



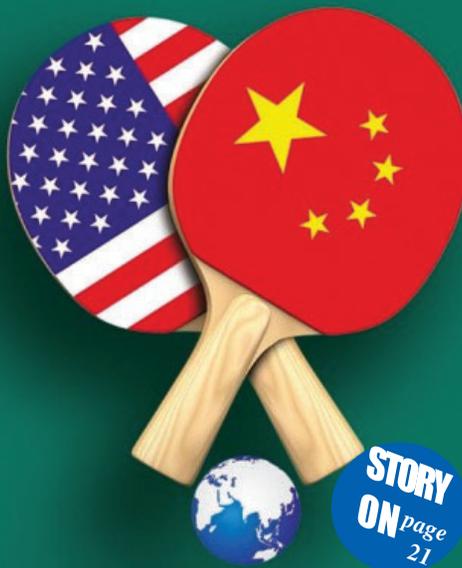
INSIDER

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The New Silk Road To Empire

The world is no longer America's oyster. China looms like a giant cloud spilling beyond Asian skies. What is India to do to cope with these shifting geopolitics?



STORY ON page 21

Shruti Haasan gained weight for her role and she explains why



STORY ON page 31

Kamala for President? First Term Liberal California Senator on the Short List



(Agencies) Newly-minted California Senator Kamala Harris is sparking excitement among Democrats nationally, who believe that she might be the key to re-taking the White House in 2020. Harris is everything the previous Democrat presidential slate of "old, white [mostly] men" was not: young, attractive — and yes, even likeable. She smiles naturally without the intense coaching that Hillary Clinton needed. The fact that she is a woman and a minority helps, too, given the obsession with gender and race among Democrats in the media and the party. Harris's parents, immigrants from Jamaica and India, gave her a gift, something else that is rare in politics: charisma. Ideologically, she is closer to Obama than Clinton, a proud progressive and an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump.

(Contd on page 20)

'The battle is likely to be fierce, brutal and quick'

Hacker group Anonymous warns that World War Three is 'looming' on the Korean peninsula

(Agencies) The hacker collective Anonymous has issued a new video warning that World War Three could soon break out as tensions rise on the Korean peninsula.

The video, released Saturday by the loose collective of affiliated hackers, attempts to connect the



geopolitical dots, concluding that 'all the signs of a looming war on the Korean peninsula are

surfacing.' Using the group's signature computerized voice and shadowy figure clad in a Guy Fawkes mask, the roughly seven-minute video highlights American military buildup in East Asia and warnings from the Chinese and Japanese government to their citizens, among other developments, as evidence that global war is inching closer. 'Watching as each country moves strategic pieces into place, but unlike past world wars, although there will be ground troops, the battle is likely to be fierce, brutal and quick,' the Anonymous video prognosticates.

(Contd on page 20)

Why the Air India maharaja needs new clothes

(Agencies) Any civil aviation policy without a fundamental restructuring of Air India Limited (AIL) is like whistling against the wind. Now is the opportune moment to privatise the carrier by adopting a multi-pronged and sequenced approach.

(Contd on page 20)



Big Leagues tie-up with MoneyGram Cricket Bee

(Agencies) Metuchen : Leading multicultural marketing firm, Touchdown Media Inc. today announced tie-ups with several local Cricket leagues to promote the MoneyGram Cricket Bee initiative.

The Tie-ups include the Bay Area Cricket Association, The Northern California Cricket Association, The Edison Cricket Club, The North Texas Cricket Association and the Bolingbrook Premiere League.

"We are very excited to work with the various leagues across the country to help develop the Cricket Bee initiative in the US," said Rahul Walia, Founder of the Cricket Bee. "The initiative is a great way to bring together cricket enthusiasts to show off their trivia and win cash prizes."

The MoneyGram Cricket Bee Contest tests the knowledge of cricket enthusiasts across the country on the history of the game, its glorious moments, as well as different teams, players and other



general knowledge of the game. Open to those 18 and older, the contest will begin with regional rounds in San Francisco Bay Area, Dallas, Chicago, New Jersey and Toronto, each testing participants' general cricket knowledge.

"The Bay Area Cricket Alliance is proud to partner with the Cricket Bee to promote cricket to the next generation in a fun and informative way." Said Suraj Viswanathan, Chairman of BACA.

The regional contest will have two components, a written test and an oral test. In the written qualifier, contestants will be asked 25 questions. They must get at least 15 correct to advance to the oral round. In the oral round, the contest will be held on a miss and out basis; simply if a contestant misses the right answer, they are eliminated. Registration deadlines for the regional rounds begin on July 7, 2017.

'Wish They Didn't Let You In The Country', Woman Tells Muslim Shopper In US

"Obama's not in office anymore. We don't have a Muslim in there anymore".

(Agencies) WASHINGTON -- A Muslim woman in the US has alleged that she was harassed in a store by a blonde lady who shouted "I wish they didn't let you in the country" and that Barack Obama was no longer in the Oval Office, a media report said.

The incident occurred after the Muslim woman allowed her fellow shopper to cut ahead of her when they were both in line for the cash register at the store in Virginia. In a video gone viral on Facebook, an unidentified woman appears to tell a Muslim shopper, who allegedly let her go ahead in line, "I wish they didn't let you in the country," local WJLA TV, an affiliate of ABC News reported. Come-



dian Jeremy McLellan posted the video on Facebook on Saturday.

The Muslim woman involved in the incident is his friend. As the video begins, the confrontation is already underway. A blonde woman accused the Muslim woman of "playing dumb" and said, "I've got it." "I shouldn't have let you in front of me," said the Muslim woman.

Steve Labriola kicks off country comptroller campaign with supporters

(By a staff reporter) Mineola, NY – Former Nassau County Chief Deputy Comptroller Steve Labriola (R-Massapequa Park) was joined by many dozens of supporters in launching his 2017 candidacy for Nassau County Comptroller. The former State Assemblyman, Town Clerk and current Management and Budget, Chief Compliance Officer has the extensive experience needed to be the taxpayers watchdog. Throughout his career in public service, Steve Labriola has demonstrated he has the integrity, the experience and the trust of the people to get the job done. He will restore the taxpayers trust.

"My goal is to restore the Taxpayers Trust, and show exactly where money is spent, by whom and for whom. I have many ideas to add controls without slowing down the contract process unnecessarily, with a clear goal to prevent shady contractors and vendors from doing business with the County. An ounce of

prevention is worth a pound of cure. My pledge to our residents is simple: Nobody will rip-off the taxpayers on my watch!" said Labriola.

Some of Mr. Labriola's first initia-

Comptroller's Office each year – ensuring that any organization receiving taxpayer dollars is held accountable for how your money is spent. Third, Steve is committed to creat-



tives upon taking office are as follows: Steve will create a Whistle-Blower Hotline so employees and citizens can anonymously leave tips via voice, text and social media. Second, he will double the number of audits conducted by the

ing an Anti-Fraud Unit. This specialized unit will work to prevent corruption by creating a vendor rating and experience database and a contract review process to ensure taxpayers are protected and services are provided fairly.

Government approves closure of insurance scheme for overseas Indian workers

(Agencies) New Delhi : A scheme aimed at addressing social security issues of certain category of workers going abroad is set to be closed. Now, the government will focus on the ongoing Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojna to provide insurance cover for such workers.

The Union Cabinet today approved closure of the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) which was set up in 2012 to address the social security-related issues of the Emigration Check Required (ECR)-category workers going abroad for employment to ECR countries. The

subscription under the MGPSY was very low and no new subscription was received for more than a year. Closure of the scheme will, therefore, obviate the avoidable recurring administrative and record-keeping expenditure. Official sources said, there were a mere 1,073 subscribers and only 443 were active.

But the running cost for the government was Rs 3.9 crore. Now, the government will focus on the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojna which is mandatory in nature and



very popular among this category of workers. The subscription of Rs 375 for three years is said to be affordable for the workers going abroad, they said.

If immigrants can study in US, why can't they work, asks Oracle CEO

(Agencies) REDWOOD SHORES (CALIFORNIA): As fears about the possible tightening of the US visa regime loom, Oracle CEO has maintained that the country should not only let immigrants study and learn here but also work to drive growth. "We have been very supportive to immigrants. They are studying in some of the best schools in the country. We let them come and learn here. Why won't we let them work here?" asked Mark Hurd while addressing a select gathering of global media here at the company's headquarters.

"We have many talented engineers at US universities. They have come from some place other than the US. We would like to hire

them. We are doing a lot of R&D here at the campus. We want growth and need talented people to spur innovation," Hurd said during a 'Recode Decode Podcast'. Hurd also said that Oracle, which has more than \$50 billion investment overseas, would like to bring that money back and invest in the US. "Let us say via repatriation. We have our money overseas to the tune of \$50 billion. We need that back and invest here to drive growth," Hurd noted.

As part of the wider tax reforms, US President Donald Trump has considered a one-time repatriation tax on overseas cash brought back which is expected to be mandatory. According to a recent Moody's report, Apple had

\$216 billion overseas, Google \$48 billion and Oracle, \$51 billion.

"My top job is to see Oracle compete, innovate and win against all odds," Hurd told the gathering. India is home to Oracle's second largest workforce of developers and engineers and accounts for its largest research and development investment outside the US. With the US tightening the norms for H-1B visas, the Indian IT companies are bound to face disruptions by way of higher costs and even some laying off work force back home, a paper by India's apex industry lobby Assocham said last month. The executive order signed by Trump calls for a review of H-1B visas by the Departments of State, Labour, Homeland Security and Justice.

Vaisakhi 5K Thanks Dinner



(By a staff Reporter) Recently, noted community personality Satnam Singh Parhar, Dr. Avtar Singh Tinna and other members of Vaisakhi 5K, organized a dinner event in a Queens Banquet hall to thank Supporters and Sponsors. The event Honored, celebrated and congratulated all the Vaisakhi 5K runners at the wonderful dinner reception.

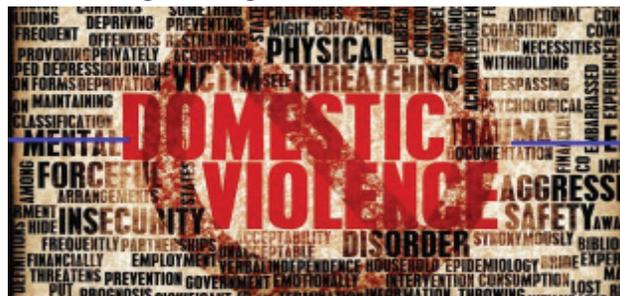
Town of Hempstead Clerk Nasrin G. Ahmed, who served as Chief Guest of the event in her address to the guests, said "It's so great to celebrate all the

Vaisakhi 5K runners at the wonderful dinner reception! I give all the participants an enormous amount of credit as they took on the 5K!" Among other notable

guests, Jasbir Jay Singh of Hum Hindustani and Sharanjit Singh Thind of The South Asian Insider Weekly, Paramjit Singh Bedi & Gunjan Rastogi,

Indian-Origin Woman In UK Allegedly Commits Suicide Over Abuse By Boyfriend

Victim's family and friends are now running a campaign to raise awareness about domestic violence



(Agencies) London- An Indian-origin woman in the UK committed suicide as a result of suffering physical and emotional abuse from her former boyfriend, a court was told. Meera Dalal, who had previously sought help from doctors and referred to occasional suicidal thoughts, was found dead at her family home in Syston, Leicestershire in the Midlands region of England in February. A documentary inquest which involves

only statements and no live witnesses took place in a Loughborough court last week. Dalal's family and friends are now running a campaign to raise awareness and funds for a UK charity which supports victims of domestic violence, Refuge. "I still feel very, very bad. It still hurts. I don't think we'll ever get over it," said her father Ashok Dalal, who had found his daughter's body. "I just can't believe that she's not here any more. I

can't take that. She was a very bubbly and happy girl. Always laughing and joking with everybody. Everybody loved her so much and she loved everybody," he told BBC. The family had made a complaint to Leicestershire Police following Dalal's death and the force was investigated by the Independent Police Complaints Commission

(IPCC). The 50-page investigation report, seen by the BBC, contains a catalogue of police incidents involving Dalal and her boyfriend dating back to December 2013. Following the death of Meera Dalal, the force identified issues in relation to the investigation and consulted the Independent Police Complaints Commission. Following a public complaint

in the weeks following her death, the force referred itself to the IPCC, who took this as an independent investigation," Leicestershire Police said in a statement. The conduct of four police officers was investigated by the IPCC, but the investigator found there was no case to answer for misconduct. IPCC commissioner Derrick Campbell said: "My sympathies are with the family of Meera Dalal following their sad loss. "We conducted a very thorough investigation. We regularly updated the family and met with them to discuss our findings". Meera had also sought

help from doctors and a report from her general practitioner was read out as an evidence at the inquest in Loughborough. "She was seen by one of the doctors and told the doctor she had recently ended her three-year relationship during which she suffered emotional and physical abuse. She said she had moved back to be with her family and her family were being very supportive," assistant coroner Carolyn Hull said. Her inquest concluded that Meera, who worked as a liaison officer for Nuffield Health, a private hospital in Leicester, died as a result of suicide.

Theresa May vows to cut migration figures to tens of thousands

(Agencies) London: British Prime Minister Theresa May today vowed to stick to her party's pledge to cut the migration figures down to "tens of thousands", evoking a strong reaction from Liberal Democrats who warned that her tough stand will damage ties with countries like India. The Prime Minister said it was important to hit this target given the pressure immigration had put on public services and those on lower incomes.

"I think that it is important that we do say and

continue to say that we do want to bring migration to sustainable levels. We believe that is the tens of thousands," May said. "Once we leave the EU, we will of course have the opportunity to ensure we have control of our borders. We will be able to establish our rules for people coming from the EU. That is a part of the picture we have not been able to control before," she said.

Liberal Democrat party attacked the ruling Conservative party for its stance. The party's shadow home secretary, Brian Paddick,

said May's stand on the issue will damage ties with countries like India.

"The leave campaign, many members of which are now in the Cabinet, made a clear commitment during the referendum campaign to lift visa restrictions on people from India and other Commonwealth countries, it is now clear that this is another leave lie," Paddick said.

"Britain's Asian communities are realising that these complacent, divisive and Brexit-style parties do not represent them and our increase of the vote to 18

per cent in last week's local election demonstrates the Liberal Democrats are making significant inroads with voters up and down the country, including many Asian voters," he said. Immigration is expected to be among one of the central issues in the campaign for the June 8 general election, with a related focus on Brexit. The ruling Conservatives have promised new migration controls after the UK leaves the EU, when freedom of movement rules will no longer apply, but they have yet to set out the precise model

they would adopt. However, until the Brexit deal is finalised, any Conservative-led government in the UK is likely to continue tightening immigration norms for non-EU nationals from countries like India. "India is a key strategic partner for the United Kingdom and the British-Indian community contribute so much to our country. Liberal Democrat immigration policies will therefore seek to maximise the economic, cultural and social benefit of these relationships and welcome immigration as

a blessing, not a curse," said Lib Dem leader Tim Farron. Under former Prime Minister David Cameron, the level of net migration rose to a record 330,000, but May, then as home secretary in charge of immigration, refused to abandon the tens of thousands target. The increasingly tightening immigration policies of the Tory-led UK government have already seen a major decline in figures of foreign students from countries like India coming to study at UK universities.

Network is the key

India must ramp up its internal connectivity to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative.

By C. Raja Mohan

Official India has turned its back on China's celebration of President Xi Jinping's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) this week in Beijing. Some in Beijing and Delhi have warned India against isolating itself amidst the apparently growing international support for the ambitious project. Others have suggested diplomatic solutions to overcome India's objections.

One of Delhi's problems is that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an important part of the BRI, runs through a part of Jammu and Kashmir that is occupied by Islamabad. Solutions suggested to overcome this problem focus on language — why not have Beijing say the CPEC is not part of the BRI, or change the name of CPEC to CSEC (China South Asian Economic Corridor)? None of this has moved Delhi at the time of writing this column, for the problem may not be with language.

India's difficulty lies deeper. It is about the prospect that the BRI will massively strengthen China's commercial, economic, political and security influence on India's neighbourhood and marginalise Delhi's regional primacy. The BRI is not just about connecting the Eurasian landmass and the Indo-Pacific maritime domain through an overland "belt" and a maritime silk "road". It involves the export of Chinese capital, labour, technology, industrial standards, commercial benchmarks, the use of the Yuan, the development of new ports, industrial hubs, special economic zones and military facilities, under Beijing's auspices.

While the BRI is breathtaking in scope, it is not unprecedented. This is what the British Raj did through the 19th century — opening markets, building new trade routes,

projecting power from the Suez to Shanghai, setting up alliances and protectorates that turned the Indo-Pacific into an expansive sphere of influence, controlled from Calcutta.

The scale of the Chinese project is, of course, much bigger, thanks to the massive economic resources and national ambition that Beijing can mobilise. Unlike the Raj, whose main focus was maritime, and barely nibbled at the inner regions of Asia, China is set to become the first non-Western power in the modern era to shape the geopolitics of Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific. While most nations are ready to accept this, grudgingly or otherwise, two of China's neighbours — Japan and India — are reluctant.

Japan has, until recently, been the number one power in Asia. It is not yet ready to roll over and play dead. It has already outlined a Belt and Road initiative of its own, called the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure. While its propaganda might not be as effective as China's, Japan has put up nearly \$150 billion to support infrastructure projects all across the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia. Delhi, that has long seen itself as equal to Beijing, finds it hard to play second fiddle. It has just about woken up to the long-term consequences of the BRI, marked by ever-deepening interdependence between China and India's neighbours. Neither India's strong objections, nor its weak political endorsement of the BRI will have any impact on its evolution; there is an air of inevitability to the BRI. Coping with China's transformation of India's neighbourhood is likely to

be Delhi's single most important strategic challenge in the decades to come. Whether India joins this week's party in Beijing is utterly inconsequential in addressing this larger challenge. India's long-term response to the BRI must instead focus on three areas: The first is to ramp up its own internal connectivity. China's BRI, for example, did not start out as an external initiative. It was built on top of the internal "Go West" strategy that focused, over the last two decades, on unifying China's domestic market and connecting its developed east coast with the interior provinces. India's discourse on the BRI has no real meaning until Delhi improves internal connectivity to its frontier regions and upgrades its rusting border infrastructure. Second, Delhi should modernise

connectivity across its land and maritime frontiers with its neighbouring countries. China is certainly not responsible for India neglecting its inherited trans-border connectivities since Independence; nor has Beijing stopped India from building road and rail links to its borders. Third, India can work with nations like Japan and multilateral institutions in developing regional connectivity in the Subcontinent and beyond. The government of Narendra Modi has certainly begun to act on all three fronts. But the gap, between the scale of the Chinese challenge, and the intensity of the Indian effort continues to grow, thanks to enduring institutional weaknesses at home and political difficulties with the neighbours. As India

begins to narrow the gap through purposeful action, its ability to engage China on the BRI will improve. To be sure, Delhi has a common long-term interest with Beijing, in promoting regional connectivity. Delhi must, however, focus on debating the specific terms of individual projects rather than having to say "Yes" or "No" to the BRI as a whole. For now, though, Delhi's urgent imperative is to recognise that China's BRI is not a diplomatic problem for the foreign office to resolve. It is about mobilising the full resources of the Indian state and creating effective mechanisms — public and private — to purposefully address the long-term opportunities and challenges that China's BRI presents.



How RSS And Amit Shah Are Plotting The Election For President

How RSS And Amit Shah Are Plotting The Election For President

By Swati Chaturvedi

For the thrice-banned RSS, it will be the ultimate validation when one of their own occupies Rashtrapati Bhavan, a point of immense satisfaction that will follow the appointment of Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. The presidential election must be held before July 25 this year. Explains a senior RSS functionary "for us to have one of our own in Rashtrapati Bhavan is like being twice born, it will make us the real Dwij (Brahmin) of the political system in India. From being shunned and treated as pariahs, we now occupy the apex. All those gangs of leftists and liberals who formed the erstwhile elite have had to give in as we now occupy centre-stage."

This peculiar persecution complex plays in to the very DNA of the RSS which is still hurting at having been banned thrice, once after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. And the Sangh is now in full antagonistic mode and will brook no accommodation or consensus when it comes to the coveted job of President. This also plays to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP

President Amit Shah's attitude of not yielding any quarter to the opposition.

This has two implications: there will be a definite contest for the President's office; and the RSS and BJP have no interest in a candidate supported by all parties to demonstrate a rare unity in polity, as hoped by a small fraction of the BJP which reportedly includes leaders like Rajnath Singh and Sushma Swaraj, who, some say, is reportedly in the running herself.

The opposition, having heard from informal back channels that the Sangh will not concede an inch, is also preparing to square off for a "blockbuster Mahabharata-type contest" as a senior Congress leader wryly put it. For non-NDA parties, who have allotted the front role for the presidential contest to Sonia Gandhi and the Congress, this is a dress rehearsal of opposition unity and now - i - n - d - i - s - c - u - s - s - i - o - n mahagatbandhan ahead of next general election in 2019. Sonia Gandhi has reached out parties including the left, Trinamool Congress's Mamata Banerjee,

Janata Dal United's Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav. She has also spoken on the phone with BSP supremo Mayawati; there are plans for all non-NDA leaders plan to meet later this month in Delhi and also later for unity talks in Chennai for DMK supremo M Karunanidhi's 94th birthday on June 3.

Feelers have also reportedly been sent to Navin Patnaik, the Odisha Chief Minister, via a very senior Congress leader with whom he shares Doon School as an alma mater. Patnaik is on alert with Amit Shah having made it clear that he has immediate plans to build the BJP into dominance in Odisha ahead of its next election in 2019. Reveals a senior Congress leader, who asked not to be named, "We have to agree on a creditable candidate, a person who is widely reckoned to be erudite and respected across the spectrum. A cipher like Pratibha Patil will not do." The opposition is looking at civil society and academia to find a candidate. Currently, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, former Governor of West Bengal and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi is being talked

about but, this could all change after the meetings that are coming up. Interestingly, several opposition leaders currently talking to each other about "suitable" candidates would like nothing better than to be the nominee; Sharad Yadav of the Janata Dal United is reportedly among them. There are conflicting reports of Sharad Pawar's level of interest. After Modi hailed him in November as his "political guru", the Pawar faction was jubilant about his prospects, but the RSS in Nagpur is not convinced. So Pawar, displaying flexibility, is also now reportedly in talks with the opposition. Leading the Sangh charge is the redoubtable Shah, fresh off his UP success. In fact, the UP numbers will give critical mass to Project President for the RSS. The BJP and its allies are barely 20,000 votes short, according to most reports. They need the support of one major opposition party to cross the majority mark. Shah is working hard to ensure this among a group of six political parties that include the AIADMK and K Chandrasekhar Rao's TRS which governs Telangana.

