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Welcome to USA

Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi Prime Minister of India

(The South Asian Insider Weekly, on behalf of our readers and supporters)

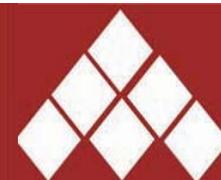


Why Modi Is Visiting Texas ?

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Indian-Americans Urge US Congressman Ro Khanna To Leave Pakistan Caucus

Ro Khanna, 42, became the first Indian-American to have joined the Congressional Pakistan Caucus last month. He is also the member Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, which is the largest country-specific caucus in the House of Representatives.



(News Agencies) WASHINGTON: A record number of 230 Indian-American organisations in the United States have urged Democratic Congressman Ro Khanna to withdraw from the Congressional Caucus on Pakistan, saying it was contrary to both American

principles and India's geo-strategic interests. Mr Khanna, 42, became the first Indian-American to have joined the Congressional Pakistan Caucus last month. He is also the member Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, which is the largest

country-specific caucus in the House of Representatives. In a letter submitted to the Indian-American lawmaker on Monday, Indian-American organisations, professional associations and community leaders urged Mr Khanna to withdraw from the

Congressional Pakistan Caucus. A copy of the letter was released by the Hindu American Foundation (HAF). "As a leading member of the House India Caucus, Foreign Affairs Committee, and a champion of human rights, we are deeply troubled that

NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer's Open Letter to Workers You Have Labor Rights Regardless of Immigration Status

New Yorker: As many of you may know, my office enforces state and local prevailing wage laws. That means that if you have done construction work on a New York City public work project or have been employed in a building service job through a city contract or in a building with an affordable housing property tax exemption, then you may be entitled to prevailing wages and benefits, regardless of your immigration status. Often, workers are unaware that our office has collected money on their behalf. Other times, the workers are afraid to come forward because of fear of retaliation by their employer or

because of their immigration status. If you believe you were underpaid on a City-funded job – no matter who you are, or where you're from – let us know. We work to recoup unpaid wages with interest, and we collect money for workers regardless of their immigration status or whether they still live in New York City or have moved to another state or country. Because informed workers are their own best advocates, my office has started a new initiative to fine contractors that fail to provide written notice to their employees of their right to receive prevailing wages and benefits. Workers that know their rights are less likely to be

exploited by unscrupulous employers. Since taking office in 2014, we have assessed more than \$28 million against City contractors in unpaid prevailing wages with interest and penalties, returned more than \$13.5 million to workers, and barred over 50 contractors who took advantage of workers from State and City public work contracts. And we've done it because people came forward. No New Yorker should be exploited, and no New Yorker should be illegally underpaid, regardless of their immigration status. Together, we can make an honest day's pay for an honest day's work a reality on City-funded jobs.

you joined the Congressional Pakistan Caucus," the letter stated. The letter alleged that Pakistan continues to utilise terror to attack US interests in Afghanistan and wage a proxy war against India. Pakistan has shown a complete and utter disregard for human rights and religious freedom and was recently labelled as a Country of Particular Concern by the US State Department for its "systematic, ongoing, [and] egregious violations of religious freedom" against Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims, they said.

"We believe that your membership in this Caucus is contrary to both American principles and our geo-strategic interests in the Indian Subcontinent and the broader South Asian region," the letter said. "Accordingly, we urge you to withdraw from the Congressional Pakistan Caucus. We further urge you to write directly to Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and meet with (Pakistan) Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan to address Pakistan's ongoing use of terrorism to destabilise the region and its rampant and severe human rights violations," it said.

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'Namaste... and sorry': Tulsi Gabbard's message to PM Modi ahead of Houston event

While warmly welcoming the prime minister, Gabbard apologised for not being able to attend the event due to prior commitments related to her presidential campaigns in Iowa.



(News Agencies) US congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard released a video message Thursday welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States but said she won't be able to make it to the Howdy, Modi! outreach because of her presidential campaign obligations.

"Namaste! I would like to extend a warm welcome to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his latest visit to the US," Gabbard said, adding, "and I am sorry that I will not be able to join there in person due to previously scheduled presidential campaign events." Gabbard is the first Hindu elected to US congress and has been close to Prime Minister Modi, who had sent her gifts on her wedding in 2015 and she attended both his previous diaspora outreach events in New York and

San Jose. "I'm very happy to see that Howdy Modi is bringing together Indian Americans and Hindu Americans from across our country, including many of my colleagues in the U.S. Congress," said Gabbard. "India is the world's oldest and largest democracy, and one of the United States most important allies. The United States and India must work closely together if we are to address the pressing issues that impact our nations, our countries, and the entire world—such as combating climate change, preventing nuclear war and nuclear proliferation, and improving the economic well-being of our people."

As a candidate for the Democratic party's presidential nomination she has faced scrutiny of those ties

and campaign contributions from Hindu-Americans. And she has sought to distance herself from him. In May she told The Intercept, "There are

things that are happening within the Indian government that I disagree with. I don't pretend to support or approve or endorse all the practices

of the ruling party in India." Gabbard said in the video message she will be campaigning in Iowa at the time of the Houston outreach, trying to stay in the

race. She failed to qualify for the last presidential debate and if she is unable to make it to the next one, her candidature will be in serious jeopardy.

DHS walks back decision to halt medical deportation relief

(News Agencies) Acting Homeland Security Department Secretary Kevin McAleenan has directed federal immigration officials to resume processing deportation relief requests for people receiving treatment for serious medical conditions. The decision reverses an earlier move by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to put a freeze on the requests, known as "deferred action." The earlier decision made an exception for military members and their families, but sought to deny relief to other applicants. "At the direction of Acting Secretary McAleenan, USCIS is resuming its consideration of non-military deferred action requests on a discretionary, case-by-case basis, except as otherwise required by an applicable statute, regulation, or court

order," a USCIS spokesperson said in a written statement. USCIS quietly changed its policy around deferred action last month. The agency sent letters to roughly 400 applicants that told them the requests would not be processed and that they should depart the country within 33 days. Democrats and pro-migrant advocates blasted the move. A House Oversight subcommittee held a hearing on the issue last week that featured testimony from two undocumented immigrants with serious medical conditions. Both witnesses had received letters informing them their deferred action requests would not be considered. "It should not take an emergency hearing by Congress — and threats for more — to force the Trump administration to do the

right thing," said Oversight Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) in a written statement. "Our committee will continue to seek answers about who was responsible for this cruel policy in the first place."

An internal USCIS memo obtained by POLITICO and published last week showed that the agency urged McAleenan to rescind its deferred action authority altogether. The memo was prepared by USCIS Policy and Strategy Chief Kathy Nuebel Kovarik for a Sept. 9 meeting to be led by acting USCIS Director Ken Cuccinelli. In the document, Nuebel Kovarik wrote that if McAleenan declined to remove the authority altogether, he should at least keep the current guidance halting any future requests for relief.

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'Storm Area 51' has Nevada desert towns on edge as they brace themselves for flood of visitors

(News Agencies)LAS VEGAS – In an area known for mystery and intrigue, the biggest unknown lies in the days ahead.

The tiny Nevada towns that dot the landscape of the high desert areas about 100 miles north of bustling Las Vegas are preparing for a possible influx of thousands of people over the next several days due to the viral "Storm Area 51" and the related festivals that have sprung up.

Thousands of alien-obsessed visitors, and just a pair of gas stations along a lone two-lane road. "If there happens to be any problem, people could be trapped out here," Ken Sig, a tour guide at Las Vegas Adventure Tours, told Fox News Wednesday during a lengthy 10-hour tour of the area. "It could be like

Woodstock in the desert." Area 51 is popularly known as the site of rumored government studies of outer space aliens. The "Storm Area 51" Facebook event went viral in July as people pledged to crash the secret military base in an attempt to "see them aliens." More than 2 million Facebook users have now said they are going, with over 1.4 million replying they were interested. The Internet joke that went viral has spurred two rural Nevada counties to draft an emergency declaration, with local law enforcement planning to team resources with the state and neighboring counties ahead of Sept. 20-22 events. During the day on Wednesday, numerous emergency vehicles could be seen heading north along U.S. 93 toward the

site, and staging areas could be seen with fire and rescue personnel.

Flight restrictions have been issued for the area surrounding Area 51 from Thursday through Sunday, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. The FAA's "notice to airmen" states that pilots are not allowed to operate aircraft near the Nevada National Security Site from 7 a.m. on Thursday through the same time on Sunday for "special security reasons," the FAA's note states.

Sig, who has lived in the Vegas area for nearly 30 years and worked for Adventure Tours for about seven months, told Fox News on Wednesday he's given about 100 tours to the area but in recent weeks there's been a notable uptick in security that's



made things "very fluid." On a recent tour, he was confronted by dozens of armed guards on the side road to Area 51's popular main gate, causing him to turn back.

The road that leads to the main gate of Area 51 intersects other dirt and gravel roads, making it easy to accidentally end up on private property. Those trekking to the area relying on basic GPS without a professional tour guide may risk facing hefty fines, jail time, or worse.

"If you don't know the areas, you aren't going to know

the spots," Sig told Fox News. Traveling through the area, dotted by Joshua trees and occasional wildlife, distant swirls of dust can occasionally be seen that, on a closer look, are stirred up by a vehicle. On the road to what's known as Area 51's so-called "back gate," a white unmarked truck appeared on a side road before turning off in a direction as other vehicles away on distant hills. "Nobody for sure knows what's going to happen in the next few days here," he told Fox News. "It's one of those things that time

will tell."

The owner of Las Vegas Adventure Tours and operator of GetYourGuide's Area 51 tour, Will Tryon, previously told Fox News his company won't be taking customers out into the area from Sept. 19 to 22 out of concerns that things could "get difficult," including the possibility that the few gas stations in the area may run out of fuel. "We have to think first of the safety of their customers," he said. "I don't think putting a customer in that kind of situation is a safe choice."

The Surreal Reason This Woman Can't Sue Massage Envy Over Her Sexual Assault

(News Agencies) Lilly just wanted to cancel her membership with Massage Envy. The 49-year-old California woman, who is only giving her first name to protect her identity, says she was sexually assaulted by a massage therapist at one of the company's spas in 2016. She is one of more than 180 women who filed sexual assault complaints against the company. Lilly, for her part, complained to the police, the state licensing board and the company. A year and a half later, she realized Massage Envy was still billing her every month for her spa membership. Frustrated and angry, she downloaded the company's app hoping that she could use it to cancel.

That's when things got even worse. When Lilly clicked to agree to the app's terms and conditions, she also agreed to take any complaints about the company to arbitration, a secret court where she would have no right to a jury trial and where the deck is often stacked against victims of sexual assault and harassment.

Lilly's case, though extreme, is not unusual. Hundreds of millions of Americans have unwittingly signed away their right to go to court against most of the biggest companies in the world through the practice that's known as forced arbitration. These agreements are tucked into online terms of service or buried in cellphone or credit card agreements. They're even slapped onto stickers placed on washing machines.

This Friday, the House is expected to vote on a bill, the Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal Act, that would ban forced arbitration. The FAIR Act would prohibit so-called pre-dispute arbitration agreements in all employment, civil rights, consumer and antitrust cases.

If the law passes, Americans could still choose to take a dispute to arbitration but no one would be forced to give up their right to go to court. The bill is expected to pass in the House, with wide Democratic support. At least one Republican, Rep. Matt Gaetz (Fla.), also backs the Fair Act.

The vote Friday would

mark the first time an arbitration bill has even made it out of committee. Though, it isn't expected to pass the Republican-controlled Senate. In floor debates at the House on Wednesday, one Republican congresswoman, Rep. Debbie Lesko of Arizona, summarized the opposition, saying the bill would be a boon to trial lawyers and flood the courts with class-action lawsuits. She contended arbitration is faster for victims and less costly. Lawyers and victims who've gone through the process say those claims have little grounding in reality.

Still, even though the bill might not become law, activists and arbitration opponents are celebrating a victory.

"The fact this is coming to the house floor for a vote is a pretty monumental development," said Karla Gilbride, a senior attorney at Public Justice, who represents workers and consumers in cases against corporations that involved forced arbitration.

Don't take CBD products into the UAE, UK government warns travelers



(News Agencies) Your body lotion or e-cigarette could get you into serious trouble in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This was the British government's message to travelers to the Emirates -- a country with a policy of zero tolerance for bringing drugs to the country. While the UAE's strict views on drug trafficking are well known, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) this week reminded travelers that even if they don't see the drug, it doesn't mean it's not there.

In particular, the FCO warns that "some skincare products and E-cigarette refills may contain ingredients that are illegal in the UAE, such as CBD oil." CBD oil contains cannabidiol, a substance found in the marijuana plant and sometimes used for pain management. It can be bought legally in most European coun-

tries, provided it has a limited amount of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive substance in cannabis -- ie, the one that gets users high.

CBD oil without THC has gained popularity as an ingredient in cosmetics, thanks to claims it has anti-inflammatory properties.

Products containing CBD include soaps, moisturizers, eyeliners and lipsticks and are legally sold in most European countries and the United States.

However, the Foreign Office warns that bringing even the smallest amount of an illegal drug into the UAE can lead to a jail sentence of at least four years.

And it's not just carrying drugs that is illegal. According to the FCO, Emirati authorities count the presence of drugs in the blood stream as possession.

How US policy in Af-Pak has hurt Indian interests

When United States (US) President Donald Trump joins Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 50,000-strong public rally in Houston next week, it will showcase the strength of the US-India relationship. But the powerful symbolism should not blind us to the divergent US and Indian interests in India's neighbourhood, especially the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) region. Indeed, before the rally, Trump will likely get the India trade deal that he has sought.

The collapse of the deal between the chief US negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Afghan Taliban is unlikely to compel the US to adopt a long-term approach to the Af-Pak region so that it ceases to be the global hotbed of terrorism. Even if Trump had signed off on the deal, it would not have brought peace to Afghanistan. Indeed, it would have only triggered a new war between Afghan nationalists and Pakistan's proxies.

Successive US presidents' short-range approach to the Af-Pak region has fostered Afghanistan's destabilisation, cemented the Pakistan military's grip within the country, and meant enduring security costs for India.

How the Af-Pak situation directly impinges on Indian security has been apparent since the 1980s, when the US used Islam as an ideological tool to spur jihad against the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Portions of the US Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) multibillion-dollar military aid to the anti-Soviet guerrillas (out of whom al Qaeda evolved) were siphoned off by the conduit, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to ignite an Islamist insurrection in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The Islamists demographically transformed the Kashmir Valley by expelling virtually all Kashmiri Pandits but not before kidnapping and murdering hundreds of them, including gouging out their victims' eyes and gangraping women.

It was America's Af-Pak policy — centred on rewards to Pakistan — that helped bring terrorism to India, including a vicious jihad culture to the Kashmir Valley. To undermine India's internal security, the Inter-Services Intelligence just copied the CIA's playbook against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The US' relationship with the Pakistan army and ISI, despite ups and downs, remains cosy, emboldening their death-by-a-thousand-cuts strategy against India. Nothing can be more galling for New Delhi than the perverse equivalence Trump draws between India and Pakistan.

The now-scuttled US deal with the Taliban was proof that America not only negotiates with terrorists, but is also willing to get in bed with the killers of US soldiers. Trump's plan to host Taliban and felicitate them as "peace makers" at Camp David was redolent of a 1985 White House ceremony where Ronald Reagan gestured towards several Afghan mujahideen and

declared, "These gentlemen are the moral equivalent of America's founding fathers." Like their procreator, Pakistan, the Taliban use terrorism as their main leverage. Pakistan's investment in terrorism has been paying rich dividends to it and its proxies. The Taliban has forced the Americans to seek Pakistani support for a face-saving exit. The dividends are also apparent from the renewed US courtship of Pakistan.

The US, meanwhile, has increasingly turned its global war on terrorism into a geopolitical tool. The result is greater jihadism and terrorism. Last week, marking the anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks, the US added more individuals and groups to its terrorism lists, including Noor Wali, the new head of the Pakistani Taliban. This outfit is the nemesis of the Pakistan military but poses no threat to the Afghanistan-based US forces, whose battlefield foe is the Afghan Taliban. Yet conspicuously missing from the US terrorism list is the Afghan Taliban or any ISI or other Pakistani military official. By contrast, the US has imposed terrorism sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and individuals with ties to it.

Three successive Pakistani Taliban chiefs have been assassinated in US strikes, with each killing designed to win Pakistan's cooperation in Afghanistan. But, despite all its talk of counterterrorism cooperation with India, the US will not kill any of the India-wanted, Pakistan-based terrorists, also on the US terrorism lists. The \$10 million US bounty on Hafiz Saeed since 2012, for example, is all for show.

In Afghanistan, a war-weary US is justifiably seeking to cut its losses. Ending the longest war in US history is integral to rolling back America's "imperial overstretch" — a Trump goal. But to prevent the Taliban from recapturing power in Kabul, the US will have to keep a residual force. It can draw down its forces without making concessions to the Taliban and Pakistan. Its endless search for a Faustian bargain with the Taliban is engendering growing bloodshed in Afghanistan and imposing ever greater costs on Af-Pak's neighbours.

