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Ayodhya

Political games continue as Supreme Court hears pleas on Babri Masjid

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When Bollywood opens up on sexual harassment, we will lose a lot of heroes:
Richa Chadha

Jerusalem officially recognized as the Capital of Israel by the United States

(SAI Buearu) Washington: President Donald Trump announced Wednesday in a televised address from the White House that the United States officially recognizes the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and will begin moving its embassy there. "I have determined that it is time to official recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel," President Trump said. "While previous presidents have made this a major campaign promise, they failed to deliver. Today, I am delivering." He later added: "Today, we finally acknowledge the obvious: that Jerusalem is Israel's capital. This is



nothing more or less than a recognition of reality. It is also the right thing to do. It's something that has to be done." He also said that the U.S. would finally move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem in accordance with the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, and would make it a monument to peace.

"I've judged this course of action to be in the best interests of the United States of America, and the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinians." Speaking in front of several Christmas trees, and a fireplace festooned with holiday bunting, Trump said: "When I came into office, I promise to look at the world's challenges with open eyes and very fresh thinking. We cannot solve our problems by making the same failed assumptions, and repeating the same failed strategies of the past. Old challenges demand new approaches."

(Contd on page 22)



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Shivangi Maini is 36th Miss India New York

US Department of State advises US citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan

(SAI Buearu) Washington: The United States on Friday advised its citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan, saying that foreign and indigenous terrorist groups continue to pose a threat to them throughout the country.

The warning comes in the wake of increasing terrorist violence, including sectarian attacks, in Pakistan. In a travel warning -- issued after a gap of seven months



-- the State Department warned the US citizens against all non-essential travel to the South Asian country.

The fresh travel warning replaces earlier warning, issued on

May 22.

Pakistan continues to experience significant terrorist violence, including sectarian attacks, the State Department said, adding that targeted attacks against government

officials, humanitarian and non-governmental organisation (NGO) employees, tribal elders, and law enforcement personnel were common in the country.

(Contd on page 22)

Indian-origin New York financier killed in Costa Rica shark attack

The shark attack on Rohina Bhandari, a Wall Street private equity manager, occurred while she was scuba diving near Cocos Island, off the Costa Rican mainland.

(News Agencies)A 49-year-old Indian-origin woman equity manager based in New York was killed last week by a tiger shark while scuba diving on a remote Costa Rican island, according to media reports..

Rohina Bhandari, 49, a Wall Street private equity manager from New York City, suffered fatal bites to both her legs during the shark attack last Thursday while she was diving with a group near Cocos Island, a national park about 300 miles off the Costa Rican mainland, New York Post reported on Sunday.

Bhandari, a Wall Street private equity manager, was hauled

out of the water after sustaining severe bites to her legs, Costa Rica's environment ministry said.

Authorities said two park rangers and several doctors who were part of the diving tourism group of 18 people on the island trip organised by the Undersea Hunter Group, offered first aid in a desperate bid to save her.

But Bhandari, a senior director at WL Ross & Co. LL, a firm founded by commerce secretary Wilbur Ross, could not be saved, the reports said.

Her 26-year-old diving instructor was also badly injured.

The male instructor, who was conscious and in relatively stable condition, told officials that the shark attacked when his group was surfacing at the tail end of the dive in the waters.

According to the Costa Rican newspaper La Nacion, the guide noticed the shark approaching his group underwater and tried to scare it away. But as they surfaced, the shark went for Bhandari, tearing at her legs. The guide, too, suffered leg injuries.

Friends paid tribute to the Manhattan resident on Facebook. "Unbelievably sad and heartbreaking news that



Rohina has died," wrote Julie Walker. "She was such a wonderful person who loved life. I will always remember her kindness, friendship and our adventures together."

Another friend wrote: "Your kindness and genuine warmth to those of us lucky enough to call

you 'friend' was a blessing to behold."

Tiger sharks are predators often found around Pacific islands.

One of the largest sharks in the world, Tiger sharks are known for their powerful jaws and voracious appetites

Indian diaspora feel secure under PM: Sahu

New York (By Prakash M Swamy) – Members of the Indian Diaspora now feel more secured, highly respected and held head high after Narendra Modi assumed charge as Prime Minister of India, said BJP leader Anand Sahu. Sahu, a member of the Minimum Wages Advisory Board at Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, who was in New York last week, said Indians abroad were faced with embarrassing situations when the erstwhile Congress Party were riddled with corruption and misuse of power ruled the nation for a decade.

Modi's neighborhood diplomacy falling in place as relations with Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka look up and India has become a much-respected country in the comity of nations. Modi carried out surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir and brought peace to Jammu and Kashmir. The launching of combing operations against Maoists in Chhattisgarh has yielded good results. Also a Joint-Director at Bharat Institute of technology Sonapat, and Member of the Hindi Advisory Committee at Ministry of Finance, Sahu is known for his tireless work in the areas of social security among the unorganized workers in economically weaker areas of Delhi. Sahu was in the US last week visiting New York, New Jersey, Washington DC to meet with the American think



tanks, Indian diplomats, community leaders and cultural organizations to assess the impact of BJP Government and its economic policies on the Indian diaspora.

Modi ushered in stability to India after a shaky UPA Government that sent strong messages to world leaders. Indian economy has never been stronger like never before and the nation is proud to have a leader who

works 24/7 without a break. He said he had a positive feedback from American think tanks and diaspora leaders on India's economic upturn and successful high growth rate.

New integrated transportation initiative for roads, railways, waterways and civil aviation and regional air connectivity scheme with fares starting at about Rs2500 has been hailed as progressive measures, he said.

Also getting states on board to introduce the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the biggest tax reform since independence combined with a crackdown on black money leading to a surge in 2016-17 tax receipts and hike in a number of return filers has given a new direction to the economy. Getting unanimity on the economic reforms agenda with high parliamentary productivity has proved to be a feather in Modi's cap, he said.

Star-up Solves Facebook Global Challenge

New York (By Prakash M Swamy) ; DataVal Analytics Inc - a Chicago and Bangalore based artificial intelligence start up with telecom guru Dr. Sam Pitroda as chairman- has become for the first time in the digital history to successfully complete a difficult 20-part challenge in artificial intelligence created by Facebook.

The test known as the 20 QA bAbi Tasks hosted by Facebook AI Research (FAIR) assesses the ability of the artificial intelligence based programs to perform text understanding and reasoning.

Todate no organization has been able to solve all the 20 tasks with one hundred percent accuracy. However, using a unique approach, DataVal has successfully completed all 20 tasks with cent percent accuracy. The approach focuses on the human way of understanding Language. It also has integrated multiple processes related to language pre-processing, word sense disambiguation, conjunction processing, preposition association,

co-reference resolution, and time and space analysis.

DataVal focuses on a holistic view of the environment and the ecosystem to reason and understands the situation, an approach similar to the human approach to problem-solving.

Artificial Intelligence is the new frontier technology of the future with far-reaching implications on social, economic and political activities across the world. It will have a significant im-



pact at home, business, factories, banking, government, education, health and lot more. All major global companies and universities have been working on artificial intelligence for decades. With advances in high-speed computing, low-cost storage, open source software, cloud computing and smartphones, artificial intelligence is now in prominence. All leading companies like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, IBM and a handful of startups have substantial research and development under way on the subject.



AAP I To Hold 11th Annual Global Healthcare Summit In Kolkata, West Bengal

The groundbreaking Summit from December 28-31, 2017 will discuss ways to bring the most innovative, efficient and cost effective healthcare solutions for India



management of the diverse group of diseases discussed during this program."

Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, Secretary of AAP I, pointed out some of the major highlights of the Summit: "Other major highlights of the Global Healthcare Summit include, interactive roundtables, clinical practice workshops, scientific poster/research session and meet-the-expert sessions. The Summit will facilitate dissemination and exchange of best practices including a special session on Public-Private Partnership featuring AAP I Healthcare Charitable showcase & innovation," he said.

Dr. Anupama Gotimukula, Treasurer of AAP I, said, "The much anticipated Women's Leadership Forum scheduled for Dec 30, 2017 is designed to conduct a "Town Hall" session with a group of highly successful Women Leaders representing a diversity of professions, involving public, private

and government organizations. The theme for the forum is Women Empowerment in the 21st century, with the speakers planned to be discussing the role and opportunity for Women to address a major challenge presented by high rates of infant and maternal mortality, areas around public awareness, education and access to healthcare."

The Young Physicians Research Forum will be held on Dec. 28th at the oldest medical college of Asia, Calcutta Medical College. International Poster Presentation Session, Two Full Days Scientific Sessions (Dec. 29-30), Workshops, CEO Forum, Women's Forum, Specialty Workshops on Dec. 31st.

Continuing its tradition of providing the much-needed training to First Responders, American University of Antigua (AUA) College of Medicine will offer the AUA's Emergency Medicine Training Centre (EMTC) developed a First Aid

and CPR courses for first responders, including fire fighters, policemen, and EMTs from West Bengal at the KPC Medical College. According to Dr. Samadder, AUA President and Co-founder, Neal Simon will participate in the panel discussion at the Summit's Healthcare & Hospital CEO Forum, which[PPK1] will discuss how to establish and maintain a patient-centric approach on the operational and academic levels of organizations.

Panelists will generate a white paper with recommendations to the Ministry of Health and the Government of India for broader implementation. "The nation of India has contributed greatly to the field of medicine internationally. In light of this and in keeping with AUA's commitment to increasing diversity in the medical field, we consider India's medical community to be a major component of our institution's success" said Simon.

(By Ajay Ghosh) New York, NY: November 20, 2017: The 11th annual Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) organized by the Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAP I) in collaboration with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs & Indian Ministry of Health and the government of West Bengal, with the participation of over 50 world renowned speakers from India, US and from around the world, and industry leaders will be held at the famous JW Marriott, Kolkata, West Bengal, India from December 28th to 31st, 2017, Dr. Gautam Samadder, President of AAP I, announced here today.

With over 200 physicians from the United States, the Summit is expected to be attended by nearly 1,000 delegates from around the world. According to Dr. Samadder, who was in India recently and had held series of meetings with several Federal and State level Ministers and government officials in Kolkata and New Delhi, said, "To be held for the first time in Kolkata, this year, AAP I Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) will have many new initiatives and also will be carrying the torch of ongoing projects undertaken by AAP I's past leaders. In addition, several prominent leaders both from India and abroad will be addressing the Summit, including the President of India and the Chief Minister of West Bengal."

According to him, GHS will have several prominent leaders from India and the US, who will address the conference and interact with the delegates. With world renowned artists performing on stage, the delegates at the Summit will be treated to an exceptionally high quality cultural extravaganza. The Summit will also result in the inauguration of the first ever free AAP I sponsored health clinic in the state of West Bengal, serving thousands of people from the north

eastern region of India.

According to Dr. Suresh Reddy, Vice President of AAP I, "The essence of AAP I is educational. That translates into numerous Continuing Medical Education and non-CME seminars by experts in their fields. CME will provide comprehensive and current reviews and guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of various disease states to reduce morbidity and mortality and achieve cost effective quality care outcomes. At the end of the activity, it is expected that attendees will gain an understanding of the causation, diagnosis and the best clinical practices for the

Venkiah Naidu, Vice President of India, to Preside Over Closing Ceremony of AAP I's 11th Annual Global Healthcare Summit In Kolkata, West Bengal



New York (By Ajay Ghosh) "The Honorable Shri Venkiah Naidu, the Vice President of India, has graciously consented to be the Chief Guest at the 11th annual Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) organized by the Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAP I) in collaboration with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs & Indian Ministry of Health and the government of West Bengal, on December 30th," Dr. Gautam Samadder, President of AAP I, announced here today.

In a personal letter dated November 29th, with a handwritten note to Dr. Samadder, Shri Naidu wrote, "Dear Sir Gautam Samadder ji, Namaste. Thank you for your letter dated

November 16th, 2017. I shall be glad to be the Chief Guest at the Closing Ceremony of the 11th American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAP I) Global Healthcare Summit on December 30th, 2017 at Kolkata."

The historic Summit is being held at the famous JW Marriott, Kolkata, West Bengal, India from December 28th to 31st, 2017 and will be attended and addressed by over 50 world renowned speakers from India, US and from around the world, and industry. With world renowned artists performing on stage, the delegates at the Summit will be treated to an exceptionally high quality cultural extravaganza. The Summit will also result in the inauguration of the first ever free AAP I

sponsored health clinic in the state of West Bengal, serving thousands of people from the north eastern region of India.

With over 200 physicians from the United States, the Summit is expected to be attended by nearly 1,000 delegates from around the world. Dr. Samadder said, "To be held for the first time in Kolkata, this year, AAP I Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) will have many new initiatives and also will be carrying the torch of ongoing projects undertaken by AAP I's past leaders. In addition, several prominent leaders both from India and abroad will be addressing the Summit, including the President of India and the Chief Minister of West Bengal."

Offering Trainings to First Responders, a CEO Forum by a galaxy of CEOs from around the world, inauguration of AAP I-sponsored clinic, CMEs, cultural events, Dinner Cruise on the Ganges, interactive roundtables, clinical practice workshops, scientific poster/research session and meet-the-expert sessions, Women's Forum by internally acclaimed successful worm from India, a special session on Public-Private Partnership featuring AAP I

Healthcare Charitable showcase & innovation, and Town Hall sessions resulting in a White Paper on helping create policies benefitting the people of India, are only some of the major highlights of the Healthcare Summit, Dr. Naresh Parekh, President-Elect of AAP I, said.

The GHS Pre-Summit (DUBAI) at the Hyatt Regency from December 24-28, 2017, will provide a unique Christmas Dinner Cruise, City tour to Palm Island, Khalifa Tower, Burj Hotel, Dubai mall, Dubai Museum, etc. Desert Safari including camel ride and belly dancing shows. The Post GHS TOUR to the heavenly Bhutan from January 1-4, 2018, will take delegates to the world renowned and ancient Takshang Monastery, Hike in Tiger's Nest, Buddha Dordenma, National Heritage museum & Dochula. For those who want to enjoy the beautiful Assam, can tour this beautiful state of Assam from January 4-8, 2018, touring Kaziranga National Park including Rhino Park, Nehru Stadium, Assam Rajyik State Museum, Guwahati Market, Kamakhya Temple and dinner at the Governor's Mansion.

Budget 2018 needs to balance reforms with political demands

The temptation for any finance minister to open the spending spigot in a bid to buy votes is at its strongest in the budget before a national election

In his first budget speech as finance minister on July 10, 2014, Arun Jaitley had told parliament that he would bring in a policy regime that would secure higher growth, lower inflation, better external balance and fiscal prudence. It is fair to say that Mr Jaitley has delivered on all four fronts — till now. He has been given a helping hand by the global oil market, but it would be unfair to say that the improvement in the Indian economy over the past four years is only because of lower global oil prices.

How the final report card will look will depend a lot on how the finance minister manages public finances over the next few months. The budget that Mr Jaitley will present early next year could be the last full one from the National

Democratic Alliance government led by Narendra Modi. He has already begun work on it. The temptation for any finance minister to open the spending spigot in a bid to buy votes is at its strongest in the budget before a national election. The damaging economic consequences of falling prey to such temptation was most evident during the second tenure of the Manmohan Singh government, when the fiscal profligacy that began in early 2008, much before the global financial crisis struck, almost sent the economy into a tailspin by July 2013.

There are four key issues that will define Budget 2018. First, the uncertainty about tax collections in the initial months of the new goods and services tax (GST) will ensure that there is uncertainty

about government revenues. The finance minister should be conservative in his projections about how much money will flow into his kitty. Second, Mr Jaitley will have to make credible monetary commitments to support the recapitalisation of public sector banks, building new infrastructure and supporting a farm economy that is in distress. Third, the act of balancing between tax uncertainty on one side and the demands of higher spending on the other side will have to be managed without ending up with a higher fiscal deficit. Fourth, the budget speech will be an opportunity to make a fresh commitment to further economic reforms. For example, the finance



minister does not have room for reductions in income taxes right now — but he needs to prepare the grounds for a new direct tax code that is free of a web of exemptions that lead to rampant tax avoidance. Every budget is preceded by pressure from various lobbies — economic and political — for

special deals to benefit their constituents. The problem is especially acute as the national election get nearer. How Mr Jaitley manages to satisfy these political demands within the constraints of economic prudence will be watched closely.

