



## UP for grabs: Uttar Pradesh will be the real kingmaker in the Lok Sabha polls



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## UN decision to declare Masood Azhar a global terrorist big success for India: PM Modi



(Agencies)- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has designated Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. It took India almost a decade to get Masood Azhar listed as a global terrorist after it first moved a proposal to designate him as a global terrorist in 2009.

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## Anti-Semitic attacks rise worldwide in 2018, led by U.S.



(News Agencies)- Anti-Semitic attacks worldwide rose 13 percent in 2018 from the previous year, with the highest number of incidents reported in major Western democracies including the United States, France, Britain and Germany, an annual study showed on Wednesday. The report, by Tel Aviv University's Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, said far-right and far-left activists and Islamists were behind many attacks but said **Continued on Page 19**

## Afghan airmen went missing in US : Program to train Afghan attack pilots in the US disbanded

(SAI Bureau) Washington DC: More than 40 percent of Afghan Air Force students in program went AWOL. Were being trained to fly AC-208 Combat Caravan, light attack combat aircraft. \*Only one class graduated from the US-based program and the students that did not go AWOL were pulled back to Afghanistan to complete their training. \*It remains unknown whether the pilots who went AWOL were ever found. A program to train Afghan attack pilots in the United States has been disbanded after nearly half of the airmen went AWOL in Texas. It has been revealed that more than 40 percent of Afghan Air Force students enrolled in the program went absent without leave in the middle of training. The attack pilots were being trained to fly the AC-208 Combat Caravan, a light attack combat aircraft, according to a quarterly report by the Special



Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). Only one class graduated from the US-based program. The students that did not go AWOL were pulled back to Afghanistan to complete their training. A program to train Afghan attack pilots in the United States has been disbanded after nearly half of the airmen went AWOL in Texas.

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## Amit Shah predicts Mamata's fall

(News Agencies)- In the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's warning of a revolt within the Trinamool Congress, BJP chief Amit Shah has issued his own note of caution to West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee -- save your government, if you can. "We are not talking about toppling anyone, but what can we do

if her government topples under its own weight?" he asked. The BJP chief's remarks during India Today TV's Jab We Met show came in response to questions over PM Modi's controversial comments at a West Bengal rally on Monday that 40 of the TMC MLAs were in touch with him.

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# Insurance

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# 'I only thought he would get a fever, I'm sorry for what I did'

## Teenage pupil who threw cheese at a severely allergic boy, 13, causing his death tells inquest of his sorrow



( Insider Buearu)- A teenager who threw cheese at a severely allergic boy, 13, and caused the reaction which killed him, has

apologised for what he did. After giving evidence at an inquest into the boy's death he told Karanbir Singh Cheema's parents: 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry for what I did'. Karanbir, known as Karan, suffered a severe allergic reaction to a slice of cheese 'the size of a post-it note' after it was thrown at his neck at school in Greenford, West London, just before midday on June 28, 2017. He was also severely allergic to wheat, gluten, eggs and nuts and suffered from asthma and atopic eczema, an inquest at Poplar Coroner's Court was told today. The boy who threw the cheese claimed he didn't know that Karan could die from an allergic reaction and assumed he would break out in a 'rash or a fever'. One of Karan's school friends who knew he had a dairy allergy, gave another boy the piece of cheese, before he was overheard

saying 'Karan is allergic to cheese', the inquest heard. The other boy then threw it at Karan who went into anaphylactic shock at around 11.30am at William Perkin Church of England High School, the hearing was told. He was unconscious as medics battled to save his life. He died at Great Ormond Street hospital 10 days later surrounded by his family. The two boys, then aged 13 and now 15, who cannot be named for legal reasons, gave evidence behind screens at today's hearing. The boy who 'flicked' the cheese at Karan told the coroner that he believed Karan would 'get a rash or have a fever or something similar to that - I didn't



know it was that serious'. The boy who handed the cheese to him claimed although he knew Karan had a dairy allergy, he wasn't aware that cheese is a dairy product.

## New York South Asian American Chamber of Commerce (NYSACOC) Hosted Women Empowerment Event "Celebrating Journey Of Women In The Corporate World"



Farah Vaswani, Amita Karwal, Dr. Dilshad Dayani, Dr. Sheetal Desai Honored with Nassau County Citation with Dilip Chauhan President of New York South Asian American Chamber of Commerce. View of attending Business Owners

Hicksville, New York (By Our Staff Reporter)- NYSACOC recently hosted a Women Empowerment Event "Celebrating Journey Of Women In The Corporate World" in an effort to

empower Women Business Owners, This event was hosted by BCB-Indus American Bank of Hicksville. Keynote Speaker of the Event was Dr. Dilshad Dayani Event was attended by Nassau

County Legislature Joshua "Josh" Lafazan. Who has presented citation to Dr. Dilshad Dayani, Dr. Sheetal Desai, Farah Vaswani and Amita Karwal. President of Chamber Dilip

Chauhan said "Networking is not about just connecting people. It's about connecting people with Passion for community, people with ideas, and people with opportunities."

## Four members of Sikh family shot dead in US' Ohio, police to investigate 'hate crime' angle after evidence of forced entry

( Insider Buearu)- Four members of a Sikh family in United States' Ohio were shot dead in their home in the West Chester apartment complex on Sunday. The local police has said that they will also explore the 'hate crime' angle, reports said on Tuesday. The victims, three women, and one man were found dead inside the apartment with multiple gunshot wounds. Children also live in the apartment, but they were not present at the time of the shooting, reports said.

Chief of police, Joel Herzog was quoted as saying that "multiple gunshots" were fired inside the apartment, but he didn't specify how many, or whether the victims had been shot more than once. Police wasn't of the opinion that one of the victims was the shooter, reports said. While the police did not specify whether they were looking for one or more suspects, Herzog said that they had evidence of forced entry. Herzog also said that it was too

early to suggest a motive and it doesn't appear that there was any return fire. He said Butler County's coroner will determine the cause of death and release the victims' identities. Herzog said the shooting appeared "isolated" and he doesn't believe there's any danger to the community. "Authorities established a perimeter around the apartment complex early Monday morning and are now searching on a larger scale. Investigators towed two

vehicles from the scene at about 7 am Monday. Investigative teams continued to canvas the apartment complex and surrounding areas for evidence Monday. A dive team searched a pond on the property, and investigators have searched the grounds extensively," WCPO Cincinnati reported. Reports quoted the local temple's executive committee president, Jasminder Singh, as saying that he was shocked when he learned of the deaths. "This is



a horrible, horrible happening, in our community especially," he says. "Everybody is really shocked and at the same time scared."

# Enfranchise NRI voters to enhance India's democracy

(Insider Buearu)- By May 19, close to 600 million Indians will have cast their ballots in what will be the largest electoral process in human history. More than two-thirds of the 900 million eligible voters, living across the length and breadth of the country, are expected to vote in this election. The scope, size, and complexity of the election are a testimony to the quality of India's democracy. Much time and effort has been expended to make the electoral process encompassing and inclusive. However, one group of voters will, again, have little say in determining who will lead the country in the next five years: non-resident Indians (NRIs). There are more than 13 million NRIs. Of that number, fewer than 75,000 will vote in this election. That is less than 1%. The reason for the low NRI voter participation is that Indian election law requires a person to be physically present in his or her constituency on the polling day to vote. For India's first 15 elections, only Indians residing in India were allowed to vote. The nation's strict voting law prohibited anyone not physically present in the country from even registering to vote. In 2010, the government changed the law to allow NRIs to register their names in the electoral rolls in the place listed on their passports as home and then to vote if they are present at the voting booth on the polling day. Despite its restrictive

nature, it was a good first step to engage Indian citizens abroad in the electoral process. It is time to take the next step and to fully enfranchise NRIs. This can be accomplished by making it easier for NRIs to vote by eliminating the requirement that an NRI be at the local polling place on voting day in order to cast a vote. This requirement is extremely burdensome.

This is proven by the fact that India's nearly decade-long experience with the NRI voting experiment shows that it is not working. This year, despite high-profile marketing efforts by Indian missions worldwide, fewer than 75,000 NRIs have registered to vote. A major factor contributing to this paltry voter registration is the logistical difficulties of travelling to the constituency to vote. If one is an Indian citizen living overseas, it would require a significant investment of financial resources and time to exercise one's democratic right.

Making it even more difficult for overseas citizens is the long-drawn nature of the country's election process. Unlike in the United States, which has a fixed polling calendar, India's election dates vary considerably, and voters get to know the polling schedule just a few weeks before the election day. This year, the election schedule was not announced until March 10. The first phase of polling was on April 11. It is unreasonable to expect people employed abroad to

**There is a simple and straightforward solution to solve this +problem. It is to reform the election law and to let the NRI's vote from where they are. They could cast either postal votes or vote online.**



make travel plans at such a short notice.

There is a simple and straightforward solution to solve this problem. It is to reform the election law and to let NRIs vote from where they are. They could cast either postal votes or vote online.

There was a legislative attempt, two years ago, to let overseas citizens vote through proxies. The Lok Sabha, dominated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, passed the "Representation of the People Amendment Bill 2017," but it failed to clear the Rajya Sabha, the upper house.

Worldwide, many democracies allow their citizens to cast postal votes. In fact, India already has provisions for postal voting for government officials and members of its armed forces. The same should be

extended to the overseas voters. Another option would be to allow overseas citizens to vote online. The country has already adopted electronic voting in parliamentary elections. It wouldn't require a significant technology upgrade to let overseas voters cast ballots online.

There are three primary reasons why the election law should be reformed.

First, it is the equitably correct. The fact that a citizen of India is residing in another country should not make him or her any less of a citizen. It should not take away the fundamental right to vote.

Second, it makes India a global beacon of hope for democracy and, in addition, it strengthens the Indian democracy. It does this by ensuring that all voices are heard. In this current national election, and the one preceding

it, the Election Commission has taken numerous actions to ensure maximum voter participation. This would reinforce those initiatives.

Third, it recognises the size and economic contributions of NRIs. If NRIs were to form a country, they would be the 75th largest nation in the world, bigger in size than countries such as Portugal, Belgium, Sweden and Israel. It is hard to overstate the economic contributions of the Indian diaspora. According to the World Bank, the diaspora remittances to India last year touched \$80 billion. In conclusion, from the time of its founding, India has been a democracy that embraced and empowered a broad and diverse swath of voters living in India. Enfranchising NRIs builds on India's enviable democratic history and extends its reach worldwide.

## Student, 20, drives away from court minutes after judge bans him from roads over crash that left woman badly injured

(Insider Buearu)- A student drove away from court minutes after being banned from the road by a judge for a crash which left a woman badly injured.

Saif Shaikh, 20, was pictured getting into his Volkswagen Golf GTI following a hearing at Manchester Crown Court today.

He had just pleaded guilty to causing serious injury by dangerous driving.

Shaikh's case was adjourned for a report to be prepared ahead of sentencing.

Judge Timothy Smith banned Shaikh from the road ahead of that hearing.

A verbal interim disqualification was put in place. Shaikh nodded to the judge before leaving court. The Manchester Metropolitan University student ignored the order. He was seen walking to his

car - parked around 50 yards away from the court on Bridge Street - before driving away. Greater Manchester Police said journalists had contacted them regarding Shaikh's ignorance of the order and the information had been passed onto relevant officers. He was driving the same black Golf when he crashed into the woman on Upper Brook Street on November 18 last year.

The court heard the woman was visiting her son, who is in permanent care at Manchester Royal Infirmary.

At the plea and trial preparation hearing, Shaikh's lawyer asked the judge to postpone sentencing until he had finished his first-year exams. Shaikh, originally from Bradford, West Yorkshire, has no previous convictions. He will be sentenced on June 14.



# US job creation surges in April as unemployment hits 49-year low

**Government data showed continued vigor in the vast services sector, with unemployment falling to a level not seen since 1969, helping allay fears of a slowdown -- although the labor force shrank.**



The United States had another giant month of job creation in April, confirming the strength of the world's largest economy as President Donald Trump prepares to fend off challengers in next year's election.

Government data showed continued vigor in the vast services sector, with unemployment falling to a level not seen since 1969, helping allay fears of a slowdown -- although the labor force shrank.

As the second quarter began, employers scooped up workers in construction, health care, computer systems

administrative support and other service industries, adding a total of 263,000 net new positions for the month, the data showed.

That was well above the result economists expected, and worker pay continued to climb, although at a slower pace, according to the closely-watched report from the Labor Department.

The unemployment rate fell two tenths to 3.6 percent but the decline was in part because the pool of workers shrank and fewer people were looking for jobs, pulling them out of the labor force.

The jobless rate for Hispanics, and that for a broad measure

of the labor force including discouraged workers, both fell to their lowest levels on record.

"This economy is roaring," Vice President Mike Pence told CNBC shortly after the numbers' release, attributing the performance squarely to Trump's economic agenda of tax cuts and slashed regulation. Average hourly pay also rose by 3.2 percent over April of last year, its ninth consecutive month with annual growth above three percent, again outstripping inflation.

Compared to March, however, the increase in pay was only 0.2 percent, shy of forecasts, but economists said this may have been due to distortions from the Easter holiday. Government hiring also was the strongest in eight months, with 27,000 jobs created. Financial services also continued to add employees. But hiring in the manufacturing sector was weak spot for the third straight month, ending last year's long growth streak.

Durable goods employment was flat and the auto sector continuing to shed jobs.

In the 12 months prior to February, the manufacturing sector had added an average of 22,000 jobs a month, according to the report. The retail sector also suffered yet more job losses, with 12,000 positions cut.

Hiring in mining, which includes oil and gas, as well as utilities was little changed, the data showed. There were other signs of weakness as well.

"If one is scouring the report for negatives, one would be the contraction in the workweek and drop in hours worked," RDQ Economics said in a client note.

"With labor force participation dropping further in April, participation is now flat on a year-over-year basis." The three-month average for job creation has also fallen for four straight months and now sits at about 169,000 -- below the averages recorded last year and in 2017. Nevertheless,

April's brisk hiring pace should further dim hopes among investors that the Federal Reserve will feel pressure to cut interest rates in the near term. As unemployment falls to half-century lows and workers become scarce, the continued strength of hiring has confounded predictions that companies would soon run out of people to hire, even as firms nationwide complain they are struggling to fill open positions. And inflation has for several years defied the usual logic that low unemployment should cause wages and prices to rise. Opinion is now divided among economists as to whether inflation later this year will at last spring to life and pressure the central bank to bump up lending rates -- the opposite of Trump's very loud recent demands for a drastic interest rate cut. After several two days in the red, Wall Street was cheered by the news, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average trading up more than 0.5 percent toward 1600 GMT.

## An exclusive interview with Jagdish Sewhani

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(New York) On South Asian Insider Show, we interview personalities who do things differently, try to bring change with their out of box ideas. These personalities come from fields like Politics, Business, Community, Social and such, The latest episode featuring an exclusive interview by Editor & Publisher Sharanjit Singh, with New York based Jagdish Sewhani on South Asian Insider Show (SAIS) is available on Josh India WebTV, available to watch on demand YouTube and Facebook. Mr. Jagdish Sewhani is a proud Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Karyakarta and an ideologue, among founders of Friend of BJP in US & President & founder of The American India Public Affairs Committee. Mr. Sewhani lives with his family in Long Island, New York.

## Krupa Panchal Lauricella endorsed by South Asian Community Leader Dilip Chauhan, for Schem School Board of Education



Lauricella for some time and I can honestly state that her passion, intelligence, and experience will be an asset to the Sachem School District. For this reason, I strongly urge Sachem district voters to elect Krupa Lauricella on May 21, 2019. Lauricella will appear as #2 on the ballot."

Krupa Lauricella states that "I am running to ensure that Sachem provides a safe environment for quality educational programs that supports a well-rounded curriculum for all students, without a high tax burden on our #Sachem Community. I look forward to supporting and prioritizing the quality of our student's educational programs, curriculum, and safety." I am very grateful to received endorsement from one of the most respected South Asian Community Leader Dilip Chauhan.

(Agencies)- (Press Release) She is a recipient of multiple Long Island : Dilip Chauhan celebrates that "Krupa Lauricella is a proven, engaged, and respected Community Leader. She is a recipient of multiple awards in behalf of her business and community-driven accomplishments." Chauhan continues "I have known Krupa

# Shiv Sena calls for burqa ban in India for 'national security', says after 'Ravan's Lanka', 'Ram's Ayodhya' should make veils illegal

(Agencies)- The Shiv Sena, in its mouthpiece Saamana, has sought a ban on burqa in India, citing the example of Sri Lanka where the government banned all types of face veils following the Easter Sunday terror attacks that killed over 250 people.

In its editorial, the party says Sri Lankan president Maithripala Sirisena made the decision in the interest of national security, and that Shiv Sena welcomes the move. The party appeals to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to follow in the footsteps of Sirisena and ban the use of burqa or niqab in India, as well, as it poses a threat to national security.

Saamana also puts forth two reasons why India should ban burqa: First, the editorial says Muslim women no longer want to wear it, and secondly, it is difficult to assess what the person hiding behind a face veil is doing, thereby raising suspicion of being a threat to national security.

The editorial also talks about Muslim countries taking such steps despite being conservative

nations. It calls on Modi to take this challenge as a "surgical strike" and implement it at the earliest.

"Burqa and niqab are not religious attires for India. They are being banned all over the world. If some people relate it to religion and Islam in India, then they must not have read the Quran. They should read it properly," Saamana says.

One part of the write-up, written in Marathi, translates to: "Face masks can be dangerous for national and social security. Therefore, by declaring that wearing a burqa or mask at public places would be considered a criminal act, Sirisena has shown courage." Shiv Sena also claimed that the practice of wearing the burqa has nothing to do with Islam and is actually a practice that was adopted in Arabian countries due to their climatic condition.

