

Iran admits to shooting down Ukrainian plane in 'error'

While apologizing, Tehran also blamed the incident on the United States ratcheting up tensions.



Page 18

WE THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR TRUST & LOYALTY

26 YEARS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



INDO US EXPRESS, INC

HICKSVILLE, NEW YORK

WORLDWIDE COURIER FREIGHT-FORWARDER
DOMESTIC & LOCAL DELIVERY

CALL US AT: 212-447-5720 or FAX 516-932-3750

ALTERNATE NUMBER: 347-538-7041

OR EMAIL US: INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM

www.indousexpress.com

GREAT SERVICE, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS A YEAR!

CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES

TO INDIA/WORLDWIDE

Some Call us a Media House
Others call us an Institution to learn from



Delivering News,
Uncompromised
& Unbiased for the
Last 16 years

Email : thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

Website : www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House



Honesty, Integrity & Experience

Since
2007

*Specializing in
Investment &
Income
producing real
estate

**COLDWELL
BANKER**

RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Associate Broker/Notary

Phone: 917 612 3158

140 Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, NY 11791 Phone: (516) 864-8100

Clavin, Town of Hempstead board sworn in



(By our staff reporter) New York: Newly elected Supervisor Donald X. Clavin and the three of the town's five council members on Jan. 7 took the oath of office. Former Supervisor Kate Murray was also sworn as town clerk, and

Jeanine Driscoll stepped into Clavin's previous position as receiver of taxes. The audience consisted mainly of dignitaries from the town's 22 villages and 38 hamlets, as well as friends and family. Former Sen. Alphonse

D'Amato, himself a former supervisor, and Rep. Peter King, a former board member, sat on a dais of dignitaries that included New York Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul; Clavin's sister, Valley Stream Village Judge Virginia Clavin-Higgins;

and Nassau County Republican Chairman Joseph Cairo. Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder and District Attorney Madeline Singas also attended.

Indian businessman on first holiday abroad dies of cardiac failure in UAE

Hailing from Punjab, Nem Chand Jain and his wife Rosy came to Dubai on January 2 as part of a group of 18 members from the Jain community from different parts of India, the Gulf News reported on Tuesday.

A 61-year-old Indian businessman, who was in the UAE on his first holiday abroad, has died of cardiac failure, according to a media report. Hailing from Punjab, Nem Chand Jain and his wife Rosy came to Dubai on January 2 as part of a group of 18 members from the Jain community from different parts of India, the Gulf News reported on Tuesday.

Chand complained of uneasiness on Sunday afternoon while swimming in a pool of a hotel here where the group stayed. "He came out of the pool saying he felt tired and uneasy. His wife urged him to go along with her to the room and have some tea. But he couldn't go up. Before reaching the stairs, he collapsed," Sunil Jain, the organiser of the trip, was quoted

as saying in the report. He said the lifeguard at the pool performed CPR and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency procedure that is done when someone's breathing or heartbeat has stopped. This may happen after an electric shock, heart attack, or drowning.



"The ambulance also reached in 10-15 minutes. Though they tried to save him, they couldn't," he said. Jain said it was Chand's first trip abroad.

"The body of Chand will be flown home on the return flight he had booked for his 62nd birthday on Wednesday," he said.

Indian-born author wins UK children's book award

'Asha and the Spirit Bird', aimed at readers aged nine years and above, beat competition from three other shortlisted books to be named the winner of the 2019 Costa Children's Award this week.

India-born author Jasbinder Bilan has bagged a coveted UK children's book award for her debut novel set in the Himalayan territory of her Indian roots and inspired by the special childhood bond with her grandmother. 'Asha and the Spirit Bird', aimed at readers aged nine years and above, beat competition from three other shortlisted books to be named the winner of the 2019 Costa Children's Award this week. Bilan will receive 5,000 pounds as the winner of the award, open to authors resident in

the UK and Ireland and presented annually across five categories of First Novel, Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children's Book. "As a girl, I always loved writing. In fact, I can't remember a time when I didn't invent stories, but I never imagined that one day I'd write a story that would be published," said Bilan, who moved from India to Nottingham in the Midlands region of England with her family as a small child. "I was born on our family farm in India, close to the

Himalayas. We kept India alive by continuing to talk about our farm and all the funny things that happened there during the big family gatherings we had," recalls the author, now based near the town of Bath in south-west England with her husband and two children. Her winning debut work follows eleven-year-old Asha, who is empowered with spiritual connections to her grandmother as she journeys through the wild and dangerous Himalayas with her best friend Jeevan. "Wow! We unanimously

lost our hearts to this gorgeous book," said the three-member judging panel. "Jasbinder's majee (grandmother) was a strong, special woman who had the challenge of raising five children single-handedly, as well as running the farm in India, and Jasbinder's bond with her was the inspiration for 'Asha & the Spirit Bird'," adds the Costa Awards citation. Bilan's book was shortlisted from 144 entries alongside 'Crossfire' by Malorie Blackman, 'In the Shadow of Heroes' by Nicholas Bowling and



'Furious Thing' by Jenny Downham. In 2017, Bilan she was chosen by a prestigious panel of judges to win a publishing deal with Chicken House. Her debut novel went on to be published in its award-winning form in February for 2019 and attracted critical acclaim.

Nassau District Attorney Madeline Singas sworn in, vows to fight corruption

(By our staff reporter) : Nassau District Attorney Madeline Singas took her oath of office Monday Jan. 25th in a ceremony that followed her election in November as the county's top prosecutor, vowing to uphold her campaign promise of fighting government corruption. "Nothing is more important for my administration than to take on public corruption," Singas, 49, said to loud applause. "I will follow the law without fear and without favor." The Democrat, who lives in Manhasset, also told those present for the ceremony that her independence will never be compromised. "I stand here because of what I know, not who I know," she said. ". . . I assure you that I will bring the cases that we need to bring to make sure that our government is working for us."



Singas taking oath of office



DA Singas with Deepak Bansal Chairman IAAC, Mohinder Singh Taneja of American Diversity Forum Zahid Syed of SAPAC and former Nassau County Human Rights Commissioner Sharanjit Singh Thind

**Some Call us a Media House
Others call us an Institution to learn from**



**Delivering News,
Uncomprimised
& Unbiased for the
Last 16 years**

Email : thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

Website : www.thesouthasianinsider.com

US based Friends for Good Health enters into alliance with India based Shanti Mission

Dr. Bobby Kalotee, International Chairman, Friends for Good Health and Baba Lakha Singh of Shanti Mission (AKA Nanaksar) undertake host of community activities. Common agenda calls for Mass marriages, Food pantries for hospital patients & other noble activities for community service



(By our staff reporter) New York: Friends for good health, a brainchild of Dr. Bobby Kalotee is a well known New York , US based charitable organization engaged in a host of activities including Toy Drives for children, distribution of medicine and other humanitarian supplies to underdeveloped countries etc. During his recent visit to India, Dr. Bobby Kalotee, led

Friends for Good Health to enter into an alliance for SEWA (Community service) with India based Shanti Mission, aka Nanaksar. Dr. Kalotee is a well known distinguished presence in New York, serving in a range of roles from being Chairman of Nassau County Human Rights Commission to a Board member of Nassau University Medical Center (NUMC) and

many others. His recent visit to India was a jam packed affair in which he was awarded by KIITS University of New Delhi, Met India's Health Minister, blessed mass marriages of more than 100 multi religious couples, participated in food distribution to patients and their families in PGI Hospital, Chandigarh. Dr. Kalotee along with Sanjan Jon , Friends for Good Health, Co Chair

(India) also met with grand daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, and fondly remembers asking her " How was it to have learned about peace and Non Violence from a man, whose name is synonymous with the word "Peace and Non Violence". The South Asian InsiderWeekly has exclusive pictures from Dr. Kalotee's visit and sharing here with our readers.

Trump killing of Soleimani and action against Iran legal-Despite Democratic complaints

(By Hans A. von Spakovsky |
Fox News)

The War Powers Resolution passed Thursday by the House in an effort to restrict President Trump's ability to take military action to defend America against attack from Iran is a meaningless political document designed only to embarrass the president.

The nonbinding resolution criticizes the president for not "consulting" with Congress and receiving its "authorization" before ordering the killing of Iranian general and terrorist mastermind Qassem Soleimani. The resolution also orders Trump to stop using military force against Iran until he gets congressional approval.

Trump acted fully within his constitutional authority when he ordered the drone strike against Soleimani, a mass murderer responsible for thousands of deaths – including over 600 Americans – who was engaged in planning additional imminent and ongoing deadly attacks.

President Trump told Fox News' Laura Ingraham in an exclusive interview Friday that Soleimani was planning attacks on four U.S. embassies. Nine other terrorists traveling with Soleimani were also killed in the U.S. drone strike near the Baghdad International Airport in Iraq last week.

Imagine how much better off we would be if U.S. forces had been able to kill Al Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden and nine of his fellow terrorist leaders while they were planning the horrific Sept. 11, 2001 attacks that killed nearly than 3,000 people. Can anyone seriously argue that preventing those tragic deaths would not have been the right thing to do if a past president had the opportunity?

We'll never know how many more people Soleimani would have murdered if he had lived longer, but it's a safe bet that the number would be a big one, and that Americans would be among the dead. President Trump should be applauded for eliminating this very real threat.

Imagine how much better off we would be if U.S. forces had been able to kill Al Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden and nine of his fellow terrorist leaders while they were planning the horrific Sept. 11, 2001 attacks that killed nearly than 3,000 people.

The framers of the Constitution understood we needed a strong president to defend our country. One reason they replaced the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution was to create the office of president with the powers it currently possesses.

Article II of the Constitution makes the president the "Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States." He is also vested with all of "the executive Power" and the duty to execute the laws. The text, structure, and history of the Constitution make it clear that this article gives the president broad constitutional authority to use military force to support our foreign policy and to respond to threats to our national security. And that's the way it has been interpreted by successive administrations and the courts since the very beginning of our nation

As the U.S. Justice Department said in a

2001 legal opinion issued after the 9/11 attacks, the "power of the President is at its zenith under the Constitution when the President is directing military operations of the armed forces, because the power of Commander in Chief is assigned solely to the President."

HOUSE PASSES WAR POWERS RESOLUTION IN REBUKE OF TRUMP'S ACTIONS AGAINST IRAN

No law and no congressional resolution – such as the one passed Thursday by the House – "can place any limits on the President's determinations as to any terrorist threat, the amount of military force to be used in response, or the method, timing, and nature of the response. These decisions, under our Constitution, are for the President alone to make," according to the Justice Department legal opinion. Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 of the Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war. Congress has done so five times in our nations' history and also authorized the use of military force over 40 times. But the commander in chief is charged with defending the country. He – and he alone – has the authority to use the armed forces for our defense.

In cases such as the killing of Soleimani – a situation calling for self-defense based on a verifiable, ongoing and imminent threat – a president can clearly act based on his constitutional authority. Neither Trump – nor any other American president – need ask for a congressional declaration of war or even an authorization for the use of military force in cases like this.

Trump acted wisely, quickly, and constitutionally to save American lives. That's something we are entitled to expect all our presidents to do – regardless of their political party.

You can be sure that if Trump had done nothing and Soleimani had gone on to stage a nightmarish terrorist attack that claimed hundreds or even thousands of American lives, the president's critics would be screaming at the top of their lungs that Trump was incompetent and derelict in his duty for failing to prevent the mass murder.

The simple fact is that the authority of Congress to declare war does not limit the ability – in fact, the responsibility – of the president to direct the armed forces to respond either defensively or offensively to terrorist threats.

If Congress wants to flex its constitutional muscles on this, it can cut off funding for the military. After all, Congress has the power of the purse. If it really wants to stop specific military actions, it can use its budget authority to withhold appropriations and to ban the use of any public funds for specific purposes.

The War Powers Resolution passed by the House Thursday does not do that. The fact that the House is not willing to use its actual authority in this matter strongly suggests that this resolution is just political theater meant to score points against the president.

In addition, the nonbinding resolution puts members of the House in the embarrassing position of seemingly defending a terrorist mass murderer. It may give the rest of the world – including our most dangerous enemies – the

impression that our government is in disarray and doesn't want to respond to attacks on our embassies, our citizens and our armed forces.

This, in turn, could invite further attacks. Soleimani was unquestionably a legitimate target – someone who could have and should have been taken out years ago by a past president in the interests of our national security. Had that happened, an untold number of innocent civilians and members of the U.S. armed forces whose deaths were caused by Soleimani would still be alive today. Those condemning President Trump for taking out Soleimani should answer this question: How many American military personnel and others

is a terrorist allowed to kill before you think he is a legitimate military target? And Trump's critics should be willing to sit down with the widows, widowers, orphans and parents who lost loved ones because of Soleimani's barbarism and explain to them why it was a good thing than an earlier American president did not rid the world of this monstrous mass murderer. Hans A. von Spakovsky is a senior legal fellow at The Heritage Foundation and the coauthor of "Who's Counting? How Fraudsters and Bureaucrats Put Your Vote at Risk" and "Obama's Enforcer: Eric Holder's Justice Department." He served as a commissioner on the Federal Election Commission from 2006 to 2007.

SC opens the door in Kashmir

In a much-awaited judgment, the Supreme Court (SC) has finally ruled on the constitutionality of the restrictions in place in Jammu and Kashmir since August. The court's order is laudable in principle. It has made it clear that freedom of speech through the Internet and the freedom to practise any profession, which depends on the Internet, encompasses the freedom to access the Internet - and this makes it a fundamental right (by extension). This builds on a Kerala High Court judgment that declared the right to Internet a fundamental right. This is particularly important since India has now seen the longest Internet blackout in any democracy in the world. The court has also asked the Centre to produce orders - which it was unwilling to do - justifying the use of Section 144 and other restrictions, and said these are subject to judicial review. It has added that these restrictions on rights cannot be indefinite. It has called for the immediate resumption of essential services such as hospitals, government websites and banking. And it has asked the competent authority to review other restrictions within seven days.

This will elicit a sigh of relief from residents of the Valley as well as strengthen the fundamental architecture

of civil liberties in India by laying out a strong precedence in jurisprudence about what the executive can do, and cannot do, even as it seeks to strengthen security. With its order, the apex court has opened the door for restoration of normalcy in Kashmir. At a larger level, the ruling sets precedents that make the Internet shutdown process more transparent, ensures that there can't be indefinite shutdowns, and actually specifies a time-frame for a review (seven days). But there are two concerns which merit attention. The first is timing. The apex court has taken over five months to lay out these principles. Civil liberties must be of the highest priority, and this reflects a certain degree of abdication of responsibility, for through this period, Indian citizens have had to live with curtailed rights. The SC's judgment also does not provide immediate relief. It leaves the door open for the executive to argue that these orders are justified on security grounds, and for another, perhaps prolonged, legal process for the full resumption of rights. The SC should have built on its own principles to provide for immediate restoration of rights. But the good news is that by opening the door for liberty, it has strengthened democracy.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief & Publisher :
Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor (Political Affairs-India) :
Aruna Singh

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Photographers: Hamad

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Special Correspondent :

Gagandeep Singh (INDIA)

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :
P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158 TelFax : 516 342 1076
editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com
www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

Jim Hanson: After Iran's attack on US forces, both sides should step back from brink of war

Iran's firing of as many as 15 ballistic missiles into two Iraqi military bases where U.S. forces are stationed is a major escalation in its confrontation with America that began with the Islamic Revolution 40 years ago and transformed Iran from a U.S. ally into an enemy. The Iranian strikes Wednesday morning - which U.S. officials initially reported caused no casualties - came in retaliation for a drone strike President Trump ordered that killed Iranian terrorist

Gen. Qassem Soleimani on Friday in Iraq.

The Iranian government proudly claimed responsibility for the new attacks. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps warned the U.S. and our allies against retaliating.

Iran had made clear since the killing of Soleimani that it would hit back at the U.S. for the death of the terrorist kingpin, who was responsible for the deaths of over 600 Americans and thousands of Iraqis, Iranians and others in the region. The choice of ballistic missiles rather than a more certain type of strike - such as a bombing or direct assault - may show that Iran was acting to avenge its honor rather than out of a desire to launch a war against the U.S.