For too long, India has taken a cautious and reactive approach to regional security issues. If it is not to be weighed down by the Af-Pak region, it must take a long-term view and become proactive. It should capitalise on the remarkable goodwill it enjoys in Afghanistan, where it is the favourite of the patriots in their fight against Pakistan's proxies. Without putting boots on the ground, India must play a much bigger role in Afghanistan, including to safeguard the multibillion-dollar assistance it has provided that country, and to checkmate Pakistan.

The adverse impact of climate change

The human cost of climate change is increasing every year. According to a report in the Hindustan Times, this year's

June 1-September 14 monsoon saw the highest number of extreme rainfall events (1,800), and the most people (1,422) killed in the season, since data started being recorded in 2010. Data also showed that

monsoon-related deaths were more widespread across India than in any previous year with the highest toll of 317 in Maharashtra, followed by 203 in West Bengal and 200 in Madhya Pradesh. It's not just rain-related deaths; other extreme weather-related events such as heat waves or cyclonic storms, are also having huge impact on the people, especially the poor. On July 9, the government informed the Lok Sabha that over 2,400 people died due to extreme weather events in the last one year. Between 1980 and 2010, the government added, India experienced 431 major natural disasters. Unfortunately, minister of state for environment Babul Supriyo, added that "direct attribution to climate change [to the extreme weather events] has not been indicated". But United Nations reports have said that over the last 40 years there has been a doubling of extreme weather events, causing huge loss of life, disrupted billions of lives and caused staggering economic losses.

To reduce climate-related deaths, mitigation and resilience, which the

Paris Climate Agreement talks about, every policy decision needs to be evaluated from the climate angle. In



addition, India's governments and people must recognise the protective value of forests, and strictly enforce regulations that protect them. Second, stop building infrastructure on danger zones such as flood plains or at the foot of unstable hills. Third, alleviate poverty and strength public institutions to reduce the risk. Fourth, improve forecasts and multi-hazard early warnings, be it on heat waves or floods.

While the central governments have been pushing the states to improve their climate action, the performance of the states has been varied across the country, says Driving climate action: State leadership in India, a May 2019 report by the Climate Group. This is unfortunate because the climate-laggard states must realise, as the data-rich report also shows, that along with saving lives, economic gain and climate action can go hand in hand. This is borne out by the fact that the top 10 performing climate action states align almost identically with the 10 highest per capita income states.



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PM Narendra Modi in the US: What are the stakes?

He will seek new economic alliances and reassure stakeholders that the slowdown in India is temporary

(News Agencies) Later this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit the United States (US) to address the United Nations General Assembly in New York. During the trip, Modi will also visit Houston to engage the Indian diaspora and boost India's economic ties with the US.

The significance of the Houston visit has been heightened by the fact the White House has announced that US President Donald Trump will participate in a major diaspora event to be held there. The White House press release states the President will be joining Modi because, "It will be a great opportunity to emphasise the strong ties between the people of the United States and India... and to discuss ways to deepen their energy and trade relationship."

President Trump might also be coming to Houston because he likes to be in front of large audiences and in this US presidential campaign season there may be some Trump supporters and prospective donors at this event. The nature of the Texas economy and the size of the Indian diaspora in the state give it great potential for Modi and India.

With a GDP of \$1.8 trillion, the state of Texas is America's second largest economy with an economy bigger than those of Canada and Russia. India is currently Houston's fourth-largest trading partner. Last year, the bilateral trade exceeded \$7 billion, nearly a tenth of India-US bilateral trade.

While this is a large amount, there is a significant opportunity to increase trade with Texas substantially — especially in the energy sector. As India progresses toward becoming a \$5 trillion economy over the next few years, its energy needs will increase dramatically. The Middle East and Russia will not be able to satisfy those needs. Texas has the resources to help do so.

The Lone Star state is a leader in crude oil production and its refineries process more than a fourth of all the US oil refining.

It's not just the natural and business resources of Texas that make the Houston visit appealing, it is the human

resources as well. Texas is home to a quarter million Indian-Americans, having the fourth-largest Indian-American population in the US after California, New York and New Jersey.

The Modi government is well aware of this and that is why on September 22, Prime Minister Modi will address a Texas-sized audience of 50,000 Indian Americans in the NRG Stadium in Houston at a gathering named "Howdy, Modi!" — notice the Texan twang. This will be by far the largest crowd Modi has addressed in the United States.

On his first visit to the US in 2014, he spoke to nearly 18,000 Indian Americans at Madison Square Garden in New York City, two years later he addressed a crowd of a similar size in San Jose in the Silicon Valley of California. Having covered the two U.S. coasts in 2014 and 2016, selecting Houston as the venue for this visit is a solid

strategic choice for these pivotal times.

Unlike their compatriots on the two coasts and in the Midwest, who tend to be more liberal, Indian Americans in the South tend to be more conservative in their political ideology and thus more aligned with Modi's politics.

Given this, one can expect Modi to make a big investment pitch to those in the stadium, especially given India's recent economic downturn. Over the past several months, as economic growth has slowed down, a number of foreign institutional investors have either pulled their money out of India or stopped additional investment. The Indian diaspora in this country could step up and help fill this gap by committing financial support to India.

Modi, in return, might announce a direct flight connecting Houston and India. The South is the only region in the United States

that does not have direct flights to India.

On the whole, the event billed "Howdy, Modi! Shared Dreams, Bright Futures" will feature a series of entertainment and cultural programs, reflecting bilateral cultural ties and Indian American heritage, can be expected to play out as an Indian-American love-fest. And, the Prime Minister will undoubtedly, as he does on all these occasions, perform exceptionally well and generate great enthusiasm from those in attendance.

After Houston, Modi will travel to New York where he will not be the main act but one of many speakers at the annual Bloomberg Global Business Forum. Other notable speakers at this year's Forum include global business and government leaders such as former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush and Christine LaGarde, former managing director of the International



Monetary Fund and incoming president of the European Central Bank. PM Modi will certainly be well received and his remarks will be listened closely as corporate leaders and investors from the US and around the world take the measure of India's current economic conditions and plans for the future. No decisions will be made at this event but it does provide the opportunity to assuage any concerns or misgivings that those in the business community might have regarding India's current state. The Kashmir situation will get some media attention

during Modi's trip and attract some protesters but it is unlikely to dominate the coverage either in the US or India or to be a centerpiece for Modi's conversations. As a result, what is at stake on Modi's September visit to the United States is increasing the financial support from those in the Indian American diaspora for India; forging some new economic alliances; and reassuring corporate and government leaders that the economic setbacks have been only temporary and that India will soon return to a fast growth path.

A tale of colliding motivations, expectations and aims

Taliban, Rawalpindi declared victory too soon. The game now depends on Trump's calculations

United States President Donald Trump has failed to meet his deadline of September 1 for a peace agreement with the Taliban. He has also cancelled his planned meeting with the leaders of the extremist militia. There were many reasons for this. In part, the Taliban began celebrating too early and began to give the perception of a government-in-waiting, negotiating a transfer of power. The Pakistan military, intermediaries on behalf of the Taliban, were similarly exultant. A pushback was inevitable. Taliban-backed terror attacks only helped.

The rush towards a deal with the Taliban risked completely marginalising the formally-elected government in Kabul. That government has its limitations and Afghan democracy is far from perfect. Yet, in the past 18 years, since the removal of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan has seen gains in social and gender reforms, development and capacity building, and political and economic evolution. This has come at a great price. In the United States, there is a sense of sacrifice of blood and treasure.

To walk away with no guarantee of the gains being sustained — and with the Taliban giving no assurances of mending its ways, sharing power, or even ceasing to harbour terrorists — was always foolhardy. The bet in Rawalpindi, and among the Taliban, has been that Trump is essentially

an isolationist whose constituency is fatigued by war; and he wants to withdraw from global security responsibilities. That is why the Taliban played hardball. It was convinced the White House would agree to just about anything, if only to ensure substantial troop withdrawals before the 2020 US presidential election.

Trump is never consistent; his last decision is only as final as his last tweet. In the months ahead, he will continue to seek an exit strategy. The "remainers" — those in the American system who worry about a hasty departure — will continue to seek to tire him out. Already, they have succeeded in moderating his initial rhetoric of bringing back every single soldier. The cat-and-mouse game will continue till Trump is convinced that an Afghanistan withdrawal is no longer a factor in his re-election campaign. When (and if) that point arrives is anybody's guess.

What is holding back Trump — and may even have spooked him — is the idea of an immediate collapse of the political arrangement in Kabul if the US announces a "we're going home" timetable. A return to a full-fledged Taliban/Taliban-style regime will make for messy media headlines. It will also raise questions from military families about how their contributions have been insulted. The media doesn't bother Trump but misgivings among the military community — many of

whom are drawn from patriotic, blue-collar heartland constituencies on which the US president depends — would be serious. This sentiment will harden if a US withdrawal is followed by any terror attack on American territory or assets that can be traced back to Afghanistan. If this were to happen before the November vote in the US, it would jeopardise Trump.

On their part, the military and the department of defence have been doing their utmost to oppose, delay and sabotage their president's Afghan departure programme. They worry that whatever the circumstances, and whichever the pieces of paper the Taliban signs, a US withdrawal will be read as surrender.

From counter-insurgency and nation building, the US mission in Afghanistan is now restricted to a narrower counterterrorism and containment. Frankly, it is not losing lives the way it was. In every year from 2016 to 2019 (so far), fewer than 20 American troops have been killed in action in Afghanistan. This number used to be in the hundreds — 710 body bags in 2010 and 563 in 2011, to pick two examples.

The military is also clear that once it goes, it can never come back. It will have to destroy or write-off billions of dollars of equipment in Afghanistan, carefully put in place over 18 years. Absence of sea access makes it logistically impossible to bring back

that equipment. The write-off the US military will incur will, by itself, be larger than the GDP of most countries. Anyone who Trump appoints to the job of Secretary of Defence, even his most ardent loyalist, will appreciate the Pentagon's arguments. No wonder the previous incumbent, James Mattis, was the face of "remain" in Washington, DC.

The implications of a possible US withdrawal are also reshaping approaches in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan. For their own reasons, Pakistan, China, Russia and Iran all initially welcomed the prospect of American humiliation. Iran has done tactical business with the Taliban in the past decade to embarrass and weaken American presence. Such a partnership is not sustainable, and Iran will sooner or later be sucked into a post-withdrawal civil war, aiding anti-Taliban groups.

Russia is also beginning to hedge its bets. It is dawning on the Kremlin that what benefits Beijing does not automatically benefit Moscow. A Taliban takeover will endanger the countries of Central Asia and threaten them with Islamist insurgencies. These countries were, and substantially still remain, Russia's backyard.

Narendra Modi is a multi-faceted personality

He is transforming India with his fortitude, politics of development, and firm decisions

By Amit Shah

Today is the 69th birthday of our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Since his early childhood, Modiji has devoted himself to the service of the nation. As a young man, he showed a strong inclination towards working for the uplift of the downtrodden. Born into a poor family, Modiji had a tough childhood, which motivated him to work for the poor and help them break the shackles of poverty.

Apart from his devotion towards helping one and all, and serving humanity passionately, Modiji is also known for his organisational abilities and political fortitude. In 1987, when he was made the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s organisation secretary for Gujarat, the party had only 12 Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in the state. But Modiji's organisational skills and political deftness made it possible for the party to capture 67 seats in the 1990 assembly elections. Then, in 1995, the BJP won 121 seats in Gujarat and formed the government in the

state. Since then, the BJP has remained undefeated and its leaders have been continuously serving the people of Gujarat. Today, the party is a force to reckon with in Gujarat, and this has been made possible only due to the organisational base created by Modiji in the state and the development work he initiated during his chief ministership.

Modiji also worked as the BJP's national general secretary and had then sowed the seeds of the party's pan-India growth. Today, the BJP is the world's largest political party, and it is all due to the vision of Modiji.

During the 1990s, I got the chance to work for the BJP under Modiji's leadership in Gujarat. I remember that there was an exhaustive and elaborate party membership campaign being run in Gujarat. The way Modiji used to organise membership drives down to the grassroots level was not just a learning experience for the party workers, but it was enlightening for me as well.

When Modiji became the chief minister of Gujarat in 2001, it

paved the way for changing the development paradigm in the state. During that time, he initiated several programmes, which were considered "unimplementable". When he decided to provide 24x7 power supply to every household in Gujarat, the idea had very few buyers. But through his political fortitude, strong determination and passion to work for the people, Modiji achieved this dream and showed the world that when there is a will, there is a way. There are numerous examples of how Modiji's image as a go-getter transformed Gujarat.

It was the Modiji-led Gujarat model of development that worked in favour of the BJP across India. It gave a clear message to the masses that if the leadership is committed, then a true welfare State is possible. Gujarat's growth story built a silent appreciation for the BJP across the country, which led to people showing the door to the corrupt, indifferent and inefficient Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government and



gave a decisive mandate to Modiji. With the motto — 'sabka saath, sabka vikas' — Modiji started many initiatives for poverty alleviation, resulting in a qualitative change in the living conditions of the poor. It would not be far-fetched to say that after Modiji became the prime minister, the poor have begun to believe that the government is sensitive towards their needs, hopes and aspirations. Another important thing to take note of is that, despite the heavy public expenditure on various developmental schemes by the government, not one charge of corruption has been levelled against the Modi government.

The chains of nepotism, casteism and the politics of appeasement, which had gripped India's politics for long, have been broken under Modiji's leadership. It has also broken one political myth. It is surprising that Modiji's caste accounts for less than 1% of Gujarat's population. But the reason for his victories in the state, and now across India, is due to his politics of development and commitment towards the poor and downtrodden.

Under Modiji's leadership, not only is the country working towards a developed society, but India's profile has also risen considerably on the global platform. The strongest proof of this is the world upholding India's position on Article 370 and denouncing Pakistan's stand. Pakistan has been left high and dry in its efforts to put India down internationally. Similarly, member states of the United Nations giving a green light to Modiji's proposal of accord international recognition to Yoga Diwas is also a sign of India's growing clout globally. Modiji believes in shaking things up to get the desired results. Keeping in mind the ills of vote bank politics, who would have thought that any

party would dare to bring a law on triple talaq to liberate Muslim women or remove Article 370 to ensure the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the national mainstream?

Modiji has always stressed on involving citizens in nation-building. The very first thing he did after assuming office as prime minister in 2014 was to hit the streets with a broom to promote cleanliness. Today, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has become a national movement. Now, Modiji has appealed to all of us to make India plastic-free, and I am sure we will achieve this very soon. One of the hallmarks of his style of governance is his ability to connect with the masses. Undoubtedly, people not only listen carefully to whatever he says, but also believe him and follow him.

To uplift the lives of people, particularly the needy and those from the weaker sections, Modiji is always ready to walk that extra mile. He has the ability to understand and utilise the capabilities and expertise of his team members. He delegates work by aptly gauging the understanding and capabilities of his team members, which ultimately helps in more efficient implementation of programmes.

Our prime minister has an unflinching resolve and unwavering patience; he is firm in decision-making; he does not let any obstacle come in the path of achieving the task; and he is a man of consensus who believes in the natural flow of ideas to get things done. It is a matter of great pride for us that today we work under a leader who is working relentlessly to re-establish India's cultural heritage and make it an egalitarian society. I extend Modiji my best wishes on his birthday and pray to God to bless him and give him more strength to serve his motherland and humanity.

India must plan for an oil crisis



Incidents like the Abqaiq fire in the Gulf can have instant fallout. Uncertainty is the primary additive to global crude these days. India, the world's fastest growing oil importer, needs to prepare for the possibility of oil prices and supplies going awry. The recent attack on the massive Abqaiq oil complex in Saudi Arabia is a reminder of India's over-dependence on the world's most unstable region. But, the Persian Gulf is still a distance away from war, and the oil prices are unlikely to superspike.

The attack fits in a pattern of Tehran targeting Saudi oil exports. The message: Iran may not be able to export oil, but do not assume you will be able to do so without hindrance. What has encouraged Iran to up the ante is the increasing evidence that the United States (US) is no longer as wholehearted in supporting the Arab monarchies as it was three years ago. The dismissal of anti-Iran hawk, National Security Advisor John Bolton, President Donald Trump's tepid response to the downing of a US drone by Iran, and the president's desire for a US-Iran summit are evi-

dences Riyadh can no longer be sure the US will have its back. The result is a game of shadows in which Iran tries to force Saudi Arabia to seek an accommodation that would include the easing of oil sanctions. Fortunately, for importers like India, there is a global surplus of black gold. The Abqaiq attack saw prices rise sharply, but only to the levels they were less than a fortnight ago. The impact of a slowing world economy and expectations of reduced crude demand on oil prices far outweighs the impact of the fireworks in the Gulf. There is still a lot of crude available and prices have remained in the \$50 to \$60 range. However, New Delhi still has little ability to influence the geopolitics of the Gulf, and should buffer itself for further bad news in that part of the world. India should do much more at home in terms of diversifying its energy sources, gasifying its baseload power and increasing its strategic oil reserves — the latter remain at criminally low levels. The Persian Gulf is in a slow-motion war, but in certain scenarios, its fallout on India would be instant.

2019 shows why achieving 1.5 degree C, not 2 C, is must to fight climate change

That 2019 has not been a good weather year is an understatement. If the present trend continues, the year is heading to become one of the most disastrous, at least in the past two decades, in affecting people.

