

# What is AgustaWestland Bribery Case?



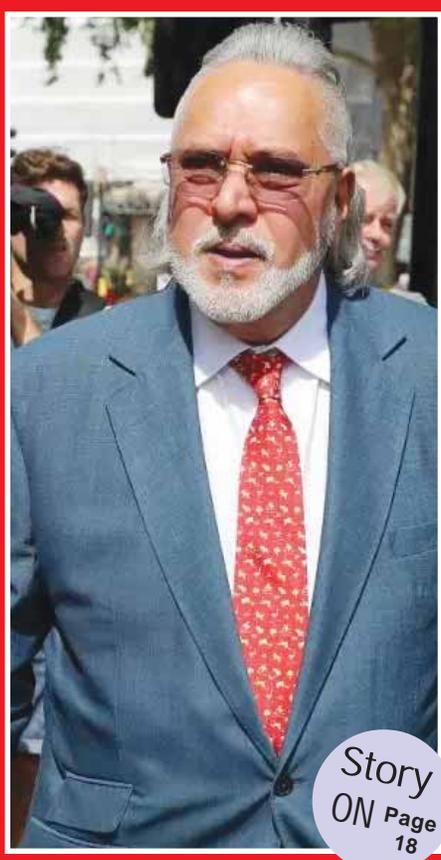
(SAI Bureau) : Christian James Michel , the alleged middleman in the Rs 3,600crore AgustaWestland chopper deal, was extradited to India from the UAE. Michel, a British national, is wanted in India in connection with alleged irregularities in the purchase of AgustaWestland VVIP choppers. A look back at the specifics of the case.

It is alleged that bribes were paid to "middlemen", perhaps even politicians, when India agreed to buy 12 AgustaWestland helicopters built by Italian defence manufacturing giant Finmeccanica (now known as the Leonardo group) at an estimated cost of Rs 3,600 crore. The helicopters were for the "Communication Squadron of the Indian Air Force". The purchase, cleared in 2010 by the previous United Progressive Alliance government, envisaged replacing ageing Mi-8 choppers to ferry VVIPs such as the President, vice-president, Prime Minister and the other dignitaries.

The Central Bureau of Investigation alleges Michel was paid a bribe totalling Rs 295 crore to swing the deal in favour of Agusta.

**(Contd on page18)**

## Vijay Mallaya Makes Desperate Appeal to His Creditors



# Adani Coal Mine In Trouble Again



(Agencies) The ACF applied to the Federal Court, challenging Federal Environment Minister Melissa Price's decision not to activate the "water trigger" for the proposed pipeline infrastructure, which avoided a full environmental impact assessment (EIS). The move comes less than a week after Adani announced it would push ahead with construction of a scaled-down version of its Carmichael project. Last year, the Indian mining giant was granted a water licence by the Queensland Government, meaning it could take up to 12.5 billion litres a year from the

Suttor River. Under federal law, coal mining projects must undergo a full environmental assessment if they are likely to have a significant impact on water resources. But in September, the Federal Government decided the water trigger did not apply to the Carmichael project, instead saying it would only require "preliminary documentation".

**(Contd on page 19)**

## 10 Indian Men, 24 Thai Women Arrested Over Fake-Marriage Scam

The arrests are part of an ongoing crackdown launched by the Immigration Police Bureau on foreigners living unlawfully in the country, it said.

(Agencies) Ten Indian men and 24 Thai women have been arrested in Thailand for their alleged involvement in fake marriages aimed at extending spousal visas in the country, authorities said. At least 20 other Indian men and six Thai women are said to be on the run, he Nation newspaper reported on Tuesday. The arrests are part of an ongoing crackdown launched by the Immigration Police Bureau on foreigners living unlawfully in the country, it said.

**(Contd on page 18)**



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**(See Full Page Advt. on Page 32)**



## After War's End, a Long Struggle to Patch Invisible Wounds

(Insider Bureau) - One by one the villagers arrive, each carrying a little blue book that chronicles a history of loss and heartache. On the back of each book is the patient's name. Inside, on the first page, a family tree. An "X" is scrawled next to each loved one who has died. A "?" next to the missing. Underneath the symbol is the cause, and more often than not, it is written in simple capital letters: "WAR."

If bearable, their trauma would have remained private, behind the walls of modest homes in this northern part of Sri Lanka shaded by coconut trees and often still bearing the scars of bullets and fire. But it's not. So they come for monthly public counseling, lining up to see Dr. V. Jegaruban.

Known as Dr. Jegan, he is a government psychiatrist who has made it his mission to help people piece their lives back together after the small island nation's devastating civil war ended in 2009, after 26 years and more than 100,000 civilian deaths. "Everyone is focusing on building roads, building houses, building hospitals after war," Dr. Jegan told me this year, lamenting the lack of urgent

attention to addressing "the collective trauma."

"Very few people focus on the lives, on helping bring back the happiness," he said. "It is not easy." Our world is one of traumatic wars that fade from one to another, rarely affording any chance for large parts of a generation to look beyond the daily struggle for physical survival. The hope one clings to is this: Even the longest of wars do end some day. I have kept coming back to Sri Lanka to see what even a deeply scarred peace looks like. Many of the fundamental inequalities and ethnic divisions that led to Sri Lanka's civil war remain. But it is hard not to be moved by how everyday people, driven by a culture of volunteerism, have rallied to deal with the deeper trauma that continues to grip large parts of the society.

The government estimates that nationwide about 10 percent of Sri Lanka's roughly 22 million people suffer from some form of mental disorder, with nearly 800,000 suffering from depression.

Research suggests those numbers are far worse in northern areas, where much of the fighting was concentrated. Small studies in the northeast around the war's

end found the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among children as high as 30 percent. Sri Lanka's suicide rates long remained among the 10 highest in the world. Improvements in infrastructure to access hospitals over the past decade, as well as restrictions on deadly pesticides that people have used to kill themselves, have improved things. But the country still ranks in the worst 20 percent. The police see a profound problem, registering about 10 such deaths a day. Activists estimate the number may be as high as 15. A more worrying and telling number, according to activists, is this: At least another 100 to 150 people attempt suicide each day.

"There is a lack of reliable data to capture the true burden of the mental health, but it's probably much more than the numbers the government is putting out," said Nivendra Uduman, a Colombo-based psychologist and activist who has walked coast to coast to raise awareness. "Some of the issues are probably more prevalent in the north and east. But the main disorders — depression and anxiety — are across the board." "It's not just result of traumatic events," he added, "it's also daily pressures." Sometimes, it is government psychiatrists like Dr. Jegan who are trying to meet the demand for treatment. But more often, that burden falls on volunteers — a recently retired banker, a former nurse, a local business dispute mediator — who have been trained as counselors. They answer calls at suicide hotlines or help with program's like Dr. Jegan's. Dr. Jegan is based in Kilinochchi, a district



of about 130,000 that saw some of the worst fighting in the last phase of the war. It was the capital of the rebel Tamil Tigers, who years before had broken with the ethnic Sinhalese majority-dominated government over accusations of abuses and unfair treatment. President Mahinda Rajapaksa's brutal offensive had hemmed the rebels into Kilinochchi, and the Sri Lankan Army, unmoved by accusations of war crimes, closed the area to international observers and unleashed its wrath. At one point, the area's entire population was displaced. In the absence of exact casualty counts, the United Nations says at least 40,000 civilians were likely killed in the last stage of the war. The trauma of that chapter has barely dulled, and for many it has been refreshed by the latest political crisis. Mr. Rajapaksa is again at the center of power, his face looming from posters on the street. Dr. Jegan's method of going door to door in the villages surrounding Kilinochchi helps break a taboo around mental health issues that, in the past, would have seen many of his patients heavily stigmatized. With him, their pain has a cause, a history — recorded in the little blue books. "Husband died of heart attack,

one daughter died of war, a sister committed suicide," he read from one family tree. The patient, a woman in her 60s, sat quietly in front of him. In his notes, the doctor keeps track of important dates — death anniversaries loom large — so he can be ready when parents come to his sessions with more trouble in their hearts.

Mothers who say their sons were disappeared by the Sri Lankan Army during and after the civil war, protesting in Mullaitivu, in March. Ulaganathan Nagendram, 67, came with his wife, Umadevi, fearing that he was having a heart attack.

Dr. Jegan did not detect anything physically wrong with him. He asked another question: What was Mr. Nagendram worrying about?

The patient insisted that he was not worrying about anything. But his wife offered an explanation: Two of their sons had been killed in the war, and the anniversary of one's death had just passed. "He always lapses into grief at this time," she said of her husband. "He keeps it all bottled up and denies feeling upset or unhappy. At least we women talk to each other and cry if necessary. He won't do that, ever."



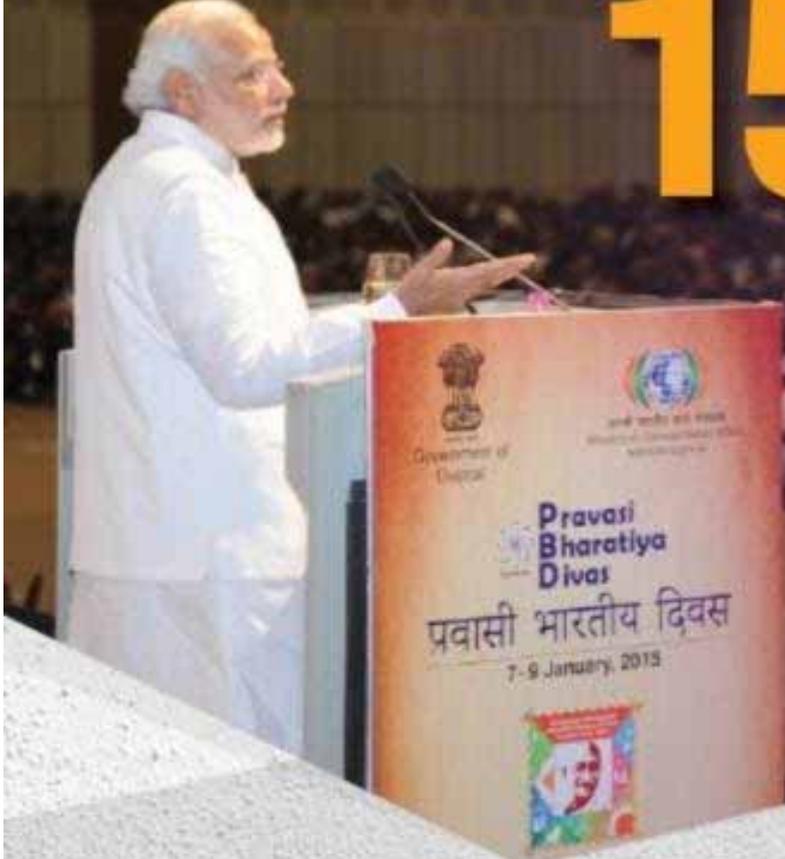


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# Trump deserves some credit for a truce with China

**The trade war between China and the US predates Trump, and he deserves some credit for doing something to help solve it**

Just because the United States and China have agreed to call a truce in their trade war doesn't mean that it's over: This was a classic exercise in can-kicking. Nonetheless, most cans have quite a few kicks in them, and overall this is good news for the global economy. Instead of sweeping everything under the rug, as was the case before Donald Trump took office, America and China have found a new way of addressing conflict by talking openly.

Let's consider the announcement itself. The US has pledged to postpone raising tariffs to 25% on \$200 billion of Chinese goods. China in turn has pledged to buy more US goods, and the two countries have 90 days to reach a broader trade agreement, which is supposed to cover forced technology transfer and

cyberattacks in addition to typical trade issues. That's not enough time to allow the bureaucracies to work out the relevant details, but extensions can and probably will be granted. The symbolic elements of the deal are at least as important. First, China has acknowledged that exports of fentanyl, a highly addictive synthetic drug, are a very real problem for the US, and has pledged to ban them. In addition to the benefits of the ban itself, simply getting China used to the idea of accepting blame — for anything — counts as a step forward. It's a sign that China will start conducting its diplomacy less defensively and more like a normal member of the global community.

Another symbolically important detail: White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, a trade hawk,

attended the meetings and participated in the process. Maybe he's unhappy with the temporary deal, but still this is a sign that Navarro and a Chinese trade agreement — even if only a can-kicking one — can coexist. If Trump sees this deal as beneficial to him politically, Navarro's protectionist influence may be reduced. Perhaps most important, both the Chinese government and public opinion are not in a downward spiralling, negative dynamic. I'm fully aware that giving China points for not getting worse is not the best way to keep score. Still, the Trump administration has managed to send China a real warning on trade, more than it received under previous US administrations, without destroying relations. That too has to count as a victory. Some observers

have pointed out that the American and Chinese summaries of the deal offer somewhat different emphases. I see that as a feature of the deal rather than a bug, and one that is hardly uncommon for can-kicking arrangements. Each side can present this agreement to domestic interest groups in a way that will shore up political support. The relevant alternatives on the table, most of all an escalation of trade tensions, were far worse. The basic problem with any US-China trade conflict is that there is not very much the Chinese are interested in offering, and their intransigence is more than just a bargaining stance. They are willing to buy more American soybeans and manufactured goods (and probably wish to anyway), and they might give US financial institutions freer



rein within China. But they won't dismantle their system of state-owned enterprises, as those companies are among China's most powerful special interest groups. Nor will China give the major US tech companies free rein in China, if only for reasons of national security and China's desire to build a surveillance state based on data controlled by China. Overall, the grievances on the US side are significant, and the possible concessions on the Chinese side are minor. So the most likely

outcome is only modest progress in difficult negotiations. It's also likely that the power and focus of the Trump administration will wane as it deals with investigations from the new Democratic-controlled House of Representatives. It might be said that the trade war you now see is the trade war you are going to get. Foreign relations gridlock will set in. Nonetheless, it's not quite fair to describe the trade war with China as a problem that Trump started and then pretended to solve.

## Mr. President, if you're attacking the FBI, you're losing

When you're attacking FBI agents because you're under criminal investigation, you're losing," Sarah Sanders, then a Donald Trump campaign aide, famously said of Hillary Clinton supporters before the 2016 presidential election. Although she has repeatedly struggled with the facts -- and now serves as White House press secretary -- Sanders' apt tweet remains wisdom for the ages.

Both President Donald Trump and Sanders have led the charge against special counsel Robert Mueller and his team of prosecutors investigating the Trump campaign's possible ties to Russia and other crimes unearthed in that endeavor. Trump has repeatedly called the investigation a "witch hunt" in an attempt to paint Mueller and his team as a band of corrupt authorities trying to bring down an innocent President. The closer Mueller gets, the more caustic Trump becomes. On Thursday, we saw yet

another round of efforts to attack investigators after Michael Cohen, the President's former lawyer and fixer, pleaded guilty to lying to Congress about Trump's business dealings with Russia. While the President has maintained he had "nothing to do with Russia," Cohen told a federal court on Thursday that, acting as Trump's representative, he had been in communication with the Russian government about a proposed Trump Tower in Moscow during the presidential campaign. Cohen previously told Congress that talks surrounding the project ended before the Iowa caucuses, but they continued for at least six months longer.

Faced with the new revelations made public by his lawyer-turned-nemesis, Trump returned to familiar territory and lashed out against his accuser, along with Mueller and the investigation as a whole. He called Cohen a weak liar, while branding Mueller and his team of independent

public servants "a total disgrace."

To bolster his case, Trump went on to amplify the words of various fire-breathing commentators on Fox News, which has often served as a mouthpiece for the President during his ongoing attempt to discredit Mueller. Remarkably, Sanders issued a statement on Friday suggesting Mueller's investigation "probably does undermine our relationship with Russia," while saying nothing about the Kremlin's documented efforts to interfere with America's sacred electoral process.

Time is running out for Trump, because the patience of the American people is not without limit. The public understands that elected leaders are not perfect, but they will not accept a continued pattern of demonstrated deception. With Trump, we have seen countless instances of his categorical denials completely subsumed by

the facts.

While Sanders denied in 2017 that Trump dictated a misleading statement to The New York Times regarding his son Donald Trump Jr.'s 2016 Trump Tower meeting with Russians, we now know Sanders' statement was false. We also know the President personally directed a \$130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels just days before the 2016 election, despite his complete denial of any knowledge of the matter. We have further learned that the President's full-throated claim that he had had no business ties with Russia was false (in an effort to rationalize his behavior, the President himself tweeted on Friday that he "lightly" looked at a building project in Russia).

As Trump's statements are continually found to be false and Mueller's progress is revealed in court documents, many are beginning to see the light. The tired yarn that Trump sits at the center of an out of control "deep



state" hellbent on bringing him down has now become quaint, eliciting yawns and eye-rolls from the national security professionals I am frequently in contact with. The unyielding scrutiny on Trump's potential ties to Russia may feel like the work of circling sharks for those in the crosshairs of the Mueller investigation, but many of us see a system working as it should to hold the powerful to account.

In February, I wrote that many people inside the FBI believe Trump was trying to undermine the institution for the sole purpose of

discrediting Mueller's findings. It was true then and it remains true now. However, what none of us could have predicted at the time is that Trump's repeated denials would be met with such a cascade of overwhelming evidence suggesting he has not been truthful with the American people.

Fortunately for our institutions of justice, each new exposed lie is further evidence that those in the Justice Department are not corrupt; they are simply doing their jobs and following the facts wherever they lead.

# Qatar leaving is an ominous sign for OPEC

The immediate question raised by Qatar leaving The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is, of course, what to call this? Qatexit, or even Qatexit, sound wrong. Qatar-ta-for-now has a nice ring to it, even if it's a tad unwieldy. Maybe just go with Qatout.

While that one is a little aggressive, it at least conveys one of the factors likely behind the move. Saudi Arabia has been gunning for Qatar, launching a blockade last year aimed at bringing the Gulf state to heel on issues such as its relations with Iran. With OPEC's de facto leader having pushed Qatar out into the cold already, the diplomatic benefits of membership can hardly seem that compelling in Doha.

In purely mathematical terms, Qatar's decision to leave makes little difference: It accounts for less than 2% of OPEC's crude oil output. The country's clout in energy markets stems from something outside of OPEC's purview, namely Qatar's status as the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. Yet the symbolism of a long-standing, west Asian member leaving is inescapable.

OPEC's world has changed, and the organisation is ill-equipped to cope. The mere fact that it relies on a clutch of non-members, especially Russia, to make its presence felt tells you a great deal about its difficulties. The fact that OPEC has also relied on the collapse of one of its founding members, Venezuela, to drain barrels from the market also says a great deal. Also telling is the likelihood that OPEC and its partners will soon



announce a supply cut of at least 1 million barrels a day to halt the recent slide in prices — almost exactly two years after announcing the same thing.

The re-emergence of the US as a fast-growing oil producer and exporter is perhaps the single biggest challenge to OPEC's authority. The shortened time scales and falling costs of tight-oil development have short-circuited the group's traditional approach of managing oil supply over several years to rebalance the market. The shale boom has also coincided with and encouraged seismic shifts in America's relationship with the rest of the world, exemplified by the presidency of Donald Trump. Those shifts exist on a continuum between reality and perception, but have changed the calculus for everyone, including OPEC's members. Saudi Arabia, for example, felt emboldened by President Trump's embrace to escalate its feud with Qatar last year. Yet the president's clear antipathy toward rising oil prices and switcheroo on implementing sanctions on Iran has also whiplashed Saudi Arabia and left it in a bind as to how to raise prices without drawing a tweetsorm from

Washington, or worse.

The prospect of Trump potentially backing anti-OPEC legislation in Congress provides another reason for Qatar to distance itself from the group, given its majority stake in a major LNG terminal in Texas. Expect this week's OPEC statement to be even more artfully worded than usual.

