



## Lok Sabha elections 2019

### 'BJP will breach 282 mark by large margin', Amit Shah

The 54-year-old BJP chief & Gandhinagar Lok Sabha candidate says the 282 number will be breached by a large margin by the BJP; even the tally of the NDA will go up. Party analysis of the rounds of voting shows that not only the number of seats but also the winning margin will increase and the spread of the BJP/NDA will increase in terms of area.



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### 'Not choosing class monitor' PM Modi breaks down BJP's election strategy

In an exclusive interview with a New Delhi based national daily, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a wide range of issues ahead of the last two phases of the Lok Sabha elections.



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### Immigrant Arrests Smash Records, and U.S. Border Struggles to Handle the Crush

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### China using BRI to achieve its national security objectives: Pompeo

(News Agencies) - China is of the view that China's using its government power "predatory financing" is through the Belt and Road Initiative to achieve its national security objective, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo alleged Monday, asserting that the Trump administration is leading global efforts to inform countries about the "predatory" Chinese economics. The Trump administration has been extremely critical of President Xi Jinping's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and



and Road activities are about using government power to achieve national security objectives," Pompeo told reporters travelling with him in Finland.

Continued on Page 20

### Smuggling Illegal Immigrants

#### Indian American Yadvinder Singh Sandhu sentenced to 5 Years in Jail

(By our staff reporter) Washington DC: : A 61-year-old Indian has been jailed for five years in the US over charges of illegally helping foreigners, including a majority of Indians, enter into the country, the US Department of Justice has said. Yadvinder Singh Sandhu pleaded guilty early this year, saying he personally assisted around 400 people to unlawfully enter the US between 2013 and 2015. The smuggling carried out by him resulted in at least one death and endangered the lives of many, the Department of Justice said. Mr Sandhu, charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in the District of Puerto Rico on March 15, 2017, used multiple aliases including Yadvinder Singh Bhamba,

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## New Hyde-Park-Garden City Park School Board of Education Dilip Chauhan, South Asian Community Leader endorse Dr. Sangeeta Nischal



(By our staff reporter) Long Island, NY: South Asian Community Leader, Dilip Chauhan has Endorsed, Dr Sangeeta Nishal from New Hyde Park Garden City Park Schools Board of Education. Election is set to be held on On May



21st At Micheal J. Tully Park. Dilip Chahun stated that "Dr. Sangeeta Nischal is a proven, engaged, and respected Community Leader". Chauhan further says "I have known Dr. Nischal for some time and I can honestly state that she will be an asset to the New Hyde Park-Garden City Park School District. For this reason, I strongly urge New Hyde Park-Garden City Park School district voters to elect Dr. Sangeeta Nischal on May 21, 2019".

Dr. Nischal states that "I believe education should go beyond the classroom walls; it

should be more than just books. To achieve this, we need to collaboratively work with our teachers. If elected to the board, I would work towards this whole-child education approach in a safe environment without burdening our community with extra taxes. I am very grateful to receive endorsement from one of the most respected South Asian Community Leader Dilip Chauhan".

Dr. Nischal also works actively with school district administration to improve the standards of education and also volunteers in school by being an active volunteer on different committees. Chauhan shares that "...as a leader in our community I continue to urge and encourage our South Asian Community to make a positive difference by getting involved and supporting each other."

## An exclusive interview with Jagdish Sewhani

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(New York) On South Asian Insider Show, we interview personalities who do things differently, try to bring change with their out of box ideas. These personalities come from fields like Politics, Business, Community, Social and such, The latest episode featuring an exclusive interview by Editor & Publisher Sharanjit Singh, with New York based Jagdish Sewhani on South Asian Insider Show (SAIS) is available on Josh India WebTv, available to watch on demand YouTube and Facebook. Mr. Jagdish Sewhani is a proud Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Karyakarta and an ideologue, among founders of Friend of BJP in US & President & founder of The American India Public Affairs Committee. Mr. Sewhani lives with his family in Long Island, New York.

# Annual Asian American Heritage Month Celebrated



(By our staff reporter) An event was recently held at Nassau County to celebrate Annual Asian American Heritage Month at the Nassau County Legislative Chamber. Nassau County Executive, Laura Curran, Nassau County Presiding Officer, Rich Nicoletto, were among host of elected officials present during the event among many other elected and appointed officials, business

and community leaders. Event organizers claimed to have attendance of 350 guests and overwhelming support from community leaders and organizations. Cultural performances were organized for entertainment & few people were honored during the event. Among honorees were .

**Pictures : Zahid Syed Facebook/Mirzan Rahman**



## Queens District Attorney Candidate Rory Lancman Hosts South Asian Media Roundtable



(By our staff reporter) roundtable discussion with Queens, New York: On Tuesday, April 25th, Councilman Rory Lancman, a candidate for Queens District Attorney, hosted a

plans for the District Attorney's office, which includes a focus on protecting immigrants, tenants, women, and workers' rights. The Democratic primary is on June 25, 2019 and polls are open from 6 AM to 9 PM. "Our criminal justice system is broken -- it's racist, discriminates against the poor, and fails to keep women, working people, and immigrants safe. As District Attorney, I will use my authority to radically transform criminal justice in Queens -- to end overpolicing and mass incarceration, money bail,

and the manipulation of rules to coerce people into pleading guilty to crimes they didn't commit, while focusing our resources on protecting women from violence, working people from having their wages stolen and their safety put at risk, immigrants from deportation, and all New Yorkers from hate crimes, with an office that is diverse, transparent, and rooted in the ethics of doing justice." Councilman Lancman was the first to announce his candidacy for District Attorney because Queens can't wait any longer for real criminal justice reform

-- for an end to the overpolicing and mass incarceration of communities of color that marks the New Jim Crow, and for renewed focus on protecting working people, women, immigrants, homeowners, and tenants. As chair of the City Council Committee on the Justice System, he has jurisdiction over the City's five district attorneys, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and the courts. His hearings, budget actions, and legislation have been on the leading edge of criminal justice reform.

## FTC Charges Operator of Crowdfunding Scheme

### Defendants failed to use consumer funds to produce high-tech backpack

(By our staff reporter) Washington DC - The Federal Trade Commission has taken legal action against the operator of a deceptive crowdfunding scheme who told consumers he was raising money to develop a high-tech backpack and other products, but failed to deliver any of the products and instead used much of the funds for himself.

In its complaint, the FTC alleges that Douglas Monahan, operating through his company, iBackPack of Texas, LLC, raised more than \$800,000 from consumers through four crowdfunding campaigns, falsely claiming the funds would

be used to develop a handful of products. This included an "iBackPack" that would incorporate batteries for charging laptops and phones, cables and a Bluetooth speaker.

"If you raise money by crowdfunding, you don't have to guarantee that your idea will work," said Andrew Smith, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "But you do have to use the money to work on your idea—or expect to hear from the FTC."

According to the FTC's complaint, Monahan first sought funding in 2015 for the iBackPack through

the crowdfunding site Indiegogo, saying contributions would go to develop, produce, and distribute the product by March 2016. The campaign raised more than \$720,000 by November 2016, according to the complaint.

Despite missing the delivery date for the iBackPack, Monahan started a second crowdfunding campaign in March 2016 via Kickstarter to produce and distribute the iBackPack 2.0, an updated version of the still-unproduced original iBackPack, according to the complaint. This campaign ended in April 2016 after raising

more than \$76,000 without ever delivering the promised product. During the same time period, Monahan started two additional crowdfunding campaigns on Indiegogo, which raised a total of about \$11,000, according to the complaint. One campaign claimed it was raising funds to produce and distribute the "MOJO," a shoulder bag that incorporated batteries, cables and other features. The other campaign claimed to be raising money to produce and distribute the "POW" Smart Cable, a magnetic USB cable system with various technological features.

## Spiritual guru held in Sydney for allegedly sexually assaulting 2 women

**The 38-year-old was arrested from a house in Oxley Park area of Sydney at around 12.35am on Sunday, the Daily Mail reported. He was on a six-week tour of Australia and scheduled to return to India on Monday.**

(Agencies)- Self-proclaimed spiritual guru Anand Giri has been arrested in Sydney for allegedly sexually assaulting two women in their homes during prayer meetings in the Australian city.

Akhil Bhartiya Akhada Parishad president Narendra Giri confirmed the arrest of Anand Giri on Sunday over alleged charges of sexual assault. Anand Giri is a mahant at the renowned Bade Hanuman temple in Uttar

Pradesh's Prayagraj.

The 38-year-old was arrested from a house in Oxley Park area of Sydney at around 12.35am on Sunday, the Daily Mail reported. He was on a six-week tour of Australia and scheduled to return to India on Monday.

The Daily Mail reported that Anand Giri assaulted the first woman at her residence in Rooty Hill of Sydney West in 2016, where he was called to

pray on New Year. Australian police said Anand Giri assaulted the 29-year-old woman in her bedroom.

Two years later, he was invited for a night-long prayer at another house in November 2018. Anand Giri and the 34-year-old woman were praying in the lounge in her home when he made indecent advances towards her. He knew both the women, Sydney Police said.

Anand Giri was taken to



Riverstone police station of Sydney and he appeared before Paramatta Courtin saffron (orange) robes. He was charged with two counts of indecently assaulting the two

women. He was denied bail by Paramatta Court and remanded to further custody to reappear before Mt Druitt Local Court on June 26, 2019.

## Chandrababu Naidu opts out of PM race, says any Oppn leader better choice than Modi

**Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu has ruled himself out of the prime ministerial race, should no party get a clear majority in the Lok Sabha.**

(Agencies)- Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu has ruled himself out of the prime ministerial race, should no party get a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader was named by two top leaders of the coalition, former PM and Janata Dal (Secular) leader HD Deve Gowda and Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, as a possible PM candidate if the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) loses.



Naidu said his decision has been conveyed to the others. "I said very clearly that I am not an aspirant for PM. I am doing this now through the media. I am only here to move things forward," he told HT in an interview. On the day that his review petition (along with other opposition leaders) to have 50% VVPATs (paper trail machines) matched with EVM (electronic voting machines) counts was

dismissed by the Supreme Court, Naidu said that his decision is influenced by a desire to focus his attention on his state which is still new. The 69-year-old leader said the

PM's post is something he was offered decades ago and even then he said no. "In 1995-96, I got an opportunity twice to be prime minister, during Deve Gowda's selection and IK Gujral's selection. The job was first offered to me and then they asked Deve Gowda ji. He was also reluctant and we all then chose Jyoti Basu, but CPM [Communist Party of India - Marxist] said no." At the time, Naidu was the

convener of the United Front. Naidu's peer from Telengana, K Chandrashekar Rao is currently meeting leaders of other regional parties, pitching for a non-BJP, non-Congress front, but Naidu says this has worked only once in the past, during the United Front government in 1996, but that even then it was with the support of the Congress. If he wasn't keen on being prime minister,

Naidu wasn't very encouraging of Bahujan Samaj Party leader Mayawati's articulated aspirations either. "If anyone will come out openly, then there will be confusion. Some people may come out, but some [other] people have overall interest of the nation. So we have to maintain restraint." On Sunday, Mayawati hinted at her aspirations in an election meeting at Ambedkar Nagar.

## Congress files affidavit against clean chits to PM Modi



(Agencies)- Congress Member of Parliament Sushmita Dev filed a fresh affidavit before the Supreme Court on Tuesday, alleging discrimination and arbitrariness on the part of the Election Commission (EC), for its clean chits to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah over Opposition complaints that the two violated the model code of conduct (MCC) while campaigning for the ongoing general elections. Dev filed the affidavit after the top court asked her to bring on record the EC orders that exonerated Modi and Shah. On Monday, the EC had cleared Modi in a

complaint that pertained to an April 9 rally in Chitradurga, Karnataka, where the PM had asked first-time voters to "dedicate their vote to the Air Force" for carrying out air strikes on a terrorist camp in Balakot, Pakistan on February 26. This was the seventh complaint in which the poll watchdog exonerated the PM. In a fresh affidavit, Dev cited a complaint filed with the EC on May 6 - the Congress party's most recent one - after Modi reportedly made "unprecedented, obscene and derogatory remarks" in a speech against former Prime Minister of India, the late Rajiv Gandhi.

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# Will the prime minister's message work? The alarming assault on the free press

## It is aimed at domestic benefits, security and swing voters

In an interview to this newspaper, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised that this is a high-stakes election, meant to determine the future of the country (ANI)

In an interview to this newspaper, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised that this is a high-stakes election, meant to determine the future of the country. It was not an election for a "class monitor". The PM is right. While each election has had its own importance in India's history, this election is perhaps more important than most because of the competing visions of different players in the battle. And at the centre of it is Mr Modi himself. The outcome will reveal whether the electorate is satisfied with his record in office, or whether there is a degree of disenchantment and anger deep enough to oust him.

Mr Modi's message can be divided into three distinct categories, meant for three different categories of voters. First, in terms of domestic performance, he reiterated the government's achievements on welfare, from providing rural housing to gas cylinders, from toilet construction to Ayushman Bharat. These are indeed important contributions; the Bharatiya Janata Party has made them a talking point and it is intended to broaden the party's class appeal. Mr Modi defended his record on job creation — but this is an area in which legitimate questions could be

raised about the government's policies. Two, the PM has continued to focus on national security. By suggesting that India has decided to inflict costs to sponsoring terror and "in the future" too, terror attacks from Pakistan could well be "detrimental" for its existence, he has redefined Delhi's redlines and strategic paradigm. Besides its foreign policy implications, politically, this message has enthused the party base and supporters and taken up a notch the emotive content of the party's messaging. And finally, the PM recast this election as a battle between a strong government and a chaos-ridden coalition which has multiple interests pulling it in different directions. This message is aimed at the swing voters, who may be apprehensive of such an alternative.

The PM has largely been disciplined about his messaging on these themes in this campaign. But there is no doubt that there have also been occasions when he — and other leaders — have engaged in bitter personal allegations, leading to a dip in the nature of discourse. Mr Modi did concede that courtesy should be maintained, but added that he has been a victim of such attacks. In the remaining phases, it would be desirable if all sides — led by the PM — exercise greater restraint. May 23 will tell us if Mr Modi's message has indeed struck a chord, or whether India seeks change.

## The most damaging failure of the UPA is the coinage of the term Hindu terror

The Pragya Thakur vs Digvijaya Singh battle will be seen as one between a victim of a politically motivated investigation and a person who coined the term Hindu terror

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has been successful in curbing terrorism, though there have been some attacks in Jammu and Kashmir which can be attributed to the desperation of the terrorist outfits, thanks to the strong measures taken against them. This includes, giving a free hand to the Armed Forces and the police in counter-insurgency operations, arrests of separatists, banning terrorist outfits and the withdrawal of security for separatists.

Though the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is remembered for its many failures, the most damaging of them is the coinage of the term "Hindu terror". This was done by a party that has always propagated appeasement politics. The sinister design of the Congress in coining this term is to create an artificial equivalence of Islamic State terror, which is a major threat in many parts of the world.

The purpose of inventing this term is to appease Muslims and to hurt the pride of the Hindu community. The BJP has maintained the stand that terrorism has no religion. The Congress, as the principal opposition party, has taken the dangerous route of communal politics.

The first Malegaon blast took place on September 8, 2006, the Mecca Masjid blast was on May 18, 2007, the Samjhauta Express bombings were on February 18, 2007. The second Malegaon blast happened on September 29, 2008. The UPA government had six to eight years to investigate these cases but it was not able to prosecute these successfully. It is evident in each of the cases how shoddy and politically motivated investigation, the politics of appeasement and the desire for power eclipsed the needs of national security as far as

the UPA was concerned.

In the 2006 Malegaon blast case, nine Muslim suspects were charge-sheeted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS). However, in 2011, after the Mumbai attack, the National Investigation Agency took over the case and filed a supplementary charge-sheet against the alleged Hindu activists, paving way for the release of all the Muslim accused.

In the Mecca Masjid blast, initially around 24 Muslims were picked up who allegedly received training in Pakistan, but all of them were later let off for lack of evidence. The probe was handed over to the CBI in 2010 and later on to the NIA in 2011. Finally, charge-sheet was filed by the NIA against 10 alleged Hindu activists.

In the Samjhauta blast of 2007, in spite of intelligence inputs being shared by the US of the proven links of one Arif Qasmani, a Pakistani national who had links with Pakistani terrorist organisations, the Congress government changed the course of investigation to implicate alleged Hindu terrorists, one of which was Srikanth Purohit, a serving army officer who lost eight years and eight months of his life.

This also gave Pakistan an opportunity to point fingers at India and to dilute the Indian stand that Pakistan promotes terrorism in India.

The Bombay High Court, while granting bail to Pragya Thakur, has stated in its order dated of April 25, 2017: "Thus, in respect of above witnesses, apart from retraction and allegation of torture, their statements give two contradictory versions... In above facts and circumstances, in our considered opinion, if both the reports of ATS and NIA are considered conjointly, so far as the appellant is concerned, it cannot be said that there are reasonable grounds for believing that accusation made against her are prima facie true."

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists who had worked for Reuters and exposed the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim men and boys, recently received word that their final appeal had been denied by Myanmar's Supreme Court. This means that the two reporters -- both fathers of children under age 4 -- will, short of a pardon, spend the next seven years in jail. They were convicted of charges in relation to a blockbuster investigative report they had filed documenting the summary executions committed by Myanmar soldiers in the village of Inn Din in late 2017. The two were found to have violated Myanmar's Official Secrets Act, despite credible testimony by a police officer at their trial that they had been framed and committed no crime.

