

The South Asian INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002

**Amit Shah 1.0 Is
Defining Modi 2.0**



Page 5

Vol. 16

Issue 31

Friday 27 December to 3 January 2019

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

***The US' retreat and China's rise
has changed the world
in this decade***



**Story on
Page 18 & 19**

***The decade was marked by the US retreat from its traditional commitments;
the rise of economic protectionism, nationalism, illiberalism; and the
emergence of China as the other pole in the global order***



WE THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR TRUST & LOYALTY

26 YEARS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

HICKSVILLE, NEW YORK

WORLDWIDE COURIER FREIGHT-FORWARDER

DOMESTIC & LOCAL DELIVERY

CALL US AT: 212-447-5720 or FAX 516-932-3750

ALTERNATE NUMBER: 347-538-7041

OR EMAIL US: INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM

www.indousexpress.com

GREAT SERVICE, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS A YEAR!

CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES

TO INDIA/WORLDWIDE

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

Since April 2005 Editor: Sharnjit Singh Thind

Vol. 14 Issue 15 Wednesday 02 Jan to 08 Jan, 2019 www.PUNJABI DUNIYA.com Published Weekly from New York

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

ਬੰਗਲਾ: ਸ਼ਬਦ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇਹ ਸਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਭੇਜੇ ਗਏ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਜਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ 27,000 ਕਰੋੜ ਖਰਚੇ ਲਗਾਏ ਹਨ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ 27,000 ਕਰੋੜ ਖਰਚੇ ਲਗਾਏ ਹਨ। ਇਹਨਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ 27,000 ਕਰੋੜ ਖਰਚੇ ਲਗਾਏ ਹਨ।

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

ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ: ਸਿੱਖ ਨਾਸ਼ਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖੇਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ।

ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਮੌਕੇ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫੀ

ਵਿਸ਼ਾਕ: ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਮੌਕੇ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫੀ।

ਬੁਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਖਾਲਿਸਤਾਨ ਲਿਬਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਫੋਰਸ ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾਈ

ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ: ਬੁਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਖਾਲਿਸਤਾਨ ਲਿਬਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਫੋਰਸ ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾਈ।

Insurance

Business, Liability, Disability, Workers Comp., E & O, Auto, Home, Property & Casualty

917-612-3158

www.whitestonecorp.com

Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House

Honesty, Integrity & Experience

Since 2007

***Specializing in Investment & Income producing real estate**

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Associate Broker/Notary

Phone: 917 612 3158

COLDWELL BANKER

RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

140 Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, NY 11791 Phone: (516) 864-8100

**Some Call us a Media House
Others call us an Institution to learn from**



**Delivering News,
Uncompromised
& Unbiased for the
Last 16 years**

Email : thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

Website : www.thesouthasianinsider.com

We're dying sooner instead of living longer - Here's why

At the close of Democratic presidential candidates' debate last week, Andrew Yang highlighted a very real problem: "Our country is falling apart Our kids are addicted to smartphones or drugs. We are seeing record high levels of depression, suicide and overdoses. Our corporations are recording record profits while our people are literally dying younger." Yang's comment about the tragedy of people dying younger referred to the statistic released recently showing that for the first time in 100 years (since World War I), the average lifespan of Americans is getting shorter. Yang is correct to call attention to this sad statistic. The decline is stunning, considering major medical breakthroughs in recent decades, improvements in safety, improved knowledge regarding health and nutrition, and our booming economy. But an important question facing us today is whether the progressive policies embraced by Yang and other Democrats are what we need to fix this, or whether they have actually contributed to the problem. The reason for the decline in the average lifespan is not in dispute. Multiple studies, including from the National Center for Health Statistics, show that the decline is a result of so-called "deaths of despair." "Deaths of despair" include significant increases in drug overdoses, liver disease related to alcohol abuse and obesity, and suicides. Related to this are significant increases in homelessness, mental health problems and gun violence.

Why are we seeing such increases?

I believe there is a unifying theory that may explain it all: The breakdown of the nuclear family. This breakdown coincides with the increase in the problems listed above. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently pointed out: "The American family is a rapidly changing institution. You may have grown up in the stereotypical American family - two parents and one or more children, with a father who worked outside the home and a mother who stayed home and cared for the children and the household. Today, with the entry of so many more women into the workforce, with the increasing divorce rate, and with the growing number of single-parent households, other family structures have become more common."

The statistics are eye-popping: The share of U.S. children living with no parents or an unmarried parent has jumped from 15 percent in 1968 to 35 percent in 2017, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data. Combine this with the significant population growth over the past 50 years and we find that America is now home to approximately 20 million children who are being raised in a home with no parent of a single parent. On top of this,

in 46 percent of two-parent homes both parents are working full-time - up 50 percent over the past 50 years, according to Pew.

The liberal elites would have us believe that this is not a significant development. In order to be among the "enlightened," political correctness requires pretending there is no benefit to children being raised in a home with their mother and father. A recent survey showed that over 70 percent of Americans believe that living with a single parent is just as good as living with two parents. The truth is quite the opposite. According to Princeton University's Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, children raised in a "fragile family" (where parents were cohabiting or where there was a lone parent), were twice as likely to drop out of high school.

Even children in stable single-parent households were likely to not perform as well as children of a married couple. The study naturally concludes that having two adults providing time and money to raise a child means more resources for the child. Single-mother families are more than five times as likely to experience poverty as married-parent families. Children are also safer in married-parent families and have a lower risk of being exposed to domestic violence. This is because married women are less likely to experience physical abuse than single or cohabiting women, and less likely to suffer abuse and neglect. "On average, no other relationship delivers the kind of stability kids need like marriage does," Bradford Wilcox explains in a study titled *The Future of Children*. According to the Princeton report, "most scholars now agree that children raised by two biological parents in a stable marriage do better than children in other family forms across a wide range of outcomes."

The American Academy of Pediatrics said in its 2016 report: "Fathers do not parent like mothers, nor are they a replacement for mothers when they are not at home; they provide a unique, dynamic, and important contribution to their families and children." And according to a London School of Economics report: "Some of the negative consequences on the wellbeing of a child born to a single mother can be reduced if their biological father joins and stays with the family."

All this supports the direct link between childhood trauma and neglect and "deaths of despair." According to a Trust for America's Health report on addictions: "Research shows that many different life circumstances, often rooted in childhood trauma and early adversity, can lead to substance misuse and mental health problems."

Jim Breslo

Hatred will have costs for India's diversity and security

Children enacting plays and recalling significant national events is an endearing activity, and December is a special month given that it is the end of the calendar year, and whether one subscribes to Santa Claus or not, the holiday ambience is contagious. However, in an unsavoury but not surprising development, on December 15, a school in Karnataka had children enact the demolition of the Babri Masjid. A video clip of the "demolition" that was widely circulated on social media noted that the footage was taken at the Sri Rama Vidyakendra High School in Kalladka in south Karnataka and that the school is owned by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader, Prabhakar Bhat. Union minister Sadananda Gowda and the Lt Governor of Puduchery, Kiran Bedi, also reportedly attended this event, though the minister was said to have reached the venue after the Babri demolition episode ended.

Be that as it may, local media reports indicate that the two schools run by this RSS leader have inculcated an ideology of hatred against the Muslim-Christian faiths among their students, and that while this is against the provisions of the constitution, the institution continues to receive State patronage. This pattern, as noted, is not unsurprising in states where Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) governments are in office - and Karnataka is no exception. Police have arrested three members of the governing body of the school, but it remains to be seen if there will be any deterrent action. This inculcation of casting the Muslim faith and its adherents as the "other" to

be despised is acquiring a large footprint in many educational institutions across India that have an empathy and affinity with the Hindutva ideology. In recent years, an insidious linkage has found traction wherein the Muslim citizen is framed as a potential terrorist or a sympathiser of jihad.

This was repeated on December 22 at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in the capital, where young people were seen chanting slogans that dripped with this derision for the other, among them, "Desh ke gaddaron ko, goli maaro saalon ko (Kill these national traitors - with an expletive added)". There have been other visuals, particularly from rallies held to support the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which show young people chanting slogans such as, "Aatankwad ki kya pehchan? Mulla Masjid Pakistan (What is the identity-marker of a terrorist? Maulvi-mosque-Pakistan)".

The total disregard for the spirit of the Constitution and the tolerance for diversity of all hues that India espouses is self-evident, and the nature of the transgression is the same whether in south Karnataka or the national capital.

While this recourse to divisive politics by the BJP is often justified as deft electoral strategy - the cynical stoking of religious animosity to garner the majority's support and advance the ideology of exclusionary Hindutva (as opposed to inclusive Hinduism) - the implications for national security are corrosive.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief & Publisher :
Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor (Political Affairs-India) :
Aruna Singh

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah
Photographers: Hamad
Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Special Correspondent :
Gagandeep Singh (INDIA)
Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :
P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158 TelFax : 516 342 1076
editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com
www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source



Amit Shah 1.0 Is Defining Modi 2.0 - With Big Consequences

In Jharkhand, the BJP has taken a big hit just seven months after it won 12 of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state. What has changed since the Prime Minister returned for a second term with an even bigger score than his landmark victory in 2014? The emergence of Amit Shah, who doubles up as Home Minister and BJP President, as the most powerful politician in the country. The combo of Modi and Shah is praised by admirers as "the most effective partnership in Sangh history." Whether or not you agree, it is inarguable that Shah's hyphenation with Modi on top issues is now written in permanent ink. I had argued here early on in this term that Shah is Modi's political heir. The Home Minister is the pilot and face of several big and controversial decisions taken by Modi 2.0 such as the repeal of Article 370 (taking away Kashmir's special status) and reducing India's only Muslim-majority state to a union territory. Shah anchored the bill and made aggressive pronouncements in Parliament such as Dr Farooq Abdullah, former Chief Minister of the erstwhile J&K, was not under arrest but he could not produce him in the House with a "kanpatti pe gun" (with a gun to his head). The House and the media gasped at the language but kept quiet even when it emerged that Abdullah was in fact under detention and continues to be. The BJP base, represented by most of its online supporters and the IT cell, was ecstatic talking about "Shah-ji as

Sardar Patel the Second" and the "Modi & Shah Jodi" which saw a "confident Modi" indulgently allowing his "partner" the complete limelight. The 370 play book of Shah as the face of tough new decisions was repeated in the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and its bigoted twin, the oft-threatened National Register of Citizens (NRC), which Shah has repeatedly committed to. Modi was not even present in the Lok Sabha when Shah introduced the bill to the same sort of raptures from the BJP base. Now, after 22 people have been killed in protests-related violence, it's a tight rope walk for Modi as he tries to distance himself from the NRC. At a campaign speech in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on Sunday, Modi tried with vintage political spin to dial down the threat of the NRC - I'm not sure the country is buying it. Modi's speech saw immediate push back and fact-checkers used serial Shah pronouncements to highlight that the NRC is a clear and present danger. Even tame newspapers wrote edits saying Modi's attempted reassurance that there have been no steps taken by his government to consider introducing the NRC is not enough and that the Modi government will likely have to concretely roll back the NRC. The opposition also remained unconvinced by Modi dialling down the rhetoric as Monday saw Y S Jaganmohan Reddy, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, announcing that he will not

implement the NRC in his state. Like Chief Ministers including Naveen Patnaik and Nitish Kumar, Jaganmohan had supported the CAA in parliament but is drawing the line at the NRC. Hemant Soren who will become the Chief Minister of Jharkhand has also said that he will not go down the NRC route. The growing number of Chief Ministers against the NRC represents significant political capital. This federal push back is unprecedented with BJP allies making it clear that they won't go along for the ride. Eventually,

Modi and Shah will have to confront the reality that only BJP states will be on board for the NRC. They don't like push back on decisions and have never bothered about political consensus. Modi has dared Mamata Banerjee, the West Bengal Chief Minister leading the fight against the NRC to "ask your Solicitor General if you can refuse to implement central legislation." So is Shah 1.0 causing Modi 2.0 big trouble, as one panelist on NDTV put it yesterday? At the best of times, say BJP leaders, Shah is a

decisive and arrogant leader not remotely given to reviewing his strategy. In Modi 1.0, Shah as BJP President had a lower profile as he did not have any executive authority. But after the 2019 win, Shah has become a larger-than-life figure hailed as a modern day Chanakya by his tame Panna Pramukhs in the media. Thus far, every decision if his was described as a "master stroke". In the cardboard cutout Modi cabinet, where silence is a virtue, only Shah speaks often to Modi. Perhaps Shah began to believe his own press. Certainly, his fabled social engineering experiments of making non-dominant castes as Chief Ministers in Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand have flopped. His fabled arrogance saw Uddhav Thackeray, preferring an uncertain alliance with the Congress and NCP in Maharashtra. Even in Jharkhand, which has become the fifth state to slip out of Shah's hands in a year, Shah backed an extremely unpopular Raghubar Das despite warnings from others. The upcoming election calendar is a challenge for Shah with elections in Delhi and Bihar, followed by West Bengal in 2021. But my reading is that Modi and Shah seem determined to double down on NRC, Shah will remain BJP president (JP Nadda will be confined to working president), and the moves will get more aggressive. All this as the BJP is reportedly blaming its new party office in Delhi for bad luck.

Clear the confusion on NRC

The PM's statement is welcome, but insufficient

Addressing a rally in Delhi on Sunday, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi defended the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, highlighted his government's non-discriminatory approach, launched an attack on the Opposition and "urban Naxals" for misleading people, and, most significantly, said that there had been no discussion on the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and argued that no Indian citizen needed to worry about it.

Mr Modi's statement may be a sign that the government is reconsidering its approach. If so, it means that the PM is open to feedback. But the statement has gaps which the government must address. Mr Modi's ambiguity on NRC stands in contrast to his own defence of it during the election campaign, but more categorically, home minister Amit Shah's repeated commitment

to a nationwide NRC, on several occasions, including in Parliament. Sure, it may not have been discussed, but it has loomed large on the national consciousness. It is the NRC, more than the CAA, which has caused anxieties among



citizens, particularly Muslims and the poor. The fact that there is no clarity on the kind of paperwork required to prove citizenship has only added to the uncertainty. The government has a right to update its citizenship records,

but this must not place disproportionate burden on citizens, and force every Indian to prove nationality. Assam's flawed NRC process had high margins of error and extracted a human cost. The PM must now build on his statement and assure the nation that the NRC is not on the agenda.

The value of diplomatic engagement

India must continue to engage with all, including critics, while pushing its own narrative

Defence minister Rajnath Singh and external affairs minister S Jaishankar visited Washington DC last week for the second round of the India-United States (US) 2+2 dialogue. The discussions with their US counterparts were substantive and testify to the comprehensive and positive advance in bilateral ties. Significantly, and in an indication of the warmth of the relationship, President Donald Trump spent 40 minutes with the two ministers. The same signal was given by the Americans in agreeing to calling on Pakistan, by name, in the joint statement, to take "immediate, sustained and irreversible action to ensure that no territory under its control is used for terrorism against other countries in any manner..". This, at a time, when the US continues to need Pakistan to address the situation in Afghanistan. Jaishankar, who spent a major part of his diplomatic

career in nurturing the India-US relationship, could take satisfaction at its current strength and that there is bipartisan support for the deepening of India-US ties. The external affairs minister would, at the same time, be aware that it is important for India that bilateral ties are not viewed from the lens of US party politics. It is, therefore, important for Indian diplomacy to be actively engaged with the leadership of both parties. In this context, a constant dialogue with different sections of opinion on the Hill, including with those who do not see eye to eye with Indian policies and positions, has to be maintained. After all, the test of diplomacy does not lie in preaching to the converted, but in opening "closed" minds. It is customary for visiting foreign ministers to meet congressional leaders during their visits to the US

capital. Jaishankar sought meetings with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee leaders. He met the former, but declined to meet the latter. This, because the Indian origin Pramila Jayapal, who is a member of the House but not of its Foreign Affairs Committee, would have been present at the meeting. Jaishankar clarified he had no interest in meeting her. It is obvious that Jaishankar's attitude towards Jayapal was on account of a draft resolution on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) that she has tabled in the House, and which has been referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee. The draft resolution urges India to lift communications restrictions in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and to release detainees. While it makes no mention of the constitutional changes of August 5, it takes note of the restrictions that were



put in place on that date. The draft resolution contains formulations that are offensive to India for they do not take cognisance of the security situation in the state that has resulted from Pakistan's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism, a fact the 2+2 joint statement itself recognises. Reports indicate that Jayapal has not been willing to truly engage India's US-based diplomats on the resolution, thereby, perhaps, showing a biased approach. Jaishankar also correctly noted that the draft resolution does not show a

correct understanding of either the J&K situation or of India's actions. Government sources reportedly maintain that it was wrong of the House leadership to insist on Jayapal's presence, especially as she is not a committee member and was not in the meeting's original list. In normal circumstances, it is not for one side to prescribe who will be present in the other side's delegation. This is in keeping with standard diplomatic practice. It is this position that the House leadership obviously took,

and which some leading US senators have also taken. Thus, while a committee's leader cannot pressure a visiting minister to meet a member the minister does not want to, he can hardly give up the principle that it will decide their delegation's constitution. India's traditional diplomacy has been based on engagement with all, including with critics. It has never imposed pre-conditions for dialogue unless it is with a state like Pakistan, which has undertaken violence and terrorism.

A leap for national security

Following up on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on August 15 to create the position of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the government finalised the roles and responsibilities of the CDS, as prepared by a committee led by the National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval. The CDS will head the Department of Military Affairs, within the ministry of defence, while being the permanent chairman of the chiefs of staff committee. The appointment of the CDS is a big leap forward for India's national security apparatus. First proposed almost two decades ago, its merit has never been contested, yet it has not got operationalised till now. PM Modi has displayed

The CDS decision is welcome. But challenges lie ahead



boldness and the step is welcome. But the hard part begins now. The CDS' first task will be

to lead the integration of the different services, who have operated in silos, have got embroiled in inter-

services disputes, and have been reluctant to let go of their own institutional interests. The CDS will have

to build trust between the three services, and then use that to push for greater integration and jointness in training, capabilities, acquisitions, operations and planning. The nature of threats has changes with the newer technologies; so has the nature of warfare where the distinctions between land, air and waters, and now cyber, are blurred. Ensuring India's forces are prepared is now the CDS' job, along with that of the respective service chiefs.

