



\$1 million reward for information on Osama bin Laden's son

The location of Hamza bin Laden, sometimes dubbed the "crown prince of jihad," has been the subject of speculation for years with reports of him living in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria or under house arrest in Iran.

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U.S. denied tens of thousands more visas in 2018 due to travel ban: data

(By our Staff Reporter)- The U.S. State Department refused more than 37,000 visa applications in 2018 due to the Trump administration's travel ban, up from less than 1,000 the previous year when the ban had not fully taken effect, according to agency data released on Tuesday. The United States denies nearly 4 million visa applications a year for a variety of reasons, including for practicing polygamy, abducting children or simply not qualifying for the visa in question. The data released Tuesday was the first

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Why I loved the Oscars this year (and so did the CIA) -- Sorry you did not, Mr. Trump

(By our Staff Reporter)- Almost 30 million people watched the 91st Academy Awards on Sunday night. According to Variety, that was 12 percent more than the 26.5 million who watched the Oscars in 2018. While Sunday's audience was up from 2018's historic low, the audience was still the second smallest ever for an Academy Awards broadcast. Both the CIA and President Donald Trump were watching though

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Credit reporting agencies face pressure from skeptical U.S. Congress



(By our Staff Reporter)- The nation's major credit reporting agencies faced renewed scrutiny from Congress on Tuesday, as lawmakers consider legislation overhauling the industry. Top executives from the three major credit reporting agencies - Equifax Inc, Experian Plc and TransUnion had to defend their business models

before skeptical lawmakers who appeared eager to order changes to the sector following Equifax's massive data breach, disclosed in 2017. "Our nation's consumer credit reporting system is broken," said Representative Maxine Waters, chairwoman of the House Financial Services Committee. "I'm troubled to the point where I do think that we need to start thinking about how we reimagine it and rebuild it from the ground ... We will be introducing legislation."

Continued on Page 19

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Prime Healthcare Services and CEO, Dr. Prem Reddy, to Pay \$1.25 Million to Settle False Claims Act Allegations

PHILADELPHIA (By our staff reporter)- U.S. Attorney William M. McSwain announced today that Prime Healthcare Services, Inc. ("Prime") and Prime's Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Prem Reddy, have agreed to pay the United States \$1.25 million to settle allegations that two Prime hospitals in Pennsylvania - Roxborough Memorial Hospital in Philadelphia and Lower Bucks Hospital in Bristol - knowingly submitted false claims to Medicare by engaging in the following conduct: (1) admitting patients to the hospital for overnight stays who required only less costly, outpatient care and (2) billing for more expensive patient diagnoses than the patients had (the latter practice known as "up-coding").

"We are committed to ensuring that hospitals, companies that own and operate them, and their executives appropriately bill Medicare," said U.S. Attorney McSwain. "Charging the government for more costly services than what the patient actually needs and billing the government for more serious diagnoses than what the patient actually has is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Those who engage in these practices will be

held accountable."

Headquartered in Ontario, California, Prime is one of the largest hospital systems in the nation, with 45 acute-care hospitals located in 14 states. Prime acquired Roxborough Memorial Hospital on February 22, 2012, and Lower Bucks Hospital on October 3, 2012. The Settlement resolves allegations that Prime submitted or caused the submission of fraudulent claims to Medicare. Specifically, from the date that Prime acquired Roxborough and Lower Bucks through September 30, 2013, under Prime management, Roxborough and Lower Bucks hospitals admitted emergency room Medicare patients for costly and medically unnecessary one- and two-day overnight hospital stays, instead of treating the patients in less costly outpatient service or keeping them under observation. In addition, from the dates of acquisition through December 31, 2014, the hospitals upcoded inpatient diagnoses (i.e., billed Medicare for more serious medical conditions than the patients actually had) to increase Medicare payments.

As part of a separate lawsuit in the Central District of California, Prime and Dr. Reddy paid the

United States \$65 million dollars in August 2018 to settle similar Medicare fraud allegations arising out of 14 Prime hospitals in California.

Also in August 2018, Prime, Roxborough Memorial Hospital, Lower Bucks Hospital, and Dr. Reddy entered into a Corporate Integrity Agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) requiring the company to engage in significant compliance efforts over the next five years. Under the agreement, Prime is required to retain an independent review organization to review the accuracy of the company's claims for services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries.

"We expect health care companies to accurately bill federal health care programs for services they provide, not pad profits by charging for more expensive services than were actually provided," said Maureen Dixon, Special Agent in Charge for the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Philadelphia Regional Office. "Our investigators will ensure those who launch such deceptive schemes are held accountable." This settlement resolves a

lawsuit filed under the False Claims Act (FCA) in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania by an employee and former employee of Roxborough Memorial Hospital.

Under the qui tam or whistleblower provisions of the FCA, private citizens are permitted to bring lawsuits on behalf of the United States and obtain a portion of the government's recovery. The FCA also permits the government to intervene and



take over the lawsuit.

"We thank the relators for their invaluable contribution in this case. Together with their lawyers, they provided vital assistance to the government throughout this case.

Ex-Cognizant execs accused of bribing Indian officials

WASHINGTON (By our staff reporter) - The Justice Department alleges two former executives for Cognizant Technology Solutions paid about \$2 million in bribes to Indian officials to build an office campus in the country.

Prosecutors said Friday the information technology giant's former president, Gordon Coburn, and ex-chief legal officer, Steven Schwartz, were charged in an indictment unsealed in New Jersey. They allege Coburn and Schwartz authorized the bribes and concealed them by having a

construction company make the payment. Prosecutors say Cognizant repaid the money through phony construction invoices.

The Justice Department declined to charge Cognizant. In a related case, the company agreed to pay \$25 million to settle charges with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Cognizant said it cooperated with investigators. It called Friday's announcement a "major step forward in putting this behind us."

Former LandCastle Title CEO Nat Hardwick sentenced to 15 years for embezzling \$26 million

(By our staff reporter)- The saga of Nathan (Nat) Hardwick, the former chief executive officer of LandCastle Title and former managing partner of Morris Hardwick Schneider, is finally nearing its end. Back in October, Hardwick was found guilty of embezzling more than \$25 million from his former companies, a crime that destroyed a prominent real estate law firm and left hundreds of people jobless. And this week, a federal judge sentenced Hardwick to serve 15 years in prison for his crimes. In a federal courtroom in Atlanta earlier this week, Hardwick was ordered to serve 15 years in prison after being convicted on 21 counts of wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and one count of making false statements to a federally insured financial institution.

Hardwick was accused of

conspiring with Asha Maurya, the law firm's former chief financial officer, to steal \$26 million from the attorney escrow accounts and operating accounts of Morris Hardwick Schneider and LandCastle Title. The Hardwick scandal first exploded back in 2014, when Hardwick's former partners with the law firm that carried his name sued him for allegedly embezzling \$30 million from the firm's accounts and the accounts of the firm's subsidiary, LandCastle Title. The allegations against Hardwick first surfaced when Fidelity National Financial bailed out LandCastle and stepped in as a 70% owner of the title company after "substantial escrow account misappropriations" were discovered in the accounts of MHS and LandCastle and "precipitated by a significant shortage in the accounts of MHS and LandCastle, of which Fidelity

became informed by the partners of MHS." Fidelity eventually acquired the rest of the company, but the law firm's fate was all but sealed. Hardwick's former partners, Mark and Rod Wittstadt, sued Hardwick, alleging that Hardwick embezzled at least \$30 million from the companies' accounts and trusts. The Wittstadts claimed that Hardwick was using the money to fund a lavish lifestyle, cover real estate investment losses, cover millions in gambling debts, and other investments. Hardwick denied those charges, stating at the time that he is not guilty of "any improper, illegal or unethical conduct," adding that he believed all the money he received was "properly distributed to him as his share of the profits of the firm." From there, the situation deteriorated into an ugly back-and-forth between Hardwick and



the Wittstadts and eventually led to the discovery that one of the country's top golfers was involved in the scandal. Soon after the Wittstadts sued Hardwick, PGA golfer Dustin Johnson sued the firm for allegedly stealing millions of dollars from him. Johnson's lawsuit, which was first reported by HousingWire, accused Morris Hardwick Schneider, which subsequently changed its name to Morris Schneider Wittstadt, Hardwick, and the Wittstadts, of using their positions as Johnson's "trusted

advisors" to steal \$3 million from him. Hardwick was, at one time, one of Johnson's closest advisors. In Johnson's suit, he claimed that Hardwick "played a particularly unique and significant role of trust and confidence" in Johnson's life, serving as one of his primary advisors on his career as a professional golfer. Hardwick was also an officer in Johnson's professional corporation, and listed on Johnson's personal website as a member of "Dustin's Team" as Johnson's "attorney/counselor."

Last Remaining Defendant Settles FTC Suit that Led to Landmark Supreme Court Ruling on Drug Company "Reverse Payments"



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

(By our staff reporter) - The Federal Trade Commission has reached a settlement in *FTC v. Actavis*, the 2009 FTC case alleging that the brand-name drug company Solvay and three generic drug companies illegally agreed to restrict generic competition to Solvay's branded testosterone-replacement drug AndroGel for nine years. After the district court dismissed the FTC's complaint and the appellate court affirmed the district court decision, the Supreme Court, in June 2013, rejected lower court rulings that treated "reverse-payment" patent settlements (agreements in which the patent holder pays the alleged infringer) as largely immune from antitrust law. The Court held such agreements are subject to antitrust scrutiny. The case was

remanded to the district court, and trial was scheduled to begin on March 4, 2019. "FTC v. Actavis turned the tide on anticompetitive reverse payments in the pharmaceutical industry," said Chairman Joe Simons. "After the Supreme Court recognized the harmful effects that reverse-payment agreements can have on competition and ultimately on consumers, we have seen fewer of these types of agreements." The settlement covers those products that Solvay may have been marketing or developing before its purchase in 2010 by Abbott Laboratories, which later spun off its worldwide pharmaceutical business into AbbVie Inc. Under the settlement, Solvay's current owner AbbVie is prohibited from entering into certain patent

infringement settlement agreements that restrict generic entry for certain drugs and contain common forms of reverse payments, such as: (1) a side deal, in which the generic company receives compensation in the form of a business transaction entered at the same time as the patent litigation settlement; or (2) a no-AG commitment, in which a brand company agrees not to compete with an authorized generic version of a drug for a period of time. The settlement exempts licenses to enter the market on a later date, compensation for saved future litigation costs up to \$7 million, a continuation or renewal of a pre-existing agreement, and several other types of agreements that are unlikely to be anticompetitive.

Senate Majority Protects New Yorkers from "Revenge Porn"

Passes Senator Monica Martinez's Legislation to Create a New Crime

(Albany, NY) (By our staff reporter) - The New York State Senate Democratic Majority today passed legislation (S.1719-C) establishing the crime of unlawful dissemination or publication of an intimate image and creates a private right of action for such crime. The legislation sponsored by Senator Monica Martinez makes New York the 42nd state to criminalize the dissemination of an intimate image with the intent to cause harm to another individual. "It has never been easier to share private images and make them widely available without consent," Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. "That is why the Senate Majority is taking action, together with our Assembly Majority colleagues, to help combat so-called 'revenge porn.' I applaud Senator Martinez for introducing this legislation to protect individuals from this heinous violation of

privacy." Bill Sponsor Senator Monica Martinez said, "I am proud to have worked with my colleagues in the State Legislature and with all stakeholders in order to come to an agreement that will work to protect victims of this particularly disturbing crime. We are sending a strong message that this kind of violation will no longer be tolerated in the State of New York. I want to extend my gratitude to the individuals who have come forward to share their powerful stories and to the advocacy groups who have given the victims a voice." The "Revenge Porn" bill passed by the Senate Majority establishes: The criminal act of unlawful dissemination or publication of an intimate image when done with the intent to cause harm to the emotional, financial, or physical welfare of another person when the image was taken with a reasonable expectation that the image would remain private.

Imposter Scams Top Complaints Made to FTC in 2018



(By our Staff Reporter)- For the first time, imposter scams topped the list of consumer complaints submitted in 2018 to the Federal Trade Commission's nationwide Consumer Sentinel database, driven in part by a jump in reports about government imposter scams. Fraudsters operating as government imposter scams falsely claim to be from the Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, or another government agency to get people to turn over money or personal information. Government imposter scams made up nearly half

of the 535,417 imposter scam reports to the FTC in 2018. Consumers reported losing a total of nearly \$488 million to all types of imposter scams in 2018—more than any other type of fraud—and reported a median loss of \$500. Many government imposter scam reports involved fraudsters who falsely claimed to be from the Social Security Administration. These scammers typically tell people their Social Security number has been suspended, or that there is some other problem, in an effort to get them to reveal their Social Security number or pay money to

"reactivate" it. In reality, Social Security numbers are never suspended and the Social Security Administration will never require you to pay to obtain one. "If you get a call out of the blue from someone claiming to be from a government agency like the Social Security Administration or IRS asking you for personal information or money, it's a scam," said Andrew Smith, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "You should hang up immediately and report it to the FTC at ftc.gov/complaint."

Proposed Congestion Pricing in Manhattan, Assemblyman David Weprin Issues Statement

(By our Staff Reporter)- ALBANY, NEW YORK Assemblyman David Weprin issued the following statement on the Proposed Congestion Pricing MOU: "I am happy to see that the Governor's and Mayor's new agreement for funding the MTA includes two additional new revenue streams but still oppose the imposition of congestion pricing as it eliminates a 100 year plus alternative for middle class drivers

and small business to get into Manhattan without paying a fee. With this new plan, the State cedes all future toll setting authority to an unelected commission, the TBTA, which I also oppose. As such, I cannot support a plan that asks New Yorkers to hand over an even larger percentage of their paychecks to the MTA and plan to continue to oppose this rehashed congestion pricing proposal."

Gaughran, Senate Pass Bill to Address Plague of "Zombie Homes"

Bill will give local governments an essential tool in ongoing effort to address "zombie homes" across New York State

(By our Staff Reporter)-(Oyster Bay, NY) The New York State Senate passed Senator Jim Gaughran's bill, S.1864, to lower the redemption period for abandoned buildings from two years to one. This bill will help local governments address the plague of "zombie homes," that are an eyesore and financial cost to communities, by lessening the timeline by which governments can redeem a building deemed abandoned. Senator Jim

have plagued communities across Long Island for years, draining local governments of unpaid taxes and burdening them with maintenance and security costs. My bill will cut red tape and help local governments take action quicker to address these zombie homes. I thank my Senate Majority colleagues for passing this legislation and empowering local governments across Long Island and New York State to address zombie homes and save taxpayer money." As Chair of the Committee on Local Government, Senator Gaughran is working to help local governments operate more efficiently in order to reduce costs to local taxpayers. His latest bill amends the real property tax law to lower the tax redemption period for abandoned buildings from two years to one year for properties that have been certified as vacant and abandoned. This will make it more efficient for local governments to address abandoned properties that accumulate unpaid taxes, cost municipalities in security and maintenance upkeep, and diminish the value of neighboring properties.

Indian Air Force's strike on Jaish terror camp:

The strategy and the risks

The strike took place between 3:45 a.m. and 4:04 a.m. Indian time on Tuesday, a time when the alertness of radar system operators is more likely to be lower, an air force veteran said.



in May 2011. The terrain in the region is mountainous, which would have helped Indian planes take cover and hide from radar.

WHAT TIME DID THE STRIKE TAKE PLACE?

The strike took place between 3:45 a.m. and 4:04 a.m. Indian time on Tuesday, a time when the alertness of radar system operators is more likely to be lower, an air force veteran said.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DID INDIA USE FOR THE STRIKE?

India used 12 Mirage 2000 fighter jets, an airborne early warning and control (AWAC) aircraft system, a mid-air refueller and drones. The AWAC is typically used to jam an enemy's radar. This can be done for a very short time until the enemy's anti-radar technology kicks in, said

a former Indian airforce pilot. The drones would help with surveillance. The attack on Balakot used 1,000 kg bombs which can devastate a large target.

WHAT WAS THE STRATEGY EMPLOYED?

