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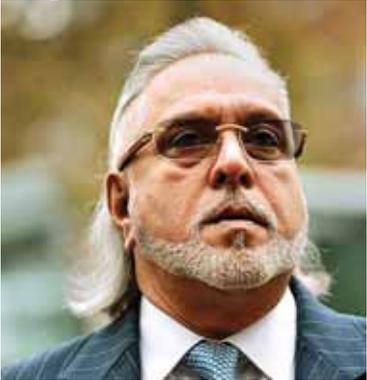



Why a Multi-Agency Probe Is Needed to Get to the Bottom of India's Over-Invoicing Scams

STORY ON page 18

Vijay Mallya makes u-turn after Arun Jaitley's rebuttal

(Agencies) Vijay Mallya created a political storm on Wednesday when he said that he met Arun Jaitley before he fled the country. The Opposition raised a storm with Congress president Rahul Gandhi demanding the Finance Minister's resignation, but Jaitley released a statement denying having ever formally meeting the fugitive tycoon.



(Contd on page 18)

Manafort to cooperate with Mueller as part of plea deal

The plea deal seeks to limit his prison time and dismisses deadlocked charges from an earlier trial pending cooperation with the Mueller probe



'Vampire facial' may have exposed spa clients to HIV, New Mexico health officials say



(Agencies) Health officials are recommending that clients who have received a "vampire facial" or any other type of injection-related service at an Albuquerque spa get tested for HIV and other blood-borne infections, as unsafe practices recently were identified at the facility. The New Mexico Department of Health announced on Tuesday that a client of VIP Spa developed an infection that may have resulted from a spa procedure. (Contd on page 19)

The Great Indian Diplomacy Juggle in Strife-Torn Afghanistan



India is attempting to diplomatically navigate through the competing interests of mutually antagonistic states—Iran and the United States-- to secure its own in Afghanistan. Five days after External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj declared in Delhi on August 6, in the presence of the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defence Secretary James Mattis, "India supports President Trump's Afghan policy", Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale met his Iranian and Afghan counterparts Abbas Aragchi and Hekmat Karzai in Kabul for the first India-Iran-Afghanistan tripartite meeting at the Deputy Foreign Minister level. The meeting was held in the backdrop of continuing terrorist violence perpetrated by the Taliban and the ISIS all across Afghanistan signalling a grim security situation. The National Unity Government has remained a divided house. This has contributed to political uncertainty. While contacts between Taliban representatives and those of the government have taken place, the former remain recalcitrant and the reconciliation process has not made headway. Moreover, Pakistan has not let up on its interference. Amidst all this, Trump's Afghanistan policy lies in shreds.

(Contd on page 19)

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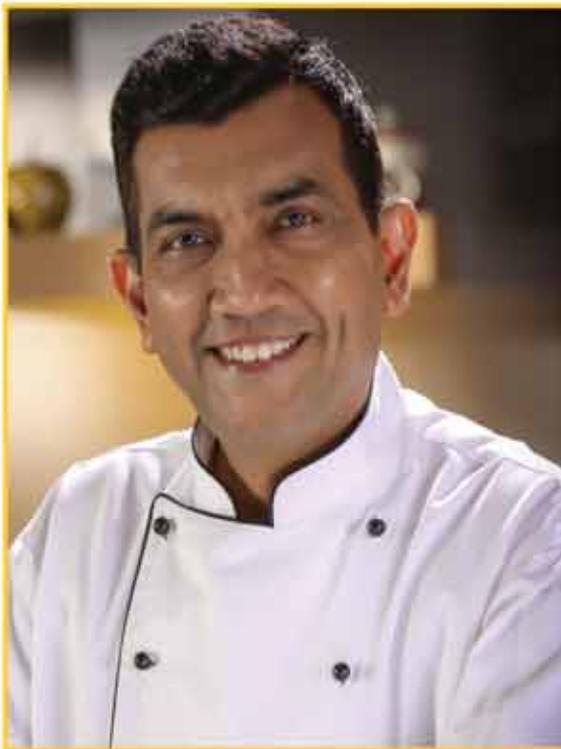
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Nirupama Rao joins Columbia Univ's George W. Ball Professor

Prakash M Swamy

Nirupama Menon Rao, who served as foreign secretary of India from 2009 to 2011 and as India's ambassador to the United States from 2011 to 2013, will join Columbia SIPA's faculty as the George W. Ball Adjunct Professor for the fall 2018 semester.

Among many other highlights of her four-decade career in the Indian foreign service, she was the nation's first female ambassador to China.

Since retiring from the diplomatic corps in 2013, Rao has served as a fellow or visiting scholar at Brown University, the New School, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. "SIPA is fortunate to welcome Ambassador Nirupama Rao as our Ball Professor," said Dean Merit E. Janow. "India is an area of great interest to our faculty, our students, and our community, and we will all benefit from the vast experience and deep insight of such an accomplished diplomat." Rao will co-teach a course on India-China relations with Professor Jagdish Bhagwati and give lectures on topics related to her expertise. Her professorship is in honor of George Ball, the former under

secretary of state in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who in 1968 served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. The position was established in 2009 with support from an anonymous donor who wished to recognize Ball's legacy as an important establishment figure who expressed independent and often dissenting views. Over its history, the Ball Professorship has brought many remarkable diplomats, scholars, and former government leaders to SIPA, including Kishore Mahbubani, Mari Pangestu, Jorge Castañeda, and Leslie Gelb, among others. Like previous Ball chair holders, Rao was selected in recognition of her demonstrated record of innovative contributions to international policy and understanding. Rao received her undergraduate degree from Bangalore University and a master's degree from Marathwada University. Among awards, she holds an honorary doctor of letters from Pondicherry University in India. For more than 70 years, SIPA has been educating professionals who work in public, private, and nonprofit organizations to make a difference in the world. Through rigorous social science research

and hands-on practice, SIPA's graduates and faculty strive to improve social services, advocate for human rights, strengthen markets, protect the environment, and secure peace, in their home communities and around the world. A leading academic and research university, Colum-

bia continually seeks to advance the frontiers of knowledge and to foster a campus community deeply engaged in understanding and addressing the complex global issues of our time. Columbia's extensive public service initiatives, cultural collaborations, and community partner-

ships help define the University's underlying values and mission to educate students to be both leading scholars and informed, engaged citizens. Founded in 1754 as King's College, Columbia University in the City of New York is the fifth oldest institution of higher learning in the United States.

The Indian film industry should now explore space

The space opera in recent years has attained such commercial heights that the Star Wars franchise, for instance, delivers a prequel, sequel, or spin-off at regular intervals. That phenomenon could well have Yoda, the Jedi master, moan, "Too much it is." But the space epic, with its unrestricted scope for the imagination to reach its escape velocity, isn't limited to such industrial-grade productions.

First Man, the biopic of American astronaut Neil Armstrong becoming the first human to step upon the lunar landscape, is the latest reminder that Hollywood can make out-of-this-world movies. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival or TIFF, with director Damien Chazelle and actor Ryan Gosling reuniting to travel from La La Land to the moon landing. Similar projects in the past, like

Apollo 13, have also soared. And unlike the fantasies of the unpredictable distant future, we've seen the emergence of a genre of speculative filmmaking earthed in the reality of present-day science, with fiction as the booster rocket.

There are plenty of such examples that point to this trend: Gravity, The Martian, Interstellar. They do very well in capturing the sheer drama of the vast expanse beyond us without requiring exotic or eerie alien life forms. To their credit, epics like Star Wars, Star Trek or Avatar, with their galactic-scale entertainment, may have created the space for reality-based dramas that capture the essence of the spirit of exploration. Bollywood, unfortunately, hasn't taken to this star system, and its version of sci-fi has often been grounded in kitsch as with PK or Koi...Mil

Gaya. That's strange, given how over 50 years back, Dara Singh was carrying a camp classic like Chand Par Chadayee, complete with combatting a space ape and the inimitable Helen gyrating on the moon. 2018, however, signals that this may be changing, with the Tamil film, Tik Tik Tik, or the planned films based on India's space programme and Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian in space, although the latter seems grounded over which superstar can spare sufficient time for what could be the space epic launch vehicle in India cinema. Space sci-fi, though, isn't limited to Hollywood.

TIFF this year features many such films, including French auteur Claire Denis' High Life, the Swedish Aniara, or young Indo-Canadian director Akash Sherman's Clara.

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People are free and fast with their accusations

The BJP government has taken all this on the chin, and continues to deliver on its promise of good governance

The terms fascist and fascism are currently being bandied about. Leaders of Opposition parties, human rights activists, and ostensibly eminent journalists, are prone to making such accusations against those in authority, without perhaps fully comprehending what the term means. The time has come to shine a light on who actually is a fascist, and who is not. Sunlight, as they say, is a good disinfectant.

The president of the Indian National Congress uses terms such as fascist ideology and authoritarian interchangeably. Rahul Gandhi might like to acquaint himself with four developments in recent history that shaped the evolution of his party and India's democracy. First, the curtailing of civil liberties in 1975, the darkest moment in the history of independent India. To forcefully sterilise individuals, lock up journalists, arrest political leaders, and undermine the judiciary, is the defining legacy of that period. Rahul



Gandhi is a direct beneficiary of a system produced by the policies of his grandmother that placed dynasty before nation.

Second, the riots in 1984 following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. It is an insult to the minority Sikh community to which I belong that Mr Gandhi remains in denial of the atrocities committed by Congressmen. He conveniently says that he was merely 14 years old when the massacre took place. He is much older

now. It is clear from the statement of his father ("When a big tree falls, the earth shakes") and now his own denial, that under their watch, the perpetrators of the heinous crimes of 1984 have found a safe haven.

Third, much has been made about Sonia Gandhi's "sacrifice" in 2004, when she decided that Manmohan Singh would be India's prime minister, and not she. What seems to have been conveniently

forgotten is the fact that, making the UPA a remote-controlled sarkar. the constitution of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) was amended to create a post more powerful than the chairperson of the CPP for Sonia Gandhi. This allowed her to hold unconstitutional power — it introduced into our polity a system of diarchy in which a nominated prime minister was to run a government without having political authority. Singh served at the pleasure of Sonia Gandhi, BNP is proud of the fact

that he is from humble origins, without a famous surname, and can be democratically chosen as prime minister. And it is thanks to his efforts that the Dalit community is today the master of its own destiny, and not at the mercy of the Congress. Through the government's various missions, PM Modi has chosen to empower the Dalit community, rather than seek their votes through fake victimhood. Rahul Gandhi is not alone in spreading falsehoods. He has been joined by individuals who pretend to be activists, but are at their core political actors. Their aim is to undermine the state, and derail any effort made towards development. Arundhati Roy is one such individual. Her most recent attack against the government comes in the wake of the arrests of individuals the Pune police suspect of aiding the Maoist and Naxalite movement.

(Contd on page 18)

The Bankruptcy and Insolvency Code could set 'naamdars' straight

Although the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code will hopefully draw a line under the loan mela that created the banking crisis it is important that its excesses are remembered so that the government and bankers are aware of all the tricks corporate borrowers can get up to. James Cabtree's book will serve as a reminder.

The prime minister's recent statement blaming the crisis in the banks on naamdars, or influential people, arranging loans for industrialists by phoning a bank reminds me of an experience my former colleague Satish Jacob had. Satish went to his bank manager for an extension of his mortgage because he had retired and his income was reduced. The manager said very firmly, "Mr Jacob you know that is not allowed under the rules." Satish asked how the bank could bend the rules to fund corporate debts but couldn't bend them to help a humble retail customer. The manager replied, "You know, the telephone." In his new book *The Billionaire Raj*, James Crabtree, for five years Financial Time correspondent in Mumbai, writes of the timidity of bankers 'when faced with tycoons' demands for loans. He quotes the former

governor of the Reserve Bank Raghuram Rajan saying, "They (the bankers) knew these guys (the tycoons) had so much more power relative to them and more influence in the corridors of power."

Although the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code will hopefully draw a line under the loan mela that created the banking crisis it is important that its excesses are remembered so that the government and bankers are aware of all the tricks corporate borrowers can get up to. James Cabtree's book will serve as a reminder. The heart of the book is the chapter called *The House of Debt*. It tells the story of credit flowing all too freely creating billionaires with huge holes in their balance sheets which they papered over, and financial information hidden by opaque corporate structures. Banks lent money for over-

valued investments which enabled promoters to avoid investing their own money and to pocket some of the banks money. This became known as gold-plating. Then there was ever-greening — borrowing money from one bank to service a debt to another bank. Bills were inflated well beyond the real value of the goods or services supplied and the proceeds were shared between suppliers and the customer. Creative accounting hid the reality of conglomerates' finances. At the corporate level, billion dollar debts were being greened by breaking banking rules while at the grassroots bank officials were enforcing rules on customers with the customary zeal of Indian minor bureaucrats. The manager of a branch in a small Karnataka town told me

he could not lend a farmer money unless the farmer got certificates from all the local branches of other banks stating that he didn't owe them any money. The manager admitted that the farmers would have to pay for each certificate.

Why didn't the holes in the corporates' finances show up on their audited balance sheets? That was a question I put to a small group of chartered accountants over lunch. They pointed out that auditors can only audit the documents companies show them. One said "If a document is created through collusion to give an impression of reality it's very difficult for the auditor to discern that". Companies can collude with constructors over the cost of a plant they are building, there can be collusion with valuers over the value of stock, and there can be collusion with suppliers over

invoices. I was told that auditors drawing up a bank's balance sheet have to depend on the audits of individual branches or clusters of branches. They don't supervise those audits so there can be collusion between managers and auditors at the branch level. I was reminded by one that Nirav Modi had conducted most of his business with one comparatively small branch of a bank. The accountants summed up our discussion with a verdict one pronounced by a judge, "an auditor can only be a watchdog not a bloodhound". Bankers can't be bloodhounds either. But at least now when they pick up the telephone they can warn naamdars and the promoters they represent that the new Bankruptcy and Insolvency Code means those who borrow money they can't repay may well lose their companies.

The 2008 financial crisis is not over yet

There is undoubtedly a lot of truth in the claim made by this kind of politics that globalisation has created more losers than winners even in advanced countries. But there are other aspects to this kind of politics which can fan retrograde beliefs and practices both in the social and economic realm.



On September 15, 2008, Lehman Brothers, a Wall Street giant, filed for bankruptcy in the United States. This was to become the starting point of the biggest economic crisis the global economy had seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Although the crisis started from sub-prime lending in the US, its effects were felt across the world. Global GDP growth declined sharply. Millions of jobs were lost. Countries which were dependent on export markets, especially in advanced countries, were among the worst sufferers.

While economic activity has recovered since then, especially in terms of headline growth numbers, things are not the same any more.

The biggest change after the crisis has been the gradual weakening of the consensus on globalisation being an unambiguous blessing. The period between the oil shocks of the 1970s, which characterises the demise of the post-war golden age of capitalism, and the economic crisis of 2008, was also the age of Washington Consensus. The trinity of World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was continuously pushing the envelope of globalisation and free markets. A US president threatening to pull out of the WTO would have been unimaginable 10 years ago.

