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"Power of One
Awards"



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Trump Impeached in Historic Rebuke

*For only the third time ever, the
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"Power of One Awards" held at United Nations

(By our Staff Reporter) New York : During recently held "Power of One Award " at the United Nations, four eminent diplomats were honored with 2019 'Diwali – Power of One Award'. Event was organized by "Diwali Foundation USA", a brainchild of Manhattan's power couple Attorney

Ravi Batra & Ranju Batra, Chariwoman. Power of One awards are organized annually to celebrate successful efforts of Ranju Batra for Diwali Stamp released by United States Postal Service.

The diplomats who were honored with the 2019 Diwali Power of One Award

at the United Nations, December 6, included former foreign minister and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the UN Kairat Abdrakhmanov, former Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations Nicholas Emiliou, former Chef de Cabinet to the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General

Assembly and Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the UN Frantisek Ruzicka and Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Volodymyr Yelchenko . Here is a sneak peak of this unique event in pictures, exclusively to readers of The South Asian Insider.



"Power of One Awards" held at United Nations



This Impeachment Folly

The Resistance wins in the House, but will it now lose in 2020?

(By The Editorial Board)

House Democrats voted Wednesday evening to impeach Donald Trump but, media high-fives aside, what have they accomplished? They have failed to persuade the country; they have set a new, low standard for impeaching a President; Mr. Trump will be acquitted in the Senate; and Democrats may have helped Mr. Trump win re-election. Congratulations to The Resistance.

Democrats Nancy Pelosi and Jerrold Nadler have said in the past that impeachment must be bipartisan to be credible, and they have achieved their goal—against impeachment. In the actual vote, two Democrats voted against both articles and a third voted with them against one. New Jersey Rep. Jeff Van Drew voted no and may switch to the GOP. All Republicans voted against impeachment.

The impeachment press will deride the GOP as either afraid of Donald Trump or moral sellouts. But note that even the 20 GOP Members who are retiring from the House and not running for another office voted against impeachment. GOP Members like Peter King (N.Y.), Jim Sensenbrenner (Wis.) and Will Hurd (Texas) have been unafraid to break with party leaders or Presidents in the past.

The problem isn't GOP consciences, it's the weak and dishonest Democratic case for impeachment. One issue is the unfair House process. Democrats refused GOP witness requests in the Intelligence Committee, denied the GOP a hearing day in the Judiciary Committee, and rushed the impeachment debate and vote. They claim impeachment is a serious, solemn moment but then sprinted to judgment to meet the political needs of swing-district Members who want it over fast.

On the substance, Democrats have taken an episode of Mr. Trump's reckless foreign-policy judgment and distorted it into broad claims of bribery and extortion. The evidence of weakness is that their own articles of impeachment include no allegations of specific crimes.

Instead they watered them down to "abuse of power" and obstruction of Congress. The first is so general that the majority can define it to be anything. Impeachment doesn't require a criminal offense, but the virtue of including a violation of law is that specific actions can be measured against it. That is why every previous impeachment included charges of specific violations of law.

This time Democrats have pulled a legal bait and switch. First they alleged an illegal quid pro quo. After doing focus groups with voters, they switched to bribery and extortion. Then they dropped those in the formal articles of impeachment, only to reassert them again on Monday in a 658-page Judiciary Committee document justifying impeachment. Can't they at least be honest enough to charge Mr. Trump with the specific acts they claim he committed? In their other Judiciary staff document on the history of impeachment, Democrats cited with approval the Republican impeachment of Andrew Johnson. They claimed that while the articles of impeachment cited Johnson's violation of the Tenure of Office Act, Republicans were really impeaching him

for undermining Reconstruction.

This is a giveaway that Democrats are impeaching Mr. Trump not for Ukraine, but because they believe he is simply unfit to be President. Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff has been explicit in justifying impeachment to prevent Mr. Trump from being able to "cheat in one more election" in 2020—a pre-emptive impeachment.

Where is that in the Constitution? Democrats are defining impeachment down to a tool of Congressional ascendancy that will threaten any President of the opposite party who becomes unpopular.

The second article—resisting Congressional subpoenas—boils down to impeaching Mr. Trump because he has gone to court to protect the powers of his office. Every modern President has done that on some issue, including Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. The article of impeachment claims Mr. Trump has gone to court "without lawful cause or excuse," but Democrats won't even give the courts the chance to define what is a lawful cause.

All of this is reason enough for House Republicans to vote no and for the Senate to acquit. Chuck Schumer, the Senate Minority Leader, is demanding to hear from witnesses like John Bolton whom the House refused to subpoena. Mr. Schumer wants to feed the impeachment maelstrom as well as prevent Republicans from calling Hunter or Joe Biden. The GOP is under no obligation to play along and, based on the House evidence, Senators are justified in voting to acquit without hearing anyone.

As for the politics, Mr. Trump is now likely to be the first impeached President to run for re-election. Democrats clearly hope the Scarlet "I" will work against him, but Mr. Trump will tout the partisan vote as illegitimate and his Senate acquittal as vindication. He will also argue that Democrats and the media never accepted his 2016 victory and tried to overrule the verdict of voters. He will be right.

How this argument will play out is impossible to predict, but note that Mr. Trump's approval rating has been improving amid the impeachment debate. Support for impeachment hasn't increased. Millions of Republicans who dislike Mr. Trump's character and behavior are nonetheless repelled by the attempt to oust him months before another election.

Removing Mr. Trump from office outside of an election won't banish Trumpism or reduce political polarization. Mr. Trump's voters would see it as an elite coup, and Mr. Trump would not go quietly into exile. A more rational opposition would understand this, accept his victory in 2016, and focus on defeating him at the ballot box. The Ukraine intervention could be part of that electoral indictment.

Instead Democrats want to overrule the electorate's vote in 2016 and pre-empt it in 2020. If Mr. Trump wins re-election, the folly of this impeachment will be a major reason.

(The Wall Street Journal Opinion)

A misinformation campaign is underway to make Muslims fearful of CAA

The passage of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) is not only historic but also upholds the democratic and moral values of Indian republic. It is not just the expression of the majority but an article of faith to protect the minorities. It is not a law which grants citizenship based on religion but one that grant's citizenship based on religious persecution. Religious persecution per se is against the minority by a majority in a non-secular state. It is a fact that religion was a prominent factor in the partition of India and the Constituent Assembly even debated the demand for naturalised citizenship for communities that were forced into becoming minorities in countries in our neighbourhood. However, amidst the influx of refugees, it became impossible for rules and procedures to be drafted in this regard. But the Constitution left the window open to make laws for these minorities, who feared religious persecution, in Articles 6,7,10 and 11. India has always stood for what is moral and just. It would have been unjust, immoral and unethical for the liberal and secular Indian democracy to look the other way when lakhs of people living in India, having fled from Pakistan after Independence, continue to remain without an identity or voice despite their residence and ancestral linkages here. Not only has the Indian state given such people citizenship in the past on a case-by-case basis, but leaders across the political spectrum from Jawaharlal Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan and even Manmohan Singh have also expressed the need to grant them citizenship. India has given the right to a

dignified life to its minorities and believes in the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. When secularism is under threat in the neighborhood, must a secular state not perform its Gandhian duty? Selective secularism goes against constitutional morality. Many have asked why the Bill did not include Muslims. The purpose of the Act is to address religious persecution, not economic migration. Human rights reports by the UN and countless media reports have the persecution of Jain, Sikhs, Christians and Hindus in these countries. How can a follower of Islam face persecution in a country where the state religion is Islam? Even if such exceptional cases arise, the doors for naturalised citizenship remain open. Given that the CAA does not impinge on a single constitutional right of an Indian citizen, the protests against it on the pretext that it is anti-Muslim are dishonest and against the secular fabric of this great nation. The truth is that the Constitution provides enough protection to minorities in case of discrimination. Morality teaches us to favour positive discrimination for minorities to bring them on a level-playing field. The CAA is based on the principle of positive discrimination for the minorities suffering from human rights' abuses in our neighbourhood. How can steps to protect minorities in India be termed secular, but steps to protect similar minorities in the neighbourhood be called communal? A global power cannot be silent when minorities are facing existential threats across its border.



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Geopolitics is shifting. India must be prepared

China's rise and the US?ambivalence have unsettled old equations. The other powers are exploring their options

Two ongoing geopolitical developments are altering strategic assessments in national capitals the world over. The first is the growing demonstration of international power by the People's Republic of China. Recent signs of Beijing's intent include the detention last year of two Canadian citizens in retaliation for Canada's arrest of a prominent Chinese businesswoman, continued incursions by China's armed forces of Japanese airspace and exclusive waters, the further militarisation of the South China Sea, revelations of considerable Chinese political influence in Australia and central Europe, and ultimatums to sections of the United States (US) private sector. The second development involves uncertainty surrounding future US military commitments to Europe, the western Pacific, and the Persian Gulf. These are regions where the US has traditionally exercised military dominance, at least since the end of the Cold War. This uncertainty did not begin under Donald Trump's presidency, but his election and subsequent positions have exacerbated it. Judging by the rhetoric of some of his possible challengers in the Democratic Party, and the positions of many in the US Congress, open questions about the US' global military posture could very well extend beyond Trump's tenure. The responses among many traditional US allies and partners

to these twin trends - a more assertive China and a more uncertain US - have been varied. Some, such as Shinzo Abe's Japan, Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel, Boris Johnson's Britain, and Tsai Ing-Wen's Taiwan, have sought to recommit to their relationships with Washington, although leadership changes in their countries could alter subsequent calculations. But even these staunch US partners have sought degrees of flexibility, whether the UK on 5G telecommunications, Japan on the Belt and Road Initiative, or Israel on Chinese port investments. Others, such as Australia, have witnessed a more robust debate on the country's strategic choices in the public sphere, even if little has yet changed of consequence when it comes to the US alliance. A second approach has essentially involved a policy paralysis - or hope that the associated challenges will dissipate on their own. For example, South Korean business leaders still speak in dire terms about the consequences of a punitive boycott of their companies by China, which followed the introduction of a ballistic missile defence system in 2017. But they generally conclude that it is best to lower tensions with Beijing. Additionally, the deterioration of relations between South Korea and Japan - the US' closest military ally in Asia - may further contribute to Seoul's

recalibration.

Many of the countries of Southeast Asia are adopting a similar posture. Despite growing criticism at home over his China policy, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has continued accommodating Beijing, placing the onus on the US to resist further Chinese encroachment in his country's waters. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien-Loong's keynote speech at this year's Shangri-La Dialogue signaled a more equivocating approach between Washington and Beijing. Even in Vietnam, where China remains very unpopular, the leadership is relying on others to come to their country's assistance on territorial disputes. The

somewhat tired refrain of "don't ask us to choose" is a common mantra in Southeast Asia, one that overlooks the fact that not making choices is itself a choice.

Perhaps more strikingly, there are those countries who have responded to these new developments by calling for an entirely autonomous approach. Most notable among these is France. President Emmanuel Macron recently gave a candid interview to *The Economist*, in which he called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) - the anchor of US security policy in Europe - "brain dead". In Macron's view, it appears, Russia is no longer the challenge to Europe that it once was, and European

security resources must be redirected southwards, including towards potential sources of terrorism. At the same time, France's emerging Indo-Pacific strategy, its scepticism of the Belt and Road Initiative, and its outreach to various regional partners indicate that Macron - perhaps more than most European leaders - appreciates the implications of China's rise. We are, therefore, in a world today in which Australian academics openly talk of a Plan B to the US alliance, Southeast Asian leaders speak of not wanting to be forced to make choices, and French leaders expound more and more on strategic autonomy. What had for decades been the vocabulary of Indian strategic elites - resulting in condescension by Southeast Asians, Europeans, and Americans - has apparently become the new normal.

For their part, the emerging poles of Washington and Beijing have themselves struggled to appreciate the consequences of their behaviour. Privately, some Chinese strategic thinkers worry that their leadership has moved too fast, and too soon, in demonstrating national intent. Perhaps more hide and bide was in order. Meanwhile, in Washington, many members of the policy community outside government still struggle to conceive of a world beyond NATO and US hub-and-spoke alliances in Asia.

What does all this mean for New Delhi? Smugness or complacency would be the wrong response. Rather, continued efforts at looking beyond immediate horizons will be required to anticipate further changes to the global strategic landscape.



Impeachment *Understanding the Dems' Simple-Is-Better Strategy*

Congressional Democrats have the Constitution on their side as they argue for Trump's removal.

House Democrats unveiled two narrowly focused articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump on Tuesday, and as expected, they drew widespread criticism from Trump's allies and displeasure from some Democrats, who wanted a broader set of charges.

But Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee were wise not to throw the kitchen sink at Trump. They picked the two most provable charges—abuse of power related to the Ukraine scheme at the heart of their inquiry, and Trump's obstruction of the inquiry itself.

The votes on these articles—in the full House and ultimately at trial in the Senate—are expected to follow party lines. Despite the abundant evidence that has emerged over the past three months, Republicans so far have formed themselves into a human wall around the president. But it is just as important

that Democrats make their case to the public. Limiting the number of allegations enables them to tell a concise narrative that voters can get their heads around in an era of 30-second sound bites and 280-character tweets.

In less than 1,500 words, the articles charge that Trump abused his office by withholding \$391 million in security aid to pressure the new Ukrainian president to publicly announce the investigation into one of his leading political opponents in the 2020 election. When Trump's scheme was revealed in a whistleblower complaint, triggering an investigation, Trump obstructed Congress by ordering government agencies and employees not to comply with congressional subpoenas. "President Trump engaged in this scheme or course of conduct for corrupt purposes in pursuit of political benefit," the articles read. "In so doing,

President Trump used the powers of the Presidency in a manner that compromised the national security of the United States and undermined the integrity of the United States democratic process. He thus ignored and injured the interests of the Nation."

Ever since special counsel Robert Mueller released his report in the spring, detailing approximately 10 instances of potential obstruction of justice, there has been intense interest among some Democrats that impeachment charges be brought on at least some of those allegations, given the conclusion of many former federal prosecutors (including myself) that Trump would have been charged had he not been president. But those charges don't fit neatly in a case based upon the Ukraine scheme, which is what sparked the impeachment inquiry. Adding extensive



obstruction of justice charges based on Mueller's report to the articles of impeachment would overwhelm their straightforward narrative. The acts of obstruction outlined in Mueller's report are varied and require significant context to understand. If those extensive acts of obstruction were added to the articles of impeachment, the Ukraine scheme would be lost in the shuffle. Democrats also would face obstacles proving that case, given that key witnesses have refused to appear (like

former White House counsel Don McGahn) or been outright hostile (such as former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski). In contrast, Democrats managed to present a full slate of witnesses on the Ukraine scheme in public hearings even though Trump ordered seven of his current and former officials not to obey subpoenas from various House committees. Though the authors of the articles did not include a Mueller-focused charge, they did nod to the special counsel's work and

suggested that they would use Trump's prior conduct to show a pattern of activity when they present their evidence to the Senate. "These actions," they wrote of the president's orders to his staff, "were consistent with President Trump's previous efforts to undermine United States Government investigations into foreign interference in United States elections." Some have argued that not including charges for all of Trump's misconduct essentially lets him off the hook for his wrongdoing. That is not the case.