Iran's leaders know the U.S. has defenses against missile strikes. So the attacks Wednesday morning allowed Iran to save face without actually killing any Americans. American deaths would surely prompt the U.S. to hit Iran with powerful force. If later assessments confirm there were no casualties from the Iranian missile attacks, President Trump has the option to basically just laugh them off and dismiss them as an example of the weakness of Iran's military.

Trump tweeted late



Tuesday night regarding the attacks that took place Wednesday morning in Iraq: "All is well! Missiles launched from Iran at two military bases located in Iraq. Assessment of casualties & damages taking place now. So far, so good! We have the most powerful and well-equipped military anywhere in the world, by far! I will be making a statement tomorrow morning."

Now is the time for both sides to back away from an escalating conflict that could lead to something

neither wants - a full-scale war. Some Democrats are absurdly claiming President Trump is a warmonger trying to embroil the U.S. in a new Middle East war to draw attention away from his upcoming impeachment trial in the Senate. But Trump has made clear he doesn't want to start another "endless war." At the same time, he felt obligated to eliminate Soleimani, who was plotting a deadly attack on Americans.

Despite all the fiery rhetoric

coming out of Iran, that nation's leaders are well aware that the U.S. can destroy much of their military equipment and other infrastructure and cause grave damage to their economy if President Trump gives the order.

Had Iran managed to kill or wound Americans - or if it does so in the future - a good target for U.S. retaliation would be the Iranian navy, as I have previously suggested.

The chief mission of Iran's navy is to threaten shipping in the Persian Gulf and

launch attacks if the regime deems that necessary. Iran proved this last year with multiple attacks on shipping in the waterway, which is a vital route for regional oil exports. Taking out Iran's naval capability would serve multiple purposes. First, it would demonstrate that our warnings are not empty talk. Second, it would remove one of the more hazardous options Iran has to wreak havoc in the Middle East.

An added bonus is that

would inflict no damage on the Iranian civilian population. Hitting any infrastructure targets like power plants or bridges would cause them hardship - but the navy is only a tool for Iran to cause trouble. Many Iranians see all the money their nation spends on military and terrorist activities as wasted resources when they are going hungry at home. They don't like paying for guns and rockets for terrorists when they need food to feed their families.

Balance ecology and economy

A new proposal could put forests and biodiversity at risk

The environment ministry has proposed a controversial scheme through which infrastructure projects involving diversion of forest land could compensate for loss of forests by buying ready-made plantations. Titled Green Credit Scheme, the policy, once finalised, will overhaul the compensatory afforestation process by accrediting private or public-private partnership companies to raise plantations near reserved forests which can be bought in lieu of projects involving forest diversion. If the company raising the plantation doesn't wish to

trade it, it can retain it and harvest the timber once ready.

Under the Forest Conservation Act 1980, each time forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes like mining or industry, the project developer is supposed to identify land and pay for planting forests over an equal area of non-forest land, or when that is not available, twice the area of degraded forest land. This money currently gets collected under the compensatory afforestation fund. But under the scheme, some argue there is delay in accessing compensatory

afforestation funds to raise plantations; difficulty in acquiring land near the site of diversion; delay in undertaking afforestation leading to cost overruns for projects which hurt industry, and poor survival of plantations.

The new proposal of trading in plantations has, however, raised concerns about biodiversity and tenurial rights. Plantations cannot replace the biodiversity value of native natural forests. This is a grouse against the existing compensatory afforestation process also. The new proposal pre-emptly diversion of forest land, and hence facilitates



readily available plantation plots to ensure ease of doing business. If companies are allowed to develop commercial plantations on so-called degraded forest land, it can fragment forests and lead to handing over of forest land to private entities. If plantations bought are located in a faraway spot, it also deprives forests, animals and people of ecological services. The environment ministry should, instead, consider a policy to minimise diversion of rich forests and maintain the sanctity of contiguous forests.

What Iran's tit-for-tat missile attack on US interests means for India



India remains focused on ensuring peace and stability in West Asia in view of its economic and security interests in the region, people familiar with developments in India said on Wednesday after Iran fired missiles at Iraqi bases housing US personnel.

Iran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at al-Asad airbase in Al Anbar and another base in Erbil in retaliation for the killing of top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in an American drone strike on Friday. US and Iraqi officials said there were no immediate reports of casualties. "India's efforts remain focused on peace and stability in the region and this has been reflected in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and external affairs minister S

Jaishankar's outreach to all the key players in recent days," said a person who declined to be identified.

The people cited above referred to a statement issued by the external affairs ministry on Friday after the death of Soleimani, which spoke of the need for stability and restraint, and said this continued to reflect India's position on the escalation of tensions in West Asia.

Friday's statement had noted "a senior Iranian leader has been killed by the US" and said: "The increase in tension has alarmed the world. Peace, stability and security in this region is of utmost importance to India. It is vital that the situation does not escalate further. India has consistently advocated restraint and

continues to do so."

Since Sunday, Jaishankar has spoken to both US secretary of state Mike Pompeo and Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif and the foreign ministers of the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Jordan to discuss ways to reduce the tensions and to work for de-escalation. PM Modi has also discussed the issue with US President Donald Trump during a phone call on Tuesday.

India's efforts are aimed at ensuring energy security and protecting the interests of some 8 million expatriates in West Asia, including more than 2.5 million in Saudi Arabia alone. Any confrontation between Iran and the US is bound to affect sea routes in the Persian Gulf and hit oil prices and supplies.

New Delhi has also been caught in a delicate situation in view of its good relations with both Tehran and Washington.

Following the Iranian missile strikes, the external affairs ministry issued a travel advisory that called on Indian nationals "to avoid all non-essential travel to Iraq until further notification".

It said: "Indian nationals residing in Iraq are advised to be alert and may avoid travel within Iraq. Our Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate in Erbil will continue to function normally to provide all services to Indians residing in Iraq."

Experts also warily welcomed what appeared to be signs by the US and Iranian leadership about a possible de-escalation.

Iran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at al-Asad airbase in Al Anbar and another base in Erbil in retaliation for the killing of top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in an American drone strike on Friday.

"All is well! Missiles launched from Iran at two military bases located in Iraq. Assessment of casualties & damages taking place now. So far, so good! We have the most powerful and well equipped military anywhere in the world, by far! I will be making a statement tomorrow morning," Trump tweeted.

The Iranian foreign minister tweeted his country had taken and "concluded" self-defence measures and did not "seek escalation".

Zarif said: "Iran took & concluded proportionate measures in self-defense under Article 51 of UN Charter targeting base from which cowardly armed attack against our citizens & senior officials were launched.

"We do not seek escalation or war, but will defend ourselves against any aggression."

Trump too has walked back an earlier threat to strike Iranian cultural sites following widespread condemnation of his remarks around the world.

US-Iran: New Delhi must weigh its options carefully

India is in a difficult spot with United States (US)-Iran tensions spiralling in West Asia after the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Al-Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iraq. Iran has vowed "harsh retaliation", while US President Donald Trump has threatened a "disproportionate" response against it, including cultural targets. In the last three days, Iraq's parliament called for US expulsion, and Iran announced it was ending the final limitation in the nuclear deal on the number of centrifuges. It has, however, not exited the deal.

India's initial statement on Soleimani's "killing" was very restrained. It did not mention the

US, but called for de-escalation in a region "of the utmost importance". This measured response masks serious concerns if tensions flare further in West Asia. The fallout has strong implications on the safety of eight million Indians living there, India's own energy security given its high dependence on oil and gas from the region as well as its burgeoning security, and investment partnerships with the Arab Gulf countries, among other considerations. India also worries about its strategic connectivity interests that include the port of Chabahar in Iran, linking India to Afghanistan and Central Asia, which received a rare exemption from US sanctions. In fact, just weeks

before Soleimani's death, the external affairs minister visited Washington, followed by Tehran and Muscat, to accelerate the much-delayed project. Regrettably, India is now caught in the crossfire that puts its interests in Iran at risk.

To be sure, the India-Iran relationship has not been without its complications. Officials often cite "historical and civilisational" links that distract from its limited, present-day engagement. For starters, their engagement on energy has never run smooth. Iran has often reneged on assurances to Indian companies. Tehran would hint at competing interests from China or Russia on deals being negotiated with India. This was the case with the gas field, Farzad B, discovered by ONGC



Videsh Ltd, and under discussion for over a decade. India reduced oil imports in mid-2017 to show its displeasure over the delay. This was after the nuclear deal when Tehran could have capitalised on the thaw and accelerated projects. Yet, it chose to play hardball.

This pattern continued with the Chabahar port project, where fresh terms were sprung on India

from the get-go when Iran introduced a new firm at the signing of the MoU in 2015. India holds Iran partly responsible for delays, as it changed terms in "very fundamental ways at least about three times in the last three years". With Trump violating the nuclear deal, and sanctions slapped on several Iranian entities, including the IRGC, these changes frustrated India further.

Time to address Muslim anxieties

The Indian polity must aim to make them full and active participants in all spheres of national life

Has India succeeded in addressing issues related to the Muslim minority, notwithstanding the entire array of constitutional rights and guarantees? An honest response has to be necessarily in the negative. Almost three-quarters of a century after Independence, and in the wake of the widespread and continuing protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), it is imperative to deal with the situation of the Muslim minority straightforwardly and in all its implications. Without doing so, India cannot achieve enduring harmony and balance, so important to realise its immense national potential. Conscious of these linkages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has based his governance on "sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas", but the words themselves, or even the equitable spread of economic benefits, will not lead to complete faith in the government's motivations. Questions of identity and a role

in the political process and in different sectors of national life are involved. Constitutional provisions relating to fundamental rights, including those of the minorities, are only enforceable statements of principles; they obtain life from State policies and governance. Did Jawaharlal Nehru's policies towards the Muslim minority provide the right substance for their welfare and progress? Irreligious himself, he sought to leave the community alone, and in doing so, did he abandon them to retrogressive elements within it? The assertion of the community's exclusive identity by its leaders may have provided comfort and assurance, but it prevented it from moving sufficiently ahead educationally, professionally and economically. Worse, Nehru's modernisation of only Hindu personal law, and not touching Muslim personal codes, consolidated suspicions, and provided ground for the charge of



appeasement. For many, this seemed credible because of the community's large political support for Nehru. Nehru's successors largely followed his policies towards the Muslims. The focus was on ensuring that the community did not feel that its religious practices were being interfered with. What was clearly overlooked was that in some cases, backward and iniquitous social customs were projected as essential elements of the faith. This approach led to Rajiv Gandhi's historic mistake of

eroding the Supreme Court judgment in the Shah Bano case. That decision became a turning point in India's evolution. The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can be partly traced to a gradual but growing feeling in the majority community, especially after the mid-1980s, that the Congress ignored its concerns and interests. On its part, the BJP gathered this sentiment within, inter alia, the fold of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which led to the

events of December 6, 1992. The destruction of the Babri mosque alienated the Muslims from the Congress, and they looked towards regional leaders. The community also withdrew more into itself, perhaps feeling that the Indian State was indifferent, if not, passively hostile towards it. Modi's massive victories in 2014 and 2019 gave the clear message to the Muslim community that governments with an absolute majority could be formed without its vote.

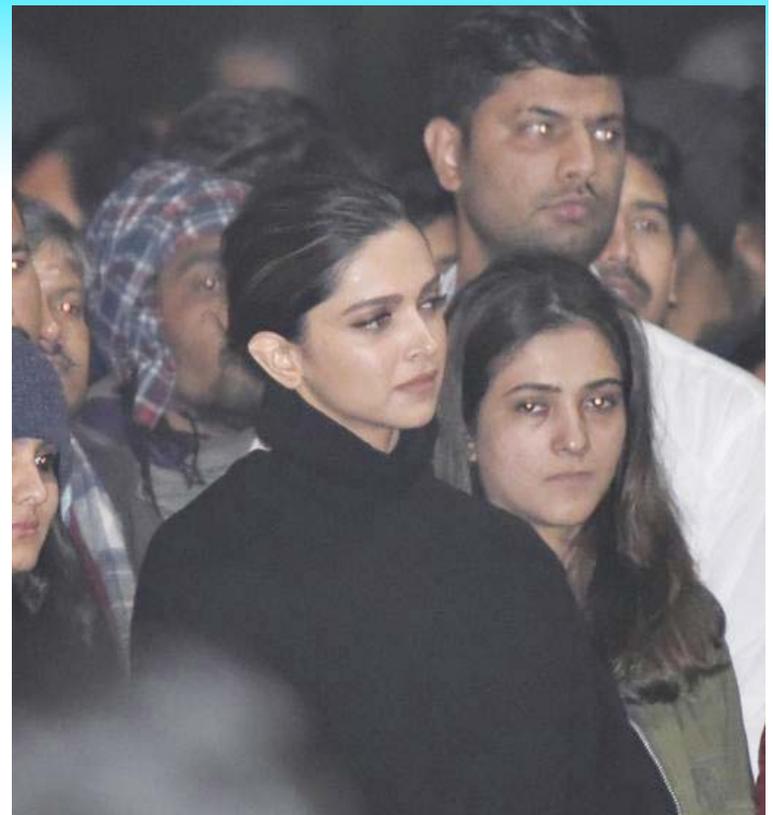
Why Deepika Padukone's presence in JNU needs special mention

Starting from Prithviraj Kapoor, many stars have done their bit for the political leaders and their agenda.

Politics has always been an unwritten script in India's Hindi film industry. But for the first time, we see a breed of young film stars making an unabashed entry in the world of political protests. Bollywood's top actress Deepika Padukone's guest appearance at the JNU on Wednesday after the much-criticised violence unleashed by masked goons in the country's premier university was the latest in the string of protests that saw many leading lights of Hindi films hitting the street in the recent days. Anurag Kashyap, Farhan Akhtar, Richa Chadda, Swara Bhaskar, Vishal Bhardwaj are among those who hit the streets while many others have remained critical of the current state of affairs on social media. But is this the first time Bollywood stars are involved in nation's politics? The answer is simply no. Starting from Prithviraj Kapoor,

the first one of his family who came from Peshawar to build the first family of Bollywood, to Dilip Kumar to Sunil Dutt, many stars have done their bit for the political leaders and their agenda. Kumar, one of India's great actors, had not only actively campaigned for V Krishna Menon when the latter contested from North Bombay, some of his films such as Naya Daur was seen by analysts furthering the Nehruvian cause. Released in 1957, Naya Daur not only had a suggestive title of a new journey of a newly-independent nation, but it showcased rural development, new economic policies and modernisation of India in its own way. Raj Kapoor, Sunil Dutt and other stars could be regularly seen performing in frontline for the soldiers to boost up their morale. Prithviraj Kapoor, one of the favourite actors of Nehru, accompanied the PM on several

tours abroad. Once, Nehru returned from USSR tour and asked Prithviraj, "What is this film Awara (released 1951) your son has made? Stalin was talking about it." So, if Akshay Kumar is making films on building toilets and promoting Swachh Bharat - a pet idea of PM Modi - he is only following the footsteps of what Sunil Dutt did in Hum Hindustani (there was even a visual of Nehru attending a Congress meeting). During the 70s, the relationship between Hindi film took a different turn. In 1971, Gulzar penned a political satire "Haal Chaal theek thaak hai" for his film Mere Apne. The song said, everything is fine in the country except that qualified people don't have jobs, bribes are allowed and people can even get away with murder. During the Emergency, India's best playback singer Kishore Kumar was blacked out from Doordarshan and All India



Radio as he refused to participate in a Congress event and infuriated Sanjay Gandhi. But in the 107-year-old history of Bollywood, it has hardly ever happened that a bunch of film directors or even actors - who are more cautious about image - have hit the streets to

participate in political protests. And almost all of them are young, new faces of Bollywood even as many senior film personalities have preferred to remain silent. For the times they are a-changin' in Mumbai. Welcome to a new, braver Bollywood.