All of this exposes the rot beneath the pomp of those gatherings in Vienna. OPEC's divisions in terms of capabilities, wealth, foreign relations, and even political cohesion are wide and widening further. The threat of weakening or even peaking oil-demand decades looms over many of these countries, including Saudi Arabia. The latter is now in permanent market-management mode, aided (for now at least) by Russia and trying to balance political and economic imperatives vis-a-vis the other big force in oil, the US.

OPEC's lesser members have little sway against these three, and the organisation's inherent weaknesses make it ill-suited to shaping a more complex and dynamic oil market. Qatar's withdrawal doesn't affect that much one way or the other, but it's the latest sign of what has changed.

# Lessons from the Paris riots

India, and every other country facing agrarian unrest, would do well to take note of events in France

Paris is burning, and everyone should be worried. Violent protests by the gilets jaunes, or yellow jackets, in Paris over the weekend should set alarm bells ringing everywhere. Some of the protestors sported the Anonymous mask made famous by the Occupy protests, and modelled after the one worn

by the protagonist in Alan Moore's graphic novel, *V for Vendetta*, and which itself was a stylised rendition of Guy Fawkes' face. The ostensible reason for the protests, simmering for some time, was anger over green taxes and high fuel prices, and although the latter came down by the time of the outbreak last weekend, people are still unhappy with the lack of jobs, the failure of local administration to provide basic services in the French hinterland, and rising prices. That this happened in France, the most socialist of all First World countries, is telling. It was inevitable, though. Since the financial crisis of 2008, it has become evident that the current model of global business and trade is flawed.



Indeed, leaders of the world's most powerful nations admitted as much at the recent G-20 summit at Buenos Aires. Over the past decade, real incomes have declined across many countries, and even in those countries that do not have an unemployment problem, there are significant numbers of unemployed (simplistically explained as PhDs flipping burgers). The result is a desire for change — the election of Donald Trump in the US and Brexit are both manifestations of this. The result is a wave of protectionism around the globe that threatens global trade. And the result is anger of the sort seen in Paris over the weekend. India isn't wholly immune to a similar phenomenon. Sure, the

economy has continued to expand over the past decade and incomes continue to increase, but farmers in many parts of the country are in the grip of an agrarian crisis — there have been at least four large protests by farmers in the past six months — and not enough jobs are being created (India needs 10-12 million new ones a year). And according to a recent report by Credit Suisse, the Gini coefficient, which measures inequality in a country, has gone up in India, from 81.3% in 2013 to 85.4% in 2018 (a coefficient of 100% means perfect inequality and 0%, perfect equality). Which is probably why India, and every other country, would do well to take note of events in Paris.



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# To protect our future, new infrastructure must be low-carbon

**Governments and international institutions must help companies and cities accelerate this green transition**

For emerging economies like India — represented at the 24th annual United Nations climate change negotiations (COP24) happening now in Poland — climate change is not just an environmental issue, it's also a development one. Over the next 10 to 15 years, the world is expected to invest about US\$90 trillion in infrastructure — more than the cost of the existing value. In India alone, 70-80% of the infrastructure needed by 2030 is yet to be built. At the same time, we are already grappling with the impacts of climate change. In just the last few months, extreme rainfall and severe flooding, consistent with the weather pattern we expect from climate change, took the lives of nearly 400 people in

Kerala. To protect our future, new infrastructure must be low-carbon, sustainable and resilient; from its design and the materials it uses to its location and the way it serves people's needs. The good news is that ambitious climate action, consistent with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, could deliver US\$26 trillion in economic benefits up to 2030 — and this is a conservative estimate. In 2030, this kind of climate action could also prevent over 700,000 premature deaths from air pollution annually. Given that India is home to 14 of the world's 20 most polluted cities, and that the poor air quality causes 1.6 million premature deaths in the country each year, the health benefits are priceless. Our cities

face serious infrastructure and health challenges but they are also places of great hope for economic opportunity and development. By 2030, India's urban population is projected to grow to 590 million, double the 285 million city residents counted in the 2001 census. Also by 2030, nearly 70% of India's national income and its new jobs are expected to come from cities — even if it is business as usual. Research shows that better and smarter urban growth could be an even bigger economic opportunity for India, worth up to six per cent of GDP by mid-century. If cities are built in more compact, connected and coordinated ways, they can improve residents' access to jobs, services and amenities



while increasing carbon efficiency. By avoiding the costs — congestion, pollution and inefficiency — of urban sprawl, city dwellers gain significant savings. Globally, filling gaps in finance for infrastructure — much of which is urban — will require roughly US\$2-3 trillion per year between 2015 and 2030. However, better designed and compact cities can more than recoup much of this investment

by saving up to US\$17 trillion from now by 2050. Industry also has a crucial role to play in shaping India's path to sustainable development. Cement and steel are the building blocks of modern infrastructure, and the two industries account for roughly 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. However, Indian cement and steel companies are already taking steps to shrink their environmental footprint.

## These assembly polls may have a few pointers for Lok Sabha 2019

A fiercely contested round of elections spread across India's northern and central states (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh), south (Telangana), and Northeast (Mizoram) is coming to a close. Campaigning ended on Wednesday evening, with PM Narendra Modi continuing his final offensive against the Congress in Rajasthan and Congress president Rahul Gandhi returning the favour in Telangana, the two states which go to polls on Friday. This round of five elections matters for both the national parties. For one, it is the sheer timing. Coming four months before the national elections, it has been billed as the semi-final. This may not be a

completely accurate way of describing it for there has been no necessary alignment between the outcome in some of these states and the outcome in the subsequent national polls. The presence of strong local leaders and local issues also makes it different. But what is true is that in three states — MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh — there is a direct bipolar contest. The BJP's ability to retain power and the Congress' ability to challenge it is on test, as will be the case in 2019. Two, the BJP, after a string of bypoll defeats in parliamentary elections and being pipped at the post by opposition unity in Karnataka, is keen to prove that it remains politically dominant and reverse the perception of a slide. The Congress,

which has displayed greater energy and sharp aggression under Rahul Gandhi, wants to prove that it can actually convert this into electoral victories, which is what finally counts in a democracy. A close defeat will not be enough. The campaigning has also revealed that the nature of issues which will dominate the electoral season of 2019. The BJP believes that it has a trump card with welfare schemes, particularly rural housing, toilet construction, gas cylinders, and infrastructure, especially rural roads and power. This is what it focused on through its campaign trail across all states. It has supplemented this with doses of Hindutva in Rajasthan and Telangana, in particular. The Congress believes that the



combination of rural distress and the government's perceived failure to create jobs gives it exactly the robust platform it needs to break the Modi appeal with the electorate. Through public display of Hindu religiosity, it has also sought to counter any attempt by the BJP to

polarise the electorate. On both sides, this is what we will see over the next four months as campaigning picks up for the Lok Sabha elections. It is curtains for the 2018 poll season, but in it, there are enough hints of what is to come in 2019.

## Madhya Pradesh assembly election 2018: Will corruption, rural anger hurt BJP in the state?

"We want to make India a destination which not only welcomes business but where it is easy to do business." Prime Minister Narendra Modi made this promise at the US India Business Council meeting on June 7, 2016. Now, just a little more than two years later, India is on the right path to deliver on that promise.

That's what the flagship Ease of Doing Business Report (Report or World Bank Report) released by the World Bank shows. In this year's report, India moved up 23 positions to reach 77th — the highest the country has ever been

placed in the 15-year history of the survey.

The Ease of Doing Business survey studies regulations that affect businesses in over 190 economies around the globe. Its ranking is based on indices such as the required procedures and time to start a business; registering property; protection of investors; and enforcement of contracts.

The new report highlighted the fact that India is one of the 10 countries "with the most notable improvement in Doing Business" this year. In fact, India was one of the only two countries that

figured in the list of top 10 improvers for two consecutive years. The other is Djibouti.

This is evidence that the flurry of reforms made by the Indian government to improve business conditions, after Modi's promise to the global business leaders in the US Capitol, have paid off. As the World Bank Report notes, India has made 14 "sizeable improvements" in the past two years.

Most notable among them was the replacement of the value added tax (VAT) with the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The GST got off to a rough start

because of considerable initial confusion regarding it and multiple changes during its first year of existence. It is established now and — it will, no doubt, make life a lot easier for businesses. As the World Bank Report pointed out, the GST, a single-tax system, is a vast improvement on the multilayered VAT framework, making the payment of tax a lot easier. Other regulatory measures initiated by India in the past year that have resulted in the higher ranking identified in the report include the integration of multiple application forms into a

general incorporation form; the streamlining of construction permits; the lowering of electricity charges; and increased access to credit.

Another example of substantial improvement is provided by the area of business registration. In 2003, the process was a long-term project requiring roughly three months. Currently, the process takes less than two-and-a-half weeks. Today, there is also much greater access to capital in India than ever before.

Each and all these improvements are critical to India's future economic growth.

# VVIP chopper deal middleman Christian Michel being sent to India tonight: Report

**Wanted AgustaWestland middleman Christian Michel has been taken to the Dubai international airport to extradite him to India, a report in the Khaleej Times said on Tuesday.**

(Insider Bureau) -Wanted AgustaWestland middleman Christian Michel has been taken to the Dubai international airport to extradite him to India, a report in the Khaleej Times said on Tuesday.

The move comes after the Court of Cassation in Dubai upheld a lower court order which had stated that Michel could be extradited to India. Michel had been detained at India's behest and kept in detention at the police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Khaleej Times reported that Michel would be extradited on Tuesday night in keeping with the Indian government's request. The extradition will be carried out in coordination with the Interpol and CID, the

report said. A British national, Michel is wanted in India for allegedly organising bribes in exchange for a 2007 contract for VVIP helicopters for the purchase of 12 luxury helicopters for use by top leaders, including the President, Prime Minister and former prime ministers. He was detained in UAE this June at India's request and granted bail later. India had cancelled the chopper deal after the bribery allegations had surfaced in 2014. With the Dubai government approving his extradition, he is likely to be brought to India some time next week.

The CBI has long suspected that Michel was the conduit to route bribe money to political contacts in India. There were two other middlemen in the deal who had

allegedly influenced the bureaucrats to swing the deal in favour of AgustaWestland.

In September last year, the CBI had filed a chargesheet against former Indian Air Force chief SP Tyagi and eight others — Tyagi's cousin Sanjeev alias Julie, Infotech legal advisor Gautam Khaitan, former Air Force vice-chief JS Gujral, former AgustaWestland chief executive officer Bruno Spagnolini, former Finmeccanica chairman Giuseppe Orsi and alleged middlemen Carlo Gerosa, Guido Haschke and Christian Michel — in the case. Three companies — Finmeccanica, its UK-based subsidiary AgustaWestland, and Mohali-based IDS Infotech — were also



charged. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigated the money-laundering aspect of the case and charged 34 Indians, foreign nationals and companies this July. "ED's investigation revealed that the kickbacks were paid by AgustaWestland for bagging the VVIP chopper deal

in India through two different channels. One channel was handled by middleman Christian Michel James and the other channel was handled by Carlo Gerosa and Guido Haschke," an ED official had told Hindustan Times in July on the condition of anonymity.

## VVIP chopper case accused, extradited from Dubai, 'will spill secrets of politicians he served': PM Modi

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a stinging attack on the Congress leadership, accusing party chief Rahul Gandhi and his family of corruption and crediting his government for catching Christian Michel.**

(Agencies)-Hours before campaigning is to end in Rajasthan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a stinging attack on the Congress leadership, accusing party chief Rahul Gandhi and his family of corruption and crediting his government for catching Christian Michel, the middleman in the VVIP chopper scandal who was brought late last night from Dubai.

PM Modi described him the 57-year-old British national who is alleged to have acted as a middleman for someone who had served many politicians. "We have brought back the middleman. He used to pay kickbacks... Now he will spill the beans, wait and see who all will be named". PM Modi also referred to barbs hurled at him from Rahul Gandhi who, he said, says that "I do not speak on corruption any more".

Corruption is a way of life for the Congress, PM Modi said. Delivering a stinging comeback, PM Modi vowed to go after Congress leaders who had escaped scrutiny when the party was in power. "For generations corruption has been a way of life for them, so they will not fight it. Only BJP can uproot corruption at the grassroots," the Prime Minister said in Rajasthan's Sumerpur. Rajasthan goes to polls on December 7, along with Telangana. The votes will be counted on December 11. Modi said that the Congress rule was steeped in scams. "In 2012, on often heard of the coal scam, 2G scam, helicopter scams etc. This government has not faced any such allegations. All they can talk about is my mother and father, my roots," he said. Referring to the Supreme Court order on the tax assessment of Rahul and

Sonia Gandhi, the Prime Minister said, "Yesterday we won in Supreme Court, the court said Indian government has the right to reassess their (Sonia and Rahul Gandhi) income tax returns. Ab dekhta hoon kaise bach ke nikalte ho (Now, let's see how they will get away)."

Urging the people to vote wisely, PM Modi said, "It is because of your support that this chaiwalla has been able to take on the corrupt and put them behind bars... use your vote wisely, BJP's victory will be your victory."

Taking on the Congress president Rahul Gandhi, who has been targeting his government over farmers' issues in his election speeches, Modi said, "Naamdaar sheds crocodile tears for farmers while his relatives grabbed farmers' land." "They knew that the



government of India was 'naamdar' snatched the land from farmers at throw a Facebook blog earlier bringing huge projects in land from farmers at throw a Facebook blog earlier Barmer, the prices of land away prices," he said. today to stress that were about to rise and the The attack was aimed at investigations against him farmers were set to gain Congress chief Rahul were an unceasing political from it. So, the relatives of Gandhi's brother-in-law, witch-hunt.

## India vs Australia: KL Rahul should be dropped if he fails in second innings - Sunil Gavaskar

(Agencies)-It was a disappointing start to the series for KL?Rahul as the India opener could manage to score just two runs before he was dismissed by Josh Hazlewood on Day 1 of the first Test against Australia in Adelaide on Friday. Former India skipper Sunil Gavaskar was not impressed with Rahul's outing in the first Test and he believes that the opener should be dropped from the team if he fails to perform in the second innings.

"KL Rahul should be dropped from playing XI if he fails to score in second innings. Because he has no more self-confidence left in him. There was a time when he was a very confident player, but now he doesn't look so. There is a tentativeness, a certainty in him about the ball outside the off stump, about his shots, he plays it across the line as well. He has not bothered to correct the faults in his techniques.



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# 50% more tax returns filed this year; official credits notes ban for spike

**The number of people filing income tax returns (ITR) has increased 50 per cent to 6.08 crore so far in the assessment year 2018-19 compared to the year-ago period, a top official said on Tuesday.**

(Agencies)-The number of people filing income tax returns (ITR) has increased 50 per cent to 6.08 crore so far in the assessment year 2018-19 compared to the year-ago period, a top official said on Tuesday.

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chairman Sushil Chandra also exuded confidence that the revenue department would achieve direct tax collection target of Rs 11.5 lakh crore for the current financial year ending March 31, 2019.

"Demonetisation has been very good for increasing the tax base of the country. So far this year (assessment year 2018-19), we have already got around 6.08 crore returns which is 50 per cent higher than last year by this particular date.

So this is the effect of demonetisation," he said. However, he did not mention the exact date when filings touched 6.08 crore. In November 2016, the government cancelled old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes as legal tenders as part of larger efforts to curb illicit fund flows.

"Our gross direct tax growth rate is 16.5 per cent and net direct tax growth rate is 14.5 per cent, which itself shows that demonetisation really helped in widening and deepening of tax base. As on date, total direct tax mop up stood at 48 per cent of the Budget estimate (BE)," the CBDT chief said. He also said the number of corporate tax payers have gone up to 8 lakh as a result of demonetisation.

Speaking at an event organised by industry body CII, Chandra said the CBDT has so far given 2.27 crore refunds during the 2018-19 assessment year, which is 50 per cent higher than the same period a year ago. In the last four years, India's tax base has gone up by 80 per cent, he added.

Noting that the government was committed to reduce corporate tax rate, he said "our tax compliance should be good so that the government is in a position to reduce the (corporate) tax rate".

The CBDT, the apex policy making body for direct taxes, plans to provide e-PAN (Permanent Account Number) within four hours of receiving an application. "We are putting a new

system in place. After a year or so, we will be giving PAN in four hours. You will have to give Aadhaar identity and you will get e-PAN in 4 hours," Chandra said.

According to him, so far this year more than 70,000 cases have been done online without calling assesseees to tax offices. The CBDT has also sent out two crore SMS to people who had not filed returns or those whose income did not match with their filings.

India has entered 245 advance pricing agreement (APAs), and more than 500 tax matters have been solved under the mutual agreement procedure (MAP). Besides, as many as 70 countries are sharing information with India under



Automatic Exchange Of Information (AEOI) framework, he said.

Regarding Permanent Establishment (PE) rules, Chandra said that in his opinion they are sustainable in the era of digital economy. So, from where the revenues are being generated, businesses would have to be taxed accordingly. These issues would have to be discussed in detail, he added.

Replying to a question on seizure of Rs 25 crore cash from vaults in Chandni Chowk area in the national capital, Chandra said the department was trying to find out whether the money was deposited in the vaults after proper Know Your Customer (KYC) scrutiny. On Monday, the income tax department seized over Rs 25 crore cash after surveying a 300-safes strong private vault in the Chandni Chowk area.

## Owaisi calls for anti-BJP, anti-Congress front at national level, says won't join TRS govt

**Owaisi, while speaking to the media, refused to buy the theory that by the general elections next year, there would only be two fronts in the country – one led by the Congress and the other by Bharatiya Janata Party.**

(Insider Bureau) -Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi said on Wednesday a united front of all regional parties was the only alternative in the country to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the people.

Owaisi, while speaking to the media, refused to buy the theory that by the general elections next year, there would only be two fronts in the country – one led by the Congress and the other by Bharatiya Janata Party.

"MIM does not believe in this bipolar politics. There is a scope for all regional parties, which are growing stronger in their respective states, to come together. You may call it a third front or federal front, but it is the need of the hour," Owaisi said.

Owaisi, however, refused to comment what the MIM stand would be in 2019 election, if there were only two fronts. "I cannot predict what would happen after elections now," he said.

While defending his party's

decision to support the Telangana Rashtra Samithi outside the eight constituencies of Hyderabad, Owaisi said the TRS government had done a commendable job to uplift the minorities.

He said the government launched various programmes including setting up of minorities' welfare residential schools, providing scholarships to Muslim students for their overseas education and marriage incentive to the poor Muslim families.

However, Owaisi ruled out the possibility of the MIM joining the TRS government in the event of the latter coming to power for a second term.

"I don't think such a situation will arise, as I feel the TRS will come to power on its own. Even if there is such a situation, we shall not join the government at all," he categorically said.

He also wondered why all national leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah, Congress

president Rahul Gandhi and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath attacked the MIM while campaigning in Hyderabad.

"That fact that they are specifically targeting me personally clearly shows they are scared me and my party. They think their parties would get some votes if they attack me," he said.

Reacting to Gandhi's comment that MIM was the "B" team of the BJP, Owaisi said he was neither A team nor B team. "I am Team Hyderabad and I will win ultimately," he asserted.

While replying to a question, the MIM chief accused the Uttar Pradesh chief minister of being callous and irresponsible in connection with the killing of a police officer by cow vigilantes in that state's Bulandshahr district. "It is unfortunate that Yogi has deserted the state when it is burning and is doing road shows in Telangana in the assembly elections in which his party hardly has any stakes. I hope the



people of UP will teach him a fitting lesson in the next elections," he said.