The Unhistoric Impeachment



Never has history felt less consequential. The impending impeachment of President Donald Trump is, as news accounts and blaring newspaper headlines tell us, historic. This is true by definition since a president has been impeached only twice before in 230 years. But everyone knows that this history isn't going to matter much. In fact, the day after the Senate trial ends in inevitable acquittal, everything goes on exactly

the same as before (except for vulnerable House Democrats from Trump districts, who will have to defend their votes until November). Impeachment won't occasion any significant new jurisprudence on executive privilege or the line between executive or legislative prerogatives. It hasn't produced any particularly memorable TV. The witnesses before Adam Schiff's Intelligence Committee were

damaging, but not nearly as compelling or perhaps as explosive as any of the true insiders that it would have taken time and litigation to try to get, like Mick Mulvaney or Rudy Giuliani. By the last round of witnesses before the Judiciary Committee, staff lawyers were testifying and questioning one another, in a strange and pointless exercise. It hasn't gripped the nation. No one is going to say years from now, "I

remember where I was when Donald Trump hate-tweeted Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch." It hasn't generated any momentum in public opinion since the Ukraine story first broke, instead settling into an evenly split stalemate that is characteristic of the partisanship of our era. Democrats are genuinely outraged by Trump's conduct in the Ukraine affair, which is indeed indefensible, yet the focus on Ukraine still seems pretextual. Many Democrats have long wanted to impeach him and latched onto Ukraine because it offered the possibility of a quick and easy investigation and vote. It is not an unexpected turn in our politics, rather the inexorable working-out of

the hostile reaction to Trump beginning immediately after his election. All of this drains impeachment, the most consequential recourse that Congress has against a president, of what should be its inherent drama. It is telling that even Democratic presidential candidates aren't particularly invested in impeachment. They pay it lip service but don't talk about it much on the campaign trail, even though they are all, to a man and a woman, excoriating about Trump. Impeachment isn't a top-of-mind issue for the voters they engage with at events, and they all understand that Trump isn't getting removed from office short of one of them actually defeating him in

next year's election. Nancy Pelosi, too, knows the score, which is why she unveiled articles of impeachment nearly simultaneously with the announcement of a deal to pass the successor to NAFTA, the USMCA. These two acts are, to put it mildly, in tension. On one hand, House Democrats are saying that Trump is such a threat to the integrity of the 2020 election that he has to be impeached urgently - so urgently that it's too risky to pause and try to gather evidence from firsthand witnesses or resolve basic matters of fact. (A Ukrainian official this week contradicted Gordon Sondland, the ambassador to the European Union, on one of his key claims.



Unreasonable exclusion of a certain group of people goes against the very foundation that this nation was imagined and built upon - pluralism.

Muslims in India - people of your faith will be looked at and treated differently.

The Bill also makes a provision to cancel Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards on trivial grounds like the OCI violating any law notified by the central government. This could mean anything as minor as jumping a red light or petty theft. Clearly, the government is eager to vest in itself the power to cancel the citizenship of anyone it deems "inconvenient".

One must not look at the CAB in isolation. Together, the NRC (National Register of Citizens) and CAB are part of a movement to target and isolate one particular community. Since the NRC did not pan out as planned, the CAB is a renewed push by the government to amend India's citizenship law in order to explicitly favour non-Muslim migrants.

To reiterate the Hindu identity is to exclude the Muslim and diminish the secular and egalitarian social fabric of India.

How Citizenship Amendment Bill has brought India to its Nürnberger moment

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), 2019, is India's Nürnberger Gesetze moment.

In 1935, the German Parliament, under the Nazi rule, passed antisemitic and racial laws. These laws were called the Nürnberger Gesetze. It was passed in stages, but nevertheless altered the way a citizen was perceived and had far-reaching implications on the German social infrastructure. The rest, as they say, is history.

The CAB passed in the Lok Sabha is not just a mere amendment to an existing Act. The Bill is sending a message. Not a coded message, but a blatant and blunt message that India is not universal in its approach to people of different faiths.

The stated objectives and spirit of CAB are admirable - to provide protection to persecuted minorities. The letter of the law though undermines not only the spirit of the Bill, but also that of the secular fabric of the Constitution.

If the Bill becomes a law, it would mean the constitutional basis of equality before law in India, as far as the acquisition of citizenship is concerned, will be altered decisively. The acquisition of Indian citizenship will become an unequal process and this inequality will be based on religious identity - that is seldom chosen and almost always, born into.

The ostensible reason for the CAB is to show India's large-heartedness. But it only provides the option of citizenship to "illegal" immigrants from three

countries - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. What is the reason for picking these three countries?

If the reason is 'pre-Partition India', then why is Afghanistan included? If it is the countries that we share borders with - then why are Nepal, Sri Lanka (who we share our ocean with), Myanmar and Bhutan excluded? Of course, when it comes to sharing a border with Afghanistan in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, one must also raise the pertinent question - whether a Border Security Force outpost even exists in the said region.

Further, the CAB aims to provide citizenship only to certain religious minorities which are fleeing religious persecution. What happens to those who follow no organised religion or those who are persecuted for their beliefs, whether ideological or political?

The spirit of the law is discriminatory. Unreasonable exclusion of a certain group of people goes against the very foundation that this nation was imagined and built upon by our founding fathers - pluralism.

Whether the Bill will actually succeed in its stated attempt to

provide citizenship to these minorities is also debatable. The actual processes under which citizenship will be awarded are subject to the rules of two other orders - the Passport Order 1950 and the Foreigners Order 1948. Making claims under the Bill and proving "religious persecution" is such a complex procedure that I doubt it will have any real impact on the citizenship prospects for religiously persecuted illegal immigrants.

The only purpose of the Bill is to send a message - anyone other than a Muslim is welcome in India; and to the existing

Citizenship protests: Violence is unacceptable

On Tuesday afternoon, in Delhi's Seelampur area, protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act turned violent. The protesters assaulted policemen, pelted stones, damaged vehicles, burnt a police post, and even attempted to storm a police station. The police retaliated by firing bullets in the air, tear gas shells, and resorted to lathi charge. 21 people, including 15 police personnel, were injured. Peace was, however, restored quickly. The police was effective but restrained, unlike its response in Jamia Millia Islamia on Sunday night when it was excessive. Local peace committees and residents, who blamed "outsiders" for the protests, did their bit in calming the mood. But the nature of the protests throw up disturbing issues.

The CAA has caused legitimate

anxieties across the country, particularly in the Northeast, among Muslims, and across universities. There is a strong intellectual, ideological and political argument against the legislation and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). But there is a simple rule. These anxieties can only be expressed peacefully. The Constitution of India does not permit violence against the State. Laws will, justifiably, kick into force if there is an attempt to incite disorder, vandalise public property, and assault public officials on duty. And the law enforcement machinery is then within its rights to respond, though proportionately and within the framework of law.

Those opposed to the CAA must recognise that the violent turn protests have taken in several parts of West Bengal, and



increasingly in Delhi, has alienated even those sympathetic to their position. It has eroded the moral authority of the protests; it has allowed the government to claim that the protests have been engineered by vested interests out to cause chaos and instability; it has created the grounds for security forces to step in; it has taken away attention from the objections to

the law and instead towards the history and background of the protestors. The infusion of religious radicalism into the protests has not helped either, for it has turned the debate from one about the constitution to one which is communal in nature. The government must allay the apprehensions caused by CAA. It must allow dissent and respect the right to protest.



CAA is a political issue. Use the Indian Army with care

The CAA must be negotiated with the citizen, and it is desirable that the soldier remains outside this mediation

The nationwide student protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) have acquired a scale and intensity that is reflective of India's deep democratic resilience. Some complex questions about the constitutional validity of the Act have been raised by citizens, particularly the young. A placard summarised the core of the student protests in a pithy manner: "We support Gandhi's India and reject Savarkar's India." One hopes that there would be an empathetic dialogue with the students in keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exhortation that debate and

ahead, even as the Supreme Court deliberates over whether the CAA is ultra vires of the Constitution or not. Embedded in the CAA-related developments of the last week are two elements specific to the Army that merit objective scrutiny for their long-term national security implications and the integrity of Indian democracy. On December 11, when the first protests broke out in the Northeast, the Army was called in. This may have been done as a precautionary measure in the event the police were unable to deal with the unrest. Consequently, two columns of the Army were

while another was kept on stand-by. However, the situation appears to have stabilised and no further Army deployments have been requisitioned as "aid to civil power". This is to be welcomed. Concurrently, Lieutenant General Anil Chauhan, the Army commander of the Eastern Command, made a statement about the CAA that raised eyebrows for its political overtones. Speaking in Kolkata on December 14, he observed: "The current government is keen on taking hard decisions that have been pending for a long time." He further added that the CAA was passed "despite

Northeastern states".

Both elements merit a recall and contextualisation apropos the Indian experience of the last 72 years. "Aid to civil power" is a duty that the military has to carry out, as and when called upon to do so by the civilian authorities. The more common of these is humanitarian assistance and disaster relief tasks.

In recent decades, the primary duty of the military - defending the nation from external threats, and managing low-intensity insurgencies - has been rendered more complex by the transmutation of the internal security (IS) challenge with the

arrival of religious radicalism and jihadi terrorism. Pakistan's support to such terrorism and the penchant of its deep-State to fish in troubled waters was noted in Kashmir in early 1990 and continues.

Hence, the conclusion, that, for India, the external and internal strands of security are now braided in an inextricable manner and the security establishment has been dealing with an opaque proxy war for decades. Kashmir and Khalistan have become symbols of such manifestation and the Army has set up special Rashtriya Rifle (RR) units to deal with this complex challenge.

Given India's geography, regional politics, and the distinctive South Asian demographic density, borders have become porous and dealing with the steady influx of illegal immigrants or refugees has been an abiding socio-political and security challenge for Delhi. This peaked in 1970, when almost 10 million refugees from East Pakistan sought shelter from the persecution and genocide that ensued at the time. The Northeast was flooded in a visible manner and the "outsider" problem has continued to fester. The illegal immigrant morphing into an armed infiltrator or emerging as a militant, jihadi terrorist is a concern for security, and the post-9/11 global anxiety is common to many nations. Hence, the genesis of the CAA is not devoid of latent security concerns.

In defence of Indian secularism

When it is threatened, multiple identities are threatened. That is the lesson from the protests

The protests erupting across India since the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) are a testament to the centrality of secularism as the foundational principle that binds the country together and holds the key to India's survival as a nation. The deathly blow that the CAA and its companion, the National Register of Citizens (NRC), have delivered to secularism threatens the foundations of India's plural social fabric. When secularism is threatened, India is weakened. This is the lesson from the passage of the CAA, and the unrest it has unleashed.

Much has been written, including in this column, on the damage

the CAA and NRC can do to India's secular fabric. However, given its import, it bears repetition. The CAA offers fast-track citizenship to a specified list of non-Muslim migrants living in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, justified on grounds of experienced or fear of "religious persecution". By introducing religion as a marker of citizenship, the CAA creates categories of citizens with differing pathways to citizenship based on religious identity. The amendment thus upends the constitutional promise of a universal, religion-neutral idea of citizenship. India belonged to all, irrespective of religion. It was this conception of citizenship that formed the

foundation of our secular promise.

But the full import of the CAA can only be understood when viewed in conjunction with the promise of implementing a nationwide NRC. While the CAA deals specifically with the question of migrants and their claims to citizenship, the nationwide NRC will open up the issue of citizenship for all Indians. Designed as an administrative tool to, quite literally, create a registry of all "citizens", and through this weed out "infiltrators" and "termites", the NRC will effectively empower all arms of the administration to interrogate people and evaluate their claims to citizenship based on



documents in their possession. For those belonging to specific religious categories identified in the CAA, the Act will serve as a protection device. For others, read Muslim, their vulnerabilities will be further enhanced, condemning them to new, torturous paths of discrimination and dispossession. The political message is clear. Together the

CAA and NRC amount to no less than a State-sponsored project of "othering" that strikes at the heart of India's secular ethos. In the days since the passage of the CAA, multiple protests across north and Northeast India last week. Ironically, these protests are themselves expressions of India's overlapping multi-religious, multi-ethnic character that the CAA seeks to undermine.

The police action in Delhi was unacceptable. Find the guilty

It is also important for the political leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party to address the emerging discontent across universities.

The passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act has witnessed protests across the country. The response has been the most fierce in the Northeast, where local communities fear an influx of immigrants who can access expedited Indian citizenship, reviving the latent "insider versus outsider" debate. Violence has broken out in West Bengal, with continued vandalism of public property. On Sunday night, the aftermath of the CAA was visible in the Capital, when violence broke out in and around Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) university, followed by a brutal police crackdown on students inside the university premises.

In JMI, as the protests turned violent - students argue that it was not them, but outsiders who turned rogue - the police response was excessive. Social media did not help, with the constant circulation of fake news. All facts are still not clear. But while protestors should have remained peaceful, there is no doubt that the police action was unacceptable. To go into university premises without the permission of the authorities, to walk into the library and force students to walk out, to engage in a lathi charge

and injure students who may have had nothing to do with the original protests, and to detain dozens of them was way beyond norms and standard operating procedures. The incident has alienated the student community not only in JMI, but also across universities in India.

Students must be treated as students, and universities as spaces where all ideas and protests are allowed. Students must be allowed the right to free expression; it is through engagement with political issues and contemporary concerns that they evolve and grow. Universities provide precisely this safe avenue for students to discuss issues, debate, learn the art of mobilisation, even make mistakes and correct themselves. Sure, student organisations must be careful and ensure that their protests are not hijacked by vested political interests; for instance, it is laudable that the JMI student community immediately disassociated itself from the violence. A commission of enquiry should be set up to investigate police excesses and take strict action against all those



officials who went beyond the law and took it into their own hands to ostensibly restore order.

There can be no grounds to justify attacking students who had little to do with the violent protests. Unless the top police leadership takes strong action against errant officials, it will only promote a culture of impunity. It will encourage security personnel elsewhere to emulate such practices. And it will enhance the trust deficit between the State and India's young.

It is also important for the political leadership of the Bharatiya Janata

Party to address the emerging discontent across universities. The fact that the incident has happened in the heart of Delhi shows the depth of anger against the CAA, but it is also symptomatic of a wider sense that the government is not addressing issues core to higher education, and instead, seeking to politicise universities on ideological lines. The fact that other universities have now joined in the protests across cities must ring alarm bells. Continued unrest and strife are both domestically and internationally counterproductive.

BJP's hegemony and party structure spark concerns. But its power is fragile

In its governance and functioning, today's BJP is similar to the Congress of the 60s and 70s. There are lessons



Two weeks ago, with Home Minister Amit Shah in front of him, corporate leader Rahul Bajaj spoke of an environment of fear gripping the country. While Shah addressed the concern in his response, government ministers and government-aligned public voices were quick to attack Bajaj - thereby validating Bajaj's concerns.

At its core, Bajaj was expressing a concern about the hegemony of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule at the Centre, and how it silences the criticism required

for effective policy. The logic that undergirds this concern is straightforward. Political parties are highly susceptible to "group think," as the careers of those in a party organisation are often linked to affirming the views of its leader. The leader's hold over the party is linked to the relative absence of criticism. This generates incentives for those in the party to withhold even legitimate criticisms, or contradictory evidence, to the party leadership, as well as for the party leadership to stifle

dissenting or critical views.

All this is well known, but the hegemony of rule by a single party (in this case, the BJP) takes this logic one step further. Fundamentally, when a party is hegemonic, the chief aim of policy is to bolster its own organisation and entrench it in society. The logic that stifles criticism within a party must then be extended to the population as a whole. From this perspective, the characterisation of what is national interest or anti-national or what is an assertion of Hindu

identity or anti-Hindu is not a matter of discernible ideology. It is curated by the political party in power and generates narratives that strengthens the party vis-à-vis its opponents. While there may be legitimate, even widely held, criticisms of the BJP government's economic or agricultural policy, citizens are likely to withhold public criticism or face intimidation from government supporters when they do so. The problem is that when criticisms from the ground cannot easily reach those in power, then the government cannot efficiently correct flaws in its policies - as it is surrounded by yes men.

In order to grapple with what we see today, one needs more institutional context. Unlike previous iterations of the BJP, the party seems to be more centralised than ever. In the recent negotiations over state formation in Haryana and Maharashtra, there was no doubt that parties and politicians were negotiating with BJP at the Centre, not the party's state units. This is a testament to the popularity of Narendra Modi and

juggernaut that Amit Shah has help to build. But this hollowing out of state units to strengthen the party at the Centre, also generates incentives for the central party to use its institutional heft to bully its rivals at the state level.

Scholars of India's political history will see strong similarities between the position of the BJP today and the Congress of the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time, while Indira Gandhi remained by far the most popular national leader, her Congress faced serious factional splits. These breakaway factions suddenly made state politics far more electorally competitive for the Congress. As political scientist Steven Wilkinson chronicles, this competition made state elections a big money game. Gandhi sought to choke the funding for rival political parties by banning corporate donations, and she sought to bypass the electoral appeal of various state leaders by announcing a series of centrally sponsored schemes to generate a connection between herself and the voter. (The



'Oppose as much as you want': Amit Shah dares Oppn over citizenship law

Amit Shah, who also doubles up as BJP boss, alleged that the opposition is trying to "mislead" the people about the intent of the act. He again spotlighted that the act will not take away anyone's rights.

