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America Must Stand Tall

The current world order was the product of U.S. might and wisdom. We can't take it for granted.

(News Agencies) Americans had reason to be hopeful. The great powers were at peace. Economic interdependence among nations was increasing. Miraculous new technologies were appearing with dizzying speed.

Yet this optimistic vision would soon fall to pieces. The first half of the 20th century would prove to be the bloodiest, most devastating period

in human history, with the two most destructive wars in history; the worst economic collapse in history; and the near-takeover of the planet by an alliance of dictatorships responsible for the worst crimes against humanity in history. The United States came of age as a world power amid the rubble left by this succession of calamities—and resolved, in the wake of the most devastating conflict the world has ever

known, to try to prevent them from ever happening again.

To keep the peace, we led an effort to establish a system of global alliances and security commitments, underwritten by U.S. military power and the deployment of our forces to bases in Europe and Asia. To create a foundation for prosperity, we put in place an open, free and rules-based international (Contd on page 18)

A dead end

Pointing at China and complaining loudly on Masood Azhar isn't working. India needs to rethink strategy.



(Agencies) China's "technical hold" on the UN designation of Jaish-e-Mohammed's Masood Azhar was foretold. Nothing has changed between India and China, or China and Pakistan, for Beijing to have had a change of mind at the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee that designates terrorist entities, individuals and groups. This is the third time since the January 2016 Pathankot attack that China has used this route to block Azhar's designation. Each time, India pointed at Beijing and complained loudly.

(Contd on page 19)

Sahara hotels abroad likely to be attached



(News Agencies) New Delhi: Troubles continue to mount for the Sahara group, forced to deposit Rs 25,000 crore with market regulator Sebi, with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) moving the Supreme Court seeking provisional (Contd. on page 18)

Court Refuses to Reinstate Travel Ban

(Agencies) Washington — A federal appeals panel on Thursday unanimously rejected President Trump's bid to reinstate his ban on travel into the United States from seven largely Muslim nations, a sweeping rebuke of the administration's claim that the courts have no role as a check on the president.

The three-judge panel, suggesting that the ban did not advance national security, said the administration had shown "no evidence" that anyone from the seven nations — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — had committed terrorist acts in the United States. The ruling also rejected Mr. Trump's claim that courts are powerless to review a president's national security assessments. Judges have a crucial role to play in a constitutional democracy, the



court said.

"It is beyond question," the decision said, "that the federal judiciary retains the authority to adjudicate constitutional challenges to executive action."

The decision was handed down by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco. It upheld a ruling last Friday by a federal district

judge, James L. Robart, who blocked key parts of the travel ban, allowing thousands of foreigners to enter the country. The appeals court acknowledged that Mr. Trump was owed deference on his immigration and national security policies. But it said he was claiming something more that "national security concerns are (Contd on page 18)

In Their Approach To Muslim Voters, SP And BSP Have Exchanged Places

Secularism Versus Development

(Agencies) There are only two vote-bank. Mulayam Singh Hajis [Haj-returned] in Uttar Pradesh, it used to be said of



Mulayam Singh Yadav and Amar Singh. Mayawati never tried to be the sole spokesperson of Muslims. Her approach to Muslims was always more opportunist than long-term, just like her approach to all sections of society other than her Dalit

Yadav's politics was well-known as M+Y, the Muslim and Yadav combination that did well in the elections. Mayawati's caste formula has been Dalit plus anybody. Sometimes there's a

greater accent on Brahmins, this time on Muslims.

The tables have turned. This time, Mayawati is clear about the D+M formula, Dalits and Muslims. The 20.5% Dalit population along with 19.3% Muslims make a formidable combination. She says

as much openly to Muslim voters. If only they'd listen. Akhilesh Yadav isn't seeking Muslim votes alone, he wants everyone's votes — just like Mayawati used to.

Mayawati is pitching herself as the ultimate messiah of Muslims in a way she has never done before. She is projecting herself so strongly as pro-Muslim and anti-Hindutva that she doesn't mind losing upper caste Hindu votes. In fact, she is hoping to benefit from Hindu-Muslim polarisation — like the Samajwadi Party used to.

The Samajwadi Party's new face, Akhilesh Yadav, is making a clear break from his father's policy of wooing Muslims with identity politics. Like Mayawati of the past, he is balancing his pitch to Muslims with his pitch to Hindus, especially upper castes, who usually vote for the BJP.

The Samajwadi Party's Muslim face is Azam Khan, but only for the national media. In UP, it is well known that Azam Khan's influence is limited to Rampur and the neighbouring areas in Rohilkhand. Like Lalu Yadav in Bihar, it was always Mulayam Singh Yadav who was the 'protector' of Muslims from the threat of Hindutva.

What has the Akhilesh Yadav government done for Muslims, I ask a party spokesperson. "Have you seen the re-development in Lucknow's old city?" he replies. The Akhilesh government's pitch to Muslims is largely the same as its pitch to everybody else: development. Mayawati, by contrast, has been busy promising to save Muslims from the BJP. For a year now, she jumps and issues statements against everything the BJP and Narendra Modi do. Her message to Muslims is that she is the one who can save them from the BJP. Mayawati never misses a chance to point out that they saw a large number of riots under the Akhilesh regime.

Trump administration may take fresh look at its India F-16 plan



(Agencies) US defence firm Lockheed Martin wants to push ahead with plans to move production of its F-16 combat jets to India, but understands President Donald Trump's administration may want to take a "fresh look" at the proposal.

With no more orders for the F-16 from the Pentagon, Lockheed plans to use its Fort Worth, Texas plant instead to produce the fifth generation F-35 Joint Strike Fighter that the United States Air Force is transitioning to. Lockheed would switch F-16 production to India, as long as the Indian government agrees to order hundreds of the planes that its air force desperately needs.

Trump has criticised US companies that have moved manufacturing overseas and which then sell their products

back to the US. In his first few weeks in office, he has pushed companies, from automakers to pharmaceutical firms, to produce more in the United States.

In Lockheed's case, however, the plan is to build the F-16 to equip the Indian Air Force, and not sell them back into the United States.

Lockheed said it has been talking to Trump's transition and governance teams as well as the US Congress for several months on its plans, including the proposed sale of F-16 planes to India, a spokesman told Reuters in Washington.

"We've briefed the administration on the current proposal, which was supported by the Obama administration as part of a broader cooperative dialogue with the government of

India," the spokesman said.

"We understand that the Trump administration will want to take a fresh look at some of these programmes, and we stand prepared to support that effort to ensure that any deal of this importance is properly aligned with US policy priorities."

India is expected to spend \$250 billion on defence modernisation over the next decade, analysts say, and there is concern that a veto on making

the F-16 in India would not only hit Lockheed, but also threaten other military contracts to come up in India for Boeing, Northrop and Raytheon.

The White House did not respond to requests for comment on the plan to build the plane in India.

A person close to Lockheed said company officials did not know what the Trump administration planned to do about the proposal to shift F-16

production to India.

"They're following it closely and talking with the White House. But if they don't move production to India, there's no way they'll get the India contract," the person said. One argument to be made was that moving to India would preserve some component production in the United States. "Twenty-five percent of something is better than zero percent of nothing," the person said.

If Modi has CBI, we have RTI: Sisodia

(Agencies) New Delhi: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday filed an RTI to get details about the expenditure incurred on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's digital and other social media campaign. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said he was taking recourse to RTI as the Modi government was unleashing the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the Delhi government to get

similar information. "If Modiji has CBI, we have RTI (Right to Information)," Sisodia told reporters here. Sisodia's RTI comes after the CBI registered a preliminary inquiry against him last month to probe alleged irregularities in the "Talk to AK" social media campaign. Backing his deputy, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said

the CBI should investigate Modi as well. "Just like Prime Minister's Office awarded contracts for digital advertisements, Manish (Sisodia)



awarded advertisements in the same way. "Since Modiji is getting Manish investigated by the CBI, he (Modi) should be investigated by the same agency as well," Kejriwal tweeted. In his RTI, Sisodia sought details of the procedures adopted by the central government to award social media advertisement contracts for Make In India, Namo App, Start-up India and Digital India. "Advertisements in social media are paid for by credit cards and have a credit limit. Which credit card was used by the Modi government for these advertisements?" Sisodia asked.

Govt Rejects US Report On Declining Religious Freedom In India

A report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom had alleged the escalation of hate crimes against minorities in the country.



WE ARE HAMMERS.

(Agencies) India today rubbished a report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) that alleged escalation of hate crimes against minorities in the country, saying it has serious doubts on the report's credibility. "We have rejected the USCIRF Annual Reports in the past as well. We have serious doubts on their credibility. Government

does not see the locus standi of a foreign entity like USCIRF to pronounce on the state of Indian citizens' constitutionally protected rights. We take no cognisance of their report," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup said. The USCIRF report alleged that religious minority communities and Dalits face discrimination and persecution in India where hate crimes, social boycotts and forced conversions have escalated dramatically since 2014 and asked the US to put human rights at the heart of trade and diplomatic interactions with India. "India is a religiously diverse and democratic society

with a constitution that provides legal equality for its citizens irrespective of their religion and prohibits religion-based discrimination," said USCIRF chair Thomas J Reese. "However, the reality is far different. In fact, India's pluralistic tradition faces serious challenges in a number of its states," he said. "During the past few years, religious tolerance has deteriorated and religious freedom violations have increased in some areas of India. To reverse this negative trajectory, the Indian and state governments must align their laws with both the country's constitutional commitments and international human rights standards," Reese said.

Sasikala is Playing 'Dirty Tricks' To Become The Chief Minister, Says Panneerselvam

"If she succeeds it will be a big blot on democracy."

(Agencies) CHENNAI — Hitting back at All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) general secretary Sasikala Natarajan for calling him a 'traitor', acting Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam on Thursday accused the former of playing 'dirty tricks', adding that she instigated several ministers to give interviews to declare her as the chief minister. "Sasikala wanted to betray the party and become the Chief Minister, she instigated several Ministers who started giving interviews that she should be CM. It is Sasikala who is doing dirty tricks to acquire the chair of Chief Minister. If she succeeds it will be a big blot on democracy," said Panneerselvam who was accompanied by senior AIADMK leader Madhusudan.



Panneerselvam also informed that post former Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa's death, Sasikala's camp wanted the former to take charge as the Chief Minister and wanted

Madhusudan to be the general secretary of the party.

Intensifying the attack on V K Sasikala, Chief Minister O Panneerselvam on Thursday claimed she had apologised through a letter to Jayalalithaa while being readmitted to the party after being expelled in 2011. Reading out the letter, purportedly written by Sasikala, amid a huge crowd, Panneerselvam said Sasikala had been dismissed from AIADMK by Jayalalithaa for alleged anti-party activities, and she had also reportedly left Poes Garden, Jayalalithaa's residence.

Panneerselvam said Sasikala had mentioned that certain persons had created rift with Jayalalithaa while staying with her. Sasikala, who was readmitted in 2012, said the differences had cropped up without her knowledge. Their "betrayal" was "unforgivable" and she had always desired 'Akka's' (elder sister) welfare, Sasikala was quoted as saying in the 'letter' by Panneerselvam.

Sasikala had said in the letter that she was not interested in joining politics nor did she aspire for any party post. She had also said that she was neither interested in contesting elections or becoming a Minister. "I have already dedicated my life to Akka. I want to be a true thangai (younger sibling) for Akka and will live this life for her," Sasikala was quoted as saying in the 'letter' by Panneerselvam.

SC orders attaching of Sahara group's Rs 39,000-crore Amby Valley: Here's a brief history of the case

After languishing in the prison for two years, Subrata Roy was allowed a four-week parole following his mother's demise in May 2016.

(Agencies) In a major setback to Subrata Sahara and his group, Supreme Court on Monday ordered attachment of its prime property worth Rs 39,000 crore at Aamby Valley in Pune in an ongoing case against the business tycoon for which he has already spent time in Tihar jail of Delhi. Sahara, who set up a multi-million dollar business conglomerate, was sent to jail by the top court in 2014 after his group failed to repay the amount to its two crore small investors as ordered by the court. In an August 2012



verdict, the SC had ordered two of Sahara companies to refund Rs 24,000 crore, along with 15 per cent interest, to more than two crore small investors who had invested in their optionally

fully convertible debentures (OFCDs) between the years 2008 and 2011. Sahara was sent to jail on March 4, 2014 for failing to pay a sum of Rs 10,000 crore. The court then ordered that during his stay in Jail, the SC allowed Subrata Sahara to use the conference room for negotiating sale of his properties in order to raise the bail money.

Court directs BSF to allow trooper's wife to meet him



(Agencies) New Delhi: After the Delhi High Court's intervention, the BSF on Friday agreed to allow the wife of "missing" BSF trooper Tej Bahadur Yadav, whose social media video clip on "substandard food" triggered an uproar, to meet him for two days.

A division bench of Justice G.S. Sistani and Justice Vinod Goel directed the BSF to let Yadav's wife meet him at the battalion in Jammu and Kashmir and also to stay overnight for two days.

The court posted the matter for February 15. Yadav's wife Sharmila has filed a habeas corpus plea after she and other family members failed to contact the Border Security Force trooper for three days. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Sanjay Jain appearing for BSF told the court that Yadav was "not missing" and just transferred to another battalion in Samba, Jammu and Kashmir.

84 riots: Tytler says no reason by CBI for lie detection test

(Agencies) New Delhi: Congress leader Jagdish Tytler today told a Delhi court that CBI has not given any reason in its plea to conduct lie detection test on him in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case. Tytler, who did not appear before the court personally, filed an application through his lawyer stating that the CBI plea was a "gross misuse of law" and it was filed with "malafide intention".

Arms dealer Abhishek Verma, who was also issued notice by the court on the CBI plea, appeared before the court and said he stands by his statement given to the probe agency earlier and was ready to join investigation. Advocate Maninder

Singh, who represented Verma, also said CBI has not given any reason to conduct lie detection test on him and he was ready to record his statement before a magistrate under section 164 CrPC. He also sought a week's time to file his reply on the plea.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Shivali Sharma granted time to Verma to file his reply and listed the matter for February 23 for hearing arguments on CBI's application. Senior advocate H S Phoolka, who represented the riot victims, said Tytler had earlier given a statement to the media that he was ready to undergo lie detection test. The court had on February 8 issued notice to Tytler and



Verma on CBI's plea. The case pertains to death of three Sikhs in the aftermath of the riots that broke out after the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Tytler has been given a clean chit by CBI thrice in the case but the probe agency has been directed by the court to further investigate the matter. Verma has made several statements to CBI against the senior Congress leader that he allegedly pressurised witnesses in the case. During the hearing, Verma told the court he was facing threat and should be given protection.

Re-polling at 48 polling stations concludes peacefully

(Agencies) Chandigarh: Re-polling for Amritsar Lok Sabha constituency and five segments ended peacefully on Thursday with no untoward incident being reported from 48 polling stations. In Mukstar, 89.55 per cent voting was recorded at all the nine booths. Maximum voting at 95.06 per cent was recorded at Khappianwali village where 962 of total 1012 votes are polled. On February 4, total 921 votes were polled at this polling booth. After Thursday's re-polling, voting percentage at Sangrur has improved to 83.88 percent and it has crossed Faridkot and Fazilka districts and improved its tally in the state from fifth position to third. In Sardulgarh

1149 votes were polled out of 1272 votes thus 82.16 per cent of the votes being polled. The re-polling in nine polling booths in Sangrur assembly segment concluded in a peaceful manner. The total vote percentage touched 85.41 percent mark. Interestingly the women voters outclassed the men voters. In nine booths that went for re-polling, there are a total of 7,127 voters out of which 3,777 are men and 3,350 were women voters and out of these 6,028 voters exercised their franchise. Re-polling in 28 polling booths of Majitha assembly constituency in Amritsar recorded 76 per cent polling said Dr Basant Garg, District Magistrate-cum-

District Returning Officer. SAD candidate Bikram Singh Majithia, after casting his vote said, "the re-polling will not affect the prospects of SAD-BJP in state and welcomed the EC's decision." Taking a dig at AAP's MP Bhagwant Mann, he said, "It must have been for the first time in seven decades that someone was compelled to point out in full House about Mann's drinking habit. I ask Kejriwal to set an example by taking an action against Bhagwant Mann who represents over 11 lakh people." On the allegations levelled by the Congress candidate about the SAD supporters bribing voters Bikram Majithia added that there was no complainant in that case.



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The Real Problem With Sasikala Claiming Jayalalithaa's Mantle Has Little To Do With Her Credentials



(Agencies) We can say it's about the disproportionate assets court case hanging over her head. We can claim it's about the fact that she's never held elected office or even a party post. We can say it's because she's just been a shadowy power broker, one who was expelled by Jayalalithaa

more than once. We can worry about the checkered retinue of family and friends that comes in her wake. We can contest her credentials for the job.

But the real problem with VK Sasikala, the Chinnamma who would be Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, is that we do not know what to call the relationship

based on which she is claiming Jayalalithaa's mantle. That's the point where we get stuck. That's the source of our real discomfort. When Lalu Prasad Yadav went to jail and Rabri Devi was installed in the gaddi, there was a lot of tongue-clicking and eye-rolling. But everyone understood the deal. This was the wife keeping the seat warm for the husband. "Rabri Devi was also pulled out of her kitchen to occupy the CM's post. All through her tenure it was Lalu who was controlling the administration," says political analyst Ravintran Thoraisami.

Sasikala, to her credit, is no Rabri Devi. She has pretty much pulled off a coup of sorts, taking control of the party on her own.

She is clearly nobody's gungi gudiya, as the Congress syndicate had once hoped Indira Gandhi would be. Without the protection of Jayalalithaa, Sasikala could have been out in the cold but she has bent the party to her will. When MG Ramachandran died, the AIADMK hastily propped up his widow Janaki, again a figure who had not been in active politics. That experiment lasted all of 24 days. That was also to ensure that the other woman in the story, MGR's protégé, Jayalalithaa was left out in the cold. Famously, she was even pushed off the cortege bearing MGR's body. But she grimly dug in her heels and planted herself next to his body when it lay in

state and established her right to the chair. It was high melodrama but we understood the triangular fight taking place, Janaki vs Jayalalithaa jousting for the legacy of the man who had loomed so large in both their lives. It was a familiar television soap opera script.

If Jayalalithaa had a shadowy behind-the-scenes husband who was suddenly being pushed forward to claim the mantle, we might have tut-tutted and shaken our heads. But we would not have been surprised. We understand the claims of spouses, mistresses and even illegitimate sons (ND Tiwari's recently acknowledged son is apparently shepherding his flirtation with the BJP).

The Crisis In Tamil Nadu Is Not The Making Of Either Sasikala Or Panneerselvam

(Agencies) Who is to blame for the ongoing political crisis in Tamil Nadu? Is it VK Sasikala, accused by a section of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) of being a wily schemer and a pretender to the throne that their beloved Amma, J Jayalalithaa, once occupied? Or is it O Panneerselvam, who has suddenly found a spine — many believe due to the blessing of the Opposition, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)?

The root of the trouble really lies elsewhere. And only the people who elected the AIADMK government to power has a finger on it.

As the drama within the party

deepens, with Panneerselvam confident about proving his majority in the assembly and Sasikala refusing to let up on her mission to be the CM, the voice of the electorate is struggling to be heard over the din.