"Basically, the burqa is not at all concerned with Islam, and Indian Muslims are following an arrangement of the Arab nation.

At one time, to avoid desert heat and sunlight in the Arab nation, women used to cover their face and get out of the house. In Maharashtra also when the temperature rises at many places, the women travelling through cycle and scooters cover their face with a cloth or handkerchief, but this usage is limited to that. But in this delusion or blind faith, that wearing a face cover or burqa is the order of the Quran, Muslims continue to use it," an excerpt from the editorial reads.

The article ends with a question for Modi, asking when will what has happened in "Ravan's Lanka" (Sri Lanka) will happen in "Ram's Ayodhya" (India)? It says that the question is being put up for the prime minister on Wednesday as he leaves for an election campaign near Ayodhya.

However, another NDA ally Union minister Ramdas Athawale of the Republican Party of India, rejected the Sena's proposal, saying burqa should not be banned as it is part of the



country's tradition.

"Not all women who wear the burqa are terrorists. It is a tradition and they have the right to wear it. There shouldn't be a ban on the burqa in India," Athwale said.

Furthermore, BJP national spokesperson GVL Narasimha Rao said there was no need for the imposition of any kind of burqa ban in the country.

"We have zero tolerance towards terrorism, but I don't think there

is a need to impose any kind of ban as the country is already in the safe hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Everyone is free to make suggestions, but the whole world knows the Central government has effectively dealt with terrorism, and I don't think any new steps are required for this."

Moreover, in response to its burqa ban proposal, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi called Shiv Sena "ignorant".

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# China is watching Western democracy eat itself

Over the next few months, the world's current and previous superpowers are set to undergo enormous self-harm.

The biggest victim could be democracy itself, and the biggest losers the approximately 4 billion people who live in its imperfect embrace. As London and Washington convulse, China belches along, gobbling up cultures in a way that should alarm us all. This week, China's future global dominance was on full display as foreign leaders headed to Beijing in the hope of securing lucrative projects as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. It is the flagship policy of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and it seeks to bring the world into China's economic embrace by building infrastructure on a mass scale, ultimately improving transport, ties with and reliance on China across the world. The promise of increased trade with what will soon be the world's largest economy -- not to mention the immediate prospect of the aforementioned contracts -- are too tempting to ignore. Xi is doing what all aspiring empires do, threading the world in a web of dependency, slowly creating dominion in other powers' backyards. His ambitious show in Beijing seems perfectly timed to exploit the self-inflicted political crises the United States and the UK are imposing on themselves. In the United States, a presidential election campaign pitching President Donald Trump against a crowd of Democratic foes will be firing up in the coming weeks, particularly now that heavyweight contender Joe Biden has officially thrown his hat in the ring. Meanwhile, the UK will continue a very public evisceration of centuries of democratic process and precedent by executing an excruciatingly painful exit from the European Union. Amusingly, the next deadline falls on Halloween. These two nations may yet reverse their direction and show that the current political spasms are nothing more than a spike in democracy's growing pains. But blind faith in the democratic system we've grown up with blinkers us to the realities of how China, the world's superpower-in-waiting, gets stronger through democracy's misadventures. Lesson here: Your overlords in the new world order won't give a fig for your democratic values or your grandchildren's rights and desires. China is creating a society without public debate in which unelected officials use artificial intelligence to control everything from promotion at work, to travel, to housing, to welfare. It holds its population in a grip that no one living in a democracy could ever countenance. Yet our mostly tolerant

society, built upon trust in our leaders, seems focused on petty personal attacks that risk throwing out that most valuable commodity in any democracy: trust. A lie gets halfway round the world before the truth puts its shoes on, so the adage goes. A Trump personal put-down has double the speed and power, often knocking out opponents before they're even ready for a fight. "Crooked Hillary," "Little Marco" -- these are just two of the stinging epithets that have instantly ensnared an opponent. Who but Trump could really own the argument that Sen. John McCain was not a war hero?

China's Xi and his autocratic Russian ally, Vladimir Putin, must be lapping up this election cycle as Trump lathers faux sympathy on Biden, labeling him "Poor" Joe Biden over allegations of inappropriate conduct with women. Trump's opening catch-all salvo in this election cycle is to label Democrats "socialists," hoping Republicans can unhinge themselves from democracy's roots and act on his slur.

The President has defined his opponents before one has arisen from the gathering mass of Democratic challengers. The next year will be ugly for many at the center of the coming political storms. But its effect on democracy's global reach could be far more damaging. The electorates in the UK and the United States will emerge bitter, divided and likely thoroughly underwhelmed at what has become of social and political discourse in their countries, while leaders and electorates in emerging and wannabe democracies will be questioning their own judgment. In the UK, Brexit is already shifting voters to the extremes. Debate is shrill, opinions entrenched, democracy weakened. Some believe politicians have failed to deliver on the will of the people; others are flabbergasted that three years since the referendum, no one represents their values and views. Brexit is turning the Conservative Party toward the right. Hard-line Brexiters are winning the internal party argument, even if they are failing to win the argument with the public at large. Meanwhile, the opposition Labour Party drifts closer to a softer Brexit, and possibly a second referendum. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has placed jobs at the center of his Brexit message. It could turn out to be a canny move, especially among older Labour voters in poorer parts of the country who voted to leave the EU in 2016. So Corbyn turns left while the Conservatives turn right. The result? The UK's politics are being pulled to extreme poles, leaving a vast middle ground where people such as former Prime Ministers Tony Blair (Labour) and John Major (Conservative) once stood.

# James Carafano: Mexico is becoming the world's backdoor into America (and Congress is AWOL)

A 2018 Gallup poll revealed that more than 750 million adults would like to migrate to the United States. If even some of them brought children, that number could easily top 1 billion. That's more than three times the population of the United States... the equivalent of most of China moving here. It wasn't always like that. In 2012, the number was only 150 million. Has the rest of the world gotten so much worse in the last six years? Is America looking that much better? One thing is certain: getting into the U.S. is looking a whole lot easier. The entire world knows about the "asylum" loophole in our immigration system. It encourages people to: sneak across the border as a "family" (real or manufactured); find a border patrol agent to surrender to; claim to be refugees with a "credible fear" of persecution, and demand asylum. Having done that, they can expect to be processed quickly and then either detained briefly or just released into the U.S. with a court date. Few ever show up for that court hearing. The vast majority simply move on to a sanctuary city or elsewhere, and hope the U.S. government never comes after them. Americans usually view illegal border crossing as a Latin America problem, with most illegal immigration coming from Mexico and Central America. That's been historically true, and it still is. But - and here is the big "but" - there have always been what's labeled as OTM or Other Than Mexicans in the mix. A small number of OTMs traditionally include Asians, as well as Africans and people from Middle

Eastern countries. Last year the U.S. Border Patrol apprehended 248,690 OTMs trying to enter illegally. That was a record. And, of course, that number does not include those who slipped across our borders and eluded capture. You can expect bigger numbers this year and for as long as the asylum loophole remains in place. Experts predict an especially large jump in the number of economic migrants from Asia. In the past, what most alarmed Americans about OTMs was the possibility of terrorists sneaking across the Rio Grande undetected. We have scant evidence of that happening. Indeed, over the last few years, we've seen very little successful terrorist travel across the border or through the ports of entry. That's not to say it won't happen. Terrorists will be trying to get to the U.S. through all means possible. But shutting the border isn't the best way to keep terrorists out. After all, no one recommends closing banks as the best way to stop bank robbers. No, the best way to stop terrorists is to find them before they get to our borders, and kill them where they're found. The overwhelming majority of OTM at the border are neither terrorists nor refugees. They are economic migrants. They want to get to the U.S. to make a buck. Still, they are a big-time security problem. That's because the criminal cartels are just as comfortable smuggling humans as they are smuggling drugs. They're more than happy to charge people from Asia, Africa and the Middle East a premium to be ferried across the U.S. border.



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# Irrespective of who is elected, India may not be ready for the challenges that lie ahead

*The elections should have been an opportunity for a robust political debate on precisely these issues so that people could make informed choices and see the emergence of a broad consensus. That has not happened.*



Midway through the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, political conversation is dominated by how parties are faring, in which region, in which constituency. The truth is that till the results are announced, predicting outcomes is a hazardous, if not futile, enterprise. The vote is secret, Indian elections are too big, voter motivations too complex, and the polity is too fragmented for anyone to really know.

But what one can discern are the broad patterns

which have come to the fore in this election.

The first is clearly the manner in which Narendra Modi has, for the second time after 2014, dominated national consciousness. Both surveys and anecdotal evidence from the ground suggest that Modi is, by far, India's most popular national leader, and some argue that his vote base is broadly intact, or may have even increased. His critics may contest it, but a substantial section of the electorate continues to see him as honest, decisive,

and strong, as a leader who has delivered on rural welfare and national security. This segment is not attracted to the alternatives and is willing to give him another chance. The election will hinge on how large this section is, what the distribution of Modi's support base across states is, and whether it is enough to take on a united opposition in key states. But a parallel phenomenon, which is as obvious to those who have travelled on the ground, is the Bharatiya Janata Party's

(BJP) increasing hollowness on the issue of local leaders. Incumbent MPs are unpopular; few are able to mobilise and inspire constituencies on their own; many confront formidable opposition candidates. If it becomes an election about local issues and candidates - or if it becomes 543 separate elections instead of one national election - the BJP is in trouble.

The second broad pattern is that this election is between coalitions. What is more talked about is of course the opposition coalition. This has assumed different forms. There is one coalition led by the Congress nationally but with state-specific variations in Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand. This has meant that the Congress is today contesting in

fewer seats than it has ever done in the past. Then you have the true Grand Alliance of Uttar Pradesh (UP), of the Samajwadi Party (SP)-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)-Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) in UP. But even as Modi mocks all these alliances as "mahamilavat", the fact is that he leads an alliance as well.

The BJP has state-specific alliances in Maharashtra, Punjab, Bihar, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh. In Maharashtra and Bihar in particular, it bent over backwards to accommodate smaller partners, recognising that replicating a 2014-style majority may be difficult. The structure of power in Delhi could thus be somewhat different after the elections; it could mean a return to the normal of Indian politics as it existed for two and a half decades between 1989 and 2014. The third broad, inter-related, feature is the continued importance of the regional parties. It is not just the major state

parties of UP. Look across and it is obvious that the footprint of national parties is limited. Take Tamil Nadu with 39 seats. Here, the Congress has had to tag along with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the BJP with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), with other local parties in the fray. Take Andhra Pradesh and Telangana with 42 seats between them. Here, the game is entirely dominated by the Telangana Rashtriya Samithi (TRS), the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Move up east and while the BJP is making strides, its primary challengers remain the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal.

Together, the two have 63 seats. In Bihar, once again, the BJP is a strong player, but the state's triangular polity has a strong player in the Rashtriya Janata Dal even though its supremo, Lalu Prasad, is in jail, and the Janata Dal (United).

## What explains rich-kid terrorists

Sri Lankan Defense Minister Ruwan Wijewardene said Wednesday that most of the terrorists who killed at least 253 people at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Sunday were "well-educated and come from maybe middle- or upper-middle-class. So, they are financially quite independent, and their families are quite stable financially." Two of the suicide bombers were the sons of a wealthy Sri Lankan spice trader, Mohamed Ibrahim, sources with knowledge of the investigation told CNN.

This likely runs counter to what many people may believe about suicide bombers. After all, why would well educated, upper-



middle-class folks with seemingly everything to live for blow themselves up and kill so many innocents?

Of course, there is no simple answer for what must be a difficult decision, nor is there a one-size-fits-all

description of how people radicalize to the point that they are willing to die while killing.

In the case of Sunni militants, this decision is likely enabled by their embrace of violent jihadist ideology, which is often sectarian in nature and

encourages the murder of "infidels." This is often combined with the belief that Sunni Muslims are under attack and revenge must be taken.

Group dynamics can also play a role. The terrorism expert Marc Sageman in his 2004 book

"Understanding Terror Networks" examined the biographies of 172 Sunni terrorists and found that friends and family members often joined jihadist groups together. Three pairs of Saudi brothers, for instance, were hijackers on 9/11. A similar dynamic can be seen with the two brothers among the suicide bombers in the Sri Lanka attacks.

In fact, terrorism experts have long known that terrorism is often a bourgeois endeavor. Before we unpack that, let's stipulate that large insurgent groups that also practice terrorism, such as the Taliban, recruit tens of thousands of foot soldiers largely from the ranks of the poor

and pay them a monthly wage.

That is why the Taliban are one of the largest drug cartels in the world: they have to meet a large payroll every month.

By contrast, pure terrorist groups are made up of true believers who are volunteers that are generally not being paid a wage.

Some of the most notorious terrorists of the modern era have been some of the most privileged people on the planet.

Osama bin Laden was the son of a Saudi construction magnate.

His successor as the leader of al Qaeda, Ayman al Zawahiri, is a surgeon from a prominent Egyptian family.

## Sri Lanka 'face veil' ban designed to distract people from govt's failures, reaffirms structural oppression of Muslim women

Back in 2009, then French president Nicolas Sarkozy said hijabs were a sign of women's debasement and began the process of banning them.

In the heat of that particular episode of the global culture war, I interviewed an assortment of hijab-wearing women from across India. A number of young women I spoke to despised the hijab and couldn't wait for a day when they could stop wearing it. But several other women I spoke to were the first in their generation to wear hijabs.

Whichever group they belonged to, every single woman I spoke to ascribed different meanings for the hijab

- from modesty to privacy to obedience to the Quran to a political identity formed after the Gujarat riots all the way to an electric enjoyment of the mystery of being the girl with the beautiful eyes. Some of them covered their faces, some covered their hair and some wore them when far from home and some only in the last half kilometre as they approached home.

Representational image. AP

One of them told me, "Sometimes even close friends ask about 'pressure'. I tell them: think of how joyfully you ask your mother to put a teeka on your forehead. You've to believe that I have a mind."

This week, the Sri Lankan government banned 'face

coverings' as a response to the killing of 250 people in coordinated attacks on Easter Sunday. According to the government's statement, "The ban is to ensure national security... No one should obscure their faces to make identification difficult."

Hijabs/niqabs are not named but it's clear that is what is meant since the seven suicide bombers are allegedly linked to a local group with ties to the Islamic State.

The hijab means different things everywhere. Two weeks ago, an Iranian woman who protested the hijab by unveiling herself in public has been sentenced to a year in jail. Muslim teenagers in New Zealand have been quoted



saying they felt happiness in seeing Sudanese political activist Alaa Salah standing on a car in her headscarf, chanting and looking ready to rule the world. In Sri Lanka that has seen decades of war, reportedly Muslim women are already long accustomed to removing their

niqabs at security checkpoints. And now just over a week since the Easter blasts, the meaning of the hijab is changing again in Sri Lanka where 10 percent of the population are Muslims. The Sri Lanka Muslim Council has called the new hijab ruling "the stupidest thing to do".

## Efforts to sanitise Hindutva terror links crumble before evidence

The Samjhauta judgment has been grist to the Hindutva apologists' mill, which has worked overtime to argue that the National Investigation Agency (NIA) spawned the bogey of Hindutva terror at the behest of the Congress. They say that there exists no evidence against Aseemanand and Co, and, in fact, leads that pointed to a Pakistan hand in the train blast, which were being pursued by other investigating agencies before the formation of the NIA, were ignored. This sanitisation of Hindutva terror links crumbles before evidence. In February 2007, the explosion of an incendiary device in the unreserved bogeys of the Pakistan-bound Samjhauta Express led to the death of 68 people. Within days, the Haryana government constituted a Special Investigating Team (SIT) headed by senior police officer,

VN Rai. From among the debris of the singed bogey, Rai's team discovered a second, unexploded, device in a suitcase. This suitcase and the canvas cover led the team to a market in Indore. Rai has reminisced in interviews that their initial suspects included Pakistani militant outfits, as well as the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). However, with time, the hand of a Hindu radical group became apparent. The SIT zeroed in on the names of Sunil Joshi, Ramji Kalsangra and Sunil Dange, who remained mysteriously untraceable, till Joshi was murdered at the end of the year. With this, the leads effectively dried up. The investigations received a new lease of life when Hemant Karkare cracked the 2008 Malegaon blast tracing the bomb-bearing motorcycle to Pragya Thakur. This led to the unravelling of a shadowy Hindu extremist

network. The Central Bureau of Investigation, to whom the Mecca masjid case was transferred, also placed Sunil Joshi at the centre of the conspiracy, finally arresting Aseemanand from Haridwar in November 2010. Thus, before the NIA took up the cases, different agencies independently arrived at the same conclusion, and Karkare's findings provided speed and spine to these investigations. What of the Pakistani angle? In 2009, the UNSC and the US treasury department sanctioned the Laskhar financier, Arif Qasmani, for supporting the Samjhauta blast on the basis of an Indian Intelligence Bureau dossier. This dossier was based not on inputs from the Haryana SIT, whose case diaries do not even once mention Qasmani, but on the Gujarat police's narco test of SIMI leader, Safdar Nagori. Nagori's revelations are the staple



of several news channels, but these scientifically dubious narco tests have no evidentiary value in court. Now let us turn to the manner in which these cases were prosecuted, and allowed to collapse. The NIA special public prosecutor Rohini Salian's revelations that she was asked to go slow in these cases must be measured against the conduct of the agency itself. It is strange that in the Mecca Masjid and Samjhauta cases, the judges

have specifically found that evidence has not been brought on record: for example, the Call Detail Record of the accused, which could have helped prove their presence in the Indore market, was not produced, nor were the jail records which would prove that Aseemanand's meeting Abdul Kaleem (arrested for Meccas masjid blast but later let off) in jail led to his change of heart and confessing his involvement.