He pointed out that the Sangh forces were not sparing anybody. "First it was minorities, then it was the turn of Dalits. Now, even the police have become its victims. The accused people in Bulandshahr incident belonged to Bajrang Dal, which is an offshoot of the RSS to which Yogi and Modi belong," he alleged.

Owaisi also found fault with the BJP's leaders for throwing challenges at him and threatening to kill him during the

electioneering.

"Have they gone mad? What kind of talk is this? Instead of threatening me and throwing challenges at me in the elections, it is better they concentrate on issues like overflowing sewerage in their colonies. And if they still think they will get votes by killing me, I am ready to sacrifice my life," he said. He suggested the Election Commission should take serious note of such inflammatory speeches, threatening statements and comments whipping up communal passions and take action accordingly.

# Centre defends sending 2 top CBI officials on leave, tells SC 'both were fighting like cats'

**Centre on Wednesday explained to the Supreme Court why it had to step in to break up the public fight between CBI officials**

(Agencies)-The government on Wednesday explained to the Supreme Court why it had to step in to break up the public fight between CBI director Alok Verma and his deputy, Rakesh Asthana and send them on leave. The Centre told the judges that it had acted well within its jurisdiction and didn't have much of a choice. "The fight between Alok Verma and Rakesh Asthana was becoming critical and matter of public debate, government was watching with amazement as to what the top officers were doing. They were fighting like cats," the government's top law officer Attorney General KC Venugopal told the top court. "Only God know where this spite

between its top officers may have ended and therefore the Government of India stepped in," the Attorney General said, responding to the Supreme Court wondering if the CBI director could have been 'immobilised' rather than moved out. The government underlined that the CBI director and his No 2 did not amount to their transfer. Alok Verma and his deputy, special director Rakesh Asthana, were divested of their powers on October 23 after an internecine battle between the two officers who accused each other of corruption. Their marching orders came days after the CBI, then

controlled by Alok Verma, filed a case against Asthana. After they were moved out, Verma petitioned the Supreme Court against the government order transferring him, insisting that he could have only been removed on the recommendation of a high-powered panel that includes the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha. Alok Verma's tenure as CBI director comes to an end in January. At a previous hearing, the court had also asked what the government's options were if a CBI chief is caught red handed accepting bribe. Noted jurist Fali Nariman, who is representing Alok Verma, had responded that even in such a situation, "the



committee has to be taken into confidence and only court can decide on the fate of the director." The Supreme Court had earlier fast-tracked a central vigilance commission inquiry against Alok Verma and asked a retired judge to oversee the exercise. The findings of this inquiry are still a secret but the Supreme Court, which reviewed the conclusions, had told the officer in court that there were portions that were not complimentary to him.

# Won't contest 2019 polls, says BJP's Uma Bharti

**Senior BJP leader and Union minister Uma Bharti announced on Tuesday she will not contest the Lok Sabha election next year and will concentrate on the issues of Ram Temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya and cleanliness of the River Ganga for the next one-and-half years**

(Insider Bureau) -One of the most prominent faces of the Ram Mandir movement, Uma Bharti, announced that she will not be contesting the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and concentrate on the Ram temple and the cleanliness of Ganga river for the next one-and-half years instead. The announcement by the union minister for drinking and sanitation water resources on Tuesday, comes at a time when Hindu organizations are drumming up the demand for a legislative solution to the Ram temple issue and lends credence to the speculation that

it will serve as a major plank for the BJP for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Uma Bharti had already announced her decision earlier this year, but had, at the time, cited health reasons. Interacting with the media, Bharti said, "From January 15, 2019, I will go on a Ganga Yatra for one-and-a-half years, after taking permission from BJP national president, Amit Shah. I will spend the time on the banks of the Ganga. I will also work for Ram temple, which is an issue of faith and belief." She said that

there was no need for protests and agitation as 'the solution will emerge with the consensus of all parties.' Bharti said her not contesting the election didn't mean that she was retiring from the politics. "I will continue to work for the BJP till my last breath and participate in the campaigns," she said. MP Congress spokesperson Shobha Oza said, "People are disillusioned with the promises of the BJP government. Its leaders have realized that and are therefore making lame excuses for not



contesting the election. As far as past so many years and have the Ram temple is concerned, come back with the same this BJP has been contesting time too. People are not going elections on this issue for the to believe them."

# Christian Michel's lawyer Aljo Joseph expelled from Congress

(Agencies)-Advocate Aljo K Joseph, who is the counsel for extradited AgustaWestland chopper case accused Christian Michel, has been expelled from the Congress and removed from his post as Youth Congress's legal department national in-charge. Amrish Ranjan Pandey, IYC, spokesperson, said, "Aljo K Joseph appeared in his personal capacity. He didn't consult Youth Congress before appearing in the case. IYC does NOT endorse such actions. IYC has removed Aljo Joseph from IYC's legal department and expelled him from the party with immediate effect." Earlier, Joseph had defended himself for taking up Michel's case, saying said that his association with the Congress has nothing to do with his profession after being targeted on social media.

Joseph, who was also the national in-charge for Youth Congress's legal department, said, "My relation with Congress is separate, my profession is separate." "I'm an actively practising advocate. I appeared for him (Michel) in my professional capacity. If somebody asks me to appear on behalf of a client, I've only discharged my duty as a lawyer. It has nothing to do with Congress," he said. His comments came after right wing activists highlighted his Congress links on social media, where he is seen actively taking part in party activities. Joseph was also seen meeting Congress general secretary Deepak Babaria at party headquarters in Delhi in a video put out by ANI on Twitter, soon after he argued the case for Michel in a CBI court.



# To prove himself superior, PM Narendra Modi can demean Gandhi, Patel and others: Rahul Gandhi

Centre on Wednesday explained to the Supreme Court why it had to step in to break up the public fight between CBI officials

(Insider Bureau) - Congress chief Rahul Gandhi Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed his need to prove his superiority by questioning Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and asserting that Kartarpur went to Pakistan due to the lack of wisdom of the leaders of that time. His attack on Modi came a day after the prime minister alleged that Kartarpur went to Pakistan at the time of

independence because Congress leaders of that time had no vision and did not respect Sikh sentiments. In a Facebook post in Hindi, Gandhi said Modi was now questioning Patel and implying Kartarpur went to Pakistan due to the lack of wisdom of the leaders of that time. "What is in Prime Minister Modi's mind has finally been articulated... to prove

himself superior to others, he can demean Gandhi, Patel and other leaders," Gandhi said. Correcting Congress' mistakes was his "destiny", Modi said in an election meeting in Rajasthan on Tuesday while referring to the recent opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor across India-Pakistan border. The foundation stone for the much-awaited corridor linking Gurdwara Darbar Sahib

in Pakistan's Kartarpur - the final resting place of Sikh faith's founder Guru Nanak Dev - to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Gurdaspur district was laid last week.



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## Chidambaram slams PM Narendra Modi for saying 'government won' in tax case against Sonia, Rahul

(Agencies) - Congress leader P Chidambaram Wednesday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for declaring that his government has won in the Supreme Court, which ordered that income tax cases against Sonia and Rahul Gandhi be reopened. The former finance minister said whoever has briefed the Prime Minister on the proceedings in the apex court on Tuesday in the income tax cases "deserves to be sacked". "If nobody

briefed him and it was the Prime Minister's own conclusion that he had 'won' in the SC, the government deserves to be thrown out," Chidambaram said. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court allowed the Income Tax Department to reopen the tax assessment of Congress president Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi for 2011-12 in connection with the National Herald case. Taking on the Gandhi family a day after the Supreme Court order, the

Prime Minister said at an election rally in Rajasthan on Wednesday that his government had scored a win thanks to the courage of a "chaiwala". Alleging that the Gandhi family had been enjoying privileges for four generations, Modi said the court order was the "victory of the honest". "Now I will see how you escape... Look at the courage of a 'chaiwala' who took those running country for four generations to the court's door," Modi said.

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# Ethiopian police take three IL&FS employees in custody over unpaid wages, five still in captivity of staff

Even as five IL&FS employees continue to remain in captivity of unpaid staff in Ethiopia, the local police have taken into custody three Indian officials of the infrastructure company over non-payment of taxes and workers' salaries, a source said.

(Insider Bureau) - Even as five IL&FS employees continue to remain in captivity of unpaid staff in Ethiopia, the local police have taken into custody three Indian officials of the infrastructure company over non-payment of taxes and workers' salaries, a source said.

Late last month, seven Indian workers of an IL&FS subsidiary — IL&FS Transportation Network (ITNL) — were taken hostage at three of its sites in Ethiopia's Oromia and Amhara states by unpaid local staff.

The source said IL&FS had 15 Indian employees in

Ethiopia, seven of whom were held captive by local staff. Of the seven, two were released last week on medical ground.

The three employees taken into custody were out of the eight who were not held captive, he said. Local workers are allegedly holding them in captivity in

protest for not having paid salaries since the past two months. ITNL, through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Elsamex SA, has been executing road projects across three sites in Ethiopia.

IL&FS Group and its various subsidiaries, including ITNL, are facing



liquidity crisis and have defaulted on various debt payments. As of October 8, 2018, the total debt of the group stood at Rs 94,215.6 crore.

## Tharoor, police oppose Swamy's application in Sunanda Pushkar's death case

After concluding the arguments in the matter, the Patiala House Court has reserved its order on Swamy's application on December 10.

(Agencies)-Congress leader Shashi Tharoor's counsel Vikas Pahwa and public prosecutor on Thursday opposed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Subramanian Swamy's application seeking direction to the Delhi Police to produce vigilance inquiry report conducted after Sunanda Pushkar's death and to allow him to assist the prosecution in the case. After concluding the arguments in the matter, the Patiala House Court has reserved its order on Swamy's application on December 10.

Tharoor's counsel has filed the application under Section 207 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) seeking direction for reconciling of the data stored in three hard disks submitted by the Delhi Police in the court. The hard disks, which have more than 900 GB of data, were filed in the court in the form of Folder F.

Folder F comprises numerous CDs, pen drives, hard disks, memory sticks etc. The data stored in these three hard disks was prepared in July 2018.. During the court proceedings, the

Additional Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) allowed the application and directed the investigating officer to sit with the counsels and start the process of reconciliation from today itself.

Tharoor's counsel Pahwa challenged the locus standi of Swamy saying that he is a stranger to the proceedings and cannot be permitted to participate in the criminal trial in any manner. He also cited numerous judgements of the apex court and Delhi High Court in support of this argument. The Special

Chief Public Prosecutor also vehemently objected to the application saying that the Delhi Police does not want any assistance from Swamy.

However, Swamy argued that the charge sheet against Tharoor in Pushkar's death is incomplete and against the interest of justice.

After the prolonged hearing, Swamy said that he will not press his prayer for assisting the prosecution but insisted that his plea seeking the vigilance enquiry report should be allowed so that the same can be



considered by the court during the framing of charges.

This plea was also opposed by Tharoor's advocate on the ground that this prayer amounts to directing further investigation under Section 173(8) of CrPC, which is not permissible in law particularly when the court has already taken cognisance in the case.

Sunanda Pushkar was found dead under mysterious circumstances in a suite of a Delhi hotel on the night of January 17,

2014. The couple was staying in the hotel as their house was undergoing renovation.

Tharoor was summoned by the court in June this year, observing there was sufficient ground to proceed against him.

The Congress leader was charged under Sections 306 (abetment of suicide) and 498A (husband or his relative subjecting a woman to cruelty) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). He, however, dismissed the charge sheet terming it "preposterous".

## Bulandshahr violence: Initial probe suggests cop, youth killed with same bore weapon

(Insider Bureau) -Inspector Subodh Kumar Singh and local youth Sumit Kumar were shot dead with same bore (.32) pistol or pistols, suggest the initial findings of the probe by senior police officials in the Bulandshahr violence. The police were, however, unable to nab the key accused in the violence, Yogesh Raj (a Bajrang Dal leader), even after 72 hours of the violence.

The SSP office of Bulandshahr said six teams (of 10-12 cops each) have been formed to arrest all the accused named in the FIR for the Monday violence. "Teams are

raiding every possible hideout to arrest the accused," the SSP office said.

Meanwhile, the slain inspector's wife Rajni met chief minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on Thursday and told him that her husband, who was handling cow slaughter complaints, used to get threat calls.

She was accompanied by her two sons during the meeting.

Additional director general (ADG), Intelligence, SB Shiroadkar, who was asked by the state government to submit the spot findings about

Bulandshahr violence within 48 hours, was yet to submit his report.

Also probing the violence, the SIT team led by inspector general (IG) of Meerut range, Ram Kumar, and a team of special task force visited the spot to investigate the matter in past two days but haven't submitted their reports. But a senior police officer at state police headquarters in Lucknow said the initial findings of the three probing teams point out that the weapon (weapons) used in the murders of the inspector and the youth were of .32 bore.

"Who killed the two and

under what circumstances is still unclear," the officer, who did not want to be named, said.

He said the slain inspector's private licensed pistol, which he was carrying at the time of the violence, was of the same bore and was missing since then.

The officer said the pistol was allegedly looted by the unruly mob after killing him during the violence.

He, however, added that it is very early to say whether the inspector's pistol was used in the killings. This would be ascertained only after ballistic examination of the missing pistol, he

added.

He said .32 bore weapons are non-prohibited and are available for common license holders, so it is possible that somebody from the mob may have been carrying the same bore pistol and used it to shoot the inspector and the youth. He said the bullets recovered from the two bodies have been sent for forensic examination but the ballistic examination of the pistol could not be done as it was taken away by the assailants present among the mob.

Moreover, the initial investigations suggest unpreparedness of local

police officials in handling the violent mob despite being aware about recovery of cow carcasses around four hours before the violence on Monday.

The mob turned violent at around 1 pm but by then the local police was not able to assess the situation. Inspector general (crime) S K Bhagat also told reporters in Lucknow that it appears that the police officer and the youth had died of injuries caused by .32 mm bullets, but whether those were fired from the same weapon would be known only after the report from the forensic lab was received.

# Caste arithmetic gives way to development equation

## Rajasthan assembly elections 2018: Caste arithmetic gives way to development equation

(By Our Staff Reporter) - Caste equations that once dominated elections in Rajasthan seem to have given ground, at least in the coming elections, to two other factors — development, and anti-incumbency against the Vasundhara Raje-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government. The Rajputs have traditionally been BJP supporters and their bête noir, the Jats, have backed the Congress; The tribal community, the Meenas, have been with the BJP and the cattle herders, the Gujjars, with the Congress. The Meghwal community and Muslims have traditionally aligned together, but have swung towards both parties. These castes dominate the electoral landscape of Rajasthan and constitute

about 70% of the total 42 million voters in the state. “Caste plays its part in Rajasthan politics, but its role has diminished in the recent past with more awareness and better education. The younger generation believes less in this caste divide,” said political analyst Narayan Bareth, a former faculty member of Rajasthan University. For instance, he said, in 2013, the BJP won from predominantly Jat or Gujjar constituencies once considered Congress bastions. There are over 2 million first time voters who will exercise their franchise on December 7. Mota Ram Punia, a Jat in Barmer’s Gagariya, said caste is second to sentiment. “Maharani [Raje] has not even visited us once,”

he said, sitting next to a local Rajput, Ramendra Singh at a tea stall. Singh said that the issues for all are the same — jobs, water, roads and good money for farm produce. “People voted on caste lines when I was young, about 20 years ago, but now not more than 10-15% of people vote on caste lines,” Singh said. In Nathdwara, a town 20 km from Udaipur with a sizeable population of Meenas and Gujjars, the sentiment was no different. “We want quota in OBC reservation so that jobs are assured,” said Amit Gujjar, who had come from Alwar to campaign for the Congress’ Brahmin leader CP Joshi. About 320 km away in Pachpadra in Barmer, Bharu Ram Meena said caste pride does not guar-



antee water and jobs. “For me, a government job for my son and assurance of decent price for my farm produce matters,” he said. Hanuman Beniwal, who recently floated the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party and has fielded about 60 candidates, has openly spoken about Jat pride in community dominated constituencies like Nagaur, Barmer, Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu. His rallies have at-

tracted crowds in the Jat-dominated constituencies and may well make a difference between the winner and loser there. His supporters admitted that he is more of a spoiler than a serious contender, a claim denied by Beniwal. This election has also witnessed less prominence being given to caste-based leaders such as Rajput leader Lokendra Singh Kalvi, Gujjar leader Kirori

leader Kirori Lal Meena. Kalvi, who led protests against release of Bollywood movie Padmaavat, held a show of strength rally in Jaipur in October, but it failed as a launchpad for his political aspirations with fewer than 500 people turning up. Mahendra Singh Ralawata, a Rajput, contesting from Ajmer north on a Congress ticket, said his caste gives him a head start of 10,000 votes but can’t ensure win.

## Telangana assembly elections 2018: Can KCR take on Congress-TDP math?

With over 28 million eligible voters, Telangana will go to the polls on Friday.

(Insider Bureau) - With over 28 million eligible voters, Telangana will go to the polls on Friday. It has a complex polity — the incumbent Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), the Maha Kootami led by the Congress, which includes the Telugu Desam Party, Communist Party of India, and the Telangana Jana Samiti, and two other important forces, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Here are the six variables likely to shape the outcome of the elections.

**KCR:** This election revolves around the personality of caretaker chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR). He led the political movement for Telangana and was rewarded for it in 2014. Since then, two things have happened. One, he has consolidated political power in himself and his

family; become distant from the electorate; and is seen to have amassed wealth. Two, he has launched a slew of tremendously popular and innovative welfare schemes, ranging from monetary farm assistance to promises of housing. He is also seen to have provided electricity. Which version of KCR prevails for voters will matter. The electoral arithmetic: The Maha Kootami has an electoral advantage if you go by sheer numbers. If the TRS had 34% vote share in 2014, the Congress and TDP combined vote share is 38%. In many constituencies, the votes of both parties exceed that of the TRS. Will older TDP loyalists vote for Congress and will Congress supporters transfer their votes to TDP or other allies? Will arithmetic prevail or will voter choices change? The Muslim vote: Mus-

lims constitute 12% of the population. They exercise influence in close to two dozen constituencies. In the Muslim-dominated pockets of Hyderabad, the AIMIM, or Majlis as it is called, is popular and it has decided to back the TRS. So any win for the Majlis boosts the TRS, especially if it is a hung assembly. But outside Hyderabad, the mood is mixed. While a section of Muslims cheer KCR’s schemes like Shaadi Mubarak (allowances for women for weddings), there is a substantial section that criticises him for not delivering on the promise of 12% reservation for the minority community. They also have loyalties to Congress and believe party president Rahul Gandhi’s assertion that the TRS has a deal with the BJP. **Subnationalism:** Telangana is India’s newest state. It has come

into being after a long struggle against Andhra Pradesh. The emotive factor has now subsided. But the TDP’s active participation in the politics of the state changes things. Telangana has a big ‘settler’ population, those originally from Andhra. Will they back the TDP? Or will they follow the lead of other Andhra parties like the YSR Congress party which have decided to stay neutral and, in effect, back the TRS? More critically, the TRS has now used the TDP’s presence to allege outsider interference and claim there is a conspiracy by Andhra Pradesh to regain control of Telangana. Will this put off the locals? **Jobs or welfare:** The Congress has made a sharp campaign pitch against the TRS for not creating over 100,000 jobs in a year; it has also committed to over 3000 as un-



employment allowance. The TRS rebuts the claims and points to its governance record on welfare. Across constituencies, among younger people in particular, the desire for jobs, particularly government jobs, and the belief that the government has not delivered on this aspect is deep. How much will it hurt the incumbent? **Local anti-incumbency:** The biggest challenge for the TRS is the fact that its local legislators appear to be unpopular. It

had 63 seats in the 2014 polls but managed to engineer enough defections to increase its strength to 90. Most of the former MLAs are re-contesting. Will this local anti-incumbency hurt the TRS or will KCR’s personality eventually offset this resentment? In sum, the election is about governance, identities and subnationalism. It’s about personalities. It’s about local and micro factors. Voters today will determine what matters to them most.