Supporters of AIADMK gathered on Marina Beach in Chennai to seek comfort at the memorial of their late beloved Amma. According to a report in The Times of India, they bemoaned the sully of the legacy of their former chief minister, who have left them "orphaned". "We chose her as our leader," a woman told Tol, "We didn't choose Panneerselvam or Sasikala. They seem to forget that. Ask us what we want, not the MLAs."

In three sentences, she summed up the real problem plaguing Tamil Nadu: an audaciously undemocratic politics that has robbed common people of any agency in choosing their leader. With Jayalalithaa's death last December, the AIADMK didn't waste a moment to install Panneerselvam as the new chief minister. The move was both sensible and expedient.

As someone who has filled Amma's shoes twice when she had to step away from duty, Panneerselvam was the most suited to running the government. At the time, emotions were fragile and the Opposition could have easily taken advantage of the power



vacuum in the AIADMK to carry out a coup. The fissures, however, began to show soon after. Even before Jayalalithaa's funeral was over, it became obvious that Sasikala, who had been her companion for 30 years, was merely biding time before

making an aggressive claim on her political legacy.

The first shock came with the sight of her corrupt family, popularly known as the Mannargudi Mafia after the village they come from, surrounding Jayalalithaa's body as it lay in state.

Maharana Pratap Won The Battle Of Haldighati: How BJP's Bid To Rewrite History Textbooks Sets A Dangerous Precedent

(Agencies) Did an Indian fly an aeroplane before the Wright Brothers did? Was Jawaharlal Nehru not part of the Independence Movement? Did Maharana Pratap win the Battle of Haldighati? If it were left to the BJP, it would have you believe all of the above. But none of it is true, at least according to historians.

In its latest bid to saffronise education, the Vasundhara Rajeled BJP government in Rajasthan has put its weight behind a proposal to rewrite university history textbooks to say that Rajput king Maharana Pratap had won the battle of Haldighati against Mughal emperor Akbar's army.

According to a report in The Indian Express, former higher education minister Kalicharan Saraf was of the opinion that while Akbar was an outsider, a foreign ruler, it was Maharana Pratap who was brave and valiant and had won the battle. He added it was a mistake that textbooks have so far said it was Akbar who won this battle.

While Saraf claims that students are being taught distorted history, it is quite the other way around.

In this particular case, historian Tanuja Kothiyal tells The Indian Express, "That Akbar defeated Rana Pratap is a fact of history, but local sentiment and public memory have very

different ideas. When Rajasthan came into existence in the 1950s, there was no other element bringing it together than the fact that it is a collection of Rajput states. So celebrating Maharana Pratap becomes crucial in forging a Rajasthani identity. However, just to accommodate public memory, one can't turn facts around. It would be very detrimental to history as well as to education."

In what is proving to be a dangerous trend, the right-wing government is trying to wipe out the history of the Mughals and other Muslim rulers to establish that India was primarily a 'Hindu' nation, where Muslims are the outsiders. This is clearly a way



of furthering their agenda of building a Hindu nation.

This is not the first time the BJP government in Rajasthan has tried to tweak facts. It had, in fact, deleted any mention of Jawaharlal Nehru from the Class VIII social science textbook. The party's aim for a 'Congress mukt Bharat' seems to have percolated to textbooks.

In the garb of promoting Indian culture, this nationalist government is trying to wipe out

the idea of the 'other', in this case of Muslim conquerors who have ruled India. But this portrayal of India as a homogenous, Hindu nation couldn't be farther from the truth. From renaming streets to placing right-wingers at top positions in educational institutes to tweaking history in textbooks, the BJP-led governments at the states as well as the Centre are pushing their political agenda unchecked.

The Way Demonetisation Is Playing Out, Some Clear Winners And Losers Are Emerging



When Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation of high-value currency notes on 8 November, the systemic shock he delivered guaranteed that there would be reverberations for months across the political, social and economic spectrum.

The virulence with which some of the opposition parties have attacked the move also lends credence to the argument that this is a game-changer. If demonetisation was going to be a political or economic dud, there was no need for the likes of Arvind Kejriwal, Rahul Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee to make fire-and-brimstone speeches, with the last-named politician vowing to oust Modi from national politics. "Today, I take the pledge that I may die in the process, but I shall remove Narendra Modi from politics," Mamata said in Kolkata two days ago. So the one

thing both Modi and his opponents are agreed on is that demonetisation is a big disrupter. The big question is who or what is it disrupting? And what will change when things are back to "normal".

Now that we have arrived near the mid-point of the 50-day time Modi sought to make things normal, we can speculate on how demonetisation will impact politics, economics and public behaviour in the foreseeable future.

Here's what the crystal ball is saying right now:

Politics: Will demonetisation impact the Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Goa and Uttarakhand elections next year? While the BJP's good showing in the recent Maharashtra and Gujarat local body elections suggests that demonetisation may be helping the ruling party, that

would be too hasty a conclusion. It is early days yet, and people's patience has not run out. The public is, at this point, willing to give Modi the benefit of the doubt, and a more definitive verdict on demonetisation will be delivered only in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections due in early 2017. By the time that happens in February-April, the government will be facing flak for slower growth and loss of jobs, assuming the cash crisis lingers.

However, if the crisis is over by January-end, which seems unlikely due to the slow pace of replacement of old currencies (only Rs 2.16 lakh crore has been replaced when Rs 8.44 lakh crore has been deposited with banks), demonetisation will not be a negative factor for the UP elections. In other words, demonetisation can be a negative for the Modi government if it does not manage the cash situation well, but it will be a positive only if it can show it is benefiting the common man. Modi must close the loop between short-term inconvenience inflicted on ordinary people and the benefits that accrue from this.

With a budget due on February 1, benefits to the aam

aadmi can at least be announced. If cash is put into Jan Dhan accounts, the tide could turn in the BJP's favour. But it is not clear if the Election Commission will allow such vote-inducements in the middle of an election campaign.

But UP will be won or lost not on the basis of the demonetisation plank alone; the BJP's real problem is it has no credible face to project as CM in India's largest state. That may cost it the election, not bad implementation of demonetisation.

However, post-2017, demonetisation will probably benefit the BJP if cash starts coming into Jan Dhan accounts. This is more than a gleam in Modi's eye. It is 2019 that bothers Modi's opposition, for the PM can make good his promise that black money will come into the coffers of the poor by then.

In short, demonetisation may not result in BJP gains in UP or Punjab or Goa, but is possibly a good investment for 2019.

Economic impact: Estimates of a fall in the GDP growth rate range from a low 0.3-0.5 percent to as high as 3.3 percent (Ambit Capital), with Manmohan Singh's 2 percent figuring in the middle.

Fitch Ratings lowered its GDP growth estimate for 2016-17 to 6.9 percent from the earlier 7.4 percent – a drop of 0.5 percent, which sounds more realistic compared to the scare numbers of Ambit and Singh.

However, any drop this year will probably be made up next year as long as the cash situation is normalised by the first quarter of next year (January-March 2017). Consumption has just been postponed, not reduced by demonetisation. So it is quite possible that growth will revive sharply by the first quarter of the next financial year (April-June 2017) and memories of GDP fall will be forgotten.

The growth blip will be short-term as long as the cash situation eases by February-March.

Revenue impact: A key political calculation in the demonetisation move is that cash that does not ultimately return to the banking system is money for jam. Depending on how much of the demonetised currency remains outside the system by 30 December, the Reserve Bank's liabilities to the public shrink to that extent.

(Contd on page 20)

The Lesson of Nordstrom: Do Business With the Trumps or Else

It is a clear violation of federal ethics rules for White House staff members, or any other federal employees, to use their official positions for private gain. But what President Trump did on Wednesday in his Twitter attack on the Nordstrom department store chain, castigating it for dropping Ms. Trump's line, was far worse.

In sum, Nordstrom made a business decision not to do business with the president's daughter because her clothing line was not selling well, and the president used his official position to attack the company for this decision.

The president's tweet — posted on his personal account and then re-sent from his White House account — is an act of intimidation. Nordstrom interacts with many executive branch agencies: the Department of Labor, the Federal Trade Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Internal Revenue Service and others. Each one of these agencies will be headed by Trump appointees. Most will be staffed with other political appointees as well. The president is telling all of these people that he is very angry with Nordstrom. The message is clear, and it won't take much

for a political appointee in some agency to conceive of an ingenious way of ingratiating himself with the White House by making life difficult for the store chain.

Most important, regardless of whether such retaliation actually happens, Nordstrom and the handful of other companies that announced they, too, would drop the line have to live in fear of it for the rest of the Trump administration. And now every other department store knows that it had better not make a similar "business decision" that displeases the president. In other words, do business with the Trump family and help the Trump family promote its products, or else.

This is not the way free markets work, particularly in the United States. We fought a revolution in part against the mercantilism that prevailed in Britain, where the king and members of Parliament played favorites and people who wanted to ingratiate themselves with the government did business with companies in which powerful politicians had an interest (the South Sea Company and the East India Company were the two most notorious examples). Edmund Burke and Adam Smith railed against this



type of corrupt relationship between business and government in Britain; similarly, the founders of our country did not want that type of abuse of power going on here.

The modern-day Tea Party movement arose in the aftermath of the Great Recession, a reaction to the perception that politicians were playing favorites in bailing out Wall Street banks and auto companies. The Republican Party for years has made a very strong case for an economy in which market actors make their own decisions free of government interference. And now all of

that — and indeed the bedrock principles of limited government power that go back to Thomas Jefferson — lies in shambles as a president seeks not only to use his official position to promote the business of the Trump family but also to retaliate against other businesses for the decisions they make in the marketplace.

Americans have worried about losing freedoms in the Trump administration, including freedom of religion and of the press, as well as the right to be heard by an independent judiciary. We learned this week that free markets are at risk as well.

Delhi, Tokyo, Canberra States, Weak And Strong

They could build the first of multiple middle power coalitions for regional resilience in Trump's world.

Donald Trump sent a tremor through one of America's most solid alliances last week in his leaked phone call with the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. He reportedly got angry at one of his country's most loyal allies and cut short the conversation before it could move to major issues such as fighting ISIS.

The friction was over whether America would honour the Obama administration's parting promise to Canberra to take 1,250 refugees left in limbo by Australian border control policies. In a tweet, President Trump attacked this "dumb deal", implying he might change his mind and reject it. The larger question matters to all of America's security partners, including India. It is about strategy and geopolitics in a confusing new era — and whether US allies and partners can continue to trust the commitments of Washington or the confidentiality of their top-level discussions.

The Australia story feeds into a wider narrative which includes America's abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trade agreement that was meant to be the economic foundation of Washington's renewed security engagement with Asia. The episode is a reminder that many nations in the Indo-Pacific are struggling to navigate a path between assertive Chinese power and the new uncertainties that come with Trump's "America First" outlook in Washington. Although Trump has accentuated the problem, it has deep structural roots in Washington. How does America cope with the ever-rising power of China? Should Washington confront Beijing or cut deals with it? Or might the US simply abandon Asia to the mercies of Chinese primacy? What does Asia do as America oscillates between these multiple options?

The solution is not to assume that America has suddenly lost sight of its deep strategic equities in the Indo-Pacific, or that every country is better off imagining China as a core of regional and global stability. Substantial powers of many sizes, including India, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, South Korea, Vietnam and Singapore need to steer a path that is steady and interest-based, avoiding both complacency and panic. A multi-polar great game was already afoot across our two-ocean region well before the Trump presidency. Along with Prime Minister Modi's India, Shinzo Abe's Japan has been quietly effective in constructing new partnerships of security, economic and political cooperation to ensure their countries can together shape the regional order and not simply accept the results of US-China competition, collision or collusion. It was telling that perhaps the most momentous meeting globally on the day Donald Trump was elected last November was a long and outcomes-rich conversation between Modi and Abe. It marked the convergence of India's Act East vision and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. But the geometry to buttress India's region against US-China vagaries is not purely bilateral.

Australia has long been another leader in building a more robust regional security architecture. Popular notions of the scale of its ties with China — its largest trading partner — overlook the concerns with which successive Australian governments have seen Chinese power and the diversification of Australia's regional relationships. Alongside solid economic and people-to-people links, Australia-India security ties have intensified, including with an anti-submarine warfare exercise in the Bay of Bengal last year. Meanwhile, the Tokyo-Canberra relationship is bouncing back. Last month, Abe and Turnbull pre-empted the Trump factor with a meeting that led to a joint statement noting the synergies in their Indo-Pacific strategies and identifying India as a key third partner. After all, one of the most promising new strategic dialogues in recent years has been the annual trilateral among the foreign secretaries of India, Japan and Australia. Now is the time for these maritime democracies to move beyond dialogue and build practical cooperation that helps all three, and the wider region, prepare for uncertain times.

Of course, Delhi, Tokyo and Canberra are not the only middle powers (or middle players, if you prefer). But they are the three best positioned to demonstrate the value of the new triangular approach to Indo-Pacific diplomacy. They could build the first of multiple middle power coalitions for promoting regional resilience: Informal arrangements of nations cooperating with one another on strategic issues, working in self-selecting groups that do not include China or the United States.

Their mutual self-help could span many priority areas, to firm up the multi-polar context with which Chinese power will have to come to terms. These include security dialogues, intelligence exchanges, sharing of maritime surveillance data, capacity-building of military or civilian maritime forces in smaller countries in Southeast Asia or the Indian Ocean, technology sharing, agenda-setting in regional forums like the East Asia Summit and coordinated diplomatic initiatives to influence both US and Chinese strategic calculations.

There is a link between demonetisation and the attack on Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

The Indian economy has not yet collapsed, even after some three months of demonetisation. The Indian public has refused to rebel, despite being told by economic experts and an ever-eager opposition that demonetisation was an uncalled-for tragedy heaped on the poor. Even the media has given up on stories documenting the people's troubles because of demonetisation. Critics of the government have lapsed into a sullen silence. But everyone failed to notice that there was a connection between demonetisation and the slap that recently assailed filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali, as he was trying to direct his movie Padmavati, coming from a handful of local hoodlums.

A very strong undercurrent in the debates generated by demonetisation of the Indian economy has been that the government had no business to convert all non-legal cash transactions into legal ones. Such debaters were in quite good company; Indians distrust government. Over a century ago, Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), one of the founding members of the Indian National Congress and a judge of the Bombay High Court, railed against the government in words recorded in Miscellaneous Writings: "No government has the right to close the mints or to say that the currency of the country was either deficient or redundant. That is a question solely for the bankers, traders and merchants to consider. If they do not require money, they will not purchase bullion to be coined. The duty of the government is merely to assay all bullion brought to the mint for coinage and to return the value of the bullion in money".

Ranade was angry that the government had decided to intervene in the working of mints and systematise the issuance of money. The English expressed surprise at this advocacy of freedom to coin one's own money. They were already surprised enough that there were mints in most of the principal towns and that the right to coin money was vested in no particular body of individuals. All you had to do was to apply to the government for the right to coin bullion.

Till the recent demonetisation, Indians were fast lapsing back to that 19th century behaviour. Often in the past, when faced with a shortage of coins, people had resorted to an informal "chit" system. Using chocolates and toffees as a replacement for change was a widely accepted practice. With almost a quarter to half of the economy being in black (guesses have varied with time and the estimator), it was but a small step to claiming that the Indian state had dissolved itself. The trouble is that such behaviour undermines the foundations of the modern state system. The uniformity of currency, the control over money supply, the regulation of illegal activity; all these are basic tenets of the state system. And the one major objective of the state system is to protect the citizen — black money is merely a symptom of a weak state that is unable to protect its citizens. The Bhansali slapping incident was just another addition to a long list of sorry episodes that have demonstrated that the state in India has been, by and large, helpless in controlling anything that harms the civil rights of citizens.



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An ambitious China is bringing the US and its Asian allies closer than ever



Since my first visit to Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) more than two decades ago, relations between India and the United States have steadily improved and have become one of the most important relationships in world affairs. There is so much that our two great democratic nations share in common, and it is of great satisfaction to see that we have overcome previous difficulties and have forged a truly comprehensive and strategic relationship — which is important for peace, stability, and security in the India-Asia region, and indeed in the world.

I will be looking into Sino-American relations, and the rising US-China strategic competition in the region — this is a subject that definitely bears on India-US ties. The

relationship between India and the US must be built on its own merits, and not as a tactical or strategic expedient. This includes in the security/defence sphere — where there are a wide range of complementary strategic and security interests between our two countries, and it therefore needs to have a broad-based foundation.

But it is certainly the case that our mutual concern about China's expanding footprint in Asia is one of our important commonalities. China's expanding footprint certainly includes its military capabilities — its naval surface/sub-surface fleet and growing area of operation (AOR), its ballistic and cruise missile capabilities, its cyber warfare capabilities, its improved airlift capabilities, and the PLA's doctrine to develop

“expeditionary” force capabilities over time.

These are all realities of growing Chinese military power — and they are realities for both the US and India. And these Chinese capabilities are — to some extent — driving the strategic and defence cooperation between our two countries. But it would be a mistake to anchor our bilateral or multilateral security cooperation on the “China Factor” alone — we need to have a broad-based India-US security relationship just as we need to have a broad-based ties in general (diplomatically, commercially, educationally, culturally, in science and technology, and other spheres).

Similarly, when we look at China's position in Asia, we need to view it broadly, and not simply through the security lens. We need to view China's entire diplomatic, commercial, and soft power efforts too. This includes understanding the potential significance of the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, which is far more than an initiative to build infrastructure. It is very much an initiative to expand China's geostrategic and geo-economic influence. Viewed

from Washington, it has been increasingly difficult to find equilibrium in relations with Beijing — much less a positive narrative and trajectory into the future. And this was pre-Trump. We are into entirely new territory now with the new US president and administration. All signs are that the Trump administration is going to become much more confrontational towards China. This will have the net effect of not only dramatically worsening US-China relations, but also severely straining relations between virtually every Asian state that has tried to balance its ties between China and the US. Few Asian states wish to choose one power over the other. As the Trump administration confronts China, we likely are going to see a number of states in Southeast Asia cease their equidistant balancing behaviour and will increasingly tilt towards China. In South Asia, my impression is that we see similar trends to Southeast Asia. Some countries are being successfully co-opted by Beijing (Bangladesh and Nepal). One shows discomfort with China's suffocating embrace (Sri Lanka). One tilts strongly towards China, but at

the same time maintaining significant ties with the US, Pakistan — I do not think it's entirely accurate to describe Pakistan as being completely in China's pocket. I also think the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (part of the OBOR) will encounter significant difficulties in being realised.

In the case of India, we see a strong strategic tilt towards the US while attempting to maintain a modicum of normalcy in diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relations with China.

Other nations — Japan, Singapore, Australia, and India in particular — will likely solidify their ties to the US and with each other. They have no desire to drift into China's orbit. This will prove a strong counter-current to other states that draw closer to China. This will lead to an increased polarisation of Asia.

Much depends, though, on the Trump administration and how it approaches the region. If it confronts China without parallel efforts to reassure the region, it could end up seriously damaging America's strategic position. At such a fluid time, it is highly important that America's allies and strategic partners make their voices heard in Washington.

By banning NGOs from foreign funds, the govt is crippling its own services, laws

It was at an airy, well-equipped hospital of 100 beds on a sylvan hilltop in tribal Tamil Nadu that N Devadasan realised how, even when it appears prepared, India's public health system is not. Catering to about 17,000 tribals at the tri-junction of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, the government hospital could not stop the deaths of many pregnant women. There was no follow-up care after admission, and there were only two doctors, usually loath to physically examine their tribal patients. “There was a local saying,” said Devadasan. “‘You come in on your own, and you are carried out by four people.’”