Indian air force veterans said the mission would have taken meticulous planning to take advantage of the terrain. "For such an operation, decoy and surveillance missions are conducted to figure out when the radars are on and off. No equipment works around the clock, 24/7," a former air force pilot said. The jets may have flown low, hugging the terrain as much as possible to avoid the radar, which face limitations due to the mountainous nature of the region.

"In general terms, for a radar located in the valley to look up, will have severe restrictions of

view because of the mountains, however optimally you place them," said a former Indian air force marshal.

WHAT RISKS DID THE INDIAN FORCES FACE?

If Tuesday's mission had been discovered earlier by the Pakistan military it could easily have run into trouble. Pakistan's army and air force have a combined arsenal of more than 400 surface-to-air missiles, according to estimates from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Typically once they are alerted, it only takes about three minutes for fighter jets to respond on an incursion and get airborne, the former air marshal said. In this case, it was likely the Pakistani security forces were only alerted after the strike, allowing Indian jets enough time to cross back into their own airspace.

(Insider Bureau) Indian Air Force's fighter jets struck a training camp of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror group across the Line of Control on Tuesday, raising the risk of conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours. The JeM had claimed responsibility for the suicide bomb attack that killed 40 CRPF jawans in Kashmir's Pulwama on February

14.

WHERE DID THE ATTACK TAKE PLACE?

The IAF attacked the hillside camp of JeM in Balakot in Pakistan more than 50 km (30 miles) from the border. Balakot is about 60 km north of Abbottabad, the hideout of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was killed there by US forces

Hum Hindustani Weekly, U.S.A. Logo and contact information.

Magazine cover for 'Hum Hindustani' featuring a headline about India's stance on Pakistan and portraits of Narendra Modi and Imran Khan.

Magazine cover for 'Hum Hindustani' featuring a headline about India's stance on Pakistan and portraits of Narendra Modi and Imran Khan.

Advertisement for a live performance by Richa Sharma at JC Adams Playhouse, featuring the text 'The Queen is Back Sajda'.

IAF strikes Jaish camp across LoC, about 300 likely killed

Foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale described the air strike - in which government officials said over 300 terrorists, trainers and commanders may have been killed - as "non-military pre-emptive action".



(Insider Bureau)- Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter planes destroyed a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorist camp in a pre-dawn strike on Tuesday in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's province after penetrating deep across the Line of Control (LoC) to enter Pakistani airspace for the first time in 48 years.

Foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale described the air strike - in which government officials said over 300 terrorists, trainers and commanders may have been killed - as "non-military pre-emptive action".

Gokhale said the strike by Mirage 2000 jets at around 3:30am was ordered on the basis of credible intelligence that the Pakistan-based JeM, which claimed responsibility for the February 14 suicide car bombing that claimed the lives of 40 Indian paramilitary troops in Kashmir, planned to carry out suicide attacks in various parts of India. He stressed that the attack on the group's biggest terrorist camp, located in the town of

Balakot, was undertaken in self-defence.

"The selection of the target was also conditioned by our desire to avoid civilian casualties. It's located in deep forest on a hilltop," Gokhale said.

The camp was headed by Yusuf Azhar alias Ustad Ghauri, the brother-in-law of JeM chief Masood Azhar, Gokhale said. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj told an all-party meeting in the evening that Indian intelligence had reason to believe Yusuf Azhar was at the facility during the strike, according to officials aware of the discussions. Azhar was one of the militants behind the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC 814 in 1999 to free Masood Azhar from Indian custody.

It was unclear if he was killed in the air strike.

Swaraj also told the all-party meeting that Indian jets had penetrated 80 miles (130 km) into the LoC. The meeting was also attended by finance minister Arun Jaitley and home

minister Rajnath Singh.

Pakistan said on Tuesday that Indian aircraft "intruded" into its airspace, dropped their payload in haste when its own warplanes scrambled into action, and returned without causing any casualties or damage. It warned that it would respond to the Indian "act of aggression" at a time and place of its choosing.

"I assure you that the nation is in safe hands," Prime Minister Narendra Modi told a gathering of ex-servicemen in Rajasthan's Churu in the afternoon, without referring to the air strikes. "I won't let this country down."

"My soul says today is the day to reiterate what I had said in 2014. I swear by my land I won't let my country be destroyed. I will not let the country stop. I will not let the country bow. I pledge to the motherland that I will not let her head down," said Modi, who briefed the president and the vice president on the operation.

Most nations that reacted to Tuesday's strikes, including

the UK, China and the European Union, asked India and Pakistan to exercise restraint. France said it "recognises India's legitimacy to ensure its security against cross-border terrorism" and asked Pakistan to put an end to operations of terrorist groups established on its territory.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi welcomed the cross-border action.

In a tweet, he wrote: "I salute the IAF pilots." West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted: "IAF also means India's Amazing Fighters. Jai Hind."

"Today's strong action shows the will and resolve of a New India. Our New India will not spare any acts of terror and their perpetrators and patrons," Amit Shah, president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said.

Though India's Mirage jets

crossed the LoC in 2002 over a border dispute, this is the first time the Indian Air Force crossed Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and entered Pakistani airspace to drop a bomb since the 1971 war for the liberation of Bangladesh. The IAF used Mirage-2000 jets carrying missiles and guided bombs to target the JeM camp spread over seven acres, people with knowledge of the development said. The air force also deployed Sukhoi 30MKIs, which were used as decoys as they flew towards Bhawalpur, the town where JeM is headquartered. These jets were also meant to double up as reinforcements in case the Pakistanis intercepted the Mirages, these people added. On Tuesday morning, a couple of hours after the attack, a Pakistani unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was shot down near the International Border in Kutch district of Gujarat. Gujarat and Punjab are now on high alert in wake of the air strikes.

According to analysts, the strike confirmed that India would deploy full-spectrum deterrence if it was attacked by any Pakistan-based terror group. One diplomat referred to the September 2016 surgical strikes conducted on terrorist camps across the LoC days after an attack in Uri left 19 Indian soldiers dead. "The Modi government made it clear from Uri 2016 that every terror strike will be met with a retaliation," the diplomat said, asking not to be named. "The question in the past was should we or should we not. Now it is when, where and how." The February 14 suicide car bombing on the Jammu-Srinagar highway left 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers dead. Modi said after the attack that he had given the Indian armed forces a free hand to retaliate at a time and place of their choosing.

15 years ago, US took note of JeM's major terror training camp in Balakot

(Insider Bureau)- Fifteen years ago, the major terrorist training camp of the Jaish-e-Mohammed in Balakot in Pakistan found a mention in a purported secret US Defence Department file leaked by WikiLeaks.

The memorandum talks about a Pakistani national Hafez K Rahman, a Guantanamo detainee, who was 20 years old and born in Gujrar, Pakistan, who turned out to be a jihadi.

The January 31, 2004 document, signed by Major General Geoffery Miller of the US Army says Rahman received training in Balakot, Pakistan, a location known to house a "training camp that offers both basic and advanced terrorist training on

explosives and artillery".

It says Rahman has admitted to volunteering to fight jihad against the US and its allies, remaining after the events of September 11th to continue to fight, and receiving training from the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

The JEM espouses Jihad against the US and is directly supported by Al-Qaida, Gen. Miller wrote.

It says Rahman was influenced by extremist Mullahs in Pakistan and decided he would go to Jihad in support of the Taliban. "Detainee traveled to Zahir, Pakistan, and attended a training camp run by the JeM," he wrote. Miller also described JeM as a Tier 1 terrorist group, especially those with state support, that



have demonstrated the intention and the capability to attack US persons or interests. After completing basic training, Rahmand travelled along with a larger group of JeM fighters to the area around Konduz, Afghanistan. He was captured by the Northern Alliance and turned over to

US forces. He was subsequently transported to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba, on February 7, 2002 because of his knowledge of the Moaskar training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, and his affiliation with the Taliban as a foreign fighter, the US Defence Department memorandum says.

New Delhi has pulled off a calculated precision strike

The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in war is an age-old adage, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken it to his heart. The surgical strikes in on terrorist camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) after the 2016 Uri attack and the stand-off missile strike on Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror training camp at Balakot in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa post February 14 Pulwama car bombing illustrate this. Neither was a knee-jerk reaction to the preceding terror strikes planned in haste.

The standard operating procedure for such strikes was prepared, much like a military drill, by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval in consultation with the three military chiefs and three intelligence chiefs including the NTRO (National Technical Research Organisation; the other two are the Intelligence Bureau and RAW), under instructions of PM Modi when the NDA government took charge in 2014.

Even the target wasn't chosen by chance and impulsively. Although the precision strike on Balakot camp may have taken Pakistan by surprise due to depth of the terror asset, India's security team had been watching the biggest Jaish-e-Mohammed camp for the past four-and-a-half years.

PM Modi is no warmonger. Nor does he have a visceral hatred of either Pakistan or China — the two neighbours and principal adversaries of India. He laid out the red carpet for Xi Jinping when the Chinese leader visited Ahmedabad on September 17, 2014 but the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) rebuffed him with a major stand-off with Indian Army at Chumar in eastern Ladakh at the same time. The April 2018 Wuhan understanding between the two leaders was reached after Modi did not bat an eyelid and made the Indian Army stand up to the Chinese PLA for 73 days at the Doklam plateau near Sikkim border in aid of India's closest ally Bhutan. The Doklam stand-off did not ease just due to deft diplomacy between Beijing and New Delhi; it was backed by the same drill (as in the Balakot attack), with the Indian military being prepared for all eventualities.

Today, it is not that the relationship between India and China is cosy, but the two countries and their leaders understand each other very well in terms of vision, capacities and capability. This has ensured PLA does not play the lone ranger at odds with Beijing on the

Line of Actual Control (LAC). With Pakistan also, PM Modi started on a very positive note by inviting the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to his May 26, 2014 swearing-in ceremony and then landing up at Lahore on December 25, 2015 to attend a family marriage at the Sharifs at Raiwind. But the Pakistan army and its sword arm, JeM, decided to attack India the same day as evident from the note recovered from the vehicle used in the Pathankot air base attack on January 2, 2016.

New Delhi knew the attack was coming, although it didn't know where. NSA Doval briefed his then counterpart in Pakistan, Gen Naseer Janjua the night before so that the Rawalpindi would use its clout with JeM leader Masood Azhar to stop the attack. The terror strike took place as Pakistan did not make enough effort to choke the terror group's leadership. The military option was ready at that time also but India chose to give Sharif a chance by providing all evidence against JeM's involvement in the airbase attack and unheard-of access to the joint investigation team from Pakistan.

It was Modi's bitter experience with Pakistan after the Pathankot attack that changed the game and the military drill. Disregarding the unsolicited advice of armchair strategic experts about the threat of nuclear escalation in case of a counter-strike, Modi struck in PoK within 11 days of the Uri attack on September 18, 2016 with precision and no collateral damage. He struck again on February 26, 2019 at the JeM terror training camp in mainland Pakistan, this time 12 days after Pulwama.

In both the counter-strikes, India ensured that its closest friends in the international community particularly the US were kept in the loop. It was the support of the US and the international community for Pakistan that prevented then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee from taking a similar stand against JeM after the Indian military mobilised following the 2001 Parliament attack.

It's worth noting though, that if anything had gone wrong in Balakot (or, for that matter, in the surgical strike following Uri), Modi and the NDA would have been on the backfoot. Then, Modi likes to play and deliver on the razor's edge.

Why Balakot is a watershed

In what ways is the Indian incursion a watershed event in India-Pakistan engagement?

First, Tuesday's airstrikes by the Indian Air Force establishes a new threshold between the two nuclear neighbours for an Indian response to a terror attack. So far, India has either chosen to put diplomatic pressure on Pakistan (after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack), mobilise its armed forces (after the 2001 Parliament attack) or conducted limited ground-based operations (after the 2016 Uri attack) but has never used the Air Force, that too inside Pakistan. The use of airpower has been taboo between the two countries, especially after both became declared nuclear powers in 1998, because of the dangers of escalation. While Pakistan has threatened retaliatory action, the fact remains that a major red-line about use of airpower has been crossed by India now. Restrictions around the use of airpower are best illustrated by the Kargil War, when the Vajpayee government allowed the IAF to be used, but did not allow it to cross the LoC. As much as it was about respecting the LoC and highlighting Pakistani incursions, it was also about the escalatory dangers of using airpower.

A more important reason making it a watershed is the extent of incursion. Indian operations after the 1971 War have always been limited to the Line of Control and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, never venturing into mainland Pakistan. As India considers PoK to be Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan, and LoC is a militarily active border manned by the two armies, military

action there has been considered somewhat acceptable. This airstrike also sets a precedent for future action by India: use of airpower in mainland Pakistan against terror camps. If it is Balakot today, it could be Bahawalpur or Muridke tomorrow. This new template for Indian response is going to create a public clamour in India after every terror incident to punish Pakistan, another reason that makes it a real watershed in the history of the bilateral relationship. The Foreign Secretary has called it an "intelligence-led operation" and a "non-military preemptive action". What do these expressions mean? The Foreign Secretary was taking the care of asserting that the targets had been carefully selected, based on hard intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists in the camp. This intelligence would be from technical inputs (via satellites), or communication intercepts or human intelligence sources on the ground. By calling it an intelligence-led operation, the government was trying to send a message to the global audience that the airstrikes were not done at some arbitrarily chosen place but were part of a well-considered action.

The phrasing of "non-military preemptive action" was important for two reasons. Given that use of airpower inside Pakistani mainland territory is bound to be considered an act of war, India by calling it non-military wanted to reassure everyone that it is not such an act. That India chose not to target the Pakistan military or civilians but a terror camp was an important part of the Indian argument for preventing any escalation by the Pakistani side.



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Pakistan must be dealt with firmly

New Delhi can avenge Pulwama only when the conditions are positive on the domestic front

We are going through a difficult phase of grief, anger tears and resentment. The Pulwama terror attack has brought about a tsunami of emotions. There have only been a few times in the history of independent India that we have witnessed this kind of rage against Pakistan.

Pakistan must be dealt with firmly. There can be no doubt about the fact that those who challenge the sovereignty of our country while residing here should also be taught a lesson. But for this, it's necessary that our reaction should be articulate. The world expects greater responsibility from India. Imran Khan's statement is an example of how shameless the leaders of Pakistan tend to be. After the Pulwama

attack, he remained silent and on the fifth day when he broke his silence, what did he say? That our country has nothing to do with this attack. We ourselves are the victim of terrorism. If India wants, then we are ready for a dialogue. But, if Pakistan is attacked then we will retaliate. We have been hearing the same thing from Pakistan's leaders after every such attack. Pakistan's politicians are always obliged to read the script prepared by the army. How can such people earn our trust?

We know that the limitations of the person occupying the prime ministerial seat in Pakistan are determined by the power centre at Rawalpindi. Today, Imran Khan is the victim of this. As far as Pakistan's army is concerned, it has been living in denial. The present

regime thinks that the contemporary global situation is in its favour. America needs Pakistan because it has been fighting in Afghanistan for past 18 years using Pakistan's resources. And now it needs an Islamabad-Rawalpindi tie-up to get itself out of this mess. China also needs Pakistan for the construction of economic corridor and to establish its dominance over the Arabian Sea. Saudi Arabia too needs our neighbour's help to deal with Iran. In this confusion, Imran Khan seems to have forgotten that the representatives of Masood Azhar who is handled by the ISI issued a statement immediately after the Pulwama attack taking responsibility for it. This audacity of the terrorists is the result of the protection



of the Pakistani army.

However, India has made it clear that it is not about to compromise on this.

The crown prince of Saudi Arabia was in Islamabad last week and just to demonstrate to the world how informal and warm the relations between the two countries are, Imran Khan himself drove the crown prince from the airport. The meaning was clear. But what happened afterwards

is more interesting. The crown prince wanted to come to New Delhi straight from Islamabad. But India requested him to go back to Saudi and come to New Delhi from there instead of taking a straight flight from Islamabad. And that is what happened. Not only this Muhammad Bin Salman also criticised the Pulwama attack in his statement. Meanwhile, more than 40 countries

have praised and appreciated Indian stance. The US has openly condemned Pakistan. The UK and France have given the assurance that they will raise the issue in the United Nations to put pressure on Masood Azhar. The question now arises, will China, which was shielding this dreaded terrorist, display any change in its Pakistan policy?