# Pakistan attempted to politicise religious issue, says MEA on Kartarpur

**The MEA asserted that Pakistan has “attempted to politicise a religious issue related to the sentiments of the Sikh community.”**

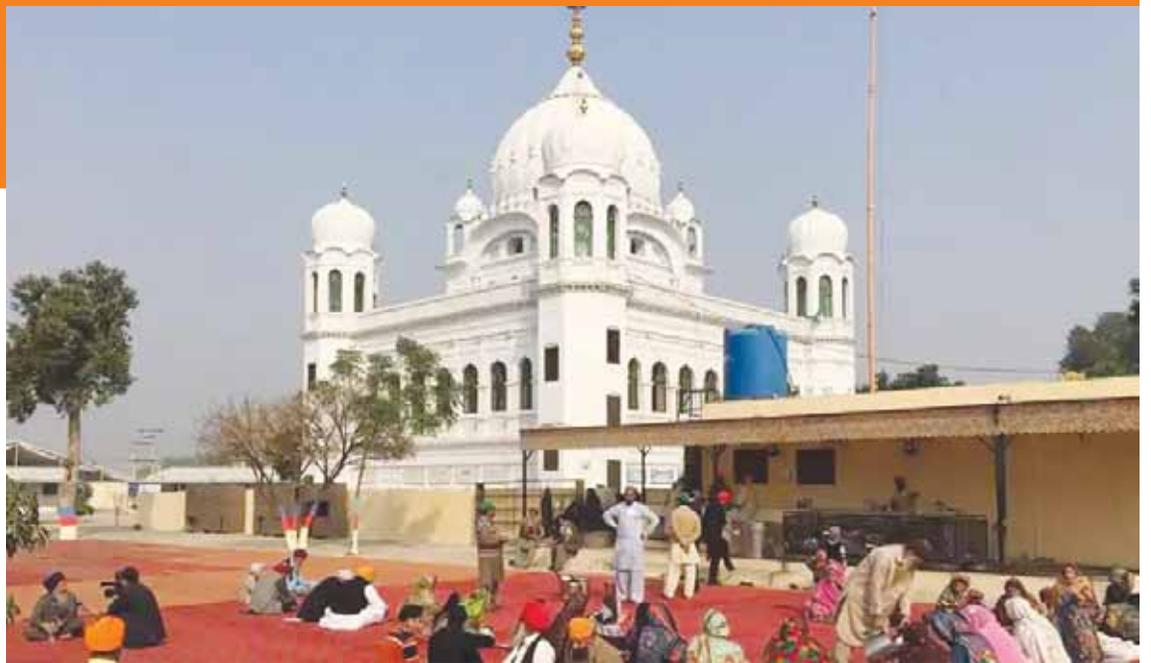
(Insider Bureau) -Denouncing Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's "googly" remark over Kartarpur Corridor, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday asserted that Pakistan has "attempted to politicise a religious issue related to the sentiments of the Sikh community."

Addressing the media, MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "I would just like to add that we see the opening of Kartarpur corridor as a fulfillment of long pending demand of the Sikh community. It was unfortunate that Pakistan has attempted to politicise a religious issue related to the sentiments of the Sikh community."

On Kartarpur

While expressing hope that Pakistan will take all necessary steps to implement their announcements regarding the Kartarpur Corridor, Kumar said, "In-principle announcements have been made by us and by the reciprocal announcements by the Pakistan side also have been made. Now the details of how the whole thing has to be worked out are to be discussed. Pakistan has to come true to its announcements on Kartarpur on their side of the border and implement those expeditiously."

Qureshi had earlier claimed that Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has "bowled a googly at India by opening the Kartarpur Corridor". On November 28, Pakistan Prime Minister laid the foundation



stone of the Kartarpur Corridor along the India-Pakistan border. Once opened, it would allow Sikh pilgrims a direct access to the historic Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur, Pakistan, where Guru Nanak Dev died in 1539. On Christian Michel

External Affairs Ministry (MEA) spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the Ministry had two requests from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for the extradition of Michel from the UAE which were then forwarded

to the Indian mission in the Gulf nation.

"After following due process and exhaustion of judicial process, Christian Michel was extradited to India," Kumar said.

"The matter is being handled by the CBI."

## Cash-strapped Sabarimala finds new way to fill its coffers

(By Our Staff Reporter) -Amid the standoff between the state government and protestors at hill temple Sabarimala in Kerala over women entry, the cash-strapped temple board has devised a new way to fill its coffers. It has installed swiping machines (POS) at the shrine. Now devotees who don't have hard cash can swipe and donate money to the temple account directly. The South Indian Bank, official banker of the temple, has installed swiping machines and Travancore Devasom Board (TDB) which

runs the temple is making special announcements to make use of "digital kanikka" (offering). Once swiped, money will go to the 'kanikka' account directly. "It is the digital age and it will help devotees. I feel swiping in the name of presiding deity will give more satisfaction to the pilgrims," said TDB president A Padmakumar. The board has also put up boards and makes regular announcements to use this facility. "We have installed five POS (point of sale) machines at the hilltop and getting good response

from pilgrims. Depositors get a receipt instantly and that make them happy. This facility is only available at the hilltop," said a senior official of the bank adding it is nothing to do with the present crisis born out of the Supreme Court verdict that allowed women of all ages to worship at the shrine. TDB officials say it will also help them save counting costs. Every year the TDB appoints many employees on deputation to count the offerings coins, currency and precious metals. There was a big controversy some years ago after

counting employees complained that they were not allowed to wear under garments fearing they may stash money in inner wears. The 'brief discomfort' was later lifted after the state human rights commission intervened and directed the board to install hi-tech facilities at counting centres. The temple has been witnessing protests over the verdict which also affected footfall and revenue considerably. The TDB says there is a 60 per cent dip in pilgrims and revenue in first two weeks of the annual pilgrimage season which

began on November 17. Last year, 16 lakh pilgrims had visited the shrine in first two weeks but this time their numbers came down to seven lakh and revenue also dipped to at least Rs 30 crore. To add to the TDB woes, many religious outfits are carrying out a campaign not to buy 'aravana,' (kheer made of rice, jaggery, ghee and cardamom), the main source of revenue at the temple, and put money in shrine saying the temple board is using pilgrims money to destroy the age-old tradition of the shrine.

## Learn to be tolerant like Atal Bihari Vajpayee: Farooq Abdullah to PM Modi

**Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah Thursday had a piece of advice for Prime Minister Narendra Modi - be tolerant like Atal Bihari Vajpayee to ensure acceptance by all people.**

(By Our Staff Reporter) - Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah Thursday had a piece of advice for Prime Minister Narendra Modi - be tolerant like Atal Bihari Vajpayee to ensure acceptance by all people.

Speaking at an event here, the National Conference patriarch also accused the BJP of following a divisive agenda.

"When (Jawaharlal) Nehru

unfurled the tricolour at the Red Fort for the first time, he never thought that a party will come to power in future which will try to divide this country. Britishers divided it into India and Pakistan and the country will be divided into many parts if the ruling party continues with its divisive agenda," he claimed.

He said that the BJP claims Lord Ram is theirs but according to holy texts, "Bhagwan Ram belong to

the entire universe and not Hindus alone".

Asking Modi to be "tolerant like Vajpayee", Farooq said, "He is the prime minister. He has to come up to that level and should not get engaged in smaller issues. At time I feel sorry for his statements."

Also read | A leader for the ages, ahead of his times: PM Modi pays tribute to Vajpayee in blog post

He went on to add, "Please



inculcate sense of tolerance, Prime Minister sahib. If you have to run this country, you have to be tolerant and ensure acceptance by others. All have to be taken along, if you have

run this country. Be tolerant like Vajpayee ji." He claimed if the country is united today "it is because of Nehru". He also said that war is not a solution to conflicts.

# Defaulter has made a desperate appeal to his creditors

Fugitive Indian businessman Vijay Mallya, facing an extradition trial in the UK, today (Dec. 05) made a fervent appeal to his creditors to accept his offer of repaying the full principal amount he owes them.

Taking to Twitter to blame extraneous factors for the sinking of his carrier, Kingfisher Airlines, Mallya, who headed the United Breweries alcoholic beverage empire till recently, said he is willing to pay "100% of the principal amount" owed to banks.

Airlines struggling financially partly becoz of high ATF prices. Kingfisher was a fab airline that faced the highest ever crude prices of \$140/barrel. Losses mounted and that's where Banks money went. I have offered to repay 100% of the Principal amount to them.

Please take it.

For three decades running India's largest alcoholic beverage group, we contributed thousands of crores to the State exchequers. Kingfisher Airlines also contributed handsomely to the States. Sad loss of the finest Airline but still I offer to pay Banks so no loss. Please take it.

I see the quick media narrative about my extradition decision. That is separate and will take its own legal course. The most important point is public money and I am offering to pay 100% back. I humbly request the Banks and Government to take it. If payback refused, WHY ?

The former liquor baron fled India in 2016 and is now fighting extradition requests

from Indian authorities in British courts over alleged money laundering and fraud. The verdict in the case is expected soon.

However, lawyers in the extradition trial have pointed out before that the principal amount Mallya has offered to repay is just around half of the airline's total dues. Kingfisher owes over Rs9,000 crore to several banks, including the country's largest lender, State Bank of India. A clutch of banks had labelled him a "wilful defaulter" and taken the legal recourse over non-payment of loans taken to fund Kingfisher Airlines.

In the past, too, Mallya had offered to repay the principal amount.



Apart from dues to banks, Mallya's company also owes in salaries to employees. However, earlier this year, in a letter written to prime minister Narendra Modi, Mallya offered to clear dues of several Kingfisher employees and also pay back lenders. India has recently seen defaulting businessmen flee the country after non-payment of large loans. Earlier this year, jeweller Nirav Modi was accused of a \$1.8 billion banking fraud that involved several large public banks. Mallya's offer comes days after India took a firm stand at the recently concluded G-20 summit to tackle fugitive economic offenders.

## 10 Indian men, 24 Thai women arrested over fake-marriage scam in Thailand

**The arrests are part of an ongoing crackdown launched by the Immigration Police Bureau on foreigners living unlawfully in the country, it said.**

The suspects were among 30 Indian men and 30 Thai women wanted in court-issued arrest warrants for forging state documents, using forged documents and filing faulty information to state officials which may result in others' damages, police said.

Immigration Police Bureau 1 in Bangkok had detected fake marriages between 30 men and 30 women, which were falsely documented in order to extend spousal visas for the men, most of whom made a living in Thailand as illegal moneylenders or salesmen for pay-by-installment goods such as clothing and electrical appliances, the police said.

The 30 women allegedly colluded in the wrongdoing by being hired, reportedly for 500-5,000 baht (USD 15 to 152) each, to register fake marriages and submit false documents to the authorities, they said.

The authorities revoked the men's visas and secured 60 arrest warrants for the suspects.

They subsequently arrested 10 of the wanted Indians and 24 of their Thai accomplices, and are continuing to look for the 26 fugitives, the report said.

Police investigators presented evidence to revoke the suspects' faulty marriage licences with the respective district offices, it added.



## WHAT IS AGUSTAWESTLAND BRIBERY CASE?

How was the deal manipulated It is alleged that several parameters, for instance, the height of the cabin of the helicopter, the operating ceiling, or the maximum altitude the helicopter could fly to, were tweaked to help AgustaWestland.

**How did allegations come to the fore?**

The allegations came out in an Italian investigation. Three of the contracted 12 helicopters had been delivered to the Indian Air Force before the bribery became public.

Then AgustaWestland CEO Bruno Spagnolini and Giuseppe Orsi, chairman of

AgustaWestland's parent company Finmeccanica, were arrested by Italian police in February 2013 on charges of paying bribes to win the deal. The then UPA government cancelled the deal, enmeshed the bank guarantee and ordered an inquiry.

**What did the CBI Inquiry Reveal ?**

CBI alleged the key players who manipulated the specifications for VVIP helicopter deal allegedly were British national Christian Michel, and Carlo Valentino Ferdinando Gerosa (71) and Guido Haschke, from Italy and Switzerland respectively.

CBI alleged the requirements were manipulated after a meeting

between former air force chief, Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi and the accused. Air Chief Marshal Tyagi, who has denied any wrongdoing, was arrested by CBI. His cousin Julie Tyagi and a Delhi-based lawyer Gautam Khaitan were also arrested for alleged wrongdoing.

**What does CBI Hope to Get From Michel ?**

While Christian Michel has denied any wrongdoing, agencies in India want to know the identity of Indians who received kickbacks in the purchase of the helicopters. It suspects that some politicians and government functionaries could have been involved.



# Adani coal mine water licence faces Federal Court challenge over move to bypass EIS

At the time, a spokeswoman for the federal environment department told the ABC this was consistent with guidelines "which make it clear that the 'water trigger' does not apply to stand-alone projects, that do not directly involve the extraction of coal".

ACF chief executive Kelly O'Shanassy told the ABC said they were alleging Ms Price made an "error of law" and that the water trigger should be applied.

"We live on a very dry continent, water is precious," she said.

"We think that is unlawful and we are challenging that in the courts."

A spokesman for Ms Price

said the Minister would not comment while legal proceedings were before the courts.

Ms O'Shanassy said other proposed mines for the Galilee Basin would also require a water source.

"We need our government to make a good assessment of what impact these mines are going to have on local waterways," she said.

An Adani spokeswoman said the company had approvals to take up to 12.5 billion litres each year, but it would "only take the water required to support the mine at each stage of production".

"This is only allowed to occur when other licensed water users like farmers have

first taken their share, when the Suttor/Belyando River system is in flood and flowing at a rate of more than 2,592 megalitres per day," the spokeswoman said.

"As the project ramps up, the rate of water use will increase accordingly, but it will always be managed in line with our approval conditions." Adani said the legal action would not stop the Carmichael Project proceeding "because we do not need the North Galilee Water Scheme finalised in order to commence work on the project". "The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Environmental Defenders Office are wasting the court's time and resources, while also wasting taxpayer funds and the ACF's own



charitable donations," it said in a statement. "Adani has been through a rigorous and strict approvals process over the last eight years and we have met all of those requirements. Accordingly we now expect that we will be treated no differently to any other Australian miner."

## Punjab-origin Labour MP recalls roots to slam May's Brexit plan

Senior Labour MP Veerendra Sharma recalled his roots in Punjab in a forceful speech in the House of Commons to condemn the controversial withdrawal agreement, suggesting that it is the moment "we snuffed out hope" of his grandchildren and their generation.

Participating in the ongoing debate before the crunch vote on December 11, Sharma, who represents Ealing Southall – better known as 'Little India' – is among a large number of MPs who are opposed to Brexit and will vote against it.

"This country was built on immigration. I myself came here more than 50 years ago, made a family and a life here, served as a local councillor for over 25

years, and have become a Member of Parliament".

"But the Prime Minister's plan for Brexit will denude this nation of who it needs most, so I cannot in good faith vote for a deal that leaves my constituents, young and old, without a brighter looking future".

"Are my grandchildren and all their generation going to look back at this moment and at the Prime Minister's deal, and remember it as the moment we snuffed out their hope", he asked in his speech

Sharma is among the Indian-origin MPs who, for different reasons, will vote against the withdrawal agreement. Conservative MP Priti Patel, one of the frontline Brexiters, is

opposed to the provisions of the deal secured by Prime Minister Theresa May during tense talks in Brussels.

Sharma said: "I campaigned for our country to remain in the EU. I believe we are stronger when we work with our neighbours, not when we turn our backs on them. The majority of this House said that leaving the EU would be bad for business, strip protections from workers and leave us isolated in the world".

"We were not heeded. Many of us here counselled that Article 50 should not have been triggered and that rushing to this momentous step was foolhardy. We were not heeded. We stood in this House and the



Prime Minister paid lip service to the requests of honourable members to negotiate to protect key sectors of the economy. We were not heeded".

If May will not agree to another referendum, Sharma said it is the appropriate time for her to stand aside and let others show some real leadership.

## Huawei founder's daughter arrested on US request, puts trade war truce in doubt

(Insider Bureau) - The daughter of Chinese tech giant Huawei's founder has been arrested in Canada and is facing extradition to the United States, dealing a blow to hopes of any easing of Sino-US trade tensions and rocking global stock markets.

The shock arrest of Meng Wanzhou, who is also Huawei Technologies Co Ltd's chief financial officer, is riling authorities in Beijing and raises fresh doubts over a 90-day truce on trade struck between Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping on the day she was detained.

The arrest is related to violations of US sanctions, a person familiar with the matter said. Reuters was unable to determine the precise nature of the violations.

The arrest and any potential sanctions on the world's second biggest smartphone maker could have major repercussions on the global technology supply chain. Shares in Asian suppliers to Huawei, which also counts Qualcomm Inc and Intel among its major suppliers, tumbled on Thursday.

Meng, one of the vice chairs

on the company's board and the daughter of company founder Ren Zhengfei, was arrested on Dec. 1 at the request of US authorities and a court hearing has been set for Friday, a Canadian Justice Department spokesman said. Trump and Xi had dined in Argentina on Dec. 1 at the G20 summit.

Sources told Reuters in April that US authorities have been probing Huawei, the world's largest telecoms equipment maker, since at least 2016 for allegedly shipping US-origin products to Iran and other

countries in violation of US export and sanctions laws. Huawei confirmed the arrest in a statement and said that it has been provided little information of the charges, adding that it was "not aware of any wrongdoing by Ms. Meng". She was detained when she was transferring flights in Canada, it added. China's embassy in Canada said it resolutely opposed the arrest and called for Meng's immediate release. In April, the sources told Reuters the US Justice Department probe was being run out of the U.S. attorney's office in

Brooklyn. The US Justice Department on Wednesday declined to comment. A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Brooklyn also declined to comment. The arrest drew a sharp response from Chinese media and on the mainland's social media. "I am shocked. The US can't beat Huawei in the market. Don't act like a despicable rogue," tweeted Hu Xijin, editor of the Global Times, a nationalistic tabloid run by the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily, derailing the U.S.-China trade talks"

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# See moving photos George HW Bush's State Funeral

*Every living president, foreign leaders, and celebrities paid their respects*



(By Our Staff Reporter) -Because attendees had to get to the church early, there was plenty of time for socializing. Because attendees had to get to the church early, there was plenty of time for socializing. There were a good amount of across-the-aisle conversations as well, like this one between former CIA Director John Brennan, left, and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, right.

There were a good amount of across-the-aisle conversations as well, like this one between former CIA Director John Brennan, left, and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, right. Just before the ceremony started, President Trump and First Lady Melania took their seats. They were greeted by the Obamas, who were seated be-

tween the Trumps and Clintons. They were greeted by the Obamas, who were seated between the Trumps and Clintons. The first pew of the church was filled with all the living presidents and their wives. The first pew of the church was filled with all the living presidents and their wives. Former President George W. Bush and former First Lady Laura Bush stood outside the cathedral to salute the president's casket as it arrived.