Courtesy

Hindustan Times Editorial

The worry is that Donald Trump will lead the US into a nuclear war

The fact that Trump appears to have some mental disorder, or disorders, has created a dilemma for psychiatrists, politicians, and journalists alike



By Elizabeth Drew

Much of America's capital has entered a state of near-panic. In recent days, President Donald Trump has been acting more bizarrely than ever, and the question raised in the mind of politicians and civilians alike, though rarely spoken aloud, has been: What can be done with this man? Can the United States really afford to wait for Special Counsel Robert Mueller to wrap up his investigation (on the assumption that he'll find the president guilty of something)? That could still take quite a while.

The question of timing has become increasingly urgent, given the heightened danger that the US will deliberately or accidentally end up in a war with North Korea. That risk, coupled

with Trump's increasingly peculiar behaviour, has made Washington more tense than I've ever known it to be, and that includes the dark days of Watergate. To put it bluntly: the worry is that the president might lead the US into a nuclear war.

In just the past week, evidence of Trump's instability has piled up. During an Oval Office ceremony to honour Native-American heroes of World War II, he offended them by issuing a racist comment. He picked an unprecedented and unnecessary fight with the prime minister of the United Kingdom, supposedly America's closest ally, by retweeting a British neo-fascist group's anti-Muslim posts. In an effort to win a Democratic senator's vote for his pending tax-cut bill, he

travelled to her state and told lies about her record (though the tax bill was so tilted to the richest 1% of Americans that no Democratic senator voted for it). And he continued to bait North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, who seems equally unstable.

At the same time, both the Washington Post and The New York Times ran articles containing disturbing stories about the president's private behaviour. Trump, it was reported, told people close to him that he considers the infamous "Access Hollywood" recording of him joking, off-camera, about grabbing women's genitals to be a fraud, even though he admitted its authenticity and apologised after the Post released it in the final weeks of the presidential campaign.

Trump has also been revisiting his mendacious claim about Barack Obama having not been born in the US — the bogus allegation that launched his political career, which, under pressure from advisers, he'd renounced prior to the election. He said in a tweet that he had turned down Time

magazine's suggestion that it would name him "Person of the Year," because it wasn't definite. (Trump sets great store by such appearances on Time's cover). But a Time official said that no such thing had occurred.

The fact that Trump appears to have some mental disorder, or disorders, has created a dilemma for psychiatrists, politicians, and journalists alike. The American Psychiatric Association has a rule that its members may not offer diagnoses of people they have not examined. But, given what some psychiatrists see as a national emergency, many have broken the rule and spoken or written publicly about their professional assessments of Trump's mental state.

The most widely accepted view is that he suffers from a narcissistic personality disorder, which is far more serious than simply being a narcissist. According to the Mayo Clinic, such a disorder "is a mental condition in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for excessive attention and admiration, troubled relationships, and a

lack of empathy for others." Moreover, "behind this mask of extreme confidence lies a fragile self-esteem that's vulnerable to the slightest criticism."

This definition is all too reflective of traits that Trump regularly exhibits. Another view held by a number of medical professionals, based on how Trump spoke in interviews in the late 1980s and how he speaks now — with a far more limited vocabulary and much less fluency — is that the president is suffering from the onset of dementia. According to the highly respected medical reference UpToDate, a subscription-financed service used by professionals, the symptoms of dementia include agitation, aggression, delusions, hallucinations, apathy, and disinhibition.

Numerous Republican members of Congress are deeply worried about Trump's capacity to handle the presidency — an incredibly demanding job. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, rumoured to be replaced soon, is said to

Rahul Gandhi's biggest challenge is rebuilding the Congress organisation

After a long time the Congress Party is all set to get a new president. The election of Rahul Gandhi this month will formalise his de facto position as the leader of India's largest opposition party. Getting elected as the Congress president in his case is easy, but leading the party hands-on and getting accepted as a convincing challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a more difficult proposition. Therefore it remains to be seen how much of a difference Rahul Gandhi's leadership will make to the Congress party which suffered its worst defeat in the 2014 elections and which reduced the party to a historic low of 44 seats in the Lok Sabha. This was followed by a string of defeats in the subsequent state elections which reinforced the serious crisis facing the party. The present crisis is far worse than anything the Congress has confronted in its 132-year history.

As the transition to the Rahul era begins, he has two major challenges, one of a personal leadership makeover and the other of revamping the party structures and messaging in order to make it a significant political voice.

For a start, he will have to contend with the strong disapproval surrounding the question of dynasty. In the New India defined by democratic assertiveness and aspiration, a reliance solely on dynasty doesn't work anymore. But for the Congress the inevitable succession from mother to son is related to the nature of the party which was transformed by Indira Gandhi into a centralised institution in the early 1970s. The party can't do without the family as no one but a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family can hold its potentially fractious elements together. Even so, dynastic entitlement is out of place in a democracy. It's even more problematic because the significance of the family was principally connected to its electoral success. But lately the dynasty has not delivered. This has ironically not lessened its influence or the dependence of the party on the family.

Rahul Gandhi's biggest challenge is rebuilding the Congress organisation which is faltering in the states. Barring a few states like Kerala, the Congress virtually does not have an effective organisation anywhere else. Organisationally, it is in disarray, it is bereft of a dedicated cadre of grassroots workers who can fight the formidable Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)/ Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election machine. The ruling party's pramukhs and booth management operations are its biggest strength and the Congress has nothing remotely similar dedicated to the task of election management.

To his credit, he has shown greater enthusiasm for structural changes in the party apparatus than his mother who didn't make any perceptible effort to change the party's centralised style of functioning during the ten years of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) rule. It is the persistence of this model which discouraged the emergence of strong and credible leadership capable of mounting effective state-wide mobilisation in the states. But so far, Rahul Gandhi has not had the chance to usher in the changes that he has often spoken about. Hardly anything has been done to rebuild the Congress organisation in the last three years when he has led the party as vice president. Democratising the organisation is essential, but to do this, the top leadership has to reorganise the party through internal elections which can throw up a new set of leaders and activists.

A distinctive characteristic of Rahul Gandhi's politics is his spirited opposition to Modi despite the BJP's political offensive against him; in fact, his sharp attacks on Modi have put the BJP on the defensive and have contributed to making him the principal Opposition leader in the country. He has successfully tapped into a rising discontent over the economic slowdown and growing job losses. The disenchantment with demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax, and his aggressive campaign in Gujarat, seems to have infused new life into his political career. According to him, Modi has over-promised, and under-delivered. But drawing attention to the government's economic failures is not enough; an Opposition party must shape it with a social and economic agenda of its own. Only a sound political vision will help Rahul Gandhi in the face-off with Modi. It is clear that in the present climate of discontent an alternative development agenda must be defined by a model of job-led growth as against jobless growth. Social welfare and economic rights should form the core of the counter-narrative to the NDA model, notwithstanding 'expert' advice to the contrary.

Rahul Gandhi will need to reach out to other parties to form alliances like his mother had done in the formation of the UPA in 2004. The Congress secured 19.3% of the vote while BJP got 31% in the last Lok Sabha polls, signifying that the Opposition can challenge the BJP if they can hold out seat adjustment, if not alliances, in the battle for 2019.

By Zoya Hasan, Hindustan Times

Ayodhya Babri Masjid case

Will Yogi finish what Kalyan started ?

On September 27, 1989, Buta Singh, at the time Union home minister, landed in Lucknow on a secret mission. He drove straight to the chief minister's residence to meet a high-profile delegation of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) headed by the late Ashok Singhal. The closed-door meeting concluded with the Congress government in Uttar Pradesh and the VHP signing an agreement that gave a fillip to the temple movement, which culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. The VHP leaders beamed as the state government granted permission for 'shilanyas' (foundation-laying ceremony) of the proposed Ram temple at the 'undisputed site', close to the disputed structure. In return, the VHP agreed to abide by the directives of the Allahabad high court. It was election time. Communal passions ran high as the VHP moved truckloads of 'sanctified shilas'(stones) to Ayodhya for the temple's foundation on November 9, 1989. Shila puja, aimed at mobilising public support, ended with the foundation laid about 200 feet from the disputed complex. As the Sangh Parivar stepped up its temple campaign, the Congress realised its blunder, but it was too late. It lost power in India's most populous state and has never won it back since. The Janata Dal formed governments in Delhi under VP Singh and, in UP, under Mulayam Singh Yadav. In 1990, BJP leader LK Advani embarked on his Somnath-to-Ayodhya 'rath yatra'. He was arrested in Samastipur on the orders of the then Bihar CM Lalu Prasad in October. Emphasising the security of the disputed structure, Mulayam said, "Parinda bhi par nahi maar sakega (not a soul will be able to reach there)," which incensed the kar sewaks. On October 30, sewaks hoisted the saffron flag atop the heavily barricaded disputed structure. More than two dozen people were killed in police firing and Mulayam was derided as 'maulana'(Islamic cleric) by some. The Janata Dal governments fell, first at the Centre, and then in the state. The BJP won UP in 1991 polls and the Congress returned to power at the Centre under PV Narasimha Rao. The government of Kalyan Singh, UP's first BJP chief minister, moved in tandem with the VHP, to clear the hurdles for the Ram temple. Young and old thronged Ayodhya as the undisputed land, acquired adjacent to the disputed complex by the Congress government, was leased to the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas. Several temples were demolished to level the ground for 'kar sewa' in the garb of promoting tourism. Opposition leaders made a beeline for Ayodhya but were stopped midway. The late PM VP Singh staged a dharna in the middle of the national highway. The biggest congregation was planned for December 6, 1992. All entries to the temple town were sealed, but temple enthusiasts reached days before for 'symbolic kar sewa'. Kalyan Singh submitted an affidavit in the Supreme Court that Babri Masjid will be protected. He also said his government will not fire at kar sewaks.

By Sunita Aron Hindustan Times



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Sustainable housing needs to be affordable too

Investment in clean and efficient infrastructure can contribute to decarbonisation and rational resource usage

By Sanjay Seth

Challenges to sustainability are aggravated by climate change, population growth, urbanisation, and aspirations to better living standards. Urbanisation offers countless opportunities to develop adaption and mitigation strategies to combat climate change through effective environmental governance. Buildings contribute to 30% of the global greenhouse gas emissions and account for the consumption of one-third of the global raw materials, energy and water. It is estimated that in 2021, electricity consumption due to space cooling and heating appliances will grow by 180% (compared to 2011 levels). This calls for immediate action towards sustainable buildings.

For curbing the environmental impact of buildings, electrical demand reduction needs to be supported by electricity generation from green sources. This reduces grid power dependency, especially in remote areas wherein grid supply is scarce and expensive. In this context, innovations like solar tiles, around the Net Zero Energy concept (the total annual energy usage by buildings is roughly equal to the amount of renewable energy created on-site), are becoming popular. Existing rooftops have a large (untapped) potential for solar energy generation and this complements the National Solar Mission's goal of generating 40 GW out of the proposed 100 GW target through solar rooftops.

In India, access to affordable housing is vital for achieving various social objectives, including poverty reduction. In 2012, urban housing shortage stood at 18.8 million units and is expected to grow at 6.6% to 34.1 million units by 2022. In the recent past, various state governments

and real estate developers have focused on the sustainability and affordability of the housing sector. Unfortunately, popular perception associates sustainability with expensive technological advances. The global green building movement that started about two decades back was triggered by the need to curb extravagant resource consumption in modern buildings. However, affordability lies at the core of sustainability.

Common sense entails that if something cannot be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished or recycled, it should be restricted or removed from production. Thus, sustainability is not an option but is the only way forward for local low-cost innovations.

Investment in clean and efficient infrastructure can contribute to decarbonisation and rational resource usage. For instance, improved day



lighting can reduce energy demand for artificial lighting and hence electricity bills. Double-glazed windows are costly but provide insulation from heat, dust and sound and are cheaper to maintain in the long run. Consumers must create market demands for sustainable housing by objectively considering sustainability as "the right thing to do." Unfortunately, lack of understanding sparks suspicion

around proposed solutions being truly green or not.

Linking sustainability with quality rather than pricing can create opportunities for upcoming housing projects, especially since India's socio-economic milieu warrants different perceptions of affordability. The underlying idea is that people should be able to maintain comfortable living standards within affordable sustainable housing.

The BJP may have more to lose in Gujarat, but the Congress lacks a knockout punch

For the BJP, a decisive win will boost the conviction that Modi is still very much in the driver's seat for 2019. The Congress will be hoping that even if they lose, there will be enough cracks in the verdict to suggest that the gap is narrowing and they are back in the mix



Gujarat, BJP's bastion and Narendra Modi's home turf, goes to the polls next week. There is more at stake here than just another term in control of the state. For the BJP, a decisive win will boost the conviction that Modi is still very much in the driver's seat for 2019. The Congress will be hoping that even if they lose, there will be enough cracks in the verdict to suggest that the gap is narrowing and they are back in the mix. All opinion polls point to a BJP victory and that seems like a high probability outcome, yet it seems like the side with more to lose.

While caste equations are as salient in Gujarat as most Indian states, it is a society where business sentiment plays a pivotal role. This could weigh against the BJP as the going has not been good for Gujarati

businessmen and traders over the last one year. The state's textile industry is in very bad shape, with a prolonged demand slump that doesn't seem to be getting better — neighbouring countries like Bangladesh are making more headway in the global marketplace. The ceramic hub of Morbi in Saurashtra had been hit hard by demonetisation and is barely limping back to life. While rates in many product categories were lowered recently, huge compliance difficulties remain — filing alignment with the informal segment still poses a huge challenge. October GST collections, well short of targets, underscores this issue. The festive season did little to lift sentiment; Diwali sales, across sectors, was one of the weakest in many years. The mood is grim

in Gujarat's business community. This may be a problem as the BJP's traditional stronghold has been urban and semi-urban Gujarat. In rural areas, its gap with the Congress is very slender.

On the caste front too, it isn't exactly smooth sailing. The emergence of new caste leaders from the Patels, Dalits and OBCs may chip away at the BJP's vote share in quite a few constituencies. Some anti-incumbency after 22 years, significant headwinds for the business community and tricky caste arithmetic — all this may easily have added up to a treacherous electoral wicket for the ruling party. Yet the BJP will probably go on to win, because of the opposition's inability to capitalise effectively on its weaknesses. Winning, as they say, is a habit; and right now, only one side knows how to do it. The Congress senses an opportunity in Gujarat. In the BJP's recent hyper reactive behaviour, it may also detect fear. Its gameplan, though, lacks a knockout punch. Teaming up with all caste leaders, who themselves cannot look each other in the eye, has a familiar, tried and failed — 'all unite against Modi'

ring to it. It is unlikely to work. While Rahul Gandhi, in his recent forays, has cut a less ineffective figure, he hasn't been able to present an alternative vision to the citizens of Gujarat. What exactly is the Congress party's proposed solution to the economic and social disaffection that may have crept in? Can it put up a strong candidate who towers over the pedestrian BJP chief ministers that have ruled Gujarat since Narendra Modi moved to Delhi? Does it even possess the political finesse to harness the apparent angst among many communities in Gujarat to its advantage? If the answers to these are not in the affirmative, all that the opposition is doing is to hope for a negative verdict against the BJP. The old two-horse race of Indian politics — if you feel let down by one, you choose the other. Till the other lets you down. But this is a dangerous ploy for a party which is becoming less relevant with every passing election. Without a more proactive approach, the Congress may lose better, but the BJP will keep winning. Gujarat now and India in 2019.

By Udayan Mukherjee

India and US must leverage Defence Technology and Trade Initiative for mutual benefit

The Modi administration wants to create new jobs in India, while President Trump is keenly focused on increasing American exports. This makes joint US-India manufacturing, co-production, and co-development a common goal



By Benjamin Schwartz

There is a real possibility that the end of America's "unipolar moment" in Asia will be followed not by an enduring multipolar environment where India has room to thrive, but rather by Chinese regional hegemony. The only realistic bulwark against this outcome is a robust partnership between India and the United States. And even that is a necessary, but insufficient condition for a free and "rules based security architecture in the Indo-Pacific" — to use the recent phraseology of American diplomats.

