



EVER TRUTHFUL

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## The INDIAN PANORAMA

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Articles for publication in the special issue may please be submitted by December 21 to [editor@theindianpanorama.com](mailto:editor@theindianpanorama.com). Please email with the article, a photograph and a brief bio.

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## Diwali Foundation USA's 'POWER OF ONE' Inaugural Award Bestowed on 6 Diplomats

UN Women's Lakshmi Puri only woman recipient of the Honor

**UNITED NATIONS (TIP):** Diwali Foundation USA's Inaugural "Power of One" Awards were presented here on December 11, 2017. Belarus, Georgia and India joined with Diwali Foundation USA, to bestow "Power of One" Awards - essentially the "Oscars of Diplomacy" - upon six exceptional diplomats: Amb. Maged Abdelaziz, Amb. Ion Botnaru, Amb. Lakshmi Puri, Amb. Matthew Rycroft, Amb. Nawaf Salam, and Amb. Yuriy Sergeyev.

The event was co-sponsored by Algeria,  
*contd on Page 4*



Deputy Executive Director of UN Women Lakshmi Puri receives her award. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Lakshmi Puri, Amb. Akbaruddin (3rd from left), Ranju Batra (2nd from right) and Ravi Batra (extreme right).  
Photo/ Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

### U.S. Federal Communications Commission scraps net neutrality rules



New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman has announced that he will lead a multistate lawsuit to stop the rollback of net neutrality.

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The U.S. Federal Communications Commission voted along party lines on December 14 to repeal Obama era landmark rules aimed at ensuring a free and open internet, setting up a court fight over a move that could recast the digital landscape. New York Attorney General Eric T.  
*contd on Page 32*

### Exit polls predict clear majority for BJP in Gujarat

The BJP is projected to win between 99 and 117 seats and the Congress between 64 and 82.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi shows his ink-marked finger after voting during the last phase of Gujarat Assembly elections, in Ahmedabad on December 14, 2017. Photo/ courtesy PTI

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Exit polls on December 14 predicted a victory for the ruling BJP in Gujarat, giving it a clear majority in the keenly-contested Assembly polls in the State, a PTI report said on December 14.

Soon after voting ended in the second and final phase of the election, an exit poll gave the BJP 115 of the total 182 seats and the Congress 65. Another exit poll gave the ruling dispensation 108 seats and 74 to the opposition Congress.

The Times Now-VMR exit poll predicted 115 seats for the BJP, 64 for the Congress, and the remaining for other parties. The Republic-C Voter exit poll gave the BJP 108 seats  
*contd on Page 32*

### A Sikh American to be next top prosecutor in NJ

**TRENTON, NJ (TIP):** On December 12, a Sikh Indian-American Gurbir S. Grewal, was nominated by NJ Governor-elect Phil Murphy as New Jersey's next attorney general. Grewal, a Democrat, on confirmation by state Senate, will become New Jersey's top law enforcement official. He will be the first South Asian attorney general in New Jersey and the first Sikh to hold the position in any state.

*contd on Page 32*

Governor-elect Phil Murphy announced Bergen County Prosecutor Gurbir S. Grewal as his pick for state attorney general on Tuesday, Dec 12





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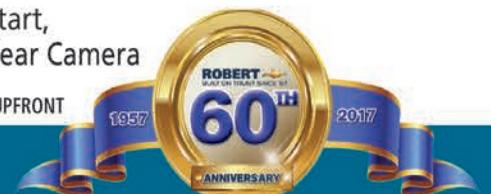


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## Hindi Sangam Foundation Honors Consul General Sandeep Chakraborty



Consul General of India in New York Sandeep Chakraborty was honored by Hindi Sangam Foundation as its Patron on December 6, 2018. Mr. Chakraborty (third from left) is seen with (from left) Ashok Ojha, president, HSF, Prof. Indrajit Saluja, Editor, The Indian Panorama, Mrs. Hema Ojha, Prof. Gabriela Nik Ilieva, NYU and Head of Chancery Jaideep

## A CHRISTMAS PARTY IN EDISON



Indian Culture Society of New Jersey Inc organized Christmas Party on Dec 9th, 2017 at Akbar Restaurant in Edison NJ

*Santa moves around distributing joy*



*Santa obliges by posing for a photograph with a section of the gathering*  
Photos / Gunjesh Desai

## IAGS ANNUAL EVENT ORGANIZED



*A captivating dance performance by children*

India Association of Garden State (IAGS) presented 41st Annual Day Event on Dec 9th, 2017 at Royal Albert's Palace, Edison NJ



*The young display their talent*

*Photos / Gunjesh Desai*

## Gujarati movie Love Ni Bhavai Screened

Lohana Samaj USA & Gujarati Movies in US presented 'Love Ni Bhavai' First Show in USA on Dec 11th, 2017 @ Big Cinemas in Edison, NJ

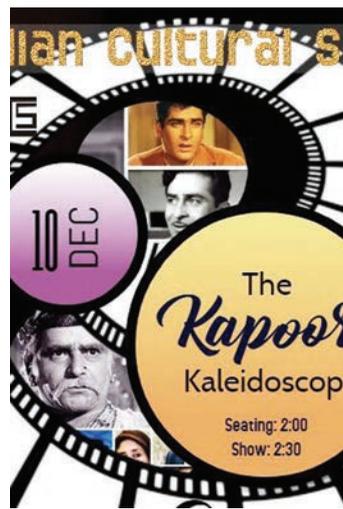


*A scene from the movie*



*A group of spectators at the theater*

*Photo/ Gunjesh Desai*



## NOSTALGIA FOR KAPOORS

Indian Cultural Society Presented 2017 Annual Gala - 'The Kapoor Kaleidoscope' on December 10th, 2017 at North Brunswick High School in North Brunswick NJ

*An attractive performance*

*Photos/ Gunjesh Desai*



## PBA Students present an evening of dances

PBA students presented Bhangra, Giddha, Malawi Giddha (Performances by all ages) at "SABHYACHARAK MELA 2017" on Saturday, December 9, 2017 at Bordentown Regional High School, Bordentown NJ

*Young students give a bhangra performance*



*A bhangra performance by children*



# Diwali Foundation USA's 'POWER OF ONE' Inaugural Award Bestowed on 6 Diplomats

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Botswana, Cyprus, France, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malta, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Permanent Observer State of Palestine, and International Atomic Energy Agency-NY.



All the awardees, with organizers and ambassadors

Amb. Rybakov who was Master of Ceremonies invited Georgia's Amb. Kaha Imnadze, India's Amb. Syed Akbaruddin, Diwali Foundation's chair Ranju Batra, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs Chair Ravi Batra along with Amb. Frantisek Ruzicka, Chef de Cabinet to President of the 72nd General Assembly, H.E. Miroslav Lajcak, to light the Diya.

He expressed gratitude to all nations who agreed to Co-Sponsor the Award Ceremony, and named each of them. He said,

"Having Diwali event held already second year in a row is hopefully becoming a regular tradition here in the United Nations. Being a symbol of charity, kindness and peace, Diwali is in lockstep with the goals and ideals of the United Nations.

After a very successful launch of the Diwali stamp in 2016, this is now transformed into the "the power of one" awards acknowledging the role a person can play in the International community.

We all hope that the "power of one" award will illuminate the way forward towards a more peaceful, safe and secure world in the United Nations and beyond."

Others who spoke on the occasion included CDC to PGA, Amb. Frantisek Ruzicka, Georgia's Amb. Imnadze, India's Amb. Syed Akbaruddin, Algeria's Amb. Boukadoum, and Kazakhstan's Amb. Umarov.



Traditional lamp lighting. Seen from L to R: Amb. Rybakov, Amb. Akbaruddin (3rd from left), Ranju Batra (4th from left), Ravi Batra (extreme right).

Ambassador Akbaruddin said, "The message of Diwali has been repeatedly stated to be the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness. It is also the reaffirmation of the foundational principles of the United Nations, which stand for universal good.

"Today's event, the "power of one" is to celebrate the outstanding contributions of those who are champions of the United Nations Charter and promoters of universal good. Each of them embodies in diverse ways what we all aspire for here in the UN. I am indeed humbled and grateful to be in the presence of all these outstanding champions, and would like to congratulate them for all their work they have put in over the years - which has made us all join in paying tribute to them.

"As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." The "the power of one" award gives us the opportunity to honor those who have successfully brought

about change. Buddha said, "Be a light unto yourself; nobody can give this light to you."

The inaugural "power of one" awardees are all living examples of that important message."

Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra thanked Amb. Valentin Rybakov "for a warm introduction", and Ambassadors Ruzicka, Akbaruddin, Imnadze, Boukadoum, Umarov and Yelchenko for their "national and personal support and kindness"

She said, "As you know, I was determined to succeed in my goal to get the USPS to issue a Diwali Stamp, despite knowing many others had tried and given up. I spent nearly 7 years chasing it peacefully, and using only inclusive and respectful means. Along the way, I got a lot of help from a lot of people.

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney accepted my invitation and provided national political leadership. I was happy that there were stamps for Hanukkah, Christmas, Eid, and Kwanza; but I also wanted one for Diwali. In October 2016, we won and got our Forever Diwali Stamp. I personally sold over 170,000 stamps to make the Diwali Stamp the USPS' #1 Bestseller for Day One in its over 200-year existence. Among many who were of great support were Shiv Dass, now a Director of Diwali Foundation USA, Neeta Jain, Surinder Kathuria, Neeta Bhasin, Air India's Vandana Sharma, Amb. Dnyaneshwar Mulay, and each of you who signed our petitions - which included many in the UN family - such as Palestine's Ambassador's daughter Reem Mansour. Aside from my Grassroot efforts, I also secured support from India's Prime Minister Modi and America's President Obama.

"Days after the Official Dedication, we attended a dinner hosted by Georgia's Ambassador Imnadze, and I told my story. Next day, Belarus' Ambassador Dapkiunas called Ravi to tell him that he had booked this historic Chamber to celebrate the Diwali Stamp and honor my journey at the UN.

"At that celebration last year, Minister Rybakov spoke of my determined efforts as "The Power of One," and now-Minister Dapkiunas spoke of the Diwali Stamp's journey being consistent with the highest ideals of the UN Charter; and that Diwali was Global. That event, like a seed, with added prompting, grew this year into the Diwali Foundation USA. In turn, that resulted in today's inauguration of the "Power of One" Awards being bestowed upon globally exceptional people - who have toiled selflessly "to help form a more perfect, peaceful and secure world for all of us.

"Today, we are privileged to celebrate and recognize the unique contributions of our Honorees:

Amb. Maged Abdelaziz, Amb. Ion Botnaru, Amb. Lakshmi Puri, Amb. Matthew Rycroft, Amb. Nawaf Salam, and Amb. Yuriy Sergejev.

"This slate of Honorees has set the bar quite high for all future honorees. Whatever the UN Charter dreams of, the Diwali Foundation's "Power of One" Honorees have helped to make it a reality!

"Finally, I thank Belarus, Georgia and India for being Co-Organizers. I also thank every Co-Sponsor of today's event, as well as the ambassadors, who by their presence, are supporting these Awards. The Co-Sponsors are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Botswana, Cyprus, France, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malta, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Permanent Observer State of Palestine, and International Atomic Energy Agency-NY.

"At the core of our purpose, is the concept of harmonious inclusion. Respect of all peoples and all cultures, serves as the only proven path to a peaceful and just society. Diwali Stamp proves it. May God bless each nation, so every person is blessed too. That will make Diwali, Global."

National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs Chair Ravi Batra said, "All of you have just heard Ranju talk about how "Today" - was born. Last year, it was Andrei Dapkiunas the



Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra: "I was determined to succeed in my goal to get the USPS to issue a Diwali Stamp"



Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra: "I was determined to succeed in my goal to get the USPS to issue a Diwali Stamp".

diplomacy. That Ambassador Kaha Imnadze of Georgia - who played host to the birth of last year's event, and now is a co-organizer is the very definition of both History made, and History corrected.

"I must acknowledge the Co-Sponsors, and the Speakers from their midst. The Sponsorship is a principled statement by these nations that Humanity & Religious mooring ought not be banned, but rather, cherished - if Good, Light, Knowledge & Hope - are to be given to our kids and grandkids so they can have a "more perfect" world. So, I thank each nation, each PR, and all Ambassadors present as well as Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum, Ambassador Kairat Umarov, now-Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, and Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko for their support and embrace. As a die-hard American, who claims intellectual ancestry to Thomas Jefferson, I especially thank Amb. Nikki Haley for America's Co-Sponsorship.

Turning to our Honorees, I note the irony: that "It takes a village to raise a child," but with the "Power of One" you can save the world: Be it Brahma, Jehovah, Jesus, or Allah. But, that of course, is the Divine Power of One, even as we celebrate great mortals today.

These Diwali Foundation USA's "Power of One Awards" are essentially the "Oscars of Diplomacy" for helping "Good" beat Evil and Suffering. They are like Clint Eastwood - our Honorees - as "Harry Callahan" in "Dirty Harry" or as "Luther Whitney" in "Absolute Power" - or better yet, like the "Magnificent Seven" - with Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen and James Coburn.

Ultimately, the "Power of One" Awards - to paraphrase our exceptional Constitution - is "to help form a more perfect" world. Even Thomas Becket and the Barons in 1215 at Runnymede who got the Magna Carta could not imagine what occurred in Philadelphia in 1789; and we are most grateful to England because we stand on these wonderful shoulders. And thank you for the Common Law, as one of our Honorees will be gracing the International Court of Justice.



National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs Chair Ravi Batra said, "When all nations agree to cosponsor these awards, we may have arrived at a near-perfect world".

Photos/Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

When all nations agree to cosponsor these awards, we may have arrived at a near-perfect world.

Ambassador Lakshmi Puri in her award acceptance speech said she was honored to receive the Power of One Award from the Diwali Foundation USA and would like to thank and congratulate the founder, inspiration and personification of this concept. Ranju Batra and her equal half Ravi Batra.

"As an Indian and a UN diplomat my vision has always been that of Vasudhaiva kutumbakam - the whole world is an interdependent family and our destinies are connected each to each and across all borders and spaces.

contd on Page 32

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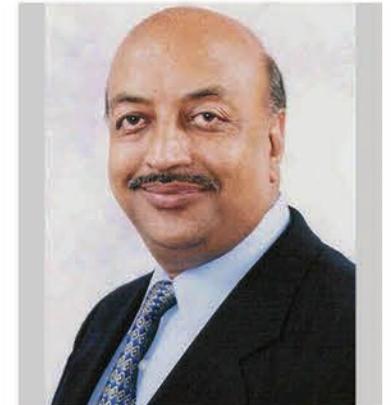
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# India-America Chamber of Commerce Welcomes Ambassador Sandeep Chakraborty, new Consul General of India in New York

**NEW YORK CITY (TIP):** The India-America Chamber of Commerce (IACC) warmly welcomed the new Consul General, Ambassador Sandeep Chakraborty on Tuesday, October 17. The evening reception was hosted by Rajiv Khanna, President of IACC and Partner at the leading law firm of BakerHostetler. The event was attended by members of the Chamber, high profile business leaders and government officials.

In his welcoming remarks, Rajiv Khanna stated: "Despite some friction on the outsourcing front, the relationship between the United States and India has been moving from strength to strength. President Trump recently confirmed India's strategic importance in the war against terror in Afghanistan. According to the numbers released by the United States' Trade Representative, India was the US's 9th largest trading partner last year. The two-way trade between India and the United States was \$67.7 billion last year. It is expected to reach \$500 billion in the near future primarily from expansion in the defense and aerospace sector.

India's economy is also moving from strength to strength. Epidemic corruption has been significantly reduced due to the Indian government's recent anti-corruption measures and crack down on the parallel cash economy. India is sticking to its fiscal deficit reduction targets and inflation is under reasonable control.

At this critical juncture, New Delhi has sent two of its brightest diplomats to strengthen the economic and commercial ties between the world's largest democracy and the world's greatest democracy. We are honored today to welcome our chief guest Ambassador Sandeep Chakraborty, the new Consul General of India." Ambassador Sandeep Chakraborty welcomed the audience and expressed his gratitude towards Rajiv Khanna for hosting the event and telling a story to the chamber members on how he learned about Rajiv from the finance minister of India when he was moving to New York for his new role. He appreciated Rajiv's involvement and support towards India."

He mentioned that his role will focus on building



Rajiv Khanna answers a question. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Consul L. Krishnamurthy, Rajiv Khanna, Ambassador Sandeep Chakraborty

relationships and prompting economic events in New York City. Ambassador Chakraborty mentioned to the audience that the consulate is at your door steps and I welcome you all to come forward to discuss your issues. He stated clearly, "We are here to help you and work on the issues together." He touched upon the following points with the audience:

- o Consulate office available at your door steps; available to help 24/7
- o Consulate at your disposal for any visa issues
- o Focus on supporting education, charities, and cultural exchange
- o Create dynamic relationships amongst the business community
- o India brings positive influence on the world
- o India and US are becoming close allies and we continue to build stronger relationships
- o Issue of trade and balance; proposal for more oil and gas transactions

Ambassador Chakraborty concluded by thanking



Leading businessmen gathered to welcome Ambassador Chakraborty

everyone for the warm welcome and emphasizing that the consulate is available to solve any hurdles and opened the floor for Q&A.

## About India-America Chamber of Commerce:

The India-America Chamber of Commerce works to promote business-to-business dialog between the business and policy leaders of India and the U.S. - the two largest democracies in the free world. The Chamber serves as a platform for open and spirited interaction among U.S. and Indian business leaders from the private and public sectors. The Chambers' monthly meetings include keynote presentations by visiting cabinet ministers, ambassadors and other prominent business leaders from the U.S. as well as India. India-America Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1932 and has since then, tirelessly worked to promote trade and investment between India and the United States. The Chamber is now accepting new members and forming a new board of influential members.

*(Based on a press release)*



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## Festivities Galore at Madam Sonia Gandhi's Birthday celebration by INOC, USA



**NEW YORK (TIP):** The scene was one of celebration and jubilation where over 100 officers, members and supporters of INOC, USA converged at its annual meet in New York on Dec 9, 2017, over the pronouncements and road map chartered out by Mr. Sam Pitroda, Chairman of the Indian Overseas Department of All India Congress Committee on Dec.2, 2017 in New York.

Mr. Pitroda also gave official recognition to INOC, USA and established an umbrella Board which would consist of Mr. Sam Pitroda as Chairman and Mr. George Abraham as Vice Chairman and Dr. Surinder Singh Malhotra as a member. Mr. Mohinder Singh Gilzian was endorsed to continue as the President of INOC, USA until the next Lok Sabha elections in about 15 months' time after which, elections will take place for the single Indian Overseas Congress entity that will be established and recognized as such. Also celebrated was the nomination of Mr. Harbachan Singh, Secretary-General of INOC, USA as Chair of a 3-member group to revise and update the By-laws of the single entity of the Indian

Overseas Congress in USA.

