," he said.

Nawab, 64, who publicly offered prayers at a Hanuman temple last year, is the latest political figure to have weighed in on Lord Hanuman's identity.

While campaigning during the recent assembly elections, Adityanath reportedly said, "Hanuman was a forest dweller, deprived and a Dalit. Bajrang Bali worked to connect all Indian communities together, from north to south and east to west."

On December 4, BJP MP Savitribai Phule took exception to the manner in which the deity is depicted.

"Lord Hanuman was a Dalit and a slave of 'manuwadi' people. He was a Dalit and a human. He did everything for Lord Ram, then why was he given a tail and his face blackened," she asked.

A Jain priest in Bhopal has claimed Lord Hanuman was neither a Dalit nor a tribal, but a Jain.

Bukkal had given up his Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council seat to pave way for a BJP minister to become a legislator within the stipulated six-month period and continue in the government. After openly supporting the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, the prominent Shia politician last year donated a 30-kg brass bell at a famous Hanuman temple. He offered prayers there, prompting the SP to comment, "It is nothing but a publicity stunt. He is hopping from one temple to another to hog media limelight."

Sohrabuddin encounter: Cops, farmhouse owner acquitted due to lack of evidence

MUMBAI (TIP): A special CBI court has acquitted all 22 accused, most of them policemen, in the Sohrabuddin Shaikh encounter case of 2005 due to lack of evidence.

Delivering the verdict, special CBI judge SJ Sharma said the witnesses and proof were not satisfactory to prove conspiracy and murder. The court also observed that circumstantial evidence was not substantial.

"Government machinery and prosecution put in a lot of effort, 210 witnesses were brought but satisfactory evidence didn't come and witnesses turned hostile. No fault of prosecutor if witnesses don't speak," the judge said.

Of the accused, 21 are junior-level police officials from Gujarat and Rajasthan. The other was the owner of a farmhouse in Gujarat where Shaikh and Kausar Bi were illegally detained before they were allegedly killed.

Ex-NDA minister joins 'grand alliance', Opposition to get a boost in Bihar

NEW DELHI (TIP): Upendra Kushwaha, the junior HRD minister in Narendra Modi's government who recently resigned, formally joined the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) on Thursday. The Bihar-based Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) leader had quit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance on December 10, citing differences with the BJP and the Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United).

At a press conference in the All India Congress Committee (AICC) office, Kushwaha said, "The alliance of RLSP and other UPA constituents is not merely an electoral formula. It is a coming together of similar ideologies."

"Yeh dalon ka mel nahin, dilon ka mel hai (This is not a marriage of different parties but of hearts)," he added.

Over the last few months, Kushwaha had been upset over the way both the BJP and the Janata Dal (United) had sidelined smaller NDA constituents – like his party in Bihar. Former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) has already left the NDA.

The process of Kushwaha's eventual departure from the NDA began when the BJP said it was ready to give only two seats to the RLSP for the 2019 parliamentary polls, as against the three it gave to the party in 2014. RLSP spokesperson Madhaw Anand had told the media earlier that the party would not settle for anything less than three.

The former minister's equation with the BJP particularly deteriorated when the Janata Dal (United) deserted the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and formed the state government with the saffron party in 2017. Kushwaha and Kumar have been known as arch-rivals since the time both were part of the Janata Dal. Both leaders emerged from the socialist movement, garnering support from their respective caste groups.

His displeasure became more evident when the BJP gave in to Kumar's pressure and declared that both JD(U) and the saffron party would contest an equal number of seats in 2019. This left little room for smaller parties. Ram Vilas Paswan, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) leader and Union minister, is also apparently unhappy with the seat-



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav with Jitan Ram Manjhi, Congress leader Ahmed Patel, AICC Bihar in charge Shaktisinh Gohil, RLSP leader Upendra Kushwaha, JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav and other leaders after joining the grand alliance during a press conference, at All India Congress Committee office (AICC), in New Delhi.

sharing formula. The LJP contested seven seats in 2014 and won six.

It is in this context, Kushwaha said, "Nitish Kumar wanted to destroy me and my party because even when I was in the NDA, my party has been raising concerns on the poor education system in Bihar."

He said that Kumar insulted him by calling him "neech" (lowly) when he appealed to the state government to implement his 25-point programme to resurrect the state's dying education sector.

He also alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi remained silent when he was insulted.

"My disenchantment with NDA is not only on the basis of the seat-sharing formula. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ignored all issues of social justice over the last four years. I have constantly raised such issues in the government but none heard them. It was a matter of self-respect for me," said the Lok Sabha member from Bihar's Karakat.

Kushwaha received a warm welcome from opposition leaders. Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel, AICC-in-charge of Bihar Shaktisinh Gohil, rebel JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, HAM's Jitan Ram Manjhi and Bihar Congress president Madan Mohan Jha were among the leaders present when Kushwaha

announced his decision to join the UPA.

A formidable alliance in Bihar

With RLSP joining the UPA, the opposition alliance has become stronger in Bihar – a state which sends 40 members to the Lok Sabha.

Apart from the Lalu Prasad-led RJD, which is the biggest UPA member in Bihar, the Congress, the Communist Party of India (ML-Liberation), Communist Party of India (CPI), RLSP and HAM will now take on the NDA in 2019.

Bihar is thus poised to see a bipolar contest between two clear political fronts, lending greater credibility to the notion of a united opposition.

Although the seat-sharing formula has still not been decided, political observers say that RJD may contest 20-22 seats, while the Congress will contest 8-10. The remaining 10 will be shared by the smaller parties.

What is clear at the moment is that the opposition alliance will attack both the Centre and the state government on their failure to keep their poll promises.

Welcoming Kushwaha, Tejashwi hinted at this political approach. "Modiji promised Rs 1.25 lakh crore financial assistance to Bihar in his campaign. Where is it? Not even a penny has come Bihar's way and my chacha (uncle) Nitish Kumar appears to have no problem with it."

Amit Shah meets LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan, son to talk 2019 seat share

NEW DELHI (TIP): BJP boss Amit Shah is meeting Lok Janshakti Party's Ram Vilas Paswan and his son Chirag at his Delhi residence. The meeting comes a day after the Bihar politicians went public with their December 31 deadline to seal the NDA's seat-sharing arrangement for the 2019 elections in Bihar. Paswan's party has been flexing its muscles over the delay and has attempted to pressurise the BJP to finalise the pact soon.

Bihar's animal husbandry minister and LJP leader Pashupati Kumar Paras had on Wednesday said that the BJP should call a meeting of NDA leaders and resolve the seat sharing issue. Calling for joint discussions, Paras, Paswan's younger brother, had said, "We want the seat sharing issue be resolved by December 31, as elections have come closer and a lot of preparation has to be done."

Ahead of the meeting, Paswan had played down the issue



and had said that there was no unhappiness. "Koi narazgi nahi hai, Chirag Parliamentray Board k chairman hain, wahi is sambandh main baat karenge. (There is no unhappiness. Chirag is the Parliamentary Board chairman and he will talk about the issue)," Paswan said.

Seat sharing isn't the only bone of discontent that the LJP has against the BJP.

"We flagged a number of issues; such as farm unrest, impact of demonetisation, jobs and many more, to BJP leadership, but, they have not taken note of it," a senior LJP leader said. "The outcome of the recent elections has proved that these challenges are real and we can't ignore them."

Paras' ultimatum to the BJP came a day after Paswan's MP son Chirag Paswan cautioned the BJP in two tweets saying that it should treat its allies with respect and that any delay in talks would hurt the NDA.

1984 riots: Delhi HC dismisses Sajjan Kumar's plea for extension of time to surrender

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Delhi High Court on December 21 (Friday) dismissed a plea filed by 1984 anti-Sikh riots convict Sajjan Kumar seeking more time to surrender. Kumar had moved the court seeking an additional 30 days for surrendering ahead of the December 31 deadline. The former Congress leader was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment by the court in a case pertaining to killing five members of a family during the riots.

The High Court while hearing the plea said that it sees no ground for granting an extension of time to Sajjan Kumar to surrender.

Reversing the orders of the trial court, which had acquitted the former Congress legislator, the court found him guilty of the murders in the aftermath of then prime minister Indira Gandhi's assassination. A bench of Justice S Muralidhar and Justice Vinod Goel also made clear that Kumar's life imprisonment will be for the remainder of his life. After the verdict, Kumar tendered his resignation from the primary membership of Congress.

Kumar was acquitted by a special CBI court on April 30, 2013, while it had held five other accused guilty of the crime. The trial court had handed three years



of jail term to former MLA Mahender Yadav and Kishan Khokhar. The CBI and victims of the riots had filed appeals against the acquittal of Kumar in the Delhi High Court.

The five convicted had also filed appeals against their conviction. All appeals were heard together and the judgment was reserved on October 27.

Meanwhile, Sajjan Kumar on Thursday appeared before the Patiala court in Delhi in connection with another 1984 riots case. In the case before the trial court, three persons — Kumar, Brahmanand Gupta and Ved Prakash — are facing trial on charges of murder and rioting pertaining to the killing of Surjit Singh in Sultanpuri.



PAK REJECTS PUNJAB'S LAND SWAP OFFER TO MAKE KARTARPUR PART OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH (TIP): Pakistan has turned down the demand from the Indian side for a land swap between the two countries to make Kartarpur a part of India.

"Absolutely not", Pakistan foreign office spokesperson Mohammad Faisal said in Islamabad on Thursday, responding to a media query if Pakistan would consider handing over the Kartarpur land to India in a swap deal.

"It's a gesture for Sikh minority community made on their request to provide a visa-free corridor to facilitate visit to a religious shrine. The decision to open the Kartarpur corridor was taken at the state-to-state level and the Indian government was fully involved in it," he added.

The Punjab assembly on December 14 had unanimously passed a resolution, seeking an India-Pak land swap deal on Kartarpur, the final resting place of Guru Nanak located in Narowal district of Pakistan. The Capt Amarinder Singh government had decided to take up the proposal with the Union government, offering over 10,000 acres in the Dera Baba Nanak area in exchange for the land on which the historic gurdwara stands barely three kilometres from the India-Pakistan border.

Congress Rajya Sabha member Partap Singh Bajwa too had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September with a similar demand. Citing an example from 1962 when land was swapped with Pakistan in return for a piece of land at Hussainiwala where the cremation site of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru is located, Bajwa said it will also negate national security concerns that may arise from the corridor.

NOIDA POLICE BUST FAKE CALL CENTRE DUPING UNITED STATES CITIZENS

NOIDA (TIP): The Noida police have busted a fake call centre here which was being used to dupe US citizens, officials said on Friday.

A raid was conducted at the call centre, located in Sector 63, on Thursday night on a tip-off that dubious operations were being carried out from there, Senior Superintendent of Police Ajay Pal Sharma said.

He said "several" operators and callers were detained from the scene and were being interrogated.

The workers at the fake call centre would call up US citizens and intimidate them saying there were problems with their Social Security Number, a nine-digit identification number issued to US citizens, and demand money to "fix" it, Sharma said.

The call centre was busted under Phase 3 police station limits, he said.

Further details were awaited as the probe was under way, the SSP said.

Over the past few months, about a dozen fake call centres had been busted in Noida and scores of people arrested for duping foreigners, including Americans and Canadians, officials said.

Source: PTI

Don't fall in love on FB, says Indian national who spent 6 years in Pak jail

MUMBAI (TIP): Having spent almost six years in a Pakistani jail, software engineer Hamid Nihal Ansari's advice to youth is simple: Don't fall in love over Facebook.

He should know. It was on Facebook that he fell in love with a girl from Pakistan, went there to prevent her 'forced' marriage and before he could meet her, was arrested and jailed.

That was six years ago. Thursday, as he reached his home in suburban Mumbai, he was in a reflective mood.

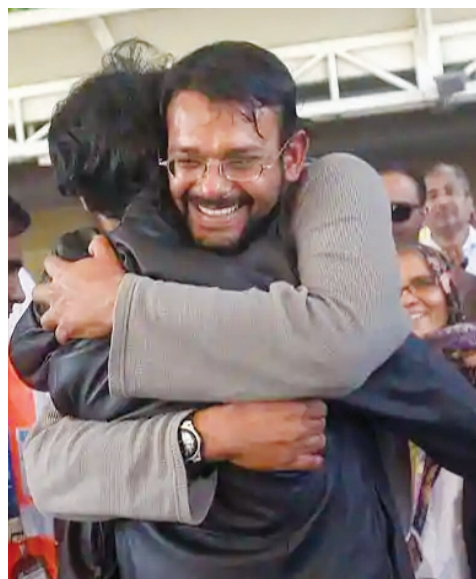
"Never hide anything from your parents. Only your parents stand by your side in testing times. And never resort to any illegal means to go to any place," Ansari told media.

His tale is a lesson for several youngsters, who have experienced a new wave of freedom with the world of internet and social media.

Asked what advice will he give to people who fall in love on Facebook, Ansari said, "Don't take (that) risk. Don't fall in love. Don't fall in love by trusting (what is on) Facebook."

As Ansari and his family reached their fourth-floor flat in Versova after their arrival from Delhi Thursday morning, they were greeted by their neighbours who had decorated the gate with Welcome Hamid written on it with a blue ribbon.

He said the news of his release came as a bolt from the blue. "At 6.30 am on Tuesday, the (jail) deputy superintendent came to me and said you have half an hour to be ready (for release).



Hamid Nihal Ansari

"I was very excited and decided not to waste a single moment. I changed my clothes, put on my shoes and sat in the vehicle. The convoy was ready (for my journey)," he said.

Ansari was arrested in Pakistan in 2012 for allegedly entering that country from Afghanistan reportedly to meet a woman he had befriended online. Pakistan slapped espionage charges against him. He was repatriated on Tuesday and handed over to India at the Wagah-Attari border.

Pak reviving terror in Punjab: Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI (TIP): Attempts by Pakistan intelligence agency ISI to fuel the Khalistan fire, radicalisation stemming out of religion or grievances, counter-radicalisation efforts and police and community relations are among major issues under discussion at the annual Conference of Directors General and Inspectors General of Police in Gujarat. The three-day conference kicked off today at Kevadia, the venue of Statue of Unity, and will be addressed by Prime Minister Modi.

Addressing the inaugural session, Home Minister Rajnath Singh directed the security establishment to check efforts to revive terrorism in Punjab. "In Punjab, recent terror incidents and related interdictions indicate concerted efforts on part of Pak establishment and Sikh extremist elements based in Pakistan to revive terrorism in Punjab with active support of other Sikh radical/extremist entities based abroad, especially Europe and America," he said.

Holiday Inn: From Paper Mill Playhouse

By Mabel Pais



Hayley Podschun (Linda) and Nicholas Rodriguez (Jim)

Photo / Jerry Dalia



Nicholas Rodriguez (Jim), Ann Harada (Louise)

Photo / Jerry Dalia



Jeff Kready (Ted), Hayley Podschun (Linda), Nicholas Rodriguez (Jim) and company

Photo / Jerry Dalia

“‘Holiday Inn’ is a tuneful, toe-tapping confection.”

- Associated Press

“‘Holiday Inn’ is about the beauty of being true to yourself - living simply and honestly and finding rewards in doing what you love on your own terms.”