This reality goes a long way to explaining why there is no shortage of pronouncements attesting to the strategic convergence, common values, and deepening friendship between America and India. Embracing India is one of the few positions that draws not only wide bipartisan support in Washington DC, but unites disparate factions within the Democratic and Republican parties. There is also increasing recognition in New Delhi that India needs foreign partners to manage the risks associated with China's ascendancy. And the United States is still the most capable military and economic force on the planet.

Yet, rhetorical recognition of these realities isn't enough to prompt effective action. A convergence of national interests must be matched by a convergence of organisational and personal interests. In other words, a robust partnership will only emerge once Indians and Americans are brought together in practical pursuits that serve common goals.

In 2012 the US and Indian governments launched an effort

that became known as the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) that has been the focal point of government efforts to increase defence collaboration. Yet while successful in significant respects, DTTI has failed to produce major industrial collaboration. And the reason is simple: It didn't bring the right people together.

It's time to reset DTTI in a manner that facilitates match making in the defence sector. There are plenty of matches to be made. The Modi administration wants to create new jobs in India, while President Trump is keenly focused on

increasing American exports. This makes joint US-India manufacturing, co-production, and co-development a common goal.

American national security leaders look at the growing capability gap between the Chinese military and the militaries of neighbouring states and fear a provocative and destabilising imbalance of power. India's military services — by their leadership's own admission — see gaps in India's military capabilities. This makes the provision of advanced American weapons systems to India a common goal, particularly now that the United States is offering unprecedented lethal technologies.

The BJP, India's military services, and India's major business conglomerates find common cause in increasing India's private sector participation in the defence industry. American companies similarly see huge opportunities for private partnerships when they look at India's defence market, labour supply, and

engineering expertise and consider the benefits of linking Indian companies to global supply chains. These are all good matches. The DTTI should now focus on the mechanics of making these matches stick. To do so, the DTTI dialogues should include participation by Indian officials who represent the interests of India's military services as well as the Modi government's initiative to increase private sector participation in defence production. This would include the Indian secretary of defence and secretary of defence industrial policy and promotion.

Second, the Indian government should use the DTTI to formally communicate to both the US government and American industry the defence capabilities the ministry of defence seeks to acquire and its timeline for doing so. This will allow American industry to identify opportunities for co-production and co-development that are profitable and therefore economically viable. In concert the US government could then

develop policies and security procedures that allow for maximum allowable technology release to India. Third, the DTTI agenda should be set to correspond with India's "strategic partnership" acquisition procedures. The US government's Technology Security and Foreign Disclosure process for global foreign military sales and direct commercial sales is not tailored to India's unique acquisition procedures. The DTTI dialogues can fill this gap between the two different bureaucratic systems, which was the original purpose of DTTI when it was first created. The next major opportunity for outcome driven US-India defence engagement is the "2+2" when the U.S. secretary of defence and secretary of state meet together with India's minister of defence and minister of external affairs. These officials are positioned to drive practical and pragmatic collaboration, but it will only go as far as common interests allow. It's essential that the right people from both the private and public sectors be present.

We have too many successful politicians, but few real leaders

Inspirational leaders, such as Barack Obama, shape opinions, they don't always go with the flow. We have far too many successful politicians and few real leaders

At the recent Hindustan Times Leadership Summit in the capital, former US president Barack Obama said that politicians take a cue from society. "...frankly, politicians tend to be more of a mirror, and more of a reflection of forces in society," he said. "Every once in a while they get out ahead and actually lead. But oftentimes, they are reflecting."

"So, if you see a politician doing things that are questionable, one of the things... is to ask yourself, 'Am I encouraging or supporting or giving licence to the values that I am hearing out of the politician.'"

Mirroring public opinion, of course, is the surest way to win an election. For instance, across much of Europe and in the US, incomes have not increased significantly in real terms since 2008. People are angry, and are happy to vote for a politician who can create a plausible "them" that's responsible for the problems of the "us". In the US, for instance, Donald Trump's them was immigrants.

But surely, there's more to leadership than just winning elections? In truth, that's a very difficult question to answer. India is a parliamentary democracy with a federal

structure, with powers divided and shared between the central government and the states. A national party such as the Congress or the Bharatiya Janata Party has to be in constant campaign mode: it's easier, to some extent, to implement nationwide programmes and push national agendas if the same party is in power in New Delhi and the states; the states are also important because they hold the key to the upper House of Parliament.

Given that parliamentary elections and state elections do not happen together, a national party in India can't afford to stop campaigning. Indeed, the same analogy can be extended, albeit not as strongly to states and municipal bodies.

Several people, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former President Pranab Mukherjee have spoken in favour of simultaneous elections; as has

government think-tank Niti Aayog. "All elections in India should happen in a free, fair, and synchronised manner so as to cause minimum "campaign-mode" disruption to governance," the body said in an April report.

If that happens, serving governments and politicians will be able to better balance the sometimes conflicting objectives of good governance and winning elections. And if that happens, maybe leaders will finally lead, rather than reflect.

Inspirational leaders, such as Obama himself, do not just reflect societal forces and opinions; they shape them. They are unlikely to stay silent or, worse, go with the flow simply because that's what the majority wants. Like Mahatma Gandhi they believe that "even if you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth."

And the truth today is simply this: we have far too many successful politicians, but few real leaders.



Maharashtra Chapter of INOC USA celebrated their anniversary



(By a staff reporter) New York-Maharashtra Chapter of INOC, USA has held its anniversary celebration at Nan King Restaurant in New Hyde Park, New York together with the National Executive committee members, various chapter heads, and Congress supporters from India's commercial hub. Mr Devendra Vora, President

of Maharashtra chapter welcomed the guests and detailed his plans to expand the membership and to strengthen the Chapter. Mr George Abraham, Chairman of the INOC, USA implored the audience to be vigilant against the current onslaught by the BJP government against India's venerable institutions that were built under the

Nehruvian vision. Mr. Mohinder Singh Gilzian, President spoke about the current challenges party is facing in the upcoming elections and exhorted the Congress loyalists to come together and fight the elements that promote communalism. Indrajitt Saluja, editor of Indian panorama spoke about the authoritarian and polariz-

ing forces in India and U.S. and spoke about the urgent need to guard against such ideologies. He also denounced the recent tweet by President Trump of the unverified Muslim videos from a right group in U.K. Mr Dilip Chauhan, Nassau County Deputy Comptroller of Minority Affairs presented citations to honorees.

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Ethnic Strategies

Mr. Perfection
The young man who entered the hindi film industry with Qayamat Se Qayamat Ka, is all set to capture the hearts of millions of

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When to air 'provocative' condom ads on TV channels

Centre asked to take a call

Viewers have complained against several brands of contraceptives using explicit adult content to publicise their products.



(News Agencies) The ministry of information and broadcasting (I&B) has been asked for its response on television channels airing condom advertisements with "explicit adult content".

Following a spate of complaints from viewers against several brands of contraceptives using explicit adult content to publicise their products, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has sought the ministry's suggestion if it is possible to restrict the telecast of such advertisements between 11pm and 5am. Adult content cannot be telecast

during prime time, which is also considered as 'family time' viewing.

The ASCI is a self-regulatory voluntary organisation of the advertising industry and oversees the contents on the basis of veracity, legal tenability and whether they objectify women to judge the advertisements as safe for consumers, especially children, fair to the competitors. Shweta Purandare, secretary general, ASCI, told HT that if the content of an advertisement is found to be suitable for viewing, the body cannot ask for the advertisement to be slotted

for late viewing. "The letters that we received from consumers complained that the content of the advertisements of condoms was meant for adults and should not be aired during prime time. But slotting ads is not our mandate, so we have asked the government for instruction," she said.

Sources in the ministry said the ASCI letter specifically mentioned 'Manforce', the condom brand that was in the eye of a storm after political parties sought a ban on its advertisements saying the contents were "provocative

and offensive". The Confederation of All India Traders, too, had complained to the I&B seeking action against the brand after its Navratri-themed condom ad featuring Bollywood actor Sunny Leone created a furore in Gujarat.

"The ministry, in response to such complaints in the past, has maintained that it cannot restrict or ban contraceptive advertisements. Contraceptives play a key role in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. So it's the ministry that will have to take a call on the issue," a source said.

Rahul Gandhi's elevation as Congress president likely on December 11

Rahul Gandhi's election as Congress president will herald a new era in the party but he is faced with the huge task of reviving the Congress to make it fighting fit for the 2019 general elections

(News Agencies) A formal announcement elevating Rahul Gandhi as the Congress president is likely on December 11 after the nomination papers for elections to the party's top post are scrutinised on Tuesday.

The 47-year-old leader's elevation to the top post in the 131-year-old party is a foregone conclusion as Rahul Gandhi was the only person who had filed papers by the end of the final day of filing of nominations on Monday.

Rahul's election will herald a new era in the party but he is faced with the daunting task of reviving and rebuilding the Congress to make it fighting fit for the 2019 general elections. A good show in the Gujarat assembly polls this month, where he is leading the party campaign, will give a good start to his new innings.

The party's central election authority, which oversees organisational polls, received 89 sets of nomination papers for Rahul Gandhi, including from proposers such as his mother Sonia Gandhi, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other Congress Working Committee members.

The last day of withdrawal of nominations is on December 11

and a function has been planned at the Congress headquarters in Delhi.

This will mark the end of the organisational polls in the Congress, which had to complete the entire process by December 31 as per the deadline set by the Election Commission.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest decision-making body, is also expected to be reconstituted soon.

According to the Congress constitution, the president enjoys a three-year term starting from his/her appointment during the session. During the interim period of election and formal appointment at the plenary, the person acts as the president-elect.

Rahul Gandhi will be the sixth member of the Nehru-Gandhi family to occupy the post.

The 70-year-old Sonia holds the record of being the Congress chief for more than 19 consecutive years after taking over from Sitaram Kesri in March 1998.

During her entire tenure, Sonia had to face contest only once when she defeated Jitendra Prasad – who had served as political advisor to former Prime Ministers Rajiv



Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao – in a one-sided contest on November 9, 2000.

The last organisational elections in the Congress were held in 2010 when Sonia was elected party president for the fourth term.

Rahul Gandhi's presidency is expected to mark a generational shift in the party that is struggling with a series of electoral setbacks, including its worst drubbing when it won just 44 seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls after 10 years in power.

The Congress's fortunes

hinge on its revival in the states. After Gujarat, his next challenges will be to retain Karnataka and dethrone the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan before the 2019 parliamentary elections.

Gandhi tried to open the party in almost five years as vice president to end heirloom politics, but didn't make much headway.

Congress leaders suggest he might now go for an overhaul, while striking a balance between young leaders and the old guard, political wisdom.

which had reservations about his style of functioning in the past.

The parliamentarian for Amethi has long had the reputation of being a reluctant leader, though analysts say he has displayed greater political acumen since the 2014 election defeat. Mother Sonia Gandhi enjoys a good rapport with opposition parties. Her son's ability to stitch alliances to prevent opposition votes from going to the BJP is likely to test his political wisdom.

(News Agencies) Air pollution causes irreversible damage to young children's brains, says a new Unicef report.

Toxic air lowers children's IQ and memory, affects their test scores and triggers neurological-behavioural problems such as anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and development delays, according to the study.

The report estimates 17 million babies worldwide — 12 million of them in South Asia — live in areas that record pollution levels six times higher than the international safe limits of 20 microgram per cubic meter for PM10 and 10 microgram per



Air pollution damages children's brains, lowers IQ, says Unicef report

Toxic air lowers children's IQ and memory, affects their test scores and triggers neurological-behavioural problems such as anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and development delays, according to a new Unicef report.

cubic meter for PM2.5. Pollution hurts children's brains through several mechanisms, with infants before their first birthday being the most vulnerable. "Most of the brain's development happens in the first 1,000 days of life, which makes children vulnerable to damage by a smaller dosage of toxic chemicals ... Children also breathe more rapidly and are more likely to breathe through their mouths, which increase the amount of pollutants they inhale," said Dr Krishnan Chugh, senior paediatric pulmonologist at Fortis

Hospitals in Gurgaon. Ultrafine particulates such as PM2.5 enter the bloodstream and travel to the brain. These damage the blood-brain barrier — a thin membrane that protects the brain from toxic substances — and cause neuro-inflammation, which is linked to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases in elderly people, the Unicef report says. The findings come amid a raging debate over the dangerous air quality in New Delhi. When pollution peaks in Delhi and northern India, as it

did this November, air quality is 10 to 12 times above safe standards.

The level of PM2.5, a fine dust that causes and exacerbates respiratory and lung diseases, was 16 times more than the national standard and 40 times higher than the World Health Organization-prescribed grade after Diwali. "Not only do pollutants harm babies' developing lungs, they can permanently damage their developing brains and, thus, their future," Unicef executive director

Anthony Lake said. He suggested that protecting children from foul air will help societies in terms of reduced healthcare costs, increased productivity and a safer environment. Another major urban pollutant is magnetite nanoparticle, a magnetically-charged dust that enters the body through the gut and the olfactory nerve which controls the human sense of smell. The pollutant creates oxidative stress that causes neurodegenerative diseases. Chemicals released

from burning of fossil fuels such as coal, petrol and diesel are known to damage neural connections in the brain that are the foundation of learning and development.

These chemicals — called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) — are abundant in New Delhi's air as the city has more than 10 million registered automobiles.

Children skipping classes in school because of frequent pollution-related infections and diseases compounds the damage to learning. "Air pollution is associated with pneumonia, which kills 18 lakh children in India every year, and triggers asthma, bronchitis, and other throat and respiratory infections, forcing children to miss school and further limiting their learning and development potential," said Dr Vinod K Paul, member Niti Aayog and professor of paediatrics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

The risk begins in the womb. Exposure to air pollutants during pregnancy leads to toxins crossing the placenta and lowers birth weight and affect the developing brain of a foetus, with studies linking it to development delays at age three, psychological and behavioural problems, a four-point drop in IQ by age five, the Unicef report says. "Indoor air pollution has gone down because people have switched to cleaner cooking fuels, but outdoor pollution is threatening to even out the gains. Parents must protect children from outdoor pollution and from tobacco smoke, cooking fumes and heating fires at home," Dr Paul suggested.

Surface-to-air missile Akash successfully test fired

This is the first surface-to-air missile with indigenous seeker that has been test fired.

(News Agencies) Surface-to-air missile Akash was successfully test fired on Tuesday with an indigenous radio frequency seeker, an official said. The missile was successfully launched from the Launch Complex-III at Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Odisha around 1.40 pm. "The radars,

telemetry and electro-optical systems along the coast have tracked and monitored all the health parameters of the missile," said a statement.

This is the first surface-to-air missile with indigenous seeker that has been test fired. "With this success, India has achieved the capability of making any

type of surface-to-air missile," the statement said.

The launch operations were witnessed by the Director General (Missiles) in the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister, G Satheesh Reddy; Director of

Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), MSR Prasad; Programme Director G Chandra Mouli; Director Integrated Test Range (ITR) BK Das and other top DRDO scientists.

This missile is being inducted into Army as Short Range Surface to Air Missile



J-K govt likely to withdraw cases against first-time stone pelters in Kashmir

Mehbooba Mufti's announcement regarding the withdrawal of cases was meant to be a goodwill gesture towards disenchanted Kashmiri youth.

(Insider Bureau) Mehbooba Mufti's government in Jammu and Kashmir is likely to extend its amnesty for first-time stone pelters by withdrawing cases against even those involved in last year's violence triggered by Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani's death.

Officials told HT that cases registered against stone pelters between 2015 and 2017 were being currently reviewed for the purpose of drawing up a list of first-time offenders. Chief minister Mehbooba had last month announced the withdrawal of cases against 4,000 youth involved in some 744 incidents of stone pelting between 2008 and 2014.

"The cases reviewed up to now were from 2008 to 2014. We are now reviewing cases from 2015 and 2017 and we will soon come up with a second list," director general of state

police SP Vaid said.

Mehbooba's announcement last month regarding the withdrawal of cases was meant to be a goodwill gesture towards disenchanted Kashmiri youth. New Delhi is understood to have pushed for such a measure to bolster efforts by central government-appointed special interlocutor Dineshwar Sharma in his efforts to kick-start a dialogue and restore peace in the state.