These appointments were welcomed by the audience with a standing ovation and with an arousing and a thunderous applause and expressions of great satisfaction. Mr. George Abraham thanked everyone for their dedication to the values and principles of the Congress Party and their perseverance to safeguard them often through difficult times. He also called on everyone to work together and hoped transparency, accountability, and fairness would prevail in working with the other group. He also cheered the imminent appointment of Shri Rahul Gandhi as President of AICC. It may be recalled that the Congress party in the USA has hitherto been served by two splinter organizations one of which was headed by Mr. George Abraham (INOC, USA) and the other by Shudh Parkash Singh INOC (I). Mr. Mohinder Singh Gilzian appealed everyone to work together and make the organization a strong one. He said the record of the Congress party was glorious and holds good hope for the future.

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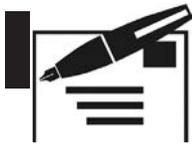
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## GUEST COMMENT

## Starting over: On Rahul's elevation

Rahul Gandhi spent so many years stepping up to become president of the Congress party that once he was elected unopposed, the biggest surprise remained the timing: in the middle of an Assembly election campaign in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home turf. Indeed, after the devastating blow to the Congress in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, and other electoral reverses since then, it was a bold decision - a signal that he is in for the long haul and that he is going to be undeterred by an election result that pundits, at least in the early days, had all but given to the Bharatiya Janata Party. No matter which way the result goes on December 18, Mr. Gandhi has made it clear that the responsibility of the party's success rests on his shoulders and that there is no one but himself to blame for any missteps. That he would take over as president was clear since his mother Sonia Gandhi's gradual retreat, but with a mere 18 months to go before the next general election, Mr. Gandhi doesn't have the luxury of a great deal of time in reversing the party's political fortunes. Given the personality cult that attaches itself to the Gandhis in the party, with every appointment and gesture read to see who's in and who's out, Mr. Gandhi will send the first signal about his leadership qualities by the speed and professionalism with which he constitutes his A-team. His swiftness in suspending family loyalist Mani Shankar Aiyar was an early indication of decisiveness and drawing a red line for party persons.

Leadership is vital for the Congress to address its three big challenges: reviving the party organization; firming up alliances; and formulating a cohesive program as the main opposition party that is looking for another chance to govern India. Historically, once the Congress is edged out of a two-party contest in a State, its local organization tends to fray. With the party ruling in half-a-dozen States and running at third or lower place in big States such as Uttar Pradesh and smaller terrains like Delhi, the challenge is obvious. Alliance-formation has remained reactive since 2014 and Mr. Gandhi will have to forge decisions on pacts with regional parties, somewhat similar to what Ms. Gandhi did painstakingly before the 2004 election. A transitional moment such as the leadership change also gives the Congress an opportunity to bring its offshoots, such as the Trinamool Congress, into an understanding. All of this will be easier achieved if the Congress can articulate its outlook and agenda. It needs to spell out where it stands on the economy, social inclusion, minority rights, foreign policy, welfare. Simply reacting to the Modi government or being un-Modi will not suffice.

(The Hindu)



Rahul Gandhi's task as Congress chief is more challenging than that of his predecessors



By Apoorvanand

Some well-meaning people have been appealing to the Prime Minister to condemn the ongoing killings of Muslims in different states of India on different pretexts. This begging must stop. One knows that it is not the person but the office of the Prime Minister one is looking up to. One takes this seat with the solemn oath to be a Samdarshi: protecting the rights of all human beings of the nation. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with the present Prime Minister.

His aversion for Muslims is well known to the Muslims of Gujarat. They are not surprised that he is scaring the Hindus by saying that Pakistan wants to make Ahmed Patel the chief minister of Gujarat.

A friend of mine, Hindu by religion, shivers while recollecting a meeting the then Chief Minister of Gujarat addressed in 2002 in Ahmedabad. The blood on the streets had not dried. He was in a Muslim-dominated area. Windows opened with curious women and men looking down to hear their CM. He theatrically swayed his hands with fingers pointed upwards and his first sentence was that he was there to make Mullahs of Pakistan to better hear what he had to say. Faces withdrew immediately, and the windows started getting shuttered. Such was the power of violence in his language. But this is not about him. We know him well. He is in Gujarat again, creating a fear in Hindus of Muslims. Uttering absurd and white lies; that Pakistan has asked Mani Shankar Aiyar to get him killed.

People of Gujarat know that this is not about Pakistan. Hindus know that he is stoking a prejudice sleeping under their skin. He is using Pakistan and Ahmed Patel metaphorically. This time, they are forcing themselves not to be swayed.

Muslims of Gujarat now hear all this with indifference. So, to ask a man who is so full of venom against Muslims to condemn the killing of Afrazul is to insult him. Let us not do that. Let us not delude ourselves by extracting a condemnation which the media would present after each killing as a consolation to the Muslims. After all, how many times the poor PM is expected to issue statements? Nor is this about the BJP or the RSS. We know well that that anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hatred is their raison d'être. So, we should not have any expectation from them.

This murder is about us. Our response to this murder and our reflection on the earlier murders would decide whether

## AS I SEE IT

## 'Absurd' is the new 'normal'

We now have a new level of normal. Murders are being justified by the keepers of law and order

“Let us not delude ourselves by extracting a condemnation which the media would present after each killing as a consolation to the Muslims. After all, how many times the poor PM is expected to issue statements? Nor is this about the BJP or the RSS. We know well that that anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hatred is their raison d'être. So, we should not have any expectation from them”, says the author

India will live or not. After the first phase of shock and revulsion over the brutal and unrepentant manner in which the murder was committed and recorded will come its rationalization. We'll start psycho-analyzing the murderer. The family of the accused has advanced a theory of 'love jihad'. This time, fortunately, the police have not connived with them. There would be an economic reason: the murderer was jobless and, so, jealous of the laborer-turned-contractor.

As time passes, we would be asked to understand that Hindus have a justified fear against Muslims. Even the Supreme Court and the High Court of Kerala have been persuaded that there could be an organized drive to convert Hindu girls to Islam by marrying them. Why blame this half-literate man then? Could he not be genuinely under the impression that the targeted man was after Hindu women? And he took a step to protect them?

This was the Supreme Court's argument when the quantum of punishment for the crime of the murder of Graham Staines and his sons was being decided. It awarded a lighter punishment to Bajrang Dal leader Dara Singh, arguing that his anger against Staines had to be understood as he was upset with the activity of conversion done by the Christian missionaries. Thus, the blame for making the murderer a murderer is put on the victim; otherwise good Hindus like Dara Singh would not have turned into murderers. This is how we seek to justify such killings.

A Rajasthan Government minister has suggested that the killer was of

unsound mind. No normal human being would do it. We know that as well. But we also know that the definition of the word normal has changed altogether. Would a normal man, with his senses intact, ever argue that Ram was born at the spot where He was claimed to be born? Was it not a former Home Minister who led a whole mass of Hindus to Ayodhya with this belief to demolish the mosque standing at the spot he wanted them to reclaim for Ram? Was he in a normal frame of mind? Or will he plead that an abnormal passion had overpowered him?

We now have a new level of normal. Murders are being justified by the keepers of law and order. Our children are being taught that God Shiva had performed the first organ transplant. Teachers are being made to chant collectively talaq to China. Children and teachers alike are being told to believe that all Muslims rulers were plunderers and outsiders. The independence and autonomy of an adult woman is taken from her by the courts.

All this might sound absurd to those who think themselves as normal. But all this is normal now. It has moved from streets to our textbooks, to our classrooms, to our public and political discourse, to our courts. The murder of Afrazul would not have been possible without this normality that India has achieved. If we want no more murders like this, we would need to reverse all this. If we do not do it urgently, it would be difficult to pull ourselves out from the morass which is pulling us in.

(The author is a professor of Hindi at Delhi University)

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# LOOKING FOR BALANCE IN POWER



By Harsh V Pant

“An arrangement that had started with an attempt to manage American unipolarity is now being affected fundamentally by Chinese resurgence. Both Russia and India are having to deal with the externalities being generated by China's rise. While Russia is getting closer to China, India is trying to leverage its partnership with other like-minded states in the wider Indo-Pacific region. As a multipolar world order takes shape, India will have to engage with multiple partners so as to limit bilateral divergences”, says the author.

A month after India was part of the 'Quad' discussion on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Manila involving Japan, Australia and the U.S., New Delhi hosted foreign ministers of Russia and China this week. The Russia-India-China trilateral held its 15th meeting in what can be construed as New Delhi's attempt to get a semblance of balance in its ties with Moscow and Beijing.

## Scope of talks

The broader discussions, according to a joint communique of the 15th meeting, "took place in the backdrop of the political scenario in West Asia and North Africa, numerous challenges in putting the world economy back on the growth track, concerns relating to terrorism, transnational organized crime, illicit drug trafficking, food security, and climate change."

But what was perhaps interesting was Russia and China's continued attempts to frame global and regional politics through a similar lens, and the growing divergences between India and them. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made it clear that he believes that India can benefit by joining China's Belt and Road Initiative. "I know India has problems, we discussed it today, with the concept of One Belt, One Road, but the specific problem in this regard should not make everything else conditional to resolving political issues," Mr. Lavrov said. Targeting India's participation in the 'Quad', he also underlined that a sustainable security architecture cannot be achieved in the Asia-Pacific region with "closed bloc arrangements." Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi also cautioned against "spheres of influence" and "cliques" by arguing that China opposed "hegemony and power politics and disagree with the sphere of influence and cliques and promote the democratization of international relations."

China, meanwhile, continued to take an aggressive posture on Doklam and its aftermath. Mr. Wang said in a speech before his Delhi visit: "We have handled the issue of cross-border incursions by the Indian border troops into China's Donglang (Doklam) area through diplomatic measures." Though he suggested that "China and India have far greater shared strategic interests than differences, and far greater needs for cooperation than partial friction," he maintained that "through diplomatic means, the Indian side withdrew its equipment and personnel which reflected the value and importance of China-India relations and demonstrated sincerity and responsibility of maintaining regional peace and stability."

## Tension in the air

The tensions in the trilateral framework are inevitable given the changes in the global geopolitical environment. The original conception of this framework was a response to a very different global environment. The proposal for a Moscow-



The Russia-India-China trilateral meet is New Delhi's attempt to overcome challenges in ties with Moscow and Beijing

Beijing-Delhi 'strategic triangle' had originally come from former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov during his visit to India in 1998, when he argued that such an arrangement would represent a force for greater regional and international stability. This did not elicit as enthusiastic a response from China and India as Russia had perhaps hoped for. Thereafter, the three countries continued to focus on improving the nature of their bilateral relationships, maintaining a safe distance from the Primakov proposal. But, this idea of a 'strategic triangle' took a tangible form when former Foreign Ministers of Russia, China, and India - Igor Ivanov, Tang Jiaxuan and Yashwant Sinha - met on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2002. Despite the fact that nothing concrete emerged out of that meeting, it represented the first major attempt by the three nations to deliberate on world affairs, and since then has become a regular feature of interactions among the three states.

The three nations had very different expectations from this trilateral. Russia's role was key as its loss of power and

influence on the world scene was a major cause of concern for its leadership. There was a growing and pervasive feeling in Russia that it surrendered its once-powerful position on the world stage for a position of little international influence and respect. It is against this backdrop that Russia tried to establish itself as the hub of two bilateral security partnerships that could be used to counteract U.S. power and influence in areas of mutual concern. While Russia witnessed a downward slide in its status as a superpower since the end of the Cold War, China emerged as a rising power that saw the U.S. as the greatest obstacle, if it was to achieve a pre-eminent position in the global political hierarchy. As a consequence, China recognized the importance of cooperating with Russia to check U.S. expansionism in the world, even if only for the short term. In fact, American policies towards Russia and China moved the two states closer to each other, leading to the formation of a new balance of power against the U.S.

## India's stance

India, on the other hand, had different

considerations, as it was still far from becoming a global power of any reckoning. India saw in the trilateral a mechanism to bring greater balance in the global order as it believed that a unipolar U.S.-dominated world was not in the best interests of weaker states like itself, even as strategic convergence deepened between Washington and Delhi. Moreover, all three countries realized the enormous potential in the economic, political, military and cultural realms if bilateral relationships among them were adequately strengthened.

As a consequence, the trilateral did not lead to consequences of any great import. It merely resulted in declarations which were often critical of the West, and of the U.S. Yet this was also a period which saw significant shifts in Indo-U.S. ties as bilateral relations expanded while Russian and Chinese links with the U.S. have witnessed a downward shift.

The joint declaration of the recent trilateral meeting said: "Those committing, organizing, inciting or supporting terrorist acts" must be held accountable and brought to justice under international law, including the principle of "extradite or prosecute." It stopped short of naming Pakistan-based terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, something that India would have liked in line with the most recent BRICS declaration.

An arrangement that had started with an attempt to manage American unipolarity is now being affected fundamentally by Chinese resurgence. Both Russia and India are having to deal with the externalities being generated by China's rise. While Russia is getting closer to China, India is trying to leverage its partnership with other like-minded states in the wider Indo-Pacific region. As a multipolar world order takes shape, India will have to engage with multiple partners so as to limit bilateral divergences.

The Russia-India-China template comes with its own set of challenges. China's Global Times, commenting on the recent trilateral, suggested that "the leaders of the three only meet with each other on international occasions," adding, "this indicates it does not have high status in diplomacy and cannot bear more functions." While this may be true, New Delhi's continued engagement with the duo suggests that India is today confident of setting its own agenda in various platforms. Just as China engages with the U.S. on the one hand and with Russia on the other, a rising India is quite capable of managing its ties with Washington, Beijing and Moscow simultaneously. It will not always be easy, but in an age when the certitudes of the past are fast vanishing, diplomacy will have to tread a complex path.

(The author is Professor at King's College, London and Head of Strategic Studies at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi)

## Pakistan asks 21 foreign aid groups to close shop, leave

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Two senior Pakistani security officials say that authorities have asked 21 foreign aid groups to wrap up their activities and prepare to leave Pakistan after they failed to re-register under a regulation introduced two years ago.

The officials say the international non-government organizations in question were told about the decision this week. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to reporters.

Pakistan unveiled tough registration rules in 2015 amid widespread suspicion that employees of aid groups engaged in spying.

There was no immediate comment from the aid groups.

Islamabad had been closely monitoring aid groups after arresting a Pakistani doctor, Shakil Afridi, who ran a fake vaccination campaign in Abbottabad as a front for a CIA-led effort to find al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. (AP)

## Pak blocks 937 web addresses to curb terrorist activities

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Pakistan has blocked 937 web addresses and 10 websites run by banned organisations as part of measures to prevent the use of internet and social media for terrorist activities.

The ministry of information technology took action under the National Action Plan (NAP) adopted in early 2015 to eliminate militancy from the country after the 2014 Peshawar school attack in which nearly 150 people, mostly school children, were killed.

Dawn newspaper reported that it carried out research across the country in the month of April 2017 which revealed that 41 of Pakistan's 64 banned outfits were present on Facebook in the form of hundreds of pages, groups and individual user profiles.

Their network, both interconnected and public, is a mix of Sunni and Shia sectarian or terror outfits, global terror organisations operating in Pakistan, and separatists in Balochistan and Sindh.

However, there appears to have been very little overall progress in the NAP in the last three months, as figures of the implementation report released in September are only slightly different than the latest report, the paper said.

The interior ministry's report showed that apart from blocking of Uniform Resource Identifiers (URLs), the government registered 1,351 cases, arrested 2,525 people and sealed 70 shops in an effort to counter hate speech and extremist material.

The government also blocked a total of 98.3 million SIMs to curb use of mobile phones in militant activities. It also introduced biometric verification system to issue SIMS cards.

It dismantled communication networks of terrorists.

To curb the misuse of loudspeakers by clerics, the government registered 17,616 cases, arrested 18,308 suspects and seized 7,942 pieces of equipment. (PTI)

## Bangladesh arrests cleric over fatwa against women farming

**DHAKA (TIP):** A Muslim cleric accused of issuing a fatwa banning women from working on farms has been arrested in Bangladesh, police said Wednesday. The imam and five mosque officials face charges after their announcement prompted locals in the western town of Kumarkhali to try and prevent women from going to work in the fields.

"They took the decision after prayers on Friday, banning women from going out of their homes," local police chief Abdul Khaleque told AFP.

"They used the mosque's loudspeakers that evening to spread the news."

Muslim-majority Bangladesh is officially secular, but Muslim clerics are hugely influential, particularly in the more socially conservative rural areas of the country.

Fatwas were banned in 2001, but the nation's highest court in 2011 ruled that they could be issued on personal and religious matters if they did not impose physical punishment.

Rights groups have criticised that ruling, saying villages far from Bangladesh's secular courts use fatwas to issue sentences that go against the nation's laws.

Women were once largely confined to the home in rural Bangladesh, but a labour shortage has meant millions now work in the fields during harvest or crop sowing season.

Women also account for some 80 percent of four million workers in the country's 4,500 textile plants -- the mainstay of the impoverished nation's economy. (AFP)

# Locals oppose construction of dams in PoK's Muzaffarabad

**MUZAFFARABAD (TIP):** Local residents of Muzaffarabad have strongly opposed the construction of dams and hydro-electric projects in the region and accused Islamabad of looting the resources from the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

"Pakistan government with the help of other countries has been stopping the flow of the rivers and altering their routes to meet the needs of the people of Islamabad. Regional government was not even considered, while taking such decisions due to which the locals are suffering," said Ishtiaq Mir, leader of the United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP).

Earlier in November, the UKPNP held a series of demonstrations and convention against the kidnapping of political activists from the PoK.

The residents of the PoK have been facing numerous issues as they allege they are treated as second-class citizens under the Pakistani occupation since 1947.

In recent days, several incidents have been reported where the Pakistani



security forces kidnapped and tortured the political activists, especially the youth, who raised a voice against the Pakistani occupation and exploitation of their natural resources.

The Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, also known as 'Azad Kashmir', has a Prime

Minister and a President, but is ruled from Islamabad.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan is the chairman and chief executive of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council that manages all affairs related to the PoK. (ANI)

# Left will lead Nepal in line with Constitution, says Prachanda

**KATHMANDU:** Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Chairman Prachanda lashed out at the Nepali Congress leaders on Thursday for dubbing the Left alliance as "authoritarian" and said that his coalition will lead the nation in line with the Constitution.

The CPN-Maoist led by former premier Prachanda and CPN-UML led by former premier K P Oli had forged electoral alliance for both the provincial and parliamentary elections.

The Left alliance bagged 116 seats out of a total 165 under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system in parliamentary polls.

"I don't want to say anything to those friends who spread rumour and wrong publicity," Prachanda said, adding that the allegations against the Left coalition will be proved wrong in the near future.