The United Nations climate action summit in New York on September 23 provides a unique opportunity to global leaders to enhance their commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement. A lot has changed since the agreement was signed as the ferocity of climate change-induced weather events are much more visible now than before. That 2019 has not been a good weather year is an understatement. If the present trend continues, the year is heading to become one of the most disastrous, at least in the past two decades, in affecting people. The World Meteorological Organisation's long-term data shows that the world is warming at a much faster pace than earlier anticipated and rainstorm fury has intensified manifold.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva, extreme weather events than 1,500 people have displaced a record

seven million people globally in the first six months of this year. Close to 5,000 people have died due to floods, heat waves and storms till end of August, shows ourworldindata.org, a website that monitors disasters across the world.

Cyclone Fani in May in Bangladesh and India led to the displacement of 3.4 million people; Cyclone Idai in southern Africa in March killed more than 1,000 people; and there was flooding in Iran in March and April that affected 90% of the country, the centre said, mentioning just few of the major extreme weather events this year. The centre estimates that by end of this year around 22 million people (excluding India) may get displaced because of the disasters inducted by climate change.

In India, the estimate derived from government data indicates that more than 1,500 people have died because of floods

and heat waves and close to 5 million have been displaced till mid-September. Every part of the country has been affected. Extreme cold in January and February hit the Himalayan region, followed by temperatures soaring to about 50 degree Celsius in the plains of northern and central India in May and June, and then ravaging floods in July and August than hit 12 big states affecting over 100 million people in some way. To make the matters worse, the extreme rain events in 2019 doubled as compared to 2018.

The data clearly shows that the Paris climate treaty's modest goal of limiting the temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius of pre-industrial levels by 2100 will help fight the crisis. The 1.5 degree Celsius is just an aspirational goal in the Paris Agreement. A plethora of scientific studies have shown that the world needs to target temperature rise

to 1.5 degree Celsius or less to keep the ferocity of these extreme weather events under control. There is enough science available to show how a high temperature rise can devastate the planet and its people but policymakers and politicians have conveniently ignored the warning, with some saying climate change is not real.

Vouching for 1.5 degree target does not mean additional economic or social burden on the developing world. The richer and the more developed nations need to bear the financial burden for historical contribution to 80% of accumulated carbon emissions and follow the United Nations principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR), under which all nations work to combat climate change but the richer nations take extra measures.

So far, the richer nations have tried to



shirk from their responsibilities. In fact, the rich countries are not on track to meet its Paris commitment of providing US \$100 billion for the Green Climate Fund by 2020. The world since 2015 had lost US \$382 billion because of the natural disasters, half of which has been caused by extreme weather events, says ourworldindata.org. To rub it further, the rich countries are seeking more assistance from the emerging economies saying they are now the biggest contributors. In the climate debate, setting aside historical responsibility would be a sin. The agenda for the world leaders at the UN climate action summit in New York from

September 23 is clear—they should agree for better funding from the developed world, including technology transfer, and urge parties to work for achieving the 1.5 degree Celsius goal. The need of the hour is to stimulate a process to advance the review of nationally determined commitments to sometime in late 2019 or early 2020 from 2023-24.

The world leaders also need to find a mechanism to fund vulnerable countries to deal with impact of extreme weather events (called Loss and Damage mechanism), which in 2019 has left around five million people in India and around 10 million across the world homeless. Such funding will help the poor and deprived to cope with the heightened vagaries of climate change.

The UN climate summit is a golden opportunity for global leaders to set the agenda for conference of parties under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Chile from December, and show the people of the world that the leaders are serious about tackling climate change. A declaration at New York on 1.5 degree Celsius can help climate negotiators in Chile to draw a road map for achieving the target.

Don't force job quotas on the private sector



Rajasthan is the latest to join the bandwagon of states proposing to provide job reservations in the private sector. It plans to reserve 75% of jobs for the local residents in the private sector, much as Andhra Pradesh did earlier this year through a law.

Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have also promised such reservations, and poll-bound Maharashtra and Haryana may go the same way. What was earlier confined to socially and economically backward sections needing

affirmative action has now become a broadbrush political move.

There is no doubt that there is a huge need for job creation across states, but forcing the private sector's hand is not the way to go about it. As people move out of

the agrarian sector, they are faced with unemployment and few skills for the jobs that are available. The answer should be to provide the kind of education and skills that the job market demands rather than impose quotas on the private sector. And the answer also should be to create a business-environment that attracts the private sector. The rest will follow. The private sector is crucial to the growth and development of a growing economy and should not be hobbled by moves that are not business-friendly. There is another aspect to such quotas — they prevent free movement of talent and labour.

The main concerns of people looking for jobs are financial security and better opportunities. And, for this, they may wish to move to states where there are greater opportunities. Job quotas are the easy way out, a band-aid approach to the problem of unemployment, which is largely aimed at political dividends. A longer term and lasting solution would be to match skills with industry and nudge industry to go in for affirmative action and inclusiveness as long as this is not at the risk of losing its competitive edge. This is the way forward, not shortcuts like forced job reservations.

Spooked by PM Modi's plastics ban, India Inc seeks clarity, exemptions

In an Independence Day speech on August 15, PM Narendra Modi urged people and government agencies to "take the first big step" on Oct. 2 towards freeing India of single-use plastic.

(News Agencies) Companies in India will seek exemptions from the government's planned ban on certain plastic items, fearing the move will disrupt supply chains and raise costs ahead of a festive season, according to sources and an industry document seen by Reuters.

India is likely to impose a nationwide ban on plastic bags, cups, small bottles, straws and some types of sachets next month as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to reduce use of pollution-causing, single-use plastic.

But the plans have stoked fears among consumer firms, which, use plastic in packaging for everything from sodas and biscuits to

ketchup and shampoo. "This has created an existential issue for multiple sectors," said the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a lobby group, in a two-page draft note, seen by Reuters, which is likely to be finalised and sent to the government in the coming days.

The CII will ask the government to consult industry executives and define what will be categorized as single-use plastics, while also pitching for some exemptions, according to the note.

It says small-sized plastic bottles used for pharmaceutical or health products should be exempted as there is no alternate available.

Sachets made from so-called multi-layered packaging should also not be banned, as that could disrupt supplies of key products such as biscuits, salt and milk, the CII draft says.

A senior Indian government official said several industry representations were being reviewed, but the aim was to "get rid of the menace of plastic pollution" without causing disruption.

In an Independence Day speech on Aug. 15, Modi urged people and government agencies to "take the first big step" on Oct. 2 towards freeing India of single-use plastic. India lacks a system for management of plastic waste, but

environmentalists have

hailed Modi's move, saying it will help combat plastic waste that chokes rivers and drains.

A ban on certain plastics from Oct. 2, however, will come just weeks ahead of big Hindu festivals for which business plans are laid out far in advance because they typically see a sharp rise in consumer purchases.

Two industry sources said Amazon.com Inc, which uses plastics in its packaging, has been concerned that a possible ban could disrupt its operations ahead of festivities, and during its mega annual discount sale that starts Sept. 29. In recent weeks, executives from Coca-Cola Co, PepsiCo and consumer goods seller



Hindustan Unilever have been part of industry delegations that met government officials to express concerns and discuss alternate packaging solutions, according to a person with direct knowledge.

Coca-Cola said in a statement that all its primary packaging does not consist of single-use plastic. Pepsi said its target was to make 100 percent of its packaging recyclable, compostable, or biodegradable by 2025. Hindustan Unilever did not

respond to a request for comment.

mazon did not respond, but has previously said that it plans to replace single-use plastic in its packaging by June 2020.

"The ban has ramifications for all sectors like food processing, dairy, garments, toys," said Jayesh Rambhia of All India Plastic

Manufacturers Association, which has 22,000 companies as members. "People, and companies, are pulling their hair today."

Govt trying to remove nationalist leaders: Rahul on Farooq Abdullah detention



(News Agencies) Rahul Gandhi added that the move will polarise the rest of India.

In a sharp attack on the Centre's Kashmir move, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Tuesday that the government is trying to remove "nationalist" leaders like Farooq Abdullah to create a political vacuum in Jammu and Kashmir that will be filled by terrorists.

On Monday, former chief minister Farooq Abdullah was detained under Jammu and Kashmir's stringent public safety law that gives the administration the right to detain a person without trial for two years. An order by the state government said the former chief minister's residence will be treated as a temporary jail.

The Congress leader also

added that the move will polarise the rest of India. It's obvious that the Government is trying to remove nationalist leaders like Farooq Abdullah Ji to create a political vacuum in Jammu & Kashmir that will be filled by terrorists," tweeted Gandhi.

"Kashmir can then permanently be used as a political instrument to polarise the rest of India," added Gandhi.

The former Congress chief urged the central government to release all leaders "ASAP".

"The Government should stop creating space for terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir and release all nationalist leaders ASAP," said Gandhi in another tweet.

The government through a Presidential order on August 5 scrapped Article 370, which gave Jammu

and Kashmir its special status. Through the Jammu and Kashmir reorganisation bill, the now former state was divided into two union territories: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The state has been under a security lockdown since then with all major leaders of the mainstream political parties placed under house arrest.

The leaders from Delhi

have had to knock at the Supreme Court's door for permission to visit Srinagar. Yesterday, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court allowed Congress leader and former chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad, to travel to four districts in the region but barred him from holding any rallies or giving political speeches.

Azad recently approached

the top court seeking permission to travel to Kashmir and raised concerns about the condition of common people. Azad was stopped from visiting Kashmir and sent back from Srinagar Airport three times in the past two months.

The bench, headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, also allowed Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader

Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, who was admitted at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) in New Delhi, to return to Srinagar.

Tarigami, who was under detention at his home in Srinagar, was shifted to AIIMS following a top court order on September 5. On August 28, the SC had allowed his party colleague Sitaram Yechury to meet Tarigami in Srinagar.

Arrest imminent, Swami Chinmayanand behaving like a kid, says UP law student

(News Agencies) The law student in Shahjahanpur who alleged former Union minister Swami Chinmayanand of rape and blackmail, on Tuesday questioned the Special Investigation Team (SIT) why it has not registered an FIR against him despite her detailed statement. The 23-years-old woman recorded her statement before the judicial magistrate on Monday for almost four hours. In her statement than ran for almost 20 pages, she reportedly accused former minister or rape and kidnapping. On Tuesday, she vented her anger at the SIT for neither arresting Swami Chinmayanand nor even registering an FIR. "What is SIT waiting for? I want SIT to explain in 24 hours, why the person has not been arrested even after the statement under 164 CrPC was recorded," she said. "We have not been informed about anything. A day has passed since I



recorded my statement before a judicial magistrate. But we are not aware what the SIT is doing in connection with rape charges," the woman added. She also accused Chinmayanand of faking an illness. "He is making an excuse like a kid when his arrest is imminent," she quipped. On Monday evening, Chinmayanand was attended by a team of doctors from Shahjahanpur district hospital and treated for low blood sugar and diarrhea. He was advised to take rest, said his lawyer

Om Singh. On Sunday, the SIT had questioned Chinmayanand for a second time in a week. A day later the woman was brought to the Shahjahanpur court to record the statement. Now the SIT is examining the statement and is expected to lodge a FIR soon. An official, privy to the probe said, "The woman has accused Chinmayanand of rape in her complaint in Delhi. If she testified the same before the judicial magistrate, the former minister will be booked for rape charges." The woman was a student of SS Law College run by the former BJP leader. She was taken to the sealed portion of Chinmayanand's ashram on Friday. She also recorded her statement with the investigating officer on the same day. The woman also handed over a pen drive to the SIT claiming that it contained around 43 videos as evidence.

ISRO inks MoUs with DRDO sign for Gaganyaan project

Speaking on the occasion, Satheesh Reddy said the technological capabilities existing in DRDO laboratories for defence applications will be customised to meet the requirements of the human space mission of ISRO.



(News Agencies) The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Tuesday inked MoUs with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for development of human centric systems for the Gaganyaan project, the Defence Ministry said.

Some of the critical technologies to be provided by the DRDO to ISRO include space food, space crew health monitoring and emergency survival kit, radiation measurement and protection, parachutes for safe recovery of crew module, the ministry said in a

statement.

A delegation of ISRO scientists, led by Director of Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) Dr S Unnikrishnan Nair, signed a set of MoUs with various DRDO labs here to provide technologies for human centric systems and technologies specific to the Human Space Mission, it said.

The MoUs were signed by directors of the Aerial Delivery Research & Development Establishment (ADRDE), Defence Food Research Laboratory (DFRL), Defence Bio-Engi-

neering & Electro Medical Laboratory (DEBEL), Defence Laboratory (DL) Jodhpur, Centre for Fire, Explosive & Environment Safety (CFEES), Defence Institute of Physiology & Allied Sciences (DIPAS) and Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS) in

the presence of DRDO Chairman Dr G Satheesh Reddy and Scientist & Director General (Life Sciences), Dr A K Singh.

Speaking on the occasion, Satheesh Reddy said the technological capabilities existing in DRDO laboratories for

defence applications will be customised to meet the requirements of the human space mission of ISRO.

Singh said the DRDO is committed to provide all necessary support to ISRO for the human space flight and

customisation of the required technologies has already been initiated to meet the stringent timelines.

ISRO aims to demonstrate human spaceflight capability before the 75th anniversary of India's independence in 2022.

Government tightens religious conversion rule for NGOs in foreign funding tweaks

The law governs the use of foreign donations and contributions and has been tightened by the National Democratic Alliance government over the past few years to check violations.

(News Agencies) The home ministry said on Monday those receiving personal gifts from other countries with value up to Rs 1 lakh don't need to inform the government under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), increasing the previous threshold value of Rs 25,000 in a newly released gazette notification.

The law governs the use of foreign donations and contributions and has been tightened by the National Democratic Alliance government over the past few years to check violations. In the latest

amendment to the rules governing FCRA, the Centre also made other changes. The rules allowing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to received foreign contribution have been made stricter. Monday's notification said it is now mandatory for every key member of an NGO – "office bearers and key functionaries and members" – to certify that they have not been "prosecuted or convicted" for "conversion" from one faith to another and for creating "communal tension and disharmony". The notification also said that in case of emergent

medical aid needed during a visit to another country, the acceptance of foreign hospitality has to be intimated to the government within a month of such receipt. It also reduced the time frame for informing the government about the source, approximate value and purpose of such receipts from two months to one month. The notification said that every member of an NGO must also certify under oath that they have never been involved in "diverting" foreign funds or "advocating violent means". Earlier, this declaration was to be given by only key members of NGOs.

ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

Since April 2005 Editor: Sharnjit Singh Thind PUNJABI DUNIYA Weekly

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

ਦੀਵੀਗੁਰੂ: ਖਰਚ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇਹ ਸਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਉੱਚ ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਜਾ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਹਨ। ਬਾਇਬਲ ਨੂੰ ਖਰਚ ਕਰਕੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਦੇ ਖਰਚੇ 27,000 ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਏ ਲੱਖ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਹਨ। ਕੋਨੇਰਾ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ੀ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਨੀਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਫਾਇਦਾ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਕੋਨੇਰਾ ਜਾ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਹਨ। ਬਾਕੀ 25 ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਮਰੀਕਾ, ਨਿਊਜ਼ੀਲੈਂਡ, ਅਯਰੀਕਾ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਕੇ ਨੂੰ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਹੈ। ਬੀਤੇ ਵਰ੍ਹੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਜਾਣ ਕਾਰਨ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਨੂੰ ਕਰੀਬ 20 ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਏ ਦਾ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਧਾਨ ਮੰਡਲ ਦੇ ਸਪੀਕਰ ਰਣਦੀਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਸੁਝਾਅ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ।

ਕੁਝ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਆਰਥਿਕ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਨੂੰ ਛੱਡ ਕੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਚੋਣ ਲਈ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਜਾਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਜਾਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕਿਆ ਜਾਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਸੰਜੜ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖੇਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ

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Pak PM finds difficult to accept that Kashmir is now back on road to progress: Indian envoy to US

In a hard-hitting opinion piece in The New York Times, Shringla said Pakistan has a “vested interest in preventing prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the Ladakh area of Kashmir, because a weak economy fuels separatist sentiments in some quarters.”



(News Agencies) Little more than a month after Article 370 has been revoked, the prospects of a growing Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh region “cuts the ground under the feet of Pakistan”, whose “fingerprints” are on terrorist strikes across the globe, Indian Ambassador to the US Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Thursday.

Striking at Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, Shringla, in an opinion piece in The New York Times, said Pakistan has a “vested interest in preventing prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the Ladakh area of Kashmir,

has said that the world has seen a “plethora of comments” from PM Khan and senior officials of his government painting an apocalyptic picture of India’s reorganisation of its province of Jammu and Kashmir - and raising the threat of conflict, including nuclear war, with India. “Clearly, this prospect for a more prosperous Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, cuts the ground under the feet of Pakistan. Its prime minister claims that he offered to work for

peace, progress and prosperity with India. What he does not say is that the assembly line of terrorists that is a major industry of his country continues without pause,” he said. Shringla pointed out that Khan finds it difficult to accept that the Kashmir region is now back on the road to progress and prosperity because the Indian government has repealed an “anachronistic and temporary” provision of law that has hindered development there.

