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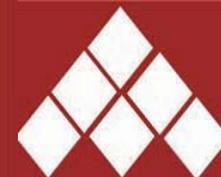


Trump's road from wishing for impeachment to dreading it

From a family dinner in Trump Tower to plotting a White House war room, Trump and his team spent the week testing strategy after strategy to protect themselves from the uncertain course of impeachment.

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Indian asylum seeker released by US after 70-day hunger strike

Ajay Kumar was released with a tracking device around his ankle. He was accompanied by human rights activists, who had been galvanized by medical personnel force-feeding him.



(News Agencies) An Indian immigrant who lost a third of his weight during a 70-day hunger strike over the rejection of his asylum claim won temporary release Thursday after a year in US detention.

Ajay Kumar, 33, bowed with his hands clasped together in a traditional Indian greeting as he walked away from a detainee processing center in El Paso, Texas, with a tracking device around his ankle — a condition of his release. He was accompanied by human rights activists, who

had been galvanized by medical personnel force-feeding him. The painful procedure involves pumping liquid food into the stomach via a tube through his nose.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials agreed to a deal last week in which Kumar and another Indian national resumed eating on a promise that they would be released, according to their lawyers. The men began eating again Saturday and had been kept under medical observation.

Kumar said he felt “very

good,” even though he lost nearly 50 pounds (23 kilograms) during his hunger strike, dropping from 150 pounds (68 kilograms) at the start of his hunger strike to 107 pounds (48 kilograms). Kumar said he has regained about 10 pounds (5 kilograms) but still feels

in pain. “I got my freedom,” Kumar said. “I’ve been waiting a long time for this.”

Kumar and fellow Indian detainee Gurjant Singh began their hunger strike July 8 after rejection of their asylum claims and denial of bond. They had spent almost a year in an ICE de-

tention facility in Otero, New Mexico, and hadn’t been charged with a crime. They believe the judge did not consider the facts of their cases individually.

“This immigration judge said, ‘All of these Indian asylum claims are incredible. I don’t believe them,’”

said attorney Linda Corchado, who represents Kumar, in a press conference last week. “It is damning. You expect at least some level of weighing the facts.” Singh has not been released but his attorney, Jessica Miles, said she hopes it will be Friday.

India, Japan, US hold talks on maritime security, connectivity in Indo-Pacific region

The meeting took place on the margins of the ongoing session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

(News Agencies) India, Japan and the United States on Thursday (local time) held talks on maritime security and connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region.

The meeting was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, and Japanese politician Toshimitsu Motegi.

“Positive meeting with @MarisePayne, @DrSJaishankar, and

@motegi. We discussed our shared interest in building a free and open #IndoPacific, denuclearization of #NorthKorea, and joint efforts to promote regional stability,” Pompeo wrote on Twitter after the talks.

Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary of the State Department’s Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA), Alice Wells, tweeted, “Thrilled to join @SecPompeo and foreign



ministers of #Australia, #India, and #Japan to deepen our partnership on connectivity, maritime security, and cyber in the #IndoPacific.” The meeting took place on the margins

of the ongoing session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The trio is expected to meet once again on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in November.

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Pak's Shah Mahmood Qureshi boycotts S Jaishankar's opening statement at SAARC meeting, brings up Kashmir issue

Pakistan minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi showed up just minutes after Jaishankar left after his opening statement at SAARC.



(News Agencies) Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday boycotted External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's opening statement at an informal meeting of SAARC on the sidelines of the UNGA saying he "will not engage with India until and unless they lift the siege and put an end to atrocities in Kashmir". Jaishankar's statement at the meeting of SAARC Council of Ministers". Qureshi showed up just minutes after Jaishankar left after his opening statement as he had been expected, according to Indian officials, without responding to questions from reporters waiting for him. The Pakistani foreign minister has been known for pulling off stunts at SAARC. In 2018, he had come out accusing the then external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj of boycotting his speech, when she had actually left after finishing her own speech and had another meeting to attend, as had the Bangladeshi and Afghanistan foreign ministers.

US jail conditions an issue in Dawood Ibrahim aide's extradition

Motiwala, who was arrested in London in August 2018, is sought by US authorities to face charges of money-laundering USD 1.4 million worth of proceeds from narcotics smuggling.

(News Agencies) Conditions in the Metropolitan Correctional Centre in New York have emerged as a key issue in extraditing Jabir Motiwala, an aide of one of India's most wanted, Dawood Ibrahim, with a judge in the Westminster Magistrates Court on Thursday seeking more information on possible risk to his human rights, if extradited.

Motiwala, 51, chose not to appear in the court. Judge John Zani said: "Given his

state of health and suicidal tendencies, what happens if he is extradited to the jail in New York." Under UK laws, extradition is blocked if there is a risk to the requested person's human rights in the requesting country.

Motiwala, who was arrested in London in August 2018, is sought by US authorities to face charges of money-laundering USD 1.4 million worth of proceeds from narcotics smuggling. Witnesses on behalf

of Motiwala have deposed to the court, alleging inhumane and degrading conditions in US jails. The court set November 26 as the next date for hearing closing arguments in the case. Florence Aveson, lawyer for the Crown Prosecution Service on behalf of the US government, told the court that it has received information "of a general nature" on the jail conditions. More information on ongoing investigations is expected from US authorities, the court was told.

Karachi-based Motiwala was reportedly trapped by the FBI in a sting operation in which he was secretly recorded by agents while he dealt with drugs, extortion and money-laundering to the US. A law expert from Pakistan previously told the court FBI's secret recording violated the country's laws. Besides the issue of human rights, Motiwala's team has cited passage of time as another reason to oppose extradition.

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When Impeachment Meets a Broken Congress



(News Agencies) The most essential branch of the U.S. government is collapsing before our eyes—right as it faces a historic showdown.

Abigail Spanberger catapults herself out of a chair, yanks on two desk drawers and pinches a stack of white notecards, plopping them onto the table between us. The gust of activity is a bit disorienting. We've been talking for all of two minutes, just long enough to state the preface for my forthcoming line of inquiry—whether the U.S. Congress is utterly hopeless, an irresponsible and dysfunctional body of unserious lawmakers with a talent only for self-preservation—but already the 40-year-old Spanberger seems distracted. Now she plunges both hands into her purse, grasping for a writing utensil as I venture a simple, sheepish question for the CIA operative turned freshman congresswoman: Does she realize what she's gotten herself into?

"So many thoughts running through my mind," Spanberger says, gazing past me with a wince, tapping her pen on the table. The Democrat representing Virginia's 7th District, it seems, has been waiting for this sort of opportunity—to share her disgust with Washington, to unload on the laziness wrought by a tribal two-party system, to wonder aloud whether Congress can be saved from itself. Spanberger wanted to itemize her grievances on paper as we spoke to ensure nothing was over-

looked. But now she is speaking in stream-of-consciousness, detailing the institutional defects she has observed from the moment she arrived for freshman orientation.

"I replaced someone who was rather ideologically driven and didn't demonstrate pragmatism," Spanberger says, generously, of Dave Brat, the cartoonish Republican whose comrades in the House Freedom Caucus nicknamed him "Brat-Bart" because of his obsession with the far-right website. "So, I'm going to work in a bipartisan fashion, I'm going to seek places where we can agree. And then I get here. And I realize from day one that it's not incentivized. Literally, even at orientation, we had different buses—there's the Republican bus and the Democratic bus. I was excited to go to [the] different dinners, all these sorts of things, this parade of events. And with the exception of I think one, they were supposed to be divided."

The division between parties, Spanberger soon realized, has a way of breeding division within them. In December 2018, a debate broke out among the 64 incoming House Democrats. They hoped to send a freshman class letter to the Democratic leadership laying out their policy priorities and strategic vision for governing. But the

contents of the letter proved polarizing; the progressives scoffed at the moderates for promising to prioritize health care costs and pocketbook concerns over investigations into the executive branch, while the moderates rolled their eyes at the semantic demands made by the progressives, including a line-in-the-sand ultimatum to delete all references to bipartisanship in the letter. What began as party-unity exercise devolved into a pissing match between rival factions that had only begun to emerge. Eventually, the word bipartisan was dropped from the text altogether—"because that was not seen as a positive thing for some members of our freshman cohort," Spanberger says, rolling her eyes—but even so, a third of the new members refused to sign their names.

Finally, a few weeks later, Spanberger realized the true depths of her political ignorance. It was the first day of the new Congress. Hours after taking their oaths of office, the freshmen representatives would cast their first recorded vote: electing the speaker of the House. Dozens of Democrats had pledged, at varying points over the previous year, that they would not support Nancy Pelosi's return to the speakership. Spanberger, whose Richmond-area district had been held by Republicans since 1971, was one of them. But nobody seemed to take her seriously; in the days after the congresswoman-elect's vic-

tory, every conversation she had with D.C. Democrats seemed predicated on an assumption that she would go back on her word.

When the pro-Pelosi forces realized that the newcomer from Virginia wasn't going to budge, they swarmed her. Veteran lawmakers threatened Spanberger explicitly, telling her to "enjoy your office in Anacostia" after voting against Pelosi. Fellow freshmen warned that she was throwing away her career. Her friends back in the district started a betting pool on how Spanberger would vote, with the smart money believing she would ultimately buckle to the pressure and stay in the party's good graces. All the while, Spanberger was growing more exasperated. She had arrived in Washington with a narrow legislative wish list, hoping to forge fast alliances with her new colleagues on the issues of infrastructure, prescription drug costs and campaign finance reform. Instead, seemingly every moment in the two months between her election and her swearing-in had been consumed by lobbying related to the speaker's vote. "Nothing about policy. Absolutely nothing," she says. "Just all of this noise." Sitting inside the House chamber that January afternoon, watching a procession of her Democratic colleagues reverse themselves and pave Pelosi's way to the speakership, a sinking feeling came over Spanberger. This was not what she had signed up for.

This was not how the most important legislative body on Earth was supposed to function. This was not the behavior she expected from people who talked about changing Congress but walked in compliance with the status quo. "You're supposed to be here, and you're supposed to advocating for people, and you're supposed to be fighting for things that you care about," Spanberger says. "How do you just fall in line?"

Suddenly, as Democrats press onward with an impeachment process that will extinguish whatever glimmer of hope might have existed for productivity in the 116th Congress, Spanberger finds herself most reluctantly at center stage. On Monday, she joined with six like-minded freshman colleagues in penning a Washington Post op-ed calling for an impeachment inquiry—stunning the Democratic caucus and effectively forcing Pelosi's hand.

It would be the unlikeliest bunch of members, legislative pacifists who had labored not to be defined by opposition to Trump, leading Congress into an era-defining clash.

How the impeachment proceedings affect an increasingly polarized nation is anyone's guess. But it's hard to imagine the coming showdown doing any more damage to an institution that, lawmakers in both parties will agree, was broken long before Donald Trump came to town.

The most essential branch of the United States

government is collapsing before our eyes. Plagued by saleable corruption, animated by instinctive partisanship and defined by intellectual dishonesty, its disrepair grows more apparent—and somehow, more accepted—with each passing day. Its crisis of leadership and lack of qualified personnel are doing long-term damage. Its abdication of basic responsibilities levied by the Constitution makes a mockery of the Framers' intent. And the presidency is in bad shape, too. Lots of Americans are losing sleep these days over the turmoil engulfing the executive branch, and not without justification: Donald Trump's presidency is testing the stability of not only the government but of the country itself. Even Republican lawmakers who otherwise support his policies will concede this much: His belligerent personality and impetuous decision-making threaten to plunge the world into chaos at any moment, with his erratic behavior setting an alarming precedent for the nation's highest office.

The executive branch is, however, inherently transient. The presidency is constantly changing hands between people and parties. Whether he is impeached by the House and removed by the Senate, evicted by voters in 2020, or re-elected to another four-year term, Trump will come and go with relative ephemerality—having forever altered impressions of the office, certainly, and leaving bruises on the body politic, but leaving all the same.



How Trump's Biden mania led him to the brink of impeachment

In the three months prior to the fateful Ukraine call, the president was extraordinarily preoccupied with Biden.



(News Agencies) The cascade of tweets began at 4:56 a.m. on May 1, starting with the president's criticism of the nation's largest firefighters union's endorsement of Joe Biden. Over the next two hours, more than 60 retweets bashing Biden and the firefighters' decision would follow from Donald Trump's Twitter account.

The burst of activity came during a three-month period that reveals an extraordinary preoccupation with his potential general election rival, and provides a window into Trump's thinking in the run-up to his

fateful July 25 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

At home and abroad, on Twitter, at campaign rallies, in interviews and even from the White House lawn, Trump spent an inordinate amount of time deriding Biden and insisting that the former vice president could not be ahead of him in polls — despite the fact that Biden has led the president in general election matchups in every major poll conducted in 2019.

"I think he's got a pretty clear pattern, doesn't he? He usually only spends his

capital on those that he views as a threat, or a challenge," said Harold Schaitberger, president of the International Association of Firefighters, which did not endorse a candidate for president in 2016. "I think our union coming out strongly on behalf of Joe Biden, cut him short at best ... It got under his skin."

Trump's predawn online tirade was a precursor to a period in which Biden appeared to occupy a remarkable amount of his attention. At a May 20 rally in Pennsylvania — the state where the former vice president was born — the president laced into the candidate who was then the undisputed front-runner in the Democratic field. "Biden deserted you," he told the crowd at a campaign rally. "I guess he was born here, but he left you, folks. He left you for another state."

A week later, Trump stunned even Republicans

by taking to the world stage to back a foreign dictator's harsh assessment of Biden. "Well, Kim Jong Un made a statement that Joe Biden is a low IQ individual. He probably is, based on his record. I think I agree with him on that," Trump said at a May 27 news conference in Tokyo.

By then, news reports had surfaced about an internal, 17-state March polling project that showed the president losing to Biden in key Rust Belt states that were essential to his 2016 victory.

Trump's first reaction was to dismiss the revelations as fake news. His actions said otherwise. After Biden formally entered the race in late April, Trump moved to shore up his support in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan by paying visits to those states — all of which are home to the Rust Belt workers Biden is believed to appeal to.

Yet the bad poll numbers kept coming. A June 5 Quinnipac poll even showed Biden beating Trump in Texas, a red state the president won by 9 points in 2016.

Trump grew defensive when pressed on those results.

"I don't believe those polls. There's no way [Biden] beats me in Texas," Trump told ABC News' George Stephanopoulos in a June 13 interview. "No, my polls show that I'm winning everywhere."

Earlier in the week, before flying to Iowa for a trip that coincided with Biden's appearance there, Trump insisted Biden was the opponent he most preferred to run against.

"I'd rather run against Biden than anybody," Trump told reporters on the White House lawn. "I think he's the weakest mentally, and I like running against people that

are weak mentally."

Not long after, his campaign fired the pollsters involved in the 17-state polling project, blaming them for leaks.

The Biden campaign concluded that, based on what it knew about the reelection campaign's well-financed, sophisticated data operation, Trump's reaction was a sign there was likely even more bad polling data about Biden's appeal that didn't get a public airing.

"They test all of these different versions, and target communities and they're getting a real clear understanding of who their voters are and what mobilizes them," Biden campaign manager Greg Schultz said. "We think Joe Biden is the only person who can break that up, with those kinds of voters, in the battleground states."

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Tucker Carlson: Ukraine story shows Dems are so obsessed with Trump, they're destroying themselves - and Biden

One of the most bewildering facts of our current moment is how quickly everything moves.

For example, remember the latest New York Times hit piece on Brett Kavanaugh? The one where they found a brand new accusation of sexual misconduct, but then later had to admit it was all a sham? When did that happen? It feels like about a year ago, but actually, no, it was just last week.

That's the Trump-era news cycle for you. Scandals that used to go on for months now seem to end in hours. Nothing illustrates that better than this bizarre Ukraine story that we're all living through. So, a week ago, no one had even heard of it. By Tuesday night, we were on the brink of impeachment because of it. And now, it seems to be over already.

Just to bring you back and remind you what just happened: the same angry news anchors who brought you Stormy Daniels and the Russia hoax now wanted you to know that Big Orange's days in the White House were finally over.

Why? Because Trump, they said, threatened to withhold military aid to Ukraine. And it's essential that we send military aid to Ukraine for some reason. But Trump was going to withhold it unless they did something bad to Joe Biden and his family.

Basically, it was an extortion plot against Ukraine, and that's a crime, the news anchors shouted. A crime! Trump was finished!

Well, Wednesday morning, they turned out to be wrong. Actual evidence emerged. And it contradicted what they told us yesterday. The administration released a transcript of the president's phone call with Ukrainian head of state, and it shows none of the things that news anchors claimed it would show. Read it for yourself, don't trust us. It's right online. Try to find the extortion in there; there isn't any. Trump never even mentions military aid. Well, yes, they're saying now, but he asked a foreign government to investigate an American citizen and that is immoral.

OK. Was it immoral when three Democratic senators wrote a letter to Ukraine just last year, demanding investigations into Trump? No answer on that question. Well, we will tell you if we hear back.