Press freedom advocates have risen up in defense of these dedicated journalists, awarding them prizes including the PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award, the UNESCO Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize and more than a dozen other honors. The US government, European leaders and other diplomats have weighed in, imploring Myanmar's still-newly-elected democratic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, herself a one-time human rights icon, to reverse this egregious violation of international norms protecting the freedom of the press. To no avail. Suu Kyi and the military generals with whom she makes common cause in order to sustain her rule are seemingly impervious to

international pressure.

Press freedom is not like most other freedoms. Unlike freedom of speech or association it is not a right that most of us personally exercise in daily life. Yet the freedom of journalists and news outlets to do their jobs is essential to democracy. The work journalists do to provide the news and analysis that allow us to understand the world around us, cast informed votes and hold our leaders accountable matters just as much as the individual rights we enjoy. That's why freedom of the press is enshrined in the First Amendment of the US Constitution, and why we should be so alarmed to witness mounting encroachments upon it both here in the United States and around the world. FDR's "Four Freedoms" provide a model for a 21st-century free press. It is not enough simply to ensure that governments do not interfere with the operation of a free press. To effectively defend press freedom requires more from us than simply opposing government censorship and the persecution of journalists like Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. Although serious and worsening, these scourges are also part of a larger, interrelated set of threats to press freedom. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt outlined the interlocking nature of liberties in his famous 1941 Four Freedoms speech, in which he imagined a world premised on freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from fear and freedom from want.



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# How the US-China trade war impacts New Delhi

*Since India's growth is in sync with global trends, it will not escape the contagion*



The trade dispute between the United States and China has become the primary destabiliser of the global economy. Just when the conventional wisdom was that the two sides were on the verge of agreement, US President Donald Trump suddenly tweeted he was planning to impose 25% tariffs on another \$325 billion worth of Chinese imports this Friday. The US-China confrontation is now officially the economic equivalent of Schrodinger's cat - simultaneously being resolved and worsening. There is good and bad in this for India. Expectations of a healthy global economy have presumed the world's main central banks will keep interest rates soft and international

trade and investment flows will remain stable. The seemingly intractable US-China trade dispute, which is as much about technology and geopolitics as it is about trade, puts a question mark over those growth figures. India's own growth figures tend to be broadly in sync with global trends. India will not be able to escape contagion. The positive side is geopolitical. India, like many of Beijing's neighbours, has had to contend with a decade of rising assertiveness by China - some of it openly military - in the external arena. One reason for China's newfound confidence is its sense of ebbing US influence in

Asia. The Asian balance of power is still struggling with the consequences of US takeover of a large part of the South China Sea. Though his motivations may not be geopolitical, Mr Trump has been prepared to beard the dragon in its lair in a manner no other world leader has. The cordiality with which China treats India and Japan today is partially a result of Beijing's worries about its deteriorating US relationship. It remains in India's interest that the US-China confrontation continues, but not that it become a conflagration. The real Indian concern should be that Mr Trump does not distinguish between friend and foe when it comes to trade. He admires Narendra Modi, sees India as a strategic partner but will not give New Delhi leeway when it comes to exports and imports. One of India's failures in its otherwise positive engagement with the US has been its inability to resolve any outstanding trade issues. If anything, these have now accumulated to the point that a US-India trade war may soon become a sideshow to the larger dispute with China. Mr Trump may or may not settle with China. Bashing China is popular at home and the US economy is booming, so he has little incentive to change his policy. India's coming trade battle with the US, in comparison, is both smaller and less political. But it needs to be addressed by the incoming Indian government as soon as possible.

## Gujarat farmers' case: PepsiCo is on shaky ground

**The PPV&FR Act's Section 39 entitles farmers to save, use, sow, resow, exchange or sell his/her farm produce, including seeds of a variety protected under this Act, provided that such seeds are not branded. In fact, Section 39's articulation makes other provisions of the Act subject to this Section.**

On April 5, PepsiCo India filed a case against four potato farmers of Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, accusing them of growing a variety of potato (FC5) that is "exclusive" to it. The multinational corporation (MNC) claims to have exclusive rights over this variety of potato under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001. Three days after the case was filed, a commercial court in Ahmedabad passed ex-parte interim injunction orders ("against infringement") against the defendant farmers. The company is also seeking to recover "damages" from the "infringement" to the tune of ₹1.05 crore from each farmer. However, due to political and civil society pressure, PepsiCo India has now

proposed to amicably settle with people who were unlawfully using seeds of its registered variety". The company is suggesting that they may become part of its collaborative potato farming programme. But was there an infringement at all? The MNC is claiming that FC5 was developed by its scientists in the US and that PepsiCo India was granted a Certificate of Registration by the Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Authority in 2016 for this variety as "FL-2027". But this variety has actually been in use in India since 2009 and unsurprisingly the seeds can be found with many farmers because of certain practices that they follow: saving and resowing of seeds, exchange of seeds

and sourcing of seeds from the market. In India, farmers cannot be expected to know which varieties are being registered under the PPV&FR Act and if this has many implications for them. Importantly, the farmers don't need to use the above two explanations as part of their defence in the court. In compliance with World Trade Organization's TRIPS Agreement, India had adopted a sui generis or unique approach, which takes into cognisance farmers' traditional practices around seed management and also recognises them as seed breeders too. The PPV&FR Act emerged from this approach. The PPV&FR Act's Section 39 entitles farmers to save, use, sow, resow, exchange or sell his/her farm produce, including seeds of



a variety protected under this Act, provided that such seeds are not branded. In fact, Section 39's articulation makes other provisions of the Act subject to this Section. A perusal of the 1999 version of the PPV&FR Act, the revised Bill of a Joint Parliamentary Committee, and the parliamentary debates in August 2001 clearly illustrate the legislative intent behind this statute, and it was clearly an intent to protect farmers' interests. PepsiCo India is on shaky ground inside and outside the court in this case. The sued farmers, who are not in any buyback arrangement with PepsiCo India, have decided against any settlement since they realise that the fight here is larger than their individual cases. It is about the assertion of their seed freedom/sovereignty and the correct judicial interpretation of the PPV&FR Act. It is now in PepsiCo India's interest to withdraw the cases unconditionally. I hope the judiciary will reinforce unequivocally Section 39 of the PPV&FR Act since this has huge ramifications for farmers and their livelihoods.

# Cooperating with China on oil imports has its limits

## The idea of a buyer's club to negotiate on oil prices has long been floated without much success

The decision of the United States (US) to not extend the waivers for importing Iranian oil has put three countries - India, China and Turkey - in a spot of bother. Of these three, India and China are two of the world's three largest oil importers and major buyers of Iranian oil. The US decision to stop other countries from importing Iranian oil also comes across as high-handed and arbitrary, especially because Tehran's alleged offence - violation of the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal - hasn't been proven. Even European allies of the US are

trying to find a way out of the American threat of sanctions in order to continue doing business with Iran. It is only natural then that New Delhi and Beijing are coming together to cooperate on energy imports.

Even as such joint efforts are welcome, it is important to recognise the limitations of such an approach. First, the idea of a buyer's club - in effect, a mirror image of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) - to negotiate on oil prices has long been floated. Tempting indeed, but this idea has never taken off. While India

and China are strategic rivals, Japan and South Korea - the other two big oil importers - are US allies. It will be difficult to get the latter two to join a group targeting American bullying. Second, can India count on China? What if China decides to settle its own parallel deal with the US as a part of a larger trade deal? If this happens, it won't be the first time. In 2014, China had decided to cut a separate deal with the US on climate change, leaving other developing countries out in the cold. And finally, the US is very serious about stifling the Iranian



regime. The world's sole superpower has announced the deployment of an aircraft carrier and a bomber task force in the region to send an "unmistakable message" to Iran. A counter-proliferation military strike or an

overt move to undertake regime change in Iran cannot be ruled out. Iranian oil, therefore, isn't something on which New Delhi can expect to find favours from Washington, either with or without Beijing.

# India should consider lowering the age of consent

Recently, the Madras High Court (HC) acquitted a boy accused of aggravated penetrative assault under the Prevention of Children From Sexual Assault (Pocso) Act and kidnapping under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). While dealing with the same case, the court also asked the competent authorities to reconsider the definition of child and reduce the age of consent from 18 years to 16. The 17-year-old girl had allegedly eloped with the accused, her male schoolfriend, and both were traced after six months, living together. During the trial, the girl turned hostile, leading to the acquittal of the boy, whose age is not mentioned in the judgment.

The court observed that it was possibly a case of mutual consent and teenage attraction, not an uncommon occurrence at such an age, and, therefore, the

age of consent should be reduced from 18 years to 16, so that the boy accused of the crime does not have to undergo punishment under the Pocso Act.

The court's suggestion to lower the age of consent is a welcome step; the government should consider it seriously.

The fact remains that many of the cases of sexual assault reported to the police (under the Pocso Act and other laws) dealing with the 16-18 years-old children are consensual in nature and are generally reported at the behest of girl's parents who disapprove of the teenagers' conduct. Therefore, the most relevant question to be addressed is whether a teenage girl or boy of this age has the capability to give "free consent". Records show that in most cases in this age group, girls turn hostile because the sexual act was not against

their will and they were not allured or induced into indulging in the act. It has also been observed that due to a change in the sociocultural environment in recent decades, teenagers are sensible enough to understand the implications of their conduct. A few other provisions of the law are also relevant to the situation. First, our laws do not consider any action by a child under the age of 7 an offence. Second, even if the child is between the ages of 7 and 12, but has not attained sufficient maturity to judge the nature and consequences of his conduct, his act would not be considered an offence. The grey area of the age category 7-12 years aside, it is implied that a child above 12 years of age develops sufficient understanding of the implications of an offence. As a corollary, this assumption of attaining maturity, with an additional margin of four years -



as is being considered now - may also be applied in cases of granting "free consent"? One may also note that the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act defines a child as a person under the age of 14, and, therefore, those above 14 can legally be employed in otherwise prohibited occupations and processes.

Many countries have 16 years or below that as the age of consent. Most of the American states,

Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, China and Russia fall into this category. Therefore, the rights of the child (up to 18 years of age) might be protected in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but the age of consent can safely be reduced from 18 to 16.

The court also suggested the need to define consensual sex as a separate category of crime under a more liberal provision.

# Potential allies in pole position

Even as two phases of polling remain, all parties are now working on twin strategies: maximise gains in the remaining seats, but also begin looking beyond the polls. Most political observers believe that it will be difficult for any party to win an absolute majority on its own. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is all set to be the single largest force by some distance, although there is fervent speculation about the exact number of seats it will win. The party is well aware that

if the existing National Democratic Alliance (NDA) falls short of a majority, it will need some additional friends. The Congress is hoping that it will be able to triple its seat share in the best case scenario. While it may have failed in stitching up alliances in some key states, it is aware that it will need all non BJP forces on the same page to muster up the numbers to keep Narendra Modi out. And regional forces - from the

Samajwadi Party (SP)-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) grouping in Uttar Pradesh to Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal to K Chandrashekar Rao in Telangana - calculate that in case of a hung parliament, if the NDA is short, they can emerge as major swing players in determining the shape of the next government in Delhi.

All of this has meant that in the final fortnight of the elections, there are these seemingly paradoxical processes at play.

On one hand, we are witnessing bitter and sharp campaigning against adversaries. On the other hand, there are also both public and private channels that have been opened up to reach out to prospective allies. Mr Modi's efforts to drive a wedge between Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav is not only an effort to win over her Jatav base in eastern UP, but also to send a signal that the BJP is willing to engage with the BSP. The PM's praise for Odisha

CM Naveen Patnaik for his work to minimise the losses by Cyclone Fani can be interpreted as a symbol of Centre-state cooperation, but in this political season, it could be seen as a signal that after a bitter campaign, all doors are open. The Congress may not have been able to sew up an alliance with SP-BSP, but its repeated assertions that the party has put up candidates in a manner which will help the alliance is a gesture of reconciliation.

# Political slugfest erupts over cyclone Fani relief and rescue



"Expiry PM" - terms both have used in the past.

At a rally in Bengal, Modi said he tried to reach out to Banerjee to discuss the impact of Fani on her state, but she wasn't available. "Speedbreaker Didi has played politics even on Cyclone Fani. I tried to get in touch but her arrogance is such that she refused to talk to me," the PM said. He said he tried twice to reach out to the West Bengal CM.

Banerjee said she was busy. "I don't want to share dais with Expiry PM. I don't consider you our Prime Minister. When the next PM comes, I will tell him," she said in a rally.

She clarified that she was monitoring the Fani impact from Kharagpur and could not take Modi's call. "We don't need you," she added, claiming that she had gone to visit Modi when West Bengal was hit by floods in 2015 and 2017, but that no central assistance was forthcoming then.

Their war of words came on the day reports of violence marred voting in seven constituencies in West Bengal, where clashes, allegations of booth capturing, and explosions, have cast a shadow on the polling process

throughout this summer's general elections. After Monday's voting, the BJP filed a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) against the Trinamool Congress, alleging rigging of polling booths and widespread violence. 3

Nine people have died in the state in political violence since election dates were announced on March 10, and polling days in all five phases so far have been turbulent. West Bengal's chief

electoral officer (CEO) Aariz Aftab, however, said, "Barring some stray incidents, polling was overall peaceful."

Modi was unsparing in his attack on Banerjee. "I must congratulate the state government, the authorities and those involved in evacuations. The work done is commendable. There has been a good coordination between the Centre and the state," he said in Odisha.

In Bengal, he said Banerjee did not turn up on Monday at a meeting he wanted to hold with officials to take stock of the situation. The PM also alleged that people saying "Jai Shri Ram" are sent to jail in West Bengal, referring to an incident in West Midnapore district last Saturday. A group shouted the slogan when Banerjee's convoy was passing by, prompting her to confront the men, who ran away.

## Elephant banned due to health, Kerala jumbo owners ban fest

A parade of around 50 elephants has been the centrepiece of Kerala's popular temple festival, Thrissur Pooram, since the late 18th century when the erstwhile Kochi royal family started it. The week-long festival at Thrissur's Vadakkumnathan Temple would not be the same when it starts this year on Monday without the parade.

The elephant owners have announced a boycott of the festival in protest against the ban on a 54-year-old tusker, Thechikottukavu Ramachandran, from participating in Thrissur Pooram.

The elephant, which suffers from a partial loss of vision, has been the centre of attraction at the festival since the 1970s. It was barred from participating in the festival after trampling two people to death in February. The elephant has been symbolically pushing open the Vadakkumnathan Temple's southern entrance to mark the beginning of Thrissur Pooram for four decades.

Kerala's Elephant Owners' Federation general

secretary, P Sasikumar, told IANS that a decision to allow the elephant take part in the festival was taken at a meet forest minister K Raju presided over on April 10. "We do not know what happened after that."

Sasikumar called the ban on the elephant a rude jolt. "Hence, we decided that from May 11, not a single elephant of ours will be given for taking part in any festival. This one-sided decision is not acceptable to us," said Sasikumar, whose organisation is the only body of owners of captive elephants in the state.

R Chandran, president of Thechikottukavu Devasom that owns Ramachandran, echoed Sasikumar and called the ban a shock. "There is some conspiracy behind this sudden change in a decision that was already taken. We hope better sense prevails," said Chandran. "It is common knowledge that Ramachandran's right eye has a vision problem while his left eye is 100% fit."

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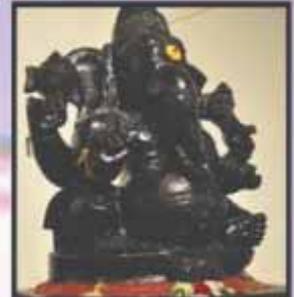
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# My right to get report, says woman who complained against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi

**The former Supreme Court staffer said in a communication to the top court, said, "Not providing a copy to the complainant while holding her complaint to be unfounded would be a violation of the principles of natural justice and a complete travesty of justice."**

(By Our Staff Reporter)- A day after a three-member in-house committee of Supreme Court judges led by justice SA Bobde cleared Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi of sexual harassment charges, the complainant, a former employee of the apex court, wrote to the panel on Tuesday seeking a copy of its report. In her letter addressed to the three judges - justices Bobde, Indira Banerjee and Indu Malhotra - the complainant asserted her right to get a copy of the committee's report. Not

providing her a copy "would be a violation of the principles of natural justice and a complete travesty of justice", she wrote in the letter distributed to the media. "I have a right to the report, the reasons for the same as well as copies of the depositions of any witnesses, any other persons or any other evidence considered by the Committee. Besides this, as is being reported by the media, if a copy of the report is being given to the CJI directly or indirectly, I am entitled to

a copy thereof in any case," the complainant wrote. "I find it rather strange that the complainant in a case of sexual harassment is not to be provided with a copy of the report which finds her complaint to be without substance and that my complaint has been held by the committee to be this without giving me any reasons for the same," she added. The former staffer cited the Delhi high court judgment in the judges assets case and attacked the decision of the committee to not give

her a copy of their report. In 2010, a three-judge bench of the HC, comprising Justice AP Shah, Justice Vikramjit Sen and Justice S Murlidhar, upheld that the Chief Justice of India and the Supreme Court were public authorities under the definition of Right of Information Act and have a duty to furnish



information to citizens with regard to administration of justice. The matter has been

challenged in the Supreme Court and has been pending for the last nine years.