"We will not move against the sentiment of federal democratic republic constitution and we will lead the nation in line with the Constitution," he added.

During the recently concluded elections, there were charges levelled by the Nepali Congress leaders that the Maoists would impose autocratic system through Constitutional amendment if they get two-third majority in the elections.

"It was wrongly publicised that the country will head towards uncertainty



after the victory of Left alliance," Prachanda told journalists in Chitawan district. Prachanda has been elected as a member of the House of Representatives from Chitawan district constituency No. 3.

He said that the Left alliance is the pro-people group.

The Left alliance was formed with key agenda of bringing political stability, economic development and prosperity in the country and the huge mandate it garnered in the election implies that the people endorsed the agenda, he added.

He assured Nepalese people that the Left alliance would work as per the

aspirations of people and thus fulfill the commitments it made during the election campaign.

The CPN-UML won 80 seats, which is close to 50 per cent of the total 165 seats under the direct voting system. The CPN-Maoist and the Nepali Congress have won 36 and 23 seats respectively.

The Left alliance would form a government at the centre. CPN-UML chairman Oli is likely to lead the new government.

In the provincial assembly, out of a total 330 seats, the CPN-UML secured highest number of 168 seats followed by the Maoist Centre with 73 seats. (PTI)

## 21 Rohingya women recount rape by Myanmar armed forces

**UKHIA (BANGLADESH) (TIP):** The use of rape by Myanmar's armed forces

has been sweeping and methodical, The Associated Press found in interviews with 29 Rohingya Muslim women and girls now in Bangladesh.

They were interviewed separately, come from a variety of villages in Myanmar and now live spread across several refugee camps in Bangladesh. Yet their stories were hauntingly similar. The military has denied its

soldiers raped any Rohingya women.

Here are the accounts as told by 21 women and girls. They agreed to be identified in this story by their first initial only, out of fear the military will kill them or their families.

She is only 13, but R had already learned to fear the military men. Last year, she says, soldiers stabbed her father to death. (AP)

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## Hindus urge India Govt. to mandate listing of gelatin source on food, which many times is beef

**NEVADA (TIP):** Hindus are urging India Government and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to mandate food manufacturers to mention the source of gelatin, if used in the product, on its "Ingredients" label.

When the source of gelatin is not listed and if it is beef, it is a serious non-disclosure affecting the Hindu devotees and would severely hurt their feelings when they would come to know that they were inadvertently consuming beef-laced popular food products, distinguished Hindu statesman Rajan Zed stresses.

Consumption of beef was highly conflicting to Hindu beliefs. Cow, the seat of many deities, was sacred and had long been venerated in Hinduism; Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, pointed out in a statement in Nevada (USA) today.

"...there is no requirement to declare the source of gelatin on the product label under our regulations", P. Karthikeyan, FSSAI Assistant Director, wrote responding to an email query from Rajan Zed.

It would be shocking for the Hindu community to learn that some of the popular food products, which they might had been unknowingly eating for years, might contain beef as part of the gelatin while beef was not explicitly mentioned under the ingredients listed on the boxes/packages to caution them, Zed indicated.

Rajan Zed further said that it was hard to comprehend that why corporations, both domestic and international, many times were not transparent enough to mention beef explicitly under the ingredients on the box/package when, being constituent of gelatin, it was part of the product inside, so that an ordinary consumer could make right and appropriate choices.

Dutch-British transnational consumer goods company Unilever, which "has been in business since the 1880s" and which claims to have "developed a clear and global approach to nutrition labeling", in a response to Zed, noted: Gelatin "is used in some of our products to provide a lower fat, lower calorie product with a pleasing texture and consistency...We cannot guarantee if the gelatin is derived from beef or pork".

Many products of Wrigley, said to be the largest manufacturer and marketer of chewing gum in the world, contain gelatin that is sourced from beef. Gelatin derived from beef is found in the many products of multinational Kellogg's, which claims to be "world's leading cereal company".

Gelatin/gelatine is procured from various animal body parts and is usually used as a gelling agent in food. It can be from cows, pigs, fish, chicken, etc.; but there are animal-free and plant-based alternatives to gelatin like seaweed extracts. Gelatin is an ingredient in some cereals, ice creams, candies, yogurts, desserts, marshmallows, aspic, trifles, dips, fruit snacks, sour cream, margarine, frosting, confections, gums, Chinese soup dumplings, puddings, nondairy creamers, cakes, cream cheese, lozenges, etc. It is also used for clarification of vinegar, juices and wine.

FSSAI, headquartered in New Delhi, "has been created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption". Ashish Bahuguna and Pawan Kumar Agarwal are Chairperson and CEO respectively of FSSAI, whose tagline is "Inspiring Trust, Assuring Safe & Nutritious Food".

## Putin, Trump discuss North Korea in phone call

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump discussed the crisis over North Korea's nuclear program in a phone call Thursday, in which the US president took the unusual step of thanking his Russian counterpart for praising America's economy.

The two heads of state discussed "the situation in several crisis zones, with a focus on solving the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula," the Kremlin said in a statement, without elaborating. The White House said the two "discussed working together to resolve the very dangerous situation in North Korea." But Trump's thanks to Putin took top billing in the US statement. "President Trump thanked President Putin for acknowledging America's strong economic performance in his annual press conference," it said. Earlier in the day, Putin told his press conference: "Look at how the markets are reacting, they are growing. This shows confidence in the American economy. With all due respect to (Trump's) opponents, these are objective facts." (AFP)

# Democrat wins US Senate seat in Alabama in setback for Trump

**MONTGOMERY (TIP):** In a stunning victory aided by scandal, Democrat Doug Jones won Alabama's special Senate election on Dec 12, beating back history, an embattled Republican opponent and President Donald Trump, who urgently endorsed GOP rebel Roy Moore despite a litany of sexual misconduct allegations.

It was the first Democratic Senate victory in a quarter-century in Alabama, one of the reddest of red states, and proved anew that party loyalty is anything but sure in the age of Trump. The Republican loss was a major embarrassment for the president and a fresh wound for the nation's already divided GOP.

"We have shown not just around the state of Alabama, but we have shown the country the way — that we can be unified," Jones declared as supporters in a Birmingham ballroom cheered, danced and cried tears of joy. Still in shock, the Democrat struggled for words: "I think that I have been waiting all my life, and now I just don't know what the hell to say."

Moore, meanwhile, refused to concede and raised the possibility of a recount during a brief appearance at a somber campaign party in Montgomery.

"It's not over," Moore said. He added, "We know that God is still in control."

From the White House, Trump tweeted his congratulations to Jones "on a hard-fought victory" — but added pointedly that "the Republicans will have another shot at this seat in a very short period of time. It never ends!"

Jones takes over the seat previously held by Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The term expires in January of 2021.

The victory by Jones, a former US attorney best known for prosecuting two Ku Klux Klansmen responsible for Birmingham's infamous 1963 church bombing, narrows the GOP advantage in the US Senate to 51-49. That imperils already-uncertain Republican tax, budget and health proposals and injects tremendous energy into the Democratic Party's early push to reclaim House and Senate majorities in 2018.

Still, many Washington Republicans viewed the defeat of Moore as perhaps the best outcome for the party nationally despite the short-term sting. The fiery Christian conservative's positions have alienated women, racial minorities, gays and Muslims — in addition to the multiple allegations that he was guilty of sexual misconduct with teens, one only 14, when he was in his 30s.



"Tonight's results are clear — the people of Alabama deemed Roy Moore unfit to serve in the US Senate," said Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner, who leads the national GOP's Senate campaign arm and called on Moore to quit the race weeks ago.

A number of Republicans declined to support him, including Alabama's long-serving Sen. Richard Shelby. But Trump lent his name and the national GOP's resources to Moore's campaign in recent days.

Had Moore won, the GOP would have been saddled with a colleague accused of sordid conduct as Republicans nationwide struggle with Trump's historically low popularity. Senate leaders had promised that Moore would have faced an immediate ethics investigation.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have expressed hopes of scheduling a vote on their tax legislation before Jones is sworn in, but lawmakers are still struggling to devise a compromise bill to bridge the divide between the House and Senate legislation that can win majority support in both chambers.

The Republican loss also gives Democrats a clearer path to a Senate majority in 2018 — albeit a narrow one — in an election cycle where Democrats are far more optimistic about seizing control of the House of Representatives.

Ultimately, Tuesday's contest came down to which side better motivated its supporters to vote. Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill said turnout likely would not exceed 25 percent of registered voters.

Jones successfully fought to cobble together an unlikely coalition of African-Americans, liberal whites and moderate

Republicans.

He had his strongest support across Alabama's "black belt," named for the color of its soil, and in the larger urban areas, including Montgomery, Birmingham, Mobile, Tuscaloosa and Huntsville. Turnout in those areas, which features a large African-American population, also ran higher than in some of the more heavily Republican parts of the state.

At his election night headquarters, stunned supporters erupted in celebration as news of his victory was announced. Many danced to the song "Happy." Some cried.

"I honestly did not know that this was even an option. I didn't think that we could elect a Democrat," said 26-year-old campaign volunteer Jess Eddington, her eyes red from tears of joy. "I am so proud we did."

Moore, who largely avoided public events in the final weeks of the race and spent far less money on advertising than his opponent, bet big — and lost — on the state's traditional Republican leanings and the strength of his passionate evangelical Christian supporters.

He sidestepped questions about sexual misconduct as he arrived at his polling place on horseback earlier in the day.

Alabama state law calls for a recount if the margin of victory is less than one-half of one percentage point. With all precincts reporting, Jones led by 1.5 points — three times that margin.

If the secretary of state determines there were more write-in votes than the difference between Jones and Moore, the state's counties would be required to tally those votes. It's not clear how that would help Moore, who ended the night trailing Jones by more than 20,000 votes. (AP)

## US House, Senate leaders reach deal on taxes

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Confident congressional Republicans forged an agreement Dec 13 on a major overhaul of the nation's tax laws that would provide generous tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans — Donald Trump among them — and deliver the first major legislative accomplishment to the GOP president.

Middle- and low-income families would get smaller tax cuts, though Trump and GOP leaders have billed the package as a huge benefit for the middle class. The measure would scrap a major tax requirement of Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, a step toward the ultimate GOP goal of unraveling the law. "The cynical voices that opposed tax

cuts grow smaller and weaker, and the American people grow stronger," Trump said at the White House. "This is for people of middle income, this is for companies that are going to create jobs. This is for very, very special people, the great people of America."

The business tax cuts would be permanent, but reductions for individuals would expire after a decade — saving money to comply with Senate budget rules. In all, the bill would cut taxes by about \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years, adding billions to the nation's mounting debt.

The legislation, which is still being finalized, would cut the top tax rate for the wealthy from 39.6 percent to 37

percent, slash the corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent and allow homeowners to deduct interest only on the first \$750,000 of a new mortgage.

The top tax rate currently applies to income above \$470,000 for married couples, though lawmakers are reworking the tax brackets. The standard deduction would be nearly doubled, to \$24,000 for married couples.

Details of the agreement were described by Republican senators and congressional aides.

"It's not my vision of the perfect, but again, this is definitely going to be a strong pro-growth tax package," said Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis. (AP)

# Sikh Religious Society Organizes Two-day Conference in Chicago to Implement Mool Nanakshahi Calendar

"It takes a Village to raise a child; it takes a nation to raise a Sikh. Midwest conference turns out international conference with delegates and speakers from Canada, Australia, India and other U.S. states"

**CHICAGO, IL (TIP):** Sikh Religious Society hosted a two-day Mool Nanakshahi Calendar Implementation Conference at 1280 Winnetka St, Palatine, IL 60067, IL.

The conference kicked off with a welcome dinner attended by the distinguished speakers at the conference as well as guests from various Sikh organizations in the US, Canada, India, and Australia. The welcome dinner, managed by S. Amardev Singh, featured a brief snapshot of what issues the speakers will cover during the conference.

The focus of the conference was how to preserve the unique Sikh heritage and prepare the Panth for the next millennia. The expert speakers explained the history and importance of the Mool Nanakshahi Calendar. Sardar Pal Singh Purewal, the brain behind the Mool Nanakshahi Calendar talked about the efforts he has made to create awareness about the practicality of the calendar and emphasized how important it is for next generations to adopt it.

Bibi Jasbir Kaur (Ohio) threw light on the need of passing the heritage on to the next generation in order to secure Sikh identity. She talked about how important it is for kids to understand Gurbani, and apply it in their day to day life. Other speakers at the conference were S. Sarabjit Singh (Sacramento), Prof. Niranjana Singh Dhesi, S. Surinder Singh (Talking Punjab)



Attendees of the conference



Honorees with organizers

and Harkirat Singh Ajnaha (Australia).

The speakers stressed upon the role of overseas Sikh community in accomplishing this mission. The conference featured a presentation explaining how the Mool Nanakshahi Calendar works and helps maintain the consistency of the Sikh observations like Gurburabs, Vaisakhi and so on. Accurate recurrence of these Sikh historical dates and preservation of Gurbani's relevance has profound implication for Sikh generations to come.

According to the speakers, the Mool Nanakshahi Calendar forever fixed drifting Sikh historical Bikrami dates and synchronized these dates with the Common Era (CE) tropical calendar.

The resolutions passed in conference

entailed that, in 1999, the Sikh scholars and SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) introduced the Mool Nanakshahi Calendar, a tropical calendar; on 300th anniversary of Khalsa's Saajna conforming to Gurbani.

Whereas, many Sikh organizations have already been following Nanakshahi Calendar for many years, except for the three dates of Guru Nanak's Gurburab, Bandee Chhorrd Divas, and Holla-Muhalla. So, the Chicago conference emphasized to fully adopt and forever follow The Mool Nanakshahi Calendar and its methodology to observe Sikh historical events on following fixed annual dates.

A. Guru Nanak's Parkaash purab on April 14th (1-Vaisaakh), Vaisaakhi

- B. Bandee Chhorrd Divas on February 12th (1-Phaggan)
- C. Holla Muhalla on March 14th (1-Chet), Mool Nanakshahi New Year Day

In the end of the conference, all the speakers unanimously requested all social, cultural, and religious (Panthak) organizations to unify to cherish the unique and blessed heritage ignited by Baba Nanak; and forever preserve it, by making every attempt to fully adopt and implement the Mool Nanakshahi calendar.

Heeding the call of the conference, many Midwest gurdwaras also adopted these resolutions simultaneously.

(Photographs and Press release/ Asian Media USA)

## NY Indian Consulate to host International Hindi Conference in 2018

**NEW YORK CITY, NY (TIP):** The Consulate General of India in New York will host the Fifth International Hindi Conference in September 2018. This was announced by Consul General Sandeep Chakraborty during a recent meeting he held with a delegation of Hindi Sangam Foundation, a New Jersey based educational and cultural organization. The proposed Hindi Conference is part of a series of initiatives undertaken by the Consulate for promotion of Hindi language in the coming year.

Consul General also accepted the honorary title of "Patron" of the foundation, which has so far organized four International Hindi Conferences in USA and India.

He announced a number of initiatives aimed at promoting Hindi teaching at the consulate premises. He said that the Consulate will celebrate Hindi Day on Saturday, January 13, 2018. The event will be attended by well-known language experts Janis Jensen of Kean University and Jennifer Eddy of Queens College, as the main speakers. "Such events are very useful for promoting Hindi in various sections of the society. We want Indian-American community to be aware of academic work done by experts of non-Indian origin", said Ojha, "Very few people know that Professor Jensen is directing a Master's program in Hindi Pedagogy at Kean University for future teachers", he added.

"The purpose of Hindi Diwas event and future conference is to establish a working relation among community and cultural



A delegation of Hindi Sangam called on Consul General Sandeep Chakraborty to apprise him of the activities being undertaken by the organization. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Professor Gabriela Nik Ilieva, Ashok Ojha, Ambassador Sandeep Chakraborty, and Jaideep, Head of Chancery

organizations in various parts of USA. We want them to share their accomplishments with each other so all of them could be benefited", said the Consul General. He also said that a scholar of Hindi and Sanskrit, who is expected to take charge of his office soon at the consulate, will conduct Hindi classes at the consulate soon.

In the past years Consulate General of India hosted a number of Hindi conferences, notably the third International Hindi Conference held in May 2016, which was attended by dozens of language experts associated with various US universities including Columbia, NYU, UCLA and UT Austin. In 2014 and 2015 the consulate collaborated with Hindi Sangam Foundation and the New York University and Rutgers

University, NJ to organize the first and second International Hindi Conferences at the respective university campuses.

"The outcome of previous three conferences was outstanding", said Ashok Ojha, president of Hindi Sangam foundation who has been coordinator of the Hindi conferences. "The fourth International Hindi Conference was held in January 2017 at GITAM University, Vishakhapatnam, AP, which was a grand success. We were able to build a network of Hindi professionals in non-Hindi speaking states of India and abroad", he added.

Ojha said that his organization was engaged in promoting Hindi as a symbol of identity for all people of Indian origin. He urged the Consul General to help implement

the resolutions adopted by previous conferences held in NY and NJ for establishment of a Hindi Center in New York Metro area.

Professor Indrajit Saluja, editor, The Indian Panorama, supported the idea of establishing a network of Hindi professionals and members of other cultural organizations in the USA.

The Hindi Sangam Foundation delegation led by its president Ashok Ojha met with Consul General Chakraborty. Other participants included Professor Gabriela Nik Ilieva, New York University professor of Hindi who was recently honored by the President of India as a promoter of Hindi language outside of India, Professor Indrajit Saluja, Editor, The Indian Panorama, Col. Virendra Tavathia, a New Jersey community leader and executive members of the foundation.

Professor Ilieva emphasized the need for cooperation and collaboration among educational institutions in USA and India. She urged educational leaders associated with universities in India and USA to develop a training system for Hindi teachers in the Indian Diaspora. She said that teaching of Hindi in 21st century was as important as teaching any other subject about South Asia. "Hindi teaching relates directly with India where teachers should frequently upgrade their teaching skills by attending workshops and conferences for Hindi teaching", she said.

(Based on input provided by Ashok Ojha)

## PARLIAMENT'S WINTER SESSION: OPPN PLANS OFFENSIVE AGAINST GOVT



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Congress-led opposition is likely to attack the government on key economic and corruption issues when the winter session of Parliament begins on Dec 15, Friday.

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will be bolstered by Thursday's exit poll results that gave clear mandates to the BJP in both Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sources in both camps indicated that the impact of the Gujarat results is likely to be felt in the House.

"Even if the Congress is unable to get majority but increases its tally in the Gujarat assembly, we will certainly see a more aggressive face of the principal opposition party," said a senior party strategist.

The session's first full day will be on Monday – when assembly election results will be declared – as the first day is likely to be adjourned after obituary references to three former parliamentarians.