The second core challenge for the CDS is to become an effective link between the services and the civilian bureaucracy, for the relationship has been mired in distrust. Being housed within the ministry

will help. The services are resentful that those who lack expertise and experience take all the decisions, while sitting in South Block, and ignore genuine concerns of the armed personnel. The bureaucrats see many demands of the services and the leadership as unreasonable, and believe that political control of the armed forces will inevitably mean administrative oversight. The CDS will have to mediate these relationships and ensure that all sides remain committed to the big picture - of making India secure, while the forces continue to operate under the democratic framework of civilian control.

In a democracy, community-based mobilisation is legitimate. So are protests, as long as they are peaceful. By vandalising public property, protesters lost moral authority. But the primary fault for the violence in UP lies with the government.

Adityanath must reach out to Muslims, restore order

The protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act have taken the highest toll on life in Uttar Pradesh (UP). Over 15 people are reported dead; hundreds are injured; there are unconfirmed reports of widespread detentions; public property has been vandalised; Internet services have been shut in many parts of the state; and there is a palpable sense of anxiety and fear among residents.

To understand the nature of the protests, and the excessive and disproportionate police response, it is useful to look at UP's demography and political history. The state has over 20% Muslims, which is close to 40 million people. The state has also had a long history of inter-community tensions. In 2017, by achieving an overwhelming majority in the assembly polls, despite not

giving any ticket to Muslims, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) made history. It also, then, appointed Yogi Adityanath, who has had a history of practicing hardline majoritarian politics, as the chief minister. The Muslims were unhappy, but respected the electoral verdict. But repeated instances of lynching, a state administration which was perceived as turning a blind eye to minority grievances, the lack

of political representation in both the assembly and Parliament, and consistent hate speech directed at the community had created a sullen mood. The Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya reinforced the perception that this was an unfavourable and adverse political climate, but Muslims peacefully respected the verdict of the judiciary. But the passage of the CAA, and the proposed

National Register of Citizens, has led to a major backlash from the community.

In a democracy, community-based mobilisation is legitimate. So are protests, as long as they are peaceful. By vandalising public property, protesters lost moral authority. But the primary fault for the violence in UP lies with the government. It's intelligence-gathering was poor, for it should have read the mood, anticipated the protests, and prepared accordingly. The political and bureaucratic leadership made no effort to politically engage with the community and its leaders to defuse tensions. And then, when protests erupted, the government response was rather indiscriminate in its use of force. The CM's language threatening revenge did not help. The detention of a journalist with The Hindu, who happens to be a Kashmiri Muslim, and the allegedly threatening and communal language used against him, is merely symptomatic of the kind of disturbing mindset that appears to prevail in the administration. The Yogi government must reach out to Muslims, allay apprehensions, and exercise its authority and restore order, but within the framework of law.

Jharkhand is a mandate of the poor, for their rights

The verdict for the Jharkhand assembly is, first and foremost, a verdict in favour of a new localism, and is a reflection of people's voice overwhelming the arena of state elections in India.

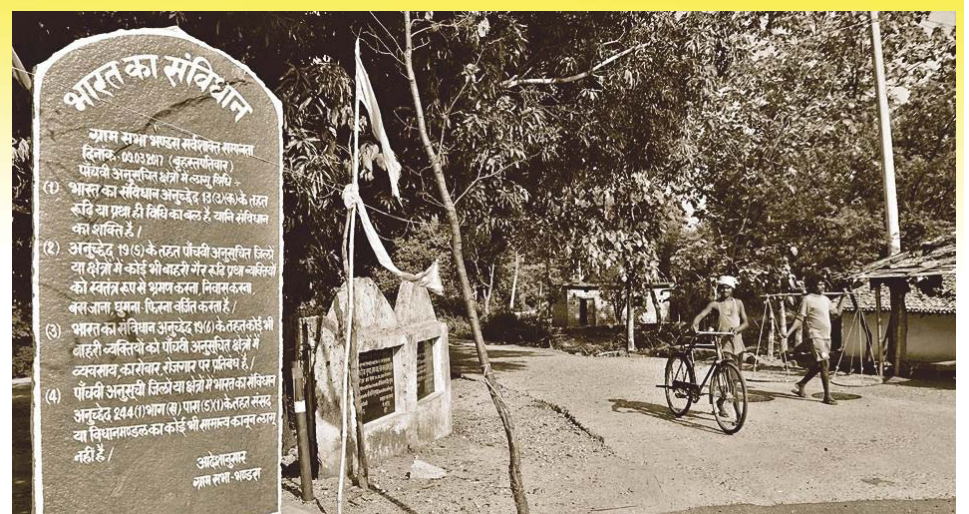
One key issue, which helps frame the meaning of the verdict, is the struggle of adivasis against purported amendments to their land rights by the Raghubar Das-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, with its acquisition deemed unjust in the name of intended development. At an even deeper level, the protest of poor people on this and other related issues of their rights as tribal citizens - specially through the pathalgadi movement - brings to fore their belief in the salience of the Constitution and voting or matdan as a preferred form of political change. At the very least, it is the "demand side" of politics, especially from the asymmetrically placed poor voter, powerless and vulnerable, that has overwhelmed and realigned the "supply side" on offer from political parties.

Conventional vectors used to understand Jharkhand fail to explain this new turn. For one, the verdict is not just about identities of the tribal, nor is it about the manipulation of patronage and money -

for long considered the bane of Jharkhand politics. Nor are the outcomes simply a reflection of the overwhelming "arithmetic" of the coalition.

First the outcome itself: The formidable majority obtained by the pre-poll alliance of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), the Congress, and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), is a historic first for this alliance in general, and the JMM in particular. Since Jharkhand was formed in November 2000, following its bifurcation from the erstwhile larger state of Bihar, and since its first state election 2005, the 81-member assembly has always seen fragmented verdicts, with post-poll coalitions being stitched to form governments.

The BJP championed the struggle for the new state. But it has only ruled with the support of the JMM, and, subsequently, with the support of the All Jharkhand Students Union led by Sudesh Mahto, and by engineering defections from Jharkhand Vikas Morcha led by Babulal Marandi - an erstwhile BJP chief minister (CM). In 2014, the BJP central leadership decided to appoint a non-tribal leader as CM in Raghubar Das. The understanding was that at just about 27% of the



population, and with sub-tribal internal differences such as those between the Santhals, Mundas, and Oraons, the BJP could play a "caste plus tribe politics" of vote banks. This would include the Mahtos (17%) under the leadership of ally Sudesh Mahto, and forward castes and urban voters. It is noteworthy that in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, as the Hindustan Times reported on November 2, the Narendra Modi-led BJP polled 70% of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) vote, 60% of the upper-caste vote, and 65% of the Hindu Scheduled Tribe votes. In the state elections, however, this

assumption of a fused tribe-caste vote bank in favour of the BJP proved erroneous. Tribal fears about dilution of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908), and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (1949) were rampant. The CM had, in the assembly, moved an amendment to the central land acquisition Act, such that the state government was no longer required to conduct social impact assessments, provide for schools, colleges; nor social security for the displaced.

On many occasions, paltry sums were given to the tribals in exchange for land. This stoked fears among the tribals.



The lessons from Jharkhand assembly poll results

The Jharkhand election, in which a coalition of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) has succeeded in dislodging the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, is a reflection of a broader pattern in national politics. For one, it shows, yet again, that the BJP is vulnerable at the state level - and Narendra Modi's popularity at the national level is often not enough to help the party when issues are more local. This is a reflection of the weaknesses of the BJP's chief ministers. It was visible in Madhya

Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in 2018; and in Haryana (where the party formed the government but did not have a majority on its own) and Maharashtra in 2019. Two, it shows that the BJP's efforts to turn every election into a national battle on issues of nationalism, and introduce

an element of polarisation, does not quite work. And three, it indicates that the rift between the BJP and its allies - first the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra post-polls, and now, the All Jharkhand Students Union in Jharkhand - is hurting the party. The BJP's very dominance has created

Indian democracy is robust. The balance is good for the polity

apprehensions among its smaller allies, and keeping the junior partners on board will be important to sustain its success.

The outcome also has lessons for the Opposition. It shows that if the non-BJP parties build a campaign on local issues, focus on local leaders, avoid getting entangled in divisive national debates, and strike smart alliances, they have more than a chance in taking on the otherwise politically dominant BJP. This is the formula Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party used in Maharashtra; it is what the Congress did in the three

states it won in 2018 and Bhupinder Singh Hooda attempted in Haryana; and this is what the JMM-led alliance sought to replicate in Jharkhand. It will be instructive to see how the local versus national debate plays out in Delhi

early next year, where the Aam Aadmi Party plans to focus on its governance.

And finally, the outcome shows that Indian democracy is robust. The BJP's dominance had given rise to fears of a polity where only one force would exercise all power. But as state elections have shown, there is a system of checks and balances inherent in India's constitutional arrangement, particularly through elections. The BJP leads nationally by some distance, but it has to contend with states ruled by others, take their concerns on board, and arrive at a degree of accommodation to make the country work. This balance within the polity is good for the system, and is a reflection of both the resilience of electoral democracy and the diversity of India.

CAA-NRC: This violence must stop

The government will have to do more to build trust. But the protesters must exercise restraint

The night of December 19 was a difficult one. I was apprehensive, confused and annoyed. If one believed posts on the social media, something "big" was going to happen in Uttar Pradesh (UP) the next day, after the Friday prayers. I was worried because I was planning to travel, on road, past Muzaffarnagar, with my family. Those who know UP are well aware of what the "Muzaffarnagar model" means politically. To be on the safe side, we started off early. As soon as we reached Ghaziabad, the phone signal and the Internet data connection went off. One could feel the tension in the air. Very few shops were open, and the usual crowd on the road was missing.

We heaved a sigh of relief when the car reached the Uttarakhand border. By the time we reached our destination, there was news of a violent conflict in Muzaffarnagar between the police and those protesting against the

Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). In UP, several people were killed that day. There were protests against the CAA and the NRC in Delhi's Jamia Milia Islamia University, and in Lucknow, Kanpur, Sambhal, and Hyderabad. At the same time, there were peaceful protests led by activists, historians and film personalities. Some students even offered flowers to policemen during their protest march. These protests were unique, and a fascinating reflection of Gandhigiri. In Bengaluru, the eminent historian, Ramachandra Guha was detained. This was shocking. Guha had not violated Section 144; he was neither chanting slogans, nor was a part of any crowd. He was only holding a poster against the CAA.

The ongoing protests were another opportunity for the Opposition to up the ante against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) government. Although the government was struggling to maintain law and order, there was also an effort to dispel apprehensions on the CAA-NRC process by publishing advertisements. But these announcements did not cut ice with the protesters. Had they paid attention to these government explainers in the press, they might not have felt the need for such aggressive protests.

On December 20, the Union government gave another clarification. It clarified that anyone born in India before July 1, 1987, or whose parents were born before that date, is a bonafide Indian citizen, according to law, and need not worry about the CAA or a possible countrywide the NRC. The government also said that it was ready to accept suggestions on CAA, stressing that rules for implementation of the law were still in the making, and yet to be issued. On Sunday, Prime



Minister Narendra Modi again tried to dispel doubts about the CAA and the NRC. But these explanations have failed to convince the protesters. The government will have to make more efforts to build trust on the issue.

More than 25 people have lost their lives in protests related to the CAA and the NRC. The burden of so many deaths is not good for any democracy. This may impact the image of the country. But the agitators will also have to understand that they will have to stop protesting, and that only discussions can

lead to solutions. It's also important to note here that it's, now, not an issue of the resentment of one community. Political stalwarts have also started taking advantage of the anti-CAA-NRC protests. But this game is dangerous.

We must pay attention to another question: Who is trying to instigate these demonstrations? For example, the UP police claimed that they did not kill Mohammad Wakil in Lucknow. The postmortem report revealed that Wakil was shot with a .32 bore bullet.

Jerusalem, a city of contested histories

Jerusalem's rich heritage embodied above all in its beautiful architecture and urban landscape and stands in stark contrast to the divisive politics and identity contestations that frame the city.



I landed in Jerusalem with some amount of trepidation about what awaits me. But I was taken aback by my first conversation at the hotel desk where they enquired if all was well in India. Clearly, the news about protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (now Act) and National Register of Citizens had travelled wide. Talking about it in Jerusalem, home to contested history and identity conflicts, was particularly poignant. Having lived in India all my life, I had taken the idea of equality before the law for all Indians for granted. I did not quite know how to engage with this conversation. To avoid any further queries, I put the ball in their

court. "What about here?" I asked. The Arab staffer said: "Its occupied territory..our citizenship was snatched..we are just residents..But at least in Jerusalem all is stable. We feel different from others, but safe." This sentiment lingered in my mind as I strolled around Jerusalem. The throngs of visitors moved with enthusiasm between the Al Aqsa mosque, the Jewish temple wall, and the Holy Sepulcher church - the site of Jesus Christ's crucifixion-making the city feel like the perfect case of cultural integration. As I meandered through the alleys, stopping at shops selling beautiful art and ceramics, the bubble of the

surface bonhomie burst. I picked up a beautiful bowl and asked, "Is this made here in Israel?" The elderly shopkeeper said, yes, in "Philistine". Walking down the next morning to Hebrew University, the streets were full of Jewish and Muslim students easily identified with their hijabs and the Jewish kippah. One could hear Arabic and Hebrew being spoken by groups of youngsters. A young boy, with his distinctly Arab family, called out a greeting to his Jewish friend across the street. And just when I began feeling reassured that politics can't kill this spirit, I found a bunch of girls in hijabs being stopped at the police picket. Jerusalem's rich heritage,

embodied above all in its beautiful architecture and urban landscape, stands in stark contrast to the divisive politics and identity contestations that frame the city. The old city not only has the Jewish temple, Al Aqsa mosque and the Holy Sepulcher Church, but fascinating remnants of the Mamluk and Ottoman madrasas, sabils (water drinking spots) and European hospices. These reflect the layers of cultural influences on this historic city. Its richly textured history peeps out from the ruins of the past that overlook the alleys of the old city. Not surprisingly, archaeology is big business here. Archaeologists have discovered the city's Roman past, and its Mamluk and

Ottoman heritage. Significantly, much of the Ottoman architecture stands on the 13th century Mamluk remains. And the Mamluk sabils or water dispensers boast of having Roman basins.

And yet as a woman observer, I was reminded that the politics of gender transcends all other issues of identity. A long flowing skirt being flung at me to wear in order to cover my trousers before entering the Dome of the Rock and the mosque reminded me that I had no other identity except that of a woman. This was not entirely surprising. But in a land riveted by contestations of religious and ethnic identity, it was certainly a little jarring.

Row over Gen Rawat comment not his first. 5 times he courted controversy

Army chief General Bipin Rawat on Thursday triggered a controversy by publicly condemning those leading violent protests, asserting that leadership wasn't about guiding people to carry out arson and violence, comments that were widely seen as being aimed at the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests across India.

The comments by the general, set to retire on December 31 and widely expected to be named India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), drew sharp criticism from Opposition leaders and also senior retired officers though most of the latter did not want to come on record.

However, this is not the first time that the outspoken and media-savvy general has courted

controversy with his comments. Here's a list of five top controversies he triggered after taken over as army chief on December 31, 2016:

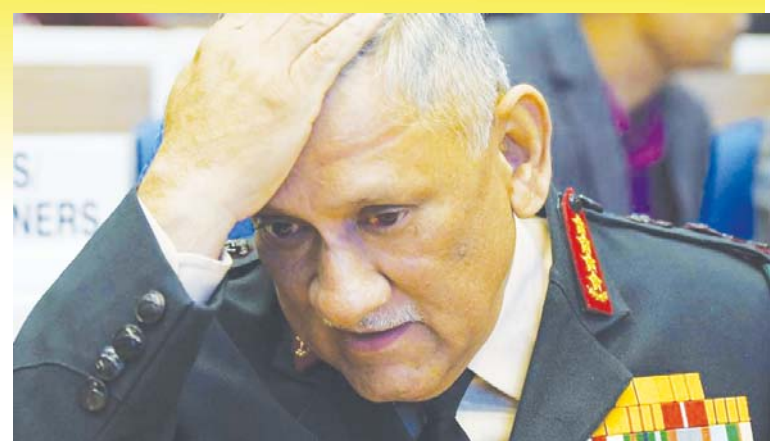
Here are 5 occasions when the Army chief courted controversy: General Rawat awarded the Chief of Army Staff's Commendation card two years ago to Major Leetul Gogoi for "sustained efforts" in counter insurgency operations. Gogoi was mired in a controversy in 2017 after tying a Kashmiri civilian to the front of his jeep, apparently in an attempt to prevent stone-pelters from targeting his convoy.

The incident evoked criticism from people in the Valley, human rights activists and political leaders. Last year, Gogoi landed in trouble after he was seen with Kashmiri woman in a Srinagar

hotel against rules and for being away from his place of duty in an operational area.

Rawat's stance relating to disability pension also sparked a row. Last December, he warned soldiers who falsely call themselves 'disabled' and make their disability a way to earn extra money, through disability pension.

"If a soldier is truly disabled, we will pay special attention to them and help them fully, even financially. But, those who falsely call themselves 'disabled' and make their disability a way to earn money, I am warning them today, that you better mend your ways otherwise in a few days you might receive special instructions from the Army Headquarters, which will not be good news for you," he



had said in Pune. Later, defence minister Rajnath Singh took an in-principle decision to rescind the order and asked service headquarters to come up with means to reduce "impropriety" in disability pension. In 2017, Rawat's comments against stone pelters in Kashmir triggered a row. "In fact, I wish these people, instead of throwing stones at us,

were firing weapons at us. Then I would have been happy. Then I could do what I (want to do)," he said. He also said, "Adversaries must be afraid of you and at the same time your people must be afraid of you. We are a friendly army, but when we are called to restore law and order, people have to be afraid of us," he said.

have a covered area of 10000 sq. meters, out of which 6000 sq. meters shall be indoor exposition, Innovation Hub, Virtual Archive etc. and 4000 sq. meters for visitor's activity area, 3 office, exhibit development laboratory etc.

The remaining land will be developed into a computer science park with interspersed outdoor exhibits, picnic area etc. The first phase would require 33 months including activities for acquisition of artifacts, exhibit development etc. The second phase would require two more years.

The project cost is Rs. 140 crores (\$1400 million). The CMS envisages to create a corpus fund of Rs. 40 crore through membership drive, corporate funding, philanthropic support, Government support etc.