A soft-spoken, earnest doctor determined to work “in a place of need”, Devadasan spent a decade with his wife in the late 1980s and '90s catering to the primary healthcare needs of tribals whose children died from reasons difficult to comprehend in prosperous, emerging India, including diarrhoea, measles, respiratory infections and

malnutrition. These illnesses continue to kill Indian children by the thousands. Although India has steadily improved its infant-mortality rate (a 53% drop over a quarter century), a million babies die every year at a rate higher than the average of 154 low- and middle-income countries.

Living on the forest edge in the town of Gudalur, initially in a leaky house with no TV, fridge or running water, except in the toilet, the Devadasans represented many idealistic folk who try to fill the country's biggest governance gap: The last-mile delivery of services, particularly to disadvantaged communities. The Devadasans set up a system of immunising children, monitoring growth and delivering babies, but they could not handle complicated deliveries or treat disease, such as pneumonia. Financed by British and Dutch donors, the NGO they worked for asked the government: Could they volunteer at the hilltop hospital?

No. Could they get vaccines to deliver to remote tribal villages? No.

This perverseness is an Indian quality. It also explains why many NGOs that work on governance failures report that Indian donors want to see buildings or tangible things — they are reluctant to donate money for research or training, and, largely, flee from anything that spells “r-i-g-h-t-s”. After a decade with the tribals of Gudalur, the Devadasans left to see if they could address the knowledge gap at the district and state level in the government health system by working with public health services. If they could be strengthened, the poorest would benefit.

Today, Devadasan's decade-old NGO, the Institute of Public Health (IPH) — run from a modest house in a Bangalore suburb — generates data from within district hospitals to help evidence-based decision making. It shares the data to influence policy — in other

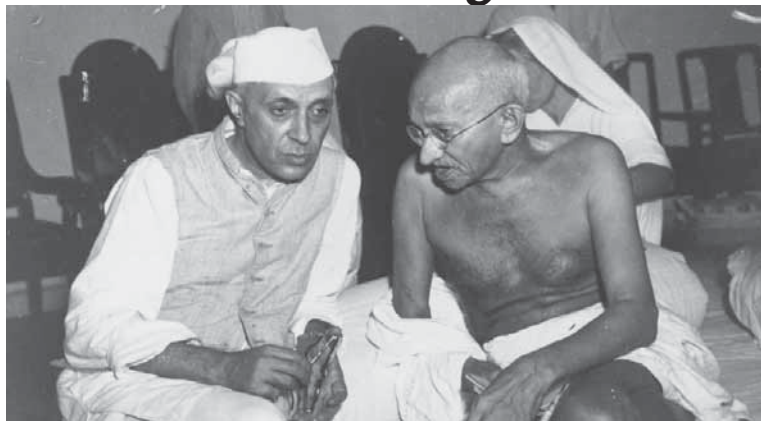


words, advocacy (which, Devadasan admitted, is now a “bad word”), and provides on-the-job training and professional education for government health officers. Some IPH recommendations have become part of India's public-healthcare improvements. Devadasan was part of the Karnataka government's task-force on reorganising primary healthcare and the national health assurance mission; a colleague was part of India's official delegation to

the UN in October on anti-tobacco laws; and IPH training programmes — for the police, education, urban development, information, infotech/biotech and other departments — have led to Karnataka, which has tasked the NGO with being the implementing agency, being furthest along in giving life to the country's anti-tobacco law, more than eight years after it came into force, 13 years after it was passed.

(Contd on page 20)

India has become good at faulting Gandhi, and adept at not consulting him



Seventy years ago, as the year turned from 1946 to 1947, we were not yet a free nation but were becoming one. We were not yet a divided nation but were becoming one. We did not have a prime minister but we had someone who was becoming one. Described officially as vice-president of the Governor General's executive council, Jawaharlal Nehru was PM-designate. But of a nation that he knew, as did Gandhi, was in the throes of a division. In the West, and in the East, of undivided India, freedom and Partition were in the air. With the worst massacres in recent memory having torn human beings apart in the eastern parts of Bengal and in Bihar, Gandhi was where the violence was, where the pain and desolation were. He was in the Noakhali

region of Bengal.

In the first week of that December 1946, as Gandhi walked across East Bengal's shattered villages, Nehru and Jinnah flew to London together, at the invitation of Attlee's government, to find a solution to the great discord between the Congress and the Muslim League (ML) on the scope of the new Constitution. 'The last ditch' is a phrase that could be said to have been devised to describe that effort. Can an undivided India be saved? Jinnah was clear. For him saving undivided India from division was not the aim. Creating Pakistan was. Jinnah was as a clenched fist. Tight, firm. The talks, held over December 3 to 6 failed. London said it would not contemplate "forcing... a constitution upon any unwilling part of the

country". There was no chance for the talks to have succeeded. On the 6th, failure was officially announced and the two leaders flew back, Jinnah ebullient, Nehru in deep gloom.

On the 28th, he did what was the most natural thing for him. With Congress president Acharya Kripalani, he went to Gandhi, carrying with him his great burden of care, of worry. Fear he did not know. But gloom he did. He carried with him all his churning emotions to place them before the Mahatma, and seek from him the gift of some light in the dark, some hope in the hopelessness. He reached Srirampur around midnight and turned in to meet the Mahatma first thing in the morning. But the 77-year-old host was up by 2.30 am to check if the few rudimentary arrangements he had made for Jawaharlal in that little village had worked for the guest's comfort.

No, he was told. Why? Jawaharlalji refused to have any special comforts made for him. Kripalaniji, likewise. But I had told you to, he up-braided people around him. What could we do, Bapu, when we told Jawaharlalji that Bapu has ordered us to give you these essentials he said:

'Disobey him!'

Gandhi smiled at this. "That is Jawaharlal", he said "so let it be". Over the whole of December 29, Nehru gave Gandhi an account of the ML's obstinacy at the London talks. He pleaded with Gandhi to leave Noakhali and return to Delhi so as to be there for the Congress and the interim cabinet to turn to, to consult. Gandhi was adamant that his work was where suffering was, Noakhali where Hindus had been slaughtered and Bihar, where Muslims were butchered. Nehru tried again, on the 30th. To no avail. He had brought with him for his host, apart from the burden of his gloom and worry, a gift. A gift for the Mahatma? What gift - material gift - could Nehru possibly give to Gandhi and in that hour of the deepest darkness and sorrow, in the very heart of communal frenzy? And what is that gift that Gandhi would accept, not return or turn over for 'public use'? It was, from the author of The Discovery of India, a pen, a fountain pen. The extraordinary Gandhi chronicler CB Dalal in his re-creation of Gandhi's daily chronological sequence has a cryptic entry (in Gujarati) against December 28,

1946, Srirampur: "Jawaharlal and others came to meet. Gift of a fountain pen from Jawaharlal". I have tried without success to learn more about that pen, its make, its present lodgement. I have not succeeded. Perhaps a reader of this column, a diligent researcher, archivist or a Gandhi museum conservator, will enlighten us about it.

I do not know but would like to believe that the following note to Nehru written at 3 am on December 30, 1946, was written with that new pen: "Your affection is extraordinary and so natural! Come again, when you wish, or send someone who understands you and will faithfully interpret my reactions... Nor is it seemly that you should often run to me even though I claim to be like a wise father to you, having no less love towards you than Motilalji.... (But) somehow I feel that my judgment about the communal problems and the political situation is true... So, I suggest frequent consultations with an old, tried servant of the nation." On New Year's day, as Gandhi left Srirampur he spoke to the villagers about his own shortcomings.

Revisiting The Clash Of Civilizations

At the end of the Cold War, political scientist Samuel Huntington who taught at Harvard University created a hypothesis. As the break up of the Soviet Union resulted in ethnic conflicts - across Central Asia and Eastern Europe most government officials and foreign policy analysts used his Clash of Civilizations as a prescient bible - as if to say, look- we knew this would happen.

Huntington's idea of a clash premised itself on a fundamental fault-line between Islam and Christianity - orthodox or otherwise, that had been contained thus far by the Western and Eastern Blocs. If the Balkan conflict in the late 20th century provided 'evidence' that the hypothesis was becoming fact, the 21st century's war on terror - that began, make no mistake, only when America was attacked on 9/11 - proved his theory absolutely. Islamic extremism was identified as the single most volatile threat to global peace and all those who questioned or critiqued his theory were sufficiently silenced, as the

world fought the monster of jihadi terror - whether in the form of Al Qaeda then, or the ISIS today.

The question here, to be honest - is not about the prophetic nature of Huntington's theory but something more fundamental. Why do we need an enemy? Is it because in identifying one - the enemy or the other - we are consolidating our own idea of who and what we are? Does that 'we' then become a 'nation' in the philosophical sense of the word? Ernest Gellner defined nationalism as a political principle where the political (state) and national (cultural) units ideally have congruity. But he also said that states and nations can and have emerged without the help or blessings of each other - not always peacefully. His normative idea of the "nation" is what Benedict Andersen termed the "imagined community" where people who were culturally, linguistically and religiously alike often identified as a national unit. As ethnic or religious wars exploded in Africa, the Balkans, Chechnya and the Middle East,

Canadian scholar Michael Ignatieff elaborated on the state vs nation as ideals of nationalism - expanding those into Civic (western) and Ethnic (eastern) concepts in the 1990s. In his definition, Ethnic nationalism had potential for violence and division and cited the examples of Iraq-Iran, Somalia, the Balkans, Ireland - to name a few. In order to define ourselves we need to identify the "other" and Ethnic nationalism converts that "other" into the enemy who must be vanquished in order for our "national" identity to rise and thrive. Civic nationalism is just the opposite. Inclusive and secular, where the state and rule of law are applicable to all, irrespective of ethnicity, faith or race. Some argue though, that in its inclusivity, it is exclusive - its guiding principle is conformity. The tensions between those who are unwilling or unable to conform 100 percent and those who demand it - visible all across Europe and the United States. People can aspire to an identity, but need to be welcomed first by those who already have it. And

that, fundamental Western concept is at the heart of American Nationalism. Or is it? Over a decade after he wrote the Clash of Civilizations, Samuel Huntington asked Americans a fundamental question - "Who are We?" Huntington argued that the end of the Cold War and the subsequent break up of the Soviet Union had 'reduced the salience of an over-arching American identity' and posed "cultural threats." He was referring to the growing Hispanic American identity, but 9/11 sharpened those questions. Are Americans one people or several? Is America a Western nation with common values, heritage and institutions created by its European ancestors and early immigrants? The quintessential melting pot where everyone became American - a political community whose identity is forged by a social contract with the constitution? Or are they an ever changing, ever adapting society of several sub-nations based on ethnic, religious and racial identities? As America identified new

enemies and defended its civilization after the Cold War, it became an active participant in the constant conflict in the Middle East - pockmarked by the first Gulf War of 1991 that American President George Bush began - ostensibly to protect Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the second Iraq war (this time to wipe out non-existent WMD aimed at attacking the "western enemy") begun by his son George W. Bush Jr. These sub-nations took on varied proportions on the homeland, leading to a greater imposition on communities from the Middle East or Asia to conform to the rules of the American melting pot. Sigmund Freud did say that people are like animals and can only, fundamentally resolve disputes through violence. The victor and the vanquished must be clearly defined. And President Trump sets in motion policies that aim to make America safe and great again, seeking answers to these questions has become not just a national imperative for the United States, but one for every "nation" in the world.

Survivors Of Muzaffarnagar Gangrapes Have Been Waiting For Justice For More Than Three Years: Amnesty Report



the alleged case of gangrape would be filed after the Muslim woman's lawyer would raise the issue in the Supreme Court.

"All three of them threatened me, saying, that if I did not do what they asked, they would kill my son... they took turns to rape me...", she told police in her FIR. "After they left, I took my son to a tube well, washed my private parts, hands and legs. I gave some water to my son to drink because he had fainted."

Now, over three years since the alleged gangrape, the trial is yet to even begin. The three men, who were granted bail, are a constant source of threat to the woman, according to a new report filed by non-governmental organisation Amnesty International.

Ghazala is one of the seven

women who came forward after the riots, alleging they were raped by men from the Jat community. While one of the women died last year, some have changed their testimony—allegedly due to threat and intimidation—while others are struggling to keep up the fight for justice even as they try to pick up their lives and make ends meet.

The Allahabad high court had granted bail to the men accused of raping Ghazala under the condition that they would not seek adjournments on days when witnesses were to give evidence. Yet, a timeline of the case shows repeated adjournments after one or more of the accused didn't show up in court. According to the report, "The timeline of the reasons for

court adjournments in Ghazala's case illustrates how repeated delays and adjournments, and an apparent lack of intent from prosecutors to expedite proceedings, can hinder the survivors' right to justice."

The Amnesty report is a damning indictment of how the police, courts, and state government have failed to bring to justice the men who allegedly raped these women in separate incidents during the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013. Many of the women interviewed by the researchers claimed they were frequently intimidated and threatened directly or indirectly by these men, and had even been forced to withdraw their complaint after fearing for their lives.

(Insider Bureau) New Delhi— Ghazala was at a sugarcane field with her young son in Uttar Pradesh's Lak, Shamli, when three Jat men allegedly took turns raping her on 8 September, 2013. It was the first day of the communal riots in Muzaffarnagar which would go

on for three days and eventually kill over 60 people. Weeks later, she would send a police complaint which would go unacknowledged. Police would later claim they never received a complaint. And it would be only four months later, on 18 February 2014, that an FIR in

Mamata Might Be Upset With The BJP But The Millions Scammed By Rose Valley Must Be The Focus



(Insider Bureau) Mamata Banerjee is a street fighter and her party is fighting on the streets these days.

The television screens are filled with images of young men with bandanas around their heads, sticks in their hand, smashing the windows of a BJP office. A straw effigy with a garland of sneakers around its neck and a Modi mask for a face is set ablaze. Trinamool Congress MPs are flabbergasting Delhi police by sitting in dharna and singing Ekla chalo re en masse. There's a full programme of resistance — rail roko, protest marches, road blocks.

Tollywood stars and political lightweights like Tapas Pal are one thing. But Sudip Bandopadhyay, Trinamool leader in the Lok Sabha, is another matter entirely. Mamata Banerjee has made it clear that she's not going to take his arrest lying down. She sees the CBI arrests of her MPs as pure vendetta by the BJP government — Trinamool-bandi after notebandi. The Centre will say the CBI is

just doing its job, investigating a financial scam. Trinamool will say the timing of CBI's renewed vigour smells of vendetta. Both could be true. We will never know for sure what the CBI would have done or not done, if Mamata Banerjee had not been as vociferous against demonetisation. But one thing we know sure. That which we call a Rose Valley By any other name would smell as murky. Mamata Banerjee is not defending Rose Valley or Saradha. She is claiming to be a victim of vindictive selective outrage. What about BJP and the Pearl group chit fund scam, she asks. Tapas Pal has named Union minister Babul Supriyo as being close to the Rose Valley boss. Supriyo has countered by threatening a defamation lawsuit against Pal. But Trinamool's Derek O'Brien posted a video where a smiling Supriyo poetically calls himself a flower in Rose Valley's garden. Aah, the good old days, when they all promised us a rose garden. Saradha and Rose Valley are

different schemes. Rose Valley had a plan where investors booked holidays or land by paying monthly instalments and at the end could opt for a return on the investment with annualised interest. Saradha was a consortium of over 200 companies running a Ponzi scheme promising astronomical returns of over 20% and generous commissions for its agents. Rose Valley is much bigger and far more wide-ranging than Saradha, some say seven times its size. But the booming success of both point to something rotten in the state of Bengal. This was not just naïve villagers tempted by get-rich-quick dreams. Everyone bought into it with gusto.

Like all Ponzi schemes, the main thing they sold was trust. That's where the politicians and film stars and television stars came in. Sudip Bandopadhyay is accused of giving speeches motivating the company's agents and vouching for its credentials. Tapas Pal was on the board of directors for a while at Rose Valley. Mithun Chakravarty returned ₹1 crore he had received from Saradha after the scam broke. Saradha claimed actor and MP Satabdi Roy was paid ₹2 lakhs a month as brand ambassador. The artist Suvapasanna was quizzed by the Enforcement Directorate about his stake in a channel sold to Saradha. None of this necessarily implies some great web of corruption. Actor Aparna Sen who edited a magazine funded on Saradha money said she thought her magazine was being run by a publishing house.

Government hands over Vijay Mallya's extradition request to Britain

(Insider Bureau) New Delhi: The government on Thursday took a decisive step to get back liquor baron Vijay Mallya, who is accused of loan default and financial irregularities by investigation agencies. The Ministry of External Affairs passed on the request for the embattled businessman's extradition to the UK High Commission.

"We've today handed over the request for extradition of Vijay Mallya as received from the CBI to the UK High Commission in New Delhi. We have requested the UK side to extradite him to face trial in India," said MEA spokesperson Vikas Swarup at a press briefing. Mallya fled to Britain in March 2016 after being pursued in courts by banks seeking to recover about Rs 9,000 crore owed by his Kingfisher Airline. Despite multiple injunctions, he has failed to appear before investigators at the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Asserting that India has a "legitimate" case against Mallya, Swarup said if an extradition request is honoured, it shows the UK's "sensitivity towards our concerns". "We have an extradition treaty with Britain and a legitimate case against Mallya. Now, it's up to the British authorities to take further action," Swarup added.

No point in shoveling out!



Another storm is set to hit the Northeast just three days after storm dropped up to two feet of snow on the region

the brunt of the storm,' Accuweather Meteorologist Kyle Elliott said.

Elliott says that some areas could see over a foot of snow.

The storm is expected to mix with a low pressure system off Cape Cod Sunday night, which could lead to an intensification and possible blizzard conditions.

If the storm reaches its full potential, it could make travel dangerous on Monday - with whiteouts and blowing snow.

There's the potential for dangerous road

conditions for the commute on Monday, as well as airline delays and cancellations.

Additionally, forecasters say there's a chance a third storm will hit the area later in the week, between Wednesday and Friday. But it's too early for details on what that holds in store - if it materializes at all.

The snow storm that hit

came just a day after New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore set record-high temperatures.

The quick-moving system started in the morning and was done by the evening, but it dumped several inches of snow throughout the region - from 10 inches in New York and Boston to 24 inches in parts of Maine.

(Agencies) snow to the Great Lakes and New England Friday began to dig out of a storm night into Saturday. But that's just the precursor for an even larger storm that's looming large over the region, Monday morning threatening to bring even more powder and travel chaos for a region that has been mostly untouched by extreme weather this winter. Forecasters say a smaller storm will bring

The first clipper system starts tonight and is set to bring one to three inches of snow to the northern Great Lakes region, upstate New York and New

England by Saturday afternoon.

After a break Saturday evening, a new - more potent - system will move in.

The second starts Sunday afternoon and will last through Monday evening.

'At this time, it appears that the I-95 corridor from Boston to Portland and Bangor, Maine, will bear



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Top US general says Afghanistan war at 'stalemate,' more troops needed



(Agencies) In a stark admission, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan told Capitol Hill lawmakers Thursday that after 15 years of war, the conflict remains a "stalemate" — and said thousands more troops are needed to train Afghan forces.

Army Gen. John W. Nicholson, Jr. offered lawmakers a grim assessment about the prospects for truly ending a war that so far has cost more than 2,000 American lives — and billions of dollars — since 2001. The challenge, he testified, is

made even tougher by Russia and Iran's aid to the Taliban, amid signs the militant group is making territorial gains.