New Delhi can avenge Pulwama only when the conditions are positive on the domestic front. But some people here too don't seem to realise that. One of them is Meghalaya governor Tathagata Roy who has made some unfortunate remarks on the issue. People in such responsible positions should refrain from making such statements.

Modi Administration Changes India Handling Of Pak Decisively

Make no mistake - as the Indian Air Force jets returned after destroying the biggest terror training camp of terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in Balakot inside Pakistan, a new strategic security doctrine has been unveiled by the Modi government. India and its security establishment have redrawn our red lines and thrown away so-called strategic restraint. The new assertion is this: Pakistan has been stripped of the sham of "non-state actors". Pulwama, where 44 CRPF jawans died 12 days ago, has been avenged after the Jaish, which is led by Masood Azhar, took ownership of the horrific attack in Pulwama.

This is the first time after the 1971 war that India's fighter jets entered Pakistani territory. During the Kargil War in 1999, then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had given the Air Force explicit instructions not to cross the Line of Control.

Conventional wisdom among strategic experts the world over is that Pakistan is the only nuclear state which indulges in nuclear blackmail. India has an explicit No First Use policy.

Till now, Pakistan harboured the sanguine belief that India would not broach an aggressive option bordering on conventional war (where we have the edge). India has stressed that the Air Force strike was non-military and pre-emptive to take out terrorists who were planning new suicide attacks in India. Another core belief of the Pakistan security establishment of bleeding India with a thousand cuts using proxies like JeM without the fear of retaliation was also destroyed.

After using the air strike to escalate and deliver the message, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale's

statement was a master class in crisp and clear speak while also portraying India as a mature and responsible country determined to protect its own. Gokhale cogently said that India was careful in ensuring no civilian and military casualties. Hence the "non-military strike".

India has carefully said that the strikes were not meant to target Pakistan but terrorists. This is a huge diplomatic face-saver for Pakistan to ensure that the situation does not escalate in to a war. I have covered national security for 20 years and this term was right up there with our "peaceful nuclear explosion".

Gokhale emphasized that India was carrying out action against terrorists and the Pakistan government had committed in 2004 to act against terrorists on its soil.

The new security doctrine and the never before nature



of India's reprisals were welcomed across the board by opposition leaders including Rahul Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwal and Chandrababu Naidu.

The Pakistan government said that "India had committed uncalled for aggression to which Pakistan would respond to at a time and place of its choosing". But even Pakistan's closet ally

China showed tacit support to India by calling for "restraint" from both the countries. Significantly it did not mention the territorial violation of Pakistan. This must have upset Islamabad no end. Pakistan now has to make the hard choice of trying to make peace with India or indulge in ever-escalating stand-offs. It can no longer get away with farming out its

battle to "jihadis" like JeM Chief Masood Azhar whose brother-in-law Ustad Ghouri reportedly died in today's strike.

Sushma Swaraj is headed to Wuzhen in China for a bilateral meeting with her Chinese counterparts where Balakot will figure.

The Mirage jets returned to India within minutes but have changed India's security mindset and doctrine forever.

Hanoi summit with Trump may see Kim Jong-un's ambitions grow

US President Donald Trump and the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un met for the first time in Singapore in June 2018. The US had hoped for a North Korean commitment to full, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. What it got instead was a vague promise "to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula". Mr Kim did agree to shut down a missile engine testing site but North Korea most probably did not need it any longer. In fact, the major concession in Singapore was made by Mr Trump who announced the suspension of "expensive" and "provocative"

military exercises with South Korea. Will the results be any better when Mr Trump and Mr Kim meet each other again in Hanoi on February 27-28?

Mr Kim has already achieved de facto nuclear status for North Korea. Flaunting the nukes, he has been able to drag the US president to the negotiating table. He is not going to give up the nuclear deterrent and lose everything he has so far achieved. Besides, he also does not want to meet the fate of Iraq's Saddam Hussein or Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. It now seems that Mr Trump also knows that

denuclearisation is an unrealistic goal. He is happy that North Korea is no longer testing nuclear weapons and missiles.

The most realistic goal would be to place some sort of limits on the nuclear weapons programme of North Korea. Mr Kim has hinted that he would be willing to dismantle the Yongbyon nuclear complex where North Korea produces plutonium and enriches uranium. But several questions remain. Will he shut down the entire complex? Will the dismantling process be truly irreversible? And most importantly, how much and what exactly will Mr Kim demand in



return? The US is contemplating a move to declare an end to the 1950-53 Korean War which had halted on the back of an armistice agreement. But Mr Kim may

demand much more. Will Mr Trump make some big concessions on economic sanctions? We will know later this week.

Indian airstrikes complicate Pakistan's military options

The February 14 terrorist attack in Pulwama left India seething with rage. There was a groundswell of opinion that Pakistan and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) - the terrorist group that claimed responsibility for the attack - should be taught a lesson. It would have been difficult for any prime minister to not pay attention to this populist sentiment, especially in an election year. The airstrikes that the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out deep inside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Pakistan proves that the latter may have overused its terrorism-under-the-nuclear-umbrella card. According to a press statement by India's foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale, IAF fighter jets, in the early hours of Tuesday, "struck the biggest training camp of JeM in Balakot". The attack

eliminated "a very large number of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and groups of jihadis".

What's new about these airstrikes? One, this is the first time one nuclear power has used airpower to strike inside the territory of another nuclear power. Two, the airstrikes were not in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) but on undisputed Pakistani territory - the first by India after 1971. The surgical strikes of 2016 did not invite, according to some experts, nuclear or any other kind of retaliation from Pakistan because it was in PoK just across the line of control (LoC). Three, unlike the 2016 strikes, these airstrikes did not target terrorist "launch pads" along the LoC, but a training camp. The difference would be realised in the number of casualties too, though exact figures are not known yet.

There are, however, some key similarities with the 2016 surgical strikes and previous Indian operations. The official briefing after the airstrikes was restrained and professional. India presented it as a "non-military pre-emptive action" against terrorists (not the Pakistani military) based on credible intelligence that the targeted camp was being used by JeM to train jihadis for suicide bombings. By not framing it as retaliation to Pulwama, India signalled that it is not walking into any pre-selected escalatory spiral. The selection of target and execution ensured that there were no civilian casualties.

The reaction from Pakistan has been confused. The spokesperson of the Pakistan armed forces started by playing down the airstrikes. He claimed that the payload actually fell on open land and did not do any

damage. However, the political response has been different. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Pakistan's foreign minister, has called the Indian action one of "grave aggression", and asserted that Islamabad has the "right to respond". The way out of an escalation in September 2016 was Pakistan denying that anything like the surgical strikes even happened. India did not force Pakistan's hands by choosing to hold back the video footage, which was released much later. On this occasion, the Pakistani army has had to accept the IAF intrusion but it has tried to find an escape route out of the escalation ladder by playing down the impact. One does not yet know whether Pakistan will choose to retaliate or not.

Where does this leave us with the subcontinental escalation dynamics? Pakistan claims to

follow the concept of full-spectrum deterrence, which aims to completely eliminate any possibility of conventional war with India. It has been able to get away with low cost, subconventional warfare against India by flaunting its nuclear weapons. The 2016 surgical strikes had already dented Pakistan's fantastical doctrine. Tuesday airstrikes have now punched a bigger hole in its full-spectrum deterrence. These two events have shown that there is ample space for a one-off conventional operation, including the use of airpower in undisputed Pakistani territory, and below the nuclear threshold. Even if Pakistan chooses to escalate, unless it uncorks its nuclear options, which is almost unimaginable, it further expands the space for conventional warfare below the nuclear threshold.

Endangering Aravallis can spell doom for us all

As mentioned in my last piece, I had planned to focus on leopards in this and the next few columns. But in this column, I simply must draw your attention on the existential crisis to the Aravallis posed by the Haryana government's recent decision to move a bill in the assembly to amend the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA). The bill, as per news reports, has been approved by the cabinet and is likely to be tabled in the ongoing budget session of the assembly. The proposed bill essentially allows construction

and other activities in areas where it was previously disallowed due to the enforcement of the PLPA, and can potentially destroy over 60,000 acres of forest - almost 50% of the entire Aravalli range in South Haryana. At complete risk of destruction are over 16,000 and 10,000 acres of forests in Gurgaon and Faridabad district respectively.

I am going to tell you why this should matter to you.

The Aravalli range, one of the oldest fold mountains on Earth, has been in existence for about three billion years. The mountains

stretch along the northwestern frontiers of India, shaping the climate, hydrology and biodiversity of the region. It curbs wind velocity, checks evaporation, recharges ground aquifers, which are depleting rapidly. Extraction of ground water in this region is 300% more than its recharge.

Aravallis' dry, deciduous forests, rich green valleys, rivers, streams are abundant with a unique mix of flora and fauna and mineral-rich soil. As per a 2017 survey by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the Aravallis in

Haryana support leopards, hyena, fox, jackals, blackbucks, sambar, chinkara, porcupines. It has over 400 species of native trees and shrubs and over 200 species of birds.

In many ways, the Aravalli range is our savior, quietly and steadily making our lives bearable and livable. For billions of years, it has stood strong, as an impenetrable green barrier against the advance of the Thar desert towards the fertile soils of Haryana and Delhi. Today, these venerable mountains are abused and degraded. The same WII survey

showed that vegetative gaps have appeared in the ranges of the Aravalli. Encroachment, mining, real estate development, privatisation of common lands, and a lackadaisical approach to resource management have destroyed the Aravallis, shrinking it by 40% in the last four decades.

We have degraded, denuded, destroyed the Aravallis to such an extent that it is no longer a shield to the Thar desert that is sweeping into the northern plains.

Sushma Swaraj speaks to counterparts in US, China, Singapore, Bangladesh, Afghanistan: Sources

In her telephonic conversation with US Secretary of Mike Pompeo, Swaraj explained the reasons behind the strike and conveyed that the action was specifically targeted at the JeM camp.

(By a Staff Reporter) - External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj Tuesday spoke to her counterparts in the US, China, Singapore, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and briefed them about the pre-dawn strike on the Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Pakistan, official sources said.

In her telephonic conversation with US Secretary of Mike

Pompeo, Swaraj explained the reasons behind the strike and conveyed that the action was specifically targeted at the JeM camp. She also spoke to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and apprised him about the "non-military, preemptive air strikes", the sources said.

They said she also briefed her counterparts from Singapore,

Bangladesh and Afghanistan on the strike.

Separately, the Foreign Secretary apprised the envoys of all major countries including from the United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom, the sources said.

Envoys of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Turkey and Indonesia were also briefed about the air strike.



Yusuf Azhar, IC-814 hijacker, was key target of the Balakot air strike

Yusuf is also known as Mohammed Salim and Ustad Ghouri and his name has figured in the list of wanted terrorists that India has repeatedly handed over to Pakistan over the years.

(By a Staff Reporter) - Yusuf Azhar, one of the terrorists involved in the December 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 from Kathmandu to Kandahar, and brother-in-law of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar, was one of the main targets of the Balakot air strike, and post-attack chatter suggests he may have been killed in the pre-dawn air strike on the camp, officials familiar with the matter said on condition of anonymity. Azhar, who headed one of the oldest training facilities of the JeM, in Balakot, in the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa province, is wanted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and an Interpol Red Notice (number A-565/6-2000) has been pending against him for the last 19 years. Yusuf is also known as Mohammed Salim and Ustad Ghouri and his name has figured in the list of wanted terrorists that India has repeatedly handed over to Pakistan over the years. "Besides the symbolic value of the camp and its importance for Jaish's war against India, Azhar's continuous presence there was one of the main reasons that the government decided to target the Balakot

camp," said a security official. Azhar is one of seven accused in the IC-814 hijacking case along with Ibrahim Athar, Sunny Ahmed Qazi, Zahoor Ibrahim, Shahid Akhter, Sayed Shakir and Abdul Rauf. The flight was hijacked over Indian skies on December 24, 1999 and taken to Kandahar in Afghanistan. The city was then controlled by Mulla Umar's Taliban. India had to release Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar and Ahmed Omar Syed Sheikh, who is now awaiting a death sentence in Pakistan for his involvement in the murder of



the American journalist Daniel Pearl, in exchange for the release of 154 passengers aboard IC-814. The CBI, which investigated the hijacking, sought the Red Notice against all the accused and it was issued in 2000. "Jaish is mostly a family run enterprise with brothers of Masood Azhar Rauf and Ibrahim and brothers-

in-law like Yusuf Azhar and Maulana Ashfaq being key figures in the outfit. Rauf is now de-facto chief of the outfit as Masood Azhar is not known to be keeping well," said an intelligence official. Intelligence agencies are now awaiting confirmation from the ground on the fate of Yusuf Azhar.

PM Modi monitored airstrikes realtime on Jaish camp across LoC: Report

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was up all night as he monitored the Indian Air Force operation to destroy a Jaish-e-Mohammed terror camp in Pakistan, relaxing only after all the pilots returned safely home, government sources said Tuesday.

(By a Staff Reporter) - Prime Minister Narendra Modi was up all night as he monitored the Indian Air Force operation to destroy a Jaish-e-Mohammed terror camp in Pakistan, relaxing only after all the pilots returned safely home, government sources said Tuesday.

After congratulating all those involved in the operation around 4.30 am, he got busy with his daily routine as he prepared for a full day's schedule, including

the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security at his residence around 10 am.

He then rushed to the Rashtrapati Bhawan, where President Ram Nath Kovind conferred the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2015-2018. Later, Modi flew to Rajasthan for a rally and returned to New Delhi to attend an ISKCON event.

"The prime minister did not sleep a wink all night and remained intimately involved in the

operations," said one source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Modi attended a News18 television channel conclave at the Taj Palace hotel on Monday night, and left for home at 9.15 pm. After reaching his 7 Lok Kalyan Marg residence in 10 minutes, he took a light meal and became involved in the operation, going through the preparations for the air strike on the training camp, the



source said.

It is not clear if he was at home or at some other location where a control room monitored the historic events about to unfold.

The prime minister was in touch

with Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Air Force Chief B.S. Dhanoa before, during and after the operation, the source, who is close to the prime minister, said.

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Army, Air Force on highest alert, ready for any Pakistan retaliation

IAF is on its highest state of alert following the air strikes against a terror camp in Pakistan on Tuesday, and is prepared to scramble fighter jets from its forward bases at two minutes' notice should the neighbour choose to retaliate, two IAF officials said on condition of anonymity.

(Agencies)- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is on its highest state of alert following the air strikes against a terror camp in Pakistan on Tuesday, and is prepared to scramble fighter jets from its forward bases at two minutes' notice should the neighbour choose to retaliate, two IAF officials said on condition of anonymity.

Soon after the Indian air strike on a Jaish-e-Mohammad training camp in Balakot, India increased its air defences, not wanting to do so ahead of the operation because that would have alerted the other side. Early on Tuesday morning, a Pakistani drone was brought down across the border in Gujarat. It isn't known whether this is connected to the air strike. On Tuesday, fighter jets were on the operational readiness platform (ORP) at several bases to intercept intruding planes; the air force's air defence network

were fully activated; and bases have been ordered to be on their highest state of alert, the officials said. ORP means the aircraft are ready to take off for missions in two minutes.

The army has fortified its defences along the Line of Control (LoC) to thwart any Pakistani attempts to retaliate, an army official said. The navy too is ready for any mission assigned to it, a navy official said. Apart from activating its air defence network to take down hostile targets, the army has moved some tanks and artillery closer to the border, two army officials said on condition of anonymity. "This is purely a precautionary measure to deal with new developments," one of the officials said. The army has also significantly enhanced its surveillance and intelligence gathering activities along the LoC. "A high level of readiness implies moving military

equipment forward and strengthening forward deployments. This will help in promptly prosecuting any contingency that we have planned for," said former army vice chief Lieutenant General AS Lamba (retired). Lieutenant General DS Hooda (retired), who oversaw the 2016 surgical strikes as Northern Army commander, said there could be more skirmishes along the LoC and a rise in terror attacks in Kashmir in the short term as a result of the air strikes. The IAF's air defence systems such as the indigenous Akash, the Israeli SpyDer, and Soviet-origin Pechora, OSA-AK and the shoulder-fired Igla are ready to tackle any aerial threats to "vital areas and points", said one of the IAF officials quoted above.

