

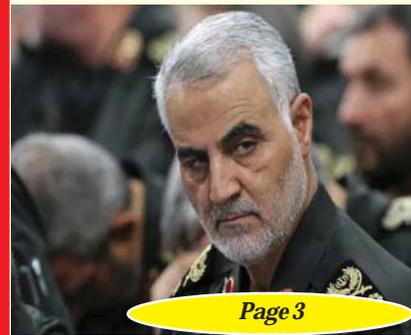
The South Asian

INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002

U.S. at Crossroads
in Middle East



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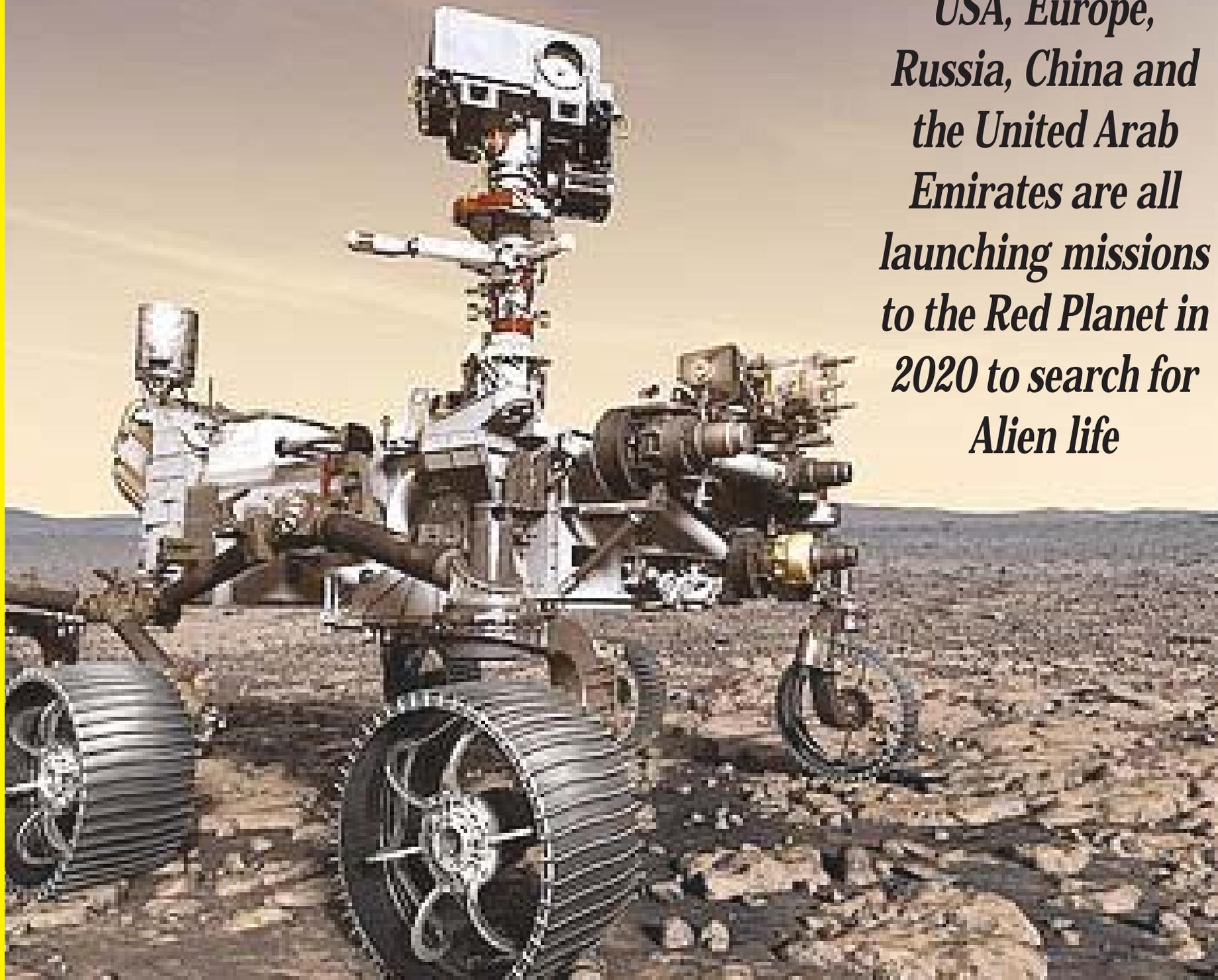
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Targeted Killing of Iranian General Puts U.S. at Crossroads in Middle East

Trump's plans to reduce military footprint in the region now at risk after Soleimani strike



(By Michael R. Gordon, Nancy A. Youssef and Vivian Salama for Wall Street Journal)

The U.S. drone strike that killed the Iranian Quds Force commander marks a pivot toward direct confrontation with Iran, further entangling the U.S. in the Middle East after years of trying to avoid a major conflict.

Since taking office, President Trump has made a priority of winding up the fight against Islamic State militants and reducing the American military footprint in the Middle East. The Trump administration was determined to roll back Iranian power and stop its nuclear program by tightening economic sanctions—not through military power.

With Islamic State seemingly routed in Iraq and Syria, and Tehran lashing out in the face of a deteriorating economy, the U.S. and Iran have entered a new phase as they vie to shape the ragged peace in an unsteady part of the world.

See-sawing tensions in recent months rose in the past few weeks, with Iranian-backed militias trying to harass U.S. forces by stepping up rocket attacks against multiple bases in Iraq. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned in mid-December that should harm come to any American the U.S. would respond decisively.

On Dec. 27 the administration's red line was finally crossed when a rocket attack carried out by the Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah militia killed an American contractor at a base near Kirkuk, north of Baghdad.

That set in motion a spiral of violence that ultimately led to the targeting of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's overseas wing, and Iraqi paramilitary military leader Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes on a road leading from the Baghdad airport.

"Ever since the U.S. official was killed in indirect fire in Iraq, [President Trump] said enough is enough," according to a senior White House official.

RISING TENSIONS WITH IRAN

Before the U.S. strike that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, friction between the two countries was building.

We took action last night to stop a war," President Trump said Friday. "We did not take action to start a war."

In killing the Iranian commander, the Trump administration is gambling that it can weaken Iran's regional influence, possibly forcing Tehran to negotiate. Such an outcome could further boost Mr. Trump as he faces an impeachment trial and gears up for re-election.

Critics said the killing of Gen. Soleimani is more likely to inflame tensions, generating reprisals from Iran and potentially miring the U.S. further in the region.

"The level of unpredictability going forward is very concerning to me," said Rep. Andy Kim (D., N.J.), who was the Iraq director at the National Security Council under President Obama. He said the Obama administration considered killing Gen. Soleimani but never went through with it because of concerns about a backlash.

Defense officials said Gen. Soleimani was behind the dozen or so rocket attacks that showered Iraqi bases since October, including the strike that killed the American contractor, who was working as a linguist. The Iranian commander was involved in plotting future attacks on Americans in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, having recently visited those places as part of the planning, the officials said.

There was "clear, unambiguous intelligence indicating a significant campaign of violence against the United States in the days, weeks and months" ahead, Army Gen. Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters Friday.

"These were attacks targeting American diplomats, American military person-

nel and facilities that house Americans," a State Department official said.

After the death of the contractor, on Dec. 27, the U.S. responded with airstrikes against compounds of the Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah paramilitary group in Iraq and Syria that the group says killed 27 people. That weekend, President Trump also authorized the use of military force on Gen. Soleimani, U.S. officials said.

Gen. Milley, Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Mr. Pompeo discussed the strike with Mr. Trump, who was winding up a two-week holiday at his Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago. Senior officials concluded that "there was a reasonable chance" the strike wouldn't spark a war and would instead empower moderates in Iran, a White House official said.

The official said discus-

sions on targeting Gen. Soleimani also "went through a legal review" to determine whether it qualified as self-defense.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, left, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, right, listen as Secretary of Defense Mark Esper delivers a statement on Iraq and Syria on Dec. 29 in Palm Beach, Fla.

Five days later, Gen. Soleimani flew to Baghdad, becoming what one defense official described as a "target of opportunity." The airport road that Gen. Soleimani and Mr. Mohandes took has few exit ramps and is lined with high walls, making it an optimum location for a targeted killing.

As Gen. Soleimani started out on that road an unmanned aerial drone dropped ordnance on the convoy, the defense officials said.

Mr. Pompeo said the attack aimed to show resolve to deter Iran against further aggression and that "the U.S. remains committed to de-escalation." President Trump, in a tweet, said Iran has never won a war, nor lost a negotiation.

Getting Iran to refrain from reprisals is unlikely, experts say. "Nobody in the administration thinks that is going to happen," said Kirsten Fontenrose of the Atlantic Council foreign-policy think tank, who left Mr. Trump's NSC in November 2018.

After Gen. Soleimani's death, Iran's leaders named a replacement and vowed retaliation. "Soleimani was iconic," tweeted Norman Roule, a former Central Intelligence Agency official on the Middle East. "He managed militias & terrorists. Neither will go away w his death. He will be replaced by others albeit w less experience & stature."



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Indian American community thanks Prime Minister Modi for CAA

(By our staff reporter) New York: Indian American community in New York thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for CAA. Addressing the largely attended meeting Mr Jagdish Sewhani, President of the American India Public Affairs Committee said that India today is the cusp of history. We are fortunate enough to be a witness to this. This is, as you know very well, the historic decisions that our beloved Prime Minister Narendra Bhai Modi has taken after people of Bharat re-elected him for the second term with a record margin. For the first time in three decades, a prime minister was re-elected with the majority. And I can tell you with full confidence that he has not disappointed at all.

Sewhani further said that In the first six-seven months of his second term, Modi ji has taken decisions that were like "Graham" for the country and had been pending for decades. Abrogation of articles 370 and 35 A of the constitution that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, which was discriminatory and fueled separatism in Kashmir. After August 5, it is now a thing of the past. Friends, today, we

have gathered here to say a "BIG THANK YOU" to the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the bold decisions taken concerning the Citizenship Amendment Act or CAA that passed by the parliament and now is the law of the land.

Speaking about CAA, Sewhani said that it gives citizenship to persecuted minorities of India's three neighboring countries – Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh – who came to Bharat before December 31, 2014, as a refugee. And these refugees are from Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist and Christians. This great act of humanitarianism should have been done years before. But because of pseudo-secularism and vote bank politics, these refugees were forced to live an inhuman life in India. Now CAA gives them an opportunity to have a dignified life in India.

But as you are all aware, CAA along with the proposed National Register for Citizenship or NRC, is being used by our adversaries and political opponents – the Congress and left radicals -- as a propaganda tool. They are whipping hysteria, social unrest and spreading

falsehood and rumor about both CAA and NRC added Mr Sewhani .

Mr Sewhani said that This is the time that we extend our hand to Narendra Bhai by challenging this propaganda and by bringing truth before the people of the country and the world. This is not for the first time that they have done this. Their only purpose is to defame India, BJP, and the Prime Minister. Let me remind you some of the events of the last six years when the same group of people has been on the forefront, holding rallies and writing editorials and columns and saying A) India's secularism is in danger B) Minorities in particular Muslims are being treated as second class citizenship C) India is moving towards a fascist regime.

He remembers these events. It was the same propaganda then and now.

But "SATYAMEV JAYATE" Truth will prevail said Mr Sewhani. Bharat under Narendra Bhai, would emerge as a strong nation like never before. India's Time has come. Let's join our hands together in strengthening the hands of the prime minister. Let's reach out to our Congress-

men, Senators, elected representatives and the media to tell them the truth.

Mr Sewhani said that a delegation of Indian American community Leaders will visit India and will meet Prime Minister Modi to personally offer a deep appreciation for CAA and Abrogation of Article 370. All the Speakers said that they fail to understand the false propaganda of opposition. This CAA is about providing dignified life to persecuted people from three neighboring countries.

Others who spoke at the meeting were Dr Nirmal Mattoo , Dr Narinder Kukar , Dr Urmilesh Arya, Dr Samir Sarkar ,Ashok Vyas, Kamlesh Mehta, Sunil Hali and Dr Vijaypal Arya. Prominent in presence were Deepak Bansal, Pinky Jaggi, Jyoti Gupta,Charan Singh Gulati , Dr Nirmal Mattoo , Jagdish Sewhani, Appan Menon, Diyal singh Vohra, Standing :Sudesh Mukhi , Dr Mulchand Chugh ,

Kamal Gupta, Dr Narinder Kukar, Gobind Bathija,Dr Samir Sarkar & Ashok Vyas .



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Iranian-backed attack on American Embassy in Iraq increases risk of US-Iran military conflict



President Trump faced plenty of problems dealing with Iran and Iraq until now, but on the last day of 2019 his problems got a lot worse when dozens of Shiite militia members backed by Iran forced their way into the U.S. Embassy compound in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, set fires and caused other damage.

The militia members, who eventually withdrew from the embassy compound, were part of a much larger group of several thousand people protesting outside the embassy. They denounced American airstrikes that killed two dozen members of an Iranian-backed militia and wounded dozens more over the weekend. The protesters chanted "Death to America," threw rocks and called for a withdrawal of the more than 5,000 U.S. troops now stationed in Iraq - a long-sought goal of Iran's anti-American regime. Protesters said they planned to remain outside the embassy.

Job One for the U.S. military is keeping Americans and the embassy secure. Some 120 Marines were sent to the embassy to provide increased security and U.S. helicopter gunships flew over the compound.

You can be sure that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Mark Esper have laid out an array of military options and President Trump has been briefed and is up to speed on all of them.

If needed, U.S. forces can and no doubt will impose calm on downtown Baghdad. Baghdad will not see a repeat of the attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi in 2012, when the U.S. ambassador and three Americans were killed. Nor will we see a repeat of the 1979 attack on the U.S. Embassy in the Iranian capital of Tehran, when revolutionaries captured 52 Americans and held them hostage for 444 days.

It's actually Iraq's duty to protect the U.S. Embassy. President Trump made that clear on Twitter and in a call with Iraqi Prime Minister Abdel Abdul Mahdi, as did other top U.S. officials with their Iraqi counterparts.

In one tweet Trump said "we expect Iraq to use its forces to protect the Embassy, and so notified." Later Trump tweeted: "Iran will be held fully responsible for lives lost, or damage incurred, at any of our facilities. They will pay a very BIG PRICE! This is not a Warning, it is a Threat. Happy New Year!"

This is all happening because Iraq is infested with Iranian influence. The power of that influence was clear when at first Iraqi police and security forces stood by while the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad began Tuesday - just as Iran planned.

The mob attacking the U.S. Embassy was filled with members of an Iranian-backed terror group called Kataib Hezbollah, or KH for short, which is closely allied with Iran's Quds militia force. Iran has a grip on Iraq's police and military response. And Iranian officers have free rein across much of Iraq's state apparatus, Britain's Guardian newspaper reported in November after reviewing leaked Iraqi diplomatic cables published by The New York Times.

Iraq's military has been thoroughly trained and supplied by the U.S. and other allies for years. Yet the failure of Iraqi forces to act against Iranian-backed militia forces in recent weeks has been similar to the paralysis that let ISIS sweep to the outskirts of Baghdad in the summer of 2014.

Iraq has lost control to the point where Iran can mount harassing attacks on U.S. forces all over the country. American troops in Iraq were attacked 11 times in the past two months, according to the Pentagon. The attacks have occurred from south of Mosul to near Kirkuk in the north and other locations.

Trump had already waited weeks for Iraq to deal with these hostile acts.

Iraq's own military would not or could not hit the KH Iran proxy gang that launched over 30 rockets at an Iraqi base where U.S. forces were stationed Saturday, killing one American and wounding four. Since Iraq couldn't cope, Trump approved the Sunday strikes by U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagles, hitting weapons caches linked to the KH Iran proxy gang. The airstrikes also help remind Iran that America is willing to take military action. Trump has been quite restrained, backing off a retaliatory strike after Iran shot down a U.S. Navy Global Hawk drone. Nor did Saudi Arabia strike back after Iran hit the Saudi Aramco oil complex.

The crisis in Iraq has been boiling since October, when Iraqis increased their demonstrations against government corruption and Iran's influence. Some 319 Iraqis were killed in protests from October to mid-November, according to an Iraqi Parliament report.

Long-term, Iran's guilt in the attack on the American Embassy in Baghdad shows why Trump has been right to impose maximum economic sanctions to pressure Iran, and why he insists on dismantling Iran's `terror network as well as its nuclear ambitions.

Rebecca Grant

Anti-Semitism is on the rise but the left (and its media allies) play a dangerous game

In October 2018, during Sabbath morning services, a white supremacist attacked the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, murdering 11 people and wounding another six. In April 2019, in the middle of Passover, a white supremacist attacked the Chabad of Poway synagogue, murdering one person and seriously wounding another three. Both incidents started absolutely necessary conversations about the prevalence and nature of the white supremacist threat to Jews across the country.