(Contd on page 20)

Comey's firing was Trump's nuclear option on Russia probe

President Trump dropped a bombshell Tuesday with the announcement that he had fired FBI Director James Comey -- just days after Comey testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee about, among other things, the bureau's investigation into Russian meddling in the election that propelled Trump to the presidency.

Trump has stunned the political world once again by issuing the orders to remove one of the most important figures in this entire investigation.

Ironically, the announcement comes at a time when former secretary of state and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has been telling audiences that Comey was a key factor behind her loss in November. His infamous announcement in late October that the FBI was looking into new emails revived the specter of the earlier probe into Clinton's emails just before voters went to the polls. Many experts agree that the announcement cost her points with voters.

But then Comey turned into a problem for President Trump. The Russia investigation has hung over Trump like a dark cloud since his first days in office. Even as congressional committees have stumbled over partisanship in their own probes of Russia's interference, the FBI seems to have been driving forward at an aggressive pace, continuing to give strong indications about evidence that Trump campaign officials were in contact with Russian officials during the campaign.

While Trump has continually denied any collusion and has lobbed accusations of his own, the FBI appears to have been keeping its eye on the ball.

President Trump's decision to fire Comey is the second such dismissal to rock the administration. When the President announced the resignation of Acting Attorney General Sally Yates in January for refusing to implement the administration's refugee ban, the comparison to President Richard Nixon's "Saturday Night Massacre" instantly lit up the headlines.

In that 1973 event, Nixon fired independent prosecutor Archibald Cox for his aggressive inquiry into Watergate. It turns out that was nothing, compared with the firing of Comey in the middle of this inquiry. It is a stunning blow to any attempt to obtain legitimate, non-partisan information about what went wrong in the campaign and why.

The justification provided in the administration's memorandum on the firing -- that it came in response to Comey's mishandling of the Clinton investigation -- doesn't pass the laugh test.

While it is true that candidate Trump has complained that Comey gave Clinton "a free pass" in his decision not to bring criminal charges against her, Trump and his surrogates capitalized on that investigation more than anyone else. The President refused to take any action on that front until now. This is not about Hillary Clinton.

There is no reason that the public should trust the congressional committees to do the job any longer. Indeed the House investigation completely broke down when it became clear that the chair of the committee, Congressman Devin Nunes, displayed more loyalty to the party and President than to finding out the truth.

The Senate committee then stalled and delayed until criticism finally pushed it toward doing its job. But the power of partisanship remains strong, and many observers are skeptical that Senate Republicans, like Texas' Ted Cruz, are willing to go where the facts take them.

From the start, President Trump has showed little interest in finding out what happened during the election. This has been one of the most suspicious aspects of his response. He has attacked President Barack Obama with false allegations of wiretapping, he has dismissed all the evidence and accusations coming out about campaign officials, and he has taken a strident stand against all the institutions that show any sign of standing up to him.

The reason that the Saturday Night Massacre stung President Nixon so badly was because the firing proved to the public that the President really was frightened that the truth would come out. He was unwilling to let the institutions of government do their job, and the decision to get rid of Archibald Cox demonstrated that the President would do anything to protect his interests.

This part of the Watergate cover-up, and, even worse, the effort to actively fight the investigation, turned public opinion against him.

The question now is whether Trump has enough Teflon support from his base to keep even this from hurting his standing. His public approval ratings are low; it's unclear how much lower they can sink. But there are several other ways in which he is vulnerable.

Firing Comey could begin to make a dent in the strong support that he has enjoyed among Republicans, who will recognize this as a blatant effort to circumvent the law and cover up the truth. The firing will also put Congress -- both parties -- on notice that this is a President who will do almost anything to protect himself. Today's firing could encourage the leaders of both parties to double down with their investigations. More than anything else thus far, this announcement fuels the perception that President Trump is scared about something. There was no obvious reason for the administration to take this step and it's hard not to be skeptical about the reasons for it to be taken at this moment.

The Kushners and Their Golden Visas

The Kushner family has been caught in a shameless act of name-dropping. It has been highlighting its White House connections to entice wealthy Chinese investors and promising them green cards in return under a special government visa program. That's pretty bad. But it's also a scandal that Congress allows real estate developers to use the American immigration system to pad their profits.

Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and special adviser, is officially no longer managing his family's businesses, but he still benefits from many of them. His sister Nicole Meyer was in Beijing and Shanghai this past weekend seeking investors for a luxury apartment project her family is developing in Jersey City, a short train ride from downtown Manhattan. Her sales pitch cited her brother and laid out how a \$500,000 investment could provide a coveted path to American citizenship. The Kushner Companies later offered a mealy-mouthed apology "if that mention of her brother was in any way interpreted as an attempt to lure investors."

Ms. Meyer's disturbing investor pitch was made possible by the EB-5 investor visa, which opens an express lane into the United States for those who can afford to invest nearly 10 times what the median American household earns in a year. The program, which covers business investments as well as real estate, was created in 1990 and took off in the past 10 years as developers figured out how to turn it into a cheap source of capital. Investors are willing to settle for low returns if it means they gain permanent residence status in the United States. Affluent Chinese families seeking a foothold in a stable democracy snap up most of the visas, which are capped at 10,000 a year. The EB-5 program has been a scandal magnet. The Government Accountability Office and the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security say that immigration officials do not properly vet applications for fraud and illicit sources of money. The real estate industry also games the system by using the dark arts of gerrymandering. Under the program, investors have to put at least \$1 million, and it has to lead to creation or preservation of at least 10 permanent, full-time jobs. But the minimum investment drops to \$500,000 if applicants invest in rural areas or places with elevated unemployment. Developers working in, say, Midtown Manhattan or Beverly Hills can say that nearby depressed neighborhoods are included in the area when they apply for the program.

Defenders of EB-5 say it fosters investment and creates jobs. But many real estate projects funded through the program, including the Kushner Companies' One Journal Square development in Jersey City, would almost surely have happened anyway. Without access to wealthy Chinese families, builders would raise more money from banks, pension funds and other investors by agreeing to pay higher interest rates, which would reduce their profits somewhat.

Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California, and Senator Charles Grassley, Republican of Iowa, introduced a bill in January that would eliminate the EB-5 program. Before Mr. Trump took office, the Department of Homeland Security proposed raising the minimum investments for the program, which could be a first step toward reforming it. But it is not clear whether the Trump administration or Congress will make substantial changes since influential real estate groups, including the Kushner and Trump families, benefit from it. Mr. Trump signed a spending bill last week that extended the EB-5 program without any changes through the end of September.



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In Trump's America, comedians lead the resistance

By Dean Obeidallah

In the age of Donald Trump, it's not the Democrats leading the opposition — it's the comedians. Sure, Congressional Democrats are voting and speaking out against Trump's proposals on issues like health care, but few of them can garner national headlines or get a video to go viral.

Comedians, on the other hand, are now the ones with a "bully pulpit" to raise issues in ways that dominate our social media feeds and impact the larger political conversation. We saw an example this week with Jimmy Kimmel's emotional plea to preserve coverage for pre-existing conditions in the Trump-championed health care bill. Kimmel touched a nerve, as the video of his tearful plea was widely shared. While the GOP plan ultimately did pass the House on Thursday in a form that experts agree could weaken coverage for pre-existing conditions, Kimmel's clip had an impact on the discussion. His late-night plea made more people aware of the issue and in turn placed additional pressure on some politicians.

We saw evidence of this from US Senator Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana), who

expressed his reservations to Trump's health care plan on CNN by directly invoking Kimmel's heartfelt plea, "Would a child born with congenital heart disease be able to get everything she or he would need in the first year of life? I want it to pass the Jimmy Kimmel test."

Then there's Stephen Colbert, the late-night leader of the comedic resistance to Trump. Colbert has seen his ratings skyrocket as he has taken on Trump night after night. And his joke this week about Trump and Putin that outraged some on the right — ironically, the anti-politically correct crowd want comedians to be politically correct when mocking Trump — had two positive effects. The joke reminded Americans of the Trump campaign's possible collusion with Russian intelligence to influence our 2016 presidential election. And it reinforced Colbert's profile as a fearless comedian who will not hold back when going after a president he feels is failing to lead.

Kimmel and Colbert followed other comedians who made headlines last weekend for taking direct aim at the current President. "The Daily Show's" Hassan Minhaj performed at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, where he

used comedy to remind Americans about Trump's travel ban on Muslim-majority countries, calling Trump, "the orange man behind the Muslim ban."

And Samantha Bee in her TBS prime-time special used comedy to remind us of Trump's history of sexism as well as his issues with telling the truth, joking that reporters need to be commended for fact-checking Trump "as if he some day may get embarrassed." And, of course, "Saturday Night Live" has been nothing short of fantastic in its comedic takedowns of Trump and his administration. Alec Baldwin's Trump has so unnerved Trump that just a week before being sworn in as the 45th President, he was tweeting about his outrage over Baldwin's portrayal.

"SNL's" role in the comedy resistance has seen it rewarded with its highest ratings in decades. And with Melissa McCarthy hosting next Saturday, we will likely see her next satiric takedown of White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer.

Add to that Seth Meyers, John Oliver and Trevor Noah, who have all contributed mightily to the comedic resistance to Trump. The role these comedians are

playing cannot be overstated.

Their jokes also play a vital role in normalizing Trump. Comedy often reminds us that Trump trafficked in bigotry, sexism and xenophobia to win the White House. Democrats are now focused on combating Trump's policies and don't spend as much time reminding the public of Trump's prejudicial currency. But comedians can and do.

Comedians, often called court jesters or fools in literature, have a long history of using humor to speak uncomfortable truths. In Shakespeare's plays, the fool was able to address social and political realities in ways that the lead characters rarely could — using humor as his shield. And even before Shakespeare, Dutch writer Erasmus wrote that the fool "can speak truth and even open insults and be heard with positive pleasure; indeed, the words which would cost a wise man his life are surprisingly enjoyable when uttered by a clown." So here's to the fools! May you fearlessly continue to use your wit and humor to resist Trump. And to Trump supporters offended by their jokes, it's time you dainty snowflakes put on your "big boy pants" because these comedians are just getting warmed up.

Why Arvind Kejriwal's AAP must be careful not to disturb India's democratic stability

In India's neighbourhood -- Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh -- the countries have varied histories and political systems. But there is a common pattern -- the lack of systemic democratic stability, which comes from an absence in the faith of the democratic mechanism.



Prashant Jha

The Aam Aadmi Party has, in the Delhi assembly, presented a carefully constructed case alleging that EVMs can be tampered with — and that this has been a feature of recent elections. This is a charge AAP has been levelling ever since the Punjab elections but presenting it on the floor of the House lends it a much higher degree of legitimacy and seriousness.

It has been echoed, to a lesser extent, by other parties, including the Congress. And it is, despite the repeated assertion by the Election Commission that EVMs are foolproof,

becoming a key element of the opposition discourse in the country. It is also a charge that the BJP, it must be noted, threw at the EC and the dispensation of the day after its defeat in 2009.

There are enough experts — particularly former election commissioners — who have provided a firm and scientific rebuttal to the charges. It is beyond the scope of this piece, and the expertise of this writer, to debate the merits of the EVM. The EC has convened an all-party meeting and may organise a hackathon to allay apprehensions.

But what is of, probably, critical relevance here is the

implication of a charge like this, for it strikes at not just the ruling dispensation but the very foundations of the democratic game in India.

Look around the country, into the neighbourhood.

Fragility of democracy

I come from Nepal — which has had seven constitutions in the last seven decades. Elections have only been sporadically held, and the electoral results have often been overturned. In 1959, the country held its first election, only to see a monarch dismiss an elected government and take over in 1960.

In 1991, the country saw restoration of democracy and held its second election, but by 1996, an armed rebel group — the Maoists — had taken up arms against the democratic regime. Eventually, an elected parliament was dissolved and in 2005, another despoticking took over absolute power. In 2013, a second Constituent Assembly election took place wherein the Maoists lost; they immediately took to questioning the legitimacy of

the results before better sense prevailed.

Or see Pakistan, where an acute civil-military imbalance has constantly threatened democracy. Elections here too have been sporadic. Electoral results have been rejected, like in 1970, which paved the way for the formation of Bangladesh. They have been undermined often, with the military dismissing elected Prime Ministers, imprisoning them and taking over power. The first smooth transfer of power from one elected government to another happened only in 2013, when Asif Ali Zardari gave way to Nawaz Sharif.

Or take Bangladesh, itself a result of an election outcome that was rejected by the West Pakistani elite. In Dhaka, the political acrimony and mistrust between the two Begums — Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia — is so deep that neither can trust each other with power when elections are held. That is why a caretaker arrangement was first devised to hold elections. But when Hasina decided that her

government would hold elections, in early 2014, Zia boycotted the elections. Political instability and violence continues, as the government and the opposition remain at loggerheads over the terms on which elections are to be held. There are huge variations in the history and political systems of all these countries. But there is a common pattern — the lack of systemic democratic stability, and that lack of democratic stability comes from an absence in the faith of the democratic mechanism. Elections and electoral outcomes have not been considered sacred; there have been enough forces which have questioned the legitimacy of these electoral processes; supporters of one force or the other have been only too keen to accept that election outcomes do not represent the will of the people; and that means it can be overturned by means fair and foul.

AAP's charges may seem technical in nature.

But they are profoundly political, with deep political implications. What they are suggesting is that they do not have faith in recent electoral processes and outcomes; that these do not represent the will of the people. They are questioning the rules of the game which all parties accepted before they entered the game, and are claiming that these rules need to be looked at afresh. Now make no mistake — they are entitled to do so. It is legitimate to ask questions of all institutions in a democracy. It is acceptable to articulate doubts — including about electoral processes. And the EC will have to go the extra mile to allay these doubts. But while doing so, a party must be really careful and must have solid body of evidence, for it can erode faith that its supporters — or voters of those who have lost the election — have in the system.

Delhi gang rape case

Move away from 'masculinist' responses to rape

In awarding the death sentence in the Delhi gang rape case the Supreme Court falls back on the "tsunami" of shock caused to the "collective conscience". If "collective conscience" is invoked as a reasonable ground, how will communal attacks, fake encounters, public lynching of Dalits and now Muslims, all enjoying social endorsement, be held unlawful?

From the 1983 judgment of the Supreme Court in Mathura's case to the 2017 judgment in the December 16 Delhi gang rape case, the issue of absence or presence of physical brutality as a concomitant element of rape, continues to lurk in the judicial mind while determining guilt and quantum of sentencing.

Both cases sparked campaigns by the women's movement for changes in the law to reflect women's actual experience of sexual violence, culminating in the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013.

The horrific injuries in the 2012 gang rape played a central role in galvanising the high decibel public condemnation of the crime. In this judgment, the brutality and severity of the injuries inflicted by the accused finds repeated echo, and is cited as the overwhelming reason for the court to call this the "rarest of rare" case. To award the death sentence, the apex court falls back on the "tsunami" of shock caused to the "collective conscience".

Over the past three decades, due to the consistent efforts of the women's movement there is a grudging understanding of the absolute right of a woman over her body. Even within the courtroom, jurisprudence is developing that a victim of rape should not be viewed with suspicion; most rapes do not leave marks of physical injury; and, by its inherent nature this crime often leaves behind no "evidence" apart from the victim's testimony.

With brutality and injuries once again taking centre stage, there is an apprehension that even as the din of 'zero tolerance for sexual violence' reaches a crescendo, rape has become a spectacle, as an outrage of the "collective conscience", where the impact of rape is measured by the physical injury accompanying rape; where the abhorrence to rape is calibrated by who the perpetrator is and who the victim is; thus routinely sidelining the understanding

of sexual violence as an exercise of power and entitlement.

Ironically, there is a simultaneous backlash which actively feeds the spectre of "false rape cases", where there is a perceived social reality of women as scheming liars, and a manipulative representation of the law being "draconian", and rape prosecutions and convictions being "easy".

It has been argued that the determinative test of "rarest of rare" is inherently arbitrary. When the same is premised on the outrage of the "collective conscience", it will not only be selective and

subjective, but also necessarily majoritarian. The Constitution and the apex court are tasked with safeguarding against a coup d'etat by dominant tendencies. If "collective conscience" is invoked as a reasonable ground, how will communal attacks, fake encounters, public lynching of Dalits and now Muslims, all enjoying social endorsement, be held unlawful? Uncannily, a day prior to the court's 430-page judgment, the Bombay High Court delivered a judgment, also on gang rape and murder, in the case of Jaswantbhai Chaturbhai Nai & Ors v State of Gujarat (Bilkis

Bano case), where 11 people were convicted for life imprisonment. While the macabre details of the Delhi case are known to all, few are familiar with the fact that 15 years ago, in 2002 in Gujarat, 11 men murdered 14 members of Bilkis's family, smashed her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter to death against a rock, killed a one-day-old baby, and gang raped a five-month pregnant Bilkis and other women of her family, who were fleeing the targeted violence unleashed against Muslims. The court did not find any reason to disbelieve Bilkis' testimony, and the absence of medical evidence



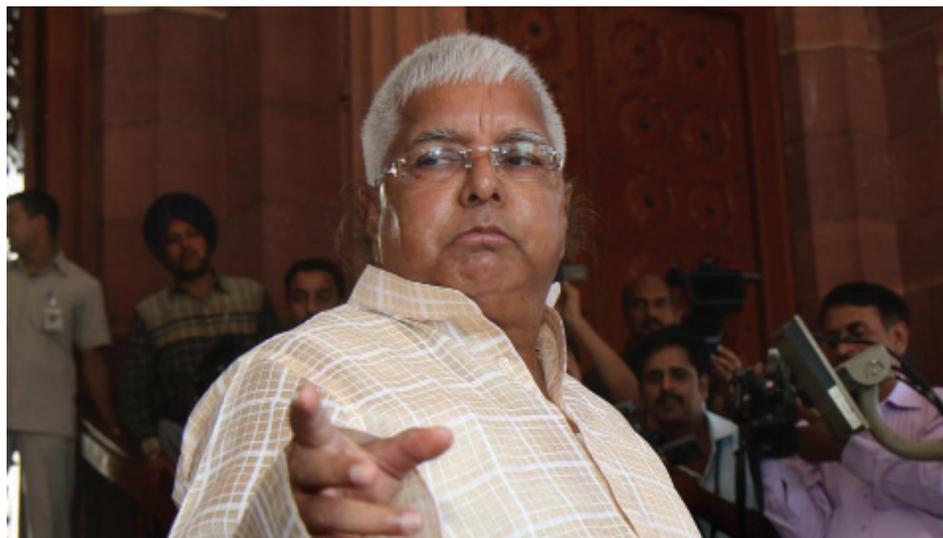
to corroborate the gang rape, was rightly considered inconsequential for the conviction. The verdict is also significant for it holds guilty five policemen who had intentionally refused to record in the FIR the names of the accused or the crime of gang rape as narrated by Bilkis. The two doctors who manipulated and suppressed evidence in the post mortems were also convicted. The high court held these acts of omission and commission as deliberate suppression of material facts by the police and doctors "with the intention to screen the accused from legal punishment". This judgment marks an important jurisprudential recognition of

institutional bias, thereby drawing a wedge in the State's shielding of perpetrators of communal attacks. Perhaps the mirror image of the "collective conscience" is "collective disbelief", which sanctions sexual violence within the home; refuses to accept that 'men like us' routinely abuse office and position to commit sexual harassment and rape.

At the conclusion of the Delhi gang rape case we need to move away from 'masculinist' responses where death sentence is seen as just, towards ensuring that all forms of sexual violence are treated as a violation and all perpetrators are held accountable.

SC ruling against Lalu Prasad

Political equations may be redrawn in Bihar



Supreme Court's Monday ruling directing former Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad to stand trial in a criminal conspiracy case related to the fodder scam has opened up a proverbial Pandora's Box in the politically volatile state. The decision may result in political equations being redrawn in Bihar.

Though Prasad's lawyers downplayed the ruling's implications saying it meant little for

the former CM already barred from electoral politics after being convicted in one of the six fodder cases lodged against him, political observers said the latest ruling could be a death knell to his political career.

It is a setback for Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) which had been trying to revive its political fortunes. In the 2015 assembly polls, the RJD won 81 seats and went on

to form a coalition government with chief minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) which won 71 seats. The SC ruling is bound to leave the RJD once again without a leader. The party is also without a second rung leadership though two of Prasad's sons – Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav are ministers in Nitish Kumar-led cabinet. Only recently, during the RJD's Rajgir conclave in the first week of May, Lalu

gave a hint that Tejashwi could take over the mantle from him. But many within the RJD feel that Tejashwi "doesn't have the stature to match Lalu".

However, party leaders feel, the situation is not as bad as it was during 2015, when Lalu surrendered at Ranchi. The party was going through the worst phase – it was out of power and RJD had virtually been decimated in the political arena. "Now, two of his sons are ministers and the eldest daughter is a Rajya Sabha MP. The party will not break," said a party leader. "The party, will now fallback on chief minister Nitish Kumar to support its alliance partner and lend support to the alliance," said another senior party leader. For the JD (U), it is a win-win situation as the RJD will not be in a position to exert pressure on the government. A JD

(U) leader, not wishing to be quoted, said the chief minister will be freer now to run the administration. Further, the audio tape expose of Lalu's

purported conversation with criminal-turned-politician Mohd Shahabuddin, may give an opportunity for the JD (U) to review its ties with the RJD. It is an open secret that both JD (U) and the RJD had not enjoyed the best of moments during the last 18 months of their rule. The apex court decision also comes in the backdrop of a situation when the opposition BJP is going hammer and tongs against Lalu and his two sons by levelling allegations of corruption against them. The SC verdict is also likely to affect the RJD's prospects in 2019 parliamentary polls and assembly elections to follow the year after.