Thousands of locals – particularly youngsters – who had hit the streets and fought pitched battles with security forces in the wake of Wani's killing in an encounter in July last year would benefit if the government extends the period of amnesty. Officials said the amnesty was part of the government's initiative to provide a 'healing touch' to the strife-torn state.



"The review of cases against these youth was a major demand from various sections of the society in the state who would be heaving a sigh of relief after this decision," Mehbooba said in a recent statement, describing the measure as a "ray of hope" for the young men and their families to rebuild their lives. She had attempted to withdraw cases against first-time stone pelters soon after assuming office last year, but the initiative was derailed by the violent protests that erupted over Wani's death. Cases against some 634

youth could only be withdrawn in that phase. "There is a provision in the law where the prosecution has the right to approach the court on the basis of certain reasons to withdraw charges in a case, and the state will invoke that. The prosecution will file a formal application to the court seeking a withdrawal of the charges which the court has to accept," state advocate general Jahangir Iqbal Ganai told HT. On Tuesday, Mehbooba distributed orders of appointment among a group of victims who lost their

eyesight due to pellet injuries last year as part of the government's "healing touch" initiative.

The amnesty, however, has evoked cynicism among the stone pelters. "Many of the accused are not even stone pelters. They were falsely framed and arrested. It is all politics," said one. Another said the government's 'healing touch' will not end the violence. "Until a political solution to the Kashmir conflict is reached, stone pelting on security forces will not end," he added.

The pyre of the tiger

Tigress is given a traditional funeral at Indian wildlife reserve after she was electrocuted by an illegal electric fence



(Insider Bureau) A tigress was given a traditional funeral at an Indian wildlife reserve after she was electrocuted by an illegal electric fence.

Dozens of locals helped arrange a pyre before watching the cremation near Nagpur, central India. Moving photos show the animal's body being placed on the wood and covered in flowers before it was burned. Wildlife expert Wasif Jamshed organised the cremation after he was tasked with catching the tiger because it had killed four people.

The 37-year-old said: 'The tigress was electrocuted outside of the reserve because of an illegal electric high voltage fence.'

Before the tiger came to our reserve, there was a killing order issued for this tigress as she had killed four humans - but people wanted me to come and tranquillise this tigress and save her life. 'This was the first tiger that died in my work span of twelve years. 'After her death I decided to show her full respect and give her an Indian ritual of after death - after prayer, we burned her like a human so that she can make her way to heaven.'



National CHOKING region

Efforts to clear Delhi of toxic smog cloud fail as smoke continues to billow from landfill site and vehicles add to pollution

(Insider Bureau) Delhi is being smothered by a blanket of toxic smog as government agencies flounder in their efforts to stop polluting vehicles and construction activity, as well as put out a fire raging at the Bhalswa landfill site.

Analysts say the multiplicity of authorities and lack of coordination between them is also denting the fight against pollution in the Capital.

For instance, they say, police in Delhi and their counterparts in neighbouring states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have failed to act as a team in stopping smoke-spewing commercial vehicles from entering the city. The transport department of Delhi also appears to be flopping on this front.

Air quality in Delhi, 'very poor' since November 23, remained unchanged on Tuesday, with high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) across residential areas heightening the toxicity of the haze.

The United Nations marked the day as the first international smog day.

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the haze.

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'It is a moment to remember all of the people who have died prematurely, and avoidably, because of the air pollution,' the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a statement.

The fire burning at Bhalswa waste dumping ground is also emitting noxious fumes into the city's air. The 40 acre-wide trash mountain, clearly visible from the arterial GT Karnal Road, receives about 2,700 tonnes of garbage per day.

It expired its shelf life in 2006 but is still in use. Authorities have tried dousing the flames with water, sand and foam, but the efforts have failed so far.

Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party government has to submit its 'action plan' on controlling pollution to the National Green

Tribunal (NGT) on Wednesday. This would include points on reducing the use of personal vehicles, making robust the public transport system, lessening emissions from power plants and factories on the city's fringe, controlling construction dust and greening the city more.

According to data maintained by Delhi traffic police, since November 1, as many as 28,592 commercial vehicles were checked at the border areas of Delhi. Of these, as many as 15,645 vehicles were stopped and asked to return.

However, activists say this is just the tip of the iceberg

and hundreds of vehicles such as Dilshad Garden, manage to sneak in, ITO, Mandir Marg, Anand sometimes by paying bribes. Vihar and RK Puram.

The city's average Air Quality Index (AQI) on Tuesday was 378 on a scale of 500, classified as 'very poor', marginally better than 390 a day ago.

The smog did not disrupt the proceedings of the ongoing Test match between India and Sri Lanka at the Feroz Shah Kotla again. However, the Lankans wore N95 anti-pollution masks while fielding. One of the players was also sick a couple of times.

The concentration of NO₂ breached the 24-hour safe limit of 80 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m³) in areas

At RK Puram, a densely-populated residential area, NO₂ was recorded at 135 ug/m³, while levels at ITO, which witnesses heavy volume of traffic, was 206. During the week, NO₂ had climbed to levels as high as 195 at Anand Vihar, while the same was 155 and 127 at RK Puram and Dilshad Garden, respectively. According to the Central Control Room for Air Quality Management of CPCB, the concentration of the most dominant pollutants, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, were 261 and 438 ug/m³ around 5 pm.



CAPITAL BARBEQUE

PLACES	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀
Mother Dairy, Patparganj	541 ug/m ³	299 ug/m ³
Mandir Marg	515 ug/m ³	370 ug/m ³
JLN Stadium	353 ug/m ³	300 ug/m ³
Anand Vihar	709 ug/m ³	301 ug/m ³
RK Puram	501 ug/m ³	256 ug/m ³



National Register Of Citizens

Supreme Court Allows Gram Panchayat Certificates To Be Used As Identity Document For Claiming Citizenship

(News Agencies) The Supreme Court has allowed certificates issued by Gram panchayat (GP) or executive magistrate to be used as identity document for claiming citizenship if issued after conducting proper enquiries.

The apex court set aside the order of Gauhati High Court by which it had invalidated these certificates for claiming citizenship.

The move is likely to bring relief to lakhs of women in the state who use the document to establish linkage with fathers and husbands.

The GP certificate is used to validate residence of a person. It is used to open bank accounts, apply for mobile numbers and so forth.

The lead petition was filed by Monowara Bewa (40), a resident of Dhubri district in Assam. She

had been marked as a doubtful or 'D-voter' by the local election authority. Her family claims that she had switched addresses and not de-registered from her prior constituency.

A foreigner tribunal had discarded most of her documents as unable to prove that she was a citizen. The GP certificate was an important document to establish her citizenship and her linkage with her parental family since becoming a widow.

The foreigner tribunal, and later the Gauhati High Court, did not accept the GP certificate and referred to it as a "private document". The Supreme Court has now restored the applicability of the document in establishing linkage to other documents that prove citizenship.

However, Monowara's counsel said that her appeal against her being detected as a

'foreigner' by the foreigner tribunal has not yet been decided.

According to the provisions of a clause of Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003, "the names of persons who are originally inhabitants of the state of Assam and their children and descendants, who are citizens of India, shall be included in the consolidated list if the citizenship of such persons is ascertained beyond reasonable doubt and to the satisfaction of the registering authority".

The Supreme Court on Nov 20 had pulled up the Assam government for making a "sweeping statement" that 15 per cent of the state population were tribals who have not participated in modernisation and were away from the mainstream.



The top court said it was a "dangerous statement" on the state's behalf and was neither good for the health of the people, nor the government as 15 per cent population was a huge chunk. The court's observation came after Assam's counsel referred to this issue and said the government was trying to make them come forward in the ongoing process of updation and publication of draft National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state. "This is not the way to do it. From where you are making these statements. These kind of sweeping statements are not good for the health of the people

and health of the state. 15 per cent is a huge chunk. If you say 15 per cent population is not in the mainstream, we will ask what have you done in this regard as a state," the bench said. The NRC of 1951 is being updated for Assam in accordance with the tripartite agreement between the state and central governments and the All Assam Students Union (AASU), which was arrived at in 2005 to implement the 1985 Assam Accord. The apex court was earlier told that as on November 22, a total of 3.29 crore claims have been made for inclusion in the NRC, which is being prepared to identify illegal migrants.

Mumbai businesswoman files complaint against Dawood Ibrahim, other gangsters

In October too, Shaikh had filed a case against a caller, who identified himself as the bodyguard of a Bollywood actor, for allegedly abusing her on the phone



(News Agencies) A 31-year-old businesswoman from Khar has filed a complaint against several gangsters, including fugitive Dawood Ibrahim and his aide Chhota Shakeel, in connection with a Rs1-crore extortion case. The Khar police registered a first information report on November 30 and handed over the case to the crime branch. According to the FIR (a copy of which is with HT), the complainant, Shabnam Shaikh, runs a garment business and Help Care Foundation, a non-governmental organisation. In October too, Shaikh had filed a case against a caller, who identified himself as the bodyguard of a Bollywood actor, for allegedly abusing her on the phone. Shaikh said the man abused her because she had helped a contestant who had a tiff with the actor on a reality show. The contestant related his insult by the actor to Shaikh. After hearing his story, Shaikh decided to help him but later found out that he was bluffing.

Anna Hazare's PIL : Bombay high court asks state about measures taken to probe 'sugar

Hazare alleged that 47 cooperative sugar factories were sold or privatised without due diligence

(News Agencies) The Bombay high court on Tuesday sought to know from the Maharashtra government what action the police had taken to investigate the "losses of Rs 25,000 crore" to the exchequer allegedly caused by co-operative sugar factories. A bench of Justice Naresh Patil and Justice Rajesh Ketkar was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare through advocate Vinod Sangavikar, who alleged that 47 cooperative sugar factories were sold or privatised without due diligence. He blamed various political leaders, mostly from Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), for the "scam" and sought an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The bench directed public prosecutor Deepak Thakare to inform the court if any action had been taken by the police on Hazare's complaint. The directive came after Hazare's lawyer SB Talekar pointed that they had approached various law-enforcing agencies. The petition stated that cooperative banks controlled by



politicians were forced to give loans to stressed sugar factories. The state government allegedly facilitated these loans. When factories turned into non-performing assets, they were bought by politicians or their associates at throwaway prices.

The alleged irregularities took place between 2004 and 2014, when the Congress-NCP government was in power, according to the petition. NCP chief Sharad Pawar was Union agriculture minister during that period.

The PIL said most of stressed

sugar factories were allegedly sold to Sharad Pawar's associates and his nephew, Ajit Pawar, who was the then deputy CM, also played a key role as the then chairman of Pune District Central Cooperative Bank and director of Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank. "There may not be direct evidence to prove involvement of Sharad Pawar or Ajit Pawar or other high level officials, but there is more than sufficient circumstantial evidence showing their connection," the PIL read.

'Death to America'

Violent protests break out in Bethlehem and Turkey warns Trump has 'pulled the pin on a bomb' after the president recognises Jerusalem as Israel's capital

(News Agencies) Violent protests have broken out in Bethlehem today after US President Donald Trump enraged the Middle East by recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Palestinians torched debris and hurled rocks towards Israeli troops who fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse a demonstration in the town. Rallies are also underway in the West Bank cities of Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin.

It comes after Trump sparked fury with his White House announcement yesterday, which changed decades of American policy and sparked warnings from Hamas of a new intifada, or uprising, against Israel.

Amid growing fears of fresh bloodshed in the region, the Islamist group said the President had 'opened the gates of hell' with his 'flagrant aggression' while a pro-Hezbollah newspaper in Lebanon has declared 'Death to America' on a front page showing a burning US flag.

This morning, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused Trump of throwing the Middle East into a 'ring of fire' and compared him to a 'blender' stirring up trouble in the area. The Country's Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the US 'has pulled the pin on a bomb ready to blow in the region.'

Russia said today that it viewed Trump's move with 'serious concern' and

will criticise the new stance at the UN Security Council. Britain's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson described the new stance as 'not helpful' while France rejected the 'unilateral' decision and Germany said Jerusalem's status could only be resolved on the basis of a two-state solution.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Trump had 'bound himself forever' to the history of Jerusalem with his announcement and claimed other states are now considering following the U.S. lead.

As spontaneous protests broke out in Gaza overnight, the Israeli military said it would deploy several battalions to the West Bank ahead of Friday, while other troops have been put on alert to address 'possible developments.'

Netanyahu said that 'we are already in contact with other states that will make a similar recognition.'

He says the 'time has come' and expressed confidence that others will follow suit and move their embassies to Jerusalem.

Last night, he hailed the move as 'historic' and said any peace deal with the Palestinians must concede that Jerusalem is Israel's capital.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it will be deploying additional troops to the West Bank ahead of Friday, when mass



Palestinian protests are anticipated in response to Trump's move.

The army statement on Thursday says it will deploy several battalions to the territory while other troops have been put on alert to address 'possible developments.'

Palestinians went on strike across the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip on Thursday and protests are expected on Friday after midday prayers.

This morning, two senior White House officials admitted Trump's move could temporarily derail the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

According to CNN, one of the

unnamed sources said the President's peace team had not spoken to angry Palestinian officials since the announcement but that they were 'pretty sure' that 'derailment' of the peace process would be 'temporary'.

One official said: 'A lot of people put their heads into this decision to see how do we make this happen without at the same time throwing the peace process out of the window.'

The second added: 'In terms of a moment where it could happen, where it could be the least disruptive at a moment in time, this is the moment. We know there will be some short term pain, but think it will help in the long run.'





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If it was not for each and every one of you today who have supported our endeavours to become a reliable source of information, we would not have been able to voice our appreciation today. We as a family will continue to move forward with every article printed, with every word typed and with every voice incorporated into the publication that has stood to uphold the value of information and knowledge. Because with each idea shared, we as a community continue to move forward. And to all, thank you for sharing this achievement with all of us here today, working towards a new tomorrow."

**-Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor In Chief & Publisher**

Ram Redux A New Calendar For Polls And Puja

The BJP's keenness to wave again the magic wand that helped it beat Mandal in the 1990s- could be a sign that the ruling party's 2019 script will have a 'mandir accomplished' theme



There's something afoot in Ayodhya. A set of political and legal events, unfolding almost in lockstep, are deigning to bring back to life a theme that fundamentally altered India's polity and inflected community relations at a deep, symbolic level a quarter century ago. This week, India marks the 25th anniversary of December 6, 1992—a whole generation has grown up in the post-Babri Masjid demolition phase. But the social amnesia that usually attends such events is poised to break. The signals are crystal clear. Ayodhya is no longer a frayed slogan from the past, a vague promise from the BJP's own directive principles. It's a live issue, and the construction of a Ram mandir will be a concrete thing India's ruling party will take to the 2019 election—perhaps even as an accomplishment.

The straws in the wind have been there for a while. Witness what happened on May 31, the day after a special CBI court filed charges of conspiracy against veteran BJP leaders L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharati in the demolition case. -Ayodhya sprang to life as Yogi Adityanath came to pay obeisance to Ram Lalla—the first chief minister of UP to visit the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi site in 15

years. Slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Mandir Yaheen Ban-aayenge' mingled with shlokas as Yogi prayed to the deity. The message was unequivocal: the vanvaas is over and Ram, the mobiliser, is coming home.

The chief minister was back in the temple town on Diwali-eve, symbolically welcoming the Prince of Ayodhya back from his -exile. The town was resplendent as 1.71 lakh diyas—equal to the population of Ayodhya—lined the banks of Sarayu with the temples as the backdrop. The symbolism couldn't have been more compelling as the saffron-clad Yogi, an unapologetically Hindu-tva figure now in power, performed the aarati on the river bank.

So the flag-bearers may have changed. Senior leaders Advani and Joshi, for long the face of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, have receded from centrestage. But the BJP is showing a new keenness to resuscitate 'Mandir'—which rivalled 'Mandal' in the 1990s as India's predominant political theme—so as to present it as a pledge redeemed in the run-up to the 2019 elections. If things go according to script, temple construction may start by October next year and be

substantially done—much of the architectural elements are ready and it's only a matter of assembling—before the crucial summer after that.