What is ironical is the fact that the backlash against globalisation has left the traditional opponents of free

market capitalism, the left, even more worried. This is because the popular mobilisation has happened behind right of centre political leaders like Donald Trump and demands like Brexit. There is undoubtedly a lot of truth in the claim made by this kind of politics that globalisation has created more losers than winners even in advanced countries. But there are other aspects to this kind of politics which can fan retrograde beliefs and practices both in the social and economic realm. The liberal counter to such politics is often seen as being representative of entrenched vested interests which benefitted from the old economic order. The ascendancy of such politics, which also entails a breakdown of rule-based and meaningful economic cooperation in the world, can endanger a sustained economic recovery. This can set off a vicious cycle in which a future economic reversal generates more support for retrograde policies in the name of populism, which will further derail a coordinated economic recovery. That such lack of trust and understanding has erupted during a time when humanity as a whole is facing challenges such as climate change, which require equitable sharing of the resultant economic burden, is even more worrying.

Ten years after the crisis erupted, three words can be used to describe the situation today: it's not over.

India is aiming for the long haul in Afghanistan

New Delhi has also overturned its policy of not supplying lethal military equipment to Kabul and has provided or underwritten deals for providing gunship helicopters. Clearly, India is in for the long haul in Afghanistan, as it needs to be, to keep an eye on and counter the machinations of a certain neighbour that eyes the war-torn nation as key to its flawed "strategic depth" policy.

Less than a week after the inaugural 2+2 dialogue between New Delhi and Washington, India participated in a key meeting with Iran and Afghanistan in Kabul on Tuesday that focused on consolidating economic cooperation, counterterrorism and the Afghan peace and reconciliation process. The meeting, at which India was represented by foreign secretary, Vijay Gokhale, was held a day after the third meeting of the India-Afghanistan joint working group on political and security cooperation. Both meetings were significant for a number of reasons. India has already signalled it intends to play a key role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan without putting any boots on the ground. It has pledged more than \$3 billion in aid since the ouster of the Taliban regime in late 2001 and is implementing several development projects across Afghanistan that have earned it tremendous goodwill among ordinary Afghan citizens.

New Delhi has also overturned its policy of not supplying lethal military equipment to Kabul and has provided or underwritten deals for providing gunship helicopters. Clearly, India is in for the long haul in Afghanistan, as it needs to be, to keep an eye on and counter the machinations of Pakistan which eyes the war-torn nation as key to its flawed "strategic depth" policy. Equally significant was the first tripartite meeting of India, Afghanistan and Iran, coming as it did in the immediate aftermath of the 2+2 talks, during which New Delhi and Washington discussed the American sanctions on Iranian oil imports that will kick in on November 4. Top US officials have said no decision has been made as yet by the Trump administration on India-specific waivers to these sanctions.

However, the tripartite meeting in Kabul, though scheduled much in advance, can be perceived as signalling by India and Afghanistan of the importance they attach to their ties with Iran, as well as the strategic significance of the Chabahar port. Iran is expected to hand over control of a part of Chabahar to India within a few weeks, following the resolution of certain technical issues, and the port is already playing a key role in India's efforts to access Afghanistan by bypassing Pakistan. If nothing else, these meetings indicate India is willing to forge an independent path in its relations with Afghanistan and Iran, even as it continues its engagement with the US, especially in defence and strategic matters. A closer embrace of the US does not necessarily mean India will align its foreign policy with the priorities of the Trump administration. That, ultimately, will best serve India's interests.



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The BJP's 2019 plan is banking on Modi's leadership, welfare and a divided Opposition

The Bharatiya Janata Party's national executive meeting over the weekend provided a glimpse of the ruling party's strategy for the 2019 elections. Schemes like Ujjwala (distribution of gas cylinders), Jan Dhan (financial inclusion), Saubhagya (electrification for all), the hike in Minimum Support Prices for farmers, and Ayushman Bharat have emerged as key issues that will constitute the party's platform in 2019.



The Bharatiya Janata Party's national executive meeting over the weekend provided a glimpse of the ruling party's strategy for the 2019 elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah focused on the achievements of the government, particularly in the sphere of social welfare and benefits to the more marginalised sections of society. Schemes such as Ujjwala (distribution of gas cylinders), Jan Dhan (financial inclusion), Saubhagya (electrification for all), hike in Minimum Support Prices for farmers, and Ayushman Bharat have emerged as key

issues that will constitute the party's platform in 2019.

There are three significant dimensions to this approach. For one, it is a part of the BJP's continued effort to break out of the perception that it is an urban, middle-class outfit, and portray itself as the vehicle for India's poor. Two, it is an effort to expand the party's social base for there is a strong overlap in caste and class in India. The poor often come from the backward, Dalit and tribal communities — welfare is a mode to reach them. And finally, it is an acknowledgement that the government's

record on economic growth and jobs — a major promise in 2014 — is mixed and thus the platform needs to be reoriented to 'development with a human face'. The second key theme that emerged in the party's executive is that 2019 will be marked by a fierce attack on the idea of the 'mahagatbandhan' (grand alliance). PM Modi argued this alliance did not have a leader; its policies were unclear; it was driven by "ill-intent"; there was no political or ideological understanding; and the leaders could not tolerate each other. Shah emphasised that the BJP had defeated the alliance constituents in

2014 in any case.

The BJP is banking on two factors here. For one, it believes that Modi has no match in the opposition ranks, and this will probably be the single most important election card. Two, it thinks that juxtaposing the possibility of a stable government with the sight of a chaotic Opposition, and fragmented political parties, will steer the voter towards the incumbent again. The 2019 election will be fought on these twin planks of welfare along with leadership and stable government.

Sec 377 judgment: An atonement for a grievous error, but a gateway towards greater freedom

It acknowledged that in a society as diverse as ours, tolerance for different forms of life, and acceptance of different ways of being, are the warp and the weft of the fabric of our plural culture.

Nine years ago, in their judgment decriminalising homosexuality (Naz Foundation v NCT of Delhi), Chief Justice AP Shah and Justice S Muralidhar of the Delhi High Court introduced the idea of "constitutional morality" into our everyday lexicon. The defenders of Section 377 had invoked public distaste and opprobrium to justify its retention in the statute books. Rejecting this argument, the justices observed that "if there is one constitutional tenet that can be said to be underlying theme of the Indian Constitution, it is that of 'inclusiveness'. This Court believes that Indian Constitution reflects this value deeply ingrained in Indian society, nurtured over several generations."

At the dawn of Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru recalled how, during the freedom struggle, our nation had passed through the "valley of shadow" — and, if necessary, we would pass through it again. In 2013, the Supreme Court plunged the LGBT+ community into another valley of shadow, when it overturned Naz Foundation, and observed that "the so-called rights of the minuscule minority" could not become grounds for challenging a law.

But on September 6, the wheel turned full circle. In Navtej Johar v Union of India, a Constitution Bench of our Supreme Court resurrected Naz Foundation, decriminalised same-sex relations (once again), and affirmed that the LGBT+ community was entitled to equal rights under our Constitution. At the heart of the Supreme Court's judgment was the idea of constitutional morality, that was finally given its due, almost a decade after it was first articulated in a courtroom. In the words of the Chief Justice, "Any attempt to push and shove a homogeneous, uniform, consistent and a standardised philosophy throughout the society would violate the principle of constitutional morality. Devotion and fidelity to constitutional morality must not be equated with the popular sentiment prevalent at a particular point of time."

Like the Delhi High Court did in 2009, the Supreme Court spoke the language of inclusiveness. It acknowledged that in a society as diverse as ours, tolerance for different forms of life, and acceptance of different ways of being, are the warp and the weft of the fabric of our plural culture. To some of us, embedded in our own social and cultural milieus, some of these ways of

being may be strange at first, and even frightening. But our Constitution is the bridge that allows us to meet each other above the abyss of prejudice and intolerance. The building blocks of that bridge are Article 14 (equal protection of laws), Article 15 (non-discrimination), Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of expression), and Article 21 (life and personal liberty). And its foundation is the concept of fraternity, which is at the heart of our Constitution's Preamble. Fraternity, in the words of Justice DY Chandrachud, "envisaged a transformation in the order of relations not just between the state and the individual, but also between individuals: in a constitutional order characterised by the Rule of Law, the constitutional commitment to egalitarianism and an anti-discriminatory ethos permeates and infuses these relations." And it was, indeed, a transformation. It is no surprise that Section 377 was part of the Indian Penal Code of 1860, a brutal law imposed upon us by an alien, colonial regime, exemplifying alien cultural values. It was part of an entire web of laws that treated segments of society as inferior (the Criminal Tribes Act), trapped within communitarian



diktats (regimes of "personal law"), incapable of exercising freedom (censorship laws), and so on. And this was a regime that was maintained by force and coercion.

But for decades, Indians protested, mobilised, organised, and campaigned against this regime. And in doing so, they articulated a grammar and a language of personal liberty, of substantive equality, and of fraternity; a grammar and a language opposed to the rule of force, the establishment of hierarchies (on grounds of caste, gender, etc.), and the walls that separated people from their fellow human beings. This was the meaning of the Indian freedom

struggle, and this was what culminated in the drafting of independent

India's Constitution. Our Constitution was — and is — meant to transform both the relationship between the individual and the State, and between individuals and individuals, in the direction of liberty, equality, and fraternity. This was what the Delhi High Court meant when it placed "inclusiveness" at the heart of the transformative constitutional order.

And it was this that the Supreme Court reclaimed last week. Navtej Johar is not only an atonement for a grievous error, but a gateway towards greater freedom.

Rahul Gandhi demands Arun Jaitley's resignation over Vijay Mallya allegations

At a press conference on Thursday, Rahul Gandhi insisted that the meeting between Arun Jaitley and Vijay Mallya had gone on for much longer in parliament's central hall on 1 March.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday attacked the government over fugitive business tycoon Vijay Mallya's exit from the country in 2016, demanding that finance minister Arun Jaitley resign over what he called an act of "collusion" with Mallya.

Gandhi alleged the minister knew about Mallya's plan to flee the country but did not alert the probe agencies. "This is a clear-cut case of collusion. There is some deal between them. Finance Minister Jaitley must resign and this should be investigated," he said, a day after

Arun Jaitley denied that he had a meeting with Mallya before he fled the country in 2016. At a press conference on Thursday, Gandhi also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Why did Jaitley allow Mallya to escape, or was it an order from the prime minister?" he said. In a statement yesterday Arun Jaitley dismissed Vijay Mallya's claim that he had a meeting with the minister before leaving the country in which he offered to settle his unpaid loans. Jaitley said Mallya did try to start a conversation when he was on his

way out of the Rajya Sabha in 2016 and recalled "curtly" telling him that he should talk to the banks about his outstanding loans.

Rahul Gandhi today insisted that the meeting between the minister and Mallya had gone on for much longer in parliament's central hall on March 1, 2016. Also at the press conference was Congress leader PL Punia, who claimed that he had witnessed the meeting, alleging that Jaitley and Mallya had initially spoken for about 5-7 minutes in one corner of the hall and later sat down on the bench. In all, the two spoke for about 15-20 minutes, Punia said.

"There are CCTV cameras, we can all see that for proof. If I am wrong, I will resign from politics," Punia said. "This is an open and shut case" where an economic offender talks to the minister before fleeing to London within



days of this meeting, the Congress president stressed at the briefing, minutes after the BJP accused the previous UPA government of giving a "sweet deal" to the beleaguered Kingfisher Airlines to keep it afloat. Later union minister Piyush Goyal also rubbished the Congress accusation. Rahul Gandhi should first answer "what were the relations between his family and Mallya," the railways minister said, underlining that the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines was given loans bypassing all norms, laws and regulations. "Sometimes it seems the airline was not owned by Mallya, but by

the Gandhi family in proxy," BJP spokesman Sambit Patra said, adding that Rahul Gandhi, who is out on bail in the National Herald case, had no right to question others on corruption. Vijay Mallya, a liquor baron who founded the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines, fled to the UK allegedly when a group of banks launched efforts to recover around Rs. 9,000 crore from him. Mallya, 62, who is fighting India's request to the UK to send him back, is wanted in India for defaulting on loans worth crores and money. The court decision on Mallya's extradition is expected on December 10.

Two militants blamed for J-K highway shooting killed, third trapped

Eight security personnel including a deputy superintendent of police were injured in the encounter that was barely five km away from the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi university and super specialty hospital.



Two militants who had opened fire at a check post on the Jammu-Srinagar-highway on Wednesday were killed in a shootout with security forces after being surrounded near a village in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district on Thursday and the third was trapped, officials said. Eight security personnel including a deputy superintendent of police were injured in the encounter that was barely five km away from the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi university and super specialty hospital. A senior police officer said that around 8:15 pm on Wednesday, the three militants, fleeing after the attack on the checkpost near Jhajjar Kotli area, held the family of Sudershan Khajuria at a village in Jhajjar Kotli till 9:30 pm and then took some biscuits and apples from the family before leaving their house. On Thursday morning, the trio had held the family of Raju hostage at Dhirthi, said police

sources, adding that the family was rescued and some villagers evacuated to safety before engaging with the hiding militants. Senior commanders of Nagrota-based 16 Corps personally supervised the operations. According to major general of Arvind Bhatia, commander of the Rashtriya Rifles' Uniform Force, the militants had infiltrated into the state recently through the Samba border in Jammu region, and were trying to go to either Srinagar or the Jammu bus station but seemed to have lost their way. He said they had taken clothes from the villagers to disguise themselves but were trapped in the area as they could not cross the overflowing Jhajjar rivulet. Asserting that the third ultra wounded in the leg would also be soon eliminated, he said the two militants seemed to be non-Kashmiris and possibly of the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

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Kerala seeks Rs 4,700 crore from Centre as compensation for flood damage

The Kerala government has sent a memorandum to the home ministry giving details about the loss of human life, properties, infrastructure and crops and sought about Rs 4,700 crore as compensation, a senior government official said.

The Kerala government Thursday sought Rs 4,700 crore as compensation from the central government for the damage caused by the recent floods, termed as the worst in a century, officials said. At least 488 people have died in Kerala due to the rains and floods this monsoon, which hit 14 districts of the state. The Kerala government has sent a memorandum to the home ministry giving details about the loss of human life, properties, infrastructure and crops and sought

about Rs 4,700 crore as compensation, a senior government official said. In case of any natural calamity beyond the coping capacity of a state, the state government submits a detailed memorandum indicating sector-wise details of damage and requirement of funds for relief operations of immediate nature. Accordingly, the Kerala government sent the memorandum, the official said.

As per the existing guidelines, the central government will

soon send an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) for on-the-spot assessment of damage and additional requirement of funds. The IMCT report will be considered by the Sub-Committee of National Executive Committee (SC-NEC) headed by the Union home secretary in conformity with the norms and then by a high-level committee, chaired by the home minister for approving the quantum of additional assistance from the NDRF. The financial mechanism to

meet the rescue and relief expenditure during any notified disaster event is governed by guidelines on State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), another official said.