Four people were murdered at a kosher supermarket in Jersey City by self-described Black Hebrew Israelites just weeks ago; five people were stabbed at a Hanukkah celebration in Monsey, New York; this week alone, New York police are investigating at least nine anti-Semitic attacks.

The upsurge of violence against Jews in New York, in particular, has finally prompted commentary from Democratic politicians ranging from New York Mayor Bill De Blasio, who just weeks ago expressed shock at anti-Semitism reaching "the doorstep of New York City," to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who expressed puzzlement at the attacks, noting broadly: "This is an intolerant time in our country. We see anger; we see hatred exploding."

This isn't new. Back in 2018, The New York Times admitted there was a massive spike in anti-Semitic attacks in the city -- and even acknowledged that the newspaper of record had failed to cover that surging anti-Semitism because "it refuses to conform to an

easy narrative with a single ideological enemy." But that has always been true of anti-Semitism. It's possible, as The Times should recognize, to walk and chew gum at the same time in covering anti-Semitism. But it's not a mere lack of focus and time preventing the media from taking anti-Semitism in New York seriously. It's the identity of the attackers. Armin Rosen wrote for Tablet Magazine back in July 2019 about the Jew-hatred in New York and correctly noted "that the victims are most often outwardly identifiable, i.e., religious rather than secularized Jews, and the perpetrators who have been recorded on CCTV cameras are overwhelmingly black and Hispanic." This throws the media -- and many left-leaning Jewish organizations -- into spasms of confusion, since it cuts directly against the supposed alliance of intersectionality so beloved by the political left. White supremacists attacking left-leaning Jews fits a desired narrative. Black teenagers beating up Hasidic Jews in Williamsburg doesn't. And so the left ignores the "wrong" type of anti-Semitism. The same media that will ask whether President Donald Trump's executive orders designed to protect Jews on campus are "ackshually" anti-Semitic will ignore the fact that former President Obama sat in Jeremiah Wright's church for 20 years - the same Jeremiah Wright who railed against Jews and Israel routinely during those years; who said Jews kept Obama from talking with him after the election; and who avers that "Jesus was a Palestinian."

Ben Shapiro



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The protesters have got it wrong. Understand the logic of the CAA

The Centre must continue explaining the law; the opponents must engage in rational discussion

The protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) have been so emotive that it has been impossible to have a rational discussion on it. Many of the protesters seem to have a deep suspicion of the government's motives, to the extent that they do not bother to properly engage on the CAA's history or rationale. Yet, it is crucially important to do so, with cool heads and reason. While opponents believe the CAA is biased, it is, in fact, not uncommon to identify religious minorities as facing serious threats in their home countries. For instance, the Barack Obama administration had identified a community of Iraqi Christians as facing genocide, many of whom found refuge in the United States.

That is exactly the case with the religious minorities

in these three neighbouring, theistic nations - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. By definition, theistic states' constitutions grant primacy to one religion. While we can engage in rhetoric about what constitutes genocide, and how to ascertain whether refugees have been persecuted, there is no denying the non-stop reports of these people being subjected to kidnappings, forcible conversions and marriages, and murders. Finally, that their share of these nations' population has collapsed, from well above 20% to the low single digits, should be proof enough.

Since most of these populations were part of undivided India, there is a moral obligation incumbent on us to shelter them from the genocide they are

experiencing. In fact, that is explicit in the many utterances of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and others.

Many opponents of the CAA seem to have reacted to appearances of bias, rather than thinking it through, let alone going deep into its history and logic. Why, some ask, should it not include Muslims? The reason is that this particular scheme of sanctuary - notably supported by Manmohan Singh and others in earlier years - is specifically to provide shelter to persecuted minorities in neighbouring theistic states.

Though it would be odd to include Muslims in this specific scheme, because they are the majority, and also have constitutional primacy in these theistic states, there is nothing in



the CAA that otherwise prevents them from seeking Indian citizenship. In fact, during the Narendra Modi government, 600 such Muslims from neighbouring countries have become naturalised Indians.

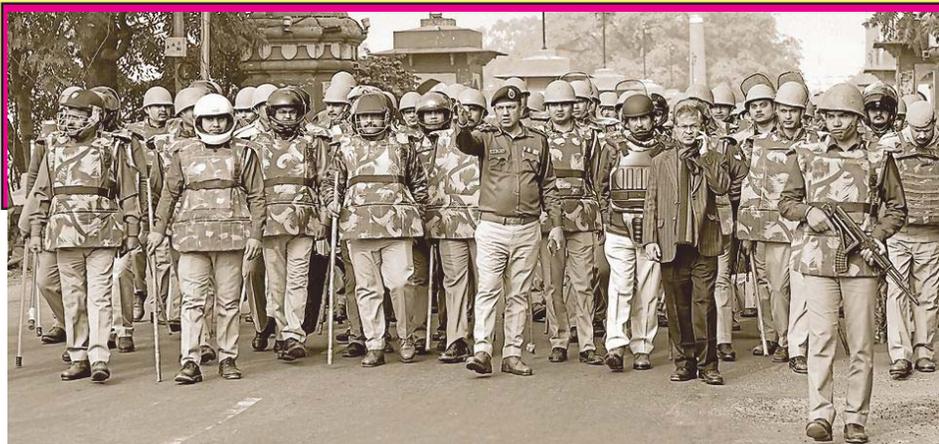
The underlying principle of the CAA is that, globally, persecuted refugees are inherently seen as deserving more accommodation than illegal immigrants, who are mainly seeking economic opportunities. While political, sectarian and

economic discrimination are all matters of concern, even worse. It is on this basis that India accepted thousands who were forced out of Uganda, not to mention the millions who escaped civil war in the then East Pakistan.

But then, what about Ahmadiyas or Shias or Sri Lankans Hindus or Rohingyas? Again, this is worth thinking through, rather than automatically assuming that their exclusion must indicate bias. While these

categories of people may indeed face some political or sectarian discrimination, it is not the constitutional, fundamental, systemic degradation that the religious minorities have experienced in those theistic countries. To top it all, there is something about the idea of Muslims wanting Indian citizenship on the grounds of facing discrimination in Islamic countries, which were carved out of India to give them a religious homeland, that is galling to many.

Don't just criticise the police. They're constrained



Modern policing in a democratic society is based on "policing by consent". This acknowledges the importance of public cooperation for the effective functioning of the force. Naturally, such cooperation is negated when the police use physical force against the public. Such action negates the principle of "minimum force" that makes it clear that the

police cannot take on the role of the judiciary or the State in punishing the guilty.

The last few weeks have seen scores of police-public confrontations across India due to the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests. At least 25 protesters have been reportedly killed and many more injured. Large numbers of police personnel have also been injured.

The anti-CAA protests, which have seen the extensive participation of young people, have raised three questions: One, can India's police force manage mass agitations that have the potential for sporadic violence? Second, whether the police leadership is acting as "servants of the law, and no one but the law"? And, third, whether the police response against protesters has been professional and

Their use of excessive force is deplorable. But they are poorly trained, inadequately equipped and over-deployed

unbiased? The need to insulate the police's leadership from extra-legal pressure, to build up specialist capacity in areas such as maintaining public order, and to ensure accountability for misuse of authority are repeated recommendations are made to improve policing in India.

Incremental changes have taken place, but by-and-large, the status quo prevails. Meanwhile, in most states, the armed police are over-deployed, poorly led and under-equipped, while the civil police are understaffed and

thinly spread on the ground. However, the Central Armed Police Forces are now million-strong and well resourced. Compare the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Police. While both have more or less the same number of personnel, the UP Police's budget of ~17,000 crore is 25% less than that of the CRPF, though its personnel remains on call 24x7, and their expected deliverables are complex, and under constant public scrutiny. The Rapid Action Force (RAF) battalions of the CRPF are well-trained, competently led, and

equipped with the state-of-the-art anti-riot equipment. But they are deployed sparingly, unlike the UP Police.

In states, both the armed and the civil police suffer from severe training deficiencies. Concepts such as work-life balance are absent for their personnel. Scientific research to upgrade policing methods is negligible when compared with other domains such as defence or health. The National Police Mission is yet to get off the block, whereas as the National Health Mission with funding of ~35,000 crores has made a huge difference.



Anti-CAA protests

The assertion of nationalism and idealism

Many attempts have been made to slander the young women and men who have taken to the streets to stand up against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). It may be convenient for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to believe that this is an agitation fuelled by the Opposition or by the "anti-national" radicals, whom even Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to as "urban naxals".

The government could not be more wrong. This student revolt is a spontaneous mainstream movement. It is the most significant pushback to the Modi government since it first won in 2014. It is also the first time in six years that a pall of fear has lifted. The voluble critics of the NRC and CAA projects are aware that they may not win the war, but they are willing to go to battle anyway.

Though multiple parallels have been drawn to demonetisation because of a similar reckless and counterintuitive impulse that drove both decisions, there is one critical difference. The government's messaging on demonetisation was much smarter. It was able to present the decision to withdraw 86% of India's cash from circulation as one triggered by a mass clean-up plan.

More critically, it was able to tap into the country's subliminal class war and lull India's poor into believing that the rich had to stand in line for money just like them. Hence, despite the hit to the economy, there were no street protests against the move. In fact, the BJP was able to sweep the Uttar Pradesh elections within a few months of the disruptive move.

This time, the young men and women leading the marches and sit-ins across India are impervious to both sophistry and slurs. Nor are they representing the political Opposition.

The students I met at the protests in the heart of the Capital underlined how disappointed they were with the Congress in particular. A young man said for a party to be "run by dynasts in today's age makes them modern-day oligarchs". Another was cynical about "the Gandhi family hijacking our protest". They laughed out loud at the suggestion that they were affiliated to any political group. Talking to them drove home two points: First, the people are leading the Opposition, and not the other way around. And second, there is a growing appetite for a new centrist, socially liberal Opposition party. Among the young people, there is fierce disenchantment

and disillusionment with the citizenship project's move to divide Indians. And there is still no political alternative they prefer or see hope in.

It is a grave political misstep by the BJP to dismiss the anger and idealism of the young. When the Delhi Police stormed the campus of Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi and horrific videos emerged - of female students encircling their male friends to shield them from a rain of lathis, or young men ducking for cover under urinals and broken glass - the BJP miscalculated the anger that would almost spread across universities. As one party member told me in private, "We thought these would remain Muslim protests. Instead they have become pan-India student protests."

Notwithstanding the focus by the BJP on violence and arson - the unequivocal condemnation of aggression by students, the fact that the protests have remained largely peaceful and the inescapable detail that the violence has only taken place in states where the police reports to the BJP - means that the charge has been unable to stick.

The lazy trope of "anti-national" has not worked either. In fact, the carefully chosen symbols of the protest - Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh,

the Tricolour, the singing of the national anthem, the mass reading of the preamble to the Constitution - all of these are assertions of new nationalism.

Yes, Muslims are also reclaiming their nationhood in an age when electoral politics has sometimes pushed them to the margins. They are shrugging off the "Go To Pakistan" trolls of social media armies with the contempt they deserve. And they are parking other debates and disagreements - on social mores, on religious interpretations, on politics, on uniform civil code - for the time being. This movement is about first retrieving their rightful political voice. But the protests are not by India's Muslims alone. In fact, they are driven by a spirit of constitutionalism and by heady youthful optimism. In a country where two-thirds of the population is under the age of 35, it should not be so difficult to understand the youthful optimism of this agitation. That and the heady adrenalin push of believing that the country you were born in will be shaped by you.

We have often judged millennials and post-millennials for being apathetic and politically disengaged. The citizenship debate has fundamentally altered that. This is a new political constituency. And the BJP has already alienated it.

The Pakistan army is showing its true colours



It is back to showcasing its ties with terror groups. This is ominous news for India

Disturbing evidence has emerged recently of growing public contact between top Pakistani army and security officers and representatives of jihadi groups. This suggests the Pakistani military establishment is not serious, if at all it ever was, about severing its ties with such organisations. Last week, Major General Asif Ghafoor, the director general of Inter-Services Public

Relations, the military's media arm, visited the hardline Jamia Rashidia seminary while on a trip to Karachi with the army chief, General Qamar Bajwa. Images and videos have since emerged of General Ghafoor addressing the seminary's students. For most terror-watchers, Jamia Rashidia is best known for its links to Jaish-e-Mohammed and the 2002 murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. There are also images of officers of the Pakistan Rangers hobnobbing with Aurangzeb Farooqi, head of the outlawed Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), accused of having a hand in the killing of hundreds of members of Pakistan's Shia minority.

Over the past two years, the Pakistani military had apparently cut down on such contacts - or if they did happen, at least, they didn't happen publicly - largely because of the stern message from Western capitals and bodies such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) that Islamabad must take credible, verifiable and irreversible action to counter terrorism and its funding. It now appears the Pakistani military no longer wants to even go through the motions of pretending it has been working to snap its ties with such proscribed organisations. The portends for a country such as India, always at the receiving end of Pakistan-backed terror, are ominous.

Why Modi's focus on groundwater is critical

Its over exploitation has led to a crisis. Pooling and sharing is the future

On December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Atal Bhujal scheme to strengthen the institutional framework for participatory groundwater management and bringing about behavioural changes at the community level for sustainable groundwater resource management. For now, the scheme will be implemented in Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The PM has personally led the initiative to make water-management a key focus area

in this term in office. In his first "Mann ki Baat" address after his re-election, he pitched for water conservation to be made into a mass movement.

The decision to focus on the groundwater crisis is a good one because its over-exploitation is contributing to - as stated by NITI Aayog - "the worst water crisis" in India's history. Groundwater is one of the most important water sources in India accounting for 63% of all irrigation water and over 80% of the rural and urban domestic water supplies. And participatory groundwater



management is a key way of tackling the crisis. In fact, villagers in Andhra Pradesh has

already shown how aquifer distribution of water. It's time to build on these positive experiences of community water management.

A new phase in Centre-state ties

Both must respect the division of powers in the Constitution

The decision of the Centre to press ahead with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the decision of a range of Opposition-ruled states to not implement the CAA, and in the case of West Bengal and Kerala, even the National Population Register, brings to fore a new trend in India's federal compact. Indian federalism has evolved over the decades, and this can be broadly structured in four phases. The first lasted for four decades after Independence. The Constitution, in fact, does not use the term federal, but calls India a "union of states". The backdrop of Partition and the

recognition among founders that the country needed a strong Centre to consolidate the Republic gave India a quasi-federal structure - where the Centre was more powerful than the states. The fact that the Congress was in power both at the Centre and in most states meant that politically too, Delhi remained more powerful than state capitals. The second phase saw the rise of the regional parties and the decay of the Congress, particularly since the late 1980s, changing the distribution of power. The emergence of the coalition era, where regional parties had

extraordinary power to decide who would govern in Delhi, reinforced the trend. Suddenly, states were equally - if not more - powerful than the Centre. The third phase began in 2014 and subsequent state polls. India had a single-party majority government after three decades. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also swept polls in a majority of Indian states. This meant that Delhi was once again more powerful than the states, which largely abided by the Centre's political directives and implemented schemes and policies. But the past year has seen a new



equilibrium emerge. The Centre is strong, but states have strongly begun asserting their independent identity. As more states slip out of the control of the BJP, and as politics becomes more polarised, India is headed towards a fourth

phase where both the Centre and the states are strong, and there is an underlying tension within the federal compact. To ensure that this does not slide into a dysfunctional polity, there is a need for accommodation on both sides.

In West Africa, a new threat to Indian sailors

There is a spike in the kidnapping of sailors in the Gulf of Guinea. India must find ways to address it

The Gulf of Guinea is increasingly unsafe for Indian sailors. Last month, pirates kidnapped two Indian oil tankers there and took Indian crew hostages. On December 3, they kidnapped 16 sailors, and on December 15, another 20. While the first group was released on December 23, the second is still in captivity.

Such incidents involving Indian sailors in the Gulf of Guinea are becoming more frequent for at least three reasons. First, over past few years, the Gulf of Guinea - running along Africa's Atlantic coast from Senegal to Angola - has emerged as the world's kidnapping hot spot with 82% of the global share. While Somali piracy has declined, the slack has been taken up by the West African crime syndicates, mostly based in Nigeria's oil-rich, thickly forested Niger Delta. Second, India's sea-borne trade with West Africa has gone up as our oil procurement from Nigeria makes us the country's largest

trading partner. This has pushed up the number of our vessels, both Indian as well as chartered, frequenting the region's ports. Third, the number of our sailors on high seas has risen by 45% in the past three years, and stands at over two lakh. India is now among the top three suppliers of seamen, with around 12.8% of officers and around 14.5% of ratings shares in the world seafaring community.