## Give us all 7 seats, we will ensure sealing stops: Arvind Kejriwal tells city traders

In his first bid to woo the trader community in Delhi, AAP national convener and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of unleashing "tax terrorism" on traders. Kejriwal urged the city's traders to vote for AAP on May 12 if they wanted the sealing drive to stop. Addressing a press conference on the issues faced by the traders, the AAP supremo said, "The BJP, which used to be a traders' party, has broken the backbone of the community. Thousands of notices are being sent to traders with the intention of extorting money from them." Referring to the violence in Mayapuri on April 13, Kejriwal claimed the AAP intervened and stopped the

sealing drive. "Last month, when sealing at Mayapuri began, AAP government put all efforts to get a stay from court. Today, I want to assure all traders I will ensure no sealing happens in the if you give us all Lok Sabha seats. You strengthen our hands, we will ensure justice," he said. Kejriwal further said the policies of the Modi government have ruined traders. "Demonetisation brought endless miseries... When traders barely recovered... the Modi government hastily brought in the GST," he alleged, adding GST led to loss of jobs. BJP's Vijender Gupta said: "They are shedding crocodile tears over GST and sealing. Delhi's deputy CM himself was a member of the GST council and supported one nation-one tax."

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## Cyclone Fani: The worst is over, but picking up the pieces won't be easy

**The natural calamity is a warning for cities: Learn to be climate resilient or the consequences would be severe**

(Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday conducted an aerial survey of Puri and Khurdha districts of Odisha to see for himself the scale of devastation caused by Cyclone Fani, which made landfall in the state on May 3. During the prime minister's visit, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said Odisha deserves "special category status" for being the most disaster-prone state in India. His demand is understandable. A Super Cyclone flattened the state in 1999; in 2013, Odisha was hit by Cyclone Phailin, and in 2018 by Cyclone Titli. In 2019, it was Cyclone Fani.

While the first one killed more than 10,000 people, the death toll in the next three was below 100, thanks to the state's improved disaster management skills. Besides these major disruptions, Odisha also had to deal with

other climate-induced disasters such as heat waves, droughts, and floods. Such episodes are expected to increase in the future. The Fifth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2015) report predicts that India and other tropical countries will witness an increasing number of cyclones, storm surges and extreme rainfall in the future.

While the Patnaik government did well to weather Cyclone Fani - the state mobilised resources and personnel to evacuate more than a million people - and save lives, the challenges ahead of the state now will be equally gargantuan. "While restoring infrastructure will be one aspect of the challenge, rebuilding lives of poor people, especially the vulnerable category, will be a much greater one. This will

need some smart and long-term thinking on the part of the government," said Amar Nayak, a disaster management expert, and ActionAid's Global Humanitarian Adviser.

In February, members of the People's Solidarity Forum, a state-level forum of people's organisations from 14 districts of Odisha, released a manifesto that focused on exactly that: Long-term planning to improve disaster management and response, mitigation, and building resilience of coastal communities. These proposals can also be considered by India's other coastal cities that don't yet have a plan to tackle such events.

One of the interesting suggestions in the manifesto is to develop a cadre of people who know how to swim, can



fix electrical networks, drive speed boats, all of which are important skills in disaster situations, and then improve their skills further so that they can supplement the state's efforts during such calamities. Second, there has to be a mapping of the most vulnerable population - single women, senior citizens, children, pregnant women, the physically challenged, Dalits - in villages and cities to ensure that they are rescued first. Third, regular disaster risk reduction trainings must be done. Fourth, such disasters also mean loss

of daily wages for poor people. It is critical to ensure that social protection programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme are implemented well so that people can resume their normal lives sooner rather than later. Fifth, each cyclone is also an ecological disaster, and all efforts must be made to regenerate nature's own disaster managers, such as mangroves. "Mangrove forests act as a buffer or shock absorber in time of such disasters. There is

a clear indication that mangroves at Sundarbans saved Kolkata from Cyclone Aila in 2009, by absorbing a massive chunk of the cyclone's fury," Indian Forest Service officer, Parveen Kaswan, recently wrote in a blog.

Unfortunately, the people who run India's coastal cities are waging a war on these natural barriers. Take the example of Mumbai. A 2018 December report in Hindustan Times reported that mangrove destruction cases doubled in 2018, but there was not even one conviction. Badly constructed buildings can be killers as much as cyclones and earthquakes. There is an urgent need to invest not just in cyclone shelters but also in cyclone-resilient construction, as per the Model Building Bye Laws, 2016, of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

## The gradual degeneration of Indian politics

**Our democracy has been reduced to a mere chariot for some families, corporations and the glamour brigade**

(Agencies)- "They gave me my bed tea very late today. So I got up late. I really don't know what has happened there." The journalists received this reply from Bengali actress Moon Moon Sen when she was asked what caused the electoral violence in her parliamentary constituency, Asansol. That day, there was another surprising scene on TV. This time it was Sunny Deol. As soon as he stepped out of the polling booth after casting his vote, journalists questioned him about his new political avatar. He first folded his hands and then ran towards his car without saying anything. In my experience of 40 years as a journalist, I have seen many good and bad events, but never before have I witnessed such scenes.

Let's first look at Moon Moon Sen. In 2014,

Babul Supriyo was elected from Asansol. He is a Union minister of state and a well-known singer. Perhaps Mamata Banerjee thought that Moon Moon Sen is more popular than Babul Supriyo and so she will definitely be able to defeat him. Sunny Deol has also been given ticket from Gurdaspur solely on this basis. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) high command may have thought that if Dharmendra in 2009 and Hema Malini in 2014 can win on the basis of sheer glamour from regions they are not directly identified with, then why not Sunny Deol? Moreover, he has replaced Vinod Khanna, so this would be a seamless transition.

It was perhaps on this basis that the actress of yesteryears, Urmila Matondkar, was selected as a candidate. Matondkar has no

political experience but now she is a Congress Lok Sabha candidate from North Mumbai.

This practice of film stars joining politics started in south India way back in the 1960s. After about two decades, the trend caught up in the north too. I remember, in the initial phase, actors had to face a lot many problems. In 1984, Amitabh Bachchan was contesting against Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna in Allahabad. At that time, many who considered Allahabad the country's intellectual capital were quite displeased with the fact that though it was not unconstitutional to field an actor against such a famous and prominent leader, it was certainly improper. Noted poet and Amitabh's father, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, himself had to camp in Allahabad to placate these people.

It is not a coincidence that almost all the political parties have a preference for film stars and sports figures. These parties work and function through their workers. Many senior leaders of various parties have worked relentlessly and selflessly for their parties. Then, it is puzzling that they are neglecting their own party workers.

To what extent can the people who get tickets to contest elections without even being familiar with the party's principles prove to be the well-wishers of the party? Take, for example, Sapna Choudhary. At first, she was rumoured to have joined the Congress but the very next day she was seen singing the praises of the BJP. Unfortunately, Indian politics is either driven by dynasties or



fairweather entrants. Haven't we been degenerating step by step in every election because of this? I am reminded of a scene from the film Anari. In it, Raj Kapoor finds the wallet which belongs to Motilal, who had dropped it. As Raj Kapoor approaches Motilal to return the wallet, some goons attack him. Thrashed and with his clothes torn, he somehow manages to reach the club where Motilal is and returns the wallet. Motilal looks at him with surprise and says something which has always stayed with me. "Young man, all these people you see around here must have got some

wallets, which were dropped at one point or another, which they did not return."

Indian politics is also turning into a club for the elite. Those who came to the corridors of power by struggling in the name of democracy are either too ambitious and later doomed to become like those very people they had protested against. That's why our democracy has now been reduced to a mere chariot for some families, corporates and the glamour brigade. The voters may nurture the illusion of driving this chariot if they want to, but the fact is what they consider the power to elect is not in their hands at all.



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# India, China join hands on oil

***This is the first institutionalised arrangement between the two sides to cooperate in energy though they have several groups on issues such as counter-terrorism and the boundary dispute.***

(Agencies)- India and China are working closely on common trade concerns, including cooperation in buying oil and gas, against the backdrop of a US squeeze through tariffs and sanctions on Iranian oil imports, officials with direct knowledge of the matter said. Efforts have been made by the world's second- and third-largest oil importers to find common ground and energy cooperation is one of the key areas where the two sides can collectively bargain for better prices from producers, the officials added, asking not to be identified. Following a visit to New Delhi in March by Li Fanrong, deputy chief of China's National Energy Administration, the two sides created a joint working group on oil and gas. This is the first institutionalised arrangement between the

two sides to cooperate in energy though they have several groups on issues such as counter-terrorism and the boundary dispute. "A meeting between the petroleum and natural gas secretary MM Kutty and the vice minister of China's National Energy Administration, Li Fanrong, was held on March 26 in New Delhi to discuss cooperation in the oil and gas sector," one of the government officials cited above said. A person familiar with thinking in official quarters in Beijing said "both sides are closely discussing" cooperation in key areas such as oil purchases. He confirmed these issues had figured in the meeting between Kutty and Li in March. Cooperation in energy has been on the agenda for some time - Kutty visited China last October - but the issue gained steam with the US announcing

the end of exemptions to sanctions on Iranian oil imports last month. Iran is important for the energy security of India and China as it is one of the largest suppliers of crude to the two major economies and the supply disruption due to US sanctions has huge strategic and economic costs for the two countries, Indian officials said on condition of anonymity. The economic interests of India and China have also been threatened by the Trump administration's announcement on ending preferential arrangements with India under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme and raising import duties from 10% to 25% on Chinese goods worth \$200 billion. New Delhi and Beijing are coming closer to counter trade barriers created by the US that threaten the two major Asian economies,



the officials said.

Among issues that India and China can jointly work on is the "Asian premium" charged by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the officials said. India is also concerned about the impact of US sanctions that kicked in on May 2 and cut off supplies from Iran, which accounted for more than 10% of the country's oil requirements, and the need to rein in prices, they added. The new arrangement marks a significant shift from the times when India and China often competed with each other to acquire stakes in oil and gas fields in Asia and Africa. Their

cooperation in the field of energy was limited and India is now also looking at the possibility of also getting South Korea and Japan to join the buyers collective so as to create some sort of a grouping of buyers, officials said. People familiar with developments on both sides said the cooperation is in line with the "Wuhan spirit", a reference to the informal summit last year between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping that reset bilateral relations after the 2017 military stand-off at Doklam. They also pointed to Beijing's changed stand on the UN listing of Pakistan-based

terrorist Masood Azhar. Though India has raised the issue of flexibility on the sanctions on Iranian oil, the US has been non-committal. On Monday, visiting US commerce secretary Wilbur Ross said his country will not ensure sale of cheaper oil to India as the commodity is controlled by private firms. "Oil is owned by private people, so the government cannot force people to make concessionary prices," Ross, here to participate in a trade forum, told reporters. However, US ambassador Kenneth Juster said his country is working with other producers such as Saudi Arabia to ensure "adequate supply of oil".

## Why India needs to keep a close eye on the progress in the US-Taliban talks

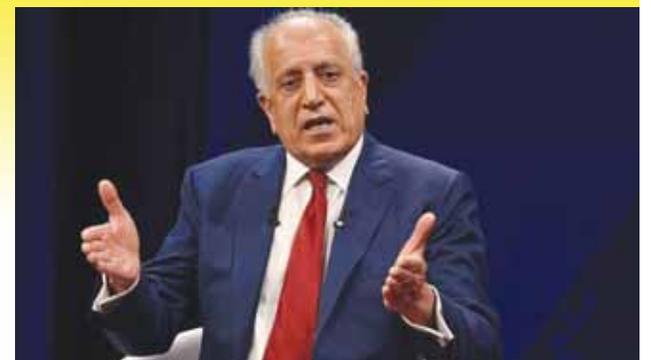
***New Delhi has, so far, protected its interests by being in lock step with the Afghan government. But new outreach may be required with the start of intra-Afghan dialogue***

(Agencies)- US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, is in Delhi on May 6-7 to update Indian officials on the current status of his negotiations with the Taliban, and international as well as Afghan government responses to his strategy. He has so far not seen India as central to his efforts. His interaction with Indian officials, in this context, has been sporadic. He had visited Delhi on January 10-11,

coinciding with the Raisina Dialogue, after several rounds with the Taliban and several visits to other countries. He had met the visiting Indian foreign secretary in Washington in mid-March. His visit this time follows another round of negotiations with the Taliban in Qatar from May 1, preceded by a visit to Pakistan. Negotiations with the Taliban are focusing on four aspects: the pace of withdrawal of foreign troops; Taliban's commitment to not again

allow Afghanistan to be a base for attacks against other countries; intra-Afghan dialogue; and reduction of violence leading to a comprehensive ceasefire. So far there has been limited progress. Reports indicate that the Taliban are pressing for a quick withdrawal of US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces, so as to strengthen their own relative presence on the ground. The US has been suggesting a drawn-out withdrawal, so that the

present situation is not destabilised. A statement issued after the April 25 trilateral meeting between the US, Russia and China in Moscow spoke of an "orderly and responsible withdrawal of foreign troops as part of the overall peace process". Taliban's representatives have indicated willingness to commit to not allowing Afghanistan to be used for international attacks. However, they seem reluctant to commit to not allowing terrorism, arguing about lack of consensus on



the term, and having country". This is a partnered with several identified groups in the past, including the Haqqani network. The Moscow trilateral statement took "note of Afghan Taliban's commitment to fight ISIS, cut ties with Al-Qaeda, ETIM and other international terrorist groups, ensure the areas they control will not be used to threaten any other

country". This is a commitment more difficult to monitor and enforce once Taliban become part of the governance structure. Pakistan has for decades denied any involvement with the terrorist groups it has sponsored. From India's perspective, we will need to monitor the Taliban's approach to groups fostered by the Pakistani state to target India.



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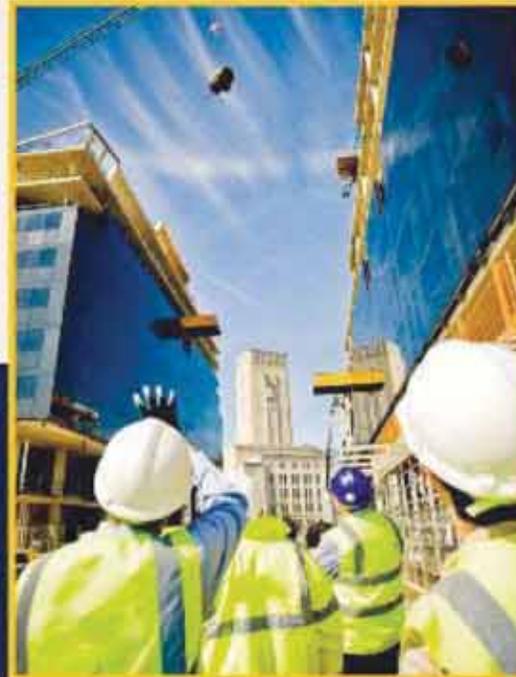
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(News Agencies) New Delhi: Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah admits that there is no "soft side" to him and says that national politics is "serious business", which he doesn't do for "fun". The 54-year-old Gandhinagar Lok Sabha candidate has canvassed for his party in no less than 290 constituencies to date in this election season. In the past five years, Shah has also visited almost all districts in India save a couple of remote ones in Arunachal Pradesh and has stayed a night in as many as 212 districts. A prominent media journalist on campaign trail with BJP president asked him a range of questions on the prospects of his party, the NDA and about the performance of the Narendra Modi government.

**Q : In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP alone won 282 seats. Will this number increase or go down? What is your assessment after five rounds of polling?**

The 282 number will be breached by a large margin by the BJP; even the tally of the NDA will go up. Our analysis of the rounds of voting complete shows that not only the number of seats but also the winning margin will increase and the spread of the BJP/NDA will increase in terms of area.

**Q: Why do you think people will vote for the BJP?**

Firstly, the public has faith and confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We can perceive the enthusiasm among the electorate in making Modi PM again. Secondly, the Modi government has done all-round development. This is matched by taking India up the global ladder in terms of GDP growth and making the country proud. Besides, PM Modi has assured 125 crore Indians that his government is committed to national security, which is the topmost priority of his regime -- whether it is taking tough decisions on Jammu and Kashmir or being the most successful government in handling international diplomacy and challenges. In all these issues, the public has seen sweeping positive change from the past. I feel that in PM Modi, people have found a leader who can be sensitive, yet has the capacity to take tough decisions.

**Q: As evident in your rallies today, you have made national security a major election issue. Do you really believe that national security is a vote catcher?**

Since the 1990s, the public has wanted national security to be a priority. They were longing for a focused strategy, where, diplomatically, India could boldly present its views to other countries and at the same time strike at the source of terror. Till re-

# Lok Sabha elections 2019

## 'BJP will breach 282 mark by large margin', says Amit Shah

cently, all the wars against terror were fought on Indian soil. We have suffered on this count. It is only under Modi that India has struck twice at the place of origin of terrorists in form of the 2016 surgical strike and 2019 airstrike at Balakot. When the surgical strike happened, defence experts from all over said that it was a fluke and not policy. After the airstrike, the same experts agree that this is the defence policy of India and Narendra Modi.