- Gordon Greenberg, Director & Co-author

Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn has arrived just in time for the holidays. This is the 2nd musical in the 80th anniversary season of Paper Mill Playhouse, the magnificent season opener being *The Color Purple*.

This heartwarming, toe-tapping musical fresh from a Broadway run and based on the Universal Pictures beloved Bing Crosby/Fred Astaire film, features more than 20 classic songs from the Berlin catalog, including *Easter Parade*, *Cheek to Cheek*, *Steppin' Out with My Baby*, and *White Christmas*.

The book is by Gordon Greenberg (*The Baker's Wife*, 1776 - Paper Mill) and Chad Hodge, music direction by Shawn Gough, choreography by Denis Jones (*Mary Poppins*, Paper Mill, *Holiday Inn* - Broadway, Tony nomination) and directed by Gordon Greenberg.

Gordon Greenberg, director & co-author, explains, "‘Holiday Inn’ is about the beauty of being true to yourself - living simply and honestly and finding rewards in doing what you love on your own terms. In an increasingly polarized and fragmented world, the show celebrates our individuality, while reminding us that we are more alike than different. The sets, the costumes, the cast, and the hullabaloo of high-stepping tap dancers flying through the air against a gorgeous Irving Berlin score makes *Holiday Inn* a great big party. And isn't that what holidays are all about?"

Jim Hardy leaves behind the hustle and bustle of showbiz for a quiet life on a Connecticut farm. Jim's agrarian efforts are a flop, but things start looking up when he falls for a talented schoolteacher, and together they infuse their sleepy rural setting with some Broadway razzle-dazzle.

The principal cast features Paige Faure (*Honeymoon in Vegas - Paper Mill*) as Lila Dixon, Jordon Gelber (*Avenue Q*) as Danny, Ann Harada (*Avenue Q*) as Louise, Jeff Kready (*Thoroughly Modern Millie - Paper Mill*) as Ted Hanover, Hayley Podschun (*Peter Pan - Paper Mill*) as Linda Mason, Nicholas Rodriguez (*Tarzan*) as Jim Hardy with Jian Harrell and Aidan Alberto alternating in the role of Charlie Winslow.

They will be joined by Jordon Beall, Gene Biscontinini, Colin Bradbury, Tricia DeSario, Taylor Fields, Kelly Gleason, Juliane Godfrey, Berklea Going, Joshua Israel, Julie Kavanagh, Mallory Nolting, Clifton Samuels, JT Teeling, Karl Skylar Urban, Amy Van Norstrand, Scarlett Walker, Travis Ward-Osborne, and John T. Wolfe.

Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn continues performances until December 30 at Paper Mill Playhouse (22 Brookside Drive) in Millburn, NJ.

About Paper Mill Playhouse



Aidan Alberto (Charlie Winslow alternate).

Photo / Courtesy PMP



Aidan with his parents Kezia and Aldrin Alberto

Photo / Courtesy PMP

Paper Mill Playhouse, a not-for-profit arts organization under the direction of Mark S. Hoebee (Producing Artistic Director) and recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award in 2016, is one of the country's leading regional theaters.

For more information on the Playhouse or for tickets, visit www.PaperMill.org.

Facebook.com/PaperMillPlayhouse

Twitter: @paper_mill

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Paper Mill's Education Programs

Paper Mill Playhouse is justly proud of its impressive array of education programs that reach nearly 40,000 students each year. Programs as varied as the Adopt-A-School Project, Theater for Everyone, Theater School, Broadway Show Choir, Rising Star Awards, and the Summer Musical Theater Conservatory are examples of this important work.

Some of the Summer Conservatory alumni are

Anne Hathaway (*Twelfth Night*, Film: *Les Misérables* (2013 Academy Award Winner), *Rachel Getting Married* (2009 Academy Award & Golden Globe nominee), *Get Smart*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, & *Disney's The Princess Diaries*)

Laura Benanti-Broadway: *She Loves Me*, *Gypsy* (2008 Tony Award winner), *Into the Woods*, *The Wedding Singer*, *Swing!*

Julia Knitel-Broadway: *Beautiful: the Carole King Musical* (u/s Carole King); *Bye Bye Birdie*

Robert McClure-Broadway: *Something Rotten*, *Honeymoon in Vegas*, *Chaplin*, *Avenue Q*

Shanice Williams-NBC's *The Wiz Live!*

And many more.....

Twelve-year-old Aidan Alberto, an alumnus of the 2017 Summer Conservatory program of Paper Mill Playhouse, is one of the youngest actors in *Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn*. He plays the alternate in the role of Charlie Winslow. This is the 2nd public performance for Aidan at Paper Mill Playhouse.

Aidan, from the rehearsal sets, spoke to Mabel Pais.

What is exciting about your role in Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn? Describe your role.

It is exciting because I play a very funny role (Charlie Winslow); I have funny lines. I like making people laugh. When you have a funny role you make people laugh.

Charlie Winslow is a kid who works for a bank. His teacher is Ms. Mason. Charlie is 10 years old and he behaves like an adult.

Tell us more about the Summer Conservatory at Paper Mill Playhouse.

In the Conservatory we learn how to audition well. We learn some songs to perform later. We learn how to perform in front of everyone and we learn how to audition properly. Examples of songs are "No Bad News," "We're Not Gonna Take it".....all Broadway (NY theater) songs. At the end, they make a dance for it and we sing and dance to the music.

What age groups are trained in the Conservatory?

There are 3 age groups: a senior group, a junior plus, and junior. I was in the junior group: about 15-20. The judges included the Artistic Director, Mark S. Hoebee, the Associate Artistic Director, Patrick Parker and some of the teachers in the Conservatory.

What is the selection process to get admitted into the program?

The selection process was each had to sing a song, they taught us a dance to the song; we had to dance and the judges judged us from that.

In which voiceovers and commercials have you participated?

I've been in a television commercial for the Five and Below (store). I've done a few voiceovers for Audio Works (recording studio), New York. I've also played Schroeder in (the comic series) *Peanut's Charlie Brown*, a youtube series, in New York.

In which school musicals and local community theater did you participate? What role did you play in each?

I did a few shows in my school: In *The Wizard Of Oz*, I played Tin Man and Marcellus in *The Music Man*. This was presented for the school staff, students and parents.

I played Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins* at the Mayo Performing Arts Center (MPAC).

I've also performed in South Orange at the Baird Theater produced by InterACT. For example, I've played Mowgli (a principal character who is the boy or "man-cub," who is raised in the jungle by wolves) for *The Jungle Book*.

Tell us about your family: your siblings and parents.

My older sibling Ahren is 16, my younger brother Andrew is 7. My dad Aldrin is a software engineer and my mom Kezia is a nephrologist.

(Mabel Pais writes on *The Arts & Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness*)

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SARA ALI KHAN SAYS SHE IS ALWAYS DYING TO BE ON A FILM SET

Sara Ali Khan says she may be pursuing acting as a profession but her aim is to be as real and relatable as possible. Sara, who made her Bollywood acting debut with Kedarnath and is awaiting the release of her second film Simmba, has become an instant social media fan favourite. She is currently busy with the promotions of the film on reality shows and events.

The young actor believes, "People appreciate the fact that I am real. I endeavour to be most real person. I don't think too much and try to be as organic as I can. I do make mistakes. With the same token you get appreciation and criticism as well and you have to take it the same way."

Sara told PTI that as a performer she wants to experiment. "I am taking each day as it comes. I will see what offers come my way and whatever excites me I will take that up. As an actor I want to experiment with different kinds of films. I have always loved acting. I am always dying to be on a film set. Life is empty for me without that," she said.

Directed by Rohit Shetty, Simmba features Ranveer Singh in the title role and Sonu Sood as antagonist. The film releases on December 28. Also, there are rumours that Sara will be seen in a sequel to Irrfan Khan's Hindi Medium, will collaborate with Imtiaz Ali and will be seen in Varun Dhawan-starrer Rannbhoomi. A few reports also suggest that the one-film-old actor has also been offered Baaghi 3.

Manikarnika: The Queen Of Jhansi is here! The three-minute-long trailer reveals that the 31-year-old actress, who plays the titular role in the film, is undoubtedly brilliant as the feisty Rani Laxmi Bai.

The trailer begins with an introduction to the story line of Rani Laxmi Bai's biopic - in the absence of a ruler, Jhansi appears to be in great peril with the East India Company attempting to seize Jhansi. The trailer then offers a snippet of Kangana as the fierce Manikarnika, who soon wins over all of Jhansi with her warmth, unbeatable skills as a warrior and ideologies. "Kanyay kaise kalaiyaan ghumate hai, main dikhati hun," Manikarnika utters at the beginning of the trailer while challenging a group of sword fighters.

The intriguing trailer also has glimpses of Manikarnika's wedding to Maharaja of Jhansi, Raja Gangadhar Rao Newalkar (aptly played by actor Jisshu Sengupta) and her naming ritual that followed. Manikarnika was assigned the prestigious title of Laxmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi. The story then takes an interesting turn as the trailer portrays Rani Laxmi Bai's heart-wrenching transformation from a young widow to a warrior queen, who is determined to serve the people of Jhansi

with every drop of her blood and sweat.

The trailer of Manikarnika: The Queen Of Jhansi also features stunning war sequences between Rani Laxmi Bai and the East India Company. Rani Laxmi Bai shines bright in the pages of Indian history as one of the early freedom fighters of India. She trained and headlined an army of women against the East India Company during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. We also get a glimpse of actress Ankita Lokhande as Jhalkari Bai in the trailer, who served in the women's army of the Rani of Jhansi.

Speaking to news agency IANS earlier, Kangana had said: "Our film is on a huge scale so there are lots of VFX involved in the film but now by the grace of God, our deadlines are under control. It's an amazing experience. After January 25, I will be very happy to sort of take a little break and go somewhere because I have been working so long on this film."

DEEPIKA IS IMDB'S TOP INDIAN STAR, LEAVES SRK, SALMAN, AAMIR KHAN BEHIND

With just one film in her account in 2018, actor Deepika Padukone has been named the top Indian star of 2018, beating her Om Shanti Om co-actor, Shah Rukh Khan, according to leading global movie website IMDb.

IMDb on Tuesday unveiled the 2018 Top 10 Stars of Indian Cinema list. The list was derived using data from IMDbPro STARmeter rankings, which are based on page views of more than 250 million monthly visitors to the platform, read a statement.

Shah Rukh Khan, who will appear in the film Zero on December 21, earned the second spot, and was followed by Thugs of Hindostan actor Aamir Khan, Fanny Khan star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Race 3's Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif, Sacred Games' Kubbra Sait, Irrfan Khan, the 'omnipresent' Radhika Apte and Gold actor Akshay Kumar. "Deepika Padukone's strong performance in this year's Padmaavat pushed her into the top spot on the 2018 IMDb Top Stars of Indian Cinema list," said Neha Gureja, Head of International for IMDb.

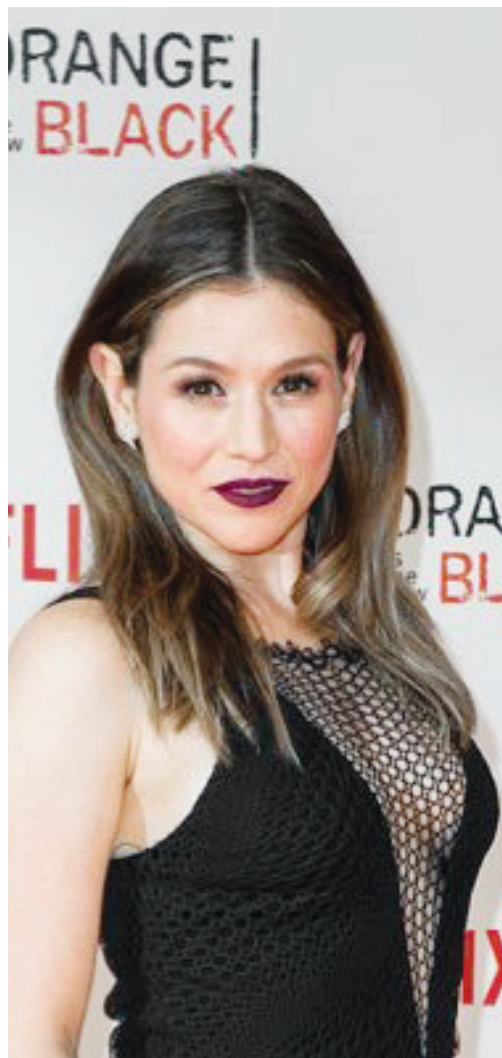
"Radhika Apte delighted audiences this year, appearing in two of the IMDb Top Indian Movies of 2018 - AndhaDhun (which ranked number 1) and Pad Man (ranked number 6). Akshay Kumar, the bold protagonist in Pad Man rounds out the Top Stars list at number 10," she added.

International film website, IMDb has named Deepika Padukone as the biggest Indian star of 2018. Deepika, who starred in Padmaavat earlier in the year, has beat out Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Aamir Khan and Akshay Kumar.



Manikarnika: Kangana's transformation from young widow to warrior queen





ACTRESS Yael Stone ACCUSES GEOFFREY RUSH OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Australian Jewish actress Yael Stone, a star of the Netflix prison show "Orange Is the New Black," has accused actor Geoffrey Rush of inappropriate sexual behavior.

Stone made the accusations in an interview with the Australian national broadcaster, as well as in an interview with New York Times columnist Bari Weiss published on the newspaper's website on Sunday night.

Stone said that during the Belvoir St. Theatre's 2010-11 production of "The Diary of a Madman" in Sydney, Rush danced naked in front of her in their dressing room, used a mirror to watch her while she showered and sent her erotic text messages.

"Geoffrey was working within the boundaries of what he felt was playful. The fact of the matter is, the behavior was very inappropriate at times and did make me feel uncomfortable and compromised," she told the ABC.

"Whenever women particularly speak about issues like this their career generally suffers. I've factored that into my calculations and if that happens, I think it's worth it," she said.

Stone's father is Jewish and her mother converted to Judaism. She grew up in Sydney.

Rush, one of Australia's most widely recognized and influential stars, is best known to American audiences for his roles in "Shine," "The King's Speech" and the "Pirates of the Caribbean" series. In a statement issued on Monday afternoon, he denied any inappropriate behavior. He called her accusations "incorrect" and said some were "taken completely out of context."

"Clearly Yael has been upset on occasion by the spirited enthusiasm I generally bring to my work," Rush said in a statement released by his lawyer. "I sincerely and deeply regret if I have caused her any distress."

Earlier this year, actress Eryn Jean Norvill accused Rush of touching her inappropriately.

MILEY CYRUS REVEALED SOME INTIMATE DETAILS ABOUT LIAM HEMSWORTH

Miley Cyrus just confirmed what we all suspected to be true—her man, Liam Hemsworth, is the full package. In just one small Instagram comment, Cyrus revealed a lot about her longtime beau, and some of the details are even NSFW.

Meme account @sourpsycho shared a photo that reads, "No man has all 5: good dick game, empathy, a height above 5'9, no hoes, common sense." Cyrus reacted to the meme, commenting "Mine does! Don't give up!" Well, seems like you hit the jackpot, Miley.

To make the exchange even funnier, Riverdale star Lili Reinhart also chimed in. "I found one! ????" she wrote, referring to her co-star boyfriend Cole Sprouse. The actress gave her two cents on a post by @CommentsByCelebs, which featured a screenshot of Miley's comment.

