

8 India's choices as America 'asks'

9 Winning back the Valley

13 SCIR Welcomes 2018 Toronto Parliament of World's Religions, Forms Sikh Task Force

30 Priyanka to attend UNICEF Gala in SA



85 South Asian films screened at the 17th NYIFF

'Gypsy': Story of a village kid who rose to the top of Indian Bureaucracy received mixed reactions



"Gypsy", a documentary on the life of Ambassador Dnyaneshwar M Mulay, made by Dhananjay Bhawalekar and Sawani Arjun was selected for screening. The documentary received mixed reaction.

By Ashok Ojha

NEW YORK (TIP): The 17th annual New York Indian Film Festival is a celebration of off-the-track movies produced in South Asia. Launched on April 30 with the screening of 'Lipstick under my Burkha', a story of struggle of women fighting for their freedom and aspirations, the festival was well appreciated by New Yorkers. Approximately 85 shorts, documentaries and feature films from South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh), made in Hindi, English and seven regional languages (Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali) were entered in the festival.

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Also see NYIAFF in pics on Pages 18 & 19

Arnab Goswami's Republic TV to launch on Hotstar, first for a news channel

The much anticipated launch on May 6?



Star India's Uday Shankar (left) with Republic TV Editor-In-Chief Arnab Goswami.

NEW DELHI (TIP): Star India's online streaming service Hotstar has announced that news channel Republic TV will be made available on its platform, a

contd on page 32

US House passes Bill to repeal Obamacare with 217 Ayes and 213 Nays

Next test of strength in the Senate

The rich to benefit from new Republican Healthcare plan

WASHINGTON (TIP)

In what could be seen as a rare victory on the domestic turf for President Trump, the US House of Representatives approved a Bill on Thursday, May 4, to repeal major parts of Obamacare and replace it with a Republican healthcare plan. The passage of the Bill which Republican leadership has been struggling with and having met with disappointment earlier, is the legislative victory for President Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan.

With the 217-213 vote, Republicans obtained just enough support to push the legislation through the House, sending it

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A jubilant Donald Trump congratulates House Republicans after they passed legislation aimed at repealing and replacing Obamacare, during an event in the Rose Garden at the White House, on May 4, 2017 in Washington, DC.

Indian Outsourcing Giant Infosys to create 10,000 jobs in USA

Company says it will open Technology and Innovation office in Indiana in August, followed by more

I.S. Saluja
NEW YORK (TIP): President Trump's comments on Indian companies taking away a larger slice of H1B visa seems to be stirring these companies to make strategic changes to their employment policy. Probably afraid of being



"Building talent pools that define the future of America is what we want to do," Ravi Kumar S., Infosys's president and deputy chief operating officer

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Air India hosts Appreciation and Award Evening

Top 10 Travel partners, 5 Freight forwarders awarded trophies for their performance

I.S. Saluja
NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Air India hosted a meet and greet evening at the Indian Consulate on May 4, 2017 to recognize and thank their travel and cargo partners for

contd on page 6



Air India senior staff pose for a photograph. Seen from L to R: Vinod Kumar, Manager, USA - Cargo; Regional Manager Americas Vandana Sharma; Sangeeta Singh, Regional Manager Accounts, and Mohan Kotheekar, District Manager. Photos / Bidisha Roy



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SURATI'S HOLI HAI AT JERSEY CITY WATER FRONT ATTRACTS THOUSANDS

JERSEY CITY (TIP): with it the spirit of freshness and renewal of colors, hope and celebration. The 2017 Holi festival, organized by Jersey City's nonprofit SURATI for Performing Arts on April 29th in the waterfront area of Exchange Place, Jersey City, celebrated the essence of spring with throwing of vibrant colors, music, dancing, food, drink and cultural performances, fostering a sense of harmony and community.

The weather was perfect and this celebration of the Festival of Colors, in its 9th year, saw its largest turnout this year. Jersey City officials estimated an attendance of almost 8000 people at the event.

Presented this year by &TV, the City of Jersey City, Hudson County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs and Jersey City Cultural Affairs, Surati's Holi Hai was brimming with energy and fun as people smeared color on each other and danced to peppy music.

The festivities began at noon and continued up to 8 PM. Similar to the past celebrations, the event drew people from across the Tri State. Important dignitaries graced the occasion by their presence, including the Indian ambassador to the USA Ms. Riva Ganguly Das, the Mayor of Jersey City - Steven Fulop, representation from the office of Assemblyman Raj Mukherji, Dr. Sudhir Parikh owner of Parikh World and others.

"We are thrilled to see such a large crowd this year and are thankful for our supporters. Holi is a special festival and we are glad to be able to bring this spirit to Jersey City with dance, music and theatrical performances by different community groups" said Rimli Roy, Founder & Artistic Director of Surati.

The day began with cultural performances by children from the community and Surati students, followed by live music, stand-up comedy and plenty of dance performances.



Surati team performs a dance. Rimli Roy is seen in the front



Guests at the event included Consul General of India Riva Ganguly Das, Mayor of Jersey City Steven Fulop and Dr. Sudhir Parikh. Seen here, from L to R: Dr. Sudhir Parikh, Mrs. Parikh, CG Riva Ganguly Das and Rimli Roy.

Amongst the featured performances was a thought-provoking theatrical performance by actresses from In Full Color, founded by playwright and director Summer Dawn Hortillosa and for lingering revelers performances by live bands, including a stellar performance by the acoustic band Eventually Epic with vocals by Sachin Premasuthan, that play across a spectrum of musical genres ranging from classic rock to Bollywood beats. The Beacons- a student live band who will soon be travelling to India to raise funds for a cause made their presence that afternoon.

Performers from the Surati professional and student team presented traditional and contemporary Indian dance and music forms. The Surati touring company opened the show with a medley of classical and folk dance forms to fusion music led by Assistant Artistic Director Cinna Chandran and choreographed by Artistic Director Rimli Roy.

Women of Distinction and Good Guys celebrated

NEW YORK (TIP): The Center for the Women of New York held its 30th Anniversary Luncheon on April 29th, 2017 at the Douglaston Manor in Queens, New York. The annual awards luncheon celebrates "Women of Distinction" who fill leadership roles in the community and "Good Guys," men who support women's efforts to achieve equal rights.

Some of New York's most prominent women and men in business, politics, media, health and education were honored at the luncheon.

As for the "Women in Leadership" awards, CWNY recognized six women from diverse backgrounds for their advocacy and support for women. Honorees included Ann-Margaret Carrozza, Esq.- former NYS Assemblywoman and Elder Law Attorney, Carole DeSaram-former President NOW NY and NOW National Board, Merle Hoffman-American Journalist, Activist and Healthcare Pioneer, Jasmin Moshipur, MD- Medical Director, Elmhurst Hospital, Malini Shah-Entrepreneur and Community Activist and Yoselin Genao-Estrella- Executive Director, Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens.

The event also featured "Good Guy" awards, given to men who support women's efforts to achieve the goal of equal rights. Honorees included Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi - Chairman, NYS Assembly Committee on



Among those honored on the occasion were Malini Shah (third from left) and Harbachan Singh (extreme left), multiple award winners in their illustrious career of social and community service

Social Services, Harbachan Singh - Past President, Queens Civic Congress, Past President Saul Weprin Dem. Club and Reverend Ned Wight - Interim Senior Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.

Many notable political and community leaders were among the guests that mingled together during CWNY's Networking Reception amidst the backdrop of a beautiful Spring day at the Douglaston Manor. Musical Entertainment was provided by Bill Gati and attendees participated in Raffles and a Silent Auction.

The Center for the Women of New York was founded by Ann Juliano Jawin, the author of one of the first books dedicated to women's need for financial independence and equal opportunity in the workplace. Part of the "Second Wave" of women's liberation in the '70's, Ann joined the National Organization for Women and became Chair of the Task Force for Education and Employment. As a career guidance specialist, Ann saw the results of inequality in the workforce as it affected all levels of women seeking financial stability and career opportunities. The Center for Women, founded in 1987, has shown that women working together can be a powerful force. The goal of the organization is to be a resource center for women and advocate for women's rights and full equality in our society. CWNY currently operates out of their office and classroom space donated by Queens Borough President Melinda Katz at Queens Borough Hall in Kew Gardens, Queens during the renovation of a landmarked building at Fort Totten in Bayside, Queens.

GOPIO Launches International Chamber of Commerce



GICC USA launch with lighting of the lamp (L to R): GOPIO's Tri-State New York Area Coordinator Lal Motwani, Parikh Media Chairman Dr. Sudhir Parikh, GOPIO Intl. Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, GOPIO Intl. Coordinator Dr. Rajeev Mehta, Consul General Riva Ganguly Das, GOPIO-New York President Beena Kothari, AIA President Govind Munjal, Assemblyman Raj Mukherjee and GICC Co-Chair Prakash Shah

GOPIO officers and State Bank of India officers after the GICC launch in New York, from l. to r.: Dinesh Mittal, Dr. Asha Samant, Shailesh Naik, Nami Kaur, Shelly Nichani, Kenny Desai, H.R. Shah, Lal Motwani, SBI Country Head Ashwini Tewari, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Beena Kothari, SBI CEO R. Viswanathan, Varghese Ninan, Rajul Shah, Dr. Sudhir Parikh, GICC Co-Chair Prakash Shah, Meera Banta and Dharmatma Saran

NEW YORK CITY(TIP): GOPIO, the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (www.gopio.net), together with the New York Consul General of India, announced the USA launch of GOPIO's International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) at the Indian Consulate in New York on April 28, 2017. GICC was inaugurated earlier at India's business capital in Mumbai on Jan. 10, 2017 by the Governor of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu Shri Vidyasagar Rao.

Honored chief guest Mrs. Riva Ganguly Das, Consul General of India and GOPIO's elected GOPIO officials hosted this event for the Indian Diaspora of the New York TriState region. The inauguration event was attended by approximately 150 members of the NRI (Non-Indian Resident) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) community. The Networking Cocktail started at 6:30 pm, followed by the Launch Ceremony at 7:00pm and Dinner at 8:15pm.

Master of Ceremony Prakash Shah, Co-Chair of GICC kicked off the event, with introductory remarks, "GOPIO has tapped into a long-felt need for an international networking organization for the business People of Indian Origin. GICC has gotten off to a flying start after the January 10, 2017 global launch in Mumbai (India) by the Maharashtra Governor, with requests

from around the world pouring in to open GICC chapters in all the major cities". Shah stated GICC objectives as, "GICC aims to bring together the business people of the Indian Diaspora, providing them the networking opportunity on a common worldwide platform."

Indian Consul General Riva Ganguly Das welcomed the attendees to the Consulate for the US launch of GICC, commenting "GOPIO is the only organization that truly represents the interests of the worldwide 30 million Indian Diaspora." She praised this latest GOPIO venture launch remarking, "GOPIO's GICC initiative is most timely and very much needed at this time."

Other speakers included H. R. Shah, Chair of the GICC launch; GOPIO Life Member and Parikh Media Chairman Dr. Sudhir Parikh and New Jersey Assemblyman Raj Mukherji.

H R Shah, this year's recipient of Padma Shri award from Indian President, who Chairs the GOPIO's Board of Advisors and is Chairman of TV Asia, quoting a number of key statistics on Diaspora businesses explained why an effort such as GICC was very much needed. Mr. Shah also served as the GICC Launch Chair.

Event sponsor State Bank of India (SBI) was represented by senior officers at the

launch. SBI's new USA Country Head Ashwini Tewari said that SBI fully supports GOPIO efforts and SBI see great opportunity ahead to work with Indian owned businesses.

Dr. Thomas Abraham Chairman of GOPIO International presented the details of GICC including the genesis of GICC, "The Biennial Convention in 2016 held in New York became a corner stone for GOPIO to be more involved in business, technology, investment and philanthropic activities to mobilize Diaspora resources for the common good. At this meeting, GOPIO General Body decided to initiate GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) as a business platform for the Indian Diaspora."

"GOPIO International is the most networked Indian Diaspora organization which is a brand, and unlike other chambers, GOPIO International Chamber of Commerce (GICC) will cater to the Indian Diaspora businesses and entrepreneurs and will be the only globally networked Indian Chamber of Commerce," Dr. Abraham added

GICC would serve as a non-geographical chapter of GOPIO International and will create worldwide networking opportunity for people of Indian origin in business and professional services. As there are over 3

million businesses owned by People of Indian Origin around the world within the Indian Diaspora of 30 million, GICC provides a great opportunity for one to become a Sponsor Member or Life Member. GICC will encourage and promote increasing levels of business investments by and among NRI/PIOs in various parts of the world.

GICC will reach out and set up chapters in neighborhoods with large number of Indian owned businesses and services. It will also launch chapters in small towns, cities, counties, states/provinces and countries. Hopefully GICC will emerge as the most networked Indian Diaspora business group. Unlike other chambers, GICC's biggest advantage and benefit to its members and chapters will be that it will be the most globally networked Indian Diaspora business group.

The launch program was put together by GOPIO's Tri-State New York Area Coordinator Lal Motwani and GOPIO New York President Beena Kothari and was supported by other GOPIO Chapters in the New York area; GOPIO-Upper New York, GOPIO-Connecticut, GOPIO-Central Jersey and GOPIO-North Jersey. The event was sponsored by the State Bank of India in New York

Nassau County Offers Free Heroin Overdose Prevention Seminar in Port Washington

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): Nassau County Executive Edward P. Mangano, along with County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton, are continuing to combat the heroin epidemic and save lives by joining with the Port Washington Police Department to host a free Overdose Prevention Seminar on Tuesday, May 16, 2017 from 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. at Manorhaven Village Hall, located at 33 Manorhaven Blvd, Port Washington.

"This free Heroin Overdose Prevention Seminar is just one part of my administration's four-pronged approach to fighting this public health crisis - including education, awareness, enforcement and treatment," said County Executive

Mangano. "These trainings prevent drug-related deaths in our community, save residents lives and keep families whole."

Residents will be trained to administer Naloxone - the lifesaving antidote to a heroin overdose - and learn the warning signs of drug addiction, new and effective treatment options, personal stories of recovery, and more.

Approximately 210 Nassau residents died from heroin and prescription painkillers in 2015. Hundreds more were saved from overdoses by those trained to administer Naloxone. Naloxone has been used by paramedics and emergency room doctors for decades, to save lives. A 2006 State law

allows citizens to administer Naloxone in an attempt to save a life, without fear of liability. Nassau County has already provided Naloxone training for more than 7,800 people, at 158 trainings, since September 2012. At least 50 trainees have reported using that knowledge - and the Naloxone kit they were given - to revive someone overdosing on heroin or painkillers, and save their lives. Naloxone is administered through a nasal spray, and is provided at no charge to trainees over the age of 18.

Social Work and OASAS Continuing Education Credits are available for the training, as the Nassau County Office of

Mental Health and Chemical Dependency - and the Mental Health Association of Nassau County - is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers.

All residents are welcome to attend, but seating is limited. To attend the two-hour seminar, provided by the Nassau County Department of Human Services, please RSVP

at www.nassaucountyny.gov/overdosetrainin g For dates and locations of additional Overdose Prevention Seminars, visit www.nassaucountyny.gov/overdose.



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Air India hosts Appreciation and Award Evening



A time to meet and greet. Guests enjoyed the company and the food.

their great contribution in the growth of the airline. Speaking with The Indian Panorama Air India Regional Manager Vandana Sharma said the travel partners and the cargo forwarders are an integral part of Air India. They are the ones who reach out to customers and, in fact, they are equivalent of Air India booking offices.

Ms Sharma appreciated the Consul General for providing the venue to host the event where, she said, all felt at home. Indian Consulate is India abroad and Air India connects India and Indians with rest of the world. In this the two share a common link.

Whereas the event was held to recognize and award top performers- 10 among travel partners and 5 among cargo forwarders, who were presented plaques for their performances, Ms Sharma took the opportunity to also announce the new direct capital to capital flight between Dulles, Washington International airport and Delhi airport which is being launched on July 7.

Two new officials of Air India were also introduced on the occasion. Mr. Vinod Kumar is the new Manager USA for cargo while Ms Tshering Sherpa has taken over as airport manager at Newark.

Consul Srinivas Rao represented the Consul General on the occasion. About 100 travel partners freight forwarders attended the meet and greet event. Also present were media persons from various media houses.

A highlight of the evening was an entertainment program in the form of a medley of dances presented by Surati, a dance group promoted by the talented Rimli Roy.

Sikh from Connecticut receives Honor from FBI Director Jim Comey

WASHINGTON (TIP): Swarnjit Singh Khalsa President of Sikh Sewak Society International USA and Member Commission of City Plan of Norwich became first Sikh of United States to achieve FBI Director's Community Leadership Award.

The Award Ceremony was held in Washington DC at FBI Headquarters in which FBI Director Jim Comey presented the award to Swarnjit Singh Khalsa.

Swarnjit Singh Khalsa did his Master's degree in Computer Science from New Jersey Institute of Technology and came to Norwich in 2010.

He has been successfully doing business in Norwich and owns Gasoline and Real Estate Business.

Swarnjit is also Ambassador for Department of Justice in their AMS program and has been doing presentations for First Responders and Police officers.

Director's Community Leadership award is given to 56 People all over America.

Each candidate goes through extensive vetting process and all his work for community is taken into consideration.

Swarnjit Singh Khalsa being a Member of Inter faith clergy association of Norwich has participated and organized many vigils and has been active in raising voice for Minority group and LGBT Community.



Swarnjit Singh with FBI Director Jim Comey



Family of Swarnjit Singh with FBI Director Jim Comey



Recipients of FBI Director's Community Leadership Award. Swarnjit Singh Khalsa was one among a group of 56 awarded from the entire USA

COMCAST CELEBRATES ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

Xfinity X1 Customers Will Have Access to On Demand Asian American Movies, Shows, Music, KPOP, and More

PHILADELPHIA, PA (TIP): Comcast, May 1, announced plans to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month by offering its Xfinity TV customers a special collection of movies, shows, music and more during the entire month of May. The curated collection on Xfinity On Demand provides customers more than 300 hours of free content in addition to over 1,200 hours of movies, TV series, and music featuring popular international actors and artists. Top films include: Yellow Face, Life of Pi, Stand Up for Justice, 30 Minutes or Less and Knife Fight, among others.

Additional features available for Xfinity X1 customers include the ability to access content by simply saying "International" or "Asian American Heritage Month" into the X1

voice remote as well as access to Watchable short-form web content.

From Bollywood to Asian television, cinema and music, customers will be able to view and listen to original content in multiple languages including, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, and Tagalog. Free programming will also be available during selected dates throughout the month with entertainment from programmers such as: Eros International, GMA Pinoy TV, MyxTV, The Filipino Channel, TVK-Pop On Demand, and TV JAPAN among others.

"Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebrates the culture, traditions, and history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders," said Rebecca Simpson, executive director International Strategy.

"Comcast has a long history of supporting diversity, and we embrace the opportunity to honor the Asian American heritage and community with this exciting celebratory collection."

Those customers looking for music that resonates with Asian Americans of all cultures can look forward to a robust offering of music videos and original content provided by Music Choice. Music Choice will feature special content and video playlists including 'Best of Bruno Mars', 'Far East Movement' 'PSY's Top Hits' and 'BTS Behind the Lines'. "Music Choice is excited to partner with Comcast Xfinity in offering unique content that celebrates Asian American talent," stated Liz Main, director Affiliate Marketing & Partnerships from Music Choice.

For more Asian American news and entertainment check out: xfinity.com/asia.

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GUEST COMMENT

Hire the best: IT companies must seize the moment

Indian IT companies have built their fortunes on outsourcing, but now their business model is under pressure because of a rising tide of nationalistic politics in several countries, particularly the US. The issue has escalated ever since President Donald Trump took over. He hit out at outsourcing during electioneering, and recently, norms regarding the grant of H-1B visas were tightened, making it more difficult for Indian IT workers to work in the US.

Infosys CEO Vishal Sikka's statement that the company will hire 10,000 American workers is a peace offering to the US political establishment. Alibaba founder Jack Ma, who pledged to create one million jobs in the US, took the lead and others followed suit. Out of two lakh or so workers that Infosys employs worldwide, only 25,000 work in the US on H-1B visas. Indian IT companies, including Infosys, typically focus on the lowest end of the food chain, and are thus squeezed tighter than others. Indian workers on H-1B visas may often have been paid less than their counterparts in the industry, but the work that they perform for their foreign clients is essential, while not particularly remunerative.

There is no doubt that such workers will be needed, and may well be the mainstay of the outsourcing efforts of Indian IT companies. However, what Sikka and other IT CEOs need to focus on is raising the bar by hiring the best talent they can, and using it to improve their work profile. The base is strong, what is needed is a recalibration of effort and a focus on the aspects that deliver the most - social media, mobile, analytics and cloud. Major IT companies are putting in their best talent in these fields, and now that Indian IT companies are aggressively hiring Americans, they should try to get the top talent and build high-end products. The challenges posed by the new visa regime can be turned into opportunities, given the right leadership and long-term perspective on the part of the investors.