"I believe we're in a stalemate," Nicholson told Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., when asked directly if the U.S. and its allies are winning or losing.

He said he has "adequate" resources for counterterrorism, but is facing a shortfall of a few-thousand troops to train Afghan forces. He made clear those additional troops could come

from allies as well as the U.S., and said the subject would be on the table when Defense Secretary Jim Mattis attends a NATO defense meeting next week in Brussels.

At the Senate hearing Thursday, Nicholson also told lawmakers a U.S. special forces soldier had been "severely wounded" that morning in Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan. Twelve Americans have been killed in Afghanistan since October.

In further evidence that the war is far from over despite then-President Barack Obama declaring an end to the combat mission in 2014, the United Nations reported Monday a record number of Afghan civilians were killed in Afghanistan last year. The report said nearly 3,500 were killed and nearly 8,000 wounded. A government watchdog group also

says the Afghan government only controls 60 percent of the country right now.

Five Americans continue to be held hostage in Afghanistan, according to Nicholson.

At the White House, Press Secretary Sean Spicer said President Trump would "heed the advice" of his generals and defense secretary, but said no decision was imminent.

Restrictions on troop levels in the past administration forced the U.S. military to rely on expensive contractors.

"We have roughly a two-to-one ratio of contractors to soldiers," said Nicholson. Currently, there are 8,400 American troops in Afghanistan, which would put the number of civilian contractors at nearly 17,000. Nicholson said soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division based at Ft. Riley, Kansas, Fla., earlier this week.

were forced to stay home when their aviation brigade deployed to Afghanistan to adhere to troops limits set under the Obama administration.

"This contract for maintenance runs into the tens of millions of dollars, and then the soldiers who are trained to be mechanics are sitting back at Fort Riley not having the opportunity to do their job. So this has a direct impact on army readiness and it also costs us more money," Nicholson said. Some say Afghanistan has become the "forgotten war," despite more American troops on the ground there than in Iraq engaged in the ISIS fight. The subject rarely surfaced on the campaign trail. President Trump mentioned Afghanistan just once to express gratitude for Americans serving there, in prepared remarks while visiting U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Fla., earlier this week.

Groups want Trump to close loophole allowing illegal immigrants to abuse tax credits



(Agencies) Illegal immigrants need only one number to access billions of dollars in free taxpayer cash. The Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) unlocks an exclusive gateway for non-citizens to receive monies meant for working, low-income Americans. The nine-digit code was created by bureaucrats in 1996 for foreigners who had to deal with the IRS. It allows people without a Social Security number, including those in the country illegally, to file taxes. "It's just a farce to say it was created to collect taxes," Robert Rector, senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, told Fox News. "It's nothing but a welfare program designed for illegal immigrants. ITINS are for tourists or illegals. No ITIN filer is eligible to work in the United States."

The problem with ITIN, critics say, is gives non-citizens access to federal cash that they

should not be entitled to receive. Once illegal immigrants file ITIN tax returns, they can apply for a Child Tax Credit — which entitles them to \$1,000 per child. Unlike the Earned Income Tax Credit, which requires a Social Security Number to qualify, the Child Tax Credit is a cash program that does not. Critics say that makes it ripe for abuse. Numerous investigations by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration have chronicled not only improper Child Tax Credit fraud and error payments ranging from \$5.9 billion to \$7.1 billion, but schemes such as nearly 24,000 ITIN payments going to the same address. The audit reports also found IRS

management was "not concerned with addressing questionable applications" but "interested only in the volume of applications that can be processed, regardless of whether they are fraudulent." Another audit report examining ITIN usage found Child Tax Credit claims more than quadrupled in five years, from \$924 million in 2005 to \$4.2 billion in 2010. An agency spokesman said ballooning payouts are because a larger number of non-citizens are applying for ITIN and also because of fraud and error. A Social Security number is required to qualify for any federal public benefit. Green

card holders, refugees and those granted asylum receive Social Security Numbers. But workers without a Social Security Number can still file taxes — and apply for certain tax credits — with an ITIN number. "If you don't have a Social Security number, you shouldn't be getting a tax payment," David North of the Center for Immigration Studies told Fox News. "It keeps happening and nobody pays attention."

Some are calling for President Trump to close the loophole and require people to obtain a Social Security number in order to receive a Child Tax Credit. North says no such course correction was included

in an immigration-related draft order leaked to The Washington Post late January.

"The order overlooks one of the largest sources of payments to non-citizens," North said. "The federal government should not be subsidizing people who are in this country illegally." North said the program has little oversight and abuse is not taken seriously. "The Treasury Department is not careful who gets a number," North said. Documents can be obtained through the mail, proving foreign status via a passport or combination of such documents as a VISA, foreign voter ID or school and medical records, without in-person interviews.

Threats against judges in immigration ban cases leads to increased security

(Agencies) Threats against more than one judge involved in legal challenges to President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration have prompted federal and local law enforcement agencies to temporarily increase security protection for some of them, according to law enforcement officials. Media did not learn how specific the threats were, but law enforcement agencies treated them seriously and out of an abundance of caution, the US Marshals Service and local police increased patrols and protective officers to provide security for some of the judges, the officials said. A spokesperson from the US Marshals Service declined to comment directly on the threats but said that while "we do not discuss our

specific security measures, we continuously review the security measures in place for all federal judges and take appropriate steps to provide additional protection when it is warranted." The threats come as Trump continues his verbal criticisms of judges -- something that has drawn concern from former law enforcement officials and others who fear that public officials should not target a specific judge, and instead base their criticism more broadly on a court's ruling. Security experts say that while Trump's comments were clearly not meant to put the judges' safety at risk, in general, public officials should avoid comments against a specific judge so as not to spur an unhappy litigant. "Federal judges are constantly under

some kind of threat around the country, and the US Marshals investigate hundreds of threats every year on the federal judiciary," said Arthur D. Roderick, who is a retired assistant director for investigations for the US Marshals. "Anybody that has looked at what the US Marshals do has got to realize that an attack on any judge is an attack on the rule of law of the United States," he said, noting that the President's sister is a federal judge and the President should be familiar with threats against judges. But Leonard Leo, an adviser to Trump on the Supreme Court, says it is a "huge stretch" to equate the criticisms that President Trump has made with a threat to judicial security.

Border officers find nearly 2 tons of weed worth \$790,000 camouflaged as LIMES at the US-Mexico border

(Agencies) Border officers found nearly two tons of marijuana camouflaged as limes at the US-Mexico border, officials said.

US Customs and Border Protection officers in Pharr, Texas, seized the 3,947 pounds of weed in the commercial shipment on January 30.

The truck hauling 34,764 of the fake fruit packages crossed the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge along the Texas-Mexico border, CNN reports.

'This is an outstanding



interception of narcotics.

'Our CBP officers continue to excel in their knowledge of smuggling techniques, which allows them to intercept these

kinds of attempts to introduce narcotics into our country', said Port Director Efrain Solis Jr in a statement. The drugs are valued at \$789,467, and the



Department of Homeland Security is investigating the case. Smugglers have already tried to use fake produce to bring drugs into the United

States. Last year, agents found 2,493 pounds of marijuana stuffed into fake carrots tossed in with the real thing at the same border crossing.

Donald Trump's Labor Nominee Sells His Mansion To Porn Mogul For \$8 Million

It's another small reminder of the Trump Cabinet's wealth -- and the CEO-to-worker pay gap in America.

(Agencies) If Andrew Puzder gets confirmed as President Donald Trump's labor secretary, he can use some of the proceeds from the sale of his California mansion to buy a new one near Washington.

The fast-food executive sold his Montecito spread last week for \$8.1 million, according to a review of real estate records. Puzder appears to have put the home on the market when his company, CKE Restaurants which owns the Hardee's and Carl's Jr. burger chains moved its headquarters from Southern California to Tennessee last year. Puzder is now living in

Tennessee, according to a spokesman.

A copy of the deed obtained by The Huffington Post listed the Montecito mansion's buyer as William Asher, using the corporate address of Vivid Entertainment. Bill Asher is a co-founder of the Vivid porn empire. An assistant to Asher declined to comment. Puzder and his wife bought the house in 1997 for \$1.8 million, according to records. They listed it last year for \$9.75 million. The posh home, situated in one of the most expensive areas of country, is another reminder of the astounding wealth of Trump's



nascent Cabinet, as well as the yawning wealth gap between executives and their workers. The real estate firm handling the sale of Puzder's home described it as a "European country manor." The 6-bed, 6-bathroom main house comes with a 2-bed, 2-bath guesthouse

dubbed "the jewel box," all of it situated in "a canopy of ancient oaks and past romantic gated courtyards." The home and its 11,000 square feet offer "an enviable lifestyle," the brochure assured. The guest house comes with its own four-car garage, and could "easily function as a

chic, full-time residence."

Puzder's disclosure documents filed with the Office of Government Ethics indicated he has somewhere between \$35 million and \$119 in assets. They also showed that CKE will be paying him between \$250,000 and \$500,000 for "outstanding relocation benefits" related to his move to Tennessee, including costs stemming from his California home sale.

That sort of money is hard to fathom for a fast-food worker. A Hardee's shift worker receives an average of \$7.98 per hour in pay, or about three quarters above the federal minimum wage, according to Glassdoor.com, a site that tracks company pay through employee reviews. That adds up to a full-time annual salary of about \$16,000.

As HuffPost reported last week, wage-and-hour investigations of Hardee's restaurants show that even small deductions for uniform costs can push some workers' pay below the legal minimum wage.

A 2014 analysis by Demos, a liberal think tank, estimated that fast-food CEOs earn about 1,200 times what the average fast-food worker did over the course of a year. They attributed the growing gap to "escalating payments to corporate CEOs and stagnant poverty-level wages" for workers at the bottom. Puzder's total compensation at CKE was \$4 million in 2012 and \$10 million in 2011, according to the company's last public filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Trump's Border Wall Would Cost \$21.6 Billion: Report

(Agencies) WASHINGTON, Feb 9 (Reuters) - President Donald Trump's "wall" along the U.S.-Mexico border would be a series of fences and walls that would cost as much as \$21.6 billion, and take more than three years to construct, based on a U.S. Department of Homeland Security internal report seen by Reuters on Thursday. The report's estimated price-tag is much higher than a \$12-billion figure cited by Trump in his campaign and estimates as high as \$15 billion from Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

The report is expected to be presented to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary John Kelly in coming days, although the administration will not necessarily take actions it recommends.

The plan lays out what it would take to seal the border in three phases of

construction of fences and walls covering just over 1,250 miles (2,000 km) by the end of 2020.

With 654 miles (1,046 km) of the border already fortified, the new construction would extend almost the length of the entire border. Many cost estimates and timelines have been floated since Trump campaigned on the promise of building a wall. The report seen by Reuters is the work of a group commissioned by Kelly as a final step before moving forward with requesting U.S. taxpayer funds from Congress and getting started on construction.

A DHS spokeswoman said the department does "not comment on or confirm the potential existence of pre-decisional, deliberative documents."

A White House spokeswoman said it would be "premature" to comment on a

report that has not officially been presented to the president. The report said the first phase would be the smallest, targeting sections covering 26 miles (42 km) near San Diego, California; El Paso, Texas; and in Texas's Rio Grande Valley.

The report assumes DHS would get funding from Congress by April or May, giving the department sufficient time to secure contractors and begin construction by September. Trump has said Congress should fund the wall upfront, but that Mexico will reimburse U.S. taxpayers. Mexico has said it will not pay.

Several U.S. congressional delegations are visiting the border this month to assess funding needs, according to several people familiar with the travel plans. The report shows the U.S. government has begun seeking waivers to address environmental laws on building in some areas.

Trump's bid to reinstate travel ban gets rejected

Washington

A U.S. appeal court late on Saturday denied a request from the U.S. Department of Justice to immediately restore a immigration order from President Donald Trump barring citizens from seven mainly Muslim countries and temporarily banning refugees.

The court ruling dealt a further setback to Trump, who has denounced the judge in the state of Washington who blocked his executive order on Friday. In tweets and comments to reporters, the president has insisted he will get the ban reinstated.

Trump says the temporary immigration restrictions on citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and on all refugees, are necessary to protect the United States from Islamist militants. Critics say they are unjustified and discriminatory.

The judge's order and the appeal ruling have created what may be a short-lived opportunity for travelers from the seven affected countries to get into the United States while the legal uncertainty continues.

In a brief order, the appeals court said the government's request for an immediate administrative stay on the Washington judge's decision had been denied. It was awaiting further submissions from Washington and Minnesota states on Sunday, and from the government on Monday.

The government's appeal says the decision by judge James Robart in Washington poses an immediate harm to the public, thwarts enforcement of an executive order and "second-guesses the president's national security judgment about the quantum of risk posed by the admission of certain classes of (non-citizens) and the best means of minimizing that risk".

Trump denounced the "so-called" judge in a series of tweets on Saturday and told reporters: "We'll win. For the safety of the country, we'll win."



People protest against President Donald Trump's travel ban in New York City on February 1

Kuwait denies it imposed travel ban

Kuwait has denied a media report which said it had imposed a travel ban on citizens from several Muslim-majority countries, a story which U.S. President Donald Trump praised on Facebook. "Smart!" a post on Trump's official Facebook page said on Thursday, linking to a report on Jordanian news website Al Bawaba which alleged that Kuwait had "mirrored" a decision by the Trump administration to temporarily bar travellers from several countries. The article alleged that "Syrians, Iraqis, Ira-

nians, Pakistanis and Afghans" would not be allowed to enter the Gulf state "while the blanket ban is in place". But Kuwait's foreign ministry refuted the report, which was widely picked up by news websites popular with Trump supporters including Breitbart, Infowars and Sputnik.

Kuwait "categorically denies these claims and affirms that these reported nationalities ... have big communities in Kuwait and enjoy full rights," a ministry spokesman said on state news agency KUNA on Friday.

last week, but were turned back to Iraq after a failed attempt to board a U.S.-bound flight from Cairo.

On Sunday, the family checked in for a Turkish Airlines flight to New York from Istanbul. "Yeah, we are very excited. We are very happy," Sharef told Reuters TV. "Finally, we are allowed to enter the US."

An official at Beirut airport said three Syrian families had left for the US via Europe on Sunday morning.

IRAQI FAMILY

The president's Jan. 27 order has drawn criticism even from U.S. allies and created chaos for thousands of people who have, in some cases, spent years seeking asylum in the United States.

Iraqi Fuad Sharef, together with his wife and three children, spent two years obtaining U.S. visas, and had packed up to move to America

LEGAL ARGUMENTS

In his ruling in Washington state on Friday, Judge Robart questioned the use of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States as a justification for the ban, saying no attacks had been carried out on U.S. soil by individuals from the seven affected countries since then.

For Trump's order to be constitutional, Robart said, it had to be "based in fact, as opposed to fiction".

The 9/11 attacks were carried out by hijackers from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Lebanon, whose nationals were not affected by the order.

Justice Department appeal criticized Robart's legal reasoning, saying it violated the separation of powers and stepped on the president's authority as commander-in-chief.

The appeal said the state of Washington lacked standing to challenge the order and denied that the order "favors Christians at the expense of Muslims." The US State Department and Department of Homeland Security said they were complying with Robart's order.

REUTERS

Marine Le Pen launches presidential campaign

Paris

Marine Le Pen has launched her presidential campaign with a pledge to hold an EU referendum, ditch the euro, withhold free healthcare from "illegal migrants" and slash immigration.

The far-right leader of the Front National (FN) is hoping to capitalise on a scandal destroying the prospects of former election favourite Francois Fillon, who is embroiled in controversy over payments made to his wife.

But she faces renewed competition from Emmanuel Macron, the former finance minister who has created his own "En Marche!" party in a bid to reach the Elysee Palace.

The majority of opinion polls currently show Le Pen, 48, winning the first round of France's presidential election on 23 April but losing the run-off vote in May.

Her supporters, buoyed by the FN's move into the mainstream amid rising Euroscepticism, anti-immigration sentiment and terror fears, have been heartened by the shock votes for Brexit and Donald Trump.

"We were told Donald Trump would never win in the United States against the media, against the establishment, but he won... we were told Marine Le Pen would not win the presidential election, but on 7 May she will win!" Jean-Lin Lacapelle, a top FN official, told hundreds of party members at a rally on Saturday.

AGENCIES



French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen attends a two-day political rally in Lyon on Saturday

Iran tests missiles despite sanctions

Iran is testing its missile and radar systems after Donald Trump imposed sanctions on Tehran for a recent ballistic missile test.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards website said the aim of the military exercise was to "showcase the power of Iran's revolution and to dismiss the sanctions".

Home-made missile systems, radars, command and control centres, and cyber warfare systems will all be tested in the drill, according to Iranian state news agencies.

Trump's administration sanctioned 13 individuals and 12 entities

related to the country's missile programme and Michael Flynn, Trump's National Security Advisor, said the US was putting Iran on notice over its "destabilising activity".

US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis said he was not considering raising the number of forces in the Middle East to address Iran's "misbehaviour" but warned the world would not ignore the activities.

Last week Iran confirmed it had test-fired a new ballistic missile but said it did not breach the nuclear agreement it signed with other world powers.

AGENCIES



THAT'S WEIRD

Oz beach invaded by hundreds of blue jellyfish



An army of jellyfish have taken over a beach in Australia.

That may sound like the plot to a B-Horror movie but it actually happened in Deception Bay, Brisbane. Pictures taken over the weekend showed the blue blubber jellyfish (*Catostylus mosaicus*) covering the sand.

But there was no need to be frightened.

The animals were not really invading and actually appeared as a result of a natural phenomenon

known as a bloom.

'Jellyfish bloom is part of their lifecycle and if the winds blow just right and if the water level falls with the tide, then they get stranded,' Dr Lisa-Ann Gershwin, a marine biologist, said.

The bloom usually lasts a week before the tide comes in and takes the animals back into the water.

This is great news for everyone as it means the public won't get stung and the jellyfish won't die as a result of being out of the sea.



'He has to sleep with one eye open'

Terrified boy, aged two, is among the 'forgotten' male survivors of India's acid attacks - and number of victims is on the rise

was playing right outside his house.

Jamuna Prasad, Aditya's father, said: 'I went inside to get money to buy him corn but when I came back, Aditya was missing. I ran to check with every neighbour but we could not spot him until the next morning.'

'Aditya was found by police next morning with burnt skin, which had almost turned black. But he was in a conscious when cops spotted him near a drain.'

'From that day till now, we have visited four hospitals for his treatment and we don't know how many more visits are in store for us. 'He will undergo another surgery next month which will rectify his air passage from the left nostril.' Soni, Aditya's mother,



rued how the incident changed the toddler. 'If he sees a stranger now, his first instinct is to run inside the house or simply break down. He grows inconsolable,' said Soni. As parents, the couple has given up their hopes to let him go outside the house, let alone send him to school.

'His left eye doesn't shut anymore. He sleeps with his left eye open,' Soni told Mail Today.

And then there's Upendra Kumar, who is just 14 years old and fell prey to a neighbourhood rivalry attack borne out of a petty fight where a family opposed their kids' friendship with him.

(Agencies) Acid attacks are most often seen as a crime against women.

The majority of victims are young women who face the ire of jilted lovers and even law commissions have reported that it is a gender-based violence.

But increasingly, a significant share of acid attack victims are men. Their cases generally go unreported, simply because most of the victims are women and there is a gross underestimation of the numbers. But there are

many like Aditya, a toddler who was left to die on roadside after his mother's jilted lover poured acid on his face and body or Firoz, 42, who was watching TV casually when an altercation between his brother and neighbor turned ugly. Meet the male acid attack survivors of Delhi:

Two and a half-year-old Aditya Raj is Delhi's youngest acid-attack survivor.