For the first time since independence, the country's diplomatic policy has been separated from its defence policy. This is why national security is an important issue. Not that other issues have been side-lined. The 22 crore beneficiaries of the BJP government know that it is Modi who has given them their due. They also know that only Modi can give their due to those who are left behind. Besides, there have been agricultural reforms with increased rate of growth, increased coverage of irrigation, faster infrastructure development with 2.5 times increase in road and 2.25 times increase in railroad construction.

**Q: The Congress says that even it conducted six surgical strikes**

Nobody says this except Congress president Rahul Gandhi.

**Q: But former prime minister Manmohan Singh has also said the same?**

Congress has to follow the footsteps of Rahul Gandhi.

**Q: The Opposition has questioned the timing of UN designation of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist in the midst of general elections...**

You mean to say that UN's 1267 committee should have postponed the meeting and waited for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections to get over. The terror tag on Masood Azhar is the biggest diplomatic victory of Narendra Modi and it comes after the world community recognised India's right to self defence after the February 14 Pulwama suicide attack and the Balakot retaliation. It has also recognised that Pakistan is sheltering terrorists and terror groups.

**Q: Will the Masood listing help you in the 2019 elections?**

It is an achievement of the Modi government, so why should we not take electoral advantage of it.

**Q : In the 2014 elections and all through the assembly elections since, we heard the term social engineering when it came to wining elections. The**

**term seems not so much in vogue now?**

It is not that the term is missing but BJP does not need to do social engineering frequently as the party has become inclusive -- all sections of society finds representation in our party. In the past five years there has been a development that will strengthen democracy -- elections are no longer a prisoner of caste, dynasties and appeasement. Narendra Modi, through his politics of performance has got rid of these ulcers.

**Q : Do you think politics of performance or development will work in a country where people vote in the name of caste and religion ?**

There are many examples to counter this -- for instance Assam, Manipur and most importantly Uttar Pradesh where BJP got 325 assembly seats without projecting any caste leader. We got good results in those states as we worked towards solving grievances of the people without keeping caste, creed or religion in mind.

**Q: So you think that caste equations will not matter even in UP and Bihar in the on-going election?**

I have not said that. I am saying this time voting in these states is not predominantly on caste. Caste-based parties are losing influence. Today, the public understands that caste based parties will help only their caste. In UP for instance, when Samajwadi Party comes to power, one caste gets a boost, similarly BSP majority helps only its supporting caste. The remaining 80 castes remain neglected. BJP with its "Saabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" mantra has been able to transcend castes by doing development work without asking caste of the beneficiary. Also read: Lok Sabha elections 2019: Diplomacy and defence policy are not linked now, says Amit Shah

**Q: Tell me three reasons why people should vote for BJP?**

First, BJP has a strong leader, while the opposition leadership is in tatters. The public wants to know the leader or PM candidate of the diverse parties opposing Modi. In contrast, we have given a strong, decisive leader, the most popular Indian mass leader since Independence. To add to this, the NDA recognises and accepts the leadership of Modi. Second, we have made the 50 crore poor in this country realise that they have a stake in the

country. These 50 crore did not have a house, electricity, drinking water, cooking gas, toilets for women and health benefits. Today, every poor person has these facilities in 165000 villages due to the BJP government at Centre. There are 22 crore beneficiaries whose life has been positively impacted by this change. Third, as opposed to indecisive or leaderless governments in the past, our decisive leadership has addressed the challenges related to economy, defence, infrastructure, agriculture, or poverty alleviation on every platform or level.

**Q: There is one school of thought that says the BJP will end up with 180 seats in 2019 elections leaving the space for opposition to cobble up an alternative.**

This theory was active in the run-up to the 2014 results. First, they said the BJP will not make Modiji a PM candidate, then they said lack of full majority will block Modi as PM, then they said Modi will not be able to form a stable government. The same people said BJP will lose Gujarat and UP. This time also, the public will smash all their illusions.

**Q: The BJP announced a farm pay out. The Congress has promised a NYAY scheme. Can we say that India is slowly moving towards a cash transfer/payout system like universal basic income when it comes to welfare?**

To link the BJP's scheme with a vote catching plan of the opposition, to my mind is due to lack of proper information. In this country, there are 15 crore farmers who have small to large holdings. Out of these 15 crore, only three crore get loans and remaining get nothing as they do not have requisite holding to qualify for loan. These are marginal farmers, who take loans from money-lenders on very high interest rates. This is one of the reasons for farmer suicides. A committee set up by NABARD found that the input cost for small and marginal farmers was Rs 6000 per year for two crops. Just as new industry is promoted by viability gap funding, we decide to respect the farmer by giving him Rs 6000 per year so that he/she did not have to go to the money-lender. This is not a gift. This is just a tonic for the farmer to keep tilling his small piece of land. You will be committing a big mistake if you compare this with cash transfer. Modi government schemes are not doles for votes but serious attempts to lift the status of the ben-

eficiary.

**Q: Data shows that the increase in minimum support prices (MSPs) has not really helped the farmers. Not enough is being procured. What do you see as a long term sustainable solution?**

Your information is half baked on this issue. Wheat and rice constitute 60% crop in India. Today, the procurement of these two staple crops is done at 1.5 times its input cost. We have added 24 new crops, eight months ago but the full implementation of this novel scheme requires 1.5-2 years with the help of Centre-state governments. My firm belief is that the farmers will be able to get 1.5 times input price for 24 crops, Rabi and Kharif crops. This is just a beginning. We have told the farmer that government is with you as 70% of crops such as dal from Gujarat, Bajra from Maharashtra, Ragi in Karnataka are being purchased by Centre and states. I believe that media should play a positive role in taking this Modi initiative to farmers.

**Q: You have talked about getting rid of Article 370, 35A in order to integrate Jammu and Kashmir? Are your NDA allies on board with this?**

BJP is totally committed on getting rid of these two articles. We are firm. We will take our allies on board by explaining to them. This is our concrete promise to Indian public. The same applies to our Uniform Civil Code promise.

**Q: How committed are you to women reservation bill, Ram Temple and Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)?**

For women reservation bill, we need consensus among all political parties. It will not happen till this agreement is reached. But we will make all attempts to get all political parties on board. We will definitely bring the CAB and get it cleared through Rajya Sabha too.

**Q : When will it happen?**

One more round of UP/Bihar of Rajya Sabha polls and things will change in favour of the BJP (in the upper house).

**Q : On Ram Mandir?**

The Supreme Court has ordered eight weeks of mediation, which will end in June 2019. The case will be taken up after vacation. We will wait for the results. I have firm belief that the Supreme Court will take the route taken by Allahabad High Court.

**Q: Sadhvi Pragya Thakur was a terror accused, she is on bail, yet you chose her to contest Lok Sabha elections from Bhopal? Why?**

Please study the charge sheet of Sadhvi Pragya. She has not been accused of planting a bomb but being part of a conspiracy

meeting for Malegoan, Samajhauta Express and Mecca Masjid blasts. The judgment in Mecca Masjid and Samajhauta Express blast has come. Court has dismissed the conspiracy meeting as imagination, bereft of any evidence. The conspiracy theory has been rejected by two Indian courts and they have said that there is no such thing as Hindu terror. Since two courts have rejected the conspiracy, there is no need to count Sadhvi as an accused. Sadhvi got a Lok Sabha ticket as a riposte to Congress vote bank politics by defaming the Hindu religion by adding the word terror to it. And to expose this, there was no better seat as Hindu terror is the brainchild of Congress leader Digvijaya Singh (the candidate from Bhopal). Sadhvi Pragya's candidature is BJP's satyagraha against fake Hindu terror. I believe let the people also give their judgement after the courts have given it.

**Q: Since you say that the NDA/BJP is coming to power in 2019, what role in future you envisage for yourselves? You are a very successful party president and have been a state home minister for six years in the past**

As far as I am concerned, I am a log in a river that is BJP. It is for the party to decide, as a log will get swept away if it tries to forge its own course. In my party, individuals don't take decisions.

# Lok Sabha elections 2019

## 'BJP will breach 282 mark by large margin', says Amit Shah

**Q: If you come to power again, will you address the perceived weak bench strength of the cabinet?**

I don't believe that a very good performance of Modi government could have been possible if we had a weak bench. Strength of ministers should not be judged on their accessibility to media but on their performance. Union Cabinet is a prerogative of the PM. Changes in the new government should not be seen in the context of success or failure but representation of states in the new elected members.

**Q: You did not give Lok Sabha tickets to the former chief ministers of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan? Why?**

There was no such proposal from the state unit. And all three are putting their energies into making the party win from their respective states. All three are vice president in the central BJP and contributing to the electoral might of BJP.

**Q: The opposition has been relentlessly targeting the Modi government about a lack of jobs? Some say the numbers have gone down to the lowest in 45 years.**

There is confusion as we are try-

ing to analyse our data with the same parameters used in small countries. Giving permanent jobs to all 125 crore Indian is impossible. The government has come up with innovative schemes for self-employment. Through Mudra Bank, 18 crore loans were given out as loan this year. Opposition tries to laugh away some of this, saying 12 crore of these were small loans of Rs 50,000 and less. It is another matter that an individual can be gainfully employed even with Rs 50,000 as seed money. Of the remaining six crore, three crore were for loans of more than four lakhs each. If three crore get loans of more than four lakh rupees, then it is safe to presume that at least one more person would get employed in each of these cases.

Mamata Bannerjee said that she gave employment to over 60 lakh individuals but the total figure of India is not 60 lakhs. This leads to the question of whether West Bengal is part of India or not? UP has also given jobs. Job data analyses for a 125 crore country cannot be done on the parameters used in Netherlands and England. And then there is common sense. If roads are getting laid at 2.5 times the speed in the past then are robots making the

roads? Railroad work is increased by 2.25 times, so is a super human making our rail network? Optical fibre has been laid in 100,000 villages, then who is doing the manual work? Is jobless growth rate possible when Indian was the fastest growing economy in the past five years? Manmohan Singh left the Indian economy at number 11 position among the biggest economies of the world, we took it to number 6 and I believe we will overtake UK once the March data is out. Will this not generate jobs? I am not an economist like (former finance minister) P Chidambaram but a layman with common sense enough to tell you that this canard is being spread as they have no real issue to tackle Narendra Modi.

**Q: While on controversies, Congress president Rahul Gandhi has publicly stated that his slogan is still "Chowkidar chor hai" in the context of Rafale deal**

Only yesterday, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, in a press conference, accused a partner of Rahul Gandhi of getting defence contracts. He should answer those allegations first as there is documentary evidence. You are accusing the government on the Rafale deal, which is neither concurred by the SC, the CAG or documentary evidence. And if Rahul Gandhi had documentary evidence

or facts, he should have put it up before the court when the Rafale case was being heard. He is relying only on press conference and blatant accusations. Unsubstantiated allegations do not stick to leaders, particularly Narendra Modi whose life has been of an honest politician. Public knows Modiji as well as the Gandhi family. Gandhi family has to answer a whole lot of questions. They are on bail and have been served an IT notice for showing less income to the tune of 400 crores.

**Q: How do you read the elections in West Bengal?**

We will definitely cross the halfway mark of Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal. There is a huge change happening in Bengal with people upset with appeasement vote bank politics of Didi. Not only is the democracy being throttled in Bengal, but its culture is being destroyed.

**Q: Political analysts believe that Maha Gathbandan will affect the BJP's electoral arithmetic in UP. What do you feel?**

I firmly believe that BJP will improve on its past tally of 73 in UP. We will be 74 from 73 not 72 in UP. Time has passed when voters followed two leaders shaking hands in a drawing room. Today voter decides on who to vote. You watch the results, BJP will improve its position.

(By Hindustan Times's Shishir Gupta on the campaign trail with the BJP president)

## Scientists Warn of a Looming Mass Extinction of Species

A report has warned that the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with a grave impact on people around the world. Of the estimated eight million species on earth, around a million face extinction, according to biodiversity specialists from around the world. Many of these are now threatened with extinction within decades - a situation humans have not faced before.

The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are now threatened. Of the estimated eight million species on earth, around a million face extinction, according to biodiversity specialists from around the world.

Many of these are now threatened with extinction within decades - a situation humans have not faced before. The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are now threatened. The picture is

less clear for insect species, but available evidence supports a tentative estimate of 10% being threatened. At least 680 vertebrate species had been driven to extinction since the 16th century and more than 9% of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had become extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more breeds still threatened. Accelerating extinctions The rate of species

extinctions is accelerating, with a grave impact on people around the world, warns a report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). It is dedicated to providing the world with an objective, scientific view of climate change, its natural, political and economic impact and risks, and possible response options.

## China using BRI to achieve its national security objectives: Pompeo

Noting that the US has said all along that it has a huge economic interest in China's success and vice versa, Pompeo said the BRI needs to be transparent.

"It's got to be on a free and open basis. It can't be with the idea that you're going to loan a country money and then foreclose on that facility so that you can then build yourself a port or take that land and real estate. That's not appropriate. We have discouraged that. We

have educated other countries around the world on that set of issues," he said.

Where there are elements of the BRI that are truly building a bridge and it is a commercial transaction, the US welcomes China participating in those, he said.

"But where we see China behaving in ways that are truly not commercial but rather designed to further gain them either access entree for national security purposes, we don't think

that's what those countries are really buying," Pompeo said.

The BRI was launched by President Xi when he came to power in 2013. It aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes

China is doling out huge sums of money for infrastructure projects in countries from Asia to Africa and Europe, enhancing its global influence. Concerns over BRI financing became vocal

after

China acquired Sri Lanka's strategic Hambantota port on a 99-year lease

as a debt swap in 2017

Earlier addressing the opening session of the Arctic Council in Finland, Pompeo slammed China for its BRI, which he said, tends to eat into the sovereignty of nations. "China has observer status in the Arctic Council, but that status is contingent upon its respect for the sovereign rights of Arctic states. The US wants

China to meet that condition and contribute responsibly in the region. But China's words and actions raise doubts about its intentions," he said.

Citing Sri Lanka and Malaysia, he warned Arctic nations to be aware of the real Chinese intentions. "Let's just ask ourselves: Do we want Arctic nations broadly or indigenous communities specifically, to go the way of former government in Sri Lanka or Malaysia, ensnared by debt and corruption?"

# Immigrant Arrests Smash Records, and U.S. Border Struggles to Handle the Crush

(News Agencies) Donna, Texas—After tens of thousands of families streamed across America's southern border late last year, a Catholic charity in Tucson, Ariz., opened a monastery to house asylum-seeking migrants whom federal agents released. The 66,000-square-foot space is now full. The recent discovery of an unused closet caused excitement.

An additional 113,797 people in families had crossed this year by the end of March, and border agents in El Paso, Texas, housed some under a bridge. Last month, Yuma, Ariz., declared an emergency after a converted strip-mall thrift store serving as a shelter hit capacity. Last week, a giant white tent opened on the outskirts of Donna, near the Rio Grande—the government's latest desperate attempt to house the families.

In April, a single-month record of 58,000 parents and children crossing together illegally were arrested, federal data released Wednesday show.

A deepening humanitarian crisis on the border is straining towns, aid groups and federal agencies as thousands of families, when released, immediately need shelter.

The border has seen illegal-immigrant waves before. This one is different.

Instead of the single job seekers of a decade ago who aimed to sneak in undetected, these are families openly seeking asylum—more like the groups of refugees familiar on borders elsewhere in the world, where wars, famine and genocide have created massive camps of displaced families with nowhere to go.

Families arrive at a U.S. border unprepared to absorb the sheer numbers of adults and children who are, by law, allowed to remain at least temporarily—confounding federal policy and the Trump administration. It is getting more chaotic, as Border Patrol officials shuttle immigrants hundreds of miles to find space.

According to the new federal data, 248,000 parents and children had illegally entered the U.S. by April since the federal fiscal year began in October, more than in any prior full year.

The families are mostly citizens of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras citing gang violence, hunger, poverty and corruption. Trump administration officials and Republican lawmakers have argued that legal loopholes encourage asylum seekers, but those loopholes have existed for years. "President Trump has repeatedly exposed the loopholes littered

## Shelters fill up with asylum-seekers; officials shuttle families hundreds of miles to find space and build a tent city. Three children have died in federal custody.

throughout our immigration laws and offered many solutions to address them," said a White House spokesman.

The administration has tried multiple responses: separating adults from their children, pushing Congress to change immigration law, threatening to close the border before backing down, sending troops to the border. On April 29, President Trump ordered the Department of Homeland Security and Justice Department to start drafting regulations to speed up adjudications for asylum cases, charge migrants an application fee for asylum and deny them work permits while awaiting a decision.

"The migration flow and the resulting humanitarian crisis is rapidly overwhelming the ability of the federal government to respond," White House acting Office of Management and Budget director Russell Vought told Congress last Wednesday in a request for \$4.5 billion in emergency funding. The administration's moves so far have neither stopped families from arriving nor found a solution to the overcrowding and turmoil at the border.

The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday that the Trump administration for now can resume its practice of sending some Central American asylum-seekers to Mexico to wait for U.S. judge to rule in their asylum case—an unexpected victory for the administration. But that policy, which had been in effect for months before legal challenges interrupted it, has had little effect on the current crisis because of restrictions on who the government can remove.