The attention being bestowed on Ayodhya by the Yogi regime at present is aimed at "transforming a hitherto neglected city". There's a plan to build a Rs 225 crore Ram museum—with the outward appearance of a temple—and a Ram statue on the banks of Sarayu. The idea is to keep alive the hopes of people who wish to see a Ram mandir as reality, while the legally enabling factors are worked out. As also to rebuild the old narrative to bring the issue back centrestage in the political landscape of the country.

"Certain events are happening in different parts of the country. Apparently unrelated, they are actually converging to make Ram mandir a rallying point," says a senior BJP leader. Last week, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat imparted a fresh impetus to the theme by reiterating at a dharam sansad—a congregation of 2,000 Hindu saints, math chiefs and VHP leaders in Udupi—that only a Ram mandir will be built at the disputed site and no other structure can come up there. At the first dharam sansad in 1984, the demand for a Ram temple in Ayodhya was raised. After which, as things heated up, then PM Rajiv Gandhi had fatefully played his own little Hindu card by getting the Babri Masjid-

Ramjanmabhoomi site unlocked in 1986. This was -after having first erred grievously on the other side with his Shah Bano move a year before that—a set of two blunderous chess gambits that form the crucial double helix around which Indian politics evolved.

Bhagwat, speaking in the tones of a final arbiter, was responding to various recent moves towards mediation and an out-of-court settlement, the

latest being from Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The RSS supremo was critical of Sri Sri's efforts, saying it was unwarranted and there's no locus standi for a mediator when the matter is in the Supreme Court.

Sri Sri had tried a round of mediations back in 2005 too. That ended abruptly when he suggested that Muslims hand over the site to the Hindus and withdraw all cases. Earlier this year, then chief justice J.S. Khehar had suggested that an out-of-court settlement would be a desirable option. The godman's renewed attempt comes in that context, but beside the RSS, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board too has been skeptical of it due to his earlier stand.

The legal theatre is where it will play out as of now. The Supreme Court is to pick up the case on -December 5 and take it up for day-to-day hearing. The political clouds are gathering around this legal theatre. Sources in the BJP say Sri Sri got into the imbroglio on the party leadership's request. "The BJP wanted to test the waters and also gauge the minority mood. It's obvious the RSS did not approve of the -effort," a party leader says.

RSS publicity chief Manmohan Vaidya endorses what Bhagwat said. "The court is going to have daily hearings and the verdict is likely to come soon. It is better to wait for the Supreme Court verdict than go in for mediations at this juncture," he tells Outlook. He refuses to comment on whether it will be an election issue for the BJP.

Everyone in the Sangh parivaar is optimistic that the temple will soon be a reality. VHP leader Surendra Kumar Jain, in fact, asserts that construction will begin on October 18, 2018—exactly a year after Yogi's Ayodhya Diwali. "The Supreme Court decision will come within three to four months. We

have kept everything in mind before declaring the date," Jain says.

But how is he certain the Supreme Court decision will go in their favour? "The writing is on the wall," he says. "There are no ifs and buts. We are not prejudging the judiciary. It's just that the court will have to take cognisance of all the evidence...and we are confident about the evidence put on record. There are radar surveys and Archaeological Survey of India reports. Digging was done in front of a panel that had a Muslim judge. Now even Muslims are agreeing to building a mandir at the site."

Jain denies the issue has come into the limelight due to the 2019 polls. "We are not doing it for the polls. It has always been our stand. But one thing is certain—jo Ram mandir ka saath dega, samaaj usi ka saath dega (people will support whoever supports the temple)," he says. The BJP never forgot to pay lip service to Ram even when it fought elections on the development plank. The Modi campaign in 2014 refrained from making the temple—the buzzword instead was development. However, the party manifesto did have the mandatory line tucked away towards the end of the document—"the BJP reiterates its stand to explore all possibilities within the framework of the Constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya."

A senior party leader, who was part of the manifesto committee, says there was a long debate whether to include the line or not. "One view was to ignore the issue altogether. However, we finally decided to reiterate the party's commitment to building the temple. Either way we would have been criticised. If we had not included it, people would have said we have given up on the Ram temple. At least we could keep our core constituency -happy," the leader explains.

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Terrorists Out of Petty Goons

Black Friday, which was later made into a film, shows the vicious cycle: revenge for Babri triggered Mumbai blasts, which led to the Gujarat riots

The Bombay blasts following the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition were an immediate excuse for perpetrating a deadly terrorist act in the country. The ISI in Pakistan had been waiting for a long time to unleash a terror offensive and the demolition of the mosque gave them the best opportunity to exploit the situation and orchestrate a diabolical attack, the worst-ever terrorist act anywhere in the world and not just India (9/11 was eight years away).

The ISI had the gullible Indian Muslims on their radar for a long time and they used the emotional upsurge after the mosque's demolition to the hilt. There was no way the blasts could have been a spur-of-the-moment reaction to the Ayodhya mosque's demolition by Muslims in India. Three months (after the Babri incident) is too less a time to execute such a major act of terrorism: serial blasts in 10 locations and grenade assault at two in quick succession. This had been planned for a long time from across the border.

The whole operation was professionally executed and precise; it had the mark of a well-oiled organisation like the ISI. Immediately after Babri, they started identifying Muslim youths in India who could be brainwashed and trained for a terror act of revenge. They landed eight tonnes of RDX on the Gujarat and Maharashtra coasts, a lot of which still remains

undiscovered. This was the Porban-der Masjed which landed with don Abu Salem, and a famous film actor whom I need not name. The other consignment of the explosives landed in the Maharashtra coast of Shekhadi, Mhasla and Srivardhan in Raigad district. These are the places from where Tiger Memon got the RDX and these were the spots managed by the underworld's Dawood Ibrahim. So, the ISI had already planned that how much RDX they will send to India. They were only deciding how and when it should be sent and who will helm the offensive. The Babri demolition decided the time.

The right-wing movement to demolish the Babri Masjid gained speed somewhere around September that year. That's when the ISI planned that if the mosque fell, they will get the Muslim youths to execute a terror attack on India using the underworld connection. On March 9, Gul Mohammed, one of the trained operative of Tiger Memon, was arrested. He confessed to the police how elaborate a plan had been plotted, how he was taken to Pakistan via Dubai for training. They actually wanted to attack eight cities on the day of Shiv Jayanti, sometime in the second week of April, as it was revealed by an operative.

It was a much bigger plan, a much wider conspiracy. I can't

imagine how it would have turned out if they had managed to blast eight cities.

I was reporting crime and was familiar with the workings of the Bombay underworld and got leads on how the terror attack was planned. I decided to put all the information I was privy to in a book. When the book *Black Friday* came out in 2000, it hardly made any ripples. It had a low-key launch and not many people took notice of it. Probably because it touched upon many sensitive issues, people just let it alone. Aakar Patel (now with Amnesty International) was the editor of *Midday* then and it was run by Tariq Ansari. Both of them read the book and felt it had a lot of new material. Tariq Ansari was toying with the idea of getting into the film business and started *Midday Movies*.

Chandramohan Puppala was an associate producer at *Midday Movies* and he wanted to kick off the enterprise with *Black Friday*. Chandramohan knew Anurag Kashyap. He had already made two films, *Paanch* and *Gulal*, and both had run into trouble. But Chandramohan and Ansari thought this book was something right up his street. Anurag wrote it and I was closely involved with the production. He was absolutely faithful to the book, didn't dilute its contents at all, as some authors of books complain about their work being made into films. Anurag even kept the titles of the chapters as they

were in the book. I was thrilled with the outcome. K.K. Menon played Rakesh Maria, the brooding cop. Aditya Srivastava was brilliant as Badshah Khan. And above all, Pawan Malhotra was fantastic as the complex character Tiger Memon, showing his various layers.

I didn't anticipate any trouble with the film. In fact, all of us thought we were doing a great service to the country by detailing the nefarious intent of those across the border, how they were trying to misguide our youth of Muslim community here, push them into terrorists. But trouble started soon after the movie was ready in 2001. The promos and trailers were on TV and this prompted an immediate reaction. One of the accused in the Bombay bomb blasts filed a petition in the High Court that as the trial was still going, the film will influence the verdict. He sought that the movie be banned till the trial was over. I just can't understand how the judiciary of a country like ours can be influenced by a mere movie. And this is when the book had been in the public domain for about two years before the film was to be released. I remember Justice H.L. Gokhale praising the book during the hearings that he had read it and how there was no factual discrepancy in it.

There was criticism for *Black Friday* (released in 2007) from other sections too. Some people thought

it was an anti-Muslim movie, that Muslims have been shown as terrorists who are bent upon wrecking India. But I thought the film was very balanced. Anurag also shows how atrocities against Muslims take place in the villages, how they are blamed for crimes they have never committed. The main message of the movie was very clear: an eye for an eye makes the world blind. The movie only shows what a vicious cycle it was—revenge for Babri leading to the Bombay blasts, that in turn leading to the Gujarat riots.

The other important point my book and the movie make is that in the end the blasts were not about jihad or religion or retribution. It was just Tiger Memon's personal vendetta. He was not doing it for the honour of his community. He only wanted to avenge the fishermen community of Kolis in Mahim, which was his area of operation in the underworld, who had got tired of his criminal activities and set his office on fire. Memon only used the gullible, petty criminals, made them into terrorists for his personal mission, playing into the hands of the ISI. I have written eight books after *Black Friday*, but for me the biggest compliment is that people still recognise me as the author of that book. It was also Anurag's first movie which got released. It wasn't so big when it was released but it has gone on to become a cult film, has been the toast of so many international film festivals. Slumdog Millionaire director Danny Boyle said the chase through Bombay's slums in *Black Friday* was one of the best he had ever seen. Anurag and I only are in touch even now.

There was criticism for *Black Friday* (released in 2007) from other sections too. Some people thought



Ayodhya case: Political games continue as Supreme Court hears pleas on Babri Masjid title suit

Twenty-five years after hundreds scaled the disputed mosque and tore it down, the Supreme Court on Tuesday began hearing the title suit over the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land.

Crimes that shake the secular fabric of the Constitution have allegedly been committed almost 25 years ago — Supreme Court, April, 2017, while reviving criminal conspiracy charges against several political leaders in the Babri demolition case.

The demolition of the 16th century Babri Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya remains a scar on contemporary India's social and political conscience, but equally vexing has been the resolution of the cases filed against alleged perpetrators and conspirators of the act.

The legal tussle over the disputed site between Hindus and Muslims dates back more than a century, but remains unresolved, inflaming passions on both sides.

The cases over the demolition have wound their way from local courts to the high court and finally the apex court of the country. In these last two decades, confusion has prevailed over which court will try the accused; leaders have been let off on procedural issues, only for the charges to be revived against them years later; and hearings have been hamstrung by which sections should apply.

Twenty-five years after hundreds of Hindu zealots scaled the disputed mosque and tore it down, the Supreme Court, on Tuesday, began hearing the title suit over the disputed land.

A total of 49 criminal cases were registered in connection with the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. But of these 49 cases, there are two main First Information Reports.

The first, crime number 197/1992, was registered at the Ayodhya Police Station against tens of thousands of unknown kar sevaks (religious volunteers) for the demolition of the mosque. They were accused of the offences of dacoity, robbery, causing of hurt, injuring/defiling places of public worship, and promoting enmity between two groups on grounds of religion.

The second, crime no. 198/1992, was registered against eight persons, including Bharatiya Janata Party leaders LK Advani, Uma Bharati, Murli Manohar Joshi and Vinay Katiyar, and Vishwa Hindu

Parishad leaders Ashok Singhal, Sadhvi Ritambara, Giriraj Kishore and Vishnu Hari Dalmia, who were on the dais at Ram Katha Kunj when the mosque was being demolished. They are accused of promoting enmity and making assertions prejudicial to national integration. This complaint didn't list a conspiracy charge.

Confusion started on September 9, 1993, when the Uttar Pradesh government transferred the case against kar sevaks to a special court in Lucknow, but left the case against Advani and others to be tried in Rae Bareilly. A month later, the state government passed another order, shifting the case against Advani and other political leaders to Lucknow.

In October 1993, the Central Bureau of Investigation, filed a composite chargesheet for both cases in Lucknow, adding criminal conspiracy charges against the political leaders. It also included charges against 13 more politicians, including Kalyan Singh, who was chief minister of Uttar Pradesh when the mosque was demolished.

The CBI sought a joint trial and against both sets of accused. Subsequently, in 1997, the Lucknow CBI court took cognizance of the chargesheet and framed charges of criminal conspiracy against the 21 accused. This was immediately challenged by the eight original accused on the grounds that, back in 1993, the criminal case against them in Rae Bareilly had been transferred to Lucknow without the approval of the concerned high court.

In 2001, the Allahabad high court said the government notification transferring the Advani trial to Lucknow was invalid because of a lack of approval from the HC. As no new notification was issued by the state government after this judgment, the Lucknow court dropped proceedings against the 21 accused, which included Advani and Kalyan Singh.

However, Advani and seven others continued to face trial at Rae Bareilly.

The CBI appealed against the HC order, and sought trial of all 21 accused under criminal conspiracy charges, apart from other offences. In April this year,

the top court ruled in favour of a joint trial, and revived conspiracy charges against Advani and 12 others. The case will be heard in a Lucknow court on a day-to-day basis.

The court has also stipulated that the judge hearing the case cannot be transferred until the judgment, which has to be announced in two years. This means the verdict is due in 2019, the year India elects a new central government.

If convicted, the accused persons will go to jail for between three and five years. This would mean that they would be barred from contesting elections for six years following the completion of their sentence. Kalyan Singh has won a temporary reprieve from criminal prosecution as he

enjoys immunity by the virtue of occupying the office of the governor of Rajasthan. The SC has said that the trial court will frame charges and move against him as soon as he ceases to be governor. But there are significant hurdles to justice. Many of the accused — former Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray and Hindu leaders Giriraj Kishore, Ashok Singhal, Ram Chandra Das and Mahant Avaidyanath — have died. In the original Rae Bareilly case against Advani and others, the court was yet to examine 105 witnesses. In the original Lucknow case against kar sevaks, the court had to hear 800 witnesses. On September 30, 2010, the Allahabad high court ordered the 2.7 acres of the

disputed site to be trifurcated between the Nirmohi Akhara, the Sunni Waqf Board and the party representing the infant Hindu god Ram Lalla. The top court suspended the judgment in 2011. In March 2017, the Supreme Court pressed for an out-of-court resolution with the then Chief Justice of India and even offered to mediate. But efforts were soon stalled. The dispute was further complicated with a petition by the Uttar Pradesh's Shia Wakf Board, which wants to become a party in the case and has claimed that the disputed site is its property. The board proposes a Ram temple at the site and a mosque somewhere else — a formula acceptable to many Hindu leaders.

Trump: 'I Have Determined That It Is Time to Officially Recognize Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel'

He noted that past presidents had signed waivers delaying the recognition of Jerusalem and the relocation of the embassy "under the belief that delaying the recognition of Jerusalem would advance the cause of peace."

While some said they "lacked courage," he said, they made their decisions based on facts as understood at the time. But after two decades of waivers, it was clear that delaying the recognition of Jerusalem had no benefit for peace, Trump argued.

Instead, Trump said, acknowledging that Israel has the right to determine the location of its own capital was a "necessary condition for achieving peace."

On a practical level, Trump said, it was apparent to all that every major institution of the Israeli government is located in Jerusalem, and that is where foreign dignitaries met with the Israeli heads of state and government.

He added: "Jerusalem is not just the heart of three great religions, but it is now also the heart of one of the most successful democracies in the world. Over the past seven decades, the Israeli People have built a country where Jews, Muslims, Christians, and people

of all faiths are free to live and worship according to their conscience and beliefs."

Trump said that Jerusalem is today, and must remain, a place "where Jews pray at the Western wall, where Christians walk the Stations of the Cross, and where Muslims worship at Al-Aqsa mosque."

He was careful to note that the new policy was not intended to prejudice ongoing negotiations between Israelis and the Palestinians. And he argued that his decision on Jerusalem was part of a "new approach" to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, one that would achieve a "great deal" for both sides.

"The United States remains deeply committed to helping facilitate a peace agreement that is acceptable to both sides," he said. "I intend to do everything in my power to help forge such an agreement." He added that the U.S. would support a two-state solution if agreed to by both sides.

"Above all, our greatest hope is for peace, the universal yearning in every human soul."