(News Agencies)-As opposition parties step up efforts to corner the government, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday signalled that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led national coalition was firm on implementing the citizenship law that has led to protests in parts of Delhi and beyond.

"I want to say (to opposition) oppose politically as much as you want, but Narendra Modi

government is firm and we will ensure that people who have been deprived of their rights for so many years will be given citizenship," the home minister said at an event to lay the foundation stone of a park, Bharat Vandana Park, in west Delhi. The home minister's challenge to the opposition came around the same time hundreds of people in east Delhi's Seelampur hit the streets against

changes to the citizenship bill. Soon, the protest turned violent with stones and bottles being thrown at police personnel who responded with tear-gas shells to disperse them.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who pinned the blame for the protests on the Congress, told an election rally in Jharkhand that the opposition party was being used by urban naxals to attack the provisions. He also

asked if the Congress wanted the government to extend Indian citizenship to Pakistanis.

The amended citizenship law provides citizenship to undocumented minorities who entered India from three Islamic countries - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan - in India's neighbourhood.

Amit Shah, who spoke a few hours in national capital Delhi, picked up from where the prime

minister left it to continue the offensive.

Amit Shah said the opposition was trying to "mislead" people about the intention behind the law and reiterated that changes to the citizenship law weren't designed to take away anyone's rights, but give them to people who had faced persecution in India's neighbourhood due to their religion.

"The entire opposition is trying to mislead the population. I am saying again that nobody's citizenship will be taken away. This was part of Nehru-Liaquat pact but was not implemented for 70 years because the Congress wanted to make a vote bank.

In April 1950, a treaty was signed between the then Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan called the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement, regarding the security and rights of minorities, and enjoins the two countries to ensure "complete equality of citizenship" and "full sense of security" for their minorities.

The Nehru-Liaquat pact, signed following communal disturbances in Bengal, Assam and Tripura, states minorities should look "to the Government of their own State" for the "redress of their grievances", and that the two government will "not recognise forced conversions".

"Modi government has implemented the pact which will give citizenship to lakhs and crores of people," said Shah at the event in Delhi.

Stones, tear gas, bottles in violent protest in Delhi over citizenship law

More than 1000 protesters had come out on the streets at around 2 pm and threw stones and glass bottles at the police. In retaliation, the police teargassed the protesters.

(News Agencies)-The police on Tuesday fired tear gas shells on a crowd protesting against the amended citizenship law in Delhi's Seelampur area. The incident comes barely a day after the police swoop on the Jamia Millia Islamia campus in south Delhi.

More than 1000 protesters had come out on the streets at around 2 pm and threw stones and glass bottles at the police. In retaliation, the police teargassed the protesters.

Peaceful protests were going on in the area since the past two

days. Locals in the area allege that a group of 10 or 20 people vandalised a school bus and the police swung into action.

The entry and exit at Seelampur and Gokulpuri metro stations are closed, said the DMRC. Also the gates at Welcome, Jaffrabad, Maujpur-Babarapur metro stations have been shut in view of protests.

Two buses (one DTC bus and a private one) were vandalised in the protest.

On Monday, Prime Minister Modi called violent protests on the new citizenship law "unfortunate and



deeply distressing" and asked people not to let what he described as "vested interest groups" create a divide in society. Shortly after, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi led a two-hour protest at the India Gate and said

the crackdown on students in Delhi was an "attack on the soul of India".

There has been an eruption of protests in university campuses and in several cities over the new law which grants

citizenship to undocumented non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who allegedly fled those countries fearing religious persecution and returned to India on or before December 31, 2014.

China drops plea for discussion on Kashmir at UN



(News Agencies)- France and other permanent members of the UN Security Council on Tuesday thwarted an effort by China, acting on behalf of Pakistan, to discuss the situation in Kashmir, people familiar with the matter said on condition of anonymity. China pushed for a meeting of the UN Security Council behind closed doors - the second such effort since an earlier meet on the Kashmir issue on August 16. At that time, China's attempt to have an open and formal meeting of the Security Council was rebuffed by members of the body, which agreed to hold only "closed consultations".

The people cited above said France and other permanent members of the Security Council conveyed to China the body was the not the best forum to discuss the Kashmir issue, which

ought to be handled bilaterally by India and Pakistan. Non-permanent members of the council, such as Germany and Poland, too, showed no inclination for a discussion on Kashmir, they said.

The Chinese side subsequently withdrew its note seeking the meeting on Kashmir, the people added.

"Kashmir will not be discussed in the Security Council today (Tuesday)," said one of them, a French official.

"Our (France's) position has been very clear - the Kashmir issue has to be treated bilaterally. We have highlighted this several times recently, including in New York," this person added. The closed consultations on August 16 marked the first time the Security Council took up the "India-Pakistan Question" - the UN's term for the Kashmir issue - since 1971.

It is time to reset the India-UK relationship

(News Agencies)-

The United Kingdom (UK) will leave the European Union (EU) early next year. With the Conservatives winning by a landslide in the national poll, the four-year Brexit drama is over, bar the parliamentary vote. The election was treated as a second referendum on Brexit. By giving the Conservative Party a resounding majority, the British voter has made it clear it prefers divorce to endless marriage counselling. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has the mandate to complete what he, one of the first mainstream voices to declare that Britain would leave the EU, can claim to have started.

India privately regretted the original referendum result, believing it would contribute to international disorder. Today, New Delhi welcomes the end to Brexit uncertainty. The many Indian firms who have invested in Britain will not be unhappy. The Brexit that Mr Johnson worked out with Brussels preserves a customs union across the English Channel, the primary concern of Indian investors. Travel will be an issue, though Mr Johnson's points-based immigration system is likely to work in favour of Indians. New Delhi should take



the opportunity provided by Brexit and Mr Johnson's desire for post-EU trade arrangements to negotiate a suitable free trade arrangement.

India must also recognise how this fundamentally changes its relations with Britain. New Delhi has traditionally treated London as its gateway to the rest of Europe. It cannot do so any more. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has already begun reaching out to the continent, including the Nordics and Central Europeans. India's relations with Britain have dipped, with London's Brexit distractions, a declining British strategic footprint in Asia, and, most recently, sharp differences over India's new Kashmir policy. With the eclipse of Labour and a new blue-water profile for Britain, the time is ripe for renewed engagement.

If anti-BJP means pro-Pakistan, PM Modi is speaking George Bush's language, says Kanhaiya Kumar

Speaking at a debate between him and other student leaders from different camps at the Agenda AajTak 2019, Kanhaiya Kumar said a democracy becomes democratic because of the voices of opposition.



(News Agencies)- Former JNUSU president and CPI leader Kanhaiya Kumar has said when Prime Minister Modi says those who are protesting against the Citizenship Act are speaking in Pakistan's language, he in fact is speaking George Bush's tongue. Speaking at a

debate between him and other student leaders from different camps at the Agenda AajTak 2019, Kanhaiya Kumar said a democracy becomes democratic because of the voices of opposition. "When PM Modi says protesters are speaking in the language of Pakistan, he in

fact is speaking the language of George Bush that whoever isn't with him is with Osama bin Laden," said Kanhaiya Kumar. Kanhaiya Kumar was referring to former US President George W Bush's controversial remark after the 9/11 attacks in which he issued a warning to other

countries in the world that they are either with the US or against it.

Kanhaiya Kumar said, "The country's universities are acting like the opposition that is not there. You should be thankful to these students who are out on the streets to protest against the government."

ABVP members present at the debate argued that the protest by Jamia Milia University students was not a "students' protest" as students do not indulge in violence and arson.

"Student protests aren't done like this. They don't burn buses to raise their voice. They believe in debate and discussions. Please don't defame students like this. Students don't believe in vandalising Vivekananda's statue," said Siddharth Yadav, ABVP Delhi state secretary.

To this Mohd Alfaz Ali, a Masters student at Jamia said, "10 people have been arrested over the clashes at Jamia and none of them are students of the university. No student stood up

in support of these 10 men who have been arrested."

Ali then went on to ask why were students inside the university assaulted by the Delhi Police personnel, called names and taunted about their religion. "A friend who was studying in the library was hit with batons and dragged to the police station. He was denied medical attention, which is a basic human right."

He also denied student involvement in the New Friends Colony violence and said, "It must have taken at least 2-3 litres of petrol or kerosene to burn those buses. How will students, who study with the taxpayers' money, pay for this fuel?"

ABVP leader Siddharth Yadav said it is a matter of investigation to see who were behind the vandalism and why did Delhi Police personnel deny the injured students treatment. "This is the same Delhi Police force that was there earlier as well. Home Minister Amit Shah didn't get 2 lakh men from his home state to put them in the force," said Yadav.

Jagan Reddy's Andhra may be India's first state with 3 capitals

Jagan Mohan Reddy's statement about three capitals drew a stinging response from Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu who described it as thoughtless and impractical.

(News Agencies)- Andhra Pradesh may soon have three capital cities representing three different regions - north coastal Andhra, central Andhra and Rayalaseema in place of current capital Amaravati, for decentralised development. On Tuesday, chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said in a statement in the legislative assembly that his government was considering creation of three capital cities - a legislative capital, an executive capital and a judicial capital as he advocated decentralised development of the state. "Visakhapatnam which has infrastructure can be considered for being the executive capital without much investment, while the present Amaravati can be retained as the legislative capital and Kurnool can be considered as the judicial capital. This will give a balanced development," said Jagan who

also heads the YSR Congress party.

His statement in the assembly came minutes before the conclusion of the winter session. Jagan's statement drew a stinging comment leader of opposition and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu who described the proposal as impractical. "How can there be three capital cities for a state? Where does Jagan live - Visakhapatnam or Amaravati or Kurnool? Should people run from one region to another region for their works? Giving power to Jagan is like giving a stone to a mad man," Naidu said after the assembly was adjourned.

Ahead of the CM's statement, assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram suspended nine lawmakers of Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLAs. The remaining TDP members led by Naidu staged a walkout. The TDP



has 23 MLAs in the 175-member House. Soon after Jagan's statement, the Speaker adjourned the House sine die. Jagan said a reputed consultancy firm would be engaged to work out details and logistics. A decision will be taken after going through the report of the consultancy firm, he said. The chief minister said an expert committee headed by retired IAS officer G N Rao constituted

to decide on the capital area region would submit its report in a couple of days. Naidu took exception to Jagan making a statement on the capital in the assembly even before the expert committee gave its report. "He is destroying the state with his thoughtless and unilateral decisions," the TDP chief said. Jagan pointed out that South Africa too had three capital cities - Bloemfontein, Pretoria and

Cape Town - for a decentralised development. Andhra Pradesh, too, could consider the concept of having multiple capitals for the development of all the regions, he said. In his concluding remarks after the discussion on Amaravati, Jagan said the previous TDP government had brought in a grand design of a capital city developing 53,000 acres with a cost of Rs 1.09 lakh crores.

'Situation on LoC can escalate': Army chief amid spurt in ceasefire violations



(News Agencies)-Army Chief General Bipin Rawat on Wednesday said that the situation along the Line of Control can escalate any time and the country has to be prepared for escalatory matrix. His remarks came in the backdrop of spurt in ceasefire violation by Pakistan along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 in August.

"The situation along the Line of Control can escalate any time. We have to be prepared for escalatory matrix," Rawat said. Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy had told Lok Sabha last month that "950 incidents of ceasefire violation along the LoC from across the border in Jammu and Kashmir were reported during August 2019 to October 2019".

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Trump impeached in historic rebuke

The House voted to impeach President Donald Trump Wednesday on charges of abusing his power and obstructing congressional investigations, a historic rebuke in a political era that has threatened to upend the nation's constitutional order.

The nearly party-line vote to recommend Trump's removal from office and label him a national security threat was met by a defiant president who vowed to prevail in a Senate trial overseen by his Republican allies - but whose presidency will be forever blemished by an impeachment.

Trump became just the third president to be impeached - after Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998 - and he is the first who will campaign for re-election after facing the House's ultimate punishment. Trump is also the first president impeached for abuse of power; a similar charge against Clinton was rejected.

The House voted 230-197 to charge Trump with abuse of power, with just two Democrats in opposition and one voting "present." The second charge, obstruction of Congress, was approved on a 229-198 vote, with three Democrats breaking ranks and one again voting "present." All Republicans opposed both articles, underscoring their staunch unity behind the leader of their party.

In a remarkable split-screen, Trump was taking the stage at a rally in Battle Creek, Michigan, as the final votes were cast, basking in the clamorous applause of his most passionate supporters amid the darkest moment of his presidency.

"It doesn't really feel like we're being impeached," Trump said. "The country is doing better than ever before. We did nothing wrong, and we have tremendous support in the Republican Party." Democratic leaders cited Trump's lack of remorse - and, indeed, his alleged ongoing

pursuit of a scheme to undermine the integrity of the 2020 presidential election - as evidence that he poses a continuing and unprecedented threat to U.S. national security if permitted to remain in office. That charge far exceeds the gravity of any previous presidential impeachment. It is tragic that the president's reckless actions make impeachment necessary," Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on the floor of the House. "He gave us no choice."

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.), whose panel drafted and approved the impeachment charges last week, said Trump's removal from office was urgent and necessary - even as the Republican-controlled Senate is likely to acquit Trump.

"We cannot rely on the next election as a remedy for presidential misconduct when the president threatens the very integrity of that election," Nadler said. "He has shown us he will

continue to put his selfish interests above the good of the country. We must act without delay."

But in a news conference shortly after the votes late Wednesday night, Pelosi injected new uncertainty into the timeline, suggesting that she would hold off on naming the House's impeachment managers - the lawmakers who will present the case against Trump during the Senate trial - until Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) commits to a "fair" set of procedures for the trial.

"So far we haven't seen anything that looks fair to us," Pelosi said, refusing to commit to ultimately sending the articles to the Senate. Democratic lawmakers and aides noted that a Senate trial cannot begin until the House names its impeachment managers.

Just two Democrats - Reps. Collin Peterson of Minnesota and Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey

- broke from their party to oppose the first article of impeachment, while Rep. Jared Golden of Maine opposed only the second article. Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard voted "present" both times. Van Drew, who had long questioned the impeachment push, has already signaled to colleagues and aides that he intends to switch parties and join the GOP.

Michigan Rep. Justin Amash, an independent, backed both articles. Amash left the Republican Party earlier this year shortly after announcing his support for impeachment, and amid several ideological disagreements with Trump.

Inside the House chamber, lawmakers dispensed with any pretense of persuasion, accepting early on that the vote was largely predetermined. They instead used the six-hour debate to reiterate well-worn arguments and talk past each other. That changed briefly during one tense moment, after Nadler accused Rep.

Trump slams potential delay in Senate impeachment trial

President Donald Trump on Thursday criticized House Democrats for their reluctance to transmit recently approved articles of impeachment to the Senate, arguing that they would "lose by Default" if a trial was not conducted in the Republican-controlled chamber. "I got Impeached last night without one Republican vote being cast with the Do Nothing Dems on their continuation of the greatest

Witch Hunt in American history," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Now the Do Nothing Party want to Do Nothing with the Articles & not deliver them to the Senate, but it's Senate's call!" The president's morning message came hours after a majority of the House voted Wednesday night to impeach Trump on articles charging him with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

But Speaker Nancy Pelosi

signaled after the evening's proceedings that she may hold up the delivery of those articles to the other side of the Capitol until Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell addresses Democrats' concerns regarding a trial biased in the White House's favor. "So far we haven't seen anything that looks fair to us," Pelosi told reporters at a news conference, and senior Democratic aides said the House was "very unlikely" to take the steps

necessary to send the articles to the Senate until at least early January. Trump lashed out at the potential delay, tweeting Thursday: "The Senate shall set the time and place of the trial. If the Do Nothing Democrats decide, in their great wisdom, not to show up, they would lose by Default!" He also wrote that that Pelosi "feels her phony impeachment HOAX is so pathetic she is afraid to present it to the

Senate, which can set a date and put this whole SCAM into default if they refuse to show up! The Do Nothings are so bad for our Country!" The president's posts, however, incorrectly characterize the next steps in the impeachment process. Though the Constitution gives the Senate the "sole power" to try impeachments, it is silent on how quickly the House must transmit impeachment articles that it adopts. Rather, Congress is now in a constitutional gray area, with little guidance on what must come next, and Democrats are seizing upon that ambiguity to increase Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's leverage as he negotiates with McConnell. It is unclear what authority Trump was quoting regarding the Senate's power to set the time and place of an impeachment trial, but past precedent and procedures require the Senate to quickly convene a trial only once presented with articles by the House. House Democrats have drawn their position based in part on discussions and public advice from constitutional lawyers who have argued that the chamber is under no obligation to transmit articles of impeachment to a Senate whose leader has pledged to tilt the trial toward the president.