A mother or newborn dies every 11 seconds

(News Agencies) Child and maternal mortality rates may have seen a decline over the years, yet a mother or a newborn dies every 11 seconds during child birth globally. Statistics released by the United Nations on Thursday show that since 2000, child deaths have reduced by nearly half and maternal deaths by over one-third, mostly due to improved access to affordable, quality health services.

The number of women dying due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth dropped by more than a third to around 295,000 in 2017, in comparison to 451,000 in 2000.

“In countries that provide safe, affordable, high-quality health services, women and babies survive and thrive,” World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

said in a statement.

Since the turn of the century, the number of deaths among children under the age of five has also been cut almost in half to 5.3 million worldwide last year. While this marks an improvement, almost half of those deaths occurred during the first month of life, meaning that around 7,000 newborns still died every single day last year. Also, 800 women died each day from complications in pregnancy and childbirth in 2017, the UN numbers showed.

In all, the statistics reveal that an estimated 2.8 million women and newborns die every year, mostly from preventable causes.

In India, the overall infant mortality rate (IMR) and maternal mortality rate (MMR) have also

come down over the years but the country is still losing new mothers and newborns annually. The current IMR of India is 33 per 1000 live births, having come down from 68 per 1000 live since 2000. Malnutrition is still the underlying risk factor for 68% of the deaths in under-five children in India, and is the leading risk factor for disease burden in persons of all ages considered together contributing 17% of the total disability adjusted life years. “We need to better focus on tackling malnutrition in India as it is one of the leading risk factors for death in children. We have made great strides but we need to do better,” said Save the Children India CEO Bidisha Pillai.

PUBLIC NOTICE

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR, UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) TRIBUNAL,
ROOM NO. 104, FIRST FLOOR, BLOCK ‘A’, DELHI HIGH COURT, NEW DELHI — 110503

RE: Notification No. S.O. 2469(E) dated 10th July, 2019, issued by the Central Government, under sub-Section (1) and (3) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, declaring the Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) as an Unlawful Association.

To,

Sikhs For Justice,
having its registered office at
Empire State Building,
350th Avenue, 59th Floor
New York 10118, USA

WHEREAS the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (3) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1957 (37 of 1967) (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) has declared Sikhs For Justice (for short ‘SFJ’) to be an “Unlawful Association” vide Notification No. S.O. 2469(E) dated 10th July, 2019 [published in the Gazette of India: Extraordinary Part II, Section 3 (ii)].

AND WHEREAS by Gazette Notification No. S.O. 2856(E) dated 7th August, 2019 [published in the Gazette of India: Extraordinary Part II, Section 3 (ii)], in exercise of powers under sub-section (1) of Section 5 of the Act, the Central Government has constituted a Tribunal comprising Hon’ble Mr. Justice D. N. Patel, Chief Justice, High Court of Delhi, for adjudicating as to whether there is sufficient cause for declaring Sikhs For Justice (‘SFJ’) as an “Unlawful Association” as required by sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the said Act.

NOW THEREFORE, a notice is hereby given under sub-section (2) of Section 4 of the Act and you are hereby called upon to show cause, within 30 days from the date of service of notice, as to why your Association, declared as unlawful, be not adjudicated to be so and why an order confirming such declaration be not made under section 4 (3) of the Act.

The objections/reply affidavits, if any, may be filed/delivered, before the next date of hearing of the Tribunal, to the undersigned at his office in Room No. 104, First Floor, ‘A’ Block, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi- 110503. In case the objections/reply and the documents are in regional language, true English Translation thereof be also attached.

You may appear through a duly authorized person before the Tribunal on 20.09.2019 at 9:30 a.m. in Court Room No. 01, “A” Block, Second Floor, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110503 for further proceedings.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal, High Court of Delhi, New Delhi this the 13th August, 2019.

Sd/-
(Lorren Bamniyal)
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal



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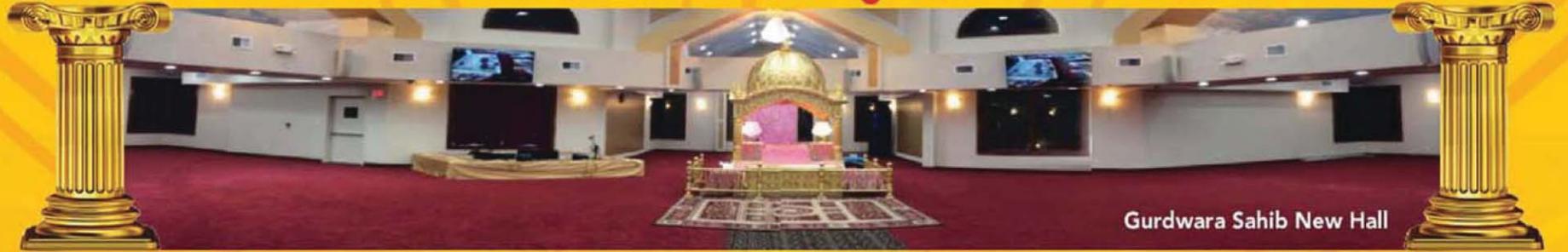
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Why Modi Is Visiting Texas?

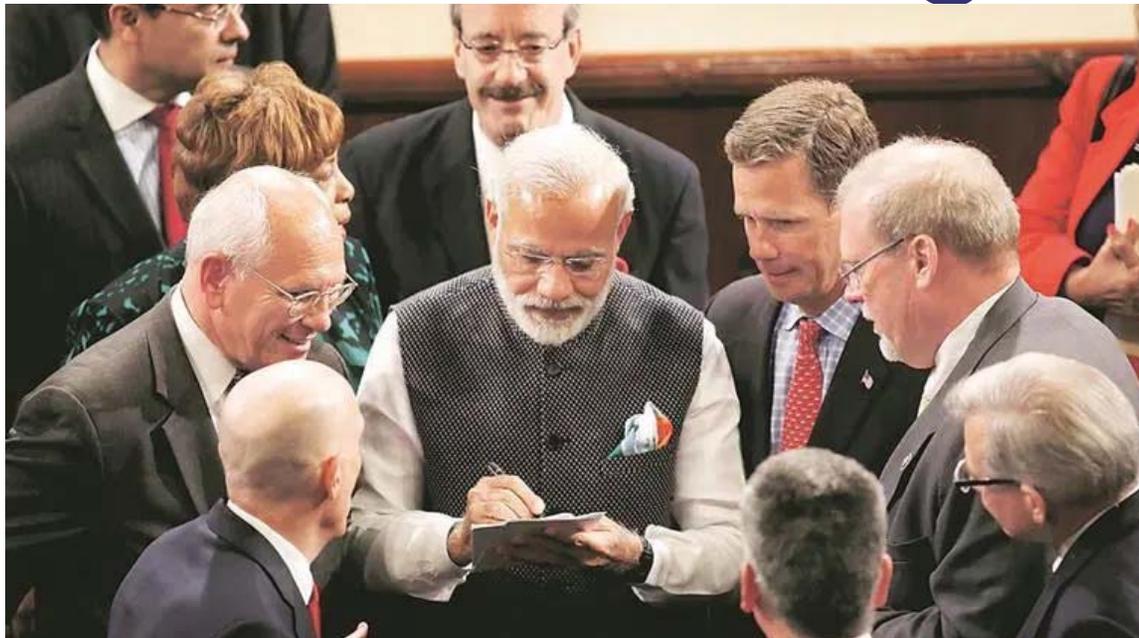
(SAI Bureau) New York: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to travel to the United States this weekend for his first U.S. visit since winning reelection in a landslide victory last May. His itinerary include a high-profile address to the United Nations General Assembly and meetings with top business leaders in New York.

But the centerpiece of his trip will not be in New York but rather in Texas: a massive rally in Houston where Modi is slated to speak to more than 50,000 attendees who registered for the now sold-out event. Although the majority of the audience will be comprised of members of the Indian diaspora, dozens of U.S. elected officials, including local and state officials, Members of Congress and several U.S. governors will also be present. Days ago, the White House announced that President Trump will join Modi on stage in Houston "to underscore the important partnerships between the United States and India."

On the surface, Houston appears to be an unconventional choice to hold the event. Washington, New York City and San Francisco have historically hosted Indian leaders in the past, given their importance as the political, financial and tech centers of the country, respectively.

While the planning for proposed the Houston event is yet to kick off, community leaders are looking at multipurpose NRG Stadium, which has a seating capacity of 70,000 people. Houston has one of the largest concentrations of the Indian American community in the US. The Texas Governor and Mayor of Houston had visited India last year.

Around 40,000 people have registered themselves for Indian-American community summit "Howdy, Modi!", which will be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 22 during his visit to the US for the UN Gen-



eral Assembly session, organisers of the event said.

"Howdy", short for 'How do you do?', is a friendly greeting commonly used in the southwestern United States.

Attendance to the summit is free, but passes have to be obtained which is now open for public, said the host Texas India Forum, a Houston-based non-profit body, which expects around 50,000 people to attend the prime minister's address to the Indian diaspora at the sprawling NRG football stadium in the US' fourth most populous city.

Houston, which has one of the largest concentration of over 5,00,000 Indian-American community in the US, is the energy capital of the world. Energy security is a priority area for the prime minister.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said, "I look forward to welcoming PM Modi to Houston, home to one of the biggest and most vibrant Indian communities in the US."

"This historic visit will strengthen the already robust bonds between Houston and India on trade, culture and tourism -- all of which benefit every Houstonian."

According to the convener of the organizing committee Jugal Malani, before the prime minister's address, the event, with the tagline 'Shared Dreams, Bright Futures', will include a cultural programme that puts a spotlight on Indian-American con-

tributions to the United States.

"We want the entire city of Houston to come to enjoy the festivities and learn about Indian-Texan relations," he said.

This will be Modi's third major address to the Indian-American community after he became the prime minister in 2014 and the first after his reelection in May.

The previous two were at the Madison Square Garden in New York in 2014 and the Silicon Valley in 2016. Both the events were attended by more than 20,000 people.

US Senator John Cornyn said, "On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Indian-Americans in Texas, and as co-chair of the Senate India Caucus, I welcome Prime Minister Modi to Houston."

"India continues to be a key security and economic partner of the United States, and I look forward to seeing that relationship strengthen with his visit to Texas," he said.

A number group of organisations from a wide spectrum of the Indian diaspora in the United States has mobilized support for the "Howdy, Modi!" event.

The future of Texas is inextricably tied to global trade and strategic relations. As a Texas-wide leadership group focused on civil discourse on the important policy issues facing our state, we recognise that this visit will be a giant step in further

strengthening Texas- India relations on numerous fronts."

According to WISERTrade, the US Census Bureau, and the Foreign Trade Division, in 2019 (year to date), India is Houston's fourth largest trading partner just behind Brazil, China and Mexico.

But the location of Modi's latest visit is revealing. A joint appearance by Modi and Trump in America's oil and gas capital reflects a desire by Washington and New Delhi to deepen their bilateral energy cooperation. Last year, Washington and Delhi signed a U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership to enhance collaboration in this arena. Both countries believe the full promise of energy trade remains unfulfilled and want to increase cooperation, particularly with respect to shale and liquefied natural (LNG) gas.

India's massive energy demand coupled with its limited domestic supply makes it a huge potential market for American oil and gas exporters. Rising tensions elsewhere around the world have also created conditions favorable for greater U.S.-India energy trade. American sanctions against Iran have forced New Delhi to stop importing one of its biggest suppliers. China has ceased purchases of American oil in February as a result of an ongoing trade war between Washing-

ton and Beijing.

As a result, circumstances appear ripe for greater cooperation. Unsurprisingly, a major component of Modi's agenda are meetings with several energy companies eyeing deals toward this end.

Beyond just oil and gas, Houston enjoys its own unique relationship with India. According to data compiled by the city, more than 28 Houston-based companies operate 69 subsidiaries in India. Houston is also the fourth-largest gateway for bilateral trade between the two countries. The South Asian giant is Houston's 10th largest trading partner, with trade valued at over \$4.3 billion, a 36% increase from the previous year. The figure is an impressive one, particularly when one considers the ongoing trade irritants testing the broader U.S.-India economic relationship.

Houston also shares close cultural ties with India. More than 150,000 Houston residents identify as Indian American. More than half this figure were born in India. The presence of such a large diaspora community helps explain why Houston was chosen to host the Modi event.

Like other similar diaspora-focused rallies, Modi has headlined in New York City and San Francisco in the past, the event is a celebration not just of the U.S.-India strategic partnership, but of the Indian-American community and its myriad contributions to the United States. Cultivating the Indian diaspora has been a major objective of Modi since he took office more than 5 years ago. The Indian premier is unique amongst his predecessors in not just recognizing the value of the millions of Indians living abroad, but actively courting them as well. Modi views the global Indian community as citizen ambassadors of India, succeeding in their home countries, but also contributing to India's growth and development agenda.

100 Days Of Decisive Action

History will -remember Modi as reformer-in-chief

While the first 100 days are an important -milestone for any government, it is never easy to comprehensively evaluate its performance. Modi 2.0 is an -exception to this norm because of its penchant for taking tough decisions. Its first 100 days have been a blockbuster and the media has had its own share of never-ending news cycles since the time Narendra Modi took over. A hallmark of this period has been the Modi government's politically sensitive and crucial decisions, making it by far one of the most decisive periods in the history of governance in India. Be it -amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act or changes in the insolvency and bankruptcy code, we have seen a government trying to solve problems at an -unprecedented pace. This was also manifested in the -decision to abrogate Article 370 and reconstitute the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two separate Union territories.

There is a commitment towards identification of -problems in our economy, governance structure or national security and their potential solutions. While many strides have been made on the national security front, including creation of the post of joint chief of staff, PM Modi's second tenure started with several economic challenges. These challenges got compounded due to surcharges on foreign portfolio -investors (FPIs) announced in the budget, which resulted in a complete reversal of the economic sentiment.

We have come a long way since and the finance ministry has rolled back the FPI surcharges, while announcing a slew of -measures to revive the economy. For example, as many small traders and big businesses demanded timely GST refunds, the government declared that the refunds would be cleared within 60 days. This shows PM Modi's -administration continues to be as respon-

sive as it was in its first tenure. Add to this the front-loading of bank recapitalisation -combined with the pending consolidation of public sector banks, and the government has shifted the gears on fixing our banking system. This combined with bank governance -reforms ensures that we not just fix the system but also leverage on it as we move towards a \$5-trillion economy. If we can see 10 banks merged into four within 45 minutes, then everything, also big-ticket -privatisation is well on the cards. Nobody can deny that our growth has slowed, but the speed and magnitude of its decisions so far give us the confidence that this government won't shy away from taking bold policy measures. If we can see 10 banks merged into four within 45 minutes, then everything, -including big-ticket privatisation, is well on the cards. Growth too will revive from the third quarter onwards and the government has done its part, but we are waiting

to see whether the monetary policy committee plays its part or not.

There is also a sense of -policy continuity since Modi's first -tenure as prime minister, where the focus was on -sanitation, financial inclusion, houses, -electricity and clean fuel. In his second stint, the focus is on ensuring piped water to all and further -expansion of the State's social security net to improve quality of life.

Be it the issue of triple talaq, Article 370 or the new Motor Vehicle Act, the government has taken bold steps aimed at building a 'New India', where every citizen is empowered with the same set of right and has access to a decent quality of life, while the society complies with the local rules and regulations. Modi 2.0 is an extension of Modi 1.0, which laid a strong foundation of a modern economy.

The clean-up of the system, especially of crony capitalism, is

largely over, and, in its second avatar, we see the -gov-ernment fix the system further to build a transparent, -robust and compliant economy that fulfils the aspirations of a billion people.

The government has been in an action mode since its first day. With Article 370 gone and triple talaq banned, we may soon have the much-awaited Uniform Civil Code. Due to the ongoing trade war and likelihood of Brexit, the global environment demands a decisive government at the helm to help navigate us through. In Narendra Modi, we have found something better as he is working to resolve most of our -dom-estic problems even while he -continues to -consolidate on the benefits of his brilliant outreach efforts made previously on the -international front.

Definitive action defines the first 100 days are and, in all likelihood, will define PM Modi's second stint as he goes down in history as India's reformer-in-chief.

On His 69th Birthday, PM Modi Meets His Mother In Gandhinagar



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met his mother in Gandhinagar on the occasion of his birthday. PM Modi, who arrived in Gujarat post-midnight, landed in Kevadiya in Narmada District early morning today.

From taking a stroll along the Sardar Sarovar Dam site, visiting a cactus garden, to releasing a basket full of fluttering butterflies while visiting Butterfly Garden, the PM took part in various activities throughout the day. PM Modi performed a pooja at the Sardar Sarovar Dam site, the venue of which was decorated ahead of the Prime Minister's visit. He also visited the Khalvani

Eco-Tourism site in Kevadiya, a Cactus Garden and he also took a safari ride on a special jeep with zebra-patterns at the Jungle Safari Tourist Park. At the Butterfly Garden, the Prime Minister smiled as he released a large basket full of butterflies into the park. He also visited the Ekta Nursery, situated in the vicinity of the Statue of Unity. The nursery manufactures various traditional eco-friendly products and offer a live demonstration of the manufacturing process to visitors. On his 68th birthday last year, Modi was in his Lok Sabha constituency of Varanasi with school children.