The CMS has planned funding for the CCM from various sources such as membership, sponsorships, grants, donations within India and abroad.

[illegible]

JMM's Hemant Soren stakes claim to form govt, to take oath on December 29

Hemant Soren along with the elected legislators of the JMM, Congress and RJD and a battery of leaders met Governor Draupadi Murmu at Raj Bhawan and staked the claim to form a government.

(News Agencies)- The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's (JMM) Hemant Soren on Tuesday staked claim to form the government and said he will take oath as the chief minister of Jharkhand on December 29.

Earlier, Hemant Soren, who is the JMM's working president and chief ministerial face of the grand alliance, was elected the Leader of the House. Congress Legislature Party Leader elect Alamgir Alam proposed his name and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejaswi Yadav and Congress' general secretary in charge of Jharkhand RPN Singh supported it. Soon after, Hemant Soren along with the elected legislators of the JMM, Congress and RJD and a battery of leaders met Governor Draupadi Murmu at Raj Bhawan and staked the claim to form a government. He also submitted the list of supporting parties and MLAs.

"I have presented the list to the Governor Draupadi Murmu signed by 50 legislators supporting my government and pleaded her to permit me to form the government," said Hemant Soren after staking claim.

He said the swearing-in ceremony will take place on December 29. He added that the letters of the supporting parties - Congress, RJD and JMM (P) have also been submitted.

Congress Legislature Party leader, Alamgir Alam, RPN Singh, Yadav were among the others present with him.

This will be the 44-year-old Hemant Soren's second term in office. He had helmed the eastern state for the first time in July 2013 till December 2014. His father Shibu Soren has also been the chief minister of the state for three terms.

Hemant Soren may go to Delhi on Wednesday or Thursday to



meet Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi and to invite them in the swearing-in ceremony. A few chief ministers of Congress-ruled state might also take part in the ceremony, AICC general secretary RPN Singh said. The swearing-in ceremony would be followed by the election of a protem speaker to administer the oath to the newly-elected members and full-time speaker. Current Speaker Dinesh Oraon,

who lost the election, tendered his resignation from the post. The newly-elected JMM legislators met at party president Shibu Soren's residence in the afternoon and put the seal on Hemant Soren's candidature as their leader. The party MLAs also sought senior Soren's blessings and assured him they will play a constructive role in shaping his dream Jharkhand that would be free from oppression, coercion and plead to protect the water,

forest cover and land. Soon after, Hemant Soren met JMM(P) chief Babulal Marandi at his residence seeking his blessings and sought his cooperation. "It was his modesty despite getting clear majority after steering election campaigns for the alliance and I have extended him my unconditional support for a new beginning and usher Jharkhand as per people's expectations," Babulal Marandi said after the meeting.

All you need to know about National Population Register and the NRC link



Ten states have already announced that they will not implement NPR.

(News Agencies)- The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, approved Rs 3,500 crore for updation of the National Population Register (NPR) that will be carried out with 2021 Census. Ten states have already announced that they will not implement NPR, considered a stepping stone for the controversial National Register for Citizens (NRC).

Here are answers to some key questions on the NPR: What is National Population Register?

The NPR is a list of "usual residents" of the country, defined as a person who has resided in a local area for the past six

months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months or more. It is a register having both biometric and demographic details of every resident in India from village to district to state to the national level.

What is required to be part of the NPR?

The Census officer will ask you about names of your parents, your family (wife and children), date of birth, nationality (as declared), present address of usual residence and permanent address, occupation and educational qualifications. It is a self declaration exercise, in which no documents are required.

How does one enrol for the NPR?

From April 1, along with Census household listing exercise, the government will information on a tablet about one's demographic and biometric data. Having Aadhaar number would help to provide one's biometric data. Those, who don't have Aadhaar, can enrol for the 12 digit unique number and give enrollment number to the census officer. All residents have to mandatorily enrol for the register.

How is NPR prepared?

The information provided for NPR will be verified by a local registrar appointed by the state government. Rules are clear on who are India citizens - all those born before 1987, those born between 1987 and 2004, whose at least one parent is an Indian citizen and those after 2004, whose one parent is an Indian citizen and other is not an illegal migrant at time of the birth.

The particulars of individuals, whose citizenship is doubtful, would be marked with "appropriate remarks" by the

registrar in NPR and notices will be issued to such persons. A person will be heard by the registrar before taking decision on whether he or she will be part of NPR. The draft local population register will be published for inviting objections. The registrar will consider these objections and will take a final decision. The local population register would be submitted to the district registrar, where a person, whose claim has been rejected, can appeal. If the claim is accepted, the person's name will be entered in the register with "appropriate remarks" and submitted to the state for the national register.

What will happen if one's name is not in the NPR?

As NPR is a population register, name of every resident would be there. If it is not there, the person can apply with sub-district level registrar, a level above the local registrar. There is no appeal process against registrar's order in the NPR and this process is

listed for NRC.

What is link between NPR and NRC? Once NPR is completed, the Census commissioner would notify local registrar for creating a National Register of Citizens (NRC) of India. The registrar will seek information from individuals against whom remarks have been made in the NPR. They would be required to submit documents as sought by the registrar. The Census commission will remove the names of non-citizens for having a national NRC. A person declared as non-citizen can appeal with a "designated authority" within 30 days of the Census commissioner's order.

Difference between NPR and NRC - In 2011 Census, the NRC was to be a sub-set of NPR, which is a register of usual residents of a country. Unlike the NRC, the NPR is not a citizenship enumeration drive, as it would also include a foreigner staying in a locality for more than six months. .

In thank you note, Prashant Kishor gives Rahul Gandhi a task; gets trolled

In a tweet, Prashant Kishor thanked Rahul Gandhi for "joining citizens' movement" against the citizenship law and NRC and asked him to get all chief ministers of his party to declare that they will not implement the NRC.

(News Agencies)- Janata Dal United leader Prashant Kishor, who led the opposition to the amended citizenship law and the proposed citizens' register within his party, on Tuesday tweeted to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to thank him for joining the 'satyagraha' against the law at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial in national capital Delhi.

The former Congress chief had tweeted against the National Register of Citizens, or NRC, that his party insists would create divisions in the society. But Rahul Gandhi, 49, was abroad on an official visit when protests broke out in Delhi earlier this month.

Monday's satyagraha organised by the Congress was his first appearance at a protest against the law. In his absence, sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had been the party's face on the protests;

she had even joined a protest at India Gate last week.

Also watch: Why Prashant Kishor says Rahul isn't protesting loud enough on NRC In a tweet, Prashant Kishor thanked Rahul Gandhi for "joining citizens' movement" against the citizenship law and NRC and asked him to get all chief ministers of his party to declare that they will not implement the NRC.

"But as you know beyond public protests we also need states to say NO to #NRC to stop it. We hope you will impress upon the CP (Congress president) to OFFICIALLY announce that there will be #No_NRC in the #Congress ruled states," Prashant Kishor, the 42-year-old JDU vice president who is also a political strategist, said.

It is an idea that Prashant Kishor had floated when his party led by Nitish Kumar supported the citizenship amendment law in

parliament despite his appeals earlier this month.

But his tweet to Rahul Gandhi asking him to do more than just protesting triggered a sharp reaction. Many pointed out that the Congress chief ministers had already declared their decision not to implement the citizenship law or the citizens' register.

Others reminded Prashant Kishor about his party's shifting stand on the citizenship law and the citizens' register. Prashant Kishor responded to them, asking them to produce Congress president Sonia Gandhi's statement declaring that there will be no NRC in Congress-ruled states.

Chief Ministers of at least 11 states - Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Puducherry, Odisha, West Bengal and Kerala - have since then declared that they will not implement NRC.



It is not clear if, and how they can block the citizenship register so far. The groundwork for the citizenship register will be laid down next year when census officials go around the country for the houselisting operations and also update the national population register. The citizenship register will be a subset of this population register and will include people who are able to produce the approved

documentation that will be counted as proof. For now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has insisted that his government had not discussed a word about the citizenship register. But there have been several statements from senior ministers in and outside parliament, declaring that the Centre would create the citizenship register and expel the infiltrators.

Scrapped Boeing stuck under a Bengal over-bridge in dense fog



(News Agencies)- A decommissioned Boeing-737 without wings got stuck under an over-bridge on NH-2 near Durgapur Steel Plant in Bengal's West Burdwan district in the early hours of Tuesday while on the way to a scrapyard in Bihar, creating a spectacle for the locals, who clicked selfies and photos.

The incident fortunately did not trigger heavy traffic snarls and was resolved after the tyres of the trailer carrying the plane were removed to lower its height enabling its passage. No one was injured in the incident.

The police officers who visited the spot said dense fog in the morning made the driver misjudge the height of the over-bridge.

The aircraft once operated by the

Indian Airlines and later by India Post before being grounded in 2014 was kept near the Air India hangar at the international airport in Kolkata since then.

Deputy commissioner (east) of Asansol-Durgapur police Abhishek Gupta said the officials of the National Highway Authority of India were informed about the incident.

"There was no traffic jam. The plane is now in custody of the police," said Gupta.

Earlier on Saturday, another decommissioned Boeing, which was being taken to a scrapyard from the airport, left people on Kolkata's Jessore road in awe. Nearly a dozen old planes are still waiting at the NSCBI airport in Kolkata to be scrapped.

Chidambaram, Stalin among 8,000 booked for anti-CAA rally in Chennai

(News Agencies)- A day after Tamil Nadu's major Opposition party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and its allies held a massive rally against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the Chennai Police on Tuesday slapped cases against DMK president MK Stalin, former Union minister P Chidambaram, Rajya Sabha MP Vaiko, Lok Sabha MP Thol Thirumavalavan and thousands of people who took part in the rally.

According to police, the cases were filed against 8,000 people for staging the rally despite the fact that no permission was given. "When the DMK approached the city police for permission, we replied to them whether they are ready to take responsibility if any violence breaks out in the rally. However, the DMK did not reply to our notice. So, the Chennai Police denied permission. However, DMK, Congress, CPI, CPI(M), MDMK, VCK, Manithaneya Makkal Katchi, Indhiya Jananayaga Katchi (IJK) and other outfits have taken part in the rally from Egmore Thalamuthu Natarajan Government Bungalow to Government Rajarathnam Stadium. So, the cases have been registered against the illegal rally," said a top source with Chennai Police.

The cop further added the cases have been filed under three sections for unlawful assembly, and conducting rally without permission. When HT contacted DMK



organising secretary RS Bharathi, he said that they had not received any communication from the police till afternoon on Tuesday. "If there is any such development, our leader Stalin will say about the further course of action," Bharathi said. Senior journalist and Indian People Association chairman Varahi had filed a petition in the Madras High Court against the rally on Sunday evening seeking an emergency hearing. The high court judges heard the matter late in the night and passed an interim order following the arguments by the petitioner and police. In a temporary order, the judge directed the police to record the illegal rallies by drone cameras.

As per the court's order, Chennai Police used drone cameras to monitor the movement of the rally. The court has also sought a report from the Police Commissioner within eight weeks about the petition of Varahi. However, the DMK went ahead and conducted the rally on Monday. "We will not worry about the hurdles, as we planned our rally would take place in Chennai," Stalin said on Sunday night.

'PM Modi was right, no discussion on NRC right now': Amit Shah

Home minister Amit Shah emphasised there have been no talks on the subject either in Parliament or the Union Cabinet.

(News Agencies)- Home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday backed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that there is no pan-India discussion on National Register of Citizens (NRC) at the moment. The home minister emphasised there have been no talks on the subject either in Parliament or the Union Cabinet. "There is no need to debate this (pan-India NRC) as there is no discussion on it right now, PM Modi was right, there is no

discussion on it yet either in the Cabinet or Parliament," said Amit Shah.

The minister again underscored that the Citizenship Act is only about providing citizenship and takes away nothing from anyone. The minister also made it clear that the National Population Register, which is a list of "usual residents" of the country, is a decadal exercise. He said the exercise will only map people who have shifted to new states. It

registers new children and removes people who're dead, said the minister.

He said the government is not doing anything new, the processes have been put in place by the past governments. Shah asserted that NPR was a continuation of a move started by the former UPA government. "It is a constitutional provision and is the same exercise which was conducted by the Congress-led government earlier. It is



neither a part of our manifesto nor our promise. It was a good move started by the Congress which is simply being followed,"

he said.

Shah's remarks came on a day the Union Cabinet approved the proposal for conducting Census of India 2021 and updation of National Population Register.

He assured that no person should have any reason to be concerned about the exercise and data collected under NPR exercise is helpful for the government to formulate schemes for people.

"The data collected under NPR will be used to formulate plans for the betterment of the public through central government schemes. It is not an exercise to decide citizenship of any person," Shah said.

Poured glue in eyes before knifing him: Sexually abused Chennai girl's grisly revenge

(News Agencies)- A 24-year-old Chennai woman was arrested for murdering her classmate's 59-year old father who used to demand sexual favours and was blackmailing her, said city police. The case was cracked within a day with the help of a CCTV camera footage of the accused running away from the murder spot with her clothes smeared in blood.

The body of the camphor vendor, M Sekar, a resident of Sathangadu in Thiruvottiyur locality of Chennai was found in a pool of blood in the wee hours of Tuesday at New Washermanpet area in the northern parts of the city with neck injuries and glue on his face. Sekar's two-wheeler was also found parked near his body. A scan of CCTV cameras in the area showed a woman running

on Ammani Amman Scheme Road (AAS Road) in New Washermanpet, right behind the spot where Sekar's body was discovered.

"It was clear that the woman was the culprit as she was wearing a Churidar with bloodstains. We later found out that the woman was a friend of the deceased man's daughter," said an inquiry officer.

During the inquiry, the accused told the police that she used to visit Sekar's house regularly to meet his daughter, who had studied with her at a local college. She said Sekar took advantage of her friendship with his daughter to harass her and demand sexual favours. He even started blackmailing her to not get married using some intimate videos recently, said police.

"Therefore, the accused decided



to eliminate Sekar. She asked him to meet her at a private place on Monday night. At her request, Sekar visited the AAS Road in

New Washermanpet," said the police officer.

The accused poured an adhesive in Sekar's eyes and mouth on the pretext of giving him a surprise and then stabbed him in the neck, added the police officer.

She ran away from the spot after confirming Sekar had died but her escape was caught in a CCTV camera installed on the AAS road.

Invest in First Mortgages

EARN 8-15%

ANNUALLY ON WELL SECURED, SHORT TERM, 1ST MORTGAGE LOANS. MONTHLY DIVIDENDS

For details & disclosures

WREAM

Whitestone Real Estate Asset Management Corp.
Phone: 917 612 3158 Email: whitesone1979@gmail.com

Real Estate Broker/Investor/Private Lender Since 2009

German IIT Madras Student Sent Back For Joining Citizenship Law Protests

(News Agencies)- A German exchange student studying at IIT Madras has reportedly been sent back for participating in protests on campus and elsewhere in Chennai against the citizenship law and the police crackdown on students in Delhi.

Jakob Lindenthal, a post-graduate student of physics at the IIT or Indian Institute of Technology, reportedly left for Amsterdam on Monday. He was quoted as telling the Indian Express that he had received oral directions to leave India from the Foreigners Regional Registration Office in Chennai.

In images from last week, the 24-year-old student was spotted in several protests. In one, he was

seen holding a placard that read:

"Uniformed Criminals = Criminals". Another placard he held up said: "1933-1945 We have been there". He was reportedly told by officials that his participation in the protests was a violation of his visa terms and he had to leave India immediately.

Jakob is from Dresden in Germany.

It is not clear yet whether it was IIT Madras or the central government that decided to send him away.

IIT Madras students call it a "shame" that such a decision was taken, given the student had a semester to complete. The institute has not responded to two requests from NDTV seeking comments.



Insurance



Are you paying too much for Auto, Home, Business, Workman Compensation, Contractors, General Liability, E&O ?

Call us today for complimentary analysis of your policy.

NLight Financial LLC



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Licensed Insurance Broker/ Notary Public
(Service with Honesty & Smile, Since 2012)

**1900, Hempstead Tpke., Suite 306
East Meadow, New York 11554
Cell: 917 612 3158 Tel Fax: 516 246 9022**

Email: info@nlightfin.com

www.nlightfin.com



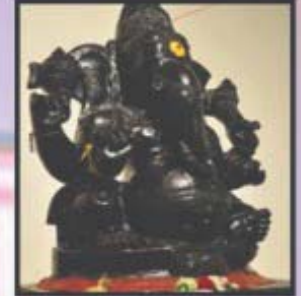
The ONLY temple in the world outside India
dedicated to Shri Shani Maharaj

Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

*Regular Poojas' and
Homams' are conducted on
daily basis:*

Special Poojas:

- + Sri Saneeswara
homam
- + Sri Saneeswara -
parikara pooja
- + Sri Saneeswara
harati
- + Sri Navagraha Homa
- + Poornima: vrata
Pooja
- + Pradosham Pooja
- + Sri Sankatahara
chaturthi Pooja
- + Sri Satyanarayana
Vratha
- + Birthdays / Wed-
dings / Upanayanam &
More... ..



**1616 Hillside Avenue, Temple Suits
New Hyde Park NY 11040
Ph: 718 740 9400 / 516 358 9400
Email: temple.navagraha@gmail.com**

Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm

*The Temple entrance is in the western side parking lot behind Hot Breads &
Maharajas in New Hyde Park NY*

Functions of the space:

*Temple / Community Events / Senior Social Day Care Center /
Art & Music School / Library / Spiritual Lounge / Gift Shop*

www.NavagrahaUSA.com

How the US' retreat and China's rise changed the world in this decade

Exactly a century ago, in 1919, US President Woodrow Wilson, in the backdrop of the first World War, decided that there had to be a new way of governing the world. From the anarchy that prevailed in the international system, it was time to devise both a set of principles - he came up with 14 - and an institutional framework to guide inter-state relations.

The world, devastated by the war, saw potential in the idea to establish sustainable and just peace. At the Paris Peace Conference after the war, which eventually culminated in the Treaty of Versailles, the US president himself presided over the committee to draft the covenant of what came to become the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations.