Trump Isn't Impeached Until the House Tells the Senate

Now that the House of Representatives has voted to impeach President Donald Trump, what is the constitutional status of the two articles of impeachment? Must they be transmitted to the Senate to trigger a trial, or could they be held back by the House until the Senate decides what the trial will look like, as Speaker Nancy Pelosi has hinted?

The Constitution doesn't say how fast the articles must go to the Senate. Some modest delay is not inconsistent with the Constitution, or how both chambers usually work.

But an indefinite delay would pose a serious problem. Impeachment as contemplated

by the Constitution does not consist merely of the vote by the House, but of the process of sending the articles to the Senate for trial. Both parts are necessary to make an impeachment under the Constitution: The House must actually send the articles and send managers to the Senate to prosecute the impeachment. And the Senate must actually hold a trial.

If the House does not communicate its impeachment to the Senate, it hasn't actually impeached the president. If the articles are not transmitted, Trump could legitimately say that he wasn't truly impeached at all. That's because "impeachment"

under the Constitution means the House sending its approved articles of to the Senate, with House managers standing up in the Senate and saying the president is impeached.

As for the headlines we saw after the House vote saying, "TRUMP IMPEACHED," those are a media shorthand, not a technically correct legal statement. So far, the House has voted to impeach (future tense) Trump. He isn't impeached (past tense) until the articles go to the Senate and the House members deliver the message.

Once the articles are sent, the Senate has a constitutional duty to hold a trial on the impeachment charges presented. Failure for the

Senate to hold a trial after impeachment would deviate from the Constitution's clear expectation.

For the House to vote "to impeach" without ever sending the articles of impeachment to the Senate for trial would also deviate from the constitutional protocol. It would mean that the president had not genuinely been impeached under the Constitution; and it would also deny the president the chance to defend himself in the Senate that the Constitution provides.

The relevant constitutional provisions are brief. Article I gives the House "the sole power of impeachment."

Sen. Marco Rubio: On impeachment, Pelosi improperly playing games and threatening partisan stunt

For the past several months, House Democrats have carried out a partisan process with the singular goal of impeaching President Trump. In fact, many congressional Democrats began plotting the impeachment even before Donald Trump was inaugurated.

Now House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is playing games by threatening to delay the transmission to the Senate of the two articles of impeachment approved by House Democrats - and not a single Republican - Wednesday night.

This partisan stunt will further undermine the credibility of the process carried out by House Democrats, but it will not impede the Senate from carrying out its constitutional obligations.

While our founders cautioned

against partisan impeachments, they wisely gave the Senate the incredible responsibility to decide whether a duly elected president should be removed from office.

As we prepare to play that role, it is important to understand that no senator is neutral - senators cannot be "impartial jurors" in the traditional sense of a jury trial in court. All 100 of us have a preexisting opinion of the president. Seven Democratic senators are currently running or were running to replace him, and many more probably wish they could.

While the talking heads attack the Senate process before it even begins, they conveniently ignore lawmakers like presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who announced she would vote to

convict President Trump before the House even revealed the articles of impeachment.

The question before each senator is not whether President Trump did something offensive or improper.

Instead, the question before us involves a much higher bar: within the meaning of the Constitution, has the president committed treason, bribery, and/or other high crimes and misdemeanors?

We are required by the Constitution to conduct a trial to reach a judgment, and we must conduct that trial fully. But the Constitution provides no guidelines for how senators should arrive at their decisions. As I have repeatedly stated, my decision will be guided by two factors. First, an understanding that a conviction carries a

mandatory and extraordinary minimum sentence: removal from office - a punishment without precedent in American history. The second factor is that there is an alternative remedy available for those who want President Trump out of the White House: the 2020 election.

We are less than a year away from a presidential election where voters will be allowed to take all information about President Trump into account and render judgment. I would be very cautious, no matter who resides in the White House, about substituting our wisdom for that of the American electorate.

Therefore my decision will be based on a two-pronged test: Did the president commit

treason, bribery, and/or a high crime or misdemeanor as meant by Constitution; and does the president's conduct rise to a level warranting his removal, or is it best left for voters to decide in 11 months?

This was not the approach taken by House Democrats, who hastily wielded the most serious tool afforded to Congress in the Constitution with blatant partisanship.

But Speaker Pelosi's last-ditch charade will not prevent senators from fulfilling our constitutional duty to hold a trial.

After this latest partisan ploy is over, I am hopeful that Congress can then move on to continue the important work the American people sent us to Washington to do.

Former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf sentenced to death for high treason

treatment. From his hospital bed in Dubai earlier this month, the former leader said in a video statement that he was innocent and the treason case was "baseless."

In a Tuesday statement, the media wing of the Pakistan Armed Forces said the special court's sentence had been received "with a lot of pain and anguish."

Pakistan's Inter-Services Public

Relations (ISPR) said that Musharraf "can surely never be a traitor" and that he had served the country for over 40 years.

"The due legal process seems to have been ignored including (the) constitution of special court, (the) denial of fundamental right of self-defense, undertaking individual specific proceedings and concluding the case in haste," the statement said.

It added that the Armed Forces

of Pakistan "expect that justice will be dispensed in line with the Constitution of Islamic Republic." Web of court cases

Musharraf earlier went into exile in 2008, returning to Pakistan in 2013 with the aim of running in the country's national elections. But his plans unraveled as he became entangled in a web of court cases relating to his time in power.

In 2007, Musharraf declared a state of emergency, suspended Pakistan's constitution, replaced the chief judge and blacked out independent TV outlets.

Musharraf said he did so to stabilize the country and to fight rising Islamist extremism. The action drew sharp criticism from the United States and democracy advocates. Pakistanis openly

called for his removal. Under pressure from the West, Musharraf later lifted the state of emergency and called elections in which his party fared badly.

Musharraf stepped down in August 2008 after the governing coalition began taking steps to impeach him. Prosecutors say Musharraf violated Pakistan's constitution by imposing the state of emergency.

Two men admit to working on illegal streaming sites that rivaled the size of Netflix and Hulu

had tens of thousands of paid subscribers and were designed to work on many different devices and platforms, "including myriad varieties of computer operating systems, smartphones, tablets, smart televisions, video game consoles, digital media players, set-top boxes and web browsers," the DOJ said, citing the two plea agreements.

Pirating has long been a major concern for leaders behind streaming companies. In a 2015 letter to shareholders, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings called piracy one of the company's "biggest competitors."

The world of streaming has changed significantly since then, but piracy may be an even bigger concern now that more legitimate players have

entered and fragmented the market. Consumers now must subscribe to Disney+ if they want Disney movies and to Netflix if they want to watch popular original shows such as "Stranger Things." There are now scores of streaming services.

In 2017, 30 content creation companies, including Hulu, HBO, Amazon and others, formed an independent organization aimed in part at battling piracy (HBO shares CNN parent company WarnerMedia). Darryl Julius Polo, 36, pleaded guilty to charges related to running iStreamItAll, according to the DOJ. The site featured a huge trove of copyrighted television shows and movies that it was not authorized to use, the DOJ said. Thousands of US users paid for

subscriptions that allowed them to stream and download the illegal content.

Polo, who also goes by "djppimp," admitted in the plea agreement to using a computer program that ran 24/7 to scrape pirating sites from around the world, and then download, process and provide the illegal content on iStreamItAll. He would then send emails to potential users, urging them to cancel their subscriptions to legitimate streaming services and sign up with his instead, citing its massive library of content, the DOJ said.

As part of his plea agreement, Polo also admitted to running several other piracy services, including a site called SmackDownOnYou, and to working as a computer programmer for Jetflix. He admitted to earning more than

\$1 million from his piracy operations.

The indictment of Polo and several other co-conspirators states that the harm caused by iStreamItAll to television and movie copyright holders, as well as to licensed streaming services, is estimated to be millions of dollars.

Polo pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit criminal copyright infringement, one count of criminal copyright infringement by distributing a copyrighted work being prepared for commercial distribution, one count of copyright infringement by reproduction or distribution, one count of copyright infringement by public performance and one count of money laundering, according

to the DOJ.

In a separate proceeding, Luis Angel Villarino, 40, also admitted to working as a computer programmer for Jetflix, the DOJ said. That site also used automated software programs and other tools to reproduce and stream tens of thousands of copyrighted TV shows and movies for tens of thousands of paid subscribers throughout the United States and Canada, the DOJ said. Villarino pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit copyright infringement.

Sentencing for both men is scheduled for March before federal judge TS Ellis III of the Eastern District of Virginia. Other defendants in this case are scheduled to go on trial on February 3.

Remembering the war of 1971 in East Pakistan

Bangladesh, India and Pakistan each have created a very distinct memory of what happened 48 years ago.

(News Agencies)- Forty-eight years after the 1971 war, which led to the independence of Bangladesh, each country involved in the conflict has institutionalised a distinct memory of the events of that year. In Bangladesh, the war is remembered as the Bengali people's struggle against an oppressive Pakistan army.

In India and Pakistan, the war is often remembered as the third Indo-Pakistan war. This representation is resented by many Bangladeshis, who feel it erases their role in what they see as a liberation war.

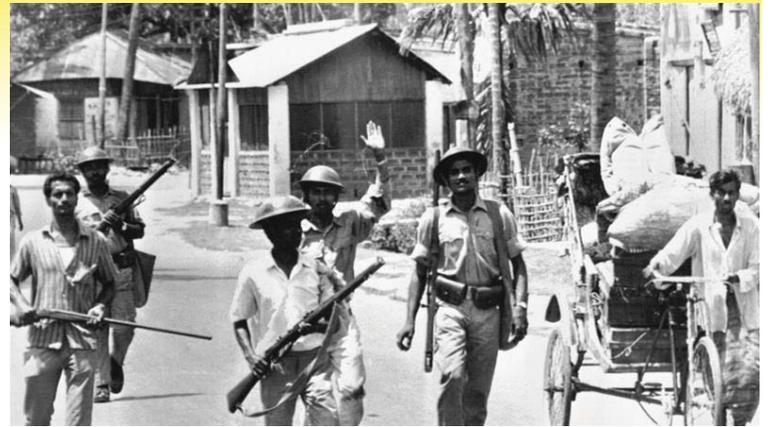
However, disagreement on who played the central role in the war is not the only point of contention between the three countries. Today, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India have their own closely held war stories, with 1971 taking on unique meanings

across the subcontinent. Bangladesh: The liberation war The struggle for Bengali rights started shortly after Pakistan gained independence as a country with two incongruous territories known as West Pakistan (today's Pakistan) and East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh). The refusal to accept Bengali as a state language of Pakistan in the early years after Partition, economic disparity between the two parts, the hegemony of the West Pakistani ruling elite over Pakistan, martial laws, and a demeaning attitude towards Bengali culture and the Bengali population soured relations between the two parts.

Tensions rose in December 1970 when the Awami League party, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (also known as Mujib) and based in East Pakistan, won the

national elections but West Pakistan parties, namely the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), refused to hand over power. Tensions between Bengalis and Biharis - the Urdu-speaking communities that had moved to East Pakistan from different parts of India after Partition and who were seen as pro-West Pakistan - rose, which led to attacks on some Bihari communities.

In March 1971, using the violence as an excuse, the Pakistan Army intervened to stem the growth of nationalist sentiments in the east. It recruited local pro-Pakistan Bengalis and non-Bengalis, including members of the Islamic organisation Jamaat-e-Islami for its operations against Bengali factions. As the violence escalated throughout the summer, a large number of refugees streamed into Indian territory, which New Delhi used as



an excuse to intervene militarily in early December 1971.

The nine-month conflict ended with the surrender of the Pakistani army on December 16; the death toll is estimated to have been between 300,000 and 3 million people, with hundreds of thousands of women raped.

Since the end of the war, various forces have tried to control the narrative in Bangladesh, most notably the Awami League - which came to be perceived as "pro-Indian" - and the Bangladesh military and Bangladesh National Party (BNP) - which has been

deemed "pro-Pakistan" and "pro-Islamist". This has hurt the process of transitional justice and frustrated many victims and their families for decades. Having played an important role during the war, Mujib took power after independence. He banned Jamaat-e-Islami and introduced special laws that allowed for the arrest and prosecution of those accused of "collaborating" with the Pakistan military. After Mujib's assassination in 1975, General Ziaur Rahman seized power and started to change the public narrative on the liberation war.

Bangladesh Publishes List of 'Razakars' Who Sided with Pakistan Army During 1971 Liberation War



(News Agencies)- Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque released the list at a press briefing in Dhaka and said the initiative has been taken to introduce the anti-liberation forces to the new generation.

Bangladesh on Sunday published a list of 10,789 Razakars (volunteers) who collaborated with the Pakistani forces during the country's Liberation War in 1971.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque released the list at a press briefing here and said the initiative has been taken to introduce the anti-liberation forces to the new generation, the Daily Star

reported. According to the historic documents, the Razakar force - an auxiliary group of then Pakistan army - targeted Hindus and Bengali nationalists during the 1971 liberation war.

AKM Yusuf, one of the top leaders of the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami, was believed to be the founder of the Razakar force. He was arrested in May 2013 and charged with crimes against humanity. However, he died of cardiac arrest in 2014 while in detention.

Haque said the number of genuine freedom fighters is not more than 2.1 lakh and their complete list will be published on the Independence Day (March 26).

Millions of Muslim refugees could flee India: Pakistan PM Khan

Imran Khan says millions of Muslims could flee India due to the lockdown in Kashmir and India's new citizenship law.

(News Agencies)- Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has said millions of Muslims living in India would be forced to leave as a result of India's new citizenship law, and the ongoing curfew in Indian-administered Kashmir - creating what he termed "a refugee crisis that would dwarf other crises".

Addressing the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva on Tuesday, the Pakistani leader said his country would not be able to accommodate more refugees and urged the world to "step in now". "We in Pakistan are not just worried that there will be a refugee crisis. We are worried that this could lead to a conflict, a conflict between two nuclear-armed countries," said Khan. Last week, India passed a law, which was an amendment to 1955 legislation, allowing Indian citizenship to "persecuted" minorities - Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians - from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan, but makes no reference to Muslims. Indian legal experts say the law violates the country's secular constitution, while thousands of Muslims and civil society groups



are protesting in the country, fearing the legislation could marginalise the country's 200 million Muslims.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres were in attendance as Khan spoke.

Kashmir lockdown

On the four-month-long lockdown in Indian-administered Kashmir, Khan said the professed aim of his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi's government was to change the demography of the region.

The most important thing the world needs to understand is that the professed aim is to change the demography of Kashmir from

a Muslim majority to a Muslim minority," he said.

"We know from our past experience prevention is better than cure. If the world acts right now and put pressure on Indian government to stop this illegal activity, we can prevent this crisis."

Ties between the two nuclear rivals plummeted to a new low following India's August 5 move scrapping the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. Later in October, New Delhi divided the state into two federally-run territories. The Himalayan region of Kashmir is divided between the two neighbours in parts with both claiming it in full.



VINCENZO PINTO/REUTERS

Pope lifts secrecy rules for sex abuse cases

(News Agencies)- Pope Francis has abolished Vatican secrecy rules for cases of sexual abuse, effectively allowing the Catholic church to share documents and information with civil authorities, and allow victims to be updated of the status of their cases. The church already shares files with authorities in some countries, such as the United States, but the practice is not universal. Some Catholic churches around the world have invoked the "pontifical secret" to refuse cooperation in certain

cases. Pontifical secret is considered the highest level of confidentiality in church law which covers a number of administrative cases at the Vatican, such as nominations of cardinals, investigations by the Secretariat of State, and by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The violation of pontifical secrecy can result in excommunication from the church. "Pontifical secret is no longer an excuse," the Vatican's top investigator for sexual abuse, Archbishop Charles Scicluna said.