State Disaster Response Fund has been constituted in each state in which the Centre contributes 75 per cent for general category states and 90 per cent for special category states of hilly regions every year according to the award of the successive Finance



Commission. According to the guidelines, the Centre provides its allocation to SDRF of each state in advance in two instalments. In case of any natural calamity, the state meets the expenditure of relief and rescue from the State Disaster Response Fund already available at its disposal. On August 21, the central government had released Rs 600 crore to flood-hit Kerala as promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Rs 500 crore) and home minister Rajnath Singh (Rs 100 crore) during their visits to the state. This was in addition to Rs 562.45 crore already made available in State Disaster Relief Fund of the state.

Rafale deal affected because state-run HAL was in poor shape under UPA: Sitharaman

State-run aerospace company didn't have the capability to produce fighter jets in collaboration with French company Dassault Aviation, defence minister says.



Negotiations for procuring 126 Rafale jets under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government failed because state-run aerospace company Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) didn't have the capability to produce the aircraft in India in collaboration with French company Dassault Aviation, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Thursday.

Sitharaman said A K Antony, who was defence minister in the UPA government, made an unprecedented intervention in 2013 when the cost negotiation committee was finalising the deal but that put the final nail in the coffin.

Dassault Aviation, after rounds of negotiations with HAL, felt that the cost of jets will escalate significantly if they were to be produced in India, she said during an interaction with PTI editors and reporters at the news agency's headquarters in Delhi.

"Dassault could not progress in the negotiations with HAL because if the aircraft were to be produced in India, a guarantee for the product to be produced was to be given. It is a big ticket item and the IAF (Indian Air Force) would want the guarantee for the jets. HAL was in

no position to give the guarantee," she said.

Sitharaman said the weapon systems, avionics and other key add-ons to the Rafale aircraft, expected to be delivered beginning September 2019, will be "much superior" than that negotiated by the UPA government, and her government is getting the planes for 9% cheaper than what was earlier agreed upon.

The UPA government started negotiating with French Dassault Aviation to buy 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) in 2012. The plan was for Dassault Aviation to supply 18 Rafale jets in

fly-away condition while 108 aircraft were to be manufactured in India by the company along with HAL. However, the deal could not be sealed.

The Congress party, which led the UPA government, has asked the government to explain why HAL was not involved in the new deal. Sitharaman said the UPA-era deal collapsed, as HAL did not have the capability to produce 108 aircraft in India. "Even during negotiation with HAL, Dassault felt that the cost with which the HAL will produce will be far higher than the aircraft produced in France. That was the reality," she said.

19-year-old commits suicide after girlfriend is allegedly gangraped in Chhattisgarh

A 19-year old youth is suspected to have committed suicide after his minor girlfriend was allegedly gang raped by two men in Chhattisgarh's Korba district, about 225 km north of the state capital earlier this month. The incident came into light when the girl lodged a complaint with the police on Wednesday evening. Police have registered a case under POSCO Act and section 306 of IPC and arrested the two accused on Thursday. Police said that the incident took place on September 1 and the youth committed suicide on September 3. Twelve days later, on Wednesday, the girl went to the police station alone and narrated the whole incident. "The girl and youth, Sawan Sai, were coming back from a local market and when they reached in Bhelwatrikra under Khatghora police station, two youths – Ishwar Das and Khem - objected to his roaming around with a girl. They then thrashed Sai in front of the girl and when Sai fell unconscious, the duo outraged the modesty of the girl," said SP Korba Mayank Shrivastava.

RSS represents Hindu nationalism, I will never accept its invite, says Asaduddin Owaisi

MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi was reacting was referring the invitation being extended by RSS to various leaders for a three-day lecture series of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, scheduled to be held in New Delhi next week.

MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi Thursday claimed that the RSS represents Hindu nationalism and said he would never accept any invitation from it to participate in any event held by the organisation. The Hyderabad Lok Sabha MP was reacting the invitation being extended by RSS to various leaders for a three-day lecture series of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, scheduled to be held in New Delhi next week. The RSS has indicated that it would invite Congress president Rahul

Gandhi, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and the leaders of all the political outfits of different ideologies besides religious leaders, sportspersons, media personalities and ambassadors of more than 60 countries. Owaisi said RSS stood for Hindu nationalism. "It is an organisation which believe in Indian nationalism. I will never do this stupidity and mistake of what Pranab Mukherjee did..." he told reporters in Hyderabad. He was referring to the

participation of the former president in an RSS event at Nagpur in June last, which had then triggered a controversy with senior Congress leaders opposing it. "I cannot speak for Congress president and I can speak only for myself. I would never even in my thought process think for a second about such an invitation," he said when asked about his reaction to Gandhi being invited. Owaisi attacked the Centre over rising fuel prices, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi

has created enough darkness by ensuring that the price of petrol and diesel go beyond common mans means. Targeting the prime minister over the issues of Jammu and Kashmir, demonetisation and employment generation, he said Modi might have "created light" for his party. "People are lynching Dalits and Muslims in the name of cow. Everywhere there is darkness. Light will come only when BJP is removed from power," he claimed.

Amit Shah, Rahul Gandhi in Rajasthan this week as poll campaign intensifies

While BJP president Amit Shah is all set to address party workers in five districts of Rajasthan during his three-day tour from September 16, Congress president Rahul Gandhi will also visit the state on September 20.

The number of visits from political bigwigs, both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress, has gone up as election season nears in the state. After his day-long visit to Jaipur on September 11, BJP president Amit Shah is all set to address party workers in five districts of Rajasthan during his three-day tour from September 16. Congress president Rahul Gandhi will also visit the state on September 20. After giving a pep talk to party leaders, office bearers and workers in Jaipur division on Tuesday, Shah will now be heading towards the crucial Jodhpur and Udaipur

divisions to motivate party functionaries and review poll preparedness. Shah will be in Jodhpur and Pali on September 16 for meetings of the Shakti Kendra representatives. In a bid to reach out to OBCs and the youth, he will address a BJP OBC Morcha Sammelan in Pali and a Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha Sammelan in Jodhpur. Shah will then head to Udaipur on September 18 where he will hold a division level Scheduled Tribes meeting in a bid to woo the community. He will address a meeting of Shakti Kendra representatives and hold a meeting with

intellectuals. Meanwhile, Congress president Rahul Gandhi too is making his way to Mewar. Gandhi will be in Aspur in Dungarpur district on September 20 where he will address the Congress party's Sankalp rally. Gandhi had launched the Congress's poll campaign with a roadshow and meeting with party workers in Jaipur on August 11. In Rajasthan, it has been the political tradition that whichever party wins Mewar, wins Rajasthan. The 35 seats of Mewar and Vagad comprising districts of Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Bhilwara, Pratapgarh, Rajsamand,



Dungarpur and Banswara are crucial in propelling any party to power. Not surprisingly, both parties began their poll campaigns from the region. While chief minister Vasundhara Raje and Shah kicked off the Rajasthan Gaurav Yatra after paying obeisance at the Char Bhuja temple in Rajsamand, Congress too flagged off its

Sankalp rally from the Sanwaliya Ji temple in Chittorgarh. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to address the concluding public meeting of the Rajasthan Gaurav Yatra in Pushkar on September 30, Gandhi is expected to be present at the final Sankalp rally, which is likely to be held in Jaipur in October.

First time in Kumbh Mela, Kinnar Akhada to be a hub of post-Sec 377 awareness

For the first time ever, at least 2,500 transgender monastics and seers will participate in the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad early next year under the banner of the Kinnar Akhada



For the first time ever, at least 2,500 transgender monastics and seers will participate in the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad early next year under the banner of the Kinnar Akhada. Kinnar village on the banks of the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati in Allahabad, will serve as a hub of culture and religion and work to spread awareness of the situation in the aftermath of the partial scrapping of Section 377, said Acharaya Mahamandaleshwar Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, who heads the order.

The Kumbh Mela will be held between January 15 and March 4 on the banks of the Sangam. Members of the Kinnar Akhada will share the culture of the transgenders, their rituals and lifestyle with the world community during the religious congregation, said Tripathi.

"As transgenders from different parts of the country will arrive during the Kumbh, our objective will also be to unite transgenders, sort out their issues, eliminate misconceptions about them, inform people about their rights and the Supreme Court ruling (quashing Section 377). Besides we will spread a message among masses about the position the transgenders hold in the Sanatan Dharma (mainstream Hinduism also known as the eternal faith)," added Tripathi.

On 6 September, the Supreme Court ruled that gay sex among consenting adults was not an offence, reading down the British-era section 377 of the penal code that penalised people for their sexual orientation. The Section had become weapon for the harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities "and subject them to

discrimination," chief justice Dipak Misra observed. A series of religious and cultural programmes will be held in the village every evening and folk artistes from different parts of the country will perform there, Tripathi added.

"Talks are underway with Kumbh Mela Authority (KMA) officials to get land in the mela kshetra to set up the Kinnar village. We will meet the commissioner of Allahabad division in this regard soon," said Tripathi. Kinnar Akhada seers had attended the annual Magh Mela in Allahabad early this year. Since then, they have been seeking recognition for the Kinnar Akhada from the Akhil Bhartiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP), the apex body of Hindu saints, but to no avail.

Swami Narendra Giri, the ABAP president, said, "The Kinnar Akhada is a self-proclaimed monastic order of transgenders. They are not part of the 13 akhadas. Hence, there is no reason to give them recognition." Kumbh mela officer Vijay Kiran Anand said the KMA will begin the procedure of allotting land to set up camps from November-December. If the Kinnar Akhada members approach the authorities, their request will also be considered favourably, he added.

ISRO spy case: SC says arrest of scientist Nambi Narayanan unnecessary, orders compensation of Rs 50 lakh

Former ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan's arrest in the 1994 alleged spy scandal was "needless and unnecessary", the Supreme Court ruled on Friday and ordered Rs 50 lakh compensation for the scientist who had accused the police of falsely framing him in the case. The top court also set up a committee headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice DK Jain to inquire into the role of Kerala police officials in the arrest of the scientist at India's space agency, ISRO, or Indian Space Research Organisation.

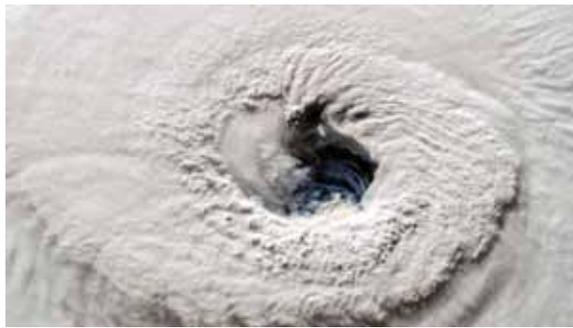
Nambi Narayanan, 76, had petitioned the court to seek prosecution of senior police officials for framing him in the alleged spy scandal. Reacting to the court order, Narayanan said, "I am happy justice has prevailed." Former DG Police Sibi Mathew refused to comment.

The scientist was arrested after the Kerala police arrested Mariam Rasheeda, a Maldivian woman, on October 20, 1994. Though she was arrested for overstaying in India, police later accused her of being involved in a sex-spy scandal. It was alleged that Rasheeda was the intermediary between the organisation and two more women. She was accused of passing on Isro's cryogenic programme secrets to the women, who in turn supplied the same to Russia and Pakistan's ISI. Two years later, the CBI cleared all the accused, who were discharged in May 1996. CBI also filed a closure report before the court. But a change in the government re-opened the probe. The earlier consent given by the state to the CBI to investigate the case was withdrawn and the Kerala police was asked to hold a fresh inquiry.

In 1998, the Supreme Court quashed the state government's decision. On Narayanan's petition, the Kerala high court, in September 2012, ordered the state government to pay Rs 10 lakh as interim relief to the scientist. Later, in October 2014, action was ordered against the errant police officials.

However, a division bench reversed the order in March 2015, which Narayanan challenged before the Supreme Court. His grievance is that despite the CBI probe indicting the police officers, the state has not taken any action against them.

Hurricane Florence: Over 188,000 without power as monster storm batters Carolinas



US Southeast power companies said more than 188,000 homes and businesses in North Carolina and South Carolina were without power early Friday as Hurricane Florence caused a deluge ahead of its landfall later in the day.

Florence was downgraded to a Category 1 storm on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale on Thursday evening and was located about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Morehead City, North Carolina with maximum sustained winds of 90 miles per hour (150 km/h). Heavy rain, wind gusts and rising floodwaters from Hurricane Florence swamped the Carolinas as the massive storm crawled toward the coast, threatening millions of people in its path with record rainfall and punishing surf. Duke Energy Corp, the biggest utility in the area with over 4 million customers, estimated the storm could cause between 1 million to 3 million outages. Restoring power to all customers could take weeks, it said. Duke said it had more than 20,000 personnel ready to start fixing outages as soon as conditions allowed, including over 8,000 from the Duke's Carolinas utilities, 1,700 from the Midwest, 1,200 from Florida and 9,400 from other utilities.

Death toll from Afghanistan suicide blast rises to 68, over 160 injured

The death toll from a suicide bomb attack at a protest gathering in the eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar on Tuesday has risen to 68, with 165 wounded, a government official said.

The bombing on Tuesday in the eastern province of Nangarhar was the latest in a wave of deadly insurgent attacks which has claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians and security forces across Afghanistan.

The blast wounded another 165 people, provincial governor spokesman Ataullah Khogyani said.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the massacre, but the Islamic State group, which has carried out most of the recent suicide bombings in Afghanistan, is active in the province.

The Nangarhar health department confirmed the toll.

Scores of demonstrators had blocked the highway between the provincial capital of Jalalabad and a major Pakistan border crossing in protest over the appointment of a local police chief when the suicide bomber blew himself up. The dead and wounded were rushed to several hospitals in the



back of pickup trucks and ambulances, overwhelming doctors and nurses as they struggled to cope with the huge number of casualties.

Zar Khan, one of the injured, told AFP he saw a young man get out of a car and run towards the protesters shouting "Allahu akbar" (God is greatest). "Then the explosion happened and I found myself surrounded by blood and flesh," Khan said from his hospital bed.

It was the deadliest attack since an ambulance packed with explosives detonated in a crowded street in the

heart of Kabul in January, killing more than 100 people, mostly civilians. That bombing was claimed by the Taliban. Violence across the country has intensified in recent weeks as the Taliban make gains on the battlefield and IS launches deadly urban attacks. It comes as Afghanistan enters a typically violent period of the year -- the holy month of Muharram, which began on Tuesday. Ashura, the most important Shiite observance, falls on the 10th day of Muharram and is often marred by deadly attacks.

Putin says two Skripal poisoning suspects are 'civilians'

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday the two men Britain suspects of poisoning former spy Sergei Skripal with military-grade nerve agent are not criminals and have been identified as civilians

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday the two men Britain suspects of poisoning former spy Sergei Skripal with military-grade nerve agent are not criminals and have been identified as civilians.

Speaking at an economic forum with Japan's Shinzo Abe and China's Xi Jinping in the far eastern city of Vladivostok, Putin urged the men to address the media and said there was "nothing criminal".

"We know who they are, we have found them," Putin said.

"They are civilians, of course," he said, apparently responding to a claim by the British authorities that the two suspects are members of Russia's military intelligence agency.