The Prime Minister was greeted by leaders across political boundaries including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP president and Home Minister Amit Shah, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal. Shah described Modi as a leader with strong willpower and a symbol of decisive leadership and hard work. "Under your leadership, an emerging India has made a mark in the world as a strong, safe and reliable nation," Shah said on Twitter. Singh said the prime minister has been instrumental in building and strengthening India's position in the comity of nations. "His visionary leadership has helped India in scaling new heights of glory. I pray for his good health and long life," the defence ministry tweeted.

Banerjee, who is likely to meet the prime minister in New Delhi on Wednesday for discussions on administrative issues, wrote on her Twitter handle, "Birthday greetings to Prime Minister @narendramodi ji." "Happy birthday to Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji. We wish him a long and healthy life," Kejriwal said.

What will Modi do in USA ?

Indian PM Modi to visit US from Sep 21-27; will meet Trump, address UNGA session. US President Donald Trump would join him in addressing the mega 'Howdy Modi' rally, to be attended by the members of the Indian-American community. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit the United States from September 21-27, during which he will meet President Donald Trump and address the annual United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said on Thursday.

Modi is scheduled to arrive in Houston on Saturday. A day later, Trump would join him in addressing the mega 'Howdy Modi' rally, to be attended by the members of the Indian-American community. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will make a visit to the US from the late afternoon of 21 September until the forenoon of 27 September. And the two cities on his itinerary are Houston in Texas and then New York," Gokhale said. The prime minister will address the UN General Assembly session on the morning of September 27, he said.

As the world commemorates

Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, Modi will also host a special event 'Leadership Matters: Relevance of Gandhi in the Contemporary World' on September 24. He will be joined with leaders of a few countries at this event.

Trump set to join Modi at Houston event

In a big diplomatic coup for India, the White House on Monday confirmed that US President Donald Trump will be joining Prime Minister Narendra Modi at an event organized by the Indian community in Houston, Texas, next week. Christened, 'Howdy Modi', the event has already garnered 50,000 registrations online, with many more on the waiting list. The White House said the event will be a "great opportunity to emphasize the strong ties between the people of the US and India, to reaffirm the strategic partnership between the world's oldest and largest democracies, and to discuss ways to deepen their energy and trade relationship". Analysts in India said it would be a major boost for Modi, and the Indian community in the US.

Iran's Foreign Minister Vows 'All-Out War' if U.S. or Saudis Strike

A military strike against Iran by the United States or Saudi Arabia would result in "an all-out war," the Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said on Thursday, repeating his government's denial of responsibility for an attack last week that damaged Saudi oil facilities and hampered the global flow of oil.

The Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are supported by Iran in their fight against a Saudi-led coalition, claimed responsibility for the attack on Saturday, but top American officials blamed Iran, and some within the Trump administration are advocating military retaliation.

The administration is still weighing how to react, but President Trump has appeared reluctant to order military action. Asked on Thursday about Mr. Zarif's comments, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Mr. Trump wanted to find a peaceful path forward.

"We'd like a peaceful resolution, indeed," he told reporters traveling with him in the United Arab Emirates before flying back to Washington after a two-day emergency trip. "We're still striving to build out a coalition. I was here in an act of diplomacy while the foreign minister of Iran is threatening all-out war to fight to the last American."

Mr. Pompeo said the United States, which withdrew last year from a nuclear agreement with Iran, planned to impose more sanctions, as Mr. Trump announced on Wednesday. "We have set about a course of action to deny Iran the capacity and the wealth to prevent them from conducting their terror campaigns," Mr. Pompeo said. "And you can see from the events of last week there's more work to do."

On Wednesday, Mr. Pompeo accused Iran of committing an "act of war" with the aerial attacks. Saudi officials also displayed debris from drones and missiles that they said had been used in the attack, citing it as evidence of Iranian complicity while stopping short of directly blaming Tehran.

In an interview with CNN on Thursday, Mr. Zarif said, "This is agitation for war, because it's based on lies; it's based on deception." He did not specify what statements about the attacks had been untrue.

"I'm making a very serious statement that we don't want war; we don't want to engage in a military confrontation," he added. "But we won't blink to defend our territory."

As for the Houthis, Mr. Zarif said: "I cannot have any confidence that they did it, because we just had their statement. I know that we didn't do it." Analysts for the United Nations and Western governments have said that Iran supplies weapons to the Houthis, including sophisticated missiles and drones that have expanded the rebels' offensive capabilities. But Mr. Pompeo said on Wednesday that intelligence gathered by the United States over the years did not show that Iran had supplied the Houthis with the kinds of weapons used in the Sept. 14 attack, which meant, he said, that the Houthis' claim of responsibility was a misdirection effort.

"The intelligence community has high confidence that these were not weapons that would have been in the possession of the Houthis," he said. American and Saudi officials have said that the strikes came from the north or northwest — in the direction of Iran or Iraq — and not from Yemen, which is to the south, though they have not provided clear evidence for that claim. Mr. Pompeo and the Iraqi government have said the strikes did not originate in Iraq, which has Shiite militias with ties to Iran.

On Wednesday, Mr. Pompeo met the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He flew to Abu Dhabi on Thursday to meet with the de facto ruler of the United Arab Emirates, Prince Mohammed bin Zayed.

The Emirates is a close partner of Saudi Arabia's, and the two nations have been leading a coalition in the war against the Houthis in Yemen, though the Emirates has been withdrawing most of its forces from that campaign in recent months. The yearslong war has resulted in thousands of civilian deaths and what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. A bipartisan group of lawmakers in the United States has tried to force Mr. Trump to end American military and arms support for the coalition.

Before departing Abu Dhabi, Mr. Pompeo said that as a result of his meetings in the two Gulf nations, "I think I'll be able to give the president some important information about how it is we should think about proceeding." "I think it's abundantly clear and there's an enormous consensus in the region that we know precisely who conducted these attacks," he added. "It was Iran. I didn't hear anybody in the region who doubted that for a single

moment."

On Wednesday, Mr. Pompeo and the Saudi prince remained at a working dinner in Jeddah until 11:30 p.m. The State Department said the two "discussed the need for the international community to come together to counter the continued threat of the Iranian regime and agreed that the Iranian regime must be held accountable for its continued aggressive, reckless and threatening behavior."

Mr. Pompeo told reporters he expected the United States and Saudi Arabia to bring up the Iranian aggression at the United Nations next week, when foreign leaders will gather for the annual General Assembly.

Before the attack, top Iranian officials, including President Hassan Rouhani, were expected to attend the conclave. There had been speculation about whether Mr. Trump would meet with Mr. Rouhani to discuss the continuing tensions among the United States, Iran, the Gulf nations and Europe, which have been punctuated by violence this past summer — including attacks on international oil

tankers for which American officials blamed Iran and the downing of an American drone by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, part of the Iranian military. A senior Trump administration official said on Wednesday that Iran had sought visas for 124 people to assist its delegation to the United Nations conference, and that the State Department had denied around 40 for people with connections to the Revolutionary Guards, which the administration designated as a terrorist organization in April.

American and Saudi officials will probably find it hard to persuade other nations to take strong action on Iran, whose economy is suffering under severe sanctions imposed by Mr. Trump. Other governments say that Mr. Trump set off the current conflict by withdrawing the United States from a 2015 agreement to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, and by reimposing sanctions.

The Trump administration took its harshest actions involving sanctions in May, when it ended exceptions it had granted eight governments to

buy Iranian oil. That meant China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey — the five governments that used the exceptions — had to comply with oil sanctions. Though China still imports some oil from Iran, the end of the exceptions led to a sharp drop in revenue for Iran.

Iran responded by breaching limits on its nuclear program set by the 2015 agreement, even though American intelligence officials and foreign officials had said Tehran was adhering to the terms of the agreement. Analysts say the violence of the summer in the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, along with the Sept. 14 attack in Saudi Arabia, were also direct results of the American actions. "Iran is fighting back, and now we have a major threat to global oil markets, not to mention Iran's walk back from nuclear commitments," said Dalia Dassa Kaye, an Iran expert at the RAND Corporation, a research group based in the United States. "It's at times like these when the United States needs allies, but Trump's policies have left us with few good options."

Eight Defendants Arrested for Distributing Millions of Opioid Pills Imported from India

This Office and our law enforcement partners will continue to vigorously investigate and prosecute those who profit from the suffering wrought by opioid distribution in the United States." Mr. Donoghue expressed his appreciation to the United States Attorneys' Offices for the District of Maryland, the District of Massachusetts and the Southern District of Ohio for their assistance in the case.

"The illegal manufacture and distribution of opioids can result in overdoses and deaths, further fueling the national crisis," stated FDA Special Agent-in-Charge McCormack. "The FDA is committed to disrupting and dismantling illegal prescription drug distribution networks, including those that import unapproved drugs from overseas, and distribute those drugs with reckless disregard of the risk to public health." "The importation of mislabeled drugs is both dangerous and illegal," stated FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Wickerham. "It contributes to the ongoing opioid crisis in our nation and causes harm to our communities."

"Postal Inspectors are always at the forefront in protect-

ing communities from the scourge of illegal drugs, no matter how they enter this country, and today's arrests are a shining example of our commitment to keep the public safe," stated USPIS Inspector-in-Charge Bartlett. "These individuals chose greed and profit at the cost of human lives. HSI is committed to investigating and ending these kinds of drug trafficking schemes to keep opioids off our streets," stated HSI Special Agent-in-Charge Eisert. "American communities continue to be plagued by synthetic opioids, often at the hands of dealers like those accused in this investigation," stated HSI Special Agent-in-Charge Fitzhugh. "HSI is committed to aggressively targeting every level of the opioid supply chain, from the overseas vendors to the street-level dealers, in an effort to end this crisis."

"This case serves as a great example of collaborative law enforcement efforts to combat international opioid trafficking conspirators. U.S. Customs and Border Protection thanks our partners at FBI, FDA, USPIS, HSI and DEA for their continued cooperation," stated CBP Director of Field Operations Miller. "DEA is

addressing the threat of opioids, both internationally and domestically. We prioritize our resources by identifying and targeting the world's biggest and most powerful drug traffickers and their organizations," stated DEA Special Agent-in-Charge Boyle. "The diversion of prescription pain killers contribute to the widespread abuse of opioids which is a gateway to addiction and is devastating our communities. DEA will continue to collaborate with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners to hold accountable those who are fueling this epidemic." The charges in the complaint are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, Ezhil Sezhian Kamaldoss faces up to 25 years' imprisonment. The remaining defendants each face up to five years' imprisonment. First Assistant United States Attorney Mark Lesko and Assistant United States Attorneys Nicholas J. Moscow, Temidayo Aganga-Williams and Andrew D. Grubin are in charge of the prosecution. Assistant United States Attorney Karin Orenstein of the Office's Civil Division is handling forfeiture matters.

We meet criteria for preferential trade status, India tells US ahead of PM Modi's visit

In June this year, the US has removed India from the list of beneficiaries under the GSP which allowed duty-free entry of Indian goods to US. India sold an estimated \$6.3 billion worth of goods to the US under this programme in 2018. Washington had cited lack of reciprocal market access by

New Delhi as the reason for doing so. In a letter to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, a group of US House members said ending the preferential status for India is costing their constituents every day. The support for India was bipartisan with 26 Democrats and 18 Republicans signing the letter. The group of

lawmakers was led by Congressmen Jim Himes and Ron Estes. The policies, the lawmakers observed, negatively affect US companies which were trying to access the Indian market. "Several US industries filed petitions under GSP's market access criterion, which were accepted for review in April

2018. Ultimately, failure to make sufficient progress on the issues led to termination of India's GSP eligibility on June 5, 2019," the US lawmakers said in the letter. Latest data by the Coalition for GSP shows that India losing the trade preferential status meant that American companies lost about \$30 million in July.

New Delhi has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Generalised System of Preferences scheme that allowed zero tariff entry to some imports from 120 countries. The GSP is the largest and oldest US trade preference programme and meant to promote economic development by allowing duty-

free entry for products from the beneficiary countries. From September 21-27, PM Modi will visit the US. He will address the UN general assembly in New York and meet US president Donald Trump. The Prime Minister will address a rally of Indian Americans—'Howdy Modi!'—at Houston on Sunday.

Top Politicians, IAS Officers Among Madhya Pradesh Honeytrap Victims While Cong & BJP Trade Charges

According to sources, one of the women was employed with the Congress social media cell. The male accused is allegedly her husband and earlier worked with her before being expelled by the party.

A court on Thursday sent all the accused in police

remand for three days. Superintendent of police (Govindpura) Amit Kumar told the media that the anti-terrorism squad (ATS) had been interrogating the women. He confirmed that some gadgets found with the accused had "objectionable content" stored in

them. However, he declined to reveal more about the case. Madhya Pradesh minister Govind Singh was quick to blame the BJP for the crimes. "The involvement of a woman leader of the BJP in a racket which blackmailed hundreds of men is a testimony to the

character of the party," he claimed. Leader of opposition in the assembly Gopal Bhargava, however, said that the matter should not be politicised and law should take its own course. "Being a member of any party isn't a certificate of criminality or innocence," he said, contesting the minister's charge. Bhargava also said that seeking character certificates wasn't the responsibility of political parties while extending membership to anyone. State home

minister Bala Bachchan told the media that the matter came to light during a probe sparked by a complaint lodged with Indore police. He declined from naming the people who were allegedly blackmailed, saying the matter was being investigated. The minister assured that the probe would not be politically motivated and anyone found guilty would be punished irrespective of their clout. Sources told News18 that the gang honey-trapped several IAS and

IPS officers apart from politicians, including some present and erstwhile ministers. The racket was active since 2013 and had extorted large sums of money from several victims, including leading builders, they claimed. The developments come close on the heels of a lewd video featuring a senior IAS officer going viral in Bhopal. Following this, police reportedly intensified a probe into the activities of the racket despite the fact that the officer and other victims hadn't filed any complaints.

Trump sues to stop New York prosecutors from getting his taxes

The lawsuit is a response to a subpoena the New York District Attorney filed last month seeking eight years of Trump's personal and corporate tax returns.



(News Agencies) Just hours after President Donald Trump sued to block a subpoena seeking his tax returns, he secured a temporary reprieve. Manhattan's top prosecutor agreed Thursday to at least briefly suspend the subpoena, pending the results of a court hearing. With the subpoena, District Attorney Cyrus Vance had been seeking eight years of Trump's personal and corporate tax returns as part of a wide-ranging investigation into hush-money payments during the 2016 presidential campaign. The subpoena was initially filed late last month. Attorneys for Vance and Trump met Thursday with a clerk for U.S. District Court Judge Victor

Marrero, the Bill Clinton appointee assigned the case, to go over logistics in the new lawsuit. There, they agreed to a rapid-fire briefing schedule that will culminate with oral arguments Wednesday morning. In the meantime, Vance consented to stay enforcement of the subpoena until after next week's court hearing. "We are pleased that the constitutional issues at stake in this case will receive the appropriate review from the District Court," said Trump personal attorney Jay Sekulow. The Trump lawsuit opens by arguing that "virtually all legal commenters agree" a sitting president can't be subject to a criminal pro-

cess while in office. "Yet a county prosecutor in New York, for what appears to be the first time in our nation's history, is attempting to do just that," the president's lawyers argue, naming both Vance and Trump accounting firm Mazars as defendants. Trump's attorneys urged the judge to declare the Vance subpoena unconstitutional. But they did allow that Trump might later face off against the New York prosecutor when the president is no longer in the White House. "This court should declare it invalid and enjoin its enforcement until the President is no longer in office," they wrote. Vance spokesman Danny Frost earlier Thursday acknowledged in a statement receiving Trump's lawsuit and said the district attorney "will respond as appropriate in court." Vance's subpoena for the president's tax returns, first reported earlier this week by The New York Times, came after the Justice Department's decision earlier this summer to conclude its own investigation into some of the same issues.

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Scrapping blacklist a welcome closure, redresses pain point of Sikh diaspora

Coming two months before the 550th anniversary of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev and opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor to Pakistan, it is a goodwill gesture with immediate resonance and long-term repercussions.



(News Agencies) It's never too late to undo the wrongs of the past for the sake of a better future.

That's precisely the message in the Narendra Modi government's decision to scrap the entire blacklist of 314 expatriate Sikhs, save two, who had for long been denied the Indian visa due to their alleged links with the Khalistan movement.

The symbolism and significance of Friday's announcement hasn't been lost on anyone – as is evident from a wave of laudatory responses it has evoked from the overseas Sikhs, and political parties and even radical fringe in Punjab.

To be fair, the previous dispensations, notably the

Manmohan Singh-led Congress government (2004-14), had also periodically pruned the blacklist, albeit in bits and pieces. Yet, the notoriously enigmatic catalogue, tagging a number of Punjab-origin NRI Sikhs as persona non grata, continued in the records of home ministry and Indian missions abroad.

But, it's the Modi government which has, in a single stroke, done away with what was a painful and lingering legacy of the Sikh tumult of the 1980s.

GOODWILL GESTURE

Coming two months before the 550th anniversary of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev and opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor to Pakistan, it is a goodwill gesture with immediate reso-

nance and long-term repercussions.