Scrapping the secrecy rule comes after several church officials criticized it during the historic Vatican summit in February, which focused on combating clergy sexual abuse. Leaders had argued that secrecy in sexual abuse cases was outdated and that church officials were using it to hide behind instead of cooperating with civil authorities. Scicluna said abolishing the rule "means the question of transparency is now being implemented at the highest level."

Abolishing pontifical secrecy will also allow victims to be informed of the outcome of their cases at the Vatican. The pope's special declaration, called a Rescript -- which takes effect immediately -- does not change the privacy rules around reporting sexual abuse or Vatican trials of alleged abusers. A leading campaigner for abuse victims told CNN that the Pope's move to lift some of the church's key secrecy laws is "overdue" and further moves towards transparency are required. "For a long time, representatives of victims/survivors from all over the world have demanded that papal secrecy be lifted in cases of sexual abuse of children by priests," Mattias Katsch said. Katsch is an abuse survivor and founder of Ending Clergy Abuse, a campaign group. "At the end of February at the Vatican, on the fringes of the

crisis summit on abuse, the international alliance of survivors and activists Ending Clergy Abuse made this demand. The decision of the Vatican is therefore an overdue step," Katsch added. "Now it is important that further steps are taken towards transparency -- also with regard to the thousands of acts of abuse cases stored in Vatican chambers and palaces. These files must be made available for independent review and investigation," Also on Tuesday, Pope Francis expanded the church's definition of child pornography, raising the age limit on who is considered a child from 14 to 18. The laws, which will come into effect in January 2020, will mean possession of pornography of children under the 18 is a crime under Vatican laws.



Estonia apologizes after minister calls Finland's new leader Sanna Marin a 'sales girl'



(News Agencies)- Estonia's President has apologized after the country's interior minister mocked Finland's newly elected leader and described her as a "sales girl." The leader of Estonia's populist

far-right party EKRE, Mart Helme, questioned the ability of Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, 34, to run her country on Sunday. "Now we see how one sales girl has become a Prime Minister and how some other street activists and non-educated people have also joined the cabinet," Helme said on his party's radio talk show Sunday, according to Estonian public broadcaster ERR. Marin -- who leads Finland's Social Democratic party -- has spoken about her life growing up in a disadvantaged family and working as a cashier, before she studied at university. She became the world's youngest sitting Prime Minister earlier in December after replacing the nation's former leader, Antti Rinne. Five of Finland's major parties in parliament are all led by women, four of whom are in their 30s. "I'm extremely proud of Finland.

Here a poor family's child can educate themselves and achieve their goals in life. A cashier can become even a Prime Minister," Marin tweeted. Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid apologized for Helme's comments during a phone call with Finnish President Sauli Niinistö on Monday, according to a statement on the Finnish President's website. Helme on Monday justified his statement by saying: "That specific sentence about the Finnish Prime Minister, which you have interpreted as demeaning, I have actually interpreted as complimentary -- as recognition that someone can work their way up from a low social standing to the peak of politics," according to ERR. On Tuesday, Helme survived a vote of no-confidence in the Estonian parliament, which was called because of his comments. It comes after the President of

Estonia and its Prime Minister, Jüri Ratas, spoke on Sunday over the phone. According to Mailin Aasmäe, a press officer at the Estonian President's office, the President "suggested that the minister of interior should be replaced." The Estonian President is a largely ceremonial role with no executive powers. The Estonian interior ministry referred CNN to Helme's party, EKRE. The party has not yet responded to CNN's request for comment. According to Reuters, Helme formerly worked as Estonia's ambassador to Russia and is known for his outspoken comments. This story has been updated to correctly state that an Estonian press officer commented on the conversation between President Kaljulaid and Prime Minister Ratas, and has also been clarified to reflect the role of the Estonian President.

Tulsi Gabbard faces heat back home for present vote on impeachment

"It's a political stunt, is what I think it was," Kahele said in a phone interview. He said the vote left their congressional district voiceless yet again, noting Gabbard has recently skipped most House votes while she campaigns for the Democratic nomination for president. According to the website govtrack.us, Gabbard missed 88.7% of the 141 House votes taken in the past three months. Gabbard announced earlier this year she would not run for reelection to the House so she could focus on her presidential campaign. This decision came after she spent much of the year traveling to Iowa and New Hampshire. Kahele, meanwhile, was busily courting voters across their district which spans suburban Honolulu and largely rural nearby islands. Sandy Ma, the executive director of Common Cause Hawaii, said Gabbard's votes aren't representative of the people in her district. She said Gabbard "shamed herself."

"In Hawaii, our constituents, the public in Hawaii, especially Representative Gabbard's constituents, have been very vocal in saying that President Trump has violated his oath of office, has violated the rule of law and has violated the U.S. Constitution," Ma said. Hawaii's other representative in the House, Rep. Ed Case, another Democrat, voted in favor of impeachment.

But voter Paul Langer said he thought Gabbard made a good decision, saying impeachment has to be a bipartisan act. "Well the question, you know, in my mind is, you know, did the president commit anything that would rise to the level of a criminal event and I don't see it," said Langer, a retired telecommunications executive living in Honolulu. Gabbard she was "standing in the center" by voting present. "I could not in good conscience vote against impeachment because I believe President Trump is guilty of wrongdoing," she said in a statement. "I also could not in good conscience vote for impeachment because removal of a sitting President must not be the culmination of a partisan process, fueled by tribal animosities that have so gravely divided our country."

Trump's 2020 case got a boost this week, except for that one big thing that happened

can sometimes be anxiety-inducing for members of his staff and congressional GOP leaders." He might use the time to think about his reelection. Trump's case in 2020 is built on the economy, not impeachment, and it got a big boost this week with help from the same Democrats who voted against him over his Ukraine meddling. Rep. Debbie Dingell of

Michigan played a crucial role in getting Democrats behind Trump's trade agreement with Mexico and Canada, which will replace the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement -- a frequent punching bag for Trump in 2016 and since. The USMCA is his most important economic policy achievement this year and will solidify the perception

he's personally helped keep the unemployment rate at 50-year lows and the stock market surging. But Trump attacked Dingell, implying that her late husband, legendary Congressman John Dingell, might be in hell. The insult came during Trump's red-faced rally in Michigan on Wednesday night, which occurred at exactly the moment of his impeachment.

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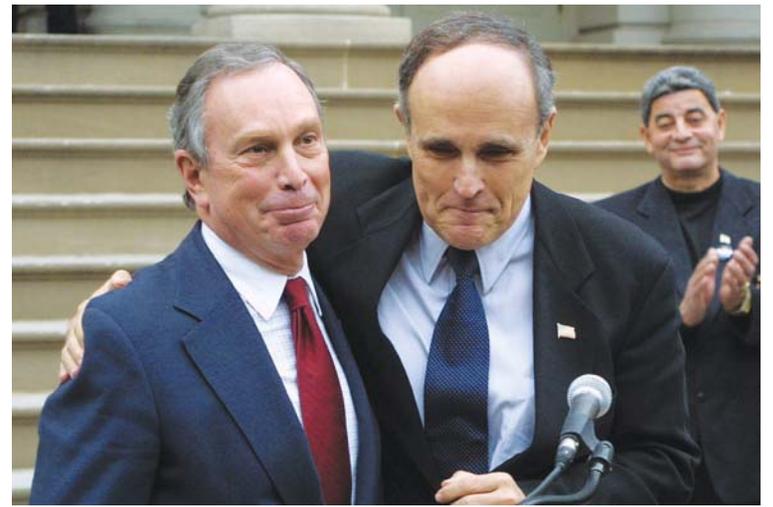
How Bloomberg Could Win. Again.

He's getting in late. He's out of step with his party. The news media thinks he's a joke. All of that was true when he first ran for mayor of New York City, too.

Michael Bloomberg has begun his improbable bid for the presidency with a rollout you could call unconventional, to be charitable. The big splash was news of his \$37 million television ad buy; then there was an overstuffed campaign bio-spot in which the candidate's voice wasn't heard and campaign trips to two states that don't hold primaries for months. Bloomberg has held no rallies, sat for no one-on-one interviews with the news media, avoided the early primary states entirely, and opened himself to criticism from his Democratic rivals that he is trying to buy the nomination. The savvy take on Twitter and in much of Washington is that this is little more than a vanity run for the presidency—a play for the political affinities of the pundit class on the Acela corridor, a low-energy answer to a question no Democrat is asking. Bloomberg is, as he puts it himself, a short, Jewish,

divorced billionaire from Manhattan. He is an avowed defender of Wall Street. He has been an apologist for #MeToo offenders. He oversaw a police department that stopped and frisked half a million primarily young men of color a year. Even putting all that aside, he is audaciously pledging to skip the first four primary states. But each of those things—or something very much like it—was true the first time he ran for office. In 2001, Bloomberg was a political unknown with a lot of money and no real ties to the party whose nomination he was seeking. He had a history of inappropriate comments. The media treated him as a joke, polls gave him almost no shot at winning, the public tired of his will-he-or-won't-he dance about actually running, and when he did finally jump into the race, he proved to be an indifferent and wooden campaigner. Yet less than a year after announcing he was a

candidate, Bloomberg was elected the 108th mayor of New York. And now, two decades later, he is running for president in more or less the exact same way. To understand how Bloomberg can become president, it is worth considering how he first became mayor—by executing, and succeeding with, a plan no less unlikely than running for president and skipping Iowa and New Hampshire. "Before he ran, I said to him, 'Do you know what guys like me do to guys like you?'" said Bill Cunningham, a longtime Democratic operative who became Bloomberg's top strategist and later his spokesman as mayor. The implication was clear: We fillet people like you—wealthy men with political ambitions—alive. In 2000 and 2001, candidate Bloomberg forged a path that seemed almost dauntingly difficult, but he pulled it off by recognizing an unusual opening and quickly moving to capitalize



on it. It was a campaign that relied on a lot of things going right for him but also made sure that his candidacy was well-positioned to exploit his advantages whenever and wherever he could. It's not crazy to think he could do it again. Buzz had begun building in the summer of 2000 that Bloomberg, at the time worth \$4 billion (now \$54 billion), was considering a run for mayor as Rudy Giuliani's term was ending. The smart play for Bloomberg, it seemed, would be to run as a Democrat. It was the party that Bloomberg belonged to his whole life, and, conveniently for his prospects, Democrats outnumbered Republicans 5 to 1 in New York City. Giuliani wasn't all that

popular, either. In the spring of 2000, he was facing a 37 percent approval rating in New York. Then Bloomberg polled the prospect of running in the Democratic primary. According to Kevin Sheekey, his longtime political aide, and one of more than a dozen Bloomberg aides and associates interviewed for this story, the poll came back with bad news for Bloomberg's chances. Beyond the polling, the primary was crowded, and the city's interest groups, labor unions and civic organizations had been courted relentlessly by other candidates for the previous eight years. So he decided it couldn't be done. And so in 2000, with the election more than a year away, he changed his registration to the Republican Party.

Diplomats for sale: How an ambassadorship was bought and lost

The story of Ali Reza Monfared, the Iranian who tried to buy diplomatic immunity after embezzling millions of dollars.

His image - the bespoke suits, silk ties and handmade shoes - was everything to Ali Reza Monfared. So, when he fell from his trademark sartorial splendour to the light-blue uniform of Iran's notorious Evin Prison, the contrast was harsh. His neatly combed hair has also greyed considerably since Iranian International Police arrested him at a Caribbean resort in 2017. In November 2019, Monfared was convicted of embezzling millions of dollars from his country, just one of the strands in a global web of financial, diplomatic and personal fraud that saw him sentenced to 20 years in prison and a \$1.3bn fine. It could have been worse. In 2016, Monfared's billionaire business partner, Babak Zanjani, was sentenced to

death for his role in the siphoning off of \$2.8bn from Iranian oil revenues. If you want to learn more about the legal trade of passports and some of the pitfalls, check our podcast *Al Jazeera Investigates: Diplomats for Sale*. Monfared's natural charisma and hustle had taken him far. From humble beginnings in the home decoration business, he had rocketed to success: banker, international oil trader and, finally, "His Excellency Dato Ali Reza Monfared", Dominica's ambassador to Malaysia. In 2015, Monfared had secured a Dominican diplomatic passport and, with it, what he treasured most of all - diplomatic immunity. A charismatic outsider In 2012, Monfared arrived on Labuan, a small Malaysian island off the coast of Borneo, as a charismatic outsider with big ambitions.

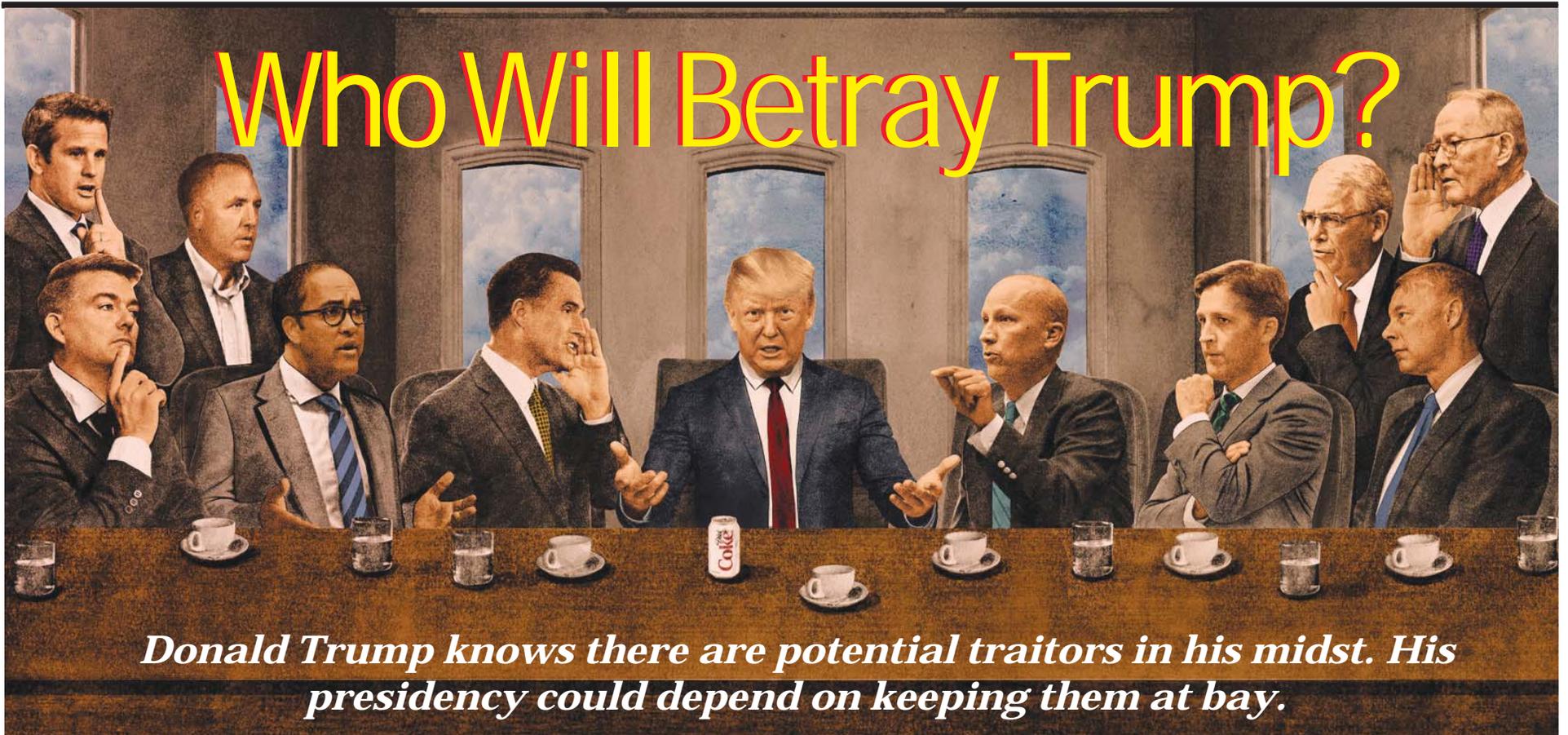
"You would practically fall in love with him because he is such a sweet talker. Ali can convince anybody into doing anything," said Manoj Bhullar, the owner of a marine logistics company on Labuan. He refers to Monfared as "Ali" because they were once best friends. When they met in 2012, Monfared claimed to be an agent of the Iranian government, working, under the direction of Babak Zanjani, to move oil from Iran. As Iran was under sanctions, "they had problems", Bhullar explained. When Bhullar proposed a solution to those problems, it marked the beginning of a relationship that would change his life. The Bhullars I first heard about Monfared in the summer of 2018. I was interested in the sale of diplomatic



passports in the Caribbean and had started gathering sources through a contact connected to Bhullar's wife, Kiran. She and her husband had been swindled by Monfared and Kiran would text me long threads about their quest for justice. Her story was compelling, so I asked to meet in person. But while it was clear she wanted to speak, she seemed reluctant to meet. She eventually agreed, but made no promises. So, with correspondent Deborah Davies

and cameraman Manny Panaretos, I travelled to Kuala Lumpur without a guarantee of an interview. We met the Bhullars for lunch at a shopping mall. Have a tip for Al Jazeera that should be investigated? Find out how to get in touch with us on our Tips page "You draw up a mental picture of the people you're going to meet," Davies said afterwards. "[Then] in walks this really stylish, charismatic, fabulous-looking couple."