The spurt in kidnapping in the Gulf of Guinea is rooted in a number of local factors as well. It includes relatively weak navies and coast guards of the littoral states, unemployed youth and a simmering insurgency in the Niger Delta, leading to the proliferation of weapons, fast boats and easy hiding options in creaks. The perpetrators often enjoy strong political patronage. The kidnapping for ransom on land has long been rampant in the region, but it now extends to offshore. These crime syndicates also engage in oil pipeline

vandalism, protection money racketeering, and bunkering crude to sell it on the high seas. In a vicious cycle, the "profits" so acquired are often ploughed back into procuring more lethal hardware and to attract more recruits. The syndicates now have a capacity to go further deep offshore and operate virtually unchallenged across the Gulf of Guinea's 2.35 million square kilometre expanse.

A degree of cynicism permeates the kidnapping ecosystem. The risk premium for the crew's kidnapping is pre-factored into by the maritime insurers, who negotiate for the release of the kidnapped sailors and pay the ransom. Thus, neither the ship owners, nor the crew management companies bear the direct consequences of the game. The kidnapers know well that the hostages are worth the ransom only if they are kept alive. Therefore, unlike political kidnappings, the kidnapped sailors are not harmed as long



as they do not resist or try to escape.

Seasonal surge in kidnapping for a month from mid-November is no coincidence. The hostage takers are on the prowl to fatten their purses to splurge on Christmas festivities. When approached, local authorities go through comb the seas and raid usual hideouts, but with little success. Most of the time, the hostages are released after the insurer's local agent and the kidnapers haggle and whittle down the ransom to a mutually agreeable figure. On an average, the process takes around two weeks.

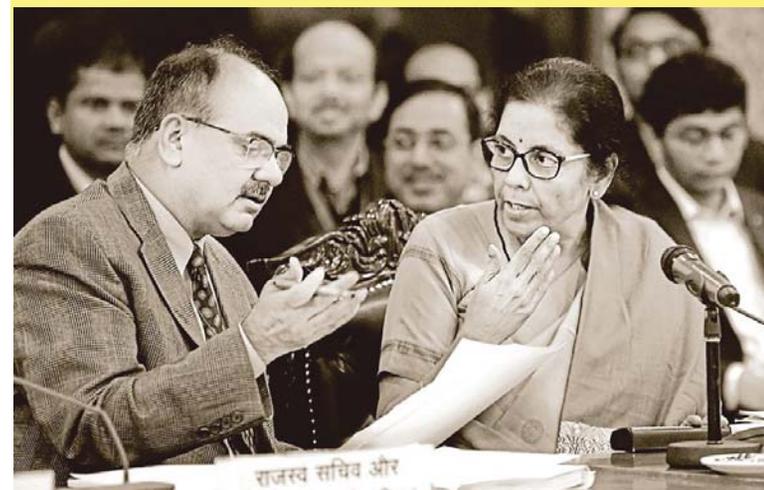
The sailors and their dependents are the main hapless victims of

the sordid saga. Although not physically harmed, the sailors are roughed up and suffer immense trauma. Ironically, some victims suffer from the Stockholm Syndrome, and end up sympathising with the same thugs.

What recourse does India and the international community have against such non-State actors? Stopping trade with West Africa, or prohibiting the seafarers from venturing into the region are clearly not viable options. The tactics deployed in decimating the Somali piracy can be applied here as well, with an international naval task force for the Gulf of Guinea.

What worked for the economy in 2019

Despite the bleak indicators, there were 10 positive developments, giving hope for the future



The tough truth is that 2019 was a particularly bleak year for the economy. Certainly the bleakest since 2013 and, on many parameters, worse.

Nevertheless, we begin a new year and a new decade now. So it might be good to end the year with optimism going forward. I have, therefore, put together the 10 bits of good news on the economy even in a lousy year. The first, undoubtedly, was the stabilisation of the bankruptcy process. A corporate group, as big and well-connected as the Ruias, lost its lucrative behemoth

Essar Steel to Arcelor Mittal. This is the biggest example of a well-connected, powerful oligarch accepting bankruptcy and selling its most coveted business. Several other, smaller promoters lost their bankrupt businesses. True capitalism should accept business failure as a normal hazard, not a point of social shame. Promoters fail in one business, lose it, then dust their bruised knees and try something else. Donald Trump may not be the ideal poster boy, but unless a society learns to accept genuine business failure, it has

no economic future. India made that beginning in 2019.

Second, if this was a powerful promoter forced to sell out under legal pressure, we saw another fine-and if I may add, inspirational-example of a more powerful owner doing so by himself, instead of using his enormous political connections or media power to brazen it out. Subhash Chandra, owner and founder of the Zee Group, suffered massive losses in many of his recent investments, made on borrowings in go-go times.

Then the music stopped, he wasn't able to pay back his creditors, mostly mutual funds, and there was a crisis. Now, within the year, he has repaid everything. In the process, he has sold away his crown jewel, Zee Entertainment. He has done it without needing an Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) process. This wasn't just honorable and atypical of an Indian business family patriarch.

Chandra is among our most instinctive, successful and self-made entrepreneurs. But when he suffered a big failure, he had the honesty and the largeness of heart to sell out and pay back. Another sign that Indian capitalism is coming of age.

Third, this year demonstrated that the Narendra Modi government has ended the culture of "bailouts". Jet Airways was allowed to go bust. There were no phone calls to banks to keep it going. Nor did anybody call to save Essar. This absence of "phone-call bailouts" is a virtuous change. Fourth, the Modi government's announcement of a full sell-out of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) is historic. Air India is an albatross any government would try to offload from its neck. But to put a perennial profit-maker like BPCL on the block shows genuine intent for privatisation. It breaks a taboo that profit-making public sector units can't be sold.

Fifth, the year started with the Modi government launching a war on statistics and data. First, the unemployment survey figures were junked. Later, the consumption spending survey was repudiated. But, as the year ended, the government set up a committee on statistics, and put it under the leadership of a known, vocal and respected critic, Pronab Sen. The committee also has intellectual heft. If the Modi government accepts that lack of data credibility is hurting it and makes its peace with statistics, it is progress. Sixth, this was the first full year since the inflation-targeting law and mechanism was tested. The good news is, the political establishment as well as the Reserve Bank of India passed the test. Avoiding the temptation and pressures to spend its way out of a terrible growth decline showed a welcome resolve on the part of the political class.

Home ministry asks states to clamp down on spurious liquor manufacturers



The NHRC had asked union home secretary to issue necessary directions to all the state Director General of Police (DGPs) and UTs to enhance police patrolling and vigil in the affected areas.

(News Agencies)- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sent a missive to all the states and union territories (UTs) asking them to form special teams at the district level to clamp down on the network of spurious liquor manufacturers and distributors, officials told Hindustan Times.

The trigger for MHA's communiqué, sent few weeks back according to a senior official, is a report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in which it recommended strong action following the February 2019 hooch tragedy in Assam in which 143 persons were killed. There was another

hooch tragedy in Uttar Pradesh in February 2019 in which around 92 people were killed.

NHRC had, on February 25 last year, taken cognizance of a Hindustan Times report while issuing notice to Assam government and union home ministry.

The human rights body had asked union home secretary to issue necessary directions to all the state Director General of Police (DGPs) and UTs to enhance police patrolling and vigil in the affected areas of their states and take strict legal action

against the culprits.

In its letter to states, MHA states, "NHRC has stated that the law is in existence to deal with this menace; however, there is a need to sensitise the police and the excise authorities in the states/UTs to be more active and vigilant so that precious human lives are not lost in such incidents."

"An effective mechanism is required to be evolved to curb the unlawful network of spurious liquor manufacturers and distributors and if necessary, special teams at the district level

to be constituted to clamp down on perpetrators of law, in an effective manner. You (principal secretaries of states/UTs) are therefore, requested to kindly issue necessary guidelines for enhancing police patrolling and vigil in affected areas of your state/UT and take strict legal action the culprits," it added.

A home ministry official said incidents of deaths due to spurious liquors have taken place over the years and police or excise departments should put a complete ban on such manufacturers.

India leaves China way behind in births on Jan 1: Unicef

The United Nations (UN) World Population report released in June last year says India is projected to overtake China as the world's most populous country this decade - by 2027.

(News Agencies)- On New Year's day, January 1, an estimated 67,385 babies were born in India - 17% of the estimated 392,078 babies born in the world that day, according to Unicef.

India and seven other countries accounted for at least half of total global births. The other countries are: China (46,299), Nigeria (26,039), Pakistan (6,787), Indonesia (13,020), the United States (10,452), Democratic Republic of Congo (10,247) and Ethiopia (8,493).

The United Nations (UN) World Population report released in June last year says India is projected to overtake China as the world's most populous

country this decade - by 2027.

Each January, UNICEF celebrates babies born on New Year's Day. "As the calendar flips each January, we are reminded of all the possibility and potential of each child embarking on her or his life's journey - if they are just given that chance," said Henrietta Fore, Unicef executive director, in a formal release issued by the organisation. To be sure, the numbers are estimates. UNICEF worked with the World Data Lab on these.

"The estimates for the number of babies born on January 1, 2020, draw on the latest revision of the UN's World Population Prospects (2019). Building on these datasets, World Data

Lab's (WDL) algorithm projects estimates of the number of births for each day by country," the UN agency said.

In 2018, 2.5 million newborns died in just their first month of life; about a third of them on the first day of life. Among those children, most died from preventable causes such as premature birth, complications during delivery, and infections such as sepsis. In addition, more than 2.5 million babies are born dead each year.

Over the past three decades, the world has seen remarkable progress in child survival, cutting the number of children worldwide who die before their fifth birthday by more than half. But there has

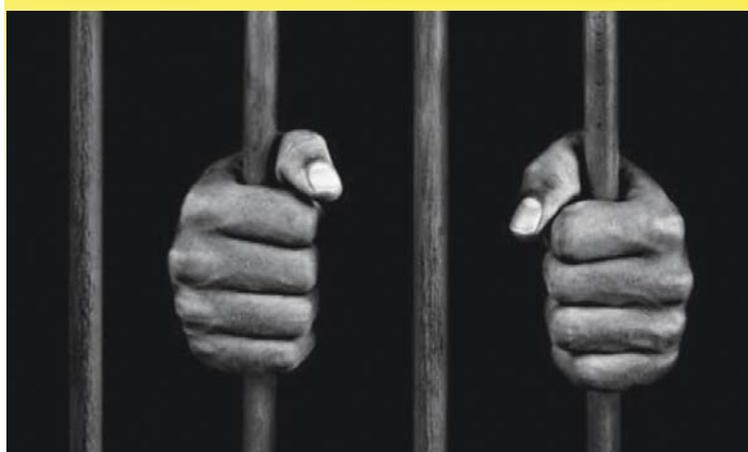


been slower progress for newborns. Babies dying in the first month accounted for 47% of all deaths among children under five in 2018, up from 40% in 1990.

Child mortality is a huge public health concern in India with about 0.76 million babies dying in the neonatal period, and nearly 3.5

million babies being born premature, according to government data. In September of last year, The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative report was released, showing significant progress on the child nutrition front in the country.

Bastar journalist booked on charges of rioting, criminal conspiracy, acquitted



A Chhattisgarh Police Special Task Force Commander alleged that he had seen Yadav stand behind a Maoist fighter during an ambush in August that year. Yadav has maintained that he was not even in Darbha the day of the ambush.

and associating with a terrorist organisation in 2015 has been acquitted by Jagdalpur NIA court on Thursday.

"I have never done anything illegal neither I was involved in any terrorist activity. I was booked over my stories I have done. I am happy that I am acquitted," Yadav told Hindustan Times.

Yadav was picked up in September 2015. A Chhattisgarh Police Special Task Force Commander alleged that he had seen Yadav stand behind a Maoist fighter during an ambush in August that year. Yadav has maintained that he was not even in Darbha the day of the ambush.

"Many tribals, journalists and

activists were targeted by the authorities for raising voice against atrocities. I am just one of them... They also need justice," said Yadav who worked for several local newspapers.

"The Jagdalpur NIA court on Wednesday has acquitted Santosh Yadav," said Arvind Chaudhary, advocate of Yadav.

(News Agencies)- Bastar journalist Santosh Yadav who was booked on the charges of rioting, criminal conspiracy

'India can't lag behind': PM Modi asks young DRDO scientists to spread wings

PM Modi was talking at the launch of five Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) laboratories for focused research in advanced technologies by young scientists in Bengaluru.



(News Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said investment in research and innovation in defence technology is important to help India keep pace in a world where rapidly changing technology was defining strategic dynamics.

The Prime Minister said this on Thursday evening at the launch of five Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) laboratories for focused research in advanced technologies by young scientists in Bengaluru.

The prime minister assured the scientific community that his government will extend all possible help in widening their horizons in order to master new technologies. "You all are aware that along with air and sea, cyber and space will

define the world's strategic dynamics," the PM said addressing the scientific community. Modi said intelligent machines will play a key role in the defence sector in future and added that "India cannot lag behind," in such

a situation as she had to protect her citizens, borders and interests. "Your capability is vast, you can do many things, widen your horizons, change the parameters of your performance...fly spreading wings...there are opportunities, I'm with you," Modi said. DRDO Young Scientist Laboratories or DYSLs are located at Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. DRDO said each of its five labs has been designed to work on a different key advanced technology for the development of futuristic defence systems. The agency added that young scientists under the age of 35 years have been selected for this opportunity to work in identified research areas. According to the Defence Ministry's research and development wing, the inspiration to create Young Scientist Laboratories came from an address delivered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 24, 2014, during a DRDO award function.

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PM greets people on birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh

He also posted a brief video on the guru describing how he fought against injustice and caste discrimination.

(News Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday greeted people on the 353rd birth anniversary of Gobind Singh, saying what the 10th Sikh guru strived for is relevant even today. "We bow to the venerable Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji on his Prakash Parv," Modi wrote on Twitter. He also posted a brief video on the guru describing how he fought against injustice and caste discrimination. The prime minister said Gobind Singh's philosophy and ideals are relevant for the "New India". A spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher, Guru Gobind Singh was born in 1666 in Patna.

'Let bygones be bygones': Sushil Modi's olive branch to Prashant Kishor

Kishor had contended that the JD(U) must contest on more number of seats in the assembly polls than the BJP. Sushil Modi had dissed him for broaching the seat sharing pact at this stage.

(News Agencies)- Nitish Kumar's second in command in Bihar and BJP leader Sushil Modi has extended an olive branch to Janata Dal (United) poll strategist and party vice-president Prashant Kishor. The two have been sparring over seat sharing ahead of the assembly elections in the state due this year.

"Let bygones be bygones," said Modi when asked about the bitterness in the wake of his attack on Kishor. The senior BJP leader, who was receiving guests at his residence on the occasion of New Year, also hoped that the people of the state will vote for the NDA in assembly polls with the same enthusiasm as was

evident in the Lok Sabha polls wherein the coalition won 39 out of 40 seats.

"May the New Year bring peace and prosperity to the people of Bihar who give their blessings to NDA just like they had done in the parliamentary elections last year," Modi said.

Political temperature in the state had soared in the last few days after Kishor in a number of interviews contended that the JD(U) must contest on more number of seats in assembly polls than the BJP.

Sushil Modi had dissed him for broaching the seat sharing pact at this stage, asserting that though the seat-sharing pact would be decided by the leadership

of the two parties, there were those who had "joined politics without any ideology" and were making statements about "coalition dharma".

Kishor responded by pointing out that the people, and not any party had decided JDU's status as the single largest party under Nitish Kumar. "It is nice to be lectured on morality by Sushil Modi, who became the Dy CM due to circumstances despite his party's defeat in 2015 (assembly elections)," Prashant Kishor tweeted.

Prashant Kishor, who played a key role in the 2015 Bihar elections, was inducted into the JDU last year as the party's vice president. The election



management firm that he founded has since then gone to take on other clients as well and consults for Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party and Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had declined to comment on the statements being made by

leaders on both sides but asserted that there weren't any problems in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

"All is well in the NDA," Kumar told reporters after an event to mark the death anniversary of BJP leader Navin Sinha in Bihar capital Patna.

After Bengal, now Maharashtra out of Republic Day tableaux race, alleges NCP



(News Agencies)- NCP alleged that the Centre has denied permission to the Maharashtra and West Bengal tableaux from the non-BJP-ruled MP Supriya Sule on Thursday

NCP's Sule said the two states had played a key role in the freedom struggle and the decision to allegedly deny permissions to their tableaux was an "insult" of the people.

for the Republic Day parade, and said the government was behaving in a "prejudiced" manner.

She said the two states had played a key role in the freedom struggle and the decision to allegedly deny permissions to their tableaux was an "insult" of the people.

"The Centre has rejected permissions to the tableaux of Maharashtra and West Bengal from parading on Republic Day. It is a festival of the country and

the Centre is expected to give representation to all the states," Sule tweeted.

"But the government is behaving in a prejudiced manner, giving step-motherly treatment to the states being ruled by the opposition parties," she added. The Parliamentarian from Baramati also shared a news report that claims that the Defence Ministry has rejected West Bengal's tableau for the Republic Day parade (on January 26).

SMS services patchy after restoration: Valley residents

SMS, broadband, and mobile internet services were among those suspended on August 5 after parliament passed laws and resolutions bifurcating Jammu and Kashmir into union territories, and scrapped constitutional provisions giving the state special status.