The toddler was allegedly kidnapped by his mother's jilted lover on December 13, when he

'Stigmata' boy weeps blood from his ears, eyes, mouth and even his hairline up to ten times a day - and doctors have no idea why



(Agencies) An Indian teenager who has been crying blood since he was just 10-years-old has been nicknamed the 'stigmata boy'.

A mysterious medical condition means that Akhilesh Raghuvanshi, now 13, bleeds from his ears, eyes, mouth, legs and his hairline up to ten times a day.

Akhilesh's painful condition, which sees blood pouring from his body even though he has not been cut or scratched, leaves him with extreme exhaustion and crippling migraines. His parents initially thought the boy was suffering from dehydration when he began to bleed from his nose three years ago - but they soon realised it was something more serious.

Doctors are stumped as to why blood continues to pour from Akhilesh's body, although

they think he may have an ultra-rare condition similar to haemolacria - where sufferers cry half blood tears. Only a handful of people around the globe are believed to suffer from stigmata - a colloquial name given to afflictions that mimic those Jesus Christ is believed to have suffered during the Crucifixion.

The bizarre phenomenon inspired hit film Stigmata, starring Patricia Arquette as an atheist hairdresser from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who is afflicted with the condition.

Akhilesh, from Ashoknagar in Madhya Pradesh, has been studied by doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, but they have been unable to give him an official diagnosis.

And the schoolboy is desperate to find a cure.

He said: 'I bleed from my eyes, my hands, my head - from

everywhere.

'I bleed from my ears, nose and eyes as well. When I bleed from ears it feels warm.

'It may happen once or may be 10 times in a day. Sometimes, the bleeding will stop and won't happen for months.

'But in the past 15 days I have bled almost everyday.

'It doesn't hurt when the bleeding starts but it makes me tired and sometimes I have headaches.'

After doctors in India were left baffled, his dad, Arun, a farmer, appealed for medics around the world to help treat Akhilesh's condition.

He said: 'I have seen the best of the best doctors in India.

'None of them seem to understand what this disease is and how it can be cured.

'So far my son was bleeding

from his eyes, nose, hairline, neck and legs.

'But now the things are getting bad to worse as he has started passing blood through while urinating.

'I fear for my child's life now.

'The medical science must have an answer to it.

'I appeal to the doctors of the world, please intervene and help save my son.'

He added: 'I hope my son's condition offers the medical fraternity an opportunity to investigate the case

once again and come up with some solution to the problem. 'I appeal to international medical fraternity to come forward to help save my child and rid us of the endless pain and agony.'



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economic order intended to safeguard against the spiral of protectionism that produced the impoverishment and radicalization of the 1930s.

And to protect freedom here at home, we adopted a foreign policy that sought to protect and, where possible, promote freedom abroad, along with human rights and rule of law.

These were the bipartisan foundations for the international order that emerged after World War II. They were the product of American leadership, American power and American values. And while imperfect, on balance they succeeded. The extent of that success can be seen when we compare the first half of the 20th century with the second half of that century—a period that witnessed the longest stretch without a great-power war in centuries;

the most dramatic expansion of human prosperity in history; and the spread of democracy to every inhabited continent on the planet.

To borrow a phrase from the historian Robert Kagan, this is the world that America made.

It is also the world that, I fear, is now in danger of being unmade. The international order that America created is now under unprecedented threat from multiple directions, including by increasingly capable revisionist powers—that is, countries dissatisfied with the status quo, by Islamic extremist organizations that want to destroy our way of life, and by technologies and tactics that are reducing America's capacity to defend

ourselves and our interests.

As important as those various threats are, however, the world order has also been undermined by something perhaps even more pernicious—a loss of self-confidence, resolve and strategic clarity on America's part about our vital interest in preserving and protecting the system we sacrificed so much to bring into being and have sacrificed so much to preserve.

The major challenge to the U.S.-led international order—the rise of a set of revisionist powers—is a development Americans have recognized but been reluctant to confront. Since the end of the Cold War, our hopeful assumption has been that mutual self-interest could provide a pathway for deepening partnership among the major powers, while globalization would gradually liberalize the internal politics of all countries.

What we have seen instead, unfortunately, is that, as certain countries have grown more powerful, so too has their desire to challenge at least some elements of the status quo, while domestically, their authoritarianism has grown both more entrenched and yet also more insecure. In particular, we see several countries—including China, Iran and Russia—now working to establish a kind of sphere of influence over their respective near-abroads, which include areas of vital strategic importance to the U.S., and where we have allies and partners to whom we are bound by shared

interests and values.

To be sure, each of the revisionist powers requires a very different approach on America's part. China, for example, is not just a rising great power and strategic competitor; it is also our No. 1 trading partner, and our relationship with it is the most important relationship in the world. In fact, in each case our relationship inevitably combines some aspects of intensifying rivalry with other aspects of shared interest, including the need to develop some concept of mutual restraint and respect. The challenge for the U.S. is to find the often elusive equilibrium—something that is likely to occur only if we combine hard-headed diplomacy with an equally hard-headed reinvestment in shoring up what has been a deteriorating balance of power.

A very different, far more radical revisionist force threatening the international order is Islamic extremism—the ideology that animates the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. The greatest weakness of Islamic extremism is also its greatest strength—which is its protean ability to exist and indeed thrive without inhabiting a conventional nation-state. What it lacks in traditional power terms, it compensates for in conviction, resilience, resourcefulness and ferocity. And in its hydra-like qualities, it is unlike any adversary we have faced before. What is still missing in many cases is a truly comprehensive approach to combating these

extremists, though, to be fair, there has been progress in recent years developing an approach that enables local partners and allows us to achieve a sustainable strategy—with sustainability being measured in blood and treasure, and being an essential quality given the likely duration of the struggle in which we are engaged.

The defeat of Islamic extremist groups does, of course, require a vital military component. But even if we succeed militarily, as I believe we will, in metaphorically putting a stake through the heart of ISIS and its allies in Iraq and Syria, that success will be fleeting unless the underlying conflicts in those countries and the greater Middle East that enabled ISIS' rise are addressed and resolved. We must also recognize that long-term success in this conflict requires that the ideology of Islamic extremism is itself discredited. And contending with the ideological caliphate in cyberspace will undoubtedly prove more challenging than taking away the rest of what is now a shrinking physical caliphate on the ground in Iraq and Syria.

Here I should note that our most important ally in this war is the overwhelming majority of Muslims who reject Al Qaeda, ISIS and their fanatical, barbaric worldview. Indeed, it is millions of Muslims who are fighting and dying in the greatest numbers on the front lines of this war—including Arab and Kurdish fighters

bravely battling ISIS in Mosul; Gulf Arab forces taking the fight to Al Qaeda's franchise in Yemen; Afghans courageously struggling against a resurgent Taliban and a nascent Islamic State affiliate; Somali forces confronting Al Shabab; and the Libyan elements that recently drove another Islamic State entity from the enclave it had seized on the North African coast.

We must also remember that Islamic extremists want to portray this fight as a clash of civilizations, with America at war against Islam. We must not let them do that; indeed, we must be very sensitive to actions that might give them ammunition to use in such an effort.

Compounding the danger posed by revisionist forces are technologies that are eroding America's conventional military edge. In this respect, the wars of the post-9/11 period were, in some respects, a preview of the future. While the U.S. deployed forces into Iraq and Afghanistan that were superbly constructed for rapid decisive operations of the kind that we waged during the Gulf War in 1991, our adversaries responded with strategies that, for a fraction of the cost, nullified many of our advantages. What Islamic extremists demonstrated through insurgency and terrorism, revisionist powers like China, Iran and Russia promise to take to a whole new level of sophistication.

Sahara hotels abroad likely to be attached

attachment of the group's three hotels and four other properties abroad. The agency alleged that these were acquired with illegal money. A hint about this plea was dropped by additional solicitor general Maninder Singh and senior advocate Rana Mukherjee, who appeared for the Union government, on Monday when a bench of Justices Dipak Misra, Ranjan Gogoi and A K Sikri was debating attachment of the group's prime Pune property Aamby Valley. The ED said it considered appropriate "to approach the SC for appraising and seeking permission... for issuance of provisional attachment order under Prevention of Money Laundering Act" in respect of Hotel Grosvenor in the UK, two US-based hotels - Dream Downtown and The Plaza - and four other properties abroad. ED termed these properties as "proceeds of crime". The agency said Sebi came to know that Sahara Housing and Sahara Real Estate had together collected Rs 25,000 crore from around three crore investors through unsecured optionally fully convertible debentures (OFCDs), which were later declared illegal by the SC, after Sahara Prime City Ltd filed a draft red herring prospectus for a proposed initial public offer on September 30, 2009. "The

director of enforcement has reasons to believe that Sahara Real Estate and Sahara Housing have collected huge funds by way of fraudulent means in the guise of OFCDs and were channelled through group companies and finally integrated the same in the accounts of Aamby Valley (Mauritius) Ltd, the integration of such illegal funds was done in the guise of loans/joint venture advances.

Thereafter, the said funds were used to procure properties mentioned abroad by way of acquiring the equity of the respective property owner entities," the ED said.

Court Refuses to Reinstate Travel Ban

unreviewable, even if those actions potentially contravene constitutional rights and protections."

Within minutes of the ruling, Mr. Trump angrily vowed to fight it, presumably in an appeal to the Supreme Court.

"See you in court the security of our nation is at stake " Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. At the White House, the president told reporters that the ruling was "a political decision" and predicted that his administration would win an appeal "in my opinion, very easily." He said he had not yet conferred with his attorney general, Jeff Sessions, on the matter. The Supreme Court remains short-handed and could deadlock. A 4-to-4 tie there would

leave the appeals court's ruling in place. The administration has moved fast in the case so far, and it is likely to file an emergency application to the Supreme Court in a day or two. The court typically asks for a prompt response from the other side, and it could rule soon after it received one. A decision next week, either to reinstate the ban or to continue to block it, is possible. The travel ban, one of the first executive orders Mr. Trump issued after taking office, suspended worldwide refugee entry into the United States. It also barred visitors from seven Muslim-majority nations for up to 90 days to give federal security agencies time to impose stricter vetting processes. Immediately after it

was issued, the ban spurred chaos at airports and protests nationwide as foreign travelers found themselves stranded at immigration checkpoints by a policy that critics derided as un-American. The State Department said up to 60,000 foreigners' visas were canceled in the days immediately after the ban was imposed. The World Relief Corporation, one of the agencies that resettles refugees in the United States, called the ruling "fabulous news" for 275 newcomers who are scheduled to arrive in the next week, many of whom will be reunited with family. "We have families that have been separated for years by terror, war and persecution," said Scott Arbeiter, the president of

the organization, which will arrange for housing and jobs for the refugees in cities including Seattle; Spokane, Wash.; and Sacramento. "Some family members had already been vetted and cleared and were standing with tickets, and were then told they couldn't travel," Mr. Arbeiter said. "So the hope of reunification was crushed, and now they will be admitted." Several Democrats said they hoped the appeals court ruling would cow Mr. Trump into rescinding the ban. Representative Karen Bass, Democrat of California, said in a statement that the ban "is rooted in bigotry and, most importantly, it's illegal."

The Way Demonetisation Is Playing Out, Some Clear Winners And Losers Are Emerging

Any write-down of liabilities can show up in its P&L account as surplus, which can be paid out to the government as dividend. Figures ranging from Rs 1.5-2 lakh crore have been mentioned in the context of this straightforward windfall for the government's coffers.

But this expectation may go awry if most of the cash returns to the banking system. As on 27 November, 58 percent of the Rs 14-lakh-crore outstanding in old Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes had been deposited with banks, and there is still more than a month to go. It seems likely that a lot of the money has worked its way back to banks, either as unaccounted deposits or as sales revenues of small firms, especially those in real estate.

However, even if there is no RBI dividend windfall, a tax revenue spike is likely. With the government ramming through the Taxation Laws (2nd Amendment) Bill through the Lok Sabha

yesterday (29 November), the stage has been set for the taxman to collect big amounts from unexplained deposits and/or higher reported incomes. The Bill allows the government to impose a tax of 50 percent on unexplained deposits or incomes, and further immobilises 25 percent of amounts disclosed as zero-interest deposits that will fund the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Kosh.

The government can expect a large tax revenue gain, allowing it to claim some form of victory for demonetisation.

Interest rates: Logically, the huge surge in bank deposits should have allowed banks to cut lending rates, but the Reserve Bank's decision to impose 100 percent cash reserve ratio (CRR) on incremental deposits means banks will lose money on the deposits. While the CRR spike is short-term, and will be reduced as the government issues more market stabilisation bonds to increase liquidity in the system, banks will

probably not be able to neutralise this loss in this quarter. The Reserve Bank will probably cut rates after the Monetary Policy Committee meeting next week, but deposit rates may fall faster than lending rates. Reason: the short-term disruption caused by demonetisation may even worsen the bad loans situation for banks, forcing them to up provisions. But rates should start falling from early next year.

Cashless economy: Apart from a rapid expansion of the tax base, the biggest gainer from demonetisation will be the digital economy. Already digital cash and e-wallets are reporting a huge surge in transactions, and if the cash crisis lingers till January, some of this shift to digital cash may be permanent. Jan Dhan accounts, already flush with some amount of laundered money, will now be used more. If the government incentivises card usage, internet transactions and e-payments, the total cash in the system can be dramatically

lowered.

Remember, it took less than a decade for India to go from a few million mobile phones to one billion. It is not going to be difficult to shift more and more people to mobile and wallet payments, with untold benefits for the economy.

Real estate: The two areas where cash is over-used are politics, and real estate transactions. The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act has now been notified, and the Prime Minister has already talked about reforms in political funding. If these two changes happen in quick succession, real estate prices will fall and political funding will shift to less cash. But we need to keep our fingers crossed on both these measures. Real estate needs more action at the state level, while political funding reforms need consensus at the central level. But that is exactly what the demonetisation fracas demolished. Political nerves will remain frayed for some time.

By banning NGOs from foreign funds, the govt is crippling its own services, laws

Helping the government implement its own laws in a country full of high-quality legislation but poor execution is an important role that NGOs like the IPH fulfil. That argument did not stop Narendra Modi's government from banning, "in the public interest" or for "anti-national activities" — to use the vague, official reasons — foreign donations to IPH and 24 other NGOs in November. The real reasons, of course, are clearer.

Some of the NGOs forbidden from foreign donations have helped implement laws in a manner inconvenient to Modi in the past, such as the Sabrang Trust of Teesta Setalvad, which fought cases on behalf of Muslim victims of the 2002 Gujarat riots, and the

Lawyers Collective, run by former Indian additional solicitor general Indira Jaising, who defended Sabrang. Another banned NGO includes Gujarat's 27-year-old Navsarjan Trust, which has built facilities for disenfranchised Dalits and fought legal cases, most notably on behalf of four Dalit tanners flogged by Right-wing Hindu vigilantes for skinning cows.

The IPH had rocked no boat associated with the BJP (although, its anti-tobacco work, I heard, could have riled the tobacco industry). Its foreign-donations ban further illustrates the inherently arbitrary and opaque nature of the government's actions. Devadasan first got to know of the cancellation of the IPH's foreign-contribution licence

from the newspapers. An appeal to ministry of home affairs, got this reply on December 26: "It is (sic) to inform that the application for renewal is refused in the public interest."

With four donors (Belgian, German, the United States, and the Red Cross) cashiered, so to say, the IPH's Rs 2.5-crore annual budget is in disarray, and 30 of IPH's 40 public health professionals and other staff will leave by the end of this month. Only one donor remains: The World Health Organization, which does not require government clearance

To use the public-interest justification against respected organisations that work in the public interest, delivering the

government's own laws and services, is an act of irony (consider, the IPH works with the health ministry and faces action from the home ministry). To provide no clear justification is not only perverse but sets yardsticks others can similarly misuse — the precedent for the hounding of NGOs was established by the previous Congress government. And to argue that these NGOs can do without foreign donations — which political parties are free to receive — hides the uncomfortable fact that Indian donors aren't exactly lining up.

One prospective Indian donor told Devadasan the most it would do was sponsor a bag of medicines — provided IPH carried their logo and name.

A dead end

But the government must know by now that China is not easily embarrassed. Like every country, China is guided by self-interest. Clearly, it does not consider the JeM a threat to its own interests yet. On the other hand, each such episode is an exposition of the limitations of Indian diplomacy with China — even a personal word from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Chinese President Xi Jinping, and an appeal from External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, have not done the trick. It is time India stopped investing so much

diplomatic energy in the 1267 Committee.

Existing designations also seem to have done nothing to "dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism"; the JeM and the Lashkar-e-Toiba were designated in 2001. Five years later, the LeT struck with the Mumbai train blasts in July 2006, and two years later, with the 2008 attack on Mumbai. Shortly after this, Hafiz Saeed, head of the LeT proxy Jamaat-ud-Dawa, and the group, were both designated. Barring some discomfiture for Pakistan, and a few months under

house arrest for Saeed, the designation has done nothing to disadvantage him or the JuD.

The JeM, which unlike the JuD, is banned in Pakistan under its own Anti-Terrorism Act, has likewise continued to grow since its designation. After the Pathankot attack, Pakistan chose to take Azhar into "protective custody".

Indian interests may be better served by working to improve ties with China in a new, unpredictable world, and to convey to Beijing that India-aimed terrorism emanating from Pakistan threatens the stability of the region, and thus hurts China's ambitious economic interests in Pakistan. This thought appears to be

dawning in the Chinese establishment too. There has been some chatter that the recent house arrest of Hafiz Saeed may have come after a nudge from China, not the US. While there is no evidence to back either possibility, it would also be unwise to put too much store by Pakistan's move, which may have been aimed at showing anti-terror credentials to the immigration-obsessed Trump administration. Saeed has easily shaken off previous house arrests under the Maintenance of Public Order Act through appeals in the courts, which, while setting him free, have reprimanded the government for bending to pressure from India or the US. It would be no surprise if this happens again.

Santino Hosts Long Island's India Republic Day Commemoration; Town Marks Historic Milestone in World History

Supervisor Anthony J. Santino, Town Clerk Nasrin Ahmad and the entire Hempstead Town Board welcomed the Indian American Forum, local Indian-American residents and outstanding performers and speakers during the town's celebration of India Republic Day. The cultural event commemorates the anniversary of India becoming a republic after declaring independence from British rule. It is the largest event of its kind on Long Island.

"We are proud to celebrate the beautiful culture and heritage of the great nation of India, specifically the many Indian-Americans who have enriched our local communities and contributed greatly to our quality of life for many generations," stated Santino. "The Town of Hempstead is honored to host a joyous celebration of India Republic Day, and we



Hempstead Town Supervisor Anthony J. Santino hosted the 14th annual India Republic Day at Town Hall. The event included bollywood dancers and the lighting of the lamp to commemorate the historical day in India. Supervisor Santino (center) was joined by Councilman Anthony D'Esposito (4th to the right), Town Clerk Nasrin Ahmad (2nd to the right), honoree Neeta Bhasin (4th to the left), honoree Sunita Manjrekar (5th to the right) and keynote speaker Tejinder S. Anand (3rd to the right) and members of the Indian American Forum.