Instead, now they're telling us that the transcript of the phone call can't be real. It must be doctored. Chuck Schumer and Adam Schiff spun their conspiracy theory on Tuesday night. So again, that was last night, before the transcript was publicly available. Now that it is publicly available for Adam Schiff's conspiracy addled brain, it has lurched in a different direction. Now he is telling us that the transcript, the one that he has already denounced as fake, is, in fact, real. But it doesn't show what it should show -- which is to say it doesn't show President Trump doing any of the things that supposedly justify impeachment. Why?

Well, Adam Schiff explains because the president, like a Navajo code talker, is speak-

ing in secret code. "This is how a mafia boss talks," Schiff told reporters. "What have you done for us? We've done so much for you. But there's not much reciprocity. I have a favor I want to ask you. And what is that favor? Of course, the favor is to investigate his political rival. A classic mafia-like shake-down a foreign leader."

So, you know, we're not psychiatrists here. But honestly, Adam Schiff is a nut case. It's true. It's hard to believe he is in Congress. Poor people of Anaheim, or wherever he is from -- Southern California, the Valley somewhere. It's hard to believe he is actually in Congress. He is actually a committee chairman, believe it or not. Too bad the 25th Amendment doesn't apply to members of Congress. But to be fair, most Democrats are not anywhere near as crazy as Adam Schiff, not even the same ballpark. They're just very cynical -- extremely cynical -- more cynical you've ever thought of being.

For example, this is illustrated when Congressman Al Green, who is not stupid or crazy, explains what's actually driving impeachment against Trump. Interviewer: Are you concerned that impeachment talk may actually help the president's reelection?

Rep. Al Green, D-Texas: I'm concerned that if we don't impeach this president, he will get reelected. "I'm concerned if we don't impeach, he will get reelected." I'm concerned that democracy could happen. We've got to stop that. It's about power. Duh. You knew that. That's what it's always about, power.

Nobody pushing for impeachment actually cares about secret deals with foreign leaders. Oh, please. Much less justice or the truth. Again, these are the most cynical people in the United States of America. What they care about -- and you knew this already -- was winning the 2020 presidential election. That's all they care about. Getting their mitts on the levers of power and exercising power for its own sake. That's what drives them. That's why they get up in the morning. Democratic leaders have decided that impeaching Trump is essential if they're going to win next year. So they're staking everything on this bizarre, flimsy scandal that the rest of us can barely even understand. Will it work? Probably not.

If personal attacks on Trump are effective -- if calling him a racist or a traitor actually worked -- then Hillary Clinton would be running for reelection right about now. That is not going to work. It never works.

If you want to impeach Trump, make a case on the issues. He won on the issues. Make a counter case. The geniuses can't figure that out.

In the end, the real loser here in this impeachment nonsense is likely to be Joe Biden. Biden, you'll recall, is the frontrunner, supposedly. He is supposed to be the safe choice, the guy who is going to energize the Obama coalition and win back the White House.

Why Modi has invested in US

After the showmanship of Houston, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump returned to the more nuanced world of diplomacy. At their press conference on Tuesday, there was continued bonhomie but also hints of traditional bilateral concerns. Ending the most substantial concern, avoiding a guerrilla trade war, remained elusive though India and the United States appear to be on track to resolving the remaining half-dozen tariff and market access. Mr Trump, in pursuit of his Nobel Peace Prize, continues to offer to mediate on Kashmir. However, the US president is now careful to indicate New Delhi has veto power over any conversation on Kashmir. His evasiveness on Pakistan's support for terrorism is a reminder the US president stills sees utility in Pakistan.

Nonetheless, the degree of US' diplomatic support to India in the battle over Article 370, the blacklisting of Masood Azhar, and the convergence evident in concepts like the Indo-Pacific are signs the bilateral relationship is robust. Mr Trump has many idiosyncrasies. Navigating them while maintaining the larger relationship has been a challenge for Mr Modi and other world leaders. Most of the remaining sources of bilateral friction, whether motorcycles or Iran, originate with the president and his quirky world view. Mr Modi's investment in the Trump relationship signals his recognition that the US is overwhelmingly India's primary international partner. It is India's



main source of foreign capital, technology and investments. It remains the favoured destination of Indian students and immigrants. The US provides much of the cutting-edge technology for India's defence forces. It is the primary external partner on intelligence and counterterrorism assistance. Washington has also been prepared to throw its diplomatic weight behind India, even where China and Pakistan are involved. India's new cluster of global friends, whether Japan, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, are all US treaty allies. A new twist has been the rise of the US as a source of oil and gas. What matters less than actual shipments of hydrocarbons is that America's shale story has suppressed energy prices to India's advantage. This is a metaphor for what a closer relationship with the US provides India: the best possible geopolitical anchor in a time of remarkable international instability. Mr Modi has also understood it is the best external backer for his ambitious domestic agenda, ranging from the economy to technology. The US is the indispensable partner for the rise of India.

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Donald Trump tries to reset optics for 2020 via 'Howdy Modi'

US President Donald Trump tried at the 'Howdy Modi!' rally to reset the optics for his campaign among immigrants.

By Arul Louis

With an eye on next year's elections, US President Donald Trump tried at the 'Howdy Modi!' rally to reset the optics for his campaign among immigrants - a group among whom he has fared badly because of the broad brush accusation of being anti-immigrant.

Unlike his 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) rallies for his re-election campaign where the audience is predominantly white, he was on Sunday in the midst of about 50,000 brown people - a striking visual contrast - at Houston's NRG stadium.

And it was broadcast live nationally by some channels.

His address was like his usual stump speeches proclaiming his tax cuts, low unemployment, strong economy and border security - except for the omission of partisan attacks on the Democratic opponents and the addition of elements specific to India.

Another huge difference was that Trump, who likes to be the centre of the universe, was not the main speaker at the rally for Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The New York Times said he was playing a "second fiddle" and The Washington Post "an unusual role of warm-up act".

It was also the biggest crowd he has addressed during his campaign, though short of the 70,000 he had said that would be there, a number beyond the stadium's capacity.

The optics and crowd size appeared to be his main motivations to take the unprecedented step of attending a large ethnic rally for a foreign leader. In recent memory, no President has done this - and possibly never.

"The Prime Minister of India has asked me to make a speech and I will make a speech in a stadium loaded up with something like 70,000 people or whatever the maximum is," Trump said before leaving for the rally.

And probably unprecedented was also the presence of a large number of

Democrats among the about 60 elected officials, including Governors, Senators and Representatives, who were on the stage before him.

For them too, the large crowd of Indians, many coming to Houston from their scattered constituencies across the nation was a draw.

The rally was an opportunity for Trump to present himself as a supporter of legal immigrants, while opposing illegal immigration, a distinction that has been erased by the media and his political opponents to make him appear an anti-immigrant racist.

"We are proud to have you as Americans," Trump said, praising the Indian diaspora

for accepting American values. Holding them out as the kind of immigrants he would like for America, he mentioned their contributions especially to medicine, technology and job creation

through entrepreneurship.

"Indian-Americans are writing the story of American greatness," he added.

According to the Pew Research Centre, the nearly four million people of Indian descent are the highest earning ethnic group in the US, with a median income of \$100,000, almost double that of the national median, and with 72 per cent having at least a bachelor's degree.

Trump emphasised the difference between legal and illegal immigrants to scattered applause.

"We proudly fight for our citizens," he said apparently referring also to Modi.

Trump said that he was against free benefits to those who enter the US illegally and added that he was going to take care of the Indian-American citizens first - with emphasis on "citizens".

Speaking about his focus

on tightening the borders, he said: "Border security is vital to India - we understand that."

While the media and Democrats have cast him as a racist opponent of immigrants because of Trump's comments about criminal illegal immigrants, his demand for a border wall and his administration detaining illegal border-crossers and tightening the conditions for seeking asylum, in reality his stand is more nuanced with a distinction between law-abiding legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. The rally gave him a stage to broadcast his welcome to legal immigrants.

Indian professionals now wait as long as 10 years for a green card that gives them permanent immigrant status.

Trump has proposed an immigration system similar to that of Canada and Australia that would favour profession-



als and the educated that would benefit Indians waiting to immigrate.

Whether his overtures to Indians - and through them to other immigrants - would make difference is another matter. According to the Asian and Pacific Islander Vote survey, 82 per cent of Indian-Americans chose Democrat Hillary Clinton, while only 9 per cent were for Trump in the 2016 election.

Trump's outreach to Indian-Americans by attending a rally of Hindu Republicans before the election did not

seem to have made a difference. In the US, a religion-based and ethnicity-based campaign is an accepted practice and that was the first time a presidential candidate had come to a rally of Hindus. While they make up only about 1 per cent of the US population, Indian-Americans are outsize political donors.

According to another research, Indian-Americans have contributed \$1 million to Trump's re-election campaign and \$2 million to various Democrats fighting for their party's presidential nomination.

What the tax cut will achieve; what it won't

There are positives. But India needs to do more on education, tech, exports, informal sector and farming

By Kapil Sibal

Our economy is demand-driven. To achieve 8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, India needs to spur demand. This can only happen by increasing the earnings of the 800 million Indians who presently survive on Rs 10,000 per month.

Before November 8, 2016, the economy was moving in the right direction. The decision to demonetise paralysed it. Growth fell every quarter. That downward spiral continues, and may continue for some time. The folly of demonetisation was compounded by the imposition of an ill-structured multi-rate Goods and Services Tax (GST). Businesses required time to adjust to this paradigm shift. Small and medium-size entrepreneurs were unable to adjust to the complexity of the GST framework. It disturbed the nation's economic equilibrium. Added to these were the economic consequences of ill-conceived majoritarian decisions disrupting lives of people. The lynching of Dalits, politics underlying the cow, the architecture of the National Register of Citizens coupled with the decision to amend Article 370,



have destroyed livelihoods across different relevant geographies.

The result: Revenue earnings have gone down. The collections under GST have not matched expectations. Resources have dried up, negatively impacting the implementation of socially beneficial measures.

Former finance minister Arun Jaitley had committed to reduce corporate tax rates to 25%, but not as a one-time measure. That commitment remained unfulfilled because of revenue constraints. The rationale was that reducing rates will make industry globally competitive. In that regard, this year's budget was found wanting. Given that in the last quarter, the GDP growth rate came down to 5%, the government

needed to urgently address industry's concerns.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States (US) provided the opportunity for some good news for industry to celebrate Howdy Modi. The diplomatic task ahead is persuading US President Donald Trump to revise his decision to exclude India from the Generalized System of Preferences list.

The president, in turn, will seek tariff concessions on US products exported to India, especially medical devices and agricultural products. He will also be looking at India easing restrictions on e-commerce platforms provided by companies like Amazon; removing impediments in relation to content on Facebook, Google, WhatsApp

and others; and the possible consequential liabilities arising therefrom. The broad contours of a bilateral trade agreement may well be in the offing. With interest rates reaching zero levels in the US, its industry will welcome increased investment opportunities in India. There are clear positives to the Diwali gift of corporate tax cuts from the government. Before this bonanza, industry with exemptions paid more than 25% corporate tax. With reduced tax rates, our industry hopes to be globally competitive. Increased earnings will result in increased capital expenditure, and will expand production capacities. That will allow for greater investment in research and development. The reduction in corporate tax rate to 15% for green field manufacturing projects — set up on or after October 1, 2019 and commencing production by March 2023 — will further incentivise investments. Given that the 15% corporate tax will apply to industries set up in Special Economic Zones (SEZs), domestic industry having invested in SEZs may avail of the benefit. This may increase the volume of exports stagnating for last several years. (Contd on page 21)



It is time to act on the climate threat

India needs sensitive policies, more finances, and a movement.

saying that business as usual strategies will not work.

Mr Modi's speech covered four important aspects of India's climate action — the push for renewable energy, electric mobility, mixing of biofuel to reduce consumption of fossil fuels, and the Jal Jeevan Mission. He also spoke of the need for behavioural change. "Need, not greed, is our guiding principle," he said. He is right, for only a more sustainable development model can work. No man probably understood or pushed for low-carbon footprint lifestyle as much as the Ma-

hatma himself, whose 150th birth anniversary India is celebrating this year. Less wasteful behaviour, which the PM spoke about at the climate meet, can tackle India's, and the world's, huge waste challenge, which is polluting air, soil and water, and adding to climate woes. While India is shouldering its share of the climate burden, despite problems in climate finance flow, the government also needs to strengthen its climate adaptation plans. In this year's Union Budget, Rs 100 crore was allocated to the National Adap-

tation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC), only a fraction of the total budget of over Rs 2,900 crore allotted to the Union environment ministry. This is 16% lower than the budget allocated to the NAFCC in 2017-18. India is correct in arguing that developed countries must do more, but a combination of policy, budgetary support, and a people's movement is needed to battle the globe's greatest challenge. Every citizen is affected, but the poor and marginalised most so. It, indeed, cannot be business as usual.

If there was one common thread that ran through the United Nations Climate Action Summit (September 21-23) in New York, it is that the world is running out of time to act against the phenomenon, which is devastating to natural resource base and human lives. Two persuasive speakers, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, and young Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg, spoke at the high-profile special meet, which has been convened to identify urgent and concrete solutions. While Mr Modi outlined the steps that his government has taken to mitigate climate change, Ms Thunberg took world leaders to task, by



The right of women to safe public spaces

Snatching and violence are rampant in Delhi. Draw up a comprehensive solution

If women instinctively fear for their safety every time they step out of their homes in the Capital, do they even enjoy the most basic of rights, that of free movement, enshrined in the

Constitution? On Monday, a Hindustan Times report detailed the plight of women whose lives have drastically changed since becoming victims of snatching. The same

evening, a Delhi journalist, who resisted snatching, sustained severe injuries. While the number of registered cases of snatching has dropped from 8,231 in 2017 to 6,932 last

year, it is still a large enough number — 19 victims a day — for the city to make women's safety in public spaces a top priority. To be sure, men have also been victims of snatching and the ensuing violence. But women have been targeted in much larger numbers. Men may not think twice before accessing public spaces, but women clearly do. This denial to women of their mobility in public places stems from India's deep patriarchy. According to the HT report, women are forced to take steps like using less/no jewellery, wearing kurtas with pockets, not travelling through dimly-lit areas, all in order to protect themselves. Cities, considered engines of growth, cannot drive progress if nearly half the population cannot walk the streets without fear. Changing this won't just contribute to im-

proving the dismal gender gap index (India ranks 108 of 149 countries, 2018). It will also give women, as equal citizens of the country, the right to safety. India has witnessed a dip in women participation in the labour force, and one reason is precisely the absence of safety. There are solutions. One, mobilise the police to use effective methods, including CCTV systems and thorough investigation, to pursue criminals. Two, enact stronger legislation by recognising snatching as a non-bailable crime, with severe punishment, to deter criminals. Three, evolve a more gendered approach to city planning, which balances development with safety. Public spaces — roads, pavements and public transportation — must be safe for all those who use them.

Tucker Carlson: Ukraine story shows Dems are so obsessed with Trump, they're destroying themselves - and Biden

One of the most bewildering facts of our current moment is how quickly everything moves.

For example, remember the latest New York Times hit piece on Brett Kavanaugh? The one where they found a brand new accusation of sexual misconduct, but then later had to admit it was all a sham? When did that happen? It feels like about a year ago, but actually, no, it was just last week.

That's the Trump-era news cycle for you. Scandals that used to go on for months now seem to end in hours. Nothing illustrates that better than this bizarre Ukraine story that we're all living through. So, a week ago, no one had even heard of it. By Tuesday night, we were on the brink of impeachment because of it. And now, it seems to be over already.

Just to bring you back and remind you what just happened: the same angry news anchors who brought you Stormy Daniels and the Russia hoax now wanted you to know that Big Orange's days in the White House were finally over.

Why? Because Trump, they said, threatened to withhold military aid to Ukraine. And it's essential that we send military aid to Ukraine for some reason. But Trump was going to withhold it unless they did something bad to Joe Biden and his family.

Basically, it was an extortion plot against Ukraine, and that's a crime, the news anchors shouted. A crime! Trump was finished!

Well, Wednesday morning, they turned out to be wrong. Actual evidence emerged. And it contradicted what they told us

yesterday. The administration released a transcript of the president's phone call with Ukrainian head of state, and it shows none of the things that news anchors claimed it would show. Read it for yourself, don't trust us. It's right online. Try to find the extortion in there; there isn't any. Trump never even mentions military aid. Well, yes, they're saying now, but he asked a foreign government to investigate an American citizen and that is immoral.

OK. Was it immoral when three Democratic senators wrote a letter to Ukraine just last year, demanding investigations into Trump? No answer on that question. Well, we will tell you if we hear back.

Instead, now they're telling us that the transcript of the phone call can't be real. It must be doc-

tored. Chuck Schumer and Adam Schiff spun their conspiracy theory on Tuesday night. So again, that was last night, before the transcript was publicly available. Now that it is publicly available for Adam Schiff's conspiracy addled brain, it has lurched in a different direction. Now he is telling us that the transcript, the one that he has already denounced as fake, is, in fact, real. But it doesn't show what it should show -- which is to say it doesn't show President Trump doing any of the things that supposedly justify impeachment. Why?