Miley and Liam have not been shy about flaunting their love this week, as the singer is out promoting her newest single "Nothing Breaks Like a Heart" with Mark Ronson. On Saturday, she performed on Saturday Night Live and Hemsworth supported her backstage. Cyrus shared sweet photos from the night, calling her beau her "Hot date."

Cyrus recently opened up on The Howard Stern Show about her relationship with her longtime love, and



why she refers to him as her "survival partner." The title came after Hemsworth heroically saved Miley's dozens of pets from the California fires while she was out of town. "I call him my 'survival partner' now, and he thinks it's not

romantic," Cyrus said of her man. "But, I learned that it is! That is why you pair up with someone is for survival and he was so incredible. He got all the animals out in his truck, he put two pigs in crates, which I'm telling you is so hard."



Sarah Jessica Parker downplays talks about third 'Sex and the City' movie

Actor Sarah Jessica Parker says she is currently not thinking about the third movie of "Sex and the City" franchise.

During the New York Women in Film & Television's Muse Awards gala luncheon, the 53-year-old actor told Variety that she and her co-stars have not discussed the long-awaited threequel.

"It's not something we are talking about right now. I just don't have a clue," Parker said.

The first "Sex and the City" film was a major critical and commercial success. It featured Parker as Carrie Bradshaw, Cynthia Nixon as Miranda Hobbes, Kristin Davis as Charlotte York and Kim Cattrall as Samantha Jones.

However, its follow-up three years later, mostly set in Abu Dhabi, had an uneven reception.

The third part is stuck, mainly due to Cattrall's feud with Parker. Cattrall has time and again made it clear that she does not want to be a part of the proposed threequel.

Carey Mulligan enjoys playing 'unlikeable' characters

Actor Carey Mulligan says "unlikable" characters attract her. The 33-year-old actor, who has received rave reviews for her performance in "Wildlife" in which she plays an unsympathetic 1960s wife and mother, believes the negative aspects of her character makes her more realistic.

"I kind of lean into the unlikable things. Because we all have slightly crap aspects to our personality, as much as we try and pretend that we don't, and that's what makes us real human beings.

"So I didn't really think about whether Jeanette was likable or not. I suppose that's why it came as quite a shock when people started shouting at me in Q&As," Mulligan told The Hollywood Reporter's 'Awards Chatter' podcast.

"Wildlife", directed by Paul Dano, also features Jake Gyllenhaal.



MARTYRDOM OF THE SAHIBZADAS

The martyrdom of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of Sikh religion is one of the most tragic and yet most glorious part of the proud community's history. The Sikhs have a long history of heroic struggle and sacrifice. The 5th Master of the Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev Ji and the 9th Master of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji made supreme sacrifices for humanity, at large. The 10th Master and the Founder of the Khalsa which means pure (that is how the Sikhs came to be known) made sacrifices that stood out in the realms of world history. The martyrdom of the four Sahibzadas, Guru Gobind Singh's sons, has to be seen in that glorious tradition that Sikhs take pride in and derive inspiration from.

The four young princes of genteel birth – The Char Sahibzade – is the term endearingly used for the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, all of whom died as martyrs while still in their tender age. Their names are reverently preserved in Sikh memory and are recalled every time the Sikh Ardas or prayer of supplication is recited at every religious ceremony in a congregation and privately twice a day (after the morning and evening prayer) by an individual. Sahibzada Ajit Singh, the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh, was born to Mata Sundri at Paonta on 26 January 1687. The following year the Guru and his family returned to Anandpur. Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, the second son of Guru Gobind Singh, was born to Mata Jito-ji at Anandpur on 14 March 1691. From a very young age both brothers were taught the religious texts, philosophy and history alongside their training in swordsmanship, archery and horse riding. Soon they grew up into handsome young men, strong, intelligent and natural leaders of men.

In 1699 both Sahibzade Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, 12 years and 8 years of age respectively, received the rites of Khalsa initiation. Soon after the creation of Khalsa on 30 March 1699, Ajit Singh had his first test of skill. A Sikh Sangat coming from Pothohar was attacked and looted by Ranghars on the way, a short distance from Anandpur across the River Sutlej. Guru Gobind Singh sent Sahibzada Ajit Singh, then barely 12 years of age, at the head of about 100 Sikhs to punish the Ranghars and to recover the loot. The following year, 29 August 1700, when the hill Rajas, backed by Imperial troops, attacked Anandpur. Ajit Singh was made responsible for the defense of Taragarh Fort which became the first target of attack. Ajit Singh, assisted by Bhai Ude Singh, a seasoned soldier, repulsed the attack. On 15 March 1701 a column of Sikh devotees coming from Darap area (present Sialkot district) was waylaid by Gujjars and Ranghars. Sahibzada Ajit Singh led a successful expedition against them.

Instructed by his father, on 7 March 1703, he took out 100 horsemen to Bassi, near Hoshiarpur and rescued a young Brahman bride forcibly taken away by the local Pathans. During the prolonged siege of Anandpur, it became necessary to leave the city under the pressure of pursuing enemy. Both the Sahibzade were experienced warriors, strong and fearless, displaying qualities of courage and steadfastness. On the night of 5 December 1705 Guru Gobind Singh gave each of his sons the command of a band of brave Sikhs to wade through the flooded Sarsa river on horseback and head towards the Fort of Chamkaur. Amidst the fierce fighting in the darkness of night and the hazardous long journey the Guru and the Sikhs, together with his family and both the elder Sahibzade in command of their bands, made their way to Chamkaur.

Further reduced in numbers by casualties



The younger Sahibzadas Zoravar Singh and Fateh Singh are being bricked alive in Sirhind.



at the hands of the enemy they reached Chamkaur by nightfall on 6 December 1705 and took up position in the Garhi – high walled fortified house. The enemy, with extra reinforcements from Malerkotla and Sirhind and from among local Ranghars and Gujjars, threw a tight ring around the fort of Chamkaur. An unequal but grim battle commenced with the dawn of 7 December 1705 – in the words of Guru Gobind Singh's Zafarnama – 'a mere forty defying a million'. The Sikhs, after they had exhausted the meager stock of ammunition and arrows, made sally in batches of five to engage the encircling enemy with sword and spear. Sahibzada Ajit Singh led one of the sallies and laid down his life fighting in the bloody battle, followed by his younger brother Sahibzada Jujhar Singh who led the next sally. Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, 18 and 14 years old respectively, who like the other brave Sikhs, fell fighting heroically. The valour displayed by the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh has been sympathetically and vividly narrated in the poems of a devout Muslim, Allahyar Khan Jogi.

Today Gurdwara Qatalgarh Sahib (Shahid Ganj) is the main shrine at Chamkaur. This marks the site where the most fierce hand-to-hand combat took place on 7 December 1705 between the Mughal army and a handful of brave Sikhs, including Sahibzade Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, and three of the original Panj Piare (Guru's Five Beloved ones). Unfortunately, during the crossing of the flooded river Sarsa, Mata Gujri and the two younger Sahibzade Zoravar Singh and Fateh Singh, aged 9 and 7 years respectively, together with their cook, Gangu, were separated from the Guru and the Sikhs.

Seizing the opportunity of a reward Gangu spied on them and handed them over to the enemy. Both the young Sahibzade were executed on 12 December 1705 in Sirhind. Sahibzada Zoravar Singh was born on 17 November 1696 and Sahibzada Fateh Singh on 25 February 1699. After the tragic death of their mother Mata Jito-ji (5 Dec 1700) they were brought up under the care of their grandmother Mata Gujri Ji.

Both the princes were closely attached to their grandmother. Mata Gujari took charge of both the princes as the column moved out of Anandpur. As Guru Gobind Singh evacuated Anandpur on the night of 5 December 1705, he was pursued by the host. In front ran the river Sarsa, swollen with rain water. Under cover of a quick rearguard action fought on the river bank, the Guru, his brave Sikhs and his family succeeded in crossing the Sarsa. Unfortunately, in the commotion of confused cries in the dark, Mata Gujri and the two younger Sahibzade, along with their cook, Gangu, were separated from the Guru and his band. Not knowing where to go Gangu offered to shelter them at his house in village Kheri, now known as Saheri, near Morinda. The journey being hazardous and dark they reached Kheri the following night. Tired and hungry they were asked to rest in the attic. But Gangu proved deceitful. During the night Gangu stole Mata Gujri's saddlebag containing cash and valuables. In the hope of a reward from the government he spied on them. With the help of the village headman he betrayed them to Jani Khan and Mani Khan, the Ranghar officials of Morinda.

The latter took Mata Gujri and the two Sahibzade into custody and in the morning dispatched them to Sirhind where they were

confined in the Cold Tower – Thanda Burj – of the Fort. On the morning of 9 December 1705 Zoravar Singh and Fateh Singh, aged 9 and 7 respectively, were summoned before the faujdar, Nawab Wazir Khan. Wazir Khan tried to lure the Sahibzade to embrace Islam with promises of riches and honors. But the brave and fearless sons of Guru Gobind Singh spurned the suggestion. He then threatened them with death but they remained undaunted. Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan, a high ranking officer and chief of Malerkotla, who was also present in the court, intervened for the innocent children to be spared their lives; to be given some more time to ponder over the suggestion to convert. As a result the two Sahibzade spent another two days of severe winter in their grandmother's lap in the Cold Tower. Still adamant as ever, on 11 December 1705 Nawab Wazir Khan ordered their death by bricking them alive. Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan pleaded against the death sentence on the grounds that the boys were too young to be given such a harsh penalty.

They could not, in any case, be held responsible for the actions of their father. As Wazir Khan began to waver at the just reproof of his peer, Suchchanand put in a remark "The progeny of a serpent shall grow up as serpents, and should therefore be shown no mercy." Wazir Khan was encouraged by these words and thereupon reiterated his order for the children to be bricked alive in a wall. By Divine Will, as the masonry around their tender bodies reached chest high, it crumbled. Wazir Khan's anger at this failure ordered the princes back to the Cold Tower for another night. The next day, 12 December 1705, the Sahibzade were once again offered the choice to convert to Islam or face death by execution. The brave Sahibzade chose the latter and were executed. The aged Mata Gujri, who had all along been kept in the Cold Tower, only a short distance away, breathed her last as the news of the execution reached her ears. After the death of Mata Gujri and the two Sahibzade, Seth Todar Mall, a wealthy merchant and an influential citizen of Sirhind, made arrangements to perform the last rites. But no one would give him a patch of land in the locality to be used as cremation ground. Then one Chandhari Atta, a local resident, agreed to sell him a small plot.

He stipulated that Todar Mall could take only as much land as he could cover with gold nuggets, mohran. The Seth produced the mohran and bought the piece of land he needed. After the cremation a Sikh, Jodh Singh, of village Attevali buried the ashes. Sirhind suffered a full fury of Sikh ire when Banda Singh Bahadur marched upon it with his daring host. Wazir Khan was killed. Diwan Suchchanand, who explicitly championed the penalty laid upon the young Sahibzade, was captured and killed. Sirhind and the Fort were razed to the ground. A memorial was erected marking the spot where the two princes were executed. In 1764 Maharaja Karam Singh of Patiala built the Gurdwara Fatehgarh on the site and ordered to search for and determine the exact spot where the three were cremated. At the spot, in 1843, the Gurdwara Joti Sarup was built. In 1888 Giani Thakar Singh started the annual Jor-Mela (fair) held during the last week in December to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's mother, Mata Gujri Ji, and his two sons Sahibzadas Zoravar Singh and Fateh Singh. A century later, in 1944, Maharaja Yadavinder Singh set up a committee for the improvement of Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib and Gurdwara Joti Sarup Sahib. Today Gurdwara Fatehgarh, with all the affiliated shrines, is administered directly by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

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A new Russian first lady? Vladimir Putin hints he may marry again

MOSCOW (TIP): Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Dec 20 he'd probably have to get married again, but did not say to whom. Putin, 66, who jealously protects his privacy and that of his close family, was replying to a question posed by a reporter at his annual press conference, which focused mainly on international relations and the state of the economy.

"As a respectable person, I will have to do this at some point," Putin said, smiling. Putin was married to Lyudmila Putina from 1983 until their divorce, announced in 2013. Their daughters, Katerina and Maria, both in their early 30s, are not involved in politics and have stayed firmly out of the limelight.

Since he divorced his wife Lyudmila, rumours have swirled around Putin's personal life. One Russian newspaper report said he was in a relationship with Alina Kabaeva, a former Olympic gymnast, though Putin rejected the assertion.

Reuters reported in 2016 that a businessman with ties to associates of Putin had transferred ownership of properties to Alina Kabaeva's sister and grandmother. (Reuters)

Earthquake jolts Russia's far east, no casualties reported

MOSCOW (TIP): A major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 struck off Russia's far east on Dec 20, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said, although Russian news agencies carried no immediate reports of damage from the sparsely populated area.

The quake off Russia's Kamchatka peninsula, which was initially measured at 7.8 before being revised downwards, struck 82 km (55 miles) west of Nikolskoye at a depth of 9 km, it said. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre said hazardous tsunami waves from the earthquake were possible within 300 km of the epicentre along the coasts of Russia. (Reuters)

Ravaged by Ebola and war, Congo named most neglected crisis of 2018

LONDON (TIP): With an Ebola epidemic raging and millions caught in a forgotten "catastrophe" of conflict and hunger, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was the most neglected crisis of 2018, according to an annual Thomson Reuters Foundation poll of aid agencies.

This year's survey was unusual for the high number of "most forgotten crises", with experts also listing the Central African Republic, Lake Chad Basin, Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Burundi, Nigeria and, for the first time, Venezuela. But Congo's "mega-crisis" barely made headlines, they said, even as the country gears up for landmark elections on Sunday which some fear could stoke further unrest. "The brutality of the conflict is shocking, the national and international neglect outrageous," said Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council. (Reuters)

China denies 'slanderous' economic espionage charges from US, allies

The United States should also withdraw charges against two Chinese citizens, the ministry said, adding that China had never participated in or supported any stealing of commercial secrets and had lodged "stern representations" with Washington.

BEIJING (TIP): China's Foreign Ministry said on Friday it resolutely opposed "slanderous" accusations from the United States and other allies criticising China for economic espionage, urging Washington to withdraw its accusations.

The United States should also withdraw charges against two Chinese citizens, the ministry said, adding that China had never participated in or supported any stealing of commercial secrets and had lodged "stern representations" with Washington.