Who Will Betray Trump?



Donald Trump knows there are potential traitors in his midst. His presidency could depend on keeping them at bay.

From the moment Francis Rooney expressed alarm to his House colleagues that Donald Trump might have abused presidential power in his dealings with Ukraine—and more dramatically, that an impeachment inquiry could be warranted—the Florida Republican was a marked man.

He made for a most unusual suspect. A silver-haired business tycoon, former ambassador and card-carrying member of the GOP establishment, Rooney had reliably played the role of good soldier for the party since easily winning his Naples-area congressional seat in 2016. He had kept his head down. He had dutifully gone about his business

as a policymaker and a politician. He had, like so many of his fellow Republicans, muffled his trepidation over the president's behavior, recognizing that to cross Trump was to commence the extinction of his own political career.

Venting privately about the president has become a hallowed pastime in Republican-controlled Washington, a sort of ritualistic release for those lawmakers tasked with routinely defending the indefensible, and Rooney had long indulged without consequence. Certainly, his friends noticed, the Florida congressman had grown more animated in private over the past year—railing against the

improprieties detailed in the Mueller report, decrying the Trump family's brazen attempts to enrich themselves off the presidency, wondering aloud what the president needed to do before voters would turn on him. Still, there was no real risk. To the extent GOP leaders heard echoes of Rooney's discontent, they dismissed it as just another member blowing off steam. Venting privately about the president has become a hallowed pastime in Republican-controlled Washington, a sort of ritualistic release for those lawmakers tasked with routinely defending the indefensible...

But as summer turned to fall, Rooney wasn't just bitching and

complaining anymore. He was talking about impeachment. And he was talking not in a manner that was abstract or academic, but concrete and ominous. Initially in one-on-one conversations, and then in larger group settings, Rooney cautioned his colleagues that there could be no turning a blind eye to the fact pattern emerging from Trump's relationship with Ukraine. It seemed possible, if not probable, that congressionally approved military aid to the embattled country—long a cause dear to Democrats and Republicans alike—had been held up contingent on investigations into Trump's domestic political rivals. The question, Rooney told

his friends, was not whether there was clear evidence of wrongdoing, but whether the president himself was culpable—and if so, whether congressional Republicans were going to cover for him.

All of a sudden, the once-invisible congressman was the subject of constant surveillance. Rooney could go nowhere, say nothing, without the eyes of the party on him. House Republican leaders, having been made aware of Rooney's agitating, deputized lawmakers to monitor the malcontent. The White House—both its political team and its legislative affairs shop—did likewise. Before long, the president himself was briefed on the threat from Rooney.

Why Donald Trump needs anger management more than Greta Thunberg

Donald Trump may not rank anywhere near the top of the charts of best US Presidents, but he certainly seems to lead by a mile when it comes to being the biggest bully on troll-infested Twitter. The White House resident went after teenage climate change activist Greta Thunberg yet again. And she hit right back, and won, yet again. When TIME magazine featured teen climate activist Greta Thunberg as the 2019 person of the year, our big bully was back in action, going after the 16-year-old. To put things in perspective, Thunberg is over five decades younger than him, three years older than Trump's youngest son, and four-and-a-half years older than Trump's oldest grandchild. If Trump thought he could get away

with his snarkiness, he couldn't have been more mistaken. Greta gave back as good as she got. Her Twitter bio now reads: A teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old-fashioned movie with a friend. Ironically, the husband of Melania Trump seems to have forgotten about his wife's #BeBest initiative and her crusade against cyber-bullying. Keeping in line with her initiative, Melania had, just last week, slammed Stanford Law School Professor Pamela Karlan, who is also a witness in the impeachment inquiry against Donald Trump, for a comment made about Barron Trump - Donald and Melania Trump's 13-year-old son. But then, the rules of the

game can be different when the President is playing bully. We suggest the FLOTUS takes a look at her husband's track record. Thankfully, Twitterati got Greta's back. It has been widely reported how his 30-minute phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky on July 25 was nothing short of bullying. He drilled down on the Ukrainian President's weakness (of needing American support) and didn't relent. It eventually led to Trump's impeachment inquiry. According to American journalist Michael D'Antonio, who authored Donald Trump's biography *Never Enough: Donald Trump and The Pursuit of Success*, bullying has always been central to Trump's character. "In the summer of his thirteenth year, his exasperated



parents notified him that he was being sent away to military school because he was too unruly. Cast out of the family home, he did become more disciplined, but he also became the man who would tell me he enjoyed 'all types of fights, even physical'," D'Antonio writes. Trump's habit of giving not-so-polite nicknames to his opponents is also

very well-known. For instance, he mockingly referred to Kim Jong-un, the supreme leader of North Korea, as "Rocket Man". "Crooked Hillary", "Little Marco", "Crazy Bernie", "Lyn Ted" and "Pocahontas" were nicknames for Hillary Clinton, Marco Rubio, Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz, and Elizabeth Warren respectively.

'No PMO interference': Piyush Goyal, Prakash Javadekar refute Raghuram Rajan's 'extreme centralisation' remark

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar refuted Raghuram Rajan's statement that the decision-making process is centred entirely around the Prime Minister's Office. The ministers also indicated that the ongoing economic slowdown is primarily due to transformation and will be reversed soon. In his recent article 'How to fix the economy' for India Today magazine, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan had listed extreme centralisation as one of the reasons behind India's economic troubles. He had stated that the centralised approach, "along with the absence of empowered ministers and the lack of a coherent guiding vision", ensures

reforms pick up when the PMO focuses on them and lose steam when its attention is diverted to other pressing matters.

"Not just decision-making but also ideas and plans emanate from a small set of personalities around the Prime Minister and in the Prime Minister's Office. That works well for the party's political and social agenda... It works less well for economic reforms," Rajan had written. Responding to Rajan's remarks during a session at Aajtak Agenda 2019, Javadekar said: "Raghuram Rajan can express his opinion but does not know the facts."

Goyal, who was also part of the session, seconded Javadekar and added that PMO does not interfere in the decision-making

at all. The Commerce Minister stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has very good ties with his cabinet ministers. "I also believe that the country has got such a hardworking prime minister who participates in meetings and gives his views. That is a very good thing. But as far as economic decisions are concerned, the PMO does not have any role in that and it does not interact with us on such matters," Goyal said.

"However, when we feel there is a need, our prime minister is always ready to meet us, even on short notice. We can talk over the phone. I think that is a very good arrangement that the relation between different cabinet ministries and the PMO is so good," the Commerce Minister



added.

The two ministers also criticised former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian for changing his stance on India's economic growth. Subramanian had recently stated India is facing a Great Slowdown and its economy is headed to the ICU.

"Till the time he was in position

(chief economic advisor) and kept getting opportunity, he could not see all of this? You have all of his (Subramanian's) past economic surveys as well. I think you should ask him the question. Suddenly after leaving India, what is the reason behind the sudden disapproval of his own past estimations. And, also,

Saudi Aramco drops for 1st time since last week's record IPO

Shares in Saudi Aramco fell, losing ground for the first time since the oil giant's record initial public offering last week, and ahead of the stock's inclusion into the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.

Aramco finished 0.7% lower at 37.75 riyals on Tuesday. It is still up 18% from the initial public offering price of 32 riyals.

Index compiler MSCI Inc. will use Tuesday's closing price in its calculations for the inclusion of the stock into its benchmarks. The Saudi stock exchange extended the closing auction on Tuesday to accommodate demand tied to the

MSCI addition. The stock will also be included via an accelerated process in gauges compiled by FTSE Russell and S&P Dow Jones indexes this month. "MSCI flows are often priced in ahead and we see flat or even negative performance during or immediately after the accumulation period," said Zachary Cefaratti, chief executive officer at Dalma Capital Management Ltd. "A lot of investors are happy to take profit; even retail are far enough in the money now."

Even with Tuesday's dip, the company still has a market value above \$2 trillion, the level sought by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.



Banks to get \$7.6 billion boost bankruptcy recoveries from 4 companies

India's banks are set for a \$7.6 billion earnings windfall this month as the country's bankruptcy court has made sudden progress in clearing a backlog of large cases.

The lenders are expected to benefit from the recovery process from four failed companies -- Essar Steel India Ltd., Prayagraj Power Generation Co., Ruchi Soya Industries Ltd. and RattanIndia Power Ltd. -- which should be completed in December, according to people familiar with the matter.

The gains will be welcome news for banks, which are facing a further increase in their \$130 billion pile of bad loans thanks to India's shadow banking crisis and the slowdown in the economy. Many lenders are

expected to set aside additional provisions in their earnings reports for this quarter.

The total proceeds from the bankruptcy cases should total 540 billion rupees (\$7.6 billion), according to Karthik Srinivasan, group head of financial sector at ICRA Ratings, the local arm for Moody's Investors Service. The banks should be able to use a large part of it "to step up provisioning as bad loans continue to rise," Srinivasan added. India has seen slow progress since the bankruptcy court was set up in 2016 to get to grips with the bad loan crisis. Only 15% of cases admitted to the court had produced a resolution plan as of September, according to data published by the insolvency board.

However, some of the logjam was broken with the Supreme Court decision last month to clear the way for ArcelorMittal SA's \$5.9 billion takeover of Essar Steel. The court allowed Arcelor to pay creditors and scrapped a bankruptcy appellate tribunal's order that gave secured and unsecured lenders equal rights over the proceeds.

Banks are expected to recover 415 billion rupees from Essar, having received a 54 billion rupees payment from the Prayagraj bankruptcy on Friday, the people said, asking not to be identified as the information remains private. Another 43.5 billion rupees is expected from Ruchi Soya on Monday and 27 billion rupees from RattanIndia later this week, the people



added.

Among the largest beneficiaries are State Bank of India, IDBI Bank Ltd., Bank of India, Canara Bank and Bank of Baroda. State Bank of India rose 0.8% as of 9:47 a.m. in Mumbai on Tuesday, compared with a 0.5% gain for

the main equity index. However, the December bonanza will be shortlived as India's prolonged economic downturn continues to push up overall bad loans, said Suresh Ganapathy, who oversees financial research at Macquarie Capital Securities.

Mushrooms are having a moment



They're popping up in papads, jams and cakes; as health boosts in bread and coffee; and in urban gardens "People are realising that mushrooms are a real superfood," says Anuradha Srivastava, a food technologist at the Indian Council of Agricultural

Research - Directorate of Mushroom Research (ICAR-DMR) in Himachal Pradesh. "They contain no sugar, so they're ideal for diabetics. They're good for those with high blood pressure or cholesterol and they contain many of the trace nutrients that our bodies need."

At the government-run ICAR-DMR, innovations have led to a versatile mushroom powder that is being used to make a multigrain mushroom bread, biscuits and papads. Their mushroom pickles are also now widely available across the country and on e-commerce

platforms. The R&D team is now working on a mushroom spread, murabba, and a mushroom bhujija. Brands like Urban Platter have a range of mushroom powders to choose from. Wholesalers like The Mushroom Co have branched out into the quirky as well. "We make a coffee mix infused with cordyceps mushroom extract, known to be a mild aphrodisiac and widely used for its medicinal and strengthening effects," says founder Rohhaan Gawde. As

chefs return to local, season produce, mushrooms are becoming a favourite ingredient because of their ability to absorb other flavours," says Sarah Edwards, a recipe developer who runs Copper & Cloves in Bengaluru. "They're also easy to cook, with a subtle nutty flavour that complements sauces, savoury dishes and certain desserts." Their fleshy texture and high-protein content make them a go-to meat substitute.

The good kind of shots

Ever done shots that are good for health? Try out these nutrient-packed drinks that can be made at home

Can a shot a day keep the doctor away? It can help, if you're taking the right kinds of shots - wellness boosts packed with antioxidants, minerals, vitamins and nutrients. The most popular are ginger shots, but you can also shoot turmeric, cinnamon or apple cider vinegar. Some have anti-inflammatory properties, others help strengthen your bones. And they can all be made at home. Here's how.

GINGER SHOTS

Take a 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, grind and strain it to extract about 1 tsp of concentrated juice. Add lemon or orange juice, turmeric, pepper and honey to taste.

"Ginger contains gingerol, a substance that aids in digestion, and can help treat many forms of nausea, especially morning sickness in pregnant women," says Bhakti Samant, chief dietician at

Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai.

CINNAMON SHOTS

Soak a cinnamon stick in water, add a bit of honey, and sip (ideally, don't down this in one go; it's absorbed better in small quantities). "Cinnamon influences the manner in which sugar is metabolised, helping to cut fat accumulation," says Samant. This shot can help ease menstrual cramps, adds Seema Singh, chief

clinical nutritionist at Fortis Hospital, Delhi.

TURMERIC SHOTS

The curcumin in turmeric is a very strong anti-oxidant. "This makes turmeric shots a great anti-inflammatory. It helps ease joint

pains, and boosts immunity," says Singh. Mix 1 tsp haldi in a cup of coconut water; add ginger, honey and lemon to taste. A pinch of freshly ground black pepper will help the body absorb the curcumin better.

CHIA SHOTS

"Chia is rich in Omega 3 fatty acids. They are a source of antioxidants, which are believed to have cardiac, anti-ageing and anti-carcinogenic characteristics," says Samant.

Soak 1 tsp chia seeds in water for at least 10 minutes. Down like a shot; it's so filling, you can have it in place of a snack.

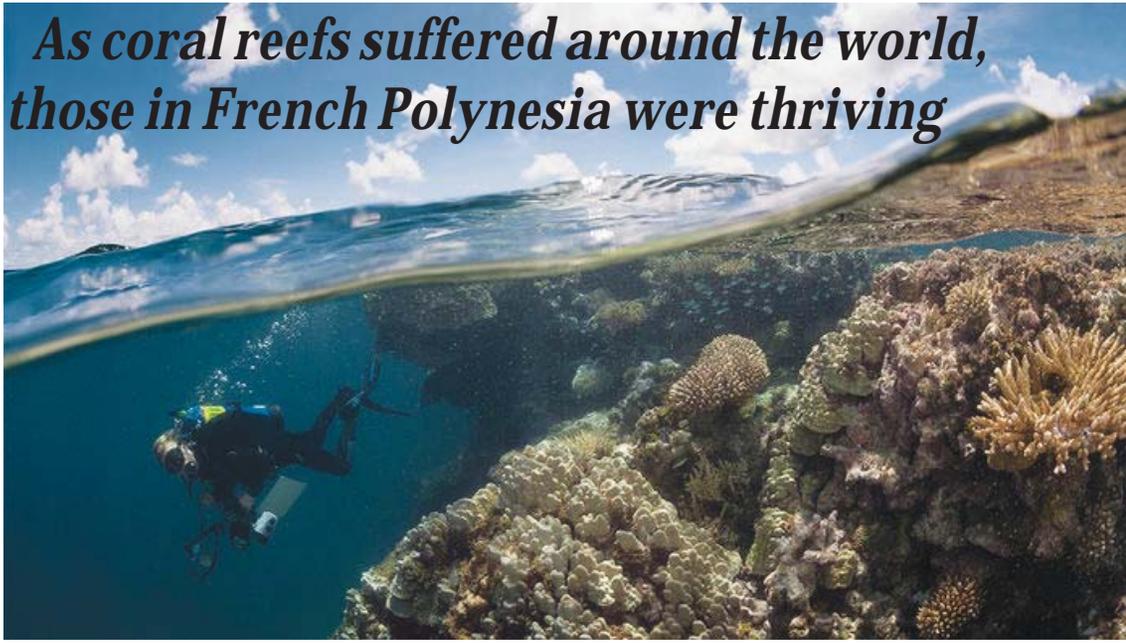
APPLE CIDER VINEGAR SHOTS

Popularly known as ACV, apple cider vinegar is an alkaline, probiotic-rich ingredient known to reduce muscle pain, headaches, and boost digestion.