# This is where rich Asians pay the most for a luxury lifestyle

**The Chinese city overtook Hong Kong as the most expensive for a basket of luxury goods and services on a price-weighted basis.**

(Insider Bureau) -If you're a high-net-worth individual in Asia into fine dining, wine, jewelry and luxury skin cream, best not to live in Shanghai. The Chinese city overtook Hong Kong as the most expensive for a basket of luxury goods and services on a price-weighted basis, according to Bank Julius Baer & Co.'s annual Wealth Report Asia, which tracks spending by the region's rich. Shanghai has also grown more pricey on a relative basis to buy property (although Hong Kong is still most expensive in that regard), hire a lawyer or purchase watches and handbags, the report found. Kuala Lumpur retained its claim as the least-expensive city in Asia -- Malaysia's capital is the best place to pick up a pi-

ano, indulge in cigars or book a hotel suite. The report, in its eighth year, also introduced a new His & Hers Index to compare the cost of luxury goods for men and women in an attempt to answer the question: Is there a pink tax? Or, does it cost more for a woman to look good versus a man? It will perhaps come as no surprise to anyone that women's items cost more on average, with Seoul being the most-expensive city for both male and female luxury goods. This is largely owing to an excise tax of up to 20 percent on certain imports. On average, it costs \$2,158 more to purchase Julius Baer's Hers Index relative to the His Index, although the differential is lower by \$126 - when a wrist accessory is excluded. The Hers index



is skewed higher due to the Cartier Love Bracelet, a diamond-paved and white gold adornment that costs around \$48,143 in Shanghai (or \$41,818 in Kuala Lumpur). At the other end of the spectrum, Jakarta is the cheapest overall for men's luxury items while Mumbai is where you want to be shop-

ping if you're a lady. In Hong Kong, Julius Baer's basket of goods and services rose by 2.2% in 2018. The former British colony remains the most-expensive city in Asia to buy residential property or take a business-class flight. However, despite its reputation as being pricey, items such as skin cream,

ladies shoes and men's suits are actually relatively inexpensive. Julius Baer defines high-net-worth individuals as people with a net investable wealth of \$1 million or more, excluding property that is their main residence. Data for the survey was collected during the period from June 2017 to July this year.

## China Breaks Silence on 90-Day Trade Truce



(Agencies)—After two days of Trump administration officials making cautiously hopeful statements about China's trade commitments only to be greeted by silence from China, Chinese officials found their voices Wednesday.

The first and perhaps most important move on Wednesday was that China's Commerce Ministry acknowledged that the two nations had agreed to a 90-day truce. Earlier statements by Chinese officials had been vague on this point, giving rise to concerns that there had not really been a meeting of the minds at Saturday night's dinner in Buenos Aires. On Wednesday, a spokesman for the Commerce Ministry said the trade negotiations have a "clear timeline and road map" and that China will quickly begin implementing changes in areas where there is an "agreed upon consensus."

Note, however, that the timeline is not really all that clear—apart from the December 1st start and the March 1st

end. What happens in between is still up for grabs. On Monday, White House economics adviser Larry Kudlow told Breitbart News' Michelle Moons that there was not yet a timetable for meetings between top officials from the two countries. "We probably need a timetable for timetables," he said.

China also began to move on policy. At the heart of the U.S. government's case for tariffs on Chinese exports is intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers. China's supreme court and a few government agencies have now announced stringent enforcement and tough penalties for infringing on intellectual property.

Bloomberg reported that China is also moving to implement its promises to import more commodities from the U.S.: Chinese officials have been told to take necessary steps for the soybeans and liquefied natural gas purchases, according to two officials with

knowledge of the discussions. It wasn't clear whether the preparations meant China would cut the retaliatory tariffs it imposed on those products, or when the purchases would happen.

The coordinated moves across the Chinese state, however, are a reminder of how challenging it will be to implement market-oriented reforms in China. It's economy is still very much under the thumb of the Chinese state and the

communist party. The state and the party are controlled by Xi Jinping. In the U.S., for instance, the president cannot order the Supreme Court to toughen punishments to fulfill promises made over a dinner with a foreign head of state and U.S. companies cannot be ordered to buy more of a certain country's exports. President Donald Trump celebrated the announcements from China in a series of tweets Wednesday. China's announcement follows a

series of carrot-and-stick statements from Trump, in which the president cheered the talks with China while also threatening further tariffs if the talks fail.

Stocks in the U.S. plunged on Tuesday as doubts emerged about the deal with China, fueled by China's silence and confusing statements from the Trump White House.

There are 85 days left in the trade truce, which may be extended if negotiations are thought to be going well. There are 699 days until election day 2020.

## Mueller: Michael Flynn Gave 'Substantial Assistance' to Russia Probe, No Jail Time Recommended

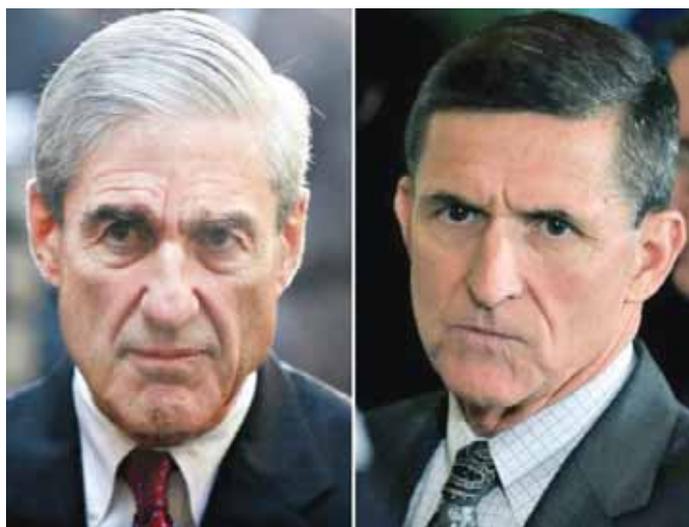
(By Our Staff Reporter) —Special counsel Robert Mueller on Tuesday filed a long-awaited sentencing memo regarding his criminal case against former national security adviser Michael Flynn and recommended he not receive any prison time after providing prosecutors with "substantial assistance."

"Given the defendant's substantial assistance and other considerations set forth below, a sentence at the low end of the guideline range—including a sentence that does not impose a term of incarceration—is appropriate and warranted," the filing reads. According to the document, Flynn participated in 19 interviews with investigators with the Office of the Special Counsel or Department of Justice, wherein the former Trump official gave "first-hand" information about communications between Trump transition

team members and Russian officials, while assisting with a previously unknown "criminal investigation."

Federal sentencing guidelines recommend Flynn be sentenced up to six months in jail and face a fine up to \$9,500.

"The offense level and guideline range, however, do not account for a downward departure pursuant to Section 5K1.1 of the United States Sentencing Guidelines reflecting the defendants substantial assistance to the government, which the government has moved for contemporaneously," the memo states.



In September, a federal judge on set Flynn's sentencing for December 18, more than a year after the retired U.S. Army lieutenant general pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russia during the presidential transition.

When he pleaded guilty last year, Flynn admitted to lying dur-

ing an FBI interview about the content of his conversations with Sergey Kislyak, Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

According to his plea, Flynn discussed U.S. sanctions with Kislyak on Trump's behalf during the presidential transition and said members of the president's inner circle were aware of,

and in some cases directing, his efforts. Flynn had urged Kislyak not to respond to sanctions imposed by the Obama administration in response to Russian election interference. When confronted by FBI agents about the conversations, court papers say Flynn made "material false statements and omissions", which

impeded what was then an FBI counterintelligence investigation. That probe was later taken over by Mueller, who has brought indictments against Russians that detail a broad campaign to attempt to help Trump's candidacy and hurt Clinton's during the 2016 presidential campaign. Flynn's interview occurred in January 2017, shortly after he took his post as national security adviser in the Trump White House. He was forced to resign in February 2017. The White House said he was fired for misleading Vice President Mike Pence and other senior officials about the content of his conversations with Kislyak. As part of his plea, Flynn also admitted to lying about Turkish lobbying and research work. He belatedly registered with the Justice Department as a foreign agent for the work weeks after he left the White House.

# We need a new approach to deal with an aggressive Russia

(Agencies) - I first went to Russia in 1969 as an exchange student. I've studied, lived, worked and traveled there ever since. I'm now considered an "expert" on Russia, a word which always strikes me as an exaggeration when it comes to understanding a country as complex as this.

I remember a friend of mine who studied Russian with me. He laughingly told me once that, as he heard little Russian kids speaking the language better than he did, that if he simply gave them a gentle kick, they'd speak English.

Sometimes, I think our approach to Russia is like that. If only Putin, his government, or the whole country would come to their senses, they'd see things our way. But, like those kids who speak Russian because they are Russian, Russia is not going to act as we do just because, as we see it, it's the "right" way.

In mid-October, in Sochi, Russia, I listened as Vladimir Putin answered questions at the Valdai Discussion group, an annual meeting of international foreign policy experts. Sitting back in a large chair, he deftly batted away his interviewer's probing and it became clear to me that, as Putin sees it, Russia never did sign onto "our" ideas -- Western principles and the "liberal inter-

national order." As the Soviet Union crumbled, Russia was weak and went along with the West, he said. But as it grew stronger, economically and militarily, it returned to its Russian roots.

Now, the United States and Russia are locked in an angry geopolitical confrontation that threatens to spiral into direct military conflict - even if neither country wants it.

America's current strategy toward Russia, simply put, is not working; it is instead tying our hands. It's making Russia more aggressive externally and less democratic internally. The dangers are escalating, as this week's armed attack on Ukrainian military vessels in the Kerch Strait proves. Moscow is becoming bolder in challenging the United States and its allies, while expanding its regional and global trade and security arrangements. We need to re-think how we deal with Russia. Confrontation combined with an endless cycle of sanctions isn't the answer, even if sanctions sometimes are justified. But a "Let's just be friends" approach won't do either. For our own security, we need a bi-partisan, sustainable policy based on a realistic definition of why we even care about Russia.

Like the United States, Russia

has its own strategic interests -- whether or not we accept them or condone them. For the sake of our own security, we must try to understand what motivates Russia. Objectively analyzing Moscow's aims helps clarify how we should pursue our objectives or respond to future actions by the Kremlin. For that we need more tools than simply confrontation, a more flexible strategy to respond to the dangers, challenges and, yes, even opportunities that Russia may present. Although confrontation may sometimes be necessary, we must add two more components: competition and cooperation.

For the past six months, I have been part of a group that's trying to outline such a strategy. It's called the Mayflower Group (after the DC hotel in which we've been meeting) and it includes political and public figures as well as policy analysts. Our first conclusion: To revise our strategy toward Russia, we first have to define what is in America's own long-term strategic interests. The first interest is national security; Russia, after all, is the only country that can destroy our country with nuclear weapons. And new weapons are on the way, including hypersonic weapons designed to evade US



defenses and hit their targets with little or no warning.

Russia can disrupt our way of life, even destroy our advanced weaponry, through cyber attacks against US computer networks. And, as we saw in 2016, it can exploit social media to undermine our democracy with disinformation campaigns. The US, of course, has the capability to harm Russia, which locks the two countries in an embrace of mutual destruction.

The Mayflower Group also concluded that we have to make clear to our fellow citizens that confrontation is not cost-free; If we let arms control agreements atrophy or even disappear, are we willing to pay for an arms race? Also, if we continue to sanction Russian individuals and entities, can we still cooperate with Russia on space exploration and manage our competition in the

Arctic Ocean? Are American business willing to lose out to foreign competitors on lucrative contracts with Russia? If we don't communicate -- military-to-military, political-to-political -- with the Russian government, can we avoid misunderstandings that could have terrifying consequences? Nearly a half-century ago, studying at Leningrad State University, the same university where Vladimir Putin studied law, I lived in a dormitory with Russian students and made Russian friends -- some of whom I am still in touch with. It changed my view of Russia forever and gave me some insight on what motivates Putin, and his country, today. Building a new US strategy toward Russia, however, is not an attempt to be "friends." It's not predicated on Russia's liking us. It is based on strengthening our own security.

## Facing Donald Trump attacks, Pakistan military seeks peace with India

(Insider Bureau) - Pakistan's military is making an unusually strong effort to mend ties with arch-rival India, as top generals worry about a deteriorating economy amid fractious relations with US President Donald Trump. Current and former Pakistani military officials have told Bloomberg that both a slowing economy and pressure from Beijing to improve ties with the West is prompting the shift on India. At the same time, they said, Pakistan is also wary of becoming too dependent on China after Trump cut some \$2 billion in security aid.

Among the proponents of a detente with India is Pakistan's powerful army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, who once served under an Indian general during a stint with a United Nations peacekeeping mission and is seen as more moderate than his predecessors. Entering his final year in office, Bajwa last week called a move to ease border con-

trols with India for visiting Sikh pilgrims "a step towards peace which our region needs."

The army chief has publicly supported China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has unleashed financing for more than \$60 billion worth of projects -- adding to debt that has forced Pakistan to seek another International Monetary Fund bailout. But he is thought to be uneasy about Pakistan's over-reliance on Beijing, according to Western diplomats who asked not to be identified so they could speak freely about senior generals.

"From the outset of his term, General Bajwa was heavily inclined to end the state of 'No Peace, No War,' but recognized that shifting views inside the huge Pakistan army would take time," said Shuja Nawaz, author of a book on the armed forces and a former IMF official who is currently a distinguished fellow at the South Asia Center at the Atlantic

Council in Washington. "This may be another incentive to launch a peace initiative."

The military's press department didn't respond to a request for comment. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, who surprised many by calling for talks with India in his July election victory speech, said last week his political party and the military are "all on one page" in wanting to mend ties and resolve the conflict over the disputed region of Kashmir. His government is in the midst of negotiating Pakistan's 13th IMF bailout since the late 1980s.

Since taking office in August, Khan has sparred repeatedly with Trump. Just a few weeks ago they traded barbs after Trump said the U.S. no longer gives Pakistan billions of dollars because "they don't do a damn thing for us" in fighting terrorism. So far, there's no indication that Pakistan's outreach will prompt Trump to reconsider aid money,

which was cut due to insufficient efforts to deny extremist groups safe haven and freedom of movement. A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad declined to comment. But there are small signs that relations are improving. This week Trump sent Khan a letter asking for Pakistan's help in facilitating talks with the Taliban to end the 17-year war in neighboring Afghanistan, a move welcomed in Pakistan. And Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie, nominee to become commander of U.S. Central Command overseeing Pakistan, said the military relationship between the countries was "strong." "It is important to remember that we are asking Pakistan to focus a significant fraction of their national power away from what they perceive to be an existential threat," he said. Fear of Indian dominance continues to dictate strategy in a military that has directly ruled Pakistan for almost half its 71-

year history. Since partition, Pakistan has fought three major wars with its larger neighbor and both nations accused the other of supporting cross-border insurgencies. Pakistan's military is the most powerful organization in the country, and has long been seen as one of the main obstacles to peace with India. Leaders in New Delhi have accused Pakistan's generals of stoking tensions with India in part to justify military spending that -- along with debt servicing -- consumes nearly 60 percent of the annual budget. Any detente with India would face deep skepticism that has endured since the British left the subcontinent in 1947. Both India and the U.S. see Pakistan as providing safe haven for terrorist groups, and often bring up the fact that the leadership of Lashkar-e-Taiba, which carried out the gruesome Mumbai attack in 2008, still live freely in Pakistan.

## 拥抱5G 开拓美好未来



# America Races China for the Future: 5G Technology Battle Goes Global

(Insider Bureau) -The United States and China are in a race to develop fifth-generation (5G) cellular wireless technology, which could determine who controls mobile telecommunications in the future, and experts and lawmakers warn the U.S. could lose unless the Trump administration does something fast.

5G technology is expected to dramatically change how fast things move over the internet. About 100 times faster than 4G, it will allow movies to download in a second or two instead of minutes, homes to run on smart appliances, and vehicles to be driverless.

The Chinese have moved fast to dominate the 5G market. Beijing has poured billions of dollars into developing 5g technology, and since 5G relies on miles of fiber optic networks that cost tens of billions of dollars to install and billions more to operate, China has been offering to build those networks for cheap, and countries all over the world have been signing up. Experts say China's headstart could determine how 5G is developed and accessed by the rest of the world.

"If you're first out of the gate with technology like this, if you're the first mover, then you have a way of setting the standards that other countries are going to use," said Hudson Institute Senior Fellow Arthur Herman in a phone interview with Breitbart News on Monday.

"If all the countries in your cor-

ner of Southeast Asia, or your corner of Africa, are using Huawei for their 5G networks, it's more likely than not that your carrier is going to say, 'You know what, we need to have Huawei, too,'" he said. "So even if you don't set the standards in a formal sense, you set the standards in a practical sense."

So far, 64 countries have an agreement or have announced testing of 5G gear made by Chinese tech giant Huawei, including some of the U.S.'s closest allies: Britain, Germany, and Japan.

China's spending on building 5G since 2015 has exceeded the U.S. by \$24 billion, according to recent Deloitte study. Last year, Huawei had 22 percent of the global market share for 5G equipment, and another Chinese company, ZTE, had ten percent, according to the research firm IHS Market Ltd. Finnish company Nokia has 13 percent and Swedish company Ericsson has 11 percent.

China's dominance could mean the U.S. may also have to use Chinese systems, which experts say has huge security risks. For one, U.S. troops and intelligence officials serving on bases overseas would likely have to transmit information over Chinese networks.

"Although the really sensitive stuff and highly classified stuff will continue to be carried on separate networks, the point is a lot of the ordinary traffic that they do, a lot of the give and take will all take place on wireless networks," Herman said.

He said the worst case scenario would be Trojan horse-type applications built into the technology that would allow China to intrude, listen in, or steal data flowing through the networks.

He said if the Chinese are able to interrupt or take command of U.S. military vehicles relying on those networks, "that's a nightmare waiting to happen, and that's a nightmare no one wants to live through."

Rivada Networks CEO Declan Ganley warned at a November 13 Hudson Institute event, "Make no mistake. Whoever controls, whoever architects these 5G networks [and] deploys those networks has got an advantage in the cyber domain."

"It's likely that the first 10 minutes of the next great war will be fought first in the cyber domain. That's how important this is," he added.

China is not just moving in 5G. It has made it a goal to dominate the markets for other advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, and quantum computing as part of its "Made in China 2025" plan, and experts worry China could gain an advantage in those technologies too.

"What we're talking about in that new technology is national security and who sets the stage, who sets the standards going forward," retired Navy Adm. Gary Roughead, co-chairman of National Defense Strategy Commission, said at

a November 27 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. "I do think that one could make the case that what we're going through right now can in the long run be as impactful as what happened to us on 9/11. It's just happening in slower motion."

Some experts and lawmakers fear the Trump administration has no plan to stop Chinese dominance in 5G.

"China is sprinting ahead. We don't have a plan. We don't have to be afraid of China, but if we don't have a plan, they will win. And we cannot afford to lose the 5G race," Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said Thursday at a conference hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies' China Power Project. "It is going to turn the whole world, and all of the technologies into it, into a digital world. Every device. China is ahead of us. We don't have a plan that anyone in this room could articulate with regard to our plan in 5G. We couldn't even talk about the names of the companies in the United States who are the leaders in 5G," he added.

"There is no plan," he said. "Nothing. China is sprinting ahead."

Experts agree if the U.S. does not have a plan by World Mobile Congress in Barcelona in March, China's dominance in 5G will be a foregone conclusion.

Ganley said once countries make decisions and sign contracts, it is hard to reverse. "It's like getting your jaw drilled for dental implants and having a whole new set put in, and somebody telling you you got to rip them all out," he said. "We don't have much time, and action needs to be taken now," he said.