The government pushed back the session from its usual schedule to ensure that it doesn't clash with the Gujarat poll campaign. The BJP, however, faced flak from the opposition parties who accused the government for trying to curtail the length of the winter session.

The government has listed nine new bills, including one to criminalise instant triple talaq, for the short session.

It also intends to pass 24 bills which are stuck in either of the two houses.

The Congress, along with other opposition parties such as the Left, Trinamool Congress and DMK, had often stalled the government's bills in Rajya Sabha and disrupted proceedings in the Lower House, where the BJP-led NDA enjoys a brute majority.

Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, who spoke about tough measures against disruptions, told Rajya Sabha TV on Thursday that the Opposition must have ways to express their views.

## Man gets death penalty in Dalit student rape case

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM (TIP):** A court in Ernakulam on Thursday sentenced to death Ameerul Islam, a migrant worker from Assam, who was convicted of rape and murder of Jisha - a 30-year-old Dalit law student from Perumbavoor.

The Ernakulam Principal Sessions Court pronounced the sentence two days after it convicted Ameerul for the crime committed on April 28, 2016.

Judge N Anilkumar had found Ameerul guilty on charges under sections 302 (murder), 376 (rape), 376A (inflicting injury causing death or a persistent vegetative state), 342 (wrongful confinement) and 449 (trespassing) of the Indian Penal Code. It also sentenced Ameerul to a life imprisonment, 10 years rigorous imprisonment, seven years' imprisonment and a one-year imprisonment under sections 376A, 376, 449 and 342 respectively, and awarded a total fine of Rs 1 lakh. The sentences will run concurrently.

Ameerul's lawyer B A Aloor said his client would appeal against the verdict before the High Court. Jisha's mother Rajeswari thanked the court for its verdict.

The gruesome rape and murder had left Jisha's body mutilated with 38 injuries including deep stab wounds. Investigating the case in which there were no eye-witnesses, the police built its case on scientific and circumstantial evidences.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the verdict was a judicial endorsement of the government's stand that there would be no compromise on women's safety.

Jisha was found dead in her single-room home by her mother on April 28, 2016. In May, the investigating team managed to collect the suspect's DNA sample. The Left Democratic Front government formed a new investigation team under ADGP B Sandhya and in June 2016, Ameerul was detained at Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu. The police submitted the chargesheet in September 2016. The trial commenced in April this year.

# Cong brands EC Modi's 'puppet', files complaint against PM's 'roadshow' after voting

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Congress on Dec 14 (Thursday) launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission (EC), saying the "sinking ship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign is being saved by the poll panel".

In Ahmedabad, the party also filed a complaint with the EC against Modi for allegedly violating the model code of conduct by holding a "roadshow" even as voting in the second phase of Gujarat elections was underway.

Later in the day, Congress workers marched to the Election Commission to protest against Modi's roadshow. They were stopped by the police outside Sardar Patel Bhawan near Patel Chowk in Delhi and many were detained.

"The Election Commission of India has set different standards for the BJP and the Congress. What is the reason for the poll panel to behave like a frontal organisation of BJP," asked Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala at a press conference in New Delhi.

"It is a great shame that PM Narendra Modi has turned all constitutional institutions into his puppets, the Election Commission of India being one of them," added Surjewala.

Achal Kumar Joti, the target of the Congress' diatribe, took over as chief election commissioner in July. A 1975-batch IAS officer, Joti was the chief secretary of Gujarat when Modi was chief minister. He was also a secretary in the industry, revenue and water supply departments in the state.

The Congress' attack comes a day after the Election Commission sought an explanation from party president-elect Rahul Gandhi for appearing in TV interviews ahead of the second phase of voting in Gujarat, which it said was a violation of the model code of conduct.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi shows his ink-marked finger after casting his vote outside a polling station during the last phase of Gujarat assembly election in Ahmedabad on Dec 14, Thursday.

The EC, on Wednesday, also filed FIRs against TV channels that aired the interviews, saying rules prohibit display of any "election matter" within 48 hours of the start of polling.

The Congress, however, accused the poll panel of favouritism and questioned why it has not taken similar action against Modi who allegedly made political statements at a business meeting on Wednesday when he targeted the previous UPA government.

"The Election Commission of India filed an FIR on TV channels based on a complaint by BJP member within 30 minutes. Unfortunately, the Commission has denigrated the Constitution of India. This shows how the institution has become a captive puppet of the BJP," said Surjewala.

The party said Modi also addressed

four public rallies on December 9, the polling day for the first phase of elections in Gujarat.

"PM Modi's roadshow after casting vote is a clear case of violation of the model code of conduct. The Election Commission, it seems, is working under pressure from the PM and the PMO," said Ashok Gehlot, Congress' Gujarat in-charge, at the press meet.

In Ahmedabad, Modi, while leaving the polling booth at Ranip locality after casting his vote, held up his inked finger and greeted the crowd. He also stood on the side-step of his SUV, which moved slowly through the street for some distance, which the Congress says is akin to a "political roadshow".

Gujarat chief electoral officer BB Swain said the panel will look into the complaint. *Source: HT*

# China on mind, India to host all ASEAN heads at R-Day parade

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Riding a mix of religion, commerce and a growing challenge of China, India will be hosting all heads of state of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for an India-ASEAN summit to mark 25 years of the relationship.

All 10 leaders will be chief guests at the Republic Day parade down the Rajpath in New Delhi on January 26.

Commerce, Culture and Connectivity are the three 'Cs' of the India-ASEAN relationship. Various people-to-people connects will be marked by the high-profile India-ASEAN commemorative summit in New Delhi on January 25 and followed by the festive fanfare of the military-cultural parade the next day. This is the second time that an India-ASEAN summit is being held, the previous one being organised five years ago to mark 20 years of the relationship. ASEAN has conducted such summits with the US, Russia, China and Korea.

## 25 yrs of relationship

- India will host all heads of state of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations to mark 25 years of the relationship
- Commerce, Culture and Connectivity are the three 'Cs' of the India-ASEAN relationship
- The focus will be on maritime connectivity and strategic ties as India and companies held by private individuals are investing in various infrastructure projects

The maritime connectivity will be an important route for our relationship, a source said. Another focus will be on strategic ties as India and companies held by private individuals are investing in various infrastructure projects. ASEAN — Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar (Burma),

Cambodia, Laos, Brunei — form fourth largest trading partner of India at \$70 billion.

India is also looking at providing the much needed stability in the South China Sea. Some of the ASEAN countries are locked in territorial dispute with China in the hydro-carbon rich sea. New Delhi has a stated goal that freedom of navigation and over flight over the South China Sea is crucial. China unilaterally claims large parts of the sea. "A peaceful, stable and free Asia is very important," a source said.

India will focus on the youth and host 500 children, exposing them to the Indian way of life. At the religious-cultural level, India has invited all 10 ASEAN countries to send in their 'Ramayana' troupes to perform in India. Variations of the Hindu epic are narrated in various forms in these countries. "Ramayana is an important link," a source said.

*Source: The Tribune*

CRIMINAL CASES AGAINST LAWMAKERS

# SC wants 12 special courts by March 2018

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Supreme Court on Dec 14, Thursday, ordered that the 12 special courts proposed to fast-track criminal cases against lawmakers should start functioning by March next year, giving a nod to a scheme framed by the Centre.

A bench of justices Ranjan Gogoi and Navin Sinha told additional solicitor general ANS Nadkarni the funds earmarked for the courts should be allocated proportionately to the states where the courts are planned to be located.

"Immediately after the allocation, the state governments in consultation with the respective chief justice of the high court will set up the court so that it starts functioning by March 1, 2018," the bench said.

In 2014, as many as 1,581 lawmakers—both members of parliament (MPs) and members of legislative assemblies (MLAs)—were facing prosecution in 13,500 cases.

The Centre in an affidavit told the top court on Tuesday that Rs 7.8 crore was earmarked for the scheme after taking into account the revised pay scales of judges in accordance with the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission. According to an estimate, Rs 65 lakh will be spent on each court, which will be able to dispose 165 cases. The scheme would be subject to minor changes after consultation with states, Centre said.

As per the calculations arrived at, each judge will get to hear 165 cases. These courts will have a year to complete the trial.

The affidavit was filed in response to the SC's November 2 order that asked the government to draw a road map for special courts to expedite trial of lawmakers facing criminal charges.

The court is hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) by advocate Ashwini Upadhyaya, who has sought a life ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections, a plea the government has opposed.

After perusing the affidavit the court said: "On setting up of special courts a scheme has been framed, though rudimentary, which is



based on certain calculations and perceptions on the time courts will take to dispose 1581 cases."

The SC directed the high court concerned to mark the matters before the special court after tracing it out from the records.

The bench also brushed aside the apprehensions raised that a dozen courts were too less to decide 1581 cases. "A judge in his life time is able to decide just about 45 to 50 cases," petitioner's lawyer told the court. It was pointed out that several states did not have any special courts.

"Let these 12 courts start. To get the work started is difficult. This is not the end of it. They (Centre) have arrived at the figure through some calculations. Cases pending in states where there are no courts can be referred to other courts," the bench said.

The court clarified its direction is tentative and has been done with a view to get the courts operational. If necessary changes are required in future or any amendments are to be made in the order, the same shall be done at an appropriate stage.

The case would be heard again on March 7 when the court will take stock of the progress made in accordance with its order.

Since the government was unable to gather information on the status of 1581 cases, the court gave it two more months to collect it.

Nadkarni submitted the Centre had written to the state chief secretaries and also all HCs to know how many cases had been disposed and how many are still awaiting a final decision. There was no government agency to maintain such a data, he said. *Source: HT*

## Death penalty to Kulbhushan Jadhav through farcical process: India

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** India on Thursday reiterated that Pakistan had awarded death sentence to former Indian Navy officer Kulbhushan Jadhav through a "farcical process" and on "concocted" charges.

Islamabad had conveyed to the International Court of Justice based in The Hague that it would not grant New Delhi consular access to Jadhav. In response, New Delhi on Thursday reiterated that India had moved the ICJ against Pakistan because the neighbouring country's government was violating the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations by turning down requests for consular access to Jadhav.

"We have repeatedly requested for consular access in respect of Jadhav and many other Indian nationals who are incarcerated in Pakistani prisons. This is as per the Vienna conventions. We have appealed at the ICJ in May because we thought that the Vienna Convention was being violated," said the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Raveesh Kumar.

"We do reiterate our position that Jadhav remains in Pakistan and is facing death sentence awarded through a farcical process and on concocted charges," he said.

## SALUTARY BENEFITS FROM DEMONETISATION IN INDIA: IMF



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees benefits in the medium-term from the demonetisation exercise which India carried out about a year ago.

"We see salutary benefits from the demonetisation that took place a year ago. And there are potential benefits going forward," William Murray of the IMF told reporters at the fortnightly IMF news conference.

Murray said the demonetisation did cause some temporary disruptions in economic activity, primarily, private consumption and small businesses due to cash shortages.

"(But) the effects are dissipating," he said in response to a question.

"In the medium term, demonetisation could have possible effects, including through greater formalisation of and the information on economic activities and a more efficient payment system with a greater use of the banking system and digital payments," Murry said.

The IMF is slated to come out with an update of its projections of India's growth rate along with the rest of the world in January. *Source: PTI*

## SC extends last date for linking Aadhaar till March 31, 2018

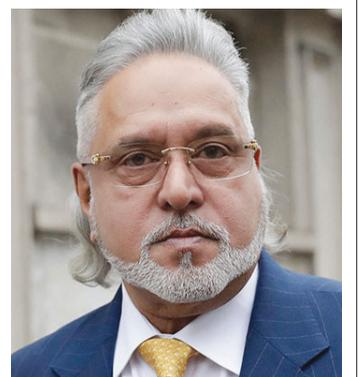
**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Supreme Court on Friday extended the last date for the linking of Aadhaar with various schemes and welfare measures up to March 31.

The deadline of February 6 for linking Aadhaar with mobile services also stood extended up to March 31, the apex court said.

The Supreme Court said the new bank accounts could be opened without Aadhaar but the applicant needed to submit proof that he had applied for the card. *Source: PTI*

## Indian jails overcrowded with poor hygiene: Mallya's defence

**LONDON (TIP):** Vijay Mallya's defence on Thursday fielded a UK-based prison service expert to claim that jails in India are overcrowded with poor hygiene as they sought to counter Indian government assurances on how he would be treated on being extradited to face fraud and money laundering charges.



Mallya's barrister, Clare Montgomery, deposed Dr Alan Mitchell before the Westminster Magistrates' Court in London where the liquor baron is facing an extradition trial.

The trial seeks to prove that there are no "bars to extradition" and that Mallya is assured a fair trial in India over his now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines' alleged default of over Rs 9,000-crore in loans from Indian banks.

The defence today made an attempt to highlight that conditions in Barrack 12 of Mumbai Central Prison on Arthur Road, where the 61-year-old flamboyant businessman is to be held, were "far from satisfactory".

Dr Mitchell, former head of healthcare at the Scottish Prison Service and an elected member of the European Council's European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, said the assurances given by the Indian government were "general in nature" to state that jail conditions would be "adequate" for Mallya.

"But adequate in the eyes of whom," Mitchell questioned.

His evidence relied heavily upon his past inspection visit to Alipore Jail in Kolkata and also on an account of the prison conditions in Puzhal Jail in Chennai, from six former British soldiers – referred to as the Chennai Six – who have recently been released. *Source: PTI*

# INS Kalvari, India's first Scorpene submarine, commissioned

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned India's first Scorpene submarine, the INS Kalvari, in Mumbai on Dec 14, Thursday. A Scorpene submarine is a class of diesel-electric attack submarines designed by French naval defence and energy company DCNS and are being manufactured by Mazagon Dock Ltd in Mumbai.

The submarine can undertake multiple missions, including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying and area surveillance.

The submarine is designed to ensure interoperability in the Navy, said Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), which built the submarine.

The submarine is fitted out with state-of-the-art technology including superior stealth features such as advanced acoustic silencing techniques, low radiated noise levels, hydrodynamically optimized shape and the ability to launch a crippling attack on the enemy using precision guided weapons, according to a statement by MDL.

Attacks can be launched with both torpedoes and tube-launched anti-ship missiles, while underwater or on surface. The stealth of this potent platform is enhanced by the special attention given to various signatures. These stealth features give it invulnerability, unmatched by most submarines.

"Peace in Indian Ocean, which is the lifeline of global trade is better off with INS Kalvari and her follow on submarines," defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.



Modi also lauded the navy's efforts.

"I call it SAGAR—security and growth for all in the region," Modi said, referring to navy efforts, from disaster management to combating piracy.

Rakesh Anand, chairman and managing director of MDL, said the induction of Kalvari into the Indian Navy would be a game changer in the field of underwater warfare due to its superiority in all operational aspects.

# The Nutcracker at NJPAC

**The Nutcracker is the perennial favorite of generations of children and "children at heart," Igor Levin**

**"[NJPAC] has a great stage. It really is a beautiful theater. Shows always come out looking nice in that space," Igor Levin**

**The State Ballet Theater of Russia's crystalline clarity is hard to match. The dancing is vivacious, secure and diamond sharp," San Diego Union Tribune.**

**[The State Ballet Theater of Russia's] The Nutcracker is sure to make some magical memories this holiday season!**

BY MABEL PAIS

**T**he Nutcracker, the 3rd and last ballet of Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky, was completed a year before his death in 1893.

The ballet ingeniously combines the straightforward open-hearted joy of a child with the deep philosophical reflection of the composer on life and death, beauty of the jest in the name of love and happiness. The libretto or book for The Nutcracker comes from Marius Petipa based on the literary material of the fairy tale by the German romanticist Hoffman.

choreography that is performed in Moscow by the famous Bolshoi Ballet and set to Tchaikovsky's beloved music, including "Waltz of the Flowers", "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy", and "Waltz of the Snowflakes," the entire family will love this magical experience filled with spectacular sets and beautiful costumes.

The incomparable State Ballet Theater of Russia presents the beloved classic, The Nutcracker, featuring traditional choreography and sparkling imagery. Internationally renowned, The State Ballet Theater of Russia brings The Nutcracker to life through graceful costumes, enchanting sets and astonishingly beautiful dances set to Tchaikovsky's musical score.

The company is dedicated to maintaining a solid tradition of superior Russian classical dance. With a company over 55 superb dancers, they have drawn critical acclaim in performances throughout Europe, as well as the United States.

In this production, the captivating story involves the family-feud of the Montagues and Capulets brought to life thanks to the talent of the acclaimed Bolshoi Theatre Ballet Choreographer Mikhail Lavrovsky who is also the show's producer.

The State Ballet Theatre of Russia was founded by Maya Plisetskaya, a legendary dancer and former principal dancer of The Bolshoi Theatre Ballet.

For 17 years, Levin, President and CEO of Hollywood Stars International Management, Inc., has been coordinating and organizing Russian ballet tours in the States to great success.

Levin spends almost half the year preparing all aspects necessary to bring to the United States a full production ballet company.

"When the company finishes a tour in February, I start on a new one right away - around mid-February," he said, adding that the lengthy process includes choosing amongst a number of ballet companies, organizing the costumes and sets, bringing all necessary items over to the states, scheduling, booking travel and hotel arrangements, as well as obtaining visas for all the dancers and workers associated with the ballet company.

One of the frequent venues Levin likes to set up as part of the tours he organizes is NJPAC - mostly due to the welcoming nature of all who work there.

"They are great," Levin said. "They are willing to work with those from another country and are very



A Scene from The Nutcracker.

Photo / courtesy Hollywood Stars International Management, Inc



A Scene from The Nutcracker.

Photo / courtesy Hollywood Stars International Management, Inc

Tchaikovsky created a symphonic poem about a young innocent girl, Masha, standing at the threshold of the great world out there, dreaming about happiness and defeating evil. The music paints a vivid picture of the children's world, their joyful games, Masha's magical dreams, which are sometimes quite uneasy and sometimes full of happiness.



A Scene from The Nutcracker.

Photo / courtesy Hollywood Stars International Management, Inc

The treasured holiday adventure follows Masha's journey through a fantasy world of fairies, princes, toy soldiers, and an army of mice. A thrill to the same authentic Russian

accommodating and very friendly. I always enjoy working with them."

Not only are the people a main factor as to why Levin chooses NJPAC as a stop to the ballet tours, but the venue is also a selling point.

"[NJPAC] has a great stage," he said. "It really is a beautiful theater. Shows always come out looking nice in that space."

"There is family history, but this production is much more modern," Levin said alluding to the choreography. "It is modern, but it is rooted in the basics of traditional

ballet."

The State Ballet Theater of Russia's The Nutcracker is sure to make some magical memories this holiday season!

The Nutcracker will be performed at NJPAC on Saturday, December 16 at 3 p.m.