But there was a twist. The US Senate did not ratify the Treaty, and the US did not join the League. The architect of the international organisation could not convince his own country. This stemmed from a range of reasons, including the terms of the Treaty. But fundamentally, while Wilson represented a school of thought rooted in viewing US interests as inextricably tied with

developments in the rest of the world, which saw the US as a leader of the global order and which believed in greater international engagement, there existed isolationists who saw US interests being best served by keeping away from the turbulence elsewhere and focusing on the domestic realm. This tussle between the two schools has been a strand in the US through its modern history, but hundred years after the isolationists trumped Wilson, they again regained the upper hand in the United States - partially during Barack Obama's administration, but substantially during the presidency of Donald Trump. This manifested itself in the partial retreat of the US from its role as the international system's security provider, as the lynchpin of global commons, and as the force pushing its own values in the world - notwithstanding the fact that the US does remain the most dominant political, economic and military power in the world.

And this US ambivalence about its global role, which goes beyond merely Trump's presidency as seen in the policy positions of a range of Democrat leaders, will, perhaps, rank as the fundamental change of this

decade. It has been accompanied with, is a reflection of, and has shaped, the rise of economic protectionism and end of the globalisation dream; the ascent of nationalism and illiberalism; and the return of a more uncertain, even anarchic, international order. And of this order, the most significant element is the emergence of another pole in global politics - China, the effort to constrain its exercise of power, and the weakening of multilateralism at a time when the world needs it the most, for the world is confronting its most serious challenge, one that goes beyond the purview of one nation-state - the climate crisis.

WESTERN SUNSET

To understand this decade, go back to the end of the last decade. The 2008 global financial crisis - which began with a subprime mortgage crisis but eventually hit banking, finance, manufacturing, investment, and employment across the board, but particularly in the developed countries of the modern capitalist world - caused deep anxieties. Governments responded by providing stimulus. Keynesian principles - after two decades of the steady withdrawal of the state from core economic activities -

were rediscovered, as public money was pumped in to revive the economy.

There was, indeed, a degree of recovery, more in the US than in Europe, where smaller countries struggled to meet the aspirations of citizens while complying with fiscal discipline. But something had changed. Citizens of the West, particularly the working class, began questioning the fundamentals of the economic order. Who had benefited from the era of global economic integration? Didn't trade help workers elsewhere, at the cost of jobs at home? Didn't the entire world of abstract finance only benefit elites within their countries, who monopolised a disproportionate share of the wealth without anything tangible to show for it? Hadn't the relatively liberal flow of labour ended up giving access to citizens from elsewhere to opportunities in their countries, while they lagged behind? Why are we fighting wars elsewhere when there is so much to do at home?

These were questions the global Left had been asking of the entire economic paradigm since the Reagan-Thatcher era. But when these questions began to assume a greater political

salience, it was the Right which came up with its own set of answers - for many, these were flawed answers, but they were answers nonetheless which tapped into the raw anxieties of a large section.

Their answers were deceptively simple. Yes, trade deals had hurt workers and helped China; yes, immigration - both legal and illegal - had hurt those native to the homeland; yes, it was time for tighter borders; yes, an elite had hurt the economy and it was time to take the country back.

These answers, then, took the form of electoral outcomes, be it the victory of Brexit in the United Kingdom or Donald Trump in the United States, and translated into a set of policy prescriptions that have shaken the very foundations of the global economic order. The global flow of goods, services and labour was no longer as smooth. global trading arrangements like the World Trade Organisation became passé. Trade deals were reviewed. Borders were more closed. They also had a political impact in these societies. Suddenly, liberalism was conflated with elitism. Minorities were frowned upon at best, and even worse, discriminated against or expelled.

How China's Rise Has Remade Global Politics

As much as any other single development, China's rise over the past two decades has remade the landscape of global politics. Beginning with its entry into the World Trade Organization in December 2001, China rapidly transformed its economy from a low-cost "factory to the world" to a global leader in advanced technologies. Along the way, it has transformed global supply chains, but also international diplomacy, leveraging its success to become the primary trading and development partner for emerging economies across Asia, Africa and Latin America. But Beijing's emergence as a global power has also created tensions. Early expectations that China's integration into the global economy would lead to liberalization at home and moderation abroad have proven overly optimistic, especially since President Xi Jinping rose to power in 2012. Instead, Xi has overseen a domestic crackdown

on dissent, in order to shore up and expand the Chinese Communist Party's control over every aspect of Chinese society. Needed economic reforms have been put on the backburner, while unfair trade practices, such as forced technology transfers and other restrictions for foreign corporations operating in China, have resulted in a trade war with the U.S. and increasing criticism from Europe. Meanwhile, China's "quiet rise" has given way to more vocal expressions of great power aspirations and a more assertive international posture, particularly with regard to China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Combined with Beijing's military modernization program, that has put Asia, but also the United States, on notice that China's economic power will have geopolitical implications. WPR has covered China's rise in detail, and continues to examine key questions about what will happen next. Can China

sustain its economic miracle in the face of demographic and environmental challenges? Will China's military modernization program change the balance of power in Asia and beyond? Is China seeking to reshape the rules-based international system to better reflect its interests, or is Beijing's goal to undermine and replace it? Below are some of the highlights of WPR's coverage.

What True Reciprocity for U.S. and Chinese Diplomats Would Look Like Reciprocity is usually a sound basis for relations between peer states and competitors, but how one pushes for it matters almost as much as the goals of fairness and equality themselves. In announcing recent changes to rules governing the activities of Chinese diplomats in the U.S., the State Department said it was responding to the longstanding imbalance between how Chinese officials are allowed to circulate in American society and who they can engage with,

and what U.S. diplomats are permitted to do when they take up posts in China. The best form of engagement with China, however, shouldn't limit itself to tit-for-tat notions of bilateral ties or trade balances, but rather build diplomacy on positive values. And it is here that the Trump administration missed an opportunity.

China Under Xi Jinping

Many observers in the West assumed that integrating China into the global economy would lead to domestic liberalization and international moderation. Instead, under Xi, China has pocketed the gains of its economic rise, while cracking down on what little domestic dissent had emerged under previous leaders.

" Why the real story of China's recent anniversary celebration was not the parade, in What China's 70th Anniversary Celebrations Really Tell Us

" Why China's biggest enemy might be itself, in Hong Kong's Protests Show the Biggest Challenge to China's Rise Is at Home "

Why a reinvigorated Chinese Communist Party may be necessary to China's economic growth, in China's Strengthening of Communist Party Rule Is Not Just a Power Grab

" Why Xi has put any further meaningful economic reforms on the backburner, in Xi Stays the Course in Speech Commemorating China's Pathbreaking Reforms

The Belt and Road Initiative China has a long history of aid and investment in the developing world. Now its global infrastructure initiative is making inroads not only in Asia and Africa, but also Europe.

" What is really driving the Belt and Road Initiative, in China's Belt and Road 'Reboot' Is Really a Foreign Influence Campaign

China's rise as a world power

One of the most important developments in the world system over the last few decades has been the rise of China as new power in the world system. How has this happened?

China's rise is the result of a combination of factors since it reoriented on production within global capitalism in the 1980s. First, in contrast to the Soviet bloc, China found a way to benefit in a twist of historical irony from its colonial legacy. Britain controlled Hong Kong up until 1997, Portugal controlled Macau up to 1999, and the US continues to use Taiwan as a protectorate.

These colonies and protectorates connected China to the world economy even before its full entry into the world system. In Mao's era, Hong Kong provided about one-third of China's foreign currency. Without

Hong Kong, China would not have been able to import as much technology. After the end of the Cold War, during Deng Xiaoping's rule, Hong Kong was very important for China's modernization. Deng used Hong Kong to gain even more access to foreign currency, to import all sorts of things including high technology, and to take advantage of its skilled labor force, like management professionals.

China used Macau first as an ideal place for smuggling goods into mainland China, taking

advantage of the island's notoriously lax enforcement of law. And then China used the Casino City as an ideal platform for capital import and export. Taiwan was very important not only in terms of capital investments, but more importantly in the long run was its technology transfer, first and foremost in the semiconductor industry. Hong Kong and Taiwanese investors were also one of the key reasons for rapid growth of the Chinese provinces of Jiangsu, Fujian, Guangdong. Secondly, China possessed what Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky called the "privilege of historical backwardness." Mao's Communist Party took advantage of the country's precapitalist past. It inherited a strong absolutist state that it would retool and use for its project of national economic development. It also took

advantage of an atomized precapitalist peasantry, which had been accustomed to absolutism for two thousand years, to squeeze labor out of them for so-called primitive accumulation from 1949 through the 1970s.

Later, from the 1980s on, the Chinese state drafted this labor force from the countryside into the big cities to work as cheap labor in export processing zones. They made nearly 300 million rural migrants work like slaves in sweatshops. Thus, the backwardness of China's absolutist state and class relations offered the Chinese ruling class advantages to develop both state and private capitalism. China's backwardness also made it possible for it to leap over stages of development by replacing archaic means and methods of development with advanced capitalist ones. A good example of this is China's adoption

of high technology in telecommunications. Instead of following every step of more advanced capitalist societies, beginning first with using telephone lines for online communication, it installed fiber optic cable throughout the country nearly all at once.

The Chinese leadership was very keen to modernize its economy. On the one hand, for defensive reasons, they wanted to make sure that the country was not invaded and colonized as it was a hundred years ago. On the other hand, for offensive reasons, the Communist Party wants to restore its status as a great power, resuming its so-called heavenly dynasty. As a result of all these factors, China has accomplished capitalist modernization that took one hundred years in other states. China is now the second largest

economy in the world. But it is contradictory. On the one hand, lots of multinationals are responsible for its growth either directly or through subcontracting to Taiwanese and Chinese firms. On the other hand, China is rapidly developing its own industries as national champions in the state and private sector. What are its strengths and weaknesses?

In my book China's Rise, I argue that China has two dimensions of capitalist development. One is what I call dependent accumulation. Advanced foreign capital has invested enormous sums of money over the last thirty years initially in labor-intensive industries, and more recently in capital-intensive ones. This developed China but kept it at the bottom of the global value chain, even in high tech, as the world's sweatshop.

China at 70: The Growing Pains of a Rising Power

This year marks the 70th birthday of the People's Republic of China. To a 5,000-year-plus civilization, 70 years seem like the blink of an eye. Yet within that blink the Middle Kingdom has experienced a miraculous rebirth.

In 1949, China was poor, backward, and isolated by the West. Today, it is the world's largest trading nation and second largest economy, a global leader in technological innovation, and

a major actor in many regional and international institutions. No other country in human history has achieved such a dramatic transformation within such a short period of time.

As China's wealth and power have changed, so has its foreign policy.

Two major aspects of Chinese foreign policy over the past seven decades are worth close examination. The first is China's evolving relationship with the

beautiful country - the Chinese translation of "America." Now that China is fast becoming a global power, its policy toward the United States seems to be undergoing a subtle but important shift, and this shift is viewed by some as the major contributing factor for the current difficult state of the bilateral relationship.

The second aspect concerns the impact of a "born-again" China on the outside world.

The rise of China so far has been felt most keenly in the economic realm. But even on this score Beijing appears to have had limited success in using its economic power to achieve all of its desired outcomes. By the same token, China's agenda-setting and ideational power remains incommensurate with its economic clout. Overall, one can argue that China is a global power with limited influence.

Scotland Yard, UAE authorities to investigate Iqbal Mirchi's family and associates

authorities in the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. The two countries initiated their probe after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) started looking into his friends and family for illicit properties.

The ED filed charge sheet in the case on December 11 and gave details on how the late drug trafficker, once designated as Significant Foreign Narcotic Trafficker under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act by United States's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), operated by laundering his proceeds of crime from India to UAE and then to the United Kingdom.

Sources have confirmed that the United Kingdom's Scotland Yard has summoned two associates

of the late narcotics smuggler and some associates were also questioned.

Similarly, in UAE, where Mirchi and his family members own huge properties including hotels like Imperial Suites, Midwest Apartment, authorities, have taken suo moto cognizance and would question Mirchi's sons Asif and Junaid and wife Hajra.

The UAE properties had been allegedly used by Mirchi and his family members to launder money to the UK and other parts of the world.

The recent developments have to come light after the 12,000-page charge sheet was filed by the agency earlier this month which gave details on his list of around 50 properties in the UK, UAE and India and various companies

created by him and his family members which are active in UAE and UK.

The charge sheet also elaborates on the residences of Mirchi and his family members and how the drug kingpin managed to create a facade of being a successful businessman by laundering money from his Dubai hotels to UK businesses while both were loss-making units.

It directly hints that drug money was being pumped from India and other countries into these businesses while the business operations created as front were never actually doing any business.

The nexus had come to light while the ED was investigating a deal of three Worli properties sold to Sunblink Real Estate Ltd for 225

crores which were a front company for DHFL's Dheeraj Wadhawan.

According to sources from the agency, Wadhawan held multiple meetings with Mirchi and then finalised the deal for the three properties in Worli for around Rs 225 crores.

The payment received for the deal had helped Mirchi buy a five-star hotel named Midwest in the UAE. While there are around 16 properties in the UK bought through four companies by Mirchi and his family members in the UK which are suspected to be bought through the proceeds of crime.

The agency filed a charge sheet in the case on December 11 and named 16 persons and firms as accused. Other than Mirchi, his

wife Hajra and two sons Asif and Junaid, Dheeraj Wadhawan of DHFL, his aides Ranjeet Singh Bindra, Sunny Bhatija, Purushottam Budhrani along with aides of Mirchi, Humayun Merchant and Rinku Deshpande have been named as accused.

Mirchi was an international drug dealer and smuggler, who had amassed huge wealth and acquired various immovable properties and businesses across the globe. After detailed investigation under PMLA, some of these properties held in India have been provisionally attached by the agency against two Provisional Attachment Orders. The market value of these properties is around Rs 600 crore.

Modi's Popularity Undented But Regional Leadership Is Letting Him Down

of the state. Its welfare schemes like rural roads, electrification of tribal areas and free cooking gas connections for the poor were all very popular with the voters. That is the reason for the increased vote share of the party.

But the BJP could learn a few lessons from the Jharkhand poll. Regional leadership, regional aspirations and micro-level developmental issues often determine state elections. The BJP had won all the tribal seats in Jharkhand during the Lok Sabha polls and it won 11 of the 14 seats in the state. The party then was also leading in as many as 63 assembly segments out of the 81. But just seven months later, the party could get only 20 plus seats.

This establishes that it was

Narendra Modi's popularity at the national level that won big in the general election but was compromised by regional leadership now.

The party lost Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan before the 2019 Lok Sabha poll. Still, it won almost all seats just six months later in the general election. Similarly, in Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand, the party won big in the national election but failed to repeat the feat in the state election. So Narendra Modi is still popular with the masses and can sweep a national election. Regional satraps are, however, not able to supplement Modi's appeal.

The state polls after the 2014 election were a different ball game. Then there was no chief

ministerial candidate. Hence the people voted for Modi in the states too. But when a chief ministerial face is presented, the people factor in his or her appeal also before voting. It is safe to say that national issues matter less in the provincial polls. For instance, the abrogation of Article 370 did not much impact the Maharashtra and Haryana polls. Similarly, the CAA and NRC did not have any impact in the Jharkhand polls. People voted locally, and the local issues seen to have dominated the outcome.

The BJP cannot afford to lose allies. It has to cement regional tie-ups to ensure that at the state level, elections are won.

Was it the poll strategy that won Jharkhand for the Congress and wrested power from the BJP? It is an issue worth analysing. The

Congress is projecting Jharkhand as its victory. It is also saying that the verdict is against the CAA and NRC. The party is wrong on both counts. It is true that its decision to play second fiddle to the JMM and accommodate the RJD worked. Its strategy was to present a united front against the BJP. In the 2014 election, the Congress contested separate and the BJP in alliance. This time, the roles were reversed. The BJP fought alone and the Congress stitched up an alliance, conceding the chief role and chief ministership to Hemant Soren. This strategy worked. This helped tribal consolidation. But the Congress won less than half of the 30 seats it contested. The CAA and the NRC came too

late, i.e., December 12, for it to have any impact on the state poll. The elections were announced in November and this was one of the longest state elections ever fought. It went on for 48 days. And by winning just 14 of the 81 seats, how can the Congress claim victory for itself?

What is worrying for the BJP is that in just one year, the party has lost power in five major states. The area under the BJP rule has shrunk by half. Now polls are due in Delhi, Assam, Bihar. The party has to take a leaf out of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand experience. It has to keep its allies in good humour, cultivate new alliances and also build up popular, honest and connected regional leaders in state after state.

The vaping black market is hiding in plain sight

It looks like a hip pharmacy complete with exposed brick and staffers they call budtenders. Throughout the visit, he repeats his mantra: "Buy legal."

"I believe that legal vape cartridges are safe. Every drop of cannabis, from the seed all the way to when it's consumed, is documented and reported to the state -- not to mention all of the testing that is required for a product to make it to a legal dispensary," Hoashi said.

But Hoashi cautions it's not that easy to know if you're buying from the legal market since some illegal shops can look just like the legal ones, even displaying counterfeit licenses and charging tax to make them seem legitimate.

This poses a danger to consumers, Hoashi said. About a year ago, he noticed that users on his app were reporting symptoms such as headache and nausea after vaping various cartridges. So he started having cartridges from unlicensed stores tested at a certified lab and posting the results on Instagram. What he found was that most contained illegal levels of pesticides and heavy metals. Hoashi said many of them also contain cutting agents that help keep the price down.

While all black market cartridges might not test positive for these illegal amounts of particular substances, the current nationwide outbreak of vaping-related illnesses and deaths is

underlining a need for transparency when it comes to the products consumers are buying.

CNN obtained five THC cartridges from an illegal vape shop and had their contents tested at BelCosta Labs, one of California's certified labs that approves cannabis products for consumer use. The results showed that the cartridges all contained a variety of pesticides that exceed the legal amount.

"When you concentrate the THC, you concentrate everything along with it," said Myron Ronay, who runs BelCosta Labs. "So every pesticide that could've been in that plant material -- if it went from, let's just say 20% THC, and now you've concentrated it to 80% THC -- you've also concentrated the pesticides that same amount."

Finding the culprit

Official testing laboratories in California are required to test for cannabinoids, the active ingredient in cannabis, but also a number of substances including pesticides, various fungal and bacterial contaminants, heavy metals and other chemicals, according to the CBCC.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's investigation into a recent outbreak of vaping-related injuries identified vitamin E acetate as a chemical of concern, although officials have said there may be more than one cause and that they are investigating many different substances and product sources. Vitamin E acetate is generally considered harmless in foods, supplements and lotions, but inhaling it "may interfere with normal lung functioning,"

according to the CDC. In THC-containing vaping products, it has been used as a thickening agent -- a way to pass what's known as "the bubble test."