A key part of the IAF's multi-layered air defence system, Akash missiles, knocked out simulated enemy jets at night



during Vayu Shakti 2019, an IAF fire power demonstration recently staged in Rajasthan. Capable of being launched from mobile and static platforms, the mid-range Akash can engage multiple aerial targets such as fighter jets and unmanned aerial vehicles in fully autonomous mode. The OSA-AK, also an integral part of the IAF's terminal air defence capability, is a quick reaction missile system that can engage low and medium level targets with accuracy. The OSA-AK surface-to-air missile travels at a speed of 500 metre per second. The second IAF official said that mobile observations flights were also on high alert to spot hostile

aircraft. "India wouldn't have launched the precision strikes if it was not prepared for possible retaliation by Pakistan," said former IAF chief Air Chief Marshal Fali Major (retired). He said all measures would be in place to respond to any Pakistani action, and the neighbour could retaliate anytime. "The air strikes in Pakistan denote very clearly the will of the government and the capability of the IAF. As for Pakistan, we have taught them a lesson not to mess with us," said Major, who had proposed aerial surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

Cost of an election: Who can spend what and how much

The Election Commission of India imposes limits on the expenditure incurred by a candidate, but not political parties, on their election campaign.

(Agencies)- Elections are an expensive affair with political parties spending crores of rupees towards campaigning.

The Election Commission of India imposes limits on the expenditure incurred by a candidate, but not political parties, on their election campaign. A US-based election expert has said, according to news agency PTI, that the upcoming general elections will be the most expensive in the history of India and perhaps one of the most expensive ever held in any democratic country.

"The combined US presidential and congressional elections in 2016 cost \$6.5 billion. If the 2014 Lok Sabha elections cost an estimated \$5 billion, there is little doubt the 2019 election will easily surpass that - making India's elections the world's most expensive," Milan Vaishnav, senior fellow and director of the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace think-tank said. "The uncertainty associated

with the coming election-polls suggest a narrowing gap between the BJP and the opposition - only provides more fodder for an arms race in spending," he said.

The expenditure limit A candidate can spend between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 70 lakh, depending on the state they are contesting the Lok Sabha election from. For all states, except Arunachal Pradesh, Goa and Sikkim, a candidate can spend a maximum of Rs 70 lakh on canvassing. The cap for Arunachal Pradesh, Goa and Sikkim is Rs 54 lakh. And, it is Rs 70 lakh for Delhi and Rs 54 lakh for other Union territories.

For the assembly elections, the ceiling is between Rs 20 lakh and Rs 28 lakh. This includes the money spent by a political party or a supporter towards the candidate's campaign. But, expenses incurred either by a party or the leader of a party for propagating the party's programme are not

covered. Candidates have to keep a separate account and file the election expenses with the poll watchdog under the law. An incorrect account or expenditure beyond the cap can lead to disqualification for up to three years under Section 10A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. All registered political parties have to submit a statement of their election expenditure to the election commission within 90 days of the completion of the Lok Sabha elections. And all candidates are required to submit their expenditure statement to the poll panel within 30 days of the completion of the elections.

How much did the various Lok Sabha elections cost? The election commission had compiled provisional expenditure figures of the various Lok Sabha elections till date. The total expenditure was equal to or less than Rs 10 crore for each of the first three general elections. The expenditure was less than Rs 100 crore until the eighth general



election in 1984-85. It crossed Rs 500 crore for the first time during the 11th general election in 1996 and went beyond Rs 1,000 crore during the 14th general election in 2004. The expenditure for the last Lok Sabha polls in 2014 at Rs 3,870 crore was three times more than the expenditure incurred for the 15th general election in 2009. Which party spent how much? The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) analysed the difference in the declarations made by political parties and their MPs on the amount granted and received as part of election expenditure during the Lok Sabha election in 2014. According to ADR, of the total of 543 MPs, complete information was available for 539

lawmakers. Out of the remaining four MPs, three were Independent candidates and one MP, Gopinathrao Munde of the BJP died and his expenditure statement was not available on the commission's website. Out of the 342 MPs from national parties, 263 MPs said they received Rs 7,559.82 lakh from their parties whereas the national parties said that Rs 5,523.53 lakh was given to only 175 MPs. Of the regional parties, 38 MPs from 15 different parties either declared they received nothing or mentioned various amounts as received from their respective parties which do not match with the expenditure statements submitted by the parties.

Wynn Resorts reportedly fined \$20M for failing to investigate sex-misconduct claims against Steve Wynn



(By Our Staff Reporter)- A year after Steve Wynn, the founder of Wynn Resorts, was accused of sexual misconduct, Nevada gambling regulators on Tuesday reportedly slapped a multi-million dollar fine against the company for not looking into the allegations. Wynn Resorts Ltd., will have to pay \$20 million as part of the Nevada Gaming Commission settlement - which came together in January - but will keep its gambling license, The Associated Press reported. The casino mogul reportedly has no role in the agreement. LAS VEGAS' MGM RESORTS, CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT WORKERS TO BE GIVEN PANIC BUTTONS

Wynn resigned from his position as CEO of the company in February 2018 amid the allegations, which were detailed in a report a month prior from The Wall Street Journal. He denied the accusations. Current CEO Matt Maddox took over the reins of the company. Wynn Resorts acknowledged in the settlement agreement that several former board members and executives knew about but failed to investigate complaints, according to The Associated Press. Included among them was one that reportedly led Wynn to pay \$7.5 million in 2005 to a former salon employee who alleged he raped her and that she became pregnant as a result.

"The company's initial response during this period was driven by Mr. Wynn's adamant denial of all allegations," a statement from Wynn Resorts, provided to The Associated Press by company spokesman Michael Weaver, said. The statement conceded to a "short-sighted focus on initially defending Mr. Wynn, rather than reassuring employees of the company's commitment to a safe and respectful work environment." Following reports on the accusations last year, Wynn Resorts has undergone a slew of changes, including new leadership and mandated sexual harassment prevention training for all employees, the company noted.

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UN warns of looming threat to food security

A new report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has warned of a growing threat to global food security as a result of severe loss of biodiversity - that is, plants, animals and micro-organisms that contribute to food production.

(Insider Bureau)- A new report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has warned of a growing threat to global food security as a result of severe loss of biodiversity - that is, plants, animals and micro-organisms that contribute to food production.

India is among the countries with a very high threat to soil biodiversity, according to the "State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture" report, released in Rome on February 22.

A risk index was created by combining eight stressors of soil biodiversity, which include loss of above-ground diversity, pollution and nutrient overloading, overgrazing, intensive agriculture, desertification, and climate change among others.

While climate change is a driver for the loss of biodiversity, the

latter is critical in building resilience to devastating impacts of climate change, states the report, which for the first time, assessed reports of 91 countries on their biodiversity status.

The global map shows almost all of India falls in the highly stressed zone along with some parts of Africa, Americas and Asia.

The report notes that there is very limited information available on soil biodiversity in Asia but some reports show high microbial biodiversity in the soils of organic farming lands.

"Soil biota is critical for release of nutrients to the crops as well as organic matter formation. With climate change soil biota will be impacted even more and there will be further loss of nutrients causing collapse of agriculture in some places," said Prof N H Ravindranath, climate scientist from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.

The global report also highlights the loss of biological control agents (BCAs) - insects and pests - as an important factor in declining biodiversity. India, in its country report, has noted a decline of parasitoid wasps and parasitoid flies, which play an important role in biological pest control. Bangladesh has reported a decline in spiders and predatory insects in fields; Nepal has mentioned a general decline in the diversity of the natural enemies of pests. The United States has reported a decline of almost 40% in its grassland bird index between 1968 and 2014.

On climate change, the reports of various countries state that extreme weather events are causing major disruptions to species distribution and yields. For example, rising temperatures in the tropics are pushing coffee growing towards higher elevations in mountainous areas. The ranges of some important



pests, such as the coffee berry borer, have also extended to higher elevations - for example in East Africa - prompting coffee farmers to spray pesticides even in highland areas. Frequent cold or windy days in spring can also disrupt pollination process. Egypt has reported that rising temperatures will lead to northwards shifts in the range of fish species, with impacts on

fishery production.

Biodiversity in agriculture is crucial to adapting to climate change. India, in its report, has noted that livestock diversity, for example, is a buffer against crop failure.

It says that small land holders and landless rural dwellers manage 75% of livestock resources and obtain nearly half of their income from them.

Venezuelans may finally have brighter days ahead

(Insider Bureau)- Nearly 90% of Venezuelans now live in poverty. Inflation is projected to hit 10 million% some time this year, according to the IMF; citizens already use literal wheelbarrows of money to purchase staples like bread and milk... when they're lucky enough to find them on store shelves. Since 2015, more than 3 million people have fled the country. The world has watched with growing dismay as Venezuela - an economy once buoyed by the world's largest proven oil reserves - has descended from prosperous nation to humanitarian catastrophe in less than a decade. And yet for the first time since President Nicolas Maduro came to power in 2013, the political situation in Venezuela appears finally to have begun to shift. That alone would be cause for celebration, but we are also witnessing something fortuitous and unexpected. It goes well beyond people lashing out against horrendous living conditions or revolting against

a repressive regime. That storyline has played out at many other times and in many other places. What's exceptional about Venezuela's current situation is that the country's opposition is now backed by a genuine alignment of foreign powers on an issue that isn't a core national interest for any of them. An opposition movement overwhelmed and fragmented by the country's many problems and resolute military support for an inept government has rallied around Juan Guaido, a 35-year old engineer and leader of Venezuela's parliament. Guaido dared to be the rallying figure for Venezuelans to unite behind. He is bolstered by his position as elected leader of the National Assembly, but also by the courage required to invoke the constitution to proclaim himself "interim president" until free and fair elections can be held. But his bid to revitalise his country's broken political system is also buttressed by broad and deep support from much of the international community. As of this writing, more than 20

countries have recognised Guaido as Venezuela's rightful leader, among them the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, and all of the country's Latin American neighbours except Mexico. There have been other opposition leaders before Guaido, but Maduro has outlasted all of them. Guaido won't be nearly as easy to push aside now that so many other governments have committed to support him. And in a world where so many countries have increasingly adopted an "every nation for itself" approach to foreign policy, that's nothing short of astounding. Even more stunning is that it was a US administration led by Donald Trump that took the lead in pushing an international response to Venezuela's political impasse. Trump's surprise decision to take a hard line against the Maduro regime (featuring sanctions against Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA, in addition to handing control of some of Venezuela's assets in the US directly to Guaido) appears to



contradict his "America First" approach to foreign policy. But Trump's newfound commitment to Venezuela's democracy is the result of the commitment of US Senator Marco Rubio (a key Republican ally for whom the developments in Venezuela are critical to his electoral base in Florida) and the hardline nature of Trump's White House staff, including national security advisor, John Bolton. It's not clear that Trump cares about the plight of the average Venezuelan any more than he does about the plight of the average Syrian or Rohingya Muslim in Southeast Asia, but he does care about being perceived as powerful and driving geopolitical

developments, and his administration's steps on Venezuela thus far have come with minimal risks to US interests. It certainly helps that Venezuela's oil is no longer nearly as important to the US energy mix as it once was, giving Washington more room to be aggressive on the diplomatic front. Just as importantly, Maduro isn't anywhere near as critical to the geopolitical machinations of foreign powers as Bashar Assad in Syria is to countries like Russia and Iran - and his government has earned a reputation as one that fails to pay its foreign debts.



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Michael Cohen is **DISBARRED** while he gives evidence on Trump to the Senate

(Insider Bureau)- Michael Cohen, the former personal attorney for President Donald Trump, has been disbarred, the New York courts announced on Tuesday. The decision was announced in documents released by Manhattan's Appellate Division, First Department and the Attorney Grievance Committee, which were posted online by a reporter for CourtHouse News. The judgement came as Cohen was behind closed doors in Washington D.C. testifying before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He was seen checking his phone during a break in questioning. Lawyers face automatic disbarment in New York for a felony conviction. In December, Cohen pleaded guilty to eight felony counts, including bank fraud, tax evasion and campaign violations. Cohen appeared to accept the bar's decision and did not fight it. 'He has failed to submit a response,' the disbarment document noted of Cohen's actions after he was sent the disbarment motion.

Cohen can file for reinstatement in seven years - or sooner if pardoned by the governor of New York - if he isn't convicted of anything else in that time period. But there is no guarantee the New York bar would reinstate him. Lanny Davis, who's serving as one of Cohen's attorneys, told ABC News last week that Cohen was worried about how he would make a living after his three year jail sentence has been served. Cohen got a two-month reprieve last week which delayed his prison reporting date until May 6. Republican Sen. Susan Collins told reporters Cohen was receiving an 'extensive grilling' from the intelligence panel. Cohen will offer the senators a document that he claims shows the president engaged in criminal conduct around the hush-money payment to porn star Stormy Daniels, it was revealed Tuesday. The document will refute a claim by Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani that Cohen used a \$35,000 monthly retainer from the president as reimbursement for


paying off Daniels, a source close to Cohen told Politico. Giuliani has said Cohen used a monthly retainer made for legal services in reimbursement as repayment for the \$130,000 given to Daniels in exchange for her silence. The documents will show who signed the checks to Cohen, the Daily Beast reported. Cohen pleaded guilty to violating campaign-finance laws by facilitating payments to Daniels. Cohen will also discuss the BuzzFeed report that Trump ordered him to lie to Congress about the Trump Tower Moscow deal. The article earned a rare - if carefully worded - denial from Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office. 'He'll explain exactly why he lied and how he came to lie,' said the source told Politico. Cohen arrived on Capitol Hill Tuesday morning to the flash of cameras lights and shouted questions but he didn't say a word as he walked into the Senate hearing room with Lanny Davis, the former Bill Clinton advisor who is acting as his attorney, and begins the first



of three days of hearings. He arrived 30 minutes before his time before senators was set to begin and is expected to be behind closed doors all day. Senators trickled into the hearing room after his arrival but few spoke about what they wanted to ask the president's former fixer. Some, however, offered hints at what they were looking for. Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden told reporters outside the hearing room he's interested in following the money when it comes to Cohen's work on Trump Tower

Moscow. But one issue he wouldn't touch was whether Cohen - who plead guilty to lying to Congress - can be trusted to tell the truth in this appearance. 'I'll leave it at that,' Wyden said when asked that question. Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich, as he entered the hearing room, said he was looking for 'the truth.' In his testimony, Cohen also intends to reveal information about Trump's financial statements, an anonymous source told the network.

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REVEALED: Suburban daycare owner posted \$100,000 bail for accused child rapist R Kelly

(By Our Staff Reporter)- The woman who posted the \$100,000 bail that enabled R Kelly to walk out of prison on Monday evening has been revealed in court documents obtained by DailyMail.com. Valencia Love, 47, lives just outside Chicago in Romeoville, and on the form she submitted in Cook County Court stated that she is friends with Kelly. Love owns a number of restaurants according to records obtained by DailyMail.com, as well as a childcare facility, the Lord and Child Christian Day Care. She posted that bail despite the fact that Kelly is accused of raping three underage teenagers in this latest Cook County indictment, and the emergence of new rape tapes which allegedly feature the singer and minors. In addition to the daycare, Love also runs the restaurant Love on the Blu. Some left comments on the restaurant's Yelp page after learning Love had posted the bail, which were all negative save one that praised the food. Love responded to that comment by writing: 'Thank you I just help out a Friend if he guilty let him pay for it thru the courts. I am sure some of them.have bail out murders drug dealers etc.' Kelly appeared in a Chicago courtroom on Monday where his lawyer formally entered a not guilty plea on his behalf to 10 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. The singer, who wore an orange prison jumpsuit in court, identified himself to the judge at the start of the hearing, but did not speak again during the proceedings. Once the hearing was over, Kelly returned to D. O. C. Division 8 RTU, with the singer still unable to cover his \$1 million bond. Hours later he was free, thanks to Love. Kelly's lawyer, Steven Greenberg, responded to the charges with a statement over

the weekend, saying: 'We haven't seen any evidence, any reason to believe these allegations are credible. He's a rock star. He doesn't need to have nonconsensual sex.' Aggravated criminal sexual abuse is a Class 2 felony with a sentencing range of 3-7 years in prison. He faces up to 70 years behind bars if convicted. These new charges come one week after the emergence of a rape tape that allegedly features Kelly and a minor. And on Monday, lawyer Michael Avenatti stated that

he is working to obtain new tapes that allegedly show Kelly with underage females. Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx spoke about the charges at a brief press conference on Friday. She went through the charges related to each of the four victims, using only initials to identify the women. First was H.W., who was under the age of 17 between the dates of May 26, 1998 and May 25, 1999. Kelly is charged with four counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse for the

alleged offenses involving that victim. Those include an instance of 'contact between Robert Kelly's penis and H.W's sex organ,' an instance where the contact was with 'H.W's mouth' and when 'Robert Kelly touched his penis to H.W's breast.' he fourth count stems from the claim that 'Robert Kelly touched his mouth to H.W's breast. R.L. was involved in an incident which occurred between September 26, 1998 and September 25, 2001 when she was a minor.