(News Agencies)- At mid-night Tuesday, broadband at major hospitals and short messaging service (SMS) on all post-paid mobile phones were restored in Kashmir valley, although residents said the restoration has been patchy.

SMS, broadband, and mobile internet services were among those suspended on August 5 after parliament passed laws and resolutions bifurcating Jammu and Kashmir into union territories, and scrapped constitutional provisions giving the state special status.

Some of these services have since been restored, and other restrictions placed after the change, eased, although many

local politicians held after August 5 still remain in detention.

Last week, the Ladakh Union Territory's administration restored mobile internet in Kargil, leading to hopes that a similar restoration may be in store in Jammu and Kashmir as well. According to reports coming in from the valley, SMS services between BSNL mobile phones have been completely restored, but there seem to be some problems with others. Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Baseer Khan said SMS messaging on BSNL was restored while Jio and Airtel were facing technical issues. "They are sorting it out," he said. "Something is better than nothing. I received a service

message on my Voda(fone) number. A message from my Voda SIM took 2.5 hours to reach a BSNL phone," said Mohammad Anees, 30, a bank employee. "I was trying from morning. While SMS service between BSNL to BSNL was working, it was not going from BSNL to other SIMs. The SMS service on postpaid private telecom numbers was also not working," said Waseem Ahmad, a Srinagar resident and videographer. Since the August 5 communications blackout, landline telephone services have also been restored. Restoration of broadband services at hospitals was also patchy. Medical superintendent of Sheri

Medical superintendent of Sheri



Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Dr Farooq Jan said that internet at just two terminals set up a few days back were working.

"The portals were installed in two rooms a few days back. But the broadband internet connections of individual doctors are yet to be restored. We were told that work is going on to restore them," he added. On Tuesday, after the government announced the restoration of SMS and

broadband at hospitals, the Kashmir Press Club held a meeting and demanded restoration of internet services to media fraternity without delay.

"It has now become untenable for journalists to operate out of makeshift media facilitation centre which is inadequate to accommodate reporters, editors, photojournalists and video journalists of over 200 publications," it said in a statement.

CBI arrests DRI ADG, two others in bribery case

The official arrested is Additional Director General, DRI, Ludhiana, Chander Shekhar, they said.

(News Agencies)- The Central Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday arrested a senior official of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and two middlemen in connection with a Rs 3-crore bribery case, officials said.

The official arrested is Additional Director General, DRI, Ludhiana, Chander Shekhar, they said. It was alleged that in June, 2019, the DRI had conducted a search

at a private clearing agency which provides services to various exporters, a CBI spokesperson said, adding some documents pertaining to an exporter were also seized.

The complainant alleged that Anup Joshi, clearing house agent, and Rajesh Dhanda, Shekhar' friend, demanded Rs 3 crore on behalf of the public servant for ensuring that he is not implicated by the DRI over the

documents recovered, officials said.

The agency arrested Joshi and Dhanda while allegedly receiving Rs 25 lakh as the first instalment of the bribe demanded by them on behalf of the officer, officials said. During the questioning, the middleman said the bribe was allegedly for the officer, they said. Officials said searches are



being conducted in New Delhi, Noida and Ludhiana.

Air India employee unions meet minister with concerns over fate

The government has set an ambitious disinvestment target for financial year 2020 at Rs 1.05 lakh crore which also includes proceeds from the sale of a stake in Air India.

(News Agencies)- Employee unions affiliated to Air India have sought assurances that their interests will be protected by the government during the privatisation of the national carrier. 26 representatives of 13 Air India unions met the aviation minister Hardeep puri on Thursday afternoon with several concerns, including fate of perks like medical facilities enjoyed by retired employees in the event of privatisation.

"The minister said that they would need employees' cooperation during the process and ensured help with pending dues," said an official.

An airline official close to the developments said the minister made it known that the airline cannot survive without privatisation.

"The government has made it clear that no expert has a solution to save the national carrier that has a debt of Rs 80,000 crore, due to which privatisation is the



only option left," the official said. The government was represented by aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola and Air India chairman and managing director- Ashwani Lohani in the meeting.

The government-run airline has around 14,000 employees and the unions have been opposing divestment of its stake to private players.

Officials at the meeting said the

airline will seek "expression of interest" from prospective buyers by the end of January 2020. An official said the minister during the meeting dismissed reports that the airline was not finding buyers as "rumours". Another senior official, who is privy to the developments, said an airline based in the middle-east has shown interest in buying a stake in Air India.

A few days ago, a senior airline

official had expressed fears that Air India might well go Jet Airways way if a prospective buyer does not come on board by June 2020.

The government has set an ambitious disinvestment target for financial year 2020 at Rs 1.05 lakh crore which also includes proceeds from the sale of a stake in Air India.

Another meeting with the unions has been called after ten days.

Why are you silent on Pakistan's atrocities PM Modi



(News Agencies)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi attacked the Congress party and those who are protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA, questioning why they are not exposing Pakistan.

"Pakistan was formed on the basis of religion, religious minorities were being persecuted there. The persecuted were forced to come to India as refugees. But Congress and its allies don't speak against Pakistan, instead they are taking out rallies against these refugees," PM Modi said in Karnataka's Tumakuru on Thursday.

"Today, every countryman has a question that those who have come here from Pakistan to save their lives, to save the lives of their daughters, processions are being taken out against them, but why are these people silent on Pakistan which has committed atrocities against these people?" he added.

The Prime Minister is in Karnataka on a two-day visit

where he will take part in various programmes.

"If you have to raise slogans, do it to highlight the way minorities are being tortured in Pakistan. If you have to take out a procession, do it in support of exploited Hindu minorities who have come to India from Pakistan," he said at the event at Sree Siddaganga Mutt.

He also exhorted those who are against the CAA to expose Pakistan at international level. "If you have to agitate, raise your voice against the exploits of Pakistan in the last 70 years," PM Modi said.

In the evening, the Prime Minister will visit the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) facility to dedicate five DRDO Young Scientists Laboratories to the nation.

He will stay at the Raj Bhavan on Thursday. On Friday, Modi will inaugurate the 107th Indian Science Congress at the University of Agriculture Science in Bengaluru.

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The race to Mars: USA, Europe, Russia, China and the United Arab Emirates are all launching missions to the Red Planet in 2020 to search for ALIEN life

There are four major missions bound for Mars this year, with the USA, Europe, China and the United Arab Emirates all preparing to depart in the summer.

The flurry of Martian launches are due to the fact that, in July 2020, Earth and Mars are ideally positioned relative to each other for spaceships to land.

Three of the four missions will see rovers landing on the planet in search of ancient signs of life, the other mission will see a UAE-built orbiter study the atmosphere.

There are hundreds of other space missions in 2020 not going to Mars, including the first commercially operated flights to the International Space Station. There will also be hundreds of new satellites sent into space by SpaceX and OneWeb as part of their 'clusters'.

Here are the big launches to watch out for in 2020.

NASA Mars 2020 rover launch
 By July all the talk will be of Mars, as rovers destined for the Red Planet are launched by Europe, America and China. NASA is launching the Mars 2020 Rover and the Mars Helicopter Scout to gather rock samples for an eventual return to Earth.

The rover will leave for Mars in July or August 2020 from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Base and will travel aboard the two-stage Atlas V-541 rocket, provided by the United Launch Alliance.

NASA's robotic vehicle passed its 'driving test' last week and won't move again until it arrives on the Red Planet in mid-February 2021.

The semi-autonomous vehicle will search for signs of ancient microbial life within the Jezero crater, which contains a dried up lake once filled with water.

During its mission, the rover will drive about 650ft a day collecting rock and soil samples, depositing them in small tubes and leaving them for later collection.

ESA and Roscosmos ExoMars mission

The European Space Agency (ESA) are working with the Russian Space Agency (Roscosmos) to launch the Rosalind Franklin rover using the Kazachok lander.

The Rosalind Franklin, previously

called the ExoMars rover, is named after the English chemist who made key contributions to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA, RNA, viruses, coal and graphite. Like the NASA Mars 2020 rover, the Rosalind Franklin's goal is to find out whether life has ever existed on the Red Planet.

The British-built rover will head out on an eight month mission that will see it travel 330ft per day as part of its study of the surface of the Red Planet.

The Trace Gas Orbiter, which has been at Mars since October 2016, will act as a relay station for the mission that also includes the Russian stationary service platform.

China's Mars Global Remote Sensing Orbiter, Lander and Small Rover mission

China are sending the Mars Global Remote Sensing Orbiter and Small Rover to the planet - the first Chinese mission to another planet using its own delivery vehicle.

The Chinese mission will launch in July 2020 on board the Long March 5 heavy lift rocket in search for evidence of past life and to assess the planet's environment.

On December 27 China successfully tested the Long March 5 by launching a test satellite into low Earth orbit.

The solar-powered rover will carry ground-penetrating radar, multi spectral camera, a Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy instrument and payloads for detecting the climate and magnetic environment.

UAE's Hope Mars Mission

The United Arab Emirates are also planning to launch for the Red Planet. They are launching the Hope Mars Mission orbiter on a Japanese rocket in July 2020. The probe will study the climate of the Red Planet every day and through seasonal cycles to better assess weather events in the lower atmosphere such as dust storms.

It's the first planetary space mission led by an Arab-Islamic country and will arrive in 2021, the 50th anniversary of the UAE's formation.

It was built in collaboration with the University of Colorado Boulder, University of California Berkeley and Arizona State University.

All four missions are due to arrive at the Red Planet in February 2021 and have the search for ancient signs of life as part of their objectives.

ESA and NASA Solar Orbiter launch

In February the European Space Agency are launching the Solar Orbiter on board an Atlas V from Cape Canaveral in the USA.

Its goal is to help astronomers understand how our star creates and controls the giant bubble of plasma that surrounds the whole solar system.

The mission in collaboration with NASA, will investigate how this solar fired plasma bubble influences the planets within it.

Once in space the craft will repeatedly use the gravity of Venus and Earth to raise its orbit above the poles of the Sun.

ESA says this will provide new perspectives on our star, including the first images of the Sun's polar regions ever captured.

NASA Orion lunar spacecraft launch

The first flight of the Orion lunar spacecraft is also due to happen in 2020 - launching on the new NASA Space Launch System (SLS) rockets.

The SLS will be the largest rocket ever built and will get the Artemis astronauts to the moon, carry parts into space for the Lunar Gateway space station, and launch future some commercial International Space Station missions.

Artemis 1 will see the uncrewed Orion craft spend three weeks in space including a six day retrograde orbit around the moon. The launch, expected for November 2020, is designed as a test of the module that will take astronauts back to the moon in 2024.

There is speculation the SLS and first uncrewed Artemis flight around the moon could slip until 2021, but at the time of writing it was scheduled for 2020.

ISS astronaut launches

It's not just the rovers and uncrewed modules having all the fun - there will be crewed missions from Virgin Galactic, China, SpaceX and Boeing in 2020.

There will also be a crew change on board the International Space Station as Russian and American crew change over on the space station.

The first two missions there and

back will be on board Russian owned Soyuz crafts but NASA says a commercial ship will take crew to the ISS in May.

The SpaceX Dragon 2 module is due to take Expedition 64 and 65 to the station in May as part of the NASA Commercial Crew program - including two American and a Japanese astronaut.

It will be the first time a craft other than the Russian Built Soyuz has been used to transfer people to the station since the Space Shuttle Atlantis made its final trip in November 2009.

Then in December 2020 the Boeing Starliner CST-100 will take expedition 66 and 67 crew to the station - including two Americans, a European and a Russian.

That mission will be only the fourth US Spaceflight with a female commander.

Boeing's Starliner ran into issues during its uncrewed test flight in December when a timing glitch meant it couldn't dock with the ISS.

This is likely going to have to be repeated before a crewed mission, although NASA said if there were crew aboard the issue could have been resolved to allow the docking to happen.

Chinese Tianhe-1 space station launch

The first part of the Chinese space station is due to be launched in 2020 - the core module is known as Tianhe-1 or Harmony of the Heavens.

The first module is being launched by the heavy-lift rocket Long March 5.

The complete Chinese space station will be assembled in orbit from pieces launched from Earth on separate missions.

The final, complete Chinese space station will be about a fifth the mass of the International Space Station and is due to be completed and occupied by 2023.

Japan's Hayabusa2 asteroid sample-return mission

We will also get some samples of an asteroid returned to Earth as Japan's Hayabusa-2 is expected to drop its samples of the Ryugu asteroid in the Australian desert.

Hayabusa-2 was launched in 2014 by the Japanese Space Agency JAXA with the aim of

bringing samples from under the soil of an asteroid back to Earth.

The probe was sent 186 million miles from Earth to the asteroid Ryugu, whose name means 'Dragon Palace' in Japanese.

The return of the samples should happen in December, so any delay could see it slip to 2021, according to the Japanese space agency JAXA.

China's Chang'e 5 sample return mission

China is also launching the Chang'e 5 sample return mission to the Moon where it will collect sample and bring them back to Earth for study.

It will launch on the Long March 5 heavy-lift rocket from the Wenchang Satellite Launch Centre on Hainan island late in 2020.

The aim of China's space agency is to bring back about 4lb of lunar samples from a site near a volcanic formation on the western edge of the near side of the moon.

In another sample return mission, OSIRIS-Rex by NASA will sample Bennu in July although the samples won't return to Earth until after 2021.

Commercial launches including Virgin Galactic

Other launches in 2020 will see hundreds of small communications satellites launched by OneWeb and SpaceX as part of their 'constellations'.

These have proved controversial as astronomers claim they interfere with observations, creating a streak that obscures the view of stars and planets.

Both companies say they are working to ensure their satellites have minimal impact on the sky as viewed from Earth.

Richard Branson is due to make his first flight to space in 2020 - he will be going up on the next crewed Virgin Galactic test flight.

The billionaire entrepreneur will fly to space on board the VSS Unity with other astronauts employed by the spaceliner.

Launches will be happening all over the world - from Russia and the USA to China and India - it's going to be a busy year for space ports.

Nasa's Mars 2020 rover will search for signs of ancient life on Mars in a bid to help scientists better understand how life evolved on our own planet.

Jeffrey Epstein's socialite 'madam' Ghislaine Maxwell 'is being hidden from the FBI'

An explosive new report has asserted that deceased sex criminal Jeffrey Epstein and his alleged 'madame' Ghislaine Maxwell were foreign intelligence 'assets', and that she is currently hiding in a safehouse in Israel. 'Ghislaine is protected. She and Jeffrey were assets of sorts for multiple foreign governments. They would trade information about the powerful people caught in his net - caught at Epstein's house,' a unnamed source told Page Six. Maxwell, 58, has been accused in lawsuits of procuring underage girls for Epstein to sexually traffick among his wealthy and powerful friends, and is reportedly the subject of an ongoing FBI probe. She has always denied any wrongdoing. Her attorney did not

immediately respond to an inquiry from DailyMail.com on Wednesday evening. After Epstein's re-arrest last year and death behind bars in August, Maxwell has remained out of sight and her whereabouts unknown. Now the Page Six source claims she is being protected by powerful foreign interests. 'She is not in the US, she moves around. She is sometimes in the UK, but most often in other countries, such as Israel, where her powerful contacts have provided her with safe houses and protection,' the source said. Maxwell is being 'protected because of the information she has on the world's most powerful people,' the source said. The source also claimed that Prince Andrew begged Maxwell

to come forward and clear his name, after Virginia Roberts Giuffre claimed Epstein forced her to have sex with the royal when she was 17. Prince Andrew, 59, strenuously denies having sex with Roberts and claims he can't remember meeting her despite a photograph of him with his arm around her. 'Andrew pleaded with Ghislaine to publicly defend him. She carefully considered it, but decided no good would come of it (if she came forward). It isn't in her best interests,' the source told Page Six. Andrew resigned from royal duties after giving a disastrous interview on Newsnight in November. It is not the first time that Epstein has been tied to a foreign intelligence service. Rumors have long circulated that Epstein

secretly took videos of his rich and powerful friends having sex with underage girls, either for financial blackmail or as leverage for a foreign intelligence service. So far, however, the FBI has not publicly confirmed whether any such blackmail material was recovered in raids on his properties. Since Epstein's arrest on federal sex trafficking charges in July, Maxwell has remained out of sight, save for photos that purported to show her at an In-and-Out Burger in Los Angeles. DailyMail.com revealed that those photos were staged, possibly to throw investigators off of her trail. Born in France, Maxwell is both a U.S. citizen and British subject. Her family's alleged ties to Israel's national intelligence service, Mossad,

have been well documented. Maxwell's father, Robert Maxwell, was a Czech-born British media mogul whose financial fraud in raiding the Mirror Group pension fund was discovered after his death in 1991. Also a British member of parliament, Robert Maxwell reportedly had ties to British intelligence, the Soviet KGB, and Mossad - and was suspected of being a double or even triple agent by British Foreign Office officials. After his mysterious death on his yacht, the Lady Ghislaine, off the Canary Islands in 1991, Robert Maxwell was buried in Jerusalem with high honors, with Israel's prime minister and multiple current and former heads of Israeli intelligence services in attendance at the funeral.