A recent Wall Street Journal report said that U.S. officials have started a campaign to warn allies about the risks of relying on Chinese vendors to develop their 5G infrastructure, and are considering financial aid for telecommunications development in countries that forego Chinese equipment.

When asked about the outreach, a National Security Council official told Breitbart News on Monday, "The United States is pursuing a whole of government effort to work with

allies and like-minded partners to mitigate risk posed by the 2017 Chinese Cybersecurity Law affecting communications infrastructure."

The 2017 Chinese Cybersecurity Law allows the Chinese government to conduct oversight on companies' networks, including by conducting security spot-checks.

Herman said more needs to be done than just warning or scolding allies. He has argued for the U.S. to introduce a new wholesale model that would make developing 5G technology much cheaper for domestic operators. The current model has governments selling portions of spectrum to the highest-bidding large telecommunications companies. Those companies then rely on cheap Chinese development of 5G networks in order to bring down their costs and boost profit margins when they allocate spectrum to their customers at a "take it or leave it" price.

Herman argues that the U.S. should build a carrier-neutral 5G network and lease spectrum directly to large and small customers based on how much they want at a much cheaper price and allow them to build out the necessary infrastructure.

He said countries would then consider going with the U.S. model instead, particularly due to the little trust countries have for the Chinese government and Chinese products. "It fires a warning shot across the Chinese bow," he said.

Herman said he is optimistic the administration will have a plan by the March gathering. "I'm pretty hopeful that the stars are in alignment, so that we can get something together before that all-important meeting in Barcelona of the World Mobile Congress, because that's the one in which China will be looking to do a victory lap and looking to be the one that emerges on top," he said.

"But if the big talk isn't about China but it's about America looking at and launching a new model for allocating spectrum, then that will be a big step in the right direction," he said.

"I think this administration is one that sort of tries to see the world outside the bureaucratic box, and it's focused on results as opposed to process, and that's going to come in handy if we're really going to break stride and catch up to where China is."

# George H.W. Bush could do what Trump can't: Laugh at himself

(Agencies)-The tributes to the late President George H.W. Bush have been pouring in, even from some progressives who disagreed with many of his policies but expressed "great respect for his lifetime of service" to our nation.

There's one more aspect of Bush's life that I believe deserves to be celebrated -- namely, how the late President could laugh at himself.

In fact, as President, Bush even invited Dana Carvey, who was then depicting him on "Saturday Night Live," to the White House annual Christmas party in 1992 to tell jokes at his expense. Can you imagine Donald Trump inviting Alec Baldwin to the White House to mock him?

This may seem minor to some, but Bush being able to laugh at himself showed us and the world that he was a secure, well-adjusted person -- qualities you want to see in the leader of the free world. In fact, after Carvey performed at the Christmas party, Bush took to the stage and told the crowd, "Dana has given me a lot of laughs." He then added a line that said so much about the

late President: "And the fact that we can laugh at each other is a very fundamental thing."

To be clear, when Carvey was on "SNL" and even at the White House holiday party, he was telling jokes that mocked and ridiculed Bush. Carvey often portrayed Bush in an unflattering light -- as a bumbling leader with wild hand gestures who was out of touch with the average American (a caricature that arguably hurt Bush when he lost his race for re-election in 1992).

For example, in 1989, after the devastating Hurricane Hugo, Bush was criticized by many for the federal relief effort being too slow. On "SNL" the following week, there was Carvey as Bush, telling America in his famously exaggerated Bush cadence, "Hurricane Hugo ... doing that damage down there ... going round and round ... natural disaster." Then, Carvey, over-emphasizing Bush's cadence, added, "Not my fault," to big laughs from the audience. And, in late 1991, with the economy slowing and Bush facing increasingly challenging re-election prospects, Carvey opened "SNL" as Bush

and noted that while the economy was sluggish, he was not afraid to say the word "recession," repeating the word multiple times. Later in that sketch, a Bush desperate to get the economy going turned his address into an infomercial hawking goods that he hoped Americans would buy from the "Salad Shooter" that quickly cuts lettuce to "the Hickory Farms' 'party in a box'...less than \$20."

Even at the White House Christmas party with Bush only a few feet away, Carvey mocked Bush for vomiting in front of the prime minister of Japan. But Bush laughed at all of jokes -- even though the entire crowd was arguably laughing at him.

What a contrast to the painfully thin-skinned Trump, who has not only lashed out at comedians who dare tell jokes about him but has even called for canceling "SNL," likely because he didn't like its jokes at his expense. And, in April, Trump demanded that the White House Correspondents' Association end its 30-plus year practice of featuring a comedian because, again, Trump objected to the



jokes directed at him. This past April, Carvey appeared on Conan O'Brien's late-night show and reflected on getting to know Bush and his wife.

"We had so many warm moments with them," he said, adding, it was "a different time. It wasn't scorched-earth, angry politics." In response, O'Brien said, "In today's environment, you do an impression of a president, and you're the enemy."

But you just can't dismiss the starkly different ways Bush and Trump respond to comedy as being a product of a "different time." I believe it has far more to do with being a product of a different person. Bush told us

that, "politics does not have to be mean and ugly." In contrast, "mean and ugly" sums up Trump. Just look at how a few months ago Trump ridiculed Bush and his famous "thousand points of light" phrase that was intended to encourage volunteerism. Overall, there are many reasons to praise Bush -- as well as to be critical of some of his policies. But no one can deny that Bush could laugh at himself, reminding us of a time when the occupant of the White House was not a petty, insecure person. Hopefully the next president will not only be able to laugh at himself or herself but also share Bush's humanity and belief that politics doesn't have to be mean and ugly.

## Sounds of nature have drowned in the cacophony of human activities

**Birds still sing, but the tremendous orchestra that drowned all other manner of sounds is an increasingly rare pleasure.**

(Agencies)-The onset of a new season usually stirs nostalgia, more so, monsoon. Besides the fun we associated with it -- savouring hot pakoras and chocolate after drenching in the downpour, sailing paper boats in puddles and if it rained heavily, a break from school. My other fond memory is the monsoon orchestra -- the guttural chorus of frogs as they serenaded their mates in the pools formed by the showers. The croaks, while not high on the melody scale, were welcome, as they meant the wet season, along with the song of the pied-crested cuckoo, in Hindi lyrically called the megh papeeha, the song bird of the clouds.

After the sunset as the din of the urban jungle dropped to an occasional sound, a different set of acoustics gradually set in: 'tchak tchak charrk'. The sound of the house gecko, invariably glued to the roof -- defying gravity -- in

the neighbourhood of the bulb. Small, slim, bulging eyes and a tail that had a life of its own even when cut off from the body. It was a ploy to distract a predator, and in this endeavour the tail would wriggle around, while our friend simply grew another one. My mum, who had a philosophy of 'live and let live', dismissed my fears and pronounced the creature harmless, and useful, as it ate flies, mosquitoes, etc. I now understand the wisdom of her words, and have adopted her philosophy. The sounds of nature played through all seasons. Like bird songs, I recall the varied ditties that accompanied the day -- the raucous call of the peafowl at dawn and as the sun rose, the soulful cry of the koel. Sparrows cheeped, babblers bickered, and the magpie robin, attired in a dapper black and white suit, sang its heart out. Cawing, cooing, cheeping, tweeting (I mean it the old

fashioned, bird sort of way). Wonderful!

Insects fluttered, bees buzzed, squirrels chattered, but what moved me the most were those memorable nights when the jackals howled, the eerie wowl piercing the soul. It was primitive ...the cry of wilderness in a concrete jungle. I marvelled at this ghost of the darkness, which I only heard, rarely saw. Where did it live? Who was it calling? How did it survive in this hostile, peopled world? I can't pinpoint when nature went silent, but it has. The only sounds that I hear in Gurugram is the blast of horns, the din of traffic and construction and the deafening sound of planes. Our world is getting noisier. The increase in noise follows the graph of human populations, only it grows faster, the decibels doubling every thirty years, by some estimates. The cacophony of Homo sapiens has



drowned nature's magnificent symphony to a soft, apologetic murmur. Birds still sing, but the tremendous orchestra that drowned all other manner of sounds is an increasingly rare pleasure. I hear the occasional parakeet screech, welcome the odd squirrel into my garden, sparrows visit, attracted by bird seed and water I put out. Dawn breaks, silently, and dusk still falls, but minus the soft hoot of the owl, or the insistent call of the lapwing.

There are fewer trees for owls to tuck themselves in, no messy, undisturbed corners for the ground nesting lapwing to hatch its eggs. Most lawns in gated colonies and complexes are neatly trimmed, lined with ornamental trees and sprayed with pesticides that does no insect, bird, or us any good. Old trees with canopies and deep roots are not favoured as they mess with overhanging wires, and their roots interfere with underground pipes and cables.

# Kartarpur exposes a lack of coherence in India's Pakistan policy, writes Barkha Dutt

**This is not to say that Pakistan speaks in one voice or is consistent in its India policy. When Shah Mehmood Qureshi met us in Islamabad, he categorically said: "This is no googy" to emphasise the sincerity of its intentions.**

When I met Harsimrat Kaur Badal at Kartarpur she seemed genuinely overcome. "I have no words," she told me, "there is too much emotion." As a Punjabi whose family migrated from Sialkot during Partition, I can relate to the raw sentiment that violent displacement can leave in the collective response of a community. That she choked up with tears at the place where Guru Nanak spent his last years was very moving.

But the problem is this: while she stood in the Pakistani border village and invoked Prime Minister Narendra Modi's analogy of the fall of the Berlin Wall to indicate how the widening gulf in the Indo-Pak relationship could be bridged, foreign minister Sushma Swaraj simultaneously spoke in Delhi to dispel any such notion. While Badal went on record to talk about how Guru Nanak's message was the perfect way to

make a fresh beginning, Swaraj underlined how Kartarpur could not be linked to any resumption of the larger dialogue process. There was a similar dissonance in the statements of the Congress. While Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh rejected Pakistan's invitation to be in attendance for the ceremonial opening of the corridor, his cabinet colleague Navjot Singh Sidhu walked away with the lion's share of the attention in Pakistan. Everywhere we went -- I was among 22 Indian journalists invited by the Pakistan government to report on the developments -- Sidhu was feted like some sort of folk hero. His panache for pithy one liners, a throw back to his years on television, made him a ratings hit. Some Pakistanis joked that there was more of Sidhu on their TV channels in the last few days than their own prime minister. The Sikh devotees I met spoke of how

it was the Maharaja of Patiala that restored Kartarpur Sahib and they wished Captain Amarinder Singh had been present to further the legacy of his family. Captain has expressed concerns about renewed Khalistani extremism and the Modi government has pointed out the continued impunity with which Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar are able to operate in Pakistan. These are legitimate apprehensions. But then it was the prime minister who first used the metaphor of the Berlin Wall for the Kartarpur corridor -- immediately elevating the peace initiative to much higher stratosphere. The BJP can hardly brand Sidhu as an anti-national when it sends two Union ministers to represent India at the inauguration in Pakistan -- and who, taking their cues from him, frame the moment as a possible kickstart for a stalled relationship. Similarly the Congress can



hardly accuse the BJP of having a muddled Pakistan policy when the Punjab chief minister and his colleague cannot see eye to eye on an issue this sensitive.

When I watched Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Hardeep Puri and Navjot Sidhu stand shoulder to shoulder with Imran Khan for the Kartarpur ceremony, I thought of what a powerful image this could have been for their home state. After all when the British drew a knife across India during Partition it was Punjab that was the most scarred. But the absence of a united front and the noise of the domestic political divisions back

home shadowed the power of that moment and left India's internal disagreements exposed.

The ministers and Sidhu should either not have been given sanction to go at all or should have been briefed to confine their comments only to the importance of the corridor for Sikh pilgrims. And instead of vilifying Sidhu, the MEA should have co-opted him and used him as a diplomatic asset.

It could not have been entirely innocuous or coincidental that at the opening ceremony Pakistan singled out Sidhu for praise. Pakistanis seemed to sense the fric-

## When regional satraps leave the home turf to address new audiences

### A new tendency has tiptoed its way into Indian politics

Today let us discuss a new tendency that has made its way into Indian politics. For the first time, chiefs of regional parties are stepping out of their comfort zones in order to prove their relevance to national politics.

If this wasn't the case, Uddhav Thackeray wouldn't have visited Ayodhya and roared in favour of a Ram temple. While envisaging such a big manoeuvre, he would have realised that building the Ram temple wasn't within the capabilities of the Shiv Sena alone. The Sena chief knows his party doesn't have a significant presence outside Maharashtra. Despite this, he went ahead with the plan only to send out this message to voters in Maharashtra: We are the only flag-bearers of Hindutva. This isn't the first time the Sena has made such a claim. If you recall, Bal Thackeray, the flamboyant Sena founder, used to say while sitting at his residence Matoshree that his party activists had a big role to play in the demolition of the Babri mosque. Today the BJP, which used to be its junior partner when it came to Hindutva and

Marathi pride, has appropriated this space.

Uddhav Thackeray may be upset that this role-reversal happened under his watch. He knows that if he can't change this equation in the elections next year, it may become impossible to rein in the BJP. The only way to combat this is for the Shiv Sena to prove once again that when it comes to flexing their political muscle, there still isn't any alternative to the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. That is why Uddhav visited Ayodhya, family in tow, and gave a piece of his mind on the Ram temple issue to the BJP, its coalition partner. Before this, his party's firebrand MP Sanjay Raut had created a sensation by claiming that Shiv Sainiks had demolished the structure of the Babri mosque in 17 minutes flat. The Shiv Sena has been known to set the agenda with similar tactics. By doing this, Raut was sending out a clear message: The mosque couldn't have been demolished without the Sena and that the BJP lacks the courage needed to build the temple that the Sena possesses. There is another

trend that is worth taking note of. Till now regional parties had been using national parties only to further their own selfish goals. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party have gobbled up the entire vote bank of the Congress. Not just them, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, a number of regional satraps have employed this mantra to great effect. N?Chandrababu Naidu even managed to successfully rein in both the Congress and the BJP, but Uddhav faltered on this front. Now the Sena wants course correction. That is why Thackeray played a new card in Ayodhya by welcoming non-Maharashtrians to Maharashtra. The Sena realises the number of non-Maharashtrians in the state has increased to such an extent that they've become a vote bank. It will be interesting to see how much the Sena's new-found tactics pay off in elections.

Why just the Shiv Sena, the BJP has made every other party insecure. Today the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah combine has painted the nation's polity in a new hue.



After preparing the ground in western India, since the time they arrived in New Delhi, the party has won elections 17 times. The BJP is ruling in 20 states at present. Not only has it gained in stature at the national level, it has also begun to smash regional fortresses one by one. This political juggernaut is making both its opponents as well as regional partners who are part of the ruling coalition, nervous. All of them are busy evolving a strategy to stop Modi. On the other hand, the Congress, too, is working hard to regain its lost base. The party has enormously improved its position since the Gujarat elections. Rahul Gandhi has improved his brand image like never before. Rahul realises that the party needs a coalition to defeat the

BJP but isn't prepared to surrender. That is why the Congress rejected the BSP's overtures in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. In the new circumstances, it has become essential for regional parties to present a new image before their voters in the states and increase the number of their seats as much as possible in the assembly and in the Parliament. It's an old political saying: The greater a party's share of seats, the greater the stake it can claim over power. This is why, whether it is Omar Abdullah or Uddhav Thackeray, every leader is travelling away from home turf looking for opportunities to send out this message to voters. You may get to witness many such antics in the next few days.

# Feel like you're a big fish in a small pond?

## *It could be bad for your health: Study finds overqualified employees experience more stress in the office*

employees and employers alike, said study lead author Professor Michael Harari.

A feeling of being overqualified occurs when an employee is expecting a job that uses their qualifications, but does not find themselves in such a position, leaving them feeling deprived, the researchers said.

Professor Harari said: 'That deprivation is what is theorised to result in these negative job attitudes. 'There's a discrepancy between expectation and reality.

'Because of this, you're angry, you're frustrated and as a result you don't much care for the job that you have and feel unsatisfied.' Psychological strain can stem from employees who do not feel they are rewarded for their efforts because there is an imbalance between their efforts and the reward structure of work. Professor Harari said: 'We invest effort at work and we expect rewards in return, such as esteem and career opportunities. 'For an overqualified

### **Dangers of Being Overqualified**

Psychological strain can stem from employees who do not feel they are rewarded for their efforts because there is an imbalance between their efforts and the reward structure of work. Professor Harari said: 'We invest effort at work and we expect rewards in return, such as esteem and career opportunities. 'For an overqualified employee, that expectation has been violated. 'This is a stressful experience for employees, which leads to poor psychological wellbeing, such as negative emotions and psychological strain.' The study found workers who feel overqualified are also more likely to engage in deviant behaviour. This might include coming in late or leaving early, theft and bullying fellow workers.

employee, that expectation has been violated. 'This is a stressful experience for employees, which leads to poor psychological wellbeing, such as negative emotions and psychological strain.' The study found workers who feel overqualified are also more likely to engage in deviant behaviour, including coming in late or leaving early, theft and bullying fellow workers. Professor Harari said the more over-qualified a worker feels, the more likely they are to engage in

counterproductive behaviours that hinder the workplace. He said workers who were younger, over-educated and narcissistic tended to report higher levels of perceived over-qualification. He said: 'It seems to suggest that there is a need to take jobs below one's skill level in order to gain entrance into the workforce. We do see that as people get older they are less likely to report being overqualified.'



(Agencies) Being a big fish in a small pond can be bad for your career and your health, new research has revealed.

Scientists claim that over-qualified employees suffer high levels of stress and are also likely to damage a company with bad behaviour such as bullying or theft.

Workers who are younger, over-educated and narcissistic are most likely to feel they are over-qualified for a role, the research found.

The researchers, from Florida

Atlantic University's College of Business, said employees who believe they are over-qualified are unsatisfied with their job, uncommitted to their company and suffer psychological strain.

This causes them to be angry, frustrated and unlikely to care for the job.

The study team looked at 25 years of research into 'perceived over-qualification' - the belief that someone has surplus skills compared to job requirements.

This attitude to work can have negative implications for

# Slouching ISN'T bad for you and should be recommended - it's sitting upright that's wreaking havoc on your body, claims expert



(Agencies) Slouching on your sofa or in front of your computer at work isn't as bad for you as you have been told, an expert has claimed.

Years of slating bad postures as being detrimental to our health is 'wrong', Jack Chew, of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy says.

In fact, slouching could be recommended - as forcing yourself to adhere to sitting upright at all times may be wreaking havoc on your body.

But due to the financial opportunity it provides firms

based around trendy wellness techniques, slouching is dubbed as awful.

Such fears have sparked an entire industry to arise, promising to kick people into shape by realigning them, taking hundreds of their pounds simultaneously.

Mr Chew told The Times: 'The assumption that we all need to be perfectly aligned is just wrong... nothing about our bodies is entirely symmetrical.

'Our organs aren't positioned symmetrically; we each have a dominant side.'

Mr Chew's claims challenge

a body of evidence that states the opposite, suggesting that slouching is the root cause of many ailments.

We need to get away from this idea that bad posture is the single cause of so many complaints because that is never the case.'

Scores of businesses have popped up on the back of such research, desperate to tap into a goldmine of adults worried about their bad postures.

Substantial links to bad backs, which affects four in

five people at some point in their lifetime, have also been reported.

Often adults are desperate to avoid the middle-aged burden of a bad back and seek innovative ways to prevent such.

Due to the growing demand, wellness firms have responded in their hundreds with the invention of gadgets promoting better postures.