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Balakot Jaish camp, destroyed by IAF, was like '5-star resort': Report

Hundreds of fidayeen or suicide attackers and their trainers were shifted from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to a five-star resort style camp at a hilltop forest in Balakot after the Pulwama attack, providing Indian forces with "a sitting duck target" when they carried out an air strike early Tuesday, killing nearly 300 terrorists, PTI has reported, quoting sources.

Pakistan. The Jaish had masterminded the February 14 suicide attack on a CRPF convoy in south Kashmir's Pulwama that killed 40 jawans. The group is headed by Masood Azhar, whose brother-in-law Yousuf Azhar reportedly ran the camp.

The sources said those killed included 25 to 27 trainers at the the 7-acre camp, terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed's biggest in

Everyone at the camp was sleeping when the IAF mirage 2000s bombed it at around 3.30 am; the Pakistani defence establishment had no clue that the attack was coming so deep into their country because they had expected a surgical strike on

camps in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir near the Line of Control, said the sources who are close to the government, PTI said. India had received intelligence that JeM had shifted many in-training terrorists and hardcore operatives, along with their trainers, to the Balakot camp, which has facilities to house 500 to 700 people, and even has a swimming pool along with cooks and cleaners.

Fighter and other aircraft took off from several air bases in Western and Central commands



at about the same time, leaving Pakistani defence officials confused as to where they were heading, the PTI report said, citing sources. A small group of aircraft broke away from the swarm and headed to Balakot where "the sleeping terrorists were sitting ducks for the Indian bombing," said one source. "They had no idea that Balakot was to be the target ... when the pictures come in you will see only khandahar (ruins) of the once-flourishing camp," said the source.

IAF pilot Abhinandan Varthaman back home after 58 hours in Pakistan Army custody

(SAI Bureau) New Delhi-

The 35-year-old Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was flying the MiG-21 Bison that shot down the PAF F-16 on Wednesday morning before he was captured. Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman crossed the Wagah-Attari border post into India from Pakistan on Friday evening. Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman crossed the Wagah-Attari border post into India from Pakistan on Friday evening, returning home after his capture by Pakistani authorities on Wednesday. Before the IAF pilot ejected from his aging MiG-21 hit in the aerial dogfight over the skies of Jammu, he had shot down a fourth generation F-

16 fighter. His parachute landed in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and was handed over to Pakistan army. A little over 58 hours later, the 38-year-old IAF pilot walked to his freedom at the heavily-guarded Attari border post manned by the Border Security Force. BSF officials, prepping for the return of the IAF pilot, had canceled the retreat ceremony at the border post. "Abhinandan is more important than the ceremony," a local official said about the IAF officer who Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, had made "every Indian proud".

Scores of people, many waving flags and singing, had gathered near the Wagah border crossing to give a hero's welcome

to Wing Commander Abhinandan, son of a decorated air force officer Air Marshal S Varthaman. The IAF officer has become the human face of the conflict between the two countries when Pakistan Army put out a series of videos that showed him in its custody. In one, he was blindfolded and blood covered and yet, responded to questions from a Pakistan Army with remarkable composure, calm and dignity. The decision to release the IAF pilot had been announced by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in the national assembly, who described it as a "peace gesture" to India. The announcement was seen as a diplomatic victory in India that had, minutes earlier, rejected an effort by

Islamabad to use him as a bargaining tool. There had been mounting pressure on Pakistan to release the IAF pilot after the Pakistan Air Force tried to bomb a couple of military installations in Jammu and Kashmir to retaliate India's air strike at terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed's biggest training camp in Pakistan.

It was the first time in 50 years that India had ordered Indian Air Force jets to carry out an aerial strike across the Line of Control. Since the escalation, world leaders have scrambled to head off an all-out conflict in the subcontinent. President Donald trump in Hanoi on Thursday said he had been involved in seeking to de-escalate the conflict.

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US offers \$1 million reward for information on Osama bin Laden's son

The United States on Thursday offered a \$1 million reward for information on a son of late Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, seeing him as an emerging face of extremism. The location of Hamza bin Laden, sometimes dubbed the "crown prince of jihad," has been the subject of speculation for years with reports of him living in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria or under house arrest in Iran. "Hamza bin Laden is the son of deceased former AQ leader Osama bin Laden and is emerging as a leader in the AQ

franchise," a State Department statement said, referring to Al-Qaeda.

The State Department said that it would offer \$1 million for information leading to his location in any country.

Bin Laden, who according to the United States is around 30, has threatened attacks against the United States to avenge the 2011 killing of his father, who was living in hiding in the Pakistani garrison town of Abbottabad, by US special forces.

US intelligence agencies

increasingly see the younger bin Laden as a successor to his father for the mantle of global jihad, especially as the even more extreme Islamic State group is down to its last sliver of land in Syria.

In 2015, bin Laden released an audio message urging jihadists in Syria to unite, claiming that the fight in the war-torn country paves the way to "liberating Palestine. And in a message a year later, following in the footsteps of his father, he urged the overthrow of the leadership in their native Saudi Arabia.

Osama bin Laden's three surviving wives and his children were quietly allowed to return to Saudi Arabia after his killing. But Hamza bin Laden's whereabouts have been a matter of dispute. He is believed to have spent years along with his mother in Iran, despite Al-Qaeda's strident denunciations of the Shiite branch of Islam that dominates the country.

Observers say that the clerical regime in Tehran kept him under house arrest as a way to maintain pressure on rival Saudi Arabia as well

as on Al-Qaeda, dissuading the Sunni militants from attacking Iran. One of Hamza bin Laden's half-brothers told The Guardian last year that his whereabouts were unknown but that he may be in Afghanistan.

He also said that Hamza bin Laden married the daughter of Mohammed Atta, the lead hijacker in Al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States that killed some 3,000 people and sparked the US intervention in Afghanistan.

Credit reporting agencies face pressure from skeptical U.S. Congress

Waters has a draft bill that would limit the reach of such credit reports, shorten the time adverse information remains on consumers' records, and make it easier for consumers to dispute errors on their reports. Several Democrats made clear they were dissatisfied with the current state of the country's credit reporting, arguing consumers lack control over their own data.

The panel's top Republican, Representative Patrick McHenry, agreed the industry was in need of a makeover. However, he emphasized a desire to see more companies compete with the three largest agencies.

"What I see here is an oligopoly," he told executives. "I don't see that vibrant competition which is needed for these agencies to actually help consumers."

The massive data breach disclosed by Equifax in 2017, where a cyber attack exposed the personal data of roughly 148 million people, has driven calls from Washington for changes to the industry. Legislation beefing up protections around consumer data is seen by analysts and lobbyists to be a rare area of common ground in the current Congress, where Democrats control the House and Republicans control the Senate.

Waters' Senate counterpart, Banking Chairman Mike Crapo, has said legislation addressing the collection and protection of personal data is one of his top priorities this year. He is currently soliciting input on how consumers could retain more control over their personal information.

For their part, credit reporting agency executives told lawmakers they were working to address consumer concerns and bolster their cybersecurity to guard against future breaches.

"Consumers trust and expect that their credit reports contain the most accurate and complete



data possible, and lenders rely on that information to help millions of consumers obtain the right loans at the right time," said Equifax CEO Mark Begor in prepared testimony.

Why I loved the Oscars this year (and so did the CIA) -- Sorry you did not, Mr. Trump

or at least tweeting about them. The CIA, which began tweeting in February 2014 and now has 2.54 million followers, continued its popular "Reel vs. Real" campaign to educate readers about the agency and help distinguish its fictional portrayal on film from reality. Its social media team congratulated all the Oscar nominees and then tweeted about "vibranium" - the fictitious substance in Marvel's "Black Panther," which won three Oscars - noting that neither the magical stuff nor the film's Wakanda (its African setting) are real. It also tweeted a link to a wonky, engaging article by an agency scientist about substances that resemble vibranium (tungsten carbide).

While the CIA tweeters seemed to relish the show and its over-the-top pageantry, President Trump did not. In a lone tweet at 6:50 a.m. on Monday, Trump blasted director Spike Lee for his back-handed critique of the

president and his policies. While accepting an Oscar for best-adapted screenplay for his film "BlacKkKlansman," Lee urged Americans to make a "moral choice" in the 2020 presidential race. "When we regain our humanity, it will be a powerful moment," he said, stumbling slightly as he read his note cards. "The 2020 election is around the corner - let's all mobilize and be on the right side of history," he continued. "Make the moral choice between love versus hate. Do the right thing." Less than 12 hours later, President Trump fired back. "Be nice if Spike Lee could read his notes," he tweeted. "Or better yet not have to use notes at all, when doing his racist hit on your President, who has done more for African Americans (Criminal Justice Reform, Lowest Unemployment numbers in History, Tax Cuts, etc.) than almost any other Pres!" The Oscars have long been an annual celebration of the liberal "Hollywood values" that conservatives despise.

U.S. denied tens of thousands more visas in 2018 due to travel ban: data

comprehensive look at the human impact of Republican President Donald Trump's ban, imposed shortly after he took office and initially blocked by federal courts.

The ban has especially affected people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, countries where the number of visas issued slid 80 percent in 2018 from 2016, the last year without a travel ban. Trump's initial January 2017 executive order banning entry to the United States by citizens of several Muslim-majority countries launched a fierce fight in federal courts over whether the policy amounts to an unlawful "Muslim ban" or is a legal exercise of presidential power. The administration revised the policy following court challenges, and the Supreme Court allowed it to largely go into effect in December 2017 while legal challenges continued. In June 2018, the high court upheld the new version of the ban. As a result, most people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen have not been able to enter the United States for well over a year. Venezuela and North Korea also were targeted in the current policy, but those restrictions were not challenged in court. The figures released on Tuesday show

the government denied 15,384 applications for immigrant visas - given to those who want to live permanently in the United States - due to the "2017 Executive Order on Immigration." A State Department spokeswoman confirmed that term referred to the travel ban policy.

In addition, 21,645 applications for non-immigrant visas - given to people coming for short-term visits for business, tourism or other reasons - were denied due to the ban.

Approximately 2,200 visa applications overcame denials based on the travel ban last year, but it was unclear how many of those applications were initially made last year or earlier. The data did not include how many visa applications were made by citizens from countries affected by the travel ban. Every month, the State Department releases the numbers of visas issued to citizens of all countries, including those under the travel ban, but it does not publish equivalent monthly information on the number of visa applications or denials by country. Other, previously released data from the State Department shows that the number of U.S. visas issued to citizens of the countries under the travel ban has dropped drastically as a result of its implementation.

Prepare for all eventualities, Pak PM Imran Khan to citizens after IAF strikes Jaish camp across LoC

The national security committee, chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan, said Pakistan "shall respond at the time and place of its choosing".

(Insider Bureau)-Pakistan's national security committee on Tuesday condemned the Indian Air Force's strikes at a Jaish-e-Muhammed terror camp across the Line of Control. The national security committee, chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan, said Pakistan "shall respond at the time and place of its choosing".

Pakistan PM Imran Khan directed the armed forces and the people of Pakistan to remain prepared for all eventualities. A statement said Imran Khan has decided to engage with global leadership "expose irresponsible Indian policy" in the region.

A special meeting of the National Security Committee was held at the Pakistan PM's office. The

meeting was attended by ministers of foreign affairs, defence, finance, chairman of joint chiefs of staff and other senior officials.

The national security panel alleged that the Indian government has "resorted to a self serving, reckless and fictitious claim." Pakistan also claimed that the air strikes were being carried out in view of the general elections in India and put "regional stability and peace at risk".

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi had said that "better sense" should prevail in India and said his country "holds the right to proper response" to what he termed a "grave aggression".

"I will term it a grave aggression...It is a violation of the Line of Control.

Pakistan holds the right to self defence and proper response," said Qureshi, according to a video statement posted by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the ruling party of the country.

The IAF carried out the strikes at terror camp deep across the LoC at the biggest training centre of Jaish-e-Mohammed at Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The IAF used Mirage 2000 jets to strike at the terror camp in the highly rugged and mountainous region. Reports said 200-300 terrorists were killed in the IAF operation.

The PTI, the party headed by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, said in another Twitter post that



"Qureshi warned India not to challenge Pakistan" saying "Pakistan is fully prepared to respond to any misadventure."

In a TV interview, Qureshi said there is section in India which "is trying to disturb the peace in the region" to serve its own political end. "Indian government is in dire need of winning the upcoming elections, selfish enough, they are willing to create unrest in the entire region.

Pakistan will use all international forums to expose India while being ready to retaliate to any aggression," PTI's official handle quoted Qureshi as saying. Qureshi had called an "emergency meeting" after India carried out air strikes across the LoC and destroyed terror camps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Early Tuesday morning, the Indian Air Force Indian forces carried out a strike

at the biggest camp of the terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed in Balakot. Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said hours after IAF dropped 1,000 pound bombs in a thickly-forested hilltop that has eliminated a large number of terrorists.

The IAF air strike came less than two week after a terror attack in Pulwama killed 40 CRPF troopers. The Jaish-e-Mohammed had claimed that attack.

China has a business

Like approach to Terrorism

To get China on board for designating Masood Azhar in the UN, New Delhi needs to increase the costs for China

(Agencies)- In what can be seen as a small victory for India, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has issued a statement condemning the suicide bombing in Pulwama. More crucially, the statement, signed off by all permanent members of the Security Council, including China, names the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). As is widely known, China has been the primary obstacle in India's efforts to get JeM chief Masood Azhar sanctioned by the United Nations under Resolution 1267. So, does the UNSC

statement mark a veritable shift in China's position? For starters, China has not yet agreed to Azhar getting listed under Resolution 1267. The UNSC statement is good but carries no punitive implication against Azhar or Pakistan. This is not the first time China has signed off a statement condemning Pakistan-based terrorist groups. The September 2017 BRICS declaration in Xiamen mentioned both JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba. It needs to be recalled that the Xiamen summit was preceded by the end of the 73-day stand-off between Indian and Chinese forces in Doklam. In fact, India



used, according to some experts, a threat to boycott the Xiamen summit. And then in February 2018, China agreed to put Pakistan on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental body that

targets money laundering and terrorist financing. In return, other countries consented to China's vice-presidency of FATF.

The lesson is clear: Beijing will support Pakistan as long as it is not costly to do so. The moment China

sees that the cost of supporting Pakistan exceeds short-term benefits, it will stop doing so. Here lies a message for India. To get China on board for designating Azhar in the UN, New Delhi needs to increase the costs for

China. India could do this using the support of friendly countries like the US and France. In the long run, India and the global community need to increase the reputational costs of standing with terrorism.