Putin urged the two men to speak to journalists.

"I hope they will turn up themselves and tell about themselves," he said.

"There is nothing special there, nothing crimi-

nal, I assure you. We'll see in the near future."

British authorities have issued European arrest warrants for Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, two suspected members of Russian military intelligence, the GRU.



They are accused of trying to kill former Russian spy Skripal and his daughter Yulia with the Novichok nerve agent in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in an attack London believes was sanctioned by the Kremlin.

The British government has said Putin is ultimately responsible for the attack, a claim the Kremlin has strongly denied.

Pakistan Supreme Court to provide jobs to transgenders: Chief Justice

Chief Justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar on Tuesday said two transgenders would be provided jobs in the Supreme Court.



For the first time, Pakistan's Supreme Court will hire two transgenders to give them their rights in the Muslim-majority country, the Chief Justice said.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar on Tuesday said two transgenders would be provided jobs in the Supreme Court.

The remarks came as he chaired a bench to hear a case regarding transgenders' rights.

"In our society transgenders are subjected to ridicule. It is our top most priority to give them their rights," he was quoted as saying by Geo News.

The chief justice said the court would issue notice to NGOs and the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while it hears the case related to basic

rights of transgenders.

"Court wants to bring them into mainstream. It wants to resolve their issues," he said. National Database and Registration Authority Chairman Usman Mobin who appeared during the hearing, informed the court upon being asked whether identity cards to all transgender applicants have been issued, that his organisation is issuing cards and also initiated a facilitation campaign.

The Chief Justice lamented that the community was facing threats and ridicule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The court also took exception to a website that he was told is involved in spreading misleading materials against transgenders.

The court was told that an NGO named Blue Van had established the website which claims as many as 500 transgenders have been murdered in the country.



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Pope Francis summons bishops for summit on sexual abuse scandals



The February 21-24 meeting at the Vatican is believed to be the first of its kind.

Pope Francis is summoning the presidents of every bishops conference around the world for a February summit to discuss preventing clergy sex abuse and protecting children—evidence that he realises the scandal is global and that inaction threatens to undermine his legacy.

Francis' key cardinal advisers announced the decision Wednesday, a day before Francis meets with US church leaders who have been deeply discredited by the latest accusations in the Catho-

lic Church's decades-long sex abuse and cover-up scandal.

The February 21-24 meeting at the Vatican is believed to be the first of its kind, and signals a realisation at the highest levels of the church that clergy sex abuse is a global problem and not restricted to the Anglo-Saxon world, as many church leaders have long tried to insist. Earlier this year, Francis faced what was then the worst crisis of his papacy when he repeatedly discredited victims of a notorious Chilean

predator priest. He eventually admitted to "grave errors in judgment" and has taken steps to make amends, sanction guilty bishops and remake the Chilean episcopacy.

More recently, Francis' papacy has been jolted by accusations from a retired Vatican ambassador that he rehabilitated a top American cardinal from sanctions imposed by Pope Benedict XVI for having molested and harassed adult seminarians.

The Vatican hasn't responded to the accusations by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, but has promised "clarifications" that pre-

sumably will come sometime after Francis' meeting Thursday with the US delegation.

The Vatican said Tuesday the meeting would be headed by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, head of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and also include Francis' top sex abuse adviser, Cardinal Sean O'Malley.

Di Nardo has said he wants Francis to authorise a full-fledged Vatican investigation into ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was removed as cardinal in July after a credible accusation that he groped a teenager.

The Vatican has known since at

least 2000 that McCarrick would invite seminarians to his New Jersey beach house and into his bed.

St John Paul II made him archbishop of Washington and a cardinal in 2001, presumably because Vatican officials were impressed by his fundraising prowess and considered his past homosexual activity a mere "moral lapse" and not a gross abuse of power.

DiNardo has also said recent accusations that top Vatican officials - including the current pope - covered up for McCarrick since 2000 deserve answers.

Sri Lanka to ban animal sacrifices at Hindu temples

Animal sacrifices in Hindu temples in Sri Lanka could be banned after the Cabinet approved a proposal Wednesday to enact laws banning the



"primitive" methods of worship, amid calls from the Hindu community to make the ritual a "punishable offence" in the Buddhist-majority country. The Cabinet headed by president Maithripala Sirisena approved the proposal submitted by resettlement, rehabilitation, northern development and Hindu religious affairs minister DM Swaminathan.

Hindu cultural affairs director Uma Maheswaran was quoted as saying by the government-owned newspaper 'Daily News' that the slaughter of animals such as goats and fowls in Hindu temples would be banned by this legislation. He said the Cabinet-approved draft legislation would be sent to the Legal Draftsman's Department for final consent.

It will then be sent to the attorney general's department and published in the gazette. He said the law would come into effect once passed by Parliament.

According to the Cabinet Memorandum, animal and bird sacrifices in Hindu Temples or its precincts will be prohibited. "One of the primitive methods of worship is animal and bird sacrifices, while the majority of Hindus do not accept the practice. Slaughtering of animals is carried out in public in open courtyard of the temple without considering health and mental harm of the devotees. "Legislation to ban animal sacrifice in Hindu temples is operative in India.

European Union's one-hour deadline to social media websites to remove 'terror propaganda'

The European Union proposed steps to compel social media websites to remove "terrorist" propaganda within an hour of receiving the order. If they do not, companies such as Facebook and Twitter will risk massive fines.

The European Union proposed steps on Wednesday to compel social media and websites to remove "terrorist" propaganda within an hour of receiving the order from authorities. If they do not, companies such as Facebook and Twitter will risk massive fines under the legislation mooted by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Having long left it to internet firms to voluntarily remove problematic content, the move marks a toughening in Brussels' approach. The internet has become a key tool for extremists carrying out attacks which have killed hundreds of people in European cities in recent years.

"Europeans rightly expect their Union to keep them safe," Juncker told the European Parliament in his annual state of the union speech. "This is why the Commission is today proposing new rules to get terrorist content off the web within one hour -- the critical window in which the greatest damage is done."

The EU's executive arm said that in January alone, nearly 7,000 items of propaganda were disseminated online from the Islamic State group, even as it has been driven out of most of its strongholds in Iraq and Syria. The commission proposal calls for a "legally binding one-hour deadline" for firms to remove terror-related content once ordered to do so by national authorities. The proposal targets con-



tent which incites or advocates people to commit terror offences, promotes a terror group's activities, or offers instructions for attacks.

Voluntary efforts 'not enough' It also provides for judicial redress when a content provider disagrees with an order.

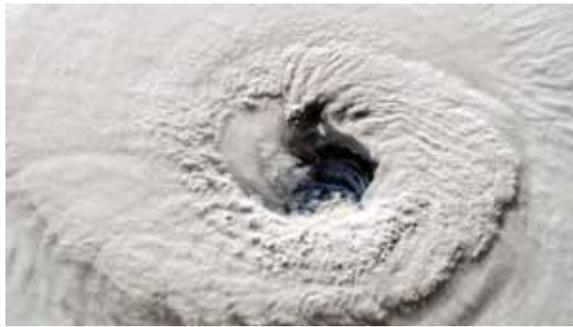
"Member States will have to put in place effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for not complying with orders to remove online terrorist content," the commission said. "In the event of systematic failures to remove such content following removal orders, a service provider could face financial penalties of up to four percent of its global turnover for the last business year."

The regional office of the Computer and Communications Industry Association (CCIA), representing Google, Facebook, and others, warned the

proposal would "disproportionately burden smaller European firms." The move could also undermine free speech, possibly prompting the removal of entirely legal content for fear of being fined. The EU joined forces with US-based tech firms in 2016 to combat online extremism.

Until now, Brussels had pushed for the industry to regulate itself, but for more than a year, EU officials have had mixed reviews for the efforts of Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and Google's YouTube. "While we have made progress on removing terrorist content online through voluntary efforts, it has not been enough," EU Security Commissioner Julian King said in a statement. "We need to prevent it from being uploaded and, where it does appear, ensure it is taken down as quickly as possible — before it can do serious damage."

Hurricane Florence: Over 188,000 without power as monster storm batters Carolinas



US Southeast power companies said more than 188,000 homes and businesses in North Carolina and South Carolina were without power early Friday as Hurricane Florence caused a deluge ahead of its landfall later in the day.

Florence was downgraded to a Category 1 storm on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale on Thursday evening and was located about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Morehead City, North Carolina with maximum sustained winds of 90 miles per hour (150 km/h). Heavy rain, wind gusts and rising floodwaters from Hurricane Florence swamped the Carolinas as the massive storm crawled toward the coast, threatening millions of people in its path with record rainfall and punishing surf. Duke Energy Corp, the biggest utility in the area with over 4 million customers, estimated the storm could cause between 1 million to 3 million outages. Restoring power to all customers could take weeks, it said. Duke said it had more than 20,000 personnel ready to start fixing outages as soon as conditions allowed, including over 8,000 from the Duke's Carolinas utilities, 1,700 from the Midwest, 1,200 from Florida and 9,400 from other utilities.

US can now reject visa, green card applications over errors in documents

US authorities can now reject a visa application, petition or request including possibly for H-1B visas over mistakes and missing documents without offering the applicant a chance to correct the error.

US authorities can now reject a visa application, petition or request — including possibly for H-1B visas — over mistakes and missing documents without offering the applicant a chance to correct the error.

Other applicants affected are those who want to stay in the US as lawful permanent residents (on a Green Card) or immigrants, those who wish to stay temporarily and work as non-immigrants, or those who are applying for US citizenship.

Around seven million such applications are filed and adjudicated every year. However, applicants for short-term visas for travel or business are not expected to be affected.

The new rule, which went into effect on Tuesday, has been called a “major shift” by immigration lawyers, activists and those likely to be impacted. They say the new rule could make the procedure more expensive, lengthy, and may even lead to deportation, if an applicant already in the US fall out of status during the process.

It will impact Indians on H-1B or other short-term stay and work non-immi-



grant visas, who plan to seek permanent residency on the Green Card — an estimated 9,800 Indians obtain work-related Green Cards a year.

“All applications, petitions, and requests received after the effective date will be subject to the new policy, except for DACA adjudications,” said a US official on background, referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme that protects from deportation people who illegally arrived in the US when they were minors.

“This policy change is part of an ongoing effort to help faithfully execute and protect the integrity of our laws, cut down on frivolous applications, reduce waste, and help ensure legitimate, law abiding petitioners seeking greater safety, security and prosperity aren’t undermined by those able to game our system,” said Michael

Bars, spokesperson for US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

In June, the USCIS had said that the new rule intended to “discourage frivolous or substantially incomplete filings” intentionally filed as “placeholder”, essentially to book their place in the queue and start a conversation through the back and forth ensued with a Request For Evidence (RFE) and a Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID). “It is not intended to penalise filers for innocent mistakes or misunderstandings of evidentiary requirements,” the agency had said. It replaces an Obama-era rule from 2013 that mandated adjudicating officials of the USCIS to issue RFE or NOID in all cases of errors and missing documents unless the applicant was prohibited under law from being advanced to the next stage.

Stone in South African cave boasts oldest-known human drawing, resembles hashtag

The abstract design, vaguely resembling a hashtag, was drawn by hunter-gatherers who periodically dwelled in Blombos Cave overlooking the Indian Ocean.



A small stone flake marked with intersecting lines of red ochre pigment some 73,000 years ago that was found in a cave on South Africa's southern coast represents what archaeologists on Wednesday called the oldest-known example of human drawing.

The abstract design, vaguely resembling a hashtag, was drawn by hunter-gatherers who periodically dwelled in Blombos Cave overlooking the Indian Ocean, roughly 300 km east of Cape Town, the researchers

so long ago is significant, suggesting the existence of modern cognitive abilities in our species, Homo sapiens, during a time known as the Middle Stone Age, the researchers said. The cross-hatched design drawn with ochre, a pigment used by our species dating back at least 285,000 years ago, consists of a set of six straight lines crossed by three slightly curved lines. The coarse-grained stone flake measures about 1-1/2 inches (38.6 mm) long and 1/2-inch (12.8 mm) wide. The abrupt ter-

mination of all lines on the fragment dates the pre-edges indicates that the pattern originally extended over a larger surface. The pattern was probably more complex and structured in its entirety than at least 30,000 in this truncated form,” said archaeologist Christopher Henshilwood of the University of Bergen in Norway and the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, who fact that it led the research published in the journal Nature. “We would be hesitant to

call it art. It is definitely an abstract design and it almost certainly had some meaning to the maker and probably formed a part of the common symbolic system understood by other people in this group,” Henshilwood added. Other Blombos Cave artifacts of similar age included ochre pieces engraved with abstract patterns resembling the one drawn on the stone as well as ochre-covered shell beads. Blombos Cave artifacts dating from 100,000 years ago included a red ochre-based paint.

Gunman kills himself after shooting wife, 4 others in California

A gunman killed five people, including his wife, before turning the gun on himself as a Kern County sheriff's deputy closed in Wednesday, authorities said. There was no immediate word on what sparked the shootings that took place at a home and a business in Bakersfield, which is some 90 miles (145 kilometers) north of Los Angeles. “Obviously, these are not random shootings,” Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood told KERO-TV. Six people died in a short amount of time, he added. The man first showed up at a trucking business centre with his wife shortly before 5:30 pm where he confronted another man.

“The suspect, the husband, shot the person at the trucking company and then turned and shot his wife,” then chased and shot another man who showed up, Youngblood said. The gunman then went to a home where he shot two people, the sheriff said. He then carjacked a woman who was driving her child. The woman and child escaped and the man drove to a highway where a sheriff's deputy saw him, Youngblood said.

The gunman saw the deputy and pulled into a lot. When the deputy confronted him at gunpoint the man shot himself in the chest, the sheriff said. His identity was not immediately released. Except for the gunman's wife, there was no immediate word on how the victims might have been related. About 30 people saw the shootings and were being interviewed by deputies, Youngblood said.

Imran Khan calls spy agency ISI Pakistan's 'first line of defence'



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has called the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) the country's "first line of defence" when he visited the headquarters of the powerful spy agency in Islamabad for the first time after assuming power. Senior ISI officials on Wednesday briefed Khan and his senior Cabinet ministers on intelligence and national security matters, an official statement said. "The Prime Minister lauded contributions of the ISI towards national security especially in the ongoing counter terrorism effort. The Prime Minister said that the ISI is our first line of defence and stands out as best intelligence agency of the world," said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the military. Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI director general Lt Gen. Naveed Mukhtar received Khan on his arrival at the HQ. Khan, who was sworn-in as the 22nd Prime Minister on August 18, has already visited the General Headquarters of Pakistan Army twice – first to get an in-depth briefing on the internal security and geo-strategic situation and then to attend the Defence and Martyrs Day ceremony on September 6. Khan has been accused by his critics of being the security establishment's man. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party has accused him of reaching the Prime Minister House through the support of the powerful security establishment. Khan told ISI officials that his government and the people of Pakistan firmly stood behind the armed forces and intelligence agencies and acknowledged the "unprecedented achievements" of these institutions, said the ISPR statement.