Sikh man in US for two decades detained, fears deportation



(Agencies) New York : A Sikh man, who had sought asylum in the US citing religious persecution in India nearly two decades ago, has been detained by immigration authorities in California after losing his latest appeal over a deportation order. Gurmukh Singh, a 46-year-old taxi driver from Punjab who sneaked into the US without a visa through the border with Mexico in 1998,

was taken into custody yesterday after failing to get a stay in his deportation case, amid a clampdown by the Trump administration against undocumented immigrants. A father of two who is married to a US citizen, Singh had applied for asylum in the US in 1999, citing religious persecution. Singh, a Garden Grove resident who has no criminal record, checked in with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Santa Ana yesterday as required for individuals with final deportation orders who have been released under supervision. But the ICE says courts at all levels have upheld his removal order, leading to him being detained. After Singh had

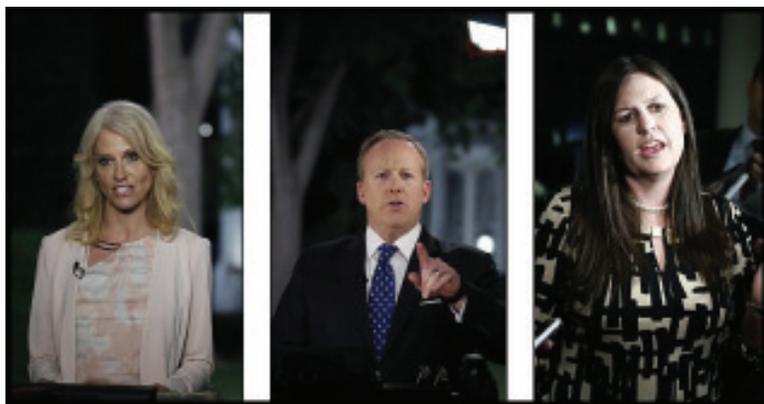
applied for asylum, his case was moved to an immigration court. But his previous counsel did not notify him in advance of his court date in 1999 and did not prepare him, so Singh appeared at the hearing without supporting evidence or testimony. A judge had then ordered his deportation. Singh's wife, Balwinder Kaur, became a US citizen in 2010 and applied for him to become a legal permanent resident in 2012. It was only then that he found out he had a deportation order on his record. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement had detained Singh in 2013 for five months based on the prior deportation order. The the Orange County

Register said immigrants rights groups and politicians had successfully advocated for his release, but two weeks ago a judge dismissed Singh's appeal to reopen his asylum case. "I would be broke, the family separated and we're not supposed to be separated," Singh said of the prospects of detention and deportation. "I would be depressed. What would happen to their future, my future?" Singh's oldest daughter Manpreet Saini, 18, said as he hugged him before ICE officials took him away. "The look on his face told me there was nothing that could be done. He breaks down. He's crying. I've never seen him cry like that," she said. It remains

unclear where Singh will be detained and the timeline for any actions the ICE may take but various groups and local elected officials have vowed to scale efforts to demand Singh's release. The ICE, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, said in a statement, "While criminal aliens and those who pose a threat to public safety will continue to be a focus, DHS will not exempt classes or categories of removable aliens from potential enforcement. "All those in violation of our nation's immigration laws may be subject to arrest, detention and, if found removable by final order, removal from the United States."

Trump mocks Comey backlash

President accuses Cryin' Chuck Schumer of hypocrisy after Senate minority leader claims firing of FBI director has 'shattered' the criminal justice system



(Agencies) New York : President Donald Trump has defended his sensational firing of FBI Director James Comey by mocking Senate minority leader 'cryin' Chuck Schumer. In a tweet Trump wrote: 'Cryin' Chuck Schumer stated recently, "I do not have confidence in him (James Comey) any longer." Then acts so indignant. #draintheswamp.' This defense came hours after Schumer claimed that he told the President that firing Comey was 'a very bad idea' Trump told Comey that he was fired via a letter late Tuesday afternoon that read: 'You are hereby terminated and removed from office immediately.'

In the letter, he claimed that the reasoning was days after he provided false testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee about classified emails from Huma Abedin found on Anthony Weiner's computer. The letter sent shockwaves through Washington - and within just over an hour Democrats, led by Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer, were claiming the firing was a cover-up attempt over Trump's alleged links to Russia. 'Why did it happen today? We know the FBI had been looking into whether the Trump campaign colluded with the Russians - a very serious offense. Were these investigations getting too close to home

not have confidence in him any longer,' he said in early November in reference to Comey's 11th hour decision to look into Clinton's improper private email server, which he said was 'appalling.' That being said, in Schumer's press briefing, he didn't offer up any specific support for the former FBI director, he simply pointed out the convenient timing of the firing. Comey, 56, was blindsided by being let go. He learned about it on

for the president?' Schumer said in a press briefing. However, as the President pointed out, Schumer didn't always have that kind of support for Comey. 'I do

live television screens he could see as he addressed agents in the Los Angeles field office, the New York Times reported. Incredibly, he told the agents he thought it was a fairly funny prank until other members of his staff took him off stage and told him it was true, the paper said.

His motorcade was seen on a Los Angeles freeway after the firing as it made its way through slow-moving traffic on a freeway in a bizarre O.J. Simpson-like scene to a chartered Gulfstream V, which Comey boarded at Hawthorne Municipal Airport just over three hours after his termination. The president used the firing letter to boast that Comey had told him three times he was not under investigation - a reference to allegations being touted by his opponents that he somehow colluded with the Kremlin in its bid to bring down Hillary Clinton. Clinton, who blamed Comey for costing her the election, said 'no comment' through an aide.

Trump Defies Turkey, Approves Heavy Weapons for Syrian Kurds



(Agencies) In a decision bound to infuriate Turkey, a senior Trump administration official said that heavier weapons would be approved for Syrian Kurdish forces as they close in on the Islamic State capital of Raqqa. The anonymous senior official was quoted by the Associated Press as part of its coverage of Defense Secretary James Mattis' meetings on Syria. NBC News published similar quotes by two unnamed defense officials, who said the Kurds could receive rifles, ammunition, armor, communications gear, and engineering equipment, delivered by ground convoys and air drops. NBC's sources did not go into detail about what type of heavy weapons might be sent to the Kurds. Military Times reported over the weekend that elite YPG fighters are already armed with advanced American combat gear, including night-vision goggles, digital camouflage, body armor, and the type of rifles used by American special operations forces. Photos of YPG commandos with American gear began appearing online during the battle to capture the strategic town of Tabqa, west of Raqqa, in late March. U.S. military officials have only acknowledged supplying the YPG with Russian-made weapons, such as the ubiquitous AK-47 rifle. Officials "offered only ambiguous responses" when asked how the Kurdish fighters acquired American gear. Military Times anticipated Turkey would be "infuriated."

Mexican Cartel Using Armored Trucks in War at Texas Border

(Agencies) REYNOSA, Tamaulipas — Mexican cartel members are using armored trucks in their ongoing war for control of lucrative drug trafficking and human smuggling routes near the Texas border. Recently, Tamaulipas State Police officers seized a large truck outfitted with thick armor plating for firefights. The vehicles are commonly called "Mounstros" or monsters. According to information provided to Breitbart Texas by the Tamaulipas government, police officers were patrolling the rural areas near Camargo, Tamaulipas, when they came across an abandoned warehouse. Camargo is immediately south of Rio Grande City,

Texas. When authorities inspected the warehouse they found a truck covered in armor plating as a makeshift combat vehicle. The truck had Texas license plates. It remains unclear if the vehicle was previously stolen. As Breitbart Texas reported, rival factions of the Gulf Cartel have gone to war for this region's lucrative drug territories. The fighting spread terror through Reynosa as convoys of gunmen roamed the streets clashing with rivals. Official figures point to 20 individuals killed, while six were injured in the ongoing violence. Authorities seized armored vehicles, SUVs, grenades, machine guns, and other weapons tied to the violence.

(Agencies) U.S. Border Patrol agents assigned to the Falfurrias Checkpoint chased down a grain hauler and discovered 14 migrants inside. The driver refused to submit to a secondary inspection and attempted to evade the agents.

The Rio Grande Valley Sector (RGV) agents observed a grain hauler approaching the Falfurrias Checkpoint in Brooks County, about 80 miles north of the Mexican border with Texas. A K-9 agent alerted to something



Border Patrol Agents Bust Grain Hauler Smuggling Migrants

unusual about the truck. Agents directed the driver, a U.S. citizen, to move the truck to a secondary inspection station for further examination.

Instead, the driver proceeded north, leaving the checkpoint, according to information provided to Breitbart Texas by Border Patrol Supervisory Agent

Marlene Castro. Agents pursued the truck, and the driver eventually stopped without incident. A search of the trailer by the agents revealed 14

illegal immigrants in the cargo area. The alleged human smuggler covered the immigrants with a tarp in an attempt to hide them from view. Castro did not

provide information about the nationality of the 14 migrants. Agents arrested the driver and seized the truck and trailer. He is being turned over to federal prosecutors where he will likely face charges of human smuggling. Castro issued a warning to migrants about attempting to circumvent the Falfurrias Checkpoint. Many illegal immigrants lost their lives while trying to march around the inland station. Breitbart Texas reported extensively about the deaths of migrants in Brooks County. In 2016, Border Patrol agents and Brooks County Sheriff's Deputies recovered the bodies or remains of 61 people who died after being abandoned by their cartel-connected human smugglers. "The treatment of these illegal immigrants by their human smugglers is

horrific," Brooks County Sheriff Benny Martinez told Breitbart Texas in a prior interview. "The people they take on these marches around the checkpoint are ill-prepared for the heat and hazardous terrain of these ranches. When they can't keep up, they are left behind where they will die quickly if they don't get help." RGV Sector Chief Patrol Agents Manuel Padilla, Jr. agreed. "These heartless criminals take ruthless steps to exploit the multitude of poor immigrants from Mexico and Central America trying to reach the United States at any cost, and the problem is getting worse," Chief Patrol Agent Manuel Padilla, Jr. said in a written statement obtained previously by Breitbart Texas. "No one wants to see their loved ones being violated or abandoned in this manner."

Jared Kushner, Justin Trudeau Teamed Up to Save NAFTA



(Agencies) WASHINGTON (AP) — On the day the White House threatened to withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement, President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, emerged as a key conduit between the United States and Canada. But his role has sparked a cross-border game of telephone and conflicting accounts about who called who first.

According to a White House official, aides to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called Kushner urgently on April 26 after seeing news reports that Trump was considering signing an executive order withdrawing from NAFTA. Kushner, who has an expansive profile that

includes foreign policy, speaks regularly to Canadian officials on a range of issues. Kushner told his Canadian counterpart that this was a matter the leaders needed to discuss themselves, according to the White House official, who insisted on anonymity

in order to discuss private conversations. The Canadians asked when Trudeau should call. After checking at the White House, Kushner called back to say Trump was ready to talk now. Trump has cited the call from Trudeau that quickly followed as the impetus for his decision to abandon the executive order and instead move to renegotiate NAFTA with Canada and Mexico. The president also wielded the call from Trudeau, as well as a separate call from Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, as proof that he has leverage over the other North American leaders as negotiations begin. But

accounts of Kushner's involvement differed Monday in Canadian media reports. According to The Canadian Press news agency, it was Kushner who first reached out to Trudeau's chief of staff to suggest a call between the two leaders. Kushner, who worked as a real estate executive in New York before taking a job in the White House, is seen as a more moderate influence on the president. He's also seen as more favorable to international trade agreements like NAFTA than some White House advisers, and a phone call from him to the Canadian prime minister could be viewed as an attempt to push Trump in his direction.

Travel ban arguments focus on Donald Trump's comments about Muslims

(Agencies) A challenge to President Donald Trump's revised travel ban appears to hinge on whether a federal appeals court agrees that the Republican's past anti-Muslim statements can be used against him. "That's the most important issue in the whole case," said Judge Robert King, who was appointed to the court

by President Bill Clinton. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals wrestled Monday with whether the court should look beyond the text of the executive order to comments made by Trump and his aides on the campaign trail and after his election in order to determine whether the policy illegally targets Muslims. The panel of 13 judges peppered both

sides with tough questions but gave few clues as to how they might rule. The judges did not immediately issue a decision on Monday. A federal judge in Maryland who blocked the travel ban in March cited Trump's comments as evidence that the executive order is a realization of his repeated promise to bar Muslims from entering the country.

Facebook CRASHES in Australia

Asia and the US leaving millions of users unable to access their social media accounts



(Agencies) Global social networking giant Facebook crashed on all platforms in parts of Australia, Asia and the US on Tuesday. Millions of social media users took to Twitter to report issues accessing the multi-billion dollar network.

Facebook was reported as going down across large chunks of Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia, India, and the US, according to website downdetector.com. While the reason for the crash is unknown, DownDetector said that of the 254 issues reported, 59 per cent said they experienced a total blackout while 36 per cent said they were having issues logging into the site. And the remaining four per cent said the problems were related to pictures.

When users tried to log in to the site, they were met with an error message, that read: 'Sorry, something went wrong. 'We're working on it and we'll get it fixed as soon as we can.' The issues have now been resolved and the site is working again, although Facebook has not commented on what the problem was. Social media was quickly lit up with humorous messages from users unable to cope with the crash.

'Oh god! The apocalypse is here! How do I even talk to someone face to face,' one person wrote. 'Things to do while Facebook is down: 1. Refresh Facebook until it comes back online. That's all I got,' joked another.

(News Agencies) Praising Modi's vision, members of the delegation expressed hope that the "nationwide trust" that he has among the people will ensure prosperity and well-being of all segments of society, the statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asked the Muslims not to allow the triple talaq issue to be politicised and urged a leading organisation of the community to take the lead in initiating reform in this regard. He made the comments while interacting with leaders of the leading Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind who called on him here. Welcoming



PM Modi asks Muslims not to allow triple talaq to be politicised

the members of the delegation, the Prime Minister said that democracy's greatest strength is harmony and amity, the PMO said in a statement. Emphasizing that the government does not have any right to discriminate among citizens, Modi said India's speciality has been its unity in diversity, it added. On Triple

Talaq, the Prime Minister reiterated that the Muslim community should not allow this issue to be politicised, the statement said. He urged the delegation members to take the responsibility for initiating reform in this regard, the PMO said. The delegation members appreciated the Prime Minister's stand on the issue of Triple Talaq, the

statement said. Modi's remarks came against the backdrop of CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury saying that the Prime Minister's "campaign against triple talaq is a communal campaign". Modi also said that the new generation in India must not be allowed to fall victim to the rising global tide of extremism. Praising Modi's vision, members of the

delegation expressed hope that the "nationwide trust" that he has among the people will ensure prosperity and well-being of all segments of society, the statement said. They said that the Muslim community is keen to be an equal partner in the making of the 'New India', it said, referring to the ambition of the Prime Minister.

It's time AAP accepts people have rejected Kejriwal: Kapil Mishra

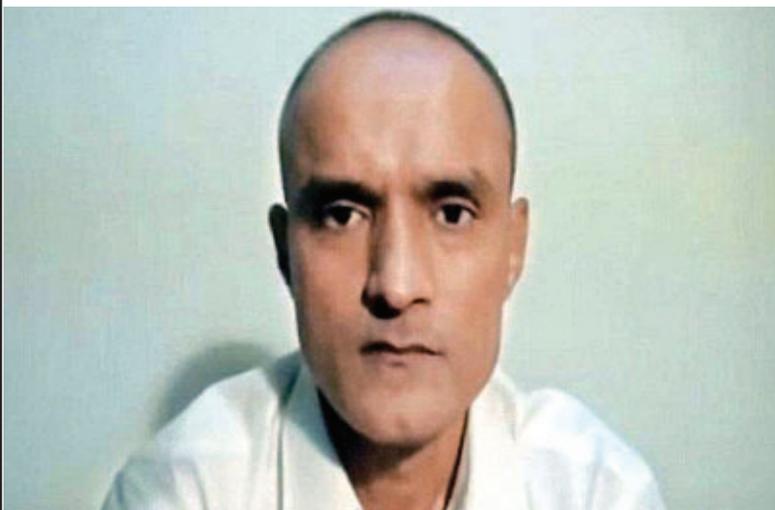


(News Agencies) New Delhi : Ousted from the AAP government and the party, Kapil Mishra+ on Tuesday ridiculed the AAP's demonstration of "live EVM rigging"+, saying it was time for it to acknowledge that people have rejected Arvind Kejriwal. Mishra attended the day-long special session of the Delhi assembly after filing three separate complaints of "corruption"+ with the CBI, including one involving Kejriwal. As a minister, he used to occupy the front benches, but on Tuesday he found himself relegated to the back. He did not speak during the proceedings. "It is just a tactic to divert the attention+ from the real issues. People don't want to vote for Arvind Kejriwal anymore which is the truth and they just want to hide this fact," he told reporters outside the House.

Mishra also took on the party for claiming that he was removed from the seven-member Cabinet for "failing" to address concerns related to water supply in the city. "They (AAP) should first decide whether they were defeated due to EVMs or water mismanagement by me as being claimed now," he said.

They brought a "prototype machine, tampered it" and is now claiming that elections can be "rigged", Mishra claimed. "When they are defeated, they question the democracy. We (AAP) had won 67 seats through the same EVMs and after being defeated, they are questioning the credibility of EVMs," he said. Earlier in the day, Mishra submitted three complaints to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), charging chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and minister Satyendar Jain with corruption and other irregularities.

International Court Of Justice stays hanging of Kulbhusan Jadhav



(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: International Court of Justice has stayed the death sentence given to Kulbhusan Jadhav by Pakistan military court on charges of 'spying'. The Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) stayed his execution following India's submission that Jadhav was kidnapped from Iran where he was involved in business after retiring from the Navy. India, in its appeal to the ICJ, accused Pakistan of "egregious" violations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and asserted that Jadhav was kidnapped from Iran where he

was involved in business activities after retiring from the Indian Navy but Pakistan claimed to have arrested him from Balochistan on March 3, 2016.

Following India's appeal, the ICJ stayed Jadhav's execution.

India, in its appeal, contended that it was not informed of Jadhav's detention until long after his arrest and that Pakistan failed to inform the accused of his rights.

It further asserted that, in violation of the Vienna Convention, the Pakistani authorities were denying India its right of consular

access to Jadhav, despite repeated requests.

"Referring to 'the extreme gravity and immediacy of the threat that authorities in Pakistan will execute an Indian citizen in violation of obligations Pakistan owes to India', India urges the Court to deliver an order indicating provisional measures immediately, 'without waiting for an oral hearing'," India's appeal said.

External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj also tweeted on the matter saying that she had conveyed the news to Jadhav's mother and apprised her of the situation.

Jadhav was given death sentence last month by the Field General Court Martial in Pakistan, evoking a sharp reaction from India which warned Pakistan of consequences and damage to bilateral ties if the "pre-meditated murder" was carried out.

The Pakistan army had released a statement last month saying that Kulbhusan Jadhav, who was arrested in March 2016 in Balochistan, had been found guilty of "involvement in

espionage and sabotage activities" against the country by a military tribunal. In an order signed by army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, the retired Indian Navy officer was sentenced to death. Pakistan had alleged that Jadhav was "a serving officer" in the Indian Navy and deputed to the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and had released a "confessional video" of Jadhav after his arrest. According to the ISPR statement, Jadhav "confessed" before a Magistrate and the court that he was "tasked by RAW to plan, coordinate and organise espionage/sabotage activities aiming to destabilise and wage war against Pakistan by impeding the efforts of Law Enforcement Agencies for restoring peace in Balochistan and Karachi." India has acknowledged Jadhav as a retired Indian Navy officer, but denied the allegation that he was in any way connected to the government. The government's repeated requests for consular access to Jadhav had been denied by Pakistan.

Election Commission: AAP hacked 'look-alike' gadget, not our EVM

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: The Election Commission on Tuesday rejected the claim of the Aam Aadmi Party+ that its EVMs can be hacked, saying the machine hacked in the Delhi assembly+ was a "look-alike" gadget and not an actual equipment used by it. "It is common sense that gadgets other than ECI-EVMs can be programmed to perform in a pre-determined way, but it simply cannot be implied that

ECI-EVMs will behave in the same manner because they are technically secured and function under an elaborate administrative and security protocol," the Commission said in a statement. The "so-called" demonstration on "extraneous and duplicate gadgets" which are not owned by the EC "cannot be exploited to influence our intelligent citizens and electorate to assail or vilify the

EVMs used by the commission in its electoral process, it added. Earlier today, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had dared the EC to provide an electronic voting machine (EVM) to the AAP, claiming it can be tampered with in '90 seconds' flat. Speaking to the media outside the Delhi assembly at the end of a day-long special session, Kejriwal, however, avoided answers on

the bribery charges made against him by sacked minister Kapil Mishra. During a day-long special sitting of the Delhi Assembly on Tuesday, AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj put on a "live demonstration" on how electronic voting machines can be programmed to favour any political party. Bhardwaj claimed that anyone knowing a "secret code" can tamper with the EVMs and the code

can be fed into a machine while casting vote. "He (Bhardwaj) showed how easy it is to hack EVMs and it is being done on a massive scale. It is dangerous for the democracy and the country, and people should raise their voice against it." The ECI can give us its machines, we will show how to hack it in 90 seconds by merely changing its motherboard," Kejriwal told reporters outside the assembly.

I-T notice to AAP over alleged tampering of donation records



(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: The income tax department on Tuesday issued a notice to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) asking why it should not be prosecuted for alleged falsification of account books and "wilful attempt" to evade tax on donations received by it. The department has issued the show cause notice to the party's convenor - Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal - and three others and has sought the party's reply in

this regard by first half of this month. The tax

department has charged the party with not filing a "true and correct" contribution report for donations received for the assessment year 2014-15 which have been found to be over Rs 30.08 crore after year long investigations. The taxman said the first audit report filed by the party to it and the Election Commission, under the provisions of the

Representation of People Act, were "incorrect and fabricated". The notice said that in view of these charges, the department seeks to file a prosecution complaint (charge sheet) under sections 277A (false statement in verification) and 276C (wilful attempt to evade tax). A maximum of three years rigorous imprisonment and a fine

can be levied on an accused once the charges are proved in court. It said that the exemption enjoyed by the Kejriwal-led AAP from paying income tax on donations could also be withdrawn as these privileges have been "wrongly claimed". Political parties enjoy tax exemption under section 13A of the Income Tax Act.

Saharanpur on boil again; 20 vehicles torched, cops run for cover



(News Agencies) MEERUT: Saharanpur witnessed another large-scale violence on Tuesday, third time in the past 20 days, when Dalit protesters went on a violent spree after the police tried to disperse a crowd of agitators who did not have official permission for the demonstration in a city park. Senior district and police officials had to take refuge in a residential colony after a mob attacked them and torched many vehicles, authorities said. Around 20 vehicles, including a bus, cars and several two-wheelers were set on fire. The mob also torched a police outpost and a police van.

Narmada-like clean-up drive for other rivers too: Shivraj Singh Chouhan

(News Agencies) BHOPAL: The Narmada Seva Yatra — a campaign hailed by PM Narendra Modi and UP CM Yogi Adityanath as the model for Ganga rejuvenation — will be the springboard for clean-up drives in other rivers of Madhya Pradesh — particularly Tapti, Son and Kshipra — by next year, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in an exclusive interview to media on Monday.