Certainties in the wake of the IAF? strikes

(Insider Bureau)- Reactions to the IAF strikes show that there is no patience for terror as an instrument of State policy

The Indian Air Force's (IAF) cross-border airstrikes leave some certainties in their wake - some negative, some positive, and in India and Pakistan. Let's list them.*It will not conclusively end Pakistan's strategy of using low-cost proxies against India. Depending on whether there is an escalation or not, things may stay calm for some time. But compulsive bad habits return. They did soon enough after the defeat in Kargil with the Parliament attack in December 2001. After the panic of Op Parakram in Mumbai, 2008. And following that global opprobrium, with Pathankot and Pulwama. Respite for India, if at all, will be short-lived. There is no immediate scope for complacency.*Going ahead, Pakistan and the global community will have to keep the redefined red lines in mind. There will be an Indian military response to terror strikes coming from Pakistan. India has dropped three self-imposed limitations of the past: One, keeping conflicts of Kashmir within and not expanding to the

"mainland" (Pakistan outside of what it occupies of Kashmir). Two, within Kashmir, respecting the sanctity of the LoC/ international border. And three, the proactive use of air power.*Pakistan has so far executed a low-cost strategy of keeping India hurting and off-balance by using expendable proxies. Over the decades, there is no doubt left that the Pakistani army uses Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba as kamikaze force-multipliers, giving the establishment plausible deniability. Even when internationally-acknowledged researchers establish the connection Pakistan gets away by finally blaming it on non-state actors, or a deep state (ISI rogues) within a deep state (ISI) within yet another deep state (the army). Check out the David Coleman Headley example. This is now over. India has demonstrated that it no longer accepts that state/non-state distinction. For too long has Pakistan thrived on the presumption that as long as it uses proxies in mufti, India will hesitate to use its uniformed forces directly. This has changed. Pakistani strategists will now need to keep this reality in mind. The basic truth is, Pakistan can cynically employ its expendable,

indoctrinated, mostly illiterate youth. Like any modern democracy, India has no access to such forces. It has no choice other than its regular forces.*If Pakistan so wishes to use it, Indian action has left it with plenty of scope for plausible deniability. It can say just a shallow penetration took place, even claim its fighters chased IAF away. It has sufficient control over its territory and media access to control the narrative and say nothing was damaged, nobody was killed. As with the post-Uri surgical strikes. Kargil showed it can even bury its uniformed dead in secret.*If Pakistan wishes to retaliate, it has to also know that this isn't a game of cricket with one innings for either side. This will go on. Does it want to go down that slope, or climb that escalatory ladder? You can choose your metaphor, but for Pakistan the choice is tougher.*Should it still wish to go ahead it definitely has the instruments, aircraft and stand-off weapons to do so. But it has to then prepare for an attrition spiral. And what will it hit in retaliation? India does not offer any civilian equivalent of Jaish and Lashkar. Hitting Indian military bases raises the level of conflict to beyond where India has suggested it means to keep it:



at the level of non-military (and non-civilian) targets.*The first important international reaction has come from China. It has counselled restraint on both sides. This must greatly disappoint Pakistan because it would have expected its most trusted all-weather friend to make a straight condemnation of India. But it's a new world with no patience for terror as an instrument of policy. We have to wait for Washington to wake up, and keep a close watch on US? President Trump's Twitter page.*Since the Americans and the Saudis too are unlikely to say what Pakistan wants, its leaders will have to weigh their leverage with the world again. They've believed that given that their geography gives them unique powers with the world. Trump can't leave Afghanistan without their help, the Chinese are too heavily

invested in their economy to dump them, and the Saudis depend on them for their national, and personal security. They might see the limitations and risks of that presumption now.*And finally, we need to watch how this plays out in our domestic, electoral politics. There will be risks in post-Uri type chest-thumping. Because there is no knowing if there will be a retaliatory cycle set, and if so how and when. The strategically smart thing would be to stay calm and keep it non-partisan, at least for the next several days. It seems unlikely though, if you saw Narendra Modi speak at his campaign meeting in Churu in Rajasthan on Tuesday, with the pictures of all the CRPF dead from Pulwama forming the backdrop. In conclusion: 'Game-changer' is a much-abused expression these days.

The two faces of Winston Churchill

He was an unapologetic imperialist, who believed that India could never become a nation, that Indians should remain forever under the British yoke.

(Insider Bureau)- Earlier this month, a flaming row broke out in Britain, when the Labour leader John McDonnell criticised Winston Churchill for having ordered troops to fire on striking workers in 1910. He was savagely denounced by his political opponents. The Tory grandee Sir Nicholas Soames, himself a grandson of Churchill, said "my grandfather's reputation can withstand a publicity-seeking assault from a third-rate, Poundland Lenin. I don't think it will shake the world." That may be true, in so far as Britain goes. There, Churchill is (rightly) venerated for having stood up to the Nazis when his party colleagues seemed unwilling to do so. A solitary death in police firing is seen as trifling as compared to saving his country

during World War II. But what about assaults on Churchill's reputation from other places, such as India? His distaste for Indians ("a beastly people with a beastly religion"), his venomous hatred for Gandhi, and his denial of food aid to the starving peasants of Bengal are well known. This column consolidates the case for the prosecution, by way of a document that I recently found in the archives. This is a six page memorandum that Churchill prepared in September 1932 for the British Parliament's Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms. Here he wrote that "the worst part of all the mischiefs which have arisen from the Round Table Conference and from the loose sayings of politicians, has been the omnipresent underlying

suggestion that whatever is to be done now [in India] is but the forerunner, or as it were the earnest, of far more sweeping changes which are impending". In this note, Churchill set out to combat this mischief, to make it clear that in his eyes, at any rate, British rule in India must continue indefinitely into the future. He complained that "the term 'Dominion Status' has been used so loosely as to cause harmful misunderstandings". Churchill wrote that it is "wrong for the high servants of the Crown, whether Ministers, Viceroys, or Governors, to use this phrase or to hold out hopes based upon it, unless they see their way to its practical realisation within some period of time to which living men can reasonably look forward. If they



have ideas that India may become a self-governing dominion like Canada or Australia within one hundred or two hundred years, and that is all they mean by it, they ought not to use such a phrase without also explaining that it cannot be achieved in any period which men can foresee". Churchill further claimed that "India is not a country or a nation; it is rather a continent inhabited by many nations. The parallel to India is Europe. But Europe is not a political entity. It is a geographical abstraction. No one after centuries of progress can

voice the opinion of Europe, or claim to speak in 'her' name. But the racial and religious divisions in India are more numerous and far more deep than those which rend Europe. Such unity and sentiment as exists in India arises entirely through the centralised British Government of India It seems to me therefore unhelpful ... to imagine that any settlement on any subject can be come to by a bargain with India as a whole". Writing in 1932, Churchill thought India could never be an independent nation "in any period which men can foresee".



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Medicare Fraud Scam Offers Free Back or Knee Braces



(Agencies)- Have you been offered a free knee brace from Medicare? Beware of this rampant scam that's been going on. The scammers claim to be from Medicare or a medical warehouse, and some even say they were referred by your doctor or a caregiver. They ask for your Medicare number, and callers are pushy in trying to get your personal information. Some telemarketers will keep calling until they wear you down and you give in to whatever is being offered.

Free back or knee brace? It's a scam

Whether it's an "as seen on TV" ad or someone calling you claiming to be from Medicare, these are scams. The best way to get a new knee brace is to meet with a doctor face to face who can get you a properly fitting brace that will help relieve your

pain.

It's understandable to want a quick fix if you or a loved one is in pain, but understand that as soon as you call the number on your TV or tell a caller on the phone that you are in need of a knee brace or back brace, you are opening yourself up to more phone calls and attempts to get your information. Scammers call offering braces as well as other durable medical equipment (DME).

Why back and knee braces?

The reason these fraudsters are hawking back and knee braces is that Medicare will pay for them, as Medicare has not reduced its reimbursement amounts for these durable medical equipment items.

Here's what happens

The back brace or knee brace that was billed as "free" is not free at all. Later, Medicare will be

billed. Medicare gets a bill for the knee, back, or arm braces for thousands of dollars (each brace costs from \$1,000 to \$2,000), when in reality a back or knee brace costs far less than that. Since Medicare receives over one billion claims per year, a live person only reviews about three percent of these claims. Medicare signs off on the claims and pays them.

Ads on TV

Abe Wischnia of Elliott.org paused the TV on a recording of an ad offering free back braces from Medicare, and he found a disclaimer in fine print that appeared for just a few seconds. It read as follows:

"By calling in, I confirm that this will serve as my signature authority for COMPANY and their customers to call me on my telephone at the number provided. I am aware of my rights

to protect my privacy and these rights are waived for the purpose of COMPANY and their customers to call me. I consent to receive information on products not limited to spinal support braces and/or knee braces on this phone call or subsequent phone calls ... I am permitting calls to be automatically dialed. ... If I am on a do not call list, by opting in, I am waiving this right."

You don't know what you might get

Some callers asked for a back brace and received more than one, or received a back brace and two knee braces, or even more. To make matters worse, these braces are often low-quality and won't last the 5 years it will take for Medicare to pay for a new one. In the end, Medicare ends up getting charged for every item the person received. Overall,

Medicare fraud costs American taxpayers \$60 billion every year. Just on back braces, taxpayers spent nearly \$108 million between 2010 and 2016.

How to mitigate Medicare fraud
" Only answer the phone if it's a caller that you know.

" If you do answer the phone and it's a solicitor, hang up. If it's a postcard or email, discard it.

" Turn off or disregard TV ads offering free back or knee braces."If you do talk to the solicitor, tell them you're going to report them for Medicare fraud and you'd like to be removed from their list."

Never give out your Medicare card number, Social Security number, birth date, bank account info, or credit card number to an unknown party. This goes for over the phone, on email, or on social media.

Exclusive: HSBC probe helped lead to U.S. charges against Huawei CFO

(Agencies)- An internal investigation by HSBC Holdings PLC into Huawei Technologies' connections to a suspected front company in Iran found that the Chinese telecommunications equipment maker maintained close financial ties to the firm years after purportedly selling the unit, documents reviewed by Reuters show.

The HSBC probe of Huawei came in late 2016 and 2017 as the bank was trying to get the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to dismiss criminal charges for the bank's own misconduct involving U.S. sanctions.

The bank's findings, which have not been made public, were given in a series of presentations in 2017 to the DOJ. The department used them to help bring its current criminal case against Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou.

She is accused of conspiring to defraud HSBC and other banks by misrepresenting Huawei's relationship with the suspected

front company, Skycom Tech Co Ltd. Huawei has said Skycom was a local business partner in Iran, while the United States maintains it was an unofficial subsidiary used to conceal Huawei's Iran business. Huawei and Skycom are also defendants in the U.S. case, accused of bank and wire fraud, as well as violating U.S. sanctions on Iran. U.S. authorities allege Huawei used Skycom to obtain embargoed U.S. goods and technology in Iran and to move money out of the country via the international banking system. As a result of Huawei's deception, U.S. authorities allege, HSBC and other banks cleared more than \$100 million of transactions related to Skycom through the United States that potentially violated economic sanctions Washington had in place at the time against doing business with Iran.

Huawei declined to comment for this story. The company has denied the charges in the case.

Robert Sherman, a spokesman for HSBC, said, "Information provided by HSBC to the Justice Department was provided pursuant to formal demand, including grand jury subpoena or other obligation to provide information pursuant to a Deferred Prosecution Agreement or similar legal obligation."

He added, "The U.S. Department of Justice has confirmed that HSBC is not under investigation in this case."

A Justice Department spokesman declined to comment.

Meng, the daughter of Huawei's founder, was arrested in Vancouver in December. She remains free on bail while the U.S. government tries to have her extradited to face bank and wire fraud charges. The case comes at a time of heightened trade tensions between Washington and Beijing, and amid concerns by the United States that Huawei's equipment could be used for Chinese espionage. The



Shenzhen-based company, the world's largest maker of telecommunications networking equipment, has repeatedly denied such claims.

Meng has maintained she is innocent of the allegations made against her.

Reuters reported in December that HSBC - which is referred to in the indictment only as "Financial Institution 1" - figured prominently in the Huawei case.

HSBC's internal probe of Huawei is reported here for the first time. The HSBC documents contain new financial details about Huawei's relationship with Skycom and the company that Huawei claims it sold Skycom to in 2007, Canicula Holdings Ltd. All three firms previously had bank accounts at HSBC, with the Skycom and Canicula accounts part of what the bank internally called the "Huawei Mastergroup."



Trump's inner circle might escape Mueller charges - but still won't be safe

(Agencies)- Even if special counsel Robert Mueller finishes his work without filing new charges, President Donald Trump and his associates won't be in the clear.

In recent weeks, several prominent figures close to Trump have insisted that they'll survive Mueller's probe unscathed. Trump himself maintains that Justice Department officials have told his lawyers he is not a target of the special counsel's investigation. And his family members have sent similar signs. Trump's oldest daughter, Ivanka, recently told ABC News that she has "zero concern" about the investigation. Her brother, Donald Trump Jr., told Fox News on Monday that he wasn't worried because "we know there's nothing there." But Mueller is far from the only threat to the president, his family and aides.

Federal prosecutors in New York are examining Trump's 2016 campaign, inauguration and businesses. Congress has given the Justice Department dozens of hearing transcripts that could contain lies told under oath. State and local prosecutors have reportedly

prepped new charges that can't be erased with a presidential pardon. And a slate of sealed indictments sit in the Washington, D.C., federal courthouse, raising the prospect that some in Trump's circle may have already been indicted and just don't know it.

"If anyone in Trump world is breathing easy right now, I'd say they are very foolish," said Shanlon Wu, a defense lawyer who previously represented Trump's former deputy campaign chairman, Rick Gates. "Even if Mueller's report were to appear and didn't implicate the president, all these other criminal investigations will continue. That's not going to be the magic bullet that solves everything. I'd be very concerned if I was a lawyer or a potential target in that world right now."

Lawyers for Trump and several other senior officials told POLITICO that they are as much in the dark about Mueller's next moves as everyone else trying to decipher whether the special counsel really is close to wrapping up his probe, as several media outlets reported last week. They're also grappling with the reality that even if Attorney General William Barr releases a

summary of Mueller's report, the document will likely be scrubbed of the names and details of anyone who wasn't formally charged - offering people who have been living under a legal shadow no exculpatory evidence. "That's the maddening thing about investigations," said James Trusty, a former senior DOJ official who is close to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. "They're not religiously compliant about banging the gong and announcing, 'Hey, you're done, you're no longer being looked at.'" Federal prosecutors in most investigations can leave suspects "dangling in the wind for years," Trusty added. "You're literally looking up statutes of limitations and saying, 'Well, it's been four years, maybe I'm done.'"

Several sources close to Trump's White House say the real threat is not Mueller's examination of potential collusion between Trump associates and Russia in the 2016 campaign.

Instead, they fret that people around the president could get indicted for misleading lawmakers - one of the key charges that Mueller recently lodged against longtime Trump adviser Roger Stone. Senate

Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr told CBS earlier this month that his panel during the course of its two-year Russia investigation had "not been shy" in referring people to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution. The House Intelligence Committee recently voted to send more than 50 of its transcripts to Mueller.

"These guys took the whole Congress thing way too lightly. They didn't understand [members and aides] actually listen, take notes and record this shit," said a senior Republican official in regular touch with the White House. "I think they all took it way too nonchalantly and didn't think it matters - and boy does it." "If you lie in a sworn deposition to Congress or anybody else then you should be worried. That's how people go to jail," added Barry Bennett, a former Trump 2016 campaign adviser. Mueller has publicly indicted 34 people and three companies, while securing guilty pleas from former senior Trump aides Gates, Michael Flynn, Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen. While Mueller could charge others before closing up shop, it's also possible that he has already placed more indictments like

ticking time bombs into the federal court system. Seventeen cases filed there so far this year remain under seal, as well as another 57 from last year.

All those cases could be unrelated to the Russia probe, but their filing in the same district in which Manafort, Gates, Flynn and Stone were charged makes them worth watching, said Brett Kappel, a Democratic campaign finance lawyer who has been tracking the sealed cases. For all the rhetorical fire Trump has focused on Mueller and his "witch hunt," meanwhile, the president himself remains at high risk from multiple other investigations. In New York, federal prosecutors have been seeking interviews with Trump Organization executives and recently subpoenaed donor and financial records from the Trump inauguration committee. They have also secured several cooperating witnesses close to the president, including Cohen, longtime Trump Organization Chief Financial Officer Allen Weisselberg and David Pecker, CEO of the National Enquirer's parent company.