"You take a cartridge and you flip it over," Ronay explained. If the bubble moves too fast, people might assume it's been diluted with some kind of additive. So some black market sellers turned to vitamin E acetate -- which is more viscous and resembles THC distillate -- to cut their product while still passing the bubble test.

The CBCC doesn't currently require labs to test for vitamin E acetate, but said it's now under consideration.

Ronay said a product's potency is one good way to tell if there's a cutting agent present. A typical legal THC cartridge might have 70-90% pure THC

distillate with the rest containing terpenes -- aromatic oils which give it flavor. Illegally cut cartridges might have only 40-50% pure THC distillate, with the rest being filled with terpenes and something like vitamin E acetate.

Ronay said it's hard to keep up because the black market is a moving target and vitamin E acetate is already being used less frequently than it was a few months ago.

"From what I'm hearing now, it's going away. And we're not seeing as much, even in the illicit market. But it's still a major issue," he said. "They may be on to the next cutting agent."

Spotting a fake

Think you can tell a black market THC product from one that's made legally? It might be harder than you think.

US raises legal age to buy cigarettes, vapes to 21

products to 21, according to the nonprofit Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids: Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and Washington. Washington, DC, and more than 500 cities and towns also have raised the age. Trump has previously spoken in favor of raising the age limit to buy tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vape products,

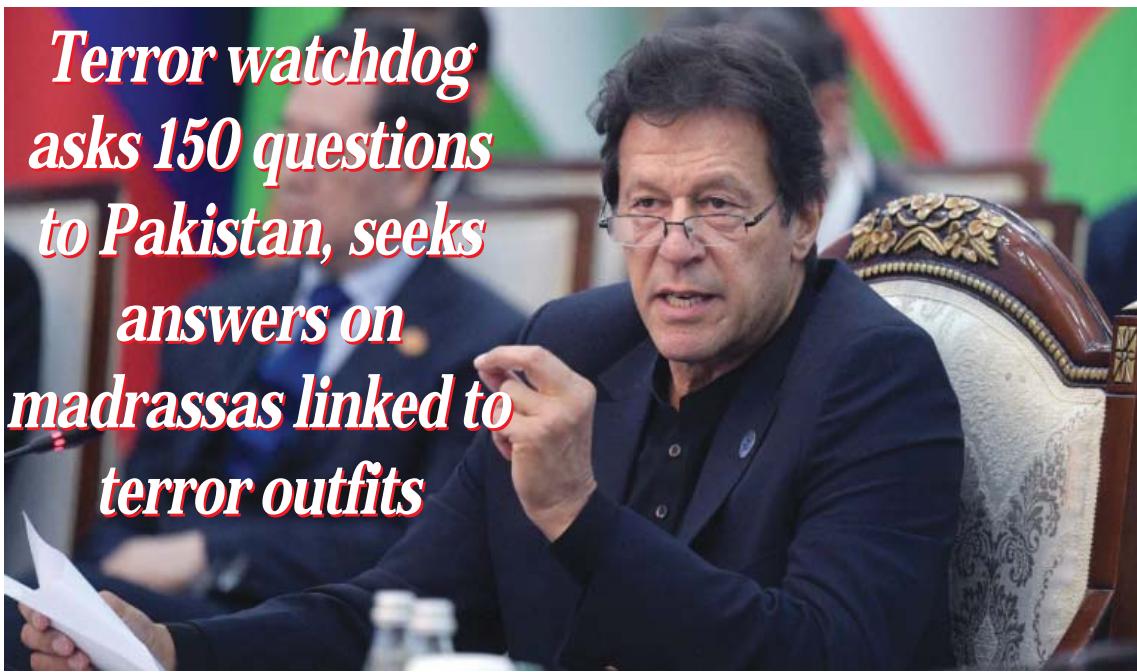
to 21.

"We have to take care of our kids, most importantly, so we're going to have an age limit of 21 or so, so we'll be coming out with something next week very important on vaping," Trump said while standing outside of the White House in November. In September, Trump said that the US Food and Drug Administration would put out "some very strong recommendations" regarding the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. At the time, Trump

administration officials said the agency would remove all non-tobacco-flavored vaping products from the market. The announcement came amid continued concerns about rising levels of youth vaping and a mysterious outbreak of vaping-related lung injuries. Health organizations have pressured the administration to ban flavors, which are popular among young people. Vaping advocates have argued they're a tool for adult smokers to quit combustible cigarettes. Vape shop owners

have argued that limits on sales of flavors would destroy their businesses. The new provision in the spending bill could be seen by some as the president's response to the youth vaping epidemic. Vaping remained popular among teens across the United States in 2019. The latest report from a federal survey, called Monitoring the Future, found that 1 in 4 12th graders, 1 in 5 10th graders and nearly 1 in 10 8th graders say that they have vaped nicotine in the past month.

Terror watchdog asks 150 questions to Pakistan, seeks answers on madrassas linked to terror outfits



(News Agencies)- A global watchdog for terror financing has sought more clarifications and data from Pakistan on actions taken by it against madrassas belonging to the banned outfits, weeks after Islamabad submitted a report to the Paris-based body detailing steps taken by the country to curb terrorism and money laundering.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which kept Pakistan on

the Grey List for an extended period till February 2020, had warned in October that Islamabad would be put on the Black List if it did not comply with the remaining 22 points in a list of 27 questions.

Pakistan submitted a report comprising answers to 22 questions to the FATF on December 6.

In response to the report, the FATF's Joint Group has sent 150 questions to Pakistan,

seeking some clarifications, updates and most importantly actions taken against the madrassas belonging to the proscribed outfits.

"We did receive a response from the FATF on our compliance report through an email in which they raised a set of 150 questions. Some of them are seeking more data, some clarifications, and most importantly questions related to madrassas and actions taken against them having

affiliation with proscribed outfits," The News quoted a top official source as saying.

According to officials, Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed-led Jamat-ud Dawah's network includes 300 seminaries and schools.

In March 2019, Punjab police said that government seized control of 160 madrassas, 32 schools, two colleges, four hospitals, 178 ambulances and 153 dispensaries associated with the JuD and its so-called charity wing Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation (FIF) in province.

At least 56 madrassas and facilities being run by the JuD and FIF in southern Sindh province were also taken over by authorities in the same month. Saeed-led JuD is believed to be the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba which is responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The US declared the LeT as a foreign terrorist organisation in June 2014.

Pakistan has been given January 8, 2020 deadline to respond to the 150 questions, the official said on Saturday.

The next FATF meeting is scheduled to be held from January 21 to 24 in Beijing where Pakistan will be given an opportunity to defend the points in the report.

Pakistan expects another relaxation probably up to June 2020 in the FATF's upcoming plenary review meeting, as the February deadline is too short a period for Islamabad to comply with the remaining 22 action plans.

The FATF in its previous statement had said, "Should significant and sustainable progress not be made across the full range of its action plan by the next plenary, the FATF will take action, which could include the FATF calling on its members and urging all jurisdictions to advise their FIs (financial institutions) to give special attention to business relations and transactions with Pakistan".

Earlier, the FATF had asked 27 questions pertaining to Pakistan's efforts to stop terrorism financing. But Islamabad managed to satisfy the global watchdog over just five of them.

Pakistan court hands down death sentence to scholar accused of blasphemy



commission placed Hafeez on its list of global victims.

"He [Junaid Hafeez] shall be hanged by neck till his death subject to its confirmation by the honourable high court," a court order stated.

His defence lawyer Asad Jamal said he would appeal against the ruling in a higher court.

"There can't be a fair trial in blasphemy

cases in Pakistan," Jamal told Reuters. "We have a spineless system. No one can stand up to a blasphemy charge."

Hafeez, who quit his studies at Pakistan's top medical college to pursue a passion for art and literature, secured a Fulbright scholarship and attended Jackson State University where he majored in American literature, photography and theatre.

The trial was held in a prison in the central Pakistan city of Multan under tight security due to threats to Hafeez's family and his lawyer.

(News Agencies)- Pakistani anti-terrorism court on Saturday sentenced a liberal scholar and former university lecturer to death on blasphemy charges.

In 2013, Junaid Hafeez was accused by students at the university where he taught of making blasphemous Facebook posts. Insulting Islam's Prophet Mohammad carries a mandatory death penalty in Pakistan, which is about 95 per cent Muslim.

His lawyers say he was framed by students from an extremist Islamist party for his liberal and secular views and this month a US religious freedom

Hafiz Saeed indicted again for terror financing charges in Pakistan

(News Agencies)-Hafiz Saeed, leader of Jamat-ud-Dawa (JUD) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has been indicted in a second case by an anti-terrorism court. The latest indictment is second for Saeed with charges of terror-financing, case of which was filed by Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Gujranwala district.

Saeed was indicted for the same charge on December 11, 2019. He is accused of running militant groups under the umbrella of charity organisations and using them for collecting funds to fuel terror activities.

Saeed along with his associate Abdul Rehman Makki is facing trials in over two dozen cases on charges of financing terrorism and money laundering under the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997.

The cases have been registered in the Punjab province after huge amounts of illegal funds were collected from organisations like Al-Anfaal, Dawatul Irshad Trust, Mauz Bin Jabal Trust among others.

These organisations were earlier banned after their links with JUD



were established in April this year. At least, 23 First Investigation Reports (FIRs) were registered by the CTD in Lahore, Gujranwala, Multan, Faisalabad, and Sargodha until July this year.

JUD's top leadership and its prominent members including Ameer Hamza, Mohammad Yahya Aziz, Mohammad Naeem, Mohsin Bilal, Abdul Raqeeb, Dr.Ahmed Daud, Dr. Muhammad Ayub, Abdullah Ubaid, Mohammad Ali, Malik Zafar Iqbal

and Abdul Ghaffar have also been booked in the cases.

The CTD has already taken control of all the assets, operating under these organisations and has seized their premises along with their bank accounts.

It is believed that Pakistan's current actions are aimed at ensuring that it complies with the action plan of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and see itself out of the grey list during the February 2020 review.

Thinking of Buying/Selling ?



WINZONE REALTY INC.



Baldev Singh

Associate Broker/Notary Public

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

Cell : 917-224-7395

Email : josanbaldev@yahoo.com

She was terrified of me, never thought she would escape: Man who kidnapped teen, killed her parents

The convict, Jake Patterson, broke into Jayme Closs's home on October 15, 2018, gunned down her parents, dragged her away and held her under a bed in his remote cabin for 88 days before she made a daring escape.

(News Agencies)-Aman convicted of kidnapping a Wisconsin girl and killing her parents told police after his arrest that he never thought Jayme Closs would escape because she was petrified, and that after holding her captive for two weeks, he believed he'd get away with his crimes, according to a transcript of a police interview. "I know that she was just (expletive) terrified of me," Jake Patterson said following his arrest in January.

The transcript of Patterson's interview with authorities was

among hundreds of pages of investigative documents released Friday by the Wisconsin Department of Justice. The files include details about tips authorities received as they were searching for Jayme, as well as evidence collected after her escape. Some of the files are redacted.

Patterson, 22, is serving a life sentence after pleading guilty in March to two counts of intentional homicide and one count of kidnapping. He admitted he broke into Jayme's home on October 15, 2018, gunned down

her parents, James and Denise Closs, dragged her away and held her under a bed in his remote cabin for 88 days before she made a daring escape. She was 13 at the time.

The transcript of Patterson's interview paints a picture of a man who acted on impulse and controlled Jayme's movements around the cabin where she was held. Patterson believed he had restrained Jayme with fear, telling police he never put extra locks on the doors or windows, because he thought she'd never leave. "I just trusted her and that,



she wouldn't try to get out," he said.

Patterson told police he initially threatened to kill Jayme if she made noise or moved. He said that once they arrived at his cabin, he burned her clothes and dressed her in his clothes, then laid her on the bed. He said she

fell asleep, and he felt sick about what he had done and slept on the couch. He said that he gave her food and water, but she wouldn't eat at first. And, he said, she "learned quickly? that he would get angry over nothing, so she was nice to him so he wouldn't hurt her.

So unfair: Donald Trump slams White House's impeachment delay

Days after his impeachment, Donald Trump criticised the House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi for holding off on sending the articles of impeachment against him to the Senate. "It's so unfair," he said.

impeach Donald Trump, setting the stage for a trial in the Senate.

Donald Trump is very unlikely to be convicted and removed from office by the upper chamber of Congress because it is controlled by his Republican Party. A two-thirds majority vote in the Senate is needed for a conviction on impeachment charges.

Republicans and Democrats are at loggerheads over how the trial will play out. Pelosi and other Democrats want to call top Donald Trump aides as witnesses and are seeking assurances that the trial will be

held on terms they consider fair. Senate trial will look like, the Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said that he is position to appoint managers working in tandem with the and take the next steps in White House on trial holding this President preparations, drawing accountable and ensuring the accusations from Democrats that Senate fulfills its he is ignoring his duty to constitutional duty," Pelosi's consider the evidence in an office said in a statement on impartial manner. Pelosi has Saturday. Pelosi's office said not yet sent the impeachment that senators have a package to the Senate in a bid constitutional obligation to to increase pressure on conduct a "fair process that Republicans there. Pelosi has provides both the Senators, also not yet announced the who will act as jurors, and the managers, or prosecutors, public with the opportunity to who will present evidence in understand the full extent of the trial. "Until the House gets President Trump's abuse of a clearer picture of what a power.



(News Agencies)- President Donald Trump on Saturday criticised the House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi for holding off on sending the articles of impeachment against him to the Senate. "It's so unfair," Donald Trump said, days after he was impeached by the House, during

a speech to conservative student group Turning Point USA, saying that Pelosi adopted the strategy because she has "no case." "They are violating the Constitution," Donald Trump said, calling Pelosi "crazy Nancy."

The Democratic-controlled House voted on December 18 to

18 Indians kidnapped by pirates near Nigerian coast released

The Indian nationals were kidnapped from a Hong Kong-flagged vessel off the Bonny island after a group of pirates took control of it.

(News Agencies)- Eighteen Indians, kidnapped by pirates from a commercial vessel near the Nigerian coast on December 3, have been released, the Indian mission in Nigeria said on Sunday. The Indian nationals were kidnapped from a Hong Kong-flagged vessel off the Bonny island after a group of pirates took control of it.

"Nigerian Navy @NigerianNavy and Shipping Company have confirmed release of 18 Indian nationals, taken hostage from MT Nave Constallation on 3 December. Thank all stake holders involved in their safe release," the Indian mission in Nigeria tweeted.

The mission had taken up with the Nigerian government the kidnapping of the Indian crew



of the vessel.

According to ARX Maritime, a global agency tracking

maritime developments in the region, 19 people, including 18 Indians, were kidnapped from the ship on December 3 after it was taken over by the pirates.

Homelessness crisis: From houseboats to boulders, unconventional methods used to tackle problem in 2019

(News Agencies)- Outrage. Frustration. Fear. Those are some of the words residents used in 2019 to describe the growing homelessness problem across the United States. There were numerous cases of harassment, rampant drug use and disturbing displays of mental illness that shined a light on the harsh reality that America's once-containable homeless problem had morphed into a modern-day crisis. In Los Angeles, Heidi Van Tassell said a homeless man pulled her out of her car, dragged her into the middle of the street and dumped a bucket of feces on her head. In Oakland, the soaring stats are still affecting the way retailers like Mika McCants operate their small businesses. Things soured so much in Seattle

that Father Michael Ryan of St. James Cathedral sent a letter to congregants asking that they pray the city and church finds "the balance we need in order to not only be a welcoming place, but a safe place." The letter was in response to a homeless man storming the church and smashing a 200-year-old wood carving of Mary with a large rock. It wasn't an isolated incident and the church now has a uniformed police officer present during all weekend Masses. Sadly, there have been similar complaints popping up across the nation. Fox News spoke with more than 100 homeless men and women, advocates and residents who said that they'd lost faith in their elected officials' ability to solve the crisis especially after most

cities and states had spent hundreds of millions of dollars to address the problem only to watch it get worse. Fed up, residents started taking matters into their own hands and have tried everything from dumping car-sized logs in front of businesses to pitching plans to pack party buses with the homeless, handing them some cash, driving them across the border and abandoning them. While some suggestions have their foot firmly planted in fantasy, other proposals could actually work. Here are some of the unconventional ways people came up with in 2019 to help curb the current homelessness crisis. The homeless situation in Oakland, Calif., is pretty grim. The city has seen a 47 percent



increase in homelessness in the past two years and elected leaders like Councilman Noel Gallo say the situation is only getting worse. Currently, city council members are considering a proposal that would house 1,000 homeless people living in the Bay Area on a cruise ship. The idea was

introduced by City Council President Rebecca Kaplan who said her plan "could be a great way to house a lot of people quickly" and added that "cruise ships have been used for emergency housing after natural disasters and for extra housing for things like the Olympics."

Musharraf's death sentence carries enormous symbolic power



Minister Nawaz Sharif. A three-member special court found Musharraf guilty of violating Article 6 of the Constitution: "Any person who abrogates or subverts or suspends or hold in abeyance, or attempts or conspires to abrogate or subvert or suspend or hold in abeyance the Constitution by use of force or show force or by any other unconstitutional means shall be guilty of high treason." In Pakistani law, the court noted, the only punishment for high treason is death.

This decision is the first time that a civilian court has sentenced a general from Pakistan's domineering military (which has undertaken three major coups in 1956 and 1977 and 1999 and ruled the country for 33 of its 72

years of existence) has been sentenced to death. Gen. Musharraf, long retired, is himself in the United Arab Emirates seeking treatment for medical problems but the attorney general of Pakistan, called the trial "unfair" and announced that the government will be appealing the verdict in Pakistan's Supreme Court.

The death sentence against the general will almost certainly not be carried out because he is unlikely to ever return to Pakistan. The symbolic significance of the verdict, however, cannot be overstated. Given this, the Supreme Court of Pakistan is likely to be the site of yet another standoff between Pakistan's judiciary and its military. Another one of the

charges on which the general was convicted was his 2007 move to impose "emergency rule" and fire Iftikhar Chaudhry, then the chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, for refusing to kowtow to the General. That move sparked a lawyers' movement and such unrest in the country that the former general himself was forced to resign. In essence then, the Supreme Court will now hear a case that considers in part whether an unelected military general has the power to depose the chief justice of the Supreme Court. If they, via some arcane loophole, say yes, they are limiting their own power as a separate branch of government; a move likely to spark further protests.