Well, Adam Schiff explains because the president, like a Navajo code talker, is speaking in secret code. "This is how a mafia boss talks," Schiff told reporters. "What have you done for us? We've done so much for you. But there's not much reciprocity.

I have a favor I want to ask you. And what is that favor? Of course, the favor is to investigate his political rival. A classic mafia-like shakedown a foreign leader."

So, you know, we're not psychiatrists here. But honestly, Adam Schiff is a nut case. It's true. It's hard to believe he is in Congress. Poor people of Anaheim, or wherever he is from -- Southern California, the Valley somewhere. It's hard to believe he is actually in Congress.

He is actually a committee chairman, believe it or not. Too bad the 25th Amendment doesn't apply to members of Congress.

But to be fair, most Democrats are not anywhere near as crazy as Adam Schiff, not even the same ballpark. They're just very cynical -- extremely cynical -- more cynical you've ever thought of being.

Why India needs timely crime data

The NCRB has not published its annual report on crime for 2017 and 2018. This is unacceptable

By Yashovardhan Azad

The Crime in India reports for the years 2017 and 2018 have not yet seen the light of day. The 2016 data was placed in the public domain at the end of 2017. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), under the Union ministry of home affairs, brings out this annual comprehensive statistics of crime across the country. Being published since 1953, the report serves as a crucial tool in understanding the law and order situation across all 29 States and seven Union Territories.

The NCRB has not even released its annual report on Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) for the year 2016, a crucial source for data on farmer suicides — an issue of serious concern. In response to an application filed under the Right to Information Act, which sought “farmers’ suicides data for the whole country from 2016 to 2018 and the reasons for not making them public”, the bureau replied saying that “data for accidental deaths and suicides for 2016 is under finalisation”.

The NCRB has been reporting the numbers of farmer suicides unflinching from 1995 to 2015 as a part of the annual report on ADSI for the whole country.

When the matter was raised in Parliament this July, G Kishan Reddy, minister of state for home, said that the Crime in India report for 2017 had not yet been finalised by the NCRB. With a view to ensure that the published data suits the requirement of various stakeholders, NCRB had revised the pro forma for collecting crime statistics. The bureau had trained state and Union Territory personnel on the new format. However, the data in the revised pro forma had not been received from all States/Union Territories, the minister added.

Democracy demands honest communication and transparency. Considerable delay in providing key information to the public can make a dent in the credibility of the government. People deserve to be informed about crucial data that etches the blueprint of their future. It is even more urgent to place facts and figures, when harsh and

unflattering, in the public domain.

The annual data relating to various crimes and incidents, released by the NCRB, is of immense importance to the police, government, civil society, among others, for tracing the crime map of the country, studying its implications, and charting out the future course of action.

It also comes out with some key statistics, enabling an in-depth study by our social planners. These include hate crimes, acid attacks against women, child trafficking, custodial deaths, prison statistics, caste and communal violence, and crimes against Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. It was the NCRB data in 2016, which revealed that South India was catching up with the North, in respect of hate crimes. Responding to changing social dynamics, compilation of acid attack cases was started after Delhi gangrape case, 2013. The NCRB would do well in present times to start compiling data on mob lynching and cow vigilantism cases too.

Mature democracies do not



conceal their data from citizens, or allow considerable delays in reporting. Take the United States, where the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program’s primary objective since 1930 is to generate reliable statistics on crime under the aegis of Federal Bureau of Investigation. Today, four annual publications are produced on time based on data received from more than 18,000 city, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, all of which voluntarily participate in the programme.

India will play a proactive role in the emerging world order as a key player. This makes it more incumbent on the country to cope with the increasing demand of transparency pertaining to well-researched data. This will serve as the North Star in charting out its growth. With new technologies, an accurate database, and coordinated ef-

fort on the part of various states, heinous crimes and those having interstate ramifications can be fought successfully. The NCRB has actually been doing just that.

Crime in India is a leading social indicator linked with citizen safety. Over the years, it has become the principal reference document for accurate and reliable information on crimes and criminals, for researchers, criminologists, and officials of criminal justice delivery system in the country. It is also used by ministry of home affairs / state governments in framing public policies.

Hence, time is an essence of its publication along with reliability. Timely publication of crime statistics will end the uncertainty and mistrust that comes with information gap in a democracy. With delay, on the other hand, the rot will start running deep and go metastatic.



By Navroz K Dubash

The enduring image of the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit held on September 23 is the young climate activist, Greta Thunberg. “How dare you continue to look away?”, she demanded, invoking wide-scale suffering, collapsing ecosystems, and the beginning of a mass extinction due to climate change.

Thunberg and burgeoning groups of other climate activists are responding to a drumroll of news of a destabilised global climate. According to the scientific report submitted to the UN, the last five years are on track

to be the warmest ever recorded; higher carbon dioxide has made the ocean 26% more acidic; the four lowest levels of winter sea-ice were recorded in the last five years; and heatwaves and cyclones have become more common and more deadly. A short list of implications for humanity is greater food insecurity in the face of heat, drought, and declining crop yields; greater exposure to heatwaves causing illness and decreased productivity; and decreases in GDP, particularly for poorer and warmer countries. None of this accounts for the risk of catastrophic climate change,

Existentialism with equity: The climate dilemma

Should the threat mean all countries do everything possible? Should it mean that those responsible do more?

which could happen if certain tipping points are reached.

Faced with this growing science and growing pressure from the street, the UN secretary general called for leaders to come to the summit with far-reaching plans, not speeches.

What he, and we, got was, for the most part, slightly warmed-over policies. A few countries pledged to reach net-zero carbon by 2050, a bold stretch. Many others, including India, reiterated that they will meet their Paris Agreement pledges, sometimes with a few teasers thrown in (such as India’s statement we would increase renewable energy to 450GW, but with no date, and an intriguing proposal for a coalition on disaster resilient infrastructure). A sizeable minority, including the United

States, Brazil, Japan and Australia, were simply no-shows.

Thunberg is right: We are looking away.

Beneath this failure to act sit two equally true, but different, ways of understanding the climate problem. The first is that climate change is an existential problem that threatens life on earth and ecosystems, and requires extraordinary measures. And the evidence is mounting that business as usual measures — an energy saving light bulb here, a few percentage points more renewable energy there — are not going to solve the problem. The UN secretary general is informed by this view when he calls on all countries to halve their greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and go to net zero by 2050. Implicit in this view is

that everyone needs to act with urgency.

By contrast, the second, closer to India’s historical view, is that while action is needed, agreeing on which countries need to act and how much — how to divide the carbon pie — is equally important. From this perspective, understandably, it is outrageous to ask a country like India, whose citizens use less than a tenth the amount of electricity on average than an American, to take equivalently strong measures to address climate change. From this perspective, climate existentialism is threatening, as it ramps up the pressure for poorer countries to take on equivalent obligations to richer countries, which may risk short-circuiting future development by curtailing energy use.

(Contd on page 21)



How hatred is dividing our societies

People are consumed by violent impulses across countries. The State and citizens must stop this

Have you heard about Saeid Mollaei? The world judo champion is in a crisis today. The Tehran regime asked him to stay away from the World Judo Championship on the grounds that there was a chance of him facing an Israeli judoka during the competition. The logic is that a country which gave the world its first-ever Islamic revolution could not accept that one of its sportspersons could be in the same arena as a Jew.

Saeid found this order unacceptable and disagreeable. As a result, the ruling regime in his country turned against him, forcing him to take up asylum in Germany. Though the International Judo Federation is supporting him, the issue has gone beyond sports, and has become a political game. Saeid is worried that his family may become victims of State-sponsored violence. Let us look back at the 2016 Rio Olympics. The judoka from Egypt, Islam El Shehaby, after defeat, refused to shake hand with his opponent from Israel because of the fear of reprisals back home. In 2004, during the Athens Olympics, the two-time world champion from Iran, Arash Miresmaeili, also avoided competing with Israel's Ehud Vaks. There

has been a shameful history of communal and racial hate in sports. At first, it was created by the ruling regimes of various countries, and now their societies are supporting this.

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the late Libyan dictator, who once executed people publicly, eventually became a victim of mob lynching himself. This is the very nature of hatred; it ends up killing those who create and nurture animosity. The list of Arab rulers who became victims of this phenomenon is long. Fundamentalist Islamic States apart, this sort of hatred is now affecting the most inclusive societies of the West. The Sikhs in America are often thrashed because they are mistaken to be Arab fundamentalists.

A government delegation from India in Paris was shocked when they were chased away near the Eiffel Tower by a crowd which shouted "Paki, Paki" at them. A person who was there at that time revealed that had their hotel not been in the vicinity, they would have ended up as victims of mob violence. In our own country, incidents of mob lynchings are becoming more frequent. First, some so-called cow vigilantes took law and order into their own hands, and now innocent

people are becoming victims of this violence. There are news reports from different parts of the Hindi-belt states of people being beaten to death on suspicion of child-lifting. People are being consumed by violent impulses for various reasons. In the National Capital Region, a short while ago, two young people fatally beat up a motorcycle rider only because he was repeatedly honking to overtake them. We seem to have created a violent society, which is intolerant of the slightest provocation. These people are not lumpens or goons, but people like you and me.

When such incidents take place, politicians often try to blame each other to serve their own interests. But are the governments of a particular ideology responsible for this? How can we say this?

Recently, the police in Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled Jharkhand restored murder charges against 11 accused of mob violence, while an Alwar court acquitted criminals of all charges in the controversial Pehlu Khan murder case. The state has a Congress-ruled government. The videos of Pehlu Khan's lynching are still there on social media. Why couldn't

the state police then provide evidence of the crime? It is clear that it is not politics but a vicious fury that is driving people from Atlanta to Alwar. In Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh, inspector Subodh Singh became a victim of mob violence. Some time ago, the people charged for his murder got bail. When they got out of jail, they received a huge welcome from a large number of people as though they had returned as victors of a war. Some enthusiasts even shouted "Bharat mata ki jai", and "Vande Mataram". There was a time when freedom fighters Ashfaqullah Khan and

Bhagat Singh chanted these slogans while they were being hanged. Needless to say, such a warm public welcome to criminals can only further strengthen an already violent society. In these moments of crisis, I am often reminded of Heraclitus, the great Greek rationalist from 540BC. He said, "The content of your character is your choice. Day by day, what you choose, what you think and what you do is who you become." If not today, tomorrow, we will have to confront the people who are busy misguiding people through social media.

Shashi Shekhar



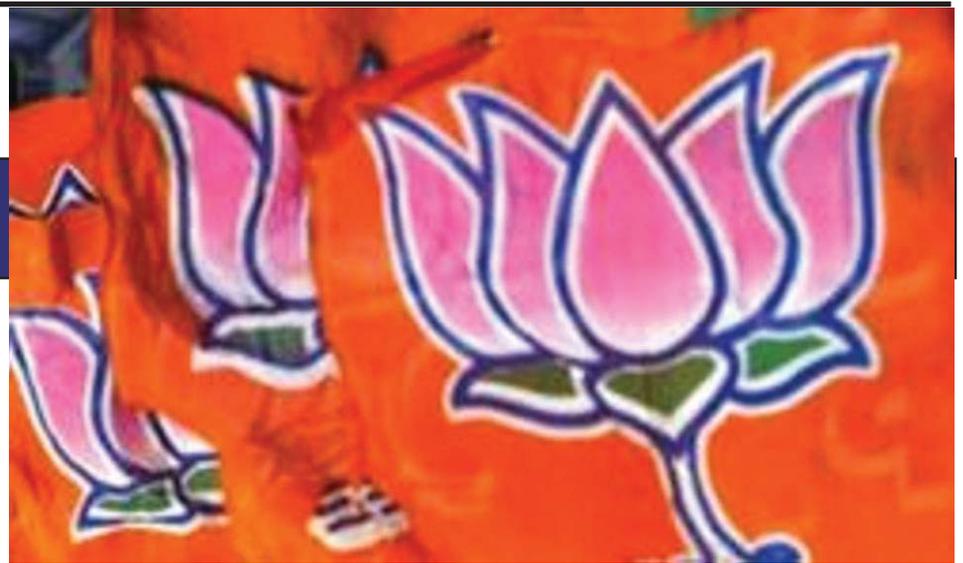
Two parties, two stories

How the Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress have prepared for polls is a study in contrast

Maharashtra and Haryana go to polls on October 21. This is the first set of assembly elections after the Lok Sabha polls. The polls are happening in the backdrop of extremely significant decisions by the Narendra Modi government, particularly its move to change the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir. It is taking place amid an economic slowdown, and recent government measures to address it. These issues will shape voter preferences, as will state-specific factors, and the performance of the respective governments

and the local representative over the past five years. But fundamentally, the two polls are a study in contrast about the mode of functioning of India's two national parties. Soon after the Lok Sabha elections ended, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began preparations for the Maharashtra and Haryana state elections. The party held preparatory meetings; narrowed down on the target for each state; and threw its weight behind the incumbent chief ministers, Devendra Fadnavis and Manohar Lal Khattar, thus stemming the possibility of any internal

jostling. It began the process of identifying issues and possible candidates; remobilised the organisational machine and activated workers who had just finished with the national polls to go back to voters; and appointed national in-charges for the states for better coordination. It deployed Fadnavis in Maharashtra and Khattar in Haryana on state-wide yatras; commenced rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president and Home Minister Amit Shah; and unleashed a propaganda blitz on the achievements of the



respective governments. By the time polls were announced on Saturday, discussions in the BJP were not about whether they would win in the two states — but the extent of the victory and how they could better their performance of 2014. The Congress, meanwhile, spent the past four months - knowing fully well that elections were about to

happen this year - in the state. It is struggling paralysed. It dealt with a national crisis of leadership when Rahul Gandhi resigned as president, with an alternative in Sonia Gandhi being found only last month. Factionalism in poll-bound states persisted, with the sharpest being in Haryana. A compromise formula was only found two weeks ago on the issue of leadership

in Maharashtra. The party has not been able to identify issues — or target the BJP on the ground on its sources of vulnerability like the economy. And its social coalitions in both states is weak. The two stories of the two parties shows Indian democratic competition is becoming increasingly one-sided.

Why Modi has invested in US

Despite United States President Donald Trump's quirks and differences, ties are robust



After the showmanship of Trump, in pursuit of his Indo-Houston, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump returned to the more nuanced world of diplomacy. At their press conference on Tuesday, there was continued bonhomie but also hints of traditional bilateral concerns. Ending the most substantial concern, avoiding a guerrilla trade war, remained elusive though India and the United States appear to be on track to resolving the remaining half-dozen tariff and market access. Mr

Trump, in pursuit of his Nobel Peace Prize, continues to offer to mediate on Kashmir. However, the US president is now careful to indicate New Delhi has veto power over any conversation on Kashmir. His evasiveness on Pakistan's support for terrorism is a reminder the US president stills sees utility in Pakistan. Nonetheless, the degree of US' diplomatic support to India in the battle over Article 370, the blacklisting of Masood Azhar, and the convergence evident in

concepts like the Indo-Pacific are signs the bilateral relationship is robust. Mr Trump has many idiosyncrasies. Navigating them while maintaining the larger relationship has been a challenge for Mr Modi and other world leaders. Most of the remaining sources of bilateral friction, whether motorcycles or Iran, originate with the president and his quirky world view. Mr Modi's investment in the Trump relationship signals his recognition that the US is overwhelmingly India's primary international

partner. It is India's main source of foreign capital, technology and investments. It remains the favoured destination of Indian students and immigrants. The US provides much of the cutting-edge technology for India's defence forces. It is the primary external partner on intelligence and counterterrorism assistance. Washington has also been prepared to

throw its diplomatic weight behind India, even where China and Pakistan are involved. India's new cluster of global friends, whether Japan, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, are all US treaty allies. A new twist has been the rise of the US as a source of oil and gas. What matters less than actual shipments of hydrocarbons is that America's shale story has suppressed energy prices

to India's advantage. This is a metaphor for what a closer relationship with the US provides India: the best possible geopolitical anchor in a time of remarkable international instability. Mr Modi has also understood it is the best external backer for his ambitious domestic agenda, ranging from the economy to technology. The US is the indispensable partner for the rise of India.



ED books Sharad Pawar, nephew Ajit in Rs 25,000 crore money laundering case

It may be recalled that on August 22, IANS was the first and only news media to report that Sharad Pawar could face charges in the MSCB imbroglio which exploded after the Bombay High Court judgement last month.



(News Agencies) Triggering a political earthquake ahead of the October 21 Assembly elections in Maharashtra, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a money laundering case against Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar, his nephew Ajit Pawar, and several other politicians and officials in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam worth around Rs 25,000 crore, officials said here on Tuesday.

Pawars and others in the matter, setting the politicians scurrying.

Following the EOW's FIR in late August, the ED filed its case on Tuesday.

Mumbai-based activist Surinder M. Arora had approached the Bombay HC, demanding an investigation into the MSCB scam.