A road map for General Rawat

Focus on formulating integrated operational plans and creating integrated theatre commands

In a surprise announcement from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day in August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had declared the government's intention to appoint a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). A committee headed by National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval - who also heads the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) - was appointed to work out the modalities and draw up a charter of responsibilities for the CDS. With former Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat having taken over as India's first CDS, a long-pending gap in the management of higher defence has been fulfilled. The creation of the post of CDS was a major recommendation of the Group of Ministers (GoM), headed by former deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, that analysed the Kargil Review Committee report. Several analysts have termed this an incomprehensible omission for which three reasons were cited. First, political

consensus on the establishment of the post of CDS was lacking. Second, the civilian bureaucracy was never in favour of the concept of CDS. And, third, there was some opposition even within certain sections of the armed forces to the idea. The first item on the agenda of the CDS should be the formulation of integrated operational plans. In fact, the CDS should be instrumental in obtaining the defence minister's approval for an integrated tri-service operational directive. It is well known that the operational plans of the armed forces are single-service plans, and they lack the synergy that comes from integrated planning. It is also well known that in 1962, the Indian Air Force (IAF) was not given any strike role to play during the war with China when it could have made a huge contribution. In 1965, the Indian Navy was not even informed about the plans to launch a three-pronged attack across the international boundary (IB) into

Pakistan. It is repeated ad nauseum that the 1971 war was a well-coordinated tri-service effort that led to a grand victory. The rather limited coordination that was achieved during the war with Pakistan in 1971 was mainly due to the personalities of the army, navy and air force chiefs. During the 1971 war, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw was able to carry his naval and air force colleagues along with him due to the personal rapport that he had established with them. Yet, there were several glitches in the planning and conduct of the land and air campaigns and it cannot be stated that India fought a coordinated "air-land" war. The Indian intervention in Sri Lanka was a disaster from the joint planning point of view. The Kargil conflict of 1999 is the only real example of a coordinated effort. Even here, there were initial hiccups and it took the IAF several weeks to begin bombing the Pakistani intruders' sangars (ad hoc bunkers) on the Indian



side of the LoC. Hence, it emerges that operational planning must be seamlessly integrated in modern conventional conflict. After gaining some experience with the CDS-led operational planning, it will be time to graduate to integrated theatre commands to further optimise the planning and execution of joint operations. Will the appointment of a CDS will have any impact of nuclear command and control? India's prevailing security environment is marked by regional instability with a nuclear overhang. More than ever before, it is now necessary for the national security decision makers to be given "single-point

military advice" that takes into account the operational strengths and weaknesses, and the interdependence of each of the armed forces on the other, to meet complex emerging challenges in a nuclear environment. Such advice can come only from a CDS who will be the principal military advisor to the prime minister who heads the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA). The CDS will streamline the operational readiness and employment of India's nuclear forces. While India's nuclear doctrine and policy are guided by the NCA, their execution is entrusted to the services and here a joint approach is mandatory.

Black Sunday: Questions for Delhi Police, JNU VC

The police must act against the culprits. Given their possible political affiliation, this requires tough resolve



The mayhem at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus, engineered by a group of masked men on the evening of January 5, has grim portents for the future. It shows the Delhi Police in poor light, and the JNU administration in a state of pathetic ineptitude. It also reflects on the quality of politics played out in university campuses for petty gains. For over three hours, a group of masked men went around unleashing violence on the campus, terrorising students and teachers alike, while the JNU security and the Delhi Police,

deployed around the administration block, remained mute spectators. Amid charges and counter-charges, the police spokesperson, in a press conference, asserted that they responded with alacrity once information about violence inside the campus was received. Operating in a politically surcharged atmosphere, in the wake of the lawyer-police clash, and the action inside the Jamia campus, the Delhi Police top brass have started vacillating even when a legitimate intervention is called for.

A number of questions remained unanswered. How did the masked men enter the campus in which the JNU security commands access control? How did they escape through the main gate again in the presence of the Delhi Police, where, by a strange coincidence, the street lights were not working? The moot point is that when the campus was going through unrest for the last five days, and the police was duly apprised, what preventive action was taken? A particular group wanted to prolong the agitation against the fee hike, and was forcibly preventing those who wanted to appear for examinations. This group was preventing students from doing online registrations, and even disturbing classes. The situation was clearly getting out of hand, warranting immediate intervention. The police spokesman said they entered the campus after permission at 7:45 pm, while the FIR clearly says that information

was available around 3 pm. Did the police need a certificate to enter when a cognisable offence was being committed inside? The same police entered Jamia in pursuit of miscreants creating trouble on the streets, while in JNU, the goons were right inside, vandalising property and attacking students. Perhaps the biggest share of the blame can be apportioned to the vice-chancellor (VC) and the administrative officers of JNU, who merely watched from the sidelines. If the students wanted a dialogue, why didn't the VC involve them in negotiations or explain clearly the inability of the university to undo the fee hike? It would have, then, cleared the way for taking action against those students who were forcing the majority of peaceful students from pursuing their studies. But VCs today rarely step down from their exalted academic pedestal to soil their hands with the daily grind of administration. They allow things

to drift till they come to a boil. As a result, universities today are in a state of disquiet, with myriad issues waiting to be resolved. If only the VC, proctor or dean were persistent enough in calling for timely police intervention on that fateful evening, the appalling incident could have been averted. The Union education minister stated that JNU is meant to be an educational centre and not a political hub. Unfortunately, in a university where even teachers forge alliances with political parties, it cannot escape from being a political cauldron at times like this. In a politically sensitive environment, it is incumbent upon VCs to act as both counsellors and administrators. The incident on Black Sunday will leave a deep imprint on the minds of the students and public alike, and cast a long shadow on the role of the police, JNU administration, and political parties.

Jaggi Vasudev's CAA defence is illogical, flawed

The CAA-NRC will either end up superfluous or exclusionary, no matter how it is finessed

Persecution of Hindus in Pakistan. Counting dogs in Coimbatore. Who the hell are you? Through three succinct phrases, Jaggi Vasudev explained why the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) - National Register of Citizens (NRC) controversy which has taken the nation by storm is a non-issue. His remarks were startling in their simplicity, and delivered with the sophistication of an urbane monk. They were also largely devoid of logic and flawed in their reading of the law. Vasudev recounts a recent conversation with a Pakistani Hindu man. The man informed him that his Hindu wife was taken away and forcibly made to marry "a man from another religion". This man, according to Vasudev, was persecuted on account of his religion, as Hindu marriages are not recognised by law in Pakistan. It is for such persons that the CAA is a demonstration of compassion allowing them to get citizenship in India, he suggested. Except that the CAA will not give any protection to this unfortunate Pakistani Hindu. Since he met

Vasudev recently, at a time when he was still a Pakistani national, he does not satisfy a key precondition to be a beneficiary of the CAA - that he should have entered India before December 31, 2014. This cut-off date definitively demonstrates that the CAA is not a legislation that is sincerely aimed at the protection of religiously persecuted minorities. If there were a pogrom against Hindus in Pakistan today, the CAA would do nothing to protect them. It is clear that the Act wants to protect a certain kind of religious minority from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan - those who have entered India before December 31, 2014. To understand why this is so, one needs to understand the NRC. Vasudev compared the NRC with the counting of dogs in Coimbatore in the aftermath of feral strays killing children in the city. The analogy, provocations aside, achieves the opposite result from what Vasudev intends. Dogs needed to be counted so that the Coimbatore administration knew how many



to prevent future killings. It is immaterial to the exercise whether the dogs were born in Coimbatore or migrated to the city from elsewhere. An exercise of this nature for human beings is the census. The census, which counts the population of every country, is needed for governments to approximately identify the number of persons who reside in the country. This is the only information the government needs in order to go about its task of ensuring law and order and making policies. Citizenship, on the contrary, is an artificial construct. It is neither embedded in one's DNA nor is it

a simple consequence of residence. In Vasudev's example, if there were a rule that only a dog which has both its parents born in Coimbatore will be counted as a dog legitimately living in Coimbatore, that would be akin to a citizenship registration exercise. Make an artificial rule, assess who qualifies, discount (cull?) the rest. To this already onerous exercise, imagine a secondary rule that all Labradors, German Shepherds, Mongrels, Pugs, Pomeranians and Cocker Spaniels would still be counted even though both their parents were not born in Coimbatore, if

they could demonstrate that they came to Coimbatore escaping persecution in Ooty. That is exactly what the CAA is - all dogs are equal, some more equal than others. And if one can't demonstrate, whether with the benefit of CAA or otherwise, that one ought to be counted as a citizen, Vasudev says to such a person: "Who the hell are you?" In his example, such a person is one who lives in India but cannot produce a birth certificate, school leaving certificate, ration card, Aadhaar, voter ID card and not even three witnesses who can attest to his Indianness.

The darkness of Sunday night

Hold the VC, Delhi Police, and ministries concerned to account

The unprecedented attack on students and teachers of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi on Sunday night is one of the darkest episodes in recent times in India. It brings to the fore a range of troubling issues - the increasing mob violence; the rule of law (or its absence) in the heart of the capital; the action (or inaction) of Delhi Police, which reports directly to the ministry of home affairs (MHA); the systematic undermining of one of India's most important higher educational institutions in line with what appears to be a concerted attack on universities; the deployment of inflammatory rhetoric to tarnish critics; the abdication of constitutional duties by authorities concerned; and, ultimately, the weakening of

Indian democracy itself. Here is what we do not know conclusively about what happened in JNU on Sunday: The complete background of all the attackers who brutally beat up students and teachers, unleashed a reign of terror, and vandalised property. But here is what we do know: These attackers engaged in violence; many of those beaten up were critical of both the government and the university administration; the university administration was absent: the police did not enter the university and restore order for hours, allowing the mob to continue; the police also turned a blind eye to the violence outside the gates, where activists and journalists were beaten up, even as others cheered on the attack with violent

slogans; the miscreants walked out, with the police looking on; and no one was arrested. Put it all together, and certain conclusions are inescapable. Irrespective of the background of the violence - the JNU administration claims that those students who were boycotting the registration process for the new semester because of their opposition to the fee hike were pressuring those who were keen to register and this led to clashes - it is clear that three institutions have failed. The vice chancellor, M Jagadesh Kumar, failed to end the controversy over the fee hike, ensure peace, provide security to students, call in the police on time, and has been generally partisan in his approach, by treating a set of students as enemies. The human resource



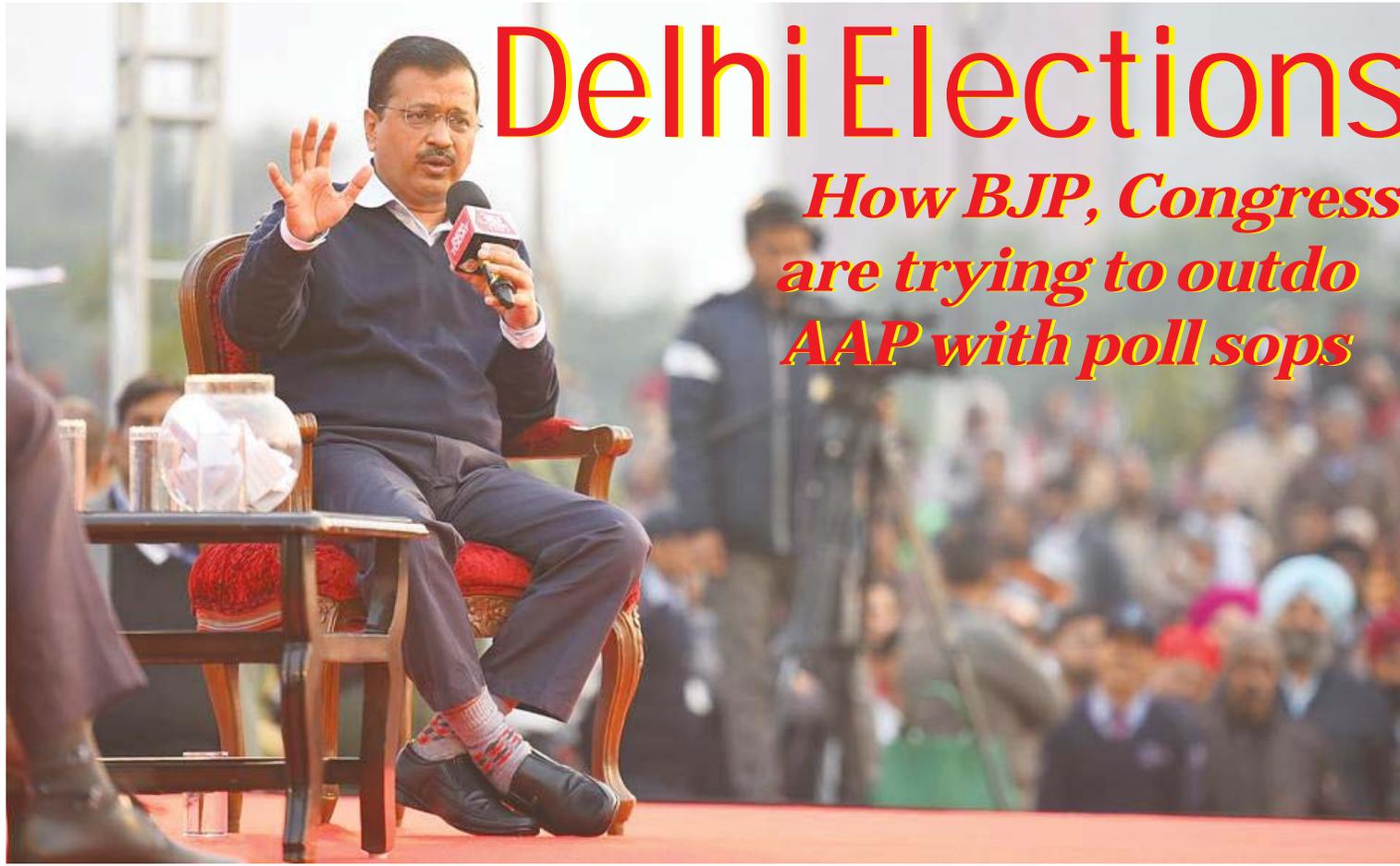
development (HRD) ministry has failed in providing leadership and resolving issues in JNU - in fact, by replacing the secretary who was seeking to find a middle ground, it closed doors on a reconciliation. And the Delhi Police, and by extension the home ministry, has failed, for it was at best, a bystander to the violence, and at worst, an active enabler of the violence on Sunday. For true justice, the VC

must resign on moral grounds; the HRD ministry must get an independent, non-partisan figure as VC and address student grievances; the Delhi Police must arrest the culprits immediately; a truly independent enquiry must be instituted; and heads must roll in both Delhi Police and MHA for abdication of duties. Otherwise, be prepared for the erosion of the rule of law and the rise of mobocracy.

Delhi Elections 2020

How BJP, Congress are trying to outdo AAP with poll sops

Delhi Elections 2020: The subsidy provided by the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government in power and water tariffs has compelled the BJP and Congress to promise sops, especially in these two sectors.



(News Agencies)-The subsidy provided by the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government in power and water tariffs-first 200 units of electricity and 20,000 litres of water free - has compelled the BJP and Congress to promise sops, especially in these two sectors, in the assembly elections. While Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said that the party will give up to 25,000 litres of free water and ensure it is of "good quality", the Congress recently announced that the party, if voted to power, will provide free electricity up to 600 units and also setup a power plant to generate electricity in the national capital. It also said that small businesses will also be provided subsidies up to 200 units.