He also addressed critics of the new policy, calling for calm, moderation, and tolerance.

"There will of course be disagreement and dissent

regarding this announcement," President Trump said. "But we are confident that ultimately, as we work through these disagreements, we will arrive at a peace, and a place, of greater understanding and cooperation," he said.

"This sacred city should call forth the best in humanity, lifting our sights to what is possible — not pulling us back, and down, to the old fights that have become so totally predictable," he said. "Peace is never beyond the grasp of those willing to reach it. ... Our children should inherit our love, not our conflicts."

President Trump also placed his announcement in the context of his broader policy in the Middle East, which is focused on working with Arab nations to fight extremism. He reiterated his message from his visit to Saudi Arabia in May: "It is time for the many who desire peace to expel the extremists from their midst. It is time for all civilized nations and people to respond to disagreement with reasoned debate, not violence. And it is time for young and moderate voices all across the Middle East to claim for themselves a bright and beautiful future."

He added that Vice President Mike Pence would be visiting Israel in the coming days.

When Bollywood opens up on sexual harassment, we will lose a lot of heroes: Richa Chadha

Hoping for a Harvey Weinstein kind of wave in Bollywood, Richa Chadda says she does not see it happening immediately, mainly because of the culture of victim-shaming.

(News Agencies) Multiple allegations of systematic abuse of women by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein started a massive clean-up operation in Hollywood that saw big names such as Kevin Spacey and Brett Ratner crumbling in the face of #MeToo protests and more. Can something along the same lines happen in the Hindi film industry? Actor Richa Chadha says she does not see it happening immediately, mainly because of the culture of victim-shaming in our country. "I don't see that happening immediately given the culture of naming and shaming in our country. But when it happens, as it is happening in Hollywood right now, the

entire power structure will change. People, who you see making feminist films and claiming to be progressive etc, they will all come tumbling down," she says.

"We will lose a lot of heroes and several people will lose their lives' work, their legacies. I think that's what people will attack — they can't attack them monetarily so they will go after the legacies. And it will happen, I would think in the next four-five years," she adds.

"If someone suffers the loss of livelihood apart from emotional trauma, why will they come forward? In Hollywood, it is easier as actors get royalty," the actor explains why

Bollywood has been quiet on the issue.

Richa also says Bollywood is not the only industry we need to look at when it comes to sexual or power harassment. "It is very sexy to say, 'Bollywood, ye gire hue log. They do this for work, they are just a cesspool for parties and all. We have a very fertile imagination when it comes to Bollywood. But we refuse to look at others. The press has a role in this - they should not be jumping on a hashtag. The press should be consistently creating a support system for the victim to come forward to say 'this



happened to me and he did that'. The judiciary has a role. I once met a rapist who said 'mereko to bus saat saal ki sazaa hogi and then I am back to a normal life', no remorse whatsoever."

Richa is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film, *Fukrey Returns* that hits theatres on December 8. Talking about the movie, she says, "The film is fun and the story has moved forward. We took time as we wanted to make a story as good as the first one and this one has turned out to be a better. They took time to write it, perfect it, tie up loose ends."

When asked about the kind of roles she enjoys doing the most, Richa chooses comedy. "I always look for good parts to play but that's not always possible. Really good work is not easy to come by. My favourite genre is comedy because it doesn't take a toll on me. It is so fulfilling and light. I say no to a lot of dark stuff, like trafficking drugs in the body, because I feel those roles take a toll on the actor." Talking about the new wave of content-driven cinema in Bollywood, Richa says, "It is a wrong notion that the demarcation of parallel and commercial cinema doesn't exist anymore. The demarcation still exists in the minds of certain producers and directors in the industry. The lines are blurring, slowly."

US Department of State advises US citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Pakistan

It said foreign and indigenous terrorist groups continue to pose a danger to US citizens throughout Pakistan.

Terrorists have targeted US diplomats and diplomatic facilities in the past, and evidence suggests they continue to do so, the travel warning said, adding that terrorists and criminal groups have resorted to kidnapping for ransom. Sectarian violence, the State Department said, remains a serious threat throughout the country, and the Pakistani government continues to enforce blasphemy laws.

Religious minority communities have been victims of targeted killings and accusations of blasphemy, it added. The State Department said insurgent and terrorist groups conducted numerous suicide bombings, hand grenade attacks, and

ambushes on Pakistani security forces and civilians over the past six months in Balochistan.

A suicide bomber in Quetta targeted senior police officers near Shuhada Chowk, killing 14 people and wounding 30. In Chaman, another suicide bomber attacked a police convoy, killing three police officials and injuring 20 others, it said while giving details of terrorist attacks in Pakistan's restive Balochistan and FATA. Two hand grenade attacks in Gwadar and Mastung injured 41 people. In Quetta, a suicide bomber killed 21 people and wounded 45 in an attack on the Pishin bus terminal, the State Department said.

Similarly, a suicide bomber in Jhal Magsi attacked worshippers at the Sufi shrine of Pir Rakhyal Shah in the Fatehpur area, killing 19

and injuring 30. Another suicide bomber in Quetta attacked a police convoy on the Sibbi Road in the Saryab mill area, killing seven and wounding 23, it said.

In Punjab province, three suicide bombings targeting police and military officials in Lahore killed at least 47 and injured more than 100 others.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and the Federally Administered Tribal areas (FATA), there have been numerous recent attacks by insurgent and terrorist groups targeting government officials, NGO and aid workers, religious minorities, and civilians. Also 148 occurrences of small arms fire, over 67 improvised explosive devices (IED) explosions, 28 known assassination attempts,

and 17 kidnappings were reported, the State Department said. Assassination and kidnapping attempts are common throughout these areas, it added.

The Department said terrorist organisations operating in the area have not discriminated between government officials and civilians. Since May 2017, the following significant attacks have occurred: in Parachinar, an IED targeting the Tori Market killed 67 civilians and injured 75; in Jamrud, an IED attack targeting peace committee workers killed at least five civilians; in Charsadda, at least five IEDs exploded, injuring 14 people; IEDs targeting Peshawar Hospital injured five people; and in Peshawar the detonation of a "toy bomb" killed one child and injured six persons, it said.

Jewel of India in Association with Box Office Insider Presents



Birth Of A New Hindu Nation

It can't be without reason that the RSS now says a mandir alone will come up at the disputed site. The Sangh has been carving a Hindu India since '92.

A quarter century has passed since the Babri Masjid demolition. Every year, Hindutva forces celebrate this day as 'Vijay Diwas' (Victory Day), as a ritual, but perhaps with a sense of guilt and helplessness—for them, Ram, despite being 'liberated', remains homeless all these years. In the changing political context, the silver jubilee year marks a watershed as the RSS gears up for what they offer as a grand metaphor—the return of Ram to Ayodhya—by turning into a reality the 'Mandir wahin bana-yenge' slogan, once considered merely rhetorical.

Symbols and rituals are embedded in the Hindu nationalist agenda; hence, the first step in this direction has already been initiated with the symbolic return of Ram to Ayodhya this Diwali by lighting almost two lakh lamps on the banks of Sarayu, creating a great spectacle. Now the Sangh parivar is zealously taking up the next step by fast-tracking the temple construction agenda. Thus, without waiting for the Supreme Court decision, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat recently announced that a mandir will be constructed, asserting that there will only be a mandir, and no other structure at the disputed site.

With this announcement, the RSS has entered a new phase of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement: construction of a temple as a new symbol

of a Hindu India. Bhagwat's confidence needs to be understood in the context of an all-powerful RSS now being in control of the levers of political power at the Centre and in a majority of the states. The hegemonic rise of the RSS owes greatly to the Ayodhya movement, of which demolition was a symbolic as well as a substantive event.

The demolition was not a sudden act, but an outcome of a decade-long mobilisation and agitation under a calibrated strategy by the Sangh-VHP-BJP combine. Though the seed was sown back in 1949 when Ram lalla 'appeared' in Babri Masjid on a cold December night, the lord still failed to go beyond the local to capture the national religious imaginary. The humiliating electoral performance of the BJP in 1984, winning only two seats in Parliament, compelled the RSS to go for a militant religio-political strategy around Ayodhya. The Meenakshipuram conversions of 1981, Shah Bano, the unlocking of the temple doors by the Congress government, all provided ideal fodder for a mammoth pan-Indian Hindu mobilisation, which became the largest mass movement in independent India.

Till then, the ideology of Hindu rashtra was by and large confined to the Sangh cadre. Ayodhya allowed the RSS to spread its worldview among

ordinary Hindus by imaginatively projecting Ram not just as a great Hindu god, but also as a symbol of repressed national pride. Thus, Hindu-ism and nationalism were skilfully woven, and this struck a chord with millions who never really related to a vacuous secularism. On the other hand, BJP veteran L.K. Advani's cogent arguments on 'minority appeasement' appealed to many.

Left secular historians questioned if Ayodhya was the birthplace of Rama and whether present-day Ayodhya was the Ayodhya of the Ramayana, thus perhaps putting more wind in the sail of the project. Let alone engage it, they failed to even grasp the working of the believing Hindu's mind: for them, Ayodhya was beyond time and history; faith never looked for evidence. Hard-line secular politicians and Muslim leadership failed to anticipate the upheaval. When Advani talked of relocation of the mosque, it could have been an entry point for talk and bargain; however, the secularists relied entirely on the constitutional/legal solution, fearing any dialogue would privilege the Sangh parivar. Political and electoral calculations, rather than minority interest, were the guiding principles. Once the RSS gauged the mass support behind its project, it showed no interest in rapprochement as it could



reap a political windfall only through a violent assertion.

Historically, the RSS has always shown the right instinct at the right time for its survival, expansion and pursuit of political power. It kept aloof from the freedom struggle, strategically opting to expand quietly. During Partition, it endeared itself to Hindu refugees as their 'saviour'. During the hard days of its ban after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, it conceived the political front, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (1951), and then strategically expanded, opening other affiliates, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (1964). In 1975, it took the bold political decision to challenge the Emergency by joining the JP movement, and soon became a dominant player in the Janata Party and in mainstream politics in 1977, acquiring respectability, legitimacy and political power.

The launch of the Ayodhya agitation in the 1980s was perfectly timed as well. By then, the Sangh network had already become pan-Indian, making inroads into new regions and social groups. And yet, the RSS had remained largely a Brahmin-Bania, upper-caste, middle-class organisation of the cow belt, and it desperately needed to break out of this mould. Ayodhya equipped it with the language and symbolic tools required to penetrate rural and semi-urban India, and flow over the caste barrier: for Ram had a big appeal among backward castes and marginalised groups across regions. Thus, mobilising for the mandir became simultaneously a

way of building a new social coalition, particularly integrating the Dalits, adivasis and backwards into the Hindu fold, not just in a token way as often alleged, but showing willingness to make them partners in power. Thus, the foundation of a 'Hindu India' was laid on a large and diverse social base. The BJP's strength in Parliament surged; the movement brought it to power in key north Indian states; and the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh made way for the demolition with the tacit approval of the Congress government at the Centre.

Surely, the demolition was insane and barbaric for many, and such violent majoritarian assertion was considered anti-democratic and anti-minority. But the supporters gloated over their victory as though it ended the very symbol of historical Muslim domination and Hindu humiliation. But this 'victory' had some long-term negative repercussions.

Mob frenzy and violence became a new normal for conflict resolution. There came to be a big question mark on the efficacy of the Indian state in protecting the rule of law and minority rights. The lofty ideal of 'Hindu tolerance' was once and for all consigned to history. The demolition and mob violence left a permanent scar on Muslims and scared other minorities. Trust in constitutional governance became a casualty, as Kalyan Singh, despite his affidavit as the CM to protect the masjid, became a wilful partner in demolition.

All this had no adverse impact on the RSS, of

course. Rather, the riots and subsequent blasts in Bombay, a violent response to the demolition, further enhanced its credentials in a field marked increasingly by Hindu-Muslim polarisation. Its constituency was further consolidated and the momentum finally enabled the party to form coalition governments in Delhi from 1998 to 2004. Some key players of the movement, including some religious leaders, became lawmakers and ministers; thus, religion got legitimacy in the secular domain. The RSS, despite constraints, exercised a sway over the A.B. Vajpayee government: from cabinet formation and policymaking to key appointments. The moderate Vajpayee, who chose to express remorse after the demolition, put the mandir issue in the backburner due to coalition compulsion; and only the VHP periodically continued with its symbolic rituals at Ayodhya.

In 2002, a train coming from Ayodhya was set on fire at Godhra, killing Gujarati kar sevaks, which led to the most horrific anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat. Gujarati society got Hindutvaised to a great extent and the state has been in the firm grip of Hindutva politics ever since. The majoritarian assertion of December 6, 1992 had a logical link to events in Gujarat a decade later. But Narendra Modi chose not to be confined to the mould of Hindutva icon: adding administrative strings to his bow, and deploying development as a slogan, he graduated to become India's prime minister with RSS support.





Dear moms-to-be, breastfeeding and probiotics can cut risk of cancer among babies

Breastfeeding babies, who receive probiotic supplements for three weeks have better gut health, which protects the baby from diabetes and some cancers.

(News Agencies) A new study has found that breastfeeding babies who receive probiotic supplements for three weeks have better gut health, which protects the baby from diabetes and some cancers. The study is the first to show that a combination of breast milk and a probiotic organism can lead to lasting changes in the gut microbiome, said lead author Mark Underwood. Previous research suggested that breastfeeding can lower risk of asthma among children later in life.

"Even though we stopped giving the

probiotic on day 28 of life, the particular organisms we gave stayed in their fecal community out to 60 days and even longer," he added. The researchers explained *B. infantis* would pair well with the sugars in breastmilk to shape the gut microbiota.

Disruption of the microbiota, particularly early in life, may increase risk for many diseases both inside and outside the gut, including diabetes, allergies and asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, and some cancers, says Underwood. According to the University

of California, Davis breast milk may help sustain those colonies in the long run, say researchers.

The team recruited 66 breastfeeding mothers. In the first group, 34 mothers fed their newborns a three-week course of *Bifidobacterium longum* subspecies *infantis* EVC001, a probiotic supplement. In the other group, the mothers did not administer probiotics. Analyses of fecal samples from the infants, collected during the first 60 days of life, revealed stark differences.

The findings indicated that Genetic

sequencing, PCR analysis and mass spectrometry revealed larger populations of *B. infantis*, which improves gut health was present in newborns who received supplementation than in the infants who did not. Those colonies persisted for at least 30 days after the end of supplementation, suggesting that the changes were durable, say the researchers. The researchers' next plan is to study how the combination of breast milk and probiotics affects the gut health of premature babies, who are at increased risk of dysbiosis.

Stop popping painkillers

They can cause obesity and affect sleep



(News Agencies) If you are in the habit of popping over-the-counter painkillers, you may be at double the risk of becoming obese as well as have poor sleep, a study has revealed. Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase in the prescription of medications such as gabapentinoids — gabapentin, pregabalin and opiates — for chronic pain management including migraine, diabetic neuropathy and chronic lower back pain. Previous studies showed that painkillers can increase risks of heart attacks by 50%. The findings showed that people on opiates and cardio-metabolic drugs reported 95% rates of obesity, 82% "very high" waist circumference and 63% hypertension, as opposed to those on cardio-metabolic drugs only. These chronic pain medications should be prescribed for shorter periods of time to limit serious health complications, the researchers suggested. "We already know that opiates are dependency-forming, but this study also found patients taking opiates have the worst health. Obesity rates are much higher and the patients reported sleeping poorly," said lead author Sophie Cassidy, research associate at the Newcastle University. Opioids act as a sedative which makes patients less active and they have been shown to alter taste perception with a craving for sugar and sweet foods.

Air pollution from road traffic is affecting health of unborn babies

Exhaust fumes, soot and dust spewed out from road traffic may be putting the health of thousands of unborn babies at risk.



(News Agencies) Pregnant women exposed to air pollution from road traffic are more likely to give birth to babies that are underweight or smaller than they should be, a study conducted in the UK warns.

However, when it comes to traffic-related noise, the study of more than half a million infants, published in *The BMJ*, found no conclusive effect on babies' health.

Cutting the average concentration of fine particle pollution emitted by London's road traffic by just 10 per cent could prevent around 90 babies a year (three per cent of cases) being born with low birth weight.