This is unique because the Madhya Pradesh government's efforts will end up benefiting neighbouring states Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar where the Son flows through; Gujarat where the Tapti flows; and Rajasthan, where the Kshipra meets Chambal river. "Tapti, Son and Kshipra rivers will be taken up for conservation and cleaning by next year," Chouhan said on the sidelines of a seminar on the

conservation of Narmada, a week before the 3,000-km yatra winds up. PM Modi will attend the culmination of the yatra at Amarkantak — the source of Narmada — on May 15. Thanking the PM for his support to the Narmada campaign, Chouhan said: "He is a visionary and is showing the way to the world. He always encourages us and sent over experts of the Ganga Action Plan."

Rajnath Singh: How is Akbar rated great, not Maharana Pratap?



(News Agencies) JODHPUR: Union home minister Rajnath Singh believes Maharana Pratap has not been given his due place in history. On Tuesday, Singh urged historians to re-evaluate the contribution of the Rajput warrior king, reiterating a concern he has raised earlier as well. Addressing a

gathering in Pali district during the unveiling of a statue of the ruler of Mewar, Singh said, "It was Maharana Pratap who fought with great valour for freedom and self-respect, sacrificing everything, and never gave into Akbar, but I am surprised — how come our historians rated Akbar as great and not Pratap?" "What shortcoming did they notice in Pratap that he was not referred to as 'the great,'" Singh said. He added it was time this "blunder" was corrected and Pratap accorded the respect he deserved. Singh said it was inspiration drawn from Pratap that triggered the urge for freedom in many and India achieved Independence in 1947.

Netherlands backs India's bid for permanent UNSC seat

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: The Netherlands today came out in support of India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), saying the country is a "prime candidate" if the premier global body were to expand. Observing that to remain relevant, bodies such as the UNSC need to be fundamentally reformed, Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders said: "If the Security Council were to include additional permanent seats, then my country sees India of course as a prime candidate". In an attempt to get the United Nations reform process moving, India and other G4 nations including Brazil, Germany and Japan recently said they were open to innovative ideas and



willing to not exercise veto as permanent members of a reformed Security Council until a decision on it has been taken. Addressing an interactive session organised by industry body CII here, he said the Netherlands too expects to be a non-permanent member of the UNSC next year.

Sharing his views on the situation in war-torn Syria, the Dutch Foreign Minister remarked: "I find especially the position of the Russian

Federation as to its use of veto power even when there are chemical attacks unacceptable." He said one can only have a functioning security council if there is legitimacy and effectiveness. Russia vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria last month and called on the government there to cooperate with an investigation into the incident. Russia, a permanent member of 15-nation Council, exercised the veto when a draft resolution drafted by France, the United Kingdom and the US was tabled in the UN. While 10 of the UNSC's 15 members voted in favour, Russia rejected the text, as permanent member China, as well as non-permanent members Ethiopia and Kazakhstan who abstained.

Why 8% Of India's Population Accounts For 46% Of The Total Malaria Burden

Malaria's the biggest health threat to India's tribal population.



(News Agencies) Malaria is a major public health and social problem in India, leading to high morbidity, mortality, economic loss, people missing work and absenteeism in schools. While studies are required to arrive at the exact economic cost of malaria in India, the fact remains that the disease is regrettably unchecked in parts of the country. As per the National Vector Borne Disease Control Program, 1.13 million malaria cases were reported in India in 2015. While between 2000 and 2015 there was a 45% drop in malaria prevalence, 80% of the remaining burden is confined to geographies inhabited largely by India's tribal populations. While a state or two in India may be on the brink of eliminating malaria in the foreseeable future, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and the Northeast are far behind. These states bear the largest share of India's malaria burden and specifically the killer falciparum malaria. Eight percent of India's population, largely the tribal residents of these states, account for 46% of the total malaria burden, 70% of falciparum malaria and 47% of malarial deaths in the country. These states have some common factors binding them: high maternal deaths, malnutrition, and sickle cell disease. Inaccessible and remote forested or hilly landscape, rainfall and water stagnation, lack of qualified healthcare professionals and health posts, weak mobile phone and internet connectivity further exacerbate the problem. Furthermore, there are numerous slow-flowing and perennial streams in these areas—a breeding ground for vectors like Anopheles Fluviatilis. There are also other predominant vectors in tribal areas. Plasmodium falciparum is the principal species mostly seen in forest fringed areas in districts in aforementioned states inhabited by tribal populations. There are districts in parts of Odisha and Maharashtra affected by malaria, with an annual parasite index (API—a measure for confirmed malaria cases or morbidity in a year) of more than 10. The unrest here renders the health system even more ineffective. All these factors make addressing malaria

in tribal areas a unique challenge.

At the turn of the millennium, there was a global shift towards insecticide treated nets, long lasting insecticidal nets, rapid diagnostic kits (RDK) and new treatment regimen using Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy (ACT) that ushered in hope. These developments however failed to reach the most affected areas. Even today some regions face an inadequate supply of RDK for early detection of malaria, poor supply of ACT during the high prevalence seasons and suboptimal coverage of indoor residual spray. Rapid diagnostic tests (RDT), excellent for early detection, have been found to be less effective for detecting people with low parasitemia, a problem which is prevalent in some tribal areas. RDTs are however more widely available than microscopy tests, making it necessary to use. Despite improvement in surveillance over the last few years, the actual burden of malaria is yet to be known—there is poor coverage, low

examination of blood smears, weak reporting systems and no reporting of malaria-related data from the private sector. In the absence of such formal functioning health care systems, tribal communities often confine themselves to traditional practices and healers. But these problems in the context of tribal population are not insurmountable. Malaria was almost conquered in India in the 50s and 60s with appropriate measures and commitment. With evidence-based practices, innovations, advancement in science and technology, research and development and new approaches to address the poor practices and health-seeking behaviours of tribal people, controlling malaria seems achievable. Smart partnerships and social capital with innovative financing, technical inputs, research, product and process innovations can make a significant difference. The approach is twofold. On the one hand the state has the mandate to invest, scale up, monitor and evaluate to ensure better quality of care and, on the other, development partners can take the risk to innovate and generate evidence which can inform policymakers to plan and chart courses of action while investing effectively and efficiently in a solution. This financial and social commitment will not only dispel malaria from regions inhabited by tribal populations but will be effective in lifting the general standards of the healthcare system to combat other diseases and conditions. This investment will earn high returns from neglected communities and their future generations through better health, improved productivity and better attendance and performance in school. Targeting malaria in

ethnic communities will significantly reduce overall malaria burden in India. To conclude, the immediate call for action to mitigate malaria in tribal regions in India will require the adoption of multiple strategies and an integrated approach. Foremost is the strengthening of the surveillance system and bolstering it with the support of IT and mobile technology. GIS mapping will capture the disease burden and enable state machinery to take timely action. Secondly, early detection and treatment of all cases, including afebrile (without fever) cases, is imperative, with attention to pregnant women and children. Thirdly, mapping of the actual requirement of anti-malarial drugs for remote tribal pockets and making those available is essential in meeting the treatment gap. Ensuring immediate distribution of long-lasting insecticidal nets, repellants and indoor residual sprays, and simultaneously educating and promoting their adoption, is critical in bringing change in tribal villages and hamlets. Lastly, research on the health of ethnic communities along with investment in the development of tomorrow's drugs and insecticides is a must for future action.

A step for India's banks, but no giant leap for bad debt

Bankers hail changes to the legislation that could help deal with errant borrowers, but analysts say the country is far from drawing a line under its \$150 billion of bad loans

(News Agencies) Mumbai/Bengaluru: India's move to strengthen the hand of its central bank will help it push reluctant lenders towards write-downs and errant borrowers into insolvency, bankers said, but the country is far from drawing a line under its \$150 billion of sour debts. India's bad loan problem is choking off new credit and dampening economic growth, and the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi knows it needs to act. Friday's changes to legislation governing India's banks—the most significant since the passage of bankruptcy reforms last year—authorise the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to push more lenders to start insolvency proceedings. The RBI, meanwhile, lowered the number of creditors who need to agree for a decision to be reached on a loan. That in itself is a major step in a system where large numbers of lenders are behind a single loan—syndicates of 20 or even 30 lenders are not infrequent in India—and matters often end in deadlock when things go wrong. But while bankers and industry officials said the moves would help prevent smaller lenders holding an entire syndicate hostage—for

them a single write-down can be a significant blow—bankers and analysts labelled Friday's moves as incremental. The changes did not do enough to resolve the complex insolvency process or a much-needed bank recapitalisation, they said. "The latest move is not a silver bullet, but it's better than nothing," said Varun Khandelwal, managing director, Bullero Capital. "Its primary benefit will be to break log-jams in the Joint Lender Forums where sometimes consensus could be not reached due to a few members being unwilling to take a hit on their balance sheets," he added. The bulk of India's problem debt is with state-run banks, where chief executives do not typically serve for beyond three years. As civil servants, some fear that bad decisions will come back to haunt them - cases of former bank heads being arrested over loan defaults spark fear - and so fail to move at all. The changes ensure the RBI can offer



cover. "The good part is that now you cannot blame a bank managing director, or executive director for a (haircut) decision taken during his tenure," said a senior state-run bank official. "He can now say 'I did that because RBI told me to'." Loans to sectors like infrastructure, power, iron and steel account for the biggest share of non-performing assets in India. Struggling projects and weaker prices are among the factors that have curtailed loan repayments in these sectors. Some will recover but others will not, making the proposed changes

Why Are Labradors The Most Abandoned Dog Breed In India?



The answer lies in the myth surrounding the Labrador's temperament.



(News Agencies) The Labrador Retriever, or Labrador, is the most popular breed world over. In India, it's the most commonly found in homes, after the Pomeranian/Spitz. Labradors are known for their mild and kind temperament. Their affability makes them much loved across the globe and they are considered to be excellent family dogs for this reason too. Indeed, pretty much every second family that decides to bring a pet home opts for a Labrador because they believe they will be getting an animal that is "easy and friendly." But if this is true, then what is the reason why so many Labradors are found abandoned? According to

us, the main reason is the myth surrounding the temperament of the Labrador. Fact is that popular as Labradors are, they are also the most commonly abandoned dogs in India. You will find several Labradors in most animal shelters. The most common reasons cited for their abandonment are health concerns and behavioural issues. They are supposedly "destructive", have "too much energy", are "aggressive" or "bark too much". So, what does this really mean? Simply put, it means that the dog is bored and the family has no time for their pet.

Then there are also dogs that have serious issues like dominance

aggression, territorial aggression and food aggression as well as a few that are highly unpredictable. In the last couple of years alone, more than 500 Labradors have crossed the threshold of Friendicoes; at present we still have 20+ in-house residents. While the demand for Labradors on the adoption front is also high, shelters are still chock-a-block with this particular breed. The root cause? Lack of effort to understand the breed and what makes it tick.

Labradors are not just a genial and social breed of dog. There is much more to them than an "easygoing" temperament. As a breed Labradors are considered

pups till anywhere between 18 to 24 months and can continue to have puppy-like energy even beyond three years of age. They were originally bred as working dogs, to be able to perform physically demanding jobs and hence have such high energy and stamina. Having been bred for "retrieving" of water fowl and other quarry, Labradors are known to possess an inborn behavioural trait called "soft mouth", which makes them prone to constantly wanting to grab things with their mouth. This particular habit if unchecked as a puppy, or misunderstood and mishandled by owners as aggression, has been known to develop into biting. Also, like most other

working breeds of dogs, without proper exercise and some basic training, a rambunctious Labrador puppy can soon turn into a big rowdy dog who misbehaves and is disobedient and thus out of the owner's control and authority.

In addition, the problem has also intensified significantly in recent years due to improper breeding practices. The high demand for Labradors and the greed to make a quick buck has led to the mushrooming of inexperienced and unethical backyard breeders and puppy mills that churn out pups for profit without care and with little consideration to the health of the mother and

pups or the gene pool. Consequently it has immense health and behavioural consequences for the puppies. Ignorance and insensitivity also leads to inbreeding, another unethical practice. Inbred pups are known to show unprovoked aggression or be sickly (with compromised immunity or some kind of congenital deformity or condition), leading to an early death or abandonment. So it is best to study deeply and in detail the breed you choose to bring home. Any vet worth their salt, of course, would always recommend a sturdy mixed breed or a breed suitable for the local weather conditions, your lifestyle and home atmosphere.

BJP plans big bash for Modi govt's 3rd anniversary

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: BJP is planning to celebrate three years of the Narendra Modi government in a grand way. Programmes will be spread over almost a fortnight, when chief ministers, Union ministers, MPs and MLAs will reach out to people to propagate how various programmes have helped the people and educate them about the government's achievements. A meeting of BJP office-bearers and party's senior-most leaders were held on Saturday to discuss details of the programmes that will be held to mark the third anniversary of Modi government, which

assumed office on May 26, 2014. Programmes will be held in the national capital and across various state capitals and districts. "Each BJP chief minister is likely to address four programmes, of which some will be held in a different state. Each Union minister is likely to participate in one programme in his or her constituency and another in some

other district. The focus of celebrations will be on how the government schemes have benefited the people," a senior BJP central office-bearer told ET.

The celebrations will begin on May 26 and are likely to last a



fortnight. The party is mulling over a slogan to mark the occasion. A programme at India Gate is also in the works. It is not yet revealed where Modi and BJP president Amit Shah will spend the day. Shah is likely to hold a press interaction in Delhi on May 27, party insiders said. The programme will be given a final shape by May 12, say party leaders. Information and

broadcasting minister M Venkaiah Naidu, away in Kenya on an official tour, is spearheading the government programme preparations. BJP general secretary Arun Singh is in charge of the party programmes. BJP is in power in 13 states and these state units will actively participate in the programmes. "Even our party MLAs will be sent to programmes in different states," a BJP office-bearer said. The party is making all-out efforts to increase its political footprint in south India and the northeast and states where it has been traditionally weak. Shah, who spent two days in Tripura last week, is headed to Tamil Nadu for a three-day visit from May 11. The NDA government's third anniversary celebrations will also be held in constituencies where BJP has not fared well in elections. "The aim is to make this year's celebrations unique and different from last two years," a senior party leader said.

Inserted Beer Bottle, Chilli Powder In Private Parts

Woman Accuses Cop Of Sexual Assault In Jammu



(News Agencies) The accused police officer said the charge is baseless. A 25-year-old woman has alleged that she was sexually assaulted by a police officer in Jammu's Kanachak area. According to reports, the woman stated that she was forcibly stripped by Kanachak Station House Officer Rakesh Sharma who then inserted a beer bottle and chilli powder in her private parts.

The woman, who was working as a domestic help, was accused of theft by her employers and arrested by the police. The woman's lawyer claimed that her case was similar to that of the Nirbhaya gang rape case in Delhi.

However, denying the allegations, SHO Sharma said that the woman was a "habitual offender" who had been arrested earlier in Punjab in theft and narcotics-related cases. A medical examination of the victim was conducted on Sunday and a special investigation team has been formed to look into the allegations.

Scarred for life... by her own FATHER

Indian woman, 20, suffers terrible injuries when parent throws acid in her face 'because she knew he was selling young women to men'

(News Agencies) A 20-year-old woman has been left permanently scarred after having acid thrown in her face by her own father after she reported him for allegedly selling women for sex.

liquid also splashed onto husband Vinod Kumar, 26, and daughter Trisha as they slept, and the three were rushed to hospital with burns to their faces, shoulders, arms and hands. Kushboo has vowed to make sure her 40-year-old father spends the rest of his life in jail for a life time of crimes against women.

then sold them at a higher price for many years. He used to share everything with me thinking I'd keep his secrets. He thought that if he killed me his secrets would be safe. He is a very cruel man.' Kushboo claimed she and her four younger siblings grew up watching her father trade women after her mother, Sarita Devi, 35, left in 2007 unable to cope.

Kushboo said: 'My mother lived a very hard life with my father. What she had to tolerate was unbearable.

'I was too young to understand as a child, but he used to mentally and physically abuse her for years, once he hit her so hard he permanently ruptured her ear drum and she lost her hearing in that ear.' But with Sarita gone, and unable to take her children with her, Kushboo was forced to become her father's main support system. 'During

those years in the house I saw him marry three girls without even divorcing my mother,' she said. 'Then he sold them. He used to charm these girls and marry them before getting a good rate and selling them to other men.' At the time Kushboo thought the women were distant relatives, unaware of her father's true crimes. She added: 'He introduced one 22-year-old girl as his niece but later he married her.

'Sometimes he said our mother didn't him cook food or wash his clothes and this was why he brought girls to the house. 'He thought I was not mature enough to understand things but as the years passed I realised what was happening.' Kushboo remembered when she was 12-years-old her father sent her to a Brick kiln to work but other workers told her to run away because her father was going to sell her.



Khushboo Devi was asleep with her husband and young daughter when Manik Chandra knocked on the door of her home in Uttar Pradesh, northern India. When she opened the door, he threw a bottle of acid in her face. The

on me because I know everything about him. He knows he'll get locked up for life with the secrets I know; the number of marriages, the buying and selling of girls over and over again.

He bought nice girls and



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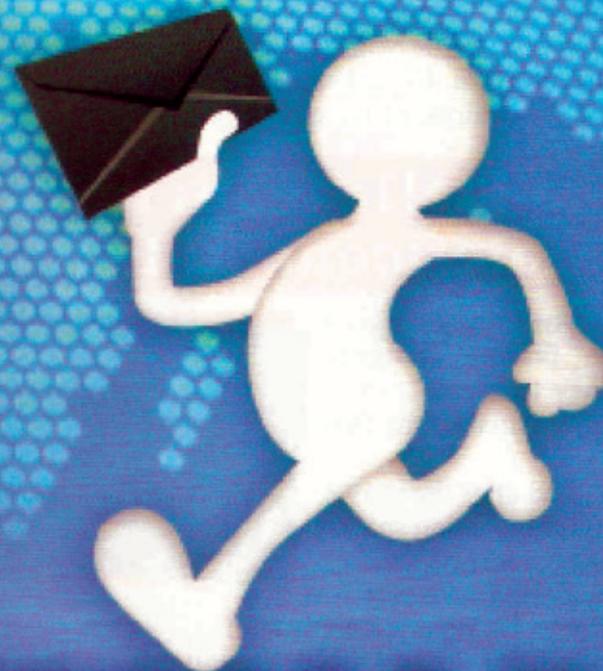
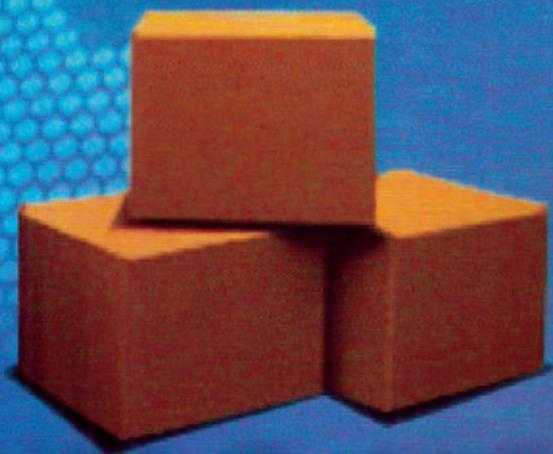
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Iran Refuses To Sideline China And Pak, Irking India

(News Agencies) For major regional partners that consistently declare a strong friendship based on civilizational ties, India and Iran seem to have hit a bumpy patch - one that has the potential to expose serious differences between Tehran and Delhi, as the sheen of Prime Minister Modi's May 2016 visit to the Iranian capital wears off. While Iran drags its feet on awarding a crucial contract for gas exploration in its Farzad B offshore field to ONGC Videsh, India has decided to cut back on oil imports from Iran by 3 million tons (roughly 25 percent) in the current financial year. (India imports over 6% of its oil from Iran, making it Iran's second-largest customer of crude oil) Now, the already tense situation has taken yet another unpleasant turn, with Tehran retaliating by reducing Delhi's window of payment for crude purchases from 90 days to 60 days, and reportedly cutting freight discounts offered to Indian state-owned oil companies by the National Iranian Oil Company. Both benefits have made Iranian crude attractive to Indian companies in the past, and in fact, Iran has consistently given oil to India on credit earlier, too. On their own, as global crude prices fall, these developments seem to be routine: tough price negotiations between two regional heavyweights aimed at

ensuring both get the best deal possible. While Iran is looking for strong, competitive bids on a gas field that India has dragged its feet on for at least seven years, India is driven by a search for the best prices for its fuel imports that supply 80 percent of its energy needs. An Economic Times report quotes sources as saying that India was wary of inviting western sanctions against ONGC Videsh Ltd if it went ahead with developing the gas field. But against a wider backdrop of global developments where India is fighting hard to offset China's regional expansionism via the Belt and Road Initiative by working on its own trade and connectivity routes, and a relatively sanctions-free Iran is suspiciously eyeing Delhi's overtures and warmth towards a belligerent US President and his unambiguous treatment of Iran as a rouge, terror sponsor, could the recent sparring be more than just negotiation tactics? During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Tehran last year, India committed \$500 million towards the Chabahar port project amid much pomp and ceremony, and along with Afghanistan, signed a trilateral agreement for the construction of key road and rail links connecting the port. Iranian scholars who study bilateral ties argue that Delhi's dragging its feet since then is encouraging voices that call Chabahar a sister port to

Pakistan's Gawadar to look for ways to involve both Pakistan and China in future phases of its development. In fact, soon after PM Modi's visit to Tehran, Iranian diplomats ruled out exclusivity for India in Chabahar. During that visit, retired Iranian diplomats at the government-backed Tehran think tank, the Institute for Peace and International Studies, said other countries were welcome to bid for future phases. They brushed off suggestions that China's inclusion in Chabahar would be a thorn in India's side, saying India and China must find ways of "changing their mindset" and not use Iran's development as a pawn in their battles for regional supremacy.

As Beijing plans its massive Belt and Road Initiative conference next week, they argue that Tehran faces fewer problems with the Chinese, eager to edge India out of its regional sphere of influence. Iranian commentators are quick to point out that Modi's visit to Iran in 2016 took place after many other major international players. Chinese President Xi Jinping was the first major leader to visit Tehran once its new nuclear deal with world powers including the US, Germany and Russia was signed - a fact not lost on Tehran.

Iran's strategic heft, due mainly to and oil and gas power, has long been a major consideration for India's foreign

policy makers. Yet, it was only after the landmark nuclear deal between the P5 1 and Iran in 2015 under the Obama administration, and the subsequent lifting of Iran's international pariah status, that India finally inched forward on the much-awaited Chabahar port project, 13 years after it was first agreed upon. But today, America's threat to review the very deal that brought Iran back into acceptability poses a conundrum for Delhi that is eager to both ensure warm ties with the new US President, as well as continue its strategic and economic engagement with Iran.