Nanobots, ape chauffeurs and flights to Pluto. The predictions for 2020 we got horribly wrong

You're late for work because you forgot to set the alarm clock embedded in your forearm. Rushing out of bed, you give your family members, located thousands of miles away, a quick virtual hug, and hop into the car -- ordering your ape chauffeur to step on it. It's a stressful day, sure, but at least your vacation to the Moon is just a few days away. That may not sound like a typical morning, but people thought it could have been. History is littered with predictions and future projections. Many of these are given with supreme confidence, before they fade conveniently into insignificance as they whiz wide of the mark. But as we charge into the third decade of the 21st century, it's time to ask: Where did we think we'd be in 2020?

The pace of technological advancements has been rapid -- and some defining trends of the past decade were predicted with remarkable accuracy many years ago. We didn't get everything right, though. According to various experts, scientists and futurologists, we would have landed on Pluto and robots should be doing our laundry by now. Oh, and we'd all be living to 150. CNN has trawled through the archives to find out what might

have been, and caught up with some of those people who thought they had the last decade all mapped out. The robot revolution was delayed. The prospect of robots coming for our jobs has been a perennial concern of every post-war generation, and by 2020 we were meant to be virtually redundant in many areas. "Futurists and technology experts say robots and artificial intelligence of various sorts will become an accepted part of daily life by the year 2020 and will almost completely take over physical work," Elon University noted in 2006. British futurologist Ian Pearson went further still. "Consciousness is just another sense, effectively, and that's what

we're trying to design in a computer," he told the UK's Observer newspaper in 2005. "It's my conclusion that it is possible to make a conscious computer with superhuman levels of intelligence before 2020." "It would definitely have emotions," he added. "If I'm on an aeroplane I want the computer to be more terrified of crashing than I am so it does everything to stay in the air." It's very nearly 2020, though, and our planes aren't more emotional than us yet. "It hasn't progressed as fast as I thought," Pearson tells CNN this month. "AI was developing very quickly at the start of the century, so we had predictions that by 2015 we'd have conscious machines that were smarter than people."

"There was a big recession and that held things back a bit," Pearson reflects. "I would estimate AI has probably progressed about 35 or 40% slower than we expected it to." But while Pearson admits that there have been fewer robot-forced redundancies than he anticipated, he notes that computerized colleagues have infiltrated some workplaces. "You can go into some car factories and you won't see any people at all," he says. The robots are still coming. MIT Technology Review has attempted to track all the reports on the effect of automation on the workforce. There are a lot of them, and they suggest anything from a moderate displacement of jobs

to a total workforce automation, with varying degrees of alarm. Pearson also went out on a limb in 2009 by predicting we'd be wearing "active skin" by now -- electronics "printed" onto our bodies to monitor our health. He added the device could also "signals from the nerves and record them, and perhaps re-inject them at a later date, so that we can effectively record and replay a sensation such as cuddling your partner while you're away." Pearson tells CNN now that such a product would not have required difficult technology to create. "We could see how to do it nearly 20 years ago but it hasn't happened, because not enough engineers or companies have decided to look at those areas," he says.

Top New York lawmaker charged with drunk driving after warning against it

while intoxicated just days after he penned an op-ed warning New Yorkers against drunk driving. Brian Kolb was arrested Tuesday night close to his Victor, N.Y., home after what he described as a "lapse in judgment." Local officials were called to a crash just before 10:30 p.m., after Kolb's 2018 GMC Acadia crashed into a ditch in front of his home. DRUNKEN DRIVER FIVE TIMES OVER THE LIMIT

CAUGHT IN CAR MISSING TWO TIRES An Ontario County sheriff's deputy gave Kolb field sobriety tests, which he failed. Kolb's blood-alcohol content was over 0.08 percent, officials said. The legal limit for driving in New York is 0.08 percent. "This was a terrible lapse in judgment, one I have urged others not to make, and I take full responsibility for it," Kolb said in a written statement. "I

made the wrong decision, and it is one I deeply regret." The incident comes just a week after Kolb wrote a column in the upstate Daily Messenger newspaper, warning people against driving under the influence of alcohol during the holiday season, while acknowledging that December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month. "Many of our holiday traditions, especially our New Year's Eve celebrations, involve

indulging in spirits," he wrote. "Done safely, and in moderation, these can be wonderful holiday experiences. However, tragedy can be only one bad decision away." Kolb has been in the New York State Assembly representing his upstate district since 2000 and has served as minority leader since 2009. In 2018, Kolb launched a gubernatorial campaign to unseat Gov. Andrew Cuomo, but dropped out of the race.

Japan tries to solve the mystery of Carlos Ghosn's audacious escape

As a condition of being released on bail, Ghosn was required to stay in Japan. But his case was completely upended earlier this week after Ghosn revealed that he had fled Japan for Lebanon to escape what he called a "rigged" justice system. Lebanon said Thursday that it had received a "red notice" from Interpol confirming that the former auto titan is wanted by police. It is still not clear how Ghosn, who is a citizen of France, Brazil and Lebanon, was able to slip out of Japan. Reuters and the Financial Times have reported that he was smuggled out of Tokyo by a private security company -- a plot that the media

organizations say took months to concoct. The governor of Istanbul said in a statement Thursday that Turkish police have detained seven people in connection with an investigation into Ghosn's "illegal escape" from Japan. Anadolu news agency said that Ghosn traveled via the city's Ataturk airport. Police detained four pilots of a private airline, a company manager and two ground staff at the request of the Istanbul prosecutor, according to the statement from the governor's office. Flight tracker Flightradar24 showed a private jet flying from Osaka, Japan, to Istanbul and then another

continuing to Lebanon at the time Ghosn is said to have arrived in the country. CNN Business has been unable to verify the circumstances behind his departure, and Ghosn did not elaborate on his escape in his public statement earlier this week. In a brief statement on Thursday, Ghosn denied reports that his family were involved in helping him flee. "All such speculation is inaccurate and false. I alone arranged for my departure. My family had no role whatsoever," he said. Japan's justice ministry, the Tokyo prosecutor's office and the city's district court have not responded to requests from CNN Business this week for comment

about Ghosn's escape. Government offices are closed this week for the New Year holiday. Legal experts and political analysts say that Japan is probably trying to figure out whether Ghosn violated immigration law when he left the country - not that there's much of a chance of forcing him to return. Prosecutors in Tokyo are now likely retracing Ghosn's moves through Japan, collecting surveillance footage and searching for potential collaborators said Nobuo Gohara, a former prosecutor who now runs a compliance and law office in Japan.

Gohara added that Ghosn's trial is almost certainly now canceled. The bigger question, he said, is how Japanese authorities will respond to Ghosn's attacks on them, now that he is able to speak freely about his detention. Ghosn has repeatedly denied the charges against him, and claimed that his arrest was part of a plot to remove him from the automotive empire he built. In his statement this week, he said he would "no longer be held hostage by a rigged Japanese justice system where guilt is presumed, discrimination is rampant, and basic human rights are denied."

Is the BJP government seeking to create a Hindu rashtra - by jugaad?

it then exempted key parts of the region from the Act. But protests still erupted, forcing the Assam government to assure residents that their rights will be preserved. The outcome of all of this is incoherent law-making and policies, borne more out of political benefit than any logical principles defining the Indian State.

After all, it is much harder to write a Constitution than it is to undermine one. While we may be upset with parts of the Constitution, it was the product of discussions and compromises over a period of three years with various stakeholders. So, by the end of 1949, we had a largely cogent, consistent view of India as a secular State that respected the rights of its minorities

enshrined in the Constitution. Contrast this process to the current model of slapdash, "big bang" legislation, being pushed through Parliament. In its hurry to redefine the State according to its worldview, the government has unleashed poorly framed policies with unknown consequences, in contrast to the spirit of deliberation and compromise that characterised India's constitutional moment.

Let us now consider the NRC and the CAA together to understand the challenges and contradictions that have been introduced into the system. To be sure, the government has categorically said that both are independent processes, and there has been no discussion on the NRC yet. But the

interlinkages between the two are hard to miss.

Between the 1951 and 2011 censuses, the Muslim population grew about 36% faster per year than the Hindu population - numbers that Hindu activists have used to argue that India has an illegal (Muslim) immigration problem. However, the first National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) carried out in 1992-93 finds that Muslims have a total fertility rate (TFR) 33% higher than Hindus - a phenomenon that can largely be attributed to lower socioeconomic levels among Muslims. The gap was likely even larger before the 1990s, suggesting that, empirically, the difference in growth rates between Hindus and Muslims can almost be explained by differences in

fertility rates, and not illegal immigration. To be clear, as incomes rise, fertility rates have been rapidly declining in the Muslim community and converging with those of the Hindu community.

Certainly, there has been some amount of illegal immigration, including of Muslims, but these are statistically negligible in a country as large as India. Are we willing to bear the cost to do an entire NRC and CAA exercise to find such a small number of people during a period of economic distress? What documents can we use to genuinely assess whether residents are here legally? Will the BJP accept the results if such a small number of residents are excluded from

citizenship? How will the courts adjudicate matters if an implausibly large number of Muslims are denied citizenship? Many have noted that these policies fundamentally alter the idea of Indian citizenship to an "Israeli model", in which citizenship is granted on the basis of religion - in this case, for Hindus and not to Muslims. But the Israeli model effectively grants any Jewish person around the world the right to Israeli citizenship. Yet, if we are following an Israeli model, why is citizenship only being extended to non-Muslims (mainly Hindus) from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, and not Sri Lanka - where Hindus are also persecuted?

Pak dubs Indian Army chief Narvane's remark of 'preemptively strike' right as 'irresponsible'

In an exclusive interview to PTI barely hours after taking charge of the 1.3-million strong force, Army Chief Gen Naravane on Tuesday said India reserves the right to "preemptively strike" at sources of terror.

(News Agencies)- Pakistan has rejected India's new Army Chief Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane's statement that New Delhi reserves the right to "preemptively strike" across the Line of Control (LoC), terming his remarks as "irresponsible".

In an exclusive interview to PTI barely hours after taking charge of the 1.3-million strong force, Army Chief Gen Naravane on Tuesday said India reserves the right to "preemptively strike" at sources of terror. He asserted that a "new normal" in the

country's response mechanism to acts of cross-border terrorism has already been "emphatically" displayed. "If Pakistan does not stop its policy of state-sponsored terrorism, we reserve the right to preemptively strike at the sources of terror threat and this intent has adequately been demonstrated in our response during surgical strikes and Balakot operation," Gen Naravane said in New Delhi, in a stern warning to Islamabad. Reacting to Gen Naravane's remarks, the Pakistan Foreign

Office in a statement on Wednesday said, "We reject the new Indian Army Chief's irresponsible statement regarding 'pre-emptive strikes' across the LoC" inside Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). "There should be no doubt about Pakistan's resolve and readiness to thwart against any aggressive Indian move", inside its territory or PoK, it said. "No one should forget Pakistan's befitting response to India's Balakot misadventure," it added. Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after a suicide



bomber of Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed killed 40 CRPF personnel in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on February 14. On February 26, Indian fighter jets entered deep inside Pakistan and bombed JeM terror camps in Balakot. The air

strike was followed by an aerial combat between air forces of the two countries on February 27 when Pakistan jets entered India. While chasing Pakistani jet an Indian Air Force jet crashed in PoK following which its injured pilot was captured.

Bernie Sanders' \$34.5 million haul leads Democrats' 4th quarter totals so far

Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont raised more than \$34.5 million for his White House bid during the final three months of 2019 -- a sign of his considerable financial strength a little more than a month before Democrats begin selecting their 2020 presidential nominee.

(News Agencies)- Sanders was the second candidate vying for the Democratic nomination to announce his fundraising numbers in the fourth quarter, a day after former South Bend, Indiana, mayor Pete Buttigieg announced raising \$24.7 million. The other Democrats who have emerged in the top tier, former Vice President Joe Biden and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, have not yet announced their totals for the last months of 2019. President Donald Trump also announced on Thursday that he raised \$46 million in the fourth quarter, outpacing the Democratic candidates' individual totals so far. Sanders' massive haul -- one of the largest quarterly totals of any Democratic candidate this election cycle -- brings the total he has collected to date in his second bid for the presidency to \$96 million, and underscores the might of his small-dollar donor base. On Wednesday, Sanders' campaign announced that it had

received more than 5 million individual contributions -- a milestone his aides said no other presidential contender had achieved at this point in a White House campaign. The Vermont independent "is proving each and every day that working class Americans are ready and willing to fund a campaign that stands up for them and takes on the biggest corporations and the wealthy," his campaign manager Faiz Shakir said in a statement. "You build a grassroots movement to beat Donald Trump and create a political revolution one \$18 donation at a time, and that's exactly why Bernie is going to win." Sanders' fourth-quarter fundraising significantly outpaces his own previous totals. Sanders raised roughly \$18 million in each of the first two quarters of the year and \$25.3 million in the third quarter. Other Democratic presidential contenders have not reported their totals for the final three months of the year but seem unlikely to topple Sanders

as the Democrats' fundraising leader. Warren told supporters in late December that she had raised \$17 million and encouraged her backers to help her hit a goal of \$20 million by year's end. The goal represented about 20% less than she had collected in the third quarter -- pointing to a significant dip in fundraising. Meanwhile, Biden's campaign has claimed a financial rebound. In a memo to journalists last month, his campaign manager said that as of December 1, Biden had raised more in October and November than the \$15.7 million he had collected in the previous three months. But he had not released his fourth-quarter totals as of Wednesday evening. The fourth-quarter fundraising performance is closely watched as a sign of candidates' ability to fund their campaigns through the early voting contests and whether they have built strong financial bases for a general election face-off with President Donald Trump, who



has been raising record sums. Trump and the joint fundraising committees he established with the Republican National Committee started October with \$158 million in campaign cash available in their bank accounts. The battle to become the Democratic Party nominee kicks off February 3 with the Iowa caucuses. Sanders' team emphasized his small-dollar base. His \$34.5 million haul came from more than 1.8 million donations, with 40,000 new donors contributing on the final day of the quarter, according to his campaign. More than \$18 million of the quarter's total raised December alone. The average donation was \$18.53, up slightly from the third quarter's average of \$18.07, aides said. Sanders' campaign said that virtually all of its donors have not hit the \$2,800 maximum an individual can donate to the primary, allowing the campaign to tap them again for contributions. Sanders has long touted his grassroots fundraising but increasingly has sought to draw contrasts with opponents, such as billionaire Michael Bloomberg and Buttigieg, who faced intense criticism during last month's Democratic presidential debate over attending a high-dollar fundraiser in a Napa Valley wine cave. "We don't have a super PAC. We don't want a super PAC. We don't go to rich people's wine caves."

Benghazi team member John Tiegen:



Media 'not even close' with Iraq-Benghazi comparisons

Former Benghazi GRS team member John Tiegen was baffled by the notion that the violent protest that erupted at the U.S. Embassy in Iraq would be branded as "President Trump's Benghazi," saying that the comparison is "not even close." "I kind of laughed when someone said that, 'Oh, this is Trump's

Benghazi,'" Tiegen told Fox & Friends." Tiegen said that the incident was not at all comparable to the 2012 terrorist attack against the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, that left four people dead, including U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens. Tiegen's comments came after

a progressive veterans PAC posted a tweet suggesting the violent protests that erupted at the U.S. compound in Baghdad would go down as President Trump's "Benghazi." Crowds of angry Iraqis protesting recent airstrikes against an Iran-backed militia laid siege to the U.S. Embassy on Tuesday,

chanting "Down, down USA!" as they stormed through the main gate. VoteVets, a veterans group that helps progressive candidates seek public office, used the violent demonstrations to knock the president. "Hey @POTUS remember [your] Benghazi rants during 2016? You're about to have your own one unfortunately in Iraq," VoteVets wrote in the now-deleted tweet. The "Benghazi rants" was reference to Trump's repeated attacks against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton over her handling of the matter. "To sit there and say it was just like Benghazi? There was no ambassador there and there was no consulate [and], technically,

no personnel at all because they all got evacuated prior to the protesters getting there and that's the big difference between this administration and the last administration. "At least this one took a stance before it actually was coming," said Tiegen, a Marine veteran who was working as a security contractor protecting the CIA annex in Benghazi when it was attacked in 2012. A U.S. defense official told Fox News that 100 Marines were being sent to the embassy to bolster security after Tuesday events. Defense Secretary Mark Esper later confirmed additional forces were being sent, as the military released images of those forces deploying from Kuwait.

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Drones flying in rural Colorado and Nebraska have residents freaking out. No one knows who's behind them



that multiple FAA divisions and government agencies are investigating reports of drones in Colorado and Nebraska.