One includes 'Tru-Align', a series of five cushions designed to realign the backs of users. It costs £384 (\$495), The Independent reports.

Another, called CoreAlign, offers a balance body course and the equipment needed to

partake for just under £2,800 (\$3,600).

### Depression links

Mr Chew's claims just after New Zealand-based researchers earlier this year said that good posture could be used to treat depression.

In January they discovered sitting upright can make people feel more proud after a success and more confident in their thoughts.

Research in 2012 made a link between people who walk with a bad posture and the risk of being depressed. A study from San Francisco State

University found slouching can lead to decreased energy and feelings of depression.

### **Good Posture to Treat Depression**

Good posture could help treat depression, a study published in January claimed.

Previous research has showed that slouching can crush one's mood, and sitting straight does the opposite.

But University of Auckland researchers wanted to examine if something as simple as posture could work for people diagnosed with depression.

'Compared to sitting in a slumped position, sitting upright can make you feel more proud after a success, increase your persistence at an unsolvable task, and make you feel more confident in your thoughts,' lead researcher Dr Elizabeth Broadbent explained.

# Nepal: first came the earthquake, then came the debt

(Agencies)-Ratna Awale counts herself lucky. She and her husband, Prem, and their two sons survived the devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Nepal on 25 April 2015 that killed almost 9,000 people.

But her narrow four-storey home in Patan, a sprawling, historical city south of Kathmandu, was badly damaged. "There were big cracks from the back of the house to the front wall, and half the ground floor collapsed," she says. The damage across the country cost Nepal an estimated \$10bn (£7.8bn), cutting its already meagre economic output in half. The government subsequently offered hundreds of thousands of homeowners \$3,000 (£2,300) each to rebuild their homes.

Unfortunately, that only covered only 30-50% of the cost of rebuilding a typical family dwelling, leaving many Nepalese with a new problem: paying for loans. "I took a bank loan for 1 million rupees [about £7,000]," says Awale. "We're paying 14%. We are caught be-

tween paying the loan and feeding ourselves. Either we eat or we pay the loan." In Nepal's worst-affected districts, 75% of the people who rebuilt their homes relied on loans to do so. Some borrowed from banks; others from informal lenders – neighbours, family members or local businesses – that have been charging up to 43% interest. The government ordered commercial banks to offer loans at 2%. Many balked, and demanded that borrowers repay the loans within impossibly tight time frames. The scheme was discontinued last month by the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) after just 1,300 applicants received loans; across the board, the Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform Nepal (HRRP) estimates, the average homeowner is paying 23% interest.

The problem doesn't stop with individual homeowners. Durbar Square in Kathmandu is a stunning medley of Hindu and Buddhist temples, and

a major draw for tourists. Many buildings, including the 18th-century Nautale Durbar palace, were badly damaged or destroyed. With the government heavily indebted, restoration in many cases is being provided for free by the Chinese and other countries. Though the Nepalese government has welcomed China's help, Beijing's influence over its small neighbour has risen dramatically. Some wonder whether it could lead to a so-called debt trap, as has happened in Sri Lanka, where the government has leased a key port to a Chinese company after struggling to repay it for building it.

There are more than 820,000 houses – the scale is massive Siobhan Kennedy. The challenges facing the authorities are enormous. Nepal is a mountainous country subject to chronic political upheaval, and only recently emerged from civil war. Repairing the damage from the earthquake is a monumental task and the

\$3,000 grants were never designed to fully cover the cost of rebuilding.

"There are more than 820,000 houses eligible – the scale is massive," says Siobhan Kennedy of HRRP. "It's bigger than Pakistan in 2005 and Haiti in 2010 in terms of the number of houses that need to be rebuilt. In terms of scale, this is huge."

The NRA has surveyed almost a million homes across the country – a major effort in itself – and says 70% of eligible grant beneficiaries are rebuilding. The central bank has just launched a new initiative allowing grantees to pay back their loans over a five-year period. But just getting the money to those who need it can be difficult. "The biggest problem for us is that many people don't officially own their own property," says Rakesh Maharjan, an IT officer at the Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Project in Patan, which oversees the distribution of grants in the area. "They don't have title deeds." He says that in



Lalitpur, the municipality that incorporates Patan, fewer than one-fifth of homeowners who applied for the government grant have received all three tranches.

Authorities introduced deadlines that applicants had to meet to receive the payout. But that has led to unforeseen consequences: many homeowners are using the proceeds to hastily construct small, one-room buildings that are clearly

unsuitable for families. For Santosh Maharjan, a 25-year-old student whose family began rebuilding their house in Patan last April, the biggest problem remains getting access to money.

"Two families live in our home – mine and my uncle's," he says. "We still need 2 million rupees [around £14,000] to finish the building. My father had to sell his land to help pay for this, and it's still not enough."

# Pakistan to impose 'sin tax' on cigarettes

(Insider Bureau)-Pakistan is all set to impose a 'sin tax' on cigarettes and sugary beverages and that fund would be diverted to the health budget, Minister for National Health Services Aamer Mehmood Kiani has said. Speaking at a public health conference at the Health Services Academy, Kiani Tuesday said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was committed to increasing the health budget by five per cent of GDP, Dawn reported.

"Various routes will be used to increase the health budget," he said, adding "and one of them is imposing a sin tax on

tobacco products and sugary beverages. That sum will be diverted to the health budget."

Currently, the government spends a mere 0.6 per cent of GDP on health.

It has been suggested several times in the past that sin taxes be imposed on products that cause health-related issues as a result of which the state pays heavy penalties in the shape of healthcare spending and lowered human productivity, the paper said.

Quoting the director general of the NHS Ministry, Dr Asad Hafeez, the paper said that tax on tobacco and sugary beverages was

being charged in some 45 countries.

"A sin tax is an internationally recognised term and is specifically levied on certain goods deemed harmful to society, for example tobacco, candies, soft drinks, fast foods, coffee and sugar," he said. "We have not yet decided on the exact amount for a sin tax (in Pakistan)," he said, but hinted that "it will certainly be a handsome amount."

"Some 1,500 youngsters start smoking in Pakistan every day, and we want to reduce that number," he said.

The general secretary of the Pakistan National Heart Association



(PANAHA), Sanaullah Ghumman, said that his association had for many years been demanding the imposition of a sin tax. "Recently,

during a meeting with President Dr Arif Alvi, we again raised the issue of such a tax," he said.

"The minister for health was also present at the meeting, and the president assured us that he would do what was possible," he added.

## Sri Lanka's disputed prime minister takes his fight to the Supreme Court

(Insider Bureau) - Sri Lanka's prime minister is appealing a court decision that temporarily bars him and his cabinet from carrying out official duties, amid a constitutional crisis that has left the island nation without effective leadership. The ruling by Sri Lanka's Court of Appeals on Monday comes after Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa refused to step down despite losing two no-confidence votes last month. Rajapaksa said he will take his appeal to the Supreme Court on Tuesday and seek an order halting the decision. "We do not agree with the decision given by the Appeals Court as Constitutional matters are finally decided by the

Supreme Court," Rajapaksa said on Twitter. Judge Arjuna Obeyesekere said in his ruling that if Rajapaksa and his cabinet continued to hold office, it would cause "irreparable" damage. "Such damage would also have far reaching consequences to the whole country," Obeyesekere said.

Even though the decision would leave the nation without a functioning government, "allowing a set of persons who are not entitled in law to function as the prime minister or the cabinet of ministers or any other minister of government," would do far greater harm, he added.

The ruling restrains Rajapaksa and his 48

ministers from holding office until the court has heard a petition by 122 lawmakers that challenges his claim to power. Rajapaksa and the cabinet members have until December 12 to prove to the court that they have authority to govern

Sri Lanka has been in crisis since October 26 when President Maithripala Sirisena ousted Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and appointed Rajapaksa -- a two-time former President -- to take his place. Sirisena then dissolved parliament and called for snap elections for January 5, a move that was temporarily halted by the country's Supreme Court.



The president and Rajapaksa have refused to recognize two separate motions of no confidence voted by parliament on November 14 and 16. Parliament is expected to debate another motion of no confidence against Rajapaksa on Wednesday. The motion, which requires the support of 113 out of 225 lawmakers, has been signed by seven members

of ousted prime minister Wickremesinghe's United National Front (UNF). The Tamil National Alliance has also declared its 14 lawmakers will support the UNF. The Supreme Court is now set to begin hearings on the legality of Sirisena's actions, with judges due to meet Tuesday. Sirisena told a UNF delegation on Friday that he would accept parliament's decision but

insisted that he would not appoint Wickremesinghe as prime minister. The political crisis is leaking into the financial markets. On Monday, Fitch Ratings downgraded Sri Lanka to 'B' from 'B+', saying in a report that the "ongoing political upheaval, which has disrupted the normal functioning of parliament, exacerbates the country's external financing risks.

## Taliban being used as hedge against India, says US commander

**Marine Corps Lt Gen Kenneth McKenzie Jr said Pakistan could play a key role in facilitating talks between the Taliban and government of Afghanistan.**

(Agencies)-Days after India. United States president Donald Trump sought Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's help in the Afghan peace process, a top American commander has told lawmakers that Islamabad's policy seems to be unchanged and it continues to use the Taliban as a hedge against

(CENTCOM). Pakistan could play a key role in facilitating talks between the Taliban and government of Afghanistan, he said, adding, "I would welcome that development. At this time, however, Pakistan does not appear to be using the full extent of its influence to encourage the Taliban to



come to the table." "We continue to see the Taliban being utilised as a hedge against India rather than as part of a stable, reconciled Afghanistan," McKenzie told the lawmakers during his confirmation hearing. His answers to the Senate Armed Services Committee in response to a set of written questions come a day after it became public that Trump has written a letter to Imran Khan, seeking his help in the Afghan peace process. "President Trump sent a letter to Prime Minister Khan, requesting Pakistan's full support to the US-led Afghan peace process and Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad's upcoming trip to the region," a spokesperson of the National Security Council,

White House, told PTI. "In the letter, the President recognises that Pakistan has the ability to deny the Taliban sanctuary on its territory," the spokesperson said. "The letter also makes it clear that Pakistan's assistance with the Afghan peace process is fundamental to building an enduring US-Pakistan partnership," the spokesperson said. McKenzie told lawmakers that he did not see much of a change in Pakistan's behaviour towards Afghanistan or its stand against terrorist groups. Despite Pakistan's positive rhetoric in support of the South Asia Strategy, violent extremist organisations (VEOs) operate along its border with Afghanistan, he said. While Pakistan has conducted some operations against VEOs in

the country, they must continue to expand these operations and remain aggressively engaged, McKenzie said.

"Taking concrete steps that deny VEO safe havens in Pakistan, as well as VEO freedom of movement from Pakistan to Afghanistan, remains an important ask that Pakistan needs to fulfil. Pakistan must leverage their influence over the Taliban leadership to help compel them to come to the table for reconciliation negotiations," he added. McKenzie said the US CENTCOM would continue to support the State Department as it works towards a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Afghanistan which includes ensuring that Islamabad's equities are acknowledged in any future agreement.

## Ad man Piyush Pandey to become global creative chief of Ogilvy

(Agencies)-Advertising giant Ogilvy on Wednesday appointed Piyush Pandey as its next global chief creative officer to work in partnership with chief executive officer John Seifert and lead the company's global creative efforts. Pandey, 63, who has three decades of experience in advertising, will be chief creative officer, worldwide, in Ogilvy from January 1, 2019. He has been executive chairman and creative director (South Asia) in Ogilvy, owned by WPP Plc, the British advertising and marketing

company. He will continue to work out of the company's Mumbai office. "In our business of communication, clients and customers are the most important. We have champions in every geography and I'll work with them to try and take our flag a little higher. Both John Seifert and me have the same objectives. We will try and make the next chapter as successful and enjoyable as the last 70 years have been for Ogilvy," Pandey said in a telephonic interview. "We could not be more thrilled that Piyush will be serving as our chief

creative officer, worldwide, and my creative partner. Piyush is a true industry icon who is uniquely suited to lead our global creative efforts. Creativity has and will always be at the heart of the Ogilvy brand and culture," he said. "Piyush is the perfect leader to shepherd that legacy as we continue to focus on making brands matter as the leading creative network in the world," he added. Pandey is the man behind the famous advertisement for Dairy Milk chocolate in which a girl breaks into a gleeful dance on the cricket pitch after a winning six is scored.

# Pakistan issues visas to over 220 Hindu pilgrims from India



(Insider Bureau) -Pakistan has issued visas to over 220 Hindu pilgrims from India to attend the 310th birthday celebrations of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib in Sukkur, the High Commission in New Delhi said on Wednesday. A large number of Indian Sikh and Hindu pilgrims visit Pakistan every year to observe various religious festivals under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974.

The issuance of pilgrimage visas is in line with the Government of Pakistan's efforts for promoting visits to religious shrines and people-to-people exchanges. It also reflects the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to faithfully implement the bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines," the Pakistan High Commission said in a statement.. The birthday celebrations of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib are taking place at the Shadani Darbar Tirth, a 300-year old temple, from December 5 to Dec 16. The foundations of the Shadani Darbar, a sacred place for devotees from across the world, were laid at Hayat Pitafi Tehsil, Mirpur Mathelo, Ghotki district in 1786 by Sant Shadaram Sahib, who was born in Lahore in 1708. More than 3,800 Sikh pilgrims returned to India from Pakistan on November 30 after participating in the 549th birth anniversary celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji. During their visit, Prime Minister Imran Khan performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the 'Kartarpur Corridor' on the Pakistan side of the border along with prominent guests from India. "Pakistan remains committed to preserving sacred religious places and providing all possible facilitation for the visiting pilgrims of all faiths," said the High Commission.

# Pakistani PM says Afghan peace is in his country's interest



(Agencies)-Pakistan's prime minister has told a U.S. special envoy that peace and reconciliation in neighboring Afghanistan is in his country's abiding interest but stopped short of promising to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. Imran Khan and Zalmay Khalilzad, who is tasked with finding a resolution to the Afghan war, held talks on Wednesday in Islamabad. The meeting comes days after President Donald Trump reached out to Khan, seeking his cooperation in ending the 17-year-old conflict. According to a statement, Khan "reiterated Pakistan's abiding interest in achieving peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan through a political settlement." Washington and Kabul have long accused Pakistan of turning a blind eye to and harboring the Taliban, whose leadership is based in southwestern Pakistan. Islamabad claims it has little influence over the Taliban. Copyright 2018 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

# Afghanistan becomes world's deadliest country for terrorism, overtaking Iraq



Donald Trump has expressed impatience with the military mission. In total, Afghanistan endured 4,653 fatalities across 1,168 terrorist incidents last year, the report said. The Taliban was responsible for 77 percent of them. However, worldwide deaths linked to terrorism fell for the third consecutive year, according to the report published by the Australian-based Institute for Economics and Peace think tank. U.S. officials are keen to bring the Taliban into a peace deal in case Trump pulls the plug on the current American military mission before the presidential election in November 2020.

(Agencies)-Afghanistan has overtaken Iraq to become the world's deadliest country for terrorism, according to a report released Wednesday. One-quarter of all worldwide terrorism-related deaths during 2017 occurred in Afghanistan, according to the latest Global Terrorism Index. It cited a surge in attacks by the Taliban and the Islamic State group. America's longest war began after the 9/11 attacks when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and toppled the ruling Taliban, which was sheltering Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. The country still hosts around 14,000 U.S. troops, although President

# Kabul ready to talk with Taliban without preconditions, discuss changes to Constitution

(Insider Bureau) - Afghanistan is ready to negotiate peace with the Taliban without any preconditions, including drafting a new constitution, a high-ranking government official said on the heels of an Afghanistan peace conference in Moscow. Afghanistan's government will not set out any preconditions for direct peace talks with the Taliban, Ehsan Taheri, spokesman for the country's High Peace Council (HPC), told RIA Novosti in an interview. Previously, Kabul demanded that the insurgent movement lay down its arms and respect the constitution,



but this is not the case now. "Nowadays, we – the government and the High Peace Council – declare that there are no prerequisites for the launch of the talks," Taheri said. Established in 2010 by then-President Hamid Karzai, the HPC is a body in charge of negotiating peace with the Taliban. The long-awaited peace negotiations may start this year or next year. There is "a growing desire" among Taliban commanders to engage in the talks "without intermediaries," according to the official. Therefore, Kabul is open to discuss "any issue crucial for Afghanistan's future," the official said. There are "no problems" for the government and the Taliban even to talk changes to the country's constitution because is provisions allow for making amendments.

# Govt proposes 100-day work scheme to fight climate change

According to a preliminary assessment by the Indian Institute of Science, drought-proofing activities under MGNREGA can at least achieve removal or sequestration of about 197 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030, or 8% of India's target.

The ministry of rural development has put forward a proposal to use the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) — the world's largest wage-based social protection programme — to achieve India's third climate target under the 2016 Paris climate change agreement. The proposal was submitted on the sidelines of COP 24 in Katowice, Poland.

According to a preliminary assessment by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), drought-proofing activities under MGNREGA can at least achieve removal or sequestration of about 197 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent by 2030, or 8% of India's target. But if the work focused on climate change, the scheme has a far higher potential, IISc scientists said.

India is on track to achieving two of its three key climate targets — 40%

electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and to reduce the emissions intensity of India's gross domestic product (GDP) by 33% to 35% from the 2005 levels. But India has been lagging on the third target — to create carbon sinks of about 2.5 to 3 billion tons.

IISc scientists said climate-oriented activities like drought-proofing, which involves afforestation and creation of fruit orchards, can contribute sizeably to meeting the target. Centre is already piloting climate proofing works under the scheme in 103 blocks of three districts of Bihar, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, said Dharamveer Jha, joint director, ministry of rural development. A team of scientists from IISc is conducting a pan-India assessment of potential from MGNREGA by dividing the area into various agro-ecological regions and carrying out

field studies in sample villages in each state. In 2017-18, MGNREGA may have helped sequester about 61.96 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. Activities with the highest potential was found to be drought-proofing, followed by land development, revival of traditional water bodies and water harvesting, among others.

"Drought-proofing will increase the resilience of community by helping them to cope with droughts, and with tree planting there will be improvement in soil fertility over time which in turn could help retain more soil moisture and better yields," said Indu K Murthy, IISc scientist who is coordinating the project with Prof NH Ravindranath. Under MGNREGA, at least one member of every rural household is eligible for at least 100 days of employment in the form of unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum

wage. "There are co-benefits of MGNREGA work. It is a welcome step that the government has proposed it. Planting of trees can benefit communities and local eco-systems. It will be dangerous if the government promotes trees with high carbon sequestration capacity and ignore its contribution to the local economy. For example, corporate afforestation projects are usually monocultures to benefit industrial needs while the needs of local communities will have to be prioritised to make progress on the poverty agenda," said Sanjay Vashisht, director, Climate Action Network



South Asia.

Environment ministry recently said it will focus on agro-forestry with private partnerships to achieve the third target. Meanwhile, scientists from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have been presenting findings from their report on global warming of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways. Joyashree Roy, professor of economics at Jadavpur University (on lien) and one of the Indian authors of the IPCC report, said the team has been briefing parties about climate science and about its economic impacts. "A 1.5

degree C rise in global warming climate will be a poverty-multiplier: makes poor people poorer, increases poverty head count. Most severe climate change impacts are projected for urban areas, some rural regions in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Climate change will negatively affect childhood under-nutrition and stunting through reduced food availability." Yet, current commitments made by 195 nations under the Paris agreement will not be able to meet the 1.5 degree target; the rise in global warming may be as much as 3.5 degrees over pre-industrial levels with the current commitments.