(Tribune India)

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AS I SEE IT

India's choices as America 'asks'

Indian government will have to take a call, and quick, on how to engage with the U.S. on Afghanistan



By Suhasini Haidar

During his inaugural address in January 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy famously asked his fellow Americans: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." In 2017, it is a question that U.S. President Donald Trump is posing to the world, as he begins to set his imprint on American foreign policy.

In the past few weeks, the one campaign promise Mr. Trump's actions have held fast to is "America First" and to make every other country "pay its dues". As a result, he has backed away from his earlier tough position on declaring China a "currency manipulator" after his meeting with President Xi Jinping, but the quid pro quo is clear: China must rein in North Korea, particularly its plans for a nuclear test.

ASKED TO PAY UP: Mr. Trump's decision to dispatch Vice President Mike Pence, Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to meet allies in Europe and Asia was received with a sense of relief after worries that he would retrench America's presence globally. But the message of reassurance came with a rider, as Mr. Trump met NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg this month and then with Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, and stressed the need for NATO allies to "pay what they owe", 2% of their GDP, for security. Similar messages were pressed home to Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Despite bombing a Syrian airbase, as reprisal for what it said was a chemical attack by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, America's engagement in the region hasn't increased either. Mr. Trump's meetings with Egyptian, Jordanian and Turkish leaders all contained a common demand: that each of their countries step up its fight to counter the Islamic State (IS) in the region. Security Council representatives visiting the White House this week were reminded that the U.S. pays for 22% of the UN's budget and almost 30% for UN peacekeeping. Mr. Trump termed this "unfair".

It is in this context that last week's visit to the region by U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster must be studied.

To begin with, the timing of the visit seemed linked to the bombing of what the U.S. Army claimed were hideouts of IS-Khorasan (IS-K) terrorists in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, using what they crudely referred to as the "mother of all bombs" (MOAB), the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb.

Those hoping the bombing meant the U.S. was now showing an interest in its commitment to security in Afghanistan hoped too early, as the bombing has not been followed by any clarification of U.S.



For now, US boots are firmly on Afghanistan ground

strategy. Instead, once the dust settles in Nangarhar, and the U.S. reverts control of the areas pounded by the largest non-nuclear weapon in the American arsenal, a closer analysis of what was achieved will be necessary. If anything, bombing IS-K targets at that time took the focus away from the Taliban, which then carried out their single most deadly attack on the Afghan Army in the past decade and a half at the Mazar-e-Sharif military base.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSES: Setting aside the MOAB debate, however, Gen. McMaster's visit to Kabul, Islamabad and New Delhi fits into the pattern of the Trump administration's foreign policy mantra: Ask not what the U.S. can do for Afghanistan, he is understood to have told his interlocutors, ask what you can do for the U.S. in Afghanistan.

Even in his apparently rough dealings with the Pakistani generals, Gen. McMaster pushed for action against groups operating in Afghanistan, avoiding the language of the Obama administration, that included the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad in their public comments on Pakistan. It would be safe to assume that given the pattern of the past few weeks, the question "ask not..." will also be put in far clearer terms by Mr. Trump to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when he visits the White House, as he is expected to later this summer.

For India, then, the challenge is twofold: to decide not just what, if anything, it is prepared to do to help the U.S. in security and peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, but also what it would like to see in clear terms in return. The former has been debated in hushed tones since September 2015, when Mr. Obama is understood to have asked India for a commitment on defense participation in Afghanistan.

While "boots on the ground" leads to instant recoil in India, and even the Afghan government has repeatedly said it does not require any more foreign presence, there are other ways India is going to be asked to contribute: from providing defense equipment, to training soldiers in Afghanistan (as opposed to in India, where at present capacity, only about 300 Afghan soldiers are being trained), as well as technical teams on the ground to repair and maintain military hardware.

From the American perspective, given

the growing attrition of Afghan Army forces and uptick in violence in 2016, the need for more assistance from India is clear. As a western diplomat said recently, "Mr. Modi must know that his meeting with Mr. Trump is a 'Yes or No' moment. If it is Yes, he will have to deliver quickly. If it is No, that too will have deep consequences." Hedging in the manner Delhi was earlier able to do over joint patrols in the Indo-Pacific may no longer be an option.

FAST-FORWARD ON FACTS: Apart from Afghanistan, it is also clear that defense ties will drive the India-U.S. relationship for the foreseeable future. The U.S. wants India to move quickly on the other 'foundational agreements', the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation as India completes formalities for the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement this week.

On hardware too, there will be the "ask", as the U.S. looks for Indian defense purchases, and "America First" clashes with "Make in India" about where that hardware will be built. India's concerns on tightening H-1B visas will be met with the American demand that Indian multinational corporations and tech companies operating in the U.S. hire more Americans and give more concessions on trade and intellectual property rights. It is unclear whether India's demands for American heavy-lifting on the Nuclear Suppliers Group membership issue this June or on climate change financing will be taken very seriously given Mr. Trump's other preoccupations.

In the face of this altered pattern of engagement that India must navigate with the new America, then, Mr. Modi has limited options ahead of his meeting with Mr. Trump: to coast along and ride out the impending storm of demands, or to reject the transnationalism inherent in these "asks from America" and steer his own course. In Afghanistan in particular, India must bolster its bilateral delivery on defense assistance, rather than be co-opted in the U.S.'s plans which frequently change according to its own cost-benefit analysis. In so doing, India may also recover some of the equilibrium in its ties with other world powers that have seemed more distant in recent years.

(Source: The Hindu)

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WINNING BACK THE VALLEY



Resistance is a way of life in Kashmir valley. Girls protest against police in a school in Srinagar



BY MK NARAYANAN

“What is most crucial is to make an open and impassioned appeal for peace in the Valley accompanied by meetings and consultations at several levels. No segment should be excluded, including separatists and the Hurriyat. Some of the ideas set out in the 'backchannel' proposals (2005-2008) should be revived. Jobs for Kashmiri youth must be a priority and a massive job-oriented program launched. India could consider swallowing its pride and reopen talks with Pakistan, not so much hoping that Pakistan would cooperate but to assuage the 'hard-liners' in Kashmir. Detaching from a muscular policy to a more reasoned one has become essential", Says the author.

The deteriorating situation in Jammu and Kashmir, together with strained relations among the Agenda for Alliance partners in the State, obviously prompted the meeting between Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The April 24 meeting covered various measures to deal with the violent protests that have rocked the Valley lately, but the main outcome seemed to have been that the Bharatiya Janata Party-Peoples Democratic Party alliance would continue.

The BJP-PDP 'soft alliance' may have survived another rough patch. Kashmir, however, does not seem to be going anywhere. This may be par for the course as far as J&K is concerned, for in the evaluation of sceptics the future of Kashmir is almost always more of the same. The argument is that Delhi is, by and large, uninterested in changing its course, and is content with providing puerile explanations for the lives lost and the recurring crises that afflict the State. For alliance partner PDP, having lost its way as far as governance is concerned, it is currently more intent on clinging to the Alliance and the Srinagar gaddi. The future of Kashmir, hence, is nobody's concern.

If, during the latter part of 2016, Kashmir was portrayed as confronting one of its gravest crises ever, the situation in the Valley today is to all intents and purposes far more complex. The violent protests, with a high number of killed and injured, have hardly come down; the patterns set following the death of Burhan Wani in an encounter in July 2016 also continue.

No one in the Establishment, either in Srinagar or in Delhi, seems to know why the violence is continuing. The unchanging nature of the Kashmir scene since late 2016 and extending into 2017 is beginning to worry even those who have for long been inured to violence and ideas of a change in plan, their sole concern having been ensuring that Kashmir remains an integral part of India.

Today it is not so much the dreaded foreign militants as the 'unattached militants' who are responsible for the bulk of the current wave of violence. They do not appear to have a direct link to pro-Pakistan militant outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, though some linkages with the local Hizbul Mujahideen may exist.

The leaders are unrecognizable, and specific causes undecipherable. Pakistan has not moved away and continues to instigate violence, the latest attack being on an Army camp in Kupwara (in which three Army men were killed), patterned on earlier attacks in Uri and Pathankot. The new threat comes from an entirely different source.

Consequently, the refrain of external instigation and Pakistan's role is inadequate to explain the current imbroglio. Urging the security forces to exercise restraint and avoid collateral damage during operations also makes little sense. The issues are far deeper than urging all stakeholders to allay the apprehensions and

misgivings of the Kashmir youth. Something very different has occurred and something new needs to be attempted.

The unorganized - and even divided - nature of the protest movement carries the danger that it could turn into an Intifada, a kind of people's uprising with no known leaders, and increasing numbers of trouble-makers, all portraying themselves as leaders of the movement. It carries deep risks for both domestic and international reasons. It is something that India must prevent before it actually takes shape, and 'martyrdom' becomes the new normal.

The moot question is whether India can, and is willing, to handle the truth - bite the bullet in other words. India could continue to acknowledge that those responsible for the past violence have not abandoned the scene, but will need to admit at the same time that a change is taking place behind the scene. New faces of militancy had emerged. Amongst these are a large number who were previously seen as India's hope in the battle for normalcy in Kashmir, and were willing to stake their future in India.

Since 2008, the Valley has witnessed several waves of unrest. In 2008 and 2010 Kashmir went through a particularly difficult period, but the main instigators then were those who were trained by Pakistan, and the bulk of those involved were inspired by Pakistan. Since 2016, however, it is the 'unattached militant' who has been in the forefront of the struggle. What could be the explanation for this

As in many other areas, truth tends to be sporadic here, and reality obscure. It would seem that after the dangerous 1990s, militancy has once again regained social acceptance. To an ever increasing number of youth, the profile of violence stands in contrast to the hypocritical utterances of the authorities in Srinagar and Delhi.

As of today, the Agenda for Alliance, the PDP, Hurriyat leaders like Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the erstwhile secessionist leaders like Yasin Malik all stand marginalized. Anger is the dominant sentiment, as epitomized by the violent protests and the near total boycott of the recent Srinagar poll. The message sent out is clear. Peace cannot be enforced by authoritarian means or by fiat.

Episode upon episode, Kashmir is steadily unravelling. Normalcy is tending to be episodic. Over and above this is the emergence of what can only be termed as 'strategic falsehood'. Social media tweets and retweets are altering ground realities. Hyperbole is making a mockery of truth and providing scope for still more lies. The only realities are: the dead, the wounded, the martyr and, of course, the authorities who are the villains.

The authorities are losing the propaganda war. Social media is putting out its own account of events and encounters, aided and abetted by several thousands of social media accounts operating from across the border. This is what is

providing oxygen to the 'unattached militant', and more significantly, leading to a 'rainbow coalition' between the 'unattached militant' and the 'Deep State' in Pakistan.

Counsels of despair are not of any use. Putting the blame on the ruling coalition for the present morass in Kashmir, as former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has done recently, hardly helps. His assertion that India is heading towards disaster is again of little use. The suggestions that he has to offer are a repeat of what has previously been said and tried.

Restraining and restricting Pakistan's ability to fish in troubled waters will not be easy. Any expectation that the U.S. would lean sufficiently on Pakistan to impel the latter to avoid meddling in Kashmir needs to be given up. Pakistan is crucial for the U.S. to sort out its Afghan imbroglio. Within Kashmir, the Hurriyat has, today, lost much of its relevance. The PDP-BJP alliance is floundering and has few real insights into what is taking place. Delhi seems far removed from the reality of the grim scenario unfolding in the Valley. Leaving matters to intelligence and security agencies, and the Army would be the least viable option.

Where do we go from here? To begin with, policymakers must ponder deeply as to why ordinary citizens are prepared to gravitate to areas where actual encounters are taking place risking death and injury even though they are not involved in the protests.

Resorting to pyrotechnics such as the novel idea of tying a protester to the bonnet of a security vehicle and driving it through a crowd of agitators are best avoided. Today's agitators are angry and reckless, but it is they who are redefining the nature of protests and reshaping the contours of the movement.

The situation thus demands a complete makeover. There is a need to go back to the drawing board and effect changes in Kashmir's Constitution that were introduced post the 1960s. This would help establish a measure of credibility to India's claims that it is not seeking to undermine the autonomy that Kashmir prizes so much. What these are will need to be carefully worked out by teams of constitutional and other experts.

Immediately, however, what is most crucial is to make an open and impassioned appeal for peace in the Valley accompanied by meetings and consultations at several levels. No segment should be excluded, including separatists and the Hurriyat. Some of the ideas set out in the 'backchannel' proposals (2005-2008) should be revived. Jobs for Kashmiri youth must be a priority and a massive job-oriented program launched. India could consider swallowing its pride and reopen talks with Pakistan, not so much hoping that Pakistan would cooperate but to assuage the 'hard-liners' in Kashmir. Detaching from a muscular policy to a more reasoned one has become essential.

(The author is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal)

One dies in Balochistan violence after Hindu man arrested for 'blasphemy'

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A 13-year-old boy died in aerial firing by police on Thursday after an angry mob in Pakistan's Balochistan demanded they hand over a Hindu man arrested on blasphemy charges.

Prakash Kumar, 35, was arrested from Hub on Wednesday after locals complained he allegedly sent blasphemous content via WhatsApp, police was quoted as saying by local media.

Police said they had lodged a case against the accused while a cellphone, from which the suspect allegedly shared blasphemous content, has been seized. A local court has sent the suspect to jail for further interrogation in the case.

A mob soon gathered outside the Hub city police station demanding that Kumar be handed over to them so they could "punish" him. When law enforcement refused, the crowd turned violent.

The police managed to disperse the crowd using tear gas shelling and aerial firing, and also took scores of protesters into custody.

According to police, a teenager died in the violence. The boy was a resident of Pathan Colony and became a victim of aerial firing during the clash which took place near Gaddani bus stop in Hub.

Blasphemy, which carries the death penalty, is a sensitive issue in Pakistan, with allegations often prompting mob violence.

Vigilantes have murdered 65 people over blasphemy allegations since 1990, according to research compiled by the Centre for Research and Security Studies think-tank. (IANS)

Prachanda govt in crisis after coalition partner pulls support over judge's impeachment

KATHMANDU (TIP): The Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'-led government in Nepal on Monday received a major blow after one of the ruling coalition partners, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, decided to withdraw from the government over the impeachment motion against the chief justice.

A meeting of the party central committee decided to pull out support following the impeachment motion registered in Parliament against Chief Justice Sushila Karki by the two other ruling coalition parties, Nepali Congress and CPN (Maoist Centre), on Sunday. There was no immediate reaction from the Prime Minister's Office over the fate of the coalition of seven parties.

"The decision to impeach Karki by the ruling Nepali Congress and Maoist Centre is an attack on the judiciary and our party does not support such a move," the Rastriya Prajatantra Party said announcing its decision to leave the government. Nepal has seen hectic political developments following the decision to impeach the first woman chief justice, with Nepal's home minister Bimalendra Nidhi quitting his post on Sunday over the impeachment decision.

With just two weeks to go for the first phase of local level elections on May 14, the series of political incidents has put the fate of the polls in a limbo, with the resignation of the home minister adding to the quandary ahead of the polls. The home minister is in charge of overall security of the country. (IANS)

Nepal's first woman chief justice suspended after impeachment motion filed

KATHMANDU (TIP): The first female judge to head Nepal's Supreme Court was suspended after Parliament members filed an impeachment motion accusing her of bias and interfering with executive powers. Sushila Karki was suspended automatically after the motion signed by nearly half the members in Parliament was registered, Supreme Court spokesman Mahendra Nath Upadhaya said on Monday. As chief justice, Karki held one of the highest positions ever held by a woman in Nepal. She was known for zero tolerance against corruption. The motion filed late Sunday and signed by members of Nepal's two largest ruling parties accused Karki of interfering with executive powers and issuing biased decisions. (AP)

Pakistan committed to resolve all issues with India through talks: Foreign secretary Tehmina Janjua

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan was committed to resolve all outstanding issues, including the Kashmir dispute, with India through talks, foreign secretary Tehmina Janjua said on Thursday.

Janjua made the remarks during a delegation-level meeting with Japanese minister of state for foreign affairs Nobuo Kishi here, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

She briefed the Japanese delegation on Pakistan's efforts to reach out to Afghanistan and India as part of the Prime Minister's vision for peaceful neighbourhood, it said.

"She also reiterated Pakistan's commitment to dialogue with India for the resolution of all outstanding issues including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute," it said.

Janjua reaffirmed Pakistan's readiness to make constructive contributions to the promotion of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

She also apprised the delegation of Pakistan's credentials for the membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), while emphasising the need for a criteria based and non-discriminatory approach for new members.

During the meeting, the two sides



reviewed the state of bilateral relations and the evolving peace and security scenario in their respective regions.

The foreign secretary highlighted the importance that Pakistan attached to its relations with Japan and underscored the need to further strengthen mutually beneficial economic partnership with focus on promoting trade and investments. During the two-day visit, Kishi also called upon Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the national security

adviser and the ministers for defence, water & power. Kishi witnessed an exchange of notes signing ceremony of loan agreement for the Islamabad-Burhan line transmission project.

His visit coincides with the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan. It also marks the 60th anniversary of his grandfather Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi's visit to Pakistan in May 1957. (PTI)

Former Afghan warlord Hekmatyar returns to Kabul after 20 years

KABUL (TIP): A former warlord branded the "Butcher of Kabul" returned to the Afghan capital Thursday, met by uneasy residents two decades after leaving the city where he stands accused of killing thousands of people.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former prime minister, has returned to mainstream political life after his dormant Hezb-i-Islami militant group signed a peace deal with the government last September which sparked revulsion from human rights groups and residents of the capital.

His convoy of several hundred vehicles to Kabul on Thursday, mainly pickup trucks equipped with machine guns, was greeted by hundreds of onlookers, including supporters bearing the green party flag and flowers.

As it progressed through the capital's main thoroughfares he was joined by hundreds of cars ferrying people waving flags, singing the national anthem or chanting "Welcome to Kabul, Honourable Hekmatyar" in Pashto.

Hekmatyar earned his bloody nickname for laying siege to Kabul while during the 1992-1996 civil war, bombarding it with rockets that inflicted some of the worst damage in nearly 40 years of conflict, destroying one-third of the city and killing tens of thousands of civilians.

The peace agreement inked in September marked a symbolic victory for the government, which has struggled



to revive peace talks with the more powerful Taliban, but has also fuelled fears of more political division.

Some of the city's residents greeted Hekmatyar's return with hope, such as 35-year-old Jamshed, who goes by one name and who told AFP the "rare happy news" meant the warlord's influence could help improve security.

For others, memories of death and destruction in the capital came rushing back.

"He will be surprised to see Kabul rebuilt again," said one wry onlooker who did not wish to give his name.

Others like 20-year-old metal worker Edress Arabzada, could not forget the past but were pragmatic about the future.

Hekmatyar was the "chief destroyer" of Kabul, Arabzada told AFP, adding the warlord should apologise for the spilling the blood of innocent people.

But, he added, "we welcome his arrival to Afghanistan if it leads to peace and stability".

Cucumber seller Sayed Mohammad, 52, agreed.

"All the warlords are corrupt and have blood on their hands," he told AFP. "But, we welcome (Hekmatyar) to Kabul because we are tired of war and conflict."

Afghanistan has suffered near-continuous fighting since the Soviet invasion of 1979, and beleaguered security forces are currently struggling to beat back the resurgent Taliban, with more than one third of the country outside government control.

Hekmatyar is the latest in a series of controversial figures that Kabul has sought to reintegrate by granting judicial immunity for past crimes, and many residents who spoke to AFP called for him to apologise and be prosecuted.

Some were more accepting of the rehabilitation of the warlords, including figures such as Abdul Rashid Dostum, currently the country's first vice president.

"I do not think, Hekmatyar's arrival to Kabul will not make a difference... We want him to continue a normal life like other warlords in Afghanistan," said drinks seller Mohammad Nasim.

Hekmatyar first returned to public life on Saturday at a gathering in Laghman province, two hours east of Kabul. (AFP)

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USHA Denounces Turkish Offer to Negotiate the Kashmir Dispute



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan being welcomed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Photo courtesy PTI

ATLANTA (TIP): "The US Hindu Alliance (USHA), representing 3 million Hindus in America, strongly denounces Turkey's desire to intervene in the internal affairs of India. We also ask the Government of India to strongly reject Turkey's offer for mediation in the dispute over Kashmir between India and Pakistan", said a May 1 press statement from the organization.

"On the eve of his two-day trip to India, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had suggested that India should be open to a multilateral dialogue on the issue of Kashmir, in which Turkey would be willing to play an important role.

Such statements only add to worsen the law and order condition in the state of Jammu & Kashmir and promote greater antagonism against India. It is this type of statements by Muslim leaders and organizations outside of India that is fueling the hatred towards Hindus and India among Kashmir's small but active Muslim separatist population.