For an ACV shot, mix 1 tsp of apple cider vinegar in 100ml of water and add ice cubes. Restrict to one shot a day.



As coral reefs suffered around the world, those in French Polynesia were thriving



In a world where warming seas, pollution, and predation are killing coral around the world, an extensive survey of French Polynesia in 2013 has found a ray of hope. On some atolls there, live coral covered 70% of the reef's surface; on others, big fish such as grouper and barracuda that have almost disappeared elsewhere were

thriving. This survey is "of great importance," says Derek Tittensor, a marine ecologist at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada. The findings, he says, could help scientists understand how reefs in French Polynesia and elsewhere may respond to climate change, and how they might be protected in the future. For the past decade, the Khaled

bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation, based in Annapolis, has been mapping the health of coral reefs around the world. Six years ago, its divers investigated 264 sites across 29 islands in French Polynesia's four major archipelagos in the South Pacific Ocean. Working with researchers at the University of

Miami in Florida, foundation scientists fed their data into supercomputers to divine what makes coral reefs resilient—results they hope will help conservationists better manage and conserve these hot spots of biodiversity. This month, the foundation released its public report about the French Polynesia findings.

There were a few places where coral cover was down to just 5%, thanks to cyclones (also known as hurricanes) and invasions of crown-of-thorns starfish. But in the Gambier archipelago, 1600 kilometers southeast of Tahiti, living corals populated almost three-quarters of the reef in some places. That compares with less than 10% in some parts of the Caribbean Sea, and rarely more than 45% in the northern part of Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Overall, French Polynesia coral cover averaged 58%, the Living Oceans Foundation reports.

"That's very high; even an average

of 58% is high," says Nancy Knowlton, an coral reef biologist emeritus at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., who was not involved with the study. "It's nice to see that places like that still exist."

High coral cover tended to coincide with high densities of fish. In some places, there were about 300 fish per 100 square meters. That's much better than 50 per 100 square meters in the Caribbean and even the 220 per 100 square meters in the northern Great Barrier Reef found in other surveys.

Knowlton worries that coral-killing high temperatures, increasingly common worldwide, might soon cloud this rosy picture. And indeed, some French Polynesia reefs have been recently affected. Living Oceans Foundation coral reef biologist Alexandra Dempsey agrees these reefs are changing, but thinks some of them remain quite healthy, she says.

Ring of fire: Partial solar eclipse on December 26

A partial solar eclipse will be visible in India along with several other countries on December 26.

This will be an annular solar eclipse in some parts of India and elsewhere which happens when the Moon covers the sun's centre, leaving the sun's visible outer edges to form a "ring of fire" or annulus - around the moon.

The maximum obstruction of the sun during the eclipse when seen from different cities of India will be 89.4 per cent in Bengaluru, 84.6 per cent in Chennai, 78.8 per cent in

Mumbai, 74.3 per cent in Hyderabad, 66 per cent in Ahmedabad and 44.7 per cent in Delhi, the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM) said.

In Kolkata, the eclipse will be seen 45.1 per cent and will begin at 08:26:55 am, reach its maximum at 09:52:37 am and end at 11:32:37 am.

Apart from India the eclipse will be visible in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Northern Mariana Islands and Guam.

The ring of fire will not be seen from all places in India but from places like Kannur in Kerala and along the southern coast of the country, a BITM official explained.

The annular eclipse will, however, appear as a partial eclipse in thousands of kilometers area elsewhere where the ring will not be seen.

The BITM, the first science museum in the country under National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), has made arrangements for direct



observation of partial eclipse through telescope fitted with filters on December 26 from 8.15 am onward, for general public.

Special viewing glasses have also been arranged for general public to observe the rare celestial event.

Martian auroras may help track Red Planet's water loss: Nasa



A type of aurora on Mars -- first identified by National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (Nasa) MAVEN spacecraft in 2016 -- is the most common form of the lights occurring on the Red Planet, according to a study which can help track water loss

from the Mars's atmosphere. The study, published in the Journal of Geophysical Research - Space Physics, noted that aurora on the Earth are commonly seen as colourful displays of light in the night sky near the polar regions.

However, the researchers from Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) in the US, said that the phenomenon on Mars, called a proton aurora, happens during the day and gives off ultraviolet light.

They said it is invisible to the human eye but detectable to the Imaging UltraViolet Spectrograph (IUVS) instrument on the MAVEN -- Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution -- spacecraft.

The spacecraft's mission is to investigate how Mars lost much of its atmosphere and water, transforming its climate from one that might have supported life to one that is cold, dry, and

inhospitable.

PROTONAURORA

According to the researchers, the proton aurora is generated indirectly by hydrogen derived from Martian water which is in the process of being lost to space.

So they said that this aurora could be used to help track ongoing Martian water loss. "In this new study using MAVEN/IUVS data from multiple Mars years, the team has found that periods of increased atmospheric escape correspond with increases in proton aurora occurrence and intensity," Andrea Hughes of Embry-

Riddle Aeronautical University in the US said. The study noted that the proton aurora form when the sub atomic particles, protons, from solar winds interact with the upper atmosphere on the dayside of Mars.

Approaching Mars, the researchers explained that these protons transform into neutral atoms by stealing electrons from hydrogen atoms in a huge gas cloud surrounding the Red Planet. When the high-speed incoming atoms hit the Martian atmosphere, some of their energy is emitted as ultraviolet light, the Nasa scientists said.

Kiara Advani caught in the same boots that Nicki Minaj wore. And they cost more than most of our salaries

Kiara Advani is quite the looker, and while she generally dresses to impress, some of her recent fashion outings have done quite a number on us. And not in a good way! The 27-year-old actor is still riding high on the much-critiqued but commercially successful Kabir Singh, and will soon be seen alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan, Akshay Kumar, Diljit Dosanjh in Good Newwz. For the Delhi promotions of her upcoming movie, Kiara committed quite the sartorial sin, and while we really wanted to look the other way, we just had to call this out! The actor was spotted wearing Prada's chunky high heel boots that were made famous when international rapper Nicki Minaj wore them, in different colours, for multiple stage performances. And while Nicki's style is super kitschy, she still has the quirky personality and aura to make almost anything work for her. However, on Kiara, the Givenchy

jumper, the tights, sunglasses and then the chunky heels, it was all so wrong! And the unattractiveness of the shoes really shone bright, to make matters worse, you won't believe the bucket-load she paid for it. The shoes by Prada cost Rs 70,000! While that may be a meagre amount for the likes of Kiara and Nicki, that is over a month's salary for most of us millennials.

Fans who usually laud celebs for every single thing couldn't hold themselves back from criticising Kiara for her ugly shoes. Some demanded she get a stylist, while others called her out for trying to imitate the Kardashian sisters and impersonating Westerners.

Well, it is her personal choice, so she can wear what she likes, but for us, we think Nicki Minaj pulled the shoes off better than Kiara.

Who do you think wore it better, and do you think these shoes are worth the price Kiara paid?

Kiara Advani is quite the looker, and while she generally dresses to impress, some of her recent fashion outings have done quite a number on us. And not in a good way!



Mismatch is the new trend. Break the rules in style

Clashing prints, colliding solids, loose-on-loose apparels - these were categorised as bad dressing sense. But the fashion world is now shedding them and experts tell us how to get it right.



Don't wear print with print. Never pair black with navy blue, blues with violets or yellows and greens. Get the colours right; make sure the silhouettes flatter. These have all been cardinal rules of fashion. Now, they're being broken with glee. "Mismatch is the new style," says Saaksha Bhat, an advocate of print-on-print fashion and co-founder of the label Saaksha and Kinni. "Clashing prints, colliding solids, loose on loose apparel... we made the rules and now the fashion world is shedding them. The new aesthetic is about shedding rigidity in favour of flair."

* Print on print: The safest way to play with this rule-breaker is to experiment with vertical stripes - thin stripes on top with thick-striped lowers. Or, play with the proportions of the print. Take a micro-pleated skirt with enlarged print and a blouse with thin stripes.

Polka dots and plaids can be mixed in

the same tonal range, says designer Amy Billimoria.

Men can play with checks on checks. "Florals on florals for men is a trend that's picking up in New York and London, but in India it's unlikely to catch on any time soon," says Billimoria.

* Clashing colours: Colour blocking is all about shades that pop. The rule-breaking pairings are more subtle. A navy blue dress with a black shrug is simple, suave, and makes for excellent am/pm wear, says Billimoria.

Use a colour wheel for reference. Colours positioned adjacent to one another (called analogous colours) create a minimised contrast and make for good am/pm and party wear. Think pink-red-orange or blue-violet combinations.

* Loose on loose: Tradition would have it that baggy clothes are the least flattering. But it's now all the rage to pair a loose, flared blouse with a micro-



pleated skirt. In India, we've been pairing loose long kurtas and palazzos for a cool, summery work-wear look. "Experimenting with baggy layers can be very freeing," says Bhat. "And it just takes the pressure off for all body types."

Mardaani 2 movie review:

Rani Mukerji steals the show in soul-stirring and well-timed thriller

Mardaani 2 movie review: Rani Mukerji channels the anger and angst of a nation in this new film about heinous crimes against women.

Mardaani 2

Cast: Rani Mukerji, Vishal Jethwa

Director: Gopi Puthran

Mardaani 2 is disturbing, chilling, heart-wrenching and makes you uncomfortable; and perhaps that's what the makers intended to achieve through this edge-of-the-seat crime thriller. Written and directed by Gopi Puthran with Rani Mukerji in the lead role, Mardaani 2 highlights the gruesome crimes against women, but also delves deeper into issues such as women safety, gender inequality, misogyny and toxic masculinity. Superintendent of police, Shivani Shivaji Roy (Rani Mukerji) is out to capture a criminal (Vishal Jethwa) who rapes young women in a fit of rage before cruelly murdering them. The trouble is, he is always one step ahead of the cops, playing a cat-

and-mouse game on his own terms.

Shivani comes with her own strengths -- she has the knack of studying a crime scene in the most detailed manner, a trait that her male subordinates detest. In the chase that follows, you are invested in finding out how, and if, Shivani will catch him before he lets the monster out again.

Mardaani 2 is not the first film to bring heinous crimes under the spotlight but it manages to tap into social consciousness given its timing. As the nation seethes after the horrendous rape and murder of a doctor in Hyderabad and its aftermath, the film once again takes us back to the brutality of such crimes and how we need a firm solution.

A sequel to Pradeep Sarkar's Mardaani (2014), that highlighted the issue of human trafficking, Mardaani 2 takes it a notch higher and duly delivers on the fact that

cinema is the reflection of our society. It's real, relatable and succeeds in evoking the desired angst in you.

Playing the top cop, Rani Mukerji looks convincing and impresses with her controlled performance from the word go. The expressions of anger and helplessness on her face resonate with you. She has some hard-hitting dialogues and manages to strike a fine balance between her duty and emotions, never going overboard.

Debutant Vishal Jethwa as the mysterious and egotist villain is spot-on. It's not easy to deliver such a confident performance, especially when you are cast opposite someone as seasoned as Rani but Vishal holds his own. While Mardaani 2 makes you hate the perpetrator, it also shows the larger systemic



problem that lead to hate crimes such as these. The director gives the bad guy a fairly believable back-story involving a troubled past and childhood making us go beneath the surface.

Even when it comes to the pace, the film doesn't waste time building up subplots or introducing needless twists. It straightaway comes to the point and leaves you not much time to evaluate or analyse the right or the wrong. Perhaps that's why, at 105 minutes, its length is one of its biggest plus points. Also, Puthran doesn't leave his grip over the story at any

moment. There are no forced songs in the film to kill its tempo; the background score also allows the story to be the real hero.

A socially-relevant film, Mardaani 2 is designed as a thriller to keep the audience involved, but it could have avoided showing the faces of sexually assaulted girls - this is surely not for the weak hearted.

Mardaani 2 is a story that everyone knows about, but it still needs to be told again. There are moments that make us cringe, but if we can watch 24-hour news cycle then this film is certainly the need of the hour to make our voices heard.

Jumanji The Next Level movie review

Handicapped Dwayne Johnson is outmatched by hilarious Kevin Hart



Jumanji: The Next Level
Director - Jake Kasdan

Cast - Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Jack Black, Kare Gillan, Nick Jonas, Danny DeVito, Danny Glover, Awkwafina
Hastily wrapped in Christmas colours and unenthusiastically conceived, Jumanji: The Next Level is more like a last-minute gift intended for a casual workplace acquaintance than a sequel to an almost billion-dollar hit.

But despite director Jake Kasdan's relatively unambitious approach (and the involvement

of a Jonas brother), The Next Level is a more enjoyable film than its immediate predecessor, Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle. Although the boldest idea it can boast of, besides adding an extra layer of clothes on Karen Gillan, is contriving a situation that requires Dwayne Johnson to act - a move so mercurial it reminded me of Salman Khan's Tubelight. Had The Next Level not been the ensemble piece that it is, it would've been crushed by the monotony of The Rock's one-note performance, if not his tendency to hog the limelight.

Jumanji The Next Level movie review: Kevin Hart and Jack Black steal the movie from under a handicapped Dwayne Johnson's nose.

Even with a real-life reference to draw from - this time around, The Rock doesn't channel a sulky teenager, but Danny DeVito instead - the highest-paid movie star in the world struggles to hold his own next to talented comedic actors such as Kevin Hart and Jack Black. There is precious little a man who has built a career on playing versions of himself on screen can do when his biggest weapons - that dazzling smile; that inquisitive eyebrow - are snatched from him.

Perhaps as a measure to inject some freshness into a tired premise, the film's four credited writers attempt to perform a switcheroo. So when it is time for our teen protagonists to be sucked into the video game world of Jumanji once again, they do not return as the same characters they played in

Welcome to the Jungle, but new ones altogether.

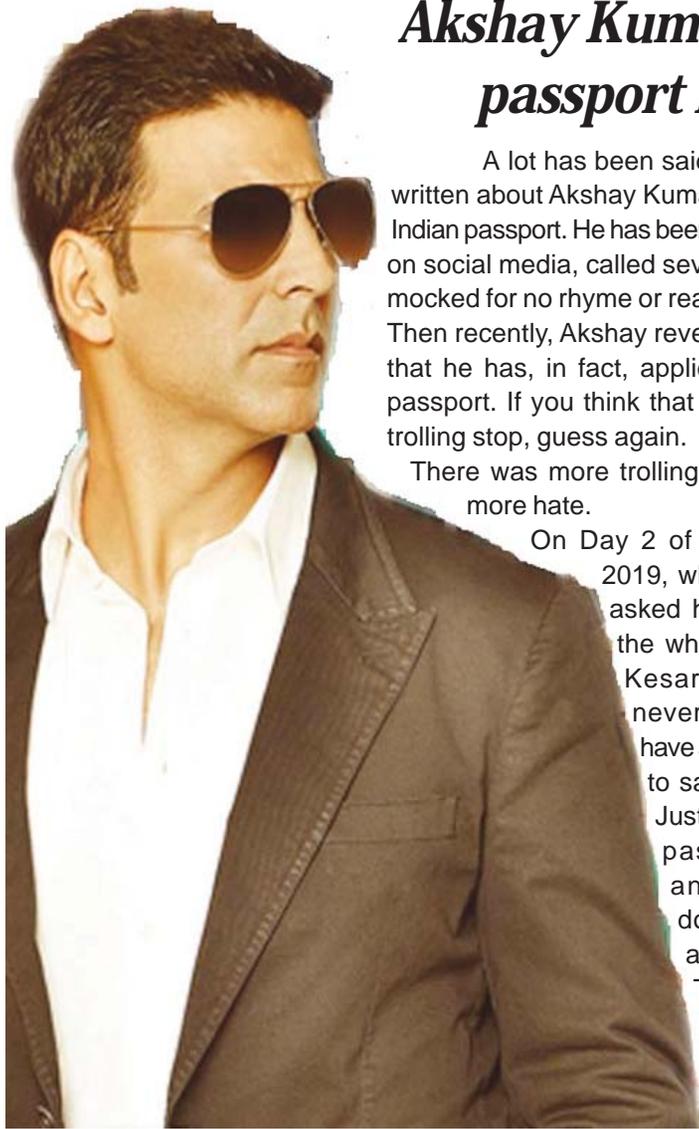
And as difficult as it may be for Johnson to shrug off his internalised swagger, Kevin Hart, on the other hand, effortlessly slips into Danny Glover's famously stately screen presence. To have Hart sideline his iconic manic energy for the entirety of a film sounds almost as risky a move as demanding Johnson to deliver a performance. Thankfully, the success of one balances out the unevenness of the other.