Yuma County Sheriff Todd Combs said in a Facebook post Tuesday it appears the drones were staying at least 150-200 feet away from buildings and people and are flying in airspace controlled by the federal government.

The aircraft, Combs said, are operating within federal guidelines but are making residents "very nervous and anxious." "People do not like the unknown as it upsets the balance of our lives," Combs

wrote. Yuma and Phillips county officials have said they don't believe the drones are malicious in nature. "There are many theories about what is going on, but at this point, that's all they are. I think we are all feeling a little bit vulnerable due to the intrusion of our privacy that we enjoy in our rural community, but I don't have a solution or know of one right now. All I can say is live your life in the fear of the unknown," the sheriff wrote.

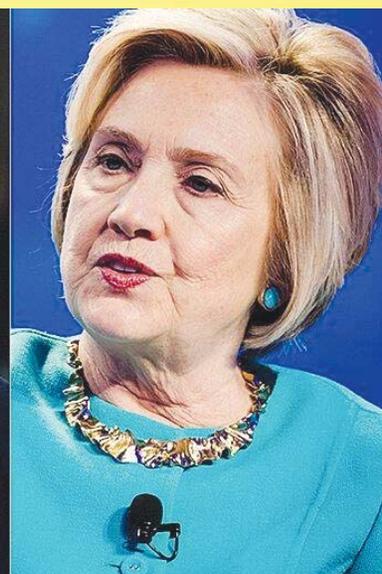
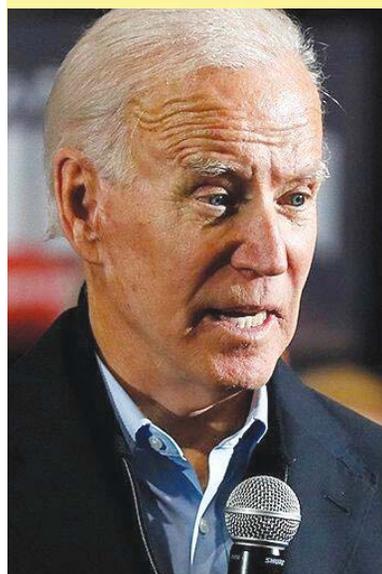
Several agencies are expected to be attending a meeting about the drones incident on Monday, Combs said. Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado said he is closely

monitoring the situation. "I've been in contact with the FAA regarding the heavy drone activity in Eastern Colorado and I'm encouraged that they've opened a full investigation to learn the source and purpose of the drones," he tweeted Tuesday.

The incidents come as the FAA proposed new rules that will require most drones to use remote ID technology that will allow the FAA, law enforcement and federal security agencies to identify drones flying in their jurisdiction. Nearly 1.5 million drones and 160,000 remote pilots are registered with the FAA, the agency said.

(News Agencies)- Mysterious drones have been flying over Colorado and Nebraska in recent weeks and authorities can't figure out who's behind the aircraft. Deputies have spotted more than 16 unmanned drones flying in northeast Colorado after authorities received multiple reports of drone sightings last month, the sheriff's offices in Colorado's Yuma and Phillips counties said. FAA spokesman Ian Gregor told CNN

Most bizarre political bets that gamblers are making in 2020



(News Agencies)-As the country heads into the 2020 presidential election, Fox News contributor and pollster Kristen Soltis Anderson looked into alternative ways to examine public opinion - and she found that gamblers are making some bizarre predictions.

"What are some of the most unusual things that you are

finding people really interested in placing their bets on as we head into 2020?" she asked co-founder of the online prediction market Predictit, John Aristotle Phillips, on her new Fox Nation show "What Are The Odds?"

"There are about 1,000 different markets that we've put up and predicted," Phillips said. "Things like, 'Will Trump mention Sleepy

Joe in a tweet this week'? The tweet markets are very interesting."

When it comes to whether or not President Trump will complete his four-year term, there are relatively few people putting their money on the likelihood the president will be removed from office by the Senate, following the President's impeachment in the

House.

"Some traders out there think there's one in 10 odds that Trump's going to be convicted in the Senate," said Phillips, though he pointed that there's another market around the possibility that Trump will decide to leave the White House on his own.

"The odds are actually higher - slightly higher - that Trump will resign during his first term," he revealed. "Not a lot, still less than around one in 10."

"There's a long shot bias that that people often have," Phillips added, "which is that they think that they can multiply their money if they take something that perhaps they can convince themselves is going to happen, even though the odds are long against it."

"You probably could have gotten really good odds on Donald Trump being president of the United States, if you would put it

put a couple bucks on him in, I don't know, June of 2015," joked Soltis Anderson.

In fact, there are gamblers who are putting their money on former Democratic presidential nominee and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton potentially winning the White House in 2020.

"You can look at the 'buying Hillarys' right now for eight cents [to the dollar] or five cents that she's going to be the nominee. There's somebody that thinks the odds are at least one in 20 that that's going to happen," said Phillips.

Soltis Anderson observed that the betting markets can be a good way to supplement our understanding of public opinion on the biggest questions of the day.

"Polls are a bit of a lagging indicator," she argued. "It takes a couple of days in the field to collect that data, then to make sure that it's all accurate..."

Boris Johnson promises a decade of prosperity

(News Agencies)- Boris Johnson called on Britons to put aside their differences and "turn the page" in his 2020 New Year's message.

The U.K. prime minister said it was time to end the "division, rancor and uncertainty," in an acknowledgment of the public divide over Brexit.

"Let's make this the moment when we put the divisions behind us," he said in a video message. Johnson, whose

Conservative party won a majority in the U.K. election in December, said Britain will leave the European Union by the end of January. "That oven-ready deal I talked about so much during the election campaign has already had its plastic covering pierced and been placed in the microwave," he said. Johnson pledged the 2020s would be "a decade of prosperity and opportunity." He also promised "no more elections, no more referendums" in the coming year.



The UK prime minister said it was time the country put its divisions aside.

Israel's Netanyahu seeks immunity from corruption charges

Netanyahu was indicted in November on charges of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday he would seek immunity from corruption charges, likely delaying any trial until after March elections, when he hopes to have a majority coalition that will shield him from prosecution. Netanyahu was indicted in November on charges of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust. After failing to assemble a governing majority following back-to-back elections last year, he will get a third shot at remaining in office in March. Wednesday's announcement essentially turns the upcoming election into a referendum on whether Netanyahu should be granted immunity and remain in office, or step down and stand trial. A recent poll indicated that a majority of Israelis oppose giving him immunity. In a nationally televised address, Netanyahu repeated his assertion that he is the victim of an unfair conspiracy, lashing out at prosecutors, the media and his political enemies. Claiming credit for a series of economic and security achievements on his watch, he said he would seek to

invoke the law that would protect him from prosecution as long as he remains in office.

"In order to continue to lead Israel to great achievements, I intend to approach the speaker of the Knesset in accordance with chapter 4C of the law, in order to fulfill my right, my duty and my mission to continue to serve you for the future of Israel," he said.

Normally, a request for immunity would need to be approved by the parliament's House Committee and then submitted to a full vote. But the House Committee doesn't exist because a government was never formed after September's election. Court proceedings cannot begin until the question of immunity is settled.

The opposition Blue and White party said it will seek to form the House Committee before the March election to take up the question of immunity. But it remains unclear whether it will be able to move forward. Parliament Speaker Yuli Edelstein, a member of Netanyahu's Likud Party, said he would hold talks on the matter

next week.

The Blue and White leader, former military chief Benny Gantz, said it was a "sad day."

"I never imagined that we would see the day that the prime minister of Israel would avoid standing before the law and the justice system," he said. "Today it's clear what we're fighting for. Netanyahu knows he's guilty."

Netanyahu said he was not evading justice and still plans to go to court to fight the "fabricated accusations."

"The law is meant to ensure that elected officials can serve the people according to the will of the people," he said.

Should Netanyahu succeed in assembling a 61-seat majority in favor of immunity, he would avoid prosecution. But that still appears unlikely after the March vote, with most polls predicting another split decision that would leave Likud and Blue and White deadlocked, with neither able to secure a parliamentary majority. The uncertainty means it could be many months before a new government is formed, leaving the question of immunity on hold with Netanyahu remaining in office.



The indictment, on charges of trading political and regulatory favors for positive press coverage and accepting lavish gifts from wealthy supporters, marked the culmination of three long-running investigations. Netanyahu has dismissed the allegations as an "attempted coup" and has vowed to battle them from the prime minister's office. Netanyahu is desperate to remain in office while he fights the charges. The powerful position would allow him to rally public opposition to what he says is an unfair witch hunt. He can also use the office to grant political favors to allies who agree to vote in favor of immunity. The question of immunity is just one of the hurdles Netanyahu faces. While Israeli law does not require a sitting prime minister to resign after being charged with a

crime, it is vague about whether an indicted politician could be tapped to form a new government after new elections. On Tuesday, Israel's Supreme Court began discussions on the matter. If the court decides Netanyahu is ineligible, it could potentially bring his three-decade political career to an abrupt end after the March election. The court gave no indication on when it would issue a ruling on the politically sensitive case. Disqualifying Netanyahu would deeply divide the nation and precipitate a legal crisis over separations of power. The prime minister has long accused judicial and law enforcement officials of trying to drive him from office and repeated his claim Wednesday night that only the voters can choose who will lead the country.

More than 100 Uyghur graveyards demolished by Chinese authorities, satellite images show

(News Agencies)- Uyghur poet Aziz Isa Elkun fled China's far western Xinjiang region more than 20 years ago. He's not welcome in the country. He can't even phone his mother. She said it was better if he didn't, because every time he did, police would show up at her door. So, when Elkun's father died in 2017, there was no way he could go back to China for the burial. To be closer to his family, he would view his father's grave on Google Earth.

"I know exactly where his tomb is," Elkun told CNN in his north London home. "When I was a kid we would go there, pray at the mosque, visit our relatives. The entire community was connected to that graveyard."

He "visited" his father like this for nearly two years. But in June, something changed. The satellite photo on Google had been updated and the graveyard that

used to be there was now nothing more than a flattened, empty field.

"I had no idea what happened," said Elkun. "I was completely in shock."

Cemeteries destroyed Elkun's story is not unique.

China appears to have been destroying traditional Uyghur cemeteries for several years as part of what critics describe as a broader, coordinated campaign to control Islamic beliefs and Muslim minority groups within its borders.

In a months' long investigation, working with sources in the Uyghur community and analyzing hundreds of satellite images, CNN has found more than 100 cemeteries that have been destroyed, most in just the last two years. This reporting was backed up by dozens of official Chinese government notices announcing the

"relocation" of cemeteries.

The destruction of Uyghur cemeteries was first reported in October by French news agency AFP and satellite imagery analysts Earthrise Alliance. They found at least 45 cemeteries had been destroyed since 2014.

AFP reporters visited several sites of destroyed cemeteries. In some, they found several bones that scientists later confirmed from photos were human remains. CNN has identified more than 60 other gravesites that are no longer there, by cross-checking sites known to the Uyghur community abroad with satellite images taken over a number of years.

In response to CNN's request for comment, the Chinese government didn't deny the cemetery destruction.

A spokesperson with the



Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement in part, "Governments...in Xinjiang fully respect and guarantee the freedom of all ethnic groups... to choose cemeteries, and funeral and burial methods."

One official notice announcing the "relocation" of a cemetery in western Aksu City said it needed to be moved "to meet the demand of city planning and promote construction."

CNN shared before and after

images with five experts from Canada, the United States and Australia with experience in Uyghur culture or satellite imagery. They included Rian Thum, a respected historian who uses satellite imagery as part of his research into Islam in China. Thum confirmed the majority of the satellite images shared with him were undoubtedly destroyed cemeteries. The other four experts verified the rest of the sites.

Why Is America So Depressed?

It's no coincidence that our politics and our mental health have declined so rapidly, at the same time.

Everyone has his or her own definition of a political crisis. Mine is when our collective mental health starts having a profound effect on our politics - and vice versa.

It cannot be a simple coincidence that the two have declined in tandem. The American Psychiatric Association reported that from 2016 to 2017, the number of adults who described themselves as more anxious than the previous year rose 36 percent. In 2017, more than 17 million American adults had at least one major depressive episode, as did three million adolescents ages 12 to 17. Forty million adults now suffer from an anxiety disorder - nearly 20 percent of the adult population. (These are the known cases of depression and anxiety. The actual numbers must be dumbfounding.)

The really sorrowful reports concern suicide. Among all Americans, the suicide rate increased by 33 percent between 1999 and 2017.

All of this mental carnage is occurring at a time when decades of social and political division have set against each other black and white, men and women, old and young. Beyond bitter social antagonisms, the country is racked by mass shootings, the mind-bending perils of the internet, revelations of widespread sexual predation, the worsening effects of climate change, virulent competition, the specter of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, grinding student debt and crises in housing, health care and higher education. The frightening environment helps cause depression, depression causes catastrophic thinking, and catastrophic thinking makes the environment seem even more terrifying than it is.

Out of this dark cast of mind arose the hunger for a strong, avenging figure whose arrival has sent even more mentally harrowing shock waves through society. If President Trump is indeed mentally ill, as so many of his critics claim, he may well be the most representative leader we have ever had.

Yet as everyone whose mind is in jeopardy knows, it is not

sufficient to speak about mental illness in general, abstract terms. A person's individual challenges are not simply extractions from a national malaise. I would not have sat down to write this if I had not been tormented over the past few years by my own individual challenges, including frequent thoughts of suicide. Even today, the idea of jumping off a bridge or swallowing a lethal amount of pills enters my mind and holds me in its grip.

But with the exception of one morning a year and a half ago, when the effects of the withdrawal from the Valium that I had been taking nightly for 18 months were so overpowering that I nearly stepped in front of a subway train, my fantasies of killing myself have been just that: dreams of escape that would obliterate my pain without ending my life. Along with visits to a therapist - since my experience with Valium, I have refused for

now to take psychiatric medication - I have my own coping strategies. Picking out "Over the Rainbow" on the piano my wife and I have rented for our 9-year-old daughter, I realized that the first two notes - "Somewhere" - are identical, separated by an octave. The seven notes between them correspond to the seven colors of a rainbow. Thus the song musically embodies the leap from unfulfilling Kansas to the enchanted world of Oz. The process of struggling to conceive of a positive idea of the future that would enable me to leap out of my depression I have begun to call, to myself, "octave thinking." Particular instances that make it possible for me to climb out of despair I imagine as pitons, the iron spikes mountain climbers drive into rock to ascend, sometimes hand over hand. Work is a piton. The enjoyment of art is a piton. Showing kindness to another person is a piton. Helping to



raise our two children - our son is 13 - is the strongest piton of them all. Freud famously said that depression was anger turned inward. We know now that depression is a result of numerous factors: social environment, economic pressure, cognitive misreading, a random event, trauma, neurobiology and genes. Like anyone who has confronted depression, I know that this is, first and foremost, my challenge, unique to my life. And yet the line between the self and all the external forces that continually shape and reshape

the self is blurrier than we like to believe. There are very particular external factors that make their way into my head and impel me toward thoughts of taking my own life. There is the constant, relentless, unremitting financial triage as our financial obligations slowly overwhelm our means of meeting them. The choices are especially painful when they involve responding to one child's needs over another's. We have to weigh expensively nurturing a child's gift against expensively responding to a child's challenge.

Is Trump's 'maximum pressure' campaign blowing up in Iraq? An assault on the U.S. Embassy in Iraq is fueling questions about whether U.S. efforts to contain Iran are backfiring.

President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran is coming under some maximum pressure of its own. As protesters tried to breach the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad on Tuesday, and Iraqi and American officials feuded over the necessity of recent U.S. airstrikes, critics blamed the chaos on the Trump team's laserlike focus on cracking the Islamist regime in Iran. The "maximum pressure" initiative is backfiring, former U.S. officials and other Iran watchers argued. They said it was far too heavy on economic sanctions and military deterrence, far too light on serious diplomatic outreach, and not focused enough on the other countries caught in the middle. Trump and many of his aides often send mixed messages on what they seek from Iran, the critics said - ranging from regime change to narrow nuclear talks. "Pompeo has long dreaded having a



Benghazi-type event on his watch," a former senior Trump administration official said. As tensions mounted this week, Pompeo spoke with leaders in Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, all of whom view Tehran as an adversary, in a bid to show that the U.S. has plenty of support in its anti-Iran tactics. But it was not clear whether Pompeo would travel to Iraq - he's scheduled to visit Ukraine and several of its neighbors starting later this week.