While the BJP will cite the work done by the Centre in Delhi as part of its achievements in the Sankalp Patra or vision document, a senior BJP leader said the subsidy provided in these two sectors has to be countered. "The benefit of the subsidy is not limited to just poor people. It is important to tell people that this government has worked only in the last three months. For 57 months, it did nothing," said a senior BJP leader. Speaking about the Sankalp Patra or vision document, Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said, "We will not stop the subsidy people are getting in water and power. We will not only give more subsidies but also ensure that people get clean drinking water in their homes. Currently, people are getting poisonous water. We

will give 25,000 litres of free water. We will also ensure that the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) doesn't suffer any loss." Though the party is in the process of preparing its vision document, BJP leaders say that water, electricity, education, health and infrastructure development are going to be the key focus areas. The BJP is going to reiterate its commitment to provide better health facilities by implementing the Centre's Ayushman Bharat scheme, which the ruling party in Delhi has refused to implement citing its ongoing scheme of free treatment at government hospitals and mohalla clinics. The Congress, which carried out reforms in water and power sectors to improve services, today is promising relief of 600

units in a hope to regain lost ground in the city which it ruled for 15 years. "Unlike the Kejriwal government, which has been using public money to benefit the power discoms, we will give relief to consumers up to 600 units. If the Congress comes to power, we will transfer the subsidy directly into the bank accounts of consumers. This will be a major part of our manifesto in the upcoming elections," Delhi Congress spokesperson Mukesh Sharma said. Political analyst Tanvir Aejaz, professor of political science at Ramjas College, Delhi University, said, "The AAP government compelled the opposition parties in Delhi to focus four areas-water, electricity, education and health-by delivering on its poll promise in the last five years. While

political parties will promise, it is a matter of trust for the people when they vote for a party based on its manifesto. For instance, people didn't buy Congress' promises of minimum income of Rs 72,000 per year, which was a good scheme, during the Lok Sabha elections." During 2013 and 2015 assembly elections, the two parties had promised subsidy in electricity and water to counter AAP's promises. In its 2013 manifesto, BJP had promised to cut electricity tariff by 30% if it comes to power. In 2015, it promised a reduction in rates of electricity and rationalisation of water tariff, without specifying the percentage. Hoping the party will return to power in Delhi after a gap of 21 years, Delhi BJP chief said, "We will give five times more benefits than what the Arvind Kejriwal government is promising. In fact, whatever we promise, will be for 60 months (five years) and not for just two-three months."

Kanhaiya Kumar to Deepika Padukone, support builds for JNU after attacks

On Sunday, a violent mob attacked students and teachers. More than 30 persons, including JNU student union president Aishe Ghosh, were injured.

(News Agencies)- From former student leader Kanhaiya Kumar to Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone, political figures and celebrities joined protests at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) to extend solidarity with students and teachers injured in Sunday's mob attack. Amid chants of "Azaadi" on Tuesday, Kanhaiya Kumar blamed the government. "The government has chosen a

wrong university to fight with. They call me the leader of tukde-tukde gang. I take it with pride. My university will always raise voice against the social injustice," he said. On Sunday, a violent mob attacked students and teachers. More than 30 persons, including JNU student union president Aishe Ghosh, were injured. "Let them file 70 FIRs against me. We are not afraid. We have done no crime and we will

continue our fight," said Ghosh, referring to FIRs against her. Padukone, who turned up at the venue at 7.45pm, did not address the crowd. She walked up to Ghosh and greeted her. The actor is in town for a film promotion. A group of JNU alumni, including CPI (M) leader Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja, Congress' Sharmistha Mukherjee and Swaraj Abhiyan chief Yogendra Yadav also took out a march demanding

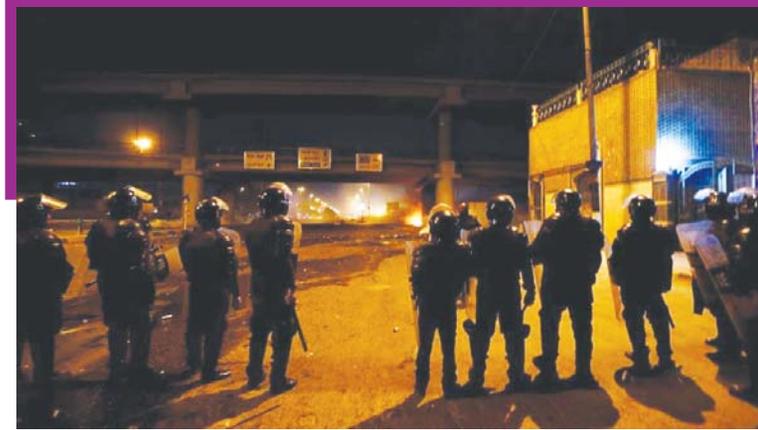


resignation of the vice-chancellor Jagadesh Kumar. "Many JNU alumni who are also members of Parliament have decided to write a letter to the President requesting for the dismissal of the JNU VC," Yechury said. Yadav said that he had come to the campus to extend solidarity with the students, but was manhandled by the mob outside

the main gate on Sunday. "It's so shocking to see the police was just standing as spectator and not stopping the violent mob." Raja, who had also visited the campus on Sunday night, said that whatever happened at JNU campus on Sunday was horrific. "It was a case of absolute fascism in action."

'Avoid non-essential travel to Iraq', India tells its nationals after Iran attack on US bases

In a pre-dawn attack on Wednesday, the US department of defence aid that Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles against its military and coalition forces at two bases in Iraq.



In a pre-dawn attack on Wednesday, the US department of defence aid that Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles against its military and coalition forces at two bases in Iraq. "It is clear that these missiles were launched from Iran and targeted at least two Iraqi military bases hosting US military and coalition personnel at Al-Assad and Erbil," US department of defence spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said. These bases, he added, had been "on high alert due to indications that the Iranian regime planned to

attack our forces and interests in the region". These attacks were carried out by Iran in retaliation to killing of head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC) Qassem Soleimani last week. Tasnim News, an Iranian news outlet closely linked to the IRGC, reported the IRGC had fired "tens" of rockets in an operation dubbed "Operation Martyr Soleimani", to avenge the assassination of General Soleimani.

A few hours after the strike, government spokesman Ali

Rabiei said Iran is not seeking war but it will deliver a crushing response to any aggression. "We thank the Revolutionary Guards' successful operation ... We have never wanted war but any aggression will receive a crushing response," Rabiei said on Twitter.

A senior official in Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's office said Iran's response to the killing of its top commander Qassem Soleimani so far had been the "weakest" of the Iranian revenge scenarios, state TV reported.

(News Agencies)- India has advised its citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to Iraq in the wake of missile strike by Iran on American bases.

Raveesh Kumar, the spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs, said on Twitter, "In view of the prevailing situation in Iraq, Indian nationals are advised to avoid all non-essential

travel to Iraq until further notification. Indian nationals residing in Iraq are advised to be alert and may avoid travel within Iraq."

"Our Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate in Erbil will continue to function normally to provide all services to Indians residing in Iraq," he added in his second tweet.

Tripura palace belongs to state govt, says HC

The verdict on Monday came five years after the state government moved the high court after a lower court in 2015 ordered the return of the property to the erstwhile royal family.



(News Agencies)-The Bahadur, built in the 1930s in belongs to the state palace of Tripura's last king, Bir the middle of a lake at government and is no longer Bikram Kishore Maniky Melagarh in Sepahijala district a property of his

descendants, the Tripura high court has ruled.

The verdict on Monday came five years after the state government moved the high court after a lower court in 2015 ordered the return of the property to the erstwhile royal family.

Bahadur's son, Kirit Bikram Kishore Maniky, had handed over the property to the state government for its maintenance and use for the public interest in 1972.

The last king's daughter-in-law, Bibhu Kumari Devi, and grandson, Pradyot Kishore Deb Burman, moved the lower court in 2005 seeking the return of the palace called Neermahal, a popular tourist destination.

A division bench of chief justice

A K Qureshi and justice Arindam Lodh rejected the family's plea, saying the family had relinquished Neermahal.

Burman said that they would challenge the high court's verdict before the Supreme Court.

In a Facebook post, he challenged the government to provide one legal document to suggest that his father gifted the palace to it.

"...I am glad that finally the state government has admitted that no money was ever paid for Neer Mahal to my father or my family. I will challenge the matter in [the] Supreme Court but I must ask one question to all if the erstwhile royal family cannot protect their private property then what hope does a poor person have"

Army porter dies, three injured in avalanche in Jammu and Kashmir

High-altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh experienced moderate to heavy snowfall, while the plains were lashed by rains since Monday.

(News Agencies)- An Army porter died and three of his colleagues were injured, one of them critically, when they were hit by an avalanche along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Tuesday evening.

Poonch Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ramesh Kumar Angral said, "The incident happened around 6 pm on Tuesday evening. Four porters

were struck by an avalanche, in which one of them died, while three others suffered injuries."

The injured were shifted to a hospital in Mandi, he added.

The incident happened near Doda Shankh forward post of the Army along the LoC in Shahpur sector, he said. Soon after the incident, army rescue teams swung into action and managed to pull the porters out of the snow. The porters were returning

home after replenishing Doda Shankh and other posts in the area. The dead porter has been identified as Zargar Iqbal of Chella village in Mandi tehsil.

Critically injured porter's name is Aijaz Ahmed, also from Chella village. High-altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh experienced moderate to heavy snowfall, while the plains were lashed by rains since Monday. However,



weather conditions improved on Wednesday afternoon.

Bharat Bandh: Violence in Bengal, disruptions in Kerala, Punjab, banking hit all over

The nationwide one-day shutdown call by trade unions had a mixed impact, with widespread disruption seen in normal life in states like West Bengal and Kerala while life mostly followed a routine course in most of the other states. Reports of disruption in banking services came from across the country.



(News Agencies)-The one day Bharat Bandh called by 10 trade unions and some student organisations was peaceful in most parts of the country barring West Bengal. Daily life was also affected in Left ruled Kerala and parts of Punjab, where union workers stopped road and rail traffic.

The bandh call coupled with protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register for Citizens (NRC) that are going on in various parts of the country. Protests were held by students at various campuses including at Delhi University, Jadhavpur University, Mumbai University, IIT-Kanpur, IIT-

Mumbai, IIT-Ahmedabad, Punjabi University, Patiala and Banaras Hindu University.

EAST

Violence and arson was reported from various parts of West Bengal, where buses, a police vehicle and government properties were vandalised by strikers enforcing the 24-hour

bandh on Wednesday.

Major protest was reported from Malda district, where tyres were burnt, government buses ransacked and stones and crude bombs hurled at police, who tried to control the mob. The police then baton-charged the mob, lobbed teargas shells and fired rubber bullets, officials said.

In various parts of the state, railway tracks and roads were blocked, affecting normal life. Violence and rail blockade was reported from East Burdwan, East Midnapore, Cooch Behar districts and from Dum Dum, Jadavpur, Lake Town and Central Kolkata.

In East Midnapore and Jadavpur, the police used baton force to disperse the mob and crude bombs were found in Barasat area of the North 24 Parganas district, police said.

Public transport was not available in most places in the state. However, flight services were normal at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, but train services were partially affected in some sectors

of the Sealdah, Howrah and Kharagpur sections due to obstruction by protesters.

In Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, the impact of the strike was visible in the mining areas and the banking sector.

North

In northern India, the impact of the strike was seen mostly in Punjab with mixed response in neighbouring Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The activists of several farmers associations asked traders at several places in Congress-ruled Punjab to keep their shops and business establishments closed. Reports of a partial shutdown of shops and other establishments were received from Patiala, Ludhiana, Bathinda, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar Jalandhar and several other places.

With the state-run roadways unions joining the strike, most buses were off roads in Punjab and road and rail traffic was blocked in several places such as Amritsar, Sangrur and Longowal. Most of the public sector banks were also closed.

'No evidence of murder of children in Muzaffarpur shelter home': CBI tells SC



(News Agencies)-The CBI on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that there was no evidence of murder of children in the Muzaffarpur shelter home. The probe agency told the top court that two skeletons were recovered but later in forensic investigation it was found to be that of a woman and a man. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde accepted the status report of the CBI and allowed two officers to be relieved from the investigation team. Attorney General K K Venugopal,

appearing for the probe agency, said, investigation was done on rape and sexual assault allegation of children and charge sheets have been filed before courts concerned.

Venugopal said children, who were alleged to be murdered, were later traced and found to be alive. He said that CBI has investigated cases of 17 shelter homes in Bihar and charge sheet has been filed in 13 of them while in four cases the preliminary inquiry was conducted and later closed as no evidence was found.

Invest in First Mortgages

EARN 8-15%

**ANNUALLY ON WELL
SECURED, SHORT TERM,
1ST MORTGAGE LOANS.
MONTHLY DIVIDENDS**

For details & disclosures

WREAM

Whitestone Real Estate Asset Management Corp.
Phone: 917 612 3158 Email: whitesone1979@gmail.com

Real Estate Broker/Investor/Private Lender Since 2009



Insurance



Are you paying too much for Auto, Home, Business, Workman Compensation, Contractors, General Liability, E&O ?

Call us today for complimentary analysis of your policy.

NLight Financial LLC



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Licensed Insurance Broker/ Notary Public
(Service with Honesty & Smile, Since 2012)

**1900, Hempstead Tpke., Suite 306
East Meadow, New York 11554
Cell: 917 612 3158 Tel Fax: 516 246 9022**

Email: info@nlightfin.com

www.nlightfin.com



The **ONLY** temple in the world outside India
dedicated to Shri Shani Maharaj

Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York

Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

Regular Poojas' and Homas' are conducted on daily basis:

Special Poojas:

- + Sri Saneeswara homam
- + Sri Saneeswara - parikara pooja
- + Sri Saneeswara harati
- + Sri Navagraha Homa
- + Poornima: vrata Pooja
- + Pradosham Pooja
- + Sri Sankatahara chaturthi Pooja
- + Sri Satyanarayana Vratha
- + Birthdays / Weddings / Upanayanam & More



**1616 Hillside Avenue, Temple Suits
New Hyde Park NY 11040**
Ph: 718 740 9400 / 516 358 9400
Email: temple.navagraha@gmail.com

Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm

The Temple entrance is in the western side parking lot behind Hot Breads & Maharajas in New Hyde Park NY

Functions of the space:

*Temple / Community Events / Senior Social Day Care Center /
Art & Music School / Library / Spiritual Lounge / Gift Shop*

www.NavagrahaUSA.com

Iran admits to shooting down Ukrainian plane in 'error'

While apologizing, Tehran also blamed the incident on the United States ratcheting up tensions.



and the prosecution of the people responsible.

"Ukraine insists on a full admission of guilt," the country's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said. "We expect Iran to bring those responsible to justice, return the bodies, pay compensation and issue an official apology. The investigation must be full, open & continue without delays or obstacles."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau demanded "transparency, and justice for the families and loved ones of the victims."

"This is a national tragedy, and all Canadians are mourning together," his office told AFP.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Saturday afternoon described Iran's admission as "an important first step." Four British citizens were on board the downed



Iran on Saturday took responsibility for the downing of an Ukraine International Airlines flight that killed 176 people, saying its military had shot down the plane by accident.

Earlier this week, Iran had rejected Western intelligence reports suggesting an Iranian missile shot down the plane, which had carried mostly Iranians, Canadians and Ukrainians.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said that an internal investigation conducted by the country's armed forces had "regrettably" found that "missiles fired due to human error caused the horrific crash of the Ukrainian plane & death of 176 innocent people."

Offering "thoughts and prayers" for the families of the dead, he added that "investigations continue to identify & prosecute this great tragedy & unforgivable mistake."

The aerospace division head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Amirali Hajizadeh, said that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile. "I wish I could die and not witness such an accident," he added.

Their statements mark a significant reversal from Thursday, when Iran's government claimed that reports of a missile bringing down the plane amounted to "psychological warfare" against the country.

According to the semi-official

Fars news agency, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said information about the plane's downing should be made public after a meeting of the country's top security body.

But while apologizing for the disaster on Saturday, Tehran also blamed the incident on the United States ratcheting up tensions in the region.

Preliminary conclusions of internal investigation by Armed Forces: Human error at time of crisis caused by U.S. adventurism led to disaster," the country's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said on Twitter.

Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the killing of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, prompting Tehran to retaliate with missile strikes on U.S. targets in Iraq.

Rouhani also attributed the plane's downing to "the atmosphere of threats and intimidation by the aggressive American regime" in a statement.

"In order to defend ourselves against possible attacks by the American Army, the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran were on full alert, which unfortunately led to this terrible catastrophe taking the lives of dozens of innocent people," he added. Calls for full investigation

Reacting to the Iranian admission on Saturday morning, the leaders of Ukraine and Canada called for a thorough investigation

plane. Johnson called for a "comprehensive, transparent and independent international investigation" as well as the repatriation of the bodies, and pledged to work together with Canada and Ukraine. "We can all see very clearly that further conflict will only lead to more loss and tragedy. It is vital that all leaders now pursue a diplomatic way forward," he said. In a spokesperson

statement, the EU's diplomatic service said measures ought to be taken to avoid similar disasters in the future. "In view of the commitments given by President Rouhani, the EU expects that Iran will continue to cooperate fully and undertake a comprehensive and transparent investigation, which should abide by international standards, into how this tragedy occurred," the statement added.