Fortis asks Sebi to arrest Malvinder, Shivinder Singh to recover Rs 472 crore

Fortis Healthcare has also asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for a personal hearing on the matter.

(Agencies)- Fortis Healthcare has said it has asked markets regulator Sebi to initiate legal proceedings, including arrest of its former promoters Singh brothers, to recover Rs 472 crore from them and related entities. In an application to Sebi for the recovery of the amount, Fortis Healthcare and Fortis Hospitals have asked for the invocation of Section 28A of the Act to recover the amounts from Malvinder Mohan Singh, Shivinder Mohan Singh, RHC holdings Pvt Ltd, Shivi Holdings Pvt Ltd, Malav Holdings Pvt Ltd, Religare Finvest Ltd, Best Healthcare Pvt Ltd, Fern healthcare Pvt Ltd and Modland Wears Pvt Ltd. Fortis Healthcare has also asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for a personal hearing on the matter.

Commenting on the development, Fortis Healthcare Ltd Chairman Ravi Rajagopal said: "Once SEBI order was

received in Oct 2018, then the revised version in Dec 2018, we began legal proceedings to recover the money as per the directive in the order. All the nine parties/noticees were sent notices from FHL." On January 18, 2019, the SEBI deadline for notices to pay back money to Fortis expired and on February 13, 2019, petition was filed by Fortis with SEBI to initiate legal proceedings against promoters and related entities to recover money and for other directions, he added. The company is also awaiting SEBI approval on declassification of Singh brothers as promoters, Rajagopal said. He further said the previous board of Fortis Healthcare had links with Singh brothers and there was an investigation by law firm Luthra and Luthra into the Rs 472 crore diverted into other companies.

"Following release of the Luthra report, we initiated legal action -

writing to the regulatory authorities with the primary objective of recovering money and protecting shareholders interest. We filed applications with SEBI, SFIO and handed them report copies. Legal action have been taken against the three entities - Fern, Modland and Best," Rajagopal said.

When contacted, Shivinder Singh said seeking to invoke Section 28A of SEBI Act is premature and unfair when a final order has not been passed in the matter. "...and when I have not had a chance to review or respond to Fortis' own investigation report which I have requested and not received till date, strikes me as premature, unfair and against the principles of natural justice," he added. Singh reiterated that the decisions on ICDs (Inter Corporate Deposits) were taken after his retirement and he had no role to play in their planning or execution. "Since September



2015 - after stepping down from all executive positions in Fortis - my position was no more than that of every other non-executive board member of Fortis. Just like the other board members, I was also kept in the dark regarding these transactions," he said in a statement. Asserting that even Fortis is well aware of the facts and his role on the matter, Singh said, "It would be grossly unjust to hold me responsible for decisions and actions taken by others who were in a position of responsibility and power." He also said he had cooperated in all interactions with Sebi and other agencies making his position clear in "detailed written

and oral submissions which establish my innocence". "I'm confident the truth will prevail and that the regulators will carefully examine the role of all decision makers individually and do justice," Shivinder said. An email sent to Malvinder Singh seeking his comments on the development remained unanswered by the time of filing the story. Commenting on other initiatives undertaken by the new Fortis board, Rajagopal said Malvinder Singh's lease of Singapore property has been cancelled, all other official assets have been reclaimed back from the Singh brothers. PTI AKT RKL MR

Uber Eats close to selling Indian food delivery business to Swiggy: Report

The share-swap deal is expected to close by next month and will give Uber a 10 percent stake in food delivery service Swiggy, the report said, citing people privy to the development.



(Agencies)- Uber Eats, the food delivery arm of ride-hailing app Uber Technologies Inc, is close to a deal to sell its Indian business to Bengaluru-based Swiggy, the Economic Times reported on Friday.

The share-swap deal is expected to close by next month and will give Uber a 10 percent stake in food delivery service Swiggy, the paper said, citing people privy to the development.

Separately, the Times of India

reported that Uber was considering the sale of its food delivery arm in India and has been in talks with Swiggy and Gurugram-based Zomato.

Swiggy is currently leading discussions but rival Zomato is still in the race for a share-swap deal, the Times of India said, citing sources familiar with the development.

Swiggy, which runs a mobile-based application and a website for food-delivery services,

currently operates in more than 80 Indian cities.

Swiggy was valued at a little more than \$3 billion and competes with homegrown Ola-owned Foodpanda, Uber Eats and China's Ant Financial Group-backed Zomato, which is valued at over \$1 billion.

Both Swiggy and Uber declined to comment while Zomato did not immediately respond.

Last week, San Francisco-based Uber posted a 2 percent growth in quarterly revenue, raising questions about its future growth prospects, as the company prepares for a public offering. Uber in December filed confidentially for an initial public offering, setting the stage for one of the biggest technology listings ever.

Amazon adds former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi to board



(Agencies)- Amazon.com Inc said on Monday it appointed former PepsiCo Inc Chief Executive Officer Indra Nooyi as a director, making her the second woman to be named to the e-commerce giant's board this month.

Earlier this month, the company named Starbucks Corp's Chief Operating Officer Rosalind Brewer as a director, the second black woman to serve on its board.

Amazon's eleven-member board now has five women including Nooyi, Brewer, Jamie Gorelick, Judith McGrath and Patricia

Stonesifer. The company last year said women and minorities are to be among its board nominees as part of a new policy to increase diversity on its board. Nooyi, who will be part of the audit committee of Amazon's board, stepped down as the CEO of PepsiCo in October 2018 and as the chairman of the beverage-and-snack maker earlier this year. She has been granted 549 shares of common stock of the company, which will vest in three equal annual instalments beginning on May 15, 2020. The company's shares closed at \$1,633 on Monday.



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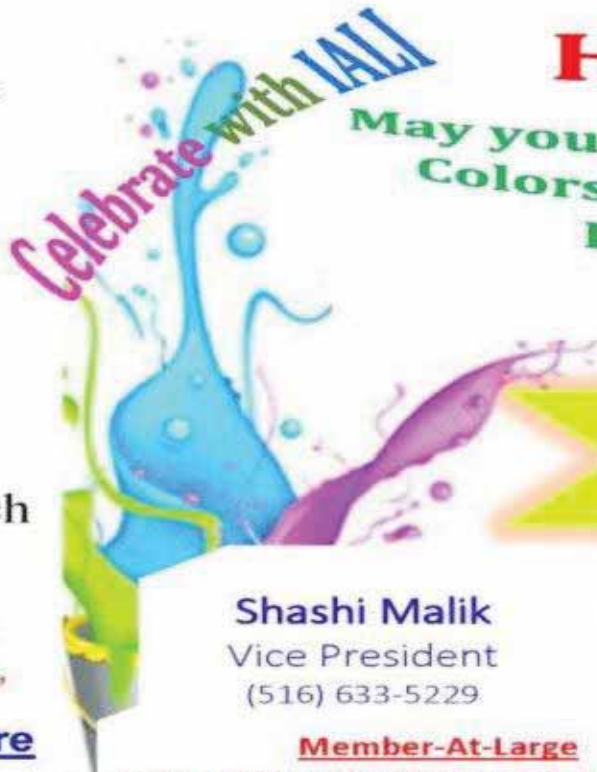
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Secretary
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Rajeev Chaudhary
Treasurer
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BUSINESS OF THE WEEK

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Research on to find robots' utility in treatment of mental disorders

A team of international researchers, including some from Spain and one from India, is evaluating the fitness of robots in delivering mental health treatment to individuals with ID and assessing its impact on users and their caregivers.

Robot-assisted therapy paper published in the International Journal of Social Robotics on February 1 has reported positive effects of such intervention on users, mainly improvement in behaviour.

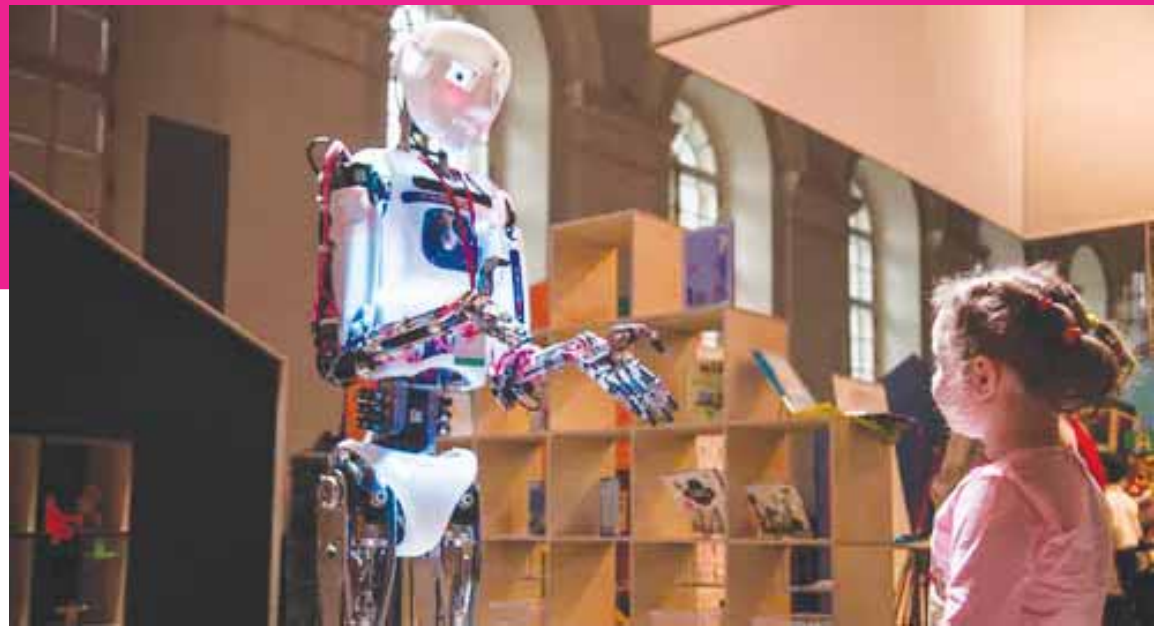
The research project, currently being piloted at the Ave Maria Foundation in Barcelona, Spain, provides valuable insight into the development of robot-assisted intervention for cognitive rehabilitation of people with intellectual disabilities.

A team of international researchers, including some from Spain and one from India, is evaluating the fitness of robots in delivering mental health treatment to individuals with ID and assessing its impact on users and their caregivers.

Titled 'Robot-Assisted Interventions for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: Impact on Users and Caregivers', the

"We made use of humanoid robots that are 58 cm tall and look, speak and move like humans. Robotics is a vast subject, so a major part of our research was to identify what areas to make use of and what sort of therapy," said Jainendra Shukla, assistant professor,

Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi, who is part of the research team. The project was a part of Shukla's PhD research and was started in 2014. A questionnaire was specifically prepared for the evaluation of robotic interaction effects. The questions were selected to evaluate social interaction and the communication intents of patients while they were interacting with other people or with the robot during the activity. The users have sensors attached to them in the form of a wrist band that robots pick up



data from and analyse before reacting.

"It's not a cure for people with ID but to provide cognitive stimulation therapy where we try to stimulate some parts of an individual's brain," said Shukla.

A multipronged strategy was adopted by the researchers. During the first phase of this project, several interviews were conducted with expert psychologists and professional caregivers working with individuals with ID to identify what sort of assistance could be offered to these individuals using robotics.

Following the interviews, a

case study was performed to evaluate the response of robot interactions with individuals with ID. Finally, there was a field trial to evaluate the impact of robot-assisted interventions on caregivers.

"It has shown effective results in retaining memory, hand-eye co-ordination and even improving communication skills, especially non-verbal," Shukla said. The researches are now working to improve the technology to be able to identify the emotional state of the user and work out a response.

Experts in the field say certain concepts that sound

C-sections double in 10 years in India; fear of pain, age of mothers reasons

Nearly 17% women in 2015-2016 underwent a C-section, compared to the 9% in 2005-2006, the study by the Mumbai-based International Institute of Population Sciences found. This rise includes both first-time mothers and those opting for a C-section for subsequent deliveries.

In just a decade, the number of women who opted for a Caesarian section (C-section) more than doubled across India, especially in the cities, according to a new study that attributes the rise to reasons such as fear of pain and complications among mothers, and a rise in maternal age.

Nearly 17% women in 2015-2016 underwent a C-section, compared to the 9% in 2005-2006, the study by the Mumbai-based International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) found. This rise includes both first-time mothers and those opting for a C-section for subsequent deliveries. The researchers used data from the National Family Health Survey. While the rise in C-section deliveries is a global trend, what is concerning, according to experts, is how women were opting for it even when there is no medical need to undergo the procedure.

Across the world, C-sections are associated with higher rates

of maternal morbidities such as obesity, and complications in subsequent pregnancies. In fact, the World Health Organisation says C-section rates in any population should ideally not exceed 15%. "When we looked at the demographics of the women who chose the C-section, we found the rates had risen across states, among the poor and rich, educated and illiterate alike," said Sanjay Mohanty, professor at IIPS and the author of the study.

"The fear of pain, increase in the number of older mothers, which is known to increase complications, may also be reasons," said Mohanty, adding there were also those cases where mothers wanted to have the baby at an "auspicious day and time".

Senior doctors, however, pointed out that women were not the only ones asking for the procedure, and that many doctors themselves suggested it fearing litigation if the delivery

fails.

Dr Nozer Sheriar, an obstetrician in Mumbai, said doctors often suggest C-section as they are worried of the consequences if something goes wrong. "There is least acceptance among people if things don't go as expected in obstetrics, when compared to any other speciality," Dr Sheriar said.

Senior doctors said C-section deliveries need to be done judiciously as it poses risks associated with anaesthesia and surgery-related infections, as with any other procedure. "Women often request for a C-section as it usually has a shorter admission time compared to normal deliveries, where a woman may need eight to 10 hours of hospitalisation," said Dr Ashok Anand, head of the gynaecology department at the state-run Sir JJ Hospital in Byculla. Dr Anand said another concern was the dying art of vaginal delivery - using forceps -



among doctors. "The younger breed of doctors do not get enough opportunities to learn forcep delivery from their seniors. There are women who initially opt for normal deliveries, but when in labour, ask the doctors to perform a C-section. It is our responsibility to motivate them to continue with the normal deliveries," Dr Anand said.

Another way to stem C-sections is by targeting first-time mothers. Dr Arun Nayak, professor and unit chief at the civic-run Lokmaniya Tilak Municipal General Hospital, Sion, said C-sections among first-time mothers can pose a threat to their subsequent deliveries.

"Mothers who opt for a normal delivery in their second pregnancy after a C-section in

the first are at greater risk of uterine rupture," he said.

Dr Pankaj Desai, the former president of the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India, said one of the gravest risks with C-sections is a complication called invasive placenta, where the placenta infiltrates the walls of the uterus, resulting in up to 20% mortalities.

Better communication with mothers is the key, said Dr Sheriar. "If a woman undergoes C-section during her first pregnancy, she is most likely to opt for it in subsequent ones. We need to target and counsel first-time mothers to ask for normal deliveries, to reduce the numbers of unnecessary C-sections."



Dolce & Gabbana make encyclopedic review of artisanal heritage

Dolce & Gabbana gave the fashion world an encyclopedic review of their artisanal credentials with an expansive show of 127 looks.



Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala made a rare fashion week appearance, sitting in the front row of Dolce & Gabbana on Sunday.

The mayor's presence had the hallmark of an institutional show of support after the designers were forced to cancel a Shanghai show following comments by one of the designers deemed as racist.

The stalwart Milanese brand also faced a boycott in China, the luxury world's biggest market, and the longer term impact of the incident remains unclear. This was their first womenswear show since the controversy, which was followed by another incident involving Milan colleagues Prada and Gucci for including images that recalled blackface in their collections.

Highlights from Sunday's previews for next fall and winter:

Dolce and Gabbana parade elegance

Dolce & Gabbana gave the fashion world an encyclopedic review of their artisanal credentials with an expansive show of 127 looks.