They crossed with other Central Americans into the U.S. illegally near Calexico, Calif., a desert border town surrounded by farm and ranch lands about an hour west of the Arizona state line.

Gregorio and his group immediately sought out Border Patrol agents, surrendered and started the process of requesting asylum. While authorities can in a number of hours deport single Mexican adults entering illegally for work, the U.S. lets most families requesting asylum stay while their cases are adjudicated.

Guatemalan asylum seekers in Yuma, Ariz., board a Greyhound to Phoenix in April, heading to Alabama, Indiana, Florida and elsewhere. Medical personnel checked out the father and daughter. Immigration officials

interviewed Gregorio, who told them he feared his life would be at risk if he went home. Officials approved them for the first step toward asylum.

Over the next five days authorities moved him and Mirian to multiple crowded, spartan Border Patrol facilities in California and Arizona, Gregorio said. Typically, such locations include cinder-block holding cells with a sink and toilet—no bed—or holding areas with tents. The facilities were made to hold single men for hours, not families for days.

"A lot of our stations were not built for this," said Matthew Roggow, the Border Patrol's acting deputy chief of the law enforcement operations directorate. "They weren't built for this demographic."

Then it was time for Gregorio and Mirian to be let go—and start waiting.

Asylum seekers like them spend months, sometimes years, waiting to have their cases heard in an immigration-court system backlogged with more than 869,000 cases. The trouble now: Where do they go meanwhile? Small border cities can't always handle the daily release of hundreds of migrant families. For Gregorio and Mirian, that meant traveling almost 300 miles to ride to Tucson, where a van later dropped them and 35 others off at the monastery-turned-shelter last month.

Gregorio, a 27-year-old Honduran, and his 1-year-old daughter, Mirian, at the monastery-turned-shelter in April.

Other Border Patrol officials last month shuttled migrants to Tucson from the border in El Paso. Last year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials started releasing migrants at parks and bus stations in San Diego and El Paso. Migrant-aid groups moved most of the newly freed migrants to shelters.

As Gregorio and Mirian shuffled into the monastery at the edge of a middle-class neighborhood and barely 2 miles from the sprawling University of Arizona campus, run by Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona, a 5-year-old Guatemalan boy riding a donated tricycle greeted them: "Bienvenidos!"

During an orientation with volunteers, the families were treated to orange and grapefruit slices, Gatorade and water. As they

waited for medical screenings and a room assignment, their first questions were where they headed next.

"How far is San Antonio?" one man asked. "New Jersey?" another asked.

Gregorio would spend a day or two in the shelter before taking a bus to Woodbridge, Va., where he had relatives. He carried a slip of paper with a date to appear in a nearby immigration office, where he would begin the process of asking a judge to let them stay permanently.

Immigration researchers and federal officials say they aren't certain why so many families are coming. Widespread hunger, gang violence, and government corruption have been factors. The spread of the internet and social media has disseminated information—and testimonials—about how to seek asylum that previous generations didn't have.

The numbers aren't unprecedented. In 2006, border agents arrested more than 1 million illegal immigrants, compared with 460,000 in the first seven months of this fiscal year. That earlier number was driven by single adults, mostly from Mexico.

What's unprecedented is the numbers seeking asylum.

One previous flood of asylum seekers came during the 1980

Mariel boatlift, when an estimated 125,000 Cubans arrived on U.S. shores, often in rickety boats, over about six months. They overwhelmed authorities and facilities in South Florida and forced the government to move newly arriving Cubans to temporary holding facilities at military bases around the U.S. and Puerto Rico. It became a political problem for President Carter, whose administration had been granting refugee status to any Cuban who arrived in the U.S.

The Obama administration was inundated with tens of thousand of unaccompanied migrant children and families in 2014. Children coming alone reached a high of more than 68,000 that year. While some families were sent home, most took their place in line in the massive immigration-court backlog.

Central American migrants in Antelope Wells, N.M., wait for directions from Border Patrol agents in January.

The administration called in the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help manage some operations, and opened jails specifically to accommodate entire families. A judge later ruled that children with parents couldn't be held longer than 20 days.

Obama administration officials also launched a public-relations campaign in Central America, warning migrants not to make the trip.

## Smuggling Illegal Immigrants

### Indian American Yadvinder Singh Sandhu sentenced to 5 Years in Jail

Bhupinder Kumar, Rajinder Singh, Robert Howard Scott and Atkins Lawson Howard.

According to admissions in his plea agreement, since 2013, he had a leadership role in a human smuggling conspiracy operating out of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, India and elsewhere.

He also oversaw and directed co-conspirators operating out of the Caribbean.

Mr Sandhu and other members involved the conspiracy made flight arrangements for foreign nationals to travel from India through other countries including Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Iran, Panama, Venezuela, Belize and Haiti to the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic was used as a staging area, where foreigners were housed before being transported to the US.

The organisation brought groups of foreigners from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico or Florida by boat. They were then picked up by co-conspirators and taken to stash houses until flights could be arranged to California, New York, or elsewhere.

Mr Sandhu and others arranged for fraudulent identifications for some migrants to use in the US, prosecutors alleged.

The boat trips from the Dominican Republic to the US were perilous as old, damaged, cracked, unlicensed, overcrowded and unsafe boats were used to make the journey, they said.

A foreign national died in a boat on his way to the US, the Department of Justice alleged.

At times, the smugglers would take passports from the foreigners during their journeys, physically assault them and threaten their families to collect money.

# 'Naam bhi, kaam bhi': PM Modi breaks down BJP's election strategy



(Media reports) New Delhi: "The 2019 elections are special because it is the first time that those born in the 21st century are voting. These youngsters are not burdened by the past, they are in pursuit of a better future. These youngsters do not want to be bogged down by dynastic shenanigans, they want a nation where merit is recognised. They do not want old-school caste politics, they want a new age development agenda," the 68-year-old Prime Minister said.

Interview began by explaining the importance of the 2019 mandate. He said the election is being fought on the basis of performance, not perception.

Asked how he had changed since 2014, when he led the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to a majority on its own, Modi replied: "My digestion powers have increased. I can digest insults more easily."

**Q. Are you confident of coming back to office?**

Absolutely. From the first day. 26 May 2014.

**Q. What are the big issues in this election?**

Three issues are there. One development. Two, inclusive development. Three, development in all directions.

In 2022, India will mark 75 years of Independence. It is up to us to create an India that will make our freedom fighters proud. The 2019 elections are special because it is the first time that those born in the 21st century are voting. These youngsters are not burdened by the past, they are in pursuit of a better future. These youngsters do not want to be bogged down by dynastic shenanigans, they want a nation where merit is recognised. They do not want old-school caste politics, they want a new age development agenda. Hence, in these elections, people will vote for those who they feel can build a better nation and lay the foundations of a strong and inclusive India. People will see our exemplary track record of 60 months, contrasting it with inertia of those who got the opportunity to rule for almost 60 years.

**Q. Are you sure, because at least in Uttar Pradesh and**

**Bihar, we hear that caste is still the most important factor.**

People of all castes want development. Especially, the young generation, women – they want a solution for their problems. And all the schemes and programmes of my government not only provide them a solution, but also brings them hope of the 21st century.

**Q. Do you think this is just an election being fought on a pro- or anti-Modi platform?**

People are weighing their options based on track record, vision and development work offered by various parties.

For me, our work and our vision ahead are the prime issues. The Opposition, which has a galaxy of PM aspirants but a total bankruptcy of vision, plan and agenda is taking to abusing Modi, using caste and communal politics. Rest assured, people are going to reject this Mahamilawat (grand adulteration) alliance.

**Q. What is your view on alliances? You have called the opposition's alliance a Mahamilawat but you also have one of your own.**

One of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's big contributions in India is two-camp politics. One camp led by the BJP, and the other by the Congress. Alliances are important to address regional aspirations. But you also need a government with a clear majority at the Centre.

Our model is a majority government at the Centre, and a focus on regional aspirations – that should be evident from our record over the past five years. The Congress party has a different understanding of alliances. Make Charan Singh PM; pull the rug from under him. Make Chandrashekar-ji PM, then pull him down. Make IK Gujral PM, then get him down.

**Q. Why is the narrative of this election so polarizing — on both sides?**

You have to understand that we are not choosing a class monitor here. We are deciding the direction this country takes. We are deciding the future of 130 crore Indians, especially the 65% of the population which is under the age of 35. A lot is at stake.

This is an election that will prove to be the turning point in India's rise in the world. I am glad that this election has brought out the differences between the two sides clearly. Now, the people of India will be able to make a clear choice between the two ways of looking at the country.

Those who say family first or those who say India first. Those who send love letters when terror strikes or those who answer terrorists in their own language. Those who stand with "tukde-tukde" gang or those who stand with the armed forces.

Those who stand to protect those who are guilty of sedition or those who live and die to protect and preserve India's integrity. Those who did dalali (brokered) defence deals and weakened Indian defence or those who proved India's mettle even in space. Those who made headlines for scams after scams in every sector or those who have ended the culture of scams. Those who tried their best to besmirch India's 5,000-year-old civilization or those who stand for learning from India's glorious past to build a bright future.

The choice is simple and clear. Therefore, if you call such an election, where the two sides have been clearly identified the positions they take on vital issues, as polarized, then I would say it is a good thing.

**Q. The quality of discourse in this election seems to be falling. Mamata Banerjee said your hands are drenched in blood. You made your comment on Rajiv Gandhi (called him Brashtachari No.1 or corrupt person No 1), and the Congress has responded in equal measure. What's happening?**

I can give you a list of what various important people of the Congress, including those of the family (the Nehru-Gandhi family) and people close to the family have called me. I have been called Duryodhan by Priyanka Gandhi, Aurangzeb by Sanjay Nirupam, a Hindu terrorist by Deen Dayal Bairwa, a namard (impotent person) by Narayan Rane. Even in the past, I have been called names. In 2016, Rahul Gandhi said I am a dalal (broker) in the blood of soldiers. In 2007, Sonia Gandhi called me merchant of death. There's more. Many of these were targeted at a sitting Prime Minister.

So, if we are speaking of respect for the post, then it's the same respect for everyone in that post – then it is true for Deve Gowdaji in Karnataka. It is true for (former PM Manmohan Singh) whose government's order, was torn in

public (by Rahul Gandhi). If you are speaking of respect for the post, then what about former Andhra CM Anjaiahji, a Dalit, who was humiliated in Hyderabad airport (by former PM Rajiv Gandhi). So anyone complaining now has to see the whole thing in perspective. As far as Mamataji is concerned, you should decide, as a journalist, whether you are fine with her tone and tenor of speaking. Her language. Ask reporters in Bengal whether such statements do anything for the state.

**Q. But surely, the quality of discourse has never been so bad...**

Ever since electronic media (TV) came, since then, these things are being given primacy. In an election meeting or rally, in a funny way, to make a point... I remember going and listening to speeches of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Madhu Limaye, George Fernandes. Their speeches had such statements too, but back then there was only print media. Now, from a 50-minute speech, a 10-second statement is taken and played on loop 24 hours. That said, there should definitely be courtesy.

**Q. In many parts of the country the contest seems to have been reduced to a presidential one with the biggest factors being the Modi effect. Doesn't this erode the relevance and importance of MPs in a parliamentary system?**

This whole election is on the basis of performance, not perception. By performance, I mean the various schemes of the government of India; and the local MPs are involved in the implementation of these schemes locally at the grass-root level. To just say that in these elections, there is just a name that is working, that isn't correct. Naam bhi chal raha hai; kaam bhi chal raha hai (the name is working, sure, but so is the work).

**Q. There is a school of thought that says your party will not get more than 180 seats this time**

Professors and teachers used to take the syllabus and make a diary of it. Every year the student would be new but the teacher and the diary. The world will change but they will teach from that. This is a similar section of people. They said the same thing in 2014. They are saying the same thing now.

**Q. There are so many complaints being made to the Election Commission these days; and the whole thing has become controversial.**

The Congress and its durbaaris have decided not to allow the EC to do its job well. Therefore, everywhere, they have people, professionals, who e-mail com-

plaints, making sure the EC can't do anything else.

The other thing is that in our country, courts never interfered in elections. These days, unfortunately, the court has also been pulled into it (with cases on the EC's actions being filed before it).

The third thing is that before the great loss in the elections, just like a student who hasn't done well makes excuses, they (the opposition) are pointing fingers at EVMs {electronic voting machines}, EC. Irrespective of whether there are elections or not, we have to respect institutions.

**Q. With the responses to Uri and Pulwama, have we rewritten the escalation matrix with Pakistan and called its nuclear bluff? Do you think this will have the desired long-term objective of preventing Pakistan from nurturing terror groups?**

For a decade or so, the Indian government had tied its own hands as far as Pakistan-backed terror was concerned. Pakistan kept mounting attacks after attacks and there was no cost imposed upon the perpetrators of attacks. This gave terrorists and their sponsors a kind of impunity that we can do anything and get away.

First with the surgical strikes, and now with the air strikes, we have sent a message that there will now be significant costs to sponsoring terror. We have also conveyed an unambiguous message that no matter where the terrorists are, even if they are deep within the Pakistani territory, they are not safe and they are within our reach. This is a significant change in the way India deals with terror. Pakistan has also seen the world reaction to our pre-emptive strikes. In future, they will be aware that their strategy of sponsoring terror against India will be detrimental to their own existence.

**Q. Sure, but hasn't this dialed things up? For instance, the next time there is an attack, doesn't this put pressure on us to act?**

So out of fear of that pressure, we should do nothing?

**Q. Former PM, Manmohan Singh, said in an interview with us that his government conducted six surgical strikes. He added that they didn't use it for votes**

To the extent that I know of such things – all army chiefs have said such a thing has not happened on their watch. What kind of surgical strike was it? Who issued the orders? Or was it a non-violent procession? Where are the orders? These are the questions

they should be asked to answer. After all, I wasn't in charge then. I can only say that we have not found any records of this.

**Q. About the Masood Azhar listing as a global terrorist by the UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee, does it mean we are now in a good place with China?**

We have always said 'India First'. When foreign policy of a government is clear in what it wants, the results happen as a by-product. Throughout the last five years, we have reached out and made new friends, we have strengthened relationships with old friends and more importantly, we have brought about a fundamental paradigm shift in the way we are perceived. We are now seen and respected as a nation that will leave no stone unturned to ensure the safety and security of its citizens.

This is the reason major nations of the world stood with our decision of surgical strikes and air strikes. This is also the reason why the long-pending listing of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist has happened. But the Azhar issue isn't about China. Why do we keep making it so? It is a global terrorism issue.

**Q. Is there a new and more friendly India-China dynamic brewing?**

India and China are both leading power centres, with an important say in today's geopolitics. It is important for our nations to work together for the greater global good. Our history shows that there was a time when both our nations controlled a lion's share of the world's GDP. I think both our countries understand that there is a lot more common ground between us. Both our countries realise and accept that we have disagreements but we are also conscious of the fact that we will not let these disagreements become disputes. There is a great deal of respect that our countries have for each other and it is out of this mutual respect that even if there is a disagreement, we resolve it through high-level nego-

tiations.

**Q. If you are re-elected you will inherit the same Kashmir problem you faced in 2014. Would you agree that there has been no progress there and that things are maybe even worse? What do you think needs to be done to address this?**

We have to understand that the problem which media defines as the "Kashmir Problem" is a problem limited to two-and-a-half districts. We have been successful in confining the problems to a limited area. This is also not a problem that cropped up all of a sudden in 2014. Successive administrations have had to tackle the issue.

The problem in Kashmir is the match-fixing being done by a few families there, who have taken the garb of conscience keepers of the people there. These families play their part with great finesse. In the process, people's aspirations have been long ignored. We are still suffering from what Rajiv Gandhi and JKNC {Jammu and Kashmir National Conference} did in 1987. Has anybody questioned the Gen Next of Congress and JKNC about it? Those who preach hate and separatism in the valley lead comfortable lives themselves. Yet, they misguide youngsters to take to violence.

Our work in Kashmir is to care of the citizens of the state, not a few families. We have done that with utmost diligence and sincerity. Jammu and Kashmir has got substantial modern physical and social infrastructure in the last five years. We want the youth to have books in their hands, not bombs. We want the youth of Kashmir to pursue their dreams. And, I know that the state is home to very talented youngsters who can give so much to their own state and the nation. The enabling environment is what we are trying to provide.

We are inspired by Atal Ji's vision of Insaniyat, Jamhuriyat and Kashmiriyat {humanism, democ-

racy and Kashmiri culture} of and will continue working to fulfil the aspirations of the state's youth.

**Q. Let's talk about economic policies. When your government came to power, there was an expectation that you would, over time, reduce role of government in business, make the market more open, do away with inspector Raj by reforming tax policies and move away from subsidies. Your farmer payout suggests a move away from subsidies, maybe even a move to a Universal Basic Income. Can we expect this to happen, if only in stages, if you return to power?**

We believe that a country as vast and as complex as India needs solutions which are contextual. We firmly believe that our approach to social welfare must be a combination of creating a ladder of opportunity for our farmers to grow and to provide a safety net to help mitigate risks so that they may bounce back from economic hardship. This is reflected in our 360-degree approach where farmer income support is supplemented by other interventions such as insurance, soil health etc while we are laser focused on doubling farmer income. Hence it would be a mistake to look at any one intervention in isolation.