India: The world leader in Internet shutdowns

(News Agencies)-"Dear Customer, As per the Government instructions, the internet services have been temporarily stopped in your area." Internet users in the Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir received this text flash on their phones as an Internet shutdown was imposed across the state on August 4, when Article 370 of the Constitution was abrogated. It was a part of a communication blockade in the state that has still not been lifted. This week, after the Indian Parliament passed a controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill that excludes Muslims from fast-tracked

citizenship for immigrants from the region, violent protests ensued in northeastern Indian states of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh -- and a familiar story played out. As unrest mounted, the government took a leaf out of the authoritarianism playbook and shut down the Internet in all four states. Initially for a few hours, and then for days. It won't be a surprise to see more districts and states plunged into digital repression over the next few weeks as protests spread. According to the Internet shutdown tracker, India has the highest number of network disruptions ordered by the state

with 91 reported instances (at the time of writing) alone in 2019. The number stood at 134 in 2018. These are just the incidents that have been reported; the actual number is likely to be more. This makes India the Internet shutdown capital of the world. The world's biggest democracy leads in digital authoritarianism -- and by some margin. The reason? The government wants to silence dissenting voices. Most of the Internet shutdowns in India have either been imposed as preventive measures to curb violence or to contain the spread of violence after it has broken out. But the government has



used them to serve other ends: to stifle discussion on social media, to make it harder for citizens to organize protests, and to single out populations like Kashmiris. Disconcertingly, these shutdowns are becoming

more commonplace. The Indian government has been restricting Internet access since 2010, but the frequency, geographic distribution, and duration of these shutdowns has increased dramatically in the last few years.

Turkey, Russia talk Syria as thousands flee bombing

The Turkey-based Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) said on Monday 120,000 Syrians were fleeing towards the Turkish border - higher than Erdogan's estimate of 80,000.

(News Agencies)- Turkish delegation was in Russia on Monday for talks on Syria, following reports that Russian-backed attacks there were forcing tens of thousands more Syrians to flee towards Turkey.

Turkey already hosts about 3.7 million Syrians - the world's biggest refugee population. President Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday it could not handle a new influx and was urging Russia to stop the strikes in Syria's northwestern Idlib province.

The Turkey-based Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) said on

Monday 120,000 Syrians were fleeing towards the Turkish border - higher than Erdogan's estimate of 80,000.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for an immediate end to the hostilities, which he said had displaced 30,000 people in the last week alone, his spokesman said.

"The Secretary-General reminds all parties of their obligations to protect civilians and ensure freedom of movement," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has vowed to recapture the Idlib region, the last significant area of

Syria still under rebel control after 8-1/2 years of civil war.

Russia and Iran have supported Assad's forces during the Syrian conflict while Turkey has backed Syrian rebels fighting Assad.

Russian and Syrian army jets have been targeting civilian convoys trying to flee the Idlib city of Maarat al-Numan, leaving hundreds of families still trapped there, activists and aid groups have said.

"It's a tragic situation for civilians remaining in the city since Russian jets are hitting any convoy that leaves the city, while those who were able to reach areas closer to the border have



nowhere to shelter," said Mohamad Rasheed, an activist in the area.

LIBYA ALSO IN FOCUS

The Syrian army said on Monday it had fought fierce battles in southeastern Idlib and seized several villages after killing large numbers of what it called terrorists.

"People are lying on the ground

sleeping in the open with no blankets and under rain and cold," said Feras Saad, who fled the city with his family and found shelter in the border village of Harabosh.

Moscow and Damascus both deny allegations of indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas and say they are fighting al Qaeda-inspired Islamist militants.

Venezuela arrests 11 after weekend raid of military outpost: Maduro



Authorities have accused Brazil, Colombia and Peru - all adversaries of socialist Maduro who recognize opposition leader Juan Guaido as the rightful president - of complicity with the attack, in which one Venezuelan soldier was killed.

(News Agencies)- Venezuela has arrested 11 people in connection with a weekend raid of a remote military outpost in southern Bolivar state, but some suspects have fled across the border to Brazil with stolen weapons, President Nicolas Maduro said on Monday.

Authorities have accused Brazil, Colombia and Peru - all adversaries of socialist Maduro who recognize opposition leader Juan Guaido as the rightful president - of complicity with the attack, in which one Venezuelan soldier was killed. All three countries' governments have denied involvement.

In an evening address on state television, Maduro called on Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to cooperate.

"Capture the assailants in Brazilian territory and return the weapons to the Venezuelan armed forces," Maduro said.

He said the 11 detainees included both military and civilian suspects, without providing details.

Authorities have blamed "extreme sectors of the opposition" for the raid. Venezuela, whose economy has collapsed under Maduro, has

been locked in a deep political crisis since Guaido, the head of the opposition-held National Assembly, assumed a rival presidency in January.

Maduro dismisses Guaido as a U.S. puppet seeking to oust him in a coup. Information Minister Jorge Rodriguez said in an earlier address on Monday that Darwin Balaguera, a former National Guard member who deserted in February and fled to Colombia, was detained over the raid. The channel broadcast video of Balaguera answering authorities' questions in custody.

Balaguera was among hundreds of Venezuelan soldiers who defected to Colombia during a Guaido-led attempt to bring humanitarian aid into the country through Colombia and Brazil in February. Some have said they are prepared to take up arms to remove Maduro.

Olnar Ortiz, an attorney with nonprofit rights group Penal Forum, said at least seven members of the Pemon indigenous group were arrested in connection with the incident. Ortiz said four other Pemon individuals were missing.

Hong Kong 'silent night' protests planned for Christmas Eve

(News Agencies)-Hong Kong anti-government protesters plan to stage gatherings in prime shopping malls and a 'silent night' rally in a popular tourist precinct on Christmas Eve on Tuesday, despite police warnings they would move in if trouble flares. Police said they would not close roads to traffic in the Tsim Sha Tsui district, where large numbers of people traditionally gather on Christmas Eve to view the Christmas lights along a

promenade bordering the city's iconic Victoria Harbour. Police said that unlike previous years, most roads would not be closed off to traffic in the district, and there wouldn't initially be a large police presence, unless trouble begins to flare. "Police officers will not, as in the past, be stationed in large numbers along the waterfront," senior superintendent Wong Chi-wai told reporters. Online protester forums say demonstrators plan to gather in various malls on Christmas

Eve, while others plan to march in Tsim Sha Tsui and count down to Christmas near the waterfront. Next week, the Civil Human Rights Front, which has organised some of the biggest marches involving more than a million people, has applied to stage another march on New Year's Day. The protests, now in their seventh month, have lost some of the scale and intensity of earlier confrontations.

Police have arrested more than 6,000 people since the protests



escalated in June, including a large number during a protracted, violent siege at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in mid-November. Many Hong Kong residents are angry at what they see as Beijing's meddling in the freedoms promised to the former

British colony when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

China denies interfering and says it is committed to the 'one country, two systems' formula put in place at that time and has blamed foreign forces for fomenting unrest.

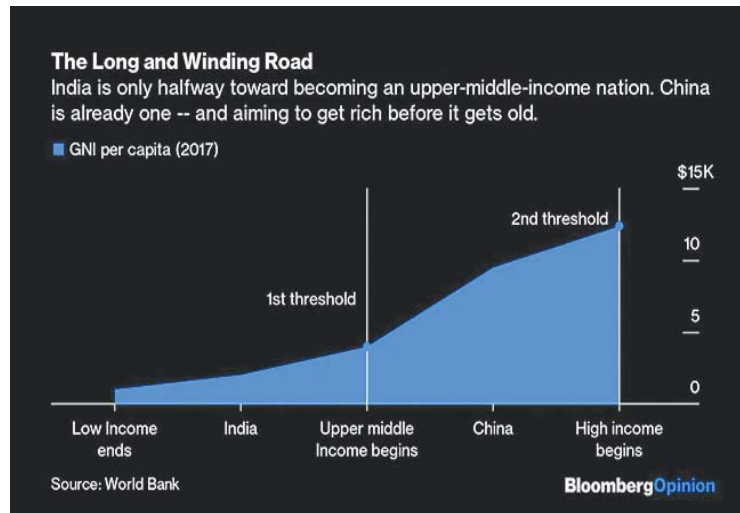
Differences Between PM Modi, Manmohan Singh In Economic Reform

Hundreds of millions were lifted out of poverty; the 1990-91 crisis became the starting point of two decades of rising prosperity.

Thirty years ago, India endured its last big financial crisis when it had to send gold held in the central bank's vaults over to London to borrow hard currency from the Bank of England. Luckily, the flights landed safely, and so did India.

The turnaround in economic thinking triggered by that balance-of-payments humiliation saw the state shed controls on production and imports. The emergence of a globally attuned software services industry as well as vibrant capital markets - which India opened up to the world faster than China - helped spawn entrepreneurship and create a middle class. Hundreds of millions were lifted out of poverty; the 1990-91 crisis became the starting point of two decades of rising prosperity.

All that progress is now at risk because of a very different failure. Growth is crashing. Jobs have gotten scarce. Investments have cratered. Profits have vanished. Tax collections are low; government deficits high. Debt has surged, but there isn't enough loss-absorbing cushion either on corporate balance sheets or with financial intermediaries to allow orderly



deleveraging. India isn't in the midst of an external crisis. It's grappling with a vicious internal cycle of defaults.

More crucially, what's missing is the national determination of the 1991 reforms. Economist Manmohan Singh, then a newly appointed finance minister who later became premier, invoked Victor Hugo in his budget speech: "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come... the emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea."

Unlike Singh, current Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a career politician who won a resounding popular mandate in

2019 for a second five-year term. There's no dearth of slogans and goals - such as a \$5 trillion economy by 2024 from under \$3 trillion now. Yet except for a recent move to make India a low-tax enclave for manufacturing units fleeing the U.S.-China trade war, there isn't much of a plan in place. It's not even clear if a search for enduring solutions will get under way in 2020, or if the economy will just muddle through.

Today's problems result from past successes. In a withering critique of what he calls a "finance-construction growth model," Princeton University economist Ashoka Mody has rightly blamed India for ignoring



labor-intensive manufacturing. The country has shortchanged its blue-collar workers, especially women, whose participation rate in the workforce has swooned. A nation of 1.3 billion people is producing only what 150 million affluent customers want.

With rampant automation everywhere, a bulging low-cost labor force isn't the advantage it once was. Even in software exports, cloud computing and digital technologies have diminished the value of work done by Infosys Ltd. and Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. engineers in maintaining bulky enterprise software for global corporations. Can India in the 2020s try to reinvent its finance-

construction model so that it works for everyone and not just for a few thousand financiers in Mumbai? Here are some ideas. First, India must reinvent infrastructure financing. The sudden collapse of highly rated infrastructure operator-financier-owner IL&FS Group in September 2018 was the last straw. The nation was already reeling under a disastrous 2016 ban on 86% of the currency in circulation. PM Modi's demonetization failed in its goal of freezing out ill-gotten wealth: It depressed consumption and pauperized farmers and tiny businesses instead. Then came a botched-up goods and services tax in 2017.

The Battle of Laungewala: How a handful of brave Indian soldiers won a battle against all odds

The incredible story of how just 120 Indian soldiers held fort and made Pakistani forces retreat during the Indo-Pak war of 1971.

When we talk patriotic movies, one of the first names that crop up in our heads is JP Dutta's *Border* made on the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 that led to the liberation of Bangladesh. Remember the handful of Indian soldiers in the deserts of Rajasthan, led by Sunny Deol, defending their post against the might of the Pakistani army until backup came? That wasn't just a fancy movie plot. That, precisely, was the Battle of Laungewala - a testimony to the bravery of the Punjab Regiment headed by Mahavir Chakra awardee Major Kuldip Singh Chandpuri.

The Battle of Laungewala (4-7 December, 1971) was one of the first major battles of the Indo-Pak war fought between 120 Indian

soldiers and 2000-3000 Pakistani soldiers backed by 40-45 tanks and artillery. Pakistan's plan had been to capture the Laungewala post - a junction on the Indian road system - and establish a base there in order to allow proceeding forces to capture Jaisalmer. The attack was supposed to be launched at night over terrain that was not preceded by route or engineer reconnaissance. Major Kuldeep Singh Chandpuri was left with two choices - flee on foot and abandon the post or attempt to hold it until reinforced. He, of course, chose the latter, making the best use of his strong defensive position. He was also able to make contact with the Indian Air Force and knew reinforcements were a matter of

time (help came 6 hours later).

The Pakistani forces launched their attack at 12:30 am, opening fire across the border with medium artillery guns. As the 45 tanks approached the Indian outpost, the Punjab Regiment hastily put up an anti-tank minefield. They held fire until the Pakistani tanks were close. The first two tanks were destroyed with only a 1066 mm M40 recoilless rifle mounted on a Mahindra Thar RCL 4X4. This also proved to be one of their most deadly weapons in this battle as they were able to easily cover the terrain and engage the Pakistani tanks that were getting bogged down in the sand.

Although hugely outnumbering the Indian soldiers and having surrounded them, the Pakistani



troops were unable to advance on an open terrain on a full moon night, especially with the unexpected fight that the small Indian contingent was putting up. With dawn, arrived the jets of the Indian Air Force (that had not been outfitted with night vision equipment and hence could not be scrambled earlier). By noon the next day, the assault ended completely with several tanks destroyed. Pakistani

troops were forced to withdraw as more reinforcements arrived with the 17th battalion, Rajputana Rifles.

The Battle of Laungewala proved to be one of the most defining moments of a war that India finally won and came to forever be remembered as a battle fought with 120 soldiers and a recoilless rifle enforced Mahindra Thar RCL 4X4 - indeed the stuff that movies are made up of.

Boeing CEO ousting inevitable, amid poor marks from regulators and crash victims

Boeing ousted its CEO Monday, a move seen as inevitable amid increasing pressure from regulators, lawmakers and the families of those killed aboard two of the company's crashed 737 MAX planes, which remain grounded.

In announcing the leadership change, which removes Dennis Muilenburg from the position of CEO, the company said it was necessary to "restore confidence" in Boeing as it "works to repair relationships with regulators, customers" and others.

Michael Stumo, the father of one of the people killed in the March 10 737 MAX crash in Ethiopia, applauded news of Muilenburg's resignation, saying the next step is for other "underperforming or

underqualified" board members to resign "in favor of a newly-configured excellence at the top level of the company and on the board." Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and the Association of Flight Attendants praised the change as long overdue. Boeing in general, and Muilenburg in particular, have been under increasingly relentless pressure to clean house from virtually every corner as the company's marquee 737 MAX jet, supposed to be the antidote to an aggressive Airbus competitor, goes into an unprecedented 10th month of being grounded.

Muilenburg's turns testifying on Capitol Hill were largely viewed as lackluster, and failed to convince key lawmakers that he

could right the ship. On Dec. 18, Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), the chairman of the House Transportation Committee that oversees the aviation industry, called for Muilenburg's head.

The company's airline customers have also grown increasingly frustrated as the projected timeline for returning the plane to service has been repeatedly pushed back.

And worse, Boeing's relationship with the new administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration has been rocky from the start, with FAA chief Steve Dickson publicly raking Muilenburg over the coals for what Dickson felt were pressure tactics from Boeing to speed up regulators' work to verify Boeing's changes to the plane's design.



FAA would not comment directly on Muilenburg's departure. But the agency said in a statement that it "continues to follow a thorough process for returning the Boeing 737 MAX to passenger service." FAA said it has not established a timeline for when the work will be completed but expects that "Boeing will support

that process by focusing on the quality and timeliness of data submittals for FAA review, as well as being transparent in its relationship with FAA as safety regulator."

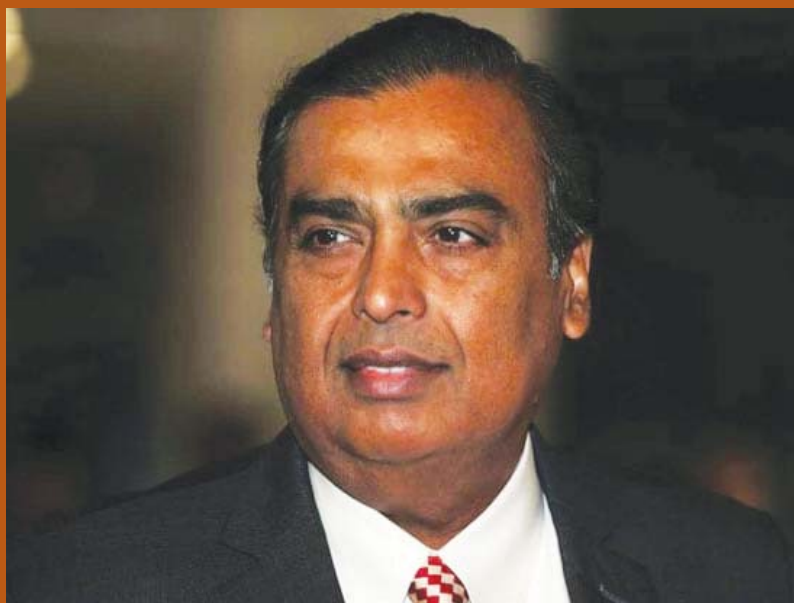
Scott Hamilton, founder of consultancy Leeham Co., said that Muilenburg had worsened the 737 MAX crisis by

Mukesh Ambani Adds \$16 Billion To Wealth, Becomes 12th Richest In World: Report

Reliance Industries (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani added \$16.5 billion to his wealth in 2019 taking his total net worth to \$60.8 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

With around \$61 billion of net worth as of Tuesday, the petroleum-to-telecom tycoon is the 12th richest person in the world. The recent consistent rise in RIL's shares prices is a major reason in the past one year. Data from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) shows that said that RIL's share price rose by over 41 per cent in the past one year.

On Tuesday, its shares closed at Rs 1,544.50, lower by Rs 26.90 or 1.71 per cent from its previous close.



In the past few years, the company has significantly diversified its business with its disruptive entry into the telecom segment with Jio, then into the broadband services with Jio GigaFiber. The group has also strengthened its retail presence and would soon enter the e-commerce segment giving a tough competition to the incumbents Amazon and Flipkart.

The list of the world's richest individuals is topped by Bill Gates with a net worth of \$113 billion, aided by an addition of \$22.4 billion this year.

Alibaba Group founder Jack Ma's (19th richest) net worth rose by \$11.3 billion while Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, the second richest individual in the world, lost \$13.2 billion.