"When Turkey continues to occupy Arab territory that had been part of Syria and incorporated the Hatay province into the Republic of Turkey just as Pakistan has occupied parts of Jammu & Kashmir, it has no moral right to offer such mediation services to India. Even if its motives are benign and it has moral authority, the Kashmir dispute is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and no other country has the right to interfere and further vitiate the atmosphere.

"The dispute between India and Pakistan involves the annexation of territory Pakistan had seized through force, which India has consistently referred to as Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and its illegal transfer of some of the same territory to the People's Republic of China.

"It is a well known fact that Pakistan had conducted a decades long proxy war against India using its homegrown Jihadi terror groups. This has destroyed the image of Islam and Muslims worldwide. As the leader of a prominent Islamic country, Turkey has the obligation to stop terrorism emanating from the Pakistani Soil. We hope Prime Minister Erdogan will genuinely pursue a policy against Jihadi Terrorism everywhere as Turkey also had suffered losses due to terror attacks on its own soil".

US army photographer captured fatal blast that took her life

WASHINGTON (TIP): The US Army has released two photographs that show the moment an accidental mortar tube explosion killed five people in Afghanistan, including an American combat photographer who took one of the images just before her death.

Army Specialist Hilda I. Clayton was photographing a live-fire training exercise on July 2, 2013, in Laghman Province, east of Kabul, when a mortar tube exploded, killing her and four Afghan army soldiers, according to the US army magazine Military Review.

"One of the Afghan soldiers killed in the blast was a photojournalist who was training with Clayton, the magazine said in an article posted on its website.

It said there has been discussion about the decision to publish the images taken by Clayton and her Afghan counterpart.

"This edition of the Military Review is focused on promoting the concepts of gender equality and these photographs illustrate the dangers our military men and women face both in training and in combat," the magazine said. (Reuters)

US to seek social media details from certain visa applicants

WASHINGTON (TIP): The US state department wants to review social media, email addresses and phone numbers from some foreigners seeking US visas, as part of the Trump administration's enhanced screening of potential immigrants and visitors.

The department, in a notice published on Thursday in the Federal Register, said it was seeking public comment on the requirement. But it also said is requesting a temporary go-ahead from the White House budget office so the plan can take effect for 180 days, beginning May 18, regardless of those public comments.

The proposed requirements would apply to visa applicants identified for extra scrutiny, such as those who have traveled to areas controlled by terrorist organizations. The state department said it estimates that the rules would affect about 0.5 percent of total US visa applicants, or roughly 65,000 people.

Affected applicants would have to provide their social media handles and platforms used during the previous five years, and divulge all phone numbers and email addresses used during that period. US consular officials would not seek social media passwords, and would not try to breach any privacy controls on applicants' accounts, according to the department's notice.

Since last year, immigration officials have sought social media information from some foreigners arriving at US border checkpoints, but that information had not previously been required on visa applications.

The new rules also would require applicants to provide 15 years of travel and work history and the names and dates of birth of all siblings, children and current and former spouses or partners. Visa applicants are now generally asked for only five years of travel and work history and are not asked for information about their siblings. The state department said it wanted the additional information "in order to more rigorously evaluate



applicants for terrorism or other national security-related visa ineligibilities."

The proposal follows a March directive from the state department for all US embassies and consulates to draw up criteria for "population sets" needing extra scrutiny before receiving US visas.

Social media snags

Immigration lawyers and advocates say the request for 15 years of detailed biographical information, as well as the expectation that applicants remember all their social media handles, is likely to catch visa applicants who make innocent mistakes or do not remember all the information requested.

They also question whether the time-consuming screening can achieve its intended goal of identifying potential terrorists. "The more effective tactics are the methods that we currently use to monitor terrorist organizations, not just stumbling into the terrorist who is dumb enough to post on his Facebook page 'I am going to blow up something in the United States,'" said John Sandweg, a former senior official at the department of homeland security, or DHS.

Because reviewing social media information is so labor intensive, several pilot programs have

experimented with automation. But a DHS inspector general report concluded in February that the technology has so far proven flawed and required humans to ensure accuracy, leaving most of the checks to be done manually.

Applicants may not necessarily be denied a visa if they fail to provide all the information if it is determined they can provide a "credible explanation", the notice said.

Secretary of state Rex Tillerson first introduced similar measures in a March cable to American consular officers that outlined questions officers should now ask in order to tighten vetting of US visa applicants.

But Tillerson had to withdraw that guidance in a cable just days later, writing to officers worldwide that the OMB had not approved those specific questions.

The state department estimated that the additional screening measures would take approximately an hour per applicant, meaning an additional 65,000 additional hours of work per year.

Tillerson's cables anticipated delays as a result of their implementation.

"Somebody's got to do the work," said Greg Siskind, an immigration attorney in Memphis. "It's going to cause operations at a lot of consulates slow to a crawl." (Agencies)

Trump announces trip to Saudi Arabia, Israel, Vatican

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump says his first foreign trip as president will include stops in Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Vatican, where he will meet with Pope Francis. Then he'll move on for visits to NATO and a summit in Italy.

Trump said Thursday in a White House ceremony with faith leaders that his first trip will start in Saudi Arabia and include meetings with leaders across the Muslim world. He says they will seek new cooperation to "combat extremism, terrorism and violence" and promote a more hopeful future for young Muslims.

The announcement follows Trump's meeting on Wednesday with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas (mahk-MOOD' ah-BAHS') and Trump's pledge to mediate peace efforts. He also met Thursday with Roman Catholic cardinals. The White House said previously that Trump would travel to Belgium and Italy for the G7 summit before Memorial Day (AP).

North Korea confirms latest detention of American citizen

SEOUL (TIP): North Korea on Wednesday confirmed the detention of another American citizen for alleged acts of hostility aimed at overthrowing the country. Kim Sang Dok, an accounting instructor at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, was "intercepted" at Pyongyang International Airport on April 22, according to the Korean Central News Agency. It said he was being detained while authorities conduct a detailed investigation into his alleged crime.

The school's chancellor Park Chan-mo and the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang earlier gave the information about Kim's detention but couldn't provide the reason for his arrest. The school's report used a different spelling of Kim's name, Kim Sang-duk. Kim's English name is Tony Kim.

He is now the third American being detained in North Korea. The other U.S. detainees are Otto Warmbier, serving a 15-year prison term with hard labor for alleged anti-state acts, and Kim Dong Chul, serving a 10-year term with hard labor for alleged espionage. Analysts say North Korea often attempts to use foreign detainees to wrest outside concessions, which in the past have sometimes involved high-profile American missions sent to secure the release of detainees. Animosity between Pyongyang and Washington has spiked in recent weeks amid a game of brinkmanship between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Park said Kim, who is 58, was detained as he was trying to leave the country from Pyongyang's international airport. A university spokesman said he was trying to leave with his wife on a flight to China. Park said he was informed that the detention had "nothing to do" with Kim's work at the university but did not know further details. The U.S. State Department said last month that it was aware of the report about a U.S. citizen being detained, but declined further comment "due to privacy considerations." (AP)

Chicago celebrates Punjabi culture and heritage with colorful treat, fun and frolic at Rangla Punjab

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): The most awaited cultural program of the year, Rangla Punjab, 2017 organized by the Punjabi Cultural Society of Chicago was celebrated with a lot of zeal and fanfare by participants of all ages, with an electrified Chicago audience at Meadows Clubs, Rolling meadows, IL. The energy of the hall was palpable and the enthusiasm of the participants was contagious. Vaisakhi marks the foundation day of Khalsa panth or Sikh order by the tenth Sikh Guru, Sri Gobind Singh. In 1699 the tenth guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, chose Vaisakhi as the occasion to transform the Sikhs into a family of soldier saints, known as the Khalsa Panth.

This memorable program encompassed a rare record-breaking number and variety of performances, with participants from Chicagoland as well as teams from neighboring states of Wisconsin and Indiana. The evening started with Shabad coordinated by Mr. Amardev Singh Bandesha followed by colorful dancing and singing performances that enthralled the crowd. The lineup of the cultural program performances was amazing and full of variety. The cultural program was very well anchored by four Emcees; Raskirath Singh, Parvinder Singh Nanua, Mona Bhalla and Paul Singh Lail. There were over thirty beautiful performances from all age groups.

The cultural bonanza was celebrated by Chicago with unencumbered enthusiasm shown through the number of attendees and participants alike; children as young as 4-year-old, through teenagers and adults put on a memorable show. Bhangra and Giddah along with the signature drum beats and 'boli's, electrified the audience and they participated by howling and clapping along the lively beats. The colorful atmosphere shone through the authentic outfits worn by the young and old alike - seemingly transported everyone to the meandering streets of Punjab. As an Emcee reminisced about growing up in Punjab, the atmosphere was brought alive by the participants and their grand attires with great attention to detail.

Mr. Rajinder Singh Mago, one of the event organizers, introduced the dignitaries and distinguished guests to the audience. The chief guest Mr. Darshan Singh Dhaliwal of Dhaliwal Enterprises along with Mr. Sukhmel S. Atwal presented mementoes to the sponsors of the program Onkar Singh Sangha (Allstate Insurance), Dr. Bhupinder Singh Saini and Dr. Narinder S. Grewal. Grand sponsor Dr. Bhupinder Singh Saini congratulated everyone on the auspicious event of Vaisakhi. He credited PCS for keeping the Punjabi heritage alive through such celebrations far across the oceans that keep Punjabis connected with their culture. Dr. Saini, while making mention of the efforts and resources needed for such events said, "These things do not come cheap. I assure the organizers of my continuous support to this great cause." Dr. Saini got sentimental while expressing his love and gratitude for his father who was also present there. The guests of honor for the evening was the Consulate General of India Ms. Neeta Bhushan represented by Mr. D. B. Bhati (Consul). Mr. Bhati addressed the audience and congratulated PCS for the grand event. Consulate General of Pakistan Faisal Niaz Tirmizi also graced the evening.

The Meadows Club hall became the microcosm of the Punjabi



Chicago Giddha, popular folk dance of women in Punjab region of India



Kaum Punjabi Bhangra Dance



The Punjabi Cultural Society of Chicago (PCS) Board of Governors and Board of Advisors and Organizers

culture and entertainment; it felt as if we were sitting in Punjab amidst all the kaleidoscopic view of its heritage surrounding us. From the authentic props to the intricately designed bhangra and Gidah garbs, the event proved to be a hit once again. Parents' eyes cherished the moments their children dressed in dance costumes performed on stage. Truly everyone was transported through time and space where one could smell the fragrance of corn and wheat being harvested from the villages of the mighty Punjab. The writer of this passages reminisced about her own childhood at this program; it was that powerful of an atmosphere. Gidah was performed by, to name a few, Bollywood Arts Academy, Shaukana Chicago Diyan, Milwaukee Gidah and Chicago Gidah Girls and so on. Bhangra

teams included all age groups like Navi Paneeri, Punjabi Kaum, Warriors Bhangra and many more. Chicago's renowned singers Mahijit Viridi, Mona Bhalla, Maddy Singh and Ashley Singh made everyone dance to their melodies.

Punjabi music reverberated in the Meadows club hall as gaily-dressed men and women sang and danced to celebrate the festival. The essence of Punjab was reflected in the hall, with kudos to Punjabi Cultural Society of Chicago for putting up a grand show and bringing the community together for this memorable event. Truly, Chicagoland will be waiting with bated breath for the next Rangla Punjab from Punjabi Cultural Society of Chicago in 2018.

(Photographs and Press release: Asian Media USA)

SCIR Welcomes 2018 Toronto Parliament of World's Religions, Forms Sikh Task Force

Next Parliament of the World's Religions will be held from November 1 to 7, 2018 in Toronto, Canada

TORONTO (TIP): The announcement of the 2018 Parliament of World's Religions was made in Toronto on Tuesday, May 2, 2017 and was attended by Dr. Satpal Singh (Trustee of SCIR), Ajit Singh Sahota (World Sikh Organization - Canada), Manjit Singh Parmar (Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council), and Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia (Trustee of the Parliament of the World's Religions and of SCIR). Toronto Mayor John Tory addressed the gathering at City Hall and highlighted the Khalsa Day parade held 2 days earlier at the same location with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joining over 80,000 Sikhs for Vaisakhi celebrations. Mayor Tory shared that any and all are welcome to share a meal at langars held at Sikh

Gurdwaras across Toronto.

SCIR coordinated the Sikh participation and presentations at the 2015 Salt Lake City Parliament of the World's Religions. In view of the upcoming Parliament, SCIR has established a 2018 Parliament Sikh Task Force. The charge of the Parliament Sikh Task Force is to coordinate and implement the active participation of the worldwide Sikh community at the upcoming parliament through:

- * significant international Sikh presence and engagement,
- * presentations at plenary and parallel sessions focused on interfaith and intrafaith issues, and
- * Guru ka Langar, if possible, at the



Dr. Robert Sellers, Chair of Board of Trustees of Parliament of the World's Religions with Dr. Satpal Singh (SCIR), Ajit Singh Sahota (WSO-Canada), and Surinder Kaur Sahota

parliament to be led by the local Sikh community. The task force members include Sikh representatives from Canada, US,



Toronto Mayor John Tory with Dr. Satpal Singh, Convener of 2018 Parliament Sikh Task Force of SCIR

and across the world. Dr. Satpal Singh, Trustee of SCIR, serves as Convener of the Task Force. Suggestions and queries about Sikh participation in the upcoming parliament can be

emailed to satpalub@gmail.com.

More than 10,000 people are expected to participate in the 2018 Parliament and in the coming 18 months the Parliament Sikh Task Force will work with the Parliament to share our perspective and priorities.

The Parliament of the World's Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. More information about the 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions along with online registration is available at <https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/2018-toronto/toronto-2018>.

Action first, talk later: Army chief hints at revenge for beheading of soldiers

NEW DELHI (TIP): Army chief General Bipin Rawat indicated on May 4 the force would retaliate to the beheading of two Indian soldiers by Pakistani troops, but refused to spell out details.



General Bipin Rawat

The killing and mutilation of the soldiers in a cross-LoC raid on Monday sparked widespread anger, with family members and political leaders demanding similar action against the neighbouring country.

"We don't talk about future plans beforehand; we share details after execution," the chief said in his first public reaction to the attack carried out by Pakistan's Border Action Team (BAT) in the Krishna Ghati sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district.

Members of the BAT, considered a rogue squad of Pakistani army regulars and militant mercenaries, ambushed an Indian border patrol and killed naib subedar Paramjit Singh, a 42-year-old junior commissioned officer with 22 Sikh Regiment, and 45-year-old head constable Prem Sagar of the BSF's 200 Battalion. Their decapitated bodies were found later.

"When this kind of action takes place, we also carry out retaliatory action," the army chief said.

His remarks came on a day security forces launched an anti-insurgency door-to-door search operation with around 4,000 troops, helicopters and drones in south Kashmir.

This was the biggest combing mission against militants for more than a decade in the Kashmir Valley, which is besieged by a spate of militant attacks, bank robberies and cross-border shelling from Pakistan. Insurgents attacked an army patrol in Shopian district, about 55km from Srinagar, on Thursday, killing a civilian and wounding three soldiers.

Gen. Rawat, who has vast operational experience in J&K, said incidents of the past few days had necessitated the move.

"Banks have been looted, policemen have been killed. That is why today's combing operation is taking place. These operations are carried out regularly," he said.

The chief, who was in Kashmir on Tuesday, said the army had beefed up counter-infiltration measures as snow was melting and militants would try to sneak into India. The border state witnesses a long and harsh winter, with snow blocking mountain passes used by militants.

Pakistan has denied its soldiers carried out Monday's attack and beheaded the soldiers. But India told Pakistani high commissioner Abdul Basit that there's enough evidence, including a blood trail, to prove troops from the neighbouring nation crossed the border, killed the two men and carried their heads back.

Source: HT

PAK, SAUDI CHANNELS BEAM INTO KASHMIRI HOMES, STOKE 'AZADI' RAGE

SRINAGAR (TIP): Saudi clerics and Pakistani news anchors are being beamed direct to Kashmiri homes, and are stoking the fires of 'azadi'. Over 50 Saudi and Pakistani channels, including Zakir Naik's banned Peace TV preaching Salafist Islam, and others indulging in anti-India propaganda are running without necessary clearances via private cable networks in Kashmir.

All this is happening under the nose of the PDP-BJP government, which even subscribes to these cable services in some of its offices and buildings.

Although satellite television service providers like Tata Sky, Airtel digital TV and Dish TV, are available in Kashmir, most people subscribe to private cable. A cable operator, who did not want to be named, said that there are over 50,000 private cable connections in Srinagar alone, and only because these broadcast Pakistani and Saudi channels.

Besides Naik's Peace TV Urdu and English channels, private operators air Saudi and Pakistani channels like Saudi Sunnah, Saudi Quran, Al Arabia, Paigham, Hidayat, Noor, Madani, Sehar, Karbala, Hadi, Sehar, Ary QTV, Bethat, Ahlibat, Message, Falak, Geo News, Ary News, Dawn News, and many others, which cannot be accessed through satellite television service providers. None of these channels is permitted to air in the rest of the country by the I&B ministry.

No cable operator, any where in the country, including in Jammu & Kashmir, can run any channel other than the ones approved by the Union I&B ministry. If it is not in the permitted list of channels on the ministry website, it is being illegally broadcast. Even if it is a free-to-air channel, a private cable operator



A girl student pelts a stone at security personnel during clashes near Lal Chowk in Srinagar. Photo courtesy: PTI

must get approval from the ministry," director of broadcasting, I&B ministry, Amit Katoch, said.

Some of the Saudi channels broadcast the same kind of rigid, fundamentalist and patriarchal interpretations of Islam and Sharia that invited a government ban on Peace TV. Wahhabi clerics on these channels often sermonise that women should surrender before their husbands and obey their commands completely.

For example, a woman should not step out of the house without the permission of her husband, a cleric preached on

Saudi Sunnah.

Most Pakistani news channels refer to the terrorists of Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkare-Taiba and other groups as "martyrs" and counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir as "human rights violations".

People in Kashmir have historically preferred Pakistani news and drama. "Love for all things Pakistan has a political history but love for Saudi religious channels developed in the '90s," said Muzaffar, a Srinagar businessman, whose employees are avid watchers of Saudi Sunnah channel. Source: TOI

SWACHH BHARAT SURVEY

INDORE IS INDIA'S CLEANEST CITY, UP'S GONDA DIRTIEST

NEW DELHI (TIP): Indore in Madhya Pradesh has emerged as the cleanest city in the country, while Gonda in Uttar Pradesh has been found to be the dirtiest, the government said today.

Bhopal, also in MP, occupies the second best spot among 434 cities and towns, followed by Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Surat in Gujarat, Urban Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu said, announcing the results of an exercise he described as a citizens' verdict.

UT Chandigarh, which was ranked second in the previous survey, has slipped to the 11 spot.

Overall, 37 lakh people responded to a set of six questions about the city they belonged to in the survey of 434 cities, which account for about 60 per cent of the total urban population in the country. The response of 18 lakh people was taken into consideration for the survey after the elimination of duplicate feedback.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency, Varanasi, has soared up the cleanliness scale, occupying the 32nd position in "Swachh Survekshan-2017", which is part of the Modi government's flagship Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) or Clean India Mission. It ranked 65th last year and 418th in 2014.

Mysuru in Karnataka, which bagged the first spot in the last two surveys, has slipped to the fifth position.

"No way it meant that cleanliness has declined in the city or the city government scaled down its efforts... Other cities have

TOP 10	BOTTOM 10
1 Indore (MP)	425 Khurja (UP)
2 Bhopal (MP)	426 Shahjahanpur (UP)
3 Vizag (AP)	427 Abohar (Punjab)
4 Surat (Gujarat)	428 Muktsar (Punjab)
5 Mysuru (K'taka)	429 Bahraich (UP)
6 Trichy (TN)	430 Katihar (Bihar)
7 NDMC (New Delhi)	431 Hardoi (UP)
8 Navi Mumbai	432 Bagaha (Bihar)
9 Tirupati (AP)	433 Bhusawal (M'ashtra)
10 Vadodara (Gujarat)	434 Gonda (UP)

scored over Mysuru," Naidu explained.

Gujarat, with 12 cities in the top 50, has the best score among the states, and Uttar Pradesh, which accounts for half of the 50 dirtiest cities, is at the bottom of the list.

Madhya Pradesh, with 11 cities in the top 50, and Andhra Pradesh, with eight, follow Gujarat.

West Bengal did not take part in the survey. Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu is the sixth cleanest city, followed by the New Delhi Municipal Council area of the national capital.

Bhusawal in Maharashtra is the dirtiest after Gonda, the survey states. Bagaha and Katihar (Bihar), Hardoi, Bahraich,

Shahjahanpur and Khurja (UP) and Muktsar and Abohar (Punjab) are in the bottom 10.

The Urban Development Ministry had commissioned the survey for 434 cities and towns with a population of 1 lakh and above in January and February this year.

Naidu described Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Telangana as "Movers and Shakers" for having significantly improved their rankings since 2014.