PM-KISAN is a program to support farmers for their input costs of cropping. PM-KISAN ensures cash availability at important points in agriculture cycle. Farmers are free to deploy their own cash as per their requirements. We believe that our programs will lead to higher productivity and new jobs in the economy not just in agriculture but in all other sectors.

**Q. The world over, countries are becoming more protectionist and closed. How does a developing country, which stands to benefit from globalization, prevent itself from falling into a tit-for-tax protectionist stand off?**

India believes in the tenet of Sarvjan Hitay, Sarvjan Sukhay. We will protect our interests in the global trade arena but we are not trying to needlessly start conflicts. That's never been Indian philosophy. Each country acts as per its own requirements. We believe that an efficient industry can overcome some of these barriers. Our Make In India program, encouraging manufacturing in India are all steps in the direction of becoming stronger and competitive. We want to focus on India's innumerable strengths.

**Q. Are you happy with the progress of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which seems to be stabilizing in terms of returns every month? Do you think it can be made more friendly. Also, irrespective of the long-term impacts, both GST and demonetization hurt the MSMEs, even if only temporarily. Many of them have been forced to formalize. Was this part of your plan? Don't you think there was/is a risk of losing political capital because of this?**

The objective of GST was not merely tax collection. The concept of "one nation, one tax" has been implemented through GST. India's biggest strength lies in being an emerging big market. This market has been unified and various inefficiencies have been removed. While implementing any major reform some problems are natural and an alert system solves those problems quickly. Learning from our experiences of 21 months with GST, we are taking multiple steps towards making GST more consumer friendly, trader friendly, business friendly, manufacturer friendly and service provider friendly.

If I also had kept thinking about the risk of losing political capital, then what is the difference between my government and previous governments. Some steps need to be taken in national interest. I am thankful that the people of India have given us uninterrupted support and co-operation in this journey. This is possible when people also know that the steps are being taken with the right intentions and in the larger good. As a result of formalization, MSMEs get the benefit of institutional credit. In India, the MSMEs are always deprived of formal credit as per their requirements. Due to this, their cost of capital was always disproportionately more. Be-

cause of inclusion in GST, the MSMEs have a new window of credit Workers will get benefit of facilities of social security from formalization. Millions of workers start getting facilities of pension, health insurance, life insurance and maternity benefits with formalisation of firms.

**Q. Which would you consider your governments most significant policy campaigns and why? Swachh Bharat? Ayushman Bharat? The PMAY? The farm insurance scheme? Ujjwala?**

Each of these schemes you have mentioned, have been unique in their speed and scale. With Swachh Bharat, a women's dignity was made the focal point of social governance. Over 9 crore toilets built in 5 years ensured that women are not forced to defecate in open and the sanitation coverage of India went up from just 38% in 2014 to 99% in 2019. With Ujjwala, again, more than 7 crore women and especially their children were freed from the choking life that they were subjected to for so long due to cooking with firewood.

Take Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest healthcare insurance programme is transforming the entire healthcare system in the country. It has made quality healthcare accessible and affordable for the poorest. Same with Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, which is fulfilling the dream of owning a house for all Indians, irrespective of which class, caste, region they belong to. PM Fasal Bima Yojana has brought immense relief to a farmer's family who no longer fear impoverishment due to crop damage.

Each of these initiatives has fundamentally changed people's lives, in a way that they have been freed from the fear and uncertainty that poverty, sickness, and homelessness bring in people's lives. These fears had tied down generations of Indians and trapped them in a cycle of poverty. But that feeling of fear, anxiety and helplessness is being driven away now. This helplessness is giving way to hope and the anxiety is giving way to aspirations.

**Q. You have been CM of Gujarat for over a decade. And you have been PM for five years. What is the biggest challenge facing the country?**

We have lots of opportunities, but we don't seem to mind if we miss them. It's almost as if it's OK to miss these. We have to now challenge ourselves to not miss a single opportunity.

**Q. What's the difference between the Modi of 2014 and the Modi of 2019?**

My digestion powers have increased. I can digest insults more easily.



# NY SENATE TO VOTE TO CLOSE 'DOUBLE JEOPARDY' PARDON LOOPHOLE

***Kaminsky bill will allow criminal Trump associates to be prosecuted in NY even if pardoned***

(Albany, New York) - Tomorrow, the New York State Senate is set to pass legislation, sponsored by Senator Todd Kaminsky, to close the "Double Jeopardy" loophole and ensure that Trump associates can be prosecuted in New York, even if presidentially pardoned. Kaminsky, a former federal corruption prosecutor, introduced the bill (S.4572) to allow New York prosecutors to hold corrupt officials accountable, regardless of whether the President issued them a pardon.

"Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report provided disturbing, new evidence of the President's plan

to improperly use the pardon power to help his associates and undermine the rule of law," said Senator Todd Kaminsky, a former federal corruption prosecutor. "I am pleased the Senate will take up my legislation to close the Double Jeopardy loophole and crack down on corruption. No one - not even the President and his inner circle - is above the law, and I urge the Assembly to pass this vital piece of legislation in an expeditious fashion - justice demands no less."

The Double Jeopardy clause of the Fifth Amendment of U.S. Constitution protects individuals from

being prosecuted twice for the same federal offense. In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court selectively incorporated the Double Jeopardy clause to the states. See e.g. *Benton v. Maryland*, 395 U.S. 784 (1969). However, under the dual sovereignty doctrine, there is no constitutional bar under the Double Jeopardy clause for a criminal to be prosecuted by both the federal and state government for offenses arising from the same conduct. See e.g. *United States v. Lanza*, 260 U.S. 377 (1922). Notwithstanding the dual sovereignty doctrine, New York Criminal Procedure

Law § 40 grants additional protections for defendants who were already prosecuted by the federal government, even if they were later pardoned.

Senator Kaminsky's bill would allow state prosecutors to bring charges - even if a presidential pardon was issued - if the President has a clear conflict of interest with the defendant, such as a current or former staff member, appointee, or family member. The measure also covers instances in which the defendant provided a material benefit to the President, or possesses information central to

an investigation of the President.

Prior to his service in the Legislature, Senator Kaminsky served as a prosecutor for more than a decade. As an Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York and Deputy Chief of the Public Integrity Section, Kaminsky took down corrupt politicians who swindled taxpayer dollars to fund lavish lifestyles. His successful prosecutions include former State Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Assemblyman Jimmy Meng and Congressman Michael Grimm.

## ***Small Business Development Center Launches at Queens College***

(By our staff reporter) New York: A Small Business Development Center (SBDC) was recently launched at Queens College. Center was launched by Queens College and LaGuardia Community College jointly, with a press conference and ribbon-cutting ceremony. Made possible with support from U.S. Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-Queens), the center will serve immigrant entrepreneurs and other underrepresented populations in Flushing, Queens. Services will initially be offered in English and Manda-

rin. It is the third SBDC in the borough of Queens, and the ninth in New York City. Seen in picture: From left to right, Queens College Dean of Arts and Humanities Michael Wolfe, The Honorable Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-Queens), CUNY Chancellor and Queens College President Félix V. Matos Rodríguez; LaGuardia Community College President Gail O. Mellow, and Director of the LaGuardia Community College SBDC Rosa Figueroa, who will initially oversee the Queens College office.



## ***Trump administration proposes to raise fees for H-1B visa***

(By our Staff Reporter)- The Trump administration proposes to double a component of the filing fee for H-1Bs, a visa programme popular with Indians hoping to work and live in the United States, that could push up costs by \$750 or \$1,500 for each application, depending on the size of the employer company.

The proposed hike is for a fee US charges for each H-1B application to fund training programme for Americans for jobs currently been performed by foreign workers, specially in STEM sectors. It is currently \$750 each for petitions filed by an employer with 25 or less full-time employees, and \$1,500 for employers with 26 or more.

The plan is to double it to \$1,500 and \$3,000 respectively, through

a legislation, which, typically, could take time.

Called the ACWAI fee - named after American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act, a 1998 law aimed at reducing the need for foreign workers - is 13% of the total H-1B fee. The rest are \$460 basic fee, \$500 anti-fraud fee, \$4,000 fee for employers that have more than 50 workers with half or more of them on H-1B or L-1 (for intra-company transfers). For premium 15-day processing, which is optional, the fee is \$1,410. Employers pay these charges. There is no proposal to change these other charges.

"In FY (financial year) 2020, the Department's budget includes \$160 million to continue our expansion of apprenticeship programs, along with a proposal to

increase H-1B fee revenues to fund additional apprenticeship activities," secretary of labor Alexander Acosta told US lawmakers at a congressional hearing last week on his department's budgetary request for 2020.

Though he gave no details, his department's budget, as proposed in the Trump administration's omnibus budget for 2020 released earlier, did.

"The 2020 Budget includes a legislative proposal to double the ACWIA fee for the H-1B visa program (to \$3,000 per worker for large employers and \$1,500 for small employers) to prepare American workers for jobs currently filled by foreign workers, especially in STEM fields," it had said.

The H-1B programme allows US-



based companies to employ foreign workers for high speciality jobs on temporary non-immigrant visas. There is an annual cap of 85,000 on the number of these visas, more than 70% of which have gone to Indian, hired both by US companies such as Microsoft, Facebook and Google and US-branches of Indian com-

panies such as Infosys, Wipro and TCS.

It has received intense scrutiny under the Trump administration, drawing from the president's "Buy American, Hire American" executive order from 2017. The number of rejections has gone up, and so have requests for more information, and enforcement to prevent abuse and fraud.

# 2019 polls: Noida versus Lodhi road

***This poll is about who will dominate power in the future and whose idea of India will reign supreme***

The battle for 2019 is in full swing but there is an even bigger war being fought for over a decade now which will have a more decisive say on the future of India. Since Independence, the destiny of India has been dominated by a small group of urban upper-caste Nehruvian elites ruling in alliance with local feudal elites who were responsible for ensuring election victories. The social structure of power was simple: The urban elites would dominate the academia, bureaucracy, institutions and policymaking, and local feudal elites would be left alone except to undertake some token pro-people actions like tenancy reforms which would be passed off as land reforms. The poor and destitute could hardly exercise their votes freely. They voted as they were told to by the feudals of the dominant castes or were denied the vote. Booth capturing and preventing people from reaching the polling venues were common events. The major reason why the

Nehruvians ruled unchallenged for years and a specific Idea of India reigned supreme was this politics of unfreedom at the grassroots notwithstanding all talk of social justice and democracy in the seminar halls and party manifestos. This was challenged vigorously from the 1980s by the Dalit and OBCs' (other backward classes) assertion which changed the dynamics of the electoral battle and reduced the space available to the traditional elites in the direct exercise of the power. But even they couldn't challenge the hegemony of the Nehruvian consensus as the terms of reference remained the same old Idea of India which is a secular-socialist, Gandhian dystopia. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) remained stuck within this framework.

But something else was churning on the ground. The economic reforms created a new class of people who were not part of the old elite. They were not landed elites in the countryside or part

of the bureaucratic structures or derived their power and wealth from proximity to the corridors of power in Lutyens' Delhi. They were simple middle and neo-middle class folk from small towns armed with modern education for whom the avenues of socioeconomic mobility were suddenly opened up by the growing private sector. Over the past two decades, millions of them moved from mofussil towns and regional capitals to the burgeoning metropolises of Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. They could hope for a better lifestyle and opportunities without being part of the old system.

These new urban denizens were not part of the globetrotting old urban elites. They did not have foreign degrees or relatives settled in the West. They were rooted in their customs and traditions and their drawing room talks centred not on US politics but local concerns back in their home districts. They were to be found in the rapidly growing new urban landscapes of Noida and



Gurugram. Their dream, and the dream they inspired back home, was to buy a flat in the satellite towns of metropolises - not to move to London or the US. And they did not agree with the Nehruvian Idea of India imposed from the top through newsrooms and academic propaganda. They looked at the old elites with disdain and held them responsible for the bad policies which kept India a poor and backward country. For them, the nation and nationalism were not abstract concepts nor was their religion or culture an academic object to be deconstructed using psychoanalysis and twisted beyond recognition. They had had enough of being talked down to by the high priests of the

Nehruvian consensus on the virtues of secularism and socialism.

Rebellion was in the air but the old elites, nested comfortably in Lodhi Road, had no idea about its existence. And then came social media. Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter completely changed how public discourse was conducted. No longer could journalists, news anchors or even academics, pass on their versions as indisputable facts. They were challenged by your average officegoer or by college students. One by one, all the myth-making of the Nehruvian consensus was shredded by the millions who now had a voice and an audience.

## Kargil's lessons remain relevant after 20 years

***India still depends more on Pakistan's blunders than on its own preparation***

It was on this day - May 3 - 20 years ago that some local shepherds in the Kargil area of Jammu and Kashmir detected Pakistani infiltrators. Thus started the Kargil War, a rare instance of a conventional conflict between two nuclear-armed neighbours. Both India and Pakistan had just become overt nuclear weapons states a year earlier. Therefore, the Kargil War has, over the years, received a lot of international attention. Three major lessons can be drawn from the war, and all remain relevant today. First, the origin of the war tells us something about the motives of the Pakistani army. In order to understand the Kargil War, it is essential to study the 1965 India-Pakistan War. It was through Operation Gibraltar that Pakistan aimed to wrest back the control of Kashmir in 1965. The plan failed badly, as the Pakistani

generals were taken aback by India's decision to open another front in Punjab. In 1999, Pakistani nukes were supposed to solve this problem. Pakistani strategists thought that if their army somehow captured territory in Kashmir, nuclear weapons could be used to preserve the new realities on the ground. It is true that Pakistan's nuclear status probably worked in preventing India from opening another front in 1999 but New Delhi did well to use the air force and evacuate the captured territory. Second, apart from nuclear capability, Pakistan was banking on international support. Its prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, and army chief, Pervez Musharraf, both believed that the threat of a nuclear war would loop in the US into some sort of a mediation role in Kashmir. Their biggest shock came when US President, Bill Clinton,



overturning decades of Pakistan-bias in Washington's South Asia policy, made it clear that the Pakistani forces must withdraw to their side of the Line of Control (LoC) without conditions. In one stroke, the LoC received global legitimacy as the de facto border. Adding to Pakistan's injuries, China, too, decided to play neutral between New Delhi and

Islamabad. Not all the message was good for India. The 1999 war revealed big holes in India's war preparation. From the intelligence failure in detecting infiltration to lack of modern equipment and clothing, India was found wanting on many fronts as the Kargil Review Committee recorded. Many of these problems

continue to fester; some have even turned worse. With a growing budget for salaries and pensions, the pie for capital expenditure has shrunk as a share of gross domestic product (GDP). Twenty years after Kargil, India still depends more on Pakistan's blunders than on its own preparedness.

## DHS, DOL to Publish Joint Rule for Additional Visas for Returning Foreign Workers

(By our staff reporter) Washington - US Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin K. McAleenan announced that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) will publish a joint rule making available an additional 30,000 H-2B temporary non agricultural worker visas for Fiscal Year 2019. These supplemental H-2B visas are available only

to returning workers who received an H-2B visa, or were otherwise granted H-2B status, during one of the last three fiscal years (FY 2016, 2017, or 2018), and availability is restricted by prioritizing only those businesses who would suffer irreparable harm without the additional workers. Returning H-2B workers have demonstrated their ability to abide by the terms and conditions of the H-2B pro-

gram and, therefore, are less likely to remain in the United States and work without authorization after their legal status has expired. H-2B workers often return to the same employer year after year on a seasonal basis, are vetted, trusted, and can have their visas approved more rapidly given their known history. "The Department of Homeland Security continues to urge lawmakers

to pursue a long-term legislative fix that both meets employers' temporary needs while fulfilling the President's Buy American and Hire American executive order to spur higher wages and employment rates for U.S. workers," said Acting Secretary McAleenan. "The truth is that Congress is in the best position to establish the appropriate number of H-2B visas that American businesses should

be allocated without harming U.S. workers. Therefore, Congress - not DHS - should be responsible for determining whether the annual numerical limitations for H-2B workers set by Congress need to be modified and by how much, and for setting parameters to ensure that enough workers are available to meet employers' temporary needs throughout the year."

## India-U.S. Bilateral Trade meeting held in New Delhi

(By our staff reporter) New Delhi - India and the United States held the India-U.S. Bilateral Trade meeting in New Delhi today. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Government of India and Mr. Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce, United States of America co-chaired the bilateral meeting.

Both the co-chairs, Suresh Prabhu and Mr. Wilbur Ross appreciated the strong, robust and growing bilateral ties between India and the U.S.

across the entire spectrum of trade and commerce. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the progress during the year 2018, with bilateral trade in Goods and Services registering a growth of 12.6% from \$ 126 billion in 2017 to \$142 billion in 2018.

India appreciated the US Trade Winds Indo-Pacific Business Forum and Mission initiative 2019, being held at New Delhi. The forum will bring together distributors, representatives and partners and enable them to in-



crease sales by taking part in business-to-business meetings from 8-10th May, 2019, across India.

Both co-chairs also complimented the new bilateral private sector led Small Business Interaction initiative, the US - India SME Forum, held today in the forenoon in New Delhi. This is the first event of its kind and would pave the way for collaboration and partnership between the U.S. and Indian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the areas of manufacturing and services.