GoAir engineer suspended for engine fire scare



(Agencies) New Delhi : The aviation regulator has suspended the licence of a GoAir aircraft maintenance engineer (AME) for alleged lapses which led to the engine fire seen by eyewitnesses on ground and some passengers on a Bangalore-bound flight at Delhi on Wednesday night. A preliminary probe by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has revealed that two AMEs' negligence caused the engine trouble soon after the GoAir plane took off from Delhi to Bangalore with 193 people on board. GoAir, on its part, denied any negligence and said it followed the drill as prescribed by the engine manufacturer.

"The Airbus A-320 new engine option (Neo) with Pratt & Whitney (P&W) engines was doing its first flight of the day on Wednesday morning from Mumbai to Delhi. An hour into the flight, the cockpit got warning of low oil pressure in one engine. This was followed by a second alert for the same engine in the form of a 'chip warning'," said a senior DGCA official.

The plane landed in Delhi safely. "After an engine gets a chip warning, the AME should have examined the same in the engine once it had landed. The condition of the part for which the second warning had come was such that the plane needed to be grounded. But the GoAir allowed the aircraft to operate

under 'minimum equipment list' (MEL) for 10 hours," said the official. Aircraft engineers routinely release planes for flight under MEL which means that the fault is such that aircraft can be operated for some more time before rectifying the same.

Why Gujarat matters in Modi-baiter Kejriwal's national ambitions

(Agencies) When the Election Commission of India announced on January 4 that assembly polls in both Punjab and Goa would be held on February 4, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)? and its maverick chief Arvind Kejriwal cried foul. These are the two states it had decided to focus on out of the five where elections are being held and votes being cast on the same day in both places would mean dividing resources and campaigners.

The AAP leadership then decided that after February 4, the party's volunteers would plunge into the Uttar Pradesh campaign to damage arch-rival Bharatiya Janata Party's prospects. But, as the crescendo of the campaign in Punjab started building and the party diverted more and more resources to the border state, AAP had its moment of awakening: It had already announced last year that it would not contest the UP assembly elections, then to waste valuable resources and manpower to

thank the many Indian-American neighbors who came out to support this wonderful event."

Santino presented the prestigious Town of Hempstead India Republic Day Award to honorees Neeta Bhasin and Sunita Manjrekar for their decades of hard work and dedication to the local Indian-American community.

Neeta is the founder of ASB Communications, a full-

service international multicultural advertising and marketing organization. She also established Event Guru Worldwide, which produces one of Times Square's biggest events, Diwali at Times Square. What's more, Neeta has a prominent role as a television personality on ITV, the oldest South Asian TV network in the United States.

Sunita is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor with

more than 17 years of experience and proven leadership, specializing in the field of substance abuse and workforce development. Additionally, Sunita works as the Director of Employment Programs at the Nassau County Department of Social Services, developing innovative and creative programs to help the public assistance population achieve self-sufficiency and economic independence.



damage the BJP would mean losing focus of its larger goal: to emerge as a viable alternative to the Narendra Modi model at the national stage.

AAP immediately abandoned the idea of going to UP and decided instead to expend its energy entirely on Gujarat, where elections will be held later this year. "Only our local unit in UP will track the UP elections and give feedback to our social media team. On the ground, our focus is on Gujarat," a member of the party's all-powerful Political Affairs told media.

The party has decided to focus on states where the BJP

and the Congress are in a direct fight. This list for 2017 and 2018 includes Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. AAP is also trying to build its organisation in Rajasthan and a credible performance in Gujarat this year can catalyse its spread in the neighbouring desert state.

Gujarat is significant in more ways than one. It is Modi's home state. With a 182 seat assembly, it is the first large state that AAP wants to make a serious bid in.

The party has been working on its organisational structure there, polling booth level upwards for the past four months now. A

two-way campaign to gauge public mood, spread awareness about the party and identify issues that could amplify the anti-incumbency called Gujarat Azadi Andolan is underway in all districts of the western state. At the end of the campaign, the party expects to have recruited 90,000 in-charges and co-incharges and aims to get them to converge in Gandhinagar on March 26 to gherao chief minister Vijay Rupani.

AAP's volunteers have been listing issues to corner the ruling BJP government, which has seen two chief ministers in Anandiben Patel and Vijay Rupani since Modi moved to Delhi as PM in 2014. Their focus is on farmers' issues, healthcare and education, sources revealed. The results for Goa and Punjab will be declared on March 11. The party is confident of a win in Punjab and opening its account in the Goa assembly. The Congress has publicly proclaimed that it is winning the election after restricting AAP to 40 seats.



Trump's Enemies Within

The president has awakened the slumbering beast that felled presidents before him: the federal bureaucracy.

How on earth is all this stuff getting in the newspapers? Bob Haldeman told Richard Nixon that he had uncovered the culprit: Mark Felt, a top official at the FBI.

"Now why the hell would he do that?" asked Nixon, who was secretly recording the exchange.

Cracking down on Felt directly was out of the question, the two men agreed. "If we move on him, then he'll go out and unload everything," Haldeman said, of the man later revealed as Deep Throat. "He knows everything that's to be known in the FBI."

Donald Trump, a self-professed Nixon admirer, is learning this history lesson about the presidency in real time: His most dangerous enemies are people who ostensibly work for him.

Modern presidents always feel hectored by the news media and harried by opposition legislators. But mortal threats to their power typically come from hostile forces inside the executive branch.

The phenomenon has rarely been on more vivid display, with Trump buffeted by an unprecedented barrage of leaks about his decision-making and direct challenges to the decisions themselves—a new example coming almost daily—from within the permanent bureaucracy of government.

On Trump's first full day in office, he called National Park Service Director Michael Reynolds and ordered him to produce photos that would buttress Trump's claims that reporters had falsely described the magnitude of his inaugural crowds. Trump's intervention quickly found its way into the media.

A draft executive order directing the CIA to consider reviving interrogation techniques widely regarded as torture was quickly publicized without White House approval—as was the news that Defense Secretary James Mattis and CIA Director Mike Pompeo were allegedly "blindsided" by the proposal.

More than 1,000 State Department officials signed and submitted a "Dissent Channel" memo criticizing Trump's

executive order halting refugees from several predominately Muslim countries from entering the country. A memo from acting Attorney General Sally Yates to Justice Department officials telling them not to defend the order was quickly publicized, leading to Yates' firing by Trump a few hours later.

Extensive details of Trump's combative phone calls with the leaders of Mexico and Australia—calls that ordinarily are private or are described in anodyne terms—were leaked shortly after the calls were over, from sources that likely included U.S. officials concerned by Trump's unconventional brand of diplomacy.

Reconstructions of a botched commando raid on Al Qaeda in Yemen—Trump's first use of military force—noted that the decision-making meeting was attended by Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and counselor Steve Bannon, an involvement by primarily political aides that offends many career national security officials.

The examples are notable both for the speed in which they are coming and the obvious skepticism they convey from within the executive branch both about the merits of Trump's agenda or the methods by which he is trying to impose it.

"Where you have new Cabinet secretaries and unnamed officials speaking out on background across the board about the lack of input screams dysfunction and it's dangerous and irresponsible," said a former Bush administration official who did not want to be quoted by name criticizing the current administration.

Trump reached his present station by mocking news media skeptics and humiliating establishment politicians who challenged him. He arguably has earned the right to be contemptuous of criticism from these quarters.

But what he has experienced his first two weeks is different. It is an illustration of something most of his predecessors learned about the presidency: When people say "Yes, sir," they might really mean "Screw you."

Nixon certainly knew it. It may have been the Washington

Post that won fame for his fall. But as the Oct. 19, 1972, conversation with Haldeman in the White House tapes suggested, it was Felt and the institutional hostility of the FBI that was a primary engine of his undoing. Nixon and his most fearsome henchman had accurately fingered a key source for Watergate stories almost 33 years before Bob Woodward's golden source was revealed.

Nixon's suspicion of institutional forces supposedly under his control was compulsive—but not necessarily inaccurate. Another passage in the tapes has him noting that Secretary of State William Rogers was vouching for the loyalty of Foreign Service officers. "He knows better. He knows better," Nixon fumed, according to a transcript from the University of Virginia's Miller Center. "Those sons of bitches are out to screw us."

The larger reality Nixon was describing—that presidential power can't necessarily be captured in an org chart—is one that even presidents without his paranoid streak knew well.

When Dwight Eisenhower, a five-star general who was used to having his orders followed, became president, his unadmiring predecessor Harry S. Truman supposedly remarked: "Poor Ike. He'll say 'do this' and 'do that' and nothing at all will happen."

Unique among modern presidents, Trump arrived in office without government experience and without, so far as the public record is known, any deep reflection about how to use the levers of the executive branch to achieve his objectives. What's unclear so far is whether his willingness to offend and defy the sensibilities of the executive branch servants assigned to carry out his policies simply reflects his own temperament or is part of a deliberate strategy. Asked about the State Department dissent channel memo, White House press secretary Sean Spicer told

reporters: "These career bureaucrats have a problem with it? I think they should either get with the program or they can go."

"You can't make omelets without breaking eggs," was how Roger Stone, a longtime Trump adviser who also worked in the Nixon administration, put it.

While Trump's particular circumstances are extraordinary, the larger dynamic—like an unruly Rottweiler, the permanent bureaucracy will either be at your heel or at your throat—is one all presidents must reckon with.

"I have often joked with people that one question that I heard more than once from the president is, 'Don't those people work for us?'" said Jack Quinn, former counsel to President Bill Clinton.

Often presidents decide that accommodation, or sullen acquiescence, is the wiser course. During his first term, as President Barack Obama was deciding how rapidly to carry out his stated desire for withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, the timing and substance of his policies often seemed to reflect his desire to avoid open warfare with the military. In particular, Gens. David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal, before their

own controversies forced them from office, were highly popular and well-connected commanders whose disagreement could have far-reaching implications for the administration even if they never went public with an open break.

Clinton loathed Louis Freeh, his own appointee as director of the FBI, and mused to aides about whether Freeh was more disloyal or more incompetent. But because Freeh was investigating his own administration, and because Clinton had a distant-at-best relationship with Attorney General Janet Reno, he didn't dare fire him. Asked if Clinton had confidence in his own appointee, press secretary Mike McCurry responded, "The president has great confidence that Louis Freeh is leading that agency as best he can."





What Steve Bannon Wants You to Read

President Trump's strategic adviser is elevating a once-obscure network of political thinkers.

The first weeks of the Trump presidency have brought as much focus on the White House's chief strategist, Steve Bannon, as on the new president himself. But if Bannon has been the driving force behind the frenzy of activity in the White House, less attention has been paid to the network of political philosophers who have shaped his thinking and who now enjoy a direct line to the White House.

They are not mainstream thinkers, but their writings help to explain the commotion that has defined the Trump administration's early days. They include a Lebanese-American author known for his theories about hard-to-predict events; an obscure Silicon Valley computer scientist whose online political tracts herald a "Dark Enlightenment"; and a former Wall Street executive who urged Donald Trump's election in anonymous manifestos by likening the trajectory of the country to that of a hijacked airplane—and who now works for the National Security Council.

Bannon, described by one associate as "the most well-read person in Washington," is known for recommending books to colleagues and friends, according to multiple people who have worked alongside him. He is a voracious reader who devours works of history and political theory "in like an hour," said a former associate whom Bannon urged to read Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. "He's like the Rain Man of nationalism."

But, said the source, who requested anonymity to speak candidly about Bannon, "There are some things he's only going to share with people who he's tight with and who he trusts."

Bannon's readings tend to have one thing in common: the view that technocrats have put Western civilization on a downward trajectory and that only a shock to the system can reverse its decline. And they tend to have a dark, apocalyptic tone that at times echoes Bannon's own public remarks over the years—a sense that humanity is at a hinge point in history. His ascendant presence in the West Wing is giving once-obscure intellectuals unexpected influence over the highest echelons of government.

Bannon's 2015 documentary, "Generation Zero," drew heavily on one of his favorite books, "The Fourth Turning" by William Strauss and Neil Howe. The book explains a theory of history unfolding in 80- to 100-year cycles, or "turnings," the fourth and final stage of which is marked by periods of cataclysmic change in which the old order is destroyed and replaced—a current period that, in Bannon's view, was sparked by the 2008 financial crisis and has now been manifested in part by the rise of Trump.

"The West is in trouble. I don't think there's any doubt about that, and Trump's election was a sign of health," said a White House aide who was not authorized to speak publicly. "It was a revolt against managerialism, a revolt against expert rule, a revolt against the administrative state. It opens the door to possibilities."

All of these impulses are evident in the White House, as the new administration—led by Bannon and a cadre of like-minded aides—has set about administering a sort of ideological shock therapy in its first two weeks. A flurry of executive orders slashing regulation and restricting the influx of refugees bear the ideological markings of obscure

intellectuals in both form and content. The circumvention of the bureaucracy is a hallmark of these thinkers, as is the necessity of restricting immigration.

Their thinking has a clear nationalist strain, and Bannon has considered hiring a staffer responsible for monitoring nationalist movements around the world, according to two sources familiar with the situation. French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen's visit to Trump Tower in mid-January was his handiwork. Le Pen has devoted her political career to softening the image and broadening the appeal of the nationalist movement in France by marginalizing its most extremist members. Her views are typically nationalist: She is hostile to the European Union and free trade and opposes granting foreigners from outside the EU the right to vote in local elections. Bannon's former employer, Breitbart News, has covered Le Pen obsessively, casting her as the French Trump.

It's a broadside against big government, which Taleb faults for suppressing the randomness, volatility and stress that keep institutions and people healthy. "As with neurotically overprotective parents, those who are trying to help us are hurting us the most," he writes. Taleb also offers a withering critique of global elites, whom he describes as a corrupt class of risk-averse insiders immune to the consequences of their actions: "We are witnessing the rise of a new class of inverse heroes, that is, bureaucrats, bankers, Davos-attending members of the I.A.N.D.

(International Association of Name Droppers), and academics with too much power and no real downside and/or

accountability. They game the system while citizens pay the price."

It might as well have been the mission statement of the Trump campaign. Asked in a phone interview this week whether he's had meetings with Bannon or his associates, Taleb said he could not comment. "Anything about private meetings would need to come from them," he said, though he noted cryptically he's had "coffee with friends." He has been supportive of Trump but does not define himself as a supporter per se, though he said he would "be on the first train" to Washington were he invited to the White House.

"They look like the incarnation of 'antifragile' people," Taleb said of the new administration. "The definition of 'antifragile' is having more upside than downside. For example, Obama had little upside because everyone thought he was brilliant and would solve the world's problems, so when he didn't it was disappointing. Trump has little downside because he's already been so heavily criticized. He's heavily vaccinated because of his checkered history. People have to understand: Trump did not run to be archbishop of Canterbury."

Trump's first two weeks in office have produced a dizzying blur of activity. But the president has also needlessly sparked controversy, arguing, for example, that his inauguration crowd was the biggest ever and that millions of people voted illegally in last November's election, leaving even seasoned political observers befuddled.

Before he emerged on the political scene, an obscure Silicon Valley computer programmer with ties to Trump backer and PayPal co-founder

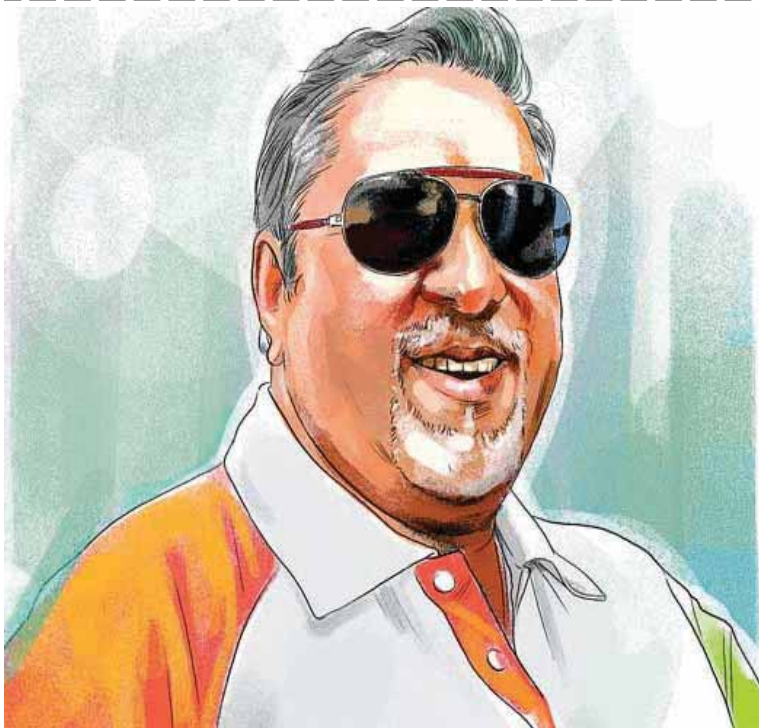
Peter Thiel was explaining his behavior. Curtis Yarvin, the self-proclaimed "neoreactionary" who blogs under the name "Mencius Moldbug," attracted a following in 2008 when he published a wordy treatise asserting, among other things, that "nonsense is a more effective organizing tool than the truth." When the organizer of a computer science conference canceled Yarvin's appearance following an outcry over his blogging under his nom de web, Bannon took note: Breitbart News decried the act of censorship in an article about the programmer-blogger's dismissal.

Moldbug's dense, discursive musings on history—"What's so bad about the Nazis?" he asks in one 2008 post that condemns the Holocaust but questions the moral superiority of the Allies—include a belief in the utility of spreading misinformation that now looks like a template for Trump's approach to truth. "To believe in nonsense is an unforgeable [sic] demonstration of loyalty. It serves as a political uniform. And if you have a uniform, you have an army," he writes in a May 2008 post.

In one January 2008 post, titled "How I stopped believing in democracy," he decries the "Georgetownist worldview" of elites like the late diplomat George Kennan. Moldbug's writings, coming amid the failure of the U.S. state-building project in Iraq, are hard to parse clearly and are open to multiple interpretations, but the author seems aware that his views are provocative. "It's been a while since I posted anything really controversial and offensive here," he begins in a July 25, 2007, post explaining why he associates democracy with "war, tyranny, destruction and poverty."

Vijay Mallya saga: How things went awry for UBHL

Liquor baron Vijay Mallya received a major blow from the Karnataka High Court yesterday when it ordered winding up of the United Breweries Holdings Limited (UBHL), the holding company of UB Group for recovery of defunct Kingfisher Airlines losses owed to consortium of bank led by State Bank of India.



Liquor baron Vijay Mallya (UBHL). The winding-up was suffered a major blow when the Karnataka High Court yesterday ordered winding up of the United Airlines to a consortium of bank led by State Bank of India .

UBHL is the holding company of the UB Group. Kingfisher was promoted by UB and the court ordered that the parent company, being a guarantor to Kingfisher's loans, had to be held responsible for recovery of debt. Currently, Vijay Mallya's stake in UBHL stands at 52.34 percent. Below is the chronology of events that led to the winding up of UBHL. May 2005: Vijay Mallya sets up Kingfisher Airlines to cater to the premium segment. June 2007: Kingfisher Airlines decides to purchase debt-ridden Air Deccan. 2008: UBHL paid Rs 550 crore for a 26 percent stake in Air Deccan. March 2008: Kingfisher Airlines debt touches Rs 934 crore due to spike in oil prices. 2009: Airline debt reaches Rs 7,000 crore. 2011: Airline accumulated losses reach more than 50 percent of its net worth. 2011: 11 bank

accounts were suspended by service tax department for non-payment of Rs 70 crore. 2012: Mallya gives guarantees of Rs 5,904 crore for carrier's loan. February 2013: UBHL seeks shareholders' approval for Rs 450 crore for Kingfisher Airlines. March 2013: Kingfisher Airlines net worth falls to negative of Rs 13,000 crore. December 2014: United India Bank recognises UBHL, guarantor of Kingfisher Airlines as wilful defaulter. February 2015: SBI led bank consortium takes possession of Kingfisher House in Vile Parle. April 2015: United Spirits Limited (USL) asked Vijay Mallya to step down as chairman and director of fund on alleged fund diversion. October 2015: CBI conducts raids on Vijay Mallya's offices in connection with Rs 950 crore loan provided by IDBI Bank .