The first survey in 2014 was launched before the announcement of the SBA in October, 2014. The 2016 survey covered 73 cities with over 10 lakh population each and capital cities.

The minister said all cities surveyed in Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand had substantially improved their rankings since 2014. Gujarat has done so in every city, barring Rajkot.

Naidu said UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab and Kerala needed to substantially step up efforts to improve sanitation standards in urban areas.

In Bihar, 19 out of the 27 cities surveyed have ranks beyond 300. The cleanest city — at 147 — is Biharsharif.

In Rajasthan, 18 of 29 cities are ranked beyond 300 with 13 in the bottom 100. Bundi, at 171, is the best ranked city in the state. In Punjab, seven of the 16 cities surveyed figure among the bottom 100, with SAS Nagar at 121 getting the highest rank in the state. Source: PTI

BILKIS BANO CASE: HC SETS ASIDE ACQUITTAL OF 7

MUMBAI (TIP): Setting aside the acquittal of seven persons, including five policemen and two doctors, the Bombay High Court on May 4 upheld the conviction and life imprisonment of 12 persons in the Bilkis Bano gangrape case. It, however, dismissed a CBI appeal seeking death penalty for three of the convicts on the grounds that they were the main perpetrators of the crime.

Bilkis Bano said, "My rights, as a human being, as a citizen, woman, and mother were violated in the most brutal manner, but I had trust in the democratic institutions of our country. Now, my family and I feel we can begin to lead our lives again, free of fear."

A Division Bench of Justices K Tahilramani and Mridula Bhatkar, in a 430-page judgement, said while the probe conducted by the Gujarat Police was "flawed with a dishonest investigation", the evidence and statements given by Bilkis Bano were "completely trustworthy". Bilkis was gangraped in March 2002 at a time when she was pregnant. Seven of her family members were killed in Gujarat's post-Godhra riots.

"The appeal against conviction filed by the 11 convicts (one of them is dead) is dismissed. The conviction and sentence is upheld. The appeal filed by the prosecution against the acquittal of seven persons (in the case) is allowed. The acquittal is set aside," the Bench announced.



This photo, taken on March 1, 2002, shows a policeman as he walks in front of a row of burning shops in Ahmedabad.

These seven persons — five policemen and two doctors — have been convicted for not performing their duty (Section 218) and for tampering with evidence (Section 201). Each of them were told to pay a fine of Rs 20,000 within eight weeks.



Punjab chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh with Sunil Jakhar. (Photo: Twitter)

SUNIL JAKHAR APPOINTED PUNJAB CONG PRESIDENT

NEW DELHI (TIP): Eyes on the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress on May 4 appointed Sunil Jakhar, former minister and a staunch Capt Amarinder Singh loyalist, as the new president of the Punjab unit. Jakhar, 63, who lost the Assembly election, will replace Capt Amarinder, who took oath as Chief Minister this March 17.

Jakhar was Capt Amarinder's choice for the post. Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party vice-president Rahul Gandhi both endorsed it.

Jakhar said he would act as a bridge between the government and the party and ensure the grassroots connect of the Congress stayed intact.

Jakhar's appointment is strategic as the central leadership wants complete coordination between the government and the organisation to ensure a strong footing in the state where the party has only three Lok Sabha seats (Ludhiana, Amritsar and Jalandhar) of 13.

"We have challenges ahead. The LS poll of 2019 are just two years away. The organisation has to be strengthened. I will endeavour equally to ensure that election manifesto promises are fulfilled," Jakhar said.

He said he had sought an appointment with Rahul Gandhi for tomorrow. A former minister in the Amarinder Singh cabinet, a three-time MLA from Abohar, and until recently Congress' Legislature Party Leader in Punjab, Jakhar has been a diehard Amarinder loyalist.

On the eve of Punjab elections, he was the one to consistently urge the Congress leadership to replace Partap Bajwa with Capt Amarinder as state chief. When that finally happened a year before the state polls, Jakhar was dropped as the CLP leader and Bajwa as state chief.

While Rahul Gandhi sent Bajwa to Rajya Sabha, Jakhar was left in the cold only to be unsuitably placated later by being named party's chief spokesperson in Punjab. In between, on poll eve, Jakhar was sour with his mentor Amarinder Singh, who today redeemed his friend politically.

In Congress circles, Jakhar is known for his straight talk and is someone who has always spoken his mind frankly even in meetings chaired by Rahul Gandhi. His appointment, sources say, indicates that the Congress won't ignore regional satraps anymore and will value their opinion. Besides, the move is important as the Congress has given Hindu leaders a pride of place in its Punjab scheme. The state has 45 per cent Hindus, who backed the Congress to victory this time.

Jakhar, when asked how he saw his appointment, said, "I have received the affection of all communities. It's up to you to analyse my appointment politically." As the son of former LS Speaker Balram Jakhar, he realises he has a lot riding on him. His acid test will be organisational strengthening ahead of the 2019 LS poll.

Source: The Tribune

CANADIAN PM'S PRESENCE AT EVENT WITH KHALISTANI FLAGS UPSETS INDIA

NEW DELHI/ TORONTO (TIP): While vitriolic attacks on Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh at the annual nagar kirtan in Vancouver riled the Indian government, there is consternation over Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's presence at a Toronto event that featured Khalistani flags and posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

The Toronto nagar kirtan on Sunday also celebrated the carrying of a motion in the Ontario assembly last month that described the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as "genocide".

A senior Indian official described Trudeau's presence at the Khalsa Day event as "surely a matter of concern".

Trudeau was the first Canadian prime minister to attend the event since Paul Martin in 2005. Trudeau's predecessor Stephen Harper had stayed away in previous years.

Bhindranwale, an extremist leader who was at the forefront of the Khalistan movement in the 1980s, was killed when the Indian Army carried out Operation Blue Star in June 1984 to remove extremists who were holed up in the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Though defence minister Arun Jaitley had expressed India's concerns about the Ontario assembly motion to his Canadian counterpart Harjit Sajjan last month, the organisers of the nagar kirtan in Toronto honoured Harinder Malhi, Liberal member of the provincial parliament or MPP (equivalent to an MLA), who moved the motion, during the event.

The organisers, Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council, also felicitated New Democratic Party MPP Jagmeet Singh, who had moved a similar motion in 2016 that was defeated.

These developments have boosted the morale of pro-Khalistan groups in Canada. For instance, Sukhminder Singh Hansra, president of the Shiromani Akali Dal (A) Canada, said in response to an emailed query: "I am glad that the organisers who represent a larger segment of the Sikh community have



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's presence at a 'nagar kirtan' in Toronto that featured Khalistani flags and posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale has upset the Indian government. (Courtesy Canadian PMO)

reminded the world of the peaceful struggle for Khalistan."

Hansra further said: "In Toronto, all floats are prepared by the organisers, at least two floats were dedicated to the events of 1984, including flags and banners of Khalistan. I along with many others walked with these floats with Khalistani flags."

He described the honouring of the two lawmakers as "the highlight of the nagar kirtan" in Toronto.

The Toronto celebration came in the wake of the event in Vancouver on April 22 where the Amarinder Singh was attacked in a speech.

While the Indian government has notified Ottawa of its concern, Canada has consistently maintained that such a protest, as long as it remains peaceful, is part of freedom of expression.

Source: HT

Pro-Khalistan groups to be reined in: UK

NEW DELHI (TIP): Britain on May 4 assured India that it would make efforts to rein in pro-Khalistan elements operating on its soil and also agreed to share information relating to them with Indian agencies.

Sharing details of the deliberations at the first "Home Affairs Dialogue" meeting here, Union Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi and UK's Second Permanent Secretary, Home Office,

Patsy Wilkinson, Adviser in the Ministry of Home Affairs Ashok Prasad said: "We discussed the issue of Khalistani militants based in the UK and they have promised to look into it."

Though Prasad refused to divulge details, which the Indian side shared with its UK counterparts, sources in the ministry indicated based on "our intelligence input", the British officials were informed about how "some Sikh groups living in that



Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi

country are trying to revive the Khalistan movement by providing terror training to the youth and funding hate propaganda against

India". Meanwhile, the major portion of the day-long deliberations revolved around the twin issue of "extradition and deportation" of respective citizens residing in each other's territories. "On the issue of deportation, both sides agreed to work on identification framework, which both sides will sign in July as a memorandum of understanding (MoU), including on cybercrime and counter-terrorism," a senior MHA official said.

Mehrishi and Wilkinson agreed to expedite the processes of extraditing fugitives of the two countries, residing in each other's territories, but Prasad said no specific name was discussed during the meeting.

Sources, however, confirmed India "alluded" to a dozen Indian fugitives, including businessman Vijay Mallya, wanted in a Rs 9,000-crore bank default case involving his defunct Kingfisher Airlines.

Source: The Tribune

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND MANKIND: A LITERARY INTERFACE

A tribute to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on his 156th birth anniversary which falls on Sunday, May 7, 2017



A renowned polymath, Tagore singlehandedly reshaped the region's literature and music

Rabindra Nath Tagore exists as one of most prominent figures in the literary and the philosophical world. Born in the nineteenth century India, Tagore through his writings has served as an emblematic figure who continues to inspire and influence masses across the globe in the contemporary era also. He is known as a complete man who encompassed everything in his poetry ranging from religion, aesthetics, education, nationalism, and social dynamics to internationalism and race relations. The paper attempts at exploring some of the substantial and recurring themes related to Mankind in the poetry of Tagore. His poetry is highly complex with regard to the volume and vastness that it becomes quite difficult to compartmentalize it. An attempt has been made to discuss some very important aspects with relation to his themes.

BY WASIA

Rabindra Nath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861 in central Calcutta. From the very childhood, the formal education did not suit him and he became a dropout at an early age. At home, he was subjected to a confined life where he could rarely move out, thereby, whetting his sensibility. However, there was a constant appeal that he found in Nature. To him, universe was as if wrapped in some mystery and he desired to approach and unlock it. An important aspect of his household life was that literature and music held an important place. Therefore, there was a scope for a literary growth and Tagore utilizing this at full started to write right from his teenage and then, there was no end to the output of his pen. His verses have never remained as a stagnant source of delight but they have moved and even continue to move and influence masses even today. Be they the lovers of nature, of god, of humans, of nations, Tagore gives a say to all. An important feature of Tagore's poetry is the humanist spirit which pervades it throughout.

According to humanist school of thought, man is the measure of everything and he is the means to reach the Divine. The relationship between "I and thou" holds an important space in this domain. Tagore became an epitome of the conduct of this belief. He saw men as men, devoid of the caste,

color, sex, race or national distinctions. Though his poetry, therefore, he explored the relationship of man with God, of man with Nature and that of man with man. The presence of divine spirit in man granted him a status above the ordinary. Therefore, according to Tagore, every man was endowed with an ethical responsibility of serving other men at large for serving men was serving God. He advocated dedicating one's life to the growth and flourishing of mankind through the path of love, knowledge and selflessness. Tagore was completely against the barriers which acted as the demarcating means among men. To him, all were equal and deserved equal attention and appreciation. To work for the downtrodden was the primary lesson that he taught the world. He says himself being ever ready to work:

*"Here is thy foot stool and there rest
Thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest"*

Tagore was the lover of people, the lover of life who responded to its delights as well as distress.

Tagore had pledged his loyalty to all mankind. He strove for the rights of children, women, poor and ignorant and demanded an equal share for all. The religion that he preached was the religion of man. He sought a freedom from evil, greed, avarice, hatred and fought for the freedom of humans from the worldly strangles. The blind ego of man, the lust for power and the desire to exploit were all, targeted areas. In many of his works, Tagore has commented on the nature of Man discussing him in relation to Nature and other men.

From his very childhood, Tagore shared an extraordinary relationship with the outside world. The rising of the sun, the chirping of birds, the tides in seas, and the moon in the night, everything had a special significance associated with it. Nature, to him, was never an alien identity but it was a manifestation of God and an aspect of man's actual essence. The various manifestations of Nature in one way or the other were linked to man's eternal being and therefore, laid an extraordinary influence upon the personality of man. The only need was to cultivate an eye that could perceive things in reality but because of the continuous involvement with the material world, man had lost touch with the Reality. According to Tagore, "All our knowledge of things is knowing them in their relation to the Universe, in that relation which is truth". The involvement that contemporary beings have with the world has deprived them of the power to see and understand things in their true color. Tagore says, "we grow out of touch with this great truth, we forget to accept its invitation and its hospitality, when in quest of external success our works become unspiritual and unexpressive" (Tagore 9). Nature, according to Him, is the manifestation of the Supreme and in fact the self and nature actually are nothing but the twin aspects of the Absolute. It is nature which actually forms the backbone of human personality. In fact, they share a relation of collaboration and transcendence. Man is a bridge between the transcendent and the nature. He claims:

"At one pole of my being I am one with stock and stones. There I have to acknowledge the rule of universal law. That is where the foundation of my existence lies, deep down below...But at the other pole of my being I am separate from all. There I have broken through the cordon of equality and stand alone as an individual. I am absolutely unique, I am I, I am incomparable."

The most important thing necessary to reach and perceive the Absolute was perseverance. It takes a lot of efforts, patience and strength to cross all hurdles successfully and reach the other shore.

An important emphasis that Tagore lays upon is the religion for every man to achieve and arrive at his true nature. According to him, religion serves the purpose of bringing man into close contact with the Supreme. By religion he didn't mean an orthodox set of principles but according to him:

"... religion is too concrete a thing, though I have no right to speak about it. But if ever I have somehow come to realize God, or if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through men, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil."

What he believed in was that the ultimate end of humanity was achieving a harmony with everything around in this world and the inner world. According to Tagore, one could achieve harmony by recognizing the fact that ultimate Being doesn't reside anywhere outside one's self but instead is a part of one's self only.

Tagore looked at man both from inside and outside as well.



Rabindranath Tagore in London in 1920. Tagore was a poet par excellence; he got India in the world map by becoming the first non-European to win a Nobel Prize for Literature.

The so called civilization and modernization according to Tagore can never create an influence to make man forget himself unless his actual conscience is alive. The only matter of distress to him was man's inability to feel the inner pulse of action and the great truth within. According to Tagore, man possessed the power to play a role for the overall benefit of mankind. According to him, Salvation and freedom could be achieved upon realizing the divine voice within. The realization of god drew man on the way to enlightenment for it makes one aware of the pitfalls, limitations and all the constraints which in turn act as the harbingers of the unhampered union between the creator and the man.

Tagore says:

*"Obstinate are trammels but my heart aches
When I try to break them
I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee
And that thou are my best friend but I have not
The heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills the room".*

According to Tagore, what glorified man was the desire to grow instinctively. An important agency which Tagore believed to be useful for the enlightenment of humanity was education.

According to him, there was a need for cultivating a proper environment which could shape the intellects and lead humans to emancipation both worldly as well as spiritual. The way a plant required care to grow and blossom in the same way minds required proper cultivation. "The best part of man as Tagore rightly thinks suffers terribly because the best of his thoughts die unborn and unexpressed". However, the hollowness of the education and social systems leads to a deformed growth of humanity. To bring out the real potential and channelize it, education plays a very substantial role. The primary agency for it was the school for Tagore believed that man as a child existed in a pure form. The world never laid its materialistic influences upon the childhood existence and by the time man grew, the world weighed him over making him lose control over his spirit of freedom. In order to attain harmony within oneself, it was important to be one with the self, to be a man from within and to mean being in harmony with the real/divine world achieved through the union of soul.

A release from the obsessions within and a union with the Ultimate was a constant point of emphasis for Tagore. The Ultimate exists as an unflinching identity, always there to show and guide a man to the right path. Oneness with the world and its diversities was the ideal concept of Man. The soul of everyman is of infinite value and therefore, every man should strive towards betterment with every passing day. A man is never just body and mind but more than passion and reason. In essence, he is a social being and therefore, he should never shirk away from the society but instead should try to learn from the social communion which is at large a collective creation. Tagore's wisdom was that of the heart also and not only of head. It helped him to see the world without any personal bondage and helped him grow into a committed man without any caste, religious, community or tradition biases. This is an important feature which makes him survive even today. His works remain as the ever relevant and ever enlightening doctrine merge into the larger realms of human life.

(The author is a Research scholar, Department of English, Central University of Kashmir and can be reached at wasia.mushtaq@gmail.com)(Source: Express, an International Journal of Multi Disciplinary Research. ISSN: 2348 - 2052, Vol. 1, Issue 6, June 2014. Available at: www.express-journal.com)



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*A presentation on, 'Promoting Living Arts and Literature' by
Sanjoy Roy, Managing Director, Teamwork Arts*



WHEN: Tuesday, May 9, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

WHERE: Consulate General of India Ball Room

3 East 64th Street (Between 5th and Madison Avenues), New York, NY 10065

Sanjoy K Roy is the Managing Director of Teamwork Arts with offices in Boulder, Cairo, Chicago, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Sydney. He has directed and produced over 1000 hours of a wide range of films and television shows, including drama series, game shows, newsmagazines, and lifestyle programmes. Teamwork Arts produces over 25 highly acclaimed performing arts, visual arts and literary festivals across 40 cities in countries including the world's largest literary gathering — the annual Jaipur Literature Festival.

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The INDIAN PANORAMA

The 17th New York Film Festival in Pictures

NEW YORK INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL
NYIFF

www.iaac.us

The New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) is the oldest, most prestigious film festival screening premieres of feature, documentary and short films made from, of, and about the Indian subcontinent in the Independent, arthouse, alternate and diaspora genres. Seven days of screenings, post-screening discussions, industry panels, award ceremony, special events, nightly networking parties, red carpet galas, media attention and packed audiences build an awareness of Indian cinema, entertain & educate North Americans about the real India, and add to the amazing cultural diversity of New York City.

The 17th IAFF was held from April 30 to May 7, 2017 in New York City. A total of 85 entries were received.

Aroon Sivadasani, President and Executive Director heads a team of people deeply committed to promotion of cinema. Eminent persons from the world of arts and cinema which include Salman Rushdie, Shashi Throop, Mira Nair, Shabana Azmi, Deepa Mehta, Shyam Benegal, Mani Ratnam, Madhur Jaffrey, Sabrina Dhawan and Sakina Jaffrey are on the advisory board of the film festival.

The Indo-American Arts Council, the organization which organizes the film festival says its mission is to promote and build the awareness, creation, production, exhibition, publication and performance of Indian and cross-cultural art forms in North America.

The Mission statement further says: "The IAAC supports all artistic disciplines in the classical, fusion, folk and innovative forms influenced by the arts of India. We work cooperatively with colleagues around the United States to broaden our collective audiences and to create a network for shared information, resources and funding.

"Our focus is to work with artists and arts organizations in North America as well as to facilitate artists and arts organizations from India to exhibit, perform and produce their works here".

Well known photographer Jay Mandal who was on assignment with the IAFF 2017 has come up with some wonderful pictures of the event which we are happy to share with the readers of The Indian Panorama.

Read also 85 Films Screened at the 17th IAFF on page 1



Aahana Kumra, lead actress of the Opening night film, "Lipstick under my Burkha"



Alankrita Shrivastava, Director of the film, "Lipstick under my Burkha", Actor Rahul Bose and Actress, Aahana Kumra



Alankrita Shrivastava, Director of the film, "Lipstick under my Burkha" and Actress, Aahana Kumra



From Left: Aron Sivadasani, founder of NYIFF, Actress Aahana Kumra and Actress, Madhur Jaffrey



Consul General Riva Ganguly Das, Aron Sivadasani and Aahana Kumra



Actor Rahul Bose and Actress, Aahana Kumra



Actor Rahul Bose takes a "Selfie" with Author Salman Rushdie



Consul General Riva Ganguly Das and Rahul Bose



Author Salman Rushdie, Aahana Kumra and Aron Sivadasani



Air India Regional Manager Americas, Vandana Sharma, Aahana Kumra and Alankrita Shrivastava, Director of the film, "Lipstick under my Burkha"

All pics by Jay Mandal / On assignment

contd from Page 1

85 South Asian films screened at the 17th NYIFF

'Gypsy', is based on Mulay's autobiographical work 'Maati, Pankh and Akash', a celebrated Marathi literary work, depicting the struggle of a boy born in a remote village in Maharashtra. It is the story of a poet who rose to the post of the Consul General of India in New York with sheer hard work and perseverance.

Ambassador Dnyaneshwar Mulay is a true son of the soil. He calls his journey as that of a gypsy, who travelled to Tokyo, Syria and New York negotiating meanings out of political and diplomatic developments, engaging in as a competent

diplomat with a poetic flavor, winning the hearts of Indian settlers as well as counterparts in the host countries. With his vision deeply rooted in the socio-cultural domain of India, Mulay, currently Secretary in-charge of Overseas Indian affairs in the Ministry of External Affairs, represents the aspirations of all Indians who belong to the impoverished strata of India, an India that lacks drinking water and nutritious food even after 75 years of India's independence. Mulay's success is an indicator that kids from the poorest economic levels can succeed and rise to the top.