Both sides also discussed various outstanding trade issues. Both sides agreed to engage regularly at various levels to resolve outstanding trade issues by exploring suitable solutions, which are mutually beneficial and promote economic development and prosperity in both countries. Both sides agreed to deepen economic cooperation and bilateral trade by ensuring greater cooperation amongst stakeholders, including Government, businesses and entrepreneurs.

## L'Oréal USA Named by Working Mother as one of the Best Companies for Multicultural Women

NEW YORK - L'Oréal USA has been named one of the 2019 Best Companies for Multicultural Women by Working Mother magazine-an honor recognizing U.S. companies that create and use best practices in hiring, retaining, and promoting multicultural women. The winners will be featured in the June/July issue of Working Mother and at workingmother.com.

The Working Mother Research Institute has conducted the initiative since 2003, tracking corporations' progress in creating cultures that encourage multicultural women to join and rise through the ranks.

The Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women application is available only to companies that have at least 500 U.S. employees. The winners were se-

lected based on their answers to an extensive questionnaire covering representation; hiring; attrition and promotion rates; recruitment, retention and advancement programs; and company culture. The Working Mother Research Institute created a scoring algorithm based on the previous year's benchmark results to determine the winners.

L'Oréal USA is the largest

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Working Mother Media (WMM), a division of Bonnier Corp., publishes Working Mother magazine and its companion website,

workingmother.com. The Working Mother Research Institute, the National Association for Female Executives, Diversity Best Practices and Culture@Work are also units within WMM. WMM's mission is to serve as a champion of culture change, and Working Mother magazine is the only national magazine for career-committed mothers. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

## Dating Apps remove from App Stores after FTC warning

(By our staff reporter) Washington DC: - Three dating apps have been removed from Apple's App Store and Google's Google Play Store following allegations by the Federal Trade Commission that the apps allowed children as young as 12 to access them and appeared to be in violation of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and the FTC Act.

In a recent letter, the FTC warned Ukraine-based Wildec LLC, which operates the apps Meet24, FastMeet, and Meet4U, that the three dating apps appeared to be in violation of COPPA and possi-

bly the FTC Act's prohibition against unfair practices. The apps have been removed from the app stores until they address the alleged violations outlined by the FTC.

The FTC's COPPA Rule requires companies collecting personal information from children under the age of 13 to post clear privacy policies and to notify parents and get their verifiable consent before collecting, using, or sharing personal information from a child.

The Wildec apps collect users' birthdates, email addresses, photographs, and real-time location

data. While the three apps claimed in their privacy policies to prohibit users under the age of 13, the apps failed to block users who indicated they were under 13 from using the apps and from being contacted by other users of the apps, according to the FTC's warning letter. In its review of the apps, FTC staff found users who indicated they were as young as 12. The letter also noted that allowing adult users to communicate with children poses a serious health and safety risk. Several individuals have reportedly faced criminal charges for allegedly

contacting or attempting to contact minors using Wildec's apps, the letter added.

The letter further noted that Wildec appeared to be aware that children under 13 were using all three apps and, given this, was obligated to comply with COPPA's requirements.

The letter urged the company to immediately remove personal information from children on the three apps, to seek parental consent before allowing minors to access the apps, and to ensure that all versions of the apps comply with COPPA as well as the FTC Act, which prohibits

unfair practices that are likely to cause substantial consumer injury.

The FTC also issued a consumer alert for parents about the dating apps.

The Federal Trade Commission works to promote competition, and protect and educate consumers. You can learn more about consumer topics and file a consumer complaint online or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357). Like the FTC on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, read our blogs, and subscribe to press releases for the latest FTC news and resources.

# Putting women's health first for a healthy future

**Women are denied sex education in school and information about contraceptives and abortion services out of it, which result in millions of unintended pregnancies every year.**

Patriarchal communities are wont to deify women who suffer in silence, ostracise those who want equal rights, and ignore those who are sick, even when medical treatment is available free. As a result, women in many parts of India are still encouraged to seek medical treatment only to deliver a healthy baby, preferably a boy.

Women are denied sex education in school and information about contraceptives and abortion services out of it, which result in millions of unintended pregnancies every year. Close to half (48%) of all pregnancies in the country are unintended largely because women, both married and unmarried, have no information about safe sex or don't have access to contraceptives, according to India's first large-scale study on abortions and unintended pregnancies study published in *The Lancet* in 2017. Two in three (67%) abortions in nine

of India's northern and eastern states that account for half the country's population are unsafe, with young women between the ages of 15 and 19 years most likely to die from complications, according to a study of 1.87 million pregnant women published in *BMJ Global Health* this week.

Poverty, gaps in health services, and teen pregnancy are the leading causes of unsafe abortions usually performed by unskilled persons in unregistered places, found the study, which used data from India's Annual Health Survey (2010-13) for the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Assam.

India's Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, makes it legal to abort a foetus up to 20 weeks of pregnancy if there is a risk to the woman's life or her physical or mental health, or if there is substantial risk of

the child being born with physical or mental abnormalities.

Pregnancies caused by rape or contraceptive failure are considered a threat to a pregnant woman's mental health. Section 5 of the MTP Act additionally allows abortion beyond 20 weeks if it's posing an immediate threat to a pregnant woman's life.

One in three of 48.1 million annual pregnancies in India end in an abortion, with 15.6 million abortions taking place in 2015. The numbers are huge and despite abortion up to 20 weeks being legal for close to half a century, many women don't know that abortion is legal, with knowledge ranging between 36% in Bihar, and 12% among Jharkhand youth between ages 15-24, show two different studies published in 2012-13.

This results in an estimated 800,000 women undergoing unsafe abortions by using traditional methods to abort the unwanted



foetus, or going to untrained pharmacists, chemists and informal vendors for services.

Under the MTP Act, surgical abortions can be done only by trained, certified doctors in registered clinics and hospitals, while abortion pills - combinations of mifepristone and misoprostol - can be prescribed to abort fetuses up to seven weeks old outside registered centres. Around 12.7 million (81%) of all abortions in India are medical abortions, and 2.2 million are surgical terminations of pregnancy, found *The Lancet* study. Training village-level

healthworkers (auxiliary nurse midwives, ANMs), nurses and Ayush practitioners to prescribe simple abortion pills in the early stages of pregnancy and make refer complicated cases to hospitals can help reach millions of women. Better regulating the healthcare sector to provide quality services to all, including contraceptives, safe delivery and abortions, irrespective of age or gender will ensure women and, by extension, future generations, don't suffer avoidable complications of something as natural as a pregnancy.

## Obesity in military officers can be solved by keto diet

**According to a study published in the *Journal of Military Medicine*, ketogenic diets are low in carbohydrates and emphasise moderate consumption of protein, with fat consumed to satiety.**

Researchers are hopeful that the keto diet could prove useful for military personnel in addressing the problem of obesity. According to a study published in the *Journal of Military Medicine*, ketogenic diets are low in carbohydrates and emphasise moderate consumption of protein, with fat consumed to satiety. Ketogenic diets can create a state of nutritional ketosis, which occurs when the body burns fat, rather than carbohydrates, for energy. The ketogenic diet is often used to control seizures in epilepsy.

Participants on the keto diet lost an average of almost 17 pounds and were able, with support of counsellors, to maintain ketosis

for 12 weeks. As a group, they lost more than 5% of their body fat, almost 44% of their belly or visceral, fat and had a 48% improvement in insulin sensitivity. The comparison group of participants, who consumed diets that were at least 40% carbohydrates, based on food diaries they kept, experienced none of those changes.

The ketogenic diets in the study included no caloric restrictions, just guidance about what to eat and what to avoid. Carbs were restricted to about 30 to 50 grams daily, with an emphasis on nuts and non-starchy vegetables.

Keto diet participants had near-daily check-ins during, which they reported blood ketone measure-



ments from a self-administered finger-prick test and received feedback, usually through text messages, from the research team.

"We showed that a group of people with military affiliation could accept a ketogenic diet and successfully lose weight, including visceral adipose tissue, a type of fat strongly associated with chronic disease.

This could be the first step toward a bigger study looking at the potential benefits of ketogenic eating in the armed forces," said senior author Jeff Volek.

Officers or trainees on military bases likely could maintain a ketogenic diet based on the various foods that are already offered at typical meals, but more options could be added to

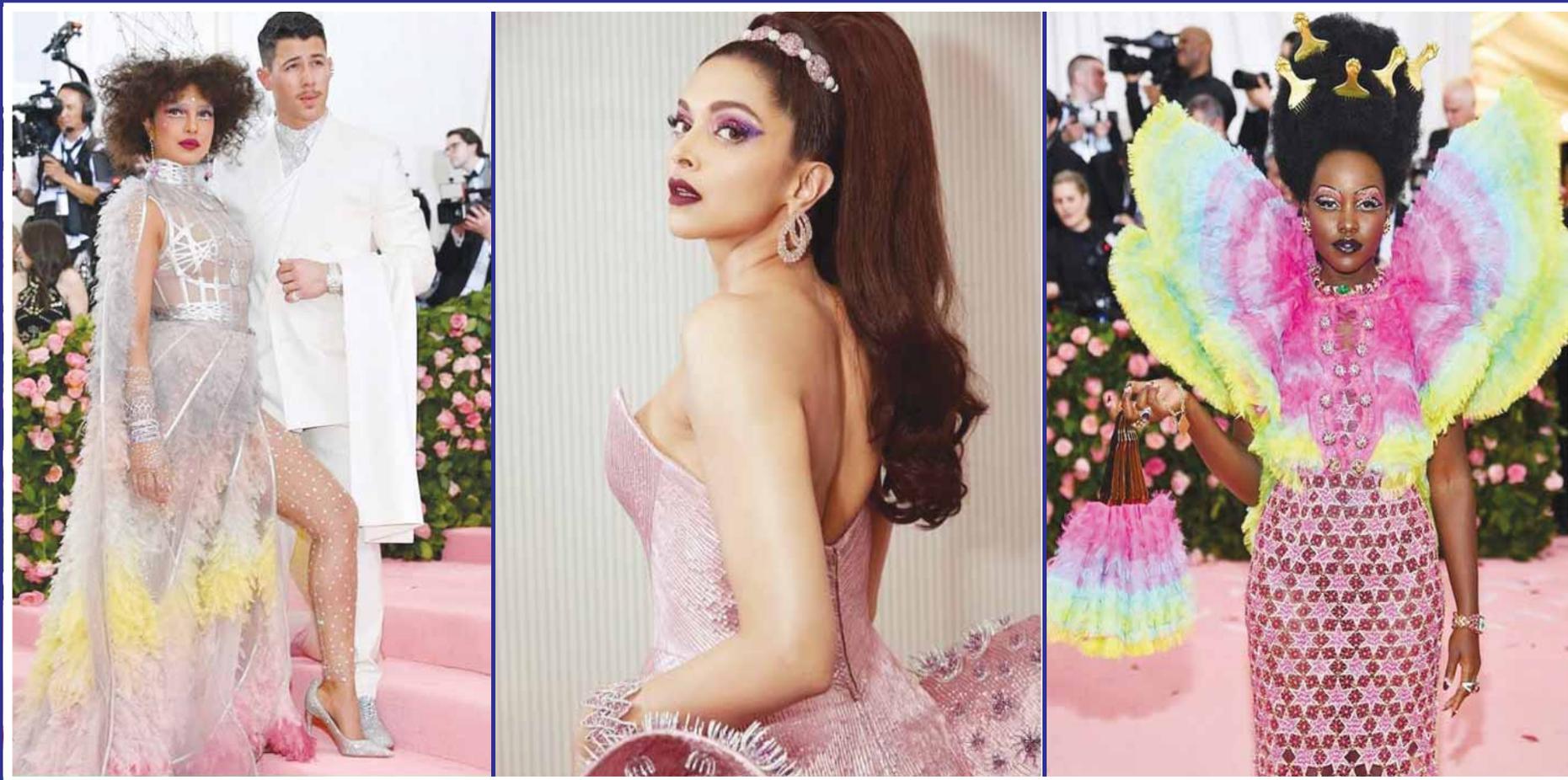
support this weight-loss strategy, he said.

Volek said: "The military has called obesity a national security crisis. One of the potential benefits of this diet in the military is that you can lose weight without having to count calories, which could be difficult in training or while on active duty. In this study, they ate as much as they wanted they just ate differently."

# Met Gala 2019

## Best-dressed celebs at the event

*Most of the celebrities chose dramatic looks while some of the stars graced the event in beautiful shades of pink, channeling their inner princesses.*



The biggest fashion night of Hollywood took place today and stars brought their fashion A-game to the pink carpet at the Met Gala 2019. Lady Gaga, Serena Williams, Billy Porter, Harry Styles, Katy Perry, Hailey Bieber were among some of the early guests, reported People.

The stars went all out with their fashion choices this year, from elegantly carrying couture

gowns and tuxedos to some outrageous outfits. Most of the celebrities chose dramatic looks while some of the stars including Deepika Padukone, Isha Ambani, and Kacey Musgraves graced the event in beautiful shades of pink, channeling their inner princesses. The most fashionable celebrities arrived one after the other at the event in New York City for a night dedicated to unique fashion, design, and art.

Over the years, there have been a lot of memorable appearances including Rihanna's Pope-inspired silver frock by Comme des Garçons from 2018.

This year, the theme for the event was 'Camp: Notes on Fashion'. Co-host Lady Gaga was a major standout at the event and her looks stole all the limelight! Gaga kicked off the pink carpet in a Brandon Maxwell pink gown before changing into a black gown by the designer with an umbrella as an accessory. She then followed it up with two more fierce looks. Billy Porter pulled off the most dramatic look ever. He graced the pink carpet draped in gold and was carried on a velvet litter by six shirtless men wearing shiny gold pants and headpieces. Porter sported a spectacular custom "Sun God" ensemble by The Blonds which included a bejeweled catsuit outfitted with 10-foot wings and a 24-karat gold headpiece. However, Porter wasn't the only one who caught everyone's attention on the carpet. Harry Styles made a statement in his Met Gala debut. The 25-year-old singer opted for a sheer Gucci top with just the right amount of ruffle and sleek

black lace detailing paired with high-waist pants with a chunky pair of shiny men's black shoes. Kylie Jenner arrived with her boyfriend and rapper Travis Scott, who rocked a military-inspired ensemble similar to last year's utility suit with a harness on top. The 21-year-old makeup mogul stunned in a lilac see-through mermaid-picturesque dress, fur stole and perfectly purple wig. Another star who stunned everyone with her looks was Katy Perry. She lit up the room in her Moschino by Jeremy Scott outfit, which is also a working Swarovski crystal chandelier, plus bow-topped heeled pumps.

Kacey Musgraves made her Met Gala debut in a Barbie-inspired look from Jeremy Scott's Moschino including a hairdryer clutch. She rounded off her look with Aldo heels and Forevermark diamonds. Zendaya too upped her fashion game. The former Disney Channel star looked like a total princess in her Tommy Hilfiger Cinderella-

inspired ball gown. She stole all the limelight when her dress not only lit up, but she dramatically dropped her glass slipper on the pink carpet. Bella Hadid was a vision to behold when she debuted a new 'do on the carpet and showed some skin in the jewelled, cut-out Moschino by Jeremy Scott design. Emma Stone stole a million hearts when she slayed the pink carpet in a silver jumpsuit by Louis Vuitton. Naomi Campbell looked stunning in a bubblegum-pink chiffon gown with feathered train, lace tights and strappy heels coupled with archival Bulgari jewellery.



## Suspiria movie review

# Dakota Johnson's new horror film is weirder than Fifty Shades of Grey

**Suspiria movie review: Fifty Shades' Dakota Johnson stars in director Luca Guadagnino's remake of the horror classic, which has arrived on our shores thanks to Amazon Prime Video. Rating: 3/5.**

Suspiria  
Director - Luca Guadagnino  
Cast - Dakota Johnson, Tilda Swinton, Mia Goth  
Rating - 3/5  
Director Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria* remake, out on Amazon Prime Video, has so little to do with the original Dario Argento classic that it might as well drop the title and take its chances with a lawsuit. Argued well, I believe a jury can be convinced that the two films have nothing in common at all. These differences are deliberate and often jarring - ranging from the decision to ignore the original's lurid visual palette, to adding dense historical subtext. It's no wonder, then, that Argento considers Guadagnino's film to be a personal affront. "It did not excite me," he said in a recent interview, and added that he felt 'it betrayed the spirit of the original film'. And it's not difficult to

understand why Argento was so offended. For starters, the new *Suspiria* isn't a horror film at all, nor is it bothered in the slightest to appeal to a general audience. Guadagnino seems to be more interested in using the genre to make sweeping political statements rather than to scare - which makes sense, because Luca Guadagnino, director of *Call Me by Your Name*, is hardly a horror filmmaker. That being said, *Suspiria* is - both visually and tonally - unlike anything he's done in the past. Besides retaining the services of his lucky charm/muse, Tilda Swinton - she plays three roles in the film - and a his regular crew, *Suspiria* finds Guadagnino in a refreshingly bold artistic space of mind. Like his characters, he chooses to restrict himself more drastically than he ever has. Freedom - mental, physical, psychological - is a theme he's addressed in previous films, and

it plays an equally vital part in *Suspiria*, which is largely confined to claustrophobic spaces. The film's central character, in fact, finds herself in direct conflict with the idea of freedom, having grown up in a house where she had none. Dakota Johnson, who is quite the pro at playing ingenues, stars as Susie. She's a young Mennonite from Ohio, who discards her repressed old life in favour of the artistic liberty offered by Madame Blanc's famed dance academy in Berlin, which, it is revealed early on in the film, is a front for a coven of witches. It is implied that Susie suffered some form of abuse at the hands of her mother, who is curiously only ever seen on her deathbed. Madame Blanc in many ways assumes the role of a foster parent, giving Susie the emotional support that she longs for, as she leaves everyone at the



academy astounded by her blazing talent.