## Gag orders on the media have to go

During this election season, a controversy arose when a trial court in Bengaluru issued an ex parte injunction at the behest of Tejaswi Surya, a BJP Lok Sabha candidate. The order required 49 named media houses to desist from publishing "malicious, defamatory, or derogatory" material about the politician. The order was passed in the wake of various #MeToo allegations surfacing about Surya, which the court found suspicious, as they coincided

with the start of the election season. While the order of the trial court was set aside within two weeks by the High Court of Karnataka on April 12, its conduct in this case was not a one-off. Increasingly, trial courts across the country have been seen to grant similarly worded injunctions on the very first day of hearing, before the other side is present. On being shown some articles or newspaper reports, these courts pass a sweeping order restraining

named (or unnamed) entities from publishing "defamatory" material against the plaintiff, until further orders. There are many things that are wrong with orders of this kind. The first is the very manner in which they are framed. According to the civil law of defamation, a statement is "defamatory" if it lowers the reputation of the plaintiff. However, that does not mean that the offence of defamation is automatically completed. A defendant has numerous

defences available - for example, she could argue that her statement was true, or that it was a fair comment. If any of these defences succeeds, then for obvious reasons, there shall be no liability, even though the statement was defamatory. Therefore, when a court passes an injunction preventing anyone from making a "defamatory" statement, what does that mean? Read literally, it would prohibit any statement that lowered the reputation of the

plaintiff, even if that statement was true or a fair comment. This would effectively mean a blanket shut down of all discourse that is not complimentary or neutral towards an individual - something that has far-reaching consequences, especially where politicians or other powerful public figures are concerned. It also has the bizarre effect of prohibiting people from making statements even though such statements do not constitute any offence in the eyes of law.

# The Reason Why Arvind Kejriwal Wanted A Tie-Up With Rahul Gandhi

( Agencies)- For a state with just seven Lok Sabha seats, Delhi punches way above its electoral weight. That's mostly because it houses all major institutions of power: parliament, government, Supreme Court and much of national media. Delhi's politicians get much more press thannetas of any other small state or union territory. Its Lok Sabha candidates become mini national celebrities. The Dilli Dangal of 2019, is also being keenly watched because it could decide Arvind Kejriwal's political future. In 2014, Kejriwal became the favourite of liberals opposed to Narendra Modi.

If one converts the assembly votes into Lok Sabha leads, AAP would have swept all seven seats in Delhi, with an average victory margin of 23% or nearly 2.8 lakh votes.

In terms of votes, seven lakh more people turned out to vote in 2015 than in the general elections in the previous year. AAP scooped nearly 49 lakh of those votes, the BJP about 29 lakh and the Congress less than 9 lakh. It looked like the people of Delhi had decided to go Congress-mukt.

But, over the next two years, the Centre's representative, Delhi's Lt Governor Najeeb Jung made it tough for Arvind Kejriwal to run



One year later, he swept the Delhi assembly elections, having won-over more than half of the city's voters: From middle-class families living in tony enclaves to the poor in the jhuggi-jhopdi or JJ colonies. In 2014, during the Modi wave, the BJP got more than 46% of the popular vote and won all seven seats. The AAP, which came second in every seat, managed about 33% votes. The average victory margin was about 1.6 lakh votes. The Congress came a distant third with just a little over a 15% vote share. Overall, the BJP got about 38 lakh votes, AAP 27 lakh and just 12.5 lakh people voted for the Congress, which had ruled Delhi for 15 years. In the 2015 assembly polls, the picture turned on its head. AAP swept Delhi, winning an unprecedented 67 out of the 70 assembly seats. It won over 54% of the popular vote and the BJP's vote-share dropped to less than one-third. The Congress did even worse, its vote-share dropping below 10%.

the state. The Kejriwal personality cult, which was already evident in the AAP's 2015 campaign slogans, Paanch Saal Kejriwal & Maange Dilli Dil Se Kejriwal Phir Se, started to weaken the party. Several early fellow-travelers began to publicly criticize the over-centralisation of power in the hands of a small group led by the chief minister. They were either hounded out of the party or quietly exited on their own.

The result was a massive erosion in public support for AAP. This became evident in the elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, where the BJP had a slim majority. AAP expected to make big inroads if not to take control of the three municipalities of Delhi. That was not to be. The BJP won two-thirds of the 272 MCD seats, taking just 3.4% votes more than in 2015. The reason was that AAP collapsed, getting just 26% vote-share. In just two years, its vote share had fallen to less than half.

Of course, fewer people vote for local body elections and the

turnout had dropped sharply. If 89 lakh people voted in 2015, only 71 lakh voted in the MCD polls. The lower turnout meant that the BJP got a higher vote-share even though it got 3.5 lakh votes less than 2015. The AAP dropped a massive 30 lakh votes. Clearly, a large chunk of the 18 lakh people who voted for the Delhi assembly polls but didn't turn-up for the local body elections had voted AAP in 2015. Another 12-13 lakh voters, who had voted for AAP in the assembly polls, decided to switch to someone else in the MCD election.

Who scored these votes? In local

body elections, independents and local netas take away a larger proportion of the overall vote-share. In 2014, independents and smaller parties had a little over 5% vote-share, which dropped to about 3% in 2015. In 2017, their share rose to over 16%. That means one in every six voters in the MCD polls voted for an independent or small party.

However, the biggest beneficiary of the AAP's decline was the Congress. Not only did its vote-share rise to 21% from less than 10% in 2015, but it also got a larger absolute number of votes compared to both 2014 and 2015. About 6.4 lakh voters who had voted for AAP or BJP in 2015, picked the Congress in the local body elections. This happened despite a sharp 21% drop in voter turnout compared to the 2015 assembly polls.

Remember that the Congress party's revival in the MCD polls took place in April 2017, right after the BJP had swept Uttar Pradesh. It was several months before GST (Goods and Services Tax) was implemented or the economic impact of demonetisation had been felt. Since then, the

Congress has improved its tally in Gujarat, and has come to power in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. So it wouldn't be unfair to say that the Congress party's fortunes in Delhi are likely to have improved since the MCD elections two years ago. This has happened mostly at AAP's expense.

That is the reason why Arvind Kejriwal was so keen to join hands with Rahul Gandhi. If the MCD elections and the Congress party's national revival since then are anything to go by, AAP and Congress are now almost even stevens in terms of vote-share. Together, the two parties could well win more than half the votes, but fighting on their own, they will split the non-BJP vote.

That clearly means it is advantage Modi in Delhi. The BJP is counting on Delhi's electorate voting for the PM when it comes to the Lok Sabha polls, rather than on local issues. The BJP has also played it safe by replacing a few sitting MPs and bringing in star candidates like Gautam Gambhir and Hans Raj Hans, to reduce the impact of any local anti-incumbency. The Congress could have had a fighting chance of winning a couple of seats if it had agreed to a tie-up with AAP. But it appears to have decided to play the long game. An alliance with AAP would have ensured Arvind Kejriwal gets a voice inside parliament. The Congress would rather eat into his votes than give the Kejriwal cult another lease of life.

## DELHI TOTAL VOTES

	2014	2015	2017
BJP	38.4	29.4	25.8
AAP	27.2	48.8	18.7
Congress	12.5	8.7	15.0



# India replies to Chinese media criticism of navy

(Agencies)- Quoting a military expert, who sounded triumphant about "accurately predicting" that fires could breakout on INS Vikramaditya, the article said the error-prone Indian Navy had failed to learn its lessons.

Indian Navy personnel are unprofessional, prone to errors and unprepared to tackle emergencies, a Chinese state media article has said, commenting on a fire that claimed the life of a naval officer on India's aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, last week.

In its response, the Indian Navy said it "prides itself on the highest level of professionalism it maintains while operating a variety of high performance platforms on the frontline, ranging from aircraft carrier groups to nuclear submarines". Navy spokesperson Captain DK Sharma said the strength of the navy "also comes from its ability to identify the right lessons from incidents and accidents and put

in place correctives that make it emerge better prepared to operate in the demanding and hazardous environment in which it deploys very extensively".

Quoting a military expert, who sounded triumphant about "accurately predicting" that fires could breakout on INS Vikramaditya, the article said the error-prone Indian Navy had failed to learn its lessons.

It was published within days of the Indian Navy sending two of its frontline ships, including the destroyer INS Kolkata, to attend the maritime parade to mark the 70th anniversary of People's Liberation Army-Navy's (PLAN) off the coast of Qingdao in eastern China. The two Indian vessels were among the handful of warships to attend the parade. A fire broke out on board aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya on Friday morning and officer, Lt. Cdr. D.S. Chauhan, lost his life in the firefighting efforts, the Navy said in a statement. "The fire was

brought under control by the ship's crew in a swift action preventing any serious damage affecting the ship's combat capability," the navy said in a statement.

Li Jie, a Beijing-based naval expert, told the Global Times that the fire was more likely to be out of human error rather than mechanical problems. "The fire and the extinguishing process suggested that they are unprofessional and unprepared to address such an emergency," he said.

India has been actively developing its military in recent years, but "its military culture is lax and it has loose regulations", which cannot effectively train soldiers to operate advanced military equipment, Li was quoted as saying. Li noted that the Indian Navy's lax regulations mean sailors may neglect or fail to obey the rules on handling advanced equipment. Unlike in India where both the armed forces



and media are relatively more open, the PLA and China's controlled state media are said to tightly control the flow of information about the military - especially mishaps in military. Navy spokesperson Captain Sharma said, "Its [Indian Navy's] operational interactions with an increasing number of leading maritime forces in the world is testimony to its standing as a highly competent and trained

force that collaborates widely to enhance regional security. Its training infrastructure and processes have been acknowledged in the region as being of the highest standards...The recent and unfortunate incident of a loss of an officer on a frontline ship will be viewed by the IN [Indian Navy] along these lines and the service will take all steps to emerge stronger from it."

# Supreme Court gives govt 4 days to file Rafale affidavit

**Attorney general KK Venugopal sought four weeks' time to file the Centre's reply. The bench, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, directed the government to file its reply by May 4 and posted the matter for hearing on May 6.**

(Agencies)- The Supreme Court on Tuesday gave the Centre four days instead of four weeks to file its reply to the review petitions filed in the Rafale case and allowed Congress president Rahul Gandhi to file a "good affidavit" in a related contempt case after the judges said they weren't convinced by his expression of regret on the matter.

Attorney general KK Venugopal sought four weeks' time to file the Centre's reply. The bench, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, directed the government to file its reply by May 4 and posted the matter for hearing on May 6. The bench, also comprising justice Sanjay Kaul and justice KM Joseph, sought the Centre's reply on a separate plea by the petitioner to initiate perjury action against officials who allegedly misled the apex court in the Rafale case. Venugopal told the court: "The Centre has circulated a letter in the review petition for adjournment of the proceedings.

We need time to file counter in the review petition. No formal notices have been issued."

On December 14, the Supreme Court dismissed all petitions seeking a court-monitored probe of the ~59,000 crore Rafale fighter jet deal with France, saying that there was no occasion to doubt the decision-making process in the deal. The petitioners, former Union ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie and advocate Prashant Bhushan, moved the Supreme Court for a review of the verdict.

The petition said the verdict contained errors and relied on incorrect claims made by the government in an unsigned note given in a sealed cover to the court.

On the contempt petition against Gandhi filed by the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Meenakshi Lekhi, the CJI told the Congress president's lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi: "We have difficulty in understanding what you are trying to say [in the affidavit]. You

make a statement and justify it. How can you attribute the statement to us? Where is the complete regret? You take 22 pages to express regret."

Gandhi last week filed an affidavit to explain his first reaction to the April 10 court ruling on use of leaked defence ministry documents for the Rafale review petition. Gandhi then appeared to remark that the court said "Chowkidar chor hai [the watchman is a thief]", repeating a slogan that he and the Congress have used to target Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gandhi has told the court that his remarks were not meant to obstruct administration of justice or scandalise the court in any manner. Gandhi also apologised for ascribing comments to the court and said this happened in the "heat of campaigning".

CJI Gogoi questioned Gandhi's latest affidavit and asked: "What is the meaning of expression of regret?"

Justice Kaul said: "The affidavit is full of contradictions. At one



point you say 'I was misled by the situation', at some other place you say something else. When you make a mistake, admit it." Singhvi tried to persuade the judges that Gandhi had clearly regretted the mistake and said: "Regret is same as apology, I have checked the dictionary. If there is a deficiency in the previous affidavit, please allow me to file a new affidavit. I will make a better affidavit. I sincerely apologise for attributing the comments to the Supreme Court."

But when he didn't satisfy the court, the senior lawyer offered to file a fresh affidavit.

Appearing for Lekhi, senior

advocate Mukul Rohatgi asked the court to reject Gandhi's affidavit and proceed against him. Rohatgi argued: "He has put words in the mouth of Supreme Court for political gains. Identical affidavit was filed 10 days back. This is the grossest form of contempt."

Speaking to reporters later, Lekhi said: "His lawyer apologising on his behalf in the court is not enough. Rahul Gandhi should file a written affidavit seeking an apology. It is clear that our petition was right and they have committed a crime, they are trying to justify their crime, meaning they have no fear of the judiciary."

# Uttarakhand cops nab Israeli man living in India without visa for 7 years

**He was earlier extradited to India in August 2011 from Peru and was arrested in a narcotic case involving police, politicians and drug dealers in Goa.**

(By Our Staff Reporter)- A 44-year-old Israeli man who was arrested in Uttarakhand's Banbasa town of Champawat district late Tuesday evening has been found to be staying in India without a valid visa for about seven years, police said. Yaniv Benaim, alias Atala, a suspected drug dealer was held by immigration authorities at the check post in Banbasa while trying to cross into Nepal, senior police officials said. In the initial investigations, it was found that he was wanted in a physical assault case registered against him on April 25 in Goa's Anjuna.

"During the checking by immigration authorities, he failed to show a valid visa for his stay in India. However, he had a valid passport," said director general of police (law and order), Ashok Kumar.

During the questioning by immigration and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) authorities, he told them he was earlier extradited to India in August 2011 from Peru and was arrested in a narcotic case involving police, politicians and drug dealers in Goa.

"He was extradited in relation to a drug-related case. Till the disposal of the case, he

was lodged in a jail in Goa for five months after which he was acquitted by a court. Since then, he was living in India without a valid visa," said Kumar. Last month, he was booked in a case of assault in Goa's Anjuna. "When we spoke to the Goa Police about it, they confirmed it. After yesterday's incident, a case has been registered against him under section 14 of Foreigners Act. Investigations are on," he added. In 2008, his former Swedish girlfriend who went by the name Lucky Farmhouse had uploaded a video in her blog in which

Atala is heard boasting of how he pays off both politicians and policemen in Goa in order to continue with his drug business and even named one 'Roy'. Atala also claimed that Goa Police were selling confiscated narcotics back in the drug market and that he was buying drugs from the police themselves. Atala's boast on video forced the authorities to launch an investigation. Seven Goa Police officials were arrested by the CBI. He went missing after he was released from jail while the suspended policemen were reinstated.

## Corporate lobbyist Deepak Talwar's bail plea denied, ED questions wife Deepa

(Agencies)- The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday continued their questioning of Deepa Talwar, the wife of corporate lobbyist Deepak Talwar, in a money laundering case, even as a Delhi court turned down his bail plea. Talwar has been in ED custody since January 31 when he was deported from Dubai. Deepa Talwar's questioning has been going on since April 24. Today was the third time that she has appeared before the ED since then. Meanwhile, a Delhi court, taking cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's chargesheet against Deepak Talwar, issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against his son Aditya after he, too, was named as an accused. In its chargesheet, the ED claimed that Talwar had been in touch with former Aviation minister Praful Patel and that he had finalised various communications on behalf of Emirates, Air Arabia that were addressed to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the then minister Praful Patel.



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## EC bars Pragya Thakur from campaigning for 72 hours for Karkare, Babri remarks

(Agencies)- Election commission (EC) on Wednesday barred Bhopal BJP Candidate Sadhvi Pragya Thakur from campaigning for 72 hours for her comments on 26/11 martyr Hemant Karkare and Babri Masjid demolition, starting 6 am on Thursday. EC strongly condemned her comment that she had climbed atop the mosque and broken it, and she was "proud" of it, violates the rule against appealing to caste and communal feelings. In her response to a notice from the Election Commission, Pragya Thakur had apologised for her statement on Hemant Karkare while adding that the remark on Babri was taken out of context.



"Even though Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur has apologised on her statement made about the late Shri Hemant Karkare, the commission has found it unwarranted," reads note issued by EC in the evening. Based on material facts and evidences related to Babri remark, EC said, it was convinced that Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur in her impugned speech has appealed to secure votes on religious lines that tantamount to violation of provisions of para 3 of part 1 'General conduct' of Model Code of Conduct, for the guidance of political

parties and candidates". There shall be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, Churches, temples, or other places of worship shall not be used as forum for election propaganda, EC said.

EC condemned statements made by her in both cases and warned her not to repeat such misconduct in future banning her from holding any public meetings, public processions, public rallies, road shows and interviews, public utterances in media (electronic, print, social media) etc in connection with on-

going elections for 72 hours commencing from 6 am on May 2. Bringing Babri Masjid back to the political narrative, Sadhvi Pragya made the controversial remark to a TV channel while campaigning in Bhopal. Asked if the Mandir will be built at Ramjanmbhoomi, she said. "Definitely. A grand one. We will build the temple. After all, we went to demolish the structure."