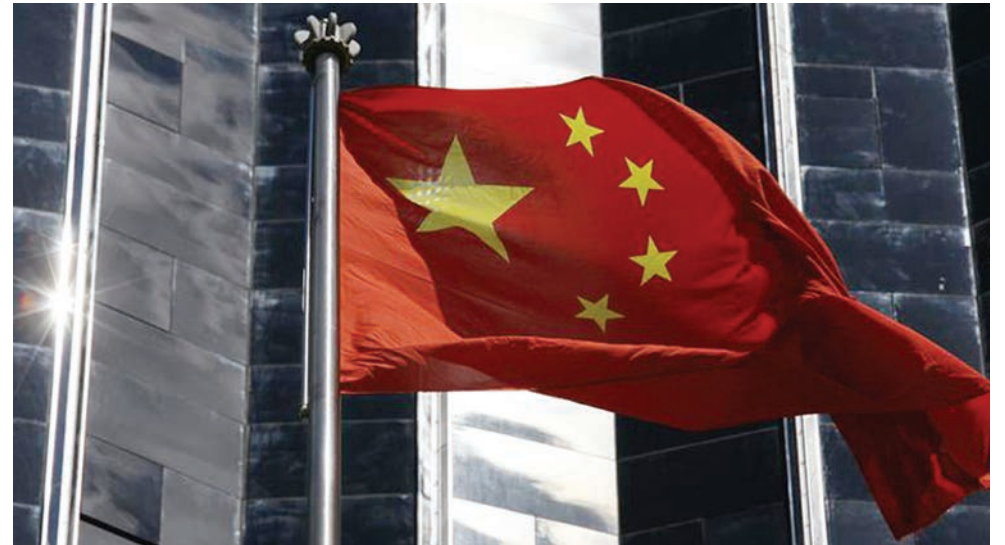
"We urge the US side to immediately correct its erroneous actions and cease its slanderous smears relating to internet security," it said, adding that it would take necessary measures to safeguard its own cybersecurity and interests.

US prosecutors indicted two Chinese nationals linked to China's Ministry of State Security intelligence agency on charges of stealing confidential data from American government agencies and businesses around the world.

Prosecutors charged Zhu Hua and Zhang Shilong in hacking attacks against the US Navy, the space agency NASA and the Energy Department and dozens of companies.

The operation targeted intellectual property and corporate secrets to give Chinese companies an unfair competitive advantage, they said.

The pair were members of a hacking group known within the cyber security community as APT 10 and also worked for a Tianjin



company Huaying Haitai Science and Technology Development Co, prosecutors said.

Reuters was unable to locate immediately contact details for Zhu or Zhang.

Britain, Australia and New Zealand joined the United States in slamming China over what they called a global campaign of cyber-enabled commercial intellectual property theft, signalling growing global coordination against the practice.

China's Foreign Ministry said Britain and other countries had also made "slanderous comments" stemming from "ulterior motives".

Five sources familiar with the attacks told Reuters the hackers breached the networks of Hewlett Packard Enterprise Co and IBM, then used the access to hack into their clients' computers. IBM said it had no evidence that sensitive data had been compromised. HPE said it could not comment.

"No country poses a broader, more severe long-term threat to our nation's economy and cyber infrastructure than China," FBI Director Chris Wray said at a news conference. "China's goal, simply put, is to replace the US as the world's leading superpower, and they're using illegal methods to get there." (Reuters)

Illinois finds 500 more Catholic clergy accused of abuse

CHICAGO (TIP): Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan on Wednesday issued a blistering report about clergy sexual abuse, saying that Catholic dioceses in Illinois received allegations of child sexual abuse by 500 more clergy than previously publicly identified.

The preliminary report found that the church's six archdioceses have done a woefully inadequate job of investigating allegations and in some cases did not investigate them at all or notify the state's child welfare agency. In all, Madigan's office said that while the dioceses have added 45 names to their lists of those who have been credibly accused over the past four months, the fact that the total is now only 185 raises serious questions about the church's response to the crisis.

"By choosing not to thoroughly investigate allegations, the Catholic Church has failed in its moral obligation to provide survivors, parishioners and the public a complete and accurate accounting of all sexually inappropriate behavior involving priests in Illinois," Madigan said in a statement. "The failure to investigate also means that the Catholic Church has never made an effort to determine whether the conduct of the accused priests was ignored or covered up by superiors."

The report did not include some key details such as when the allegations were made or the names of the clergy. A spokeswoman said that

the allegations date back decades and include some priests who are now deceased.

The Illinois disclosures are a new blow to the credibility of the church, which has struggled to contain the scandal amid mounting accusations of negligence. In August, a Pennsylvania grand jury report alleged that hundreds of priests abused at least 1,000 children over seven decades in that state. The report prompted Pope Francis to call U.S. bishops for a retreat at a suburban Chicago seminary next month to debate how to respond. Larry Antonsen, a Chicago leader of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said Madigan is doing the right thing and needs to continue. He said Illinois should convene a grand jury with subpoena power, as in Pennsylvania.

"There's more that needs to be done. The Catholic Church does not do a good job of policing itself, and you can't expect them to do that," Antonsen said. "It's hard to know what to believe because so much of what they're doing is in secret and not out in the open, but this is a step in the right direction."

Madigan's office said the problems went beyond a lack of effort. In some cases, the report found, efforts were made to work against the accusers.

"When the Illinois Dioceses investigated an allegation, they frequently found reasons not to deem an allegation 'credible' or 'substantiated,'" according to the report. Not only did Madigan's office find a "pattern" of

dioceses failing to substantiate allegations that came from one person, "The dioceses also often found reasons to discredit survivors' stories of abuse by focusing on the survivors' personal lives."

Church leaders at dioceses in Illinois expressed regret about the abuse, but pointed to steps they have taken to address what has become an international crisis.

Chicago's archbishop, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, in a statement said that although he regretted "our failures to address the scourge of clerical sexual abuse," the archdiocese has been a leader in dealing with the issue, including a policy since 2002 of reporting "all allegations of child sexual abuse to civil authorities."

The Springfield diocese said that it reviewed paper files of clergy dating to its 1923 founding and provided Madigan's office with documentation of each instance of abuse, regardless of whether it was deemed credible, according to a statement.

The Diocese of Joliet said in a statement that it took steps such as establishing in 1993 a review committee made up of people from law enforcement, social service agencies and others to investigate allegations of sexual abuse. Madigan said her office's findings make it clear that notifying authorities is critical, and pointing to instances when dioceses used personal information about people to discredit them and help them conclude accusations weren't credible. (AP)

North Korea state media says denuclearisation includes 'eliminating US nuclear threat'

SEOUL (TIP) North Korea's commitment to the "denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula" also includes "completely eliminating the US nuclear threat to Korea," North Korean state media said on Thursday.

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un issued a joint statement after their historic meeting in Singapore in June that reaffirmed the North's commitment to "work towards complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula" and gave US guarantees of security to North Korea.

Conflicting or vague views of what exactly "denuclearisation" means, however, have complicated negotiations that now appear stalled.

Thursday's commentary, released by North Korea's state-run KCNA news agency, is one of the clearest explanations since the June summit of how Pyongyang sees denuclearisation.

"When we refer to the Korean peninsula, the term encompasses the area of DPRK plus South Korean territory where US nuclear weapons and other forms of aggression forces are deployed," the editorial said, using the initials of North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"When we refer to the 'denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula' as well, it should be correctly understood as removing all nuclear threat factors from not only the North and the South but from all neighbouring areas."

North Korea rejects American calls for it to unilaterally denuclearise, and Washington should abandon the "delusion" of forcing Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons "via pressure and oppression," the article said.

The United States has said that it will not



lift sanctions on North Korea until more progress has been made toward the verifiable denuclearisation of North Korea.

Washington has also rejected any suggestion that it would reduce its military presence in the region as part of a deal with North Korea, but in a surprise move after the summit, Trump announced that the Pentagon would cancel most of its largest military exercises conducted with the South Koreans.

The exact definition of denuclearisation is likely to be raised again as Trump has said he is working to meet again with Kim sometime early next year.

"It is obvious that denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula is a joint business that cannot be achieved unless both Korea and the United States strive together," the KCNA commentary said. "In this sense, the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula

should be defined as 'completely eliminating the US nuclear threat to Korea' before it can eliminate our nuclear deterrent."

The United States deployed nuclear weapons in South Korea from 1958 to 1991. Since they were withdrawn, the United States has extended its "nuclear umbrella" of support to Japan and South Korea using bombers and submarines based elsewhere.

At a press briefing in Washington on Tuesday, US State Department spokesman Robert Palladino said he would not "split words" when asked about whether the promise of "denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula" means only North Korea or the broader region.

"We are focused on the denuclearisation of North Korea," Palladino said. "We remain confident and we look forward to the commitments that Chairman Kim and that President Trump have made." (Reuters)

Hundreds of South Koreans sue govt over wartime labour at Japan firms

SEOUL (TIP): Hundreds of South Koreans have sued the government for compensation over their forced labour at Japanese firms during World War Two, representatives said on Thursday, in a fresh twist to one of several historical disputes between the two sides.

Seoul and Tokyo have been struggling to contain fallout from a landmark ruling in October by South Korea's Supreme Court that Japan's Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp must compensate four South Korean forced labourers as their rights to reparations were not terminated by a 1965 treaty that normalised diplomatic ties.

Under the deal, South Korea received around \$800 million in economic aid and loans from Japan in exchange for Seoul considering all pre-treaty compensation issues settled. And the money was spent to rebuild its infrastructure and economy ravaged by the 1950-53 Korean War.

Similar verdicts in favour of the forced labourers followed suit, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in said last week that he respects the decision upholding their individual rights to compensation.

A group of 1,103 former forced labourers and their families said it filed a lawsuit in a Seoul court on Wednesday, demanding the South Korean government provide 100 million won (\$88,500) to each of them in compensation because it had received funds from Japan.

The case adds to three suits previously raised by a total of 283 victims and their families. "The government should compensate us first, taking responsibility for using the money it took from the 1965 treaty," the group told a news conference in Seoul. The two countries share a bitter history that includes Japan's 1910-45 colonisation of the Korean peninsula, the forced mobilisation of labour at Japanese companies and the use of comfort women, Japan's euphemism for girls and women, many of them Korean, forced to work in its wartime brothels. The rows over wartime history have long been a hurdle for relations between the neighbours at a time when there is a need for concerted efforts to dismantle North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes. (Reuters)

World Bank expects China's economic growth to slow to 6.2 per cent in 2019

BEIJING (TIP): China's economic growth is likely to slow to 6.2 percent in 2019 from an expected 6.5 percent this year, as headwinds increase due to its trade dispute with the United States, the World Bank said in a report published on Dec 20.

Its outlook on China's 2018 economic growth, which would be the weakest in 28 years, remained unchanged from its prediction in April. "Looking ahead, China's key policy challenge is to manage trade-related headwinds while maintaining efforts to limit financial risks," the bank said its latest assessment on the world's second-largest economy. Consumption will remain the main driver of China's economy, as weaker credit growth weighs on investment and slowing global demand and higher US tariffs on Chinese shipments take a toll on the country's exports, the report said. (Reuters)

Army called after drones shut UK's Gatwick Airport for second day

LONDON (TIP): Drones flying near London's Gatwick airport grounded flights throughout Thursday, stranding thousands of Christmas travellers in what the government called a reckless attempt to cripple Britain's second busiest airport. Police said there was no indication of a terror motive as they hunted unsuccessfully for the operators of the drones that first appeared on Dec 19 night.

Authorities resisted shooting the drones out of the air for fear of stray bullets, Gatwick Chief Operating Officer Chris Woodroffe said. With flights grounded for more than 17 hours, the army was called in to help with unspecified "specialist equipment".

The airport said flights would remain cancelled until further notice on Thursday, a day when 115,000 people were scheduled to pass through, many en route to seasonal breaks. "I'm very annoyed because I'm with two kids, a three-month-old and three-year-old," said passenger Ani Kochiashvili who was bound for Georgia but spent six hours overnight sitting on a plane with her children.

"They require a lot of space and food and changing and all that, and the airport is crazy busy so it's challenging," she told Reuters by phone among thousands camped in the terminal. Flights were halted on Wednesday

after two drones were spotted near the airfield, triggering the biggest disruption at Gatwick since a volcanic ash cloud in 2010.

Prime Minister Theresa May offered sympathies to upset travellers and said police may be given greater powers against drones in the future. Her spokesman condemned the drone flying as "irresponsible and completely unacceptable". The airport and its biggest airline easyJet told passengers to check before heading to the airport where people sat waiting on stairs and floors.

Police said more than 20 units were hunting the operators, and drones were still being spotted, according to Gatwick, 50 km (30 miles) south of London.

'Complete Mayhem'

With an upsurge of public enthusiasm for drones, there has been an increase in near-collisions by unmanned aircraft and commercial jets in recent years. The number of near misses between private drones and aircraft in Britain more than tripled between 2015 and 2017, with 92 incidents recorded last year, according to the UK Airprox Board regulator.

Gatwick's Woodroffe described one of the drones as a heavy industrial model. "The police advice is that it would be dangerous to

seek to shoot the drone down because of what may happen to the stray bullets," he told BBC radio. Drone expert Peter Lee, of Portsmouth University, said he and others had been anticipating disruption.

"An airport would be a preferred or obvious target for somebody who wants to either just create mischief or criminal damage," he said. "One of my concerns about today is that it may well encourage copy-cat incidents because you can achieve a high amount of disruption for a very, very low cost."

It is illegal to fly drones within 1 km (0.62 mile) of a British airport boundary, punishable by five years in prison.

Even after Gatwick re-opens, the backlog and disruption are expected to last for days. Gatwick said that it was working with its airlines, the biggest of which also includes British Airways and Norwegian, on recovery plans once the runway re-opens.

Gatwick, which competes with Europe's busiest airport Heathrow, west of London, had previously said Sunday would be its busiest day of the festive period. Passengers took to Twitter to share their stories. One waiting at the airport said: "At Gatwick Airport, drone chaos, surprisingly good-natured, but complete mayhem." (Reuters)

SLIM DOWN YOUR FACE WITH HAIR CONTOURING



Think of perfect hairstyles and the likes of Jennifer Aniston and Sarah Jessica Parker (in her Carrie Bradshaw avatar) come to mind. Their hairstyles are among the most duplicated looks across the globe, but not many know that these stylish ladies have been sporting hair contouring, much before it became such a hot beauty trend.

What is it about?

Vidushi Agarwal, senior hair professional says, "Hair contouring a process of high-lighting and low-lighting certain parts of your mane to either enhance or subdue certain features. Similar to how face and body contouring works, one may use colour techniques to create the hair contouring effect." Highlighting and shading certain parts of the hair can create an illusion of a different face shape, depending on what you want to accentuate. Puja Singh, hair professional explains, "Like with any art form, light shades are for highlighting and darker shades are for creating a shadow effect, similarly to adopt this technique in hair contouring with colours, one might

follow these simple guidelines."

Be Aware

Using healthier, natural hair-safe products are essential to avoid side effects. It is also advisable that every individual reads the ingredients list to be sure of the products being used on themselves.

Your hair colour and cut can define your face

The way you cut and colour your hair can really change your personality. "The right colour and cut can make you look not just younger but also slimmer than you are," says celebrity stylist and make-up artiste Ritoo Jenjani. She gives us a few helpful tips...

- A very short haircut will make you face appear wider.
- A mid-length, layered haircut can make it look slimmer.
- A side fringe can make your face appear thinner, even if you have a short haircut or bob.
- Long hair that covers your cheekbones looks stylish and gives your face a lean look.
- Light coloured hair falling on your

cheeks can make your face look wide..

- Get low lights or darker shades in the front hair that covers your cheeks and keep highlights or lighter colours for the crown.
- Colouring can enhance your face colour too, and can really add a lot of character to your face.

How does it work

Hair contouring is about applying highlights and lowlights in certain parts of your hair, to create an illusion of a different face shape.

This technique of colouring the hair can give your cheekbones a visual depth.