For additional information on The Nutcracker and NJPAC, please visit [www.njpac.org](http://www.njpac.org).

(Mabel Pais is a freelance writer. She writes on The Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Health and Wellness, and Spirituality)



A Scene from The Nutcracker.

Photo / courtesy Hollywood Stars International management, Inc

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## Vidya Balan: 'Tumhari Sulu' proved married actresses can score a hit

Vidya Balan said with back-to-back box office disappointments post her wedding, she gave into the thinking that married female actors cannot deliver a hit, but the success of 'Tumhari Sulu' has proved the theory wrong. Vidya said for someone like her, who considers acting as important as personal life, the praise the movie is receiving is a major confidence booster.

In an interview, Vidya said, "There was a point I started believing that may be a married actress can't score a hit. But the love 'Tumhari Sulu' is getting has proved it wrong."

"The films, I did before this, were probably not successful in building the connect with the audience. It is a personal movement of glory for me. The actor part of me is as precious to me as a married woman part of me." The 38-year-old actor said the lesson she has learned from her past failures is 'keep trying until you succeed'.

"Success and failures are a part of life. Every day is not a Sunday. The only thing as an artiste I can do is keep moving forward, keep working hard and keep growing. The joy is in learning. Failures help me rise." Vidya recently received the best actress award for her performance as 'Sulochana' in the film.

She said awards are always a big motivation for her and she never shies away from accepting that she enjoys winning. "Awards matter to me. And I have always been joking about it that 'if you win, awards do matter to you'. I love when people appreciate my hard work and dedication. With 'Tumhari Sulu' the appreciation I am getting matters more. Recognition and acknowledge is always special for me."

Source: PTI

# BOLLYWOOD WISHES ANUSHKA-VIRAT HAPPY MARRIED LIFE



A host of Bollywood celebrities wished actor Anushka and Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli a happy married life as the duo tied the knot in Italy today.

In one of the most-awaited weddings in tinsel town and the playing fields, the two got married in a private event, attended by close family members and friends, at a resort in Tuscany, Italy.

Filmmaker Karan Johar, who directed Sharma in his last directorial "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil", tweeted, "Huge congratulations and tons of love to @AnushkaSharma and @imVkohli ....beautiful couple and I wish

them and their loved ones the best years ahead..."

Actor Abhishek Bachchan took to Twitter and said, "Many congratulations to @AnushkaSharma and @imVkohli on their wedding. God bless and welcome to the club!"

Actor Sridevi tweeted, "Congratulations, may this partnership last forever.. God Bless @anushkasharma @viratkohli #VirushkaWEDDING"

"Fukrey" star Richa Chadha said, "Congrats guys. Wish you marital bliss, peace and may you continue to smash goals in the face, like @imVkohli smashes tidy 6s. Love."

Actor Neha Dhupia wrote, "What a catch @imVkohli ...and what a shot @AnushkaSharma ... happiness, always!"

Sharma and Kohli, who were married with Hindu wedding rituals, will host a reception in New Delhi on December 21 followed by another bash in Mumbai for their industry friends and cricketers on December 26.

The celebrity couple, who had been dating for four years, were tight-lipped about their wedding plans despite the hype in the media.

In October, a newspaper reported that an Italian wedding may be on the cards for the couple.

Source: PTI

## MOVIE REVIEW

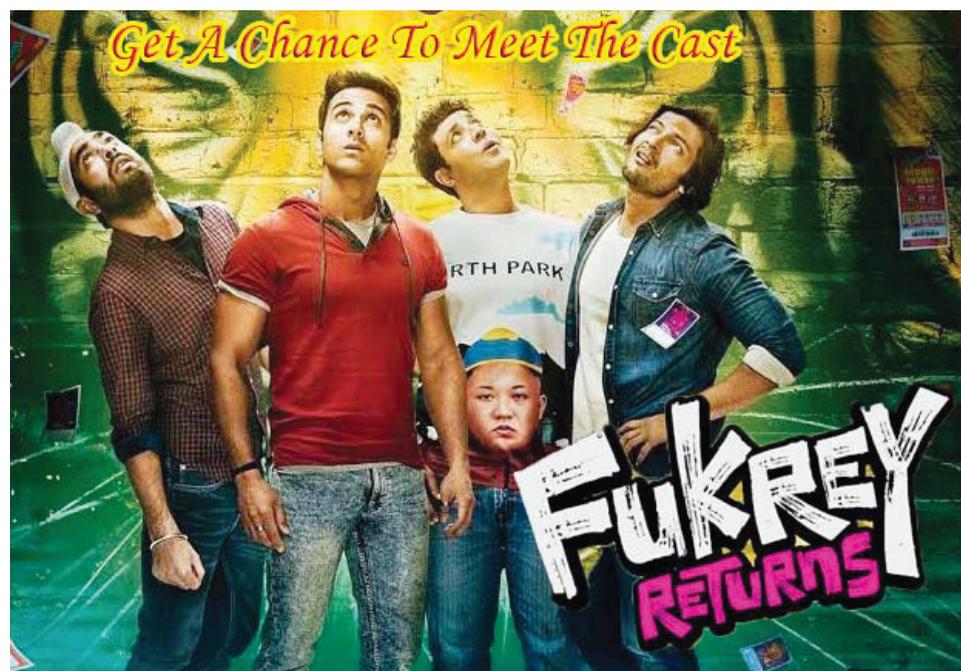
### FUKREY RETURNS

**CAST: PULKIT SAMRAT, VARUN SHARMA, MANJOT SINGH, ALI FAZAL, RICHA CHADHA, PRIYA ANAND, VISHAKHA SINGH, PANKAJ TRIPATHI**

**DIRECTION: MRIGHDEEP SINGH LAMBA**

Fukrey Returns, unlike most of the other sequels, carry forward the story where the gang left in the prequel. Bholi Punjaban (Richa Chadha) is in jail, the fukra gang consisting Hunny (Pulkit Samrat), Choocha (Varun Sharma), Lali (Manjot Singh) & Zafar (Ali Fazal) are happy living their lives selling Choocha's dreams (As shown in the prequel). As they weren't issue-less in the first instalment, there are many twists and turns waiting for them in this one too.

Starting with Bholi Punjaban getting the jail-free card with the help of an infamous politician Babulal Bhatia. Bholi is out



seeking a revenge from the gang & how her plan puts everyone in trouble is what the rest

of story revolves around. Choocha, who was a dream seller in the first one starts to pre-

imagine things in this one. With his help, the team sets the stage for a little golden heist. Where they lead to facing what obstructions is what the remaining story is about.

Fukrey was loved for its earthiness & the salient hero of this movie - Vipul Vig (Writer) has maintained the same charm in this one too. Yes, the script has few flaws here and there but it has enough rofl-worthy moments to divert your attention away from them.

It starts with an amazing flashback song describing the story of the first part, so even if you haven't seen the first one you can easily enjoy this. Though, the personal recommendation will be to not miss the first gem. Bollywood has no major releases for a couple of weeks until Tiger Zinda Hai, which is why Fukrey Returns could work well at the box office.

Vipul has written some amazing dialogues but a better explanation of events and rehashing some in the story would have helped this to touch the magic of its predecessor. The buildup of numerous events makes you believe something tacky is about to come your way but thankfully captain leads the ship well.



## Hilary Duff's new tattoo a tribute to Bette Davis

Actress-singer Hilary Duff has got a new tattoo, which is a tribute to the late actress Bette Davis.

Her new tattoo was created by Dr. Woo, who shared the photograph on his Instagram on Thursday. The design was in a simple and elegant script which read: 'Take fountain', reports people.com.

Davis famously uttered the line when the late show host Johnny Carson asked her for the best way an actress starting out could get into Hollywood. She said: 'Take fountain.'

The advice is useful to those stuck in Los Angeles traffic as Fountain Avenue is in Hollywood, California, and serves as a quicker route than using the congested parallel Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards.

"Just a super tiny reminder on Hilary Duff, one of the best tips when you are driving in Los Angeles via Bette Davis," Woo captioned the image.

Duff shared a Boomerang of herself sitting as Woo designed the tattoo.

In 2015, she said that she had 12 tattoos.

Source: IANS

# I FELL INTO ACTING TO HELP MY MOTHER, SAYS ANGELINA JOLIE



Hollywood heavyweight Angelina Jolie has confessed that she turned to acting to help her late mother pay bills. In an interview, the 42-year-old actress shared that she fell into acting and despite tasting success in her career she has never truly felt at home in front of the camera.

Jolie said, "There's a lot that's not in my nature to be an actor. I'm very happy that I was able to be one - I'm very lucky and very fortunate - but I realised how much it was for my mother when she passed away, because I felt very differently about it as soon as she was gone."

Adding, "I think, when I started acting, it was a good means to an end. It was a job, and I wanted to help my mom with bills. It was a creative job, something where you get to explore different times in history, different people, different sides of yourself, learn different skills, so it's a wonderful job to have as you grow and as you learn as a person. But you also are not those people."

The 'Maleficent' actress also shared that there were times when she has struggled to cope with the pressures of fame during her time in Hollywood. She also noted that when she entered the industry, she was too inexperienced in life to deal with the scrutiny she faced. "You're young and you don't know exactly who you are, yet you also get a microphone in front of your face, and you're 17, 18, and people are asking you your opinions, and you haven't formed them yet," noted Jolie. Source: ANI

## MOVIE REVIEW



# STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI

**CAST: MARK HAMILL, CARRIE FISHER, DAISY RIDLEY, JOHN BOYEGA, DOMHNALL GLEESON, GWENDOLINE CHRISTIE, OSCAR ISAAC, ADAM DRIVER, BENICIO DEL TORO**

**DIRECTION: RIAN JOHNSON**

Running more than 2 ½ hours, the eighth "Star Wars" movie built around the Skywalker clan is the longest under that banner and showcases an abundance of action. But despite the enormous scope and visual spectacle, too many key components of the film -- including those that have kept die-hard fans guessing and debating -- prove unsatisfying.

To be fair, writer-director Rian Johnson delivers some genuine surprises, and has dotted the movie with its share of pleasurable moments, from disarming humor to the first space battle to callbacks to earlier films -- practically flashing a sign to ensure opening-night audiences will have opportunities to whoop and holler.

"The Last Jedi" also adds a number of new characters, most of whom feel pretty disposable with the exception of Rose (Kelly Marie Tran), a plucky rebel whose

vulnerability seems well calibrated to connect with the fan base.

Still, the eagerly awaited arrival of Luke (Mark Hamill) -- with his promised tutelage of Rey (Daisy Ridley), and past role in the dark descent of Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) -- doesn't ignite as anticipated.

While "Force Awakens" did an admirable job of engineering a baton pass by establishing the new cast (the other key members being John Boyega as Finn and Oscar Isaac as Poe), "Last Jedi" bogs down in the middle and, the cooler parts notwithstanding, doesn't rally enough at the finish to offset that.

Granted, "Star Wars" has weathered past disappointments -- including the clunkier qualities of George Lucas' second trilogy -- without damaging the franchise, and the emotional investment fans have in a property that's passed from parents to their kids can't be overstated.

Like those movies, though, which produced standout moments, "The Last Jedi" feels like less than the sum of its parts. And where "Force Awakens" director J.J. Abrams nicely set the table for this sequel, this film leaves Abrams (who will reprise that role on Episode IX) with his work cut out for him. The flaws also invite second-guessing about Lucasfilm's pre-release vote of confidence by anointing Johnson as the force behind a separate trilogy set in that far-away galaxy.



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## Theresa May 'disappointed' by UK vote but 'on course to deliver Brexit'

**BRUSSELS (TIP):** British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Thursday that she was "disappointed" after she lost a key parliamentary vote on Brexit but insisted it had not derailed negotiations on the terms for leaving the European Union.

"I'm disappointed with the amendment but actually the EU Withdrawal bill is making good progress through the House of Commons and we're on course to deliver on Brexit," May said as she arrived for an EU summit.

Hours before the summit May's own Conservative MPs rebelled on a vote on an amendment to the flagship bill that would give parliament the final say on a Brexit deal with Brussels.

May however pointed to the interim agreement on divorce terms sealed with European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker last Friday, which paves the way for the opening of the second phase of talks on a future EU-UK relationship.

"I'm looking forward to discussing that deep and special partnership for the future," May said.

"We're on course to deliver Brexit, we're on course to deliver on the vote of the British people."

Britain voted to leave the EU in a referendum in June 2016 and talks on its departure began a year later. (AFP)

## Man arrested trying to climb wall at UK's Buckingham Palace

**LONDON (TIP):** British police on Monday said they had arrested a man who tried to climb a wall at Queen Elizabeth's Buckingham Palace home in central London, but said that the incident was not terrorism-related.

The 24-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of trespass on Sunday evening, three minutes after he stepped over a low outer perimeter fence near the palace, the Metropolitan Police said.

"The man was not found in possession of any offensive weapons and the incident is not being treated as terrorist related," police said in a statement.

He has been released on conditional bail and has undergone a mental health assessment.

British police are on high alert after five attacks blamed on terrorism this year. In August, a man wielding a sword outside the palace was charged under terrorism laws. Three police officers suffered minor injuries detaining him.

A number of people have tried to get into the palace grounds in recent years. A woman was arrested in October for attempting to scale the gates of the palace.

In May 2016, a man with a conviction for murder climbed over the wall and walked for about 10 minutes around the grounds of the palace before being arrested. He was jailed for four months.

Four years ago, a man armed with a knife tried to enter through a gate and was later jailed for 16 months. A month earlier, two men were arrested following a break-in at the palace.

One of the biggest security breaches at Buckingham Palace happened in 1982 when an intruder, Michael Fagan, climbed a wall and wandered into a room where the queen was in bed. (AFP)

## Snow wreaks havoc on travellers in Britain, schools closed

**LONDON (TIP):** Snow and wintry weather are still wreaking havoc on travellers in Britain, with flights cancelled, roads sheathed in ice and rail travel disrupted Monday. With temperatures predicted to drop overnight to as low as minus 12 Celsius (11 degrees Fahrenheit), transport officials worked on cleanup. Hundreds of schools were closed and airports struggled under the weight of flight delays.

"The worst of the snowfall is behind us," said Grahame Mudge of the Met Office. "It's now more about dealing with the weather we've had."

Europe's largest airport, Heathrow, warned that hundreds of flights would be cancelled as it cleared the backlog of flights delayed by Sunday's snowfall.

In the world of interconnected air travel, any extended disruption quickly leaves planes and flight crews out of position, knocking them out of the rotation for their next assignments. Airlines are also responsible for de-icing their aircraft, and some have more capacity than others to do so. (AP)

# New Polish PM debuts at summit, seeks better ties with EU

**BRUSSELS (TIP):** Poland's new prime minister was making his debut on Dec 16 at a European Union summit, a first test of whether the Western-educated former banker can bridge a deepening rift between his right-wing government and Brussels.

Mateusz Morawiecki, 49, was tapped last week by the leader of the ruling Law and Justice party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, to replace Beata Szydlo. Her two years as prime minister were marked by bitter conflicts with the EU over migrants, the environment and the state of Poland's democracy.

Poland's current isolation marks a sharp reversal for a country that has seen massive economic development since joining the EU in 2004, which brought it an infusion of EU subsidies and foreign investment and which until 2015 was an increasingly influential voice in European affairs. That growing clout was reflected in the election in 2014 of the Polish prime minister at the time, Donald Tusk, to lead the European Council.

Tusk leads the two-day EU summit that begins Thursday where leaders are to focus on Brexit, migration and defense.

While Kaczynski has not explained his reasons for switching prime ministers, party members have suggested one aim was to improve the country's international standing.

As a communicator, Morawiecki certainly seems better fitted to the task. He is fluent in English and German, studied at universities in the United States and Germany, and for several years headed the Polish branch of a Spanish bank, Santander experiences that give him a more cosmopolitan air than many in his conservative party.

Speaking to reporters, Morawiecki appeared conciliatory on Poland's extensive logging in the protected Bialowieza forest, a point of contention between Warsaw and EU officials. He



said that if the EU court rules that the logging must stop, it will.

But he also made clear he was sticking to his predecessor's staunch refusal to accept any refugees as part of an EU resettlement plan.

"I am glad that our approach on refugees is becoming more and more understood in the European Union," Morawiecki said, following a statement by Tusk earlier this week that the EU's mandatory refugee quota system has been divisive and ineffective. He said his government supports an earlier policy of giving aid to refugees who stay closer to their homes.

"We want to help people affected by the war on the spot," he said to reporters in Brussels. "This support is more effective."

Yet recent developments in Warsaw will make it hard for Morawiecki to persuade his European counterparts to drop their concerns over the rule of law in Poland.

In a case that US State Department says raises concerns about media freedom, Poland's media regulator on Monday fined a private news channel nearly 1.5 million zlotys (\$420,000) for what it alleged was unfair reporting during a political crisis last year. The

channel, TVN24, is the country's key source of independent television news.

Lawmakers last week also passed two new laws regulating the Supreme Court and the National Council of the Judiciary, a body that appoints judges, giving the ruling party control over both institutions. At the Supreme Court, the retirement age for judges was lowered from 70 to 65, which will force the immediate retirement of some 40 per cent of more than 80 judges allowing the president, a party ally, to name their replacements.

Law and Justice says it is seeking to purge the justice system of old communist holdovers and corrupt judges out of touch with regular people. Europe's top human rights body, the Council of Europe, disagrees, and said aspects of the laws bear similarities to the Soviet judicial system.

Morawiecki says he fully backs the changes. A former anti-communist dissident, he said recently some judges still working had passed judgments on his fellow activists in the 1980s.

In Brussels, he said, "Europe should be a Europe of sovereign states who should have the right to reform their justice systems." (AP)

# China fumes over potential US navy visits to Taiwan

**BEIJING (TIP):** China said it lodged an official protest with the United States after President Donald Trump signed a defence budget that opens the possibility for US warships to visit self-ruled Taiwan on Thursday.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lu Kang charged that the legislation, while non-binding, violates the One-China policy and "constitutes an interference in China's domestic affairs".

"We firmly oppose any form of official exchanges or military links between Taiwan and the US, as well as US arms sales to Taiwan," Lu told a regular news briefing.

"We hope that the US can fully grasp the damaging nature" of the legislation's Taiwan clause, he said.

Trump on Tuesday signed the budget, which includes a clause saying the United States should "consider the advisability and feasibility of re-establishing port of call exchanges between the United States navy and the



Taiwan navy". Chinese media reported last week that a diplomat from the Chinese embassy in the United States had warned that Beijing would take Taiwan back by force the day that a US warship enters a Taiwanese port.

The island has been a thorny issue in China-US relations, as Trump began his transition into office by taking a precedent-breaking phone call from Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen.

Trump mended ties by vowing to uphold the One-China policy shortly before Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to his Florida Mar-a-Lago resort, but infuriated Beijing again this summer by approving a USD 1.3 billion arms sale to Taiwan.