Earlier this month, Ajit Pawar and others had moved the Supreme Court to quash the proceedings in the matter, but Justices Arun Mishra and M.R. Shah had declined the plea and instead asked the Mumbai Police to conduct a free and fair probe.

The ED said there were several irregularities in loans provided to the cooperative sugar factories (CSFs) by the MSCB officials who were allegedly

connected to the owners of the factories.

The loans were sanctioned to the factories despite weak financials, negative net worth, collaterals not taken in many cases and additional facilities extended without any justification.

This and other factors resulted in many of the cooperative sugar factories falling sick while many were sold at lower than the reserve price for the benefit of the buyers who were personally or politically connected with the MSCB directors whose consent was not taken before the sales.

Besides, the ED said many transactions involved forged sales documents and many sales were effected without inviting tenders, thus flouting rules of

the NABARD, RBI and SARFAESI.

"There was huge misappropriation of funds on the part of committee members, directors and loan committee members of MSCB, acting in connivance to siphon off the money and causing huge losses to the bank," said the ED.

Setting the ball rolling last month, a division bench of Bombay HC comprising Justices S.C. Dharmadhikari and S.K. Shinde had ruled that there was prima facie credible evidence and directed the EOW to initiate proceedings invoking the relevant provisions of the law.

The Pawars and other prominent politicians, named in a public interest litigation filed by Arora, were accused of causing

losses worth around Rs 25,000 crore to the MSCB between 2007 and 2011. Earlier, a quasi-judicial probe panel under the Maharashtra Cooperative Societies Act had blamed Pawars and the others accused in the matter.

The National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) had also inspected and audited the MSCB, revealing flouting of various banking and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rules while distributing loans to sugar factories and spinning mills, and the subsequent defaults on repayments and recoveries of the dues.

Despite the probe reports and complaints lodged by Arora, no action or FIR was filed in the matter after which he filed a PIL in the high court in 2015.

'Thinking of giving up my smartphone': Supreme Court judge on need for social media guidelines



(News Agencies) The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed serious concerns about the drawbacks of technological advances saying 'it's dangerous the way technology is developing.' The court also sought a status report from the government on the framing of guidelines for social media.

The top court was hearing pleas seeking transfer of cases related to linking of social media accounts with Aadhaar pending in different high courts to the Supreme Court.

"As one goes deeper and deeper you realise it's dangerous the way technology is developing... I was thinking of giving up my smart phone and going back to basic phone," Justice Deepak, Gupta, whom

heads the bench, said Elaborating on the easy accessibility of potentially dangerous goods online, the judge said he was helped by someone to access the dark web and realized how harmful it could be. "I have started digging deeper after the matter came before me. I realized one can purchase AK-47 within half an hour."

To buttress his point for the urgent need for guidelines to regulate social media, the court said: "There will be some cases where security of the country or incitement to violence is concerned. We need to have guidelines... My privacy is also important and has to be maintained. All these issues have to be taken into consideration."

The top court was hearing pleas seeking transfer of cases related to linking of social media accounts with Aadhaar pending in different high courts to the Supreme Court.

The top court said that while framing the guidelines balance has to be maintained between privacy of individuals, sovereignty of the State and also the reputation of individuals. "The government policy must look into all these aspects while framing regulations".

Expressing concern over the harm fake news can cause, the Supreme Court

said that the originator of such news must be traced. "If there is technology to encrypt then there should be technology to decrypt."

On August 20, the apex court had sought response from the Centre, Google, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and others on Facebook Inc's plea seeking transfer of cases related to linking of social media

accounts with Aadhaar, pending in different high courts to the apex court.

Facebook Inc has contended that whether service providers can be asked to share data with probe agencies to help them in criminal investigation needs to be decided by the apex court as it will have a global effect. The social media giant had argued that

different High Courts have taken contrary views and for the sake of uniformity it would be better, if the cases are heard at the Supreme Court. Facebook Inc had contended that there are four petitions including -- two in Madras High Court, one in Bombay and one in Madhya Pradesh High Courts -- and they contained almost similar prayers.

A master in surveillance, Rajeev Kumar can't be tracked down easily, say Kolkata cops

Over the years, former Kolkata top cop Rajeev Kumar, who has always maintained a very low profile and avoided the media, gained the confidence of the Left and Trinamool Congress governments solely because of his high success rate in tracking down terrorists and mafia bosses.

(News Agencies) For the first time in its history, Kolkata is watching a team of detectives visiting hotels, resorts and government offices to track down Rajeev Kumar, a former commissioner of the city police. As the unique manhunt entered its twelfth day on Tuesday, some officers whom 53-year-old Rajeev Kumar led till a few months ago said the job would be near impossible for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Kumar, the officers said, is a master in electronic surveillance who

transformed the methods of crime detection of the Kolkata Police that he headed till the last Lok Sabha polls. The computer engineer from IIT-Roorkee later took charge of the criminal investigation department (CID) of the West Bengal police.

The 1989-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer procured surveillance drones, security cameras, tracking devices and an array of electronic gadgets for his force and organised training sessions.

Over the years, Kumar, who

has always maintained a very low profile and avoided the media, gained the confidence of the Left and Trinamool Congress governments solely because of his high success rate in tracking down terrorists and mafia bosses. The top officer is wanted for questioning in the CBI's Saradha and Rose Valley chit fund investigations. The Calcutta High Court on September 13 vacated its interim order granting Kumar protection from arrest.



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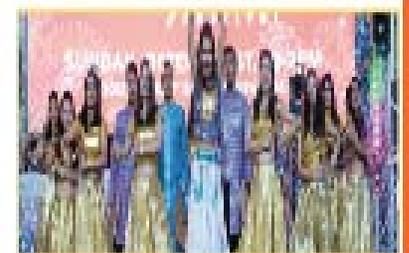
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Soon, Army may open parts of Siachen glacier to civilians



(News Agencies) The Indian Army is examining a proposal to allow civilians to visit the world's highest battlefield, the Siachen glacier, to gain first-hand experience of the tough conditions in which soldiers operate, two senior army officers said on Tuesday.

Mooted by army chief, General Bipin Rawat, the proposal to give civilians access to the glacier is at an initial stage but is being considered seriously, one of the officers cited

above said on condition of anonymity.

Siachen is strategically important because so long as it is in India's control, the Pakistani army can't link up with the Chinese and pose a threat to Ladakh. It acts as a wedge between the Shaksgam Valley under Chinese control and Baltistan, which is occupied by Pakistan.

"We are examining how the proposal can be implemented, the logistics involved and areas

that can be opened to the public. We are looking at the possibility of allowing people to visit the Siachen base camp and some nearby posts," said the second officer, asking not to be named. Since 2007, the army has been conducting a civilian trek to the Siachen glacier every year.

India, which spends Rs 5 to Rs 7 crore daily on guarding the glacier, has deployed around 3,000 soldiers at Siachen, where temperatures can

Mooted by army chief, General Bipin Rawat, the proposal to give civilians access to the glacier is at an initial stage but is being considered seriously, one of the officers cited above said on condition of anonymity.

drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius. More than 1,000 soldiers have died guarding the area since the army took control of the inhospitable glacier in April 1984, almost twice the number of lives lost in the Kargil war. While about 220 men have been killed in firing from the Pakistani side, the other casualties have been caused by extreme weather and treacherous terrain.

Guns have been silent on the glacier since the November 2003 ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

Experts welcomed the move to give civilians access to the glacier, stressing that it will give them a better understanding of India's national security challenges.

"It will be a capability

demonstration for the people of the country. They will appreciate how our brave troops are trained to fight in any kind of terrain and also the challenges they encounter daily," said former Northern Army commander, Lieutenant General BS Jaswal (retd).

Soldiers have to trek for almost 28 days, covering a stretch of 128km to reach some of the farthest pickets on the glacier, one of the most desolate places on the planet.

Former army vice chief, Lieutenant General AS Lamba (retd), said the move will allow people to comprehend the complexities of guarding the country's farthest frontiers at any cost. "It will also create a new sense of integration of these remote

areas to the rest of the country," Lamba added.

The Indian Army launched Operation Meghdoot in April 1984 to secure the glacier after the Pakistan army occupied the heights at Siachen, a 76km river of slow moving ice. Almost 80% posts on the glacier are located above 16,000 feet, with Bana towering above the rest at 21,753 feet.

Islamabad has made repeated demands for demilitarising the glacier, invoking long-term peace but India has taken a cautious approach on the sensitive issue. Several rounds of talks between India and Pakistan on demilitarising the glacier — a contentious issue in bilateral ties — have failed, with Islamabad refusing to authenticate troop positions on the ground.

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Snake-bites kill more people than cyclones in Odisha, experts tell you why



Odisha government statistics between 2016 and 2019 show that of the total 6,228 deaths that took place due to various calamities, snakebite deaths alone accounted for 2,217 lives surpassing casualties due to cyclones, floods, lightning, fire accidents and boat tragedies.

people may have died of snake-bite, there was no incentive to take the bodies to government hospitals for post-mortem. The compensation is now an incentive to take the victims to hospitals and so that could be one reason of the spike," Prabhat Mohapatra, joint relief commissioner in the office of special relief commissioner said.

Another reason is the inability of the victims to comprehend that they were bitten by poisonous snakes like kraits, Russel's Vipers and cobras, the three most common varieties of poisonous snakes found in Odisha. Herpetologist Sushil Dutta said some snakes don't cause much pain while biting a human and by the time the victim realises he or she has been bitten, the toxin spreads through the body impairing the functioning of major organs. "Many of the poisonous snakes

are nocturnal and so most of the deaths occur at night when the victims are either sleeping or can't see what bit him/her," said Dutta.

The third reason is the delay in taking the victims to a hospital for treatment and lack of venom in rural community health centres.

Medicine specialist Dr Lambodar Panda says response time plays a great factor in the cure of snakebite victims. "Even the largest venom dose of any snake can be neutralised by anti-venom but the golden hour must be kept in mind. In many rural areas, the families of the victims waste a lot of time in taking them to sorcerers before shifting to hospitals for treatment," he said, terming delay in taking the patient to the hospital as a reason for high deaths.

According to government protocol, antivenin should be avail-

able in the primary health centres, the first rung of the three-tier healthcare system. But, hundreds of PHCs don't have antivenin, government officials admit. In some PHCs where venom is available, the protocol requires that a MBBS doctor should administer the injection. In absence of them, the victims are referred to district hospitals leading to time loss to control spread of the venom, a government official said.

Experts also said that habitat loss due to rapid urbanization is pushing snakes to homes of people, increasing their conflict with humans. Dutta said with rapid urbanisation happening, most snakes are losing their habitations and are now seen living close to human habitations. In India, every year, 2.8 million people are bitten by snakes, resulting in 46,900 deaths.

(News Agencies) The death of six people, including an Anganwadi worker and her 8-year-old son in Kandhamal district, in the last 24 hours due to snake-bites has brought to the fore that deaths due to snake-bites have been rising in Odisha. In fact, more people die in this venomous attack by reptiles in the coastal state than by natural disasters.

Experts attribute it to better reporting for getting compensation.

Odisha government statistics between 2016 and 2019 show that of the total 6,228 deaths that took place due to various calami-

ties, snakebite deaths alone accounted for 2,217 lives surpassing casualties due to cyclones, floods, lightning, fire accidents and boat tragedies. In the financial year 2019-20, so far 325 people have died of snakebites.

Experts say there are primarily four reasons for the large number of snake bite cases.

Odisha government officials familiar with the development said, before 2015, when Odisha declared snakebite deaths to be state-specific disasters with a provision of compensation of Rs 4 lakh for the next of the kin, there were little records of snakebite deaths. "Though before 2015,

Punjab Police find half-burnt drone which smuggled weapons from Pakistan

Punjab Police said that four members of the terror group Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) who were arrested on Sunday, disclosed during interrogation that they had burnt the drone which failed to fly back to Pakistan after dropping weapons near a border village in Tarn Taran.

(News Agencies) Two days after busting a Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) terror module, Punjab police on Tuesday said it has recovered a half-burnt drone that was used for smuggling weapons from Pakistan.

A police official privy to the development said the drone had failed to fly back to Pakistan after dropping arms in Indian territory near the Pakistan border.

HT reported on Monday that security agencies have warned the Centre that terrorists may use small drones to

ferry small arms and ammunition across the heavily guarded border to be used by ultras already in Kashmir valley.

On Sunday, police arrested Balwant Singh, Akashdeep Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Balbir Singh of the KZF from Chola Sahib village in Tarn Taran and seized five AK-47 rifles, along with 16 magazines and 472 rounds of ammunition, four Chinese made pistols along with eight magazines and 72 rounds of ammunition, nine hand grenades, five satellite phones along with ancillary equipment, two mobile

phones, two wireless sets and Rs 10 lakh in fake currency from them.

"During interrogation, the accused disclosed that they burnt the drone which failed to fly back to Pakistan after dropping weapons near a border village in Tarn Taran. We immediately dispatched our team and the half-burnt drone was recovered from an abandoned field in Chabhal town," a senior police official involved in the investigation said.

The drone has been sent to a forensic lab to ascertain how unmanned aerial vehicles are being used to smuggle drugs and weapons despite a radar system at the border, he said. Experts say a drone can carry two AK-47 rifles.

"The accused received arms and ammunition near Rajoke village, which is stone's throw from the border fence, between August 23 and September 12," said an official of the counter intelligence wing of Punjab Police which



busted the module.

Punjab's director general of police (DGP) Dinkar Gupta, who was in Amritsar on Tuesday to attend a function, told reporters that the probe is in a preliminary stage. "The accused are being interrogated to ascertain where the arms and ammunition were to be used. We are collecting evidences," he said.

Reports of drones dropping weapons into the Indian territory and returning undetected to Pakistan have already set the alarm bells ringing for the Border Security Force (BSF) and national security agencies.

Punjab chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh has already urged the Union government to

direct Indian Air Force (IAF) and BSF to launch measures to check any further threat from drones to Punjab.

Police chief Gupta said the module was backed by Pakistan-based chief of KZF Ranjeet Singh, alias Neeta, and his Germany-based associate Gurmeet Singh, alias Bagga, alias Doctor, who had reorganised the terror group to revive terrorism in Punjab. Another official said that 20-year-old Akashdeep was in contact with KZF chief Neeta through social media apps. He used to send locations to Neeta for receiving contrabands. "Neeta was also smuggling fake Indian currency through drones. According to our investigation, Neeta was also in contact with Gurmeet," he said.





How dare he? Trump slammed for trolling Thunberg

- ☛ **Thunberg took a jab at Trump by changing her Twitter bio to reflect the words he used in his tweet to mock her**
- ☛ **The trolling of the teen activist—who suffers from Asperger's syndrome—racked up more than 16,000 responses in three hours, many of them attacking the US president**

(News Agencies) New York: US President Donald Trump stirred up fresh outrage on social media on Monday with a tweet mocking an impassioned speech made by 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg at the UN climate summit in New York.

Her voice shaking with emotion in an address that was the defining moment of the summit, Thunberg accused world leaders of betraying her generation by failing to act on rising emissions,

repeating the words "how dare you" four times.

"You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words, and yet I'm one of the lucky ones," she said. "People are suffering. People are dying."

"She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!" climate sceptic Trump tweeted a few hours later, alongside a clip of the speech. The

trolling of the teen activist—who suffers from Asperger's syndrome, a mild form of autism—racked up more than 16,000 responses in three hours, many of them attacking the US president.

"Donald Trump picking on an innocent young girl is absolutely disgusting!" wrote one user.

Thunberg and Trump were briefly in the same small room as they arrived for the summit, with video showing the teen glowering at him as he passed by with his entourage.

Later, Thunberg appeared to

take a jab at Trump by changing her Twitter bio to reflect the language the US president used in his tweet to mock her address at the UN.

Before world leaders made their promises at the UN on Monday to do more to prevent a warming world from reaching even more dangerous levels, Thunberg gave a speech in which she scolded the leaders. "This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here," she said. "I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you have come to us young

people for hope... We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and yet all you can talk about is money. You are failing us."

Later, she and 15 other youth activists filed a formal complaint with an arm of the UN that protects children, saying that governments' lack of action on warming is violating their basic rights.

Thunberg has become the global face of a youth movement against climate inaction that mobilized millions in a worldwide strike on Friday.

President Donald Trump faces impeachment probe over call to Ukraine leader

Pelosi for months has resisted calls to be impeachment proceedings, but a stream of Democrats over the past two days have shifted from urging caution on impeachment to backing action after revelations that Trump pushed Ukraine's government to investigate Joe Biden.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi launched a formal impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump on Tuesday, acquiescing to mounting pressure from fellow Democrats and plunging a deeply divided nation into an election year clash between Congress and the commander in chief.

The probe centers on whether Trump abused his presidential powers and sought help from a

foreign government for his reelection. Pelosi said such actions would mark a "betrayal of his oath of office" and declared: "No one is above the law."