December 2015: CBI questions Vijay Mallya in Rs 900 crore IDBI Bank's loan. February 2016: SBI led consortium moved debt recovery tribunal (DRT) to attach Vijay Mallya's passport. March 2016: Vijay Mallya in discussion with banks to settle debt. March 2016: On March 9, Mallya leaves India. March 2016: Mallya offers to pay Rs 4,000 crore by September to banks. April 2016: Banks rejected Mallya's offers for payment of dues worth Rs 9,000 crore. April 2016: Hyderabad court convicts Vijay Mallya in case filed by GMR Hyderabad International Airport for bounced cheque. April 2016: Ministry of External Affairs revokes Vijay Mallya's passport. April 2016: Enforcement Directorate approach special court to issue non-bailable arrest warrant against Mallya.

How Russia Became the Leader of the Global Christian Right

While the U.S. passed gay-rights laws, Moscow moved hard the other way.

In early April 2014, as the post-Cold War order roiled in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula—the first forced annexation in Europe since the Second World War—Pat Buchanan asked a question. Taking to the column-inches at Townhall, Buchanan wondered aloud: "Whose side is God on now?"

As Moscow swamped Ukraine's peninsula, holding a ballot-by-bayonet referendum while local Crimean Tatars began disappearing, Buchanan clarified his query. The former speechwriter for Richard Nixon and intellectual flag-bearer of paleoconservatism—that authoritarian strain of thought linking both white nationalists and US President Donald Trump—wrote that Russian President Vladimir Putin was "entering a claim that Moscow is the Godly City of today[.]" Despite Putin's rank kleptocracy, and the threat

Moscow suddenly posed to stability throughout Europe, Buchanan blushed with praise for Putin's policies, writing, "In the culture war for the future of mankind, Putin is planting Russia's flag firmly on the side of traditional Christianity." Three years on, it's easy to skip past Buchanan's piece in discussing Russian-American relations, drenched as they are in mutual sanctions and the reality that Moscow attempted to tip the scales in Trump's favor during the election. But Buchanan's article crystallized a paradigm shift in religious relations between Moscow and Washington, and in Moscow's role within the global Christian right. Before 2014 Russia was largely seen as an importer for Christian fundamentalists, most especially from the U.S. But as the Kremlin dissolved diplomatic norms in 2014, Moscow began forging a new role for itself at the helm of the global Christian right. And Moscow's grip at the

tiller of a globally resurgent right has only tightened since. Not only have Russian banks funded groups like France's National Front, but Moscow has hosted international conferences on everything from neo-Nazi networking to domestic secessionists attempting to rupture the U.S. Meanwhile, American fundamentalists bent on unwinding minority protections in the U.S. have increasingly leaned on Russia for support—and for a model they'd bring to bear back home, from targeting LGBT communities to undoing abortion rights throughout the country.

"In the same sense that Russia's [anti-LGBT] laws came about in 2013, we've seen similar sorts of laws proposed in Tennessee, for example," Cole Parke, an LGBT researcher with Political Research Associates, told me. "It's difficult to say in a chicken-and-egg sort of way who's inspiring whom, but there's definitely a correlation



between the two movements."

It's no coincidence that Buchanan's column, which outlined the players within the "cultural, social, moral war" between Russia and the "hedonistic" West, mentioned a semi-obscure group called the World Congress of Families. As Buchanan wrote, the WCF listed Russia's emergence as a "Pro-Family Leader" as one of the "10 best trends" of 2013. Indeed, in order to outline how Russia challenged—and supplanted—the U.S. role as a clarion for Christian fundamentalists, you have to parse the WCF's role, and the group's attendant impact on Russian policy over the past few years.

Based out of Rockford, Ill., the WCF is an outgrowth of the Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society. Claiming that it wants to "help secure the foundations of society" by, among other things, defending "the natural family founded on

marriage between a man and a woman," the WCF is run by Brian Brown, who also acts as the co-founder and president of the far right, and vehemently anti-gay, National Organization for Marriage. Just this week, Brown landed in Moscow to, as BuzzFeed reported, help continue constructing trans-Atlantic links between Russia and the American Religious Right.

In the two decades since its formal founding in 1997 the WCF has become one of the primary poles around which far-right U.S. evangelicals have exported their fundamentalism, as well as one of the world's foremost anti-LGBT organizations. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the WCF "is one of the key driving forces behind the U.S. Religious Right's global export of homophobia"—not that the WCF would necessarily take offense to the charge.

Scrumptious Sikkim

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

rying the flavours of fresh seasonal ingredients like tree tomatoes and dalle chillies.

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

Bhutia Cuisine

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

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

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

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

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

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



Millet steeped in hot water for chaang

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

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

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

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

Leafy greens

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



Oily fish

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

Beetroot

This superfood releases nitric oxide into the bloodstream making blood vessels expand, and lowering blood pressure.

Rick says: "They say beetroot is the secret weapon of winning football teams — that's very plausible."



Foods that will help you live longer

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



Garlic and onion

These are rich in sulphur which aids muscle function and insulin production and helps produce the cleansing antioxidant glutathione.

Rick says: "These are great for those with sluggish digestion. If you cleanse the body properly you're on the right track."

Turmeric

Yellowy turmeric may help to prevent



any colour is usually good for you."

Chickpeas; lentils

A study found that eating 3% more plant-based proteins like chickpeas and lentils cuts death risk by 10%.

Rick says: "People think chicken and beef when they think protein — and then overeat."

Cinnamon

This helps regulate your blood sugar as it lowers your insulin levels.

Rick says: "This is great for diabetes sufferers."

changes in the DNA of cells that lead to cancer, asthma, eczema and depression.

Rick says: "A general rule of thumb I learned from a biochemist: any food that stains your fingers



Watermelon

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

Matcha Green Tea

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



Red grapes and berries

They contain antioxidants called anthocyanins which slow the ageing process and can fight Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

Rick says: "Don't spend a fortune on exotic berries like goji. Local berries will have the same effect."

—Daily Mirror



FORTUNE'S TALE

INGREDIENTS

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

Sauce / Seasoning:

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

METHOD

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



CONTRIBUTED BY: Chef Charles Chee Kent Fui, Hakkassan



WILD PRAWN CURRY WITH ONION AND WATER CHESTNUT



INGREDIENTS

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

Sauce

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

METHOD

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

CONTRIBUTED BY: Chef Wang Yixuan, Yauatcha

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

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

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

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

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

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



The return of NINTENDO



Three basic modes

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

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

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



Nintendo Switch games

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

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

User interface

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



Multitouch display

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



Joy-Con controller

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

Battery life

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

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



Pornhub Wants To Educate People About Romance, Sex And Consent



(Agencies) Sex education has always been a contentious issue in India. In 2014, former Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan, faced severe criticism for proposing that Delhi schools should ban “so-called sex education” and make yoga compulsory instead. Schools around the country have also often been locked in a battle with parents

who consider the idea vulgar. In a surprise move, one of the world's most popular porn sites has come to the rescue to fill in this educational gap. Pornhub, with over 70 million daily users, is one of the key players in the global adult entertainment business. And now, in addition to all the visual stimulation on offer, the company has launched a sex education platform to help provide credible, fact-based information to its users. The Pornhub Sexual Wellness Center is a free online resource that will offer information on a gamut of topics such as sexually

transmitted diseases, sexual anatomy, relationship advice, online dating, sex tech, birth control, reproduction and, thankfully, the concept of consent. The platform will be helmed by Dr Laurie Betito, a world-renowned clinical psychologist specialising in sexuality, and her team of therapists and doctors. In the promo video, Dr Betito says that her goal is to create a platform where “information pertaining to the physical, psychological, and even the most intimate aspects of sex is available to all.” The irony

is inescapable, considering that the adult entertainment industry is the major reason for skewed perceptions about sex and its healthy expression among young people. Even so, parents who want their kids to be accurately informed but can't bring themselves to have the where-do-babies-come-from conversation can now breathe a little easy. Who would've thought that there would come a day when parents would want their sexually curious kids to visit a porn site?!

These 21 Skincare Treatments Cost Almost Nothing, But Can Help You Look Like A Million Bucks



to 45 minutes before washing it off.

To brighten up the skin, make a paste of curd, orange peel, gram flour (besan) and a few drops of honey and leave it on your face for about 10 minutes.

For acne-prone sensitive skin, mix curd with turmeric powder, sandalwood powder and some sugar or honey and use as a face pack, the zinc in the curd will provide relief to your skin.

Apply plain curd on your face daily if you have patchy skin with blemishes.

Tomato

Tomatoes are a storehouse of Vitamin A and C, both of which are essential for skin health—both inside and out. Tomatoes help in cleaning and shrinking pores, reducing acne, dealing with tanning and give dull skin a glow.

Use tomato juice as an astringent and face cleanser to clear pores and make them shrink over time, and to get rid of excess tanning. If you have acne, use tomato pulp as a face pack for about 10 minutes. A papaya and avocado face mask once a week will moisturise your skin as well as keep oiliness in check. For glowing skin, add honey to tomato pulp and leave it on for about 15 minutes. If you've been spending too much time in the pool and feel your hair becoming hard due to the chlorine residue, take a can of tomato juice into the shower with you. Massage it into your hair and let it stay for 10 to 15 minutes. The acid in the juice will break down the chlorine residue and give you back your soft locks. Shampoo and condition well, of course.

(Agencies) Each year, we spend thousands and thousands of rupees on skincare products and treatments. But almost everything we really need to keep our skin healthy, happy and glowing is within reach, in our own kitchens and bedrooms. Here are 21 DIY skincare tricks that cost next to nothing, but your skin will forever be grateful for them.

Olive oil

In addition to being one of the healthiest fats in the market, olive oil offers a host of skin, hair and nail benefits. It slows down skin ageing, helps nails grow, reduces dandruff and soothes inflamed skin.

Add a few drops of lemon juice to olive oil and massage into your scalp to keep dandruff at bay. The Vitamin E in olive oil will keep your scalp healthy and prevent dandruff from accumulating on it.

If you have split ends, dab them with a mixture of olive and coconut oil to hydrate the dry hair.

Since olive oil is lighter than most other oils, it gets absorbed into the skin easily. If your nails are weak due to harsh nail paints or manicures, rub some olive oil into the cuticles and on the nails to

boost nail growth. If you can, soak your nails in olive oil for about 15 minutes each week.

If you have irritable skin, you can replace your regular face cream with olive oil. It contains a compound called oleocanthal that has powerful anti-inflammatory properties.

Extra virgin olive oil is packed with polyphenols, an anti-oxidant that slows down skin ageing by neutralising free radicals. Use olive oil as a daily moisturiser or add a few drops of it to your face cream to stop premature wrinkles.

Curd

The odour might be off-putting but curd is one of the best all-purpose ingredients in your kitchen. Its anti-fungal properties can help you deal with acne and get rid of pesky dandruff, and the lactic acid lightens blemishes and brightens the skin. It helps in smoothing frizzy hair and restoring shine to dull hair.

For dandruff removal, grind some black peppers and apply to the scalp and leave it on for an hour, then double-wash with a mild shampoo (to remove all odour) and condition thoroughly.

For rough or frizzy hair, add two teaspoons of almond or coconut oil and a egg yolk to curd and leave it on for 30



How Our Cities Are Violating The Rights Of Children

(Agencies) Urban infrastructure problems affect their health, safety and opportunities to play. Air pollution, piles of garbage, open electrical wires and chaotic traffic are just a few of the hazards that children in India's cities negotiate every day. While these problems may be an everyday feature of city life, mounting research indicates these urban problems are detrimental to the mental and physical development of children. These concerns are highlighted by a report on children's quality of life in Bengaluru that was released this month by the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy. Drawing on research involving more than 60 eighth-standard students in 10 schools around Bengaluru in 2015, the report found that

children are deeply concerned about how urban infrastructure problems affect their health, safety and opportunities to play. Their concerns include dangerous intersections without crosswalks, footpaths blocked by piles of garbage or electric wires, and roads with no footpaths at all. They also worry about garbage—piling up on sidewalks, in parks and near their schools—that makes it difficult for them to walk around and play safely. “We can't walk on the roads due to the fast moving vehicles and on top of it we also can't walk on the footpath due to its bad condition,” explained one student interviewed by Janaagraha. More than half of the students in Janaagraha's study also said Bengaluru needs more greenery and parks.





An Exclusive Interview with Saadia Asad:

signature style of your own, and still naming it creativity then you won't survive for long.

Certain percentage of your sales, from Lawn collection Volume 1, 2017, goes to Cancer patients. Thought, worth a real applause. How are you balancing Charity, Creativity and Commerce for

**The Lawn Muse
Mohali
(Komal Minhas Bindra)**

this Lawn Collection ? What is the main source of inspiration for this upcoming lawn collection?

This year I have dedicated my lawn collection to my late father "Khawaja Mohammad Ashraf" who was, is and will be my inspiration for ever. I was very close to my father and he recently died due to cancer. He himself used to do a lot of charity, and always told me to do so. So in his loving memory, I decided to give a certain amount of percentage to the cancer patients.

Is, all your production indigenous? Would, you like to use fabric, from any other part of the world, in future for your lawn collections?

It totally depends on the collection one is working on, for example with printed lawn collections, we experiment with embroideries and dupattah fabrics, but when it comes to luxury pret, I love experimenting with fabric from all over the world. I get fabric



from China, U.A.E, Europe and a lot of fabric from India so that I can create something which others aren't.

What is Saadia's dream project for her brand in future?

Honestly, I am less of a dreamer and more of a believer. I would keep working hard so that I take Noor the brand to another level, so that people know about it all around the globe and make my Father even more proud of me.

One Indian icon you would like to dress for Cannes/

Oscars? What would it be ethnic or western?

I would love to dress Priyanka Chopra for sure. She as an Indian has taken India to another level and makes India proud. So, it definitely has to be her, plus the poise and power of beauty she holds is unbeatable. The dress will be a fusion of eastern and western both as that is my signature style too. It will be simple with enough kind of drama to it so that it stands out.

Saadia Asad is a young, contemporary Pakistani designer, founder of brand "Noor", who has already established herself in this highly competitive fashion world of Lawn. Her creations are known for floral's, sharp digital prints with an edge. Our Fashion Editor got an opportunity to know her better with these questions and her being candid to the best.

A successful career, carved out in the world of fashion. How did fashion, precipitate in you?

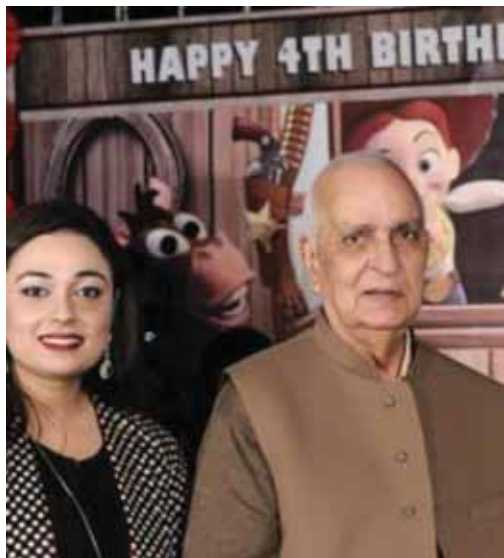
Fashion has always been my thing. I have this love for fashion that's why I stepped into this industry. I wanted my passion to be my career so I chose Fashion designing as my business.

What is the story behind, "NOOR" brand?

Noor the brand is literally my baby. It is named after my

daughter. I was working in the industry for quite some time than I decided to step into the textile side and name my retail brand Noor which provides people with good clothing options from unstitch lawn suits, casual wear, luxury pret and exclusive bridal wear on a very affordable price point. **Creativity, according to you is inherent, inbred or assimilated in prestigious fashion schools? What, would be, the real gap between the two?**

Well to be honest creativity that is "the ability to create something" is inbred. Surroundings and schools can polish the ability, but if you don't have it in you, then you can't really survive in this industry. People are always seeking out for something different, and if you can't provide with something that is creative or new, with a



Here's Why Priyanka Chopra's ABC Show, 'Quantico,' Is Likely To Go Off Air

(Agencies) Priyanka Chopra, who made her American TV show debut with ABC's *Quantico* may have to deal with some bad news. According to TV By The Numbers, a website that tracks the ratings of TV shows in the US, the show has seen a drastic dip in the ratings despite being given a primetime slot on Monday. The website notes, "A while back the Bear noted that *Quantico*'s move to Monday nights would likely result in marginal ratings gains at best. That didn't happen, and thus the show is getting a downgrade to a likely cancellation."

Two shows that have recently been canceled

include *Notorious* and *Conviction*. The ratings for these shows were 0.87 and 0.64 respectively. *Quantico*, on the other hand, is dangling at a dangerous 0.76, which means if it doesn't show an upward swing in the coming weeks, it'll certainly be taken off air. The tracking website isn't too optimistic on PC's espionage drama. It further noted: "*Quantico* probably won't move much higher than its current ratings this season and ABC should cut ties with it at season's end." The website follows something called as a 'Bear Methodology.' If a show gets one bear, it means 'Certain Cancellation' while two bears, which *Quantico* is currently at,

means 'Likely Cancellation.' In either case, this isn't a great scenario for Chopra who has pinned her hopes on *Quantico* to enter the mainstream American market. While it has enjoyed two long seasons, the current one hasn't generated any great reviews that could bolster its prospects. A review on *Vulture* summed up the show's problem when it said, "We know theoretically that Alex is in danger, but she's never proven herself to be anything but capable under pressure. Her incredible ability to get herself out of any sticky situation has become a road bump in her character's story and it no longer feels like Alex is in danger, even when she is."

Hate to watch myself on screen: Zaira Wasim

(Agencies) "*Dangal*" actress Zaira Wasim says it's rather embarrassing to watch herself on the screen. In conversation with young writer Zuni Chopra here on Wednesday, Zaira said: "I hate to watch myself on the screen. It's annoying and embarrassing. I never watch my interviews. I am even scared to watch my film." What are the challenges when acting? "I am a debutant and I don't know about challenges. I just blindly follow the instruction given by directors. "It's up to the writers who write brilliantly-shaped scripts and they are the ones who decide what we (actors) should do. I think the entire credit should go to the writers. "Even in '*Dangal*', if it would not have been a brilliant script, I don't think I would have been called a good actor," she added. Born and brought up in Jammu and Kashmir, the 16-year-old actress said it was the love for work that keeps her on toes even if there is a hectic schedule. "It doesn't matter what time you are waking up if you love your work. If you love your work, no matter what difficulties come up. It's like you have to do it." Asked how she prepares herself for an intense scene, she said: "If the scene is emotional or intense, I need my own time. I would rather prefer sitting in one dark room try to comprehend what coming up next. Everyone needs their own space, so do I." Likewise, in her personal life, she likes to remain in her own zone. "I think my life was a little different from how the life of a 16-year-old person should be. I never went out much. My dad used to tell me stories that they used to go out all the time. There is a huge hill right next to my house and I have



I'm very protective about my personal life: Actor Ranveer Singh

(Agencies) Gossip mills have been in overdrive with rumours of his relationship with actress and "*Padmavati*" co-star Deepika Padukone, but Ranveer Singh has always chosen not to speak about it. The actor says he prefers to be protective about his personal life.