But does the movie, 'Gypsy', succeed in presenting the true colors of Mulay's personality? Dhananjay, the young filmmaker from Maharashtra, captures a few touching moments of Mulay's childhood life in Laat village of Kolhapur district, where he inherited traditional poverty and cultural richness, that was passed on to him from his teachers. He continued studying major literatures of the world during his teenage. The black and white visuals in the movie recreate social poverty and cultural richness of the village. We see Mulay walking around the streets of his native village where his school remains deprived of repair and his people continued living with traditions. We see ribbon cutting Mulay, and a number of his child hood friends and admirers including his mother, speaking highly about him as a young boy. The movie further depicts Mulay as an adult officer who pursued his dreams of joining the ranks of the bureaucrats of Delhi. He does well in UPSC interviews demonstrating his deep knowledge and understanding of Maharashtra's socio-cultural traditions and relevance of Indian democracy. Finally, he joins the ranks of IFS officers rising to the position of an Ambassador.

Other than breaking the traditions to joining the elite club of Indian bureaucracy, what are the major contributions of Mulay as a diplomat? What did he do to raise India's prestige abroad? He handled difficult situations during the two-week-long refuge of President Mohamed Nasheed in the Indian High Commission in Male'. As Ravi Batra, a leading New York attorney, said after the screening of the movie, the high points in Mulay's diplomatic career came in the second decade of 21st century, first at Male, and then in New York during his tenure as the Consul General, when the then Deputy Consul General of India in New York was arrested and strip searched. Mulay is credited with handling both situations aptly that helped raise the prestige of India. Mulay is too modest to talk about these incidents in the movie or in public. However, it shouldn't have prevented the filmmaker of 'Gypsy' from projecting it in the movie, through the professional voice-over that Tom Alter provided so well.

The movie also fails to underscore Mulay's role in initiating the yearly organization of International Hindi Conferences in USA, now in its fifth year. It was an effort to reestablish the profile and importance of Hindi internationally that no other Consul General did in the past.

The filmmaker of 'Gypsy', who seemed very conscious about Mulay's roots in Maharashtra, fails to depict him as a national symbol of India's aspirations, an India that lives in the villages. We are left to watch Mulay's friends talking and not what Mulay thinks today about his people's ongoing struggle, especially in Maharashtra and India, where farmers and students are unable to face their failures, only resorting to actions like suicides.

NYIFF presented remarkable movies, such as, 'A Death in the Gunj', directed by Konkona Sen Sharma. The movie pays tribute to the late Om Puri, one of India's most versatile character actors who starred in more than 147 films during his illustrious career and was awarded the Padma Shri in 1990.

The closing movie, 'You are my Sunday', is a story of five young men in Mumbai who share same goal to play football (soccer) at Juhu Beach every Sunday. While each one has his reason to look forward to the Sunday morning, there's no doubt it's a high point of their week. One Sunday, as a result of the actions of a senile old stranger who joins their game, a ban is issued on playing games at Juhu Beach. The group now has to look for a new place to play in the crowded city of Mumbai. More than just football, the film is about each of their lives and how each one deals with their own physical and emotional space.

NYIFF presented a rich fare for which Aron Sivadasani and her colleagues on board of directors deserve all appreciation. Here is a list of NYIFF 2017 National Award Winners.

Best Films - "Kaasav (Turtle)" **Best Director** - Rajesh Mapuskar - "Ventilator" **Best Editing** - "Ventilator" **Best Recordist For Final Mixed Track** - "Ventilator"

Best Gujarati Film - "Wrong Side Raju"

Best Short Film - "Aaba"

Best Child Actors - "Colours of Innocence"

Special Mention - Adil Hussain - "Mukti Bhawan (Hotel Salvation)"



'Gypsy' makers Dhananjay Bhawalekar (left) and Sawani Arjun (center) at the post screening Q & A session with festival director Aron Sivadasani (right)
Photo by author

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Panjab University, Chandigarh Professor Emeritus Padma Shri Harkishan Singh



Professor Emeritus at the PU, is a Prof Harkishan Singh is a well-known pharmaceutical academic, medicinal chemist and renowned science historian

Prof Harkishan Singh is a well-known pharmaceutical academic, prominent medicinal chemist and renowned science historian.

On being asked for his reaction on the announcement of Padma Shri to him, 89-year-old Prof Harkishan Singh said, "I am pleased to receive this honor, but I was not working for awards. It is my passion



Prof. Harkishan Singh is one of the Padma awardees who were conferred the honor by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee at Rashtrapati Bhavan on March 30, 2017



President Pranab Mukherjee, Vice-President Hamid Ansari, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries with the recipients of Padma Vibhushan at the Padma Awards 2017 function at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Thursday.

Photo courtesy PTI

to research and invent something fruitful for society."

Prof Harkishan Singh is a renowned personality in the pharmacy industry not because of his books on research but for his rarest accomplishments, including the discovery of a clinically useful drug, Chandonium Iodide (HS-310), which was later named by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as Candocuronium Iodide. Candocuronium is the only drug discovered by any Indian University till date.

Over 350 publications, 18 books and 14 patents are testimony to the outcome of his work. He mentored over 50 doctoral and master theses too.

One of his sons, Harry S Panaser who is settled in New Jersey State of USA said he was pleased that his father was selected by government of India for one of the highest civilian awards of India and added that his father was never after any awards and honors. All he wanted was to work to his ability to contribute his bit to humanity.

Professor Harkishan Singh was born on 25 November, 1928. He is a well-recognized pharmaceutical academic, medicinal chemistry researcher and science historian. He has experience of over half a century to his credit. He has worked at the Banaras Hindu University, University of Saugar, and the Panjab University in India, and abroad at the University of Maryland, University of Mississippi and the University of London.

His scientific research has been in organic chemistry, medicinal chemistry and natural products. Nearly 50 master and doctoral theses have been completed under his supervision. There have been published 125 original scientific research papers. 14 patents have been obtained. His research group has been successful in designing a clinically useful drug candocuronium iodide (INN) (chandonium iodide, HS-310), which is a synthetic azasteroid. Dr Singh has lectured on his research at several of the institutions and conferences in India, United States

of America, Canada, United Kingdom and China. He delivered invited lectures at the Harvard School of Medicine and at the International Symposium on Molecular Structure sponsored by the International Union of Crystallography at Beijing.

As a science historian Professor Singh has examined the history of pharmaceutical developments in India of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His history research studies have been on pharmacopoeias and formularies, pharmaceutical education,



Prof. Singh (seated) with family. L to R: Alicia, Dr Manjeet, Ajooni Kaur and H S Panaser

membership of the American Chemical Society, life memberships of the Indian Pharmaceutical Association and Association of Pharmaceutical Teachers of India, and memberships of the American Institute of History of Pharmacy and British Society for History of Pharmacy.

Professor Harkishan Singh is recipient of several scientific and professional awards and recognitions. He has been a National Fellow of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. He has been General President of the



Dr Manjeet Kaur, H S Panaser, Dr. Amarjit Singh, IAS with Prof Harkishan Singh

pharmacy practice, biographies of pharmaceutical luminaries, and pharmaceutical journalism. He has published over fifty articles.

In addition to his scientific and history research papers, Dr Singh has authored and/or coauthored twelve books and nearly two dozen of review articles, including several book chapters. He has written extensively on educational, scientific, historical and professional issues. All told his total publications come well to over 300.

Professor Singh has been on many academic, scientific, professional and governmental bodies. He was a member of the Committee on Education in Medicinal Chemistry of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which prepared the Report on the International Education of Medicinal Chemists (IUPAC Technical Reports Number 13; 1974).

His affiliations with several scientific and professional organizations include emeritus

Indian Pharmaceutical Congress. He received Eminent Pharmacist Award of the Indian Pharmaceutical Association. Dr Singh's standing as historian has been recognized through his election to the Academie Internationale d'Histoire de la Pharmacie. The University of the Sciences in Philadelphia conferred upon Professor Harkishan Singh the degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) in recognition of his distinguished academic career and outstanding contributions to scientific research in organic and medicinal chemistry and the history of pharmacy.

The Indian Panorama has a special reason to celebrate the honor to Prof. Harkishan Singh. The Chief Editor Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja shares with Dr. Singh an association with Banaras Hindu University (BHU), where he studied for two years, and with Panjab University, Chandigarh, where he was a Member of Languages Faculty for a couple of years.

UK to streamline payments to boost bank competition

LONDON (TIP): Britain's multi-trillion pound system for shuffling payments and cheques will be streamlined under plans announced on Thursday to help newcomers compete more easily with long established banks and improve services to customers.

Britain is keen to increase competition in banking, a sector dominated by the "Big Four" lenders - Lloyds, HSBC, Barclays and RBS. Any new banks have to use existing payments systems, largely set up by the big lenders, for a fee.

A group created by the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) and Bank of England recommended on Thursday that the three retail payment systems, Bacs, Cheque and Credit Clearing Company, and Faster Payments Scheme be consolidated under one roof.

That would mean new banks will only have to make one application to use all the three systems, thereby speeding up the process and cutting costs.

"The consolidation would be an important first step towards a generational change in UK payments," PSR Managing Director, Hannah Nixon, said in a statement.

"Consumers will also benefit from new entrants coming into the market and offering users of payment services new, innovative products."

Although only a recommendation, in practice the three payments firms have little choice but to accept the proposal by the regulator and the BoE.

The PSR has powers to force through changes.

"We welcome the report, and look forward to seeing its recommendations taken forward in a way which promotes an orderly and smooth transition," said David Bailey, the BoE's director for financial market infrastructure.

It is expected that the consolidation will be substantially completed by the end of 2017, the PSR said.

"While good progress has been made, support from across the industry is vital and significant collaborative work still needs to be done if the plan is to be delivered successfully and the benefits of the consolidation unlocked," said Robert Stansbury, who chairs the joint BoE, regulator, delivery group. (Reuters)

Le Pen, Macron clash in fiery final French debate

PARIS (TIP): French centrist Emmanuel Macron and his far-right presidential rival Marine Le Pen clashed over terrorism, the economy and Europe in a bad-tempered TV debate on Wednesday, that laid bare their profoundly different visions for the country.

The duel ahead of this Sunday's election was billed as a confrontation between Macron's call for openness and pro-market reforms and Le Pen's France-first nationalism.

The tone was set in the opening minutes, with Le Pen branding the former economy minister and investment banker "the candidate of the elite" and the "darling of the system".

Macron replied that Le Pen, the 48-year-old scion of the National Front (FN) party, was "the heir of a system which has prospered from the fury of the French people for decades", adding: "You play with fear."

The 39-year-old frequently branded Le Pen a liar and even a "parasite of the system", who he said lived off the frustrations of France's blocked political system.

On Europe, Le Pen accused Macron of being "submissive" towards German Chancellor Angela Merkel, saying: "France will be led by a woman, either me or Mrs Merkel."

She also accused Macron of an "indulgent attitude" towards Islamic fundamentalism and constantly sought to remind viewers of his role as a minister in unpopular President Francois Hollande's Socialist government.

But Macron was in combative form throughout, repeatedly portraying Le Pen's proposals as simplistic, defeatist or dangerous and targeting her proposals to withdraw France from the euro in particular.

The euro policy "was the big nonsense of Marine Le Pen's programme," he said midway through the 140-minute debate.

Le Pen called the euro, shared by 19 countries in the European Union and blamed by some in France for a rise in prices, as "the currency of bankers, it's not the people's currency." Trailing in the polls, the debate was probably her last chance to change the dynamics of the race ahead of the final weekend of a long and unpredictable campaign.

A poll by the Elabe group for the BFM channel immediately afterwards showed that 63 percent of people interviewed found Macron the most convincing versus 34 percent for Le Pen. (AFP)

China vows friendship despite North Korean media attack

BEIJING (TIP): China vowed to remain a good neighbour to North Korea on May 4, despite a rare and stinging critique in Pyongyang's state media of its main diplomatic protector and economic benefactor.

Beijing offered a measured response to a signed commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), which lashed out at China and said it should be grateful to Pyongyang for its protection.

The bylined article warned of "grave consequences" if North Korea's patience is tested further.

China's Global Times newspaper retorted that the nuclear-armed North was in the grip of "some form of irrational logic" over its weapons programmes.

But Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang took a conciliatory tone when asked about KCNA's commentary at a press briefing, saying Beijing has a consistent position of "developing good neighbourly and friendly cooperation" with North Korea.

Geng, however, also said China was "firmly committed" to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula through dialogue and consultation.

Beijing and Pyongyang have a relationship forged in the blood of the Korean War, and the Asian giant remains its wayward neighbour's main provider of aid and trade.

But ties have begun to fray in recent years, with China increasingly exasperated by the North's nuclear antics and fearful of a regional crisis. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un is yet to visit Beijing, more than five years after taking power.

The media spat is a sign of the level to which ties between the two have deteriorated. KCNA regularly carries vivid denunciations of the US, Japan, and the South Korean authorities, but it is rare for it to turn its ire on China.

Beijing regularly calls for parties to



avoid raising tensions -- remarks that can apply to both Washington and Pyongyang -- and in February it announced the suspension of coal imports from the North for the rest of the year, a crucial foreign currency earner for the authorities.

Chinese state-run media have called for harsher sanctions against the North in the event of a fresh atomic test, urged Pyongyang to "avoid making mistakes", and spoken of the need for it to abandon its nuclear programmes.

The KCNA commentary denounced the People's Daily, the official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist party, and the Global Times, which sometimes reflects the thinking of the leadership, as having "raised lame excuses for the base acts of dancing to the tune of the US".

Chinese suggestions that the North give up its weapons crossed a "red line" and were "ego-driven theory based on big-power chauvinism" said the article, bylined "Kim Chol" -- believed to be a pseudonym. "The DPRK will never beg for the maintenance of friendship with China, risking its nuclear programme which is as precious as its own life," it said, referring to the North by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea.

Pyongyang had acted as a buffer between Beijing and Washington since the Korean War in the 1950s and "contributed to protecting peace and security of China", it said, adding that its ally should "thank the DPRK for it".

Beijing should not try to test the limits of the North's patience, it said, warning: "China had better ponder over the grave consequences to be entailed by its reckless act of chopping down the pillar of the DPRK-China relations."

In its response Thursday, the Global Times -- which can sometimes stridently espouse what it sees as China's interests -- dismissed the KCNA article as "nothing more than a hyper-aggressive piece completely filled with nationalistic passion".

"Pyongyang obviously is grappling with some form of irrational logic over its nuclear programme," it added.

Beijing "should also make Pyongyang aware that it will react in unprecedented fashion if Pyongyang conducts another nuclear test", it said.

"The more editorials KCNA publishes, the better Chinese society will be able to understand how Pyongyang thinks, and how hard it is to solve this nuclear issue," the Global Times said. (AFP)

Israelis, Palestinians appear willing to make peace deal

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Donald Trump told Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday he was committed to working with Israelis and Palestinians to reach a peace agreement, but he offered no clues about how he would break the deadlock between the two sides. Trump, appearing with Abbas at the White House, told reporters about the peace deal, "We will get this done." Abbas, speaking through a translator, said Palestinians were committed to a peace agreement that would create two separate states based on the 1967 borders.

Israel shows off F-35 stealth fighters for first time

TEL AVIV (TIP): Israel on May 1 showed off its new F-35 stealth fighter jets recently delivered from the United States as part of an air show marking its annual Independence Day celebrations.

Three of Israel's five stealth fighters took to the skies along the Mediterranean coast off Tel Aviv as thousands of people gathered at the waterfront to watch.

The F-35s, made by US-based Lockheed Martin, were the highlight of the show, which marked 69 years of Israeli independence.

Israel has received the initial five jets since December with the aim of allowing it to maintain its military superiority in the turbulent Middle East, particularly regarding its arch-foe Iran.

It plans to purchase a total of 50 F-35s. Its first jets are to be operational this year.

While other countries have ordered the planes, Israel - which receives more than USD 3 billion a year in US defence aid - says it will be the first outside the United States with an



operational F-35 squadron. Among its main features are advanced stealth capabilities to help pilots evade sophisticated missile systems. The pilot's ultra-high-tech helmet, at a cost of about \$400,000 each, includes its own operating system, with data that appears on the visor and is also shared elsewhere.

Thermal and night vision as well as 360-degree views are possible with cameras mounted on the plane. (AFP)

THE BLACK PRINCE, TRUE STORY OF THE LAST MAHARAJAH OF PUNJAB, DULEEP SINGH



Satinder Sartaaj plays Duleep Singh and Amanda Root, Queen Victoria

By Nirpal Singh Shergill in London
LONDON/ HOUSTON (TIP): THE BLACK PRINCE, a historical drama based upon the true story of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the boy who became king of Punjab shortly before it was annexed to the British empire, was awarded the Special Jury Remi Award, May 2, at the 50th annual WorldFest International Film Festival in Houston. The event's Gold Remi was also awarded to the film's Natalie O'Connor for achievement in Art Direction.

Maharaja Duleep Singh was exiled by the British to a privileged life in England when he was only 15 years old, and was shortly thereafter converted to Christianity. Reuniting with his long-lost mother after more than a decade, Duleep begins a daring journey of self-discovery in order to reclaim his faith and the kingdom that is rightfully his. His struggle inspired Sikhs to continue their fight for freedom until India regained

its independence from British Imperialism in 1947, and the Sikh kingdom was divided into India and Pakistan.

Produced by Brillstein Entertainment (12 Years a Slave), THE BLACK PRINCE was written and directed by Hollywood filmmaker Kavi Raz and filmed widely across the U.K. and India.

Acclaimed singer-poet Satinder Sartaaj marks his acting debut in THE BLACK PRINCE, and is joined by an esteemed cast of British acting stalwarts including Jason Flemyng (Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, Snatch) as Dr. Login, the foster parent for the Maharaja, English stage and screen actress Amanda Root (The Iron Lady), who portrays Queen Victoria, and veteran Indian actress Shabana Azmi (City of Joy), as Maharani Jindan, the exiled king's mother. The film also features Keith Duffy, David Essex, Canadian actor Rup Magon and Sophie Stevens in supporting roles.

"This powerful chapter of Indian history has been poorly documented but it is a chapter that needs to be re-examined. When I received the opportunity to be part of this wonderful journey and to share this amazing but tragic story with the world, I made a promise that I share the epic nature of the life of the boy king of the mighty Kingdom of Punjab, but I would also share something of myself as well-my heart and my soul-what moves and inspires me," said writer-director Kavi Raz upon receiving the Special Jury Remi Award. "It's the history of my ancestors, of a land where I find my roots firmly and deeply planted."

WorldFest Houston is the world's largest

independent film festival. The 2017 event concluded last night with the participation of 74 countries. Out of 500 feature film submissions, a total of 63 films were selected for presentation.

THE BLACK PRINCE made separate debuts at the CineQuest Film Festival in San Jose, California and the Manchester Film Festival in England, both in March of this year. The film will next be unveiled at the Bentonville Film Festival in Arkansas and at the International Film Festival of South Asian films (IFFSA) in Toronto in May.

THE BLACK PRINCE releases in cinemas on 21st July, in the English, Punjabi and Hindi languages.

Hundreds show their support for Virendra Sharma at his Election campaign launch

By Nirpal Singh Shergill in London

LONDON (TIP): Hundreds showed up, May 3, in Ealing - Southall to show their support at Virendra Sharma's election campaign launch. Following the shock announcement of a snap general election, today, on the day parliament dissolves, Virendra Sharma launched his campaign to continue as MP for Ealing -Southall, West London.

The event was introduced by Dr Onkar Sahota, GLA member for Ealing and Hillingdon, other contributions were made by Steve Pound from Ealing North, Seema Malhotra from Feltham and Heston, and Cllr Julian Bell Leader of Ealing Council, West London.

Speaking at the launch Virendra Sharma said: "I am proud to represent the area I have lived in for the last 49 years and my campaign will focus on our community and how much we can achieve. This election must be about bringing people together, improving people's lives and turning our backs on the politics of division.

This is a British election, and we should be debating British values, not old community conflicts, ancient arguments and squabbles from half a world away and half a century ago. Ealing Southall should be a standard bearer for tolerance and integration. We achieve so much more when we cooperate, when we unite and when we come together. It harms our community when we see ourselves as different and live separate lives.

I believe in the freedom of speech, I believe in debate and I believe in the ballot box. We only damage ourselves when we resort to scare tactics and when we try to silence dissenting opinion. I will represent all of Ealing Southall, I will represent every religion, every culture and those unsure of where they belong."

With dozens of community groups represented at the launch Virendra Sharma's campaign is one of community unity and people coming together.

Organizations represented at the launch included: Shri Guru Singh Sabha Southall; Sri Ram Mandir Temple; Miri Piri Gurudwara; Sri Guru Nanak Gurudwara; Abu Bakar



Mosque; Sri Guru Ravidass Gurudwara; Vishwa Hindu Kendra; Sri Guru Amardas Gurudwara; Ramgarhia Sabha Southall; Sri Guru Nanak Darbar; Afghan Hindu Society; Rajpoot Society; Haryana Association; South Indian Associations; Rajasthan Society; Kashmiri Pandits; Councillors from Hounslow, Hillingdon, Brent, Harrow and

of course Ealing, and many more prominent individuals from of all communities.