"I climbed atop the structure to break it. I am tremendously proud that God gave me the opportunity and the strength to do it. And I did it. We wiped off a blot on the country. Now we will build the Ram temple there," she had said.

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# Why a ban on Masood Azhar is important to India

**Masood Azhar is a Pakistani terrorist responsible for some of the worst attacks on India in recent years. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on Wednesday designated him as global terrorist.**

(Agencies)- India's long wait for a United Nations ban on Maulana Masood Azhar, the Pakistani leader of the terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammed, has finally ended. The decision came a day after highly placed sources had told India Today TV that Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar will be "designated" a global terrorist by the UNSC 1267 Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee with China lifting its hold, placed of March 13, on the move sponsored by US, UK and France.

China has repeatedly blocked sanctions on Masood Azhar, 50. China had said on Tuesday that the issue of Azhar's listing as a

global terrorist would be "properly resolved". "I can only say that I believe that this will be properly resolved."

- Geng Shuang, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman

The blacklisting of the man responsible for some of the worst terrorist attacks on India in recent years is a significant diplomatic victory for New Delhi -- one that comes bang in the middle of a general election.

**DEADLY ATTACKS**

The son of a retired schoolteacher, Masood Azhar was arrested in south Kashmir in 1994 but released with two others in 1999, in exchange for passengers aboard a hijacked

Indian Airlines plane.

Azhar then founded Jaish-e-Mohammed, a terrorist group responsible for a number of major attacks on Indian soil, including the suicide bombing that killed dozens of Indian paramilitary personnel in February this year. The military escalation between India and Pakistan that followed brought the two nuclear-armed rivals to the brink of war.

The US, the UK and France asked the UN Security Council's Islamic State and al-Qaeda sanctions committee to blacklist Masood Azhar, but China thwarted the effort.

Jaish-e-Mohammed was also involved -- along with Lashkar-e-



Taiba -- in the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament.

**HECTIC NEGOTIATIONS**

Before March 2019, China, an ally of Pakistan's, blocked UN action against Masood Azhar three times.

Now it appears his blacklisting

is imminent, thanks to sustained efforts made by Indian diplomats and hectic negotiations with Beijing by Washington, London and Paris.

It would be the first time a terrorist is listed by the UN after an attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

# Air India issues gag order, asks employees not to speak to media

**Air India asked its employees not to speak to media and said they will have to take permission from the CMD before offering any reaction on social media.**

(Agencies)- National carrier Air India has issued a gag order for its employees asking them to refrain from speaking to the media, stating that there have been instances where the employees in uniforms have portrayed the company in bad light.

"It has been observed that there are instances where employees have interacted with media or posted videos in uniform in Air

India aircraft, aired views on electronic and social media portraying the company in bad light despite the fact that time and again instructions have been issued advising employees to refrain from doing so," Air India said in a letter to its employees. The letter further states that the employees will have to take permission from the CMD before offering any reaction on social media.

"The employee will make a request through a proper channel which will be processed through personnel department and explicit approval of the CMD will be obtained," the letter read.

"The employee will make a request through a proper channel which will be processed through personnel department and explicit approval of the CMD will be obtained," Air India Director Amrita Sharan said in a



statement. Air India said action would be initiated against employees who violates the order. "It may be noted that any violation of above will be viewed

very seriously and appropriate action as per applicable service regulations. Instructions would be taken against those found violating the same."

# Mayawati attacks Priyanka Gandhi on vote-cut barb

**A day before, Priyanka Gandhi had said the candidates she has picked for UP will either win or cut into the BJP votes.**

(Agencies)- Battleground Uttar Pradesh is witnessing a tricorned contest marked by high political rhetorics. The Bua-Bhatija duo responded sharply to Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's 'weak candidate' comment by accusing Congress of being hand in glove with the BJP.

Former UP CM Akhilesh Yadav hit out at the Congress by saying, "People are not with them...I don't think Congress has fielded weak candidates in UP. There is

no difference between the BJP and Congress. Congress wants to benefit the BJP.

"Who taught the central agencies to intimidate Opposition leaders?" BSP supremo Mayawati also lashed out at the Congress, calling it fake Ambedkarwadi. "Congress is helping BJP... both BJP and Congress are fake Ambedkarwadi... We all saw how Rahul hugged PM in the parliament both parties are in collusion but they will be wiped

out of UP," she said.

A day before, Priyanka Gandhi had said the candidates she has picked for UP will either win or cut into the BJP votes.

Mayawati alleged that there was a tacit understanding between the Congress and the BJP. "Like the BJP, the Congress has started saying absurd things about the SP-BSP alliance. It is clear that both (Congress & BJP) have a tacit understanding and are contesting against our alliance



as united," Mayawati said.

The political slugfest saw the BJP trying to mint the vote cutter row with finance

minister Arun Jaitley saying, "The grand old party of Indian politics is now a fringe organisation, not just in size."

# US Negotiator Ends 2 Days of Afghan Peace Talks in Pakistan

(By Our Staff Reporter)-The U.S. special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, has concluded two days of official discussions in Pakistan on how to advance the Afghan peace process.

Officials said Khalilzad arrived Monday in Islamabad and led delegation-level talks with senior foreign ministry officials before meeting Pakistani military chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and other military leaders. He was accompanied in these meetings by senior State Department diplomat for the region, Alice Wells.

"Ambassador Khalilzad requested and received support for the need to accelerate intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations as well as a reduction in violence, concrete steps necessary for a comprehensive settlement," the U.S. embassy noted Tuesday in a post-visit statement.

The Afghan-born American

diplomat heads a team of U.S. negotiators who have held several rounds of direct negotiations with the Taliban in Qatar since late last summer to encourage the insurgent group engage in Afghan-to-Afghan talks for finding a political settlement to the 17-year-old war in the country. Both sides have acknowledged the dialogue is making a steady progress.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi reiterated Tuesday his country has arranged the U.S.-Taliban dialogue by bringing insurgent leaders to the negotiating table to assist in international efforts to establish a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

"The progress achieved so far as a result of the ongoing peace process is a welcome development," Qureshi told an unofficial meeting of Pakistani and Afghan experts in Islamabad.

"Pakistan has rendered its full support to direct talks between the U.S. and the Taliban. We hope that the

talks ... will lead to a comprehensive intra-Afghan dialogue, which is essential for sustainable peace in Afghanistan," he stressed.

Intra-Afghan meeting An intra-Afghan meeting, involving the Taliban, was scheduled to take place in the Qatari capital of Doha on April 20. But a dispute about who should participate and in what capacity prompted the Taliban to pull out at the last minute.

Qureshi lamented the cancelation of the talks was an unfortunate development. "Intra-Afghan dialogue holds the key to the Afghan peace process. We hope that the meeting will be held at an early date," he said.

The foreign minister, who was out of the country during Khalilzad's presence in Islamabad, noted that in his previous meetings with the U.S. reconciliation envoy, both sides agreed that "we cannot afford to miss this opportunity of peace in Afghanistan."



Pakistan is believed to have again use the country as a long maintained close ties to sanctuary. The chief American allegations insurgent leaders are allowed to use the neighboring country for orchestrating cross-border attacks. Islamabad rejects the charges.

Khalilzad has acknowledged that in his meetings with the Taliban in early March, both sides had drafted a preliminary agreement on how and when U.S.-led foreign troops will withdraw from Afghanistan in return for insurgent assurances that transnational terrorist groups will not be allowed to

again use the country as a sanctuary.

The chief American negotiator, who is scheduled to hold another round of discussions with Taliban representatives in coming days, has linked a final agreement to cessation of hostilities by the Taliban and their participation in intra-Afghan talks.

The Taliban refuses to stop the fighting and insists it will not engage in any Afghan-to-Afghan talks until Washington finalizes and announces a troop drawdown agreement.

## 160,000 year-old remains of human relative found in Tibet: study

(By Our Staff Reporter)- The fossilised remains of an early human cousin found in the mountains of Tibet proves mankind adapted to live at high altitude far earlier than previously thought, scientists said on Wednesday.

A jawbone dating from at least 160,000 years ago of a Denisovan - a now-extinct branch of humanity - is the first of its kind discovered outside of southern Siberia, and experts believe it holds the key to understanding how some modern-day humans have evolved to tolerate low-oxygen conditions.

Contemporaries of the Neanderthals - and like them, possibly wiped out by anatomically modern man, Homo sapiens - the Denisovans first came to light a decade ago. Their existence was determined through a piece of finger bone and two molars unearthed at the Denisova Cave in southern Siberia's Altai Mountains and dated to some 80,000 years ago. But the new remains -

discovered in passing by a local monk nearly thirty years ago - has led researchers to conclude that Denisovans were far more numerous, and far older, than previously thought.

"To have beings, even if a little archaic, living at 3,300 metres (11,000 feet) on the Tibetan plateau 160,000 years ago... That's something that no one could have imagined until today," said Jean-Jacques Hublin, director of the Max Planck Institute's Department of Human Evolution.

The bone, found in the Baishiya Karst Cave in Xiahe, China, was donated by the monk to a local museum, before scientists set about analysing its composition. It was so old no DNA could be extracted. But Hublin and his team used the latest protein analysis to date one of its teeth and to link it genetically to Denisovan specimens found in Siberia. "From my point of view it's confirmation of a working hypothesis I've had for a while: Nearly all Chinese and east Asian

(hominin) fossils between 350,000-50,000 years ago are probably Denisovan," said Hublin, lead author of the study published in Nature.

'Extraordinary' A recent research paper suggested that humans only reached the

Tibetan plateau - a vast area of mountainous terrain north of the Himalayas - around 40,000 years ago. "Here we have something that's four times older," said Hublin. "It's absolutely extraordinary." The jawbone discovery also solves a riddle that has troubled anthropologists for years. In 2015 researchers found that ethnic Tibetans and Han Chinese living at altitude had buried in their genetic code an unusual variant of a gene, EPAS1,



which regulates haemoglobin, the molecule that hauls oxygen around the blood. At high altitude, common variants of the gene overproduce haemoglobin and red blood cells, causing the blood to become thick and sludgy - a cause of hypertension, low birthweight and infant mortality. But the variant found in Tibetans increases production by much less, thus averting hypoxia problems experienced by many people who relocate to places above 4,000 metres

in altitude. The mutation is nearly identical to that found in the DNA of Denisovans discovered in Siberia - at an altitude of less than 700 metres. "That was something that no one really understood, because the Denisovans weren't known to live at altitude, so they didn't really need that gene to survive," said Hublin. "Now we know why. It's not the DNA from Denisovans from (Siberia), it's the DNA from the Denisovans of Tibet."

# Sri Lanka mistook Indian alert as bid to create rift with Islamabad

**Sri Lankan officials alleged Delhi was trying to pit Colombo against Pak by citing Islamic terror activity.**

(Agencies)- Sri Lanka had refused to pay heed to India's alert on possible suicide attacks and the involvement of extremists based on its belief that New Delhi is trying to pit Colombo against Pakistan by pointing fingers at the island's Muslim community. Senior Lankan officials (defence secretary and police chief who have now been sacked) had claimed that India is trying to instigate Colombo against Islamabad by proposing counter-terror operations among the minority community in the island nation, sources told ET from Colombo on the

condition of anonymity. But this Easter Sunday, suicide bombers killed at least 253 people and injured some 500 at churches and top-end hotels across Sri Lanka, leaving the nation stunned. It is no secret that Sri Lanka had maintained cordial relations with Pakistan for decades that also saw ISI officers supporting the Lankan Army in its fight against the LTTE. ISI, the intelligence wing of the Pakistani Army, had become active through Pakistan's High Commission in Colombo when Mahinda Rajapaksa

was in power as the Lankan Army was seeking support to crush the LTTE. ISI, allegedly, was recruiting from the minority community in Lanka. It may be recalled that Lanka had allowed Pakistan Air Forcerefuelling facilities during the 1971 War. Sri Lanka does not want to be dragged into what it claims "India-led alliance" against Pakistan and felt that India is raising a bogey against Islamabad by claiming that Lanka could face suicide attacks, one of the above-mentioned sources claimed. The Lankan security apparatus was also apparently casual



with the Indian alert as they did not comprehend any threat from jihadists after defeating the LTTE, the above-mentioned person.

The Lankan government

had been warned for the past couple of years to crack down against extremist elements but the political leadership feared that any such step will alienate the community.

The Lankan political leadership was extremely cautious of any move that will pit Buddhists against Muslims and thereby disturb the communal harmony of the nation.

## After Yeti claim, new chapter added in Nepali folklore

**Daniel C Taylor, who has extensively explored the Makalu-Barun area and written a book on the mystery of the Yeti, told Reuters after the Indian Army's tweet on Tuesday that the footprints were likely those of bears. "If that is the footprint of an animal or a single animal, it's the size of a dinosaur," he added.**

(Agencies)-The Army's tweet on Monday night saying one of its mountaineering teams recently sighted the "mysterious footprints" of the Yeti has added to the Nepali lore about the "mythical beast". Many mountaineers and locals have contributed to it in the past.

The Army said the "elusive snowman has only been sighted at the Makalu-Barun National Park in the past". The remark appeared to



refer to footprints British explorer Eric Shipton sighted in 1951 near Mount Everest.

Tales of the big mythical beast, which people in Nepal say could be living in the Himalayas, have been shared across the world since the 1920s.

Many including mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary have launched

expeditions to search for the creature. In 1960, he went on an expedition to a location situated along the Nepal-China border, but nothing came out of the mission.

"Sir Edmund Hillary and Mr Desmond Doig, who have

been on a Yeti-hunting expedition in Nepal, arrived in London by air yesterday with the scalp of what is believed in Khumjung village to be a Yeti," the Guardian wrote in an article published in December 1960. It was later established that the scalp did not belong to the mythical beast.

In 1937, English mountaineer

Frank Smythe took photographs of big footprints in the snow near Nepal's Mount Makalu.

The footprints were examined and experts found that they belonged to a bear, an animal

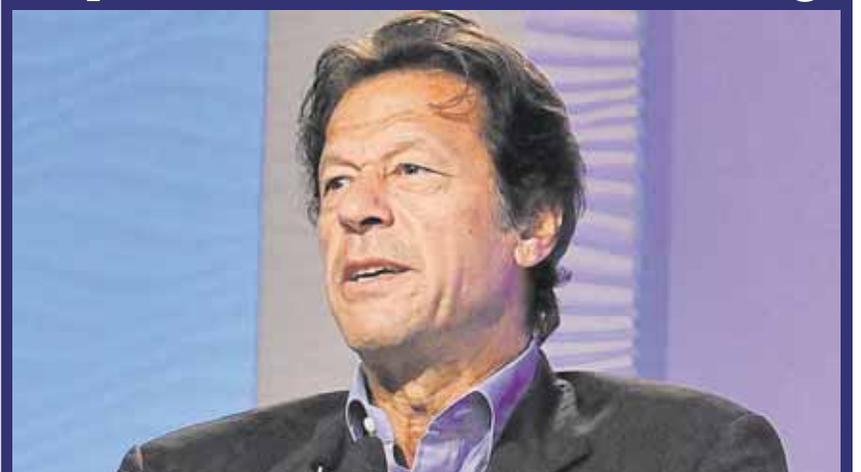
that is found in the region and has often fuelled the Yeti lore.

Daniel C Taylor, who has written a book on the mystery of the Yeti, told news agency Reuters on Tuesday that the

footprints the Army reported were likely those of bears. "If that is the footprint of an animal or a single animal, it is the size of a dinosaur," he added.

Several other scientists have written the creature off as a centuries-old myth originating in Tibet, with forensic results of previous samples proving to be from bears.

## US looks to Pak PM Imran Khan to implement Masood Azhar's listing



(By Our Staff Reporter)- The US said on Wednesday the designation of Jaish-e-Mohammad leader Masood Azhar by the United Nations was a demonstration of the "international commitment to rooting out terrorism in Pakistan", quashing relief in Islamabad that it had scored a victory by dodging mention as an accomplice. The United States, the chief sponsor and driver of the designation, also sought to tie the implementation of the listing - imposing a travel ban, assets freeze and arms sales embargo on Azhar - to Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's stated commitment to eradicating terrorism, seemingly holding him personally accountable for it. "Designating Azhar demonstrates the international commitment to rooting out terrorism in Pakistan and bringing security and stability to South Asia," Garrett

Marquis, a spokesperson for the US National Security Council said in a statement Wednesday, in the first and only on-record official comment on the listing. Marquis also directly linked Azhar to the February 14 killing of 40 CRPF personnel, pointedly perhaps to counter those making too much of the non-mention of Pulwama, Kashmir or Pakistan in the UNSC statement on the designation and the "narrative summary" released by the 1267 sanction committee for listing. "The United States commends the United Nations Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee for the designation of Masood Azhar, the leader of Jaish-e Mohammed, a UN-designated terrorist group that was responsible for the February 14 terrorist attack in Kashmir that killed over 40 Indian paramilitary forces," he said.



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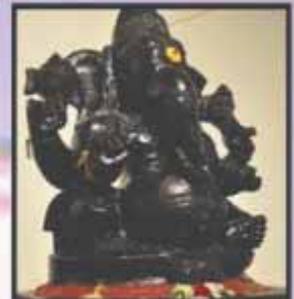
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## Anti-Semitic attacks rise worldwide in 2018, led by U.S., west Europe: study

there was also evidence of anti-Semitism going more mainstream. "Anti-Semitism is no longer an issue confined to the activity of the far left, far right and radical Islamists triangle - it has mainstreamed and became an integral part of life," the report said. It catalogued 387 anti-Semitic attacks worldwide and cited among the causes growing fears in Europe and elsewhere linked to mass immigration, economic

hardship and opposition to Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. Physical attacks, with or without weapons, arson, vandalism and direct threats against Jews, synagogues and other Jewish institutions were included in the overall figure, with over 100 cases occurring in the United States.