"The thing is I find that there is too much scrutiny anyway, and I don't want to encourage it or add to it. So, I am very protective about my personal life. I would like to protect a few aspects in my life," Ranveer told IANS in an e-mail interview.

"I am mostly open and honest, but there are some aspects that I choose to protect and I hope people respect my decision," the actor, the recently-appointed ambassador of eyewear brand Carrera, added.

The 31-year-old star has been a part of the industry for over six years and has worked in hit films like "*Band Baaja Baaraat*", "*Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela*", "*Dil Dhadakne Do*" and "*Bajirao Mastani*".

He describes his experience in the Hindi film industry as magical. "I genuinely believe that I am living a dream. Every day

when I wake up, I can hardly believe that I am a mainstream actor who works in Hindi films. Working in mainstream Hindi films has been my dream ever since I was a little kid," he added.

The actor, who was also lauded for his role in "*Lootera*", says he has learnt so much by collaborating with many gifted people who have enriched his life and creativity.

"My work has been appreciated and I have learnt from the highs and, more so, from the lows. I have become more of a well-rounded person thanks to my experience," he added.



Indian film industry not based on actor's look, age: Sushmita Sen

(Agencies) Actress and former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen says that nowadays, the Hindi film industry is not based on an artiste's look and age but on talent. She believes that age only adds experience to the actor's career. "No, I don't agree with that, not today...if you had asked me this when I joined the film industry, I would have said a resounding yes! but at this stage, when you look at an 'English Vinglish', you look at Sridevi, you think wow," Sushmita told IANS in an e-mail, when asked if she thinks Indian film industry is based on looks and age and not on an actor's talent.

Lady Gaga Shuts Down Body Shamers After Super Bowl Performance

"I'm proud of my body and you should be proud of yours too."

(Agencies) This is why we can't have nice things. After putting on a show-stopping 13-minute performance at the Super Bowl on Sunday night, Lady Gaga is speaking out against the cruel body shamers out there who dared to critique her abs rather than her set. On Tuesday night, Gaga took to Instagram where she posted a photo of herself from the halftime show wearing sparkly hotpants and a cropped shirt that resembled shoulder pads worn by football players. "I heard my body is a topic of conversation so I wanted to say, I'm proud of my body and you should be proud of yours too," she captioned the photo. "No matter who you are or what you do. I could give you a million reasons why you don't need to cater to anyone or anything to succeed." "Be you, and be relentlessly you," she added. "That's the stuff of champions. Thank you so much everyone for supporting me. I love you guys. Xoxo, Gaga"



Raees box office collection day 15: Will Akshay Kumar's Jolly LLB 2 end SRK's BO honeymoon?

Raees box office collection day 15: Raees vs Kaabil clash has kept the box office busy.

(Agencies) Shah Rukh Khan's Raees is enjoying a good run at the box office. The film which saw a clash with Hrithik Roshan-starrer Kaabil has always maintained an edge. But will the coming Friday release, Akshay Kumar's Jolly LLB 2, affect the business of SRK's film?

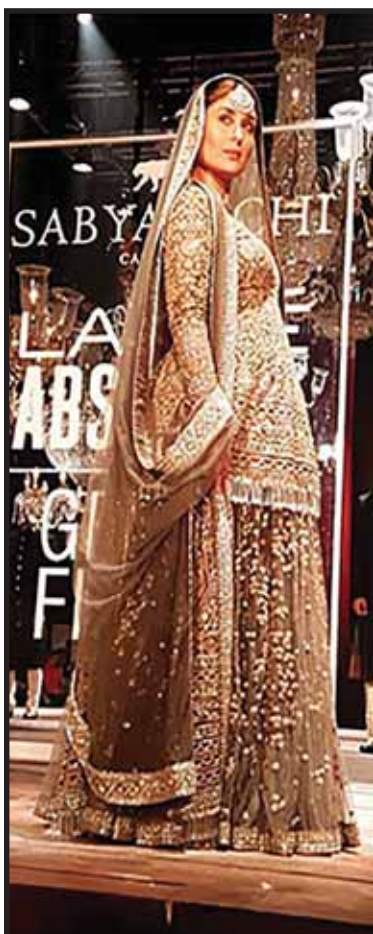
Raees vs Kaabil clash has kept the box office busy since past month but now, Akshay Kumar's Jolly LLB 2 might just

end the clash with its release on February 10. Interestingly, even before the release of the legal drama, Jolly LLB 2 has earned a profit of Rs 45 crore. According to the trade analyst Joginder Tuteja, Jolly LLB 2 has already recovered its budget with satellite, music and digital rights. Meanwhile, Raees is likely to enter Rs 300-crore club in coming days with its gross worldwide collection. The film

faced a wall when it was banned in Pakistan, ostensibly for showing Muslims in a negative light. As per the available figures, Raees starring Shah Rukh Khan and Mahira Khan has collected Rs 139.21 crore till now in the domestic market. Also, according to reports, Raees has crossed Rs. 275 crores at the worldwide box office as of February 6, 2017. Also, looking at Akshay's recent outing, it



seems even Jolly LLB 2 will also starring Huma Qureshi, become one of the films to earn Saurabh Shukla and Annu Kapoor. The film is directed by Subhash Kapoor.



As A New Mom, I Admire Kareena Kapoor, But There's Something That Really Bothers Me

(Agencies) It was heartening to see Kareena walk the ramp for Anita Dongre without caring about her 'post pregnancy weight' – three words designed to immediately convert the phenomenon of childbirth from a fact of life to a dreadful disease. But Kareena's confidence on the ramp made her incandescent and, one would hope, convinced millions of women that it's okay to not run towards the gym from the hospital after delivering a baby.

But then she said something that made me forget my Kajol-like 'bharat jeet gaya' jig and instead pull her 'phooldaan toot gaya' face: "many might look at (motherhood) as an excuse to hide, just because they aren't in

the best shape. But I am not one to get conscious with skinny models around."

And what I want to tell Kareena is this: Pretty much no woman, who has chosen to be a mother, looks at motherhood as an 'excuse' to hide. If the said Indian woman has embraced motherhood out of choice — some Indian women are still coerced to perform it as a duty — she is really not looking to 'hide' at all.

Unless she is suffering from post-natal depression — which is a medical condition — and in that case probably needs more than just celebrity pep talk to deal with it. But yes, as a new mother, I can say, we could perhaps be a little more empathetic to each

other? If Kareena and her ilk of famous women have the paparazzi and annoying fashion police rolling their eyes at stomach rolls, we have an army of relatives, neighbours, colleagues, random-people-who-you-run-into at grocery shops dispensing unsolicited advice on everything from how to burp the baby to how to hide post-baby flab. Yes, we do have our small bunch of enablers, but that's what they are — small. In which case, maybe, it would be more helpful to not do this us-against-them routine when we are battling similar social evils.

Kareena's pregnancy, like Aishwarya Rai's, put on roll a media circus like no other. Only, thanks to the intervening years

in between and possibly growing social media activism, the nature of the conversation was markedly different. While people were carping about everything from Rai's chin to her midriff when she finally started being spotted post-pregnancy by the paparazzi, the dominant social media narrative around Kareena was oh-so-cool-and-liberating. And yet, I couldn't stop feeling part-amused, part-irritated at this strange obsession with pregnant women doing perfectly normal things — like eating out, walking, wearing nice clothes, wearing make-up, basically having a life. It's as if people were surprised that she had a life, despite being pregnant.

Interview With Jolly LLB2'S Akshay Kumar

Akshay Kumar takes on the corrupt establishment and fights for justice in his acclaimed new film JOLLY LLB 2 which releases in North American theaters this Friday, February 10. The award-winning actor sat down to talk about his latest motion picture in this brand new interview.

Please tell us about your character and the story?

Well, it is the story about a blunt, abrasive and yet oddly compassionate Advocate Jolly, who I play – a small-time, struggling lawyer who moved from Kanpur to the city of Nawabs, Lucknow, to take on the establishment. It's a bit of an underdog persona, as Jolly attempts to catapult himself to the top of the legal food chain. Having spent years in the chaotic and dingy court corridors, Jolly is looking out for an opportunity that could turn the tide in his favor and help him achieve his dream of becoming a full-fledged Lawyer with a chamber. When faced with the glimpse of such an opportunity, Jolly jumps at the chance and in the bargain commits an innocent mistake with irreversible consequences that makes him ready for a big fight with the ruthless advocate Mathur played by Annu Kapoor.

What did you like about Jolly LLB 2?

Well, what I really liked about Jolly LLB 2 and what attracted me to it was the script. It is a great script, based on true incidences,

and I was really impressed by the way it acts as a lens on our society. The film is packed with satirical humor which is always far more palatable for an audience in a film like Jolly, where you are trying to convey a specific issue or message – it's better than adopting a preachy attitude. It allows you to have fun but also think about the issue in equal measure. But it's more than just the script and story – it was a great team to work with, like Huma Qureshi, Annu Kapoor, Saurabh Shukla and our director Subhash Kapoor. The entire cast was great and we had a lot of support from our producers at Fox which is always good.

Normally you create franchises, but what was it like jumping into an existing one?

There's always some expectations when coming into an existing franchise, especially when the first film was so appreciated.

In some ways that makes the project a bit of an underdog! But I treat each script and film as a fresh project, regardless of whether or not they are existing franchises or not.

What are the under lying messages of the film?

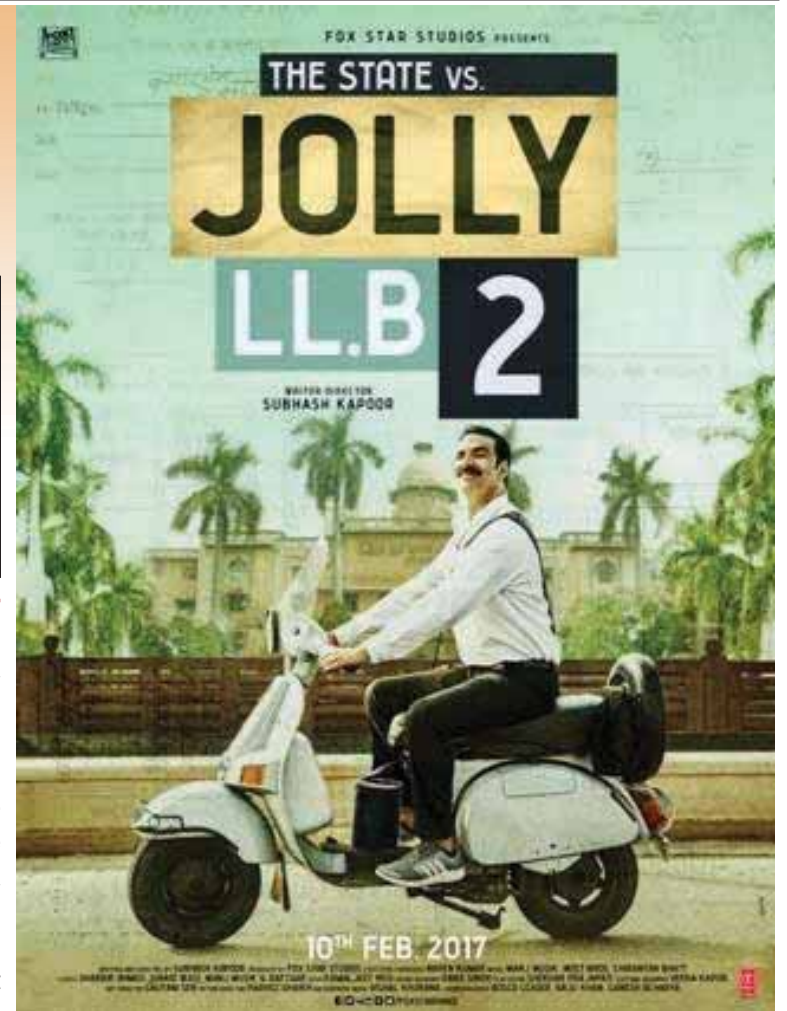
In these films there is always a struggle between good and evil but this film is also very much about principles and morals. In particular, it is about never compromising on those values for the sake of a quick buck. There is a lot more that happens in the film regarding certain issues which I can't reveal at this time but it does shine a spotlight on the wider social issues. Now to exactly what that it is you'll have to watch the film.

What is your favorite moment in the movie?

There are so many throughout the film! More than favorite, a special time for me was shooting in Varanasi as it was my first time there and I was fortunate to take a dip in the holy Ganga. Also I loved locking horns in court with the inimitable Annu Kapoor.

You must be pleased with the incredible success you had in 2016?

Absolutely! I owe it all to my fans – they are the ones that keep me going and after 26 years I'm only here in the industry because of



them. 2016 was definitely an interesting year from a creative perspective, as I had the chance to experiment with different genres and different roles, from playing characters based on true stories in Rustom and Airlift to a more comedic one in Housefull 3. Variety in the kind of roles I take always helps! It keeps me on my toes.

You have a great sense of humor on screen, but how jolly are you in real life?

Deadly serious...is not something to describe me! I've always been the joker of the pack, so it doesn't take much acting to be Jolly!! But to be Jolly in this film took a lot of understanding from

my genius Director Subhash Sir, it's his magical script that took years to perfect that had me gripped to play the man he perceived in his mind...

Why should we watch Jolly LLB 2?

I think because it's a film for the whole family - there's something for everyone to see. It is educational, based on real life and has a clever script with a satirical edge. There's drama, there's emotion and some sprinkling of romance but that too with a quirky inimitable way. It tells a great story about principles and values and I think audiences will be leaving the theatres feeling entertained and hopefully inspired.

'Fifty Shades Darker' careens from erotic to absurd

(Agencies) "Fifty Shades of Grey" became a literary sensation, heightening anticipation for a movie that proved more silly than sizzling. Its sequel, "Fifty Shades Darker," goes well beyond that on the groan meter, repeatedly failing to pass the unintentional-giggle test. Obviously, the idea is for the movie version of E.L. James' novel to be sexy and erotic, from star Jamie Dornan's impressive biceps to its dominant-submissive naughtiness. But reminiscent of the old joke that "kinky" means using a feather and "perverted" involves the whole chicken, "Fifty Shades" basically plays like an overstuffed turkey. For starters, this latest adaptation barely qualifies as a functional movie, in terms of possessing a plot and a beginning, middle and end. Indeed, the story doesn't so much finish as run out of time -- following a hilarious interlude seemingly designed just to prolong matters -- before promising (or perhaps threatening) another edi-

tion a year from now. If the first film dealt with Anastasia (Dakota Johnson) trying to decide if she could accept the special sexual appetites of the billionaire businessman Christian Grey (Dornan), including bondage and spanking, the formula here loosely turns the tables. That's because with Anastasia having left him, it's Christian who's left trying to prove that he can evolve -- that he wants her back badly enough to set his needs aside, at least partially, in order to be with her. Heck, he's even willing to "renegotiate terms" of their relationship. With an offer like that, who could possibly resist? Director James Foley takes the reins and tries to build some suspense around that, as well as side plots like Christian's former submissive-turned-stalker and Anastasia's creepy boss (Eric Johnson). The movie also introduces Kim Basinger -- very appropriately, given her early-career turn in the then-salacious "9 ½ Weeks" -- in

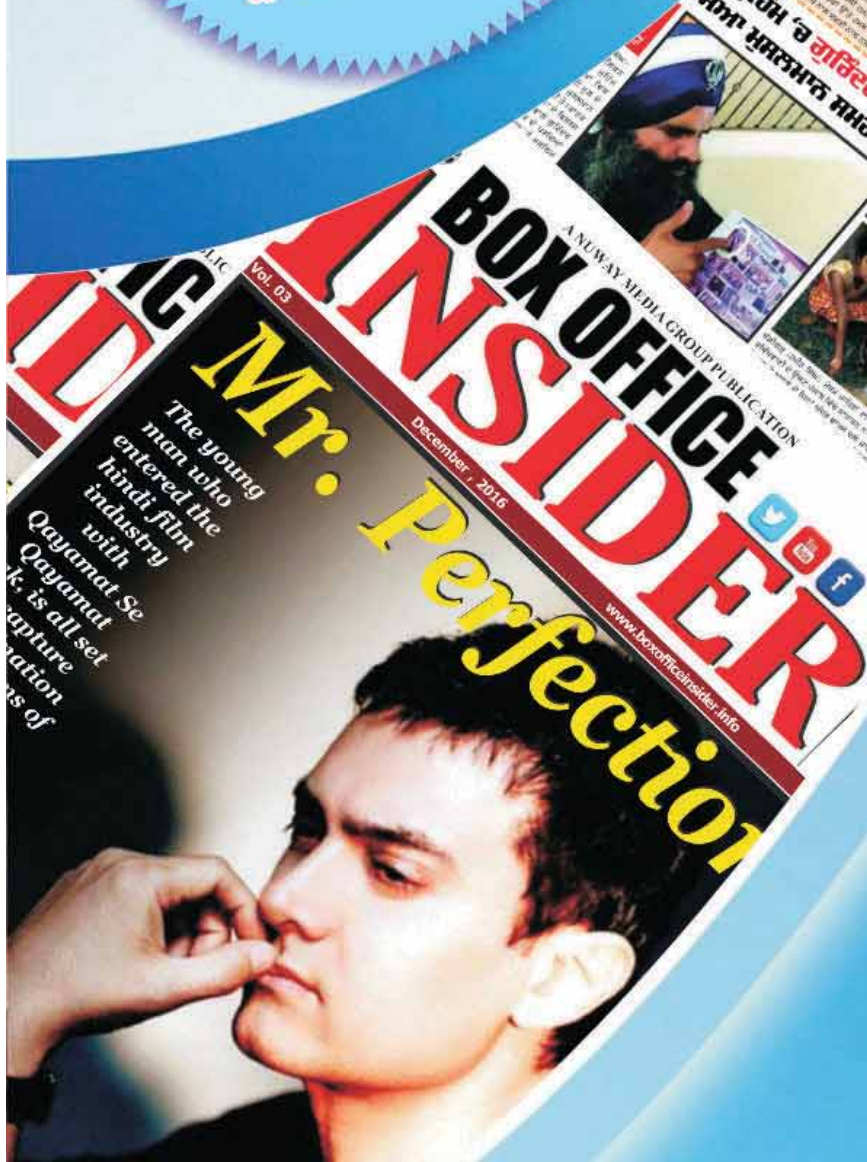
what amounts to a cameo as Christian's one-time lover who ushered him into this sadomasochistic world. Still, none of it really adds up to much, and the sensual flourishes -- like sneaking off together during a masked ball -- can't obscure the laughs that the most risible dialogue elicits. By the time Christian earnestly tells her, "I know I'm complicated," "Fifty Shades" has entered midnight-movie camp territory. In that respect, the frequent use of musical montages -- as trite and heavy-handed as they are -- comes across as something of a relief, simply because during those stretches, nobody's talking. American movies have a longstanding reputation of being more adventurous regarding violence than sex, and "Fifty Shades" scored initially by flipping that script. Apparently, even with what will likely be diminishing box-office returns, the franchise will hang on a little longer. And unlike its brooding leading man, there's certainly nothing complicated about why.





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