28-year-old immigrant in Canada turns millionaire, wins 2 lotteries in 5 months
Melhig Melhig, 28, won two scratch-off games in the space of five months.

A young west African immigrant who moved to Canada two years ago has hit the lottery jackpot -- twice. Melhig Melhig, 28, won two scratch-off games in the space of five months. Total winnings? CAN \$3.5 million (US \$2.7 million). "I want to improve my English and communication. And I want to learn something useful, like carpentry," Melhig told the Western Canada Lottery Corporation when asked what he would do with the money.

Melhig, who hails from west Africa but did not specify the country, moved to Winnipeg two years ago. In April, he bought a ticket and won \$1.5 million. Last month, he bought another ticket -- and won an-



other \$2 million.

With his first payout, he Marantz told.

L bought a new home for his wife and children. With the second windfall, he hopes to buy a business -- maybe a car wash or a gas station, he says -- and "go to school." Melhig had a one in 900,000 chance of winning the first time, according to lottery officials. The second time, his odds were one in 1.3 million.

So what are the chances of someone winning two major jackpots in such a short period of time? Difficult to calculate, the Western Canada Lottery Corporation says. Lottery officials say everything about his twin wins is legit. "We didn't find anything out of the ordinary and we are happy for him," lottery spokeswoman Andrea

American IT company, with offices in India, fined for paying low wages to H-1B employees

A Redmond-based information technology staffing company was asked to pay over USD 300,000 to its 12 H-1B employees for paying them far below their salary and has been imposed a penalty of over USD 45,000 for violating the labour provisions. The US Department of Labour Wage and Hour Division (WHD) during an investigation found the company, which has offices in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, violated the labour provisions of the H-1B visa programme by paying its guest workers far below the required wages, a media release said Thursday. As a result, People Tech Group Inc has been asked to pay its 12 employees USD 309,914 and has

been slapped with a penalty of USD 45,564, it said. Investigators found that the company paid entry-level wages to H-1B computer analysts and computer programmers who performed the work of much more experienced employees and should have received higher prevailing rates, the Department of Labour Wage and Hour Division said. The People Tech Group also failed to pay workers for the time when it did not provide them work, as the law requires, the department said. "The intent of the H-1B foreign labour certification program is to help American companies find highly skilled talent they need when they can prove that a shortage of US workers exists," said Wage and Hour Division Acting District Director Carrie Aguilar in Seattle. "The resolution of this case demonstrates our commitment to safeguard American jobs, level the playing field for law-abiding employers, and ensure no one is being paid less than they are legally owed," Aguilar said. The Department of Labour Wage and Hour Division has listed nearly 30 companies as willful violators under the H-1B programme. As per the list maintained since 2013, a majority of willful violators are Indian Americans or companies owned by them. At least 10 companies, which includes eight willful violators, have been debarred from hiring foreign guest workers on H-1B visas.

Rising temperatures will mean more deaths globally, say scientists

Southeast Asian nations like the Philippines and Vietnam would be most affected by heat-related mortality, along with those in Southern Europe and South America, according to a study published in the journal Climatic Change.

Failure to meet global targets to limit rising temperatures will mean more heat-related deaths, researchers said on Thursday.

Countries have signed the Paris agreement on climate change to limit the rise in global temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, and ideally to 1.5C.

An increase of 3C or 4C could raise mortality rates by between 1 and 9 percent, according to a study published in the journal Climatic Change.

"Currently, we are on a trajectory to reach over 3 degrees

Celsius of warming, and if this trend continues there would be serious consequences for health in many parts of the world," said co-author Antonio Gasparrini in a statement. Southeast Asian nations like the Philippines and Vietnam would be most affected by heat-related mortality, along with those in Southern Europe and South America, according to the report.

A drop in cold-related deaths elsewhere would not be enough to offset overall increase, said researchers led by scientists from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine who looked at 23 countries for the

survey. A nudge in global temperatures from 1.5C to 2C would likely result in less than a 1 percent increase in related deaths in warmer regions such as Southern Europe, South America and Southeast Asia, they said.

The study did not take into account measures to adapt to rising temperatures, or demographic and economic factors, but those could have an impact when it comes to reducing heat-related deaths, said lead author Ana Maria Vicedo-Cabrera.

"Evidence so far suggests that we are adapting to heat, so



we expect that in the future, maybe, the mortality risk due to temperatures could be lower compared to today, but still it's not clear," Vicedo-Cabrera told the Thomson Reuters Founda-

tion. United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned this week it could be too late to stop "runaway climate change" unless countries take action by 2020 to reduce global warming.



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People are free and fast with their accusations

Naxalism is India's biggest internal security threat. Its objective is an armed rebellion against the Indian state and the overthrowing of its democratic polity. State capture through an armed struggle is qualitatively different from the expression of dissent. To proudly claim "I am an Urban Naxal", therefore, does great disservice to our security forces, many of who have died fighting Naxalism.

Roy's hypocrisy, however, doesn't stem from her support for Naxalites; she has been consistent in this regard. At a press conference on the arrests made in Pune, she propagates the lies spread by the Rahul Gandhi on the Rafale deal. When did Roy and Rahul Gandhi become allies? Roy needs to be reminded that it was Rahul Gandhi's party that had first come down hard against Naxals. P Chidambaram is on

record suggesting the use of air power against Naxalites, in the aftermath of a brutal attack in 2010, that claimed the lives of 76 security personnel.

The purpose of this article is not to pick on specific individuals. It is to expose an ecosystem that would like people to believe their lies, to mask their hypocrisy. The very fact that this ecosystem can so clearly misuse their freedom of speech by spreading

fabricated stories shows that the present establishment is not in the least bit authoritarian. I would, in fact, argue that this dispensation has faced more scrutiny than any previous government. And, more importantly, no prime minister has been critiqued as often, and as bitterly, as Modi. The government has taken such accusations on its chin, and continued to deliver on its promise of good governance.

Why a Multi-Agency Probe Is Needed to Get to the Bottom of India's Over-Invoicing Scams

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) should act on former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan's suggestion for a coordinated investigation by all agencies into cases of over-invoicing of imported coal and power equipment involving nearly 40 entities owned by India's top corporate houses. Some of the businesses under the scanner are part of the Gautam Adani-led Adani group, Anil Ambani-promoted ADAG and the Ruias' Essar group. The urgency for a multi-agency probe is being felt as the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) investigation into the Rs 50,000 crore scams is struggling to make headway. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) too, as The Wire first reported, abandoned its probe into these cases under less-than-ideal circumstances. The CBI had registered a preliminary enquiry (PE) in the over-invoicing scam after the DRI issued a notice to the Adani Group, which allegedly accounted for a decent share in over-invoiced coal imports. However, the investigative agency later closed it, citing "jurisdictional issues", in a move that has been criticised by legal experts.

The CBI also only filed a PE against NTPC in the coal import scam that happened during 2008 to 2010, and has mostly avoided a probe against the major corporate houses involved in over-invoicing.

Moreover, the clean chit given by the DRI's adjudicating authority to the Adani group in cases involving nearly Rs 4,000 crore-over-invoicing of power equipment bill have caused embarrassment to the agency, forcing it to appeal against the order.

On August 22, 2017, the customs adjudicating authority, K.V.S. Singh, dropped all charges filed by the DRI against Adani Power Maharashtra Ltd (APML) and Adani Power Rajasthan Ltd (APRL) for allegedly inflating the total declared value of the goods imported under power and infrastructure heads, which attracts zero or less than 5%, to the extent of Rs 3,974.12 crore.

The decision came after the DRI alleged that the goods – power generation and transmission equipment – imported by APML and APRL in 2009 and 2010 were shipped directly to India by the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) based in China and South Korea, while the documents were routed through an intermediary entity, Electrogen Infra FZE, UAE (EIF),

created in Dubai.

In its appeal filed before the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) in Mumbai in November, the agency claimed that the adjudication order "suffers from several contradictions which indicate either total non-application of mind or recklessness in passing of the order".

It further argued, "The manner in which the adjudicating authority has gone on to describe an otherwise dubious contract process in glowing terms as transparent, independent and good corporate governance practice... only points at eagerness and bias on the part of adjudicating authority to justify overvaluation ignoring facts to the contrary." The customs adjudicating authority's clean chit to the Adani group also caused huge embarrassment to the finance ministry, which later assured the Delhi high court that all cases will be pursued to their logical conclusion.

The court had asked the ministry to clarify its stand in these cases while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by social activist Harsh Mander. It also asked the CBI to explain why it closed the PE even as the DRI was still probing these cases. The PIL had had

Mallya then quickly claimed the media had misrepresented facts.

Jaitley was the Finance Minister in 2016 when the Kingfisher Airline chief fled India. On Tuesday, Mallya appeared before a court in London for a hearing in an extradition case.

Soon after his hearing outside Westminster Magistrates' Court in London court, Mallya told reporters that he had met with the Finance Minister to speak about a settlement. "I left because I had a scheduled meeting in Geneva. I met the Finance Minister before I left and repeated my offer to settle with the banks. That's the truth," he said. Mallya reiterated that he had the means to offer a settlement. Jaitley refuted his claims and said that nothing could be further from the truth. "Since 2014, I have never given him any appointment and the question of his having met me does not arise," he said. Jaitley added that since Mallya was a member of the Rajya Sabha, he had "misused the privilege" on one occasion.

sought setting up of a special investigation team (SIT) to probe cases of over-invoicing of imported coal and power equipment.

As per the affidavit submitted by the ministry in court, the DRI in 2014 gathered intelligence that certain private companies in the power sector are involved in over-invoicing of coal and power generation equipment sourced from overseas.

The gathered intelligence indicated that while Indonesian coal was being shipped directly from Indonesian ports to India, the invoices were routed through one or more intermediaries in various countries such as Singapore, Dubai, Hong Kong and British Virgin Islands (UK) to artificially inflate value, the affidavit said.

The preliminary probe, according to the affidavit, shed light on the modus operandi followed by companies for inflating the price of imported Indonesian coal.

Following that, show-cause notices were issued to errant companies. The adjudication cases are now at different stages. While some cases are still pending for adjudication, appeals have been filed in the Customs, Excise and

Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) against the orders of the adjudication authority, the ministry said in its affidavit.

The ministry further said that due to the scale of imports and the involvement of a large number of parties, cases have been divided into multiple investigations.

Given the involvement of multiple levels of intermediaries in most cases and their overseas locations, and because of the complex nature of transactions, the details of bank accounts of all parties in India and overseas involved need to be procured, said the affidavit.

Since transactions have been carried out within and outside India, legal proceedings have been initiated to recover material evidence from abroad. The affidavit said that the DRI is in the process of collecting documents from banks in India and overseas.

While deposing before the parliament's estimates committee recently, Rajan said he had red flagged "a list of high profile fraud cases of non-performing assets to the PMO for coordinated investigation" and noted how the over-invoicing of imports by "unscrupulous promoters" was used to inflate the cost of capital equipment.

Vijay Mallya makes u-turn after Arun Jaitley's rebuttal

"While I was walking out of the House, he paced up to catch up with me and while walking, uttered, 'I am making an offer of settlement'. Having been fully briefed about his earlier bluff offers, I cut short the conversation and curtly told him that there is no point talking to me and he must make offers to his bankers. I did not even accept the papers he was holding in his hand," Jaitley told reporters. He also wrote a detailed description of the incident on his blog. This prompted Mallya to clarify that he did not have a "scheduled meeting" with the BJP leader, but "happened to meet him". He, however, added that he had told Jaitley that he was leaving for London. Jaitley's clarification didn't cool political tempers. "Given Vijay Mallya's extremely serious allegations in London today," said Gandhi on Twitter, "the PM should immediately order an independent probe into the matter. Arun Jaitley should step down as Finance Minister while this probe is underway."

Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala too slammed the BJP in a

tweet saying, "After Mallya reveals his 'consultation meetings', before his smooth escape, with Fiscal Mismanagement Blog Minister Sh Jaitley — one thing is clear — BJP is running 'tour travels & immigration' agency for [the] 'loot scoot & settle abroad' brigade."

Party colleague Abhishek Manu Singhvi said that question remains on how Mallya could leave even though everyone knew of his debts and non-performing assets (NPAs). "Congress has been repeatedly asserting for over 18 months that not only Vijay Mallya but Nirav Modi, (Mehul) Choksi and many others have been allowed to flee with impunity," Singhvi added. The Congress further demanded that the government reveal details of Mallya's meetings with Jaitley. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal attacked the BJP-led government on Twitter saying, "PM Modi meets Nirav Modi before he flees the country. FM meets Vijay Mallya before he flees India. What transpired in these meetings? People want to know."

'Vampire facial' may have exposed spa clients to HIV, New Mexico health officials say

Now the department is urging clients to visit the state's Midtown Public Health Office this week for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C lab testing and counseling.

"It is very important that anyone who received a vampire facial or other injection-related service at the VIP Spa in May or June of 2018 come to the Midtown Public Health Office for free and confidential lab testing and counseling," Lynn Gallagher, Cabinet secretary for the New Mexico Department of Health, said in the announcement. An inspection of the spa on Friday revealed it was practicing in a way "that could potentially spread blood-borne infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C to clients," according to the announcement.

Subsequently, the spa was issued a cease and desist letter, and closed immediately, the department said.

A representative of the spa declined to comment, and CNN attempted to contact a lawyer for the spa on Thursday.

When done safely and properly, a vampire facial -- also known as a

plasma-rich protein facial -- should not expose clients to any such blood-borne infections, experts say.

"This never ever should have happened in the first place," said Dr. Kenneth Mark, a board-certified cosmetic dermatologist in New York and clinical assistant professor at NYU Langone Health, who was not involved in the New Mexico case.

"As long as proper protocols are followed and there is no sharing of equipment for patients," he said, "then it should not be an issue." A vampire facial involves drawing a person's blood, hence the name. "The blood is then centrifuged, meaning it's processed in a centrifuge machine where it's spun around real fast," said Dr. Ehsan Ali, a board-certified internal medicine physician known as the Beverly Hills Concierge Doctor.

Next, "the plasma is then extracted. The plasma is what has all the nutrients, the growth factors, and the protein that helps stimulate new skin, new collagen, and that's essentially what's providing all the benefit," he said.

The plasma is then layered on top of the face and reinjected into the skin using a tool called a micro-needling pen, which creates tiny punctures in the skin with miniature fine needles. Ali, who was not involved in the New Mexico case, said that if the micro-needling pen or any other equipment is not properly disposed of or sterilized between facials, that could expose patients to potential blood-borne infections, as what was seen in New Mexico. That could occur if micro-needling tips or syringes were reused, or if another patient's blood was used to perform the facial, for instance.

If interested in a vampire facial, Ali advised that patients make sure they see practitioners opening new syringes to draw blood, as well as changing the micro-needling pen before performing the procedure. "Just make sure you're seeing everything being done in front of you," he said. "Make sure that the place is using new equipment, changing the tips and needles." Dr. Michael Dobryansky, a plastic surgeon at the Long Island Plastic Surgical Group who is trained in the cosmetic vampire

method, said there is specific training providers must complete to become licensed in a complex procedure like the vampire facial.