Hair contouring suits everyone because it is customised to your face shape and your hair colour tone.

It uses the freehand colouring method and is a low-maintenance style.

It is a pretty intensive act and one has to be clear about the basic rules and guidelines. However, depending upon the face cut and contouring requirement, it may take around one to two hours.

Go For Waxing

In order to get flawless and shining legs, you should opt for a closer shave. You should avoid using razors, tweezers, and other electronic devices while shaving, as it will prevent giving you a closer shave. Instead, you should go for waxing, as it will help to remove hair follicles deeply without leaving any marks behind.

Keep Your Legs Moisturised

You should always keep your legs moisturised by using an ounce full of moisturiser. Applying a good-quality moisturiser can help to keep your legs hydrated and moisturised for a longer period of time, thus preventing dark spots or bumps. You should make sure you moisturise your skin well and reapply the lotion after 5-6 hours. When you step out, remember to apply a sunscreen, so that your legs are

TRICKS TO GET SHINY LEGS



protected.

Look For A Firming Cream

Using firming cream can help to tighten your skin and also improve the elasticity of same. You should look for a

lotion which contains extracts of caffeine in it, as it helps to rejuvenate your skin quickly and prevents dullness or sagging. Leg creams with extracts of caffeine are especially designed to keep your legs to look younger and beautiful.

Exfoliate Your Skin

Exfoliating your skin is another vital step that will help to get rid of the dead skin cells easily. Not exfoliating your skin daily may lead to an appearance of large-sized pores, dead skin cells, breakouts and other such problems to be found on the legs. In order to prevent all of these, it is advisable to use a body scrub to remove the dead skin cells. Use a sugar-based scrub and exfoliate your skin every alternate day to remove the dead skin cells and debris from the skin.

FOOD CORNER

MOONG DAL KACHORI

INGREDIENTS

2 cup all purpose flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 2 cup refined oil
5 teaspoon refined oil, For Filling, 2 tablespoon chopped coriander leaves, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1/4 teaspoon red chilli powder

1/2 teaspoon ginger powder, 1/4 teaspoon garam masala powder, 1/2 cup soaked moong dal, 2 cup chopped green chilli

1 teaspoon fennel seeds powder, 1 gm asafoetida

1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 tablespoon cumin seeds

Method

Take all purpose flour in a big bowl, add salt and oil. Mix well.

Add little water at a time and knead soft dough. Cover the dough and keep it aside for 15-20 minutes.

Preheat a pan and add 3-4 tbsp oil in it. Add cumin seeds, cumin seeds, asafoetida, green chilly, coriander powder, fennel powder and saute the spices for few minutes.

Now add soaked dal, salt, garam masala, ginger powder and red chilly powder.

Stir constantly and cook dal until it dries up. Allow it to cool and keep it separate.

Now take one dough ball and flatten it with help of your fingers. Fill it with dal stuffing and make kachori. Repeat the process with other dough balls.

Preheat oil in a wok. Fry the kachori till it turns golden brown.

Crunchy moong dal kachori is ready.

Serve hot with green coriander chutney or sweet chutney.



FACE MASKS TO KEEP YOUR SKIN YOUNGER

Pomegranate Mask

Due to vitamin C and antioxidants present in pomegranate, it can help to boost collagen, thus giving you clear and glowing skin. The pomegranate face mask is extremely beneficial for your face, as it helps to remove dead skin cells, thus giving you flawless-looking skin. Take 3 spoons of pomegranate seeds, add two spoons of cooked oats and 2 spoons of milk. Grind all the ingredients together and apply this mask on the face. Wait for some time and wash off with cold water.

Oatmeal And Honey Mask

Make a face mask with the help of honey and oatmeal, and massage this on your face. Wait for 20-30 minutes and wash off with cold water. Using a mixture of oatmeal and honey can help to exfoliate your skin deeply, thus preventing dead skin cells on the skin. Also, it helps to increase the production of collagen, thus giving you a younger-looking skin. Repeat the process 5 times in a week to enjoy maximum benefits.

Banana Anti-ageing Face

Mask Banana contains a lot of good fibre, antioxidants, and proteins that help to keep your skin looking younger and fresh every time. There are several ways to use banana on the skin and here we mention to you one simplest yet effective banana face mask recipe. Take a banana and mash it with the help of a fork. Now, add some honey and fresh cream to the mixture. Mix well and apply this on your face. Wait for 30 minutes and wash off with cold water. Due to Vitamin E and anti-ageing properties, banana can help to reverse the signs of ageing.

EXERCISE AS EFFECTIVE AS DRUGS TO TREAT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Exercise may be as effective as taking prescribed drugs to tackle high blood pressure, a study claims.

However, the researchers from the London School of Economics and Political Science in the UK caution patients against giving up their blood pressure lowering drugs in favour of an exercise regimen yet.

The study, published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, suggests that patients should boost their physical activity levels, alongside their medication.

Exercise can lower systolic blood pressure—the amount of pressure in the arteries when the heart is beating and expressed as the top number in any blood pressure reading.

However, how exercise compares with blood pressure lowering drugs are not clear. To get round this, the researchers pooled the data from 194 clinical trials looking at the impact of drugs on lowering systolic blood pressure and 197 trials looking at the impact of structured exercise, and involving a total of 39,742 people.

Structured exercise was categorised as: endurance, to include walking, jogging, running, cycling and swimming, and high intensity interval training; dynamic resistance, to include strength training—for example, with dumbbells or kettle bells; isometric resistance, such as the static push-up (plank); and a combination of endurance and resistance.

Three sets of analyses were done: all types of exercise compared with all classes of blood pressure lowering drugs; different types of exercise compared with different types of drug; and different intensities of exercise



compared with different drug doses.

Finally, these analyses were repeated, but in a group of exercise trials that included only participants with high blood pressure, as most of these trials were of young healthy participants with normal blood pressure.

The results showed that blood pressure was lower in people treated with drugs than in those following structured exercise programmes.

However, when the analyses were restricted to those with high blood pressure, exercise seemed to be just as effective as most drugs. The effectiveness of exercise increased the higher the threshold used to define high blood pressure—that is, anything above 140 mm Hg. The researchers also found "compelling evidence that combining endurance and dynamic resistance training was effective in reducing systolic blood pressure."

However, structured exercise trials were fewer and smaller than those for

drugs, they caution.

The researchers point out that prescriptions for drugs to lower blood pressure have risen sharply in recent years. This trend is likely to continue given that major clinical practice guidelines have recently lowered the threshold for high systolic blood pressure to 130 mm Hg.

However, substituting exercise for drugs may be challenging as people with high blood pressure often have several long term conditions, and an estimated 40 per cent of adults in the US and many European countries are physically inactive, researchers said.

"We don't think, on the basis of our study, that patients should stop taking their antihypertensive medications," said Huseyin Naci, of London School of Economics and Political Science.

"But we hope that our findings will inform evidence based discussions between clinicians and their patients," he said. *Source: PTI*

Birth control pills may block blood flow to brain

Turns out, birth control pills increase the risk of ischemic strokes which are usually caused by a blood clot that blocks or plugs a blood vessel in the brain. This keeps blood from flowing to the brain.

According to stroke specialists at the Loyola University, oral contraceptives increase the risk of ischemic stroke, but this risk is very small among women who do not have other stroke risk factors.

The findings of the study appeared in the journal MedLink Neurology.

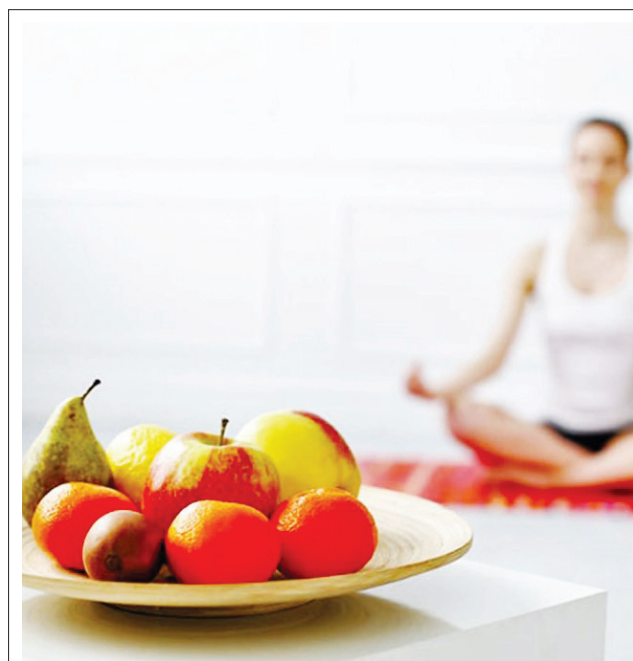
Several mechanisms were proposed to explain why oral contraceptives increase stroke risk during the research, including raising blood pressure and making blood hypercoagulable.

"The ideal drug is one with the lowest estrogen and progestin doses that will be effective in preventing pregnancy while minimizing adverse effects," said neurologist Sarkis Morales-Vidal.



In women with other stroke risk factors, the risk is higher and, in most cases, oral contraceptive use is discouraged. These risk factors include

high blood pressure, cigarette smoking and migraine headaches, especially migraines with sensory disturbances called the aura.



Mindfulness strategies may help shed excess body weight

Mindfulness training could be the key to support weight loss in individuals with obesity, thereby facilitating healthier eating behaviours, as per a new study.

Mindfulness is a mind-body practice where individuals learn to achieve heightened awareness of their current state of mind and immediate environment in the present moment.

The study showed that individuals who participated in mindfulness training as part of an intensive weight management programme lost three kilograms of weight in six months than others who participated in obesity management programme.

"This research is significant as we have shown that problematic eating behaviour can be improved with mindfulness application," said Petra Hansona, lead researcher and postdoctoral student from the University of Warwickshire in the UK.

"Mindfulness has huge potential as a strategy for achieving and maintaining good health and wellbeing," said Thomas M. Barber, Associate Professor at the varsity.

Focus should be on enabling the populace to make appropriate lifestyle decisions and empowering subsequent salutary behaviour change, said Barber.

For the study, the team examined weight loss among a small group of people who were attending the multidisciplinary tier 3 weight management programme.

Findings, published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, showed that individuals who attended only one or two courses lost, on average, 0.9 kilograms (2 pounds) during the same period.

Conversely, those who did not complete the course tended to weigh more than those who finished the group mindfulness course.

"Individuals who completed the course said they were better able to plan meals in advance and felt more confident in self-management of weight loss moving forward," said Hanson.

Obesity worldwide has nearly tripled since 1975, according to the World Health Organisation. As of 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults worldwide met the criteria for overweight or obesity. *Source: IANS*

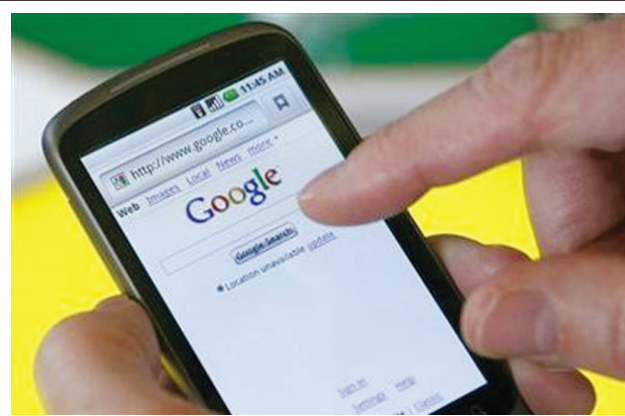
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GOOGLE USES MOBILE-FIRST INDEXING FOR MOST PAGES IN SEARCH RESULTS

Google has said that its algorithms now use mobile-first indexing for over half of the pages shown in search results globally.

Google introduced mobile-first indexing about two years ago as it found that an increasing number of people were searching on Google using a smartphone.

This marked an important shift in its indexing as Google's ranking systems earlier typically looked at the desktop version of a page's content to evaluate its relevance to the user.

But with most people using mobile devices to search Google, the company announced that its algorithms will eventually primarily use the mobile version of a site's content to rank pages from that site, to understand structured data, and to show snippets from those pages in its results.

"In general, we move sites to mobile-first indexing when our tests assure us that they're ready," John Mueller of Google Switzerland wrote in a blog post on Wednesday.

"When we move sites over, we notify the site owner through a message in Search Console," Mueller added.

Google said it was looking forward to being able to index more and more of the web using mobile-first indexing in order to help more users to search the web using a smartphone. *Source: IANS*

Google Assistant will soon alert you if your flight is delayed

Using flight status data combined with Machine Learning (ML), Google Assistant will soon tell you over phone if your flight would be delayed even before the airline announces it.

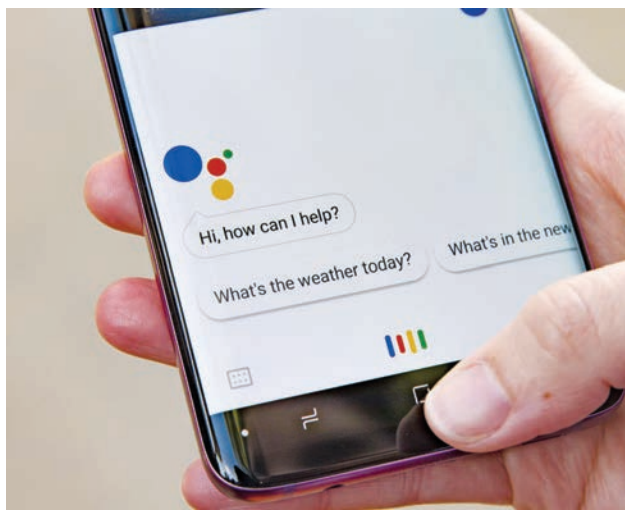
According to Google, Assistant will notify users on phones when its algorithms predict that their flights would be late.

"Earlier this year, we started sharing flight delay predictions (via Google Flight) when you search for your flight status and we're 85 per cent confident that the flight will eventually be delayed. We use historic flight status data combined with machine learning to make these predictions in advance of airlines confirming delays," Google said in a blog post late on Tuesday.

To help with the increase in delayed flights, the Google Assistant will now show predicted flight delays, too.

"You can ask things like, 'Hey Google, is my flight on time?' or 'Hey Google, what's the status of the American Airlines flight from Philadelphia to Denver?'" said Google.

"Over the next few weeks, the Assistant will begin proactively notifying you on your phone if we predict a flight delay and tell you the reason if we know it," the company added.



GLOBAL WARMING THREATENS 'FEMINISATION' OF GREEN SEA TURTLES

Global warming is threatening "feminisation" of green sea turtle, a study has said suggesting that by 2100 up to 93 per cent of the hatchlings of this species could be females.

The sex of turtle hatchlings is determined by temperature and, currently, approximately 52 per cent of green sea turtles (one of the seven species of marine turtles) are females, according to a study published in the *Global Change Biology* journal on Wednesday.

The study by the British University of Exeter and the Portuguese Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre indicated that with the scenario of warmer temperatures predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), between 76 and 93 per cent of the offspring of those sea turtles would be females.

The data refers specifically to the Bijagos archipelago in Guinea-Bissau in Africa, one of the most important nesting areas.

However, researchers expect "a similar picture globally", according to a statement from the University of Exeter, *Efe* news reported.