Investigation into Iran's downing of plane explained

The process of investigating an air disaster involves countries, regulatory agencies, airlines and more.

The downing of Ukrainian International Airlines flight PS752 is going to be a lot more complex to investigate than most air catastrophes.

Iran on Saturday admitted that its military shot down the Boeing 737-800 in error after initially denying responsibility. Earlier this week, Western intelligence reports had suggested the plane had been brought down by an Iranian air defense missile. Ukraine's president on Saturday morning demanded a "full admission of guilt" and a thorough investigation from Tehran, but Iran will still get to dictate the terms of any fact-finding mission. Despite hostilities with the U.S., Iran has invited the National Transportation Safety Board, the U.S. accident investigation body, as well as Boeing to help with the probe. Although Iran is under immense pressure to conduct a transparent investigation — mainly by Ukraine and by Canada, which lost a significant number of people in the disaster — there are already worrying signs of chaos. Reports

from Iran suggest the crash site hasn't been secured and that it's already been picked over by scavengers.

The process of investigating a crash involves countries, regulatory agencies, airlines and more. The internationally accepted guidelines for how an air traffic accident is to be investigated are laid out in the Convention on International Civil Aviation, an international treaty signed by members of the International Civil Aviation Organization, the U.N.'s aviation body. The treaty stipulates that the investigation will be led by the country in which the crash takes place. In this case, that's Iran. But crash investigations almost always tend to be collaborative. Investigators from the countries where the plane is registered, where the airline is based, where the aircraft designer is based and where the aircraft was assembled — all may also play a role. Countries where the engines or other major aircraft components were

designed and assembled and those with citizens killed or seriously injured in the crash may also take part. Further, countries such as France and the U.S., which have advanced technical ability to investigate flight data from black boxes, can be brought in.

In this case, France and the U.S. made the engines, Ukraine is where the plane is registered and where the airline is based, and the U.S. is where the plane was made. Commercial aircraft have two black boxes, one that records flight data like altitude, instrument readings, power settings and flight control inputs, and another that records all communications within the cockpit of the plane and the pilots' correspondence with air traffic controllers. Both tend to be crucial to any investigation.

If the black boxes are damaged, Iran could ask the manufacturer — Boeing in this case — or countries with greater technical expertise to help retrieve the data.

2020 is prime time for Putin

In addition to hacking into key infrastructure, Russia has also used its cyberwarriors to engage in a sophisticated information warfare campaign with a broad target audience -- the American people.

And while President Donald Trump promulgates Russian propaganda about the 2016 election -- giving Russia's information operations a major boost -- he has also given members of his team the authorization to chip away at Russia's online operational advantages, as well as those of other foreign countries.

Though Trump may continue to spread Russian conspiracies in the year to come, we must hope he also continues to prioritize offensive cyber operations as part of a key strategy to deter Russian aggression.

Prime time coverage

Senior US government officials have publicly stated under oath that Russian efforts to interfere in our elections are ongoing. Despite efforts to punish and deter foreign election interference, we have not succeeded in changing the cost-benefit calculation for the actors

involved in directing or participating in these attacks. As we head into an election year, we should expect countries such as Russia to kick their operations into high gear. 2020 is prime time for Putin -- his internet trolls and bots have endless, divisive content to amplify online, unless we figure out a way to stop them.

Cyberspace force

Defending our interests from cyberattack -- and also deterring them before they happen -- is a complex undertaking, and the Trump administration has thankfully streamlined the resources we have available.

The administration elevated Cyber Command (CyberCom) to a unified combatant command in 2018 with a mission to integrate and conduct "full-spectrum cyberspace operations, electronic warfare, and information operations, ensuring freedom of action for friendly forces in and through the cyber domain and the information environment, while denying the same to our adversaries." In other words, CyberCom's mission expressly

fits within the Defense Department's larger cyberstrategy, which specifically calls out persistent campaigns by Russia to influence Americans.

The United States has engaged in information operations and overt public diplomacy in the past, using both civilian and military assets. But by giving CyberCom the ability to integrate and conduct these operations online, the administration took an important step to modernize our information operations and protect our democracy. And Trump's decision to delegate decision-making authority to the Pentagon for offensive cyber operations has probably made the approval process faster because decisions do not necessarily have to be vetted through an interagency process and get the sign-off from the President each time. With the authorities and resources available to launch calibrated attacks for both defensive and deterrent purposes, our cyberspace force has gone to work and may up the ante in the run-up to the 2020 election.

Since the 2018 midterm election, the administration has engaged in

offensive online operations aimed at influencing specific target audiences -- namely Russians involved in interfering in our elections.

CyberCom reportedly took the Internet Research Agency -- a Russian troll farm that the administration has accused and sanctioned for interfering in our 2016 elections -- offline to prevent it from spreading disinformation during the midterms. And The Washington Post reported that CyberCom also engaged in calibrated online information operations -- known as cyber psyops -- sending direct messages to Russians working at the agency, telling them Americans know who they are and are tracking their work.

We don't know whether any of those targeted stopped working at the Russian agency, but new reporting suggests CyberCom may be broadening its target list to include members of the Russian security apparatus and Russian oligarchs. Leveling the playing field -- While stepping up online information operations, the administration has also tried to level the playing field in other

ways, including through offensive cyber operations against Russian electric grids. Our cyber operations are likely intended to send a warning that the United States is poised to inflict damage on these grids if necessary, including if Russia takes action against our own infrastructure here at home. And since Russia has placed itself in a similar position with respect to our key infrastructure, the risk of engaging in a tit-for-tat escalatory cycle is high. US cyber operations against specific Russian targets are a drop in the bucket when compared to the information warfare campaign that Russia has and is engaging in against Americans. But they are an important step toward signaling to Russia that its actions have consequences -- and that its asymmetric advantages may be eroding. If integrated into a broader deterrence strategy and properly calibrated, these cybercampaigns are an appropriate step toward modernizing the tools in our toolkit -- and better protecting American national security interests.

'World War III' was trending

his forces on the battlefield will describe Soleimani as a mass murderer, a war criminal, a terrorist and a despicable demon."

Soleimani's killing was a sharp escalation in an already tumultuous conflict. It came days after protesters stormed the US embassy compound in Baghdad in response to American airstrikes on an Iranian-backed militia.

Christiane Amanpour wrote that Soleimani was "a shadowy spymaster mythologized among Shiites and loathed by Iran's American adversaries" and the world is watching "to see how and where Iran retaliates after three days of official mourning end." The key question now: "What's the strategy against Iran? In the words of a former UK ambassador in the region, does the Trump administration have a plan to prevent this killing from being more than just 'drive-by adventurism'?"

Writing before the general was targeted, Aaron David Miller noted "the inconsistency and vulnerability of the Trump administration's policies toward

both Iran and Iraq. Like a modern-day Gulliver, President Trump is metaphorically wandering around a Middle East where he'd rather not be, tied up both by smaller powers whose interests are not his own - and by America's illusions about the region, perpetuated by Trump who somehow believes he can force Iran to bend to his will." American officials justified the strike by saying Soleimani was developing plans to attack American interests, but legal experts questioned it. "Assassination cannot be justified by the law of self-defense," wrote Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame's law school. "Trump is not the first president to carry out drone assassinations in violation of international law," she noted. But "he has taken the practice to a new level of lawlessness."

Ukraine 'bombshell'

The Soleimani killing grabbed headlines hours after news broke of a previously redacted email linking President Donald Trump directly to the controversial withholding of

congressionally approved lethal aid from Ukraine, the matter at the heart of the impeachment articles voted by the House.

"Whatever praise or condemnation President Trump is drawing from the latest US actions in the Middle East, they in no way diminish the power of the legal bombshell that just exploded in the United States with new evidence of his behavior regarding Ukraine," observed Frida Ghitis. "If Trump had a coherent explanation, a viable defense, he would put it forward. He doesn't. The more we learn, the guiltier he looks. That's why he blocks every release of information, blacks out key pieces in court-ordered document releases."

When the New York Times reported that three top administration officials tried in vain to talk Trump out of withholding the Ukraine aid, Elie Honig warned, "this is a cover-up, unfolding right before us." The three officials "honored Trump's blanket instruction to executive branch officials not to testify ... It is precisely because of the crucial missing evidence that we need a real trial in the Senate."

That trial is on hold, awaiting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's decision on when to send the articles of impeachment to the Senate.

Horror in Monsey

As Jews were celebrating Hanukkah a week ago, a man wielding an 18-inch knife charged into the home of a Hasidic rabbi in Monsey, New York, and slashed at least six people. Investigators later found anti-Semitic journal entries in the attacker's home, indicating that the stabbings were the latest in a series of purposeful attacks on Jews.

Frimet Goldberger, a former member of a Hasidic community in New York, wrote, "while the Hasidic community is reeling, it is also resilient." The community "is one where everyone knows everyone, and where one person's woe is the community's affliction," she added. "Their togetherness is such that one mother's cancer diagnosis is a call for communal prayer and for a clamoring of balabustas ('homemakers') to deliver meals and ease the patient's burden," Goldberger said. "It is a community that

desperately needs our support now - from Americans and Jews everywhere alike."

"If you think this is a New York problem, or a Jewish problem - or perhaps a far-right, or a far-left, or a black or white problem - you should think again," observed Frida Ghitis. "Anti-Semitism is a symptom of a larger societal problem. Sure, when Jews are unsafe, it is they who are most at risk, but Jews are the canary in the coalmine, an early warning sign of a community or a nation losing its moorings. The coalmine is filling with toxic fumes."

Meanwhile, West Virginia authorities pushed back strongly against one episode of symbolism associated with hate, noted Jill Filipovic: "There is a tiny bit of good news at the tail end of the trash fire that was 2019. A Nazi salute will, in some corners of America, get you fired." The members of a class of correctional cadets in West Virginia, along with several staff members were dismissed after they were photographed appearing to give such a salute.

In a first, China, Pak navies deploy submarines in strategic Arabian Sea drills



The Arabian Sea region is strategically important for India as major ports including Kandla, Okha, Mumbai, Nhava Sheva (Navi Mumbai), Mormugão, New Mangalore, and Kochi are located there.

(News Agencies)- Navies of China and Pakistan, holding nine-day exercises in the Arabian Sea to enhance their all-weather strategic partnership, have for the first-time deployed submarines, providing a rare major exposure to the Chinese navy in the region.

The Arabian Sea region is strategically important for India as major ports including Kandla, Okha, Mumbai, Nhava Sheva (Navi Mumbai), Mormugão, New Mangalore, and Kochi are located there.

The joint maritime exercises began on Monday in the North Arabian Sea, regarded strategically significant for China which is now developing Pakistan's deep water Gwadar

port there.

Gwadar is being connected through the over USD 60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to China's Xinjiang province, providing a key land route to China to access the warm waters of Arabian Sea. India has objected to China over the CPEC as it is being laid through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The Gwadar is also located close to Iran's Chabahar Port being jointly developed by Iran, India and Afghanistan to ensure a trade corridor for Indian exports to Afghanistan.

The Arabian Sea provides entry to the Indian Ocean where China currently has built a logistics base at Djibouti in the Horn of

Africa. The joint exercises are expected to be the first of many to come, as China and Pakistan have now developed a series of joint exercises covering the navy, army and air force, the PLA (People's Liberation Army) Daily, the official newspaper of the Chinese military, reported.

The report said that this joint exercise is not related to ongoing regional affairs and is not aimed at any third party. The exercise is also the first between China and Pakistan that will feature anti-submarine and submarine rescue training, indicating a high-level of strategic mutual trust, state-run Global Times quoted experts as saying.

The exercise started on Monday in the port city of Karachi, Pakistan, and will be held in the North Arabian Sea until January 14, the PLA Daily reported on Tuesday. This is the sixth joint naval exercise between China and Pakistan, the report said, but it is the first time the exercise was named "Sea Guardians."

"Sea Guardians" is expected to become a series of naval exercises with Pakistan, similar to the "Warrior" series of joint land exercises and the "Shaheen" series of joint air exercises, the report said.

Zhang Junshe, a senior research fellow at the PLA Naval Military Studies Research Institute, told the Global Times that serialising the drills and making them a routine will further enhance China and Pakistan's friendship and cooperation. The Chinese troops mainly come from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theater Command Navy, including the guided missile destroyer Yinchuan, guided missile frigate Yuncheng, comprehensive supply ship Weishanhu, submarine rescue ship Liugongdao, two ship-based helicopters and some 60 Chinese Marines, the PLA Daily reported. Pakistan deployed two frigates, two missile boats, a fixed-wing anti-submarine aircraft, two vessel-based helicopters and

about 60 members of special forces participating in the drills. The drills would focus on joint cruising, air defence, maritime interception, anti-submarine and live-fire exercises at sea.

Zhou Hanwen, an executive director of the exercise, said that previous China-Pakistan joint naval exercises did not feature anti-submarine and submarine rescue training, and the exercise this time will enhance the two countries' capability of dealing with underwater threats, China Central Television reported.

Zhang said that the training involving submarine will boost the two navies' combat capabilities and show a high level of strategic mutual trust. The goal of the Sea Guardians-2020 drills is to boost the two countries' military cooperation, enhance their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, build a safe maritime environment and enhance the two navies' capability to deal with maritime terrorism and crime, the PLA Daily report said.

Trump impeachment process stuck over question of new testimonies

US? President Donald Trump's impeachment process has moved to the US Senate, which is yet to notify resolution of rules and guidelines to hold the trial amid dispute over the question of allowing new testimonies.



(News Agencies)-A stalemate continues in the US congress on the next step of the Trump impeachment process with the Republicans, who control the Senate, which will hold the trial to determine if the president should be removed from office,

and Democrats, who impeached him in December, not agreeing on allowing new testimonies.

The two parties are locked in a dispute on the question of whether or not to call for new testimonies, from the president's past and current aides, including

former NSA John Bolton. Republicans want to start the trial and leave the question of witnesses to a later stage, while Democrats want to settle it now, upfront, with an assurance on new witnesses.

"It is important that he

immediately publish this resolution, so that, as I have said before, we can see the arena in which we will be participating, appoint managers and transmit the articles to the Senate," Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House of Representatives said in a letter to Democratic lawmakers, hours after McConnell declared he has the votes to pass a resolution laying out the rules and guidelines of the trial and could do so as soon as the speaker sent across the two articles of impeachment in December.

"We have the votes," McConnell told reporters earlier Tuesday to pass the resolution on the guidelines, which is modelled on the one adopted by the Senate 20 years ago for the impeachment trial of then president Bill Clinton, which allows starting the trial and determines the issue of new testimonies later.

Democrats, who fear that the

Republican leadership wants a short trial without new witnesses, have pointed to a key difference between the two impeachments: Clinton had cooperated with the process and allowed aides to testify, whereas Trump has fought it from the start, prevented officials from testifying and refused to release documents. Some officials still testified, defying the president.

But there are plenty more who the Democrats want to see testify, including Bolton, who had a ringside view to the president's alleged efforts to coerce Ukraine to investigate his political rivals, by withholding military aid to Kyiv and a White House meeting, which is at the heart of the impeachment case. And he did not approve of it, more crucially. He had likened it to a "drug deal" and had a dim view of those helping it, such as the president's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani. Bolton has said he is ready to testify if subpoenaed.

Thinking of Buying/Selling ?



WINZONE REALTY INC.



Baldev Singh

Associate Broker/Notary Public

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

Cell : 917-224-7395

Email : josanbaldev@yahoo.com

Flights to US, Europe longer by upto 40 mins as flights over Iran rerouted



Dhananjay Kumar said in a statement.

The statement further said that the rerouting may lead to increase in flying time by approximately 20 minutes for flights from Delhi and 30-40 minutes for flights from Mumbai. Many other commercial airlines have already rerouted flights crossing the Middle East to avoid possible danger amid escalating tensions between the United States and Iran.