New Delhi finds itself in a spot. The message between the lines is that as he plans his meeting with Donald Trump later this year, Prime Minister Modi might be cautious to avoid any steps that could raise eyebrows in Washington. Adding fuel to the fire, some in Tehran say that like the United States, India has "problems with the Islamic world, and Iran is an Islamic state." Now, as Iran readies for a Presidential election on May 19, and the Ayatollah backs hardliners who accuse President Rouhani of pandering to foreign interests, especially to modernize its oil and gas sector, India has its own list of complaints - accusing Iran of reneging on its promises, even though Delhi has been a

steadfast partner throughout the sanctions regime. Delhi's anger is understandable. Iran is refusing to budge on the gas field India covets even after ONGC Videsh has revised its development plan and costs. In addition, Iran's President Rouhani recently reiterated support for "trusted brother" Pakistan as he announced the completion of the Iranian section of a pipeline to carry natural gas to Pakistan. Whether the Iranians are expressing their displeasure over the slow progress at Chabahar, or India is doing the same for the delays over the Farzad B gas field contract and being cautious before a crucial US bilateral, the result is a gridlock for the moment. Iran has nearly 10 percent of global oil and over 18 percent of global gas reserves, and as its oil minister said, is confident of other customers for its resources if India cuts back. But while Iran argues its case, Tehran must also realise that India of late has pursued aggressive diplomatic engagements with other oil and gas rich countries in the gulf-Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other GCC countries, and can offset the shortfall from Iranian crude by increasing imports from these. Delhi will not hesitate to use its new-found leverage with Iran's Sunni neighbours to push for a better deal for itself. Hard fought price negotiations, indeed.



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Sense of Crisis Deepens as Trump Defends F.B.I. Firing

WASHINGTON — President Trump's abrupt dismissal of the F.B.I. director roiled Washington on Wednesday and deepened the sense of crisis swirling around the White House. Republican leaders came to the president's defense, and Mr. Trump lashed out at Democrats and other critics, calling them hypocrites.

On Capitol Hill, at least a half-dozen Republicans broke with their leadership to express concern or dismay about the firing of James B. Comey, who was four years into a decade-long appointment as the bureau's director. Still, they stopped well short of joining Democrats' call for a special prosecutor to lead the continuing investigation of Russian contacts with Mr. Trump's aides.

At the White House, Mr. Trump shrugged off accusations of presidential interference in a counterintelligence investigation. He hosted a surreal and awkwardly timed meeting in the Oval Office with Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, and Sergey I. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the United States. Mr. Kislyak's private meetings with Mr. Trump's aides are a key part of the sprawling investigation.

White House officials denied American reporters permission to witness the Oval Office meeting or take photographs, but Russian state news outlets published images taken by their official photographer of a beaming Mr. Trump shaking hands with the envoys. The pictures quickly spread on Twitter.

Stunned by the sudden loss of their leader, agents at the F.B.I. struggled throughout the day to absorb the meaning of Mr. Comey's dismissal, which the White House announced Tuesday evening. Veteran agents and other F.B.I.



employees described a dark mood throughout the bureau, where morale was already low from months of being pummeled over dueling investigations surrounding the 2016 presidential election.

Mr. Trump is weighing going to the F.B.I. headquarters in Washington on Friday as a show of his commitment to the bureau, an official said, though he is not expected to discuss the Russia investigation.

The president and his allies expressed no regrets over Mr. Comey's removal, insisting that F.B.I. agents had been clamoring for it. Mr. Trump's decision, they said, was unrelated to Mr. Comey's oversight of the investigation into Russian meddling and possible connections to Trump advisers.

In an email to F.B.I. agents on Wednesday, Mr. Comey said he would not dwell on the reasons for his firing or how it was carried out.

"I have long believed that a president can fire an F.B.I. director for any reason, or for no reason at all," he wrote in the email, which a law enforcement official read to The New York Times on the condition of anonymity. "I have said to you before that, in times

of turbulence, the American people should see the F.B.I. as a rock of competence, honesty and independence," Mr. Comey wrote. He added, "It is very hard to leave a group of people who are committed only to doing the right thing."

Top Justice Department officials were hurrying to install an interim director to run the F.B.I. while a permanent replacement for Mr. Comey is chosen. Among those under consideration for the temporary role were several career law enforcement officials, including Andrew G. McCabe, who was named acting director upon Mr. Comey's firing.

White House officials refused to comment on reports that, days before he was fired, Mr. Comey had asked the Justice Department for a significant increase in resources for the Russia investigation. Democrats cited the news of Mr. Comey's request as added reason to be suspicious about the president's motive for firing him.

"Was this really about something else?" Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, asked in remarks on the Senate floor.

"Nothing less is at stake than the American people's faith in our

criminal justice system and the integrity of the executive branch of our government," he said.

The outrage over Mr. Comey's firing was a political turnabout for many Democrats, who had previously expressed anger and frustration at his handling of the investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server when she was secretary of state. It was that investigation that Mr. Trump cited as the reason for dismissing Mr. Comey.

Days before last fall's election, Mr. Comey announced that the F.B.I. was examining newly found emails potentially related to the investigation. "I do not have confidence in him any longer," Mr. Schumer said at the time.

"I am asking that he step down," Representative Steve Cohen, Democrat of Tennessee, said.

Many Democrats, including Mrs. Clinton, have since placed much of the blame for her loss on Mr. Comey's actions.

On Wednesday, in a series of visceral posts on Twitter, Mr. Trump seized on those earlier comments to highlight Mr. Comey's "scandals." He also suggested that Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, be investigated, moments

after Mr. Blumenthal appeared on television to condemn the president's action. "Watching Senator Richard Blumenthal speak of Comey is a joke," Mr. Trump wrote. "Richie' devised one of the greatest military frauds in U.S. history."

For years, "as a pol in Connecticut, Blumenthal would talk of his great bravery and conquests in Vietnam — except he was never there," Mr. Trump added. When "caught, he cried like a baby and begged for forgiveness ... and now he is judge & jury. He should be the one who is investigated for his acts."

The president was referring to a 2010 article in The Times that said Mr. Blumenthal had presented himself as a Vietnam veteran during his first Senate campaign, when he had actually served in the Marine Reserves at home and never gone to war. The story did not say that Mr. Blumenthal had boasted of bravery or conquests. Republican leaders echoed Mr. Trump's Twitter attacks on Democrats throughout the day. At one point, the president wrote that his adversaries were pretending to be aggrieved by Mr. Comey's firing.

"Phony hypocrites!" Mr. Trump wrote, signaling the growing

frustration inside the White House about the backlash.

Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky — who, as majority leader, wields vast power over the focus of the Senate — defended the decision. Many other top Republicans agreed.

Senator Richard M. Burr, Republican of North Carolina and chairman of the Intelligence Committee, stopped short of directly criticizing the president. But his committee announced that it had issued its first subpoena to demand records from Michael T. Flynn, Mr. Trump's former national security adviser, in connection with his emails, phone calls, meetings and financial dealings with Russians. It was an aggressive new tack for what had been a slow-moving inquiry.

The maelstrom is sure to sap the Senate's time and energy, detracting from a Republican agenda that includes a budget, health care, a tax overhaul and infrastructure.

"Today, we'll no doubt hear calls for a new investigation," Mr. McConnell said on the Senate floor as most Democrats looked on. He predicted that such a move could "only serve to impede the current work being done."

How RSS And Amit Shah Are Plotting The Election For President

Modi's penchant for springing surprises like demonetisation is well known, so the NDA candidate could be a complete outlier to take the opposition by surprise. But, like in UP, the RSS would like to stamp its authority on the nominee. With national elections due in two years, the President's job acquires huge importance. Both Modi and Shah would want a candidate that they are comfortable with and who could rule in favour of the government in crucial matters. Sources in the know of the current discussion say it has to be a person that Modi can trust completely. This would have ruled out L K Advani, even if the Babri Masjid case had not gone against him recently, as both the RSS and Modi have a trust deficit with him. The third President of the BJP, Dr Murlī Manohar Joshi, who also

vacated his Varanasi constituency for Modi, had a better shot at making it to a shortlist at least but has, like Advani, hit a setback in the Babri case where they will now be tried for criminal conspiracy in the destruction of the 16th-century mosque in Ayodhya. While the Sangh preference is a closely-guarded secret, a host of BJP politicians are reportedly making a big play for the job.

These include Venkiah Naidu, Urban Development Minister, who compared Modi to an "avatar of God" and said "India was blessed to have him", Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, Draupadi Murmu, currently Governor of Jharkhand. Hailing from a tribal family in Odisha, Murmu has had a career spanning two decades. If she is the NDA candidate, it would be the first time that a tribal occupies the office and would also ensure the support of Odisha Chief Minister Patnaik. Another candidate is Thawar Chand Gehlot, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment. Sources say RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat was never interested in the job and his name was mentioned to embarrass him by some frenemies like the Shiv Sena till he squelched the speculation himself.

'The battle is likely to be fierce, brutal and quick'

Anonymous, a decentralized group that grew out of the imageboard 4chan in the 2000s, has a history of using hacked data, targeted harassment, and publicity campaigns in a self-described effort to spread 'information and facts the government doesn't want you to know.' 'With three superpowers drawn into the mix, other nations will be coerced into choosing sides,' the group says in its latest video,

although it isn't clear which three nations the group is referring to. The video makes no mention of Russia. The video goes on to highlight several recent developments in East Asia. First, it points to the recent roll-out of the American THAAD ballistic missile defense system in South Korea, a move condemned by the Chinese. China's recent warning to its citizens to leave North Korea, and military buildup at the North

Korean border in anticipation of a potential flood of North Korean refugees, also merit attention, according to Anonymous. 'The pragmatic Chinese, it seems, are starting to lose their patience,' the group says. As further evidence of looming war, Anonymous points to a recent warning the Japanese government gave its citizens living near military bases, alerting them that they could only have a 10 minute warning in the event of a

nuclear attack from North Korea. The ominous video also notes that the US recently conducted a test launch of a Minuteman 3 intercontinental ballistic missile. Military officials said that test had been planned for 10 months as part of ongoing force readiness assessments. The group also points out the mixed motives of the Chinese, who are considered the isolated North Korean regime's only ally on the international stage.

'Although China doesn't want radioactive fallout and refugees on its borders, do they really want their neighbor giving up nukes when keeps the US in check?' North Korea is not believed to have nuclear-capable missiles able to reach the continental US. Despite its ominous warnings, Anonymous does caution that all of this 'doesn't mean outright war yet,' adding forbiddingly: 'for the moment'.

Kamala for President ? Why the Air India maharaja needs new clothes

She believes more government is the answer to almost every question. Her unwavering support of "sanctuary city" policies — in spite of the growing list of high-profile victims like Kate Steinle — makes her the perfect foil to President Trump. And liberals and leftists alike will have much to cheer with her unambiguous support for the most extreme gun control measures — first as California's progressive Attorney General, and now as its junior U.S. Senator. Naturally, there will be a huge primary fight, which may feature Hillary looking for a rematch, as well as Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) — and even Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). But in order to energize younger, female and minority voters, it will be hard to keep Harris out of the race.

In politics, timing is everything — and Harris's time may have come, just as her star is rising. After the debacle of the Hillary nomination, which split the Democrat Party into two camps — mostly older, establishment types who favored Clinton versus the mostly younger, anti-establishment Bernie supporters — Democrats

need a unity candidate. A McClatchy News story quotes veteran Democrat strategist Bob Shrum: "From everything I've seen of her she'd be an attractive candidate, she could be a compelling candidate, and I think she'd have a lot of appeal for primary voters." "A strong block of liberal Democrats, though," the article continues, "would eagerly embrace another Sanders run. And Shrum said Democrats would rally around a Biden presidential candidacy but, if the 74-year-old Biden doesn't run, and he has said that he will not, 'there's a deep desire in the Democratic Party to move on to a new generation.'" In spite of denying any interest in running for President in 2020, Harris is doing all the things that candidates do when exploring a run of this magnitude. She's been giving speeches all over — including keynoting at last week's National Democratic Institute's Madeleine Albright luncheon. She's also been proving her fundraising ability by helping to raise funds for other Democrat candidates around the country, and is laying the groundwork for her political

future — whatever that may be — by developing and fostering all the right relationships. When asked, Harris has repeatedly denied that she has any interest in running — but casually mentions that she's got foreign policy chops as well. "I'm four months into the Senate and we've got a lot of work to do," Harris reportedly said after an event in downtown Los Angeles. "I just got back from Iraq, from Baghdad, and from looking at one of the largest refugee camps in the world with 80,000 Syrian refugees. Those are the issues I will focus on." One final demographic that favors a Harris run is that she hails from the epicenter of Trump resistance: name, California. And if the recent trend of Trump-bashing in every obscure race continues, Harris will have a Ph. D. in anti-Trumpism by 2020 — just in time for the campaign. However, she may have to be careful if she wants to appeal beyond the party's "progressive" wing. Last week, she used profanity in an attack on an Idaho congressman who defended the House health care bill: "What the f— is that?" she exclaimed during a podcast.

There is a renewed political vigour to implement changes which have eluded successive governments. The conclusion of GST, banking ordinance and fiscal rectitude are some examples. The Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) or UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagarik) will unleash market forces to improve connectivity, given the constraints of topography and distance. GST ensures economic integration, UDAN fosters physical connectivity. The burst of private operators has enlarged consumer choice, reduced costs and improved linkages among metropolitan centres. Notwithstanding dramatic improvements in roads and railways, faster integration of rural India remained a quest. Economising on time through air connectivity has multipliers beyond the narrow calculus. The UDAN scheme has the vision of "creating an eco-system to make flying affordable for the masses". It secures regional connectivity by harnessing the power of market forces. Deeper air penetration between tier-2 and tier-3 cities through low-cost and reliable air connectivity will spur growth. The

essence of the scheme rests on its market-based principles designed for long-term sustainability. The incentives of reduced excise and Value Added Tax (VAT) on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), and constitution of a Regional Connectivity Fund (RCF) financed through fee or levy on domestic flights enables its operational funding. The provision of Viability Gap Funding (VGF) and exclusive operational rights for three years balances incentives with competition. Any civil aviation policy without a fundamental restructuring of Air India Limited (AIL) is like whistling against the wind. AIL is the elephant in the room. The national carrier, also famous as the 'Maharaja', is a classic example of 'Emperor without clothes'. It represents all that can go wrong when governments seek to run businesses, often unimaginatively. Reckon with the following. First, its dismal financial health. AIL has consistently incurred losses and is severely d e b t - r i d d e n . Notwithstanding the massive equity infusion of around Rs. 25,000 crores since 2012 under its turnaround plan/financial

restructuring plan (TAP/FRP), the total debt stood at Rs. 52,815 crore on March 31, 2016. An annual interest burden of Rs. 4,000 crore and a net loss of Rs. 3,836 crore (2015-16) erodes profitability. It continues to have a cash deficit of around Rs. 200 crore per month which is financed by fresh borrowings and deferred payments to its creditors. A default on its debt obligations is inevitable without constant infusion of fresh public funds. Second, its poor market performance. The less said about the illogical merger of Indian Airlines and Air India in 2007, the better. Its market share has monotonically come down from 60% to below 15%. It consistently lags behinds its peers on performance indicators like passenger load factor, complaints, delays and operational lapses. Third, compounding its financial problems is its miserable personnel management. For instance, there has been no recruitment in AIL (except pilots and cabin crew) for the last 20 years. Ironically, in a country replete with young talent, the employees' average age of 48 years is misaligned.

The New Silk Road To Empire

There's no dearth of post-scripts to the End of History. A quarter century ago, America was presumed to have become the sole gravitational centre of the world, with a monopoly over punitive power and soft power alike. And liberal democracy was to rain down over the universe. One sign of how the script has changed resides in an informal proposal, broached over a decade ago, that visualises a cosy relationship between the United States and China. Even without being implemented, just as a potential future, it sends waves of nervous anticipation—filling a whole host of US allies in different Asian capitals with a vague sense of dread.

As a concept, the Group of Two or G2 formalises what everyone by now implicitly concedes about the global distribution of power: we are really in a bipolar era. G2, if it ever comes to pass, will seek to bring the world's two most powerful nations—the US and China—closer so they could address and look to resolve all major challenges together. The idea has been endorsed by several leading American foreign policy practitioners since 2005, when it was first floated. But George W. Bush and Barack Obama as US presidents were smart enough to keep the proposal on the table while dealing with China, without really putting it into force.

Under Donald Trump's presidency, are things about to change?

From the time the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, the US had been the sole superpower dominating the world—and it behaved like one. However, today that world looks like a historical relic. China looms large not only in Asia but everywhere, and seriously threatens American hegemony. The G2 concept is a pragmatic response to this changed reality: in effect, it will mean the US has been forced to make space and rearrange the political order because greater advantage may lie in non-conflictual cohabitation.

"The gap between the US and China has now reduced. But this has been an ongoing phenomenon," says Ashok Kantha, director of Delhi's Institute of Chinese Studies. The US's relative decline has been talked about since the 2008 global economic crisis that began in America and spread to other western capitals. China, one of the world's fastest growing economies for nearly four decades, became the natural source of vitality for an ailing global economy. Today, its role seems more pronounced.

Trump's advent and his 'America First' slogan—protectionist moves to insulate the world's largest economy from global competition and to withdraw from multilateral trade deals with restrictive policies to safeguard American jobs and markets—have ceded more space to China.

In a sense, it's inevitable. "When you have something as dramatic as the 'rise of China', the US, as the pre-eminent power, will have to accommodate and make adjustments to that," argues Kantha, who has served as India's ambassador to Beijing. Bonnie Glaser, director of the China Power project at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, says: "If the US is ceding ground to China in Asia, it is not by design." China's military advancement itself makes enduring US primacy unsustainable, she says.

Yet, there's a tinge of multipolarity to the new world. Several other powers, like India, Indonesia, Vietnam and Brazil, too, have been rising. "Their rise may not be as spectacular, but they too affect the broader transition of power we witness today," says the former diplomat.

So how does a country like India deal with this new reality? During the Cold War, India had relied on both the US and the USSR to deal with China—mostly a rival and competitor, despite occasional phases of cooperation. Soon after the 1962 conflict and around the 1965 war, when Beijing had issued a warning to India to withdraw from Pakistani territory, New Delhi leveraged Washington to neutralise that challenge. Since the 1971 war, India leant more on Moscow to deal with China, taking advantage of strained Sino-Soviet relations. Post-1991, it began a serious outreach to the US—and it's resumed its old role of a counterbalancing force for India.

"In my reading, it's only during Bush Jr.'s time, maybe 2003

onwards, that India began to leverage its growing proximity with the US in ties with China," says Srinath Raghavan, senior fellow at Delhi's Centre for Policy Research. This has been New Delhi's default stance for years, especially since it went nuclear in 1998 and cited China as a main threat to its security. Under the Narendra Modi dispensation, India has seemed more blatant in flaunting its

MIDDLE'S RISE TO TOP

China, with its enormous economic, defence, diplomatic and geo-strategic heft, is a viable alternative to US's global clout

It's the world's largest trading nation, at \$4,068 Bn, surpassing the US volume of \$3,724 Bn. It's also the top manufacturing nation, accounting for a quarter of the global value, surpassing Germany, Japan, the US.

The world's second largest economy has a size of \$11.39 trillion; in PPP terms it's \$23.2 trillion, more than the US (\$18.56 trillion). With US under a cloud of protectionism, China has stepped in as leader of a free market world, champion of open trading system.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the world largest military with 2.28 million personnel. At \$145.8 bn, its military budget is the second largest after the US's \$597 bn. It's expanding its naval force to become a 'two-ocean' navy to help project power as a global player, in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

As permanent member of the UN Security Council, China is stressing more on multilateral initiatives, in contrast to US's unilateralism to meet challenges from climate change to global terror. After US, it's the only other nation which has leverage over other nations.

Its One-Belt-One-Road Initiative and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership are gaining traction among Asian countries, Africa, Europe; may end up being one of China's main geo-strategic planks and establish it as the most viable option to a US-led world order.







proximity to the US, especially while sending a signal to the Chinese leadership.

But now, with Trump seemingly keen to enlist China's support in dealing with North Korea's nuclear programme, the equations alter for India. Most Indian policy thinkers are sceptical about G2, confident as they are of the trajectory of Indo-US relations. Yet, some may also recall images from not too long ago, when President Clinton stood side-by-side with Jiang Zemin after India's May 1998 nuclear tests and berated India and Pakistan, demanding that the two dismantle their nuclear programme and sign the CTBT and NPT.

The possibility of such a scenario being re-enacted—the US and Chinese presidents jointly issuing public prescriptions for New Delhi—would seem remote now. But it serves as a sobering reminder, and it's likely that behind brave public fronts there lies the concern that, sooner rather than later, India might have to defend

its interests without relying too much on the US.

Indian experts say there is no real sign yet of a retreat on America's part from the security domain. According to Kantha, the altered US stance on global trade or climate change has no direct effect on its keenness to maintain its pre-eminent position in the Asia-Pacific. "There are contradictory signals and it is still a work in progress," says Kantha. And yet, he concedes, China has indeed adopted a more aggressive role since the 2008 global meltdown, especially under Xi Jinping. "There is likely to be a third wave of a more assertive China and it might start unfolding because of US ambivalence."

One extravagant sign of its new footprint will come with the 'One-Belt-One-Road' Summit, to be held in Beijing in mid-May—a mega diplomatic event. It has generated a lot of interest and a fair bit of controversy. A personal initiative of President Xi, OBOR aims to revive an ancient trading route that stretches from Asia to Europe and also to Africa. The presence of 28 heads of state—including the likes of Putin—and representatives of over 100 countries will signal a China-centred world-order.

"At one level, OBOR is a repackaging of policies under way since the end of USSR," says John Garver, professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology. "It's a response to an awareness that China's growing power is causing unease among Asian countries—an attempt to use the hundreds of billions of dollars in its foreign currency reserves to entice neighbours into win-win 'communities of common development'."

In a way, it's a 'coming-out party' for China. Juxtaposed against Trump's inward focus, China almost looks like an alternate "leader of the free world", if defined in economic terms. China has already invested over \$50 billion in countries in the OBOR zone since 2013—the 21st century Silk Road spins out from Xinjiang to take in Central Asia, West Asia, the Levant, Turkey, with destinations in Germany, Netherlands and Italy. The maritime Silk Road begins in Fujian and goes up to Venice. The network, in China's plan, would include railways, highways, oil and gas pipelines, power grids, internet networks as well as maritime and other infrastructure links. Xi foresees trade volumes running into \$2.5 trillion in a decade—naturally, there's a surge of interest in sagging European economies. The Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is another transnational instrument it helms.