### "STATE OF EMERGENCY"

Those incidents included the deadliest attack ever against Jews on U.S. soil, in which a gunman

who stormed the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh yelling: "All Jews must die," killed 11 Jewish worshippers on Oct. 27. "The most disturbing development, that keeps continuing and intensifying since 2016, is that Jews in some countries feel they live in a state of emergency, because of the continuing rise, most notably in Western Europe and North America, in anti-Semitic While far-right supporters often

see Jews as "a cosmopolitan foreign agent" threatening national identity, far-left groups sometimes blame Jews for economic uncertainties and tensions caused by globalisation.

In Britain, where 68 anti-Semitic attacks took place, the study blamed the impact of Brexit - which has helped fuel a rise in xenophobic nationalism - and what it called "virulent anti-Semitic opinions, disguised as anti-Zionism" expressed by the leader of the

main opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. "For the first time in their long history British Jews, who feel they lost their political home, question their future in

Britain," it said.

Corbyn denies being anti-Semitic. The report said France, home to Europe's largest Jewish community, had seen a 74 percent rise in violent anti-Semitism and Germany a 70 percent increase.

## 'Brief the boss': The backstory of Masood Azhar's global terror tag

Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar was on Wednesday designated a global terrorist by the UN after China withdrew its long-standing block to the move, marking a major diplomatic and political victory in the Indian government's efforts to counter cross-border terrorism.

Azhar was listed by the UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee for his association with al-Qaeda and his role in financing,

planning and facilitating terrorist acts by the JeM, shortly after officials announced in Islamabad that Pakistan would no longer object to his designation - a sign to iron brother China to lift the "technical hold" it had placed on four attempts to sanction Azhar. Hindustan Times first reported on Tuesday that China was expected to lift its hold on listing Azhar at the UN on May 1.

Following the designation, Pakistan will be required to take three steps - freeze the funds and

financial assets of Azhar, enforce a travel ban on him, and cut off his access to arms and related materials.

At 6.30 pm IST, India's permanent representative to the UN, Syed Akbaruddin, informed Sanjeev Singla, private secretary to PM, about the listing and asked him to "brief the boss". Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been inquiring about the matter since morning, he could not be directly informed by Singla as the premier was in the

midst of an election rally.

Singla is believed to have informed National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, who rushed to the PMO from Sardar Patel Bhawan and informed Modi of the development on a secure line.

Shortly after the February 14 suicide attack in Pulwama that killed 40 Indian troopers and was claimed by JeM, France, with the backing of the US and the UK, moved a proposal at the 1267 Sanctions Committee to sanction 50-year-old Azhar. After

a 10-day period to consider the matter, China blocked the proposal on March 13 by saying more time was needed to discuss the issue. This angered the US, which threatened to take the matter to the UN Security Council, where discussions are held in public, unlike consultations held behind closed doors by the sanctions committee. The heavy lifting was done by the US as it wanted the terrorist tag for Azhar during consultations on April 23, but

## UN decision to declare Masood Azhar a global terrorist big success for India: PM Modi

The move seems to be a success on India's part for seeking justice for the terror attack in Pulwama for which JeM had claimed full responsibility.

As soon as India's permanent representative to UN Syed Akbaruddin made the announcement, many leaders declared it as a huge diplomatic victory for India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the United Nations (UN) decision to declare Masood Azhar as a global terrorist was a big success for India's efforts to root out terrorism and proved that the country's voice could no longer be ignored on the global stage.

"Today is a day that would make every Indian proud! I thank the global community and all those who believe in humanitarian values for their support. India's fight against terror will continue. We will work towards peace and brotherhood in our planet," PM Modi said.

Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman also gave credit to PM Modi's leadership for UN's decision against Masood Azhar.

In a tweet, Nirmala Sitharaman

said, "India's diplomacy succeeds in making the global community declare Masood Azhar a terrorist. The untiring effort of PMO India pays dividend. India is safe under PM Narendra Modi's leadership. Great work, Minister Sushma Swaraj."

BJP MP MJ Akbar also took to Twitter to praise PM Modi and said, "Finally terrorists who wound India are getting terrified. Our country has PM Modi who seeks them in their sanctuaries.

As he said, the international victory in hunt for terrorist Masood Azhar is only the beginning. The era of Congress weakness and vacillation is over." BJP spokesperson Ram Madhav wrote a long post on UN's decision against Masood Azhar and said that the credit went to "doggedness" of the Modi government. In a Facebook post, Ram Madhav attacked the Opposition and said, "People of India are naturally rejoiced over this success. I am sure the Opposition leaders too feel the same way. Last time when China blocked the decision, the Congress president, in

stead of criticising China, used the opportunity to attack PM Modi."

However, Opposition leaders felt differently about the decision in India's favour and condemned PM Modi for making a compromise in the matter.

While the move was initiated for the fourth time since 2009 after the dastardly Pulwama terror attack in Kashmir that killed 40 CRPF soldiers on February 14, the incident did not figure in the final document that has been put up on the website.

It is learned that tough negotiations between India, China and Pakistan led to the removal of Pulwama reference in the application since the initial application by US, UK, and France was cosponsored on the premise of the recent terror attack.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said, "Like the UP cop who went 'thain, thain' because his gun stopped working; PM Modi delivers only cosmetic and no tangible actions in our fight against terror. JeM was already a designated group."

## Now Amit Shah predicts Mamata's fall

"Didi, on May 23, when the results will be declared, the lotus will bloom everywhere and your MLAs will leave you. Even today, Didi, 40 of your MLAs are in contact with me," the PM said, sparking opposition accusations of horse-trading. Seen as the closest lieutenant of the Prime Minister, the BJP president indicated the West Bengal Chief Minister could be heading into a political crisis. "It's her job to save her government. It's her job to keep her flock of MLAs together," Shah said, accusing Banerjee of plunging West Bengal into lawlessness. "The MLAs can see the public outrage. It's not against them. It's against Mamataji and her nephew, her goondas," charged Shah. Prodded if he also thought that the TMC government might fall, the BJP leader warned its survival would become "impossible" after the results from the May 23 vote count.

"I don't want to get into any analysis but the mandate that is about to come would make it impossible for Mamataji to keep the TMC intact after that," Shah claimed. He rebutted opposition accusations of horse-trading, terming them an "insult" to the people of West Bengal. "Is this horse-trading?" he asked, pointing to crowds at his

Howrah rally. "She's insulting the people of West Bengal. Are these people indulging in horse-trading? Hundreds of thousands of them are attending the PM's rallies. Is that horse-trading?"

Undeterred by the TMC's complaint to the Election Commission over the Prime Minister's MLA warning, the BJP president accused the West Bengal CM of using undemocratic means to silence dissent.

"Our helicopters are not allowed to fly (in West Bengal). My helicopter was delayed by an hour. She has deployed all sorts of undemocratic means," Shah alleged.

He expressed the confidence that the BJP would be able to secure a majority of Lok Sabha seats in the TMC-ruled West Bengal, insisting the Mamata Banerjee government has caused disaffection among the state's voters.

"West Bengal has been consigned to intruders, goondas and syndicates," he alleged.

The BJP chief sought to defend the Modi government against opposition charges that the Centre has failed to deliver on the economic front.

At the same time, he stood firm on his party's national-security plank, saying its tough policy has produced effective results.



The SP bastion voted on April 23, in the third phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha election, and prior to that BSP leader was in Mainpuri to canvass for Mulayam. Hailing Mulayam as the asli, vastavik, janam jatiya pichhre varg ka leader (real, original, natural-born backward class leader), Mayawati called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a nakli, farzi (false, fraud) backward class leader, accusing him of co-opting his Modh-Ganchi caste into the backward class list when he was the chief minister of Gujarat. Mulayam doesn't exactly need Mayawati to campaign for him in Mainpuri. The SP has won the constituency six times in a row, four times under Mulayam. With Yadavs making up almost 35 per cent of its voters, Rajputs 20 per cent and the Dalits, Brahmins, Shakyas and Muslims forming the other dominant groups, the BJP has never been able to win Mainpuri. Even during the 2014 Modi wave, Mulayam won his seat with a record margin. What, then, is the significance of Mayawati campaigning for Mulayam in the SP pocket borough? The Mayawati-Mulayam reunion is a historic moment aligning the leaders of two communities that have been oppressed for long, says SP national secretary Abhishek Mishra. The coming together of former rivals has led to the emergence of a powerful vikalp (alternative) in Uttar Pradesh. The historic alliance of two arch-rivals is to counter the formidable consolidation of the BJP in UP. The party had won 71 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in 2014 with ally Apna Dal bagging another two. Led by Modi, BJP's sweep in a state that sends the maximum number of MPs to the Lok Sabha propelled it to a famous majority in Parliamentsomething no party had achieved since the decisive mandate the Congress won in 1984. The BJP's win had also reduced the SP and BSP to marginal players in the state. For both the SP and BSP,

agenda but also force them to bow to coalition compulsions. For the Congress, too, which had been reduced to irrelevance in 2014, the stakes are as high. Apart from party president Rahul Gandhi retaining his seat in Amethi, his bold (some say desperate) bid to propel sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to centre stage in UP will be put to test. The real threat to the BJP in its citadel, though, is the unlikely alliance between the SP and BSP.

**ALLIANCE OF ALTERNATIVES**  
The alliance may have been formalised on January 12, 2019, but it was cemented the day the SP-BSP-RLD won the Gorakhpur, Phulpur and Kairana Lok Sabha constituencies in the 2018 byelections. The results were the first major setback to the BJP after the spectacular wins in 2014 and 2017, as Gorakhpur is UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath's constituency and Phulpur that of deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya.

Once the alliance was announced, posters of SP leader Akhilesh Yadav in a red cap and black sleeveless jacket and Mayawati in trademark salwar kurta sprung up all across UP. If one poster proclaimed "Satya pareshan ho sakta hai, parajit nahin" (Truth can be troubled, but not defeated), another goes "Hamare paas gathbandhan hai, BJP ke paas CBI" (we have the alliance, BJP the CBI). A third bua-bhatija (aunt-nephew) poster declares, "Hamara kaam bolta hai, BJP ka jhooth bolta hai" (Our work does the talking, BJP's lies speak).

In 2019, the seats have been distributed among the alliance partners according to each party's relative advantage in the electoral map of the state. The BSP bagged the predominant share in Paschimabad (western UP) and Purvanchal (northeastern UP). The SP ended up with more seats in the Doab belt. The RLD has three seats Mathura, Baghpat and Muzaffarnagar in the Jat-dominated western UP. Being the party representing Dalits, the BSP is contesting from 10 seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes; the SP has seven.

## UP for grabs: Uttar Pradesh will be the real kingmaker in the Lok Sabha polls

The SP, on the other hand, has fielded members of the Yadav family Akhilesh from Azamgarh, his wife Dimple from Kannauj, cousin Akshay (son of Ramgopal Yadav) from Firozabad where he faces uncle Shivpal who has formed the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia (PSP-L), Mulayam from Mainpuri and firebrand leader Azam Khan from Rampur where he is locked in contest with former Bollywood actor Jaya Prada, who has been fielded by the BJP.

After the first two phases of the Lok Sabha election, the SP-BSP-RLD alliance seems to have done well in the sugarcane, brass and furniture belt of western UP, dominated by the Dalits, Muslims, Jats and Yadav, who form the core constituency of the alliance.

**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**  
Until the alliance emerged as an alternative, everyone in Lucknow talked of only one phenomenon hawa, wind or, more precisely, which way it was blowing. Let's just call it the bhagwa (saffron) hawa and/or the Modi hawa, but the tailwinds that propel the future of political parties favoured one man, one party, one colour, one ideology in the past five

years. Large billboards depicting Prime Minister Modi flanked by the saffron-robed Yogi Adityanath, chief minister of UP, and the bespectacled state BJP president Mahendra Nath Pandey dot UP's political landscape. The significance of UP for the BJP in 2019 can be gauged from the fact that the PM kickstarted his campaign for 2019 with a rally in Meerut in west UP because the revolutionary city of Meerut was the pioneer of the first war of Indian independence in 1857. In June 2018, Modi had inaugurated the 14-lane Delhi-Meerut Expressway, the widest of NHAI projects. Never tired of highlighting his achievements', he boasted how Meerut will soon be part of Delhi-NCR. From the same podium, he dismissed the mahagathbandhan as a mahamilavat (grand adulteration). To which Akhilesh retorted that the alliance was for mahaparivartan (grand transformation).

In 2014, the BJP's 71 seats in UP accounted for 25 per cent of its 282 seats in the Lok Sabha. This year, apart from Modi contesting from Varanasi and home minister Rajnath Singh from Lucknow, other key political

leaders contesting on BJP tickets include cabinet ministers Satyapal Singh from Baghpat, Mahesh Sharma from Gautam Buddh Nagar and former army chief and Union minister V.K. Singh from Ghaziabad. Union minister of state Manoj Sinha is fighting from Ghazipur, and former Bollywood actresses Hema Malini and Jaya Prada from Mathura and Rampur respectively.

The BJP's strategy in 2019 is four-fold: Hindu consolidation across castes, highlighting the pro-poor initiatives and promises of the Modi government, large-scale mobilisation of voters, especially first-time and women voters and, finally, to foreground a belligerent, tit-for-tat nationalism over economic considerations, where the government's performance has been unconvincing.

Consider the BJP's strategy of Hindu consolidation across castes. Traditionally, the bulk of the party's core vote bank came from the upper castes: Brahmins, Banias, Bhumihars, Kayasthas and Thakurs.

## Afghan airmen went missing in US : Program to train Afghan attack pilots in the US disbanded

The attack pilots were being trained to fly the AC-208 Combat Caravan. The second and third classes will finish the rest of their training in Afghanistan, according to Air Force Times. SIGAR said it does not know whether the AWOL pilots, who were being trained in Fort Worth at Meacham Airport, were ever found. DailyMail.com has reached out to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement for comment.

While the figures may be striking, this is not an uncommon phenomenon with foreign military trainees. Taliban hitmen frequently target the highly-qualified Afghan attack pilots. And SIGAR revealed in 2017 that nearly half of the 320 foreign military trainees that have gone AWOL while training in the US since 2005 were from Afghanistan. Of those 152 AWOL Afghan trainees, 83 either fled the US after going AWOL or remain unaccounted for. Many also

claim asylum after being apprehended, such as the first female Afghan pilot - who was receiving frequent death threats. SIGAR also revealed this week that Afghanistan may not be ready for peace unless it finds a way to reintegrate Taliban fighters into society, combat corruption, and rein in the country's runaway narcotics problem. The students that did not go AWOL were pulled back to Afghanistan to complete their training. Pictured is the 438th Air Expeditionary Wing, which assistants Afghanistan with developing an Air Force in Kabul. Over the past months, the US has stepped up efforts to find a peaceful resolution to Afghanistan's 17-year war and has been holding talks with a resurgent Taliban. The insurgents, however, refuse to negotiate with the Kabul government, which they consider a US puppet. The Taliban also continue to stage near-daily attacks, inflicting staggering casualties, and now

control about half the country. 'No matter how welcome peace would be, it can carry with it the seeds of unintended and unforeseen consequences,' John Sopko, head of SIGAR, said in the report. The war has already cost America \$737 billion, according to the Pentagon. On reconstruction alone, the US has spent \$132 billion since 2002, much of that to train and equip Afghan security forces, as well as strengthen government institutions, provide education and better health care, said Sopko. But the gains are fragile, Sopko said, and solutions are needed to the country's increasing insecurity, 'endemic corruption, weak Afghan institutions, the insidious impact of the narcotics trade, and inadequate coordination and oversight by donors.' (Originally reported by DAILYMAIL.COM REPORTER and ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORTER)



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# 2 dead, 4 injured in US? university campus shooting

(Insider Bureau)- The shooting prompted a lockdown at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and caused panic across campus as students sheltered in place.

A man armed with a pistol opened fire on students in a classroom building at a North Carolina university during the last day of classes Tuesday, killing two people and wounding four others, police said. Officers who had gathered ahead of a campus concert raced over and disarmed the suspect in the room where the shooting happened.

The shooting prompted a lockdown at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and caused panic across campus as students sheltered in place.

Campus Police Chief Jeff Baker said authorities received a call around 4:40 p.m. that a suspect armed with a pistol had shot several students. He said officers assembling nearby for a concert rushed to the scene, where they apprehended the male suspect. Authorities did not immediately release the suspect's identity.

"Our officers' actions definitely saved lives," Baker said at a news conference. He said two people were killed, and three

remained in critical condition late Tuesday. He said a fourth person's injuries were less serious.

Monfia Drayton, an adjunct professor, was walking onto campus when she heard the shots ring out. She said she began urging students fleeing the danger to go into a parking deck for cover.

"I heard one final gunshot and I saw all the children running toward me," she said. "We started to get all the children pulled into the second floor of the parking deck and the rationale was if we're in the parking deck and there's a shooter and we don't know where he is, he won't have a clear shot."