The multi-theme runway show flipped through a series of well-catalogued Dolce & Gabbana themes. Designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana started with elegant suits topped with fedora hats or elaborate feathered fascinators worthy of a female Dasheill Hammett character then transitioned to chiffon and silk dresses or pantsuits with feather boa trim that exuded leisure.

The designers then ran through

patterns, textiles and colour: leopard, florals, houndstooth and Prince of Wales, jewel tone colorblocking and brocades. The designers, unusually, then highlighted a series of frothy bridal gowns. And the final flourish was reserved for the brand's true mainstay: beautifully tailored looks in black.

The looks played on classic, even stereotypical, roles of femininity, which remains at the heart of Dolce & Gabbana's appeal with its core consumer.

Highlights included a royal purple A-line coat with cape and bow details that popped with layers of turquoise crinoline, an all-white fitted double-breasted suit topped with a soft cashmere overcoat, a modern take on the suit deconstructed into an off-shoulder look and a black-and-white polka dot dress made voluminous by underlays worn by an Asian model. Applause emitting from a VIP front row punctuated the show.

The show titled "Elegance" opened with a video showing Dolce draping fabric on a model and hand stitching a garment that, when finished, was branded with the duo's script in Italian "Fatto a mano," or "Made by hand." Stella Jean

Haitian-Italian designer Stella Jean's collection for next fall and winter took a dramatic turn with a sleeker silhouette and more urban styling.

Jean said that her "bourgeois lady" is taking an updated version of a 17th-century European tour, and instead of

cultural capitals, she is visiting places usually considered beach destinations — but which instead have a rich artistic tradition. By that, she referred to the naive art of French Polynesia, Haiti and the Caribbean in general.

A gray, brick and camel plaid belted trench gave expression to Jean's old continent influence and European styling. A tiered, pleated red print dress worn with a turtle neck and knee-high boots projected an easy elegance. A black laser-cut top with slit-skirt and short-shorts with a sweater with a pair of cats had youthful flair.

Jean maintained her colourful naive art prints, but with a long pencil skirt worn with a sleek high-neck blouse in seashell pink. The colour palette was more subdued than in some seasons past, including pink, green, blue, brick red gray and white. "For the first time there is some black. I guarantee that it does not reflect any malaise. I am not having a difficult moment. I like black," Jean said backstage.

Marra's miners

Antonio Marras's collection exuded the freedom that he imagines would have been felt by Sardinian mine workers freed from labour, dressed in their Sunday best and ready to party. It's a feeling many new economy workers could easily relate to. The joyful looks had a deliberate rag-tag feeling that Marras achieved by taking cuttings from discarded or used clothing and other fabrics, creating a chronological history of a garment through panels and patches as it is passed from mother to daughter, father to son, adapted for occasion and season.



SAMINA MUGHAL Launches her Lifestyle Brands at NYFW



(By Our Staff Reporter) NY : Samina Mughal is an Award-Winning International Fashion Designer and the Founder/ Executive Producer of “SMGlobal Catwalk” – an International Fashion Movement which involves Fashion Shows & Events; Model Management & Training in New York, London, Paris & Dallas. Samina is also a Philanthropist and the Founder/ President of “Relief SMGlobal Foundation Inc”; a 501c3 Charity with a mission to help women & children around the world lead better lives through education, training and empowerment funded through Global Fashion and Modeling events.

The “Surviving in Fashion Showcase” was launched during “SMGlobal Catwalk – NY Fashion Week” on February 11th, 2017 where Stage 4 Cancer Survivors were given an opportunity to get glammed up and walk the runway in beautiful gowns, in front of a packed audience and lots of press. A dream come true for many of them. The story was reported by Reuters and was shared with over 1000 media outlets and channels across the world including the BBC News, NBC, ABC, FOX and many more. This initiative has continued ever

since in New York and Dallas every season, creating an event that so many of the survivors and their families look forward to. “Relief SMGlobal Foundation Inc.” has made a commitment to make a difference in the lives of others and has teamed up with “Say YES to Hope” to continue its mission as we bring Stage 4 Cancer survivors to a Fashion Capital of the world. The SAMINA MUGHAL Collection includes Couture Dresses & Gowns; a more affordable Luxxe Collection; and Resort wear. However, this season Samina re-launched her Menswear Collection and is due to launch her Beauty Brand within the coming weeks.

The SAMINA MUGHAL Collection has an International customer base who purchase her pieces online and from several boutiques across the USA and Europe. The collection will also be available in Macy’s and Amazon later this year. Samina Mughal is best known for providing an Innovative and Glamorous Collection of Clothing & Jewelry that is Sexy but slightly Edgy and Eclectic. Her Signatures of Accessible Luxury include unconventional silhouettes, and the use of Unique Luxurious Surface Embellishments with a high

attention to detail in each of her designs. With the launch of her Menswear and Beauty Lines, Samina is on her way to creating her Lifestyle Brand with something for everyone. Samina takes inspiration from her multicultural upbringing from the Exotic East, Edgy European Vibe and blends it together with innovative silhouettes with a touch of Red-Carpet Glamour. Samina’s other inspirations include International Music, The Arts, Entertainment and her Own Unique Individual Style. Born and raised in England, Samina started her fashion career after graduating from The Institute of Art & Design. Her creativity, cutting edge style, and an eye for the eclectic, allowed her technical knowledge and business sense to shape the trends for today’s Fashionistas. Those same skills have made Samina a desired asset and she has been entrusted with many roles with leaders in the fashion industries in England, Europe and the United States for several years. Samina has worked with many International brands and retailers worldwide; As well as top fashion schools and international magazines, making Samina a force to be reckoned with in the fashion industry.



CBFC passes Kartik Aaryan's *Luka Chuppi* with 4 cuts, mutes swear words

The Central Board of Film Certification has asked for four changes - three audio and one visual - in Kartik Aaryan-Kriti Sanon's *Luka Chuppi* that will hit theatres on March 11.

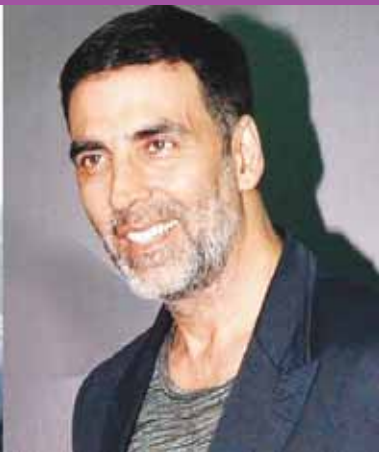
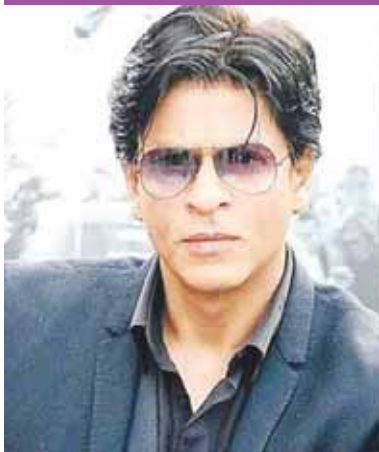
The Central Board of Film Certification has granted a U/A-certificate to *Luka Chuppi* starring Kartik Aaryan and Kriti Sanon, after asking for three audio and one visual change in the original edit of the film. The film is set to hit theatres on March 1. The CBFC has muted the word "k*njar" and "har**mi". The word "chu**a" has been replaced with "kutta" and a zoom in on a hand gesture for dialogue "Mujhe bhi chahiye" has been modified. The board has also asked for an additional disclaimer to be added in Hindi.

The final runtime of the movie will be 126 minute 9 second. Recently, makers of *Total Dhamaal* had to make five changes for a U certificate. Apart from additional disclaimer for anti-dowry, the board had also asked words "har**mi", "pich**de" and "material kya hota hai (objectifying women) to be muted. The CBFC has also removed an "abusive sounding word". Earlier this month, Ranveer Singh-Alia Bhatt-starrer *Gully Boy* was asked to trim a kissing scene between the lead actors. Talking about the theme of live-in in the film, Kartik had earlier said, "Indian society today is more realistic... In a way it is good that our thinking is widening. People are open to thinking in a way which was



not there earlier. We are in a good democratic situation where we are free to think, free to say and do things, which are not harming anyone else. This is the first film which is saying that come live-in with film." Directed by Laxman Utekar, *Luka Chuppi* is a romantic comedy set to hit the theatres on March 1.

Akshay Kumar, Shah Rukh Khan to work together in a Malayalam film remake? Director says talks are on



Here is some good news for fans of Akshay Kumar and Shah Rukh Khan who want to watch the two together in a film - director Unni Krishnan plans to rope in the two stars for his next, a remake of *Kodathi Samaksham Balan Vakeel*. The director has said he is in talks with the actors for the film, though nothing has been finalised as yet.

Starring Dileep, Mamta Mohandas, and Priya Anand, the Malayalam film released earlier this month to a good reception. The film showed a lawyer (Dileep) with a stammer, and marked Unnikrishnan's first comedy.

A Silverscreen report quoted Krishnan as saying, "Viacom (the production company) is considering remaking the movie and discussions are in the initial stages. We are talking to both Akshay Kumar and Shah Rukh Khan for starring in the movie."

Earlier, talking about working with Akshay, SRK had said, "It will be fun to act with Akshay. Dono set pe hi nahin milenge. Woh jaa raha hoga aur main aa raha hounga (laughs). He'll be leaving the set and I'll be coming in. I would like to work like Akshay and with him, but our timings won't match."

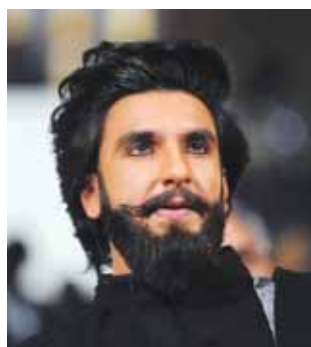
The actor had added, "I go to sleep when Akshay is waking up. His day starts early. By the time I start working, he is packing up and going home. So he can put in more hours of work. I'm a nocturnal person. Not many people are fond of shooting at night like me."

Shah Rukh has not announced any new project, but Akshay has multiple films lined up for release this year - *Battle of Saragarhi* war drama *Kesari*, comedy caper *Housefull 4*, *Mission Mangal*, Karan Johar's *Good News* and Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi*.

Ranveer Singh asks Kareena Kapoor how to be better husband to Deepika Padukone

Ranveer Singh needs help when it comes to being a good husband to wife Deepika Padukone but Kareena Kapoor has a tip for him anyway.

A lot of fans are already calling actor Ranveer Singh the ideal husband that any woman can ask for but he still thinks there is room for improvement. Maybe that's why he has asked for actor Kareena Kapoor's help. Ranveer made an appearance on Kareena's new radio show, *Ishq 104.8 FM's What Women Want*. On her show, the actor talks about women and all things that matters to them in life. Ranveer asked Kareena for tips on how to be the 'top, top husband' to his wife and actor Deepika Padukone. Kareena thought he was fishing for compliments as everyone already knows how much he dotes on his wife. "Wow! Ranveer now you are just fishing. The whole country knows that how loving you are towards Deepika. You any tips at all. love that you Deepika is thing that I everybody watch. But I'll tip, it's magical. You each other



don't need The amount of shower on the sweetest t h i n k gets to give you one actually know, give s o m e

space. Then all else will fall into place," she said. Ranveer also said that he looks forward to finally working with Kareena. The two will be seen together in Karan Johar's *Takht*. The film will be a period drama, set in the court of Aurangzeb. Ranveer plays Dara Shikoh while Vicky Kaushal plays the Mughal ruler. The film will also star Alia Bhatt, Bhumi Pednekar, Anil Kapoor and Janhvi Kapoor. Earlier on her show, Kareena's husband Saif also asked her who he can get her to pay attention to him. "It's really very cheeky of you Saifu to be asking this on national radio but either ways I shall answer it. I think a husband should just be there for a wife. Baby means a lot of extra responsibilities and by sharing them, wife will automatically get happy. As for attention, plan a nice date for her to some romantic location without the baby and then see the magic. And if the wife says that she wants to spend time with the baby then don't feel bad. It doesn't mean she loves you any less. It just means for some time, her perspective has changed.



Ariana Grande responds to backlash over headlining Manchester Pride as she claims she's not 'trying to be the hero of the LGBTQ community'

Ariana Grande has responded to backlash over being announced as the headline act of Manchester Pride 2019. The American singer, who is preparing to return to the city for the coveted gig two years on from the 2017 terrorist attack, swiftly responded to a tweet from a fan who wasn't happy that she had supposedly 'doubled the price of tickets to exploit the LGBT community'. Also addressing the fans' concern that a straight performer would be headlining the event, Ariana noted that she wasn't trying to be the 'hero' or 'face' of the community, but simply wanted to celebrate and support the LGBTQ movement. The concerned fan tweeted: 'Idk ariana headlining pride when she's straight (as far as we're all aware) and doubling the price of tickets kinda smells like exploitation of the lgbt community to me

Ariana responded: 'I saw many people discussing this so i wanted to chime in.... hope that's okay.' She then offered her thoughts in an accompanying note: 'I have nothing to do with ticket pricing - Manchester pride sets those rates, and they're mostly out of my control. The LGBTQ community has been so special to me and supportive throughout my entire career. The relationships I have with my LGBTQ fans, friends, and family make me so so happy. I want to celebrate and support this community, regardless of my identity or how people label me. And also I wanna visit a city that means so much to me,' she added. 'LGBTQ representation is incredibly important, and I'm always proud to share the stage with artists LGBTQ artists! Over the years, Pride events have been headlined by performers and artists of all sexual orientations and genders, including straight allies like Cher and Kylie Minogue.' 'I do think there's room for us to talk about these issues without equating a performance *for* an LGBTQ audience with exploitation of the LGBTQ community.



nutters lock



Regina King says *If Beale Street Could Talk* cast is like family



Academy Award winner Regina King has warm words for her *If Beale Street Could Talk* co-stars. In a video by IMDb, King, who won the Best Supporting Actress Oscar on Monday morning, said that director Barry Jenkins had created a family like atmosphere on set.

"We're family," she said. "Immediately, right from the beginning we fell right into step. It's been a group of artists that from the beginning understood the responsibility that we had with James Baldwin's words." *If Beale Street Could Talk* is based on the celebrated novel by writer James Baldwin - a love story set in Harlem in the 1970s. The film was also nominated for Best Original Score at the 91st Academy Awards.

In the same IMDb video, King's co-star Stephan James said that he wishes her the best of luck for the Oscars, even though she doesn't need it. The film also stars KiKi Layne, Colman Domingo, Teyonah Parris, Michael Beach, Dave Franco, Diego Luna, Pedro Pascal, Ed Skrein and Brian Tyree Henry.

"I'm an example of what it looks like when support and love is poured into someone," King said in her acceptance speech. "Mom, I love you so much."

What has Famke Janssen done to her face? *X Men* star, 54, looks unrecognizable with wrinkle-free skin and plumped up cheeks

With her luscious hair and perfect bone structure, Famke Janssen is a natural beauty. But as she was photographed out and about in London on Tuesday, the 54-year-old *X-Men* star and former *Elite* model looked unrecognizable from just a few months ago. Gone were her natural laughter lines, replaced by a line-free, pillowy complexion. The Dutch-born actress' wrinkle-free face appeared frozen in time, as she talked to a friend in the street. Always immaculately

presented, the *Nip/Tuck* star was dressed in a belted red coat. Audiences can currently catch Famke as Sophie in Michael Caton-Jones' hitman drama *Asher* which hit US theaters December 7, alongside Ron Perlman, Richard Dreyfuss, Peter Facinelli, and Jacqueline Bisset. The *All I Wish* actress is currently filming her role as prosecutor Nancy Ryan in Ava DuVernay's four-episode *Central Park Five*, which starts streaming later this year on Netflix. Clearly still in demand, she is

also in pre-production for a project named *American Undercover*. And she can be seen later this year in Dutch film *The Poison Rose*, out in July. Former *Bondgirl* Famke previously played Susan 'Scottie' Hargrave in *The Blacklist* and then spin-off show *Redemption*, which has now been cancelled. The Columbia University grad has been single since divorcing writer and director Kip Williams, the son of architect Tod Williams, in 2000 after five years of marriage.





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