The bold move implies the Indian state turning a new leaf on its outreach to the Sikh diaspora, widely recognised for its rising influence in power politics, particularly in Canada and Britain.

Home to a majority of those figuring in the 'adverse list', as the blacklist was officially called, both countries also figure high on the Indian security establishment's radar as the focal centres of a surviving pro-Khalistan rump and its sinister attempts to stoke Sikh separatism and fund the random terror modules in Punjab.

THE KASHMIR FACTOR

At another level, the Kashmir factor also apparently weighed in the Centre's swift action on the blacklist that has for long lent grist to the foreign-based Khalistani lobby's anti-India spiel.

Post-August 5, two strands are discernible in Pakistan's strategy to up the ante on Kashmir. First, rope in the Khalistani lobby to orchestrate the Kashmir tensions on the global stage. That has since been illustrated by two major protests in London where Pakistanis and pro-Khalistan

Sikhs made a common cause in vandalising the Indian high commission.

It prompted New Delhi to convey its strong concern over violent protests by "Pakistan-incited elements". More such spectacles are expected in New York later this month as India and Pakistan brace for a showdown in the UN General Assembly.

The second piece is to paint Narendra Modi and ideological godfather RSS as "anti-minorities", as Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has done so bellicosely in his fire-spitting speeches.

TWO-PRONGED STRATEGY

In that sense, the Modi government's pragmatic gesture on the blacklist is aimed as much at blunting Pakistan's propaganda as earning the goodwill of a globally vibrant and visible Sikh community.

After all, the arcane 'kaali soochi' had long come to be seen as an unwarranted legacy of Punjab's violent and forgettable past. The state has long moved on; so have those figuring in the 'no Indian visa' list because of their one-time sympathies for the Sikh separatist cause.

Over the years, the blacklist had become a cause célèbre for radical elements who not only magnified the numbers, but also stridently harped on it to whip up a "discrimination against the Sikhs" narrative from foreign shores. "The so-called blacklist has been a major obstacle in the way India has been combating the Sikh separatism in the western countries. Doing away with it augurs well as it denies the Khalistanis a whipping boy to arouse the Sikh sentiments", says Ujjal Dosanjh, Vancouver-based former premier of British Columbia and a respectable face of the Sikhs in Canada.

That is why scrapping the blacklist marks a welcome closure on the most-voiced grouse of the Sikh diaspora. As Punjab director general of police Dinkar Gupta puts it perceptively, "This redresses one of the pain points of Punjab-origin people abroad. We welcome them to come to Punjab, reconnect with their roots and see for themselves the ground realities here." Such a magnanimous gesture, after all, is sign of a mature and confident democracy. India's spirit of reconciliation demands nothing less.

In LA's homelessness crisis, the Skid Row is everywhere

Many are angry and wondering why government officials have been unable to solve the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles.

(News Agencies) LA spent nearly \$620 million in tax dollars last year to address the issue, and yet the number of homeless people increased by 16%, reaching nearly 60,000 people.

As a Los Angeles resident, I am among those who wonder what the mayor's office is doing. When I lived downtown it was virtually impossible to walk a full block in any direction without seeing a homeless person. In Silver Lake where I live now, there are tent cities. On my drive to work I see people living underneath the highway overpasses. It's no longer Skid Row here. The skid is everywhere. But you know what else is everywhere? Churches -- and therein lies the rub.

Earlier this spring, results from the 2018 General Social Survey revealed something that many found rather shocking. For the first time in the survey's nearly 50-year history, the No. 1 religion Americans identified as being was none, edging Catholic and Evangelical.

Now, I'm sure some religious conservatives would read this and ask, "well, who did the survey?" The answer is Ryan Burge, a political scientist at Eastern Illinois University and a Baptist pastor. Next would likely be the finger pointing as to why Americans are losing religion -- the rise of secularism, acceptance of abortion, the gays, and so on.

To that I would simply point my finger at the other national story that has unfolded within the week.

It was about an interview conducted by journalist Lisa Guerrero with famed Christian televangelist -- and prosperity gospel adherent -- Kenneth Copeland. When asked about what he paid for his private plane, Copeland replied "that's none of your business." He also said the private plane he purchased from producer Tyler Perry was "so cheap for me I couldn't help but buy it."

I'm not against buying the finer things in life, but I'm uncomfortable with Copeland positioning himself as some sort of helpless victim as

he acquires those things. Especially since we all know he's doing it tax free.

There's not a city I've lived in that didn't have people you learn to unsee. Sometimes I give directly to someone who asks. Sometimes I buy a meal. But most times I force myself not to care enough to stop because to stop is to admit there's something I can do.

Instead, I ask myself, "where are my tax dollars going and what are our politicians doing with it?" I pay taxes so that the people I voted for can handle it. Then I'm reminded that homelessness, like most socioeconomic issues, is complicated. There isn't a single answer because there isn't a single reason why someone is living on the streets.

They're not all drug addicts. They're not all lazy. They all didn't choose to be without a home. Brokenness comes in many forms -- like mental illness, a disenfranchised veteran, a transgender woman

fleeing a violent environment.

These are not random hypotheses, these are the stories I have been told when I do stop and ask them about themselves in an effort to try to help. For example, in Chicago, there was a homeless man I would occasionally buy food for because medical bills forced him out of his home. And yeah, some are drug addicts... but that doesn't mean they are not worthy of compassion. Worthy of being treated like a human being.

All of which brings me back to the decline of religious identity. While it is fair to wonder what our elected officials are doing with our tax dollars to solve the issue, I do wonder what our religious figures are doing with their tax-exempt status regarding the issue. There are several mega churches within Los Angeles County alone with weekly attendance well over 5,000, which begs the question: How is it possible that 60,000 are living in the streets, while so many self-identified Christian Evangelicals are worshipping in

buildings large enough to house that many parishioners?

When you watch the video of a man like Copeland justifying his lavish lifestyle juxtaposed against the story of rampant homelessness, it becomes a bit easier to understand why so many Americans have decided not to be a part of organized religion. Perhaps instead of looking outward for reasons why people's hearts have moved away from the church, maybe the church should spend time looking inward. This week, the issue of homelessness is about what's going on in Los Angeles, but isn't it a problem all around the country?

There also isn't a major urban hub without a church resting on prime real estate, collecting thousands in non-taxed donations and tithes each week. The government needs to be a better steward of our taxes. I can stop to help more as well. But I would argue that the self-proclaimed body of Christ has leaders who could use a serious tune-up as well.

Trump's obsession with California has cash benefits

Four fundraisers in the state netted a Trump fundraising committee \$15 million.



(News Agencies) President Donald Trump's resurgent obsession with California and its policy machinations boils down to money — specifically, raising as much cash as possible from the state's under-the-radar Republican base.

The president keeps talking up California's problems like environmental regulations and homelessness to show the West Coast's well-heeled donors that he is engaged on problems that affect their businesses and families, according to two sources familiar with the Trump reelection campaign. Trump aides are realistic enough to know they cannot flip the state red in 2020, but they still want dollars flowing from California conservatives during the election that they can redirect toward efforts in states like Wisconsin, Michigan or Pennsylvania. Trump narrowly won these states in 2016 — and they will be crucial for his path to winning a second term.

"The president does not believe California is in play, but there is surprisingly a decent pot of money in fundraising in the state," said one close White House adviser. "The same people who gave to his campaign have a list of problems they have with

the state, and they're running up against a Democratic state legislature while looking for creative solutions."

Trump is more than happy to listen to their concerns at roundtables and private dinners and lunches. Trump supporter and California attorney Harmeet Dhillon said the president's message to California-based donors this week behind closed doors included discussions of rising property crime, immigration and homelessness in San Francisco.

The four fundraisers Trump attended in Los Angeles, San Diego, Beverly Hills and the San Francisco area netted \$15 million for Trump Victory, a joint fundraising committee made up of the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee, said one Republican official familiar with the events.

Trump's donor base in California is bigger than one would presume for a blue state, even if many of its donors would prefer to remain under-the-radar given Trump's divisiveness. In 2016, between May and the November election, the Trump campaign and the RNC took in roughly \$11.2 million in donations of at least \$5,000 or more from California residents, according to data from

the Federal Election Commission.

That included donations from Steven Mnuchin, who worked on the Trump campaign and later became Treasury Secretary, and Tom Barrack, Trump's longtime billionaire friend currently under investigation by federal prosecutors.

In late 2018 and 2019, Trump's support from California Republicans comes from real estate industry executives, players in California's huge agricultural sector — long a supporter of and geographic home to California Republicans — and technology executives who have broken with the industry's generally liberal bent.

This includes Peter Thiel, the co-founder of PayPal and an entrepreneur, as well as donors who are not household names, including: Geoffrey H. Palmer, a real estate developer; Barbara M. Grimm-Marshall, owner of Grimmway Farms; entrepreneur Jarrett Streebin; and Oculus founder Palmer Luckey, according to Federal Election Commission records.

Two close advisers to the White House said the Trump campaign always raises the majority of its money from donors in

California, New York, Texas, and Florida, given the wealth in the four states.

Trump's attention to California-specific issues helps make donors feel heard, they added, especially since Trump has never been able to tap into establishment Republican money in any meaningful way in states like Connecticut, Massachusetts or New Jersey.

The Trump campaign also intends to continue to elevate the state as a cautionary example for what it considers an overly liberal government run amok, compared to the #MAGA worldview Trump has created. The campaign is casting California as socialism on steroids, with the state suddenly the president's favorite political foil.

Democrats control more than two-thirds of the California Legislature while Republicans have fallen to third in voter registration, trailing independents. Even longtime GOP bastions such as Orange County have turned blue, a major reason Republicans hold only seven of the state's 53 seats in Congress.

"There is a growing sense that California is just out of control," said Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House and a longtime friend of Trump's who serves as an informal political adviser. "The president is ultimately going to run a campaign of contrasts. The party that cannot fix Baltimore also cannot fix San Francisco and cannot fix the homeless problem there. He is looking for opportunities to draw the contrast between the two Americas, and I think it is greatly to the left's disadvantage." Trump certainly played up that theme during his visit. On Air Force One during the ride back to Washington D.C., he announced the Environmental Protection Agency would soon give San Francisco a notice of environmental viola-

tions related to its homelessness problem. The president said pollution was flowing into the ocean in California because of waste in storm sewers caused by objects like used needles.

"It's a terrible situation — that's in Los Angeles and in San Francisco," he said on the plane. "We can't have our cities going to hell."

"The President is underlining the failure of liberal leadership in major cities, in California and elsewhere, to draw a contrast with the success of his own policies. And the success of his fundraising in California is evidence that there are millions of Golden State residents who enthusiastically support his re-election," said Tim Murtaugh, director of communications for the president's re-election campaign. "It is also important for California Republicans to stay engaged, because there are a number of House seats we can regain with President Trump's help at the top of the ticket," Murtaugh added. Attorney Dhillon, who rode with Trump in his motorcade in California and had previously attended a White House social media summit enlisting conservative voices, rejected the notion that Trump was "retaliating" against California's Democratic leaders. "I think there's a lot of interest here despite the one-party rule" in what the president has to say, added Dhillon.

The president also always loves a good foil — from the New York Times to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to state political figures and business leaders in the nation's most populous and arguably bluest state. "There are a lot of bogeyman who reside in California," joked one source close to the campaign about the president's most recent visit. "You have Big Tech and Hollywood," giving the president ammunition for Twitter, rallies, and his 2020 re-election bid.



He was a Yale graduate, Wall Street banker and entrepreneur. Today he's homeless in Los Angeles



(News Agencies) Shawn Pleasants has the kind of resume that would attract the attention of any job recruiter: high school valedictorian, economics major from Yale University, Wall Street banking jobs, small business entrepreneur. But a few wrong turns in life 10 years ago left him homeless, and today he's living underneath a tarp in the Koreatown section of Los Angeles.

He's been told before that a smart and capable person like him should not be in this situation.

"But I'm like, should anybody be here? Who should, then?" Pleasants said.

Last week, Trump administration officials came to Los Angeles to examine the homelessness crisis. The President, who clashes with California politicians on a number of issues, has made frequent reference to the state's failure to solve the problem.

Trump is visiting the West Coast this week, amid reports that his administration is about to launch a crackdown on homelessness -- potentially involving dismantling encampments and moving the homeless en masse into a government facility, according to the Washington Post. (It's not clear how this would work or whether the President has the authority to order this kind of action.)

Against that backdrop, Pleasants' story is a reminder of how complex the problem of homelessness can be. "It means it can happen to anybody. It's a problem we all could face," Pleasants said, standing on a sidewalk in front of his weathered belongings. A couple of unopened cereal boxes that he just collected from a food pantry sit atop his things. "I am responsible for my own choices. I own all my decisions," he said plainly before telling his story.

Pleasants, 52, is one of 60,000 people living on the streets of Los Angeles County. The situation has been worsening in recent years -- between 2018 and 2019, the number of homeless people went up 12% in the county and 16% in the city, according to the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Along LA's skid row downtown, tents line entire blocks, and encampments in other neighborhoods have been growing.

Mike Dickerson, an organizer for the homeless advocacy group Ktown for All, says the stories of many people living on the streets might surprise you. "I think a lot of people have this perception that danger lurks in the encampments," he said. "And for myself and for other volunteers, what we found is people who are just people like everyone else, who have fallen into hard times, whether that's because of their

own personal issues or because their landlord evicted them or because the rent rose in a way they could no longer pay." Pleasants grew up in San Antonio, Texas, the product of a stable, loving family who always excelled in school, according to his younger brother, Michael.

Their mother was a teacher, while their father made a career in the Air Force.

"He was always as a young child taking things apart and putting them back together," said Michael Pleasants, who followed his brother's footsteps to Yale. "He was a whiz kid."

"He (Shawn) played trombone and won several civic awards around the city." Pleasants also overcame a physical disability. He was born with a club foot and wore leg braces throughout his childhood, his brother said. His doctor joked he would never run a marathon. In fact, his brother said, he's run several, and was in peak physical condition through his 20s.

Pleasants was a high school valedictorian, who had offers from multiple colleges, according to his brother.

Shawn chose Yale and said he received grants and several academic scholarships, which covered most of his tuition. CNN has verified that he graduated from the university. He majored in economics, and after a few years toiling on Wall Street, including

jobs at Morgan Stanley, he landed in California. Trying to fulfill a Hollywood dream, he started a photography and filmmaking company.

It was the mid-'90s, and as the DVD industry soon exploded, his company got involved in the then-lucrative world of the adult film industry. They made so much money that Pleasants wound up buying a large home in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles.

"It was a beautiful house, something you'd see on MTV," said his brother. But amid squabbles with his co-founders, the income dried up.

"By the time it was all sorted out, there was no business," Shawn Pleasants said.

About 10 years ago, around the same time, he also lost his mother to cancer, and her death sent him into an emotional and physical tailspin.

He went from living one place to another, eventually living out of his car before he lost that as well, his brother said.

Pleasants is gay, and considers himself to be married to another homeless man he's been with for 10 years, since before they were on the streets.

They live on the streets together, acting as a sort of team. They've held court on the same Koreatown sidewalks for six years.

"We're actually in the middle of a move," he said, explaining that some of their things are few blocks away.

He grimaced at the notion of ever going to a shelter.

"They're always set up with such rigid protocols. I would leave the place immediately," he said.

Pleasants believes a shelter would restrict his freedom and is concerned he wouldn't be able to keep all of his things due to a lack of space.

"I would prefer to be somewhere where I can still go to the library and do the things I need to do when I need to do them." Like many of the nation's homeless, drugs, specifically meth, are a part of Pleasants' life.

He said he began using the drug before he became homeless, but insists it's not what led him to the streets.

His brother says his path toward addiction began while he was recovering from a back injury before he was homeless. "It started with pain killers, and then when they were too expensive or not accessible he medicated with other things."

Shawn Pleasants said he takes meth a few times a week as both an escape and to help him stay awake at night.

"Every time you sleep, that's when you lose and when people come and take your things," he said. "I'm a heavy sleeper. I lose a lot."

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Tata Power exits South African wind power projects

The move is in line with the Tata Group company's aim to sell sub-optimal international assets. The two wind power farms have about 230 MW of generation capacity



(News Agencies) Tata Power has exited its investments in two wind power farms of about 230-MW generation capacity in South Africa for \$106 million. The move was in line with the company's aim to sell sub-optimal interna-

entire 50% stake in Cennergi, a South African joint venture, for an amount of ZAR 1,550 million (\$106 million), subject to normal working capital and other adjustments.

Cennergi (Pty) Ltd is a 50:50 joint venture between Exxaro Resources Ltd, a leading South African coal producer, and Khopoli Investments Ltd. The agreement is likely to be completed by the third quarter of FY20. Post this transaction, Exxaro will have 100% ownership of Cennergi.

Cennergi owns two wind

farms in South Africa — Amakhala Emoyeni (with a generation capacity of 134.4 MW and 95% shareholding) and Tsitsikamma Community Wind Farm (with a generation capacity of 95.3 MW and 75% shareholding). Each project has a 20-year power purchase agreement with state power utility Eskom.