She added: "My thought was, I've lived my life, I've had a really good life, so, these students deserve the same. And so, whatever I could do to help any child to safety, that's what I was going to do." Antonio Rodriguez, 24, who was visiting campus for his friend's art show, described a chaotic scene. "Just loud bangs. A couple loud bangs and then we just saw everyone run out of the building, like nervous, like a scared run like they were looking behind," he said. Shortly after



UNC Charlotte issued a campus lockdown, aerial shots from local television news outlets showed police officers running toward a building, while another view showed students running on a campus sidewalk. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department later said that the campus had been secured and that officers were going through buildings to let people who had sheltered in place know that it was safe. The university has more than 26,500 students and 3,000 faculty and staff. The campus is located northeast of

the city center and is surrounded by residential areas. Spenser Gray, a junior, said she was in a campus building near where the shooting happened watching another student's presentation when they were alerted to the shooting. "During his presentation which was on one of the campus computers, a popup came up ... that there was an active shooter," she said, adding that she immediately felt panic and worried the gunman could come to her classroom. "We had no idea where he was ... so we were just expecting them at any

moment coming into the classroom." Susan Harden, an UNCC professor and Mecklenburg County Commissioner, was at home when she heard of the shooting. She went to a staging area, she said, to provide support. Harden said she has taught inside the Kennedy building, where the shootings occurred. "It breaks my heart. We're torn up about what's happened," Harden said. "Students should be able to learn in peace and in safety and professors ought to be able to do their jobs in safety."

## Japan's new Emperor Naruhito ascends Chrysanthemum Throne

**Naruhito officially became emperor at the stroke of midnight but the process was formalised with a brief ritual on Wednesday morning that was off-limits to female royals -- even his wife Masako.**

(Insider Bureau)- Japan's new Emperor Naruhito formally ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne on Wednesday, a day after his father abdicated from the world's oldest monarchy and ushered in a new imperial era. Naruhito officially became emperor at the stroke of midnight but the process was formalised with a brief ritual on Wednesday morning that was off-limits to female royals -- even his wife Masako.

The emperor entered the Imperial Palace's Pine Room in formal Western clothing, including a heavy gold chain of office, accompanied by male family members including his brother Akishino.

The 59-year-old was presented with the items his father Akihito relinquished a day earlier: sacred imperial treasures of a sword and

a jewel, as well as the seal of state and his personal imperial seal.

The sole woman invitee allowed to attend was the only female member of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet.

The ceremony took place on the first day of the new imperial era of Reiwa, meaning "beautiful harmony", which will last throughout Naruhito's reign.

Shortly afterwards, Empress Masako arrived by car at the palace in a diamond-studded tiara to join Naruhito for his first address to the nation as its 126th emperor.

He will also make a public appearance on Saturday when he will again speak to the people of Japan.

But the pomp and ceremony will wait until October 22 when he and Masako will appear in elaborate

traditional robes for a ceremony in the palace before parading through the streets of the capital to be congratulated by a host of world leaders and royals.

Naruhito will greet his first foreign head of state as emperor later this month, when US President Donald Trump visits Japan to meet the new monarch.

Balancing act

The Oxford-educated Naruhito faces the delicate balancing act of continuing his father's legacy of bringing the monarchy closer to the people while upholding the centuries-old traditions of the Chrysanthemum Throne.

Like his popular father Akihito, he has warned of the need to remember World War II "correctly," without downplaying Japan's early 20th-century militarism.



He has also spoken of the need to modernise the royal family, and vowed when he married Masako -- who left behind a promising diplomatic career -- to protect her "at any cost". She has struggled however to adjust to palace life, including being subjected to enormous pressure to produce a male heir, and has suffered stress-induced "adjustment disorder" for much of their marriage. The couple have one child, a 17-year-old daughter called Aiko, who cannot inherit the throne

because she is female.

In a statement released on her birthday in December, Masako pledged to do her best despite feeling "insecure" about becoming empress.

In the candid statement, she said she was recovering and could "perform more duties than before", crediting the "powerful support" of the public.

Naruhito is ascending the throne in a very different Japan to the one his father took over when he became emperor in 1989.

## 'Iran to keep exporting crude oil despite U.S. pressure,' says President Hassan Rouhani

**Oil prices hit their highest since November last week after Washington said all waivers for sanctions-hit Iranian oil would end this week, pressuring importers to stop buying from Tehran and further tightening global supply.**

(Insider Bureau)- Iran will continue to export oil despite U.S. pressure aimed at reducing the nation's crude oil shipments to zero, Iran President Hassan Rouhani said in a speech broadcast live on Iranian state TV on Tuesday.

"America's decision that Iran's oil exports must reach zero is a wrong and

mistaken decision, and we won't let this decision be executed and operational" Rouhani said.

"In future months, the Americans themselves will see that we will continue our oil exports," he said.

If the United States is able to stop one method for Iran to export oil, then it will find other ways, Rouhani said. Oil prices hit their highest

since November last week after Washington said all waivers for sanctions-hit Iranian oil would end this week, pressuring importers to stop buying from Tehran and further tightening global supply. [O/R]

The United States demanded last Monday that buyers of Iranian oil stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, ending



six months of waivers that had allowed Iran's eight biggest customers, most of

them in Asia, to continue importing limited volumes. Ordinary Iranians are the ones who feel the pressure from U.S. sanctions, Rouhani said.

## America is running out of Impossible Burgers

(Insider Bureau)- There's real demand for fake meat. Interest in Impossible Foods' plant-based meat alternative is growing so much that the company is struggling to keep up, the company said Tuesday.

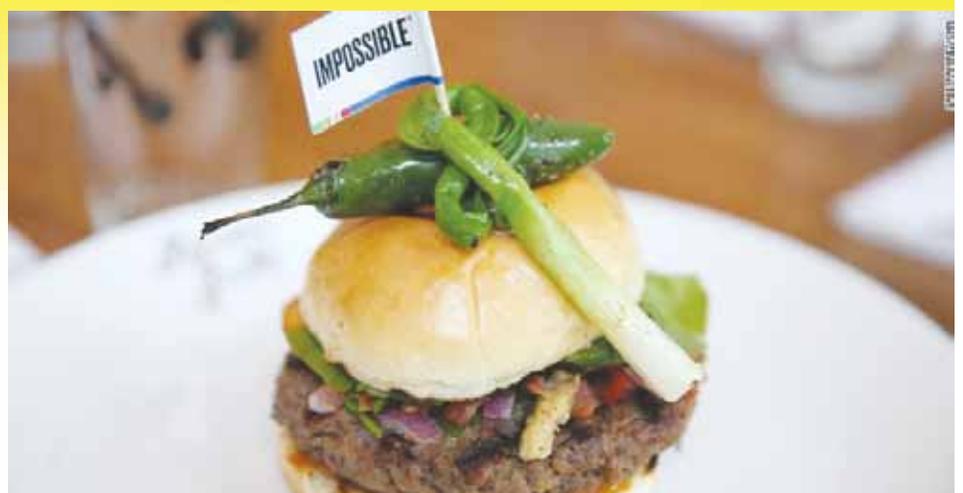
The acknowledgment comes just after the company expanded its partnership with Burger King. Earlier this week, the fast food chain shared that it plans to sell the meatless patty as a Whopper at all of its US locations by the end of the year. Restaurant Brands International, which owns Burger King, said a St. Louis test of the Impossible Whopper went "exceedingly well." That

nationwide rollout would essentially double the amount of restaurants that Impossible works with.

Burger King had about 7,300 locations nationwide at the close of last year. Right now, Impossible supplies its product to about 7,000 restaurants.

On top of that, demand for Impossible products within those 7,000 locations has more than doubled, Impossible Foods CFO David Lee told CNN Business. The company also said it's been stretched thin because of growth from "every sales category where Impossible Foods does business," including small restaurants,

other chains, like White Castle, and attractions, like theme parks and college campuses. In a statement, Impossible said that it "recognizes the inconvenience that this shortage is causing and sincerely apologizes to all customers, particularly those who have come to depend on the additional foot traffic and revenue that the Impossible Burger has generated." Impossible added that it is not facing a shortage of the ingredients it uses to make the plant-based meat. "We are facing short-term ramp-up challenges resulting from demand greatly outstripping supply," it



said. To keep up with demand, Impossible is increasing the number of hours its Oakland, California, plant is open. It's also hiring for a planned third shift. And it is installing a second production line that

the company says "should double current capacity." Lee said he is confident that Impossible will ultimately be able to meet the demand. The company is "not sparing any expense" to keep up, Lee told CNN

Business. "We absolutely will continue fundraising." Until the shortage is resolved, Impossible is encouraging its fans to call ahead to see if their restaurant has the meat in stock.

## WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange sentenced by London court to 50 weeks in jail for skipping bail

**Julian Assange faces another hearing in the extradition case at the Westminster Magistrates Court on Thursday brought by United States, where he is wanted to face charges of breaching secrecy laws.**

(Insider Bureau)- WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was sentenced by a London court to 50 weeks in jail for breaching bail conditions, after he submitted a letter to the court, apologising to those who "consider I've disrespected them".

The sentence at the Southwark Crown Court was about Assange's bail conditions, while he faces another hearing in the extradition case at the Westminster Magistrates Court on Thursday brought

by United States, where he is wanted to face charges of breaching secrecy laws. Assange, 47, was found guilty of breaching bail laws after his arrest at the Ecuadorian Embassy on April 11. He took refuge in the country's London embassy in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden over sexual assault allegations, which he has denied.

In the letter read to the court, Assange said he had found himself "struggling with difficult circumstances", adding "I

did what I thought at the time was the best or perhaps the only thing that I could have done."

Judge Deborah Taylor set out three features of the case that make it "exceptional in seriousness".

She told Assange: "Firstly, by entering the Embassy, you deliberately put yourself out of reach, whilst remaining in the UK. You remained there for nearly 7 years, exploiting your privileged position to flout the law and advertise

internationally your disdain for the law of this country. Your actions undoubtedly affected the progress of the Swedish proceedings".

"Even though you did cooperate initially, it was not for you to decide the nature or extent of your cooperation with the investigations. They could not be effectively progressed, and were discontinued, not least because you remained in the Embassy".

"Secondly, your continued residence in the Embassy has necessitated a concentration of resources, and expenditure of £16 million of taxpayers' money in ensuring that



when you did leave, you were brought to justice. It is essential to the rule of law that nobody is above or beyond the reach of the law. Orders of the Court are to be obeyed.

"Thirdly, you have not surrendered willingly. Had the Government of Ecuador not permitted entry to the

Embassy, you would not have voluntarily come before the court".

Assange arrived at the court from the Belmarsh prison, as photographers and reports saw him defiantly pumping his fist. The sentence of 50 weeks is the maximum imposed under Britain's bail laws.

# Modi's war chest leaves India election rivals in the dust

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is flush with cash, giving his Hindu nationalist bloc a massive advantage over the main opposition Congress party as he seeks to win a second term in India's general election. Opaque campaign financing in the world's largest democracy makes it tricky to get a full picture of money in politics here. But current and former BJP supporters, opposition politicians, businessmen and activists interviewed by Reuters say Modi has an unprecedented advantage, thanks to support from businesses and expectations he will be the winner.

Staggered voting in the general election is currently in progress across India, with results to be declared on May 23.

The BJP war chest has allowed it to unleash a massive amount of advertising on social media and send Modi and party officials crisscrossing India to campaign. The ruling party has showered money on Facebook and Google advertisements, spending six times more than Congress since February, according to data from the two firms. Modi merchandise

abounds, as do Modi marketing sites.

The money puts the BJP in an extraordinarily powerful position, even over logistical issues like how to get its leaders to election rallies.

A Congress official said the BJP had the funds to reserve most of India's fleet of helicopters for hire for 90 days, making it difficult for opponents to get hold of them. "We have never ever seen an election with such disparity. Financially, we cannot compete with them," said another veteran Congress politician, who asked to remain anonymous.

He and another high-ranking Congress official said they expected the BJP to outspend them by a factor of ten. A third Congress source estimated the disparity at twice that.

Two BJP officials declined to provide an estimate of spending, but one said the "BJP definitely has a big war chest and has more funds at its disposal than the Congress."

Congress has received far fewer funds because of a perception it is unlikely to win the election, political strategists said. The opposition party has been hampered by its inability to forge

a national alliance to take on Modi and has struggled to capitalise on discontent against the BJP over a lack of jobs and distressed farm incomes.

Modi has been topping polls as India's most popular politician, well ahead of Congress President Rahul Gandhi.

## LONG ELECTION

Money has become critical in elections given the country's 1.3 billion population, its voting over 39 days and the sheer complexity of the electorate, in terms of region, religion, language, and caste.

A tradition of doling out freebies to sway voters only adds to costs. Authorities say they have seized goods and cash worth about \$456 million since March 26. "This war chest gives the BJP significant advantages," said Milan Vaishnav, director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's South Asia programme. "Money is useful for wooing voters but also for keeping networks of party workers and influencers well lubricated."

Parliamentary candidates' expenditure is capped at up to 7 million Indian rupees (about \$100,000), but the limit is widely



flouted, and political parties are allowed to spend freely.

The New Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies (CMS) estimates almost \$8.6 billion will be spent on this year's vote, roughly twice the 2014 election.

The figure would surpass OpenSecrets.org's estimate that \$6.5 billion was spent in the 2016 U.S. presidential and congressional elections.

Recent reforms under Modi may have fueled the spending spree: Companies can fund parties anonymously through new 'electoral bonds' and they no longer face a donations cap. Activists say that gives corporations too much sway and obscures ties between politicians and businessmen. About 95 percent of electoral bonds

snapped up in a first tranche offering last year went to the BJP, according to data reviewed by Reuters through a Right To Information request and BJP filings.

When asked whether the BJP had a financial advantage, party spokesman Anil Baluni said "it is not an unfair advantage."

"I guess maybe the BJP does believe in taking maximum donations by cheque or through bonds... We are the largest political party in the country," Baluni added. He said he did not have information on the provenance of funds or the uses. Pawan Khera, a Congress spokesman, said this was "turning out to be the most unequal election," but did not provide specifics.

## Who is Masood Azhar? 10 things to know

**The renewed demand for Azhar's listing was raised at the United Nations Security Council after the deadly suicide bombing at Pulwama on February 14 in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed.**

Masood Azhar, the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief, who was listed as a global terrorist by the UN on Wednesday, is one of the few terrorists who have brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war. The renewed demand for Azhar's listing was raised at the United Nations Security Council after the deadly suicide bombing at Pulwama on February 14 in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed. Apart from the February 14 Pulwama attack, Masood Azhar has been involved in multiple terror strikes against India, including the October 1, 2001 suicide bombing of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in Srinagar that left 39 people dead. Here are 10 things to know about Masood Azhar: 1. Masood Azhar was born in Bahawalpur on July 19, 1968. His father Allah Bakhsh Shabir, taught at a local

school and was a small-time entrepreneur who ran a dairy and poultry farm. 2. Masood Azhar studied at the Jamia Islamia at the Binori mosque in Karachi under Mufti Sayeed. 3. At the Jamia Islamia, he found himself studying beside students who were under the influence of leaders of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), a terrorist organization that was active in Afghanistan at that time, and which later extended its activities to Kashmir. 4. In 1989, Azhar returned to Jamia Islamia and took up a job as a teacher. His knowledge of Islam and jihad, soon saw him bringing out a magazine called Sada-i-Mujahid or Knock of the Mujahideen, featuring articles on HUM's activities and the war in Afghanistan. Free copies were distributed after Friday prayers

and at functions held by the Harkat. 5. In 1989, the 21-year-old Masood Azhar passed the almia (Islamic) examination with distinction. Deeply influenced by the HUM leaders and his fellow students, Azhar had already made up his mind on what he planned to do with his future. Soon after that, he met Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, the HUM chief, and was on his way to Afghanistan for his training. 6. All of 5 feet 3 inches tall, Masood Azhar underwent training at Yuvar, a training camp in Afghanistan, where he had great difficulty in overcoming the obstacle races and handling weapons. He couldn't complete the mandatory 40-day training programme and later admitted after his arrest in Srinagar in 1994 that it was "because of his poor physique". 7. Masood Azhar was



released from prison on December 31, 1999 in return for 176 passengers and 15 crew members of the hijacked Indian Airlines flight IC-814 at Kandahar. 8. Masood Azhar formed the Jaish-e-Mohammad in January 31, 2000, soon after he was released in the Kandahar exchange. Addressing a gathering of 10,000 armed followers at a mosque in Karachi, he said: "I have come here because it is my duty to tell you that

Muslims should not rest in peace until we have destroyed America and India. Kashmir has to be liberated from Indian rule. Soldiers of Islam have come from 12 countries to free Kashmir." 9. In 1993, he was asked to go to Jammu and Kashmir where he was to meet a sharpshooter. But he could only arrive in India a year later in 1994. On his way to India, Masood Azhar first flew to Dhaka and then to Delhi on a Portuguese passport.

# Homeowners in India roll up sleeves to complete unfinished flats

India's property market is struggling to digest some \$65 billion worth of projects in various stages of completion -- or, in many cases, non-completion.

Lalit Vazirani, a computer programmer from Mumbai, never reckoned on having to turn amateur property developer.

Yet here he is, a decade after putting down a deposit for an apartment near the city's airport, dealing with architects, taxes, various planning permissions and even court hearings. All because the developer behind the \$50 million project has gone bust, and nobody else has stepped in to finish the work.

"We never in our wildest dreams imagined one day we would take on the functions and the role of a developer," said Vazirani, 45, who bought the two-bedroom unit before construction started. "But fate had other plans."

Few things illustrate the malaise in India's property market as starkly as would-be homeowners having to dedicate untold hours to completing the flats they spent years saving up for. While no estimates exist for the number of people in Vazirani's position, India's property market is struggling to digest some \$65

billion worth of projects in various stages of completion -- or, in many cases, non-completion.

It's an issue with the potential to sap confidence among house buyers, further complicating developers' attempts to claw their way out from under a mountain of debt.