Australian carrier Qantas said it was altering its London to Perth routes to avoid Iran and Iraq airspace until further notice. The longer route meant that Qantas

would have to carry fewer passengers and more fuel to The US Federal Aviation Administration said it was barring American pilots and carriers from flying in areas of Iraqi, Iranian and some Persian Gulf airspace. The agency warned of the "potential for miscalculation or mis-identification" for civilian aircraft amid heightened tensions between the US and Iran. The Russian aviation agency, Rosaviatsia, also issued an official recommendation for all Russian airlines to avoid flying over Iran, Iraq, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman "due to existing risks for the safety of international civil flights".

(News Agencies)-The Air India on Wednesday rerouted its flights overflying Iran to Europe and US in the wake of a missile strike by Tehran on US airbases in Iraq. "The Safety of our passengers and crew members comes first. In light of the tensions within the Iranian airspace a decision to temporarily reroute flights of Air India (AI) and Air India Express (AIX) overflying Iran has been taken," Air India spokesperson

Oil prices fall as alarm over Iran rocket strike fades

Prices gave up most of their early gains as oil production facilities remain unaffected by attacks.

(News Agencies)- Oil futures fell on Wednesday from peaks hit in frenzied early trading after a rocket attack by Iran on American forces in Iraq raised the spectre of a spiralling Middle East conflict and disruption to crude flows. Prices gave up most of their early gains as oil production facilities remain unaffected by attacks. Tweets by U.S. President Donald Trump and Iran's foreign minister also appeared to signal a period of calm - for now.

Brent crude futures were down 49 cents, or 0.72%, at \$67.78 by around 1254 GMT, after earlier rising to their highest since mid-September at \$71.75.

West Texas Intermediate crude futures were down 76 cents, or

1.21%, at \$61.94 a barrel. WTI has seesawed through the day. The futures earlier hit \$65.85, the highest since late April last year, before briefly being down by over \$1 from the previous close. Iran's missile attack on U.S.-led forces in Iraq came early on Wednesday, hours after the funeral of Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the country's elite Quds Force killed in a U.S. drone strike on Jan. 3.

Tehran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles from Iranian territory against at least two Iraqi military bases hosting U.S.-led coalition personnel, the U.S. military said on Tuesday.

Stock, currency and gold markets were also roiled by the attacks. Trump said in a tweet that an assessment of casualties and damage from the strikes was

underway and that he would make a statement on Wednesday morning U.S. time. "All is well!" Trump said in the Twitter post.

Temporary phenomenon?

Early indications suggested no U.S. casualties, one source told Reuters, although other officials declined to comment. Iranian state television said 80 "American terrorists" had been killed and U.S. helicopters and military equipment damaged.

Iraq, Germany, Denmark and Norway said none of their troops were killed or injured.

Executives and analysts said oil markets remained focused for now on the targets in the Wednesday attack being military, rather than oil industry facilities.

"Now the price move will depend



on what the red line will be for Trump. After the initial reaction, gains have been taken back," Olivier Jakob of consultancy Petromatrix said. "Headlines about Saudi's Bahri shipping, likely a temporary suspension, show that what is happening in the region is going to have some impact on oil flows. We're seeing this on freight rates now, so the risk on supply cannot be fully discounted." Saudi Arabia's state tanker operator Bahri temporarily suspended transits through the

Strait of Hormuz, the Wall Street Journal reported. In a research note, Goldman Sachs maintained its three-month view for U.S. oil at \$63 a barrel. "The recent rally in oil prices is unsustainable without actual supply disruption," the bank said. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries will respond to any possible oil shortages if necessary but it also has "limitations", the United Arab Emirates energy minister said on Wednesday.

Fact Check: Know the truth behind viral video showing US's attack on Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani

(News Agencies)- A video is being shared on social media with a claim that it shows footage of the American airstrike on Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad, Iraq. From Facebook to Whatsapp, the video has been massively shared across different platforms with the same claim. The claim, however, is false. The black and white footage shows movement of a convoy

at night. Within seconds, the cars explode and a few human-like figures run away from the place of the incident. Eventually, the video shows that the figures are gunned down too.

"Footage of American drone attack on Soleimani. Sadness is they are not even leaving people running with fire to save their life..!", wrote a Twitter user and shared the video.

A reverse image search of the clip's first frame quickly revealed that the video is not of the US

airstrike which killed Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani. It's not even a real-life video and is a part of a stimulation game from Byte Conveyor Studios. A search on TinEye offered the same result. So, the video is not real and the claim is false. Here's the full version of the simulation game a part of which is now being shared as the video showing the US's attack on Qasem Soleimani. The video was shared on YouTube by the developers back in 2015:



Hence, the video which is being shared with the claim that it shows USA's airstrike on Iranian

leader Qasem Soleimani is not a real-life video and the claim is false.

Ghosn's escape: How the wealthy and powerful evade justice



EUGENE HOHES/OUTLINE

Carlos Ghosn, the former chairman of Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors, escaped Japan on Sunday, where he was awaiting trial on financial misconduct charges. Unlike many bail-jumpers who miss court dates because they are often impoverished, addicted to drugs, or unfamiliar with the court system, Ghosn reveals just how easy it is for the wealthy and powerful to evade justice. Once a highly-respected businessman, Ghosn's arrest in November 2018 made headlines around the world. He was subsequently forced out at Nissan and Mitsubishi before resigning from

his post as CEO of Renault. As a condition of his release on bail set at 500 million yen -- the equivalent of \$4.5 million -- last April, he was restricted to house arrest, subjected to 24-hour surveillance at his Tokyo residence, and ordered to turn over all three of his passports (Ghosn is a citizen of France, Brazil, and Lebanon). Ghosn, who fled to Lebanon this week, and is the subject named on an active Interpol arrest warrant, emailed a statement on Tuesday accusing the Japanese justice system of being "rigged," and denying he had "fled justice" -- maintaining he was a victim of a

conspiracy and "political persecution."

It may be true that Japanese courts are notorious for an almost 100% conviction rate. And due process provisions are distinctly different than those in the United States and other Western countries -- Japan's system has been referred to as "hostage justice" since the accused can be detained and subject to interrogations for up to 23 days prior to indictment. Regardless of the inadequacies of the Japanese justice system, the financial misconduct charges leveled against Ghosn were considered solid.

He must have recognized that his astounding wealth would provide little protection for him in his trial, which was scheduled for April. And so he set in motion an international operation that would have made the creative screenwriters of *The Great Escape* feel wholly inadequate. Just how did Ghosn pull off such an audacious maneuver? According to Reuters and the Financial Times, Ghosn was smuggled out of Tokyo by a private security company.

Ghosn boarded a flight bound for Turkey, where he accessed a connecting flight to Lebanon, according to the Anadolu news agency. The governor of Istanbul said Turkey has already detained seven people in connection with the investigation into his escape. Wild theories have already spread like wildfire, roundly humiliating his host country in the process. But what is most important in attempts to grasp just how this international plot was devised and successfully effected is this -- only a well-connected bail-jumper with access to boatloads of cash could effect such a complex getaway.

We certainly don't have all the details behind his escape. And since Lebanon and Japan do not share an extradition agreement,

Ghosn may never face justice in Japan, or anywhere else for that matter.

Do not expect to hear news reports of Japanese commandos transgressing sovereign borders on a secret rendition to bring Ghosn to justice. As sinister as financial misconduct is, this can't compare to cases like Adolf Eichmann, the architect of Hitler's "Final Solution" who was tracked down, abducted, and returned to Israel for trial and hanging. You also won't find similarities with SEAL Team 6's operation to capture or kill Osama bin Laden. It simply isn't worth an international crisis when it comes to capturing a well-heeled absconder accused of financial crimes.

And yet this sad episode is but another of the countless examples of how wealthy suspects expertly understand just how to circumvent multi-jurisdictional criminal justice systems, and why collaborative law enforcement around the world is a difficult endeavor. Thus far, Carlos Ghosn has outwitted and beaten the system where cash is king.

But then again, he's been engaged in an expensive game of chess, while the rule of law was playing checkers.

Australian bushfires point to an ominous pattern

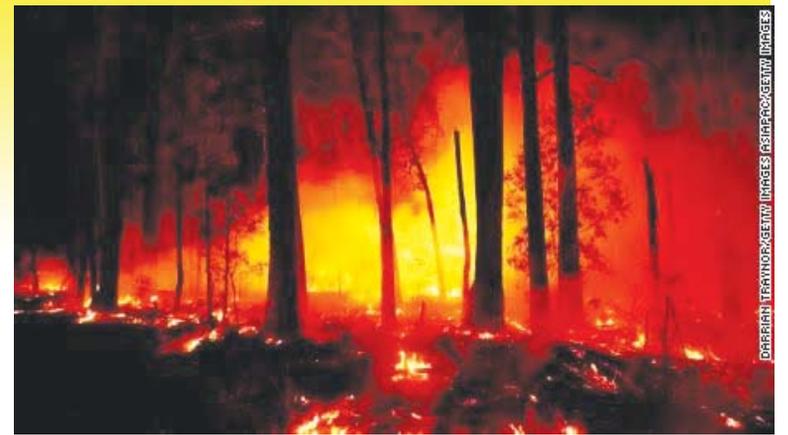
Apocalyptic scenes are playing out across Australia as bushfires have burned millions of acres and ravaged more than 1,000 homes in New South Wales alone. The bright orange haze may look like something out of a dystopic science fiction film -- or even Dante's *Inferno* -- but this is Australia's current reality. A total of 20 people have died, and the photographs of human suffering are foreboding: native Australians have poured out of smoke-shrouded towns as the flames creep nearer, while people along the coast have taken refuge on beaches. These are scenes from an Earth that is becoming uninhabitable amid raging wildfires, severe hurricanes and floods, record droughts and rising sea levels that have already submerged islands. The climate crisis is claiming human lives, and the body count will grow. The worldwide community of climate scientists says that ever larger swathes of our world could burn if the climate crisis continues to trigger extreme weather events like record-breaking temperatures and extended dry



spells.

They have been ringing the alarms bells for years now. In late 2018, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a damning report stating that because we have prevaricated for so long -- climate change has been well documented since the late 1980s -- greenhouse gas emissions could cause global warming to reach the crucial threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by as early as 2030. This would lead to greater sea level rise, extreme weather and food shortages for hundreds of millions of people. The recent fires that have ravaged North

America's west coast, Europe, the Amazon and the Arctic Circle should have been enough, together with all of the other mounting evidence, to bring politicians to their senses and convince even hardcore climate skeptics that global warming is already impacting our world with even more dire consequences to come if we do not reverse course. In fact, the only point where the scientists have erred is in their predictions about how fast temperatures will climb, and how resounding the shorter-term consequences would be. The global wildfires are one case in point. The ever hotter, drier weather, exacerbated by forest



mismanagement in some cases, is causing higher-intensity, faster-moving fires that can turn into erratic firestorms, argues Marc Castellnou, president of the Spanish independent wildfire prevention group Pau Costa Foundation. Castellnou said that many experts initially thought that the ferocious blazes in Europe, California and Australia in 2009 and 2012 were perhaps freak phenomena. But then fierce wildfires in Chile and Portugal in 2017, followed by fires in Greece and California the year after, confirmed an ominous pattern. "That was the new normal arriving. 2018 has confirmed that," he told *Horizon*: The EU

Research & Innovation Magazine. This kind of lethal wildfire is of an entirely different quality: "It eats everything," Castellnou says. Firefighters are nearly helpless against blazes of this intensity, he says. The current fires in Australia are already the most destructive ever in terms of reach. Records for the region's hottest days -- up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit -- have been shattered one after another, and meteorologists say more blistering weather is on its way. Low humidity and stiff winds have only complicated firefighting and rescue efforts, which now include 10,000 emergency personnel and the Australian Defense Force.

Much of Puerto Rico still without power after worst earthquake in a century

Many Puerto Ricans woke up on Wednesday to a second day without electricity after the island's worst earthquake in a century knocked out power, collapsed homes and killed at least one person. All schools remained closed and public employees except police and health workers stayed at home as engineers checked the safety of buildings after Tuesday's 6.4-magnitude quake and powerful aftershocks.

Some Puerto Ricans in the hard-hit south of the island moved beds outside on Tuesday night and slept outdoors, fearful their homes would crumble if another earthquake hit after a week of tremors, the governor, Wanda Vázquez, told reporters.

Nearly 500,000 people had power service restored by Wednesday morning, up from 100,000 the night before, and the island was generating about 542 megawatts of electricity, the power authority AEE said, still far short of the demand of 2,000 megawatts. The hardest-hit municipality was the south-west coastal town of Guánica. More than 200 people had taken shelter in a gymnasium after a first quake on Monday, only for the latest shake to damage that structure, forcing them to sleep outside.

Among them was 80-year-old Lupita Martínez, who sat in the dusty parking lot with her 96-year-old husband by her side. He was sleeping in a makeshift bed, a dark blue coat covering him. "There's no power. There's no water. There is nothing. This is horrible," Martínez said.

The US federal disaster agency Fema said Donald Trump had signed an emergency declaration for Puerto Rico because of the quake. As authorities on the island assessed damage from the latest tremor, Democrats in Congress issued demands that the administration release \$8.3bn in disaster recovery approved after the island was slammed by Hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017.

Democratic 2020 candidates also weighed in with calls for official assistance - and criticized the administration for holding up aid after Maria.

A Fema report into its response to Hurricanes Irma, María and Harvey in 2017, which overall affected 47 million people, concluded the agency needed to

improve "overall readiness and resiliency for future incidents". In October, the housing and urban development secretary, Ben Carson, was forced to defend the agency against accusations that administrators intentionally missed a legally required deadline that would have given billions in federal housing funds to the island.

"The Trump administration has failed the people of Puerto Rico," Bernie Sanders said in his tweet, adding: "We must do everything we can to rebuild."

Joe Biden said it was "unconscionable" that disaster recovery work remained undone and called for delivery of "concrete support" to Puerto Rico.

"I'll fight to ensure they receive the disaster assistance they need and deserve to recover from these earthquakes," Elizabeth Warren tweeted.

Pete Buttigieg said Puerto Ricans "must be assured the administration will act quickly". Senators Amy Klobuchar and Cory Booker also issued calls for a coherent official response.



About 750 people spent Tuesday night in shelters in southern towns hit hardest by the earthquake. Television images showed flattened homes and apartment buildings with deep cracks running down their exteriors in communities such as Guánica and Ponce.

Bottled water, batteries and flashlights ran low at supermarkets in the capital, San Juan, and long lines formed

outside gas stations.

Puerto Ricans are used to dealing with hurricanes but powerful quakes are rare on the island. "There's a lot of uncertainty, this is the first time this has happened to us," said Patricia Alonso, 48, who lost power and water at her home and headed to her mother's apartment building with her 13-year-old son as it had a generator.

Tuesday's quake struck at a

depth of six miles (10km) at 4.24am near Ponce, the US Geological Survey said.

As the climate crisis escalates..... the Guardian will not stay quiet. This is our pledge: we will continue to give global heating, wildlife extinction and pollution the urgent attention and prominence they demand. The Guardian recognises the climate emergency as the defining issue of our times.

Trump has created his biggest foreign policy crisis yet

A consistent theme of Donald Trump's presidency is how the seemingly endless post-9/11 wars in the greater Middle East have wasted trillions of dollars.

Trump believes he was elected, in part, to draw down from these wars -- and in the past year he has done just that, both in Afghanistan and in Syria.

Then came Thursday's air strike, ordered by Trump, that killed arguably the most important commander in the Middle East, the Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani.

As global affairs analyst Max Boot pointed out Friday on CNN, the US has not killed a senior military leader of another country since 1943, when it shot down the plane carrying Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the mastermind of Pearl Harbor.

This represents a serious escalation of the long-simmering confrontation between the United States and Iran, since Soleimani was effectively the leader of Iran's armed forces.

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has vowed to



avenge Soleimani's death. And given Iran's proxies across the Middle East -- from Lebanon to Iraq, from Syria to Yemen -- as well as Iran's substantial military and ballistic missile capabilities, it's a threat that must be taken seriously. Indeed, on Friday, the United States urged the evacuation of all US citizens from Iraq immediately. And Trump now faces what is likely the most significant foreign policy crisis of his presidency -- part of which he has created for himself. To paraphrase Leon Trotsky: You may not be interested in the wars of the Middle East, but those wars are interested in you.