The change in the proportion of



gender would initially lead to a larger number of females nesting, increasing the population, before a decrease "as incubation temperatures approach lethal levels". In addition, on the beaches where the study was conducted, experts predict that rising sea levels will submerge from 33 to 43 per cent of the areas where the green turtles nest.

One of the authors of the study, Rita

Patricio, of the University of Exeter, warned that the green turtles "will have to face problems in the future due to the loss of habitat and increase in temperatures".

However, cooler temperatures, both at the end of the nesting season and in some shaded areas, will ensure that some hatchlings are male, she added.

Source: IANS

WHATSAPP ROLLS OUT PICTURE-IN-PICTURE FOR ANDROID



WhatsApp introduced a new feature for Android users recently. Picture-in-Picture (PiP) on WhatsApp lets users watch videos without leaving the app.

Picture-in-Picture was first rolled out with Android Nougat in 2016. With this feature, users can minimise their video windows and use other apps at the same. WhatsApp users can use this feature to watch YouTube and Instagram videos without leaving the app. This feature was earlier available for WhatsApp beta users only while iOS users have had this feature for over a year now.

If you haven't received this feature as yet, you can head over to Google Play Store and update WhatsApp to its latest version.

HOW WHATSAPP'S PICTURE-IN-PICTURE MODE WORKS

- Once you update your WhatsApp, send a

YouTube or Instagram video link to your friends.

- Press the play button on the video link, and it will start playing on the app itself.
- You can continue chatting and scrolling through messages as the video is being played.
- You can also move the video screen around the chat box, and maximise to watch the video in full screen.
- PiP stays within the chat box only and will disappear when you move to the previous menu.
- WhatsApp has PiP mode for video calls as well. Here, users can shrink the video call screen on WhatsApp. Users can continue using WhatsApp and other apps while being on a video call. This feature is available for Android and iOS users as well.

Instagram's Boomerang comes to Facebook Messenger

Facebook has rolled out the "Boomerang" and "Selfie" features on its Messenger platform.

"Starting today, there are now five modes to Messenger's camera including everyone's favourite video-looping effect, Boomerang, to make Messenger posts more interactive and fun," the company said in a blogpost on Monday.

"We've also added Selfie mode, where you can capture portraits of yourself or friends in Messenger's camera," it added. The company said that they are making it easier to navigate Messenger's existing camera modes -- Normal, Video and Text. In Text mode, users can now add even more personality with new fonts and colour backgrounds.

The company also announced new stickers, powered by augmented reality (AR). According to Facebook, more than 20 million people use camera effects for photo and video posts on Messenger every day.

India's stocks are hostage to US Fed rate cycle, says mutual fund giant

MUMBAI (TIP): For all the domestic drivers of India's stocks -- from oil to elections to shadow banking shakeouts -- the US Federal Reserve holds the most sway, according to the nation's biggest money manager.

Sankaran Naren, who helps manage 3.1 trillion rupees (\$44 billion) as chief investment officer at ICICI Prudential Asset Management Co., says investors need to brace for a run of constrained returns that will last until the Fed's Jerome Powell makes a policy U-turn. Key Indian equity indexes are up less than 10 percent this year, and gauges of mid- and small-sized companies are poised for their first yearly decline since 2013.

"Once the US interest-rate cycle changes and one moves to a situation where they say we are done with the quantitative tightening, then one may have a much more secular bull market in emerging markets and India," Naren said in an interview in Mumbai last week. "We are in an accumulation phase of investing, where the near-term returns aren't likely to be very high."

While the US central bank's influence on emerging assets is hardly an unknown phenomenon, India's \$2 trillion stock market has also been whipsawed in recent months by homegrown narratives. For Naren, those issues -- including speculation on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election prospects in 2019, and a cash crunch in the non-bank financing sector



-- will mostly be resolved in the next year, leaving the Fed as the biggest factor.

Investors around the world will find out later on Wednesday whether Fed officials will reduce their 'dot plot' trajectory for 2019, which currently implies three interest-rate hikes. Economists surveyed by Bloomberg have dialed back their expectations to two.

For the next year at least, Naren doesn't see investments in Indian equities fetching more than "mid-teen" percentage in gains. "We shouldn't talk of multi-baggers now, we can't expect stocks doubling and one has to invest with expectations of lower returns than that," he said. The \$4.1 billion ICICI Prudential Balanced Advantage Fund -- the biggest that Naren manages -- has returned 12.85 percent annually in the

past five years, the best among its peers for that period, according to Value Research Ltd.

A more dovish Fed could help bring foreign investors back to India: they've sold more than \$4 billion of the nation's shares so far in 2018, the first year of outflows since 2011. The Dow Jones Industrial Average has outperformed the MSCI India and the MSCI Emerging Markets indexes in the past three years.

Still, local flows into equity funds have helped cushion markets. Investors have poured 1.2 trillion rupees into stock mutual funds this year, according to the Association of Mutual Funds in India. Naren likes small- and mid-caps, infrastructure stocks, banks and consumption-linked shares, he said. Non-bank lenders still aren't cheap enough, he added. *Source: Mumbai*

Qatar Petroleum plans to invest \$20 billion in US in major expansion

DOHA (TIP): Qatar Petroleum (QP) is looking to invest at least \$20 billion in the United States over the coming few years, its chief executive told Reuters, after the Gulf Arab state unexpectedly quit OPEC this month.

Saad al-Kaabi, who holds the energy portfolio of the world's top liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplier, also said on Sunday the company aimed to announce foreign partners for new LNG trains needed for an ambitious domestic scale-up by the middle of next year, but was keeping open the possibility of going it alone.

Qatar, a tiny but wealthy country is one of the most influential players in the LNG market due to its annual production of 77 million tonnes. It plans to boost capacity 43 percent by 2023-2024 and will be building four liquefaction trains for the LNG expansion.

As part of its more than \$20 billion investment push in the U.S. QP is looking "at gas and oil, conventional and non-conventional," Kaabi said.

Qatar Petroleum is majority owner of the Golden Pass LNG terminal in Texas, with Exxon and ConocoPhillips holding smaller stakes.



Kaabi said he expected to make a final decision on that investment and whether to move ahead with the project "by the end of the year, if not January."

Qatar is a relatively small oil producer compared to its massive gas production. Its decision to quit OPEC this month was seen as a swipe at the group's de facto leader Saudi Arabia, which along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, has imposed a political and economic boycott on Qatar since June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism, which Doha denies.

Kaabi said that proposed U.S. legislation known as "NOPEC", or No Oil

Producing and Exporting Cartels Act, which could open the OPEC group up to anti-trust lawsuits, was among the reasons for quitting the oil exporting club.

Qatar Petroleum announced separately on Sunday that it was partnering with Italian oil major Eni on three oil fields in Mexico, taking a 35 percent stake in deposits that will begin production in mid-2019 and ramp up to about 90,000 barrels per day by 2021.

The company is in talks with international oil firms about the LNG expansion project at home, including Eni, Kaabi said. Other partners already operating in Qatar include Exxon Mobil Corp, Total, Royal Dutch Shell and ENI.

QP said it will self-finance the LNG expansion rather than borrow, a shift from previous practices where it used lenders to fund up to 70 percent of project costs.

Kaabi said it could carry out the expansion alone if no good offers from foreign firms were made.

"We are looking for a lot of things (in our partners) including asset swaps, things that will help me in my international expansion," he said.

INDIA AGAIN DEFERS DUTY HIKE ON 29 US PRODUCTS TILL JANUARY 31

NEW DELHI (TIP): India for the fourth time deferred the deadline to impose retaliatory customs duties on 29 US products, including almond, walnut and pulses, by another 45 days, the government has said.

According to a notification by the finance ministry, the implementation of the duty hike has been postponed until January 31, 2019.

The commerce ministry had asked its finance counterpart to extend the deadline further.

In June, India decided to impose retaliatory tariffs from August 4. But it was extended by 45 days till September 18 and then till November 2. In November, the decision to impose these duties was deferred till December 17.

As part of imposition of higher import duties, New Delhi has notified higher tariffs on several products. While import duty on walnut is to be hiked to 120 per cent from 30 per cent at present, duty on chickpeas, Bengal gram (chana) and masur dal will be raised to 70 per cent, from 30 per cent currently. Levy on lentils will be increased to 40 per cent, from 30 per cent.

The duty hike move by India was in retaliation to US President Donald Trump's March 9 decision to impose heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items.

Senior officials of India and the US are in discussions to finalise a kind of trade deal. Both sides are holding two track discussions -- to increase trade in short and medium term, and identify long-term trade potentials. *Source: PTI*

Elon Musk says he personally spent \$40 million on Boring Co.

Elon Musk took the wraps off Boring Co.'s first completed test tunnel with a lot of razzle-dazzle, the fact that he had spent \$40 million on the venture and a surprise twist in the underlying technology.

At an event on the fringes of Space Exploration Technologies Corp. headquarters in Hawthorne, California, Musk stood in front of a large hole in the ground that led to a mile-long tunnel and pronounced it officially open.

"This is incredibly profound," he told reporters Tuesday, calling his first ride in the tunnel "epic."

Guests—including officials from other cities that might one day hire Boring Co. to build longer versions of the tunnel, plus Tesla owners and various other party-goers—quaffed cocktails named after tunnel-boring machines, noshed on hot dogs and stood in line to take rides.

The actual means of transit in the tunnel, once envisioned as tube-encased skates that individual vehicles would drive off and on, was simpler at the launch than it was at conception. The skates are gone, and instead, individual Teslas were driving along fixed guideways. That change will allow more electric cars, not just Teslas, to travel through the tunnel, with the addition of specialized wheels—a modification which Musk said might cost from \$200 to \$300 per vehicle. The tunnel itself cost \$10 million. *Source: Bloomberg*

Indian carriers will need 2,300 planes in 20 years: Boeing

NEW DELHI (TIP): Indian airlines are projected to need 2,300 planes worth USD 320 billion in the next 20 years amid unprecedented domestic passenger growth, aircraft maker Boeing said Wednesday as it raised the forecast for the country. As much as 85 per cent of the planes would be narrow-body and the rest would be wide-body.

The forecast is for the 2018-2037 period.

According to Boeing, India would need 1,940 single-aisle planes worth USD 220 billion and 350 wide-body aircraft valued at USD 100 billion.

At current exchange rate, USD 320 billion is over Rs 22 lakh crore. Around 10 regional jets worth less than USD 1 billion would be needed during the 2018-2037 period.

"India continues to grow at a faster pace," Dinesh Keskar, Senior Vice President (Asia Pacific & India Sales) at Boeing Commercial Airplanes said here.





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 DECEMBER 24 - DECEMBER 30, 2018

Aries:

Ganesha says you are stable, happy, joyous, positive, determined, persevering and adventurous. You take risks that work in your favor. 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained' is the old adage which works in nearly all situations. You manage to keep an open mind and absorb everything that is thrown at you. You are a good listener and realize that you have to empty the cup often to fill it up with new water. You do just that and grow as a person.

Taurus:

You are in communication mode. You are all over the place, physically and metaphorically. Your mind is razor - sharp and fast as lightning. You don't tolerate passengers on the team and if wit and repartee are absent you may just end the conversation. You slice them out of the picture without drama. You want to exchange ideas and grow in stature. You want to learn all that there is to learn about every topic under the sun.

Gemini:

As a Spanish proverb says, 'If you do not dare, you do not live.' You are full of enthusiasm and zest. You are self-assured and confident. You have the necessary material, psychological, spiritual and physical resources for all that you aspire to do. You are hard - working and determined, and, as we all know, genius is all about perspiration. You carry out Herculean tasks in this phase. You are also in risk-taking mode.

Cancer:

'A closed mind is like a closed book, just a block of wood,' says a Chinese proverb. You are open to new vistas and new knowledge. You communicate furiously with others and make elaborate plans for the future. You are in touch with your feelings and emotions which you rarely wear on your sleeve. Your inner desires guide you to making the right decisions. You are meticulous, almost fastidious, and run through all the minute work details.

Leo:

Your mind is everywhere, bobbing like a buoy in the ocean. You look inward and reflect upon the truths that have nestled in your cells. There are significant encounters with people from all walks of life. You realize deep down that you have to change your views on a lot of issues or you will be atrophying. You may also be interested in yantra, mantra and tantra and go looking for gurus. You want answers to pressing questions about life, death and the afterlife.

Virgo:

There are equanimity and equilibrium in your life. There are peace and balance. You have reached a point of inner stability. This is a good time for teachers and counsellors. You are able to solve complex human problems as you have a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the web of life. You are keen to pass on this knowledge to others. Also, you are able to understand what makes you tick and what triggers you off, and this self-understanding helps interpersonal relationships.

Libra:

'The secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live dangerously,' said Nietzsche. You want the adrenaline pounding. You don't want to lead a boring life, worrying about the humdrum aspects of existence. You have had it up to your eyes with boredom. You look for adventure and excitement but the world calls, and this could be a busy phase with lots of mental activity. There could be paperwork, business deals and negotiations.

Scorpio:

This is an interesting phase. You are filled with energy and want to do a zillion things. Yet, it is also a time of intellectual withdrawal. You want to assess your life and thoughts and put things in the right perspective. You want to examine your personal and domestic life and list the pros and cons. There are domestic concerns hovering over you. The health of a parent could be a cause of concern. If the person has been ill for a long time, the situation could get critical now.

Sagittarius:

Family matters are predominant in this phase. You interact with relatives and friends and need to sort out issues that are troubling you. Your thoughts focus on your persona life, inner feelings, longings and desires. You want to get a move on in life, but, before that, you have to know your inner workings. You may have lived up to others' expectations till now. It is time to know real you, shorn of the make-believe.

Capricorn:

Your ego drives are strong and you are aggressive and ready to mingle and tumble. Personal relationships could take a beating in this phase. You may have pushed all the dirt under the carpet and suddenly the stains show. You will have to work out a compromise or some sort of working agreement. If you are inflexible and rigid, you make no progress. There are new ideas, opportunities and openings in your life. Ganesha holds your hand and leads the way.

Aquarius:

There are balance and equilibrium in your life. Your affairs are humming along nicely. You have been through the mill and taken the ebb and flow of life in your stride. The future is always uncertain, but for now you are on a good wicket. There are new beginnings and new vistas opening up. There are maudlin moments too, but they only help you understand yourself better.

Pisces:

There is stability, and hard work is there too. You make steady progress. You also learn more about yourself through your relationships. You begin to understand why you feel and respond to others the way you do. Intimate relationships are highlighted. There are heightened amour and new discoveries of yourself and your partner. All relationships flourish, whether a marriage or business partnership.

KASHI SHRI VISHWESHWAR

Where the Varana and Asi rivers join the Ganges, a beautiful city was built there in the ancient times. It was named Varanasi. Varanasi, a prime place of pilgrimage, a tribe called kasha used to live. Therefore, Varanasi was also known as Kashi. Near Kashi, Ganga flows in the shape of a bow. Hence it acquired special importance. A king called Deivodas expanded this area.

Varanasi is located in Uttar Pradesh, in the Gangetic plains.

KASHI VISHWANATH JYOTIRLINGA

Nirvikar cahitanya and Sanatan Brahma have assumed the form of Saguna Vishwarupa from the initial Nirgun Roopa or form. The Shiva Shakti roopa became the Purusha (man) and Stree (the woman) again. Prakriti and Purusha (Nature and man) (Shiva-Shakti) were once ordained by Shiva to do tapas in the universe in order to create the best being. He specified the best place for this purpose.