Ex-Fortis promoter Malvinder Singh arrested in another case of funds misappropriation

Former Fortis Healthcare promoter Malvinder Singh was arrested on Tuesday in another case related to alleged misappropriation of funds at Religare Finvest Ltd (RFL), the police said.

Singh is already in judicial custody in another case.

RFL alleged that Malvinder Singh and his brother Shivinder Mohan Singh in connivance with the employees of Lakshmi Vilas Bank misappropriated two FDs of Rs 400 crore and Rs 350 crore made with the Lakshmi Vilas Bank by the complainant company, the police said.

The investigation in the case, filed in September, revealed that

the duo misappropriated the amount by availing loan from the bank against these FDs in RHC Holdings Pvt Ltd company they owned and further squaring off their abilities, according to the police.

Malvinder and Shivinder systematically siphoned off and diverted public money in a clandestine manner for their own benefit, they added.

A Delhi court had on Monday extended the judicial custody of Malvinder Singh and a co-accused by two weeks in a money laundering case related to alleged misappropriation of funds at RFL.

Besides Malvinder, the court

remanded Sunil Godhwani, former CMD of Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL), to judicial custody till January 6 next year. Earlier, Malvinder, his brother Shivinder, and Godhwani were in judicial custody along with two others -- Kavi Arora and Anil Saxena -- in a case filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police.

The five were arrested by EOW for allegedly diverting the money and investing in other companies.

The EOW registered an FIR in March after it received a complaint from RFL's Manpreet Suri against Shivinder, Godhwani and others, alleging



that loans were taken by them money was invested in other while managing the firm but the companies.

New Motorola Razr sales will be delayed but not because of any manufacturing issue

Motorola has delayed the new Razr in the US market after it announced that it is unable to meet the demand. The new Razr costs \$1,500 in the US.

The new Motorola Razr for 2020 has raised quite a lot of interest among smartphone buyers and if you believe Motorola, the demand has been quite high for its first folding phone, despite the exorbitant \$1,500 price tag. But how high is the demand? Motorola says that it is having to push forward its launch date as it is unable to cope up with the demand of the phone. Simply put, Motorola says it didn't expect such high demands for its folding flagship phone. "Motorola has decided to adjust Razr's presale and launch timing to better meet consumer demand. We are

working to determine the appropriate quantity and schedule to ensure that more consumers have access to Razr at launch," said the company in an official press statement. The company has not issued a new sales date for the device yet but it is said that it won't be delayed much beyond the original timeline. Motorola is ruling out any technical difficulties for the delay and it says that the high demand for the product is causing it to delay the sales of the device. The new Razr was supposed to go on sale in late December and it was originally

expected to launch in more global markets, including India where registration for the device has been going on for a while. Hence, those waiting for the new Razr might have to wait longer in order to get their hands on this phone. The new Razr has a similar clamshell form factor to the Samsung Galaxy Fold but it's much cheaper than the latter. Motorola is using the classic form factor of the original Razr phone but employs a new foldable OLED display instead of the smaller screen and T9 keypad from the old one. The new Razr even looks similar to



the old Razr from 2004 from the outside. However, the new Razr is an Android smartphone, running stock Android 9 Pie out of the box (although if you want the feel of the original Razr, then there's an Easter Egg that offers a launcher mimicking the old phone's layout. In terms of

specifications, the 2020 Razr uses a Snapdragon 710 chipset paired with 6GB RAM and 128GB storage. The phone has a 5-megapixel camera on the inside for taking video calls and a main 16-megapixel camera on the outside that can be used to take both selfies and regular photos.

This is the Samsung Galaxy Fold 2 and it could take on the new Motorola Razr



Samsung surprised the world in 2019 with the Galaxy Fold, which despite being exorbitantly priced, brought the folding smartphone to the world. The Fold had a few issues when it launched and even after the device went on

sale, many considered the form factor wasn't practical. It seems that Samsung designers took note of the feedback and are coming out next year with the Galaxy Fold 2. What's new, you wonder? Well, it's the design and

it's being completely overhauled. Some images of what's being claimed to be the Samsung Galaxy Fold 2 have been doing rounds of the web and so far, it seems that Samsung is taking a page out of Motorola's design books. The Galaxy Fold 2 ditches its book-style form factor and it goes for a clamshell design similar to the Motorola Razr. The images show a regular looking smartphone with thin bezels all around when it's in the unfolded state. However, when the device is folded, it becomes smaller. There's a hinge in the middle of the display and it folds the phone into half. It looks quite similar to the Motorola Razr but unlike the Motorola Razr, there

are no chunky bezels at the bottom. The device also appears to be quite slim like the Motorola Razr and there appears to be a small secondary display on the outside of the clamshell. There's an always-on display section that keeps showing the time. A dual-camera system could take selfies when folded. The main display also features a punch-hole cutout in the top-centre. The phone seems to be running on the latest version of Samsung's One UI 2.0 based on Android 10. Hence, chances are that Samsung could show it to the crowds at the MWC 2020 or at the Galaxy Unpacked event in March. Compared to the Motorola Razr, the alleged Fold 2 goes for

a more minimalist design with simple surfaces and curves. The main display has slimmer bezels all around and that's better for customers who want more display and fewer bezels. The best part is that when unfolded, the Fold 2 looks like any other normal smartphone from Samsung. What remains to be seen is whether Samsung offers it with the flagship chips of 2020. The Fold 2 could replace the original Galaxy Fold and feature Qualcomm's Snapdragon 865 chip. Chances are that the Fold 2 could also come with midrange chips and be offered at a lower price- that's also evident from the dual cameras at the back.

Twitter warns users of serious security breach that could impact millions of accounts in India

Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world and is used by millions of users every day who share not just their daily lives with fellow Twitter users, but also essential data about themselves with the platform itself.

As such, when news emerged that the platform's security systems had been breached and possibly user data was stolen from it, many users were understandably left scared. The company earlier last week admitted that it had released a fix for a malicious code that was possibly inserted into its app by hackers and could have compromised some users'

information worldwide.

The information about the possible data breach was shared with users by Twitter itself which had sent an email to its users asking them to update their apps and warning that in the case don't the decision could give hackers a chance to gain access to non-public account information or even give them direct control over the user's account (send Tweets or Direct Messages).

"Prior to the fix, through a complicated process involving the insertion of malicious code into restricted storage areas of the Twitter app, it may have been possible for a bad actor to access information (Direct Messages,

protected Tweets, location information) from the app," Twitter said in a statement.

Was any user data stolen?

While the company outlined the issue, and possible implications arising from it, it did not say if any user data was actually stolen because of the flaw it found in the code of its app. The company explained that while it was indeed possible to steal data by exploiting the flaw, it wasn't sure if any data was actually stolen as a result of the issue.

It even said that that it does not have direct evidence that malicious code was inserted into the app or if the hackers



exploited an existing vulnerability. "We have taken steps to fix this issue and are directly notifying people who could have been exposed to this vulnerability either through the Twitter app or by email with

specific instructions to keep them safe". However, if you are an iOS user, you needn't worry as the company claims the issue only affects the Android app and iPhone users remain unaffected by the flaw.

Salt: How much is too much?

Keep an eye out for the hidden sources



Scientific data shows that High sodium consumption (>2 grams/day, equivalent to 5 g salt/day) contribute to high blood pressure and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke - World Health Organization (WHO)

The primary source of sodium in our diet is salt and preserved foods. Salt intake of less than 5 grams (one level tea spoon) per day for adults helps to reduce blood pressure and thus the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and heart attack. WHO Member States have agreed to reduce the global population's intake of salt by a relative 30% by 2025. Rapid Urbanisation and changing life styles are transforming diet patterns, towards the use of more processed foods that are easily available at lower costs, thus the consumption of more salt in them.

Recommendations for salt reduction

- o For adults: WHO recommends that adults consume less than 5 g (just under a teaspoon) of salt per day
- o All salt that is consumed should be iodized, essential for healthy brain development in the foetus and young child and optimizing people's mental function in general.
- o Add less salt during the food preparation
- o Avoid salt shaker on the table
- o limit the consumption of salty snacks, pickles, sauces, Papad, chutnies, pizza, chips, bhujia etc
- o Use freshly cooked foods with 4-5 servings of fruits and vegetables, as Potassium content in fruits and vegetables is good to control high blood pressure. Adding unsalted nuts is a good option.



THE DISH THAT PACKS A HEALTHY PUNCH

JUST a mention of this story took Chef Nishant Chaubey back to his childhood in Jharkhand. "I was reminded of the times when I had barely started eating. That's when my grandmother and my mother used to serve this dish to me because I was too busy playing all day. Eating *dal pitha* for breakfast would mean they wouldn't need to bother about my food all day," says the chef. He remembers watching his paternal grandmother Kusum Chaube cook this dish, who later passed on the recipe to his mother and eventually it came to him.

Chaubey has now recreated this dish for his restaurant Street Storyss. "This dish has pretty much all the nutrient requirements as there's dal, rice, spices and fats. And it's steamed. It used to be made in earthen pots back then and was quite a tedious process. It's much simpler now of course," he quips. Chef Chaubey feels the best thing that we could do is going back to our roots. "No one likes to eat chemicals. Our basic food is easy, fuss-free and is soul food, cooked with a lot of love. If I do a dish and create nostalgia around it, that always works."

What's Cooking At The Home Kitchen

KHICHDI DONS A MODERN AVATAR



AS the saying goes 'you remember the first of everything', well we always remember the food from our childhood as we grow older we reminisce about the flavours of food associated with it. And when we recreate these family recipes it brings fond memories of the past," says celebrated Chef Sujan Sarkar. At his restaurant Rooh in Mehrauli, he serves a butter-

Chef Sujan Sarkar

nut squash khichdi. For this, he's taken inspiration from various households of his home state Bengal. He says, "in Bengal, we serve khichdi with labra which is a dish primarily consisting of pumpkin and other seasonal vegetables. Taking inspiration from that in my kitchen rather than serving the vegetables as a side dish I cook the khichdi along with pumpkin. It is wholesome and a rather rustic dish but passed on from generations."



FINDING COMFORT IN MUSTARD

ONE can almost picture a typical Bihari household when Chef Aditya Jha fondly reminisces, "In most families of Bihar, this is a staple diet. They enjoy this dish at least once a week sitting all together on the floor and eating it with hands. It's more like a celebration." He's talking about the fish curry that is part of the menu at The Manor's In-Q restaurant.

Traditionally made with Rohu fish and bursting with flavours of mustard, Jha tells us that it is one of the most loved dishes in Bihar. At the restaurant however, he uses Barramundi fish as Rohu is not easy to eat in a fine dine restaurant. Jha emphasises that Indians increasingly are going back to their 'dadi nani ka khana'. "That is going to be the highlight in the coming times. Most of the people don't cook at home but want to look for those

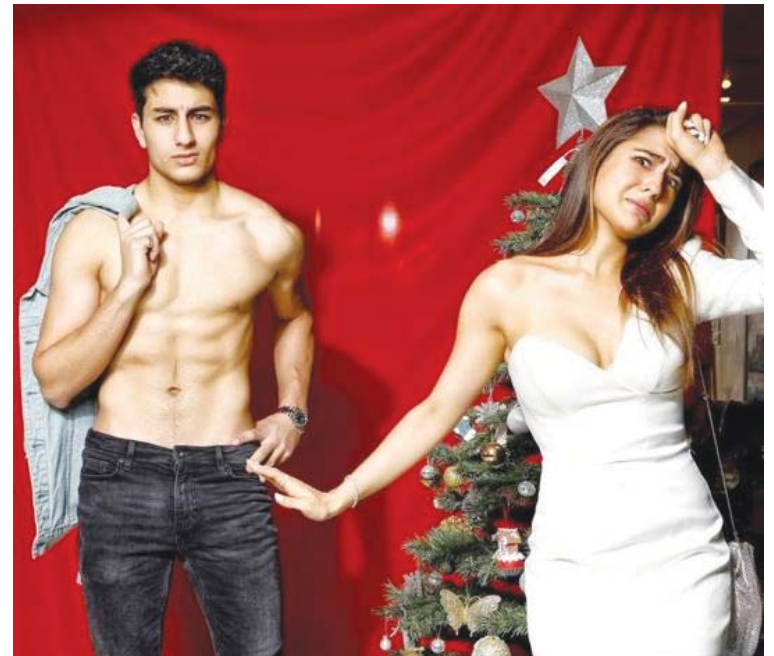


Chef Aditya Jha

flavours wherever available. One section in our menu is home flavours where we introduce such recipes. The most important thing is that these dishes are so healthy. For example, this fish curry uses very little mustard oil for 300 grams of fish," says Jha.

Kareena Kapoor Khan, Sarah Ali Khan, Malaika Arora: Bollywood celebrities bring on the glamour for Christmas

Bollywood celebrities from Sarah Ali Khan, Jahnvi Kapoor, Kartik Aaryan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karan Johar, Malaika Arora, Arjun Kapoor, Jacqueline Fernandez, among others took to their Instagrams to share some festive cheer, and they all looked stunning in their festive gear.



Bring on the festive cheer, after all the festival of giving is here! And that's exactly what our Bollywood celebrities did on Christmas eve. Bollywood celebrities from Sarah Ali Khan, Jahnvi Kapoor, Kartik Aaryan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karan Johar, Malaika Arora, Arjun Kapoor, Jacqueline Fernandez, among others took to their Instagrams to share some festive cheer, and they all looked stunning in their festive gear. Jacqueline Fernandez was the

first to spread the Christmas cheer and posted, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas." She later shared another one where she wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Actor Sara Ali Khan looked stunning in a one-shouldered mini dress in white as she posed alongside brother Ibrahim for the most adorable photoshoot, where she looked rather dejected by a shirtless Ibrahim. She captioned the post, "Red nose reindeer, White snowflake, Virgin

eggnog, Christmas cake, Get the party started, It's Christmas Eve for heavens sake." Ibrahim and Sara were headed to Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan's Christmas party. Kareena looked stunning in an animal print jumpsuit and her cute red antlers, while sister Karisma Kapoor almost twinned with her in her animal print top with black pants. Malaika Arora wore a festive red pantsuit, while sister Amrita Arora wore a glittering, sequined grey jumpsuit. Natasha

Poonawalla wore a gorgeous, flared red tulle dress. Also present at the party were Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Arjun Kapoor, Sanjay Kapoor, to name a few. Actor Jahnvi Kapoor also took her Instagram to share a picture of herself in a red cap like Santa's. She wrote, "It's almost Christmas and I've got more than one reason to be this happy!! p.s this was truly candid." Kartik

Aaryan, who is currently basking in the success of Pati Patni Aur Woh, also shared a picture wearing the cap and wrote cheekily, "Y fear when Santa is here. Kis kis ko gift chahiye." He posted another picture alongside Jahnvi Kapoor and Collin D'Cunha and wrote, "Merry Christmas from the team of Dostana 2." The trio sported Santa hats and sported red, the festive colour for Christmas.

Deepika Padukone is in love with Emilia Wickstead and Sabyasachi Mukerji for Chhapaak promotions. Here's proof

Deepika Padukone is one of the most stunning women to have made a name for herself in Bollywood, and after a series of commercial successes (and some failures), the actor began to do more women-centric roles, carving a niche for herself in Bollywood in a time when being gimmicky is the only way. Deepika stayed authentic and we love her for it. And now, after playing strong roles in movies like Ram Leela, Bajirao Mastani and Padmaavat to name a few the actor is all set to make her debut as a producer with her latest venture, Chhapaak.

Chhapaak, directed by ace director Meghna Gulzar is about the real-life journey of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal, and stars Deepika in the lead role alongside Vikrant Massey. Like all celebrities have to, Deepika too is out and about town to promote her upcoming film, and we gotta say we are absolutely in love with all her outfit choices, and the new hairdo is a pleasant change, and much welcomed as compared to the constant slicked back hair we are used to Deepika sporting.

Most recently, Deepika stepped out in a gorgeous, skin-tight red coloured sleeveless Emilia Wickstead



dress as she went to promote her film on the dance reality show, Dance Plus 5, and her look is absolute love! The actor wore golden chain-link earrings in her ears, red pumps in her feet and her mid-length highlighted hair looked perfect. She wore minimal make-up but sported a bright red lip-colour and looked radiant.

Deepika has been sporting a lot of Emilia Wickstead's designs recently, from the shoot of a magazine cover, to red carpets and now her movie promotions.

How about this gorgeous black number by Emilia Wickstead?

Of the many designers Deepika has been sporting of late, Sabyasachi Mukerji seems to be her all-time favourite, from her wedding ceremony last year, her temple visits soon after, her public appearances, her first-year anniversary celebrations to her movie promotions, it appears Deepika absolutely loves Sabyasachi's work. Even for the promotions of Chhapaak, Deepika wore multiple Sabyasachi ensembles, from sarees, co-ord sets, capes, you name it! And we are in absolute love with Deepika in Sabyasachi's traditional as well as fusion ensembles by the ace couturier.



Dabangg 3 Movie Review:

Salman Khan film is dabanggai ki height

Prabhudheva paints a visual delight with Salman Khan aka Chulbul Pandey at the centre. And that's all you need to know, says our Dabangg 3 movie review.

Movie Name:Dabangg 3

Cast:Salman Khan, Sonakshi Sinha

Director:Prabhudheva

Marvel and DC have made a fortune with backstories of their most loved (and sometimes hated) characters. So, circa 2019, are we ready for one about Chulbul Pandey? Salman Khan ne bola toh of course we are.

Chulbul Pandey and his story moves from Laalgunj to Kanpur to Tundla, all in Uttar Pradesh, in the third instalment of the Dabangg franchise. Along with the locales, the directors and the respective flavours they add to each film have also changed - from Abhinav Kashyap to Arbaaz Khan to now Prabhudheva.