But Trump is not the first American president to learn how difficult it can be to fully extricate the US from the region.

President Jimmy Carter was confronted by the hostage crisis at the US embassy in Tehran that helped contribute to his one-term presidency.

President Ronald Reagan had to pull back from Lebanon after 241 US servicemen were killed in Beirut by a truck bombing in 1983 that was mounted by the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia.

And Reagan's presidency was nearly derailed by the harebrained Iran-Contra scheme to swap arms with Iran in return for American

and European hostages that were held by Hezbollah in Lebanon.

President George H.W. Bush had to respond to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 that seemed to also threaten neighboring Saudi Arabia by sending hundreds of thousands of American soldiers to expel Saddam from Kuwait.

Bill Clinton's presidency saw the rise of al Qaeda. On Clinton's watch, the terrorist group bombed two US embassies in Africa, killing more than two hundred people in 1998.

Two years later, the group attacked the USS Cole in Yemen, killing 17 American sailors. 9/11 was one of the hinge events of American history. As a result, President George W. Bush launched a war in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and the Taliban -- and also a war of choice two years later in Iraq.

President Barack Obama dramatically increased the covert CIA drone campaign targeting al Qaeda in Pakistan and in Yemen.

Make sure you do these 5 things before your best friend's wedding



It is important that you are prepared in advance well before the celebrations begin for your best friend's wedding.

It is important that you are prepared in advance well before the celebrations begin for your best friend's wedding. One can definitely do without last-minute stress when such a significant event is coming up. It's without a doubt one of the most exciting times you are going to have in your life, but at the same time, there is the

responsibility of being there for her at such an important moment in her life.

In the lead up to the wedding, the bride will feel anxious due to the various ways in which her life would change soon. But in order to be there for her completely, you need to sort out certain things from your end too.

1. Plan your work schedule

Do not wait for just a few weeks before the wedding to ask for leave. This is because a colleague of yours might also want to take off during that time or you might be given an additional responsibility then. You need to apply for leave at least a month before so that your team gets enough time to plan the office work during your absence.

2. Wedding clothes

You won't want to turn up at your best friend's wedding without a good set of clothes. It's important that you choose your clothes for each function well in advance, to avoid last-minute panic attacks. It can be quite painful when you suddenly realise that the wedding is three days away and you don't have the correct choice of clothes.

The best option is to set a deadline in advance outlining by when you should have all your clothes ready and in the house.

3. The gift

The bride and bridegroom are going to be showered with gifts no doubt, but you need to make sure you choose something which they would definitely appreciate. Since she is your best friend, you would know what she likes the most, so choose wisely!

4. Be available

In the run up to the wedding, there could be a variety of issues which could crop up for which your friend could need your help. That does not mean that you need to be physically present for her all the time, but being available on call and Whatsapp can do the job too.

5. Planning advice

As far as the wedding preparations, food menu, location and such other logistics are concerned, it is your friend, her parents and the boy's parents who shall be taking all the decisions.

However, when there are instances you feel that something could be done better or they might be going wrong somewhere, do pitch in. Remember, don't interfere, but your insights could definitely help.

Poor sexual health more common in women than men. Here's why

Researchers have found that poor sexual health is more common in women and affects them in more diverse ways than men. According to the study, published in the journal BMC Public Health, out of 12,132 men and women included in the research, 17 per cent of men and 47.5 per cent of women in the UK reported poor sexual health. "Sexual health is an umbrella term that covers several different health risks, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancy, sexual function problems and sexual coercion," said study lead author Alison Parkes from the University of Glasgow in the UK. "A greater understanding of how these risks are patterned across the population is needed to improve the targeting and delivery of sexual health programmes," Parkes added. To get a better idea of how sexual health varies within the UK population, a team of researchers investigated patterns of sexual health

markers, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or sexual function problems, in 12,132 sexually active men and women, aged 16-74 from England, Scotland and Wales, who were interviewed between 2010 and 2012.

They also examined associations of sexual health with socio-demographic, health and lifestyle characteristics, as well as with satisfaction or distress with a person's sex life. Based on markers of sexual health that were most common in different groups of people, the researchers identified sexual health classes, four of which were common to both men and women; Good Sexual Health (83 per cent of men, 52 per cent of women), Wary Risk-takers (four per cent of men, two per cent of women), Unwary Risk-takers (four per cent of men, seven per cent women), and Sexual Function Problems (nine per cent of men, seven per cent of women). Two additional sexual

A recent study examined associations of sexual health with socio-demographic, health and lifestyle characteristics, as well as with satisfaction or distress with a person's sex life.



health classed were identified in women only; a Low Sexual Interest class which included 29 per cent of women and a Highly Vulnerable class, reporting a range of adverse experiences across all markers of sexual health, which included two per

cent of women.

Highly Vulnerable women were more likely to report an abortion than all other female sexual health classes except unwary risk takers, and most likely to report STIs, the study said. "We identified several groups who are

not well served by current sexual health intervention efforts: men and women disregarding STI risks, women with a low interest in sex feeling distressed or dissatisfied with their sex lives, and women with multiple sexual health problems," she said.

Hemp oil benefits list



Hemp oil can refer to a full-spectrum oil from the Cannabis sativa plant or hemp seed oil, which is oil that comes from just the seeds of the hemp plant.

There is very little risk of intoxication from hemp oil as all forms of hemp oil come from food-grain strains of hemp. The authors of a study in the journal Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research note that food-grain strains of hemp must contain less than 0.3 percent tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is the compound that causes the so-called "high" of marijuana. Hemp oil is not the same as cannabidiol (CBD) oil. The production of CBD oil uses the stalks, leaves, and flowers of the hemp plant, which contain a higher concentration of CBD, another potentially beneficial compound in the plant. Hemp seed oil comes from the

small seeds of the Cannabis sativa plant. The seeds do not contain the same levels of compounds as the plant itself, but they still have a rich profile of nutrients, fatty acids, and useful bioactive compounds. Full-spectrum hemp oil that also contains plant matter may add other effective compounds, which may help with certain health issues, such as inflammation. The oil from the hemp seed is highly nutritious and may be especially helpful for the skin. The vitamins and fatty acids in this oil may help keep the skin healthy and prevent breakouts. A 2014 study looking at the lipid profile of hemp seed oil found that it is rich in healthful oils and fatty acids.

The abundance of fatty acids may make the oil an excellent choice for nourishing the skin and protecting it from inflammation, oxidation, and other causes of aging. The authors of a 2014 review note that the topical application of hemp seed oil strengthens the skin and makes it better able to resist infection. The authors also suggest that hemp seed oil may be a helpful treatment for a range of skin issues, including:

- " eczema
- " dermatitis
- " psoriasis
- " varicose eczema
- " lichen planus, an inflammatory skin condition
- " acne rosacea

These benefits are likely to be

due to the high quantity of beneficial fats and other helpful compounds in the oil.

Brain health
The fatty acid content of hemp seed oil may also be good for the brain, which requires plenty of healthful fats to operate properly. Hemp seed oil is also rich in other compounds that may help protect the brain. A recent study in mice found that a hemp seed extract containing these active compounds was able to help protect the brain against inflammation. The authors note that hemp seed oil contains polyphenols, which may play a role in protecting the brain. Although these initial results look promising, scientists need to

carry out studies in humans to confirm the benefits of this oil.

Heart health
The comprehensive nutrient profile of hemp seed oil means that it may also be good for the heart. However, much of the information that is currently available comes from older studies or research that uses animal models. An older study in the journal Nutrition & Metabolism highlights the nutrient profile of hemp seeds and notes that they might have a positive effect on various health issues, such as high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, and cholesterol levels. A 2014 review concludes that an increase in alpha-linolenic acid, one of the fatty acids in hemp oil, appears to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. This fatty acid, which doctors call linolenic acid, is also present in fish oils and flaxseed oil. However, the researchers call for more clinical trials to confirm these results.

Full-spectrum hemp oil benefits
Full-spectrum hemp oil also includes plant matter, which adds additional compounds, such as CBD. Although hemp seeds contain small amounts of these compounds, a higher concentration may bring some additional benefits to the body.

Natural pain relief
Many people use hemp or CBD oil as a form of natural pain relief, especially if the pain is a result of inflammation. Those who do not want to take over-the-counter or prescription pain medications may turn to a high-quality hemp oil for relief.

Hyperthyroidism: Foods to eat and avoid

Hyperthyroidism, a type of thyrotoxicosis, is a condition in which the thyroid gland produces too much thyroid hormone. Some people refer to this condition as an overactive thyroid. The most common cause of hyperthyroidism is an autoimmune condition called Graves' disease. The symptoms of an overactive thyroid include unintentional weight loss, anxiety, sweating, frequent bowel movements, difficulty sleeping, and muscle weakness. Hyperthyroidism is much more common in women than in men. In this article, we discuss how

diet affects hyperthyroidism and provide lists of foods to eat and avoid. How does diet affect hyperthyroidism? Foods to eat The following foods can have benefits for people with an overactive thyroid: Low iodine foods If a person is planning to receive radioactive iodine treatment for hyperthyroidism, their doctor may ask them to follow a low iodine diet. Foods and drinks that are low in iodine include:

- " noniodized salt "
- " egg whites "
- " fresh or frozen vegetables "

coffee " herbs and spices " vegetable oils " sugar, jam, jelly, and honey " unsalted nuts and nut butter " soda and lemonade " beer and wine " moderate portions of beef, chicken, turkey, veal, and lamb " fruit and fruit juices The American Thyroid Association offer tips on how to follow a low iodine diet. Cruciferous vegetables Some cruciferous vegetables contain compounds that decrease thyroid hormone production and may reduce iodine uptake by the thyroid. Both of these effects may be beneficial for a person with hyperthyroidism. However,



anyone with hypothyroidism (decreased thyroid function) should avoid eating large amounts of these foods. These cruciferous vegetables include: "

Brussels sprouts and cabbage " collard greens, mustard greens, and turnip roots and greens " kale and arugula " radishes and rutabagas

Red carpet fashion

Classic blacks, whites, reds, pinks spotted on gowns and tuxedos; strapless neckline and choker are a 2020 trend



Hollywood stars and various celebrities got set to shine on the red carpet as the year's first award ceremony took place under the twinkling Tinseltown sky in Los Angeles, California. Golden Globes is also dubbed as the party of the year. Hosted by British comedian, Ricky Gervais, the stars came dressed in some of their finest for the gala. The annual awards show went vegan,

with thousands of guests being served a plant-based meal for the first time ever. Here's a look at the noteworthy fashion of the 2020 Golden Globes: Pink had a moment Actors Kirsten Dunst and Dakota Fanning stunned in soft hues of pink on the red carpet while Isla Fisher and Tiffany Haddish chose a bold hot pink. Priyanka Chopra-Jonas stunned in her Cristina

Ottaviano pink off-shoulder gown which she wore with a Bvlgari diamond necklace. Black and white The classic black and white is a fashion staple at most red carpets. This year was no different with most A-listers choosing the two shades for their red carpet fashion along with the outfits they wore for the after-party. Once Upon a Time in Hollywood actor Margot Robbie wore a strapless top with a burst of encrusted colour along with a white column skirt by Chanel, while leaving her blonde hair loose and beach wavy at the after-party. Style icon Billy Porter wowed the Golden Globes red carpet with an all-white tuxedo with a long, feathered white train by Alex Vinash. The pop star and actress Jennifer Lopez sported a giant green and

tuxedo with a ruffled collar blouse and a long ball skirt. Leonardo DiCaprio made a striking appearance at the red carpet in a black tuxedo. Brad Pitt managed to slay the hunk look in his tuxedo too. Nick Jonas too wore a sharp black tuxedo and complemented the pink on his wife and actor

Priyanka Chopra. Adam Driver was spotted in a classic black suit and a bow on the red carpet. Salma Hayek went for a blue bustier with a plunging neckline with a sheer white slit skirt for her after-party look. Ladies in red A red dress is the stuff of Hollywood legends, and some of Hollywood's biggest stars delivered. Nicole Kidman went for a strapless crimson Versace gown with a train and strappy stilettos. Scarlett Johansson kept it simple and elegant in a strapless Vera Wang gown with a plunging neckline in a hue that matched her name perfectly. Olivia Coleman opted for a red Emilia Wickstead gown with dramatic puff sleeves and an Empire waist. The puff sleeve pattern and the red is from Emilia's AW '19 collection and has been seen on Deepika Padukone, Helena Bonham Carter and other actors. Helen Mirren and Sophia Vergara chose deep reds for their respective dresses at the Golden Globes after-party and looked stunning. Midnight blues Midnight blue was quite a rage at this year's Golden Globes. Ana de Armas looked like a million bucks in a glittering, strapless Ralph & Russo gown with a full skirt. Beanie Feldstein was a stunner in her strapless blue Oscar de la Renta gown and matching headband.



Underwater review

Kristen Stewart's soggy, silly monster movie

A much-delayed attempt to resurrect the Alien formula underwater has some effective moments but fails to justify its own existence

Diving into the January release schedule, unofficial dumping ground of studios, can give one a sinking feeling here in the US. After being spoiled by the extravagant riches of awards season, a brief, packed period overflowing with high-quality films crafted with care and precision, we're then given malformed byproducts, perhaps promising on paper but quite often punishing on screen. Previous years have offered the Matthew McConaughey stinker *Serenity*, the masochistically unfunny spoof *Fifty Shades of Black* and, just last week, an entirely unnecessary redo of *The Grudge*. Filmed three years ago and finally being unleashed on audiences with minimal fanfare, the *Alien*-aping sci-fi thriller *Underwater* is the most

frustrating kind of January movie: one that's almost, kind of, nearly, worth seeing. It's a good movie that got soggy, turning it into an average one instead, a script with blurred pages, ink seeping into one big murky splurge. The setup is simple, and loosely familiar to genre fans. A crew of aquatic researchers are left in disarray when an earthquake destroys most of their facility. They're unsure what caused it but there are concerns that the drilling team they work alongside has found something that should have been left buried. You know the deal. For a while, *Underwater*'s brisk goofiness is, if anything, a refreshing palate cleanser after the more serious-minded offerings of late. There's an impressively ominous scene-setter as we glide all the way down, accompanied

by an unsettlingly sinister score, and once we're we're onboard, we're thrown straight into the action as our heroine, played by Kristen Stewart, fights to survive a tense sequence of destruction. It continues to move along at a fair lick and while for the most part, it recalls better, smarter examples of the genre, the bare minimum is done well enough. But as the last act comes into view, so does a creeping realisation that, er, that's all there is because when the formula does allow space for innovation, the script from Brian Duffield and Adam Cozad sticks a bit too closely to well-recycled beats, originated in *Alien* and never far from our screens since. When the crew members inevitably start getting picked off, their death scenes, because of the film's



mass-audience-pleasing PG-13 rating, are largely incoherent. At one point a character has to remind someone, and us, that a death actually did just occur. It's of course entirely possible to construct a film such as this with a lower rating in mind, but the script's insistence on including theoretically gory moments suggests that a neutering has taken place and sloppy studio tampering has left the movie hopelessly defanged. The three years that it has taken for the film to reach us has aged it in a

number of ways but most notably in the decision to cast TJ Miller as comedy support, a tiresome jester who has since been mercifully pushed aside by the industry. He's especially grating here, spewing unfunny quips to a cast of actors who find it hard to suppress their fatigue. It has not been a great time for Stewart of late, an actor who had managed, quite brilliantly, to escape the shadow of the *Twilight* franchise to become an intriguingly unknowable arthouse darling.

Chhapaak movie review

Deepika Padukone is stellar in Meghna Gulzar's impactful film



Chhapaak movie review: Meghna Gulzar's film is all heart as it takes on the scourge of acid attacks. Deepika Padukone shows the mastery on her craft as she emerges as Malti.