"The decision to monetise this South African asset is in alignment with our stated strategy to deleverage the balance sheet by divesting sub-optimal size international as-

sets," said Praveer Sinha, CEO and managing director, Tata Power. "The proceeds from such sale would be re-invested in emerging areas where there is a huge growth opportunity. The company will focus on renewable power, power distribution and service-led businesses in India which will bring in greater value and help us align with the emerging consumer needs", he added.

ABSA Bank was the sole advisor to Khopoli for the transaction. "The collaboration between Exxaro and Tata Power over the

past seven years to develop these projects to their current status has been commendable and an outstanding success in South Africa's implementation of its energy strategy. As a South African-based company, Exxaro is pleased with this opportunity to consolidate its interest in this renewable energy asset at a time in South Africa where we need energy security as we respond to increasing negative sentiment towards coal-based electricity generation," said Mxolisi Mgojo, CEO of Exxaro Resources.

Rupee weak as Saudi attack spurs demand for safe haven assets

The yield on the 10-year Indian government bond was at 6.708%, compared with its previous close of 6.714%. In the year so far, the rupee has weakened 2.8%, while foreign investors have bought nearly \$6.79 billion in Indian equities and \$4.65 billion in debt



(News Agencies) The Indian rupee was weaker against the US dollar tracking emerging market currencies as the attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities lifted demand for safe haven assets such as the greenback.

At 12.12 pm, the domestic currency was trading at 71.83 a dollar, down 0.32%, from Monday's close of 71.60. The local currency opened

at 71.83. The yield on the 10-year Indian government bond was at 6.708%, compared with its previous close of 6.714%.

The Sensex was down 0.88% at 36,796.71 points. So far this year, the index has risen 3%.

In the year so far, the rupee has weakened 2.8%, while foreign investors have bought nearly \$6.79 billion in Indian equities and \$4.65 billion in debt. Asian currencies were trading

lower. South Korean won was down 0.6%, Indonesian rupiah fell 0.5%, Malaysian ringgit, China Offshore 0.3% and China renminbi declined 0.3% each, Philippines peso lost 0.2%, and Taiwan dollar, Thai Baht and Singapore dollar fell around 0.1% each. The dollar index, which measures the US currency's strength against a basket of major currencies, was at 98.60, down marginally from its previous close of 98.61.

Goldman Sachs says the market is about to get wild in October



(News Agencies) For investors taking a breather from the chaos in August, buckle up as the market is about to go crazy again, Goldman Sachs warned.

Wall Street is now inches away from reclaiming its record highs, but a rockier ride could be around the corner as stock volatility has been 25% higher in October on average since 1928, according to Goldman. Big price swings have been seen in each major stock benchmark and sector in October over the past 30 years, with tech-

been tame this month as trade tensions between the U.S. and China eased and Treasury yields bounced back from their historic lows. But things could get chaotic again as earnings season kicks off, which should exacerbate a shift in investor sentiment. "Such pressures boost volumes and volatility as investors observe earnings reports, analyst days and management gives guidance for the following year," Marshall said. Seasonality is also strong in single stock volatility as earnings and other events tend to lead to bigger moves, the strategist noted. "Not only are earnings day moves rising relative to average daily moves, but October tends to be the quarter with the largest absolute earnings day moves for U.S. stocks," Marshall said.

nology and health care being the most volatile groups, Goldman said.

"We believe high October volatility is more than just a coincidence," John Marshall, equity derivatives strategist at Goldman, said in a note Friday. "We believe it is a critical period for many investors and companies that manage performance to calendar year-end."

The Cboe Volatility Index, a measure of the 30-day implied volatility of U.S. stocks also known as the VIX or "fear gauge," has

Cash-starved Air India to put its crew on low-fat diet

Dhananjay Kumar, the state-run airline's spokesman, said Wednesday that the objective is to provide healthy and cost-effective meals to crews on domestic and international flights.



(News Agencies) Cash-starved Air India is putting its crew on a diet, changing their inflight menu to special low-fat meals. Dhananjay Kumar, the state-run airline's spokesman, said Wednesday that the objective is to provide healthy and cost-effective meals to crews on domestic and international flights. Kumar declined comment

on media reports that the cost per meal, mostly vegetarian, will fall to one-third of the current 500-800 rupees (up to \$11) per meal. The new menu was introduced Monday on flights originating from New Delhi and Mumbai and will be extended to other routes soon. "Special low-fat diet meals have been worked out on a day-wise basis in

order to provide light and healthy meal with a home (Indian) touch," an airline statement said.

The decision comes at a time when the Indian government is trying to divest from Air India, which has debts of nearly 580 billion rupees (\$8 billion).

After an earlier failed attempt to sell the airline off last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is expected to try again in October.

In 2009, the airline fired 10 air hostesses for being overweight after they failed to get back in shape three years after they were switched to ground crew jobs.

Coffee before sex?

More than half of Americans prefer their morning caffeine fix to wake up sex, according to poll

(Agencies) Most people prefer waking up to coffee over morning sex, according to a recent survey.

The caffeine addicted masses beat out the randy risers in a study conducted by Le Meridien Hotels & Resorts. An eye opening 53 per cent of frequent travelers asked by the chain preferred their caffeine

fix to satisfying that other craving.

Even more amazing – over three quarters of respondents were willing to go without alcohol, switch off social media or endure a year of celibacy instead of having to kick the coffee habit over that same time frame.

The product of surveying



Le Meridien guests across Arab Emirates and the United States earlier this year, the survey



China, India, the United States it to last through long meetings.

also showed that 51 per cent of people can hold out on sex longer than going without a cup of that heavenly coffee.

With 78 per cent of respondents willing to give up drinking, social media or a sex for year rather than go without coffee, and 16 per cent saying 'they are not able to talk to other people' without coffee in the morning, it

With 78 per cent of respondents willing to give up drinking, social media or a sex for year rather than go without coffee, and 16 per cent saying 'they are not able to talk to other people' without coffee in the morning, it should be no sur-

A further 28 per cent of people felt less creative without their favourite brew and another 22 per cent are physically unable to crawl out of bed without coffee, according to the survey. As far as travelers, it may not be too much of a surprise that 73 per cent of respondents would cede in-room internet access or televisions for a perfect cup of coffee while on the road. A further 36 per cent would rather kick back with a cup of joe before having alcohol while staying at a hotel, said the survey, which was spotted by News.com.au.

Of the 7,455 people who responded to the survey, 55 per cent were women.

How your parents can break your heart

Children starved of warmth and affection suffer lifelong health problems

(Agencies) The effects of childhood abuse and lack of parental affection can last a lifetime, taking a toll both emotionally and physically, reveals a new study.

A new UCLA-led study for the first time examines the effects of abuse and lack of parental affection across the body's entire regulatory system.

The study, published online by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, found a strong biological link for how negative early life experiences affect physical health and can even lead to cardiovascular disease.

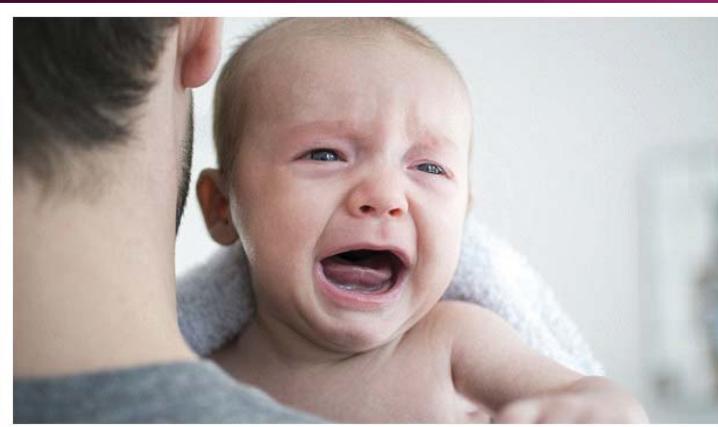
However, it's not all bad news. 'Our findings suggest that there may be a way to reduce the impact abuse has, at least in terms of physical health,' said Judith E. Carroll,

a research scientist at the Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology at UCLA, and the study's lead author.

'If the child has love from parental figures they may be more protected from the impact of abuse on adult biological risk for health problems than those who don't have that loving adult in their life.'

The researchers studied 756 adults who had participated in a study called Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA).

They measured 18 biological markers of health risk, such as blood pressure, heart rate, stress hormone, cholesterol, waist circumference, inflammation, and blood sugar regulation, and analysed if they were at higher biological risk for disease.



To determine the study subjects' childhood stress the researchers used a self-report scale called the Risky Families Questionnaire.

They found a significant link between reports of childhood abuse and multisystem health risks, but those who reported higher amounts of parental

warmth and affection in their childhood had lower multisystem health risks. The researchers also found a significant interaction of abuse and warmth, so that individuals reporting low levels of love and affection and high levels of abuse in childhood had the highest multisystem risk in adulthood. 'Our findings highlight the extent to which these early child-

hood experiences are associated with evidence of increased biological risks across nearly all of the body's major regulatory systems,' said Teresa Seeman, professor of medicine in the division of geriatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine and of epidemiology at the Fielding School of Public Health at UCLA, and the paper's senior author.

'If we only look at individual biological parameters such as blood pressure or cholesterol, we would miss the fact that the early childhood experiences are related to a much broader set of biological risk indicators - suggesting the range of health risks that may result from such adverse childhood exposures.'

The authors note that the findings used information provided by the participants, so there may be some recall bias.



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Think you're house is clean ?

The air quality in your home tells a different story

University of Utah engineers from both the School of Computing and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering built a series of portable air quality monitors with Wi-Fi and connected them to a university server.

(News Agencies) What if you could see the microscopic air pollutants in your home? In a new study, engineers have discovered that visualising how bad air quality is in your home can help mitigate pollution. They conducted a study to determine if homeowners change the way they live if they could visualise the air quality in their house. It turns out, their behaviour changes a lot. Lead author Jason Wiese said, "The idea behind this study was to help

people understand something about this invisible air quality in their home." During the day, the air pollution inside your home can be worse than outside due to activities such as vacuuming, cooking, dusting or running the clothes dryer. The results can cause health problems, especially for the young and elderly with asthma. University of Utah engineers from both the School of Computing and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering built a

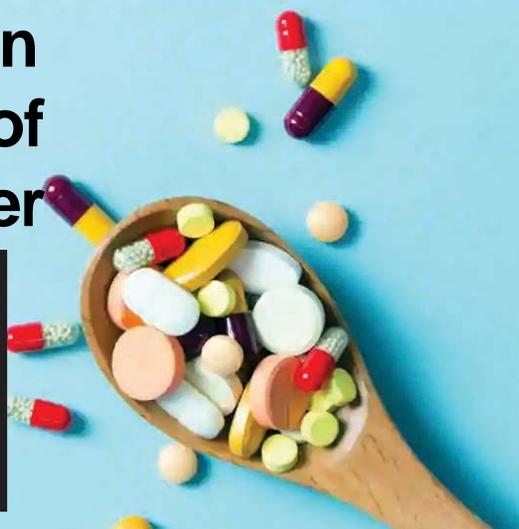
series of portable air quality monitors with Wi-Fi and connected them to a university server. To help identify when there might be spikes in the air pollution, homeowners were given a voice-activated Google Home speaker so they could tell the server to label a particular moment in time when the air quality was being measured, such as when a person was cooking or vacuuming. Participants also were sent an SMS text message warning

them whenever the indoor air quality changed rapidly. During the study, researchers discovered some interesting trends from their system of sensors, which they called MAAV (Measure Air quality, Annotate data streams, and Visualize real-time PM2.5 levels). Researchers also learned that circumstances that made the air pollution worse differed in each home. Vacuuming in the home, for example, would cause different reactions to the air

quality. They also learned that if homeowners could visualize the air quality in their home, they always stayed on top of labelling and looking at the data. The study involves engineering in collaboration with other University of Utah scientists, including biomedical informatics and clinical asthma researchers. The full findings are present in Proceedings of the ACM on Interactive, Mobile, Wearable and Ubiquitous Tech.

Pop an aspirin to lower risk of ovarian cancer

Taking a low-dose aspirin daily may help women lower their risk of developing ovarian cancer by 23%, suggests a new study.



Taking a low-dose of aspirin daily may help women lower their risk of developing ovarian cancer by 23%, suggests a new study. Ovarian cancer is the most fatal gynaecological cancer, largely due to lack of early detection strategies and is believed that the inflammation that occurs during ovulation plays a role in the development of this cancer. Aspirin is thought to lower cancer risk by reducing inflammation. The findings, led by researchers from H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Centre and Research Institute in the US, showed that low-dose aspirin use was associated with a lower risk of ovarian cancer while standard-dose aspirin use increased the risk, their findings revealed. Conversely, women who took non-aspirin anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve)—

at least 10 tablets per week for many years, had an increased risk of developing the disease. "We're not quite at the stage where we could make the recommendation that daily aspirin use lowers ovarian cancer risk. We need to do more research. But it is definitely something women should discuss with their physician," said Shelley Tworoger, Associate

Centre Director from the varsity. For this study, published in the journal JAMA Oncology, the team analysed data on more than 2,00,000 women among which 1,054 developed ovarian cancer. In addition, researchers looked at the participants' use of aspirin (325 milligrams), low-dose aspirin (100 milligrams or less), non-aspirin NSAIDs and acetaminophen.

Sleep is good for brain health, helps your brain organise memories

Sleep is integral to good health. A new study shows that during your sleep, the brain reactivates memories.



(News Agencies) Sleep helps to consolidate memories, as per a new study. Researchers from Ruhr-Universität Bochum and the University of Bonn have investigated the activity patterns that occur in the brain when people remember or forget things. They were interested in how the brain replays and stores during

sleep what it had learned before. The team recorded the brain activity of epilepsy patients who had electrodes implanted into their brain for the purpose of surgical planning. One result: During sleep, the brain even reactivates memory traces that it can no longer remember later on. For the experiment, the test participants were given a

series of pictures to memorise. They then took an afternoon nap. When looking at a picture, the activity in the brain shows a pattern that differs somewhat from picture to picture. The researchers were able to measure these differences in high-frequency activity fluctuations — called gamma band activity. They analysed brain activity not only during the learning task but also during sleep. They then tested which images the participants could remember after sleep and which they could not. The gamma band activity that was typical of certain motifs occurred not only when looking at the images, but also during sleep.

World Smile Day: 5 mood-boosting foods to make you smile

(News Agencies) You may think a slice of pizza or a bowl of chips will cheer you up. But the truth is that if you're looking for more sustainable boosts to your emotional well-being, there are better ways to eat yourself happy. There are food items that have been clinically proven to fight depression, lift energy, ease anxiety and generally make you feel good. On World Smile Day, October 5, here

are five mood-boosting foods that can influence your brain in a consistent, positive way and help cheer you up: **Chocolate** There's a very good reason we feel a bit happier after indulging in a piece or two. Chocolate releases mood-elevating chemicals, like theobromine, tyrosine, and tryptophan (serotonin), according to a study in National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

Banana Aside from their many health benefits, bananas can be eaten to treat PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms or depression. The yellow fruit is high in tryptophan, which converts to serotonin — the mood lifting neurotransmitter — according to a study by the University of Maryland Medical Center. And, can also stabilise blood sugar and help you to relax. **Yoghurt** The probiotics

found in yoghurt, aren't just great for the stomach and immune health. They can also affect your brain functioning, increasing the mood-boosting neurotransmitters, says a study by NCBI **Green tea** Taking a sip of green tea will instantly give you that "ahh" feeling. Its L-theanine (amino acids) properties will help to calm and relax you. It can also help to improve mental fog. So if you're feeling a little low today, it's time to unwind.

Is the cure for cocaine addiction in the gut?

Bile may break up the reward system that makes users feel high, study suggests



(Agencies) Bile acids could prove an unusual tool in the battle to prevent cocaine addiction. Researchers found that the unlikely substance, released by the liver to aid in fat absorption, also alters the brain's reward system and can reduce the high addicts get from the addictive drug. Giving lab mice surgery to ramp up their bile acid production lowered the amount of dopamine they produced in response to cocaine, the study revealed.

And it also left mice less likely to return to their cocaine-associated lab chamber, which indicated to the

researchers that cocaine was 'probably less rewarding.'

Study co-author Dr Aurelio Galli, a biologist at the University of Alabama said: 'These findings redefine the physiological significance of bile acid signalling.'

'They highlight the importance of determining whether bile acid analogues represent a viable pharmacological treatment for cocaine abuse.' Some four million people in the US use cocaine a year, and in 2016 the stimulant was involved in 10,375 deaths in 2016.

There are no medications currently approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat cocaine addiction. People addicted to the drug must quit cold turkey. But the University of Alabama researchers' discovery could change that.

The team carried out the study using an experimental treatment called bile diversion surgery, which is

typically used for weight loss. Bile is released at the end of the small intestine, increasing the amount of bile acids that enter the general circulation.

Mice treated with this surgery have less appetite for high-fat foods, which suggests that bile acids affect brain reward pathways. The study revealed the surgery also produced an elevation of bile acids in the brain, resulting in a reduction in dopamine release in response to cocaine. The team also gave the mice a drug, called OCA, that mimics the effect of bile at its receptor in the brain (TGR5 receptor). It showed OCA mimicked the cocaine-related results of bile diversion surgery in untreated mice, bolstering the theory the drug's effects were reduced with elevated levels of bile acids. Dr Galli added: 'Knocking out TGR5 from the brain's nucleus accumbens – a central reward region – prevented bile acids from reducing cocaine's effects,

confirming that signalling through this receptor was responsible for the cocaine-related results of bile acid elevation.' Bile acids are normally released from the gall bladder into the upper part of the small intestine. There, they emulsify fats for absorption, before being recycled further down the small intestine.