Pompeo did speak with Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi and President Barham Salih. The Iraqis "assured the secretary that they took seriously their responsibility for and would guarantee the safety and security of U.S. personnel and property," the State Department said. Reports from Baghdad, however, suggested that Iraqi officials may have turned a blind eye as protesters headed toward the heavily guarded U.S. diplomatic compound. The developments this week were

a remarkable turn of events for the United States in Iraq, where it maintains some 5,000 troops nearly 17 years after U.S. troops invaded the country and toppled dictator Saddam Hussein. In recent months, it seemed that U.S. efforts to isolate neighboring Iran's clerical leadership were bearing some regional fruit, and not just by depleting Tehran's coffers. Trump aides pointed to the protests in Iraq and Lebanon - as well as demonstrations in Iran itself - as proof that people across the region are tired of the Iranian regime's antics. "What we are also seeing regionally - the protests in Iran, the protests in Iraq, and the protests in Lebanon are a consistent rejection of the Iranian model of undermining sovereignty, endemic corruption, weaponizing sectarian grievances and destabilizing the region broadly," a senior State Department official told reporters Monday.

Chief Justice John Roberts warns about dangers of fake news

Some read the annual New Year's Eve message as a rebuke of President Donald Trump.

Chief Justice John Roberts - who's on the verge of an extraordinarily high-profile balancing act presiding over the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump - issued a warning on Tuesday about the dangers of misinformation in the internet era.

"In our age, when social media can instantly spread rumor and false information on a grand scale, the public's need to understand our government, and the protections it provides, is ever more vital," Roberts declared in

something we should all be thankful for." Trump, angry over court orders blocking many of his immigration policies, shot back that Roberts was burying his head in the sand. "Sorry Chief Justice John Roberts, but you do indeed have 'Obama judges,' and they have a much different point of view than the people who are charged with the safety of our country," Trump wrote last November. "Please study the numbers, they are shocking. We need protection and security - these rulings are making our

source of national unity and stability," the chief justice wrote on Tuesday. "But we should also remember that justice is not inevitable. We should reflect on our duty to judge without fear or favor, deciding each matter with humility, integrity, and dispatch. As the New Year begins, and we turn to the tasks before us, we should each resolve to do our best to maintain the public's trust that we are faithfully discharging our solemn obligation to equal justice under law." Roberts also used his four-page message to note that, in the early days of the republic, rumors sometimes drove citizens to riot. He pointed to a 1788 attack on founder John Jay, who was struck in the head with a rock while trying to quell a lawless mob whipped up by talk that medical students were robbing graves to experiment on corpses. The episode appears to have limited Jay's contributions to the Federalist Papers, leaving most of those writings to be prepared by Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, Roberts observed. "It is sadly ironic that John Jay's efforts to educate his fellow citizens about the Framers' plan of government fell victim to a rock thrown by a rioter motivated by a rumor," Roberts wrote.



"Happily, Hamilton, Madison, and Jay ultimately succeeded in convincing the public of the virtues of the principles embodied in the Constitution. Those principles leave no place for mob violence." In the coming weeks, Roberts is expected to become the third chief justice to preside over the trial of a sitting American president, as the Senate takes up two articles of impeachment the House passed against Trump in December. The outing will be an unusual one for the chief justice, not only because of the rarity of such events, but also because he's not accustomed to his work being televised. Supreme Court sessions are closed to cameras, but the Senate's impeachment trial is expected to be a spectacle carried live on television. While Roberts celebrates educational programs and initiatives undertaken by the federal judiciary, his report

ignored the lack of video or still cameras at the high court and most lower federal courts. Roberts' discussion of the courts' daily work also overstates the extent of other efforts toward openness.

"Today, federal courts post their opinions online, giving the public instant access to the reasoning behind the judgments that affect their lives," the chief justice wrote. In fact, two decades after the internet became widely used, most federal district courts do not take the simple step of posting their opinions on the courts' public-facing websites. Often, citizens who want to get such rulings directly from the court must register for an account, figure out how to navigate the federal court system's clunky online docketing system, and pay for the privilege of tracking down the decisions they are seeking.



his annual New Year's Eve message summing up the work of the federal judiciary.

Roberts was not explicit about whether his call for increased civics education was intended as a rebuke of Trump, although some quickly read it that way. Trump has been widely criticized for repeating false information released online and for retweeting messages posted by conspiracy theorists and racists. The view of Roberts' message as a critique of the president was also reinforced by the fact that the two men have clashed publicly over a topic related to the chief justice's year-end report: Trump's tendency to label adverse court rulings he and his administration face as the work of judges doing the political bidding of previous, Democratic presidents.

A little over a year ago, Roberts issued a highly unusual public statement that lashed back at Trump's claims that many federal judges are nakedly partisan and illegitimate. "We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges," Roberts said in a statement. "What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them. That independent judiciary is

country unsafe! Very dangerous and unwise!"

Roberts' year-end report included no language remotely as pointed as that exchange, but he did use the message to again extol the virtues and vitality of judicial independence. "We should celebrate our strong and independent judiciary, a key

Tata Sons Moves Supreme Court Over Cyrus Mistry's Reappointment As Company Chairman

Tata Sons on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order that directed reinstatement of Cyrus Mistry as Executive Chairman of Tata Sons.

The company has sought early interim relief ahead of the board meeting which is likely to be held on January 9. The matter has not yet been fixed for hearing and will only come up after the apex court opens on January 6 after the winter break. In a big win for Mistry, the NCLAT had restored him as executive chairman of Tata Sons and ruled that appointment of N



Chandrasekaran as the head of the holding company of salt-to-software conglomerate was illegal. The NCLAT, however, stayed the operation of the order with respect to reinstatement for

four weeks to allow Tatas to appeal before the Supreme Court, which has appellate jurisdiction over the NCLAT. Tata Sons had abruptly sacked Mistry as Chairman of Tata Sons on

October 24, 2016 alleging he betrayed trust reposed in him by his desire to seek to control main operating companies of the Tata Group to the exclusion of Tata Sons and other Tata representatives. He was also accused of non-performance during his reign by pointing out the then conditions of Tata Steel Europe, DoCoMo-Tata Tele joint venture and Tata Motors' India operations, which were termed as 'problem companies', where there was no 'noticeable improvement in operations' and the situation worsened with widening losses, increasing debt and declining market share.



What effects does alcohol have on health?

Alcohol is the intoxicating ingredient that is present in wine, beer, and spirits. It is a depressant, which means that when it reaches the brain, it slows down the body's systems. It can also be difficult for the body to process, putting extra pressure on the liver, the digestive system, the cardiovascular system, and other functions. Alcohol is a legal recreational substance for adults and one of the most commonly used drugs in the United States. People consume alcohol to socialize, to

relax, and to celebrate. It is commonly misused among individuals of all ages, resulting in significant health, legal, and socio-economic damage. In 2017, around half of all Americans aged over 18 years had consumed alcohol in the last month. Just over 9 percent of those aged 12 to 17 years had done so. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 15.1 million people aged 18 years and over in the U.S. had alcohol use disorder (AUD), or 6.2 percent of this age

group. Short-term effects Within minutes of consuming alcohol, it is absorbed into the bloodstream by blood vessels in the stomach lining and small intestine. It then travels to the brain, where it quickly produces its effects. The short-term effects of alcohol depend on:
 " how much is consumed
 " how quickly
 " the weight, sex, and body fat percentage of the individual
 " whether or not they



have eaten Drinking with a meal slows the rate of absorption, resulting in fewer side effects and less intoxication.

Signs of intoxication At first, the person may feel relaxed, uninhibited, or giddy. As they consume more alcohol, intoxication may result. Other signs of intoxication include:

- " slurred speech
 - " clumsiness and unsteady gait
 - " drowsiness
 - " vomiting
 - " headache
 - " distortion of senses and perception
 - " loss of consciousness
 - " lapses in memory
- How much alcohol? One drink is the equivalent of:
 " 12 ounces of beer that is around 5 percent alcohol, depending on the type
 " 5 ounces of wine that is around 12 percent alcohol
 " 1.5-ounces of spirits, or

a "shot," at about 40 percent alcohol
 " 8 ounces of malt liquor, at around 7 percent alcohol
 In other words, these servings all contain the same amount of alcohol: 0.6 ounces.

Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream. It is expressed as the weight of ethanol in grams per 100 milliliter (ml) of blood. The University of West Virginia suggests that a person may experience the following, depending on individual factors: The body absorbs alcohol relatively quickly, but it takes longer to get the alcohol out of the body. The liver needs about 1 hour to process one drink. Consuming several drinks in a short time causes the alcohol builds up in the body. This puts the body's systems under pressure. It can lead to illness and, in severe cases, death. It also increases the risk of blackouts, especially on an empty stomach.

Study reveals how much fiber we should eat to prevent disease

A new meta-analysis examines 40 years' worth of research in an attempt to find out the ideal amount of fiber that we should consume to prevent chronic disease and premature mortality.

Researchers and public health organizations have long hailed the benefits of eating fiber, but how much fiber should we consume, exactly? This question has prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to commission a new study. The results appear in the journal *The Lancet*. The new research aimed to help develop new guidelines for dietary fiber consumption, as well as reveal which carbs protect the most against noncommunicable diseases and can stave off weight gain. Noncommunicable diseases are also called chronic diseases. They typically last for a long time and progress slowly. According

to WHO, there are "four main types of noncommunicable diseases: cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes. Professor Jim Mann, of the University of Otago, in New Zealand, is the corresponding author of the study, and Andrew Reynolds, a postdoctoral research fellow at Otago's Dunedin School of Medicine, is the first author of the paper. Prof. Mann explains the motivation for the study, saying, "Previous reviews and meta-analyses have usually examined a single indicator of carbohydrate quality and a limited number of diseases, so it has not been

possible to establish which foods to recommend for protecting against a range of conditions." To find out, the researchers performed a meta-analysis of observational studies and clinical trials. Daily intake of 25-29 grams of fiber is ideal Reynolds and colleagues examined the data included in 185 observational studies - amounting to 135 million person-years - and 58 clinical trials which recruited over 4,600 people in total. The studies analyzed took place over almost 40 years. The scientists investigated the incidence of certain chronic



diseases, as well as the rate of premature deaths resulting from them. These conditions were: coronary heart disease, cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, and a range of obesity-related cancers, such as breast cancer, endometrial

cancer, esophageal cancer, and prostate cancer. Overall, the research found that people who consume the most fiber in their diet are 15-30 percent less likely to die prematurely from any cause or a cardiovascular condition, compared with those who eat the least fiber.

Bhumi Pednekar, Parineeti Chopra, Urvashi Rautela: Worst-dressed female celebrities of Bollywood in 2019

Sometimes celebrities and/or their stylists either try too hard or too little, and fail to impress. Here are the celebrities who couldn't make it out from the bottom of the fashion barrel.



In recent times, Bollywood celebrities have come even more under the radar than before, thanks to social media and paparazzi culture making it's way to India. And now celebrities are under more scrutiny and surveillance than ever before. Since celebrities are always being photographed, whether they're going for an award show or even just the salon, they try their best to always look on fleek. This is most definitely the reason why gym looks, casual looks and airport looks of celebrities have become so hyped. It may surprise some of you to know that some celebrities even get their gym and airport looks professionally curated by their stylists. And while all the efforts put in by

celebrities are usually fruitful, sometimes celebrities and/or their stylists either try too hard or too little, and fail to impress. Here are the celebrities who couldn't make it out from the bottom of the fashion barrel. Urvashi Rautela has had quite a year with her songs, dance performances and back-to-back movie releases, and it seems she's made some great choices, unfortunately, the same can't be said about her fashion choices. The Pagalpanti actor has time and again worn seriously unflattering clothes that the fashion police couldn't help but call out. In fact, during a show when Neha Dhupia asked Taapsee Pannu who needs a new stylist in Bollywood, Taapsee answered in a heartbeat, "Urvashi Rautela. I think she has got a

great body, I would love to see better clothes (on her) and not just the kind that only show the body." We agree Taapsee. Bhumi has delivered some power-packed performances this year including Saand Ki Aankh and Bala, and while the actor is a total stunner and has been experimenting a lot with her style, somehow all the looks seem very played out and repetitive. And the choice of clothes seems very haywire, at times we see her in the exact same saree (Manish

Malhotra sequin number) but in a different colour, and at times we see her in an ill-fitted mini. Hopefully, Bhumi will find her style in 2020. Parineeti somehow always looks the same, whether she's in jeans or in a couture gown, yeah we see the smokey eye and hairdo, but there is no stark difference. More defined looks, better make-up and outfits that are better suited to her personality will help for sure. Nushrat Bharucha is an incredibly talented actor, but

we truly wish the Soni ki Titu ki Sweety actor would revamp her wardrobe, stylist and all. From the most-un-Manish Malhotra-like maroon lehenga choli, to the most unflattering cutout dress, she's worn all the big fashion no-nos. Shraddha's style has evolved tremendously over the past year, and while we are glad she is headed in the right direction, she wore quite a few sartorial disasters that couldn't be ignored and landed her here.



The Two Popes movie review:

God bless Netflix for ending 2019 with this heavenly film

The Two Popes movie review: Jonathan Pryce and Anthony Hopkins are staggeringly good in Fernando Meirelles' new film. God bless Netflix for ending the year on such a heavenly note.

The Two Popes

Director - Fernando Meirelles

Cast - Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Pryce

The arrival of films like The Two Popes calls for both a celebration, and quiet introspection. Why isn't every film as good? Must we suffer through interminable mediocrity before we are rewarded for our penance? Can Netflix be forgiven for the sins of Michael Bay?

Not since Danny Boyle and Aaron Sorkin's Steve Jobs have the singular voices of a director and a writer united with such wisdom, wit, and visual flair. Written and directed by Anthony McCarten and Fernando Meirelles, respectively, The Two Popes is a triumphant caper to Netflix's unofficial trilogy of awards contenders, following

Martin Scorsese's The Irishman and Noah Baumbach's Marriage Story. And it might just be the best of the lot.

But neither of the two men at the centre of the film would approve of a comparison such as this. The Two Popes is about many things - the transfer of power, the relevance of religion, and the importance of pizza as a unifier - but it is mostly a film about two lonely old men, finding in each other the companion that they so desperately desire.

The Two Popes is framed around three pivotal meetings between Joseph Ratzinger (Anthony Hopkins) and Jorge Bergoglio (Jonathan Pryce), during three important moments in not just their personal lives, but also for the Catholic Church at large. Scandal has erupted during the

Papacy of Benedict XVI, and faced with a crippling loss of faith, the conservative German seeks the advice of the progressive Argentine destined to succeed him on the Chair of Saint Peter.

The conversations are cracking, featuring two performers operating at the peak of their powers. Neither outshines the other, although Hopkins occasionally lapses into his famous staccato outbursts. A flash of anger in Hopkins' tone has more force than any physical fight between Batman and Superman; a glimpse of warmth in Pryce's voice is more affecting than a million saccharine romances put together.

As critical as McCarten's script often seems of Ratzinger's

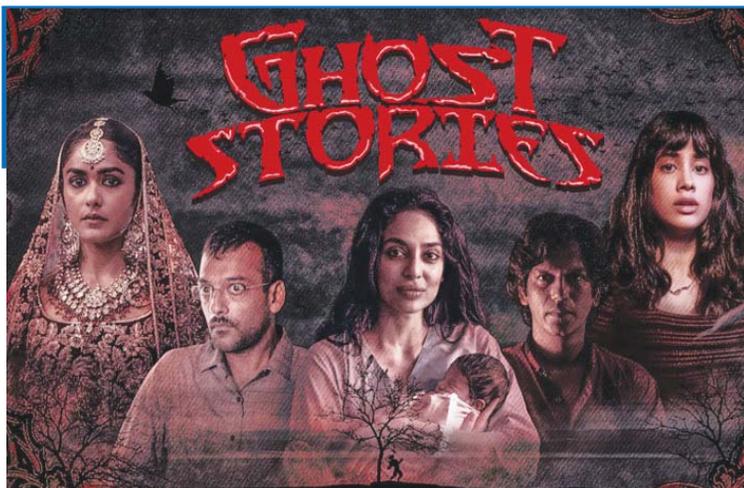


Papacy, it isn't entirely dismissive of his achievements as a political leader. The Catholic Church has witnessed more than its share of controversies, most of them perpetuated by small men playing God. Surrounded by allegations of corruption, child abuse, and a growing obsolescence, Benedict XVI was thoroughly unprepared for the demands of the job, or so it seems. "The first qualification for a leader is not wanting to be a leader," one Cardinal tells Bergoglio, subtly hinting that he

should be the one leading them, and not the old-fashioned German. But as serious as some of its themes are, Meirelles never allows his film to be consumed by the pomposity that a lot of the characters positively thrive in. The exchanges between Ratzinger and Bergoglio are bursting with humour as they debate about their conflicting ideologies and philosophies, and indeed, their understanding of God and Christianity.

Ghost Stories movie review:

Janhvi Kapoor and Sobhita Dhulipala anchor Netflix's lacklustre follow-up to Lust Stories



Ghost Stories movie review: Directors Anurag Kashyap, Zoya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee and Karan Johar reunite for Netflix's unnerving anthology follow-up to the acclaimed Lust Stories.