Pelosi's brief statement capped a frenetic stretch on Capitol Hill, as details of a classified whistleblower complaint about Trump burst into the open and momentum shifted swiftly toward an impeachment probe. The

charge was led by several moderate Democratic lawmakers from political swing districts, many of them with national security backgrounds and serving in Congress for the first time.

After more than two and one-half years of sharp Democratic criticism of Trump, the formal impeachment quest sets up the party's most urgent and consequential confrontation with a



president who thrives on combat — and injects deep uncertainty in the 2020 White House race. Trump has all but dared Democrats to take this step, confident that the specter of impeachment led by the opposition party would bolster his political support

Trump, who was meeting with world leaders at the United Nations, previewed his defense in an all-caps tweet: "PRESIDENTIAL HARRASSMENT!"

Pelosi had barely finished speaking as he began a mini-blizzard of tweets assailing her announcement.

At issue are Trump's actions with Ukraine. In a summer phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, he is said to have asked for help investigating Democrat Joe Biden and his son Hunter. In the days before the call, Trump ordered advisers to freeze \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine — prompting speculation that he was holding out the money as leverage for information on the Bidens. Trump has denied that charge, but acknowledged he blocked the funds.

Ahead of Pelosi's announcement, Trump authorized the release of a transcript of his call with Ukraine's president, predicting it would show no evidence of wrongdoing. The transcript is to be made public on Wednesday.

"You will see it was a very friendly and totally appropriate call," Trump said.

Australia's Gladys Liu scandal shows how the Chinese Communist Party is weaponizing race

(News Agencies) A minor political scandal in Australia has shone a bright light on the threat the Chinese Communist Party and its chauvinistic attitude to race poses to Chinese-heritage politicians in democracies across the world.

In May 2019, Gladys Liu from the Victorian seat of Chisholm became the first female Chinese-Australian elected to sit in the Australian Lower House of Parliament. That was a significant milestone and not before time given there are approximately 1.2 million citizens with Chinese ancestry in a nation of 25 million. What was then a celebration of progress with respect to ethnic diversity amongst the ranks of politicians has descended into controversy.

Over the past month, it was revealed that Liu was previously associated with Australia-based organizations with alleged ties to the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party. Known as an effective fundraiser for her Liberal Party, there are also questions about the links of those donors to Beijing, which Liu allegedly tapped for money. Liu has strenuously denied any association with the Chinese government, saying she would always put "Australia's interests first," and said she would audit local organizations which had listed her as a member without her permission.

Australia is at the forefront of calling out and passing legislation against covert influence and foreign interference activities by Chinese operatives. The United

Front, which is supported by considerable resources and a vast bureaucratic operation, was called one of his "magical weapons" by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September 2014. One of the objectives is to co-opt ethnic Chinese individuals and organizations in foreign countries or else silence dissent.

Unlike the former Labor Senator Sam Dastyari who was forced to resign in December 2017, there is no evidence Liu has opposed government policy nor colluded with foreign entities against Australian authorities in return for financial largesse from donors allegedly linked to the United Front. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has strongly backed Liu and indicated there were no adverse findings against

her made public by Australian intelligence agencies.

Regardless of how this plays out for Liu, the deeply uncomfortable issue for pluralistic democratic societies of the link between race and allegiance has been pulled into the spotlight.

Are Australian citizens of Chinese origin less supportive of Australian interests and values? Will this question be asked of large ethnic Chinese diasporas in countries such as the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and New Zealand? One should expect that an increasing number of ethnic Chinese citizens will seek to win office in their respective countries. Might the controversy surrounding Liu dissuade them from doing so -- to our collectively detriment -- and how to ensure that does not occur?

Meghan Markle conjures memories of Princess Diana as she wears a headscarf in public for the first time on visit to Cape Town mosque



(News Agencies) The Duchess of Sussex today donned a headscarf following in the footsteps of Princess Diana as she joined her husband at South Africa's first and oldest mosque. To mark Heritage Day, a public holiday in South Africa when the nation celebrates its culture, diversity and traditions, Meghan and Harry paid a visit to the historic Auwal Mosque in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town.

Meghan, 38, changed out of her casual clothes and wore a floor-length ol-

ive dress with a scarf to cover her head, even helping a woman with her veil when she stepped inside the mosque. Diana wore a veil during a visit to the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore on a royal tour of Pakistan in 1991. During their visit, which aimed to promote dialogue between faiths, the royal couple met with Christian priests and Rabbis together with Christian, Jewish and Muslim youth leaders. Harry told one

18, an Anglican who attends a Jewish school, said: 'Harry said he often woke up and felt it's hard to get out of bed because of all the issues.' Earlier in the day Harry and Meghan joined in a 'bonding' ceremony on a beach outside the city with a group of surfers who use their sport to help children beat mental health issues. The couple, who left Archie with his nanny back at their base, later had afternoon tea at the home of a Cape Town family, where Meghan spoke about motherhood and how the 'transition was smooth' as Archie was such an 'easy baby'.

Libo Metel, 11, hugged both Meghan and Harry when they stopped to talk to crowds waiting for them in the historic Bo Kaap neighbourhood. She said of her meeting with Meghan: 'I gave her a flower, a yellow rose and she said 'can I get a hug?' 'You're the sweetest

person in the world and I'm like 'what the heck?!' and then I gave her a hug and then the prince asked me 'did you give her a hug?' and he gave me a hug too.'

Asked who had the best hug, Libo replied: 'The queen! Meghan. I felt the love and the care.' I felt very special. It was just awesome. Everybody has had a good time seeing them.'

Libo was with a group called Brave, which provides rehabilitation through yoga and meditation to people with limited mobility due to physical trauma or injury. Volunteers from the Bo Kaap organisation handed the royal visitors packages of handmade soaps and bracelets to take with them and explained their work to yoga-fan Meghan.

Volunteer Indrani McMillan said: 'They looked so happy, they looked so taken with the vibe. It's so amazing, they really know



how to stir up a party effect.' Women do not have to cover their heads in all mosques, but it is usually considered a sign of respect. Many Islamic places of worship provide headscarves for non-believers to wear when they visit. This morning the couple had heaped praised skills as they labelled one another 'the best mum' and 'the best dad'. Earlier in the day they had visited Monwabisi Beach on the outskirts of Cape Town, to learn about the work of Waves For Change, which helps vulnerable children

from township and challenging communities through the power of surfing. They also heard about the Lunchbox Fund, one of four charities to benefit from public donations made following the birth of their son Archie, who has joined his parents in South Africa for his first official royal tour. The Duchess hugged and joked with youngsters before the couple were asked to declare their personal strengths during a 'power hand' bonding exercise - but Harry cheekily ducked the task and invited his wife to share instead.

Boris Johnson indicates he may renew attempt to suspend parliament

(News Agencies) Boris Johnson has repeated his condemnation of a landmark ruling by Britain's highest court that his suspension of parliament was unlawful, saying he "profoundly" disagreed with the decision and indicating he could take the same action again.

Speaking alongside Donald Trump at the UN general assembly in New York as they went into a meeting together, Johnson said: "As I said earlier on, let's be absolutely clear that we respect the judiciary in our country and we respect the court. I disagree profoundly with what they had to say."

Johnson rejected the idea that he could resign over the defeat, and was backed up by Trump. Asked if he might step down, Trump said: "I'll tell you, I know him well, he's not going anywhere." Johnson added: "No, no, no." Trump went on to say the reporter concerned had asked "a very nasty question".

Speaking earlier in the day, before a breakfast speech to US businesspeople and investors, Johnson declined to spell out what he might do after the supreme court

found that the five-week prorogation was "void and of no effect". But he insisted there was still a need for a new legislative programme preceded by a Queen's speech - indicating there could be scope for a renewed attempt to send home MPs who are returning to Westminster after the ruling.

He also took a notably combative tone, saying those who led the legal challenge to the suspension wanted to "frustrate Brexit" - a view which appeared to run contrary to the prime minister's repeated insistence that the suspension had nothing to do with Brexit. He said: "It is perfectly usual to have a Queen's speech. That is what we want to do, but more importantly let's be in no doubt there are a lot of people who want to frustrate Brexit. There are a lot of people who want to stop this country coming out of the EU." A Downing Street source said Johnson had no intention of resigning in the wake of the judgment. However, he will fly home from the UN general assembly early after a conference call with cabinet ministers due at 6.30pm BST. The PM had been due to leave

New York on Wednesday morning, meaning he would be travelling when parliament returned. However, he will now leave directly after his speech to the main general assembly hall on Tuesday evening. As well as Trump, Johnson was due to meet a series of leaders including Ireland's Leo Varadkar and Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani.

Speaking to business leaders at the new Hudson Yards development in New York, Johnson broke off from his pre-trailed speech about investing in post-Brexit Britain to reiterate his words about the judgment, saying it would be "remiss and wrong" not to address it. "I have the highest respect, of course, for the judiciary and the independence of our courts," he told the audience. "But I must say I strongly disagree with the judgment, and we in the UK will not be deterred from getting on and delivering on the will of the people to come out of the EU on 31 October, because that is what we were mandated to do." There was a major policy agenda planned, he said. "And to do that we will need a Queen's speech to decide how we are going to do that.

Walrus sinks Russian Navy boat in the Arctic Ocean

(News Agencies) London & Moscow A walrus attacked and sunk a Russian Navy landing boat in the Arctic Ocean last week, with no one hurt in the incident.

According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, the female animal was protecting its calves when it targeted the craft carrying researchers to the shore of Cape Geller in the Arctic.

Those on board were members of a joint expedition by the Northern Fleet -- Russia's naval fleet in the Arctic -- and the Russian Geographical Society (RGO).

he ministry said: "Serious troubles were avoided thanks to the clear and well-coordinated actions of the Northern Fleet servicemen, who were able to take the boat away from the animals

without harming them." The RGO explained in a statement that the boat had "sunk" but confirmed that everyone had reached shore safely.

The organization added: "Recently, we wrote about the risks that accompany expedition members. Wild animals, storms, low temperatures.

"The incident is another confirmation that no one is expecting humans in the Arctic."

The joint mission is working around the Franz Josef Land archipelago to investigate the flora and fauna of the region, as well as making glaciological observations. It is also mapping historical expeditions such as those of Austro-Hungarian military officer Julius von Payer in 1874, and American explorer Walter Wellman in 1898.

Trump's road from wishing for impeachment to dreading it

For President Donald Trump, impeachment once seemed like a vacation compared to the never-ending, leak-filled Mueller investigation.

The president for months genuinely believed he'd gain politically from an impeachment inquiry because he thought Democrats were out to get him on any issue they could, and such an inquiry would make that clear, according to two former senior administration officials.

Privately, he talked to aides about the way Democrats even picked up seats in the 1998 midterms as President Bill Clinton faced impeachment hearings. Trump also latched onto the fact that removing a president required the approval of two-thirds of the Senate — so he felt assured that as long as he maintained the support of Senate Republicans, he would be fine.

The president's optimistic, even nonchalant attitude melted away this week in a series of sudden developments as he crisscrossed meetings at the United Nations in New York. Trump and a coterie of aides were stunned by a swift progression of events that upended their longtime thinking about how an impeachment scenario would proceed. By the time they returned to the White House Thursday, they had tested and retested strategies on the fly as they began to recognize the perilous road ahead that would likely look far different from anything this president or any of his predecessors faced.

"It should never be allowed, what's happened to this president," Trump told reporters upon stepping off Air Force One.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's rapid move toward impeachment, after months of stalling, reflected her recognition of a new political reality: The contents of Trump's call with the Ukrainian president, in which he used his sacred perch in the White House to ask a foreign leader to investigate a political rival, could push Trump into feisty and perilous territory — testing public opinion and congressional patience in a drama-filled election season. The swiftness of Pelosi's action caught the White House by surprise. White House aides and allies do not expect the president to calm down anytime soon. Many worry impeach-

ment proceedings will sour the president's mood and his ability to focus on legislation, any other substantive policy matters or even key elements of the 2020 campaign, much the way Mueller dominated his attention. Interviews with more than a dozen White House aides, former administration officials, Republican operatives and close Trump allies showed little consensus on either the best course of action ahead or the consequences for Trump and his presidency.

The White House and Trumpworld are expected to test countless new strategies in the weeks and months ahead, just as they did in recent days.

The White House attempted to first bat down the controversy by stonewalling Congress on getting the whistleblower complaint. Then the administration veered toward transparency by releasing a summary memo of the call between Trump and the Ukrainian leader, and then the whistleblower complaint. Republican talking points tried to cast the rough call transcript as a vindication for the president, a "muddy" document as one former senior White House official put it.

Still, the president believed his sudden embrace of transparency would exonerate him, even if he and two Cabinet members worried about the precedent of releasing notes of calls with foreign leaders.

But by Thursday, the administration and allies moved into a new phase of attempting to discredit the whistleblower, whose complaint kicked off the events that brought Trump to this point. Republicans, privately and vaguely, tried to cast the whistleblower as a partisan figure without offering any evidence, while Trump reportedly referred to the whistleblower as a spy.

But some former aides also say Trump himself has made things much worse for himself with his changing story, a reflection of the president's long-held approach to decision-making. "You get one version of the story, and then you go, 'Oh okay.' But then you go, 'Oh wait, there's another version. We forgot to tell you these 10 other things,'" said one of the former senior White House officials. On calls with foreign leaders, the president "has a comfort level where he says

whatever is on his mind."

After days of differing messages offered between his U.N. meetings, the president spent part of Thursday taking Twitter jabs at both the whistleblower and Democrats. "Liddle' Adam Schiff, who has worked unsuccessfully for 3 years to hurt the Republican Party and President, has just said that the Whistleblower, even though he or she only had secondhand information, 'is credible.' How can that be with zero info and a known bias. Democrat Scam!" Trump tweeted Thursday afternoon, shortly after he arrived back at the White House.

Campaign aides and advisers maintain the impeachment inquiry only helps motivate Trump's extremely loyal base as well as his fundraising. The campaign and Republican National Committee raised an estimated \$8 million this week from a dinner and breakfast in New York, which featured the president as a special guest. Pelosi sacrificed Biden's presidential campaign to get Trump, and now Elizabeth Warren is going to be the nominee, which I think every Trump person with a brain would prefer," said a person close to the campaign.

Republicans and White House advisers' greatest comfort now comes from the wonky mechanics of impeachment, which will give the Senate the final say about the fate of Trump's presidency. Few think Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell will allow the Senate proceedings to drag on. Republicans' confidence in Trump's ability to survive this scandal appears to largely rest with McConnell and his grip on his caucus, not necessarily with the White House. A White House official claimed there "is a very positive mood" in the building. "Everybody's just absolutely thrilled."

The White House press secretary and communications director, Stephanie Grisham, said the president and his aides' view of impeachment has not changed in the last week. "Nothing has changed. The president did nothing wrong," Grisham said.

"What these guys are do-

ing — Democrats — are doing to this country is a disgrace and it shouldn't be allowed," Trump told reporters Thursday afternoon. "There should be a way of stopping it — maybe legally, through the courts. But they're going to tie up our country. We can't talk about gun regulation. We can't talk about anything because, frankly, they're so tied up. They're so screwed up, nothing gets done — except for when I do it."

Public opinion has rapidly shifted over the week, with the number of Americans who support impeachment on the rise.

Strategizing about the best way to handle the impeachment proceedings and the White House's release of information happened on Monday night, when the Trump family gathered for dinner at Trump Tower.

Then as soon as White House aides returned to Washington on Thursday afternoon, the West Wing impeachment planning kicked off in earnest.

Acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney hopes to set up a war room, comprised of political, press and communications aides to help with the administration's fight. The administration intends to model it after the Clinton White House's impeachment strategy, which relied on both separate administration staffers and outside surrogates for the political battles.

Grisham said the White House does not need to make any new hires to deal with the impeachment inquiry. Already, the White House counsel's office is accustomed to the siege of investigations and Democratic oversight, so the top attorney, Pat Cipollone, and his team are more prepared than the rest of the White House staff, according to two former administration officials and one close White House adviser. The administration will need to set itself up for a potentially long battle. The impeachment proceedings for President Richard Nixon stretched roughly eight months, ending with Nixon's resignation. The Clinton proceedings ran for roughly five months, with Clinton acquitted by the Senate.

Several former administration

aides and White House advisers worry the West Wing is not staffed robustly enough for this type of prolonged political fight, as filled as it is with family members, junior aides, newcomers or staffers who've stayed so long they feel exhausted.

Current and former aides also wonder if this impeachment fight will end up feeling different than the prolonged Mueller investigation. "Some of the White House scandals are awful, and you take the PR hit. Everyone knows it is just a matter of time and the news cycle changes. This is one of those instances where it is less clear," said a former senior administration official.

Trump critics say the president's habit of firing aides so habitually may hurt him as Congress looks for witnesses and the president tries to stay on message.

"The president's HR practices are going to come back to haunt him here because he is uncomfortable apparently with truth-tellers in his inner circle," said Timothy Naftali, a professor of public service at NYU and a co-author of "Impeachment: An American History."

"He is likely to not get good advice from the acolytes who are left," Naftali said. "He does not have Don McGahn anymore to tell him not to cross a trip cord."