The drug OCA, which affects the bile acid receptor, is already approved for the treatment of primary biliary cirrhosis, an autoimmune liver disease.

The researchers said this offers 'fast translational opportunities' for the drug to be used for other treatments.

Dr Galli said: 'This study also contributes to a greater understanding of how gut-based signalling influences higher order central functions such as reward.' The researchers said further research can now determine whether bile acid is a viable treatment for cocaine abuse.

Why cuts in your mouth heal 10 times faster

Scientists discover oral cells are on standby to repair wounds but do not act the same way on skin in discovery that could pave the way for new treatments



(News Agencies) Wounds in your mouth can heal up to 10 times faster than skin cuts, a study has revealed.

Injuries inside the mouth recover quicker because the tissue in the mouth is constantly ready to regenerate itself, research found.

Mouth wounds also close up without leaving a scar, which has led scientists to look at a way of mimicking the process to improve the treatment of skin wound healing.

Researchers discovered the mouth has more activity in proteins which reduce inflammation and fire up the cells

needed to close wounds.

Boosting the amount of this protein in mice's skin quickens skin healing time by a third – the scientists hope their findings can improve medics' ability to treat damaged skin.

Researchers from the University of California in San Diego tested the difference in healing speed by making cuts on 30 volunteers' arms and inside their mouths.

While the arm injuries closed up at a rate of around 0.1 millimetres a day, those in the mouth healed three times faster, at an average of 0.3 millimetres a day.

And the difference is because there are proteins controlling the healing process in the mouth which are not present in arm skin. These proteins mean skin cells are constantly repairing or on standby to fix the lining of the mouth, but the same thing does not happen on the outside of the body.

Mouth injuries heal quickly – in as little as six days without leaving a scar, in the study – whereas arm wounds often take longer than two weeks to fully recover.

The oral wounds healed approximately five to 10 times faster than skin wounds,' researcher Silvio Gutkind told the New

Scientist. The researchers now suggest the mouth could hold clues to how to make skin heal faster all over the body, after boosting the levels of one of the proteins in mice shortened skin healing time from nine days to three. One expert suggests moist membranes in the body may heal better because we evolved from underwater creatures. Luis Garza, a skin researcher and dermatologist at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine told Science News: 'We spent most of our time learning how to repair wounds underwater. So it makes sense that we repair wounds really well on our moist mucosa.'

US named the 'most dangerous place to give birth' in the developed world by in-depth report

(News Agencies) Women face a higher risk of life-threatening complications during childbirth in the US than in any other 'developed' nation, a USA Today investigation claims.

The number of women who die in childbirth has risen dramatically in the US since 1999 while these fatalities have dropped in every other wealthy nation, including the UK, France, Japan, Germany and the UK.

For its investigation, USA Today spent four years examining hospital records and interviewing women who had survived dangerous childbirth complications across the country.

These women are among the 50,000

who sustain serious injuries during labor and delivery, and that only stands to grow unless doctors and hospital employees are given better training in the future.

Historically childbirth has always been a dangerous endeavor.

But medical advances – especially those made in the last couple of decades – have changed that for most countries in the world.

'Instead, the US continues to watch other countries improve as it falls behind. Today, this is the most dangerous place in the developed world to give birth,' the report says.

However simply not diagnosing common problems during childbirth is

leading to an alarming number of deaths in the US, where 26.4 women per every 100,000 that give birth do not survive the process – a sharp increase from the rate in 1990.

USA Today combed through hundreds of thousands of pages of internal records from hospitals looking for patterns in the childbirth-related complications that their patients experienced.

The most common problems were excessive blood loss and severely high blood pressure – simple problems that can easily be treated if doctors catch them in time.

Worldwide, about five women die every hour of preeclampsia, or high blood

pressure during or immediately following pregnancy.

USA Today investigated the death of Yolanda Mention, who died due to the common complication.

After giving birth to a daughter, Serenity, at a South Carolina hospital in 2015, Mention was sent home. Neither she nor her doctors seemed to realize that her blood pressure was dangerously high. She returned to the hospital the days later with classic symptoms of severe postpartum preeclampsia: high blood pressure and a splitting headache. But during the hours she was left uncared for in the waiting room, Mention had a stroke and died at age 38.



Dimple Kapadia Films Tenet With Christopher Nolan And John David Washington In Mumbai

(News Agencies) Hollywood director Christopher Nolan, who arrived in Mumbai this weekend, started shooting for his drama Tenet in the city. The filmmaker, along with the film's stars John David Washington and Dimple Kapadia, was spotted prepping for the shoot at the Gateway of India on Monday. In the pictures from the sets, Christopher Nolan can be seen walking around on the set in a blue shirt and black trousers while Dimple can be seen dressed in an orange-coloured salwar suit, which she paired with a red shawl. She was also photographed talking to John David, a former footballer, who has earned a Golden Globe nomination for his work in 2018 drama-crime BlackKkKlansman. Son of veteran actor Denzel Washington, John David is also known for his work on HBO's Ballers. On Monday, he was spotted on the sets dressed a black shirt and grey-coloured blazer and trousers.

Christopher Nolan is best-known for directing critically acclaimed films like The Prestige, Batman Begins, The Dark Knight series, Interstellar and Memento. His film Tenet also features Robert Pattinson, Elizabeth Debicki,

Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Clemence Poesy, Michael Caine, Kenneth Branagh and Himesh Patel.

Take a look at the pictures of Dimple Kapadia, Christopher Nolan and John David Washington from the sets of Tenet. It has been reported that the cast and

crew of Tenet will shoot the film in South Mumbai for 10 days. Last year, Christopher Nolan had visited India in March to create awareness about celluloid films in the digital era and to "engage with people from one of the greatest film cultures in the world." He

had also met several celebrities such as Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan and Shah Rukh Khan back then. In an interview with news agency IANS, the director revealed his motive behind his three-day visit to India and said: "One of the reasons

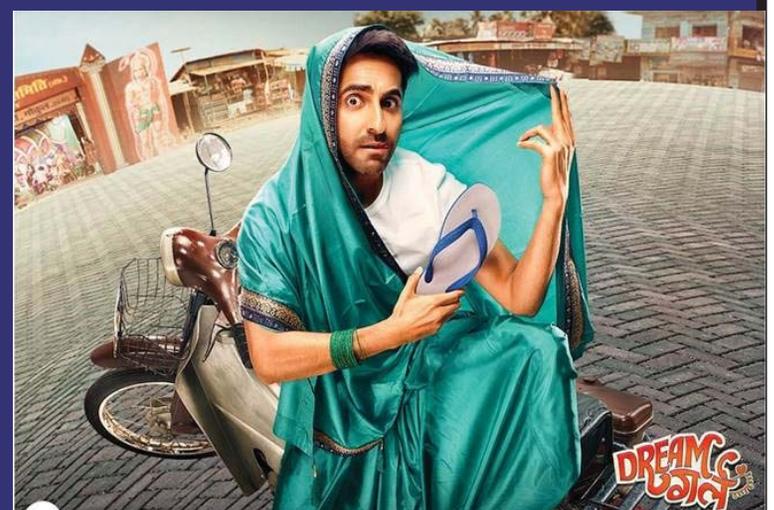
why I am here in India, other than I believe in the cause of saving celluloid films, is to meet more people from the Indian film industry and engage with the people from one of the greatest film cultures of the world... To learn more about it."

Dream Girl Box Office Collection Day 4 Ayushmann Khurrana's Film Is A 'Bonafide Success' At Rs. 52 Crore

(News Agencies) Dream Girl, which stars Ayushmann Khurrana in the lead role, crossed the 50-crore-mark within 4 days of its release, reports Bollywood trade analyst Taran Adarsh. The film collected Rs. 7.43 crore on Monday, which is relatively less than the amount that it collected over the weekend. In his tweet, Taran Adarsh described the film as a "bonafide success." The film has garnered Rs. 52 crore as of now. Sharing the film's box office report so far, Taran Adarsh tweeted: "Dream Girl consolidates and cements its status ... Is a bonafide success, with Day 4 [work-

ing day] showing negligible decline [despite lower ticket rates on weekdays]... Fri 10.05 cr, Sat 16.42 cr, Sun 18.10 cr, Mon 7.43 cr. Total: Rs. 52 cr. India biz."

Dream Girl had a great opening weekend collection. On Monday, Taran Adarsh shared a tweet, wherein he compared the film's opening weekend collection with the other releases of Ayushmann Khurrana. Dream Girl occupied the second spot on the list while the 2018 comedy film Badhaai Ho ranks first on the list (with an opening weekend collection of Rs. 45.70 crore). The third and the fourth spot were occupied by Article 15



and AndhaDhun, opened in theaters on Friday. Other than Ayushmann Khurrana, the film also features Nushrat Bharucha, Annu Kapoor and Vijay Raaz. Directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa and co-produced by Ekta Kapoor, Shobha Kapoor and Nachiket Pantvaidya, Dream Girl

Chhichhore Box Office Collection Day 11

Sushant Singh Rajput, Shraddha Kapoor's Film Is A 'Champ' With Rs. 98 Crore



(News Agencies) Shraddha Kapoor and Sushant Singh Rajput's movie Chhichhore may have been joined by new releases last Friday but it continues its slow and steady performance at the box office. Chhichhore, which hit screens on September 6, has recorded an impressive score of over Rs. 98 crore in 11 days in theatres, reported trade analyst Taran Adarsh. "Chhichhore is a box office champ... Inches closer

to Rs. 100 cr mark... Maintains a strong grip on [second] Mon... This one's not going to slow down soon... [Week 2] Fri 5.34 cr, Sat 9.42 cr, Sun 10.47 cr, Mon 4.02 cr. Total: Rs. 98.08 cr. India biz," Mr Adarsh wrote in his Instagram post.

Chhichhore, which took off on a relatively slow note, has been consistent with its box office performance, resulting in Rs. 50 crore in five days, Rs. 75 crore in

nine days and now, predictably Rs. 100 crore in 12 days. "Will cross Rs. 100 cr mark on Day 12 [second Tue]," wrote Taran Adarsh and added: "Super-hit". Chhichhore was joined by Ayushmann Khurrana's Dream Girl and Akshaye Khanna's courtroom drama Section 375. In his earlier box office reports for Chhichhore, Mr Adarsh had reiterated that Rs 100 crore is not too far for the movie.

What Zareen Khan Told The Director Who Asked Her To 'Rehearse Kissing Scene' With Him

(News Agencies) Actress Zareen Khan, who is gearing up for the release of Punjabi film Daaka, recounted her brush with the casting couch when she was relatively new in the film industry. Speaking to Pinkvilla, the 32-year-old actress, who was launched by Salman Khan in Veer, said that once a director asked her to 'rehearse a kissing scene' with him so that she could 'let go off her inhibitions.' "The person was like, 'you have to let go off your inhibitions, you have to let go off inhibitions' and at that time I was relatively very new (in the film industry)," Zareen told Pinkvilla. She added that when the director asked her to 'rehearse the kiss-

ing scene' with him she told him, "What? I am not doing any kissing scene as a rehearsal."

Zareen Khan has earlier featured in headlines for narrating stories of her struggle with weight loss and dealing with bullies and social media trolls, who've body-shamed her on several occasions. Recently, Zareen Khan was criticised for posting a picture showing stretch marks on her stomach. She shot back saying, "For people who are very curious to know about what's wrong with my stomach, this is the natural stomach of a person who's lost more than 50 Kg of weight. This is how it looks when it is not photoshopped

or surgically corrected. I've always been someone who believes in being real and embraced my imperfections with pride rather than covering it up."

Zareen Khan's reply was applauded by a section of the Internet and actress Anushka Sharma, who also posted an appreciation post for Zareen, in which she wrote, "Zareen, you are beautiful and brave and strong and perfect just the way you are."



'It was the scariest time of my life'

Holly Hagan reveals she was sexually assaulted, fat-shamed and had food thrown at her by strangers after finding fame on Geordie Shore



(News Agencies) Holly Hagan has spoken candidly about the dark side of fame after becoming a household name on Geordie Shore.

The reality star was just 18 years old when she made her debut on the MTV party show in 2011, and admitted she wasn't prepared for the fierce backlash she would receive.

Speaking candidly on BBC Radio 1's The Reality Tea Podcast with Raj and Pilar, Holly, now 27, revealed that among many horrific experiences, she was subjected to assault from fans who would grope her in nightclubs. Recalling her experience of doing nightclub appearances, Holly explained: 'Being in the clubs again opened me up to a lot of trolling in person and a lot of kind of sexual harassment. I would go to club appearances and people would think be-

cause I've been this person on TV that they had the god given right to just turn around and grab my boob or try and put their hand up my skirt.

'It was honestly probably one of the most scariest times of my life.' The reality star added that she began to fear wearing anything other than jeans and long tops to the appearances as it would 'put her at risk', and recalled having to press herself up against walls so that no one would try and grope her from behind. As well as physical abuse, Holly was also subjected to cruel taunts that left her suffering from panic attacks.

She admitted that she would go out running her daily errands and members of the public would scream she was a 'fat sl*g', or she would overhear people discussing her.

As Holly began to retreat into herself and struggle with

crippling anxiety, she couldn't even turn to her friends for support, as they too began to get targeted by association.

Holly recalled: 'My friends have had food thrown in their faces on nights out because they're with me... And that's why I just stopped going out, I stopped going anywhere.'

Reflecting on the experiences she and her co-stars had, she added: 'Me and Sophie [Kasaei] for example, were getting a lot of stick because we weren't seen as the pretty ones. 'We weren't seen as the skinny ones and we were having much more of a hard time then say Charlotte [Crosby] or Vicky [Pattison] were because they were size eight and pretty.' The consistent abuse also lead Holly on a dangerous path of trying to achieve 'perfection' through multiple cosmetic procedures.

**Top Politicians, IAS Officers Among
Madhya Pradesh Honeytrap Victims
While Cong & BJP Trade Charges**



(News Agencies) Bhopal: Top politicians and IAS officers are among dozens of people who may have fallen victim to a high-profile honeytrap gang in Madhya Pradesh, police sources told News18 on Thursday, as authorities picked up five women and a man in connection with the case.

The development has triggered a babel in the state's political circles, with both the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP pointing fingers at each other. A senior police officer from Indore said that a municipal corporation official approached authorities recently with the complaint that a woman befriended him and then shot videos and photographs of him in "compromising positions". Later, she and her associates allegedly started blackmailing him, demanding money.

Three women and a man were arrested from Bhopal on Wednesday while two women were picked up by police in Indore the same day in a covert operation, said sources. One of the accused was allegedly living in a house that she had acquired on rent from a state BJP leader.

(Contd on page 21)



**Iran's Foreign Minister
Vows 'All-Out War' if
U.S. or Saudis Strike**

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**We meet criteria for preferential trade
status, India tells US ahead of PM Modi's visit**

(News Agencies) India on Thursday said that it meets the criteria for the Generalised System of Preferences and the US should take a call on reinstating the trade concessions. New Delhi's comments came a day after 44 influential US lawmakers called upon the Donald Trump administration to reinstate India as a beneficiary of the scheme of duty-free import for developing nations. "Generalized System of Preferences is a unilateral decision, given by countries to other countries based on certain criteria. We are a developing country, we meet those criteria," said foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale in a press briefing before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US visit.

(Contd on page 21)



**Eight Defendants Arrested for Distributing
Millions of Opioid Pills Imported from India**

Defendants Allegedly Received and Repackaged Misbranded Drugs at a Warehouse in Queens



A complaint was unsealed in federal court in Brooklyn charging eight defendants, Ezhil Sezhian Kamaldoss, Harpreet Singh, Parthiban Narayanasamy, Baljeet Singh, Deepak Manchanda, Gulab Gulab,

Mukul Chugh and Vikas M. Verma with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance containing Tramadol, a synthetic opioid. The defendants were arrested this morning,

and their initial appearances are scheduled for this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Peter C. Fitzhugh, Special Agent-in-Charge, HSI, New York Field Office; Troy Miller, Director of Field Operations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, New York Field Office (CBP); and Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent-in-Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Field Office (DEA), announced the charges.

Since approximately January 2018, law enforcement agents with FDA-OCI, USPIS, HSI, CBP, DEA, FBI and other

agencies have been investigating the large-scale importation of misbranded controlled substances, including Tramadol, into the United States from India. As part of the defendants' scheme, distributors in India shipped misbranded Tramadol and other drugs to individuals and entities in the United States through the U.S. mail and other commercial couriers. The defendants primarily operated out of a warehouse in Queens where they repackaged the pills and mailed them to customers throughout the United States. The defendants maintained daily ledgers

detailing the names, addresses, pill size and pill amounts ordered by customers. During the course of the investigation, the defendants distributed millions of Tramadol pills. Ezhil Sezhian Kamaldoss is also charged with money laundering. "As alleged, the defendants participated in a black market for prescription medications by distributing millions of opioid pills in tens of thousands of transactions in one year alone," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "

(Contd on page 20)