"So for patients, when they are investigating places for getting these types of procedures, they need to make sure that the places are actually vampire certified, because there is specific training and there is specific maintenance of certification that that organization requires of its providers in order to be able to both perform the procedures and continuously offer them to patients," said Dobryansky, who was not involved in the New Mexico case. "If you as a consumer look for that, you're likely to end up in a reputable place," he said. Patients also should make sure any facility they visit for such procedures follows universal safety precautions, such as "handwashing, and wearing gloves, wearing masks when appropriate, disposing of waste appropriately including blood-related wastes," among other precautions, he said. "So all those things need to be in place."

The Great Indian Diplomacy Juggle in Strife-Torn Afghanistan

Thus, the trilateral meeting was an important Indian and Iranian signal of support to the Afghan government and people at this critical juncture. A joint statement issued at the conclusion of the tripartite meeting mentioned that the three countries discussed "economic cooperation, including Chabahar, as well as enhancing co-operation on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and continuing support for the peace and reconciliation process that is led and owned by Afghanistan". Pakistan is unlikely to allow India overland access via Wagah/Attari and through Punjab into Afghanistan. The government of Pakistan also makes it almost impossible for Indian goods to reach Afghanistan through the Karachi port. The development of

Iran's Chabahar port is therefore of vital importance for India to secure connectivity to Afghanistan and beyond. Modi's visit to Tehran in 2016 provided a boost to India-Iranian cooperation to develop the Chabahar project. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani joined Modi and Iranian President Rouhani in the Tehran meeting and the three decided to have a trilateral agreement for transport and transit of goods via Chabahar into Afghanistan. A ministerial committee was set up to provide oversight to this important process. It has met twice, the last in December 2017 in Delhi. The legal framework for transport and transit has moved ahead. Iran has also agreed to lease two jetties to India to develop.

Although the US sanctions on Iran are complicating cooperation, matters are expected to be resolved to enable India to take over jetties and begin work. General John Nicholson, who handed over command of the US forces in Afghanistan on September 2, told the US Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2017 "Iranian-India-Afghanistan cooperation over the Chabahar port presents great economic potential". At that stage President Trump had just assumed office. He had threatened to undo the US-Iran nuclear deal during the campaign but it was unknown how far he would go to pressure Iran. It is now clear that Iran is his foremost enemy and ever tougher sanctions are likely to be imposed

on it. In this context will the US be able to take the pragmatic approach indicated in Nicholson's testimony? otherwise, Indian companies will face difficulties and hurdles in operationalising agreements. Drugs, Terrorism & Clash of Interests

There is great diffidence in Afghanistan and in the international community, too, to acknowledge that narcotics has been a major factor in preventing its stabilisation. Afghanistan produces more than 90% of the world's illicit opium. It causes havoc in Iran and impacts India too. There is great need for India-Iran-Afghanistan cooperation to curtail if not eliminate Afghan opium. Through the 1990s India, Iran and Russia had cooperated to

sustain the Rabbani government. They had prevented the Taliban from completely overrunning the country. Now, Russia and Iran are giving material support to the Taliban on the ground that their cooperation is essential in the fight against ISIS in Afghanistan. This is a specious, and dangerous, argument. The Afghans are projecting that their reconciliation process with the Taliban is moving ahead. The US is signalling that the Taliban are showing flexibility. None of this, however, is borne out by the ground situation. President Ghani is, sadly, appearing as a supplicant before the Taliban. In a scenario like this, it is important for India to be and act as an independent power in Afghanistan. The tripartite meeting has assisted in this projection.

Manafort to cooperate with Mueller as part of plea deal

President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort has agreed to cooperate with special counsel Robert Mueller under a plea agreement revealed Friday. Manafort appeared in a Washington, D.C., courtroom Friday morning, looking relaxed in a suit and red tie, to formally announce the deal. The deal dismisses deadlocked charges against Manafort from an earlier bank- and tax-fraud trial in Virginia, but only after "successful cooperation" with Mueller's probe into Russian election interference and whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Moscow on its efforts. Later, U.S. District Court Judge Amy Berman Jackson said Manafort is agreeing to "cooperate fully and truthfully" with the

investigation.

However, a source close to the defense told POLITICO, "the cooperation agreement does not involve the Trump campaign. ... There was no collusion with Russia." Separately, the agreement calls for a 10-year cap on how long Manafort will be sent to prison, and for Manafort to serve time concurrently from his earlier Virginia trial and the D.C. case involving foreign-lobbying and money-laundering charges, according to a second source close to the case. But it will not release Manafort from jail, where he has been held since Mueller's team added witness tampering charges during the run-up to the longtime lobbyist's trial. Manafort's sentencing will not occur until

after the midterm elections. His first status hearing is set for Nov. 16, although the sentencing will likely happen at a later date. Manafort addressed Jackson in a soft voice, saying, "I do," and, "I understand," as she asked him whether he understood what rights he's giving up.

"Has anybody forced you, coerced you or threatened you in any way?" she asked later.

"No," Manafort replied in a barely audible voice. A deputy marshal stood directly behind Manafort, a reminder that he remains in custody.

"Mr. Manafort has accepted responsibility," Manafort lawyer Kevin Downing told reporters after the hearing. "He wanted to

make sure his family was able to remain safe and live a good life. He's accepted responsibility and this is for conduct that leads back many years, and everybody should remember that."

Legal experts quickly spun the deal as a win for all the parties involved. Manafort gets a potentially shorter sentence and lessens his legal bills. Trump avoids several weeks of bad headlines ahead of the midterm elections about his corrupt former campaign aide. And Mueller — faced with Trump's constant claims that his probe is a "witch hunt" — gets to show yet again that his charges are not fabricated and can now divert resources to other elements of his Russia probe.

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Patanjali enters dairy business, launches curd, cheese, other milk-based products

Patanjali had also ventured into frozen vegetable segment and has introduced products such as sweet corn, pea and potato fingers.



a conference. The Haridwar-based firm has established a network of around 56,000 retailers. We are targeting 10 lakh litre of daily sales, Ramdev added. Besides regular milk, Patanjali would also introduce milk and allied products in tetra packs, he added. The company would directly procure milk from the farmers through its network and would promote products from India-based breeds. Our milk would be cheaper than other established brands by Rs 2, said Ramdev. Patanjali also launched packaged drinking water under the brand name of 'Divya Jal' in different pack sizes and has plans to introduce natural mineral water and herb infused water.

Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved Thursday announced its foray into the dairy segment by launching milk and milk-based products, including curd and cheese, targeting sales worth Rs 1,000 crore from the segment.

Besides, Patanjali had also

ventured into frozen vegetable segment and has introduced products such as sweet corn, pea and potato fingers.

"We are aiming to have a business of Rs 1,000 crore next fiscal. This fiscal, we would have a business of Rs 500 crore," said Baba Ramdev while addressing

'Pink dollar' to boost India's economy after gay sex legalised



Indian businesses and multinationals operating here have an opportunity to profit from the ruling, which allows businesses and government to tap into the so-called 'Pink Economy'.

India's private sector is set to enter a new era of inclusiveness, after a landmark Supreme Court ruling decriminalised homosexuality in a move that's expected to provide a significant boost to the South Asian nation's \$2.6 trillion economy.

Many multinational businesses in India and elsewhere already recognise the links between inclusion of gay employees and better business outcomes and have taken steps to end discrimination in staff benefits in order to maintain a competitive workforce. The court's decision to overthrow the country's notorious anti-gay law is expected to encourage others to do the same.

'It will have a massive economic impact,' says Keshav Suri, an Indian hotelier who joined other activists and social groups challenging a 158-year-old colonial law that criminalised same-sex relationships in the world's second-most populous

country.

Suri, whose family owns the luxury Lalit hotel chain that recently expanded to London, said last week's ruling allows Indian and multinational companies to openly court India's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer consumers, as well as market India internationally as a destination that's now more gay friendly. 'Why are we hampering the tourism sector in this country?' he said from his 465-room New Delhi hotel.

Indian businesses -- and multinationals operating here -- have an opportunity to profit from the ruling, which allows businesses and government to tap into the so-called 'Pink Economy'. The city of Mumbai will also benefit as it competes with other Asian financial hubs for talent, particularly following a July court ruling in Hong Kong that grants visas to spouses of gay expatriate workers, putting pressure on other centers to introduce inclusive policies.

Rupee strengthens by 50 paise to Rs 71.68 against US dollar in early trade

Continuing its recovery, the rupee Friday strengthened by 50 paise to 71.68 against the dollar in early trade



Continuing its recovery, the rupee Friday strengthened by 50 paise to 71.68 against the dollar in early trade in the forex market on the government's assurance that all steps would be taken to ensure the domestic currency does not depreciate to unreasonable levels. Besides, dollar selling by exporters and banks, the greenback's weakness against other currencies overseas, helped the domestic currency recover, forex dealers said.

They said a higher opening in the equity market and positive macro data released on Wednesday also supported

the rupee's recovery, they added. Industrial production grew at 6.6 per cent in July and retail inflation cooled to a 10-month low of 3.69 per cent in August, according to the data released by Central Statistics Office. The rupee on Wednesday rebounded from the historic low of 72.91 to end higher by 51 paise at 72.18 against the dollar. The forex market was closed Thursday on account of Ganesh Chaturthi. Meanwhile, the BSE benchmark Sensex reclaimed the 38,000-mark to 38,036.81 by climbing 318.85 points, or 0.85 per cent, in opening trade.

Apple celebrates new iPhone models as Asia suppliers suffer

Apple's strategy of getting higher revenue despite low sales of iPhones is hitting Taiwanese suppliers as they rely on the number of devices sold for their revenue.



With a suite of new devices and a market value of \$1 trillion, Apple Inc. has given its investors cause to celebrate. That's not the case for a number of its suppliers in Taiwan which have suffered from stagnating shipment growth.

General Interface Solution Holding Ltd. is the worst performer in the MSCI Taiwan Index over the past year, dropping 58%. Also making the top 10 of poor performers are Apple's main iPhone assemblers, Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. and Pegatron Corp.

which have both slumped by more than a third.

Apple's focus on selling higher priced devices as well as content and accessories is leading to a boost in revenue and profit even as the number of iPhones it ships remains little changed. The Taiwanese hardware makers are struggling to adjust to that new dynamic because they rely on the number of devices sold for their revenue and don't see any income from their major customer's other businesses.

"Apple suppliers are no

longer relatively attractive investment targets because the number of units sold are not growing and there are few technological breakthroughs," said Christine Wu, vice president at Yuanta Securities Investment Trust. Losses for many Apple suppliers deepened after the company unveiled iPhones that were marginally costlier than anticipated, according to Morgan Stanley. General Interface fell to a year's low, while Hon Hai slid 1.3% Thursday. Assemblers such as Hon Hai and Pegatron need higher volumes to drive profit growth, said Kevin Liu, Taipei-based fund manager at Eastspring Securities Investment Trust. "Low factory utilization rate certainly will hurt suppliers' profitability. Further, Apple's strategy to ensure its own profits is to cut suppliers' asking prices while recruiting more suppliers," Liu said.

Scrumptious Sikkim

Buckwheat pancakes have been a staple of Nepali Hindu cuisine long before gluten-free pancake mixes hit your kitchen. And we're not feeding you some neo-con schpeel



You know you are about to embark upon a special journey when you see a line of backpackers at the airline counter in New Delhi airport waiting to check-in to the Bagdogra flight. Mid-air, the continental divide preens between clouds and somewhere between your meal and coffee, the pilot informs you to look outside and spot Mt. Everest. If you are really lucky, your visit to the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom starts on a high note, when you catch a glimpse Kanchenjunga, as the plane descends into Bagdogra.

Delicately tucked away between Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet the narrow state, no wider than 100 km, is a melting pot of several cultures. In the village of Darap, in West Sikkim, we stayed at the Dara Gaon Village Retreat homestay run by Shiva and Radha Gurung. The Gurung is a tribe of Hindu shepherds from Nepal. Radha's food has just enough of that sense of familiarity to feel like you are in a Hindu household.



Selrotis are deep-fried circles made of rice and wheat batter; (top right) Dalle chillies



Phapars (buckwheat crepes) with fried potatoes and chutney is a breakfast staple

While you would often get to eat daal, rice, 'sabzi' and other homely sounding dishes, the key lies in the philosophy of the Nepali Hindu cuisine of Sikkim. Fresh ingredients are always seasonal, food is cooked with technique that exhibits the character of the ingredients, and often times dried herbs and spices are aromatic and different from what we are often used to. Most importantly, almost everything eaten is grown in and around the village.

In Darap, you consume ghee from cows that you stare at every morning, rice that is grown in the lower fields (basti chawal), vegetables picked fresh from the garden, rare spices, like chimping – an aromatic spice similar to caraway, fermented mustard greens (gundruk) and so on. Radha's chutneys are almost famous. Every meal warrants chutney, and this side serving plays the crucial role of car-

rying the flavours of fresh seasonal ingredients like tree tomatoes and dalle chillies. The food is rich in textures and nuance as much as it is in flavours. Deep fried rings of a mildly sweetened batter made with rice and wheat flours (selrotis) are snacked with chutneys and pickles. For breakfast, buckwheat pancakes (phapar rotis) have been enjoyed with chutney, long before buckwheat became a popular choice in gluten-free pancake mixes.

Bhutia Cuisine

About halfway between Darap and Gangtok is the Bhutia village of Kewzing. While Nepali Hindus make over half the population of Sikkim, the Buddhist Bhutia, originally from Tibet, is the largest minority. Often times, when you enter a kitchen, the woman of the house will offer you a jug of chaang, or millet beer. This, for me, is the jarring difference between the Bhutia culture and the Nepali culture.

While there are many common ingredients, the Bhutia are known for their rich

In Darap, you consume ghee from cows that you stare at every morning, rice that is grown in the lower fields, vegetables from the garden

pork and beef dishes. Pork sausages, beef momos, stir-frys, thukpas and so on. My most memorable meal in Sikkim was a beefy soup of pakthu (hand-shaped pasta) with herbs, chillies, and pieces of tenderloin. It was rich, flavourful, spicy, warming and just right for the cold weather of Kewzing. With views of Mt. Norseng of the Kanchenjunga range, this was a perfect evening.

The Bhutia offer some stunning manipulations of dough. Momos of all shapes are deftly made in groups and likewise enjoyed in groups with jugs of chaang. Sometimes, Sha Phale – the Bhutia's deep-fried version of a meat-stuffed empanada, does the trick. And of course, one can poetically wax about the Bhutia family of noodles and pastas.

My heart, however, belongs to the little less known cookie, Khabzay. Thinly hand-braided dough shapes are fried and enjoyed with tea, or just wolfed down by people like me. These intricately shaped cookies are a painstaking effort, which is especially enjoyed during Losar (Tibetan New Year). On a routine day, when no celebration is happening, dinner might be as simple (read delicious) as fresh chhurpi cheese tossed with onions and chillies, cooked



Millet steeped in hot water for chaang

with ghee. Very similar to the Bhutanese Ema datsi, the fresh and fermented flavours of this preparation, let alone the spicy and fatty coating on the palate, is splendid.