Not even a shower of rain could dampen the excitement, and the groups came together with one voice in support of Virendra Sharma and his message of tolerance, democracy and secularism.

HABITS THAT CAN RUIN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

There is no rule book when it comes to relationships. It's all about what you feel is right, and how you handle the situations you are exposed to. Gestures and habits that once loomed sweet may become toxic for the same relationship in some time, and you may not even realise it.

Before it becomes difficult to analyse when and how your relationship started treading the wrong path, here are the five habits that might be responsible for making it toxic.

Keeping grudges

Noting down all the past mistakes of your partner and bringing them up during arguments as your 'defence mechanism' is definitely not going to strengthen your bond. It actually stops the growth of your relationship and injects bitterness.

Jealously

Trust us guys, being jealous for anything takes you nowhere. It disturbs your own peace of mind. Instead of burning inside, talk it out with your partner about what is troubling you and you will feel much lighter.

Gifts are not solutions!

Nobody says no to a cool gift but don't use them as a convenient way to hide or make up your mistakes. It may placate your partner for time being, but eventually you both will end up moving in circles on the same issue.

Emotional drama? No please!

It is good to have genuine emotions for each other but turning them into a drama sort of a thing is a warning sign for your relationship. For instance, threatening your partner with break up, divorce or anything like that for their every little mistake is a toxic habit.

Aggression

This one is pretty obvious. Nobody



likes being scolded, mocked, blamed or tortured for every minute mistake that can be solved with a simple discussion. It is a subtle form of egotism and ergo, think before opening your gates of anger.

Being too dependent

Depending upon your partner for every little thing is another toxic habit and might be turn off for your partner. It's really important to be independent and have a life out of the relationship as well.

Respect

Not just to your partner, you need to be respectful towards his/her parents and the people who matter to them.

Being flirtatious

Being a little flirtatious is not a bad thing but it must be within the well-defined boundaries set by you and your partner.

Taking your partner for granted

Ah, this one needs not to be emphasised! It is always great to surprise your companion with sweet gestures and let them know how special they are!

Expectation level

Let's be honest here. Relationships are not fairy tales and it is not necessary that everything will turn out the way you had expected. One must be open for adjustments and keep the expectation level realistic.

Source: TOI

Most surprising uses of humble salt

History proves that humans have always built communities either around sources of salt or where they can trade for it. Held as one of the most essential minerals for survival, salt acts like magic for these surprising daily chores.

Exfoliate dead skin

After taking a shower, use plain salt to slough off dead skin from dry areas like your feet, elbows, or knees.

Eliminate a grease fire

Pour salt on top to smother it.

Puffy eyes

Yes it's true! Salt can actually help you deal with puffy eyes. Soak a cloth in 1 cup warm water with 1/2 teaspoon of salt.

Test for rotten eggs

It is the easiest way to test if an egg is rotten. Put an egg in a cup of water and add two teaspoons of salt. A fresh egg will sink but rotten one will float.

Clean tarnished silverware

Maintain your silverware with this essential mineral. All you need to do is scrub with salt and a dry rag to make your silverware shiny again.

Brown spots on iron

Brown spots on the nonstick soleplate of the iron formed by the starch in clothes can disrupt the results. Sprinkle salt on a sheet of brown paper, slide the iron across it. Wipe with a cloth after the iron has cooled down.

For white teeth

A mixture of one part salt and two parts baking soda will whiten your teeth. This also helps in maintaining healthy gums by removing built up plaque. No wonder why brands are asking - 'kya aapke toothpaste mein namak hai?'

Fruit slices

One of the most popular tricks to keep potatoes and apples from turning brown once they're sliced is to put them in salted cold water. Try it to believe it!

De-Stink refrigerator

Next time you plan to clean the fridge, use a mixture of salt and soda water to scrub the inside of your refrigerator. The scrub will remove stains and grease and cut odors too.



MAKE YOUR MAKE-UP MELT-PROOF BY DUNKING YOUR FACE IN WATER!

When it comes to beauty, Koreans are never afraid to try new things. From snail-slime face packs to volcanic clay masks, Korean women love to experiment with their beauty techniques. And the latest Korean trend will just surprise you! Women are now submerging their faces in water to achieve flawless make-up.

This technique is called 'jamsu' which translates to diving in Korean. The jamsu beauty trick involves coating your face with baby powder and then submerging the made-up face in the cold water for 30 seconds.

Wondering why beauty buffs are swearing by this trick? The trick of using baby powder (which works like baking) and water dunking seals the make-up—which means you'll get long lasting melt-proof make-up. So, if you want matte, oil-free skin in summers, this trick might come handy.

FOOD CORNER

TOMATO FISH

INGREDIENTS

250 gm tomato, 1 large onion, 2 teaspoon turmeric, 2 teaspoon ginger paste, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1 pinch salt, 1 tablespoon coriander leaves, 500 gm fish, 2 tablespoon yoghurt (curd), 1 teaspoon red chilli, 1/2 teaspoon cumin, 1/2 teaspoon sugar, 3 tablespoon refined oil.

Method

- Remove any pin bones from the fish fillets and cut into large chunks. Rub 1 ½ tsp turmeric powder and 1 tsp salt over the fish and set aside for 10 minutes.
- Boil water in a pan. Make a cross cut on the stem side of the tomatoes. Plunge the tomatoes in boiling water for 30 seconds and remove. Peel the tomatoes and chop them finely. Also, chop onions very finely.
- Heat oil in a large pan. Spread the fish pieces on the pan and fry till golden in color. Turn and fry on the other side as well. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.
- Add the onions to the same pan. Saute for 5-6 minutes till soft and cooked. Add the turmeric powder, red chili powder, cumin powder, coriander powder, ginger paste, sugar and chopped tomatoes. Mix well and cook for 4-5 minutes till the tomatoes are tender.



- Remove from fire, cool slightly and blend in a blender to get a coarse paste. Return the paste to the pan on the fire. Add 1 cup water and bring to a boil.
- Reduce the heat and allow to simmer for a minute. Whisk the yoghurt and add to the simmering curry.
- Add the fish pieces along with any juices and simmer for 4-5 minutes. Add the chopped coriander and mix well.
- Remove from fire and serve hot with rice or rotis.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SLEEP DRUNK

Most of us, if not all, sleep while we are still tipsy. Sleep may come to you easy and too quickly then, however, your sleep quality is not even close to relaxed. Alcohol has the ability to agitate your body's chemistry, thus, haywiring your entire sleep mechanism. Want to know what happens to your body when you catch forty winks while still drunk? Have a look.

A distressed slumber

Studies say that if you sleep drunk, you might fall asleep too quickly but this will negatively affect the latter half of your sleep. Drinking in excess also makes you distressed and tired. This may translate to an increased pulse rate, which may further result in increased anxiety.

Delay in onset of REM sleep

Rapid Eye Movement or REM is a restorative sleep. It allows brain to calm stress and process the emotions and memories you made during the day. Usually, there are 5 to 7 cycles of REM sleep in a normal night's sleep of an average person. As alcohol wrecks the body's functioning, it reduces REM sleep cycles to just 1 or 2. This interruption in REM sleep could lead to grogginess and will make you feel lethargic throughout the following day.

Loud snoring

Consuming alcohol makes your body muscles relax, including the muscles in your throat. When you fall asleep with relaxed throat muscles, you tend to snore loudly. Some people may even talk or



walk during their drunk sleep. This can even cause impaired memory.

Elevated heart rate

You may think that alcohol intake helps you have a peaceful sleep but it is actually the contrary. The body's nervous system becomes more active and the heart rate increases leading to a spike in blood pressure. This state of your body and mind during the sleep leaves you stressed and restless the following day.

Frequent peeing

The 'regenerative sleep' after alcohol

consumption leaves you impatient the whole night. As alcohol is diuretic, it directly affects your kidneys. This makes you pee more frequently and is harmful for your kidney health. Consuming alcohol also reduces the production of vasopressin, a hormone required to indicate kidneys to reabsorb required quantity of water rather than flushing it through urine.

More sweating

It makes you sweat more, causing you to feel dehydrated when you wake up the next morning.



Listen closely to your knees, they may be giving you clues about osteoarthritis, according to a new study

ARE YOUR KNEES MAKING A WEIRD NOISE? YOU MAY BE AT RISK OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

Hear grating, cracking or popping sounds when you bend your knees? You may be at an increased risk of developing osteoarthritis, a new study suggests.

Osteoarthritis is a type of arthritis that occurs when flexible tissue at the ends of bones wears down.

Researchers from Baylor College of Medicine in the US analysed data from about 3,500 participants who were at high risk for developing knee osteoarthritis.

They found that people who heard grating, cracking, or popping sounds in or around their knee joint may be at an increased risk of developing knee osteoarthritis.

Researchers also found that people who developed osteoarthritis within a year, more than 75 per cent had signs of osteoarthritis on radiographic images but no frequent knee pain at the start of the study.

"This study suggests that if these people have noisy knees, they are at higher risk for developing pain within the next year compared with the people who do not have noisy knees," said Grace Lo, assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine.

"Many people who have signs of osteoarthritis on x-rays do not necessarily complain of pain, and there are no known strategies for preventing the development of pain in this group of people," Lo said.

Future studies that target people who have x-ray signs of osteoarthritis, and who do not complain of pain but do report noisy knees, hold the promise of identifying interventions that can prevent knee pain, researchers said.

NEW STUDY FINDS HOW AIR POLLUTION LEADS TO HEART ATTACK, STROKE

British researchers have found inhaled nanoparticles, especially those coming out of vehicles, enter the bloodstream through the lungs and build up in vessels over a period of time, which runs the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

The new findings, published on Wednesday in the journal ACS Nano, build on previous evidence show the particles we breathe get into our blood and are carried to different parts of the body, including arteries, blood vessels and the heart.

Researchers said these nanoparticles tend to build up in damaged blood vessels of people who already suffer from coronary heart disease - the condition that causes heart attacks - and make it worse.

Experts have long known that air pollution causes serious health risks and can trigger fatal heart attacks and strokes. But until now scientists were not sure how particles inhaled into the lungs go on to affect heart health.

"There is no doubt that air pollution is a killer, and this study brings us a step closer to solving the mystery of how air



pollution damages our cardiovascular health," said Jeremy Pearson, a professor and associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation charity that part-funded the study.

According to a Centre for Science and Environment report, more than 6 lakh people die in India each year due to outdoor air pollution.

"When pollution levels go up, people living with chronic respiratory illnesses like asthma and bronchitis, experience an aggravation of symptoms. Pollution also results in hypertension, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. This study is just another proof," Dr Srikant Sharma, senior consultant physician at Delhi's Moolchand Hospital, said.



ANTIBIOTICS MAY UP MISCARRIAGE RISK

Women who take common antibiotics to treat infections during the early stages of pregnancy may be at a two-fold higher risk of suffering a miscarriage, a new study warns.

Researchers from the Universite de Montreal in Canada looked at data from about 8,702 cases, defined as clinically detected spontaneous abortions, which were matched with 87,020 controls. The mean gestational age at the time of miscarriage was 14 weeks.

Researchers found that many classes of common antibiotics, such as macrolides, quinolones, tetracyclines, sulfonamides and metronidazole, were associated with increased risk of miscarriage in early pregnancy.

Erythromycin and nitrofurantoin, often used to treat urinary tract infections in pregnant women, were not associated with increased risk, the researchers said. These findings may be useful for policy-makers to update guidelines for the treatment of infections during pregnancy, the researchers noted.



WHATSAPP FOR ANDROID GETS 'NEW' USER INTERFACE

Facebook-owned WhatsApp has rolled out a new update for its Android app. Bearing version number 2.17.146, the update introduces some user interface changes to the app.

After the update, WhatsApp's Android app has a separate button for video calling. The placement of the attachment button has also been changed. A new video calling button is placed next to the voice calling button, on the top left corner of the upper bar.

The attachment button now sits next to the camera icon in the text bar. Moreover, the shape of the text input field has been tweaked. It now has rounded corners instead of being rectangular in shape.

Recently, an online report suggested that WhatsApp will soon introduce a new feature that'll enable users to pin individual or group chats. The chat-pinning feature is available in WhatsApp for Android's beta version 2.17.162 or 2.17.163.

The feature allows users to select up to three chats (including individual or group chats) on top of the list, so that they don't get lost. To pin a chat, users can long press on it and tap on the pin icon seen on the top bar. The icon is accompanied by other icons which can be used to access other options such as delete, mute or archive.

The same method can also be used to unpin chats. Users will need to long press on the chat once again and tap the pin icon on the top to unpin it.



SquareTrade tests find Samsung Galaxy S8 phones more prone to screen cracks, damages

Samsung's latest phones feature big wraparound screens and lots of glass. They also appear to break more easily, according to tests run by SquareTrade, a company that sells gadget-repair plans.

The nearly all-glass design of Samsung's Galaxy S8 and S8 Plus makes them beautiful, SquareTrade said, but also "extremely susceptible to cracking when dropped from any angle." Samsung had no comment.

The new phones have received positive reviews from The Associated Press and other outlets. Samsung says advanced orders for the S8 were 30 percent higher than that for the Galaxy S7 phones. The company didn't release specific figures. The S8 starts at \$750, which is about \$100 higher than the S7.

SquareTrade said Monday that cracks appeared on screens of both the S8 and S8 Plus after just one face-down drop onto a sidewalk from six feet. The phones had similar problems when dropped on the backs and sides.

Unsurprisingly, both models did well in water-drop tests. The phones had some audio distortion, but that is typical and temporary. The S8 has water-resistance features.

SquareTrade didn't test the phones' battery, the source of problems that led to a recall of Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 phone.

CHINESE SCIENTISTS TAKE QUANTUM LEAP IN COMPUTING

BEIJING (TIP): Chinese scientists have built the world's first quantum computing machine that goes beyond the early conventional or classical computers, paving way to the realisation of quantum computing.

Scientists announced their achievement at the Shanghai Institute for Advanced Studies of University of Science and Technology of China on Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported.

They believe quantum computing could in some ways dwarf the processing power of supercomputers. One analogy to explain the concept of quantum computing is that it is like being able to read all the books in a library at the same time, whereas conventional computing is like having to read them one after another.

Pan Jianwei, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a leading quantum physicist, said quantum computing exploits the fundamental quantum superposition principle to enable ultra-fast parallel calculation and simulation capabilities.

In normal silicon computer chips, data is rendered in one of two states: 0 or 1. However, in quantum computers, data could exist in both states simultaneously, holding exponentially more information.

The computing power of a quantum computer grows exponentially with the number of quantum bits that can be manipulated. This could effectively solve large-scale computation problems that are beyond the ability of current classical computers, Pan said.

Due to the enormous potential of quantum computing, Europe and the US are actively collaborating in their research. High-tech companies, such as Google, Microsoft and IBM, also have massive interests in quantum computing research.



Professor Lu Chaoyang (C) of the University of Science and Technology of China checks the operating status of the quantum computing machine with his students at a lab in Shanghai, east China, May 3, 2017.

The research team is exploring three technical routes: systems based on single photons, ultra-cold atoms and superconducting circuits.

Pan explained that manipulation of multi-particle entanglement is the core of quantum computing technology and has been the focus of international competition in quantum computing research. In the photonic system, his team has achieved the first 5, 6, 8 and 10 entangled photons in the world and is at the forefront of developments. Pan said quantum computers could, in principle, solve certain problems faster than classical computers.

Indian-origin scientist helps develop robot drill for 50 times faster skull surgery

WASHINGTON (TIP): A new computer-driven robotic drill that can make a type of complex cranial surgery 50 times faster than standard procedures has been developed by scientists including one of Indian origin.

The automated drill, similar to those used in machine auto parts, produces fast, clean and safe cuts, reducing the time the wound is open and the patient is anaesthetised.

This can decrease the incidence of infection, human error, and surgical cost, according to the findings published in the journal *Neurosurgical Focus*.

To perform complex surgeries, especially cranial surgeries, surgeons typically use hand drills to make intricate openings, adding hours to a procedure. The automated drill reduces the time for bone removal from two hours using a hand drill to 2.5 minutes. "It was like doing archaeology. We had to slowly take away the bone to avoid sensitive structures," said William Couldwell, a neurosurgeon at University of Utah in the US.

"I was interested in developing a low-cost drill that could do a lot of the grunt work to reduce surgeon fatigue," said A K Balaji, associate professor at University of Utah.

The patient is first imaged using a CT scan to gather bone data and identify the exact location of sensitive



structures, such as nerves and major veins and arteries that must be avoided.

Surgeons use this information to programme the cutting path of the drill.

"The software lets the surgeon choose the optimum path from point A to point B, like Google Maps," said Balaji.

In addition, the surgeon can programme safety barriers along the cutting path within one millimetre of sensitive structures.

The drill does the heavy lifting by removing most of the bone, similar to a mill, accurately and rapidly.

The translabyrinthine surgery is

performed thousands of times a year to expose slow-growing, benign tumours that form around the auditory nerves, researchers said.

This cut is not only difficult, the cutting path also must avoid several sensitive features, including facial nerves and the venous sinus, a large vein that drains blood from the brain. Risks of this surgery include loss of facial movement.

The device also has an automatic emergency shut-off switch. During surgery, the facial nerve is monitored for any signs of irritation.

INDIA'S REVENUE RECEIPTS TO HIT RS 30 LAKH CRORE IN 2 YEARS ON INFRA PUSH

NEW DELHI (TIP): An integrated policy is on the anvil to ramp up infrastructure at a time when India's revenue receipts are set to touch the Rs 30 lakh-crore mark in the next two years, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said.

"An integrated policy for the sector will be formulated and placed before the nation to bolster its economic growth. Unlike the precedent of working in silos, various ministries like road, port, rail, aviation and shipping would closely coordinate," said Gadkari, who holds the portfolio of road transport, highways and shipping, after inaugurating the India Integrated Transport and Logistics Summit 2017 here.

The maiden IITL summit saw various government departments come together on a single platform.

Gadkari said such a huge initiative is taken for the first time and various departments will hold meetings to chalk out a policy which could be placed before the Cabinet or the Prime Minister.

This is seen as a step towards realising the Prime Minister's vision of holistic development as augmenting infrastructure, the topmost priority of the government, will help eradicate poverty.

The minister is optimistic that the three-day summit, which got under way



Nitin Gadkari

today, would garner Rs 2 lakh crore investment.

The summit is in line with the government's plans to have an effective multi-modal logistics and transport sector to make Indian economy more competitive.

Claiming that this government is "pro-poor", the minister added that extensive planning to boost infrastructure will not only reduce the high logistics cost, but realise the dream of double-digit growth soon.

"If we have to wipe out poverty, if we want to achieve double-digit growth, we will have to augment infrastructure in an integrated manner and we are focusing on developing a network of

waterways, railways and highways," Gadkari said.

Terming GST as "a historic decision", the minister exuded confidence that the major tax reform coupled with demonetisation are bound to give a push to the country's total revenue receipts.

"Post-demonetisation and GST regime, India's revenue receipts are likely to touch Rs 28-30 lakh crore in the next two years coupled with steps to strengthen infrastructure," Gadkari said.

When the NDA government took over in 2014, the revenue receipts read Rs 13 lakh crore, which could scale up to Rs 20 lakh crore during the three years of the present regime, the minister pointed out.

He also touched on employment part, saying holistic development of a massive network of roads, ports, rail and aviation will create more jobs.

His ministry, Gadkari said, is taking the length of National Highways to 2 lakh km soon and is committed to achieving a target of building 40 km of roads a day from the current 23 km.

Thirteen expressways are on the anvil and work has been initiated on five of them with a target of completing the Rs 12,000 crore Eastern Peripheral Expressway by August 15 this year.

INDIA NOTIFIES PHASED MANUFACTURING PLAN FOR MOBILE PHONES



NEW DELHI (TIP): The Ministry of Electronics and IT has notified phased manufacturing programme to boost indigenous production of mobile phones by providing tax relief and other incentives on components and accessories used for the devices.

"The Phased Manufacturing Programme has been notified with the objective of substantially increasing the domestic value addition for establishment of a robust Cellular mobile handset manufacturing eco-system in India," an official statement said.

The programme will enable the Cellular mobile handset and related sub-assembly and component industry to plan their investments in the sector, it further said.

With the implementation of PMP, the value addition or share of indigenously procured components in manufacturing of feature phones will go up from about 15 to 37 per cent and the same for smart phones will move up from about 10 to 26 per cent.

"This initiative will help in building a robust indigenous mobile manufacturing ecosystem in India, and we believe that it will incentivise large scale manufacturing.

"It is our road map to ensure an increase in the domestic value addition in manufacturing of mobile handsets," Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Secretary Aruna Sundararajan said.

The phased manufacturing programme was proposed by a joint panel, Fast Track Task Force, of the industry and the government.