But Trump allies and current and former aides argue the White House has been anticipating the moment of Trump's impeachment since he first took office.

"It's like crack cocaine to the Democrats. They can't not take the hit," said Michael Caputo, a former Trump 2016 campaign official. "If the Republicans aren't ready for impeachment after having two and a half years to prepare, then we shouldn't be in politics," adding that he believed the White House was "completely prepared" and the Senate, "bulletproof."

"This isn't a strategy to survive. It's a strategy to thrive through this. It's a strategy to leverage the Democrats' obsession with impeachment to defeat them at the polls in November 2020," Caputo added. "The White House's strategy should be predicated on public opinion that's trending in their favor on impeachment."

How Trump's Biden mania led him to the brink of impeachment



The cascade of tweets began at 4:56 a.m. on May 1, starting with the president's criticism of the nation's largest firefighters union's endorsement of Joe Biden. Over the next two hours, more than 60 retweets bashing Biden and the firefighters' decision would follow from Donald Trump's Twitter account.

The burst of activity came during a three-month period that reveals an extraordinary preoccupation with his potential general election rival, and provides a window into Trump's thinking in the run-up to his fateful July 25 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. At home and abroad, on Twitter, at campaign rallies, in interviews and even from the White House lawn, Trump spent an inordinate amount of time deriding Biden and insisting that the former vice president could not be ahead of him in polls — despite the fact that Biden has led the president in general election matchups in

every major poll conducted in 2019.

"I think he's got a pretty clear pattern, doesn't he? He usually only spends his capital on those that he views as a threat, or a challenge," said Harold Schaitberger, president of the International Association of Firefighters, which did not endorse a candidate for president in 2016. "I think our union coming out strongly on behalf of Joe Biden, cut him short at best ... It got under his skin."

Trump's predawn online tirade was a precursor to a period in which Biden appeared to occupy a remarkable amount of his attention. At a May 20 rally in Pennsylvania — the state where the former vice president was born — the president laced into the candidate who was then the undisputed front-runner in the Democratic field.

"Biden deserted you," he told the crowd at a campaign rally. "I guess he was born here, but he

left you, folks. He left you for another state."

A week later, Trump stunned even Republicans by taking to the world stage to back a foreign dictator's harsh assessment of Biden. "Well, Kim Jong Un made a statement that Joe Biden is a low IQ individual. He probably is, based on his record. I think I agree with him on that," Trump said at a May 27 news conference in Tokyo.

By then, news reports had surfaced about an internal, 17-state March polling project that showed the president losing to Biden in key Rust Belt states that were essential to his 2016 victory.

Trump's first reaction was to dismiss the revelations as fake news. His actions said otherwise. After Biden formally entered the race in late April, Trump moved to shore up his support in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan by paying visits to those states — all of which are home to the Rust Belt workers Biden is believed to appeal to.

Yet the bad poll numbers kept coming. A June 5 Quinnipiac poll even showed Biden beating Trump in Texas, a red state the president won by 9 points in 2016.

Trump grew defensive when pressed on those results.

"I don't believe those polls. There's no way [Biden] beats me in Texas," Trump told ABC News' George Stephanopoulos in a June 13 interview. "No, my polls show that I'm winning everywhere."

Earlier in the week, before flying to Iowa for a trip that coincided with Biden's appearance there, Trump insisted Biden was the opponent he most preferred to run against.

"I'd rather run against Biden than anybody," Trump told reporters on the White House lawn. "I think he's the weakest

mentally, and I like running against people that are weak mentally."

Not long after, his campaign fired the pollsters involved in the 17-state polling project, blaming them for leaks.

The Biden campaign concluded that, based on what it knew about the reelection campaign's well-financed, sophisticated data operation, Trump's reaction was a sign there was likely even more bad polling data about Biden's appeal that didn't get a public airing.

"They test all of these different versions, and target communities and they're getting a real clear understanding of who their voters are and what mobilizes them," Biden campaign manager Greg Schultz said. "We think Joe Biden is the only person who can break that up, with those kinds of voters, in the battleground states."

"Why are you punching someone?" Schultz said. "Because you're afraid of them."

From May to late July, Trump referred to Biden as "Sleepy Joe" at least a dozen times on Twitter alone. He also zeroed in on the size of Biden's crowds. "We have thousands of people ... look at the thousands and thousands of people we have," Trump said at his Pennsylvania rally in May. "They said [Biden] had 600 people ... I'd say 150."

The Trump campaign declined to comment for this story.

Trump's allies insist his seeming fixation on Biden is based on factors unrelated to Biden's performance in the polls. Those who know the president's quirks say he has certain issues that anger him, and one of them is that he believes his son and namesake was endlessly dragged in the media for his business dealings overseas relative to news coverage about Hunter Biden.

"He's not scared of Joe Biden, not at all," said Michael Caputo, who worked for Trump's campaign and has had political clients in Russia and Ukraine.

"Hunter Biden profited from the proximity to his father and it has to infuriate President Trump that there's no investigation, barely any media coverage," Caputo said. "He resents the double-standard and the hypocrisy of Washington DC. He wants equal treatment."

But one former aide to Trump's 2016 campaign saw a different reason.

"The one thing the president is well aware of is that in his base there are a lot of Obama voters," the aide said, alluding to what he said was the president's perception that Biden threatened his hold on those voters. "They're union members, they're rank and file. A lot of those times, if they were campaigning, Obama would send Biden out there."

In July, Biden was still very much on Trump's mind despite the president's engagement in numerous other controversies. On July 14, Trump unleashed a furor after tweets directed at "The Squad," four female minority lawmakers, whom he told over Twitter to "go back" to the "totally broken and crime infested places from which they came." The House later formally rebuked Trump for his comments.

Still, Trump found time to single out Biden for Twitter abuse at least eight times in the first two weeks of the month.

Biden disappeared from Trump's Twitter feed for a brief period in the run-up to special prosecutor Robert Mueller's July 24 testimony before Congress. The Zelensky call, in which the president asked the Ukrainian president to investigate the Ukrainian business dealings of Biden's son Hunter, took place the next morning.

As it turned out, Biden would loom over the entire day. Aside from the president's request — which would ultimately spark an impeachment inquiry — Fox News released a poll that day showing Biden with a commanding 10-point lead over Trump.

And hours after the call, Trump, his top political advisers and congressional leaders gathered in the White House for an extensive campaign briefing in which Trump adviser Bill Stepien highlighted Biden as a potentially formidable threat.

Five days later, the president gave reporters a peek into his mindset on the campaign ahead.

"I am watching," Trump said. "I think right now it will be 'Sleepy Joe.' I feel he'll limp across the line."

Imran Khan talks Kashmir with Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn

Besides the resolution passed at the conference, shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry told party members in her speech: "How can it be that we have a Commonwealth member, India, revoking 70 years of constitutional protections for the Kashmiri people?"

Thornberry has previously expressed the party's concerns over alleged violation of human rights in the state, calling upon New Delhi to allow international monitors into the region.

The spokesman's statement in New Delhi that Labour's resolution was an attempt to pander to vote-bank interests was reflected in a statement by the Labour Friends of India, a lobby group within the party, after the conference.

It said: "It is understandable that some Labour members of parliament with to make specific representations on behalf of their constituents but we do not believe

that it is the place of the British Labour party to prescribe a solution".

"We continue to believe that the future governance of Kashmir is an issue to be resolved peacefully and respectfully, recognising the sovereign rights of the states of both India and Pakistan in that process", it added.

London's longstanding official position on Jammu and Kashmir, followed by Labour and Conservative governments, is that it can neither prescribe a solution nor act as a mediator, and that it is for the governments of India and Pakistan to find a lasting resolution taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

The Conservative party's forthcoming annual conference is dominated by Brexit but Prime Minister Boris Johnson described the situation in Jammu and Kashmir as "serious" during a recent conversation with Khan.

'Our country is at stake like never before': Donald Trump tells supporters

"Because our country is at stake like never before. It's all very simple. They're trying to stop me because I'm fighting for you -- and I'll never let that happen." In subsequent tweets, Trump repeated his charges that the impeachment investigation is a "Witch Hunt," and said Democratic lawmaker Adam Schiff, who is leading the impeachment probe, had defamed and libeled him, and should resign from Congress. Congressional com-

mittees carrying out the impeachment inquiry have ordered Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to turn over Ukraine-related documents and will conduct interviews starting next week with five State Department officials. They include former ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, whom Trump reportedly forced out earlier this year for resisting his efforts to pressure Kiev to probe Biden.

The government's corporate tax move is bold. But there is a fiscal risk

It will potentially leave investors with more money, make firms competitive, and boost consumption

Private consumption, the engine of the economy that had been firing most consistently in recent years, is losing steam. Two other engines — investments and exports — seem to be slowing down again after a brief period of robust activity. The result is 5% growth.

To boost growth, the government, on Friday, decided to risk the only engine of the tax system that has performed lately — corporate tax. In 2018-19, the actual collection (provisional) of corporate tax was Rs 6.63 lakh crore, against the budgeted Rs 6.21 lakh crore. The collections under other major taxes were much lower than budgeted.

The government's finances have been under pressure. Tax collections have not grown at expected rates. To meet the fiscal deficit target, the government has pushed a lot of borrowing off-budget, making government agencies borrow more. It has also allowed the National Small Savings Fund to lend to a number of government agencies. Most of household financial savings in India now go towards financing the government and its agencies.

In this context, cutting corporate tax rate is

a very bold move. It is a fiscal risk — as the government will forego Rs 1.45 lakh crore in possible revenues — being taken to boost growth by way of increased private investment.

The new structure of corporate tax rates leaves more money for investors to save and invest in a manner of their choosing (corporate tax incidence is mainly on capital or investors); it can help Indian firms become more competitive globally (corporate tax rates were higher than most countries); and it can boost consumption by lowering prices.

The nature and scale of impact of this move will, however, depend on four factors.

First, will the decision trigger a deeper change in tax policy and administration vis-à-vis businesses? It is puzzling that corporate tax collections have been growing rapidly in a difficult economic situation. Interestingly, the corporate tax collection under dispute increased from Rs 3.07 lakh crore in 2016-17 to Rs 3.99 lakh crore in 2017-18. No other type of tax saw a comparable rise in amounts under dispute. It seems the department is collecting

more from firms than is due, even if a lot of it goes into dispute and is eventually not realised. The tax cuts must be accompanied by a rationalisation of the revenue department's approach to businesses, otherwise it could nullify some of the benefits.

Second, how will the government pay for these tax cuts? It can cut expenditure, monetise assets (land, operational infrastructure assets), privatise government firms, or increase borrowing. India has considerable capital controls, especially on debt instruments. Government borrowing in domestic markets makes private sector borrowing more expensive. This tax cut will lead to lower tax collection in the short to medium-term. If the government then borrows to bridge the gap (on-budget or off-budget), it would limit the benefits for firms. The government must try to pay for most of these tax cuts by reducing unproductive expenditure, monetising assets and privatising government firms. Third, the benefits will depend on which firms really benefit from this reform and how.

The existing incentives on corporate tax, which included incentives for accelerated depreciation, exports from special economic zones, expenditure on scientific research, investment in the power sector, were projected to be Rs 1.4 lakh crore in 2018-19. After adjusting for Minimum Alternate Tax, these were Rs 1.09 lakh crore. Firms will have to choose between availing such incentives and going for the lower tax rate. At present, on an average, the larger firms are financially more comfortable, but might benefit less. In 2017-18, the effective tax rate for firms with more than Rs 500 crore in profit was only 26.3%. So, for them, the net effect will be smaller. Smaller firms are financially more stressed at present. They will get a breather, but whether and when they will start investing is to be seen. This move will benefit existing firms that face effective tax rates higher than the now reduced rates (including the lower MAT), and all new domestic firms in manufacturing. In the



coming months, we will see firms making these choices, which will determine the overall economic impact.

Fourth, the impact will also depend on what else the government does to improve the investment climate in India, in terms of financial sector reforms, land and labour market reforms, opening access to foreign capital, solving problems of public sector banking, easing infrastructure constraints, improving contract enforcement, and so on. Evidence suggests that even firms in relatively sound financial condition are hesitating to make fresh investments. There may be a variety of reasons for this hesitation. Structural issues will continue to affect investment decisions, and even such a big tax cut is not a substitute for addressing those through reforms.

Foreign firms, which are basically defined as firms that

do not pay dividends in India, but do business here, have been excluded from this reform. If the objective is to encourage firms to invest more in India, this complete exclusion should be reconsidered. Even if the firm is foreign but is investing in India, having a lower tax rate might encourage it to invest more here, and may even lead to more taxes for the country. Being a capital-starved country, India needs to attract investment by foreign firms. It also needs technology from foreign countries. Integration with the global economy is essential for our future growth. The government should consider reforming the tax treatment of foreign firms as well.

The move to cut corporate tax rate is consistent with the Indian government's tendency to reform from crisis to crisis. Due to the context, this reform also presents a big fiscal risk. Its overall impact will depend on certain choices that the government and firms will make in the next few months.

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Israel is at an impasse after its deadlocked national elections. But the results seem to mark the ebb tide of Benjamin Netanyahu's domination of that country's politics. The incumbent Israeli prime minister called a second national election after failing to secure a ruling majority in polls held five months ago. It made no difference: the left-centre Blue and White coalition of Benny Grantz has won two more seats than Netanyahu, though still falling far short of a majority in the Knesset. But it is notable Netanyahu has now twice failed to bring on board rival rightwing parties and his hardening posture on security issues has resulted in a surge in Israeli Arab turnout. His political invincibility seems irremedi-

ably shattered. Even if Netanyahu returns to office by some fluke, it will be as a much weaker leader.

While there will be some talk of Prime Minister Narendra Modi losing an important international friend, there will be no major disruption of the India-Israel relationship. There is a robust consensus on maintaining close relations with India. It was a liberal Israeli politician, the late Shimon Peres, who elevated the relationship to where it is today. Successive Israeli governments have provided India valuable military and security assistance, irrespective of the parties in power. With the Modi government now interested in tapping Israel's world beating capacities in water technology, New Delhi's only concern will be

The churn in Israel

Netanyahu is now weak. But India-Israel ties will remain robust



stability in Tel Aviv. In any case, there is little foreign policy difference between Netanyahu and Gantz. The latter's coalition is largely built around a dislike for the prime minister than any serious policy difference.

The fading of the Netanyahu era is also a cautionary tale of the limits of nationalist politics in any multicultural polity. He carried out major market reforms in the economy but kept push-

ing the envelope on the ideological front. In his last few years, his attempts to weaken the Supreme Court to avoid corruption charges and consider taking over the Jordan River valley only

strengthened his foes. Israel's next government will inherit the most threatening external environment that it has had since the 1960s. It could probably do with a government more capable at tending the home fires.

Adityanath has wasted his astounding mandate

The government has failed in the areas of agriculture, health care, women safety, media freedom, and economy

The Yogi Adityanath-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government completes half its term this month. Whenever the BJP has been at the helm of affairs in Uttar Pradesh, governance has suffered. Despite the extremely low standards the BJP sets for itself, it is inexplicable how the present government has achieved so little, and transgressed on so much.

Across sectors, the imprints of poor governance are visible. Let us take, for example, farmers. The government started with waiving farmers' loans, and generously waived 19 paise and other similarly small amounts. At the same time, other dues to farmers kept rising. Earlier this season, the dues to sugarcane farmers rose up to Rs 10,000 crore.

Paddy and wheat farmers are beset with a crash in prices and administrative neglect. In 2018, the government procured only 7% of wheat. On 99% of the

procurement days, the market price was below the Minimum Support Price. Vegetable farmers have met with a similar fate.

The menace of stray cattle has added to the distress. Farmers have locked up cattle in schools while students are forced to stay out.

It is a serious dereliction of duty when a government is apathetic towards the well-being of children. Nearly 50% children in Uttar Pradesh are stunted while 40% are underweight. Yet, the government does not flinch when children are fed sub-standard meals. Post the 2017 Gorakhpur tragedy — in which more than 100 children lost their lives in a matter of hours — we sincerely hoped things would change for the better. But exactly a year later, children in Bahraich died due to an "unknown" fever.

Uttar Pradesh is the worst performing state in the health care index prepared by Niti Aayog.

Compared to 2015-16, it remains one of the few states to have witnessed a worsening health care situation.

The poor performance in health care is outdone by the (lack of) law and order. As many as 80 people have been killed in encounters. Even the police isn't safe. Who can forget the ghastly murder of inspector Subodh Kumar at the hands of a mob in Bulandshahr?

Crimes against women peaked soon after the BJP took over. Within a year of BJP misrule, there were rape cases being reported every three hours. Unnao and other cases proved that under the Yogi government, the accused are protecting, while the victims and their families are punished. Dalits and adivasis have been vehemently attacked, and when they seek the protection of the law, they are faced with an unjust administration. When Con-

gress general secretary, Priyanka Gandhi, sought a meeting with the families of those who had been massacred at Sonbhadra, the administration answered by arresting her instead. The state government could have focused its energies on checking atrocities against the poor, but it was concerned with tormenting those demanding justice.