It is in the village of Payong, on the border of North and South Sikkim that I learned of the important contributions of the Lepcha people: The indigenous population of Sikkim that now makes up only seven per cent of the demographic. I was out foraging for nakhima – a wild flower that is eaten in stir-fries or made into pickle – with Sikkim Mandarin farmer Gitanath. We stumbled upon tite niguro, or bitter ferns. The season was right to find these fiddleheads bobbing about in the lower portions of the thicket.

What I learned from him was that back in 1100 A.D., when the kingdoms of Bhutan and Sikkim fought for over 20 years, the Lepchas, who were experts at guerrilla warfare, protected the mountainous borders. Women during that time had to depend on the forest for food. They learned to forage and knowledge of wild edibles was first recorded. It is of no surprise that many Lepchas today remain shamans practicing their religion of nature known as Mun. It was a joy to take some of the bitter fern back to the kitchen, toss it in ghee and top it with some freshly made chhurpi cheese.



Tiny shell-shaped pasta called pakthu in a beef soup with dalle chilli paste

Foods that will help you live longer

Foods you have in your kitchen could help you live to the ripe old age of 100



A Mediterranean diet isn't the only secret to living a longer life. Eating red hot chilli peppers could help you live longer and prevent a stroke or heart disease. Over a 26-year study, those who ate them were found to be 13% less likely to die. Scientists at Vermont University in the US found that capsaicin in the chillies has a positive effect on our cells. Anti-ageing nutritionist Rick Hay says, "You can live to the age of 100 with the foods already in your kitchen, you just don't know it." Other tips for longevity:

Leafy greens

Kale, broccoli and spinach help to target proteins called sirtuin. This slows cell-ageing and boosts your metabolism, helping to burn fat. **Rick says:** "Spinach is fabulous. It's also packed full of magnesium and iron for energy."



Oily fish

Rich in Omega 3, this protects the heart and brain and fights cancer, arthritis and kidney disease. **Rick says:** "I'm a fan of fish oil supplements. You can't eat enough fish — they are a great way to top up on Omega 3."

Beetroot

This superfood releases nitric oxide into the bloodstream making blood vessels expand, and lowering blood pressure. **Rick says:** "They say beetroot is the secret weapon of winning football teams — that's very plausible."



Garlic and onion

These are rich in sulphur which aids muscle function and insulin production and helps produce the cleansing antioxidant glutathione. **Rick says:** "These are great for those with sluggish digestion. If you cleanse the body properly you're on the right track."

Turmeric

Yellowy turmeric may help to prevent



any colour is usually good for you."

Chickpeas; lentils

A study found that eating 3% more plant-based proteins like chickpeas and lentils cuts death risk by 10%. **Rick says:** "People think chicken and beef when they think protein — and then overeat."

Cinnamon

This helps regulate your blood sugar as it lowers your insulin levels. **Rick says:** "This is great for diabetes sufferers."

changes in the DNA of cells that lead to cancer, asthma, eczema and depression. **Rick says:** "A general rule of thumb I learned from a biochemist: any food that stains your fingers

Watermelon

This is rich in lycopene, the red pigment in tomatoes. That makes it one of the best foods for lowering the risk of breast and prostate cancer as it interrupts the signals that cause cells to mutate and tumours to grow.

Matcha Green Tea

The favourite tea of health-conscious stars like Gwyneth Paltrow, this contains the most cancer-fighting catechins.



Red grapes and berries

They contain antioxidants called anthocyanins which slow the ageing process and can fight Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease. **Rick says:** "Don't spend a fortune on exotic berries like goji. Local berries will have the same effect."

-Daily Mirror

FORTUNE'S TALE

INGREDIENTS

- Roast chicken.....1/2
- Cherry tomato.....10 g
- Bacon.....5 g
- Passion fruit.....10 g
- Romaine lettuce.....10 g
- Lolo rosso lettuce.....10 g
- Crab meat stick.....20 g

Sauce / Seasoning:

- Mayonnaise.....15g
- Truffle oil.....5 g
- Thai chilli sauce.....10 g
- Lemon juice.....5 ml
- Five-spice.....100 g
- Salt.....50 g



METHOD

- 1** Marinate the chicken with five-spice and salt; roast for 30 minutes at 150°C.
- 2** Roast the bacon until it gets crispy.
- 3** Debone the roast chicken and julienne.
- 4** Mix the mayonnaise and sweet chilli, and add the chicken to it.
- 5** Place the chicken on the plate and put all the ingredients over the chicken.
- 6** Garnish with cress (optional). Drizzle the truffle oil over it, and serve.

CONTRIBUTED BY: Chef Charles Chee Kent Ful, Hakkasan

WILD PRAWN CURRY WITH ONION AND WATER CHESTNUT



INGREDIENTS

- Tiger/king prawns.....160 g
- Spring onion.....15 g
- Chillies.....2 g
- Almond (for garnish).....3 g
- Curry leaves (for garnish).....3 g
- Water chestnut.....20 g
- Chicken stock.....20ml

Sauce

- Chillies.....5 g
- Butter.....10 g
- Curry leaf.....3 g
- Condensed milk.....10 g
- Curry powder.....15 g
- Ginger powder.....10 g
- Chicken powder.....5 g
- White pepper powder.....3 g
- Potato starch.....5 g

CONTRIBUTED BY: Chef Wang Yixuan, Yauatcha

METHOD

- 1** Dice all the vegetables; blend with condensed milk.
- 2** Take a mixing bowl, add butter and condensed milk; cover with cling-wrap and steam until the butter melts.
- 3** Put some oil in a pan; add the blended vegetables and stir for 10 minutes. Add butter and simmer on low flame for two minutes.
- 4** Put some oil in a pan and stir-fry all the ingredients for a few seconds. Then, add chicken stock and thicken the mixture with potato starch.
- 5** Place the prawns on the top of the sauce, and garnish with fried curry leaves, almond slices and Thai red chillies.

With less than a month left for the launch of Nintendo Switch, the much-awaited next-generation gaming system, pundits are questioning its role in the gaming ecosystem.

It's been five years since Nintendo unveiled the disappointing Wii U. And this hybrid gaming system, which works as both a portable machine and a home console, now looks to represent Nintendo's future in the games industry.

Analysts are expecting Switch to sell more than twice as many units as the Wii U when the release date — March 3 — rolls around.

The console is launching in the UK and the US on the same day. India will have to wait a bit longer. But here's a closer look at the Switch that's being swarmed by unprecedented hype.

The unit is fitted with a 6.2 inch capacitive touchscreen capable of displaying at 1280 x 720 resolution

The Switch has 32 GB of internal storage. There's a microSD card slot that will support both microSD and microSDHC cards up to 2 TB at launch



The return of NINTENDO



Three basic modes

TV mode is your classic set-top with a big screen.

Tabletop mode lets you bump out the Switch's rear kickstand and play holding the detached left and right Joy-Cons in either hand, or lend one to a friend and if turned sideways, they work like standard controllers.

Handheld mode lets you clip the Joy-Cons to the Switch screen and play anywhere you like.



User interface

The Switch UI appears to be starkly different from what Nintendo fans have gotten used to on the Wii U and 3DS. It has a sleek, clean user interface. The logged in user's icon displays in the upper left hand corner of the screen. A horizontal scroll allows users to browse their game library. Nintendo only officially revealed the white background, but independent developer Nicalis tweeted a picture of the Switch UI with a black background, suggesting that the Switch UI may support multiple colour schemes. Additionally the since-deleted image hinted that you will be able to switch between user accounts while games continue to run in the background.



Joy-Con controller

The controllers have motion sensors in them that allow them to be used in the same way that the controllers for the Wii and the Wii U were, where you can tilt them in one direction or another to control a game. It has an infrared camera that can see objects in close proximity. You can play gunfight or boxing games with it. The controller also has a near-field communications sensor to read or write data from a toy. You can "share the joy" by sharing one of the mini Joy-Con controllers with a friend, enabling two people to play on the TV or play on the portable screen. The Joy-Con controllers also have a more refined sense of vibration, known as HD Rumble.



Nintendo Switch games

Switch will release with *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *1-2-Switch*, *Skylanders Imaginators*, and *Just Dance 2017*. Developer Tomorrow Corporation has confirmed that its titles *World of Goo*, *Little Inferno* and *Human Resource Machine* will all be available as digital downloads. There will also be a new Soundtrack Mode, where players can explore Kyle Gabler's wonderfully bizarre music.

1-2-Switch is a minigame bundle from Nintendo designed to show off the Switch's various game modes, similar to *Wii Sports* and *Nintendoland* for the Wii and Wii U. There is also a cowboy-themed quick-draw game, along with others for fencing, spell-casting, guitar playing, volleyball, dancing, cooking, boxing, ballet, answering phones and more.

Multitouch display

The Switch has a 6.2-inch 720p capacitive multitouch display with a resolution of 1280 x 720 pixels — that's the same size as the screen on the Wii U Gamepad, but a step up from that screen's resolution of 854 x 480. Note that the Nintendo Switch won't offer a second screen experience like the Wii U as the tablet needs to be plugged into the dock - Nintendo Switch is dedicated to deliver a single-screen experience.



Battery life

The Switch offers between two-and-a-half and six-and-a-half hours of gameplay while undocked, depending on the game. As an example, the

company said that players can expect to get three hours of portable gameplay from *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, one of the console's more technically intensive games. The Switch can be charged by USB-C, and you can continue to play it as a portable while it's charging. You'll need a power bank though as the 4310mAh battery isn't removable. The Nintendo Switch also brings back the game cartridge. Like the 3DS, the Switch games will come on small memory cards which slot into the back of the tablet. In the preview trailer we also spotted a nifty car mount which the tablet slots onto making it a decent in-car entertainment system for the kids (or adults).



'I refuse to see a scene like this and consider it normal'

Commuter's Facebook rant about two women embracing on a station platform

(Agencies) Earlier this week, Brazilian commuter Nelson Felipe was deeply offended by a scene he witnessed on a train platform.

He proceeded to take a photo, and express his disapproval on Facebook, after which the image was shared more than 100,000 times in 24 hours.

In the picture, taken on a train platform in Rio de Janeiro, two women hug and gaze into each others' eyes, but the source of his outrage soon becomes clear in a post that cleverly spoofs conservative attitudes.

In his Facebook post, Felipe stated: 'I am not prejudiced, I think everyone does what they want out of your life. But I find it absurd that I should be forced to witness a scene like this.

'What one does in private is your business, but what you do in public concerns me yes. And I refuse to see a scene like this and consider it normal.'

'I do not wish ill of anyone, but people should be preserved. [They] are challenging social conventions, and this can be dangerous.

Continuing with what the unknowing reader assumes at this point is a homophobic rant, the next part of the post starts to become confusing.

'If after a tragedy strikes, or worse, if someone dies, who will put the blame on who? On me? Worst of all is the example for children.

Suddenly it becomes clear what Felipe, who works at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, is really warning against

- with his tongue firmly in this cheek. 'What would happen to a child who sees this scene every day? 'Kids will think it's normal to wait for the subway on the yellow line. So, don't act like that guy over there.

It seems the Brazilian commuter was in fact observing a public transport safety regulation, which the man in the far top-right is clearly breaking. Felipe warns others not to follow in the delinquent man's footsteps. The post has received thousands of comments with users applauding his witty way of exposing homophobia.

Leando Da Silver wrote: 'Great text. Shows that do not need to be boring to combat homophobia.' Celia Rodrigues added: 'There are people that judge before concluding the reading.'



Why having a female boss can hit women's promotion hopes

Chance of another woman getting management job halve if one is already in the role

If you're a woman looking to get to the top of your profession, try to avoid having a female boss.

Because if your firm already has a woman manager, your chances of promotion have just plummeted, a study shows.

Researchers found companies work hard to get one woman into a managerial position but once that happens the chances of another following in her footsteps halve.

The study, published in Strategic Management Journal, analysed the top tiers of 1,500 firms from 1991 to 2011.

The authors from the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business and Columbia Business School could not say for sure whether the 'quota effect' was a conscious or unconscious decision.

University of Maryland associate professor Cristian Desz said: 'Once a company had appointed one woman to a top-tier job, the chances of a second woman landing an elite position at the same firm drop substantially, by about 50 per cent, in fact.

We thought that the hiring of one woman would lead to a snowball effect at a given company. In fact, what we find is exactly the



opposite. Once they had appointed one woman, the men seem to have said, "We have done our job." This may be because the men feel that such an appointment already puts them ahead of most companies, which is true.'

They rejected the possibility of a 'queen bee' effect, in which the first executive-level women hired would perceive other women as rivals, and work against hiring more.

In fact, companies with a female CEO did slightly better at hiring a second woman than those with a woman in a different senior position.

The team drew on data from a

Standard & Poor's database, supplemented with other sources. They used mathematical formulas to study the distribution of top female executives across the companies in their sample.

Although women make up nearly half of the workforce, just 8.7 per cent of top managers were female in 2011, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics - slightly up from 5.8 per cent who held such positions in 2000.

Other reasons the researcher suggested for the pattern of one woman executive in a firm, were that men feel that there are diminishing returns to hiring more females.

Why 26 is the age when we have the most friends



We have most friends at the age of 26 after having spent the first quarter of our lives building up our friendship circle, a new study has revealed.

The report into friendship showed that our social circle peaks at 26 years and seven months, at which we typically have five close friends.

Women are most popular at 25 years and 10 months, with men hitting the friendship high point a little later at 27 years and three months. The research, by greetings card firm Forever Friends, shows that a third of adults (36 per cent) met their closest friends while at school with a fifth (22 per cent) saying they met them at work.

Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter now also play a major role in nurturing new friendships. The study found that 25 to 34-year-olds make 22 friends via Facebook, compared to 18 to 24-year-olds who make 12, and 35 to 44-year-olds who will have made just four.

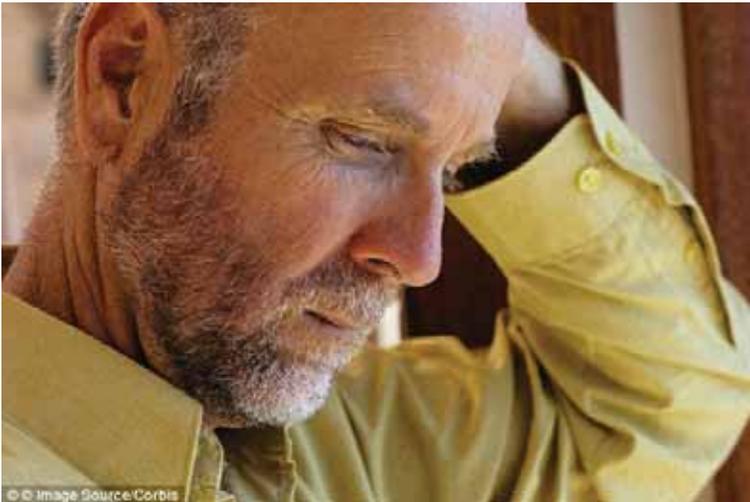
Forever Friends relationship coach Sam Owen said: 'It is no coincidence that over a third of us meet our best friends at school.