Chhapaak
Director - Meghna Gulzar
Cast - Deepika Padukone, Vikrant Massey
The opening shot of the film recreates the protests that followed the Delhi gang-rape case in 2012, setting the tone for *Chhapaak*. Based on a real life incident of acid attack violence and a survivor's (Laxmi Aggarwal) story, the film starring Deepika Padukone as the protagonist leaves an impact though it lacks the shock value that one would expect from watching a film about such a heinous hate crime.
Director Meghna Gulzar, who

has earlier helmed *Talvar* and *Raazi*, once again treats her story with maturity and doesn't get carried away. She understands the nuances of the subject and instead of evoking sympathy, she sends out a stronger message of standing tall and celebrating life even after you've faced adversity at its worst.
Chhapaak narrates the story of 19-year-old Malti (Padukone) who, as a happy teenager, aspired to be a singer, but 'chhapaak' of acid changes the course of her life. Her life, now, revolves around working for an NGO for acid attack victims,

battling her court case and getting corrective surgeries at the hospital. For those creating a ruckus over how the makers have changed the religion of the attacker in the film, that's not true. The man is named Bashir Khan aka Babbu and Rajesh turns out to be Malti's boyfriend. The film starts from Malti's present day when she is hunting for a job, having mustered the courage to come out of the emotional trauma the acid attack wreaked on her. The physical scars still haunt her and I quite like the references to that -- the interview where Malti says 'There's no category called acid attack survivors or else I would have ticked it', or when she's told 'beauty parlour mein kaam karne ke liye beauty ka hona jaruri hai'. Even though Meghna shows a great grip on her story and direction, her constrained approach while telling Malti's story does leave some blanks

and loose ends. For instance, Deepika's alcoholic father is there in a couple of heartwarming scenes but suddenly he's nowhere to be seen, leaving you to assume he has died. Same goes for her brother who is shown to have an acrimonious relationship with his sister, but that's all we know about their equation.
While you stay invested in *Chhapaak* despite a second half that drags in part, you hope to see more of Malti's struggle on the personal front, like how did this horrific incident affect her relationship with her parents, friends or even that boyfriend who played a crucial role in her life. But *Chhapaak*, at many places, is reduced to a courtroom drama. Not denying that those were powerful sequences but watching the known can only be interesting to a limit.
Chhapaak has several moments

where you feel the pain of an acid attack survivor -- the scene where Deepika screams looking at her face in the mirror for the first time after the attack, or when she is trying to put an earring but can't are heart-wrenching. Her agony and helplessness touch your heart; more so because at no point Meghna makes her protagonist beg for sympathy or let her succumb to self-pity. Instead she is shown to empower herself and many others, finding her self-worth and making the most of the life that she has to live after the unfortunate incident. Deepika Padukone gets into the skin of Malti's character without any difficulty. Two years after playing a queen in *Padmaavat*, she eschews all vanity to play an acid attack victim and does full justice to it. Even her prosthetic makeup deserves applause because with such a sensitive and delicate subject, you can easily go wrong.

Katrina Kaif: 'I feel extremely grateful and blessed to have had the audiences' support'

Katrina Kaif says she's 'extremely grateful and blessed' about the audiences' love; adds her journey, so far, has been 'incredible'

Back in 2005, when she tasted her first big commercial success [with *Maine Pyaar Kyun Kiya?*], not many must have imagined that Katrina Kaif would go on to become a household name for the next 15 years (and counting). But she kept moving ahead rapidly while also proving her naysayers wrong. And now, as she readies for a busy new year - with Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi* co-starring Akshay Kumar lined up next - the actor is gung-ho. "This year is going to be an exciting one with a variety of films and genres that I would be dabbling with," says Katrina. Excerpts from an interview: 2020 sees you complete 15 years in Bollywood since your breakthrough film, *Maine Pyaar Kyun Kiya?* Do you feel great that audiences continue to love you a lot?

Acting in movies has given me an incredible amount of satisfaction. For me, the most wonderful place to be in is a film set and that's primarily because I just love the process of exploring a character and being part of films which are going to be forever. It's something which is indescribable and an

intrinsic part of me as well. I think one thing that I have continuously tried to do is not to have any set, rigid formula, and to respond instinctively to what I do.

So, despite all the success and fame, at the core, you still remain instinctive. Right?

See, vis-à-vis work, the simple idea is to try and not have any concrete plan as such. I think your choices have to be instinctive and ought to come from the heart. Especially, in the last few years, the joy that I have found in playing characters in films such as *Zero* or *Bharat* has given me an incredible sense of fulfilment. And I really enjoy that process of building a character.

Over the years, you have constantly - and successfully - redefined yourself with changing times. What's the mantra behind it? For starters, I think it's very important to not take yourself too seriously and to just enjoy every moment. You should relish the process of being on a film set, enjoy the work that you do as well as every moment, and just let the outcome follow. When I've to say yes [to a film] or when I am in the middle of it, the way I judge things is this: 'how has the process been for me?', 'have



I felt connected on the set with the character, my director and co-stars?', and 'has the process been one where I felt we have all - creatively - put in our complete best.?'

Recently, Ormax Media announced you as the 'most popular female star of the decade', ahead of names such as Deepika Padukone, Priyanka Chopra and Alia Bhatt. How does it feel? It's amazing. I feel extremely grateful and blessed to have had the audiences' support as well love over all these years. They've

backed me throughout my career - besides helping in my growth as an actor - in the industry. All of it brings a smile to your face as you know that the audience is with you, and is supporting wholeheartedly. My journey, so far, has felt really incredible because of the sheer affection from the audience, as well as the industry and the media. I feel as if we have all - including the directors, producers and co-actors that I have worked with - been together on this journey. As we step into the new decade, how do you look at the times ahead? In terms of 2020, I am extremely excited about a few very interesting projects that I am currently in discussions for. I am making sure that I do things, or put myself in spaces where I feel challenged, inspired as well as excited. The idea is to maintain a mix and balance of different kinds of stories as well as genres that excite me. Through that, hopefully, I am able to continue presenting myself in a new way to the audiences and show different aspects of me [as an actor], and, most importantly, put myself in spaces where I can learn and grow as an artist.

Sonakshi Sinha supports Deepika Padukone, says 'Can't sit on the fence any longer'

Actor Sonakshi Sinha has thrown her weight behind Deepika Padukone over her support for students of the Jawaharlal

Nehru University (JNU). The Dabangg actor took to Twitter to express her feelings. She wrote: "No matter which political party you support, do u support violence? Don't visuals of bleeding students and teachers shake you up? We can't sit on the fence any longer. Kudos

to @deepikapadukone for showing up, & all those who spoke for speaking up. This is not the time to stay quiet." On Tuesday, Deepika showed up at Sabarmati T-point in JNU and silently stood with protesting students. Speaking later to Aaj Tak, Deepika said that she was "very angry" over what was happening in JNU. She said: "I am



very angry at what is happening but it is worse that no action is being taken."

"What I wanted to say I said it two years ago when *Padmaavat* was released. What I am seeing today, it pains me. I hope it doesn't become the new normal. That anyone can say anything and they can get away with it. I fear and I'm sad. This is not the foundation of our country." Many Bollywood

celebs have chosen to stay quiet on the issue while others have spoken and protested against the brutality. Actors Richa Chadha, Swara Bhaskar, Dia Mirza, Shabana Azmi, Sandhya Mridul, Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, Sushant Singh; directors Hansal Mehta, Anubhav Sinha, Nikhil and Anurag Kashyap have also supported the students.

Kareena Kapoor dodges tricky questions on Sara Ali Khan-Kartik Aaryan dating rumours: 'None of them have told me that'

Kareena Kapoor Khan is an ace at dodging the rapid fire. In a new video clip from Pinkvilla, she is seen taking a barrage of questions and talks about all the gossip in town - Sara Ali Khan and Kartik Aaryan's dating rumours, her son Taimur Ali Khan and her pay package among other issues. Now, for the uninitiated, Kareena enjoys the reputation of being a repository of all the gossip in Bollywood. In the rapid fire, she was asked about Varun Dhawan and Natasha Dalal's wedding rumours. Answering to that, Kareena said, "I think it is great; I think they make a cute pair and I wish them all the best."

To the question that if she knows who Kartik is dating, Kareena said, "In fact that was one of my questions on my show and he was like he is dating his work." Does she know if Kartik and Sara are dating, she diplomatically said, "I honestly wouldn't know as none of them have told me that and that's the truth."

Kareena is among one of the highest paid

actors in Bollywood. On the issue of her pay package, she said, "I don't talk shop." Not just Kareena's but her son Taimur's nanny's pay package too is news. On the issue of Taimur's nanny speculated to be getting pay package

of Rs 1.5 lakhs, Kareena said, "Like I said, I don't talk shop."

No interview of Kareena can be complete without a question on her son Taimur. On the question of Taimur being the biggest superstar in the 'Khandaan' (implying the biggest among all Bollywood Khans), she said, "Well, in my khandaan (family) not in the real Khandaan. So it's fine." After the anchor disagreed, Kareena continued, "Not at all. He has a lot to achieve. He has

not achieved anything in life right now. So you just want to leave at that."

On the question of producer Rhea Kapoor planning *Veere Di Wedding Part 2*, Kareena said, "Well, I think she is and you know I am super excited about it because I think one (Part 1) was amazing and both Rhea and Sonam are fantastic and I love working with them."



Abbey Clancy displays her phenomenal figure in red lace

lingerie with thigh-high boots as she poses up a storm on a vintage car for sexy shoot

She welcomed her fourth child, baby son Jack, into the world with husband Peter Crouch, in June last year. And Abbey Clancy looked every inch the yummy mummy as she turned up the heat for a new lingerie shoot. The model, 33, showcased her incredibly toned figure as she posed on a vintage car in a red lace bra and a matching thong, teamed with a pair of thigh-high stiletto boots.

Catwalk queen Abbey ensured all eyes were on her washboard abs and lean legs in the flirty two-piece, which also featured heart-shaped detailing. With her tresses styled into messy waves, the blonde bombshell complemented her beauty with a bold smokey-eye make-up look.

The mother-of-four - who finished in second place on the 2006 edition of Britain's Next Top Model - was in her element as she smouldered at the camera in the striking images.

Abbey recently shared the secrets behind maintaining her incredible figure, admitting that it's down to both genetics and a healthy fitness routine.

The media personality told Closer magazine in November: 'I generally eat what I want to in moderation. I don't really struggle with my

weight too much, so I don't have to be focused on what not to eat.

'Everyone in my family is slim and tall. My mother bounced back after kids, so I think my genes are a huge part of it.

'I've been doing more core work for fitness. After having my third baby, I did feel quite weak and tired... Doing your pelvic floor exercises and working on

your core, you just feel stronger.' Her husband, former footballer Peter, 38, hasn't been shy in sharing his appreciation for his partner's stunning figure. During an appearance on Red Stripe Presents: This Feeling TV in October, the ex-sportsman gushed Abbey 'still looks great' after giving birth to four children.

Peter jokingly blamed his stunning wife for their huge family as he said: 'It's her fault I think, she still looks great!' The striker retired in July last year after a successful 21-year football career in a bid to spend more time with daughters Sophia, eight, Liberty, four, and sons Johnny, two, and Jack, seven months.



From Taylor Swift to Parkland: 10 documentaries to watch in 2020

It's been a string of banner years for documentaries, and 2020 seems poised to follow suit, with a number of films examining pop stardom, ambition and celebrity. Documentaries detailing (with cooperation) the lives of such figures as Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, Rihanna, Greta Thunberg and Hillary Clinton are all set to premiere on global streaming services this year, as well as topical features on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and gun safety activism after Parkland. Here are 10 of the most buzzworthy documentaries to catch in 2020:

Rihanna

No second name, subtitle or qualification necessary - the multi-hyphenate



fashion mogul and singer will get her own film treatment in 2020 to stream on Amazon in a whopping \$25m deal. Director Peter Berg, who also directed the Barbadian singer in Battleship, has reportedly worked on the project for years, amassing over 1,200 hours of footage. Rihanna takes an intimate, expansive look at the

superstar's development into one of the world's biggest pop acts and pioneer of the Fenty beauty and fashion lines while providing a window into the star's "personality, humor, philosophies on work, family and love".

Us Kids - In the nearly two years since a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school ended 17 lives,

the survivors in Parkland, Florida, have been bravely, doggedly visible - through social media, the student-led March for Our Lives protests, and in documentaries such as Song of Parkland and the activism-focused After Parkland. This month, there's Us Kids, premiering at Sundance. Directed by Kim A Snyder - who also spent years befriending the

families and community members torn asunder by another horrid school shooting for her 2017 film Newtown - Us Kids will track the students of MSD high school as they became unexpected, and effective, youth leaders and activists. Taylor Swift: Miss Americana - In another high-profile documentary on music stardom, Taylor

Swift: Miss Americana will premiere at Sundance and on Netflix at a still unspecified date. The film will cover, according to director Lana Wilson, a "transformational period in [Swift's] life as she learns to embrace her role not only as a songwriter and performer, but as a woman harnessing the full power of her voice".





INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002

Sonakshi Sinha supports Deepika Padukone



Page 30

Vol. 16

Issue 33

Friday 10 January to 17 January 2020

\$ 1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

'World War III' was trending



meme, and some of President Donald Trump's critics trotted it out to question the timing of the killing of Soleimani, who commanded Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force.

It's much more complicated. "The significance of Thursday's US strike against Qasem Soleimani cannot be overstated because he ran Iran's military operations across the Middle East," Peter Bergen wrote. "Soleimani also oversaw operations against US servicemen in Iraq by Shia militias in which hundreds of American servicemen were killed following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003." The general had "the blood of many Americans on his hands."

Retired US Army Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling noted, "While the Ayatollah Ali Khomeini once described Iran's premier general as his 'living martyr,' most Americans -- myself included -- and many Iraqis, Kurds and Syrians who faced him and

Cond Page on 20

2020 is prime time for Putin



(News Agencies)- For the past few years, Russia has been playing with some asymmetric advantages -- on- and offline. While investing in costly conventional assets to increase its military edge, such as a new hypersonic weapon, Russia has also mobilized aggressive assets in cyberspace. Its cyberwarriors have penetrated some of the United States' most critical pieces of infrastructure, from election systems to nuclear power plants and electric grids -- as well as private homes.

Cond Page on 20

(News Agencies)- In the hours after the Pentagon announced the killing of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani on Thursday, "World War III" was trending on Twitter. Traffic to the US Selective Service, the agency that would be responsible for any eventual military draft, spiked so high that the website crashed.

Also trending was "Wag the Dog," the 1997 movie that conjured up the

notion of a president trying to distract from a scandal by spreading news of overseas conflict. Remarkably, that dark comedy was officially released just days before news broke about President Bill Clinton's real-life scandal, his relationship with a White House intern. That scandal played out as the US fired missiles at Iraq and resulted in an impeachment trial in the Senate. "Wag the Dog" became a pop culture

Town Hosts 2020 Inaugural Ceremony
Supervisor Saladino, Councilman Labriola, Councilwoman Maier, Councilwoman Walsh, Town Clerk LaMarca & Receiver Pravato Sworn Into Office

Cond Page on 19

Australian Officials: As Many as One Billion Animals Could be Lost in Ongoing Bushfires

(News Agencies)-While firefighters from around the world are trying to quell the bushfires and save lives - more than 20 people have died - the images of suffering animals, some found only in Australia, have tugged heartstrings and inspired donations from ordinary citizens and celebrities alike.

CNN reported on what experts are saying: Nearly half a billion animals have been impacted by the fires in [North South Wales] NSW alone, with millions potentially dead, according to ecologists at the University of Sydney.



That figure includes birds, reptiles, and mammals, except bats. It also excludes insects and frogs - meaning the true number is likely much higher. The total number of animals affected nationwide could be as high as a

billion, according to Christopher Dickman, the University of Sydney ecologist who led the report. CNN reports that fires in Australia are worse because of climate change, even as officials in that country report that 183 arrests have been made for fire-related charges, including 24 for arson. "The scale of these fires is unprecedented," Dieter Hochuli, an environmental sciences professor at the University of Sydney, said in the CNN report. "There are substantial concerns about the capacity of these (ecosystems) to rebound from the fires." The team at the

Cond Page on 19

Home Business Auto Insurance

(See Full Page Advt. on Page 16)



NLIGHT INSURANCE

(A Division of Nlight Financial LLC)

Call : 917-612-3158