"This programme will be rolled out over a period of time... The focus is to ensure that through appropriate fiscal and financial incentives, indigenous manufacturing of cellular mobile handsets and various sub-assemblies, which go into manufacturing of handsets, can be promoted over a period of time," the statement said.

The phase-wise programme covers mechanics, die cut parts, microphone and receiver, key pad and USB cable in the current financial year.

It also aims to promote the indigenous manufacturing of populated printed circuit boards, camera modules and connectors in 2018-19, and display assembly, touch panels, vibrator motor and ringer in 2019-20.

"The programme will be extended to parts, sub-parts, inputs for aforesaid sub assemblies as the manufacturing ecosystem evolves over the next few years," the statement said.

The government is also in process of formulating second phase of PMP which it expects will enhance value addition to 58.3 per cent in feature phones and 39.6 per cent in smartphones.

"PMP-II is currently under preparation by the Fast Track Task Force, set up by MeitY," the statement said.

Fast Track Task Force Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo said the mobile industry is on a robust path of enterprise creation and developing a world-scale industry.

"We will not get entrapped by protectionism, but will create deep competencies, both cost and skills, which will create a globally benchmarked workforce and complementary industries intertwined with the global mobile phone and component ecosystem equally encouraging global and domestic enterprises," Mohindroo said.

Euro zone economy outperforms US with robust start to year



BRUSSELS (TIP): The euro zone economy started the year with robust growth that outstripped that of the United States and set the stage for a strong 2017, preliminary estimates showed.

The improving economy may weaken the eurosceptic parties that have gained ground in several European Union states over the past years, many of which have denounced the poor state of their economies and called for ditching the euro and returning to national currencies.

The gross domestic product of the 19-country euro zone bloc grew by 0.5% on the quarter in the first quarter, which translates to annualised growth of 1.8% in all of 2017, the European statistics agency Eurostat said.

The preliminary euro zone figure is much higher than the 0.7% annualised growth recorded in the United States in the same quarter, the weakest performance since the first quarter of 2014, according to U.S. estimates.

The weaker performance of the U.S. economy was a blow for the administration of Donald Trump, who has promised strong growth with a protectionist agenda.

The contrasting data from the U.S. and the euro zone may weaken the French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, who is calling for tariff barriers to protect the French economy. She faces free-trade supporter Emmanuel Macron in a May 7 runoff, which polls show Macron is likely to win.

Uber in US court to fight on possible shutdown of self-driving program

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): Uber Technologies Inc goes before a U.S. judge on Wednesday to fight for the right to continue work on its self-driving car program, the latest phase in a courtroom battle over trade secrets that threatens to topple a central pillar of Uber's growth strategy.

The ride-services company is contesting a lawsuit by Alphabet Inc's self-driving car unit, Waymo, which accused former Waymo engineer and current Uber executive Anthony Levandowski of taking technical secrets from Waymo and using them to help Uber's self-driving car development.

If it were proven that Levandowski and Uber conspired in taking the information, that could have dire consequences for Uber, say legal and ride-hailing industry experts. Uber's \$68 billion valuation is propped up in part by investors' belief it will be a dominant player in the emerging business of self-driving cars. At issue on Wednesday is Waymo's demand that U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup in San Francisco issue an injunction barring Uber from using any of the technology that Waymo said was stolen. If Alsup issues a broadly worded order against Uber, it could all but shut down Uber's self-driving car program while court proceedings continue. Alsup is not expected to rule immediately on Wednesday, but he may intimate which way he is leaning. At a hearing last month, Alsup warned Uber that it may face an injunction, saying of the evidence amassed by Waymo: "I've never seen a record this strong in 42 years."

Uber Chief Executive Officer Travis Kalanick has said that autonomous vehicles, though still in their infancy, are critical to the company's long-term success and future growth.



If you are looking for an adventurous getaway, now would be an ideal time for it. This time around, trek through the lesser travelled areas of the Himalayas, and experience the magic of clear skies, colourful landscapes, and uninterrupted views of the lofty peaks. Take your pick.

Solang Valley

Located near Manali, at an altitude of about 2,560 m, Solang Valley offers a beautiful view of the snowclad Himayan range. A trek from Manali to Solang (16 km) is one of the best ways to reach the place. The trek will take you through paths with picturesque surroundings and deodar forests. Moreover, you won't just find snow-capped mountains to gaze at; the trail is laden with apple orchards, a few old villages, and abundant lush green environs. Once at Solang, you can try out activities such as paragliding, zorbing, horse-riding, etc.

Naggar

A trek from Naggar, a quaint settlement in the Kullu district, to the village of Malana, takes about three days. Going through the Chanderkhani Pass is a part of the Naggar trek. It's a great opportunity not just to marvel at the beauty of nature, but also to experience the selfless hospitality of the rural folk living in these mountainous areas. On your trail, you will come across villages like Rumsu and pastures like Shillu Pathar that are ideal to camp for the night. The descent to the village of Malana is steep. Therefore, it is important to be careful while trekking.

Chalal

Chalal is a small village situated very close to the small town of Kasol. It is located on the banks of the Parvati River and provides a much-needed break from the hustle and bustle of Kasol. This is a short trek, but it nevertheless proves to be an enthralling experience. The road to Chalal is scenic; the path runs along the river, which has huge boulders where one can relax in the middle of the trek. For anyone taking a trek to Rasol or higher, it is a good idea to stop by Chahal to rest or stalk up on supplies.

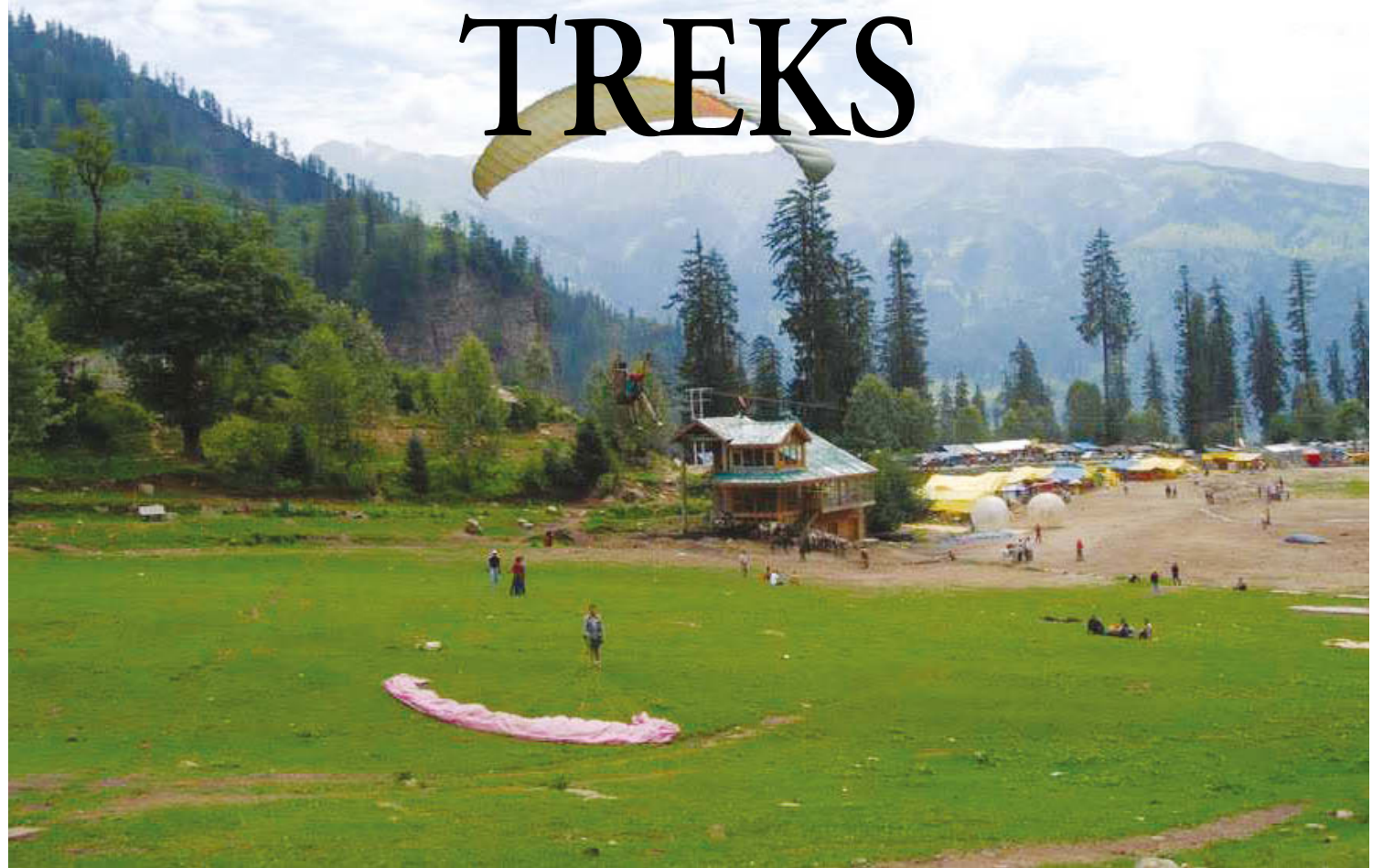
Sandakphu

Sandakphu, a part of the Singalila Ridge, is the highest peak of West Bengal. With an altitude of 3,636 m, the summit is a surreal experience, and is a must-see for people who love adventure treks. It is one of the few places that offers trekkers a majestic view of four of the tallest mountains in the world - Mount Everest, Kanchenjunga, Lhotse and Makalu - spread across India, Nepal, Bhutan and further. The trek to Sandakphu is a long one, and it is advisable to carry enough supplies to last through the journey. The distances between one pit stop and the next are quite long. Once you start your trek from Manebhanjan, which is about an hour's drive from Darjeeling, it takes nearly four hours to reach Chitre. The trail is quiet steep, with a mixture of rocky, gravel-filled paths, as well as levelled land, which are easier for walking. The trail towards Kalipokhri is beautiful and you see an abundance of exotic, colourful birds. By the end of the day, you reach the small Black Lake of Kalipokhri - the sacred lake that never freezes, with Buddhist prayer flags hanging over it. You can camp at Kalipokhri and head out to Sandakphu the next morning, which is a relatively easier trek of about 6 km.

Roopkund

Situated at an altitude of 4,463 m, this is a moderately challenging trek. The Roopkund, or Skeleton, Lake, (several human skeletons were found at the site in 1942) is one of the sites that attracts adventure lovers. The challenging terrain is accompanied by picturesque sights of snow-capped mountains and the Bedni Bugyal grasslands.

LESSER EXPLORED TREKS



The glory of the Vedas knows no bounds and it is manifested in the affairs of the world in a manner that defies comparison. Of all the sacred places on earth Kasi comes foremost.

When we speak in praise of other hallowed centres, we say that they are equal to Kasi in holiness. From this we know the importance of that city. In the south there is a pilgrim centre which has come to be called "Daksina Kasi (Southern Kasi). There is an Uttara Kasi (Northern Kasi) in the Himalaya. Vrddhacalm in Tamil Nadu is also known as "Vrddha Kasi". In Tirunelveli district (of Tamil Nadu) there is a town called " Tenkasi" (this also means " Southern Kasi"). When we speak in praise of a sacred place it is customary to describe it as being "equal to Kasi". But Kumbhakonam is considered greater than Kasi (" in greatness it weighs one grain more than Kasi"). Here is a stanza that speaks of the high place accorded to Kumbhakonam.

*Anyaksetre krtam papam punyaksetre
vinasyati Punyaksetre krtam papam
Varanasyam vinasyati Varanasyam krtam
papam Kumbhakone vinasyati Kumbhakone
krtam papam Kumbhakone vinasyati*

"The sin committed in any (ordinary) place is washed away in a sacred place. That committed in any sacred place is washed away in Varanasi (that is Kasi). The sin committed in Varanasi is wiped away in Kumbhakonam. And the sin earned in Kumbhakonam, well it is destroyed only in Kumbhakonam." The glory of Kasi is that all other sacred places are likened to it. Even when a place is said to be superior to Kasi the implication is that Kasi is uniquely great. It has acquired a distinction by being made an object of comparison. A great man has composed a poem on Kasi. " ksetranam uttamanam api yad upamaya ka pi loke prasastih, " so it begins. It means: Hindu Dharma 337 "By being likened to it even highly esteemed places become famous- that is Kasi."

Similarly, when you speak highly of scared tirthas you liken them to the Ganga or say that they are more holy than that river. We

THE VEDIC WISDOM



must conclude from the foregoing that Kasi comes first among the sacred places and that the Ganga is the holiest of the tirthas. It is in this way that, when any work is to be extolled, it is said to be "equal to the Vedas". The Ramayana is a very famous poetic work. There are many versions of it. Take any language in India: the story of Rama will be seen to be a theme in drama, poetry, music, etc, in its literature. The greatness of the Ramayana is such that it is exalted to the position of a Veda. "Vedah Pracetasadasitsaksadramayanatmana.

" The Veda itself was born as Ramayana to Valmiki, the son of Pracetas. The Mahabharatha too is celebrated as a Veda: in fact it is called the fifth Veda ("pancamo Vedah"). Vaisnavas glorify the Tiruvaymozhi as a Veda. It is the work of Nammazhvar, who is also called Sathakopan and Maran. They say: "Maran Sathakopan composed the Tamil

Veda." The famous Tamil work on ethics, the Tirukkural, is also called the "Tamil Veda." During the time of the author of the Kural, Tiruvalluvar, there was the "Kadai Sangam" in Madurai. In that city there was a seat received as a gift from Sundaesvara. Only the worthy could sit on it.

The unworthy would be pushed aside. Was such a thing possible? We cannot believe it; but we do believe that when a coin is inserted in a machine we get a ticket. [Here the Paramaguru tells the story of Tiruvalluvar and his Kural and how the poets of his time came to regard Tamil as great as Sanskrit since it had now come into possession of a work like Kural which, they said, was equal to the Vedas. This story occurs in Chapter 5, Part Two, and "The Vedas in their Original Form."] Saivas [in Tamil Nadu] regard the Tiruvacakam as the Tamil Veda. To the Christians in India the Bible is the "Satya -

Veda. " Thus we see that the Vedas have a special place of honour.

The Vedic river is ageless and it traverses the length and breadth of our land as the very life-blood of our culture. This river should not be allowed to dry up. There is no greater responsibility for a Hindu than that of keeping the Vedas a live and vibrant tradition. The sound of the Vedas must pervade everywhere, must fill all space. The truths enshrined in them must be spread far and wide and the rituals enjoined on us by them must be made to flourish. Sufficient it would be if the Vedic dharma remains vigorous and is maintained atleast in our land. If a man's heart is stout he will survive even if all other parts of his body are afflicted. In the same way, if the Vedas flourish in this land all nations will prosper and live in peace and happiness. This is the prayer of the Vedic dharma.

SARASWATI: GODDESS OF KNOWLEDGE

Saraswati is the beloved Hindu goddess of knowledge, music and the arts. In Buddhism, she is a guardian deity who upholds the teachings of Gautama Buddha. In Burma she is called Thurathadi or Tipitaka Medaw, in China her name is Biãncáitian, in Thai, Surasawadee and in Japanese, Benzaiten.

Her name, which derives from two words, "saras" (meaning "flow") and "wati" (meaning "a woman"), gives clues as to her origin. Ten thousand years ago, a mighty river flowed, three to ten kilometers wide at its largest. Called the Saraswati by those who lived along its banks (and now known to geologists as the Ghaggar-Hakra River), it carried glacial water from the Himalayas through the plains of northwest India and probably ended in a series of terminal lakes within the Thar Desert, its water only reaching the sea in very wet rainy seasons. Many significant archaeological sites have been excavated along its course-way, indicating that the river played a vital part in the development of the Indus Valley Civilization. However, the Saraswati began to dry up during the Harappan and the Late Harappan phase as evidenced by the abandonment of many sites, at the latest around 1900 BCE. This probably occurred due to the capture of its tributaries by the Indus and Yamuna River systems and the loss of water in much of its catchment area, caused by deforestation,

overgrazing and irrigation.

To the people who lived along her banks, the goddess Saraswati was originally a



personification of the river itself. As its waters began to fail and the Harappa settlements shifted eastward towards the mighty Indus Valley, Saraswati began to lose her status as a river goddess and became increasingly associated with literature, the arts and music. As centuries passed, she grew further to embody the concepts of intelligence, consciousness, knowledge, creativity, education, enlightenment and power. This embodiment of everything associated with refinement and culture points to her importance in the founding of an independent civilization that has endured for thousands of years.

Today Saraswati is depicted as a beautiful, light-skinned woman dressed in white, signifying the purity of true knowledge. She may be depicted near a flowing river, relating to her early history as a river goddess. Her mount is the swan, symbolizing her ability to discriminate between good and bad; however she is more often pictured seated on a white Nelumbo nucifera lotus, indicating her association with Absolute Truth. Occasionally she is associated with the colour yellow, the colour of the mustard plant flowers that bloom at the time of

her festival in the spring. She is dressed modestly without ornaments or jewels, representing her preference for knowledge over material things. Her consort is Brahma. Saraswati has four arms, representing the four aspects of human personality in learning: the mind, intellect, alertness, and ego. These four arms also represent the 4 Vedas (the sacred books of the Hindu faith), which in turn represent the 3 forms of literature, poetry, prose and music. She holds in her hands a book (prose), a rosary of crystal beads (poetry) and a vina (music). Her final hand holds a pot of sacred water, which represents the purity of these three arts and their power to purify human thought.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it? Indian alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."



PRIYANKA TO ATTEND UNICEF GALA IN SA

Actress Priyanka Chopra will attend a UNICEF's gala fundraising event to highlight the challenges faced by children affected by violence here this week.

The May 6, inaugural event plans to bring together some of the biggest names from across the globe to leverage their support to enhance care and protection of children affected due to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Priyanka, 34, served as a UNICEF national Ambassador in India for nearly ten years and was recently appointed a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

"The visit of UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador Priyanka Chopra to South Africa will highlight the challenges faced by children affected by violence. Her visit is providing UNICEF with a unique opportunity to profile our mandate and values that guide our daily work for every child in South Africa," a statement from UNICEF read.

It will also feature a fashion show by the country's most renowned Indian-origin designer Gavin Rajah.

There will be a live auction as well, funds raised from which will go towards the child protection programmes of UNICEF South Africa.

Source: PTI

SUNNY LEONE TURNS COMMENTATOR, GETS A THUMBS UP FROM SEHWAG

Sunny Leone may be raising the mercury levels these days by posting her hot pictures on social media, but that's not the only thing about her that's making news. She is also making her presence felt in the field of cricket.

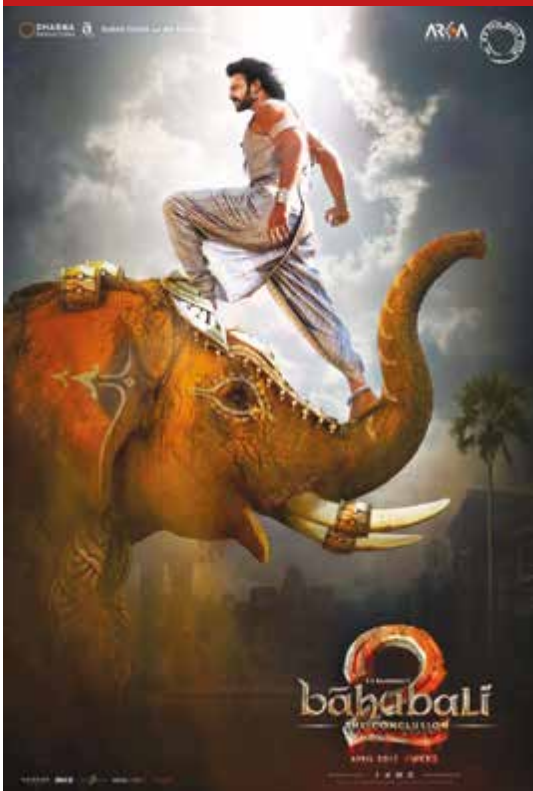
The actress turned live commentator for an online application and recorded with Sunil Grover during a cricket match between Shah Rukh Khan's and Preity Zinta's teams recently at an ongoing cricket league. Not one to stop at that, Sunny then challenged the commentating skills of Virender Sehwag.

On Tuesday, cricket lovers in Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla stadium were treated to Sunny's funny banter and her love for cricket. Her turn as a commentator even got a thumbs up from Sehwag. Must say, if acting doesn't work out, she's got a back-up plan for sure.