New Delhi is a bit chagrined at

this new lustre China is acquiring. It sees the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—a key element of OBOR—as having been built in total disregard of India's veto, since it passes through Kashmir. As a protest, India will send only a low-level delegation to the Beijing Summit. But how effective will this strategy of maintaining a tense distance from China be? More importantly, has the strategy of relying on the US seriously worked?

"It has been useful, though there are limits to it," says Raghavan. The Sino-Indian agreements in 2005 on strategic partnership and boundary were clearly possible, he says, because China wanted to get in there before the Indo-US nuclear deal was announced. But that strategy is useful only to the extent that Beijing believes India still has some leeway to sustain independent bilateral ties with it.

Rana Mitter, professor of Chinese history at Oxford, sees potential for a more stable Asia. "China is keen to take advantage where it can, but it would not want to provoke the US directly. Traditional US allies like Japan are more reassured than they were even a few weeks ago. A key test will be the South Korean polls this month. If the new president does not feel confident of US support, he may need to lean more towards China."

India is thus faced with a complex, shifting map of geopolitics. Amid transitions in the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific and its multi-pronged contestations, a unitary strategy may be fraught with risk. An uncertain world demands nimble-footed diplomacy—a sustainable way to balance advantages and concerns. A rising China offers opportunities, and yet poses an implicit security threat. You cannot contain a country like China, nor can it contain a country like India. How do you take advantage, while mitigating the challenges? That is the dilemma before India and most countries.

There is a reasoned, mature way out. "So much good is also happening in this relationship that's getting ignored. Right now, it would seem the entire Sino-Indian relationship hinges on Masood Azhar and NSG... There are far too many issues on the problem side of the ledger or the gain side of the ledger than these," says Kantha. Can a way be found to game the situation and maintain India's traditional primacy in its region? Or will China's emerging hegemony become a stepping stone to Xi's 'China Dream'? OBOR, CPEC, Tibet, the Dalai Lama...all are elements in that game, or as someone called it, "protracted contest".

US lawmakers visit Dalai Lama, highlight situation in Tibet



their culture and their language," Pelosi said.

The lawmakers' visit comes at a awkward time for Trump. Campaigning for election, he had cast China as a trade adversary and currency manipulator, but he now wants President Xi Jinping's support to restrain nuclear-armed North Korea.

"This is my home," the Dalai Lama said holding Pelosi's hand after welcoming the US delegation to his timber-built hilltop residence. He then corrected himself: "This is my second home. My real home - other side."

He then reflected on his fate as a refugee, since fleeing from his homeland in 1959.

"Here the last 58 years I am the longest guest of Indian government," the Dalai Lama said. "But, emotionally, some concern about deep inside Tibet,

and also in China proper there are 400 million Buddhists."

The Dalai Lama said he would be willing to visit China but this was not possible while Beijing still considered him a "dangerous splittist."

After Trump's election last November, the Dalai Lama said he was keen to meet the incoming US leader. It now looks unlikely the Nobel peace laureate will get a White House invite - an honour accorded by recent American presidents - anytime soon.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson last week played down the role of human rights in US foreign policy, raising fears the Dalai Lama could lose one of his last friends in the West.

Pelosi last visited the Dalai Lama in 2008, in the aftermath of a Chinese crackdown on an uprising in Tibet that coincided

with the Beijing Olympics.

The situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region has worsened since then, according to experts and human rights activists, as authorities crack down on dissent and pursue systematic policies to assimilate Tibetans. "The level of repression in Tibet has increased tremendously," said Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch. Numbers crossing from Tibet into India and neighbouring Nepal have slowed to a trickle, she added, sapping the vitality of the Tibetan emigre community in South Asia. Reports continue to emerge from Tibet from time to time of isolated acts of protest against Chinese rule. China took control of Tibet in 1950 in what it calls a "peaceful liberation" and has piled pressure on foreign governments to shun the Dalai Lama.

(News Agencies) DHARAMSALA: A US Congressional delegation visited the Dalai Lama at his headquarters in India on Tuesday, seeking to draw world attention to human rights in Tibet as President Donald Trump eyes warmer ties with China. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi flew with a bipartisan delegation to the Himalayan hill town where the 81-year-old Buddhist leader is based. The meeting is likely to upset China, which regards the Dalai Lama as a separatist. "As we visit His Holiness the Dalai Lama, our bipartisan delegation comes in his spirit of faith and peace. We come on this visit to be inspired by His Holiness and demonstrate our commitment to the Tibetan people, to their faith,

'Imran Khan's party to sue Nawaz Sharif for taking money from Osama bin Laden'



Intelligence (ISI) spy Khalid Khawaja, who was brutally murdered in 2010 by Pakistani Taliban.

"Relying on the revelations made in certain interviews and a book, PTI intends to open up a shady chapter in the country's political history from late 1980s in an apparent bid to further malign Sharif," the report said. The interviews and the book claim that Sharif took money, amounting to Rs 1.5 billion from former al-Qaida chief Laden to promote jihad in Kashmir and Afghanistan, the report said. They also claim that later, an amount of Rs 270 million from this money was

utilised to support a no-confidence move against Bhutto in 1989, the report said.

However in 2013, PTI leader Masood Sharif Khan Khattak - who is a former director general of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) - had submitted a statement before the Supreme Court in a case related to misappropriation of the IB funds in 1989. In his nine-page statement, Khattak had claimed that the moving force behind the vote of no-confidence against Bhutto in 1989 was not political and named former president Ghulam Ishaq Khan and former army chief Mirza Aslam Baig, claiming that they

wanted to keep Bhutto out of power, the report said. Chaudhry, meanwhile said, "In the past, Sharif remained an active part of several conspiracies against the elected governments". Last week, the PTI announced to open up another legal front against Sharif, saying it would file a petition demanding implementation on a 2012 verdict of the apex court in the Asghar Khan case which determined that Sharif and other politicians had received money from an intelligence agency prior to the 1990 general election to form an alliance against the Pakistan Peoples Party.

(News Agencies) ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's opposition leader Imran Khan's party has said it would sue Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for allegedly taking money from Osama bin Laden to promote jihad in Kashmir.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Khan has been demanding resignation from Sharif for alleged corruption.

PTI spokesperson Fawad Chaudhry said on Monday that he would file a petition in the Supreme Court seeking admission of a case against Sharif for "taking funds from a foreign individual to destabilise and conspire against democracy in Pakistan", the Express Tribune reported.

The PTI does not possess substantial evidence to fortify its case except for some interviews and excerpts from a book 'Khalid Khawaja: Shaheed-e-Aman' by

After protest from Pakistan, China removes envoy's remark on renaming CPEC

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: China's ambassador to India, Luo Zhaohui, offered to change the name+ of the China-Pakistan economic corridor+ to assuage Indian sentiments if it would persuade India to join OBOR. The Chinese embassy in Delhi removed the relevant portion from the transcript of his speech after Pakistan government protested to China.

In the past few weeks, the Chinese ambassador and his deputy have gone out of their way to entice India into joining OBOR+. China is setting much stock by the OBOR summit in Beijing which starts on May 14, but without India. India has refused to send any representation to the summit, having expressed deep reservations about the project+.

Addressing the United Services Institution (USI) in the capital, the Chinese ambassador, Luo Zhaohui said India and China should synergize the Act

East Policy with OBOR. "OBOR and regional connectivity could provide China and India with fresh opportunities and highlights for the bilateral cooperation."

The Chinese envoy then made two points, according to some members of the audience. First, that China acknowledged that Kashmir should be resolved bilaterally between India and Pakistan "in accordance with the Shimla agreement." This was seen as a positive shift in the Chinese position. Then he said, if it pleased India, China could even rename CPEC into a China-Pakistan-India corridor. Afterwards, he was questioned by the chairperson, former foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal on his "offer". Luo suggested they could run the corridor through J&K (the part under Indian control) as well and tag India's name to the project. "It was totally disingenuous," said a listener, "by

pretending to underplay India's objections based on sovereignty."

However, the Chinese envoy acknowledged Indian reservations on OBOR. "The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through the Pakistan-Controlled-Kashmir, raising sovereignty concerns. China has no intention to get involved in the sovereignty and territorial disputes between India and Pakistan. China supports the solution of the disputes through bilateral negotiations between the two countries. The CPEC is for promoting economic cooperation and connectivity. It has no connections to or impact on sovereignty issues."

India has insisted that sovereignty concerns here are paramount, since by China's actions it was trying to change the ground reality and therefore challenge sovereignty.

The city without a human in sight

South Korea reveals plans for giant self-driving car 'test town'

(News Agencies) The strict rules set by officials may have hindered the progress of self-driving cars in the US, but a country across the Pacific believes to have found a way around regulations.

South Korea has announced it will open an 88 acre facility geared towards testing autonomous technologies, which will incorporate a range of scenarios and road environments found in the real-world.

Called 'K-City', the complex will allow self-driving cars to run the course without the need of a temporary operating permit that is required to test on public roads.

South Korea gave the green light for firms to test

their self-driving cars in November, in a bid to overtake other nations already deep in the space.

However, the addition of K-City is said to offer more assistance to those developing the technology, reported Business Korea.

At the moment, the facility is still under construction, but will span 360,000 square meters and include bus lanes, expressways and zones for autonomous parking.

It is also said to be the largest self-driving testing area in the world – it will be 50 acres larger than the University of Michigan's 32-acre MCity in Ann Arbor.

The expressways are set to open in the second

half of this year, but the entire area will not be ready

until the beginning of 2018.

However, what makes this facility so unique is that the self-driving cars being tested on the course do not need a temporary operating permit to cruise around. Carmakers such as Hyundai and Kia Motors are among those on the list to sue the facility to test their technologies and Samsung, which recently won approval to test its on

public roads, will also join come October. The electronics maker received approval from the South Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport earlier this month to begin test its 'commercialized Hyundai vehicle equipped with the latest cameras and sensors', The Korea Herald reported. The

ministry has been working towards easing regulations on self-driving cars in the country – in a bid to not fall behind the rest of the world. So far, the agency has been able to decrease the number of passengers required to ride in the vehicle from two to just one. It is designed to support



repeatable testing of new technologies before they are tried out on public streets and highways. The \$6.5 million facility will be outfitted with 40 building facades, angled intersections, a traffic circle, a bridge, a tunnel, gravel roads, and plenty of obstructed views. And it has also 'paved the way' for

automobile manufactures to begin producing cars without steering wheels or pedals. 'Self-driving cars call for the collaboration of various cutting-edge technologies from the artificial intelligence and information communication sectors,' the ministry said.

And it has also 'paved the way' for

Don't Let Facebook Make You Miserable

(News Agencies) IT is now official. Scholars have analyzed the data and confirmed what we already knew in our hearts. Social media is making us miserable.

We are all dimly aware that everybody else can't possibly be as successful, rich, attractive, relaxed, intellectual and joyous as they appear to be on Facebook. Yet we can't help comparing our inner lives with the curated lives of our friends.

Just how different is the real world from the world on social media? In the real world, The National Enquirer, a weekly, sells nearly three times as many copies as The Atlantic, a monthly, every year. On Facebook, The Atlantic is 45 times more popular.

Americans spend about six times as much of their time cleaning dishes as they do golfing. But there are roughly twice as many tweets reporting golfing as there are tweets reporting doing the dishes. The Las Vegas budget hotel Circus Circus and the luxurious hotel Bellagio each holds about the same number of people. But the Bellagio gets about three times as many check-ins on Facebook.

The search for online status takes some peculiar twists. Facebook works with an outside company to gather data on the cars people actually own. Facebook also has data on the

cars people associate with by posting about them or by liking them.

Owners of luxury cars like BMWs and Mercedeses are about two and a half times as likely to announce their affiliation on Facebook as are owners of ordinary makes and models.

In the United States, the desire to show off and exaggerate wealth is universal. Caucasians, Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans are all two to three times as likely to associate on Facebook with a luxury car they own than with a non-luxury car they own.

But different people in different places can have different notions of what is cool and what is embarrassing. Take musical taste. According to 2014 data from Spotify Insights on what people actually listen to, men and women have similar tastes; 29 of the 40 musicians women listened to most frequently were also the artists most frequently listened to by men.

On Facebook, though, men seem to underplay their interest in artists considered more feminine. For example, on Spotify, Katy Perry was the 10th most listened to artist among men, beating Bob Marley, Kanye West, Kendrick Lamar and Wiz Khalifa. But those other artists all have more male likes on Facebook. The pressure to look

a certain way on social media claim. can do much more than distort our image of the musicians other people actually listen to.

Sufferers of various illnesses are increasingly using social media to connect with others and to raise awareness about their



diseases. But if a condition is considered embarrassing, people are less likely to publicly associate themselves with it. Irritable bowel syndrome and migraines are similarly prevalent, each affecting around 10 percent of the American population. But migraine sufferers have built Facebook awareness and support groups two and a half times larger than I.B.S. sufferers have.

None of this behavior is all that new, although the form it takes is. Friends have always showed off to friends. People have always struggled to remind themselves that other people don't have it as easy as they

Think of the aphorism quoted by members of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Don't compare your insides to other people's outsides." Of course, this advice is difficult to follow. We never see other people's insides.

I have actually spent the past five years peeking into people's insides. I have been studying aggregate Google search data. Alone with a screen and anonymous, people tend to tell Google things they don't reveal to social media; they even tell Google things they don't tell to anybody else. Google offers digital truth serum. The words we type there are more honest than the pictures we present on Facebook or Instagram.

Sometimes the contrasts in different data sources are amusing. Consider how wives speak about their husbands.

On social media, the top descriptors to complete the phrase "My husband is ..." are "the best," "my best friend," "amazing," "the greatest" and "so cute." On Google, one of the top five ways to complete that phrase is also "amazing." So that checks out. The other four: "a jerk," "annoying," "gay" and "mean." While spending five years staring at a computer screen learning about some of human beings' strangest and darkest thoughts may not strike most people as a good

time, I have found the honest data surprisingly comforting. I have consistently felt less alone in my insecurities, anxieties, struggles and desires. Once you've looked at enough aggregate search data, it's hard to take the curated selves we see on social media too seriously. Or, as I like to sum up what Google data has taught me: We're all a mess. Now, you may not be a data scientist. You may not know how to code in R or calculate a confidence interval. But you can still take advantage of big data and digital truth serum to put an end to envy — or at least take some of the bite out of it. Any time you are feeling down about your life after lurking on Facebook, go to Google and start typing stuff into the search box. Google's autocomplete will tell you the searches other people are making. Type in "I always ..." and you may see the suggestion, based on other people's searches, "I always feel tired" or "I always have diarrhea." This can offer a stark contrast to social media, where everybody "always" seems to be on a Caribbean vacation. As our lives increasingly move online, I propose a new self-help mantra for the 21st century, courtesy of big data: Don't compare your Google searches with other people's Facebook posts.

How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality

An enormous entitlement in the tax code props up home prices and overwhelmingly benefits the wealthy and the upper middle class.

The son of a minister, Ohene Asare grew up poor. His family immigrated from Ghana when he was 8 and settled down in West Bridgewater, Mass., a town 30 miles south of Boston, where he was one of the few black students at the local public school. "It was us and this Jewish family," Asare remembered. "It was a field day." His white classmates bullied him, sometimes using racial slurs. His father transferred Asare when he was 14 to Milton Academy, which awarded Asare a scholarship that covered tuition and board. His parents still had to take out loans worth about \$20,000 for his living expenses. But the academy set Asare up for future success. He and his wife, Régine Jean-Charles, whom he got to know at Milton, are in their late 30s. She is a tenured professor of romance languages and literature at Boston College, and Asare is a founder of Aesara, a consulting and technology company.

Two years ago, the couple bought a new home. Set on a half-acre lot that backs up to conservation land in Milton, Mass., the 2,350-square-foot split-level has four bedrooms, three bathrooms, an open-concept kitchen and dining area, a finished basement, hardwood floors and beautiful touches throughout, like the Tennessee marble fireplace and hearth. It cost \$665,000. "This is the nicest house I've ever lived in," Asare told me.

Asare and Jean-Charles have four children and earn roughly \$290,000 a year, which puts them in the top 5 percent of household incomes in the country. After renting for the first years of their marriage, they participated in a home buyers' program administered by the nonprofit Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of

America. The program allowed Asare and Jean-Charles to purchase their first home in 2009 for \$360,000 with a 10 percent down payment, half of what is typically required. In 2015, they sold it for \$430,000. There is a reason so many Americans choose to develop their net worth through homeownership: It is a proven wealth builder and savings compeller. The average homeowner boasts a net worth (\$195,400) that is 36 times that of the average renter (\$5,400). Asare serves on the advisory board for HomeStart, a nonprofit focused on ending and preventing homelessness. Like most organizations, HomeStart is made up of people at various rungs on the economic ladder. Asare sits near the top; his salary exceeds that of anyone on staff at the nonprofit he helps advise. When Crisaliz Diaz was a staff member at HomeStart, she was at the other end of the ladder. She earned \$38,000 a year, putting her near the bottom third of American household incomes. A 26-year-old Latina with thick-rimmed glasses, Diaz rents a small two-bedroom apartment in Braintree, Mass., an outer suburb of Boston. Her two sons, Xzayvior and Mayson — Zay and May, she calls them — share a room plastered with Lego posters and Mickey Mouse stickers. Her apartment is spare and clean, with ceiling tiles you can push up and views of the parking lot and busy street.

Continue reading the main story

When Diaz moved in four years ago, the rent was \$1,195 a month, heat included, but her landlord has since raised the rent to \$1,385 a month, which takes 44 percent of her paycheck. Even with child-support payments and side jobs, she still doesn't bring in enough to pay

her regular bills. She goes without a savings account and regularly relies on credit cards to buy toilet paper and soap. "There's no stop to it," she told me. "It's just a consistent thing."

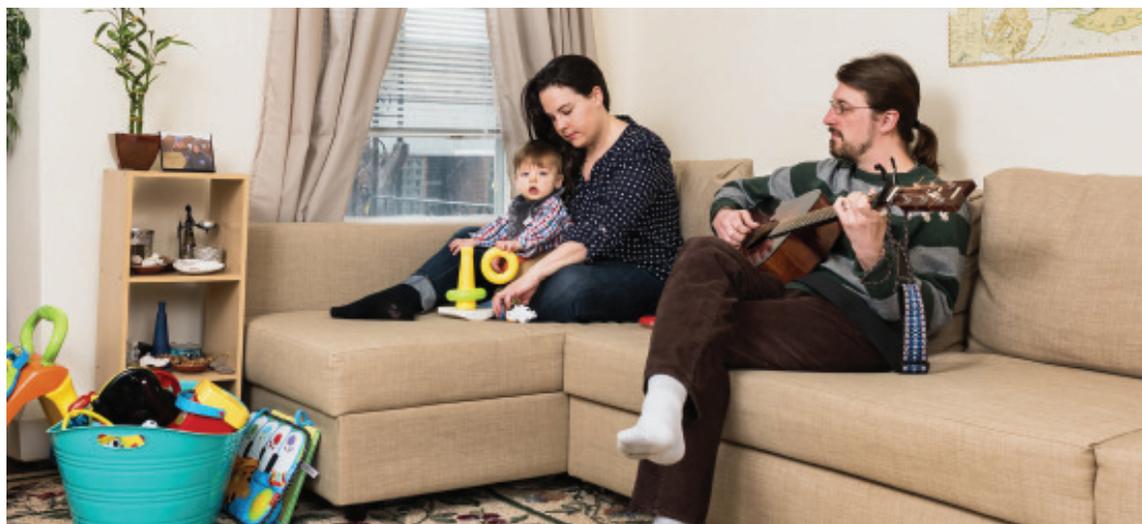
Diaz receives no housing assistance. She has applied to several programs, but nothing has come through. The last time Boston accepted new applications for rental-assistance Section 8 vouchers was nine years ago, when for a few precious weeks you were allowed to place your name on a very long waiting list. Boston is not atypical in that way. In Los Angeles, the estimated wait time for a Section 8 voucher is 11 years. In Washington, the waiting list for housing vouchers is closed indefinitely, and over 40,000 people have applied for public housing alone. While many Americans assume that most poor families live in subsidized housing, the opposite is true; nationwide, only one in four households that qualifies for rental assistance receives it. Most are like Diaz, struggling without government help in the private rental market, where housing costs claim larger and larger chunks of their income.

Almost a decade removed from the foreclosure crisis that began in 2008, the nation is facing one of the worst affordable-housing shortages in generations. The standard of "affordable" housing is that which costs roughly 30 percent or less of a family's income. Because of rising housing costs and stagnant wages, slightly more than half of all poor renting families in the country spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing costs, and at least one in four spends more than 70 percent. Yet America's national housing policy gives affluent homeowners large



benefits; middle-class homeowners, smaller benefits; and most renters, who are disproportionately poor, nothing. It is difficult to think of another social policy that more successfully multiplies America's inequality in such a sweeping fashion. Consider Asare and Diaz. As a homeowner, Asare benefits from tax breaks that Diaz does not, the biggest being the mortgage-interest deduction — or MID, in wonk-speak. All homeowners in America may deduct mortgage interest on their first and second homes. In 2015, Asare and Jean-Charles claimed \$21,686 in home interest and other real estate deductions, which saved them \$470 a month. That's roughly 15 percent of Diaz's monthly income. That same year, the federal government dedicated nearly \$134 billion to homeowner subsidies. The MID accounted for the biggest chunk of the total, \$71 billion, with real estate tax deductions, capital gains exclusions and other expenditures accounting for the rest. That number, \$134 billion,

was larger than the entire budgets of the Departments of Education, Justice and Energy combined for that year. It is a figure that exceeds half the entire gross domestic product of countries like Chile, New Zealand and Portugal. Recently, Gary Cohn, the chief economic adviser to President Trump, heralded his boss's first tax plan as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to do something really big." And indeed, Trump's plan represents a radical transformation in how we will fund the government, with its biggest winners being corporations and wealthy families. But no one in his administration, and only a small (albeit growing) group of people in either party, is pushing to reform what may very well be the most regressive piece of social policy in America. Perhaps that's because the mortgage-interest deduction overwhelmingly benefits the sorts of upper-middle-class voters who make up the donor base of both parties and who generally fail to acknowledge themselves to be beneficiaries of federal largess.



ICE Announces Crackdown on Congressional Interference with Deportations



months if not years.

Liberal members of Congress like Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO), Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA), and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) have resorted to introducing these private bills to prevent deportations when the regular administrative process is exhausted.