When a prayer was held, Nirgun Shiva, with His own powers and aura, created a wonderful city called Panchakoshi. Vishnu, who resided there, spent a lot of time praying to Shiva after which several watersprings originated there.

Vishnu was amazed at this wonderous event, and even as he tilled his head, a gemstone fell from his ear. Because of this place, it was also called Manikarnika. The entire Panch Koshi area of Manikarnika waters were then gathered into the Trident by Shiva. Then from the navel of Vishnu was born a lotus flower with Brahma in it.

Brahma was ordained by Shiva to create a world, at which Brahma created this wonderful world. It had fifty crore Yojanas of area and fourteen lokas. In order to save the lives of these who are bound by their own actions or karma.

Shiva kept panchakoshi city away from the entire universe. In this city, Shiva Himself established the saviour Muktidayak JyotirLinga, which He can never leave. Shiva removed this very Kashi from His Trident and set it in this mortal world.

It was not to be destroyed when Brahma's day ends, but during Pralay i.e., final destruction of the world, Shiva saved it by keeping it safe in his trident. So the kashi is called avimukta kshetra. In Kashi, the Avimukteshwar Linga is there forever. Those who can never hope for salvation, attain Moksha here.

This holiest city of Panchakoshi, with its capacity to destroy every conceivable sin, is the vehicle of a special Moksha by the name "Samyugha".

That is the reason why this city which is ruled by Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha, is the place, where even divines want to die. Sarwaguna from inside and Tamoguna from outside, are the qualities of Rudra here. When prayed to, Vishwanatha Bahagavan Sri Shankar made this abode and resided there with Parvati.

GLORY OF KASHI

Kashi city is the place for Moksha and Ganga. Those who live here attain Mukti or Salvation, even without having to travel to any place of pilgrimage. Any one, be it a man, woman, young, old, Sahava, pure or impure, Prasuta, Aprasuta, Swadesh, Andaja, Udibhaja, of whatever caste, all attain Moksha.

There is not an iota of doubt in this. Whatever a person may be doing, eat, sleep or anything else, if he departs from this



world from Avimukteshwar, he definitely attains Moksha. Any small act of goodness or Punyakarya, takes away all the sins. Good as well as bad people are born on this earth. But by living in Kashi, both attain Moksha. Later, several people came forward to build this temple.

A king by the name Banar developed this city of pilgrimage. About one and half thousand beautiful temples were built here. The tower of the Vishweshwara temple is a hundred feet high.

Kashi Nagar is so great that even if the universe is to be destroyed in Pralaya, it would remain intact. Dandapani and Kalabhairav guard this city. They stay there forever. On the Ganga banks eighty four bathing ghats are located. There are also several teerthkundas. They have been there right from the times of Vedas.

HISTORY OF THE KASHI VISHWANATH

Varanasi, which was a pious place of pilgrimage for the hindus, soon became an eyesore and source of jealousy for the Muslims. From 1033 to 1669 AD Kashi came under several destructive attacks. Temples were demolished and Masjids built there instead. But due to the dedication of the Hindu devotees, the JyotirLing pilgrimage place continued to develop. During the reign of the British and the Marathas, this place really developed well. Even the Jaina and Boudha monks helped to keep the place of the city intact.

The Kashi Vishweshwar temple as we see it now was built by Ahalya Devi Holkar in 1777 AD. In 1785 AD, the then King of Kashi, Mansaram and his son Belvant Singh built many more temples near Varanasi. In 1755 AD, the Avadh pantof pratinidhi (representative) got the old temple of Bindumadhava repaired and renovated it beautifully. The kalabhairava temple was built by Srimant Baji Rao Peshwa in 1852 AD.

King Ranjit Singh had the Kashi Vishwanath temple towers covered in gold. A huge bell hangs in the temple. It was donated by the King of Nepal. Surrounding Saranath, there are many Buddhist stupas, Viharas and Chaitra grihas. In 1931 AD the mahabodhi society had built a very beautiful Buddha temple in Saranath.

The Hindu devotees visit Kashi to make offering. Here they perform many rituals and consider themselves blessed. Along side, several foreign tourists visit this place regularly. Places worth seeing include Ghats, temples, tapobhoomi and the scenic beauty of the surroundings. Kashi Kshetra and Sri Vishweswara JyotirLinga are connected as the holiest shrines in the world. The Ganga water here is considered as the nectar of the earth. Dying in Kashi or performing the final rites is considered as the way to the Heavens. Kashi - Rameshwar yatra is the prime pilgrimage for the Hindus.

Kashi city is the place for Moksha . Those who live here attain Mukti or Salvation, even without having to travel to any place of pilgrimage. Any one, be it a man, woman, young, old, of whatever caste, all attain Moksha. There is no doubt in this. If a person dies in Kashi, he definitely attains Moksha. Any small act of goodness or Punyakarya, done here takes away all the sins. Kashi nagar is so great that even if the universe is to be destroyed in Pralaya, it would remain intact. Dandapani and Kalabhairava guard this city.

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Arish K Sahani (Father)

Shiv Sahani (Son)

Priya Sahani Sood (Daughter)

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

Support Package for Fashion Production and the Garment Center announced

Part of a citywide manufacturing strategy, the Midtown Manhattan plan preserves critical production space and long-term stability for the fashion industry

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): The City Council approved, December 20, a comprehensive plan to support fashion production and commercial office expansion in the Garment Center. Informed by recommendations of the Garment Center Steering Committee, the City has created a multi-pronged approach to balance the interests of the fashion industry with those of other industries growing in the Garment Center. The City will implement a set of targeted zoning changes with real estate and programmatic support. These initiatives will provide fashion manufacturers with the long-term stability needed to maintain their foothold in the historic home of fashion. The citywide strategy includes the creation of a 200,000-square foot garment production hub at the Made in NY Campus in Sunset Park.

The new plan addresses rapid diversification of industries in the Garment Center, whose 66,000 jobs across industries is expected to grow to 72,000 by 2021. As the district has grown, its economic profile has changed: although fashion office space has grown by 17% in the past five years, 60% of the area's jobs are now in nonprofit, healthcare, entertainment, and IP services. The plan removes a decades-long ineffective zoning mechanism that will finally allow the Garment Center to achieve its potential as a mixed-use neighborhood that includes significant office space alongside manufacturing, wholesale, and showroom space.

"We're preserving the City's fashion manufacturing capacity both in its traditional home in the Garment Center, and with investments across the city," said Mayor de Blasio. "Today's vote ensures that the Garment Center will continue to thrive as a mixed-use neighborhood - and that New York City will always be the world's fashion capital."

"Today marks another major milestone in a multi-year process to ensure a permanent home for garment manufacturers in New York City. The manufacturing sector is a key part of the broader New York fashion industry, which contributes so much to our city, so securing its health for today and in the years to come is absolutely vital. I want to thank Borough President Brewer, President Patchett, the Garment District steering committee, and all those who have helped bring us this far along in the process. Together we will ensure that the Garment District survives and thrives for years to come," said Speaker Corey Johnson.

"This plan not only opens the door for new jobs and investment in midtown, it will stabilize and strengthen New York City's garment manufacturing sector. By preserving space in the district and making resources available for manufacturers to grow outside of the district, New York City will continue to be the fashion capital of the world. I want to thank Speaker Johnson, Borough President Brewer, and the Garment District Steering Committee for collaboration," said Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen.

"The de Blasio Administration has delivered a plan to reinvigorate the City's iconic fashion industry by ensuring long-established businesses continue to thrive and allowing new uses that will reinforce Midtown as one of our most important job centers," said NYCEDC President and CEO James Patchett. "I thank Speaker Corey Johnson, Borough President Brewer and the Garment Center Steering Committee for their commitment to reaching this historic milestone."

"The Garment Center's unique ecosystem of

New York City's fashion industry employs 180,000 people, accounting for 6% of the city's workforce and generating \$10.9 billion in total wages. An estimated 900 fashion companies are headquartered in New York City, which is also home to more than 75 major fashion trade shows and thousands of showrooms.-EDITOR



skilled workers and specialty suppliers clustered in one place is the foundation that the wider New York fashion world is built on. What we've negotiated here is a real plan to preserve it, and now that plan is moving forward and coming together in more detail," said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. "Now it's critical that we follow through on every element of the plan - including making sure the IDA program is successful and purchasing permanent space for manufacturing in the Garment Center. Working together, we can ensure all of New York continues to grow as a fashion capital, with a thriving manufacturing core in Manhattan."

"The CFDA is supportive of today's steps to strengthen the garment manufacturing industry and looks forward to partnering with the sector to help it modernize for the future," said Steven Kolb, President and CEO of the CFDA. "We thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson and Borough President Brewer for working with us through an inclusive process that has helped ensure that New York City's fashion ecosystem can continue to thrive on a citywide basis for many years to come."

"Today's historic vote will ensure that the Garment District remains a hub for American fashion while at the same time unleashing the neighborhood's full economic potential. This is a tremendous, pivotal moment for the future of our City, and I thank the Garment District property owners for playing a critical role in developing a plan that would preserve apparel manufacturing while positioning our neighborhood for continued growth. Special thanks to Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, Manhattan Borough President Brewer, NYCEDC and the City Council for making this a reality," said Barbara A. Blair, President, Garment District Alliance.

"Through this zoning action, we ensure that the Garment Center supports a healthy mix of uses and thrives for decades to come," said Marisa Lago, Director of the Department of City Planning.

The zoning changes lift the cumbersome 1:1 preservation requirement that prevented as-of-right office conversions and led to the disinvestment in building infrastructure. The

zoning changes also include a new special permit to curb hotel development throughout the entire Special Garment Center District.

Non-zoning tools will preserve garment manufacturing space, with mechanisms including a customized tax incentive program that requires property owners to provide long-term, affordable leases for fashion manufacturers; and funding support for the public-private acquisition of a building to permanently house garment production. These strategies are further bolstered by other investments in the district and programmatic support for garment manufacturing and fashion businesses located across the city through partnerships with industry stakeholders.

The culmination of a nearly two-year effort between the administration, Speaker's Office, Manhattan Borough President's Office and local and industry stakeholders includes:

Manufacturing Preservation

The NYCIDA Garment Center Program promotes long-term preservation of garment businesses in the Garment Center. Launched earlier this year, the program provides applicable property owners with tax abatements in exchange for providing long-term and affordable leases to fashion manufacturing tenants. The program has already authorized up to 200,000 SF of fashion manufacturing to be preserved through the program, with an additional 70,000 SF in the pipeline. Eligible properties must be located within the Garment Center Business Improvement District, which is generally defined as 34th to 42nd Streets and 5th to 9th Avenues. More details on the program are available here.

To further help strengthen and preserve garment manufacturing in the Garment Center, NYCEDC released a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for the acquisition of a building that will provide permanent, dedicated garment manufacturing space in Midtown. Through the RFEI, the City has made up to \$20M available to fund a portion of the acquisition cost of a building in the Garment Center. The selected property will be required to offer

fashion manufacturing tenants with affordable and long-term leases in accordance with the NYCIDA Garment Center Program. The RFEI will remain open and may accept proposals on a rolling basis through November 1, 2019. The RFEI is available here.

Workforce Development

The City and Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) will launch a \$14 Million expansion of the Fashion Manufacturing Initiative (FMI). The program, which first launched in 2013, fosters, supports, and develops a dynamic, diverse, and innovative fashion production ecosystem across the five boroughs. FMI provides grants to local production facilities to upgrade equipment and technology, offer employee skills training, hire business development consultants, make capital improvements to their facilities, and cover costs of relocating within New York City.

The newly launched program will expand upon the existing program's services, in addition to targeted workforce development training and the Pilot Local Production Fund. The Pilot Local Production Fund will be available to all New York City-based designers and seeks to incentivize designers to use local fashion manufacturers by creating stronger relationships between designers and manufacturers to enable better business terms.

GDA Funding Commitment

To further support the garment manufacturing and fashion industry in the Garment Center, the Garment District Alliance has received approval by the New York City Council to increase their annual budget by \$2.5 Million for the next 10 years. This increase in funding will be dedicated toward special programming to support the Steering Committee's goals of supporting the industry in its historic home. The special programming will further the GDA's mission to improve the quality of life and economic vitality of the district.

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India is Afghanistan's most reliable regional partner: Pentagon

WASHINGTON (TIP): India is Afghanistan's most reliable regional partner, the Pentagon has said as it praised New Delhi's contributions to the peaceful development of the war-torn country.

Pentagon, in its semi-annual Afghan report to the US Congress that covers the period of June to November 2018, said India interpreted the new US South Asia policy as an opportunity to increase its economic involvement with Afghanistan.

The South Asia Strategy, which was announced by President Donald Trump in August 2017, has focused on pressuring Pakistan to limit support and safe-haven for proxy terrorist and militant groups and to play a constructive role in facilitating Afghan reconciliation, the Pentagon said in the report.

Noting that the US strategy calls for a regional approach to enhance stability in South Asia, the report said this includes building a broad consensus for a stable Afghanistan, emphasising regional economic integration and cooperation, stressing cooperation for an Afghan-led peace process, and holding countries accountable for their use of proxies or other means to undermine



stability and regional confidence.

"India is Afghanistan's most reliable regional partner and the largest contributor of development assistance in the region," said the Pentagon.

Since late 2015, India has pledged USD 1 billion in development assistance in addition to the approximate USD 2 billion already spent on Afghan infrastructure.

India continues to invest in the

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline, it said.

"India provides significant training opportunities for Afghan officers and enlisted personnel and has frequently offered to increase its burden-sharing for Afghanistan. Approximately 130 Afghans travel to India each year to attend various military academy and commissioning programs," the Pentagon said. (PTI)

China builds air assets in Tibet, Indian missile units head east

New Delhi (TIP): Extensive exercises by the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), the Chinese air force, in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) across the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC), and enhancement of Chinese aviation infrastructure in the region, have prompted the Indian Air Force (IAF) to activate plans for greater deterrence in the eastern sector, including deployment of six units of the Akash missile system. For the contentious eastern border with China, the IAF also plans to deploy a squadron each of Chinook and Apache helicopters, besides the Russian S-400 missile system and a squadron of the Rafale fighter aircraft.

While the induction of Chinook and Apache helicopters is scheduled to be completed by 2020, the S-400 air defence missile system and Rafale fighter jets will be inducted by 2021, sources said. Discussions are also underway for induction of one more squadron of the Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighters in the region, in response to increased Chinese activity across the LAC.

A senior IAF officer told The Indian Express: "Chinese Air Force has started building infrastructure in the TAR since Doklam (the border standoff in 2017). (PTI)

contd from page 1

Govt. of India to infuse...

The government Thursday sought Parliament's approval for infusion of an additional Rs 41,000 crore.

This amount, sought to be infused in the banks through issue of government securities (recapitalization bonds), is over and above the Rs 2.11 lakh crore recapitalization plan announced in October 2017.

The recapitalization, the finance minister said, will enhance the lending capacity of state-owned banks and help them come out of RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework.

"Now this Rs 1.06 lakh crore this year and Rs 83,000 crore which is remaining is going to be utilized under four different heads. The first of course is to ensure that banks meet their regulatory capital norms.