China and Taiwan split after a civil war in 1949, and while Taiwan sees itself as a sovereign nation, it has never formally declared independence. (AFP)

# China, South Korea leaders to discuss North Korea nukes

**BEIJING (TIP):** South Korean President Moon Jae-In will meet with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing on amid mixed US signals about potential talks to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis.

Relations between Beijing and Seoul have encountered their own rough patch over the US military's deployment of a powerful anti-missile defence system in the South to counter the North's threats.

Moon hopes to "normalise" ties during the visit, his office has said, after Beijing imposed economic measures against South Korean companies, a move seen as retaliation to the installation of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) system.

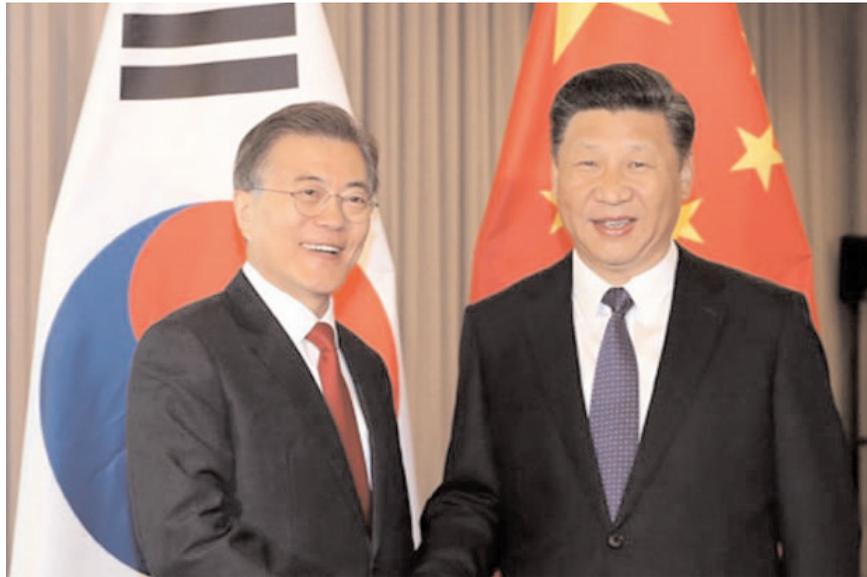
China sees the deployment as a threat to its own security.

Moving past the disagreement has become increasingly important amid growing concern that bellicose rhetoric between Washington and Pyongyang could spark war on the Korean peninsula.

"The highlights to watch of the visit would be whether the two sides (Seoul and Beijing) can start a dialogue and cooperation mechanism on the DPRK (North Korea) nuclear issue," said Zhu Feng, international studies professor at Peking University.

China has long refused to countenance the possibility that the North's Communist regime could collapse.

But a series of nuclear and missile tests combined with pressure from US President Donald Trump has pushed Beijing to reconsider its position and prioritise improving relations with



Seoul.

"It is a very uncertain period," Zhu said. "The two sides need high-level dialogues and dialogues between militaries. These dialogues cannot really start without the normalisation of the bilateral relations."

Moon's visit comes after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Washington was ready to talk to North Korea "without preconditions", though it remains determined to force Pyongyang to give up its nuclear arsenal. China and Russia responded positively to Tillerson's remarks, even after the White House appeared to put his proposal in question by saying Trump's "views on North Korea have not changed."

Beijing has pressed for talks to peacefully resolve the crisis, but there are signals that it has begun to prepare

for the possibility of the North's collapse.

Tillerson said Tuesday that US and Chinese officials have discussed scenarios in case the North Korean regime falls, including steps to deal with refugees crossing the border, and how to secure Pyongyang's nuclear weapons. Washington's top diplomat said these discussions involved him, the US defence secretary and military chief, and senior Chinese officials.

Such discussions were unthinkable just a few months ago. But China's priority has been to convince the United States and North Korea to hold talks. Beijing has also urged the US, Japan and South Korea to suspend joint military drills in the region in return for North Korea to halt its nuclear activities -- an idea consistently rejected by Washington and Seoul. (AFP)

# China summons Australian envoy over political meddling allegations

**SYDNEY:** China summoned Australia's ambassador to lodge a complaint last week over Canberra's allegation that Beijing had sought to interfere in Australian politics, a source familiar with the diplomatic action told Reuters on Thursday.

Relations between Australia and China became strained in recent weeks after Canberra said it would ban foreign political donations as part of a crackdown aimed at preventing external influence in domestic politics, sharpening the focus on China's soft power.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull singled out China as he said foreign powers were making "unprecedented and increasingly sophisticated attempts to influence the political process" in Australia.

In response, China summoned Ambassador Jan Adams to a meeting at the Chinese Ministry for Foreign Affairs on December 8 to lodge a complaint, the source said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang confirmed the ministry had an "important discussion" with the Australian ambassador.

"The Australian side should be very



clear about China's position on the relevant issue," Lu told a daily news briefing, without elaborating.

China's Foreign Ministry said last week Turnbull's allegations were full of prejudice against China, were baseless and poisoned the atmosphere of China-Australia relations.

Turnbull's allegations have been criticised by Australia's opposition Labor Party as showing an "anti-China" bias that could jeopardise bilateral trade.

China, which is easily Australia's biggest trading partner, bought A\$93

billion (\$70 billion) worth of Australian goods and services last year. Australia's unshakeable security relationship with the United States, however, has limited how cosy it gets with China.

Turnbull denied indulging in anti-Chinese rhetoric, insisting Labour was using the issue to win favour with a large voter block ahead of a make-or-break by-election on Saturday that analysts said will determine his political future.

"I am disappointed they have tried to turn Australians against each other," Turnbull told reporters in Sydney. (AP)

# At least 4 killed after train collides with bus in southwest France

**PARIS (TIP):** Four children were killed after a train and a school bus collided outside the town of Perpignan in southwestern France on Dec 14, the interior ministry said.

Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne described the crash as a "terrible accident" and said on Twitter that she was heading immediately to the scene, more than 850 km (530 miles) from Paris.

"All emergency services have been mobilised and a crisis coordination unit set up," an official at the local Millas townhall told Reuters.

The interior ministry said seven people were seriously injured among the 19.

Video images showed a long line of ambulance and emergency service vehicles near the crossing where the collision occurred. (Reuters)

# Russia shuts its embassy in Yemen, evacuates diplomats

**MOSCOW (TIP):** Russia said it has temporarily shut its embassy in Yemen and evacuated all of its diplomats.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in Dec 10 statement that the ambassador and other diplomats will fulfill their duties from the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

Zakharova said the decision to close the embassy, in the rebel-held capital, Sanaa, was related to the security situation in the country, without elaborating.

A Saudi-led coalition has been at war with Iran-backed Shiite rebels known as Houthis, who control much of the north, since 2015. The stalemated war has killed 10,000 people, displaced three million and pushed the country to the brink of famine. Tensions have escalated recently after Houthis killed their top ally, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. (AP)

# Iraq hangs 38 members of Islamic State, Qaida for 'terrorism'

**NASIRIYAH (TIP):** Iraq hanged 38 jihadists belonging to the Islamic State (IS) group or al-Qaida for terrorism offences on Dec 14 in the southern city of Nasiriyah, provincial authorities said.

It was the largest number of executions in a single day since September 25 when 42 people were put to death in the same prison.

"The prison administration executed on Thursday in the presence of Justice Minister Haidar al-Zameli, in Nasiriyah prison, 38 death row prisoners belonging to al-Qaida or Daesh (IS) accused of terrorist activities," said Dakhel Kazem, a senior official in the provincial council.

They were all Iraqis but one also had Swedish citizenship, a prison source said.

Amnesty International has voiced repeated concerns about the use of the death penalty in Iraq, which it ranks as one of the world's top executioners behind China, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Saturday declared victory against IS after a three-year campaign by government forces backed by a US-led coalition to retake territory seized by the jihadists. (AFP)

# Suicide bomber kills 18 at Somalia police academy

**MOGADISHU (SOMALIA) (TIP):** An Islamic extremist suicide bomber disguised as a police officer killed at least 18 people at a police academy in Somalia's capital on Dec 14, authorities said. The Somalia-based al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility.

Another 20 officers were wounded, some of them seriously, Col. Mohamud Aden said.

The bomber, with explosives strapped around his waist and torso, infiltrated Gen. Kahiye Police Academy and targeted officers rehearsing for Somalia's Police Day celebrations scheduled for December 20, Capt. Mohamed Hussein said.

The bomber walked into the academy undetected and joined a line of officers before he detonated the explosives under his sportswear, Hussein said.

"He detonated his bomb vest having realized that his presence had drawn suspicion among officers in the queue," he said.

Officer Farah Omar, who was at the scene at the time of the blast, said the bomber targeted a spot where dozens of soldiers had gathered. (AP)

# SHED INHIBITIONS AND COME OUT OF SEXUAL SHELL

Of all the disservices that we women do to ourselves, the most common is that we do not consider ourselves sexual creatures. Blame it on the conditioning we've been slapped with all through our growing years and add to it the Madonna-whore dichotomy that the patriarchy imposes on us. The fear of being judged for being sexual creatures makes most women play down their sexual selves and desires. If this is you, and you find yourself always holding back when it comes to all matters carnal, perhaps these tips could help.

## Tell yourself you deserve better sex

The only person holding you back is you yourself. If you don't make your sexual welfare a priority, no one else will. Lying back and thinking about England might have been sound advice for a generation with no handy birth control but there's no reason why you should be prised up from the frozen earth, unless there are medical issues or you do find intercourse painful, in which case a generous application of lube, stern instructions to the partner to ensure you are raring to go, and if all this fails, a consultation with a sexologist is in order. Self pleasure is your best teacher

Experimenting with what works for you, what gets you going, what does not is what will make you understand your body and reactions to various stimuli. Knowing how you can make yourself reach an orgasm makes it easier to get there, given that the path to the female orgasm is slippery and peppered with many traps.

## Make friends with your body

You're not going to be tripping down the pathway to the Big O if the internal monologue in your head is running on a loop about your droopy butt or the Michelin Man tyres around your waist. Every morning when you go in for your shower, look at yourself in the mirror naked and focus on one part of your body to love.

## Don't shy away from porn

Is it any wonder the major demographic that helped boost E L James trilogy straight to the top of all the bestselling charts were adult women, most of them married? Never mind the debate we could have about Anastasia's quivering inner goddess needing a stern talking to, in a red room of pain if required, the fact remains that erotica is a vital tool recommended by most therapists.

## Embrace sensual textures

Learning to embrace one's sexuality also includes learning to enjoy non-sexual touching and textures. Wearing sensual textures of silk and satin can make your nerve endings go on



overdrive, so can getting a good massage.

## Initiate sex

Female sex drives are more responsive when compared with men who are spontaneous, and we have variable arousal patterns. Sometimes being the one to initiate sex can be a sudden aphrodisiac. Also, libido and sex are the classic chicken and egg syndrome, the more you have of it, the more you will want of it.

## Ask for what you want

You need a gentle massage to get you in the mood, while your partner thinks reaching out and tapping your shoulder is the best foreplay ever. The only way to get the gap between expectation and reality bridged is to state your wants and needs clearly. If it is fantasising that gets you going, whisper what you're imagining into your partner's ears. If you want to try out something a trifle risqué, suggest it. There's an entire universe of sexual exploration out there if you only go beyond your comfort zone.

Source: India Today



## FOOD CORNER

# ALOO KEEMA

## INGREDIENTS

2 medium onions, chopped, 450 g beef or 450 g ground chicken, 1 teaspoon gingerroot, minced, 1 teaspoon garlic, minced, 1 teaspoon chili powder, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1 teaspoon turmeric powder, 1 teaspoon salt, 2 tablespoons yogurt, 2-3 tomatoes, chopped, 300 g potatoes, peeled and diced, 1 teaspoon garam masala, 2 green chillies, chopped, 3 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped.

## Method

- Fry onions in a heavy based pan over medium heat.
- when onions are soft but not brown, add meat, garlic and ginger and cook over medium heat about 3-5 mins or until all the moisture has dried from the minced meat.
- Add spices + 3 tbsp water and stirring constantly, cook another 2 minutes.
- Add chopped tomatoes and yogurt and cook for about 10 mins, stirring constantly.
- Add potatoes, mix well.
- Add 1 cup of water, cover and cook 30 mins over low heat or until potatoes are tender.
- Add garam masala, chillies and coriander right before



- serving.
- Mix well.
- Serve hot with naan, chapati or rice.

## WORKING MOMS, DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF

Being too hard on yourself about how you are faring as a parent can negatively impact your happiness, say scientists who unveiled the factors behind the well-being of such women. Working mother's sense of well-being drops when she feels inadequate, under pressure, and is alienated from her social circle by her efforts work and be a good parent all at once, according to a study published in the Journal of Happiness Studies.

The study also found that her own baby's temperament has little influence on her sense of well-being, but having a more extrovert child does help some women to feel more positive about motherhood, and to be less hard on themselves.

"Our findings point to a complex interplay between parent and child characteristics in the prediction of maternal wellbeing," said Katrijn Brenning, from the University of Ghent in Belgium. The research team analysed five days of diary entries made by 126 mothers after their maternity leave ended and they had to leave their babies at a day-care facility for the first time.

This tends to be a particularly stressful episode in the life of working mothers because it is often the first time that they are separated from their children. With maternity leave over, they also need to learn how to balance their work and family lives effectively. Although the temperament of their children did not have much influence on the mothers' sense of well-being,

# THIS NEW BLOOD TEST CAN DIAGNOSE TWO TYPES OF CANCER

Scientists have developed a blood test using infrared spectroscopy that may diagnose two types of cancer, lymphoma and melanoma. The findings, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, suggest infrared spectroscopy can detect biochemical changes induced by non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a solid tumorous condition of the immune system, and subcutaneous melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer.

The technique has diagnostic potential as a screening technique for these cancers, according to researchers, including those from Georgia State University in the US. They used mid-infrared spectroscopy to analyse blood serum derived from experimental mice and differentiate mice with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and subcutaneous melanoma from healthy mice and also between these two tumorous conditions.

The mid-infrared spectral region of the electromagnetic spectrum is frequently used to characterise biological samples at the molecular level. Studies have found the incidence rates of cutaneous melanoma have increased in many regions and populations over the last decade, specifically three to seven per cent per year among fair-skinned populations, researchers said. The available diagnostic regimen for both cancers, which includes tissue examination and biopsy, is time-consuming, invasive and costly, resulting in small compliance rates of eligible populations for cancer prescreening.

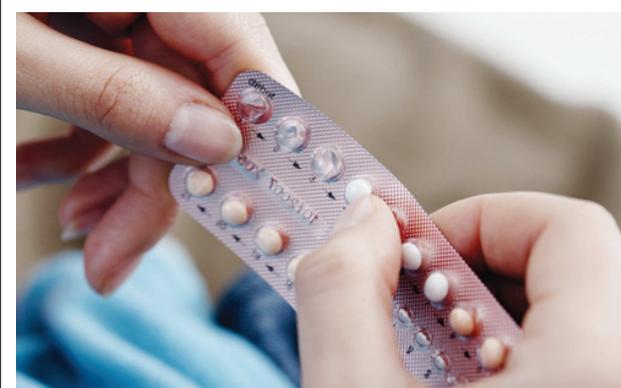
Developing a rapid and reliable prescreening strategy for melanoma and lymphoma is critical because early



**It can detect biochemical changes induced by non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a solid tumorous condition of the immune system, and subcutaneous melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer**

diagnosis and treatment of these malignancies improve the patients' chances of survival. Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy in Attenuated Total Reflection (ATR) sampling mode provides high-quality results with better reproducibility compared to other vibrational

spectroscopy. It has attracted scientists' attention for its rapid and reliable detection of various health conditions using body fluid samples. "Our final goal is to say we can use this infrared technique to identify various diseases," said Unil Perera, Professor at Georgia State. *Source: PTI*



## BIRTH CONTROL PILLS MAY UP BREAST CANCER RISK: STUDY

**LONDON (TIP):** Women who use hormonal contraceptives, including birth control pills, are at an increased risk of breast cancer, a study warns.

The findings, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, are based on a study that followed 1.8 million women between 15 and 49 years of age for more than 10 years.

Researchers from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark said the risk of breast cancer was higher among women who recently used contemporary hormonal contraceptives than among women who had never used hormonal contraceptives. However, absolute increases in risk were small.

After discontinuation of hormonal contraception, the risk of breast cancer was still higher among the women who had used hormonal contraceptives for five years or more than among women who had not used hormonal contraceptives.

Women who currently or recently used the progestin-only intrauterine system also had a higher risk of breast cancer than women who had never used hormonal contraceptives.

The overall absolute increase in breast cancers diagnosed among current and recent users of any hormonal contraceptive was 13 per 100,000 people, or about one extra breast cancer for every 7,690 women using hormonal contraception for one year. *Source: PTI*

## COMMON PAINKILLERS MAY DOUBLE OBESITY RISK

**LONDON (TIP):** Regular use of commonly prescribed painkillers may double the risk of developing obesity and cause sleep deprivation, a study has warned.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a large increase in the prescription of medications such as opioids and some antidepressants for chronic pain management.

Researchers from the Newcastle University in the UK unveiled the serious impact of these medications and highlights the need to reduce their use.

The findings, published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, show that medications commonly used to treat pain, like gabapentinoids such as gabapentin, pregabalin and opiates, doubled the risk of obesity and were associated with poor sleep. Scientists assessed the cardio-metabolic health – the inter-relationship between metabolic and cardiovascular disease – in more than 133,000 participants from the UK Biobank.

Body Mass Index (BMI), waist circumference and blood pressure were compared between those taking painkillers for chronic, non-cancer pain and cardio-metabolic drugs, compared to those prescribed cardio-metabolic treatment only.

# Less meat, exercise may cause mental distress in young adults

Young adults who eat meat less than three times a week and exercise less may be at an increased risk of mental distress, a study claims.

However, the mental health of a mature adult (aged over 30 years) seems to be more sensitive to regular consumption of coffee and carbohydrates. Researchers found that mood in young adults (18-29) seems to be dependent on food that increases availability of neurotransmitter precursors and concentrations in the brain (meat).

"Young adult mood appears to be sensitive to build-up of brain chemicals," said Lina Begdache, from the Binghamton University in the US. "Regular consumption of meat leads to build-up of two brain chemicals (serotonin and dopamine) known to promote mood. Regular exercise leads to build-up of these and other neurotransmitters as well," Begdache said.

"In other words, young adults who ate meat (red or white) less than three times a week and exercised less than three times week showed a significant mental distress," she said.

However, mood in mature adults may be more reliant on food that increases availability of antioxidants (fruits) and abstinence of food that inappropriately activates the sympathetic nervous system (coffee, high glycemic index and skipping breakfast).