## Weakened Faith

So many delayed building projects have "severely weakened faith in any under-construction properties and reviving buyers' trust is a Herculean task," said Anuj Puri, the chairman of Anarock Property Consultants Pvt. "If buyers stop purchasing, builders will have a far more challenging time to get funds from external sources for construction."

Two years ago, India introduced a law with strict punishments for building delays.

A series of economic shocks in the past three years, from the unexpected withdrawal of high-value rupee notes in 2016 to the sales tax introduced the following year, have dented property-market sentiment and caused funding for developers to dry up. Many lack the funds to keep projects aimed at millions of more affluent citizens going.

An analysis of about 11,000 home builders by research firm Liases Foras in February showed that developers on average have to repay twice as much in debt each year as the income they generate that can be used to service it. This comes as property prices in India's biggest cities are flagging -- home values in Mumbai sank 11 percent last year following a 5 percent decline in 2017. They ran up 32 percent in the four years through 2016.

## Band of Buyers

Vazirani is one of 281 buyers who banded together to complete their development, which currently consists of the skeletons of six buildings standing on an otherwise deserted site. Developer Orbit Corp., which specialized in mid-to high-end apartments, collapsed in 2016.

The immense task has taken time away from Vazirani's day job and is starting to take a toll. "It's very disheartening, but we know we have no option, we have to continue this fight," he said. He's not alone. Home buyers at a Nirmal Lifestyle project in the northeast Mumbai suburb of Mulund are lending the developer



more money so it can complete the final stages of a tower. At a housing development in the state of Uttar Pradesh, purchasers will monitor construction after a local regulator stepped in. The buyers of the unfinished project had approached the state's real estate regulator seeking a handover of the project to them after it had been stuck for three years and the builder had run out of money.

## Bleak Outlook

With would-be home buyers reluctant to hand over cash for deposits, the funding horizon for developers looks bleak. Builders' debt repayments amount to \$18.5 billion each year, the Liases Foras data show. On top of that, some lenders have

sharply increased the interest rates they charge developers for new loans.

Already, real estate and associated businesses account for the largest number of cases referred to India's two-year-old bankruptcy process. Around 235 of the companies are under the insolvency-resolution process, government data show.

Orbit's former Chief Executive Officer Pujit Aggarwal says he's trying to help by providing the group with construction and regulatory expertise. Aggarwal was taken into custody in 2016 for allegedly cheating apartment purchasers. He wasn't convicted and the Bombay High Court granted him bail in July 2017. Soon after, his company was referred to a bankruptcy court.

# Maduro hangs on as Venezuelan protests peter out

Venezuelans heeded opposition leader Juan Guaido's call to take to the streets on Wednesday in a bid to force President Nicolas Maduro from power, but there was little concrete sign of change in a crisis that increasingly looks like a political stalemate. Guaido had called for the "largest march" in Venezuela's history and said on Twitter that "millions of Venezuelans" were in the streets in "this final phase" of his move to oust Maduro. But by late afternoon, many of the protesters in the capital Caracas had drifted home. National Guards fired tear gas at a hardcore of demonstrators who remained, and one injured demonstrator was carried by others to a first aid truck, Reuters video showed. Local rights organizations said a young woman died in surgery after being shot in the head during a protest in Caracas. Guaido confirmed via Twitter that a woman died after being shot. The standoff in Venezuela increased tensions between the

United States and Russia, who accused each other of interference in the OPEC-member nation's affairs. Despite Guaido's calls for the military to support him, the armed forces leadership has so far remained loyal to Maduro, who has been in power since his mentor, the late President Hugo Chavez, died in 2013. "If the regime thought we had reached maximum pressure, they cannot even imagine," Guaido told thousands of cheering supporters. "We have to remain in the streets."

It was unclear what more Guaido can do at this point. The Venezuelan opposition has often staged huge street protests against Maduro but failed to dislodge him despite a deep economic recession and hyperinflation. Demonstrators said they were prepared for the process of ousting Maduro to last a long time. "We need to keep going," said Laila Amezcuita, a 52-year-old nurse from Caracas' downtown Candelaria district. "In three months Guaido's been able

to do what they have not done in 20 years, and one has to be patient." Others are frustrated that nothing has changed more than three months after Guaido, head of the opposition-run National Assembly, invoked the constitution to assume an interim presidency, arguing that Maduro's 2018 re-election was illegitimate. Guaido is recognized as Venezuela's legitimate head of state by the United States, the European Union and others, while Maduro is backed by countries including Russia, China, and Cuba.

## U.S.-RUSSIA FRICTION

Those fault lines are increasingly putting Venezuela at the heart of global geopolitical tensions.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has imposed sanctions on the Maduro government and refused to rule out military intervention, although it says it prefers a peaceful transition. "Military action is possible. If that's what's required, that's what the United States will do," U.S. Secretary of State Mike



Pompeo told Fox Business Network. The Pentagon appeared to downplay any active preparations to directly intervene in Venezuela, but acknowledged detailed contingency planning. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Pompeo on Wednesday that further "aggressive steps" in Venezuela would have grave consequences, Russia's Foreign Ministry said. In turn, the United States has accused Moscow of interfering in the South American country, an ally

of Russia since the time of Chavez. Pompeo said Maduro had been expected to flee the country on Tuesday but Russia convinced him to stay, which the Kremlin has denied. White House national security adviser John Bolton, a foreign policy hawk, said Moscow's involvement was not welcome. "This is our hemisphere," he told reporters outside the White House. "It's not where the Russians ought to be interfering. This is a mistake on their part. It's not going to lead to an improvement of relations."

The US President has repeatedly claimed that India is a "tariff king" and imposes "tremendously high" tariffs on American products.

US President Donald Trump has criticised India's "big tariffs" on American paper products and the iconic Harley-Davidson bikes, saying the US has been losing billions of dollars to countries like India, China and Japan.

Addressing a Republican political rally in Wisconsin state's Green Bay city on Sunday, Trump alleged that every country has been ripping off America for years.

The President has repeatedly claimed that India is a "tariff king" and imposes "tremendously high" tariffs on American products.

"For so many decades we've been losing tens of billions of dollars to China and Japan, and India, and name any country and we lost, but we're not losing anymore," he said to his cheering supporters.

He said that the US was being charged high tariffs on foreign paper products.

"We charge other countries

zero tariffs on foreign paper products, but when Wisconsin paper companies export it abroad... China charged us big tariffs, India charged us big tariffs, Vietnam charge us massive tariffs," Trump said. He claimed that people of the US demanded a government that puts America first.

"And we're doing that with China, we're doing that with India, we're doing that with Japan, we're doing it with a great new trade deal, that hopefully will get approved in the house," the President said. Early this year at a White House event to announce his support for reciprocal tax, Trump had said that he was satisfied with the Indian decision to reduce the import tariff on high-end Harley-Davidson motorcycles from 100 per cent to 50 per cent.

The President said that he called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue of tariffs on Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

"Look at Harley-Davidson. I met with them three years ago, they would tell me tough to do

## Donald Trump again goes after India on trade, says it slaps 'big tariffs' on American products



business in certain kind. I asked 'How you're doing in India?' and they said, 'Oh, we don't do any business'. They weren't even complaining because so many years.

"So India charged a 100 per cent tariff on Harley-Davidson, but when they send their motorcycles and they may come to us, we charge them nothing," Trump said.

"So I called up Prime Minister Modi, I said unfair, he cut it 50 per cent... But that's not good

enough because look, it's 50 per cent to nothing. And what we're doing is changing all of that stuff, changing all of that rapidly," he added.

India is pressing for exemption from the high duty imposed by the US on certain steel and aluminium products, resumption of export benefits to certain domestic products under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme, greater market access for its products from agriculture, automobile, au-

tomobile components and engineering sectors.

On the other hand, the US is demanding greater market access through a cut in import duties for its agriculture goods, dairy products, medical devices, IT and communication items. India has stated that it would be difficult for them to cut duties on IT products. India's exports to the US in 2017-18 stood at USD 47.9 billion, while imports were USD 26.7 billion. The trade balance is in favour of India.

## Amazon's nascent freight service has a truckload of rivals

**The world's biggest retailer made a splash in truck brokerage circles after Freight Waves reported on Friday that Amazon's service, launched in a handful of Northeastern states last summer, was discounting market rates by as much as one-third.**



As Amazon.com Inc targets traditional brokerages that match shippers with truckers, it's also battling a bevy of startups - including Uber Freight and a company funded by the e-commerce giant's founder Jeff Bezos. The world's biggest retailer made a splash in truck brokerage circles after Freight Waves reported on Friday that Amazon's service, launched in a handful of Northeastern states last summer, was discounting market rates by as much as one-third. "The analysis suggesting dramatic undercut-

ting of pricing is false," Amazon said in a statement. The company - which is investing billions of dollars to build an air, sea and land shipping network to contain its own costs - has never been shy about squeezing the companies it seeks to unseat. Analysts said its fight for a slice of the more than \$700 billion U.S. companies spend on trucking each year could pose a long-term threat to leading truck brokers like C.H. Robinson Worldwide and United Parcel Service. But, they added, that could be offset by Amazon's

penchant for competing with the companies that sell on its site or pay for its services. "Not all customers will be looking to turn over their confidential supply chain data to Amazon, particularly larger players in the retail and consumer products businesses," Cowen & Co analyst Jason Seidl said in a note. Investors are betting that technology can transform the fragmented truck brokerage business that ran for decades on personal relationships and telephone calls. They've poured millions of dollars into startups like Uber, Transfix and Convoy - the latter of which raised nearly \$270 million from Bezos and other backers. Anheuser-Busch InBev, Colgate-Palmolive Co and other companies have kicked the tires on those upstarts, which aim to dominate by building a massive network of shippers and drivers.

## Nirav Modi to stay in jail till May 24, orders London court

Nirav Modi, who has been behind bars at Wandsworth prison in south-west London since his arrest last month, appeared before Westminster Magistrates' Court Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot via videolink from the jail. The defence team representing diamondaire Nirav Modi did not move a fresh bail plea in the Westminster Magistrates Court on Friday, as the court extended his tenure in the Wandsworth jail until May 24. Modi, 48, appeared via video-link from the jail, dressed casually, and mentioned his full name and date of birth. He will be produced in court on May 24 again via videolink, chief magistrate Emma Arbuthnot told him during a brief hearing. The next 'case management hearing' in the extradition case brought by India has been scheduled for May 30, when he is expected to present in the court in person. The prosecution has until May 24 to produce paperwork related to charges against Modi. Modi's bail pleas were rejected twice; first on

March 20 after being arrested in central London the previous day, and again on March 29, despite offering to pay £1 million as security deposit and obey stringent conditions Denying Modi bail is

significant given the history of Indians sought to be extradited since the 1992 India-UK treaty. Almost all of them were granted bail, including former Dawood Ibrahim



aide Iqbal Mirchi, as well as others such as Vijay Mallya, Sanjeev Chawla and Ravi Shankaran. At the March 29 hearing, Arbuthnot had accepted the prosecution's objections and denied him bail due to a flight risk, the high value and seriousness of fraud in the scandal in India, and his "lack of community ties" in the Indian diaspora in the UK. Wanted in India to face charges of major financial irregularities linked to loans from a Mumbai branch of the Punjab National Bank, among others, Modi earlier sought citizenship of Vanuatu through an investment scheme, which was declined.

# 'Antimicrobial resistance a threat to everyone'

**According to a UN report, the misuse and overuse of antimicrobial drugs in humans, animals and plants are fuelling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) that makes it difficult to treat common infections like tuberculosis and malaria, which could cause 10 million deaths annually by 2050.**



The misuse and overuse of antimicrobial drugs in humans, animals and plants are fuelling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) that makes it difficult to treat common infections like tuberculosis and malaria, which could cause 10 million deaths annually by 2050, said a United Nations In-

teragency Coordination Group (IACG) on Antimicrobial Resistance report released on Monday. Dr Haileyesus Getahun, director of the IACG at the World Health Organization, explains to Sanchita Sharma why multi-sectoral action must be taken now to stop "a return to the old

days of people dying from common infections and injuries".

How big is the AMR threat in highly populated countries, such as India?

Antimicrobial resistance is a threat to everyone, everywhere. The WHO Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System

(GLASS) collects data from 71 countries, including India, in which more than a third of countries reported widespread resistance to common pathogens. In some member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), about 35% of common human infections are already resistant to currently available medicines, and in some low- and middle-income countries, resistance rates are as high as 80%-90% for some antibiotic-bacterium combinations.

Resistance to second- and third-line antibiotics - the last lines of defence against some common diseases - are projected to almost double between 2005 and 2030. Concurrently, millions of lives are lost every year due to lack of access to existing antimicrobial agents: inadequate access to antibiotics alone kills nearly 6 million people annually, including a million children who die of preventable sepsis and pneumonia. How many people will be affected? If there isn't collective leadership and action between governments, pharmaceu-

tical companies, international agencies and civil society, predictions suggest that there could be as many as 10 million deaths worldwide by 2050. This would mark a return to the old days of people dying from common infections and injuries.

What are the biggest causes of AMR deaths globally?

Globally, it is estimated that at least 700,000 people die each year due to drug-resistant diseases, including 230,000 people from multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. Based on the WHO GLASS data collected from 3,097 hospitals and 2,358 outpatients clinics in 2017, the most common drug-resistant pathogens reported include *E. coli*, *K. pneumoniae*, *Salmonella* spp., *Acinetobacter* spp., *S aureus*, *S pneumoniae*, *N gonorrhoea*, and *Shigella* spp causing a variety of blood stream infections, respiratory tract infections, sexually transmitted infections and urinary tract infections, which are increasingly become untreatable. What financial and regulatory investments need to be made to avert the crisis?

## '13 Reasons Why' associated with increase in youth suicide rates: Study

**Netflix's uber-popular show '13 Reasons Why' was responsible for a 28.9 percent increase in suicides among youth aged between 10 and 17 in the US in April 2017, according to recent findings.**

Netflix's uber-popular show '13 Reasons Why' was responsible for a 28.9 percent increase in suicides among youth aged between 10 and 17 in the US in April 2017, recent findings suggest.

The findings highlight the necessity of using best practices when portraying suicide in popular entertainment and in the media.

The number of deaths by suicide recorded in April 2017 was greater than the number seen in any single month during the five-year period examined by the researchers.

When researchers analysed the data by sex, they found the increase in the suicide rate was primarily driven by significant increases in suicide in young males. While suicide rates for females increased after the show's release, the increase was not statistically significant.

"The results of this study should raise awareness that young

people are particularly vulnerable to. All disciplines, including the media, need to take good care to be constructive and thoughtful about topics that intersect with public health crises," said Lisa Horowitz, lead author of the study published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*.

'13 Reasons Why' is a web-based series that tells the story of a young girl who kills herself and leaves behind a series of 13 tapes detailing the reasons why she chose to end her life. Although this show received critical acclaim, it also raised questions over how the show's portrayal of suicide affects young people who watch it. The series premiered on Netflix on March 31, 2017.

To better understand the impact of '13 Reasons Why' on suicide rates, researchers analysed annual and monthly data on deaths due to suicide sourced from the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention's web-based Wides-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research.

These data included information about the deaths of individuals between the ages of 10 and 64 that occurred between Jan. 1, 2013, and Dec. 31, 2017, a timespan that encompassed the period before and after the release of the series.

The researchers examined whether the rates of suicide for the period after the release of '13 Reasons Why' were greater than would be expected based on suicide counts and trends observed in previous years.

The researchers found that the rates of suicide for 10- to 17-year-olds was significantly higher in the months of April, June, and December 2017 than were expected based on past data. This increase translated into an additional estimated 195 suicide deaths between April 1, 2017, and 31 December 2017.



The observed suicide rate for March 2017 -- the month prior to the release of "13 Reasons Why" -- was also higher than forecast. The researchers note that the show was highly promoted during the month of March, exposing audiences to the show's premise and content through trailers. The researchers did not find any significant trends in suicide rates in people 18- to 64 years of age.

As a comparison, the researchers also analyzed deaths due to homicide during the same period, to assess whether otherworldly social or environmental events

after the release of the show might have influenced suicide rates.

Homicide rates can be influenced by some of the same social and environmental factors as suicide rates.

The researchers did not find any significant changes in homicide rates following the release of the show. The lack of change in homicide rates during the period of interest lends some strength to the idea that changes in suicide rates were influenced by the show and not some other environmental or social factor that occurred during this period.

# Beach bulletin: Keep it earthy, natural and organic

*Say hello to summer's hottest sundresses, beach cover-ups and swimsuits.*

Summer calls for refreshed swimwear and sophisticated cover-ups, if you aim to own every beach you walk into. The new array of upgraded swimsuits come with luxe fabrication and ultra-high cut bottoms exposing the pelvage. All you need is a statement beach hat (which doubles up as your beach umbrella), a gigantic raffia tote and shell jewellery to be the czarina of the sandy shores. The high-cut monokinis were major last season too and they show no signs of fading out. However, shake things up a little with a bamboo handbag or a cane clutch - both of which are enjoying the spotlight. "I'd suggest working with natural, breathable fabrics in terms of your sun cover-ups. PVC pieces are a major hit too, and you can't go wrong with the ubiquitous thong heels and giant sunnies," says stylist Allia Al Rufai. While bright hues always work beautifully for summer holidays, it won't be off the mark to invest in a more earthy and soothing palette of pale grey, beige separates - all of which are pleasing to the eye. Stylist Edward Lalrempuia's style mantra is "earthy, natural and organic". He suggests opting for a cotton sundress and layering it with a linen jacket. "A nifty linen blazer too complements a pair of beach shorts. The bucket hats are a sure-shot winners as they completely cover your face from the harsh sun. In terms of



footwear, you couldn't possibly go wrong with basic slides," suggests Edward. Flowy fabrics like Chanderi and chiffon work stunningly for pool parties or sea side holiday escapes. Designer Anupama Dayal roots for statement prints in pop colour. "The cherry prints and vintage florals are having a moment right now and the ruffled bralette is your go-to pick. The high-cut monokini may have been a trend, but I have to admit that it's a demanding look and one has to be impossibly fit to pull it off," says Anupama. Besides the muted hues, neons are make a



thrilling comeback too. Stylist Mohit Rai suggests some off-kilter pairings. "Team a pair of linen trousers with a cool bikini or a short tennis skirts. In terms of accessories and jewellery, sea shells are enjoying the spotlight like never before."