This obsession with subverting truth and justice is fast becoming a norm. Journalists and anyone else reporting the truth are regularly harassed. The hounding of Pawan Jaiswal — the reporter who broke the story of namak-roti being served to children as the midday meal in a Mirzapur school — reflects the insecurities of the Yogi government. It feels like the government has come to realise its inability at governance, and, now, wants to focus full-time on containing all negative news.

This would have been



easier had the government not been so hell-bent on destruction. Demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax broke the back of UP's industries and the vast unorganised sector. The state government chose to not help businesses. Across all regions and businesses — be it the brass works of Bhadohi and Mirzapur, or the weavers of Varanasi and Mau — one witnesses gloom and doom. It is hardly a surprise that unemployment has increased five times under the Yogi government. When the BJP took over in March 2017, the unemployment rate was 2.4%.

By August 2019, this had increased to 12.3%.

Varanasi's rich cultural heritage has been laid to waste as hundreds of temples and ancient houses continue to be razed in an attempt to modernise the historic city, through the ill-conceived Kashi-Moradabad, the carpet industry of Bhadohi and

The Adityanath government has wasted its astounding mandate. It has presided over unimaginable misgovernance, brought an unprecedented dependency to the state, vehemently worked towards weakening democracy, and sought to dismantle the fabled Ganga-Jamuni tahzeeb.

Guardian's List Of Top 100 Movies Pricks Bollywood's Content-Rich Era Bubble



Bollywood has, of late, been patting itself hard for making content-rich cinema in the new millennium, thinking it has finally gotten over its hoary obsession with formula flicks and all of their familiar tropes, including song-and-dance routines. But it appears to have taken just one list of the top 100 movies of the 21st century compiled by The Guardian to prick its bubble.

A team of film critics from the venerated British daily has found only Indian movie, *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) worthy of a place on the coveted list. Anurag Kashyap's two-part gang war drama is ranked 59th

on the list. Let us not get into a debate whether this film would be a unanimous choice of the critics back home when they rack their brains to pick their all-time favourites from the largest movie industry. What matters at the moment is that altogether 41 movies on the list have been found to be inferior to GoW. That is a cause for celebration.

It, however, raises a big question on the kind of movies Bollywood has been making in the past two decades. It's a period during which it claims to have come of age in terms of the content, having experimented with all kinds of scripts, unlike the time when it de-

pendent heavily on the stars for its survival. In recent years, a number of low-budget movies starring little known actors have clicked in a big way, underlining this turnaround but the moot point is: how many of them could be considered on par with the world-class cinema? As The Guardian list indicates in no uncertain terms, Bollywood needs to do a lot more to make an impact on the global level. Let's pick a few random Bollywood films which were hailed as great works of art by the movie aficionados in this century. *Lagaan*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Monsoon Wedding* (all in 2001), *Munnabhai MBBS* (2003), *Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi* (2005), *My Brother ... Nikhil* (2005), *Khosla ka Ghosla*, *Omkara*, *Rang De Basanti* (2006), *Black Friday* (2007), *Dev D*, *3 Idiots* (2009), *Udaan* (2010), *The Lunchbox*, *Shahid* (2013), *Aligarh* (2015), *Newton* (2017), *Bhadhaai Ho* and *AndhaDhun* (2018). All these movies left an impact. I have no reasons to believe The Guardian's learned team of dispassionate critics did not watch all of them. Evidently, none of these movies could capture

their imagination when they set out to pick the top 100 from the thousands of movies made in the past 19 years across the globe.

Is The Guardian list, then, a dead giveaway to the fact that we have fewer filmmakers who can measure up to the international standards these days? Or, for that matter, was even the much-reviled 1980s was a better period than the so-called content-rich era of today in terms of quality of the films and their makers? Even though that era of dominated primarily by masala entertainers, it was the auteurs like Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihalani, Sai Paranjape, Kundan Shah, Saeed Mirza, Gautam Ghosh and many others who kept Bollywood's flag high by making classics which were far superior to what the industry has been churning out in the new millennium. Come to think of it, the parallel cinema had few takers at the box office in those days and many great films like *Sparsh* (1980), *Chakra* (1981), *Jaane Bhi Do Yaron* (1983) and *Paar* (1984) did not even have proper theatrical release across the coun-

try for want of the distributors and the exhibitors.

Nowadays, when the audiences have started accepting all kinds of good cinema, and big studios are ready to back a small movie, the filmmakers do not face such hindrances. And yet, this era has rarely produced an all-time classic. The industry needs to ponder over it. These days, most of the filmmakers, even the discerning ones, are found to be racing against the clock to complete their films and release them on their scheduled dates to make a fast buck. They often end up doing a rush job and compromising their quality, which invariably reflects in their work. One sincerely hopes that the selection of GoW among the 100 best movies of this century should inspire the millennial filmmakers to pull up their socks and make more movies that will stand the test of the time. It is indeed a travesty of the so-called content-rich era of Hindi cinema that only one film has made it to the list of the best movies of the new millennium. It can certainly do better.

"Fellas, Just Work It Out': US President Donald Trump To Imran Khan, Narendra Modi On Jammu And Kashmir

Trump's comments came a day after he held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday and two days after his meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.



US President Donald Trump has said that he offered "arbitration or mediation" on the Kashmir issue to the top leadership of India and Pakistan during separate meetings and the two nuclear-armed neighbours have to "just work it out".

Trump's comments came a day after he held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday and two days after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan met the US President on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session.

"I said, 'Fellas, work it out. Just work it out,'" Trump said in

his opening remarks at a news conference on Wednesday after attending the UNGA session.

India maintains that Kashmir is a bilateral issue with Pakistan and no third party has any role in it. Prime Minister Modi has also categorically rejected any scope for third party mediation between India and Pakistan on Kashmir.

"All the issues between India and Pakistan are of bilateral nature, and we don't want to trouble any third country. We can discuss and resolve these issues bilaterally," Modi said on the sidelines of the G-7 summit in the French city of Biarritz, ahead of

his bilateral meeting with Trump last month.

While Prime Minister Modi and Trump on Monday mainly focused on issues related to terrorism emanating from Pakistan and the Indo-US bilateral trade, Imran and Trump on Tuesday discussed the Afghan peace process and the Indo-Pak tensions over Kashmir.

On Wednesday, Trump said he held "very productive" conversations with the leaders of Pakistan and India.

"And with respect to Pakistan and India, we talked about Kashmir. And whatever help I can be, I said - I offered, whether it's arbitration or mediation, or whatever it has to be.

"I'll do whatever I can. Because they're at very serious odds right now, and hopefully that'll get better," Trump said, offering to mediate on the Kashmir issue for the fourth time in recent weeks amidst fresh Indo-Pak tensions.

"You look at the two gentlemen (Modi and Khan) heading those two countries, two good

friends of mine. I said, fellows work it out, just work it out. Those are two nuclear countries, gotta work it out," the US President said, adding that many other nations are achieving stronger ties of fair and reciprocal trade.

Asked to comment on Trump's latest remarks, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said India position is "very clear".

"I think it has been articulated by the prime minister earlier. It was articulated yesterday (Tuesday) by the foreign secretary so that position remains," Kumar told reporters at a briefing here.

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale told reporters after the Modi-Trump meeting on Tuesday that the prime minister "made it clear that we are not shying away from talks with Pakistan".

"But for that to happen, we expect some concrete steps to be taken by Pakistan. And we do not find any effort by Pakistan taking those steps," Gokhale had said.

A White House readout of the Trump-Modi meeting said Trump

"encouraged" Modi to improve relations with Pakistan and fulfil his promise to better the lives of the Kashmiri people.

Gokhale had said during the meeting, Modi explained in detail to Trump the challenges faced by India because of terrorism, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, where 42,000 lives have been lost in the last 30 years due to terrorism.

Tensions between the two countries have spiked since India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

India's decision evoked strong reactions from Pakistan, which downgraded diplomatic ties and expelled the Indian ambassador.

Pakistan has been trying to internationalise the Kashmir issue after India withdrew the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, but New Delhi has asserted the abrogation of Article 370 was its "internal matter".

RBI puts curbs on PMC Bank, customers panic



(News Agencies) Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) put severe curbs on Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank on Tuesday, including on cash withdrawals, amid a probe into accounting lapses, sparking speculation that the regulator may force a management change through a merger.

Cash withdrawals were capped at ₹1,000 per account for six months, spreading panic among depositors. PMC Bank has also been barred from making fresh loans and taking deposits.

The restrictions under Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act are aimed at preventing a run on the bank that could end up endangering the stability of the entire financial system because of a contagion effect.

"Since cooperatives come under the purview of state governments, neither does RBI participate too much into it, nor

can they keep away because of deposit holders. With so many cooperative banks facing problems, it is always the deposit holders that suffer ultimately," said Ashvin Parekh, managing partner at Ashvin Parekh Advisory Services. "The RBI must... compulsorily convert systemically important cooperative banks into small finance banks and universal banks." Gross under-reporting of bad loans is one of the reasons for the restrictions on PMC Bank, two people aware of the development said on condition of anonymity.

The regulator is currently looking into the books of the bank, they added. While the bank's gross bad loans, according to its FY19 annual report, were at 3.76% of its advances, the bank has now disclosed that the figure is much higher, one of the two people said.

The second person said RBI is doing an audit of PMC bank to look into alleged irregularities. A cooperative bank is typi-

cally audited by the state government. RBI also does an inspection of the books of cooperative banks every 12 months.

If RBI's past actions after exercising Section 35A are any indication, it usually merges the bank put under restrictions with a healthy bank. This is done to secure depositors' funds and to avoid systemic instability. Even before Tuesday's development, there were news reports about Goa-based Mapusa Urban Co-operative Bank's merger with PMC Bank. Following RBI's intervention, there is a possibility that new banks might be in the fray.

Under Section 35A, RBI can issue directions to banks to "prevent the affairs of any banking company being conducted

in a manner detrimental to the interests of the depositors or to secure the proper management of any banking company generally".

Instances of bank mergers under Section 35A include Bank of Rajasthan with ICICI Bank, and Benares State Bank with Bank of Baroda.

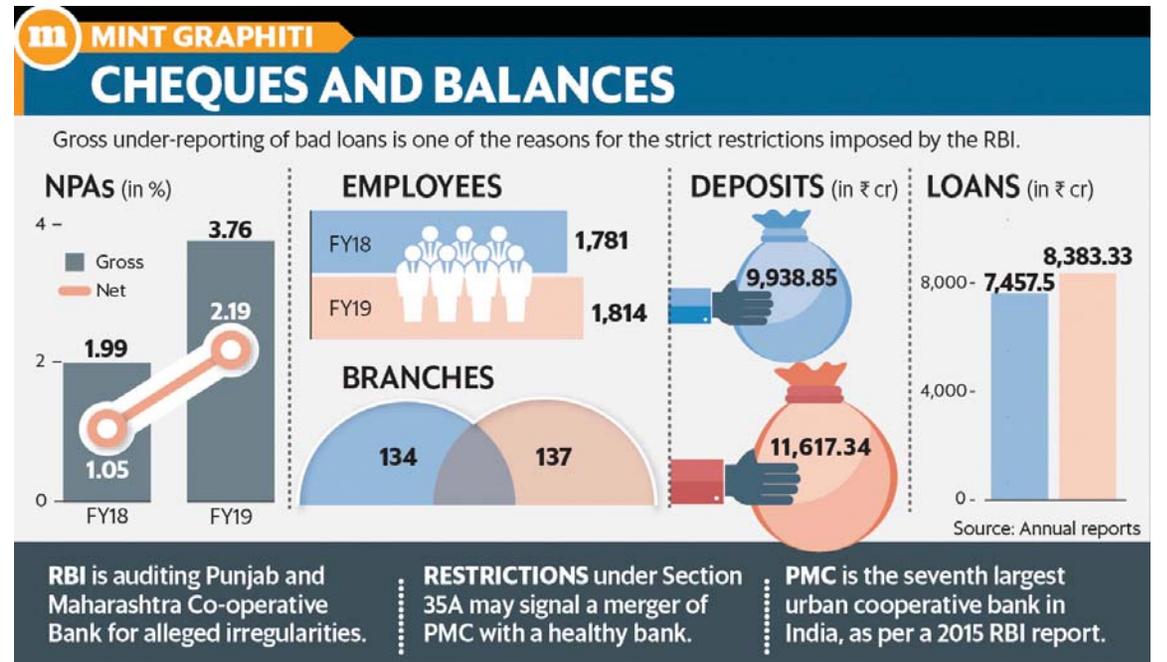
In 2001, Ahmedabad's Madhavpura Mercantile Co-operative Bank went bust. That landed another 210 urban cooperative banks, which kept money with Madhavpura Mercantile, in trouble and some of them had to be liquidated. The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corp., which offers insurance cover to individual deposits of up to ₹1 lakh, had to pump in thousands of crores

to rescue stranded depositors. Since then, RBI has launched a clean-up operation to revive the health of cooperative banks. It has merged several banks and liquidated many more.

As on 31 March, the Mumbai-based PMC Bank had deposits of ₹11,617.34 crore and loans of ₹8,383.33 crore.

With a network of 137 branches, the multistate scheduled urban cooperative bank has presence in Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Goa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

In a press release on Tuesday, RBI said it also barred the bank from granting or renewing loans and advances, making investment and incurring liability, like accepting fresh deposits



WeWork founder Adam Neumann to step down as chief executive

Executive to step down at troubled office rental company after plans for an initial public offering were scrapped last month

The WeWork co-founder Adam Neumann stepped down as chief executive of the troubled office rental company on Tuesday after shelving plans for a stock market listing.

The Wall Street Journal first reported that Neumann was preparing to step down. In a statement Neumann said he was "proud of this team and the incredible company that we have built over the last decade".

"While our business has never been stronger, in recent weeks, the scrutiny directed toward me has become a significant distraction, and I have decided that it is in the best interest of the company to step down as chief executive," he said. Neumann says he will continue on as non-executive chairman. The company, now known as We, is one of the world's most valuable startups

and Neumann's demotion marks a dramatic fall from grace for one of the most high-profile executives of the new generation of tech companies. We scrapped plans for an initial public offering last month after investors balked at the company's sky-high valuation. We had been valued at \$47bn, despite losing \$3bn in the last three years. That price was cut by more than half ahead of the proposed share sale but even that price seemed too high to many investors.

Investors were also concerned that Neumann had taken \$700m out of the company ahead of the share sale and would keep tight control even after it. Meetings between the board and We's largest investor, Japan's SoftBank, began on Monday to discuss the possibility of Neumann being de-

moted. Those meetings came after the Journal reported a private jet chartered by Neumann had to be grounded after a large amount of marijuana was found onboard. The report also detailed tequila-fuelled company parties and bizarre statements by Neumann about his plans to become immortal and to use We to "solve the problem of children without parents".

According to the tech news source the Information, WeWork executives and the company's bankers have been discussing laying off a third of We's workforce, about 5,000 people, among various plans to cut costs at the heavily loss-making company. WeWork has shaken up the sleepy world of office rentals by leasing space, giving them a millennial makeover with potted plants, communal areas and beer taps and then



leasing them to startups and other would-be entrepreneurs.

WeWork reported that it had 527,000 members and 528 locations at the end of June and said it plans to open 169 new locations. In London, it owns or leases more spaces than any enterprise except the government. Larger companies (including the Guardian) also rent

WeWork space.

But while the company has grown fast, so have its losses and even We has conceded that it may never make a profit. We's revenues in 2018 were \$1.82bn, more than four times larger than they were in 2016. At the same time the company lost \$2.9bn in the last three years.



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**FREE PARKING
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Hustlers movie review

Jennifer Lopez's stunning new film is Scorsese with strippers

Hustlers movie review: Jennifer Lopez and Constance Wu are stunning in this tremendously entertaining story about strippers who stole from the rich and gave to themselves.

Hustlers

Director - Lorene Scafaria

Cast - Jennifer Lopez, Constance Wu, Lili Reinhart, Julia Stiles

Based on a 2015 article published in *The Cut*, the same online magazine that became famous in India for launching an unprovoked attack on our beloved Priyanka Chopra, *Hustlers* tells a story about actual scam artists. Unlike Priyanka, whose biggest crime was being famous or something, the ladies here duped hundreds of wealthy men and robbed them of thousands of dollars during the worst economic recession in decades.

We're meant to admire them.

To be asked to make a moral leap such as this isn't uncommon. For *Hustlers* to be even remotely successful, it must first get you on its side — more precisely, it must convince you to root for its characters, most of whom are criminals. But if people can aspire to be Gordon Gekko (*Wall Street*) and admire Jordan Belfort (*The Wolf of Wall Street*), then why can't they cheer

for women who could probably con the both of them in their sleep? *Hustlers* is a tremendously entertaining film, but it is also deceptively deep, with singles of wisdom slipped under its glittery g-strings. It wonderfully combines the best aspects of Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* and Steven Soderbergh's runaway 2012 hit, *Magic Mike*.