The findings were published in the journal *Nutritional Neuroscience*. "Mature adult mood seems to be more sensitive to regular consumption of sources of antioxidants and abstinence of food that inappropriately activates the innate fight-or-flight response (commonly known as the stress response)," Begdache added. *Source: PTI*

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## POKEMON GO MAY HELP PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE SOCIALLY: STUDY



**TORONTO (TIP):** Pokemon Go may help people who struggle socially, according to a study which found that the popular augmented reality game has a lot of social aspects and requires players to have good social competence.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada recruited 101 Pokemon Go players between the ages of 18 and 28 to take part in the study published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*.

After completing questionnaires about their personality, social anxiety and social competence, participants played the game for 20 minutes.

Through observing players' performance in the game, the researchers found that extroverted participants caught more Pokemon, visited more PokeStops and travelled greater distances than players who described themselves as socially introverted.

The researchers are now looking at ways for modern video games to be designed in a way that helps people who struggle socially. "In the beginning, players might only need to communicate with a person through text, but as the game reaches a higher level, they may have to actually be physically close to other players to collaborate and win," said Adri Khalis from UBC.

"The game provides a context in which interacting with others might be easier than walking up to a stranger and striking up a conversation from the get-go," Khalis said.

As modern video games become more popular, it's important to understand how individual personality traits influence behaviour, said Amori Mikami from UBC.

Source: PTI

## Shatter-proof smartphone screens in the offing



**MELBOURNE (TIP):** Scientists have found a novel way to alter the structure of glass to improve its resistance to fractures, an advance that may lead to the development of shatter-proof smartphone screens.

"Everyone knows how frustrating it is when you drop your mobile device and get a large crack in the screen," said Charles Le Losq from Australian National University (ANU).

He said that glass appeared to be structured randomly, but it was actually quite ordered at the microscopic level of a few atoms. The researchers worked on a type of glass called aluminosilicate, which is used in the screens of mobile devices.

"The glasses we analysed are mostly composed of aluminium and silicon oxides, and can also contain various elements such as sodium, potassium, calcium or magnesium - each element influences the flexibility and resistance of the glass," said Le Losq, who led the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. Le Losq said the findings also shed light on the crucial role that lava oceans and volcanoes played in the geological evolution of Earth.

The researchers measured the viscosity of molten glass at more than 1,000 degrees Celsius and the density of the glass when cooled and formed.

"Our research findings allow better modelling of present volcanic activity, as well as of the lavas involved in the original formation of Earth and its surface," Le Losq said.

# MARS ATMOSPHERE IS WELL PROTECTED FROM SOLAR WIND

**LONDON (TIP):** The Martian atmosphere is well protected from the effects of the solar wind, despite the absence of an Earth-like magnetic dipole, a study has found.

Present-day Mars is a cold and dry planet with less than one per cent of Earth's atmospheric pressure at the surface.

However many geological features indicate the planet had an active hydrological cycle about 3-4 billion years ago.

An active hydrological cycle would have required a warmer climate in the planet's early history and therefore a thicker atmosphere, one capable of creating a strong greenhouse effect.

A common hypothesis maintains that the solar wind over time has eroded the early Martian atmosphere, causing the greenhouse effect, and thus the hydrological cycle, to collapse.

Unlike Earth, Mars has no global magnetic dipole, but the solar wind instead induces currents in the ionised upper atmosphere, creating an induced magnetosphere.

"It has long been thought that this induced magnetosphere is insufficient to protect the Martian atmosphere," said Robin Ramstad from Umea University in Sweden.

"However our measurements show something different," Ramstad said.

Researchers using measurements from the Swedish particle instrument ASPERA-3 on the Mars Express spacecraft.

The spacecraft has been measuring the ion escape from Mars since 2004. Researchers combined and compared measurements of the ion escape under varying solar wind conditions and levels



of ionising solar radiation, so-called extreme ultraviolet (EUV) radiation.

The results show that the solar wind has a comparatively small effect on the ion escape rate, which instead mainly depends on the EUV radiation.

This has a large effect on estimations of the total amount of atmosphere that has escaped to space.

"Despite stronger solar wind and EUV-radiation levels under the early Sun, ion escape can not explain more than 0.006 bar of atmospheric pressure lost over the course of 3.9 billion years," said Ramstad.

"Even our upper estimate, 0.01 bar, is an insignificant amount in comparison to the atmosphere required to maintain a sufficiently strong greenhouse effect, about one bar or more according to climate models," he said.

The findings show that a stronger solar wind mainly accelerates particles already escaping the planet's gravity, but does not increase the ion escape rate.

Contrary to previous assumptions, the induced magnetosphere is also shown to protect the bulk of the Martian ionosphere from solar wind energy transfer.

Source: PTI

## Facebook to help Indian students learn, build Virtual Reality products

Facebook has teamed up with Bangalore-based startup SV.CO to help Indian college students learn and build products for the emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality. The partnership is aimed to help Indian students build their ideas into globally marketable products and services.

The new VR programme under SV.CO's School of Innovation will provide a platform for nearly four million engineering students across 3,300 colleges to learn how to build innovative products while they are in college and get polished under the guidance of the industry experts.

"India is host to one of the largest community of developers and is also one of the fastest growing regions for start-ups. The School of Innovation programme is our investment into skill for tomorrow. We want to make sure, that we have invested in not only helping the communities in building products today, but also in building a world for tomorrow," Satyajeet Singh, Head of Platform Partnerships, Facebook India and South Asia, told reporters here.

"The new programme is a step forward, in realising our vision of building an ecosystem that inspires innovation and empowers young talent to build products using emerging technologies such as VR that will shape the future of businesses," Singh added.

As part of the new VR-based programme, top 10 student teams from across 3,300 engineering colleges in India will be



selected to build a next generation VR product idea they have.

The selected teams will be on-board the SV.CO Online Learning Platform for a six-month programme that includes online and in-person learning to progress their idea, build a low and high-fidelity prototype and finally launch to customers.

The successful teams will be selected and given an opportunity to represent their product in front of a leadership panel on demo day, to be organised at Facebook India office in January 2019.

Source: IANS

# NEED TO CONTINUE MOMENTUM ON BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE: JAITLEY

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has emphasised the need to continue the momentum on infrastructure creation and expedite investment in railways to propel the Indian economy.

Addressing industry association FICCI's annual general meeting here, he said India has had one of the highest infrastructure spendings in the world but the momentum needs to be sustained.

There is a need to "hurry up" on investment in railway infrastructure, including on stations and super fast and bullet trains, he said.

Explaining the rationale for massive capital infusion plan in public sector banks, Jaitley said that lending capacity of banks was constrained due to capital inadequacy.

Improving lending capacity of banks will be government's priority for the next year, he said.

India, he said, has realised the importance of structural changes despite global slowdown. The country saw more structural changes in 2017 than the recent past.

Jaitley said next year's agenda for the government is funding banks and completing unfinished tasks of strengthening state-owned banks.

The government has appointed advisors for sale of Air India and will soon come out with the next step, he said without elaborating.

He exuded confidence of exceeding the disinvestment target this fiscal, the first time ever.

## FLAGS INFRA SECTOR, BANK CLEAN-UP AS PRIORITIES

The government will boost spending on building infrastructure next year even as it continues to strengthen state-run banks, widen the tax base and rationalise taxes, said finance minister



Union finance minister Arun Jaitley addresses during the 90th Annual General Meeting of the FICCI in New Delhi on December 14.

Arun Jaitley.

It will also continue to push through structural reforms, Jaitley said on Thursday at the annual meeting of lobby group Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The finance minister's comments come weeks before the Union budget will be presented on February 1, the last full budget by the NDA government before general elections in 2019.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also reiterated the government's commitment to pushing through more reforms.

"In 2017, India has seen more structural changes taking place than any time in the recent past. The changes in 1991 were more out of compulsion, while the changes in 2017 more out of conviction," Jaitley said, adding that there may be some short-term adverse consequences of the structural reforms undertaken by the government.

India rolled out the goods and services tax (GST), brought in changes to the insolvency and bankruptcy code to make it more effective and initiated the process of capitalising state-run banks over the past few months.

Highlighting the steps taken to resolve the issues in the banking sector, including the ₹2.11 lakh crore capitalisation plan for state-run banks, Jaitley said it remains an important unfinished item on the government's agenda.

"Completing the unfinished task of strengthening state-run banks and resolving the bad debt problem is unquestionably one of the most important agendas on the table today. Lending capacity of banks is depleted because of NPAs (non-performing assets). Banks have a lot of liquidity on account of low-cost deposits but they are not able to lend because of capital adequacy issues," said Jaitley.

## WHOLESALE PRICE BASED INFLATION RISES TO 3.93 PER CENT IN NOVEMBER



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Inflation based on wholesale price index (WPI) accelerated further to 3.93 per cent in November due to a sharp rise in onion prices and costlier seasonal vegetables, government data showed on December 14.

It was 3.59 per cent in October this year, and 1.82 per cent in November last year. Onion, a kitchen staple, witnessed a whopping 178.19 per cent rise in inflation last month on annual basis.

For seasonal vegetables too the rate of price rise accelerated to 59.80 per cent, as against 36.61 per cent in October.

Protein rich eggs, meat and fish as a category, however, grew at a slower pace of 4.73 per cent during the month, against 5.76 in preceding month.

WPI inflation of food articles increased to 6.06 per cent last month, as against 4.30 per cent in October, as per the data released by the Commerce Ministry.

For manufactured goods, it was at 2.61 per cent during the month, almost static against 2.62 in preceding month.

Retail inflation, based on Consumer Price Index, hit a 15-month high of 4.88 per cent in November, as per the data released last week.

## Electricity, petroleum, realty likely to come under GST net

**NEW DELHI (TIP):**

The GST Council in the coming months would aim to reduce the number of GST slabs and bring items like electricity, petroleum and real estate under the GST ambit, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi said today.

Addressing the Ficci AGM, the Bihar Deputy CM who also heads the Group of Ministers (GoM) set up to look at the IT challenges being faced under the GST, said electricity, real estate and petroleum products can be brought under the GST ambit once the revenue collection under the new regime stabilises.

Electricity, real estate, stamp duty and petroleum products should become part of GST. This would be our (GST Council) endeavour," he said.

He said it would be difficult to specify any timeline for this to happen. Inclusion of these can happen without amending the Constitution, he said.

If petroleum products are brought under the GST regime, he said, it will attract the highest tax slab prevalent at that time and states would be at liberty to levy cess on it in order to protect their revenues. Both states and the Centre earn 40% of their revenue from petroleum products at present. He also hinted at the reduction of tax slabs going forward after tax collection stabilises. The current GST regime has five tax slabs — 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. An additional GST cess is also levied on certain products. Though final decision would be taken by the Council, he said, "The possible scenario could be that the current highest tax slab of 28% could be brought down to 25% and two tax slabs of 12% and 18% could be merged into one."



## APPLE INVESTS \$390MN IN US-MADE IPHONE LASERS

**SAN FRANCISCO (TIP):** As part of its \$1 billion Advanced Manufacturing Fund to support innovation and job creation by American manufacturers, Apple has invested \$390 million in optical communication component manufacturer Finisar whose technology has made the iPhone's Face ID feature viable.

The fund was awarded to increase the production of vertical-cavity surface-emitting lasers (VCSELs), which power Apple's new features such as Portrait mode selfies and Animoji, the company wrote in a blog. The 700,000-square-foot manufacturing plant in Sherman, Texas, that was closed in 2012, is expected to begin shipping its products in the second half of 2018 and its output will make Sherman the VCSEL capital of the US. Finisar will soon start hiring 500 highly skilled workers and Bruce Armstrong, the caretaker who was born and raised there, is busy getting the building ready. "It will be great to see people come back through the door. This means a lot for the Sherman area," Armstrong said.



## SOUTH KOREA BANS ITS BANKS FROM DEALING IN BITCOIN

**SEOUL (TIP):** South Korea has banned its financial institutions from dealing in virtual currencies such as Bitcoin, as the cryptocurrency soars in a bubble fuelled by retail speculators, many of them from the country.

The hyper-wired country has emerged as a hotbed for cryptocurrency trading, accounting for some 20% of global Bitcoin transactions — about 10 times its share of the world economy.

About one million South Koreans, many of them small-time investors, are estimated to own Bitcoins, and demand is so high that prices for the unit are around 20% higher than in the US, its biggest market.

Bitcoin prices have surged globally this year, soaring from less than \$1,000 in January to over \$17,000. Source: AFP



## Shree Ganeshaya Namah



## Horoscope Forecast for DECEMBER 2017

BY BEJAN DARUWALLA

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Ganesha says in digital terms speed + space + spirituality + showmanship = Sagittarius.

Add to it the great divide between illusion / reality, evolution / revolution, freedom / captivity, knowledge / wisdom. The archer pierces the eye of the Sun and hits infinity.

Finally, Sagittarius is all about freedom. Sagittarius is both fast and furious.

**Aries:**

The body and physicality means much to Aries. Therefore, December is a good time to do away with "Old habits, patterns and deep-seated memories from the subconscious, claw our being backwards." You have a great opportunity to be new and shining clean from December onwards. Go for it. Pilgrimages and pious deeds are fated.

**Taurus:**

Tantra and mantra, prayers and hymns should give an extra boost to life and living this month. At the same time health precautions are absolutely essential. Life is a concoction of concord and conflict. This truth will be seen and felt by you in December. The last week finds you calm of mind as pressures ease.

**Gemini:**

Psychologists tell us again and again that today life is all about RELATIONSHIPS. I agree totally with it now because the Sun in your seventh angle is mainly about meeting people. But relationships can also be with Nature and with your own self. Travel with a stop-over is more than possible. Reach out to people and you will find God.

**Cancer:**

Most Cancerians are emotional, intuitive and can link up with God naturally and easily. But in December hard work, sustained labor and intense concentration will result in awards and rewards. You jolly well deserve the grace of God as well as promotion and perks. However, you must learn to take excellent care of your health and wellness.

**Leo:**

Time to sing, make merry and also marry. In other words, hobbies, the fine arts, exhibitions, romance, children, crash into your life. Throw a party and also join a satsang, a Christian Mass, a Parsee Navjote. Be both busy and happy. Nietzsche asks, "Is man one of God's blunders, or is God one of man's blunders?" What say you?

**Virgo:**

House, home and property will figure very prominently in your scheme of things. It will interest health conscious Virgos to know that "The advent of massive human genome databases is enabling researches to look for possible connections between mental illnesses and the environmental and societal conditions that drive their development."

**Libra:**

Libra is all about beauty, poise, harmony and spirituality. Therefore, Volcanic hair from lava of volcano stretches 6 feet long could excite you. Use all media of transport and publicity to get what you desire. Preachers, pundits, priests, tv anchors, politicians, professors will succeed in impinging on the minds of the entire world.

**Scorpio:**

Scorpio many times stands for trusts, public money, banking and helping out others with money and active support as well as secret co-operation. Scorpio Bill Gates is the best example of it. By your oratory and charm you can change the world. Great praise this but well deserved. A mix of honey and money.

**Sagittarius:**

"Seaweeds, sawdust, skeletons, skulls" were never meant for you. You are meant for space travel, research, knowledge of your own self and most certainly you have the power to break with a mighty jerk all the chains that bind you. Osho the Sagittarian could well be the Master you may follow. Your choice.

**Capricorn:**

The dead world sleeps / The living world cares not is what most of us believe. But for you Capricornians the dead world can come alive now and the living world could dare and care for one and all. This is the special significance of Jupiter and Saturn for you in December. Hidden secret and mighty powerful forces will help you with or without your knowledge. Ganesha smiles.

**Aquarius:**

Shri Shri Anandamurti speaks of Surrendering to the Universal Rhythm and this applies very specially to you cosmos embracing Aquarians in the month of December when the Sun, the power planet, is in your eleventh angle. Connecting to the universal rhythm is to me very spiritual, extremely important and also very natural and our destiny.

**Pisces:**

Aristotle said, "The energy of the mind is the essence of life." To this I add power, position, prestige, promotion and a big round of profit and pleasure. Sounds interesting, doesn't it? The only snag is do not be overly aggressive, sly and greedy. After all nobody is perfect. It is our imperfection which makes us so very special. You may or may not agree with it.

Bejan Daruwalla is world's most famous astrologer today. He appears regularly on world wide TV shows. Bejan who has been a professor in English, has authored a number of books on astrology. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 29, 2012, lunched one of Bejan's books, '2012-End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of

journals and newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama (New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.

Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at [info@bejandaruwalla.com](mailto:info@bejandaruwalla.com) and on phone 011-91-8141234275 [www.bejandaruwalla.com](http://www.bejandaruwalla.com)

# DEITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ORGANS IN HUMAN BODY

The most common word used to refer to the body in Sanskrit is deha or deham. De means to protect and aham means the Self. Deham, thus, means that which protects the individual Self (Atman). The physical body not only protects the Self but also assists it in various ways during its continuation upon earth as a bound soul (baddha). The alternative word in Sanskrit for the body is sarira, which is probably coined from the root word, sarah, meaning five, to denote the presence of five elements in its formation. However, sarira is used to refer to the bodies of both animate and inanimate objects since the five elements are present in both. Another word associated with deha is daha, which means to burn. Dahanam, the Vedic ritual of burning a corpse in a proper manner to the accompaniment of Vedic chants, is the last rite (antyeshti) in Hinduism.