Ghost Stories

Directors - Anurag Kashyap, Zoya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee, Karan Johar

Cast - Janhvi Kapoor, Mrunal Thakur, Sobhita Dhulipala, Gulshan Devaiah, Surekha Sikri, Vijay Varma

Like your neighbourhood aunty, Hindi cinema doesn't do horror. So it's rather interesting to see four filmmakers who represent the broad spectrum of Hindi moviemaking, come together to experiment with a genre that the industry believes is best avoided. But unlike 2018's Lust Stories, and indeed, the filmmakers' first anthology film together, 2013's

Bombay Talkies, Netflix's Ghost Stories is an uneven and ultimately impotent affair. There are occasional moments of magic, especially in a couple of segments, but they're inconsistent. It should be noted that none of the four filmmakers - Anurag Kashyap, Zoya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee and Karan Johar - has made a horror movie before. God knows Johar has scared audiences, but this time, he's expected to.

Ghost Stories begins rather promisingly, though, with Akhtar's technically impeccable short. Janhvi Kapoor plays Sameera, a nurse who's

assigned to look after a senile old woman, played by Surekha Sikri. For a filmmaker who's expressed her apathy for horror, Akhtar does a splendid job of appropriating some of the genre's most recognisable tropes - visually and tonally. Think of her film as an elaborate Halloween costume; you can't deny the effort and skill that must have gone into making it, but in the end, it can't help but feel slightly superficial.

The film is wonderful to look at - the creaky old Mumbai apartment, set against the backdrop of incessant rains, is intricately designed - and Akhtar does an excellent job of laying out the geography of the place. So when a noise wakes Sameera up in the middle of the night, we're subconsciously aware of where it might have come from. Akhtar puts us in her protagonist's shoes, allowing us to feel what she's feeling,

successfully sustaining dread in this age of jump-scare filmmaking.

It's a fun tweak on that old babysitter-in-peril premise, but Sameera most certainly isn't a vapid, virginal victim. Janhvi instils in her an instant warmth, and even though her accent might not be as consistent as her performance, there's an effortless charm about her. Surekha Sikri, meanwhile, knows exactly the sort of film she's in, effectively alternating between her character's many moods with precision and restraint. But I struggled to understand the larger point Akhtar was trying to make, or if there even was any. This is unfortunate, especially if you remember the muffled voices she handed a megaphone to in Gully Boy, and also in her Lust Stories short.

Like the first segment, the second, directed by Anurag Kashyap, is also a twist on

familiar horror movie tropes. Featuring yet another largely solitary performance at its centre, Kashyap's short is a wildly ambitious mashup of Darren Aronofsky's Black Swan and Richard Donner's The Omen, with a bit of Cronenbergian body horror thrown in for good measure. Unlike Akhtar's film, this one has anxieties to address - about motherhood and mania, loss and loneliness.

As always, Sobhita Dhulipala proves that she can be an astonishingly reliable actor, regardless of what she's given to work with. She's able to add more dimensions to her character in 30-odd minutes here than she was in seven episodes of the shoddy Bard of Blood. But once again, the film is more impressive technically - the deathly desaturated colour palette, the sneaky visual foreshadowing, the impressive practical effects - than on a narrative level.

Alia Bhatt welcomes New Year 2020 with boyfriend Ranbir Kapoor and some sunshine on the beach.

Alia Bhatt is currently vacationing with Ranbir Kapoor at an undisclosed beach destination. After teasing her fans with vague glimpses of her beach holiday, Alia has now shared a stunning picture of herself as she emerged out of the waves.

Sharing a picture of herself dressed in a floral costume and looking at the sun, Alia wrote on Instagram, "the light is coming 2020." The actor looks flawless as the sun shines on her and the blue sea is seen in the background.

Her fans loved her first picture of the year and showered her with praise. It got more than 11,98,000 'likes' within a few hours. Her sister Shaheen Bhatt called her "My sunshine" in the comments section. Her bestie Akansha Ranjan Kapoor declared her an "angel". Actor Dia Mirza and stylist Anaita Shroff Adajania also dropped heart emojis as their reaction to the picture. Alia also wished her fans "Happy New Year" by sharing a boomerang video of waves kissing her



feet in her Instagram stories. Another picture posted by her is from their candle-light dinner as she and Ranbir rang in the new year with some champagne on the beachside.

She had earlier posted a glimpse of their movie date as they enjoyed watching a classic Hollywood film in the lap of nature.

Sharing a picture of them sitting in front of a TV screen with Audrey

Hepburn

starrer

Breakfast

At Tiffany's'

playing on

it, Alia wrote,

"A classic

under the stars,

by the water &

amongst the trees."

Two right feet can be seen pointing in the direction of the TV in the picture. Alia and Ranbir will be seen together for the first time in Ayan Mukerji's upcoming film, Brahmastra. The film is delayed but is expected to hit theatres this year. Alia has also started work on her Sanjay Leela Bhansali film, Gangubai Kathiawadi and had recently shared a picture of its clapperboard.

Alia wished her fans "Happy New Year"



The Bollywood actor who made the hero irrelevant

Actor Vidya Balan defies every stereotype there is in Bollywood - she is far from being size zero, made her Bollywood debut when she was well into her 20s and can hardly be called a great dancer. Yet, Vidya has been a shining example of talent - in her ability to essay tricky roles. On her birthday today, here is a look at her journey so far.

Indian television fans will vaguely recall her as a curly-haired, spectacled teenager in Hum Paanch (1995). In the years that followed, Vidya tried her luck in South Indian films, particularly her native Tamil and in Malayalam with little success. Then, sometime in early 2000s, she did a Bengali film called Bhalo Theko, but that didn't work in her favour either.

Around this time, she did few

music videos too, the most popular being that of music group Euphoria's Kabhi Aana Tu Mere Gali (2003). It was directed by ad guru-turned-filmmaker Pradeep Sarkar, who immediately marked her as his future 'heroine'. In 2005, Vidya went on to make her debut in Bollywood with Parineeta, in a retelling of Bengali writer Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's iconic short story of the same name.

The film, which also starred Saif Ali Khan and Sanjay Dutt, was a hit and introduced to Bollywood a 'heroine' it had forgotten - feminine, seductive, buxom and classic Indian beauty, steeped in old-world charm. Vidya had arrived. A year later, she featured in another successful film, Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006), in which she reinvented herself to portray a young urban woman who works as a RJ at a radio station. The role catapulted her into the top league of actors.

IAF pilot Sq Ld Vijay Karnik is impressive



Ajay Devgn's first look from Bhuj The Pride of India

Ajay Devgn will be seen as an Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot in one of his upcoming films, Bhuj: The Pride Of India. Director Abhishek Dudhaiya shared the first look of the film on Twitter on the first day of the new year. Sharing the picture, Abhishek wrote: "It's a privilege to present @ajaydevgn sir's first look as Sq. Ld. Vijay Karnik from my upcoming directorial film #BhujThePrideOfIndia. #14Aug2020." He also revealed that the film will open in theatres a day before Independence Day this year. Ajay plays the lead role and will be seen as Squadron Leader Vijay Karnik.

Ajay has worked in number of patriotic films, with another of his upcoming films, Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior, also showcasing similar sentiments. Bhuj: The Pride Of India tells one of the many stories of bravery, selflessness and commitment, shown by ordinary people apart from the armed forces during the 1971 Indo-Pak War.



Champagne and kisses!

Sophie Turner shares romantic New Year's Eve clinch with Joe Jonas on stage... and Priyanka Chopra piles on PDA with Nick Jonas too



The Jonas Brothers rang in the New Year on stage with their wives in Miami, enjoying champagne and kisses as the clock struck midnight.

The group were performing live from the Fontainebleau in Miami on Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve.

Sophie Turner, Priyanka Chopra and Danielle Jonas were all out in force to support their husbands after earlier joining their men for celebratory dinner.

Former Game of Thrones star Sophie, 23, leaned in for a passionate kiss with her husband Joe,



30, while dressed in a little black dress. She wore her hair tucked back behind her ears and held in place with a headband that read: 'Pop Fizz Clink'.

Former Quantico actress

Priyanka, 37, shared a smooch with her husband Nick, 27, on stage too.

She was dressed in a hot pink flowing dress that featured cutouts around the midriff.

Kevin Jonas, 32, and his wife Danielle, 33, were also in the mood for fun, with the mother-of-two looking stylish too in a blue party frock.

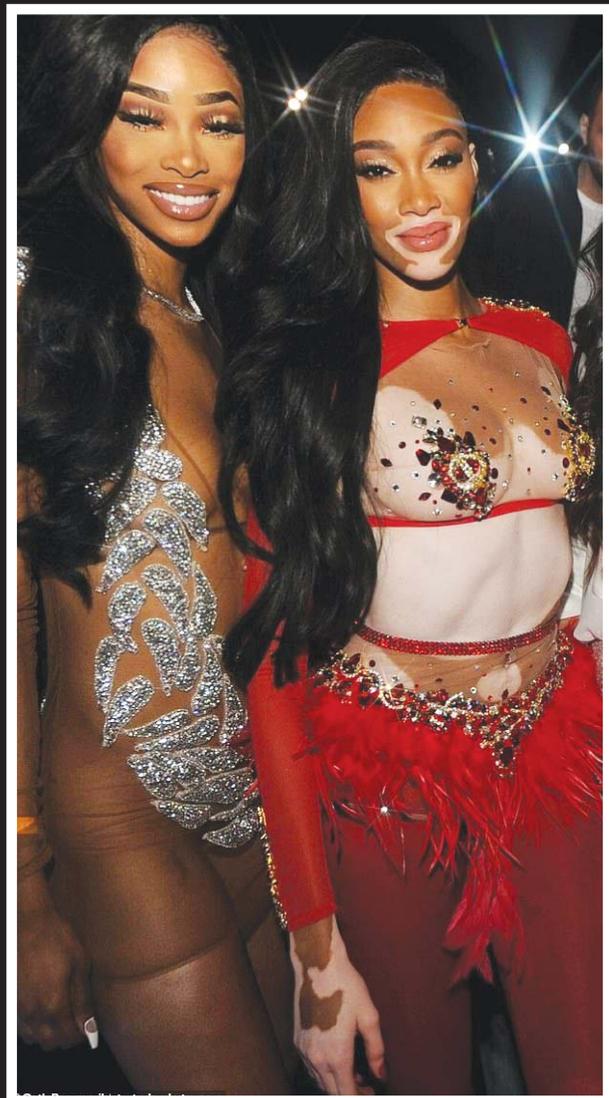
Winnie Harlow was among the glamorous revelers and wore a very skimpy red outfit with sheer panels and plenty of sparkles for the festive night.

The band and their wives had earlier arrived in Miami via private jet.

It's been quite a year for the Jonas Brothers who announced their reunion, had a string of hits and a successful tour.

They made their first television performance in a decade at the Billboard Music Awards in May and released their album Happiness Begins as well as an Amazon documentary Chasing Happiness in June.

In November, they celebrated getting a



Grammy nomination for their comeback hit Sucker which earned a nod in the best pop/duo group performance category. Their performance on

New Year's Eve wraps up their four-month Happiness begins tour that kicked off at the Fontainebleau in August.



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The South Asian

INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002

*Special
4 Page
Feature*

Holiday Dinner hosted for Diplomatic Community by Manhattan's Power Couple



(By our staff reporter) New York: In a noble effort to recognize hard working & stressed Manhattan's power couple, noted Attorney Ravi Batra & Ranju Batra, Chairwoman, Diwali Foundation USA recently organized a

Holiday party. "Ranju's last-minute idea - to bring the joy and celebration of the holiday spirit to officialdom - resulted in the reception and holiday dinner last Saturday for the overstressed and always hard-working diplomatic community. The diplomats

are the unsung heroes bridging the gap between peace or war". The reception and dinner was graced by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, House Foreign Affairs committee Chairman Eliot L. Engel, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, Congressman Adriano

Espallat, and New York State Attorney General Tish James. After being introduced by Ravi Batra, each of them exhibited the holiday spirit and celebrated the great gathering on such short notice, the vital need for diplomacy in our world, and with the Mayor taking special

pleasure in celebrating Ranju as a "powerhouse in her own right," given her 7 year-drive to successfully get the Diwali stamp. The diplomatic community included Permanent Representatives and/or their family from many nations, including, Albania,

Andorra, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Dominica, Egypt, Granada, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Moldova, Slovenia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Taruna. India's C.G. ,Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty of India felicitated the event with joy and special pride."

Holiday Dinner hosted for Diplomatic Community by Manhattan's Power Couple



Holiday Dinner hosted for Diplomatic Community by Manhattan's Power Couple



Holiday Dinner hosted for Diplomatic Community by Manhattan's Power Couple





Is the BJP government seeking to create a Hindu rashtra - by jugaad?



(News Agencies)- Sushmita Dev, a Congress Member of Parliament, recently noted, "Anyone who applied to the National Register of Citizens [NRC] legally claimed that they were Indian. But now, under the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill [now an Act] they will have to claim they came from

Bangladesh. This is a Catch-22." This quote invites us not to see the NRC or CAA in isolation - but as a part of a collection of inchoate, haphazard laws and amendments to the Constitution in pursuit of what can be broadly termed as Hindu rashtra. But what is this Hindu rashtra "we

seek? As political scientist Vinay Sitapati has explained, unlike Islam (or even Judaism), there is no clear, largely accepted alternate conception to the modern Indian democratic State in the Hindu nationalist ideology or Hindu scripture as to what a Hindu rashtra might be. Rather than appealing to any tightly-defined set of principles, the government is inventing its Hindu rashtra by jugaad (improvisation) - slowly, but surely, alienating Muslims. After the initial thrust, Kashmir is still in the throes of an Internet shutdown, with all of its major political leaders still under arrest - while the government has no discernible exit or normalisation strategy. When the NRC produced less-than-desirable results for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam, it pushed the CAA. Anticipating trouble in the Northeast,

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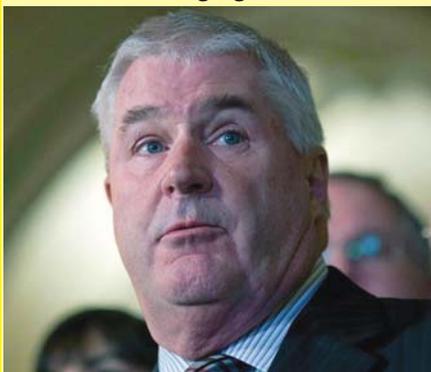
Japan tries to solve the mystery of Carlos Ghosn's audacious escape



(News Agencies)- Japanese authorities have raided the house where fugitive auto executive Carlos Ghosn was staying before he arranged his escape to Lebanon earlier this week, possibly via Turkey. Japanese media reported that Tokyo district prosecutors entered the property on Thursday. CNN affiliate TV Asahi also reported that prosecutors were working with police to access CCTV video around his home as part of their investigation. Ghosn - the former chairman of Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors, and former chairman and CEO of their alliance partner, Renault - had been awaiting trial in Japan on charges of financial wrongdoing, including allegations that he understated his income for years and funneled \$5 million of Nissan's money to a car dealership he controlled. He was ousted from his posts at Nissan (NSANF) and Mitsubishi Motors following his arrest in November 2018, and later resigned from Renault (RNLSY).

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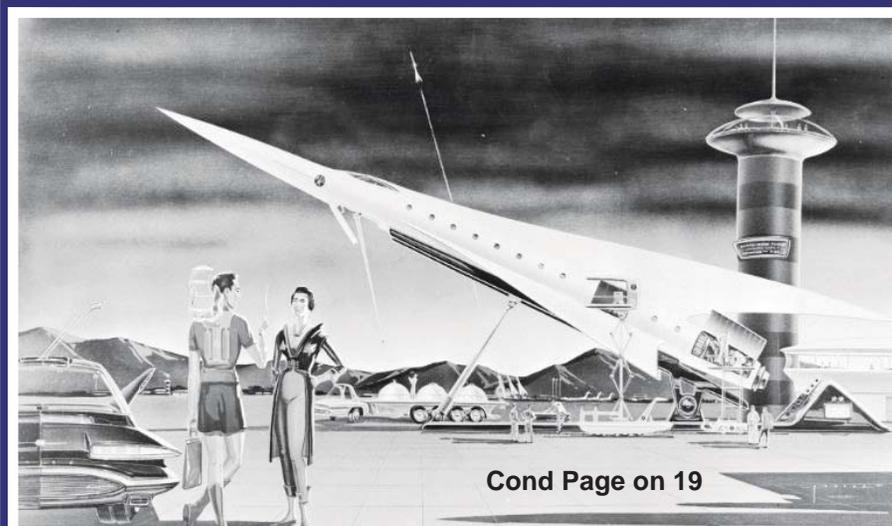
Top New York lawmaker charged with drunk driving after warning against it



(News Agencies)- The top Republican in the New York State Assembly was charged on New Year's Eve with driving

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Nanobots, ape chauffeurs and flights to Pluto. The predictions for 2020 we got horribly wrong



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Jeffrey Epstein's socialite 'madam' Ghislaine Maxwell 'is being hidden from the FBI

in a series of safe houses because of the information she has on powerful people'



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