As much of an escapist fantasy as it is, it is also a cautionary tale; about greed, excess, and the frequently flimsy excuses people make to justify amoral acts. Essentially told in flashback, *Hustlers* chronicles a modern day Robin Hood story of a few strippers, who, according to *The Cut*, 'stole from (mostly) rich, (usually) disgusting, (in their minds) pathetic men and gave to, well, themselves'.

Our surrogate in this seedy world is Dorothy (Constance Wu), a single mother who during a particularly difficult time in her life is forced to become a stripper to support her grandmother and young daughter. At a New York club, she is introduced to

Ramona (Jennifer Lopez), who is somewhat of a legend in the those circles. Word around the club is that she can take home thousands of dollars every night. The self-sustaining ecosystem that *Hustlers* explores reminded me of the segment in the non-fiction book *Maximum City*, in which author Suketu Mehta investigated the lives of Mumbai's dance bar girls. Both the film and the book share an empathetic tone that we don't often see in stories such as this. The profession, as we must understand, isn't entirely victimless, and as insensitive as it would be to treat these characters without respect, it would be just as tone-deaf to celebrate their newly acquired wealth. "On a good night," Mehta wrote in *Maximum City*, "a dancer in a Bombay bar can make twice as much as a high-class stripper in New York does." The trick, as both Dorothy and *Maximum City*'s *Monalisa* learn very early in their careers, is to play the long con. The idea is to develop relationships with vulnerable chumps, to make



them feel desired, loved, in control — emotions that they probably haven't experienced in a while. And in return, they'll buy you cars; put you through school; pay the rent for your expensive apartment. But then, the 2008 recession hits, and all of a sudden, the money dries up. Dorothy is suddenly back in square one; with little cash and even fewer options. And that is when Ramona comes up with a plan. She rounds up a bunch of the girls, and with Dorothy as her number two, they set about drugging unsuspecting dudes and maxing out their credit cards. When the guys wake up the next morning and realise they've been taken for a ride, what are they going to do? "Call the cops and say 'I spent \$5000 at a strip club, send help?'"

Ramona justifies the scam by giving a lecture that she appears to believe in: these guys robbed the entire country, sent the global economy spiralling out of control, and not one of them went to jail. It's iffy reasoning, but not nearly as nonsensical as some of the stuff we saw in the recent, and very similar film, *The Kitchen*. Written and directed by Lorene Scafaria, *Hustlers*, like its feisty heroines, reveals more emotional layers as the superficial ones are stripped off. She constructs her movie in a way that might feel slightly jarring at first — the temporal shifts are sudden, and significant — but over time, the techniques begin to take thematic relevance. By refusing to disclose every detail about these characters' lives, Scafaria protects their dignity.

Prasathanam movie review

Sanjay Dutt, Ali Fazal shine in a tale too stale and dated to digest

Prasathanam movie review: The Sanjay Dutt-Ali Fazal-starrer is a classic case of old wine in new bottle — the plot is the same and faces are new.

Film: Prasathanam

Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Ali Fazal, Manisha Koirala, Jackie Shroff, Chunky Panday

Director: Deva Katta

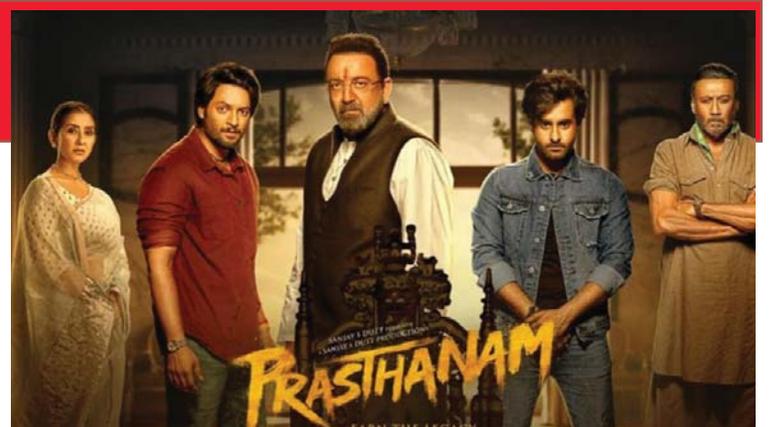
Power drives you crazy -- you forget the difference between good and evil, and don't think twice before harming your loved ones. That's *Prasathanam* in a nutshell for you. Starring an ensemble cast of Sanjay Dutt, Ali Fazal, Satyajeet Dubey, Manisha Koirala, Jackie Shroff and Chunky Panday among others, it's a remake of a 2010 Telugu film by the same name, and helmed by the same director, Deva Katta.

There are moments when you wonder how is the film even relevant after almost a decade. But that's with political dramas;

they never fail to impress. *Prasathanam* is a classic case of old wine in new bottle — the plot is the same and faces are new. The film opens with a son asking his stepfather if it's okay to kill someone and during the course of the film, you see many references to mythological tales of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Set in a political family, the story is about Baldev Pratap Singh (Sanjay Dutt) who marries a widow Sukmini (Manisha Koirala) and becomes stepfather to Aayush (Ali Fazal) and Palak (Chahat Khanna). They soon have their biological child, Vivaan (Satyajeet Dubey). When Dutt hints that Fazal would be groomed to take care of his political empire, that's when the story picks pace and Dubey is

shown resorting to all unfair means and crimes one possibly can think of. Does he manage to get away and convince Dutt to support him and betray Fazal? Does he succeed in becoming the heir of the family? All these questions find answers in a rather predictable yet somewhat shocking manner. Scenes where Dutt is shown in a dilemma over which son to support without harming his political position, register in your mind.

Now the problem is there's very little in terms of surprise from a south remake as the story is already known. And therefore, it's only the performances that keep you interested sans any new twist or surprise element. An intriguing political drama exploring human nature, complex



relationships, emotional turmoil and hunger for power, *Prasathanam* needed a revamp, at least in the treatment of story and the screenplay. However, some brilliant performances make it watchable. Dutt is powerful and leaves an impact each time he comes on screen. It's pleasant to see a 60-year-old play a character his age and nowhere trying to look young. However, for the larger-than-life persona that Dutt exudes, the

plot seemed a bit underwhelming. Fazal gets all the applause for portraying a strong-headed character who is rooted in his family values and understands morals and principles in life. Dubey, playing an almost parallel lead with Fazal, though with negative traits, is a great casting call. He convincingly plays the rich spoiled brat who doesn't think twice before flaunting his money and position.

Kareena Kapoor Khan's Pastel Coloured Tulle Gown Is Unmissable

It's certainly not a first for Kareena Kapoor Khan to turn heads with her dressing and style quotient. The actress is known to make a fashion statement each time she dresses up.

Recently, she was seen wearing a tulle gown by Yousef Al Jasmi and the internet immediately noticed it. Needless to say, it started a barrage of comments on social media. Light Lavender in colour, the gown had ruffled sleeves that covered her arms. The bare shoulder gown also bore a fishtail slit, with a small trail behind. To accentuate the look, she

wore a diamond-studded serpentine necklace by Bvlgari. The makeup too, was kept minimal, to give a nude look. The hair was tied in a tight neat bun. The look was styled by Mohit Rai.

Kareena Kapoor, made her Television debut as one of the judges on the panel for the show Dance India Dance Season 7, and is wearing outfits that become the talk of the town. For every episode, the actress can be seen in a highly glammed up avatar, flaunting her amazing fashion sense. Be it Gowns, Sarees, Pantsuits or

Jumpsuits, Kareena Kapoor's outfit have been making more noise than the show itself.

The actress recently completed shooting for her upcoming movie Good News, also starring Akshay Kumar, Diljit Dosanjh and Kiara Advani. She will also be seen in Irrfan Khan starrer Angrezi Medium. Kareena has also joined Karan Johar's ambitious project Takht, a multi starrer and featuring Ranveer Singh, Vicky Kaushal, Alia Bhatt, Bhumi Pednekar, Janhvi Kapoor and Anil Kapoor.



Krishna Shroff hits the beach with boyfriend Eban Hayms Fans can't stop talking about her colourful tattoos.



Tiger Shroff is currently in news as he is busy promoting his upcoming film War whereas sister Krishna Shroff is making headlines for entirely different reasons. The star kid has shared pictures from her beach outing with her boyfriend Eban Hayms.

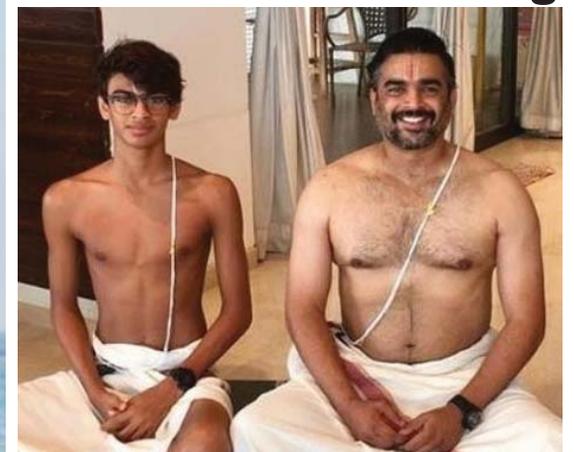
Sharing the pictures from their walk on the beach on Instagram, Krishna wrote, "Damn. #blessedwiththebest @ebanhayms @doitall23." While Krishna is seen in a black bikini which also highlights her colourful tattoos, her boyfriend is in blue shorts and is seen holding her hand as they enjoy a walk on the beachside. The post got more than 25,000 likes within two hours. Actor Emily Shah commented to the pictures, "Dang girl you look

fuegoooo." Hair stylist Amit Thakur wrote, "Look at u both." A fan commented, "Nice tatoos." "That tattoo....," wrote another along with a fire emoji. Krishna had recently opened up about her relationship in an interview to Mumbai Mirror. Talking about how they met each other, she said, "I was catching up with a friend of his whom I hadn't met in a long time, but eventually ended up chatting with Eban." She had said that they have been together for four months and are currently living in the moment and enjoying each other's company. Talking about his career aspirations, she had said, "He's interested in films, but right now, he's into sports and makes his

own music, including rap, hip hop and R&B. He has worked in projects in LA and Australia."

Eban had recently called Krishna 'wifey' on social media, which fuelled rumours of the two secretly tied the knot. She had, however, turned down such reports and said, "It's hilarious, just a term. And it's crazy how there are so many articles saying we were secretly married. Even my mum (Ayesha Shroff) asked me what was going on." Meanwhile, Tiger is busy with the promotions of War, in which he shares the screen space with his idol, Hrithik Roshan. The two will be seen performing some nail-biting action scenes in the thriller. It is set to hit theatres on October 2.

R Madhavan's son Vedaant wins silver for India in swimming



Actor R Madhavan is a proud father as his son Vedaant has won silver for India in swimming at the Asian Age Group Swimming Championship. The actor shared the news on social media along with pictures from the ceremony. Sharing a collage of few pictures on Instagram, he wrote, "India gets her Silver medal at the Asian Games . Gods grace .. Vedaants first official medal representing India ." Madhavan's son Vedaant can be seen standing first from right in the second picture, holding his silver medal and flashing a victory sign. Several celebrities from the industry also congratulated the actor and his son for the achievement. Actor Rohit Roy wrote, "Incredible achievement! Congrats vedant and team india !!!" Actor Shilpa Shetty's husband and businessman Raj Kundra commented, "What a rockstar!! Several of the actor's fans also congratulate Vedaant on Instagram. A fan wrote, "Many congratulations vedant...like dad like son...always bringing glory to the nation." Another commented, "What a proud feeling for a parent. Congratulations !!!" One more user wrote, "Hope now yoa a proud dad Maddy.

Katrina Kaif is a ray of sunshine in her latest Instagram post, Alia Bhatt loves it.

Actor Katrina Kaif recently shared a picture on Instagram which was 'liked' by none other than Alia Bhatt. Taken against the Sun with the light shining right on the camera lens, the picture has Katrina putting out her hand in a bid to cover the entire lens but it manages to capture portions of her face that is

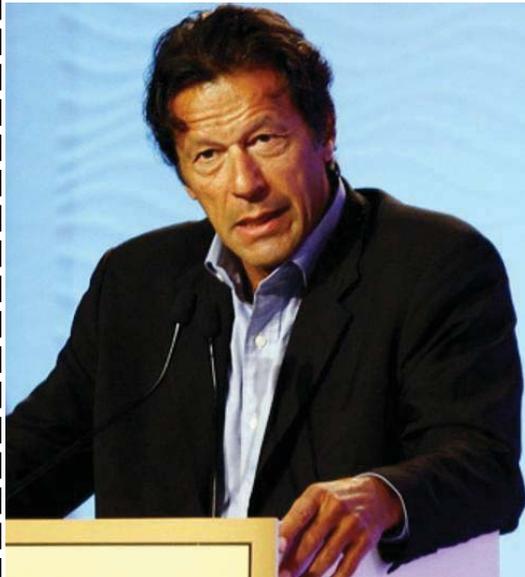
hidden behind her free-flowing hair. Sharing the image, Katrina wrote, "Make your own magic." Alia appreciated the post by dropping a heart emoji in the comments section. This is not the first time Alia has shown love for the ex-girlfriend of her boyfriend Ranbir Kapoor. She often 'likes' Katrina's Instagram

posts and has talked positively about the Bharat star. Katrina had once said in an interview, "A certain thing is already playing out in a certain manner. My reaction to it makes no difference. I can sit here and feel anger and bitterness. I can make myself unhappy. Or I can take into consideration that, how miserable I am makes no

difference to anyone else. So, instead, I can lighten my own burden and say — let me be happy and at peace. And what is meant for me, will come my way." "I do go through my own share of pain and angst. But I see no point in holding a grudge. Whoever it is, I don't see the point of holding on to anything unpleasant from the past. I

would rather let bygones be bygones," she added. Last seen opposite Salman Khan in Bharat, Katrina will soon feature alongside Akshay Kumar in Rohit Shetty's Sooryavanshi. She will also feature in a recreated version of 90s hit Tip Tip Barsa Paani in the film. The song was originally picturised on Raveena Tandon and Akshay for the film Mohra.

Imran Khan talks Kashmir with Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn



(News Agencies) Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn reiterated his party's human rights-focused stand on Jammu and Kashmir during a conversation with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday, the day he raised the issue at the United Nations general assembly.

Labour passed a resolution on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir during its recent annual conference, which was rejected by India's official spokesman in New Delhi on the ground that its position was "uninformed and unfounded".

Corbyn said after speaking to Khan: "On a call with Pakistan PM Imran Khan I listened to his concerns about the situation in Kashmir, including the ongoing curfew".

"The UN has a vital role in ensuring dialogue between India and Pakistan. Any political resolution must uphold the human rights of the Kashmiri people", he added.

(Contd on page 23)

UK travel giant Thomas Cook collapses, stranding tourists

A collapse of the group would mean the repatriation of 600,000 tourists, including around 150,000 seeking government help returning to the UK.

'Our country is at stake like never before': Donald Trump tells supporters



(News Agencies) President Donald Trump, the target of an impeachment investigation over alleged abuse of power, warned supporters that "our country is at stake like never before."

The video message posted on Twitter Saturday underscores the pressure on the White House as Democratic lawmakers charge aggressively into their investigation over accusations that Trump tried to arm-twist the Ukrainian president into providing dirt on one of his main 2020 election rivals, Joe Biden. American rights are being threatened by Democrats, Trump said, stating that they "want to take away your guns, they want to take away your health care, they want to take away your vote, they want to take away your freedom." "We can never let this happen," he said. (Contd on page 23)

India Not Modi. Not Gandhi. Ambedkar May Be The True Father Of India

No doubt Gandhi fought untouchability and Nehru followed his footsteps, but it was Ambedkar who shaped the progressive, futuristic idea of a modern India.

In our college days marked by boyish humour with braggadocio, we used to have a saying: "Those of you who think you know everything are most annoying to those of us who do."

That saying comes to mind as Congress and Hindutva loyalists brandish their ancient swords in a digital-age dogfight to showcase a predictable duopoly of nationalistic narratives after President Donald Trump described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "Father of India" -- only to invite derision from those who understandably see that as an insult to their heritage tag of Mahatma Gandhi as "The Father of the Nation."

It is time now to stress a third narrative, that of the Republic of India, which may not exactly be the Bharat that Modi Bhakts speak of. Nor is it exactly resem-

bling a Gandhian one.

In this narrative, Gandhi's Harijans (children of God), become Dalits (the oppressed). In this view, Tamilians are not part of Hindutva or its cousin, "Hinditva" that took a new lease of life recently after home minister Amit Shah talked about the need for a unifying language, and that language being Hindi.

If the Republic of India is the basis of the country's nationhood based on its constitutional values of equality, freedom and justice, we might do well to invoke Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar as the father of the Republic, by virtue of his being both a thought leader of Dalits and as the chief architect of the Constitution. It is the Constitution, adopted on November 26, 1949, and enforced two months later on January 26, 1950, that convinced hundreds of