The findings led by researchers at Imperial College London could be applicable to other cities in the UK and across Europe with comparable levels of road traffic pollution, highlighting the need for environmental health policies to improve air quality in urban areas.

Previous studies have shown a link between air pollution, pregnancy complications and childhood illness, but studies of noise pollution in pregnancy have provided conflicting results.

The latest study looked at the link between exposure to air and noise pollution from road traffic during

pregnancy and the effect on measures of birth weight — both low birth weight (less than 2,500 grammes) and being born small for gestational age.

The study focused on records of more than half a million (540,365) babies born in the Greater London area between

2006 and 2010, along with the mother's home address location. Researchers estimated average monthly concentrations of pollutants related to

road traffic, including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from traffic exhaust and non-exhaust sources, such as brakes or tyre wear, as well as larger particulate matter (PM₁₀).

Average day and night-time road traffic noise levels were also estimated.

They found higher levels of these air pollutants, particularly PM_{2.5}, were associated with two per cent to six per cent increased odds of low birth weight and one per cent to three per cent increased odds of being small for gestational age.

Smartphone addiction is more dangerous than you thought. It causes depression, anxiety

(News Agencies) Prolonged use of smartphones may significantly increase the risk of depression, anxiety and insomnia among teenagers, a study warns. Researchers from the Korea University in South Korea have found an imbalance in the brain chemistry



of young people addicted to smartphones and the internet. They used magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) to gain unique insight into the brains of smartphone-and internet- addicted teenagers. MRS is a type of MRI that measures the brain's chemical composition. The study, presented at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), involved 19 young people diagnosed with internet or smartphone addiction who were paired with healthy people. Twelve of the addicted youth received nine weeks of cognitive behavioural therapy, modified from a cognitive therapy programme for gaming addiction, as part of the study. The researchers used standardised internet and smartphone addiction tests to measure the severity of internet addiction. Questions focused on the extent to which internet and smartphone use affects daily routines, social life, productivity, sleeping patterns and feelings. "The higher the score, the more severe the addiction," said Hyung Suk Seo, from the Korea University. The researchers reported that the addicted teenagers had significantly higher scores in depression, anxiety, insomnia severity and impulsivity.

Vijay Mallya extradition

India's case politically motivated, UK court told



Vijay Mallya's defence team says he is being used as a scapegoat by Indian politicians to deflect public anger at the accumulation of bad loans by state-owned banks

Kingfisher Airlines obtained from Indian banks, especially state-owned IDBI Bank. The banks want to recover a total of about \$1.4 billion that the state says the defunct airline owes.

Mallya's British defence lawyer, Clare Montgomery, told Westminster Magistrates Court that India had made a series of serious allegations against him and others that did not have "a shred of evidence" to back them up. She also said that the Indian government's case revealed a "shocking" lack of appreciation of how companies function and of basic realities such as the effects of incorporation and the rights of shareholders. "Economically and legally, it is impossible to palm off losses onto banks by borrowing to pass on the cost of failure," she said. Montgomery said she would call witnesses later in the two-week

hearing to give evidence on what she called the "political ramifications" of the case.

She accused several Indian parties, including the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, of "making political capital from the Mallya case on the assumption there was a fraud". Montgomery said India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is prosecuting the case, had a "long and inglorious history of being politically motivated in the cases it brings". She also criticized prison conditions in India, saying that they were worse than in Russia, a country to which British courts have on several occasions refused to extradite suspects for that reason. Montgomery said there were competing narratives, fraud versus business failure, and that no reasonable jury would be able to reach a safe conclusion that there had

been a deliberate intent to defraud.

Mallya, the focus of intense media interest in India, arrived wearing a dark suit and yellow tie and was mobbed by cameramen as he walked into the building. Inside the courtroom he spoke only to confirm his name and age, before sitting quietly in the glass-walled dock as Montgomery spoke.

She said that the government's allegation that Mallya had deliberately misled banks by overstating Kingfisher's projected profits was "a false premise". That was because airlines were subject to many unpredictable factors beyond their control, such as fuel cost fluctuations and the global economic climate, so to make entirely accurate projections several years in advance was unrealistic.

(News Agencies) London: The Indian government's fraud case against tycoon Vijay Mallya is baseless and politically motivated, his defence lawyer told a London court on Tuesday as she battled to prevent his extradition to his home country.

Mallya, who lives in Britain, stands accused in India of fraudulently palming off losses from his now defunct Kingfisher Airlines onto banks by taking out loans he had no intention of repaying.

His defence team argue that

he is being used as a scapegoat by Indian politicians of all stripes to deflect public anger at the accumulation of bad debts by state-owned banks.

The 61-year-old, nicknamed "The King of Good Times" after the slogan on bottles of one of his premium beers and his hard partying lifestyle, had business interests ranging from aviation to liquor.

He is also the co-owner of Formula One motor racing team Force India. The case against him centres on a series of loans

China's top two banks refuse loan to Adani's coal mine project in Australia

Adani is seeking A\$2 billion (\$1.5 billion) in financing by March 2018 for the A\$4 billion first stage of its proposed Carmichael coal mine in Queensland; Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and China Construction Bank said they were not working on the project



(News Agencies) China's two biggest banks said they do not plan to finance a controversial Australian coal mine, in the latest blow to Indian conglomerate Adani Enterprises' long delayed project.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and China

Construction Bank said in separate statements they were not working on the project, after media recently reported that Chinese banks may get involved.

Adani is seeking A\$2 billion (\$1.5 billion) in financing by March 2018 for the A\$4 billion first stage of its proposed

Carmichael coal mine in the state of Queensland, a project that has been shrunk from a A\$16.5 billion plan to make it more viable.

Adani declined to comment on its financing plans on Monday or the statements from the Chinese banks.

Australian and overseas

banks have balked at granting loans for the project, which environmentalists oppose due to climate change and the potential for damage to the Great Barrier Reef.

"ICBC has not been, and does not intend to be, engaged in arranging financing for this project," ICBC, China's biggest listed lender by assets, said in a statement on its Australian website.

"ICBC attaches great importance to its social responsibilities and keenly promotes 'green financing' ... This statement is made without any view on or prejudice towards the Carmichael mine project."

The mine's location 400 km (250 miles) from a Pacific Ocean shipping terminal means financing infrastructure costs has been at the forefront of debate over the project's economic viability.

"China Construction Bank is not involved with, nor consider-

ing involvement with, the Adani Carmichael Mine project," an external spokesperson for China Construction Bank in Australia said in an emailed statement on Monday.

CCB in China was not immediately available for comment.

Reuters has previously reported that Adani was in talks with China Machinery Engineering Corp (CMEC) for a loan, which could have involved China Construction Bank or China Export Import Bank. China Export Import Bank was not immediately available for comment. Carmichael has been delayed by court challenges from environmentalists and indigenous groups concerned about climate change and the impact on native land and water supply, but those challenges have been rejected. Adani hopes to start shipping coal from Carmichael by March 2020 in the first stage of the project, which it bought amid a coal boom in 2010.

Bitcoin hit a fresh record of \$15,000 as investors pile in

Bitcoin hit a fresh record of \$14,000 Thursday as investors piled in, triggering a warning the cryptocurrency was "like a charging train with no brakes" which would inevitably slip back



dramatically in the past month.

The increased interest has been driven by growing acceptance among traditional investors of an innovation once considered the preserve of computer nerds and financial experts.

But some, including the US Federal Reserve, have warned against dabbling in bitcoin as it could threaten financial stability, and fears of a bubble have increased as the price has soared.

"Bitcoin now seems like a charging train with no brakes," said Shane Chanel, from Sydney-based ASR Wealth Advisers. "There is an unfathomable amount of new participants piling into the cryptocurrency market."

But he warned: "Once the hype slows down, we will most certainly see some sort of correction."

There are mounting

concerns about its introduction into the mainstream financial system after US regulator the Commodity Futures Trading Commission last week cleared the way for bitcoin futures to trade on major exchanges, a decision which analysts say has helped spur the recent rally.

Bitcoin is to be offered on the CBOE Futures Exchange from this weekend and on the world's biggest futures venue, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME), from December 18. The Futures Industry Association, which groups some of the world's biggest derivatives brokerages, criticised the plans in a letter to the regulator, saying that contracts are being rushed through without the risks being properly weighed up.

"A more thorough and considered process would have allowed for a robust public discussion among clearing

member firms, exchanges and clearing houses," said the association. Transactions happen when heavily encrypted codes are passed across a computer network.

The NiceHash marketplace was meanwhile today investigating a security breach resulting in the theft of bitcoin. "Clearly, this is a matter of deep concern and we are working hard to rectify the matter in the coming days," NiceHash said in a statement.

"In addition to undertaking our own investigation, the incident has been reported to the relevant authorities and law enforcement and we are co-operating with them as a matter of urgency." Bitcoin and other virtual currencies use blockchain, which records transactions that are updated in real time on an online ledger and maintained by a network of computers.

(News Agencies) Bitcoin has been used to buy everything from an ice cream to a pint of beer, hit the USD 12,000 mark for the first time, while it has soared more than 50 per cent in value in just one week.

Bitcoin — which came into being in 2009 as a bit of encrypted software and has no central bank backing it and no legal exchange rate — has risen from a 2017 low of USD 752 in mid-January and surged

The rally came just a day after the virtual currency, which

Chinese lenders plan to pursue Reliance Communications in insolvency court

Last month, CDB began insolvency proceedings against RCom, which has been trying for months to restructure its debt via a debt-for-equity swap.

(News Agencies) Two major Chinese lenders plan to support a move by China Development Bank to put Indian wireless carrier Reliance Communications (RCom) into insolvency court as they seek to recover about \$2 billion in debt, said three people with knowledge of the matter. Last month, CDB began insolvency proceedings against RCom, which has been trying for months to restructure its debt via a debt-for-equity swap. Now, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), the country's biggest-listed lender by assets, and Export-Import Bank of China, plan to back CDB, the sources said.

The combined effort would be a rare tilt against an Indian conglomerate by a group of Chinese lenders, keen to boost their presence in India. And it would also further jeopardize Anil Ambani-controlled RCom's efforts to restructure out of court. RCom last week said the majority of its creditors will



oppose CDB's insolvency bid. With total debt of 457.33 billion rupees as of end March, RCom is the most-leveraged of all listed telecoms carriers in India. The company has not reported its debt level since then.

The CDB petition seeking insolvency proceeding against RCom is not on behalf of all three Chinese banks, but the banks are "on the same page", said one of the people with knowledge of the development.

If needed, the other two banks will file their own petitions at India's National Company Law Tribunal, which hears bankruptcy cases in the country, the person said.

Two other people with knowledge of the Chinese banks' plans also confirmed that ICBC and Export-Import Bank would seek to join the insolvency bid unless the parties reach an out-of-court settlement. The people spoke to Reuters on condition they not be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. RCom did not immediately respond to a request for comment. ICBC declined to comment, while the other two Chinese banks and the mobile carrier's top Indian lender, State Bank of India, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In the age of Amazon, Walmart is changing its legal name

The world's largest retailer, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, said Wednesday it will change its legal name to Walmart Inc. from Wal-Mart Stores Inc.



(News Agencies) Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is changing its legal name effective Feb. 1 as it shifts away from physical stores in the age of Amazon's increasing dominance,

The world's largest retailer, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, said Wednesday it will change its legal name to Walmart Inc. from Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

It said the move underscores its growing emphasis on serving shoppers in different ways beyond just physical stores but also online, on their mobile devices and through pickup and delivery. The company has been making inroads in narrowing the gap between itself and Amazon by making big investments in its online business. It tripled the number of items sold online from a year ago, overhauled its free shipping strategy and is expanding such services as allowing shoppers to pick up online grocery orders curbside at the stores. That has helped drive strong e-commerce sales gains in the past several quarters, most recently 50 percent growth in its fiscal third quarter. It operates more than 11,600 stores and clubs under 60 different banners worldwide. "Whether it's in our stores, on our sites, with our apps, by using their voice or whatever comes next, there is just one Walmart as far as our customers are concerned," wrote Doug McMillon, Walmart president and CEO, in a blog post Wednesday.



7th season premier of first, & only of it's kind

"Jewel of India Calendar Hunt Reality Show" coming soon on Josh India WebTV

(By SAI Bureau) New York - US Based media and entertainment company Jewel of India announced today that 7th Annual "CALENDAR HUNT Reality Show", shot in New Jersey and New York is ready for it's season premier on Josh India WebTV (A NuWay Media Group Company). Josh India TV is available on YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms to the viewers worldwide.

Produced by Box Office Insider, US based reality show is all set to unveil on Dec 12



by bringing more celebrity Judges, great worldwide locations, celebrity appearances, great prizes and opening the eligibility to participate? The winner, will appear on COVER PAGE OF THE 2018 CALENDAR. There were many challenges for contestants, like 'Fitness, CONTEST and 'Product Challenge'. To win the coveted title each contestant competed in all these challenges. The winner will also be the face of JEWEL OF INDIA USA AND BOX OFFICE INSIDER.

This is the second time that this show was shot in New York

and New Jersey. Season finale was show at Long Island's beautiful & famous "The Mint Banquet & Restaurant". Real Show Calendar is being produced this time by BOX OFFICE INSIDER (A NuWay Media Group Company). "Last year the CALENDAR HUNT was held in De la

ware, but this year we are excited to bring it back to New Jersey and New York", said Juhi Jagiasi, the CEO and Founder of Jewel of India and Director of MISS INDIA INTERNATIONAL.

"We are a new generation media company, aiming premium content for young and happening South Asians. This was the pri-

mary reason we decided to associate with Jewel of India to produce Jewel of India Calendar Hunt Reality Show for a long term association. We are aiming to raise stakes much higher for 2019 Calendar,





AWESOME TOP MODEL 2018 UNVEILED!

Setting a new bar in the world of Fashion.



(By Babita Sharma) With prestigious designers and an innovative thinking, New Jersey saw some interactive celebration of fashion, music and talent within the country and beyond, as AWESOME TV & ASC Production, laid the foundation of a high-toned and distinctive International Model hunt on December 1, 2017. AWESOME TOP MODEL 2018 event held at Royal Albert Palace in Edison, NJ, organized and hosted by Awesome TV in collaboration with ASC Production Inc., enthralled the audience with the ramp walk of models and talents

covering a diverse array of specialties that ranged from unique Casual wear, Swimwear, Evening wear and much more.

Ritesh Parikh, founder said the "The 'Awesome Top Model' hunt celebrated exceptional designers whose imagination and creativity broke new ground in fashion industry. The purpose was to discover, showcase and inspire modeling talent from around the world".

Nutan Kalamdani, co-founder added, "Awesome Top Model is a vision that we created with the purpose of offering a platform for models to progress further in their careers with the help of well-

established individuals, industry professionals, mentors and the like, thereby giving them an opportunity to connect with them. We believe it is important to give a model the tools required to become successful, and create a path to lessen the struggles of such a profession, thereby making it easier to achieve their goal".

Amit Singh Chauhan, Founder of ASC Productions has been working with models for several years now and has been passionately active in the NY Fashion week over the years. He understands the business very well and has been instrumental in this model hunt event. A man of few words, Mr. Chauhan said, "I truly want to see all my models succeed. I want them to make a name for themselves. It gives me great sense of satisfaction when I see their progress. I want nothing else."

The event witnessed the embracing of unique fashion inspirations and design aesthetics that was showcased with an embodied craftsmanship. Designers Caren K by Kiran Khan, Kenny 'KAS' & LAVA LUXE, Layol loyal by Quiana Brown, Derrick J. Sellers for DJS Lifestyles, Zainab Ero-Phillips for Hot Momma, Original Crackage by

Wesley Woods and Patty Such for Candy treated several hundred guests to a runway presentation of fashion trends of casual to swimwear to evening wear as the Models strutted the catwalk in designs.

The glamorous event was judged by a panel of judges, Jon Harari, Michele Sorvino, Cheryl Jacobs, Kenny 'KAS' Flanagan, Mani Kamboj & Hakim Dubois who are known in the Fashion and Entertainment world, and did not limit the winners to garments in terms of fashion, but also focused on the presentation, grace, pattern, hair, accessories and the attires of the participants.