Motherhood is another strong recurring theme, and despite a longish length of two-and-a-half hours, the film has time only for one major speaking role for a woman.

This subversive streak continues in Guadagnino's pointed political commentary. He sets his *Suspiria* at a very particular period in history - the complex German Autumn of 1977, when a faction of the radical left, very clearly overcompensating for the sins of their parents, decided to wipe out the last remnants of the Nazi

party, in a city that was quite literally divided at the time. This fact-based plot plays out in the background, through TV reports and stray newspaper clippings, as it did in the Brad Pitt film *Killing Them Softly*, which used the Great Recession and the American Presidential election of 2008 as a terrific backdrop for its ideas.

On the surface, one might wonder why such a seemingly disconnected subplot even exists - removing it entirely could have shaved off an hour of runtime, and perhaps made *Suspiria* a more palatable experience.

## Blank movie review

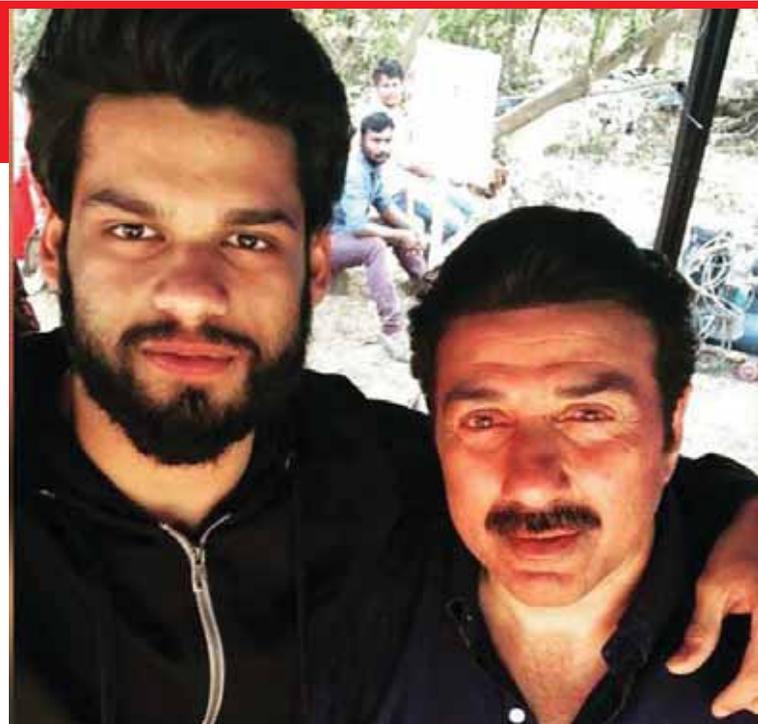
# Sunny Deol plays it cool in a silly thriller

**Sunny Deol keeps things watchable, though it is a bit odd to see those legendary, larger-than-life hands pulling coloured string across an FBI-style board of suspects. It gives the sense of a majestic jungle cat forced to play with yarn.**

Blank  
Cast: Sunny Deol, Karan Kapadia, Karanvir Sharma  
Director: Behzad Khambata  
Rating: 1.5/5  
All the bad guys in this film have beards. Sunny Deol does not. He is a good guy, and therefore shortchanged in the facial hair department. As chief of the Anti-Terrorism Squad, Deol is instead given a moustache, the kind that looks scared to sit on his face, making him look like a swole Manoj Prabhakar. The reason the terrorists have beards, of course, is because they are all evil fundamentalists, and Blank goes some distance in making all Urdu words, even "Inshaallah," sound sinister. Yep, this is that kind of film. Directed by Behzad Khambata, Blank is about sleeper-cells and

terrorists, and more specifically about a guy with a bomb planted inside his chest. This guy, Hanif, doesn't remember who he is, but the bomb is ticking and the film is fraught with urgency. Or at least it should have been. Weighing in at just over a 100 minutes, this should have been a tight film but merely enforces the illusion of economical filmmaking: it is short not because it's unspooling at a thrilling speed but because it has too little to say, as is evidenced by the multiple montages of terrorists checking their phones. We see each terrorist, we see their phone screen with an identical message, we see their identical reaction shots, and we see them move into action. Still, this could have been

pulpy fun and there is some promise. The hand-to-hand combat sequences are shot grungily, with extreme close-ups, but while Blank wants to be a heavy metal movie, it is basically a kid with a noisy amp. At one point a terrorist Skyping from afar who was clearly supposed to have an Osama Bin Laden beard is wearing a Rajneesh Osho beard. All beards are evil, remember? Deol solemnly commits to an uncharacteristically un-screamy part and keeps things watchable, though it is a bit odd to see those legendary, larger-than-life hands used to pull coloured string from photograph to photograph across an FBI-style board of suspects. It gives the sense of a majestic jungle cat forced to play with



yarn. The mouse in this chase is debutant Karan Kapadia, who, as Hanif, must be commended for starting out with a supporting role. There really isn't much to do, but Kapadia is tall and fights well. The two times he has to

really emote, though, his voice rises to an unfortunate Suniel Shetty register, but otherwise there isn't much wrong with him. Maybe the next time he'll be in a film that fires actual bullets.

# Alia Bhatt & Katrina Kaif used to train together more often

Katrina Kaif

Katrina Kaif has said that she trains with Alia Bhatt less frequently than she used to. In an appearance on Arbaaz Khan's talk show, Pinch, the actor said that there was a time when they used to go to the gym together very often. Katrina was shown a video of the two of them training in a segment of the show, in which the guest is meant to provide a story behind a popular social media post. Reacting to the video, which showed Katrina acting as a trainer to Alia, who was lifting weights, she said, "This was when me and Alia used to train a lot together; we still do sometimes but we used to train together more during this time."

Both Alia and Katrina have in the past shared several images and videos with each other on social



media. But these posts have decreased in frequency after Alia started dating Ranbir Kapoor, Katrina's ex-boyfriend.

On their part, both Alia and Katrina have maintained that they still share cordial relations with each other.

Katrina told Filmfare,

"When I thought about it, I just felt, who she was dating was not to the equation that I share with her. So why should that equation change?" In an interview to DNA, she said, "I will tell you something important. A certain thing is already playing out in a certain manner. My reaction to it makes no difference. I can sit here and feel anger and bitterness. I can make myself unhappy. Or I can take into consideration that, how miserable I am makes no difference to anyone else."



Actor Katrina Kaif has said that while she still trains with Alia Bhatt on occasion, they used to train together more often in the past. There have been rumours of a growing rift between the two.

## Priyanka Chopra and Deepika Padukone are the Angels to Nick Jonas' Charlie at Met Gala after-party

**Priyanka Chopra and Deepika Padukone posed together at the Met Gala 2019 after-party for an epic photo.**



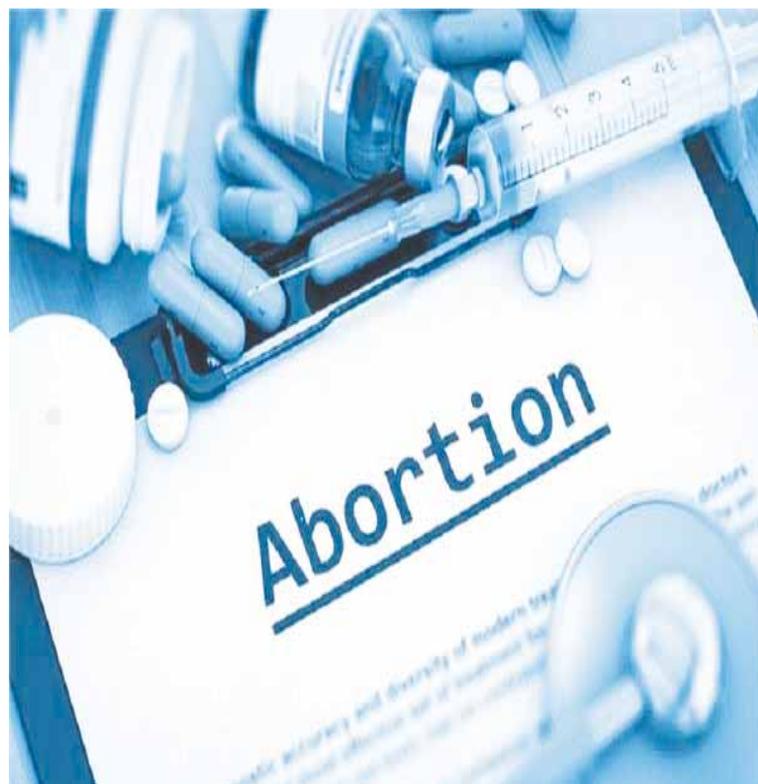
(Insider Buearu)- Actor Priyanka Chopra has shared a brand new picture from her night at the Met Gala after-party on Monday. The picture is made even more special as it also features another Bollywood star, Deepika Padukone.

The ladies are seen posing with Priyanka's husband and singer

Nick Jonas right after the gala as they wrap up a night of fashion and fun. It also features stylist Anaita Shroff Adajania and their friend Natasha Poonawala.

After the gala, Priyanka, Deepika and Nick switched to different outfits for the after-party. Priyanka was seen in a silver romper while Deepika wore a

bodycon fluorescent dress. Nick changed into a white shirt and black suit. "Charlie and the Indian angels end the night," Priyanka captioned the picture. The two Indian actors interpreted this year's theme for the event, Camp: Notes on Fashion in their own way. Priyanka, who first met husband Nick Jonas at the same event, seemed to have plucked a leaf out of Lewis Carroll's fantasy classic, Alice In Wonderland and channelled self expression through a multishaded Dior gown in grey, yellow and pink with Chopard dangles. Styled by Mimi Cuttler, Priyanka also gave a nod to her Indian roots by using 'bindis', not one but three on her face. According to Deepika's stylist



Shaleena Nathani, the actor gown in a quintessential pink pitched her tent as a "Camp shade and bespoke jewels by Barbie". She chose a multi-layered Zac Posen 3D printed a tiara in her flowing coiffed hair.

# Kylie Jenner flashes her tummy in an unusual white blouse...

after checking out Jennifer Lopez's bottom at the Met Gala

(Insider Buearu)- Kylie Jenner shared two images to Instagram on Wednesday where she looked very California casual.

The 21-year-old makeup mogul had on a white blouse that showed a hint of her tummy as well as a pair of high-waisted jeans.

This comes days after the Keeping Up With The Kardashians star looked stunning in a purple Versace gown at the Met Gala, where she was caught checking out Jennifer Lopez's famous bottom. On Wednesday, Kylie wore sunglasses that hid her eyes but not her very lined in eyebrows. And there was no hiding her big pout that was painted with Kylie Cosmetics lipstick. The Life Of Kylie star had a Louis Vuitton purse over her chest. It was hard to tell if it was attached around her waist. The \$1B beauty wore her



black hair down in soft curls and showed off a long manicure with colorful paint. She added a wide yellow gold ring.

Kylie not only wore a custom made Versace gown for the Met Gala with feathers on her arms, she also was covered in \$9million worth of jewelry. The mother-of-one wore a pair of Lorraine Schwartz earrings with

diamonds and purple sapphire, that had over 70 carats, according to Forbes.

At the Gala, she was caught looking at Jennifer Lopez's famous backside. Jennifer, 49, was posed with Donatella Versace who designed her plunging beaded gown. Later Kylie craned her neck to get another glimpse of the Jenny From The Block singer.

And then inside she posed with Jennifer as well as Kendall and Kim making it seem as if all was kosher. Kylie and Jennifer have been friends for years and they have been seen mingling at various events like Kris Jenner's Christmas Eve party. After the Met, Kylie changed into an aqua gown and once again showered herself with expensive jewels as she he was spotted wearing a pair of rare Paraiba Tourmaline earrings with 15 carat diamond pear shaped drops.



## Supermodel Tyra Banks, 45, poses in a teeny yellow bikini on Sports Illustrated Swimsuit cover

(Insider Buearu)- Tyra Banks has returned to the cover of Sports Illustrated Swimsuit at the age of 45 - 22 years after she made history as the first black model to land the honor of posing on the front of the famed publication.

The supermodel, who made her debut in the publication 26 years ago, stars on one of three covers released by the magazine on Wednesday - sharing the role of 2019 cover girl with model and Instagram star Camille Kostek, 27, girlfriend of NFL star Rob Gronkowski, and soccer star Alex Morgan, 29.



## HBO quietly removes Starbucks cup from Game of Thrones episode, but Hotstar still has it

(Insider Buearu)- HBO has digitally edited out a stray coffee cup from the latest episode of Game of Thrones, after fans noticed it and unleashed a stream of disbelief (and memes) on social media. The Verge reports that HBO has removed the cup from its streaming platform HBO Go, without making any announcements. But the cup can still be seen on Hostar, the Indian



streaming service which airs GoT, as of when this story was published. The distinctive paper cup with plastic cover was spotted on a table at a feast in Winterfell within reach of characters Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen during episode 4 of the final season, The Last of the Starks. Bernie Caulfield, one of the executive producers of HBO's global hit television series, apologised to fans.

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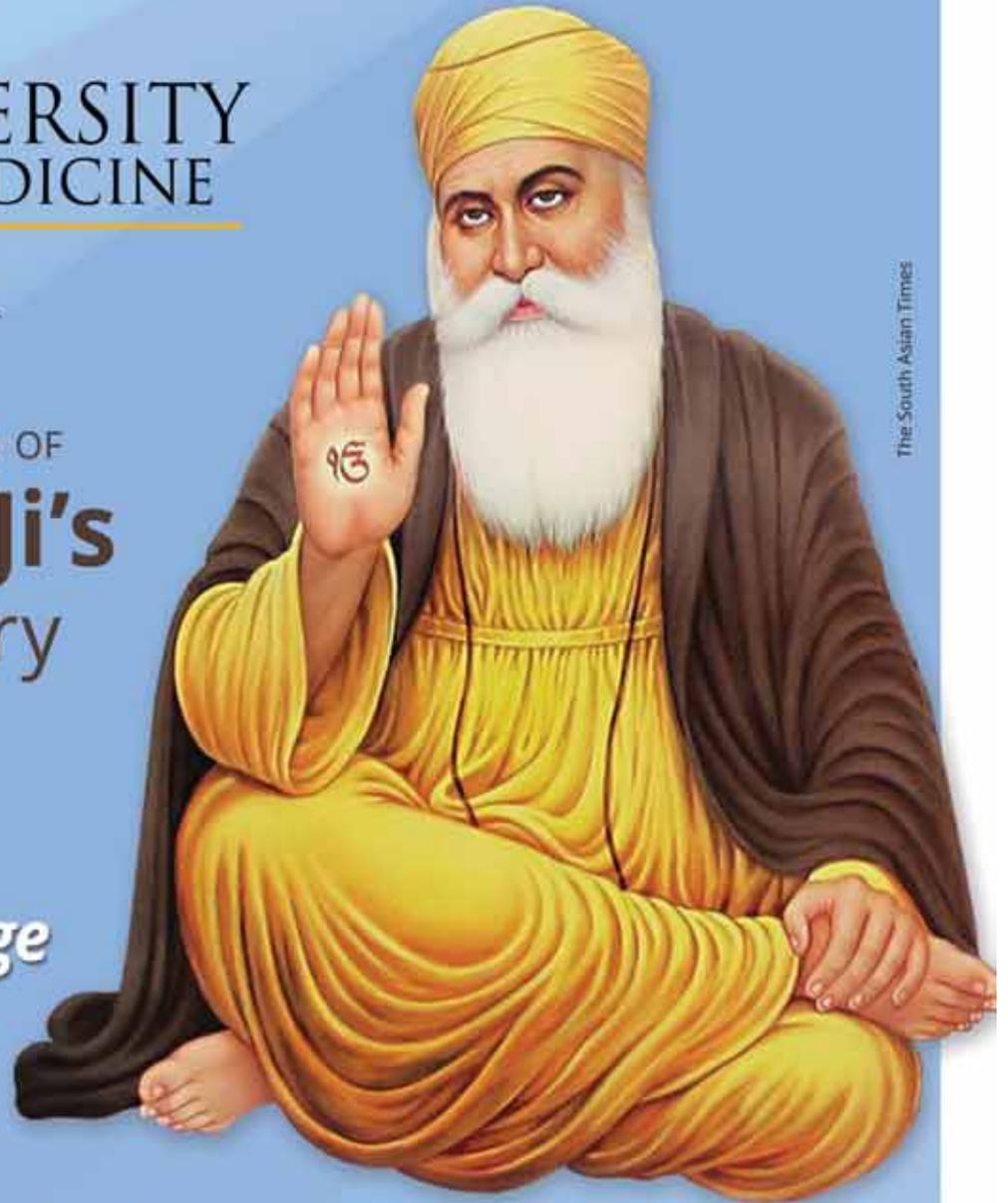


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