In light of President Donald Trump's executive order to place new emphasis on the deportation of aliens convicted of crimes, ICE has reevaluated this policy, according to the letter sent to congressional leaders Friday.

From now on, stays of removal will only be issued when specially requested by the chairs the House and Senate Judiciary Committees or the relevant subcommittees. In the current

Congress, all these posts are held by Republicans.

Even when specifically requested, stays will now be granted only once for no more than six months with the potential for 90-day extensions at the discretion of the Director of ICE, currently Acting Director Thomas Homan. Stays will also be eligible for revocation if ICE discovers damning information about aliens slated for removal after a stay is issued.

This new ICE policy may remove one of the most potent weapons used by opponents of the Trump administration's new direction on immigration enforcement. A Capitol Hill source who was apprised of the policy change also expressed hope that, by decreasing the

possibility of congressional interference, it would help ensure the efficient functioning of lawful immigration adjudication. Over 950,000 aliens have pending removal orders against them as of last May, according to now-Acting ICE Director Homan's testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Only about 300 federal immigration judges, who are part of the Department of Justice, are working through this backlog, although the Trump administration has pledged to rapidly expand this number. Fewer stays second guessing these judges' orders, which are enforced by ICE, part of the Department of Homeland Security, may help to overcome this still-expanding logjam in the country's immigration dockets.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced a new policy to pare back congressional leaders' ability to delay removals of illegal aliens, according to a letter obtained Monday by Breitbart News.

Stays of removal are frequently issued to aliens otherwise slated for deportation when members of Congress

introduce "private bills" to individually grant those aliens permanent legal status. While these bills rarely come to a vote and are even more rarely passed, ICE previously granted aliens stays of removal as a matter of course, while the bills are formally under consideration — a policy that can allow otherwise removable persons to remain in the United States for

Johnson, Westmoreland and the 'Selling' of Vietnam



in April by bringing the head of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Gen. William Westmoreland, to report on the war's progress. It was the first time in American history a president had called back a wartime field commander to testify on the administration's behalf.

At the time, Westmoreland seemed the embodiment of post-World War II American military power. In naming Westmoreland its 1965 "Man of the Year," Time magazine called the four-star general a "jut-jawed six-footer" and a "straightforward,

By early 1967, American and allied forces appeared stuck in the morass of Vietnam. Publicly, military commanders talked about progress; off the record, Army officers told journalists that they weren't "anywhere near the mopping up stage." Moreover, the press increasingly noted Lyndon B. Johnson's own frustrations. One report even suggested that the president was "tormented by the slow progress" of the war effort.

Ever an eye on domestic political trends, the president responded that spring by starting what would become a yearlong campaign to not only "sell" his Southeast Asia policy, but also disprove accusations of a stalemated war in Vietnam. Johnson began this publicity drive

determined man." Westmoreland, already a veteran of two wars before arriving in Vietnam, had led the famed 101st Airborne Division and had served as West Point's superintendent. In inheriting the multiple roles of a politically sensitive command in Vietnam, Time quipped, Westmoreland wore "more hats than Hedda Hopper."

In 1965, however, Westmoreland had only one strategic goal in mind — arrest the losing trend. By most accounts, South Vietnam teetered on the verge of collapse. Hanoi was sending full infantry regiments along the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail into South Vietnam. Acts of terrorism targeted local officials. The South Vietnamese

Army (officially known as the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, or A.R.V.N.) appeared incapable of keeping pace with the escalating levels of violence. Westmoreland realized, though, that regaining the strategic initiative meant more than just killing the enemy. Rather, military operations were meant to a larger end. In short, battlefield victories were intended to have political purpose.

Thus, throughout 1966 and early 1967, American forces undertook a host of missions helping to extend Saigon's control over the population. They fought alongside the A.R.V.N. and local militia against enemy main force and insurgent units. They implemented nonmilitary civic action plans, such as medical visits to rural hamlets and administrative training of district officials. And they instituted programs to "win the hearts and minds of the people."

Contrary to the way it was later portrayed in the press and history books, Westmoreland's war proved far more than a singular focus on attrition of the enemy and racking up high body counts simply for a "false sense of military pride."

Of course, there were myriad difficulties in implementing such a wide-ranging strategy, of balancing a war whose nature was as much political as it was military. Westmoreland grappled with contentious party politics in Saigon, with a Communist-

nationalist message that resonated among the South Vietnamese countryside, and with a stubborn enemy committed to Vietnam's reunification and freedom from Western influence.

Perhaps most troubling, by 1967 the American military command faced a home front increasingly questioning the sacrifices for a war that seemed to produce so few tangible results. As the year wore on, words like "stalemate" and "quagmire" became commonplace in appraisals of America's strategy and chances for victory in Southeast Asia.

Westmoreland's designation as the president's chief surrogate in the spring of 1967, though, left little doubt that Johnson had committed himself, and the nation, to continued war. Johnson intended his "salesmanship campaign" to shore up defenses backing the United States' commitment to Vietnam, to push back against those questioning the viability of his policies. The nation's top field general would disprove critics by demonstrating progress. At Westmoreland's first stop, The Associated Press's annual editors luncheon on April 25, the general argued that Vietnam's fate would affect the future of all "emerging nations." He lauded his soldiers' performance in rescuing a Saigon government "on the verge of defeat," while highlighting the complexities of this kind of war — "a war of both subversion and invasion, a war in which political and

psychological factors are of such consequence." And while a confident Westmoreland painted a favorable military picture, he twice emphasized a point that most likely made Johnson wince. "I do not see any end of the war in sight."

Three days later Westmoreland gave another speech that overshadowed his A.P. address. To a joint session of Congress, the general roused legislators to "enthusiastic cheers," according to one report, pledging that his command would "prevail in Vietnam over the Communist aggressor." (Such language intimated a threat more external than internal.) Yet Westmoreland noted that military success alone would not ensure "a swift and decisive end to the conflict." The enemy was waging a "total war all day — every day — everywhere." Westmoreland maintained that only a strategy of "unrelenting but discriminating military, political and psychological pressure" on the enemy would lead to success.

At no time did Westmoreland mention the issue of stalemate. While their enemy was "far from quitting," American forces, backed at home by "resolve, confidence, patience, determination and continued support," would succeed.

In truth, Westmoreland proved unable to articulate the convoluted nature of a struggle over Vietnamese national identity that no foreign entity was likely to resolve. The war remained as "undefinable" as ever.

Why a western diet gives you gout

Regularly consuming sugary drinks, red meat and chips raise the risk

(News Agencies) Consuming a Western diet can increase the risk of developing gout, a new study suggests.

Researchers have discovered that people are more likely to have the painful condition if they indulge in red and processed meats, soft drinks, French fries, sugar, sweets and desserts.

However, they also found that a diet rich in fruit, veg, nuts and wholegrains may protect against gout. Research on 44,000 men found eating these types of foods in preference to red meat could prevent the crippling condition.

The team from Harvard Medical School in the US believe they help lower levels of a chemical called uric acid which

causes gout.

They hope the findings could lead to a new treatment for gout based on a diet of fruit, nuts and wholegrains. Gout is a form of arthritis which affects about half a million adults in the UK, or 4 per cent of the population.

It occurs when small crystals form inside the joints causing sudden attacks of severe pain and swelling. The condition is most common in men over 30 or women after the menopause.

It is caused by a build-up of uric acid which forms tiny crystals near the joints.

But today's study suggests that fruit, veg, nuts and wholegrains contain powerful ingredients to prevent this build-

up. Dr Hyon Choi looked at the records of 44,444 men aged 40 to 75 who had never been diagnosed with gout.

They all completed detailed food questionnaires and were given scores based on how much fruit, veg, nuts and wholegrains they ate. The men were followed for the next 26 years over which time 1,731 were diagnosed with gout. Those who with the highest scores who ate the most fruit, veg and wholegrains were 32 per cent less likely to be diagnosed with gout.

The findings of the study are not conclusive and the scientists cannot be certain that these foods prevent gout.



But Dr Choi said that a high fruit and wholegrain diet 'may provide an attractive preventive dietary approach for the risk of gout.' He said this would also prevent high blood pressure – which affects many gout patients – thereby treating two birds with one stone. A spokesman for the UK Gout Society said: 'Gout is excruciatingly painful and left untreated it can cause irreversible damage to the joints. While diet and lifestyle are

important, it is only a small contributor to the likelihood of getting the condition. 'Other important risk factors for gout include family history and genetics, being overweight, taking certain medicines, diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, heart disease, kidney problems and, in some cases, crash dieting. 'If you think you have gout it's vital you go and visit your doctor as gout is eminently treatable.'

How to use protein powder for weight LOSS

Nutritionist reveals the 6 fat-burning ingredients to look out for

(Agencies) Rice, pea, whey or soy? Protein supplement ingredients are practically a language of their own. A rather confusing one at that.

The rule of thumb, says nutritionist Rick Hay, a lecturer in weight management at the College of Naturopathic Medicine is, 'if you can't pronounce it, then it's unlikely to be good for you'.

Good news is, research shows that supplementing the diet with quality protein powder, from whey or vegetable sources such as rice, pea or hemp and made into a smoothie can both increase performance and lower fat levels in the body.

Now a new generation of protein powders enhance this effect by including cutting edge ingredients for muscle recovery, metabolism and aiding the nervous system – all essential if fat loss is your goal.

Here, Rick Hay lists six key

ingredients to look for in your protein powder for weight loss.

1. Carnitine

'One of the key ingredients is carnitine, it's well researched and it has a wonderful role to play in the body with the metabolism fat, not only getting rid of the fat but helping to burn it and transport it out which is what we want.'

A systematic review of the evidence for carnitine and weight loss done published in Obesity Review in 2016 showed that supplementing with it did indeed lead to a decrease in Body Mass Index over time.

2. Matcha green tea

'Another ingredient you need to look at is matcha green tea, green tea imparticular is well researched and comes with many other benefits, cognition, better mood and it's a lovely antioxidant as well.

'Scientific studies show that drinking up to five cups of green

tea a day can increase daily metabolism.'

Countless studies have shown green tea benefits metabolism.

In one, done in 2014 at Penn State University, mice on a high-fat diet that consumed green tea extract and exercised regularly experienced sharp reductions in final body weight and significant improvements in health.

After 16 weeks, high-fat-fed mice that exercised regularly and ingested green tea extract showed an average body mass reduction of 27.1 percent and an average abdominal fat mass reduction of 36.6 percent.

The mice on the green-tea-extract-and-exercise regimen also experienced a 17 percent reduction in fasting blood glucose level, a 65 percent decrease in plasma insulin level and reduction in insulin resistance of 65 percent – all substantial improvements related to diabetic health.

3. Glutamine

'If you're looking to help your muscles recover after you've worked out or you want to help them if you're stressed and they're feeling a little tight, one of the key ingredients look for is glutamine; a muscle relaxant.

'Glutamine also has other benefits to the nervous system and is used to help stress and anxiety.'

It's also essential to the normal healthy functioning of the immune system and in the



maintenance of healthy muscle, especially if you're exercising.

4. Plant based proteins

'Plant based proteins are effective ingredients to improve energy production in the body and at a mitochondrial [cellular] level as well.

'They've got an array of key amino acids that help to deliver to the cell that energy you need to give you that burst of sustained energy.

'Such proteins are not metabolised as quickly as some of thought sugary carbohydrates and so they can help keep you fuller for longer between meals.

Look for a combination of plant proteins such as pea, hemp, rice and pumpkin seeds are to ensure you get a healthy mix if essential fats and a wide-ranging amino aside profile – especially if you are vegan.'

Plant protein may also help suppress appetite more than meat protein.

In a fascinating study published in December 2016 in the journal Food & Nutrition researchers from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark fed 43 healthy young men who were normal weight or slightly overweight three different meals:

a high protein meal based on legumes, a high protein meal based on meat, and a low protein meal based on legumes.

After eating the high protein legume-based meal in the morning, participants ate about 100 calories less for lunch.

These participants rated their appetite as lower than they did after eating either the meat-based meal or the low protein legume-based meal.

5. Inulin

'Inulin is an ingredient that you might of heard a lot about as its anti-acing and fat-burning benefits have been touted in the press. Inulin is a fibre that comes helps burn fat around the abdominal cavity and this fat is called visceral fat, which is often around our internal organs, so it's the most unhealthy form of fat.

'Unhealthy diets and being overly stressed can lead to visceral fat so inulin is an ingredient to look out for to lose that fat on the outside and inside.'

One randomised controlled trial published in the journal Nutrition & Metabolism on 44 subjects found that those supplementing with inulin lost five per cent of their body weight in 18 weeks.



Why Warren Buffett hasn't delivered a big deal lately

Warren Buffett has set a high bar for deals and the list of companies that can reach it is getting shorter



(Agencies) New York: There's certainly no shortage of cash lying around at Berkshire Hathaway Inc. Even so, Warren Buffett's struggle to find the \$407 billion company's next meaningful acquisition shows that his relative buying power has diminished.

If you attended or

streamed the shareholder meeting on Saturday, you heard a lot about Berkshire's soaring cash pile, which stood at \$96.5 billion as of the March quarter. And it seems Buffett isn't getting calls from willing sellers the way he'd like, or as he said:

"It'd be more fun if the phone would ring."

Finding good takeover

targets has proved so challenging, the billionaire hinted that should the cash continue to just accumulate he'd have to consider returning some of it to Berkshire's investors via buybacks or a dividend. It was a notable statement from Buffett, who has long been against paying a dividend because his dealmaking could produce superior returns.

But Berkshire shares have gained little more than 1% this year. They've trailed the S&P 500 index, which is currently led by tech stocks. With so much focus on Buffett's next big deal, there are factors working against him:

Scarcity of cheap targets: Stocks are broadly

more expensive than what Buffett is used to paying. His success in making acquisitions in part comes down to his ability to drive a bargain for strong companies with impressive management teams and attractive profit profiles. But the S&P 500 has a trailing price-earnings ratio of about 21, compared with around 14 just five years ago. We've seen acquirers pay record valuations for big transactions during the past year, even amid political uncertainty in the US and Europe.

Not the only buyer in town anymore: Berkshire also faces more competition than ever for takeovers, as the biggest companies in most industries turn to

consolidation given a shortage of growth opportunities. While it's always been viewed as an honour to sell to Buffett, it may be getting tougher to reel in targets if other bidders come knocking with higher offer prices. Buffett doesn't get involved in competitive processes, and it would be poor corporate governance to negotiate exclusively with him if superior offers could be on the table.

Loyal managers: Buffett only wants to buy companies that already have proven leaders in place who are dedicated to running the business for the long haul. A confluence of factors is making that more of a rarity nowadays, though. For

example, baby boomers are nearing retirement age and activist hedge funds have been an impetus for turnover at the top of some big companies. There simply aren't as many family-run, megasized public corporations out there available for Buffett's taking. 3G's recent missteps: Buffett could have bought some time by announcing another deal with private equity firm 3G Capital and Kraft Heinz Co., which counts Berkshire and 3G as its largest shareholders. Buffett and 3G had been in the early stages of working on a merger between Kraft and Unilever, but the proposal leaked out to the press and Unilever quickly shut that door.

Nisaba Godrej to replace father Adi as Godrej Consumer executive chairman

Nisaba Godrej will take charge as executive chairman replacing father Adi Godrej, who will now become chairman emeritus at Godrej Consumer Products

(Agencies) Mumbai: Nisaba Godrej, 39, will take over from her father Adi Godrej as executive chairman of Godrej Consumer Products Ltd, the company announced on Tuesday. Adi Godrej will now be chairman emeritus, the company added in a statement to the stock exchanges.

The elevation of Nisaba Godrej (who is called Nisa within the company) was expected, although the company had not set a time-frame for this. It marks another milestone in the larger Godrej Group's succession plan. Adi Godrej turned 75 in April. Earlier, in February, he became chairman emeritus of Godrej Properties Ltd, with son Pirojsha Godrej, 35, taking over as chairman. Adi Godrej remains chairman of Godrej Group. His eldest daughter Tanya Dubash, 48, is executive director,



Godrej Industries and also chief brand officer of Godrej Group.

Nisaba Godrej, an MBA from Harvard Business School joined Godrej Consumer Products in 2007. She is currently executive director of the company.

"Nisa has been the key architect of its (GCPL's) success and has been directly overseeing innovation," managing director and CEO Vivek Gambhir said. "She will now work very closely with the management to guide our next phase of growth."

Analysts tracking the company say the move was expected.

"Given how active Nisaba already was in the company, the move was expected", an analyst at an

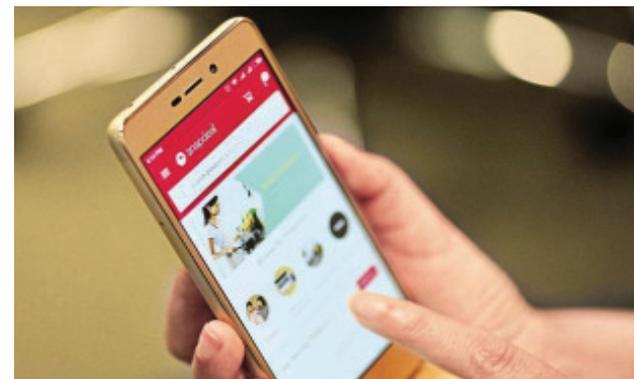
equities brokerage firm said on condition of anonymity. "But we did not have clarity on when it would happen. In that sense, the timing of the announcement was a little surprising."

Godrej Consumer also recommended a fourth interim dividend worth Rs12 per share to be paid out by 31 May 2017. This brings the total dividend paid out for the year to Rs15 per share.

GCPL also announced that it would issue bonus shares from its securities premium worth Rs1,452 crore. The shares will be issued in a 1:1 ratio, meaning the company will give an additional share for each held to its shareholders. A record date for this bonus issue is yet to be decided.

Snapdeal sale to Flipkart: SoftBank said to be closer to bringing Nexus on board

A board meeting, involving investors SoftBank, Nexus Venture Partners and Kalaari Capital, may take place Wednesday to discuss Snapdeal sale to Flipkart



(Agencies) New Delhi: Japan's SoftBank Group Corp. is believed to have moved a step closer to securing the consent of investor Nexus Venture Partners for Snapdeal sale to Flipkart, the largest e-commerce firm in India.

A meeting of representatives of SoftBank and Nexus Venture Partners was held Tuesday and the impasse over the sale could end soon, people familiar with the matter said.

SoftBank—the largest shareholder in Snapdeal (Jasper Infotech Pvt. Ltd)—has been making all efforts to get Nexus Venture Partners on board for the sale of India's third largest online retailer, and a breakthrough could come as early as this week, said the people quoted above.

They added that while attempts have been going on for the past few weeks, Nexus Venture Partners finally

seems to be warming up to the idea of a Snapdeal sale.

A board meeting is expected to take place Wednesday to deliberate upon the issue.

E-mails sent to Snapdeal, SoftBank and Nexus Venture Partners did not elicit any response.

An "yes" from Nexus Venture Partners is crucial for the deal to go through. The seven-member board of Jasper Infotech Ltd includes representation from investors SoftBank, Kalaari Capital and Nexus Venture Partners, as well as co-founders Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal.

Nexus Venture Partners and Kalaari Capital were early stage investors in Snapdeal.

The deal between Snapdeal and Flipkart, if completed, would mark the biggest acquisition in the Indian e-commerce space and change the landscape of the sector that is witnessing

intense competition among players.

People aware of the development had highlighted that valuation has been one of the hurdles in the deal, as Kalaari Capital and Nexus Venture Partners were not in agreement with the valuation given by SoftBank.

However, that could change soon after Nexus Venture Partners's approval. Kalaari Capital has already given its nod to the proposed arrangement.

Snapdeal was valued at \$6.5 billion in its last funding round in February 2016. The valuation, however, has shrunk since then and the potential deal could be struck at a discounted rate. Indian e-commerce companies have seen funding dry up over the last few months as investors are focussing extensively on profitability and rationalisation of expenses.



'What the Frakta?'

Social media users show off their surprisingly-wearable fashions made out of the 99 cent IKEA BAG, after Balenciaga debuted its own \$2,145 version of the blue tote

fashions that are, surprisingly, both functional and stylish.

As the blue and gold

Using the plastic, they closed the knock-off circle by creating a Swedish-design-certified version of Balenciaga's Speed Trainers.

The image showing the trendy shoe was captioned, 'Balenciaga will be like: "What the FRAKTA?!"'

Beijing-based designer Zhijun Wang also took the Frakta to new levels by designing a custom anti-pollution mask for his girlfriend. The tailored contraption even has a ponytail holder for maximum multi-tasking, in the true IKEA spirit.

Wang's creation even gained the

attention of popular men's style blog High Snobiety. When the site shared Wang's picture on their Instagram page, it received more than 31,000 likes.

In the comments section of the post, some jokingly speculated that it's only a matter of time before IKEA collaborates with street wear brand Supreme.

Whereas Balenciaga's version of the IKEA tote was met with hilarious backlash, these craftier Frakta variations are drawing fans in droves. Unfortunately for those leaving 'I need this!'-style comments on Wang and Studio



(Agencies) The famous IKEA Frakta bag is at it again. This time, the iconic blue tote has returned not as a \$2,145 Balenciaga replica, but as an array of ingenious custom designs that see the bag reinvented into hats, backpacks, dresses, and even shoes.

D I Y - s a v v y Instagrammers are using the Frakta's sturdy blue material to create IKEA-inspired

looks only began cropping up recently, it seems likely that many were inspired by the recent controversy surrounding Balenciaga's overt replica of the blue bag, which was labeled the 'Arena Extra-Large Shopper Tote Bag.'

Studio Hagel, a footwear design studio based in Amsterdam, was one of the first accounts to show off their re-invented version of the Frakta.

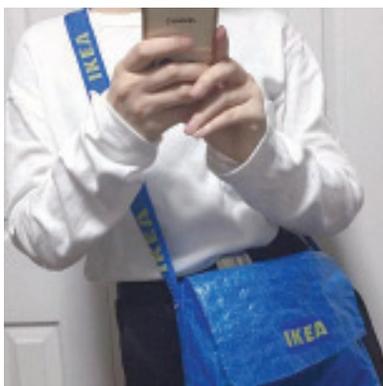
Wang's creation even gained the

Hagel's pictures, most of these tote bag-based creations are one-of-a-kind items.

Still, there's hope: men's clothing company Norwood Chapters is already selling IKEA-themed merchandise in their online shop. For \$145, you can purchase a blue or gold hoodie that features Frakta handles running along the seams, and a hood constructed out of the crinkly blue bag. For just \$135 more, you can

complete the look with a pair of matching sweatpants.