#### Beach essentials

Cane clutch and raffia totes are the 'it' accessories of the season. Invest in giant hats and statement sunnies.

Layer with chanderi and chiffon waistcoats.

High-cut monokinis and ruffled bralettes are having a moment.

Author tweets @dandydujour\

## In first, Sports Illustrated will feature burkini-clad model

*In its annual swimsuit issue, Sports Illustrated will feature a Muslim model, Halima Aden for the first time wearing a hijab and burkini, the full length swimsuit favoured by some Muslim women.*



Sports Illustrated's annual swimsuit issue, best known for its racy covers of scantily clad bikini models, will feature for the first time a Muslim model wearing a hijab and burkini, the magazine said Monday. Somali-American model Halima Aden's rookie spread will be set in Kenya, where she born in a refugee camp and lived until the age of seven. "Growing up in the States, I never really felt represented because I never could flip through a magazine and see a girl who was wearing a hijab," Aden said in a video tweeted by the magazine. Sports Illustrated also posted a picture of her posing lying down in shallow water, wearing a turquoise hijab, long yellow earrings and a deep blue burkini -- the full length swimsuit favoured by some Muslim women. Halima, 21, made headlines at age 19 when she was the first woman to wear a hijab in the Miss Minnesota USA Pageant, where she made the semi-finals in 2016. She has previously featured on the cover of British Vogue and walked on the New York Fashion Week runway.

## Avengers Endgame movie review

# An epic conclusion to Marvel's Infinity Saga; it's a triumphant tear-jerker

**Avengers Endgame Movie Review and Rating: Marvel concludes the epic Infinity Saga with a triumphant tear-jerker, starring Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth. Rating: 4.5/5.**

Avengers: Endgame

Directors - Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

Cast - Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Karen Gillan, Bradley Cooper, Don Cheadle, Brie Larson, Paul Rudd, Josh Brolin

Rating - 4.5/5

With Avengers: Endgame, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has arrived at its long-awaited 'conclusion', offering fans an old-fashioned mix of grand spectacle and undiluted emotion. To say that it is a success would be too simple an observation; what it deserves instead, is a eulogy.

Like a series finale of a television show you've loved for years, it crosses all the Ts and dots all the Is - some more neatly than others - and ends not so much with a feeling of rigid resolution, but a sense of freeing possibility.

For new doors to open, Marvel seems to be saying, old ones must first be closed. It's a film that will compel even the Frost Giants in the audience to whoop and weep.

For films like Avengers: Endgame to succeed, piled as they are with unfathomably large expectations, a well-oiled system is required to be in place. There needs to be a discipline in the writing, a crispness to the editing, and a generosity in the performances. True ambition in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, more often than not, is born out of a strict adherence to rules. And there are perhaps no two filmmakers better at working within studio sandboxes than Anthony and Joe Russo - at least not on this unprecedented scale.

Avengers: Endgame is a terrific example of that epic intimacy that Marvel does so well - alternating between glorious action and subtle character

moments. Watching it almost feels like taking a wistful walk down memory lane, flanked on either side by a Russo brother, our hands held firmly in theirs. It's an odd feeling that I can't quite describe; a mixture of déjà vu and nostalgia, of melancholy and euphoria.

It's a delicate balance to strike, but not nearly as difficult as having to write a review without revealing potential spoilers, whose definition, it seems, is as subjective as the idea of Iron Man 3's Mandarin being a good villain. But there won't be any spoilers here, at least not beyond what we've seen in the trailers. The marketing campaign that Marvel put together for Endgame is a work of art in itself - I can confirm that most of the footage we've seen is pre-opening credits stuff. There are, however, parallels to the scientific methods trailer companies employ and the Russos' keen understanding of



blockbuster storytelling. Despite being the longest superhero film in history, and the longest film in the MCU, Avengers: Endgame is paced like Quicksilver on crack cocaine. Not a single moment feels unnecessary, but there are scenes - especially in the first act - that feel slightly rushed.

It's their own fault, really. Over the years, we've come to develop certain expectations from our Marvel movies, as well as a patience for their indulgences. This makes the 'getting the band back together' scenes in Endgame rather tedious. We know what needs to happen, so why dilly-dally? The fatal flaw with

Avengers: Infinity War, I feel, was that at no point did the Decimation feel like it would be irreversible. It was a scene - a very good scene - built entirely on shock value that dissipated almost as swiftly as one of 'the fallen'. And after all, they say that no movie death should be believed unless you see a trickle of blood escaping from the corner of the character's mouth. It was a similar situation with Captain America: Civil War. Steve Rogers and Tony Stark's differences felt more like a momentary tiff than an ideological confrontation; in other words, of course they were going to get back together.

## Kanchana 3 movie review

# Raghava Lawrence's film is loud, annoying and barely entertaining horror-thriller

**Kanchana 3 movie review: Raghava Lawrence's film is loud, annoying and barely entertaining. It should ideally be the last film of the franchise.**

Kanchana 3

Director: Raghava Lawrence

Cast: Raghava Lawrence, Vedhika, Oviya, Nikki Tamboli, Kovai Sarla and Soori

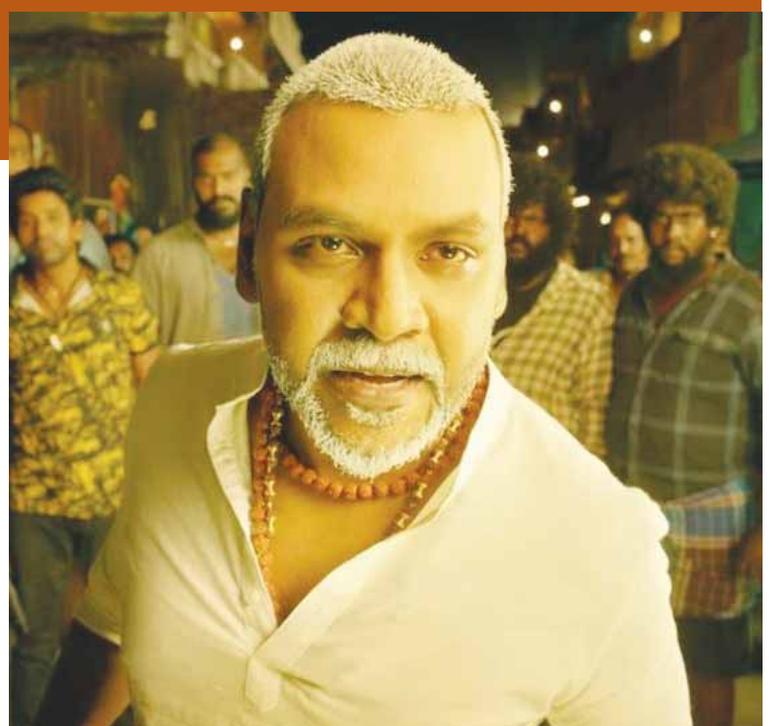
Rating: 2/5

Actor-filmmaker Raghava Lawrence is back with the fourth instalment to the highly popular and successful Kanchana franchise which kicked off with the 2007 film Muni. Kanchana 3, which has been in the making for quite some time, comes at a time when there's very little scope for freshness left in the horror genre, given the number of films that have come out in the last few years. Therefore, Lawrence borrows elements--that worked thrice with the masses--from his own

Kanchana films to deliver a horror flick that's both unfunny and preposterous.

If you've seen the previous parts in the franchise, you already know the drill. The story is dated. When Kaali and Rosy are brutally killed, they return as ghosts and use Raghava to avenge their death. Like the previous parts, Kanchana 3 is set in a haunted house and it features three heroines who look glamorous but add no value to the plot. Kovai Sarla and Divyadarshini, as a tag team, return to essay the same roles that made them popular in the last two parts. Unfortunately, they make a mockery of themselves with extremely annoying antics and unfunny comedy sequences. The film relies heavily on all the

elements that worked in the previous instalments. By borrowing ideas from his own films and not displaying creativity in writing, Lawrence makes Kanchana 3 an excruciatingly painful watch. Even the jokes, which were the highlight of the previous parts, fall flat. Kanchana 1 and Kanchana 2 had very strong performances from Sarath Kumar and Nithya Menen. As a transgender seeking revenge, Sarath Kumar was phenomenal. In Kanchana 2, Nithya Menen as a differently abled character yearning for revenge after being brutally killed, immediately struck a chord with the masses. The flashback portions worked big time with family audiences



and even with general public alike. The flashback episode in Kanchana 3 lacks the emotional heft that the previous parts brought to the story. Kanchana 3, which is loud, annoying and barely

entertaining, should ideally be the last film of the franchise. But Lawrence has other plans as he announces the next part towards the end of this film. That thought is scarier than this film.

# STUDENT OF THE YEAR 2

**Alia Bhatt and Tiger Shroff's Hook Up song received a mixed response from viewers on Twitter. Here are some of the reactions to the song.**



(Insider Buearu)- Alia Bhatt joins Tiger Shroff for the new too-hot-to-handle music video for the Hook Up Song featured in Karan Johar's new production STUDENT OF THE YEAR 2 which releases in North American theaters next week on May 10.

Director: Punit Malhotra

Producers: Karan Johar, Hiroo Yash Johar, and Apoorva Mehta

Music: Vishal & Shekhar

Rohan (Tiger Shroff) is a student, athlete and kabaddi player from a mediocre Pishorilal Chamandas College. He dreams of becoming the Student of the Year by winning the Inter-college Dignity Cup one day. Rohan's life takes a turn, when he gets accepted to St. Teresa College on a sports scholarship. As Rohan tries to fit in at St. Teresa's, he is completely dwarfed by its hugeness. Rohan encounters the reigning Student of the Year, Manav who begins to coerce him and the beautiful Shreya and Mia who begin to fall for him. All hell breaks loose when their life gets tangled through competition, failure, manipulation and heartbreaks. Rohan is thrown out of the college only to go back to his mediocre Pishorilal College. Badly bruised and insulted, Rohan decides to challenge Manav to win the Student of the Year trophy. Will Rohan defeat Manav to win the Student of the Year trophy? Will Rohan find his true love in Shreya or Mia?



## LATE NIGHT, Starring Mindy Kaling and Emma Thompson, Directed by Nisha Ganatra Opens June 7.

Mindy Kaling and Emma Thompson bring the laughs in their new comedy LATE NIGHT which just premiered its new trailer #2.

Amazon Studios will release the Nisha Ganatra-directed film in theaters nationwide next month on June 7.

After almost 30 years, a groundbreaking talk-show host suspects she may soon be losing her coveted seat on late-night television unless she manages a game-changing transformation in Late Night, the first feature film from Emmy-nominated writer and producer Mindy Kaling. Legendary talk-show host Katherine Newbury (Oscar? winner Emma Thompson) is a pioneer in her field. The only woman ever to have a long-running program on late night, she keeps her writers' room on a short leash ? and all male. But when her ratings plummet and she is accused of being a "woman who hates women," Katherine puts gender equality on her to-do list and impulsively hires Molly



Patel (Mindy Kaling), a chemical plant efficiency expert from suburban Pennsylvania, as the first and only female on her writing staff. With rumors swirling that Katherine is being replaced by a younger, hipper male host, she demands that the writers make her funny and relevant again. A lifelong fan, Molly is determined to prove she's not just a diversity hire, but the one person who can turn her idol's career around. Going against everything Katherine has staked her reputation on, she urges her to make the show more contemporary, authentic and personal, a move that could make Molly's career ? or send her back to the chemical plant for good.

## Game of Thrones' The Long Night is series' second worst rated episode on Rotten Tomatoes. Can you guess the worst one?

**Game of Thrones' season eight episode three, The Long Night, has become the second worst rated episode in the show's history.**

(Insider Buearu)- Earlier this week, Game of Thrones latest episode The Long Night became the most tweeted about television episode in Twitter history. It received more than 52 million tweets in just a single day, an impressive feat for any film or show. While most fans were in awe of the episode, its blurry and dark cinematography and the unbelievable twist at the end left some dissatisfied. According to a new report on review aggregator

website Rotten Tomatoes, critics were not all love for the episode. The episode received a fresh but disappointing rating of 75% after registering 93 reviews, making it the second worst rated episode in the entire series. While for any other film or TV?show, 75% rating would be called healthy and hopeful, the same doesn't stand true for Game of Thrones, 22 episodes of which have earned 100% ratings so far. For those wondering which episode still maintains the worst rating, it is fifth season's sixth episode titled

Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken. As a refresher, it is the same episode that showed Sansa Stark's wedding to Ramsay Bolton and her horrible rape right after. The scene became majorly controversial and earned a lot of flak from viewers all around the world. However, The Long Night still ranks below The Bear and the Maiden Fair (77%). As for the 22 episodes rated 100%, eight belong to season one itself. Others include Blackwater, The Rains of Castermere, Hardhome and The Lion and The Rose (The



Purple Wedding). As for The Long Night, many viewers and critics complained that the episode was literally too dark to make out what was happening. Several people took to Twitter to complain about it as well. Fabian

Wagner, the man behind the lens for the episode explained the much-criticised dimly-lit cinematography. "A lot of the problem is that a lot of people don't know how to tune their TVs properly.

# Billboard Music Awards 2019

*Taylor Swift wins best-dressed battle of the divas as she goes head-to-head with Cardi B and Ciara*



The Billboard Awards brought out the best of the music world on Wednesday.

And attendees made sure to show up in style as they brought glamour, glitz and gall to the red carpet of the MGM Grand Las Vegas.

Taylor Swift made a bid for the best dressed of the evening, showing up fellow fashionistas Ciara and Cardi B as she sauntered into the affair wearing a ruffling lilac look.

The ME! songstress' toned legs were on full display in the short

micro-pleated frock by designer Raisa Vanessa, which accented her curves with perfectly placed flounces, a high collar and sheer, lace sleeves.

Turning around, the starlet showed off her back with a sheer lace panel surrounded by rows of ruches.

She pulled her hair back into a low bun which let her show off a dazzling starred ear-cuff and beautiful plum colored eyeshadow.

Shimmering stilettos in a soft pastel hue tied the entire look

together along with a collection of heavenly rings.

The pop star had some of the evening's most adorable dates, bringing along two of her three cats to the show.

Ciara went for full elegance, slipping into a dramatic black Stephane Rolland gown which offered an eyeful of cleavage with a plunging neckline and a touch of sheer silk. Continuing the glamour, her dress climbed up to a high-embellished collar all while a substantial ruffle sat upon her shoulder. She jutted her leg out from a high slit for an extra dash of sex appeal. Heels by Femme LA were simple and sexy.

The Level Up songstress smoothed her hair back into a sleek high ponytail, which cascaded down her back. Diamonds aplenty completed her look. She was joined by darling son Future Zahir Wilburn, who looked cool as can be in a little Versace suit with matching sneakers and mirrored sunglasses. Cardi B commanded attention in a sultry yellow Moschino look which showcased her sculpted center and newly enhanced breasts. Framing her cleavage with jewels, the Money rapper - who is up for 21 awards this evening - looked as if she

was ready for a night on the town. Her skin was covered with glitter, only emphasizing her eye-catching attire.

Husband Offset balanced his love's look with an all-black suit, diamond encrusted glasses and a solid rock on each ear.

Not the kind to keep conservative, the couple lavished each other in affection, even seen touching tongues at one point.

Priyanka Chopra looked simply smitten while there with her husband Nick Jonas.

The Bollywood stunner set pulses racing in a iridescent Zuhair Murad wrap dress which put her figure front and center with a plunging V-neck and sultry leg slit. She let layers of diamonds sweep down into her cleavage for maximum glamour. Making sure not to distract for her dazzling attire, she added see-through Cinderella-style stilettos for shoes. Besides her hubby Nick went for vintage vibes in a plaid suit worn with tasseled blue suede loafers.

Nick was joined by his bandmate brothers Joe and Kevin, who also rocked retro suits. Though she didn't pose with fiance Joe on the red carpet, Sophie Turner was still there to support her love, looking bold in a silver lamé

Louis Vuitton suit that exuded space-age vibes.

Angular shoulders and an exposed zipper gave the look an extra edge while the Game Of Thrones star tied things together with simple black pumps.

She played up her eyes with a hint of smoky shadow, which was complemented by pale lips.

Halsey dared to bare in a corset-like indigo Aadnevik design with sheer lace at the sides and on her full, skirt. A thigh-high slit let the Without Me singer showcase her lean legs, which were elevated by a pair of strappy patent leather stilettos. She matched her look with a bold splash of violet on her lips. Meanwhile, the talent went for a simple wet-look with her black cropped locks. Olivia Wilde was pure glamour in a sequined gold Ralph Lauren shirt dress with buttons down the front. Matching platforms only amped up the allure. The Bookworm director was joined by her debut film's stars Kaitlyn Dever and Beanie Feldstein on the red carpet. Dever was slick in a silver suit while Feldstein looked set for summer in a yellow wrap dress.





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