"The second will be that the better performing banks under PCA are given capital to achieve a 9 per cent Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) and required capital conservation buffer and the 6 per cent net NPA requirements so that some of them are able to come out of the PCA itself," he said.

The third category will be the non-PCA banks which are very close to the PCA red-line will be provided capital so that they do not come under the framework, he said.

Some capital will also be provided to banks which are going to be amalgamated to meet regulatory norms and growth capital, Jaitley added.

Earlier this year, the government had announced merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda.

Jaitley also said the non-performing assets (NPAs) recognition, started in 2015, is almost complete, and the September quarter has shown decline in bad loans.

Gross NPAs of PSBs started declining after peaking in March 2018, registering a reduction of Rs 23,860 crore in the first half of the fiscal.

Speaking to reporters, Financial Services Secretary Rajiv Kumar said three banks were on the verge of being included in the PCA, but with this infusion, they will be safe.

A total of 11 out of the 21 PSBs are under RBI's PCA framework, which imposes lending restrictions on weak banks.

"India's PCA framework for weaker banks has more onerous thresholds, that is higher capital thresholds and a net NPA threshold that further embeds capital requirement on account of provisioning of NPAs.

"Today's proposal is an expression of government's commitment that each PSB is an article of faith and aims at securing compliance even for the higher regulatory norms," Kumar said.

Asked if the Nirav Modi scam-hit Punjab National Bank (PNB) will get capital support, he said it could be a candidate for fund infusion.

Kumar said PSBs have recovered Rs 60,726 crore of bad loans in the first half of the current fiscal year, which is more than double the amount recovered in the corresponding period last year.

In October 2017, the government decided to infuse Rs 2.11 lakh crore in PSBs over the next two years-through budgetary provisions of Rs 18,139 crore, recapitalization bonds of Rs 1.35 lakh crore, and the balance through raising of capital by banks from the market.

The government envisaged that PSBs would raise Rs 58,000 crore from the stock markets by March 2019 to meet Basel III norms.

Kumar said out of this, Rs 24,400 crore has been raised by banks so far.

The secretary also said four banks-SBI, Bank of Baroda, Indian Bank and Vijaya Bank may not need capital. (Source:PTI)

Defense Secretary...

other subjects, I believe it is right for me to step down from my position," Mattis wrote.

Mr. Trump announced the news in a tweet and praised Mattis' tenure as secretary.

"During Jim's tenure, tremendous progress has been made, especially with respect to the purchase of new fighting equipment," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. "General Mattis was a great help to me in getting allies and other countries to pay their share of military obligations. A new Secretary of Defense will be named shortly. I greatly thank Jim for his service!" A senior White House official said that Mattis came to the White House for a meeting, not previously scheduled, around 3:30 p.m. Thursday, and informed the president he would be leaving. The president hopes to announce a replacement by the end of the year.

Text of Defense Secretary's resignation letter.

"Dear Mr. President:

I have been privileged to serve as our country's 26th Secretary of Defense which has allowed me to serve alongside our men and women of the Department in defense of our citizens and our ideals.

I am proud of the progress that has been made over the past two years on some of the key goals articulated in our National Defense Strategy: putting the Department on a more sound budgetary footing, improving readiness and lethality in our forces, and reforming the Department's business practices for greater performance. Our troops continue to provide the capabilities needed to prevail in conflict and sustain strong U.S. global influence.

One core belief I have always held is that our strength as a nation is inextricably linked to the strength of our unique and comprehensive system of alliances and partnerships. While the US remains the indispensable nation in the free world, we cannot protect our interests or serve that role effectively without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies. Like you, I have said from the beginning that the armed forces of the United States should not be the policeman of the world. Instead, we must use all tools of American power to provide for the common defense, including providing effective leadership to our alliances. NATO's 29 democracies demonstrated that strength in their commitment to fighting alongside us following the 9-11 attack on America. The Defeat-ISIS coalition of 74 nations is further proof.

Similarly, I believe we must be resolute and unambiguous in our approach to those countries whose strategic interests are increasingly in tension with ours. It is clear that China and Russia, for example, want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model - gaining veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic, and security decisions - to promote their own interests at the expense of their neighbors, America and our allies. That is why we must use all the tools of American power to provide for the common defense.

My views on treating allies with respect and also being clear-eyed about both malign actors and strategic competitors are strongly held and informed by over four decades of immersion in

these issues. We must do everything possible to advance an international order that is most conducive to our security, prosperity and values, and we are strengthened in this effort by the solidarity of our alliances.

Because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours on these and other subjects, I believe it is right for me to step down from my position. The end date for my tenure is February 28, 2019, a date that should allow sufficient time for a successor to be nominated and confirmed as well as to make sure the Department's interests are properly articulated and protected at upcoming events to include Congressional posture hearings and the NATO Defense Ministerial meeting in February. Further, that a full transition to a new Secretary of Defense occurs well in advance of the transition of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in September in order to ensure stability Within the Department.

I pledge my full effort to a smooth transition that ensures the needs and interests of the 2.15 million Service Members and 732,079 DoD civilians receive undistracted attention of the Department at all times so that they can fulfill their critical, round-the-clock mission to protect the American people.

I very much appreciate this opportunity to serve the nation and our men and women in uniform."

Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers expressed regret that Mattis was leaving the administration. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi said she was "shaken" by Mattis' resignation and expressed admiration for the letter he wrote to the president. "I think that everybody in the country should read his letter of resignation," she told reporters. "It's a letter of great patriotism, respect for the President, but also a statement of his values."

Dow falls below 23,000...

Markets are also concerned about the ongoing trade dispute between the U.S. and China, which has lasted most of this year and shows few signs of easing, and forecasts for a dip in economic activity next year.

The broader S&P 500 closed at a 15-month low, while Nasdaq also lost ground - the tech-heavy index is now down 20 percent from its peak in August.

NELONG VALLEY: THE LADAKH OF UTTARAKHAND

One of those untouched places is Nelong Valley, situated near the Indo-China border in the Uttarakhand Himalayas, which provides a view of Tibetan Plateau. It is a new addition to the bucket lists of the explorers, as it opens for tourists for the first time since the 1962 Indo-China war. It was once a popular Indo-Tibet trade route; however, as a result of the war, the valley came under restricted area where movements, even for the locals, were regulated for 53 years.

This disassociation has left valley with little to no infrastructure to support the conventional tourism. However, that is what its USP is; many professional trekkers who have skimmed other unregulated valleys are now swamping it in droves. The valley, a cold desert like area, looks unlike anything else because of its segregation. Since there had been no external interference, the wild life has thrived—Himalayan blue sheep, snow leopards and musk deer—and nature have taken over the treacherous hand-built wooden bridge, known as Gartang Galion, which once was a route to China, an artery for trade.

Location

Under the Gangotri National Park, Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand, the valley is located at an altitude of 11,000 feet (3352.8 meters) above the sea level, and it is around 315km away from Dehradun. You can reach the valley through Bhaironghati, which is just an 8km trek from Gangotri shrine—an easily accessible place, given its religious importance.

History and people of region

The Bhotiya tribe was the original inhabitants of the valley, trading carpets, blankets and woolen clothes weaved by women as well as food items such as tobacco, tea, coffee, barley, and rice. There are evidences of trade of agricultural equipment and copper products, and medicines, as well. All this was traded at Bada Haat, a big market, based on the barter system; it was the mainstay of the



local economy. The Bhotiya traders followed the old trade route, which involved the wooden bridge, still reported to be intact, and the Lal Devta temple, where they offered prayers before embarking on their ancient trading route to Tibet.

However, the 1962 war ended the trade, and all the locals who resided in the valley were moved to Bagori and Dunda villages that lie in Uttarkashi district. The news of re-opening has brought joy to the community; however, it is highly unlikely the authorities will allow the trade, given the control of Tibet is under the Chinese regime.

Best time to visit

The Ladakh like terrain, as many travelers have described the region due to its arid environment, remains open from May to November. However, the government has put a limit on the number of vehicles that can enter the valley each day. Only a maximum of six vehicles with four occupants in each can enter the valley daily. However, administration is mulling over the regulations in place and is trying to come up with solutions to tap the tourism potential of the valley. Soon more relaxed regulations are expected, which will give explorers a free hand to scout the valley. Though, until then, a permit letter

is required to visit the valley from a subdivisional magistrate. But these logistical barriers are unlikely to stop explorers from visiting the place. Do not consider camping in the region as overnight stay is not permitted, nor expect a restaurant, as only ITBP (Indo Tibetan Border Police) personnel are allowed to camp in the region. The forest department facilitates the tourist activities; and to visit the valley, which is well above 3,000 meters, also requires a fitness certificate. However, the first glimpse of the valley will make you forget all these botherations. Get your gear ready and explore the valley—a vestige of an ancient trade route.



CRICKET NEEDS PASSIONATE CHARACTERS LIKE VIRAT KOHLI: ALLAN BORDER

PERTH (TIP): Former Australia captain Allan Border defended Virat Kohli's aggression, saying cricket needed characters like the Indian skipper who exuded passion on the field.

"There are not many characters in our game at the moment. The professional era has sort of beaten that out to a certain degree," Border said on Fox Cricket's podcast--The Follow-on.

Kohli has received severe criticism from the likes of Mike Hussey, Mitchell Johnson and Sanjay Manjrekar for his aggressive celebrations in the ongoing Test series in Australia.

The Indian skipper was also involved in a series of heated exchanges with his Australian counterpart Tim Paine, which prompted umpire Chris Gafaney to intervene during the second Test here.

"I haven't seen anyone sort of carry on so much as a captain when his side takes a wicket. It's really over the top but it's good in a way. You can see some passion about what he's trying to do," Border said.

Border added that perhaps Kohli's aggression stemmed from the desire to cement his legacy with an away series victory.

"He's so keen to win away from home and really deserve that number one ranking...that's your KPIs (key performance indicators) as a captain I suppose," he said.

Under Kohli, India suffered two back-to-back away series defeats against South Africa and England this year.

"To drive the team to be number one, which he has achieved, but to win away from home is one of those important things you notice as a captain."

Border also opined that as the leader, Kohli felt the need to manifest the passion and drive.



"I think he's feeling that pinch. If you look at this Indian side he's probably the only one that has the character to get really animated," he said.

"The rest of the Indian boys are very good cricketers but seem to me a quiet bunch and maybe Kohli feels as skipper he needs to lead from the front and really show some passion and drive. I think it just comes naturally to him," he added.

GETS LEHMANN BACKING

An "excitable character" who wants to win at all times — that's how former Australian coach Darren Lehmann sees Virat Kohli. Lehmann said that there is nothing wrong with the Indian captain's on-field conduct. Kohli and Australian skipper Tim Paine clashed on several occasions during the second Test in Perth, and some former Australian cricketers criticised Kohli's aggression.

Lehmann said Kohli is entertaining to watch. "Virat Kohli is very passionate.

So that's what you get from him on the field and that's what he will always give you. He is an excitable character. He enjoys his challengers, and he wants to win," said Lehmann. "Not only for himself, he wants his country to win. It was good to see out there and I thought it was good banter."

Lehmann made light of Kohli's confrontation with Paine. "Neither Kohli nor Tim Paine crossed the line. It was good banter, and it came across as a bit of fun on the stump mics," he said. Current coach Justin Langer had also described the showdown as humorous.

"You have to show passion when you are playing for your country and I don't have any issue with what happened," Lehmann continued. "There shouldn't be any drama about what happened in Perth. You just have to make sure it is never personal and play the game in right spirit. Rest, I am sure they will sort it out after the game or after the series."



Former India opener W.V. Raman appointed head coach of India women's team

WV Raman, former India opener, has been appointed as the coach of the Indian women's team, BCCI announced on Thursday (December 20).

He will take over the role from Ramesh Powar, who served on an interim basis - a relatively successful phase which ended with a semi-final loss against England in the recently-concluded World T20, followed by a to and fro of allegations with Mithali Raj.

Raman was among one of the three candidates shortlisted for the role by an ad-hoc panel to select the coach. The panel comprised Kapil Dev, Anshuman Gaekwad and Shanta Rangaswamy, and alongside Raman, the shortlist also included the names of former India coach Gary Kirsten and Venkatesh Prasad, which was sent to the Committee of Administrators and the BCCI.

Explaining the process of shortlisting the candidates, Gaekwad said, "Even as there were several questions asked to the candidates, a few basic questions involved were coaching credentials, why they are interested, how do they plan to take the team forward and how many languages they can communicate in. We then also asked them about their expectations, what kind of support staff they would be needing etc. On the basis of that, we came up with our decision."



SHAKIB'S ALL-ROUND SHOW SINKS WEST INDIES

DHAKA (TIP): Shakib Al Hasan starred with both bat and ball as Bangladesh edged West Indies by 36 runs in the second Twenty20 international to level the three-match series here today. Shakib claimed 5/21, helping Bangladesh bowl out West Indies for 175 runs after his unbeaten 42 off 26 balls played a hand in Bangladesh's record score of 211/4.

Rovman Powell smashed 50 off 34 balls but succumbed to the pressure of a huge asking rate as West Indies folded up in 19.2 overs. In-form Shai Hope gave West Indies a rollicking start, picking up 24 runs from one over of Mustafizur Rahman before he was dismissed by off-spinner Mehidy Hasan for 36 off 19 balls.

Shakib bowled Fabien Allen for seven to complete his five-wicket haul — becoming only the third Bangladeshi to achieve the feat — before Mustafizur, who finished with 2/54, dealt a decisive blow by removing Powell and Keemo Paul, who made 29 off 16 balls.

"If you want to win a T20 game you need to keep the momentum going, be it with the ball or bat. Luckily we got the momentum early and we continued with it to post in excess of 200 on that wicket," Shakib said after the game. Opener Liton Das struck 60 off 43 balls while Shakib and Mahmudullah, who remained unbeaten on 43 off 21 balls, guided Bangladesh to their highest ever score in a Twenty20 international on home soil.

Source: AFP

IPL 2019 AUCTION

Jaydev Unadkat, Varun Chakravarthy sold at costliest Rs 8.4 crore

JAIPUR (TIP): Indian fast bowler Jaydev Unadkat and mystery spinner from Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) Varun Chakravarthy earned a whopping Rs 8.4 cr each in the 2019 Indian Premier League (IPL) auction, being the costliest buy among the players so far here on Tuesday.

Kings XI Punjab bought England's Sam Curran for Rs 7.2 crore surpassing South Africa's Colin Ingram's price of Rs 6.4 crore to become the most expensive overseas buy in the auction here. Indian fast bowler Jaydev Unadkat was among the top buys after he was bought for Rs 8.4 cr by the Rajasthan Royals here at the auction while Varun Chakravarthy is an architect turned cricket player performed well for Tamil Nadu Premier League and Anil Kumble fan emerges the most expensive buy among uncapped players fetching a



Jaydev Unadkat and Varun Chakravarthy.

whopping 8.4 cr bought by Kings XI Punjab.

Varun is the joint-most expensive in the auction so far. From his base price of

Rs 20 lakh to being sold for whopping Rs 8.4 cr. Rajasthan Royals had bought Jaydev Unadkat in the previous edition of the IPL for a whopping 11.5 cr.

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