What hasn't changed is Salman Khan's dabanggai. If his subordinate asks for a

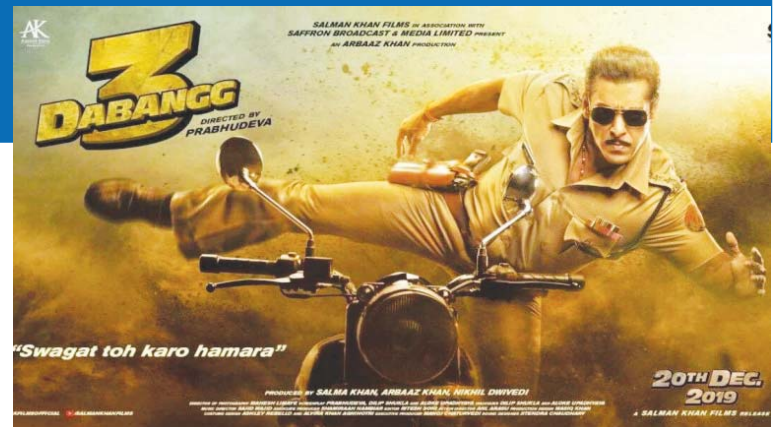
promotion he still shoots at him so that he can claim sarkari compensation. His toxic yet all-in-jest banter with bro Makkhi (Arbaaz Khan) is still on. And he still wastes err...invests, sorry, invests as much time as he can delivering punch lines pe punch lines before finishing off the bad guy. Sometimes, much to Rajjo's (Sonakshi Sinha) peril.

But then, Chulbul wasn't always like this. Just as Bhai's fans made him the Bhaijaan that he is today, Bali Singh (Kichcha Sudeep) with little (pale, pasty-faced, Piranha-pout) help from Khushi (Saiee Manjrekar), made Chulbul.

Now, Dabangg 3 is no Race 3. Aur dhundne pe jaise bhagwaan mil jatein hai, Dabangg 3 mein story bhi mil hi jayegi. Prabhudheva, who masters the art of slow motion, dust-particle

flying action sequences, paints a visual delight with Salman Khan at the centre. The rest is just one pop culture reference after another to tickle your 90s bone. Young Chulbul (we can tell you that's not Salman's real name but we won't tell you how he got that name for that would be a major spoiler in the little bit of the story Dabangg 3 has is wooing Khushi, but is interrupted by a poster of Shah Rukh Khan and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge on the wall behind her. In a dream sequence with Khushi, we see them recreate the train-chase scene from the DDLJ (not the one with Bauji, the other one), and once they're on the train, Salman does what looks like a recreation of Chaiyya Chaiyya.

Present-day Chulbul and Rajjo's dance duet suddenly have them



mimic Salman's Maine Pyar Kiya step, shouldering pigeons and strutting like one would if they had a shoe bite. His house help's phone rings and Mera Hi Jalwa from Wanted (2009), is the ringtone.

At one point Sohail Khan appears on screen!

And in another, we have Rajjo mouth "Khaamosh!"

In all this, if you fail to look at characterisation, screenplay, coherency, logic, or the fact that Vinod Khanna's brother Pramod Khanna has reprised the role of

Prajapati Pandey after the former's death, and has been made to look uncannily similar to him, it's not your fault.

Some films are experiences, and therefore, shouldn't be restricted with star ratings, or discussions about the film's merit. A Salman Khan film, in this context, is a rollercoaster ride. You buy a ticket, stand in line, take your seat, buckle yourself up, and pray to the almighty that you don't puke on thy neighbour.

Which is why we're going with 5 stars out of 5. You decide.

Star Wars The Rise of Skywalker movie review:

A confused mess and unworthy send-off, watch 3 hours of Baby Yoda GIFs instead

Star Wars The Rise of Skywalker movie review: JJ Abrams takes the reins of the beloved franchise back, only to deliver one of its most disappointing films ever.



Star Wars The Rise of Skywalker
Cast: Daisy Ridley, Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, Adam Driver, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac

Director: JJ Abrams

One of the many subplots of Star Wars: Rise of the Skywalker is about a mole on one of the two warring sides. The mole's identity, while not central to the plot, still piques the viewers' interest. Who could it be? While one might land on the right guess in an attempt or two, it's the mole's intention that demands your attention. They say they did it out of spite for another, the one calling all the

shots. "I don't care if you win, I just want *redacted* to lose," they say.

In that moment, having sat through more than an hour of JJ Abrams' ordeal of a film, I wondered if JJ was speaking through this character. With Rise of the Skywalker, JJ sets on fire the biggest ideas, characters, and their arcs that were introduced by Rian Johnson in the divisive predecessor The Last Jedi. Could it be out of spite? This rising large, dark cloud of a film is a clue if I've ever seen one.

In 2017, Rian's The Last Jedi divided Star Wars fans into two groups -- those who liked it and

those who hated it with the fiery vengeance. How could Rey (Daisy Ridley) be a nobody? How could Supreme Leader Snoke get taken out without any answers about his origin? How is there not enough nostalgia? A clarification-Personally, I loved The Last Jedi and its many new ideas including Rey's ancestry and legacy being swept off the plot line. Why do our heroes always have to be special by birth; born to important people who inadvertently die? Here's looking at you Rowling.

And the harsh criticism seems to be the force that flowed through JJ, his only guide as he birthed this confused mess of a film. He set out to 'right' all the 'wrongs' one-by-one, losing the bigger picture, the film, the trilogy or hell, even the 9-film franchise. There is fun to be had in individual scenes, how else would they have been able to cut two brilliant trailers out of a movie as dull as

this one. The action is still gorgeous and grand but nothing, absolutely nothing, will get your heart racing as much as seeing Laura Dern tear through a Star Destroyer at light speed. Nothing will look as stunning as ships leaving a trail of blood red salt on the battlefield. And no send-off will be as perfect as Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) evaporating in thin air.

Instead of building off the last film and tying away those ideas, we are dragged through yet another infestation of Jedi ghosts, Sith rituals, more chatter about Rey choosing the right side, something one would think was behind us after that month long trainee program under Luke. And yet, like a desperate suitor who just wouldn't take no for an answer, Kylo won't stop trying to seduce her to the dark side. It's a whole exercise and just not fun or even sexy anymore. Adam Driver is not even meme-ably

shirtless anymore. Rey, Finn (John Boyega) and Poe (Oscar Isaac) band together as the Harry, Ron and Hermione of a galaxy far far away. Hopping from one set location to another (most likely one giant green wall), they are always searching for one MacGuffin or another. The motivations are immediate and the missions eat up the scenery. There is no room for emotions, which is a shame considering one is supposed to bid goodbye to these characters, some of which we have loved for decades.

Rise of the Skywalker is a disappointment bigger than The Last Jedi could ever have been. Taking risks and not landing on your feet is still forgivable. You stuck to your guns Rian Johnson and someday the world will appreciate you for it. And someday, no one will remember who made the best ghost of their favourite film.

Janhvi Kapoor says she'll do a character like Kabir Singh: 'I don't think there's anything wrong with it'



Almost every actor, director and producer has been asked their opinion on Kabir Singh by now, and looks like Janhvi Kapoor also has something to say. In the latest episode of No Filter Neha, Janhvi was asked by host Neha Dhupia if she would ever consider a role like Shahid Kapoor's divisive one in Kabir Singh. The actor said that she would.

"I loved Kabir Singh. I understand people's concern. I think cinema in our country plays such a big part in creating an impression on the minds of the general public, so I understand why people feel that it might encourage men to act a certain way. But it's art! It's not supposed to cater to societal norms, and what is right and what is wrong. It's one man's reality, it's one man's opinion of

someone's reality. It's a grey character, that's the point of it. If you only make sanitised, society-approved empty shells of characters, then what's the point? He's supposed to be f**ked up. Isn't cinema art and isn't art supposed to be a reflection of yourself. That's maybe someone's reality and that's what they are trying to present on celluloid. I don't think there's

anything wrong with it. Frida Kahlo painted really disturbing images but it was called feminism because it's her reality. You can't filter it, then it's not art. Then where's the heart in it?" she said.

Janhvi added, "Art is supposed to make you uncomfortable. At least it started a conversation. That's the point of films like these. Wouldn't it be worse if you

see a film and just leave? This disturbed some people. Some people loved it and some people hated it. That's art and that's what it's supposed to do."

Kabir Singh was one of the most polarising films of 2019. While some fell head over heels in love with Sandeep Reddy Vanga's film about an alcoholic, violent man who loses in love, others called out the film's misogyny and toxic masculinity. Some celebs failed to see what the furore was all about, but a few, such as actor Parvathy and actor Taapsee Pannu, did see the film as problematic.

Janhvi will now be seen in Ghost Stories, a Netflix film made up of four shorter stories directed by Zoya Akhtar, Anurag Kashyap, Dibakar Banerjee and Karan Johar. She features in Zoya's segment and says that she had an enjoyable experience working in the project.

"I have recently done a short film for Netflix and I had a very enjoyable experience working on it. It feels good to work in a short film because mostly we do a film's shoot over 50 to 60 days. It becomes very monotonous after a certain point. In a short film, however, you go in with a lot of energy and the shoot is over quickly, without distractions.

From Nawazuddin Siddiqui's Photograph to Jallikattu, top 10 films of 2019 you probably haven't seen (but absolutely must)

Perhaps the only flip side to living in an age where so many wonderful films and television shows are available to us, is that so many wonderful films and television shows are at the risk of getting lost.

While it is understandable for Netflix to stake out prime homepage real estate for the Adam Sandler comedy Murder Mystery, and not, say, the hidden gem The Perfection, it is slightly disappointing when films that deserve to be seen by a larger audience don't even get the opportunity to present their case. Practices such as this -- Amazon, too, made it nearly impossible for a casual viewer to discover its fantastic crime series Too Old To Die Young -- perpetuate a circle wherein audiences are presented only with a certain kind of entertainment. The poor viewers, over a period of time, are forced into a dull submission, having assumed that good films are



simply not being made anymore. Which brings us to lists like this. Here are the top 10 films of 2019 that you probably haven't seen, but absolutely must. And if you have, then take a moment and pat yourself on the back. After that, do your duty and spread the good word. Delicately animated and deftly written, Netflix's I Lost



My Body is one of the finest films of 2019. It's a stunningly original vision that will no doubt find tremendous love at the Oscars, just like it did at the Cannes Film Festival, where it premiered to warm enthusiasm over the summer.

Jallikattu

A gloriously nutty celebration of



cult filmmaker Lijo Jose Pellisery's excesses, Jallikattu (available on Amazon) is at once a parable about human hubris, and a white-knuckle survival thriller. Pellisery remains one of India's finest visual storytellers, a talent that is allowed to flourish thanks to the little resources he usually has to work with.

Ready or Not

Funnier than most comedies and scarily thought-provoking when it needs to be, Ready or Not is a sneaky little surprise. Directed by two-thirds of the horror collective known as Radio Silence, it is the sort of movie that - given the right kind of publicity push and championed by the right critics - has the potential to become a cult classic. It certainly deserves to. Blinded by the Light

Photograph

Photograph (available on Amazon) finds director Ritesh Batra at his poetic best. It's a bit of a crime, really, that we aren't paying more attention to his work, considering just how instrumental he has been in announcing to the world what Indian filmmakers are capable of. While his sensibilities remain as international as ever, Photograph is rooted in its Indianness.



Hollywood celebrating the holidays! Rihanna brings out her naughty side in TOPLESS underwear snaps as the singer kicks off Christmas Day festivities

The only other cheekily, adding hashtag accouterments in the shots are her garter-style stockings, which further accentuate her derriere, along with flirty elbow-high black velvet gloves. Rihanna's luxuriant dark tresses are down, and she wears a classic pop of red color on her lips that echoes the shade of her panties. 'Mer-RIH?MAS to all, and to all a Savage night,' she captioned the images

for good measure. She added an additional image to the account's Stories, kneeling with her hair falling down her back, along with more text wishing followers a 'Mer-Rih Xmas, from the bad gal herself'. Other stars were a bit tamer with their social media holiday greetings, like Katie Holmes, who got into the holiday spirit by posting an image of some

beautiful Christmas tree ornaments along with wishes for happy holidays. Having a little fun was new mom Shay Mitchell of Pretty Little Liars fame, who shared an absolutely hilarious trio of family portraits done in the style of an old-school department store holiday photo. Shay poses with partner Matte Babel in ugly retro holiday sweaters and glasses, posing in delightfully awkward

arrangements with their two-month-old baby girl, Atlas Noa. Kerry Washington uploaded a joyous boomerang, showing the TV star excited to open a beautifully wrapped gift. And Alec Baldwin's wife Hilaria got an early start on Christmas morning, adding absolutely adorable photos of their four children in Christmas pajamas 'ready!' to open presents, along with one

of their youngest son Romeo brushing his teeth: 'Getting the brushing done before opening presents!' Sweethearts Kelly Ripa and Mark Consuelos posed for a cozy portrait in front of their Christmas tree, while supermodel extraordinaire Heidi Klum lounged in a Santa hat with her name on it along with the family dogs. Representing the celebrity male contingent was Iron Man Robert Downey Jr., who posted a

slo-mo video in which he hides behind a lopsided sweater he's knitting, paired with the hilarious caption: 'Sometimes, don't the holidays just make u wanna curl up behind that zombie sweater you've been working on? #MerryXmas' Sophie Turner shared a super cute shot of her man Joe Jonas outfitted in a Santa hat and beard, along with a matching red jacket over a white tee.

Disney cuts same-sex kiss from Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker's Singapore release

Disney has cut a lesbian kiss from the latest Star Wars movie - one of the top Christmas films - Singapore's media regulator said on Tuesday, so that more children can watch it.

The two minor female characters embrace but do not kiss in the version of The Rise of Skywalker shown in Singapore, local media said, as the ninth and final film in the celebrated science-fiction series rakes in millions from loyal fans.

"The applicant has omitted a brief scene which under the Film Classification Guidelines would require a higher rating," a spokeswoman from Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority told the Thomson



Reuters Foundation. Disney, which owns the Star Wars production company Lucasfilm, did not respond to a request for comment on its decision to cut the scene from the last installment of the second highest-grossing movie franchise of all time.

It concludes a story that began in 1977, when filmmaker George Lucas introduced a young hero named Luke Skywalker and delighted audiences with a

galaxy of robots, furry warriors known as Wookiees and a host of other eclectic characters. Sex between men is illegal in Singapore and punishable with up to two years in prison, though the British colonial-era law is rarely enforced. The law does not apply to sex between women. Singapore activists challenged the law last month as polls suggested attitudes toward homosexuality are

softening and similar legislation was scrapped in India last year.

The film is rated PG-13 in Singapore without the kiss scene, meaning parental guidance is advised for children below 13. Higher ratings mean it could be restricted only to viewers aged 16, 18 or 21 and above. In 2016, the Singapore organisers of the musical Les Miserables removed a scene in which two male actors kiss after complaints from the public. Disney declined to respond to a question about censorship in other markets, including the Middle East, amid media reports that lesbian kiss has also been deleted from screenings of The Rise of Skywalker in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Daniel Craig on returning as James Bond for the last time: We needed to finish something off



Actor Daniel Craig said that he had some unfinished business with the James Bond franchise as the famed British spy for one last time. Craig, who took over the role of the suave 007 agent from Pierce Brosnan, has so far featured in four Bond films -- Casino Royale (2006), Quantum of Solace (2008), Skyfall (2012) and Spectre (2015). He reprises the character for the fifth and final time in Cary

Fukunaga's No Time To Die. Craig said that though Spectre had a perfect ending, the film did not give him a proper closure in terms of the story. "If that had been it, the world would have carried on as normal, and I would have been absolutely fine. But somehow it felt like we needed to finish something off. If I'd left it at Spectre, something at the back of my head would have been going, I wish I'd done one more," the actor told Empire magazine.



US raises legal age to buy cigarettes, vapes to 21



(News Agencies)- President Donald Trump on Friday signed a sweeping spending bill into law, including a measure that prohibits the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21. The increased age restriction for tobacco purchases is one of several provisions outside of the

spending measures themselves that will be attached to the broader \$1.4 trillion spending agreement. Trump tweeted Friday that the spending agreement "raises smoking age to 21! BIG!" -- marking the change as one of its highlights. The restriction on tobacco sales has long been pushed by a bipartisan mix of

senators: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican; Republican Sens. Mitt Romney of Utah and Todd Young of Indiana; as well as Democrats including Sens. Richard Durbin of Illinois, Tim Kaine of Virginia and Brian Schatz of Hawaii. Those lawmakers have been looking for a way to get the prohibition across the finish line and now they've found one, by attaching it to a must-pass series of bills to avoid a government shutdown. States that have already raised the minimum age Raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products in the United States from 18 to 21 marks a major public health achievement for the White House. There already have been several states that have individually passed legislation to raise the tobacco-buying age to 21. As of December, 19 states have raised the minimum age to buy tobacco

Cond Page on 20

The vaping black market is hiding in plain sight



(News Agencies)- From the outside, the store is clearly marked. Inside, rows of colorful products are on display. As far as any average shopper on this street in California can tell, this is a legal cannabis shop. But it's not. Even in a state where it's legal to buy, sell and use recreational cannabis, the California Bureau of Cannabis Control (CBCC) says there are still unlicensed and illegal stores operating openly -- selling untested, potentially dangerous products, including THC vaping cartridges. "It is difficult for consumers to know which shops are operating legally," said Mark Hoashi, founder of Doja, an app that has been called the Yelp of cannabis. Hoashi walks through a legal cannabis shop called Chronic Pain Relief.

Cond Page on 20

Scotland Yard, UAE authorities to investigate Iqbal Mirchi's family and associates



(News Agencies)- Underworld gangster and international drug trafficker Iqbal Mirchi's associates and family are under the scanner of

Cond Page on 19

Modi's Popularity Undented But Regional Leadership Is Letting Him Down

(News Agencies)- The Jharkhand results show that it is not national issues but regional aspirations that finally work in a state election. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is still popular which allowed the BJP to put up a tough fight - its vote share increased. The combined vote share of JD(U) and AJSU and the BJP, till recently in an alliance, is six percent higher than the combined percentage of the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance. The regional leadership of now former Chief Minister Raghubar Das failed to complement Modi's popularity. The BJP has not done as well as it was expected in Jharkhand. The absence of a regional alliance (the JDU



and and AJSU left the team at the last minute) and some senior leaders deserting the party made the big difference between victory and defeat. The final tally and the vote share show that

the BJP could have very well pulled off a sweep, had it contested with the partners that ruled the state for five years.

The outcome shows that it was neither anti-incumbency nor the unpopularity of the coalition that made it lose the state. It was sheer arithmetic. The JMM reaped rich rewards with tribal votes consolidation. The fact that a tribal leader could the next chief minister dented the BJP vote base.

For the first time in Jharkhand's history, it had a stable government with the BJP which also did a lot for the development

Cond Page on 20

Home Business Auto Insurance

(See Full Page Advt. on Page 16)



NLIGHT
INSURANCE

(A Division of Nlight Financial LLC)

Call : 917-612-3158