Rox Seunarine covered red carpet for Awesome TV & AWSM Radio, while Lina Ludwicki, Jo Gagliardo, and Johann Ortiz hosted the event, Alaja Greene handled backstage, casting and styling. Liza Gibson helped the models develop their portfolios onstage and provided direction as they walked the ramp. In addition to being a unique opportunity for the fashion designers, the event put in spotlight the talented makeup artists (Johanna Jimenez, Jessica Alarcon, Wendy Aviles, Anthony Graciela and Alexis Kelhower and teams) and over 50 striking models.

Among the sub-categories, the winners were as follows:

Miss Popularity - Joselyn Zambrano and Mr. Popularity - Tommy Maksanty

Miss Personality - Elena Maconaughey and Mr. Personality - Jose Baez
Miss Photogenic - Katy Grey and Mr. Photogenic - Tommy Maksanty

Miss Performance - Bessie Gee and Mr. Performance - Kyree Moore

Miss Physique - Carolyn Antal and Mr. Physique - Tommy Maksanty

Bindi Liebowitz (as seen on the Voice on NBC) wowed with her performance that earned her a thunderous applause from the audience. Post event dinner included Indo-Italian fusion cuisine with open bar all night long. DJ Sunny Patel provided the musical backdrop.

With over 50 Models participating in the Awesome Top Model 2018, the final top winners were Meghan Martin in the female category and Tommy Maksanty in the male category.



Firangi movie review

Kapil Sharma flaunts his acting in a mundane film

An incoherent screenplay makes this Kapil Sharma-starrer a mind-numbing affair. Here's our Firangi movie review



Firangi

Director: Rajiv Dhingra

Cast: Kapil Sharma, Ishita Dutta, Monica Gill

Rating: 1/5

Kapil Sharma leaves his forte of comedy to don the role of a village simpleton, Mangatram, who wants everyone to be happy.

His character is supposed to be innocent, honest and loving.

Firangi is the love story of Mangatram (Kapil), an innocent man who takes up a job, earns money, commits a few mistakes

and tries to rectify them. But he goofs up in the effort and then puts his life at risk to undo those bloopers. All these for the sake of marrying the woman of his choice, Sargi (Ishita). Monica Gill plays the typical good woman in white men's camp who ends up helping the protagonist in his endeavour.

Written by Rajiv Dhingra who has also directed the movie, the story may not sound wonderful, but it had the potential of a sweet, fun-filled and warm film. However, the boring narrative, an

incoherent screenplay and mismatch between milieu and discourse in certain scenes of the film make it an extremely mind-numbing affair.

Manga, who is supposed to be a naïve person, is also shown shrewd enough to fool the villagers and devise ways to manipulate them and his British employer, Mark Daniels (Edward Sonnenblick). Daniels is a British government official who likes to play by the rules and befriends the local king to ensure smooth functioning of the British system. He also falls for the king's daughter, and is ready to kill for her sake. However, both Daniels' character and the film meet a roadblock when Mahatma Gandhi makes an appearance. Suddenly the guns are dropped and Daniel almost runs away from the spot. Why? Did Gandhi threaten him with any kind of protest? No. Simply because he's Gandhi. You know, his mere

sight made the British tremble and run away.

While there is a visible effort to make the film look like it's set in the pre-British era, the characters often slip in the modern-day lingo- "Tu to star hai yaar!"

Ishita Dutta, who plays Manga's love interest, Sargi in the film, is not required to do much except smile and make faces at the hero. Rajesh Sharma plays her dad in the film, a blacksmith who is more worried about his family than the freedom struggle. Inaamul Haq plays Kapil's friend and the character is such a waste of his talent. He is only supposed to perform antics in the film.

Kumud Mishra plays one of the few well-etched characters- that of the conniving, cruel king. Raja Sahab is the only one who can boast of a smooth character graph. He is the typical king who may not be the ruler anymore

but does not want to give up his luxuries. One of the initial scenes in the film shows a discussion between few British officials and the king. The king reads out an agreement which says the revenue will be increased by 40% and the king can "only marry 25 times". While Kumud initially objects to the clauses, he agrees when the British increases the number of wives to 30. Kumud stays true to his character throughout the film and does not waver, unlike others in the film.

If there is one positive thing that emerges from the movie - Kapil flaunts his acting skills and proves he can play the serious, sincere man as convincingly as the charmer he mostly plays on his shows.

It is sad that Manga's character is not well defined, rendering Kapil's act and efforts useless as the film turns out to be tedious and monotonous.

Tera Intezaar movie review

The curious case of hanging mango and Sunny Leone

From performing planchette to listening conversations via paintings, Tera Intezaar can entertain you at many levels. Here's our zero star movie review.



Tera Intezaar

Cast: Sunny Leone, Arbaaz Khan

Director: Raajeev Walia

Rating: 0/5

It's another weird supernatural film featuring Sunny Leone.

There isn't anything to talk about its story, still I will enlighten you. Why should critics have all the fun?

Veer Singh Rajput (Arbaaz Khan)-- there are producers who still dare to cast him as lead- is a closet painter. One fine

day, while he was painting from his imagination, it turns out to be Raunaq's (Sunny Leone) portrait. In next thirty seconds, he meets her and begins to sing duet on a beach.

Oh I forgot, Sunny Leone exclaims with uncontrollable enthusiasm after seeing her portrait on Arbaaz's tablet, "Tumne mujhe bina dekhe itni achchi tasveer kaise bana li (How did you draw such a beautiful picture without seeing me?). Err, shouldn't you be

worried about such a creepy situation?

There are some white collar thieves who want to steal Veer's paintings even though he is a rookie. Don't even ask about his paintings, because they may remind you of the first drawing you did in your childhood. Yes, that sun-mountain-river one. I don't know why somebody would kill for such a mediocre painting! On the other hand, they should run away as fast as they can if they are indeed art collectors. There onwards, Tera Intezaar changes into a bizarre ghost story. People get kidnapped, eloped, murdered. Oh my god, it sounds so better on paper. Then there are twists, more twists and some more twists till you lose the track, or twisted in the head.

There is a ghost-buster played by Sudha Chandran (Ramola Sikand!). She accepts, "Jis

tarah se saari cheezein mujhe clear nazar nahi aa rahi hain waise hi tum bhi mujhe clear nazar nahi aa rahi ho (I can't see you clearly as well as other things)." Well, ask us!

She also says, "Inme se aatma kaun si hai ye mujhe samajh nahi aa raha hai (I don't understand which of these is a ghost?)."

It's a collage of incredibly planned scenes. Consider this: A group of four hears a roaring sound inside a jungle and one of them says, "Ye aawaz kuch jaani pehchaani lag rahi hai, shayad sher ki hai (This sounds familiar, is that a tiger?)" Please consider playing Sherlock's Indian counterpart. Will you? In other scene, Sunny Leone invites some people on a business meeting to discuss about paintings and then breaks into a suggestive dance. They mustn't have seen this coming. Maybe business with pleasure is

their mantra in life. What do we know about art!

This review will be incomplete if I don't tell you about the hanging mango. What exactly happens is that four people are running for their lives and enter a jungle. Suddenly one of them spots a mango and decides to eat it. The ghost can wait.

One of them takes a bite and starts talking to the next person. I am yet to figure out why he left the mango mid-air after putting his teeth into it. The mango stays there and after a while starts to stare at them. Trust me, you haven't seen anything so surreal in recent times. I got goosebumps after realising that it's only been 15 minutes into it.

From performing planchette to listening conversations via paintings, Tera Intezaar can entertain you at many levels. Just don't doze off.

Daddy's Home 2 movie review

In which Mel Gibson encourages a child to commit sexual assault. Zero stars

Starring two convicts (Mark Wahlberg, Mel Gibson), one tragically unfunny Will Ferrell, for zero stars. Categorically the worst film of the year.



Daddy's Home 2
Director - Sean Anders
Cast - Mark Wahlberg, Will Ferrell, Mel Gibson, John Lithgow, Linda Cardellini, John Cena, Alessandra Ambrosio
Rating - 0/5

Recently, Mark Wahlberg, a devout Catholic, said during a Church event that he hoped God is a forgiving movie fan because he - Wahlberg - had "made some poor choices" in his past that he regrets. Like any marginally aware person,

you're probably nodding in silent agreement. Yes, Mark Wahlberg has made some poor choices in his past, but hey, at least he's willing to own up to it.

Perhaps that's the exact thought the Cardinal sat next to him had when he, displaying the presence of mind of a People Magazine reporter, prodded him to name and shame that one most embarrassing movie. Perhaps, like you or I, the Cardinal expected Wahlberg

to sheepishly admit that his two Transformers movies were, even by the standards of Transformers movies, a sin that justified repentance. Perhaps the nice Cardinal, presumably not a fan of evolution, expected Planet of the Apes. Who knows?

But Wahlberg had a surprise in store for that rapt Catholic crowd. Not only did he not mention Transformers or Planet of the Apes or even the cinematic masterpiece Max Payne (remember, this was before any of us had laid eyes on Daddy's Home 2), he said that the one movie that he regrets doing the most, the one movie that he still 'prays forgiveness' for happens to be the one most sane minds would define as his finest hour: Boogie Nights.

Make of that what you will - but at least we can all agree that even God, despite his all-

knowing-all-seeing ways, would've been slightly blindsided by Wahlberg's answer. Because God remembers that time when Wahlberg developed a cocaine addiction at the age of 13. He remembers when a 15-year-old Wahlberg threw rocks at black kids. And try as He might, even He could never forget that time when Wahlberg was charged with attempted murder for blinding a Vietnam War veteran.

I've decided that this was all an elaborate ploy by cooked up by Wahlberg to explain Daddy's Home 2. He's playing the long con here, systematically establishing himself as dimwit-turned-yokel who doesn't know right from racism. How could he possibly be expected to turn down millions of dollars for essentially shrieking at the camera for a shooting

schedule that couldn't have been longer than a week? And you know what pushes this entire fiasco over into legitimately insane territory? The thought that hiring Mel Gibson would be a good idea, and while everyone was too dazed to think straight, going ahead and doing it.

But wait, there's more. May Mark Wahlberg's God help us all. There's a scene in Daddy's Home 2 of such blinding stupidity, of such blatant disregard for kindness and empathy and decency, a scene so tragically misjudged it almost gives the impression that it was pillaged from the rotting mind of Harvey Weinstein himself. It's a scene in which Mel Gibson, convicted domestic abuser and flagrant anti-Semite, encourages a child no older than 10 to commit sexual assault.

National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, NY Honors 11TV Celebrities



NEW YORK (Prakash M Swamy) The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, New York chapter, that gives the prestigious Emmy Awards has inducted 11 top television celebrities in gold and silver circle at a glittering ceremony held here last week.

The Board of Governors of the Academy announced the in-

duction of 11 individuals into the prestigious Gold and Silver Circles. The Gold & Silver Circles are comprised of an elite group of professionals who have made significant contributions to the New York television market.

The Silver Circle recognizes individuals who have devoted a quarter of a century or more to the television industry. The Gold

Circle honors those legends whose contributions span fifty years or more. The Gold & Silver Circles are societies of honor. Their members represent the passion, creativity and dedication that are the hallmarks of excellence in this industry.

The honorees represent those media professionals working in either a performing, cre-

ative, technical, administrative, or journalistic role within the industry, including executive, writing, or production. 2017 marks our second Gold Circle event.

Since 1992, the New York Chapter has honored distinguished television broadcasters with Silver Circle induction, including Walter Cronkite, Bob Keeshan, Linda Ellerbee, Sheila Nevins, Jerry Orbach, Rafael Pineda, Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, John Roland, and Chuck Scarborough.

This year, The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, New York Chapter will induct the following accomplished professionals: Gold Circle Inductees: Maury Povich (NBC Universal Entertainment), Marvin Scott (WPIX-TV). Silver Circle Inductees: Bruce Brauer (CBS Television Stations), Esteban Creste (WXTV), Andy DeSantis (WGRZ-TV), Pat Dolan (News 12 Networks), Mark Fetner (WABC

retired), John Filippelli (YES Network), Susan Lucci (Actress and Performer), Dana Tyler (CBS2 News), and Mary Alice Williams (NJTV News).

Presenters were Audrey Arbeeney, N.J. Burkett, Connie Chung, Todd Ehrlich, Norm Fein, Megyn Kelly, Rich Leibner, Denise Rover, Dana Tyler, Amy Waldman, and Diana Williams.

"This year's illustrious honorees have distinguished themselves in their positions, amongst their peers, and in our community," said Denise Rover, President of The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, New York Chapter. "Each has made a significant contribution to our industry, whether it is in entertainment, news, or sports. We salute these 11 exceptional people who have made an impact in New York media." The ceremony was held in New York City at The Lambs Club.

Shivangi Maini is 36th Miss India New York

Panache Entertainment Inc. In association with IFC holds this largest & reputed pageant outside of India

(By Our Staff Reporter) Glitz, glamour and galore - all came down on Sunday December 3, 2017 in Long Island. The Event was hosted by Nishi Bahl of Panache Entertainment, and coordinated by Shilpa Jhurani.

Panache entertainment, in association with IFC, hosted the 36th Miss, 10th Teen and the 4th Mrs. India New York Pageant! The largest reputed pageant held outside of India, this pageant has provided a platform and had past winners to many well achieved women, such as Bollywood actresses Richa Sharma Dutt, and Aarti Chhabria.

This year, a handful of New York's finest Miss, Youthful Teens, and Elegant Mrs took the ramp displaying the utmost qualities of beauty, grace, elegance, confidence and talent! Despite all being



**Nishi Bahl, CEO
Panache Entertainment**



Shivangi Maini being Crowned Miss India New York



Judges for Miss India New York 2017



Talath Quadri, Mrs. India New York 2017



**Vinika Shikapuri, Miss Teen
India New York 2017**

current Indian Americans, it became evident that each generation has been, is and still carrying on their cultural heritage, roots and culture forward; and very much alive even though being Seven seas away from home!

The event consisted of judged segments including Ethnic Wear, Evening Wear, Talent, and Question and Answer.

The contestants took the ramp shining light and bright in their beautiful traditional ethnic wear, and glamorous and stunning evening wear.

Expert photographer and event planner of AA Film Studios and Dream moulders respectively. Box Office and South Asian Insider founder Mr. Sharanjit Singh Thind, Renowned social worker and community leader Mrs. Nilima Madan, Travel specialist and founder of The Ticket Guru, Mr. Abhinav Madan, and Director of social services in Nassau County,

Sunita Manjrekar.

The event was emceed by the 2016 outgoing queens, Miss India New York Riya Kaur, Miss Teen India New York Rhea Manjrekar and Mrs. India New York Nishtha Chadda. Ultimately, the event concluded after a nail biting tough competition, crowning Miss India New York 2017: Shivangi Maini of Queens, New York, 1st Runner Up: Renuka Joseph from Long Island, 2nd Runner up: Inpreet Rattu of suffolk county, New York. 3rd Runner Up: Nishigandha from Queens, Long Island. In the Teen category, Miss Teen India New York 2017 is Vinika Shikapuri from Melville, Long Island. 1st Runner up: Simran Kohli from Hicksville, Long Island, 2nd Runner Up: Priya Aguilar Bhanot of New Hyde Park, and 3rd Runner up: Geetika Kochar from Bethpage, Long Island. In the Mrs Category, Mrs. India New York 2017 Talath Quadri from Long Island, 1st Runner Up: Devinder

"Devin", 2nd Runner up: Gurpreet Kaur from Upstate, NY and 3rd Runner up: Anjali Jain from Hicksville, Long Island.

In addition to these titles, there were multiple subtitle winners in all 3 categories including Best talent: Vinika Shikapuri, Beautiful smile: Anjali Jain, Most Photogenic: Nidhi Tomar, Best Model: Sofia Win Aung.

This year, a new title was also crowned as Panache Brand Ambassador. The first year initiation was crowned to Sofia Win Aung. Ultimately, a exciting and eventful evening indeed. Congratulations! to all the winners on all their commendable accomplishments and new titles and reigns! The winners will now proceed to compete representing the state of New York, at Miss, Teen and Mrs. India USA hosted at Royal Alberts Palace on Sunday December 17, 2017 by Neelam and Dharmatma Saran of IFC.