Source: TOI



MOVIE REVIEW



BAAHUBALI 2: THE CONCLUSION

CAST: Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, Sathyaraj, Tamannaah, Nassar and Ramya Krishnan

DIRECTION: S S Rajamouli

GENRE: Action

DURATION: 2 hours 48 minutes

STORY

Amarendra Baahubali (Prabhas) and Bhalla Deva (Rana Daggubati) are cousins raised by the same mother, Sivagami (Ramya Krishnan) who is also the reigning Queen of Mahishmati. Amarendra is orphaned in his childhood and despite the fact that Bhalla is her own son, the Queen wants to crown Amarendra the King of Mahishmati because

Baahubali 2 total collection crosses Rs 600 crore mark in 4 days

SS Rajamouli's Baahubali 2 (Bahubali: The Conclusion) has collected over 600 crore gross at the worldwide box office and shattered the lifetime collection record of Bahubali: The Beginning in four days. Having rocked the box office over the weekend, the Prabhas and Rana Daggubati starrer was expected to continue its dream run on Monday, May 1, which happened to be the holiday on account of the Labour Day. As per early estimates, Baahubali 2 registered fantastic response at the ticket counters in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala during the day.

she feels that he has the true makings of a ruler and benefactor. Bhalla is peeved. His father and he conspire to overthrow Baahubali. And they use Kattappa (Sathyaraj) and the Sivagami as pawns in their game.

REVIEW

This part is more prequel than sequel because initially the story traces the origins of Baahubali's father, who was originally meant to be the King of Mahishmati. It also delves on the love-story between Amarendra and Devasena (Anushka Shetty), who is mother of Mahendra Baahubali (Prabhas in a dual role.) Recounted in the folklore-meets-Aesop's fable-style, the plot is simple and carries the good triumphs over evil thought forward just like the

first part did. Albeit with some childish conspiracy theories added in. Of course, the end comes together in a long-drawn climax that could have been 10-minutes shorter.

But don't judge Baahubali. Just savour it. It is a visual extravaganza that India must feast on.

Part 2-The Conclusion onerously carries the equity of the first part on its shoulder and ups the scale on many counts—especially in heroism. Baahubali has been sketched out as such a symbol of strength and power that he makes you root for him throughout. Prabhas is terrific as father and son. What's more, this part provides an answer to a question uppermost in everyone's mind for the last two years—it tells you why Kattappa, the old faithful, killed Baahubali Senior.



BLAKE LIVELY SPORDED 200 CARATS OF JEWELLERY AT MET GALA

Actress Blake Lively wore almost 200 carats of jewellery at the 2017 Met Gala red carpet. The 29-year-old actress, who was dressed in gold, embellished Versace gown with a blue-feathered train, completed her look with over USD 3.5 million of jewellery.

The ensemble included an 82-carat pair of Burma earrings, a 50-carat triple sapphire ring, a 28-carat nude diamond pear shape ring and a 10-carat triangle diamond ring. *Source: PTI*

LIV TYLER'S 'MAMA SAID' TO CELEBRATE MOTHERHOOD



Ahead of Mother's Day which falls on May 14, Liv Tyler has acted in and co-directed a film titled 'Mama Said' in support of an NGO.

The film is a launch by American clothing brand Gap in support of charity Every Mother Counts.

Tyler has co-directed it with Paola Kudacki, with whom she set out to create a film that embodies the joys and

optimism of motherhood, with a nod to the loving influence mothers have on their children.

The Hollywood actress features in the film alongside Coco Rocha, Candice Swanepoel, Jurnee Smollett-Bell, and Cass & Ali Bird with their children.

"I often think of the things my grandmother and my mother have been telling me my whole life. Remembering

what your 'mama said' as a child and growing up is very important. I often try to think of things that I can say to my children in a way that they can hear me the same way I heard my mom," Tyler said in a statement.

The film depicts mothers enjoying intimate, candid moments with their children playing, dancing and bonding.

Source: IANS

MOVIE REVIEW



GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2

CAST: Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Vin Diesel, Bradley Cooper, Michael Rooker, Karen Gillan, Pom Klementieff, Sylvester Stallone

DIRECTION: James Gunn

GENRE: Action

DURATION: 2 hours 15 minutes

STORY

In 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2' the newfound team's adventures continue as they fight their way to unravel the mysteries of Peter Quill's true parentage.

REVIEW

With the exception of 'Captain America: The Winter Soldier', the Marvel Cinematic Universe has notoriously struggled with their sequels. Be it Iron Man, Thor, or even The Avengers – none of the follow-ups managed to capture their predecessor's magic. It's not too surprising then that writer & director

James Gunn tries to regurgitate the lightning-in-a-bottle success of the first film, by replicating some of the comedic elements that worked for it. Which isn't entirely a bad thing – as this is arguably the most vibrant and whimsical comic book film we've seen in a while, and that's precisely what it should be.

The movie's ability to exist on its own two legs as an engaging, science-fiction story is its strongest point. This might come across as a disappointment to fans expecting a setup to upcoming films – 'Avengers: Infinity War' and 'Thor: Ragnarok', but keeping the proceedings self-contained to this ragtag bunch of anti-heroes is hardly a detrimental factor. In fact, it allows for a more personal look at each of these previously obscure characters, and delves into their individual psyches.

Since we're relatively familiar with some of their idiosyncrasies, Gunn allows them to run wild to humorous effect, while revealing crucial aspects of their respective backstories. 'No small parts' is appropriate here, which is testament to Gunn's ability as a writer and director to juggle a number of outlandish personalities – both old and new. He also extracts strong performances from a diverse bunch of actors, and all of them bring their A-game to the table as their prominent chemistry with each other is on full display.

Elizabeth Hurley takes elephant ride

Actress Elizabeth Hurley, who is currently filming 'Phoenix Wilder: The Great Elephant Adventure' in South Africa, took a break from her shooting schedule to take an elephant ride.

Hurley shared a photograph of her enjoying the ride over social media last week, reports dailymail.co.uk. In the image, the 51-year-old holds her hand in the air with joy as she rests on top an elephant. "Hello Africa! Adventures with elephants. This one was due to be culled until they rescued it," Hurley wrote alongside the image.

'Phoenix Wilder: The Great Elephant Adventure' follows the story of a 12-year-old who outsmarts a gang of poachers and saves the elephants.

NYS EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR STEALING NEARLY \$2.4M IN STATE FUNDS THROUGH BRIBERY SCHEME

Defendant Sentenced to Two to Six Years in State Prison for Accepting Bribes, Stealing Funds from Educational Program for New Yorkers With Disabilities

NEW YORK (TIP: Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced the sentencing of Keisha Relf Davis, a New York State Department of Education vocational counselor, for taking part in a scheme that stole nearly \$2.4 million from New York State. In September 2014, a Bronx County grand jury indicted Relf Davis along with co-defendants, Juan Cabrera and Juani Ortiz, who were already sentenced on Grand Larceny charges. Relf Davis was sentenced to two to six years in state prison by the Honorable Justice Steven Barrett.

"Those who steal from the state will face serious consequences" said Attorney General Schneiderman. "Government programs cannot be used as a personal piggy bank-especially ones that are intended to help some of our most vulnerable citizens."

As part of the scheme, Relf Davis, in exchange for cash bribes, approved students for the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Program ("ACCES-VR"), although these students never applied to the program. The

ACCES-VR program was created to help eligible New Yorkers with disabilities and functional limitations gain self-dependence through education, training, and employment. Relf Davis knew that the students she approved did not have disabilities or functional limitations to qualify for this program.

From approximately October 2010 through March 2013, in Bronx County and elsewhere in New York, Relf Davis and others agreed to steal over one million dollars from the ACCES-VR program. When students sought on-the-road commercial driver's license ("CDL") training lessons at Roadway and Americana, the co-defendants required the students to provide a copy of their driver's license and social security card. In addition, students were required to pay \$300 to \$500 in cash for the lessons. These cash payments were paid directly to Relf Davis as bribes. Over the course of the scheme, each driving school paid Relf Davis over \$10,000 in bribes.

In exchange for the cash bribes, Relf Davis agreed to fraudulently fill out an application for ACCES-VR services on behalf of each

Roadway and Americana student for whom she received a driver's license and social security card from the co-defendants. She forged multiple student signatures and falsely indicated that the students suffered from substance abuse problems, when they did not. For each student Relf Davis approved to receive CDL training at Roadway or Americana, Relf Davis agreed to approve payments from ACCES-VR to the driving schools ranging from approximately \$3,900 to \$4,930, without requiring documentation or evidence that the schools provided the services contained in the proposals or vouchers.

Relf Davis and others knowingly filed false and forged documents with the State Education Department and with ACCES-VR. Specifically, they falsely filed: applications; certifications of vocational services eligibility; proposals; and vouchers with certifications that Roadway and Americana provided 50 hours of classroom instruction, 40 hours of theoretical instruction, and 35 hours of on-the-road training services for the ACCES-VR purported consumers. Roadway and Americana did not

provide these services to the students. The services that students received from the schools were worth far less than the amount that ACCES-VR paid.

The Attorney General's office thanks the Department of Education for their assistance in this case.

Prosecuting the case are Assistant Attorneys General Kevin B. Frankel and Travis Hill of the Attorney General's Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Bureau Chief Daniel Cort and Deputy Bureau Chief Stacy Aronowitz. The investigation was handled by Investigator Angel Laporte of the Attorney General's Investigations Bureau, under the supervision of Deputy Chief Investigator John McManus. The Investigations bureau is led by Chief Dominick Zarrella. Associate Forensic Auditor Matthew A. Croghan assisted in the investigation under the supervision of Forensic Audit Section Chief Edward J. Keegan, Jr. Legal support analyst Katharine Litka of the Public Integrity Bureau also assisted in the investigation.

contd from page 1

US House passes Bill to repeal...

to the Senate for consideration. No Democrat voted for the Bill.

The Bill's passage represented a step toward fulfilling a top Trump campaign pledge and a seven-year Republican quest to dismantle Democratic former President Barack Obama's signature healthcare law.

But the effort now faces new hurdles in the Senate, where the Republicans have only a 52-seat majority in the 100-seat chamber and where just a few Republican defections could sink the Bill.

Thursday's vote was also a political victory for House Speaker Paul Ryan, demonstrating his ability to pull together a fractured Republican caucus after two failed attempts this year to win consensus on the healthcare law.

Democrats are hoping that the Republicans' vote to repeal Obamacare will spark a voter backlash in next year's midterm congressional poll.

Some 20 million Americans gained healthcare coverage under Obama's 2010 Affordable Care Act, which has recently gathered support in public opinion polls. But Republicans have long attacked it, seeing the program as government overreach and complaining that it drives up healthcare costs.

The Republican Bill, known formally as the American Health Care Act, aims to repeal most Obamacare taxes, including a penalty for not buying health insurance.

But, the battle is not over yet. It is over to senate now.

Though the Bill's passage represented a seven-year Republican quest to dismantle former President Barack Obama's signature healthcare law, the American Health Care Act now faces new hurdles in the Senate

The Republicans have only a 52-seat majority in the 100-seat chamber and just a few Republican defections in the Senate could sink the Bill. The Democratic senators remain firmly unified against any repeal of Obamacare

The new Bill repeals the individual mandate requiring those who can afford it to have health insurance. Those who have been without coverage for more than two months would face a 30% surcharge for new policy

It repeals Obamacare's requirement for companies with 50 or more staff to provide insurance coverage for employees

Meanwhile, reactions to the bill passed in the House on May 4 are pouring in. Generally, hospitals, doctors, health insurers and some consumer groups, with few exceptions, are speaking with one voice and urging significant changes to the Republican health care legislation.

Indian Outsourcing Giant Infosys...

edged out in view of Trump administration's avowed policy declaration of cutting down immigrant work visas, Infosys, the IT giant from India said on May 2 it was in the process of setting up a technology and innovation office in the State of Indiana, the State of Vice President Mike Pence, which will create up to 10,000 jobs for Americans.

New York Times commenting on the statement of Infosys said, "The move makes Infosys the latest Asian technology company to portray itself as a jobs creator as President Trump threatens to take action against companies he sees as hurting American workers".

The Times report further says, "Last month, Mr. Trump signed an executive order directing government agencies to review employment immigration laws to promote "Hire American" policies. That included offering suggestions for how to reform the H-1B visa program, which operates as a lottery to bring skilled foreign laborers to the United States each year - usually tech workers.

"But Infosys is also making its move to hire American driven by other forces. Its home base of India has become a less appealing place to do the grunt work of programming as wages rise there and skilled labor has become more difficult to find. A study of 36,000 engineering students at 500 Indian colleges released last month found that only 5 percent could write

software code correctly.

"Building talent pools that define the future of America is what we want to do," said Ravi Kumar S., Infosys's president and deputy chief operating officer, in a phone interview from Indiana.

Indiana, the home state of Vice President Mike Pence, will be the first beneficiary of Infosys's hire-American efforts. The company intends to open a new technology and innovation office in or near Indianapolis in August, recruiting 100 new workers this year and several hundred more next year, with a goal of adding a total of 2,000 employees by 2021.

"Infosys said it would seek out three other sites for American expansion, looking for places that are close to clients and universities and where state and local governments are willing to offer significant economic incentives. The company already has an innovation hub in Silicon Valley.

"The majority of Infosys's business is in the United States, and it typically receives several thousand H-1B visas every year to bring in mostly entry-level Indian programmers who move from project to project at companies in industries like banking, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and energy.

"Infosys has hired more American college graduates in the last couple of years, said Mr. Kumar. And now clients in the United States want the company to have even more people on site locally. So, it must expand its American work force significantly, he said."

Arnab Goswami's Republic TV...

first of its kind partnership between a news channel and an online streaming service, in India.

Chairman & CEO, Star India Uday Shankar, in a statement issued, said "We are deeply committed to making sure that we continuously widen Hotstar's offering, and the launch of Republic TV on Hotstar fills a big gap in our portfolio."

Editor-in-Chief, Republic TV, Arnab Goswami said the tie-up will ensure that one can watch the news on the go. "We are confident of breaking the digital barrier and believe this is the first step as news produced in India goes digital and then global. We believe the coming together of these two exciting brands and services will take news to the 90 million plus viewers on Hotstar every month."

Earlier this week, Republic TV announced that it will use a range of Microsoft products and services that are designed to make newsrooms more productive. Microsoft Azure will host Republic's digital platforms.

The channel also announced that it will be a free to air channel. On dish satellite providers, it will be available on TataSky - channel no. 616, Airtel Digital TV - 376 and DishTV - 771.

Republic TV is part of ARG Outlier Media Private Limited. Among its main investors are Rajya Sabha MP's Rajeev Chandrashekar's Asianet News Online Private Limited, and SARG Media Holding Private Limited which is owned by Goswami himself. (Source IE Business)



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PANT AND SAMSON BRING BRUTAL END TO LIONS' CAMPAIGN



NEW DELHI (TIP): Only once had a team chased more than 209 to win an IPL match and yet Delhi Daredevils made such short work of the target that by the last five overs, the required rate was less than a run a ball. This incredible situation was the result of local boy Rishabh Pant (97 off 43) and Sanju Samson's (61 off 31) blitzkriegs. At one stage, the two batsmen together struck four successive deliveries for sixes. In all, there were 31 hits over the boundary line - a record for this tournament - and 20 of them came off the bat of the Daredevils as they raced to their target with 15 balls to spare and forced the Gujarat Lions out of the playoffs.

Earlier, impressive spells from Kagiso Rabada and Pat Cummins had turned the momentum after Suresh Raina and Dinesh Karthik struck rapid fifties, restricting Lions despite their having raced to 158 in their first 14 overs.

The Daredevils have a new tradition: they'd dropped at least one catch in each of their last two games. Today, they dropped three. Each of the reprieved batsman - Yuvraj Singh and Robin Uthappa - had gone on to score 70 or more and Raina followed suit tonight. He was on 2 when Shreyas Iyer spilled a dolly at first slip off Rabada's bowling. He was on 40 when Marlon Samuels couldn't hold on to a flick aimed straight at him at midwicket.



Sanju Samson plays a shot during an IPL 2017 match between Delhi Daredevils and Gujarat Lions on May 4 (Thursday). (BCCI)

Eventually, the latest beneficiary of the Daredevils Goodwill List finished with 77 off 43 balls.

At the other end, Karthik had not given Daredevils the slightest chance. He struck at a quicker rate than Raina as the pair

counterpunched in response to being 10 for 2 by the second over to put on the Lions' highest partnership (133) in the IPL.

It was around this time, though, that Daredevils began learning an important lesson: when the batsman gives you a chance,

convert it. Rabada caught Raina short at the non-strikers with a direct hit from backward point. Next over, Karthik fell to one of the catches of the season - Corey Anderson leaping backwards with an outstretched left hand at mid-off, before executing the perfect tumble to hold on. For good measure, Pant pouched a skier to dismiss Aaron Finch in the penultimate over.

After their successful chase in the last game, Nair revealed the plan had been to play like a young side - hit hard and have fun. And it was the youngest of them all who masterminded this chase. Pant's first scoring shot was a six on the up over cover, a sign that dew was making its presence felt, and of a batsman enforcing home advantage.

So when Raina decided that Pant's Delhi team-mate Pradeep Sangwan would bowl the next over, he was asking for trouble. Pant welcomed Sangwan with 16 off the first three balls and the Daredevils had breached 50 inside the fifth over. James Faulkner conceding five runs to end the Powerplay would be the last instance of the Lions being in the game. The next six overs went for 90 runs; each over contained at least one six, the 11th went for three. When Samson - who hit seven sixes and no fours - was dismissed by Jadeja in the 14th over, Pant responded with a six and a four to bring the asking rate below run-a-ball. It was perhaps the perfect T20 innings. The only way it could have been better was if he had scored the three runs required to become IPL's youngest centurion.

When Pant was caught behind for 97, Raina, knowing he will not play an IPL playoff match for the first time in 10 years, still came up and hugged the young man. It seemed like the handing of a baton, the IPL's pre-eminent batsman heralding a new hero.

Source: ESPNcricinfo

'NEGATIVE' BCCI ORDERED TO SELECT INDIA TEAM

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators has rebuked the Board of Control for Cricket in India officials for delaying the naming of the Indian cricket team for next month's ICC Champions Trophy in UK.

In a strongly-worded letter to acting BCCI secretary Amitabh Choudhary on Thursday, the CoA, led by former auditor general of India Vinod Rai, took exception to the Board's stance to use the players as pawns in their revenue-share battle with the ICC bosses. "The BCCI appears to have lost sight of the fact that it attained a pre-eminent position in the ICC not by a combative approach but by building consensus and ensuring a positive image including by helping other cricket boards in their time of need," the CoA said in its letter.

India, led by MS Dhoni, had won the ICC Champions Trophy in UK in 2013. India beat hosts England in a rain-hit final at Edgbaston. India start their 2017 ICC Champions Trophy campaign against Pakistan in Birmingham on June 4. "There has been more than enough negativity surrounding Team India's participation in the ICC Champions Trophy and the sooner the same is put to rest the better. The players' interests are paramount and they must be given the best chance to prepare for, defend and retain the ICC Champions Trophy," the administrators said.



The ICC Champions Trophy will be played in UK from June 1 to 18. Defending champions India's first match is against Pakistan in Birmingham on June 4.

According to the ICC's revised financial model based on equity and good conscience, BCCI will receive \$293 million across the eight year cycle, England \$143m, Zimbabwe \$94m and the remaining seven Full Members \$132m each. Associate Members will receive funding of \$280m. This model was passed 13 votes to one.

Unhappy with this model, India threatened to withdraw from the ICC Champions Trophy as a mark of protest. The CoA has rejected such an approach from the BCCI. India also failed to name their squad by April 25.

AFRIDI: EXCEPT GAUTI, MOST INDIA PLAYERS ARE MY FRIENDS

DUBAI (TIP): Recalling fond memories of his friendship with several Indian cricketers, former Pakistan skipper Shahid Afridi on Thursday said that, contrary to popular perception, players from both the nations get along really well. Afridi, however, singled out veteran India opener Gautam Gambhir as the one with whom he doesn't share a friendly equation.

For the record, the duo had a heated exchange on the field a few years back. In a column he wrote for the International Cricket Council as part of the build-up to the marquee clash between India and Pakistan in the Champions Trophy on June 4, Afridi fondly recalled his experiences of playing against the archrivals.

"Contrary to popular belief, India and Pakistan players get along very well. Of course, there are exceptions like Gautam Gambhir, who dare I say isn't the friendliest," Afridi wrote.

"We are unlikely to be found together at a coffee shop anytime soon. We had a heated exchange on the field some years ago and it made headlines all over the world. While I have moved on as I feel these things are part and parcel of the game, Gautam for some reason can't get



over it. Good luck to him!"

Afridi said he cherishes the time he spent with the likes of Harbhajan Singh, Yuvraj Singh and Zaheer Khan. "The three are my good mates and we have some wonderful memories together from the times when both the sides used to play and tour each other on a regular basis. "In the early days of our careers, we used to hang out together quite a lot and spend time at each other's homes. Now, all of us are married and, as such, responsibilities and priorities have changed. But whenever we catch-up, we meet with warmth and love, and remember our good times together," he recollected.

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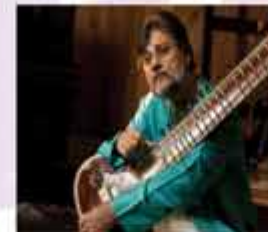
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