It's understandable if this price point is difficult to reckon with, though, seeing as we all know the tote bag used to create the outfits costs less than a dollar. If you're a young designer, the Frakta tote bag is actually quite the deal. For just pennies, you can have roughly four square feet of fabric to create the crinkly blue and gold wardrobe you've always wanted.



An Idiot's Guide To The World Of Saris

There are two eras in an Indian man's life—Before Saris (BS) and After Nalli

(Agencies) Not too long ago, for the first time, and rather in late in life, I visited a showroom to buy a sari (not for myself, for someone else, just to be clear). It was an education and inspired this brief (and completely unhelpful) primer which I have titled "The Idiot's Guide to the World of Saris." There are two distinct eras in an Indian man's life. Just like BC and AD, there is BS and AN—which stand for Before Saris and After Nalli. For those of you who actually have no idea what "Nalli" is, it is the ultimate sari showroom. It is the

mecca of sari showrooms. Every two-bit sari shop ("Chopra Sari Centre", "Dhingra Sari Shop", "Sharma Saris") dreams of one day being a Nalli showroom. I too was once sari-ignorant. Then I visited a Nalli showroom to buy a sari. Now I know every single thing there is to know about saris, which I am happy to teach you. Read carefully and you will learn a lot.

There are almost as many different kinds of saris as there are women in India. But for the sake of convenience and ease, I have broken down the world of saris into the following

categories. Kanjeevarams are the ultimate in saris. They are sort of like the Alphonso mango of saris. I mean, just close your eyes and slowly say to yourself "Kanjeevaram". What is the image that comes in front of your eyes? A gold-embroidered dazzling, expensive thing costing not less than ?25,000, right? Kanjeevarams come from the town of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. It is a sari town. It is known for its saris. It is named after its saris. Everyone there wears expensive saris, including the fishermen and temple priests. Then

there are Pochampallis. Pochampallis comes from... um... Pocham of course. And just like there are Nallis, there are Pallis. Hence, Pochampallis.

OK, moving right along. Bandhani silks are easy to recognise—they are sort of like tie-and-dye saris. They look like someone has twisted them around. In fact, if you don't want to look like a complete idiot in a Nalli store, point nonchalantly to the saris that look twisted around and say, "Bandhani dikhaiye please..."

Then there's Silk crepe saris. They are

beautiful—soft and crepe-y they are.

Then there's Murshidabad saris. They are, of course, from Murshidabad. (Then where? Aurangabad? Use your brain, no?)

Then from the land of West Bengal there are the Tangail saris and the Jamdani saris. Jamdanis were so named because they were probably worn proudly by the great Bengali artist Jamdani Roy. I think. Maybe.

Then there are Katki saris from Cuttack and there are Bomkai Saris made famous by the Bengali detective Byomkesh Bakshi. HE didn't

wear them, thank God, but one of the women he was in love with probably did. Then there are Sangneri saris from Sanganer, just like there are Bikaneri sweets from Bikaner. D-uh.

We also have Patola saris. (Don't ask.)

One thing that is very important to remember is that all saris need pekoes, falls and blouses. But don't worry your head about all that. Leave that to the wearers, that's their problem. If you've actually managed to successfully buy a sari, you are well ahead of the rest of your dim-witted race.

Thane court grants anticipatory bail to Shilpa Shetty, Kundra, three others

(Agencies) A Thane Sessions court on Tuesday granted interim protection against arrest to actress Shilpa Shetty, her husband Raj Kundra and three others in a case of alleged cheating and breach of trust filed against them in Bhiwandi. Additional sessions judge Sangeeta Khalipe granted them interim anticipatory bail on bonds of Rs 50,000 each. The case registered against on April 26, 2017 by a vendor of their company Best Deal TV (BDTV), a trading platform, alleged that he was duped of Rs 24 lakh. The accused who also moved court along with Shetty and were granted protection include Darshit Shah, Vedant Bali and

Uday Kothari, all former directors of the company. Advocates Aniket Nikam and Hiren Kamod appearing for Shetty and others argued that that the complainant and Best Deal TV PVT LTD of which the accused were directors were in a business relationship for more than a year. "BDTV has made payment of more than Rs 1 crore to the complainant and in such a situation it could not be said that the accused had intention to cheat from the inception which is the requirement of section 420, of Indian Penal Code (IPC)." He also argued that the allegations made in the FIR prima facie reflect that the dispute between the parties is civil in nature and

elements of mens rea (guilty mind) is not attracted to the facts of the present case. Ravi Bhalotia, proprietor of Bhalotia exports had alleged in an FIR before Kogaon police station that he had delivered bedsheets through BDTV but was yet to receive payment. BDTV is an e-commerce, tele-shopping and online retailing business for apparels, accessories, jewelleryes, kitchen appliances, electrical appliances. The public prosecutor Varsha Chandane opposed grant of any relief saying it was a "clear case of cheating."



Parineeti Chopra's dresses have been so bad of late, we wonder why she's doing this to herself

(Agencies) With the release date of Meri Pyaari Bindu coming closer, actors Ayushmann Khurrana and Parineeti Chopra have been busy with numerous promotional events. While we understand that attending all these events is a task, we do not approve of Parineeti wearing bedsheets around to save time. Parineeti's fashion game is growing weaker by the day, and these outfits are justifying the fall. Parineeti Chopra donned a candy-pink collared jersey dress, and reminded us of the nurse-Barbies we loved as kids— ONLY as kids. The sad blue cut-out belt was mismatched, but it wasn't as painful a sight as that embroidered colourful flower.



If you haven't already compared her Sonal Verma attire to a pink gift wrapping sheet, the metallic-blue, flower-like brooch (read decoration) on the shoulder will point your thoughts in that direction. Parineeti dressed like a gift, but this sure was a shocking surprise. Parineeti's melodious voice might have left the audience mind-blown, but her over-the-top pretentious-rockstar outfit made us want to look away. We have no idea why Parineeti was trying to pull off a bedsheet-like Krishna Mehta cape in those weird colours. Like the combination of an orange top and multi-coloured cape wasn't bad enough, she donned a lot of shabby-looking accessories—maybe she was trying to have her own Bappi Da Day. The makeup was so loud, it almost drowned her beautiful voice.

Aamir Khan's Dangal becomes the highest-grossing Indian movie in China

(Agencies) The Aamir Khan-starrer Dangal on Tuesday became the highest grossing Indian movie in China, making more than \$18 million (Rs 116 crore) in less than five days.

The sports movie with a social message broke the record of PK, another Aamir-starrer, which had done well two years ago.

Dangal released in about 7000 screens across China on Friday after Wanda Cinemas, the owner of the largest number of screens worldwide, decided abruptly not to show the movie at the theatres it had allotted.

No reasons were given and speculation was rife in Chinese social media that the decision would have

been triggered by business rivalry in China. Rumours were also making rounds that the decision taken by Wanda Cinemas had to do with its projects in India hitting roadblocks and not taking off.

A number of emails sent to Wanda Cinemas haven't got a response.

Despite the blank out by Wanda, the movie has done and has certainly got China's urban audience talking.

The movie continues to be a hot topic of discussion on Weibo with thousands of online users praising its theme and acting,

especially that of Aamir.

Many users rued that China doesn't make similar movies with social themes, talking about issues that impact people's lives.

The movie is also doing well because of the "word-of-mouth" phenomenon. Both critics and audience reviews have been universally positive and many took note that it was a departure from the routine "song and dance" movies from Bollywood. Aamir's high-profile promotional

tours in Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, helped in Dangal's promotion; his public events were packed in all three cities. A few of China's top film stars also promoted the movie on social media including actor Yao Chen who has millions of followers on Weibo, China's version of Twitter.

The movie has become a talking point among a wide range of urban Chinese — students, academics, government officials, journalists and those doing white collar jobs.



He came, he sang, Mumbai swooned

Justin Bieber enthralled fans at India concert



(Agencies) From scrolls and special outfits to travelling all the way from Canada, Beliebers are all set for popstar Justin Bieber's first-ever concert in Mumbai.

We bring you live updates from the venue:

9.52pm: Bieber waves the Indian flag onstage

9.50pm: The star walks off the stage, returns only at fans' insistence that he sing his hit 'Sorry'

9.49pm: "No matter who you are, how old you are, you have a purpose. I just really love you guys," Bieber tells his fans, winding down the show

9.48pm: Justin Bieber says Namaste to his Mumbai fans

9.39pm: Bieber calls the concert 'the best night of his life', promises to return to India

9.21pm: The singer welcomes the 100 underprivileged kids he gave free tickets to on to the stage. He hugs and chats with them

9.18pm: "Let me love you", sings the Canadian popstar next

9.16pm: Bieber sings 'Company'

9.08pm: Bieber says he loves India and has met some of the 'coolest people' here

8.46pm: The singer performs an unplugged version of his hit 'Cold Water'

8.41pm: Bieber sings

his hit single 'Boyfriend'. Crowd knows all the words by heart, sings along

8.30pm: The Canadian popstar starts singing his fourth song of the night - the hit 'I'll show you'

8.23pm: Bieber launches into the third song of the night, reports say he opened the concert with crowd-pleaser 'Where are you now?'

8.20pm: Police say they are keeping an eye on foreigners trying to sell drugs to attendees

8.15pm: Justin Bieber finally takes the stage to thunderous applause

8.07pm: More than 200 people are still waiting outside the stadium's main gate, which is reserved for VVIPs

8.06pm: Actor Sayaji Shinde parks his car on the pavement outside the venue, starstruck cops pose for selfies with him

8.04pm: With the number of people

outside the stadium beginning to dwindle, 50% of undercover police start entering the venue

7.42pm: Officials confirm that Justin Bieber will take the stage at 8pm. Meanwhile, the crowd goes wild as DJ Alan Walker plays his super hit 'Faded'

7.32pm: No more traffic snarls near Sion-Panvel highway, but double parking near the stadium

7.28pm: No drones in sight, but 50 officials are monitoring 200 CCTV cameras. Officials from Kalamboli, Panvel have been deployed at Nerul to keep the situation under control

7.25pm: "We will stop the concert at 10 pm



sharp. It will not go on a minute longer," says traffic DCP Nitin Pawar

7.15pm: Actor Sridevi, Khushi Kapoor and Boney Kapoor arrive at the show

7.13pm: Actor Sonal Chauhan at the venue.

7.05pm: Models Urvashi Rautela and Pooja Hegde set for the show

smooth for now

6.37pm: Cops say people should have opted for mini-buses

6.36pm: But narrow roads force people to walk or take cabs to the venue

6.34pm: Organisers have arranged for buses to ferry those attending the concert

6.20pm: Crowd starts to move in

6.03pm: Waiting for the star, some buy Justin Bieber wristbands

6.01pm: A service road, which was declared no-parking zone, is packed with vehicles. Police say it has been opened for those with tickets

6pm: Parking issues continue

5.54pm: Only a few hours to go before thousands get to catch a glimpse of their favourite star

5.30pm: Actor Himansh reaches the venue

5.24pm: A chopper lands at the stadium. Who's in it?

5.23pm: People use foot overbridge to cross the Sion-Panvel highway

5.21pm: Hundreds of vehicles parked near the stadium

5.13pm: Choreographer Remo D'souza reaches the venue

5.11pm: DJ Aqeel reaches the venue with his children

5.10pm: Warm-up events are on

5.02pm: Towing vans outside the stadium to keep a check on illegal parking

5.01pm: One more chopper hovers over the venue

5pm: Anu Malik reaches the venue with his daughters

4.56pm: People stuck on Sion-Panvel highway because of defunct signal near the stadium

4.55pm: TV actor Anuj Sachdeva reaches the

venue wearing a Justin Bieber T-shirt

4.50pm: The chopper is here, but is Bieber in it?

4.47pm: Traffic snarls on internal roads in Navi Mumbai, as many roads are declared no-entry zones

4.44pm: Crowd is filling up the concert venue

4.42pm: The chopper seems to be here

4.35pm: People throng the food stalls at the venue

4.31pm: Glowbands being sold for Rs10

4.30pm: Tea being sold for Rs20 a cup

4.29pm: Visitors being charged Rs100 for 1 litre of water

4.21pm: Here's a look at the set-up

4.18pm: Housekeeping staff are ready for clean-up

4.17pm: From pizza to goli vada pav - a lot of options for Beliebers inside the venue

4.16pm: A lot of fans selling spare tickets outside the venue

4.13pm: Those booking Uber after the concert, remember, you will have to wait for cars outside

4.11pm: Police personnel making sure the situation remains under control

4.10pm: Fans getting impatient to see the star

4.04pm: Media takes position outside the gate

4.03pm: Two private security agencies check those entering the venue

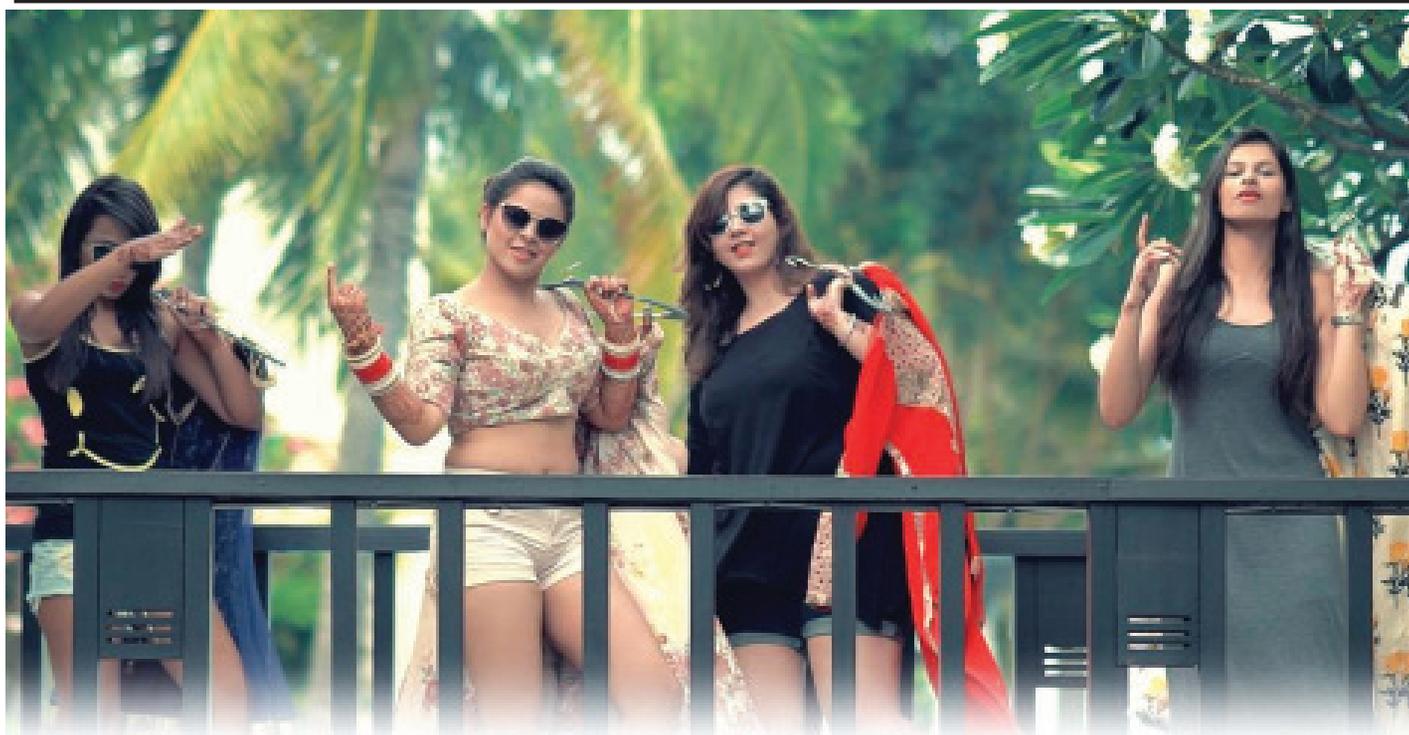
4.01pm: Special attention is being paid to ensure smooth traffic

4pm: Security personnel refuse to allow power banks inside the stadium

3.59pm: Around 300 police officials deployed near the stadium

3.56pm: Excited fans battle scorching sun to catch a glimpse of their favourite star





The bindaas bride: Women are no longer coy mannequins on their wedding day

(Agencies) A wedding video that has gone viral has turned a bride into a mini celebrity. This is the kind of insta-fame that everyone is aiming for. While it's fun, the pressure can also be too much. Delhi girl Amisha Bhardwaj has become an internet celebrity overnight. Her wedding video, which shows her performing to Cheap Thrills by Sia, is breaking the internet. In the video, Amisha shows off her coolest dance moves, while getting ready for her destination wedding.

Her attitude and unrestrained dancing has got people talking. Wearing chooda on her wrists, funky shorts and a pair of sunglasses, she grooves to the song in a totally uninhibited fashion. Amisha had no idea that the video would go viral. "I never imagined that people would go crazy about it. We shot it while I was getting ready and waiting for my bridegroom, Pranav, who was late. I was super angry, as it was a

beachside wedding and I wanted it to be perfect. My videographer suggested that we dance to kill time. I didn't know that the video would be so cool. I'm getting friend requests and messages from people across the world. But the best compliment came from my husband. He said he is proud of me because I am so bindaas," says Amisha. "My in-laws are also going crazy about it. They have been complimenting me and sharing the video with

friends." Pawandeep Singh, owner, Coolbluez, who made the video along with his partner Surpreet Kaur, says that he didn't want Amisha's wedding video to be mush-loaded and melodramatic. "She wanted something cool, quirky and out of the box. We thought that a video of a bride dancing to a fun, peppy number with her bridesmaids will be cool. Cheap Thrills by Sia seemed to be the perfect pick. Amisha is a confident girl and she performed flawlessly," he says.

Deepika Padukone's Met Gala dress was one of the most Googled in the world

(Agencies) This year's edition of the Met Gala saw a seamless blend of every fashion genre there exists. From outfits that were bizarre to those that left nothing to the imagination—the event grabbed eyeballs for a variety of reasons. But what made this year's Met Gala special for us Indians was the presence of two gorgeous Bollywood stars, Priyanka Chopra and Deepika Padukone. When the two ladies—flawless in their own ways—stepped on the red carpet, the comparisons knew no bounds. And while Priyanka's record-shattering Ralph Lauren trenchcoat-styled gown inspired a gazillion memes and took away the cake in the novelty department, Deepika's debut received a lukewarm response. But guess what, despite making a gorgeous-yet-low key debut, Deepika Padukone's Tommy Hilfiger satin gown was one of the most Googled outfits from the Met Gala night. According to a tweet by Google Trends, Deepika's was the fifth most Googled Met Gala outfit this year. Model Kendall Jenner's meshed outfit topped the list, with Bella Hadid on number two, Katy Perry on number three and Blake Lively on number four.

Shruti Haasan gained weight for her role and she explains why



her role in upcoming film, Behen Hogi Teri. "I think every character requires a certain look and the vibe for it to be as real as possible. Given the family and background that Binny Arora was from, she needed to be slightly fuller and that's why I had to gain the weight and thankfully it paid off given the amazing response our trailer got," says Shruti, who will star alongside actor Rajkumar Rao in the film. According to a source, "Shruti kept her look very fresh, clean and simple for this one and was even asked to gain some weight to fit in with the big happy family. Being someone who's always been

a fitness freak, this was new for her but she was willing to take up the challenge and pile one a few kilos. She changed her diet and made it more carb-heavy. She also altered her workout regime to a slightly lighter version." Actor Rajkumar Rao shared the first look of the film on his Twitter account: "Shruti eventually underwent immense training to shed the weight. "Soon after the film shoot, I got back to my intense workout regime and made sure I lost all that weight and then some, especially since I was going to start my next film, Sangamithram," she says.

(Agencies) Actors work hard to shed extra kilos to look leaner and fitter on screen but actor Shruti Haasan decided to gain some in order to look relatable for

Diljit Dosanjh Plays "Superhero" In His Upcoming Film Super Singh



(Agencies) Diljit Dosanjh has been Punjab's heartthrob for a while now. So, when he made his Bollywood debut in the movie Uda Punjab, it was no surprise that he quickly gained a national fan base. And why not? Have you seen how cute this Punjabi boy is? Now, he's all set for the release of his next movie called Super Singh, and from the trailer, it seems like it is going to be quite super! In the film, he plays an unassuming young bloke who only wants to woo his lady love. Oblivious to his superpowers, he goes with the flow of life, until one day, he gets shot, and the mystery is revealed. For the rest, you've got to watch the film!

OBITUARY



KARAN (KAY) BERI
7th Jan 1979 to 6th May 2017

With a heavy heart, we convey the sad news of the sudden demise of Karan (Kay) Beri, President of RIC Technology & Services Pvt. Ltd. Bengaluru, Founder of Opinio Media Inc. and a Director of The Indian Panorama.

The only son-in-law to Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, Publisher-Editor of The Indian Panorama, Karan Beri, 37, passed away on Saturday, May 6 in Bengaluru, India, leaving behind wife Jaskiran Beri and a five-year-old son Kabir Raj Beri.

Karan was born on 7th January 1979 to Ravi Beri and Amita Beri, a well-known family of Ludhiana.

He had his early education in Ludhiana where he studied at Sacred Heart Boys' School. He studied Business Administration, obtaining his MBA degree from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. He worked with companies like IBM, Convergys, Hero Group and AirTel, in various capacities.

He was a top performer in every company that he worked with. IBM, pleased with his performance and professional competence selected him for an assignment in the US where he remained on deputation for some time.

Later, he decided to start his own information technology company and launched, in 2011, RIC Technology & Services Pvt. Ltd. with headquarters in Bengaluru.

With a view to expanding the horizon of his business, in January 2016, he founded Opinio Media Inc. in the US, a company to serve media industry, with his father-in-law's newspaper The Indian Panorama as his first client in the US. The list of Opinio Media's clients grew phenomenally and the business grew. Karan had plans to move to the US to further expand the company's business, a responsibility which his wife Jaskiran will now shoulder.

Karan was a brilliant student and topped at every level of his educational career. Innovation was always on his mind. He created in the last few years very useful software for media which he was experimenting with at The Indian Panorama to give it the finishing touches of perfection.

He got married to Jaskiran Saluja in 2006 and the couple were blessed with a wonderful son, Kabir in 2012.

We deeply mourn his sad and untimely demise and pray for eternal peace to the departed soul.

IN GRIEF

Family, friends, relations
 and staff of RIC Technology & Services Pvt. Ltd. Bengaluru, India;
 Opinio Media, Inc., USA; The Indian Panorama, USA

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