## We're not your 'hired gun' anymore, Pakistan PM Imran Khan tells US

**Imran Khan said Pakistan was not "hedging" towards China, rather it was Washington's attitude which had brought a change in the bilateral relationship.**

Prime Minister Imran Khan has accused the US of "pushing Pakistan away" and said he would never want to have a relation with Washington where his country is treated like a "hired gun". "I would never want to have a relationship where Pakistan is treated like a hired gun -- given money to fight someone else's war," Khan said in an interview with the Washington Post on Thursday, referring to the 1980s war against the Soviet Union and the ongoing war on terror. "We should never put ourselves in this position again. It not only cost us

human lives, devastation of our tribal areas, but it also cost us our dignity. We would like a proper relationship with the US," he said. Asked to elaborate on the ideal nature of relationship that he would like to have with the US, Khan said: "For instance, our relationship with China is not one-dimensional. It's a trade relationship between two countries. We want a similar relationship with the US."

He said Pakistan was not "hedging" towards China, rather it was Washington's attitude which had brought a

change in the bilateral relationship. "The US has basically pushed Pakistan away."

Asked why he "harboured anti-US sentiments", Khan said disagreeing with Washington's policies did not make him "anti-American".

"This is a very imperialistic approach. You are either with me or against me."

Khan condemned the 2011 US operation in Abbottabad that killed Osama bin Laden, saying that it was "humiliating" that Washington did not trust Pakistan to kill the terrorist.

"It was humiliating that

we were losing our soldiers and civilians and (suffering terrorist) bomb attacks because we were participating in the US war, and then our ally did not trust us to kill Bin Laden," he said, adding that the US "should have tipped off Pakistan".

"We did not know whether we were a friend or a foe."

He also dismissed claims that there were safe havens for terrorists in Pakistan, saying that "there are no sanctuaries in Pakistan".

Referring to US President Donald Trump's South Asia policy, Khan said he was committed to having dialogue to achieve peace



in war-torn Afghanistan. Afghan Taliban, he said "I talked for years about that Islamabad did not want the US to leave Afghanistan in a hurry as they did in 1989. Khan. Now I'm happy that everyone realises there is only a political solution." Welcoming the US bid to engage in talks with the

# Eating together as a family can improve your teen's diet, even if you all don't get along

Teenagers and young adults who eat meals with family are healthier. Family meals really do improve teenagers' diets and put them on a path to healthy eating in later life, says new study. The researchers found that when families sit down together, adolescents and young adults eat more fruits and veggies and consume fewer fast-food.

"Our research found that family dinners are a great way to improve the dietary intake of the whole family, regardless of how well the family functions together," said lead researcher Kathryn Walton, post-doctoral researcher at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto,

Canada. "It's a time when families can slow down from their busy days to talk, spend time together and problem-solve. It's also a time that parents can model healthful eating behaviours," Walton added.



The study, published in the journal JAMA Network Open, found that preparing and enjoying a meal together can also help families bond and the meal does not have to be a big drawn-out affair.

"Even if it's something you pull out of the freezer, add a bagged salad on the side and you'll have a decent nutritional meal," said Jess Haines, Professor from the University of Guelph in

Canada. Walton said many teenaged and young adults living at home are busy with evening extracurricular activities or part-time jobs, making it hard to find time for dinner with family members. But finding that time once a day -- even if it's breakfast together -- can be just as effective, the researcher said. For the study, the team looked at more than 2,700 participants, 14 to 24 years of age.

## Pregnant? Here's another reason why you must eat healthy to stay fit

While it is known that inadequate nutrition during foetal development can cause diabetes and heart disease, a new study warns that it could also lead to early menopause at age younger than 45. Prenatal malnutrition was also associated with a higher risk of premature ovarian failure.

Natural menopause is a milestone of ovarian aging that results in the end of a woman's reproductive years. Conversely, an early menopause is associated with increased risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, depression, and memory changes and changes in vaginal and sexual health, according to researchers.

"The findings showed that food deprivation during early foetal life affects how long the future ovaries function," said Joann Pinkerton, executive director from the North American Menopause Society (NAMS). Although several studies have investigated the association between malnutrition exposure in early life and risk of various metabolic diseases in adulthood, the association with reproductive ageing was not evaluated.

This new study, published in the journal Menopause, involved nearly 2,900 Chinese women and specifically sought to address the effect of early life exposure to malnutrition on age at menopause. It has already been documented that the development of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis during the foetal stage plays a critical role in adulthood reproductive health, the researchers said.

## Just 1 hour on treadmill can boost metabolism for 2 days: Study

A single workout session consisting of three 20-minute treadmill runs could activate neurons that are important regulators of blood glucose levels and energy balance as well as influence metabolism for up to two days, says a study over mice.

The findings showed that a single bout of exercise for mice could boost the activity of energy-burning neurons and inhibit the counterpart one for up to two days and those changes can last longer with more training.

"It doesn't take much exercise to alter the activity of these neurons," said Kevin Williams, a neuroscientist at University of Texas Southwestern.

"The study predicts that getting out and exercising even once in a semi-intense manner can reap benefits

that can last for days, in particular with respect to glucose metabolism," he added.

Further, a single workout consisting of three 20-minute treadmill runs caused a decrease in appetite that lasted up to six hours.

"This result may explain at the neural circuit level why many people don't feel hungry immediately after exercise," Williams said.

For the study, published in the journal Molecular Metabolism, the team measured the effects of short- and long-term exercise on two types of neurons that comprise the melanocortin brain circuit. Both humans and mice have this circuit.

One of the neuron types is associated with reduced appetite, lower blood glucose levels, and higher energy



burning when activated while the other type increases appetite and diminishes metabolism when activated.

The study also provides avenue to research potential treatments to improve glucose metabolism in patients with conditions such as diabetes.

"It is possible that activating melanocortin neurons may hold

therapeutic benefits for patients one day, especially for diabetics who need improved blood-glucose regulation," Williams said.

"This research is not just for improving fitness. A better understanding of neural links to exercise can potentially help a number of conditions affected by glucose regulation," he noted.

# Heavy snowfall linked to heart attack ?

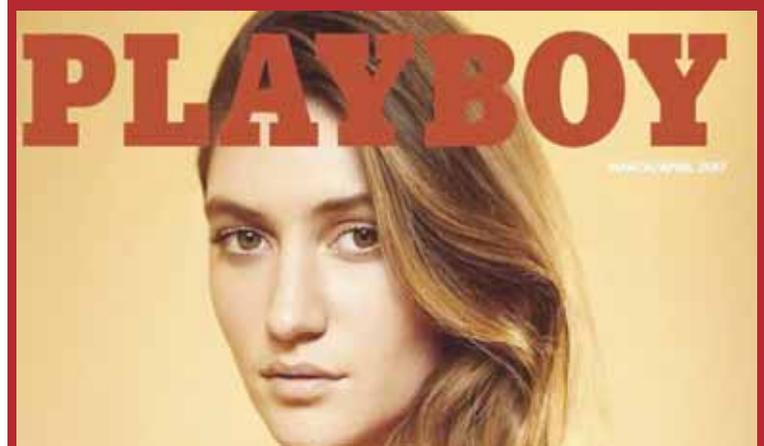
## Shovelling seen as the main reason

(Agencies) People living in regions that see heavy snowfall, like India's Himalayan region, better be careful as you are at an increased risk of a heart attack after a heavy snowstorm, a new study suggests.

The risk was found to be particularly higher for men and researchers believe that shovelling is the main mechanism linking snowfall with heart attack, or myocardial infarction (MI).



*Playboy will feature nudes after all, magazine disrobes after covering up in 2016*



(Agencies) Playboy magazine is returning to its roots, bringing nudes back just a year after abandoning full frontal shots of women saying they had become outdated.

Under the headline "Naked is Normal," the magazine will bring nude pictorials back in its March/April edition, the company said on Monday.

"I'll be the first to admit that the way in which the magazine portrayed nudity was dated, but nudity was never the problem because nudity isn't a problem," Playboy's chief creative officer Cooper Hefner said in a statement on the magazine's website. "Today we're taking our identity back and reclaiming who we are," added Hefner, the son of Playboy founder Hugh Hefner.

Former Baywatch star Pamela Anderson was the last person to bare it all for the magazine in its January/February 2016 edition.

Founded in 1953, Playboy had decided to stop publishing nude photos of women, saying they had become outmoded due to the plethora of free pornography on the internet. Playboy's circulation has dropped from about 5.6 million in 1975 to around 800,000 in recent years, and the magazine had also come under pressure from women to end a practice many found offensive and degrading.

It launched a revamped version in March 2016 in which it replaced full frontal nudity with flirty, more natural shots of women in scanty attire.

Cooper Hefner said on Monday that the magazine was also bringing back some of its other features, including "Party Jokes" and "The Playboy Philosophy" column that last appeared in the 1960s.

particularly after heavy snowfalls. Snow shovelling is a demanding cardiovascular exercise requiring more than 75 per cent of the maximum heart rate, particularly with heavy loads," said study co-author Nathalie Auger from University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre in Quebec, Canada.

The team of researchers looked at data from two separate administrative databases on 128,073 individual hospital admissions and 68,155 deaths from heart attack (MI) in the province of Quebec between 1981 and 2014.

They restricted analysis to months in which snow falls,



November to April, and obtained detailed weather information from Environment Canada for each health region included in the study.

About 60 per cent of hospital admissions and deaths due to heart attack were in men, showed the study published in the

Canadian Medical Association Journal.

The day after a snowfall had the strongest association.

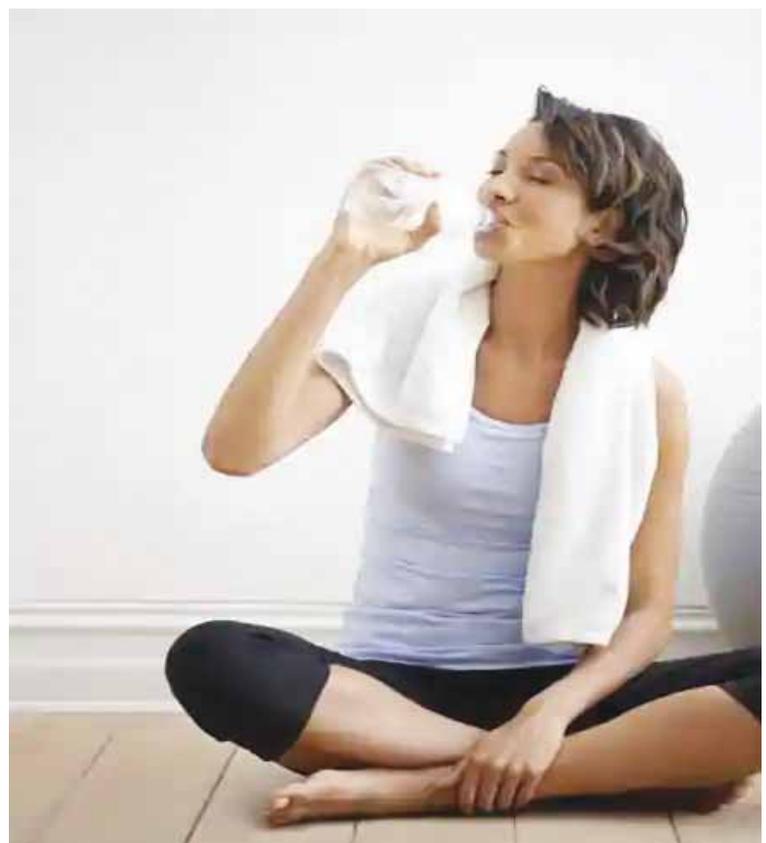
"Quantity of snowfall was associated with an increased likelihood of hospital admission or death due to MI the following day among men," the study said.

## 5 ways to get rid of a puffy face

### Here is everything you need to know

(Agencies) The worst thing you can ever wake up to in the morning is a puffy, swollen face. From stress, water retention to allergies, there are various reasons, which can cause one's face to be puffed up. And when one's face is swollen, they usually end up in a situation where they avoid looking at themselves in the mirror. This aggravates the stress. However, the good news is that puffy face is not permanent, unless it's a medical condition. So, here is your guide on how to get rid of a swollen face, the natural way.

The notion that drinking lots of water can lead to a bloated face is a myth. In fact, it's the other way around, dehydration and lack of adequate water intake can cause your face to be bloated. Dehydration can cause blood vessels to enlarge that can lead to water retention, especially in the face causing it to be puffy. One of the main reasons for your face to swell up is the high content of salt in the body. Salt tends to retain water in the body that causes puffiness. Avoid carbonated drinks and always look for the level



of sodium content in packaged products. 2300 mg or less is enough sodium for the day, for 50 years old and below and 1500 mg for people above 50 years old.

Increase fiber in your diet if you want to prevent your face from getting bloated. Have papaya as it helps to keep your stomach and intestines healthy, which in turn keeps your face lean. Also have fruits containing Vitamin C, beta-

carotene and antioxidants, that prevent water retention in the skin. These also help to renew the skin and give it a bright glow.

Work out to lose the puffiness. Cardio and weight training will help you improve blood circulation and open up the pores. Combine this with a balanced diet and you can shed weight off your face too. You can also do exercises that target your double chin and jawline.



# The student has become the master!

**Kim Kardashian is a klone of Kylie Jenner as she copies younger sister's business Barbie look in bright pink suit**

Kim Kardashian has taught her sisters well in becoming style icons.

But the 37-year-old reality star seemed to be taking fashion clues from her younger sister Kylie Jenner as she was spotted in a similar outfit in Los Angeles on Thursday.

While promoting her cosmetics line, Kim rocked a bright pink suit at Ulta Beauty akin to the slick ensemble the 21-year-old wore last month while hawking her own makeup products.

As if she raided her youngest siblings ward-

robe, the reality star donned an ensemble remarkably similar to Kylie's sartorial choice.

Both KUWTK stars swathed their famous figures in oversized pink hued suit jackets that cut just above their knees.

While Kylie sported matching shiny pants, Kim wore for a more baggy set with graphics of what appeared to be ancient statue faces.

However, Kylie did wear her tresses in Kim's signature platinum color that she often uses instead of her raven hue.



## KATIE PRICE SPENDS £10K TO CLEAN UP MESSY HOME

*she revamps mansion in hope of making a 'fresh start' after avoiding bankruptcy*

She was left red-faced in November after revealing her home is still a mess - 10 months after she was first criticised over its untidiness.

And after avoiding bankruptcy, Katie Price is turning her attention to her messy mansion and wants to embark on a huge clean-up mission in a bid to make a 'fresh start' for 2019.

According to The Sun, the mother-of-five, 40, has splashed out over £10,000 on re-vamping her home to 'make it perfect again'.

Sources told the publication: 'Katie wants next year to be a completely fresh start and she's starting with her house.'

They detailed how the former glamour model has spent £10,000 'if not more' on restoring her home to a cleaner state, with Katie 'having new wallpaper throughout' and picking out new furniture to give her abode a 'fresh feel'.

Insiders added: 'Katie knows she let the house go over the past few months but now she's working hard at getting back on top of her game, and having the mansion looking good again will help.'

In recent months, Katie has been plagued by financial woes and had been battling bankruptcy, following a downward spiral that saw her seek treatment at The Priory.

At the beginning of De-

ember, Katie avoided bankruptcy after coming to an agreement over her tax bill and a close pal allegedly loaned the star £22,000 to bail her out.

Earlier this month, the High Court was told that the petition to make her bankrupt had been dismissed.

Katie's case was heard at a specialist insolvency and companies court in Central London, which estimated her total debts ranged from £250,000 to £500,000.

She was not at the court for the hearing, which lasted less than two minutes.

Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judge Middleton said: 'This case

has been dismissed after the parties concerned reached an out of court agreement.

Court costs of £881 are to be paid in accordance with the terms of the IVO (Individual Voluntary Agreement).'

Outside court, a spokesman for HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) added: 'We are not the lead creditors in this case, but we are happy with the agreement. I can't tell you who the other creditors are in this case at the minute.'

'We don't have a specific date for the first payment and the amount has not been decided. Katie Price was not obliged to turn up to this court hearing today.'



# Sonam Kapoor leads Twitter in damning 'sexist, racist' article that accused Priyanka Chopra of scamming Nick Jonas

Twitter has jumped to the defence of actor Priyanka Chopra after an article was published by a US magazine that accused her of scamming her husband Nick Jonas into marriage

Actor Sonam Kapoor has come to the defence of her colleague Priyanka Chopra against an article published in US' The Cut magazine. Sonam called the piece racist and sexist and disgusting for criticising Priyanka's wedding to American singer Nick Jonas. "For a publication that 'shows women's what they are made of' @TheCut has a lot to answer for. The article on @priyankachopra was sexist, racist and disgusting. Also it's written by a woman which is so sad. It reeks of envy and bitterness. @mRiah shame on you!" Sonam wrote in her tweet. The article, written by Mariah Smith, calls Priyanka a 'global scam artist' whose PR machinery was on the lookout for a romance for her.

It also said Priyanka intends to break Nick's heart and that he simply wanted 'a fling' with an older woman but is now caught up in a 'life sentence', advising him to run away on the horse he arrived to his wedding on. The highly sexist piece also shamed her for buying expensive things and said that their relationship doesn't make sense as Nick would want to stay a bachelor at 24 while Priyanka would be looking to settle down at 34. The article has now been re-

moved by the publication. Journalist Nidhi Razdan and many other Twitter users expressed anger at the article. "What kind of petty hate-mongering garbage is this? If your writer can't handle someone's successful career or keep their sexist/racist over-tones in check, it's their personal problem, and unbecoming of the platform to publish," wrote one. "Oh good, let's have a woman (of color, no less) perpetuate the myth of an older foreign woman en-

trapping and corrupting the wholesome and naive white man. Forget petty. This piece is problematic and embarrassing," commented another. Priyanka and Nick tied the knot over the weekend in Jodhpur's Umaid Bhawan Palace on December 1 and 2. They first exchanged vows in a Christian wedding ceremony that was officiated by his father. On the second day, they tied the knot in a Hindu wedding ceremony. The couple's wedding pictures were released on Tuesday by People and Hello magazines. The couple also hosted a reception in New Delhi on Tuesday, which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It will be followed by another reception in Mumbai for Priyanka's colleagues from Bollywood.



## Priyanka and Nick wedding kiss photo is setting the internet on fire

A photo of Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas's first kiss at their Christian wedding is doing the rounds on social media. The two walked the isle on December 1, and followed Hindu rituals on December 2.



It has almost almost been a week since Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas's fairytale wedding at Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur. Yet, the photos from their marriage functions continue to regale fans and mesmerise all. Priyanka and Nick got hitched in two wedding ceremonies. On December 1, they got married in a Christian wedding and on December 2, they followed Hindu rituals. For the Christian wedding, both were dressed in Ralph Lauren creations. Photos of their kisses from the white wedding rounds, and fans can't

help but ooh and aah at how adorable they are. In one video, you can see Nick and Priyanka share a dance and a kiss, after their wedding. In another video, Nick gets teary-eyed as Priyanka walks down the wedding aisle. Speaking about the wedding, Nick revealed in a magazine, "The emotions were running high during the ceremonies, I think especially during the Western wedding for me," he said. "You know you think your whole life about that moment. Honestly, I could not have imagined it would be



as perfect as it was. It was highly emotional." On December 4, Priyanka and Nick threw a reception in Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi graced the event and gave them his blessing. Priyanka and Nick started first met at Vanity Fair

Oscars Party, but it was at Met Gala 2017 that the two made their public appearance together. However, it was this year that Nick and Priyanka officially started dating each other, and as they say, rest is history.

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