'It is a key time in our lives where friendships are grown through sharing notes, giving gifts, seeing each other regularly and laughing a lot.

'As adults we can often forget how powerful these small things are and how the little things can make a difference. Small gestures are just as important as big ones.

Do YOU struggle to remember faces?

You could have face blindness: Take this 20-point test to find out...



(Insider Bureau) Do you struggle to recognise people and mistake friends for strangers?

You could be suffering from face blindness, experts say.

The condition - also known as prosopagnosia - is the inability to recognise faces - a problem that usually affects the person for most or all of their life.

Many people with it cannot even recognise family members, partners or friends.

Instead, they may cope by using alternative ways to recognise people, such as

remembering the way they walk, or their hairstyle, voice or clothing.

However, compensation strategies like this don't always work, and the condition can have a severe impact on a person's everyday life.

It can often lead to people avoiding social situations and feeling embarrassed about actual or imagined offence to others. Now, researchers have created a short questionnaire for people who suspect they suffer from it - which can be taken below.

Currently, there are no tests that can conclusively diagnose prosopagnosia, which is estimated to affect up to 2 per cent of people. The researchers hope their 20-question test will help improve diagnosis of the condition. The quiz asks people how strongly they agree with phrases including 'I often mistake people I have met before for strangers' or 'I sometimes find

DO YOU HAVE FACE BLINDNESS? TAKE THE TEST TO FIND OUT

The following statements inquire about your face recognition abilities.

For each item, indicate how much you agree or disagree by choosing the appropriate numbered response on a scale of one to five.

One represents you strongly agree while five represents you strongly disagree.

Read each item carefully before responding and answer as honestly as possible.



movies hard to follow because of difficulties recognising characters'. Other questions include: 'When I was at school I struggled to recognise my classmates' or 'When people change their hairstyle, or wear hats, I have problems recognising them.' Each question is scored out of five, giving a total score of up to 100. This final score could be used to help determine the severity of face-blindness.

To verify the questionnaire's effectiveness it was tested in several validation studies. By comparing questionnaire scores

with computerised face recognition tasks, researchers were able to confirm that people had the necessary insight into their face blindness for a self-reporting test to be effective. Punit Shah, lead researcher based at the Medical Research Centre's Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre at King's College London, said: 'In its most extreme form people with face blindness cannot even recognise their family or friends.'



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Manmarziyaan movie review

Abhishek Bachchan, Taapsee Pannu impress, Anurag Kashyap's romance doesn't



standard rom-com. The result is a slow slog, far too frequently in slow-motion.

The man in Rumi's life is barely one. Vicky is a wild child, a blue-dyed fool who is hilariously said to look like a "shuturmurg." This lovely Hindi word for ostrich, always and unfailingly, makes me think of the word 'shuttlecock,' which he resembles more closely. He is a DJ without the confidence to make his own music, and his hair — which makes him look like a guinea pig for apprentice hairdressers — was only coloured because Rumi said so, with his 'blue ruin' contrasting her dynamite-red curls. There isn't more to him than want; several times a day, even.

In the other corner stands Robbie (Abhishek Bachchan), a quiet, diffident banker who wears his turban to placate his family — then forgets he's wearing one when putting his earpods in. He is all too passive, a calm cuckold who is content to wait rather than act. However and this seems understandably important to Rumi after her love with a freeloader he knows not just how to pay a bill, but also to tip a waiter.

Vicky Kaushal shines as the

dullard musician Vicky, moving as if the beat has always just dropped in his head, as if there is an invisible DJ on an invisible turntable, operating at a dog-whistle frequency only he can hear. He wears a constantly confused look, unable to decipher why on earth his girlfriend could want an engagement. Abhishek Bachchan is tremendously likeable and restrained as Robbie, helpless and calm yet fervently wishing he could break character. "Even Rama broke character at times," reminds Rumi, and the closest Bachchan comes to that is when he suddenly quotes one of his father's lines from Kaalia. Taapsee Pannu is an explosion. She commits to the fiery, flaky role and makes her Rumi real: a girl who dreams of a life lived not only under the stars but also soaked in sweat. She embodies perpetual frustration, momentarily rescued by a shot of dopamine be it from a rooftop rendezvous or a mobile phone notification that lights her up with glee. She is as good shouting and cursing as she is when silent and sullen, and in a scene where she is the one barked at, instead of the one who is barking, she jumps with

immediate vulnerability. Here is an actress who doesn't seem to know a false note.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the film.

Kashyap is a visionary filmmaker, and he starts Manmarziyaan with a unique shot, a time-lapse of Amritsar's famed Golden Temple where we can see — besides the temple and the devotees — a big black screen where words are rushing by and prayers are being pointed out to the devout like an almighty karaoke screen. He throws in two pairs of identical twins — girls who dance up a storm, boys who drink kahwa quietly — to anchor the solid Amit Trivedi soundtrack, just like he'd used The Twilight Players in his own Dev D. While Manmarziyaan uses songs a lot more conventionally than that landmark film, Kashyap still finds ways to make dances and lipsyncing appear less contrived. At one point, for instance, the synchronised choreography is only present because Rumi is walking through a neighbourhood park where some girls are practicing their routine for an upcoming wedding.

Manmarziyaan

Director - Anurag Kashyap

Cast - Abhishek Bachchan, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal

Rating - 2.5/5

Rumi is defined by her rage. She can't sell a hockey stick without flaring up at a customer for not knowing the right brand. Anger is not a state of being, it is who she is. Even the name Rumi on her feels like a simple nickname, short for something prosaic, since a girl like this — accurately described as "atom bomb" by one of the characters — can't possibly have anything to do with the tranquil 13th century Persian poet and mystic so frequently quoted on Instagram these days.

This is the remarkable heroine of Anurag Kashyap's new Punjabi

film Manmarziyaan, entirely atypical for a mainstream romance. I love how unapologetic she is, never pulling her punches or checking her temper. This is a quirky film with incredibly compelling characters, but, as a love story, it eventually squanders its momentum so frustratingly that Rumi — had she been watching the film she were in — would have screamed.

Set in Amritsar, Manmarziyaan has robust local flavour but builds its narrative too slowly and indulgently. There is a potentially interesting romantic entanglement somewhere in there, but (unlike Rumi) Kashyap has visibly been reined in, and what could have been a progressive mature romance keeps trying to resemble a

The Predator movie review

A discount Marvel movie that even Arnold Schwarzenegger couldn't save



The Predator

Director - Shane Black

Cast - Boyd Holbrook, Olivia Munn, Keegan-Michael Key, Alfie Allen, Sterling K Brown, Jacob Tremblay, Thomas Jane, Trevante Rhodes, Yvonne Strahovski

Rating - 2.5/5

There is a scene towards the end of director Shane Black's The Predator, the latest attempted reboot of the journeyman action franchise, in which a character attempts to board a fleeing alien spaceship. Before you say anything; no,

this is not a spoiler.

Sensing the attack, the alien pilot deploys a force field to keep the man out, and succeeds. The man freezes as the force field quickly envelops the spaceship and gushes towards him, gruesomely severing his body in half. His limp torso falls off the airborne craft, while his legs remain trapped underneath the shallow blue vapour of the force field.

There couldn't have been a more accurate metaphor for this movie. The problem with it - and it remains to be seen how non-

Shane Black fans react to this - is that The Predator feels like it's caught between two worlds - the mindlessly violent, sweaty jungles of the Predator series, and the tongue-in-cheek irreverence of Black's filmography. And perhaps in an effort to please both audiences - fans of '90s action cinema and fans of '90s action cinema written by Shane Black - it clumsily ends up getting itself severed in half.

In addition to limbs, several heads are decapitated in The Predator, a bunch of people are pulverised by bullets, more hands are chopped off than shaken, and in an apparent tribute to the original films, spinal cords are ripped clean out of human bodies.

There's a reason for all this violence, in case you're wondering - and it's not just the success of the similarly R-rated Logan and Deadpool. The film is populated almost entirely by busload of soldiers, and even those who aren't

PTSD-ridden, trigger-happy vets are more than willing to bear arms. All of them - the ragtag group of soldiers, a biologist and the kid from Room - unite when a new batch of Predators arrives on Earth to engage in another round of their favourite sport: human hunting. As fans of the series would know, our planet has on many occasions served as a hunting ground for the dreadlocked aliens, who are - and the sheer stupid genius of this premise never gets old - simply looking to bust some stress.

As you'd imagine, no one with more than one X chromosome is welcome to this party. At one point Olivia Munn's character, the aforementioned biologist - one of only two women in the entire movie - literally says the words, 'grow a pair', to the Iraq War vets next to her. At approximately the same time, several miles away, the only other female character (played by Yvonne Strahovski)

is busy cocking shotguns and threatening FBI agents.

In all fairness, it's no surprise that the movie is aimed at guys. The Predator is, after all, the spawn of an Arnold Schwarzenegger film from the '80s. For it to essentially cater to a very specific (and dwindling) category of male moviegoers is more annoying than it is problematic. But it's not really a bad thing, though - for instance, it has been scientifically proven that no man has seen any Kathrine Heigl film after the year 2007. And therefore, I have decided that The Predator is the Katherine Heigl of dude-centric cinema - aggressively in your face, stubbornly exclusive and desperate to be liked. It is also the absolute worst film Shane Black has been a part of, in whichever capacity -- and this includes his uncredited cameo in the 1986 horror film, Night of the Creeps (thanks, IMDb).

Paris Hilton competes with pal Kim Kardashian with her own scantily clad American Beauty style photo shoot

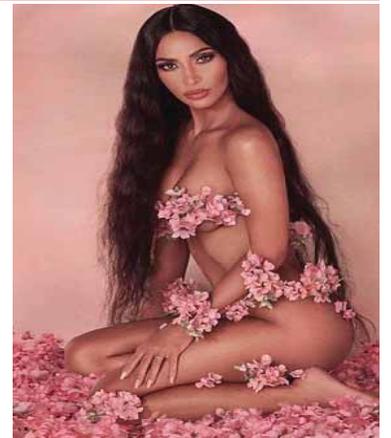


two poses. Earlier this week, Kim posted two similar sultry photos on social media with her enviable physique artfully covered in cherry blossoms instead of roses. The beauty mogul shot her versions to promote her new Classic Blossom Collection of KKW blushes debuting on September 14.

The KUWTK star explained on social media that the new collection in her uber popular cosmetics line was 'inspired by my love for the pretty pink-colored Cherry Blossom trees.' She also revealed that she had a cherry blossom themed baby shower for her youngest daughter, seven-month-old Chicago. While Kim's pictures have more of a Beyonce-announcing-her-pregnancy vibe, Paris' give off a classic Hollywood pinup feel. Both of the sets of photos seem to be inspired by the scene in 1999's American Beauty where

a creepy dad played by Kevin Spacey fantasized about his teenage daughter's friend, played by Mena Suvari, naked in a bed of roses. Kim's two photos each got upwards of 3.4M and 4.1M likes, while Paris' (who only just posted hers) has less than 500,000. Social media commenters were quick to question if Paris was trolling Kim by posting the photos.

On user commented: 'You did it first! @kimkardashian trying to copy you! And yours are awesome!' Another wrote: 'Lol bringing in the shade @kimkardashian to know that Paris is the OG if ideas' Kim and Paris were former best friends and then more like frenemies after Kim's swift rise to stardom. The two socialites met as children and remained friends as they got older. The wife of Kanye West used to organize Paris' closet back in her Simple Life days and was



It's a battle of the bombshells. Paris Hilton appears to have responded to Kim Kardashian's sexy social media photos this week with a matching set of her own. On Thursday, the heiress posted some throwback pictures from a photo shoot last year and two of the shots looked mighty familiar. The 37-year-old looked like a mirror image of her old pal Kim's pictures from several days ago.

In the throwback photos Paris is in full-scale glam with a

voluminous head of blonde curls and dramatic pinup makeup. The Star's Are Blind singer has chiseled cheeks, crimson lips and thick winged cat-eye liner. Her outfit, if one can even call it an outfit, is simply a collection of ruby red rose petals arranged like a bikini. The barely-there petals showed off The Simple Life star's slim arms and legs, as well as her impossibly taught tummy. Paris' two rose-clad shots mirrored her friend Kim's nearly identically, even down two the

known as her side kick for much of the early 2000s. By 2008, the pair seemed to have had a falling out, just as Kimberly's star was really taking off. But, a decade later the women seem to be back on good terms. They've become a bit of a mutual admiration society, fawning over each other on social media. And, in January, Kanye West hired his wife's former bestie and styled her as Kim's doppelgänger for his Yeezy 6 ad campaign.

Sushmita Sen shows off washboard abs and core strength.



Sushmita Sen's envious figure and rigorous workout regimen is giving us fitness goals and how. The former Miss Universe's social media account is full of her workout videos and every post is a new dose of inspiration for our lazy heart. Recently, the diva took to Instagram to post a snap from one of her workout sessions, giving us a sneak peek into her goal-worthy routine. Sushmita posted the photo saying, "#dynamic can be #overrated want to know your #strength try #static #hold #hold #hold #keepbreathing as you discover just #whatareyoumadeof #wednesdaymotivation InCOREigible I love you guys!!!" In the post, the diva can be seen doing a headstand while flaunting her washboard abs and toned figure. Recently too, Sushmita posted a video of her doing a bunch of harness exercises which showcased her incredible core strength and fit body.

Ameesha Patel posts hot photo, gets called 'aunty' by trolls

Ameesha Patel did a smoking hot photoshoot with Subi Samuel earlier this month, and the pictures are finally here. She took to her Instagram account to share a sultry picture from the shoot, in which she is dressed in a black tube top, with a liberal dose of body shimmer. The picture has grabbed eyeballs, with over 13,000 likes in just an hour. While many compliments poured in for Ameesha, the picture also attracted a barrage of negative comments from trolls. On the work front, Ameesha has been missing from Bollywood for a few years now, despite a promising start. Though she began her acting career with back-to-back hits, Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai and Gadar - Ek Prem Katha, she could not replicate the same success in her later films. Ameesha will be seen next on the screen in the action-comedy Bhaiji Superhit, directed by Neeraj Pathak. After being stuck in limbo for several years, the film is will finally hit the theatres on October 19. Bhaiji Superhit also features Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Arshad Warsi, Shreyas Talpade and Mukul Dev in pivotal roles.



Manushi Chhillar celebrates Section 377 verdict.

Manushi Chhillar, who is currently on a break from her hectic schedule, recently took to Instagram to celebrate the landmark judgment of partly scraping off the archaic law of Section 377, which criminalised homosexuality, by

the Supreme Court. The judgment sparked a string of celebrations in the LGBTQ+ community, as they commemorated the historic win around the country. Manushi, too, joined hands with all the celebrities from the

industry in celebrating the historic win. The Miss world 2017 posted a picture of the symbolic Pride flag, that represents the LGBTQ community, celebrating the victory of love with a caption, "Love wins! Always!" Manushi, who was seen touring around

the world for her pageant project - Beauty with Purpose tour, will be making her Bollywood debut soon. It is rumoured that the diva will be joining hands with Karan Johar, who will be launching her in a big project under Dharma Productions.





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