Don't get me wrong, Johnson is certainly given more than a few occasions to flex his pecs and whup some villains, as is probably stipulated in his contract, but this isn't as relentlessly mind-numbing as something like Hobbs & Shaw. The set-pieces this time around are, perhaps thanks to a bigger

budget, more thrillingly put together. Keeping with the video game conceit of the premise, the action in The Next Level resembles something you might experience in an Uncharted or a Tomb Raider adventure.

Particularly enjoyable is a sequence set on rickety mid-air bridges, which seamlessly integrates everything that makes Johnson's Jumanji reboot films such lightweight fun - cartoonish choreography, quips, and cracking visual effects.

But I remember having a similar reaction to Welcome to the Jungle as well, and yet I had to revisit my review of that film before writing this one; that is how poorly it has aged. I have a suspicion that the finer (and even broader) details of The Next Level will quietly leak out of my brain within the week.



Akshay Kumar: I never knew I had to have a passport in hand to say I'm an Indian

A lot has been said, a lot has been written about Akshay Kumar not holding an Indian passport. He has been trolled endlessly on social media, called several names, and mocked for no rhyme or reason.

Then recently, Akshay revealed at an event that he has, in fact, applied for an Indian passport. If you think that would make the trolling stop, guess again.

There was more trolling, more mockery, more hate.

On Day 2 of Agenda AajTak 2019, when Akshay was asked how he felt after the whole episode, the Kesari actor said, "I never knew I had to have a passport in hand to say I'm an Indian. Just because I had a passport from another country, doesn't make me any less Indian."

Talking about why he even chose to apply for a Canadian

passport, Akshay said, "I gave up the (Indian) passport and got a Canadian passport because 14 of my films flopped here and I wanted to find work elsewhere. Then my 15th film worked. So I stayed back. The film after that also worked and I never had to look back."

Akshay Kumar since then never felt the need to get the passport changed. He also never thought this would turn into an issue or would lead to so much trolling.

But Akshay doesn't let these things bog him down. He's currently delivered 11 back-to-back hits at the box office. When asked how that makes him feel, Akshay added in his characteristic humour, "Don't forget my 14 flops!"

"There's hard work in every film, even the ones that flopped. You try hard, but sometimes it doesn't work, added Akshay. When asked about his success mantra, Akshay had another hit answer waiting. "I believe there's 70 per cent luck and 30 per cent hard work in success. There are more good looking actors, better dancers and more talented people waiting in line, but they don't get a good start as I did," he concluded.

Veteran actor Shriram Lagoo dies in Pune at 92

Eminent theatre and film actor Dr Shriram Lagoo died due to age-related ailments at his Pune residence



on Tuesday evening, family sources said. He was 92. "I spoke to his son-in-law. He passed away due to age-related complications," playwright Satish Alekar told PTI. Lagoo, who was a trained ENT surgeon, played important role in the growth of theatre movement in Maharashtra in post-Independence era alongwith Vijay Tendulkar, Vijaya Mehta and Arvind Deshpande. As an actor, his roles in Marathi plays such as "Natsamrat" and "Himalayachi Saoli", and films such as "Pinjra" made him popular. In Hindi, he essayed memorable roles in films such as "Ek Din Achanak", "Gharonda" and "Lawaris", to name a few. Lagoo, affectionately known in theatre circles as 'Doctor', was also known for his progressive and rationalist views which he expressed without fear.

Zareen Khan claims Bollywood is 'sticking by' their perception about her, tries her luck in regional cinema



Just because she feels the Hindi film fraternity is caught in a web of perception about her range as an actor and isn't giving her ample opportunities, isn't reason enough for Zareen Khan to simply sit at home. She is making the most of the visibility she is getting through regional cinema.

The actor, who first featured in a Punjabi film Jatt James Bond in 2014, and she recently featured in a Telugu movie titled Chanakya, and also in a Punjabi film Daaka.

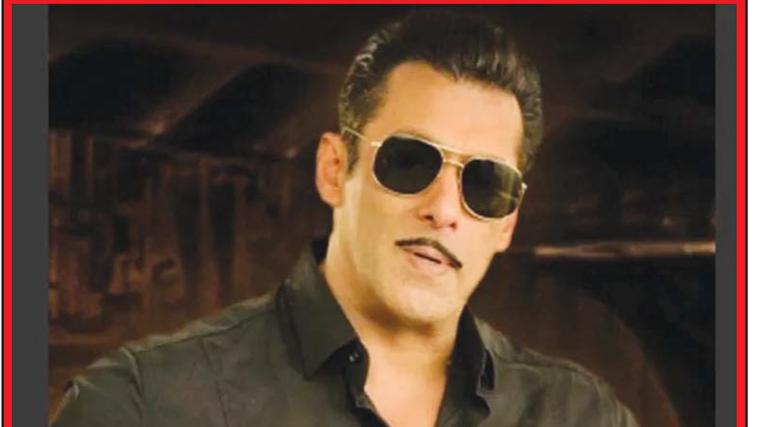
On her experience of working outside Hindi cinema, Zareen says, "Doing a Punjabi film is different, a southern film is different. My Telugu film was my very first experience in the

southern film industry. It's an amazing industry. It is very disciplined and they get so much work done in such a short span of time. It was really fun working there, and I hope I do more films there."

Having said that, she says Punjabi is a market she loves. "I love Punjabis. My best friends are Punjabis. They are such big-hearted people, such happy-go-lucky people that work doesn't feel like work with them. I remember on the last day of my shoot on my Punjabi film, we actually had tears and we were crying [because of the bonding]," adds Zareen, who has more projects coming up. She feels that while Bollywood is "living by or sticking by" a perception

about her, maybe she needs to do something "really out-of-the-box to show them that I am capable too of being a part of their films". While Zareen rues the lack of opportunities she has got in Hindi showbiz, she adds that "in the meantime, I don't think I should be upset and sit at home". "People are recognising my talent in different cinema, so why not? Till the time my potential is recognised here [in Bollywood], I think I am very happy that the Punjabis and people from the south have recognised my talent and potential and are giving me that opportunity, and I'm really happy about it," says Zareen, who recently attended an international film festival in New York.

Salman Khan calls Dabangg, Tere Naam small films: 'Nobody remembers they worked completely on content'



Bollywood star Salman Khan, whose stardom is based mostly on entertainers, has said content-driven cinema works when commercial elements are added. He also labelled his films Dabangg and Tere Naam as small films that worked purely on their content. Speaking to Bollywoodlife in an interview, Salman said, "I think they're talking about a different kind of content. I think they're talking about the smaller movies, the web, that kind of content. You know that kind of parallel cinema that used to not work earlier, like what we used to call art cinema, which used to be a different chain of cinema, has now become a part of standard cinema. A bit of commercialism has now been added to it; earlier

they used to be very small-budgeted films - now the budget has increased a bit and they've been shifted here now is what I feel, and it's a good thing."

He also said, "Till the time the content doesn't click, the film won't click, it doesn't matter how big a star you are. You can get the Friday, Saturday and Sunday numbers, but beyond that, it won't hold. No matter how good you're looking or how good your body's looking, nobody's going to sit and watch your film. Even if they are ready to pay for tickets and stuff like that, no one's going to go and sit there for two-and-a-half hours." Salman is currently promoting his upcoming film - Dabangg 3 that hits theatres on December 20.

Jess Wright and her sister Natalya, 19, share more bikini-clad photos as they reminisce on their Turks And Caicos getaway with Millie Bobby Brown

They recently returned from a sun-drenched getaway to Turks And Caicos with their unlikely family friend - Hollywood superstar Millie Bobby Brown. And Jess Wright was clearly feeling nostalgic as she shared a throwback bikini-clad photo from their getaway on Thursday while her sister Natalya posted new snaps from her current ski trip in Chamonix, France.

The TOWIE star, 34, took to Instagram to upload a sultry photo of herself in Turks And Caicos captioned: 'The sky's the limit,' followed by a blue heart. In the snap, Jess looked sensational as she showcased her toned figure in a white strapless bikini as she posed to the side with her arms in the air. Making sure her swimwear coordinated, the reality star teamed her look with a white pedicure and matching coloured hair scrunchie which she used to tie back her brunette locks. Meanwhile, despite only just returning from Turks And Caicos, Natalya revealed that she has already jetted off on another holiday to Chamonix,



© Natalya Wright/Instagram

France, for a ski trip. Yet despite the snowy weather, the 19-year-old Instagram sensation couldn't resist showing off her toned figure in a skimpy bikini. Natalya joked that she had ditched her ski wear for swimwear as she posed up a storm in a tiny white frilly bikini with a dressing gown draped over her arms in

front of the stunning snowy scenery. The younger sister of Mark Wright also shared a collection of bikini-clad photos of herself in the ski chalet's hot tub and sauna. Natalya also posted a picture of herself all glammed up as she revealed she felt like a 'chalet girl' in a metallic copper mini dress, cream

cardigan and white heeled ankle boots. It comes after Jess and Natalya shared yet more throwback photos from their Turks And Caicos getaway with Millie Bobby Brown, 15, earlier this week. The girls looked as though they had a whale of a time as they sunbathed in a variety of bikinis and indulged in a little



horsieriding, posting the snaps on Instagram. In one sweet snap, Jess shared a picture of herself and Millie looking super glam. Jess wore a white bikini top and frilly skirt and Millie wore a pretty pink dress. In another, Jess wrote that they were 'spirit animals' as they prepared to paint the town red. Jess

captioned the image with the words: 'Magical nights.' She added: 'There are not enough words to sum up this holiday but the only way to express how I feel about it is, life isn't about places or things that take your breath away; it's about the people, & the people on this trip are forever in my heart.'

Star Wars The Rise of Skywalker first reactions are mixed

It's epic, but disrespectful to The Last Jedi

Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker held its world premiere on Monday, and first reactions to the highly secretive new film have flooded the internet. Fans and journalists have taken to social media to offer immediate takes on the film, the ninth instalment in the epic space opera saga.

While several people praised director JJ Abrams for satisfyingly wrapping up the sequel trilogy, which he began in 2015 with Star Wars: The Force Awakens, others had mixed emotions about the

retconning of Star Wars: The Last Jedi, which received fan backlash for its unexpected plot twists.

"I've seen #StarWarsTheRiseofSkywalker. It's... a lot. There's a lot I like and some I loved but overall my feelings are pretty mixed. It felt like an apology for The Last Jedi in some ways and a sequel to The Force Awakens in many, which I found frustrating," one person wrote. "The seams from Disney's 'Star Wars' director changes, rushed production schedules, etc., are still present in

#RiseofSkywalker, but most fun, gorgeous, rewarding of the films. Not sure Palpatine/Empire needed 3rd trilogy, but what matters is conclusion of Kylo-Rey: it delivers," another person wrote.

Another fan expressed slight reservations about the film and wrote on Twitter, "Lot to take in with #riseofskywalker It is the big adventure, lightsaber adventure I hoped for. A few things I still wonder if it was necessary but it was a very satisfying end to this new trilogy." Another person wrote, "I'm emotional,



overwhelmed, surprised, shocked & stunned. More than anything, I'm happy. Thanks for coming through one more time, Star Wars.#TheRiseOfSkywalker." Representing the dissenters, which is unusual after an exclusive

premiere such as this, one person wrote, "STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER is certainly the most convoluted Star Wars. There is a lot I liked, but the first half gets so bogged down with exposition and new plot

and doodads and beacons and transmitters, it feels like it should have been three movies on its own." Another person wrote, "I loved parts, I didn't love others, and I'm leaving the theater very, very conflicted about it."



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Former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf sentenced to death for high treason



Musharraf seized power in a military coup in 1999 and ruled Pakistan as President until 2008.

He was indicted in 2014 on a total of five charges, including three counts of subverting, suspending and changing the country's constitution, firing Pakistan's chief justice, and imposing emergency rule.

It's the first time in Pakistan's history that an army chief has been tried and found guilty of treason. Under Pakistan's constitution, high treason is a crime that carries the death penalty or life imprisonment.

The special court ruled on the death sentence by a two to one majority, with one of the three judges not backing the death sentence but agreeing on a conviction.

Musharraf has been living in Dubai since 2016 after Pakistan's Supreme Court lifted a travel ban allowing him to leave the country to seek medical

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(News Agencies)- Former Pakistan President and military ruler Pervez Musharraf has been sentenced to death in absentia for high treason following a six-year legal case.

A three-member special court in Islamabad on Tuesday convicted Musharraf of violating the

constitution by unlawfully declaring emergency rule while he was in power, in a case that had been pending since 2013.

The 76-year-old former leader, who has lived in self-imposed exile in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates for more than three years, has the option to appeal the verdict.

Two men admit to working on illegal streaming sites that rivaled the size of Netflix and Hulu



(News Agencies)- As the streaming wars continue to heat up, the Department of Justice says two men behind some of the largest illegal streaming services have been taken out of play.

Two computer programmers in Las Vegas pleaded guilty last Friday to criminal copyright charges after an FBI investigation revealed they had been working on two massive, illegal online streaming sites, iStreamItAll and Jetflixs, according to plea agreements.

iStreamItAll's content library featured more than 118,000 television episodes and nearly 11,000 movies, making it larger than Netflix (NFLX), Hulu or Amazon (AMZN) Prime, according to a release from the Justice Department. Both iStreamItAll and Jetflixs

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Tulsi Gabbard faces heat back home for present vote on impeachment

Longshot presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard is facing some heat in her heavily Democratic home state of Hawaii for voting "present" on two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump. Kai Kahele, a Democratic state senator who is running to succeed Gabbard in Congress, said the two most consequential votes that a member of Congress will ever cast are on whether to send troops into harm's way and whether to impeach a president. He said her decision to vote "present" was disappointing and unacceptable.

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Trump's 2020 case got a boost this week, except for that one big thing that happened



Any other president than Donald Trump might just have had the best week of his career -- a pre-Christmas sleigh ride that included getting a major trade deal through Congress, getting the federal government funded (with money for his controversial border wall!) and getting the official green light for a whole new

awesome-sounding branch of the military, the Space Force.

To cap it off, more good economic news kept the already bubbly markets frothing ever higher. CNN Business' Anneken Tappe reports: "US stocks once again finished at all-time high closing levels on Friday. Throughout the week, the Dow and S&P 500 hit records four times, while the Nasdaq Composite logged seven consecutive days on all-time highs."

But Trump also got impeached, becoming only the third US president to face the prospect of removal from office. Forced to wait for his acquittal

in the Senate, Trump is thrashing in a stew of his own aggression as he heads to his private Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida to celebrate the holidays and wait to see when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will allow a trial to move ahead.

As CNN's White House team put it: "Trump's sojourns to his oceanfront resort -- filled with hours of unstructured time on his palm-lined patio, random chats in the buffet line on prime rib night and interactions with wealthy friends that often serve to reinforce his most volatile instincts --.

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