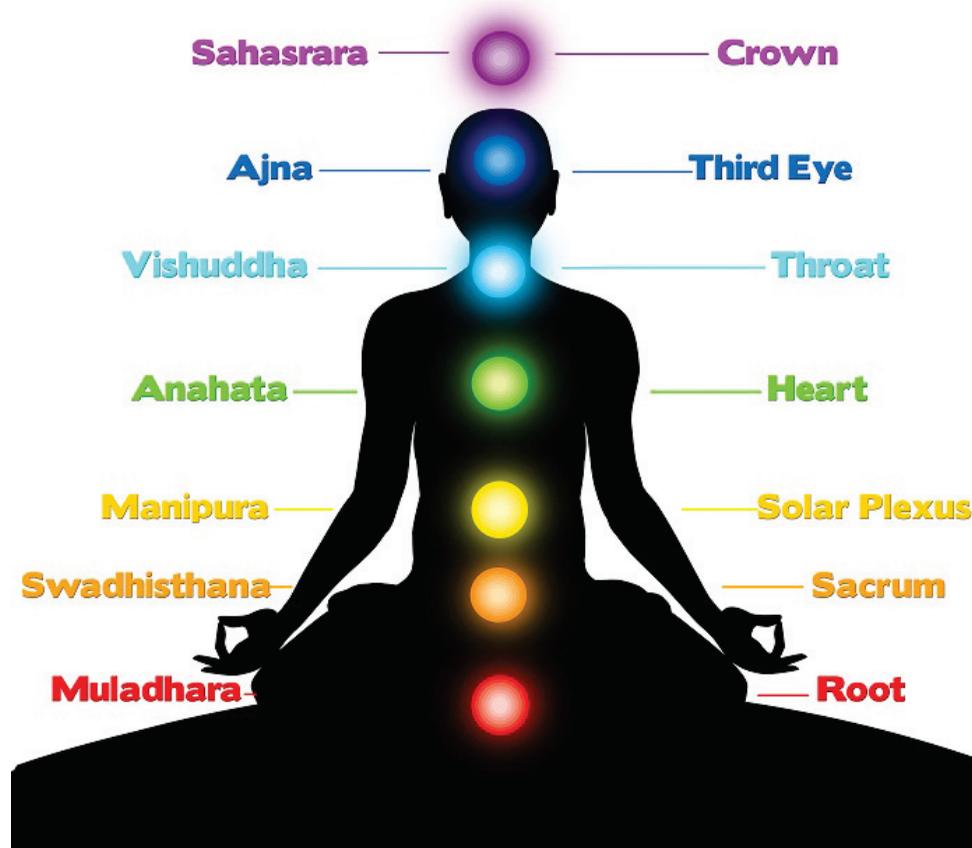
The human body is described variously in Hinduism. The scriptures view it as a necessary but troublesome companion to the Self with which it has to live until its liberation. The two have an inconvenient but significant relationship, which extends all the way to the highest Brahman and His dynamic energy, in which eventually the body has to sacrifice its desires and attachment to assist the soul in finding its way to its original source, which is the Abode of Brahman located in the sun. Depending upon the actions of each individual, the body may act as a friend or an enemy to the Self. It is a friend to those who live piously in the service of God and an enemy to those who pursue their own desires and subject themselves to ignorance and delusion. The scriptures caution against forming attachment to the body. One should not live solely to fulfill its every whim. That is the philosophy of the materialists (carvakas or lokayatas) who believe that the body is made up of only four elements and an individual entity perishes with death. One should rather live to liberate the soul that is held inside the body, using the body as the means to accomplish that difficult but austere goal. The body lives for itself. That is its natural tendency. We must recognize our spiritual identity and learn to live for the Self that exists within us.

## The body is the physical universe

In the hymns of creation in the Rig-Veda and verses associated with Brahman, the Creator, the material universe is described as the body of Purusha, the Cosmic Self, who used it in a great sacrifice as an offering to produce from his own organs the worlds and beings. The dualistic schools derive inspiration from these and view the entire universe as the body of, Brahman, the Supreme Self.

## The body is creation itself

The scriptures also describe the body as creation itself. The splendors of Brahman listed in the Bhagavadgita are manifestation of God only. He appears in the worlds both as the Creator and the created. He pervades them as well as envelops them. Whatever that issued forth from Brahman, first as a golden germ (Hiranyagarbha) or as a cosmic egg (brahmanda) or as the manifested world (viraj), constitute Brahman's bodies (murtam) only. The forms (bodies) of Brahman emerged from His formless state (amurtham). They are



also often described as sambhuti (manifested) and asambhuti (unmanifested) respectively.

## The body is Nature

The Manifested Brahman has a dual aspect, the Supreme Self and the Primal Energy, symbolized in the Puranas, as Siva and Shakti or Father God and Mother Goddess. They are also described as Purusha and Prakriti. Prakriti is God's material body. In the Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna states that seated in Prakriti, He manifests the worlds and beings. He is the seed and Nature is the womb. At the individual level, the body houses the individual Self as part of Her eternal dharma. It is made up of several individual realities (tattvas), which keep the Self bound to the mortal world. The Purusha and Prakriti are the male and female components of creation, represented symbolically in the anthropomorphic form of Lord Siva as Ardhanarisvara.

## The body is a city

The body is described in the Upanishads, such as Katha Upanishad, as the city of eleven gates. They correspond to the eleven openings in the body, namely, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, anus, sexual organ, the navel and the aperture in the top portion of the head. The Upanishad suggested that whoever rules this city is freed from grief. In other words, whoever lacks control over the body suffers from sorrow and whoever has control is ripe for liberation.

## The body is a chariot

The body is also compared to a chariot which is on its course towards some destination as determined by the decisions and actions of its owner (adhyatma), actions of others and circumstances (adhibhautika), and acts of God (adhidaiva). The horses yoked to the chariot are compared to the senses, the wheels to dharma, the reins to intellect, the occupant of the chariot to the individual Self,

tainted by one's actions.

## The body is a vehicle

This analogy is the same as the chariot. However in Hinduism, a vehicle (vahana) is not merely a mechanical contraption or a means of conveyance only. It is much more than that and represents an aspect of the lord of the vehicle. It symbolizes the powers and the qualities over which the owner or the lord of the vehicle has mastery and transformative control. Thus, each divinity has a vehicle upon which he or she rides. For the Self, who is the Lord (Isvara) of the body, the body is His vehicle. It carries Him from place to place and facilitates His journey upon earth. However, even though it is the Lord, the individual Self does not actively control the body or its organs. The body cannot sustain life (prana) without Him. But He does not regulate it. He remains in the background as a silent occupant, a mute witness, seated within the heart, untouched by the impurities of the body and its activities, enjoying the sense objects. In a feudal society, from which this analogy was derived, a master or a king does not have to do any work other than sitting in his house and enjoying life, while his servants have to do all the work and bear the burden of keeping him happy!

## The body is a battle field

The body is not only a field (ksetra) of Nature in which modifications arise and subside like seasons upon earth, but also a battlefield where good and the evil forces wage a relentless war under the influence of the gunas. The body supports the bodily organs, who are the manifestation of various deities (devas) in the microcosm of a being. Fire, Air, Indra, Soma, earth, water have their counterparts in the body in the form of organs. They perform various actions and in return for their services receive offerings from the bearer of the body in the form of food. It is said that when these organs are used in the service of God or for promoting and preserving Dharma, they become increasingly divine, gather strength and act like true divinities (devas), but when they are used for selfish and destructive purposes they gather negative energy, become evil and act like demons (asuras). Thus in the body the good and evil forces wage a relentless battle for supremacy and the body becomes a heaven or a hell depending upon how each being lives upon earth and how he uses it.

and the charioteer who drives it to God Himself. This is the symbolism we find in the narrative of the Bhagavadgita and with some variations in other scriptures. The Katha Upanishad (1.3.3), for example, compares the body to a chariot. However, it describes the Self as the lord of the chariot, the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the reins.

## The body is a field

The body is described in the Bhagavadgita as a field (ksetra) and the Self as its owner or enjoyer (kshetraajna). The body is compared to a field, because like the body, a field has boundaries, requires nurturing and care, owned by someone, subject to birth and decay, has seasons, bears crops, and serves the divinities by generating food and sustains life. The body is subject to modifications, such as aging and death, and the dualities such as heat and cold, happiness and sorrow, and purity and impurity. One is therefore advised to cultivate detachment from the body, stabilize the mind, and perform actions solely as a service or an offering to God so that one is not

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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.'

# Estonia's Capital Still Has an Old-World Charm

CONTED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

BY M. P. PRABHAKARAN

The square is also famous for its summer fairs. We did pass by something that could pass for a fair: Estonians who had fallen on hard times were out there selling things, most of them made by themselves-children's clothes and toys, paintings, photographs, picture frames, etc. We walked past all of them, but we couldn't help stopping at a table with a variety of chocolates spread on it.

It was not the chocolates that made us stop, though. Nor was the beauty of the two girls selling them that did it. When they said that those chocolates were homemade and that they were selling them partly to pay for their college, I felt obligated to buy some. When I tried to take a picture of them, my Russian friend-by now we had become friends-grabbed my camera and insisted that I pose between the two girls. They happily let me do it.

Standing between them, I said, "This is my souvenir from Estonia."

"You are welcome, Sir," one of the girls said.

We continued our walk. When I heard some music wafting in from a distance, it aroused my curiosity. It was not any music. It was Indian music. I was not expecting it in a small Baltic town where, other than a restaurant owner, I had not seen a single Indian. Pointing to an alley out of which the music was coming, I told my friend, "Let's go and take a look."

As we approached the alley, we saw a bunch of Hare Krishna followers emerging from it. All of them were men in their late twenties or early thirties. And all were clad in dhoti and kurta, some saffron-colored and some white. A few of them banged cymbals, one played the tabla (the Indian percussion instrument), and

another one the harmonium. All of them chanted:

*Hare Rama, hare Rama, Rama Rama, hare hare;*

*Hare Krishna, hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, hare hare.*

They came out of one alley, crossed the square, and went into another alley. We watched them until they disappeared from our sight.

"Do you have them in your town?" I asked the Russian.

"No," he said. "I have heard about them. This is the first time I am seeing them in person."

"They are there in all big cities of the world," I said. "I didn't expect them in Tallinn. This is America's contribution to Hinduism."

We continued our exploration of the Old Town area. We passed by several churches-most of them small, blending well with other buildings. St. Olaf's Church, named after the Norwegian king Olaf Haraldsson, was an exception. It dwarfed all other buildings in the area.

The original structure, built by Danish settlers as a place for socializing and worshipping, needed renovating and rebuilding a few times. It had burned down three times, and its steeple was hit by lightning ten times. When the steeple was raised to a height of 159 metres, around the year 1500, it became the tallest structure in the world. Since then, needless to say, many other structures have come up around the world, surpassing it in height. It still dominates the Tallinn skyline, though. From 1945 to 1991, when Estonia was part of the Soviet Union, the tower of St. Olaf's Church came in handy for its security apparatus, the KGB. The KGB used it as a radio tower and installed

surveillance equipment on its spire.

Another important landmark in Old Town Tallinn is St. Nicholas Church. It was built by German settlers around 1230. The interior of this sturdy structure-"designed to double as a fortress" before the Germans built a wall around their new settlements-was almost destroyed in World War II Soviet bombings. The restored structure is now used more as a museum and music hall than as a place of worship. It houses the Niguliste Art Museum of Estonia. The most popular piece of art in the museum is Danse Macabre (The Dance of Death), painted by BerntNotke at the end of the 15th century. The music hall is much sought-after by concert organizers.

We had only a couple of hours left before heading back to Riga. So we decided to go up the hill, to the part of the town called Toompea.

Toompea is derived from the German word Domberg, meaning the Cathedral Hill. The cathedral from which the hill gets its name is the Aleksandr Nevsky Cathedral. Famous for its golden-onion rooftops and luxurious interiors, this biggest Greek Orthodox church in Tallinn is another important landmark in the city. There was a time when it was mandatory for women to cover their hair while entering the cathedral. Not anymore.

Toompea is also the seat of the government of Estonia. The Toompea Castle, originally built, in 1227, by the German Knights of the Sword, now houses Estonia's parliament. A few yards away is the Stenbock House. Named after Count Jakob Pontus Stenbock, a descendant of a Swedish noble family who completed most of its construction in 1787, it is now the office of the prime minister. It was originally meant to be a courthouse.

We had been strongly recommended not to



Author in Estonia

leave Toompea before taking in the spectacular view of Tallinn from its top. The view of Old Town-with its medieval red rooftops juxtaposed with the modern city center-was spectacular. The distant coastline added to the beauty.

Looking at my watch, I told the Russian: "All good things come to an end abruptly."

The bus for Riga we were booked on would be leaving in a few minutes, at 7:00 p.m. We hurriedly climbed down the hill and walked fast. Destination: TallinnaBussijaam.

*(Published on December 6, 2017. This is a slightly edited version of Chapter 17 from the author's book, An Indian Goes Around the World - II: What I Learned from My Thirty-Day European Odyssey. The book is available online at amazon.com and xlibris.com, and can be ordered through any Barnes and Noble store. The India edition of the book is available at amazon.in, Flipkart and Pothi.com)*



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contd from Page 4

## Diwali Foundation...

To me the significance of Diwali and the United Nations projects for humanity which I have been proud to serve for 43 years in different capacities are closely linked. I have envisioned my mission as one meant - to dispel the darkness of poverty, deprivation and despair everywhere

- To end the evil of violence and injustice especially against women and girls
- to light the lamp of prosperity and equity, sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian action and resilience building for all,
- To secure an International Compact for the triumph of the global public Good of gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights

And yes, I do believe in the power of one, in each of us being a lamp to illuminate and transform the world through the power of ideas and knowledge, advocacy and movement building, setting of global standards and values to realize the ideals of the United Nations and the Perfect World we all dream of, want and deserve.

The power of one is about passion, commitment and indomitable courage and keeping faith with the causes we serve no matter the difficulties and setbacks. It's about not giving up ever. And though I leave the United Nations shortly to go back to India to be with my soulmate I am not done with the UN. Just as you can take an Indian out of India but can't take India out of her, you can take me out of the UN but cannot take the UN out of me! So, I will power on believing in the infinite possibility of all of us to achieve our infinite potential for good! Igniting that power of one, that godliness in each and every one of us is what the UN is

about!"

contd from Page 1

## A Sikh American to be...

Attorney general is the most powerful position in New Jersey government. He leads a number of departments including Law and Public Safety, civil rights, consumer affairs and police. Grewal was twice nominated by the current governor, Republican Chris Christie, to be prosecutor in Bergen County, New Jersey's most populous county.

Grewal left private law practice 14 years ago to enter public service. "I wanted to give back to a country that has given us, and other immigrant families like us so much," Grewal, the Bergen County prosecutor, recalled, "I experienced hate and intolerance firsthand

He said after the nomination: "The American dream is alive and well in New Jersey." According to media sources Governor-elect Murphy, commented that he wanted an attorney general who would "stand up" to Trump and his fellow Republicans who control Congress.

## Exit polls predict clear...

and the Congress 74. A poll on NDTV said the BJP would get 112 seats and the Congress 70. The ABP-CSDS survey by ABP News predicted a BJP victory in 117 seats as against the Congress' 64.

A survey by India Today's Aaj Tak news channel also predicted that the BJP, which has been ruling Gujarat for almost 20 years, would retain power in the State. It said the BJP would emerge as the winner in 99-113 Assembly segments in the State, while the Congress could win 68-82 seats. A party has to win 92 seats or more to form a government in the State. In the 2012 Assembly polls in Gujarat, the BJP had won

115 seats, the Congress 61 and others six.

Even though BJP gets majority to form a government in Gujarat, Congress seems to be on way to recovery in Gujarat.

## U.S. Federal..

Schneiderman has already announced that he will lead a multistate lawsuit to stop the rollback of net neutrality. Schneiderman released a statement which read, "The FCC's vote to rip apart net neutrality is a blow to New York consumers, and to everyone who cares about a free and open internet. The FCC just gave Big Telecom an early Christmas present, by giving internet service providers yet another way to put corporate profits over consumers. Today's rollback will give ISPs new ways to control what we see, what we do, and what we say online. That's a threat to the free exchange of ideas that's made the Internet a valuable asset in our democratic process.

Today's new rule would enable ISPs to charge consumers more to access sites like Facebook and Twitter and give them the leverage to degrade high quality of video streaming until and unless somebody pays them more money. Even worse, today's vote would enable ISPs to favor certain viewpoints over others. New Yorkers deserve the right to a free and open Internet. That's why we will sue to stop the FCC's illegal rollback of net neutrality.

Today's vote also follows a public comment process that was deeply corrupted, including two million comments that stole the identities of real people. This is a crime under New York law - and the FCC's decision to go ahead with the vote makes a mockery of government integrity and rewards the very perpetrators who scammed the system to advance their own agenda. This is not just an attack on the future of our internet. It's an attack on all New Yorkers, and on the integrity of every American's voice in government - and we will fight back."

The approval of FCC Chairman Ajit Pai's proposal marks a victory for internet service providers like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon Communications and hands them power over what content consumers can access. Democrats, Hollywood and companies like Google parent Alphabet and Facebook had urged Mr. Pai, a Republican appointed by U.S. President Donald Trump, to keep the Obama-era rules barring service providers from blocking, slowing access to or charging more for certain content.

Consumer advocates and trade groups representing content providers have planned a legal challenge aimed at preserving those rules. The meeting was evacuated before the vote for about 10 minutes due to an unspecified security threat, and resumed after sniffer dogs checked the room. FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, a Democrat, said in the run-up to the vote that Republicans were handing the keys to the Internet to a handful of multi-billion-dollar corporations. Mr. Pai has argued that the 2015 rules were heavy handed and stifled competition and innovation among service providers. "The internet wasn't broken in 2015. We weren't living in a digital dystopia. To the contrary, the internet is perhaps the one thing in American society we can all agree has been a stunning success," he said on December 14.

The FCC voted 3-2 to repeal the rules. Consumers are unlikely to see immediate changes resulting from the rule change, but smaller startups worry the lack of restrictions could drive up costs or lead to their content being blocked. Internet service providers say they will not block or throttle legal content but that they may engage in paid prioritization. They say consumers will see no change and argue that the largely unregulated internet functioned well in the two decades before the 2015 order.

**WHAT EXACTLY IS NET NEUTRALITY?** The net neutrality rules were approved by the FCC in 2015 amid an outpouring of online support. The intention was to keep the internet open and fair. Under the rules, internet service providers are required to treat all online content

the same. They can't deliberately speed up or slow down traffic from specific websites or apps, nor can they put their own content at an advantage over rivals.

To take a classic example, this means Comcast can't just choose to slow down a service like Netflix (NFLX) to make its own streaming video service more competitive, nor can it try to squeeze Netflix to pay more money to be part of a so-called internet fast lane. As Michael Cheah, general counsel at video site Vimeo, previously told CNNMoney: the point of the rules is "allowing consumers to pick the winners and losers and not [having] the cable companies make those decisions for them."

**WHY IS NET NEUTRALITY SUCH A BIG DEAL?** If there's one thing that both sides can agree on, it's that the internet is increasingly central to our lives. Any change to how it's regulated is a hot button issue. (Remember the uproar over repealing internet privacy protections earlier this year?) "Everyone uses the internet, and everyone uses these tech platforms," Michelle Connolly, a former FCC official who supports Pai, previously told CNNMoney. "So, issues that are coming up right now, people are seeing from a very personal perspective."

**SO HOW WILL INTERNET PROVIDERS BE REGULATED?** The FCC is doing away with rules barring internet providers from blocking or slowing down access to online content. The FCC would also eliminate some rule barring providers from prioritizing their own content. In the absence of a firm ban on these actions, providers will be required to publicly disclose any instance of blocking, throttling or paid prioritization. It will then be evaluated based on whether or not the activity is anti-competitive.

As part of this shift, oversight of internet protections will shift from the FCC to the Federal Trade Commission. Maureen K. Ohlhausen, the acting head of the FTC, said in a statement Monday that the agency is "committed to ensuring that Internet service providers live up to the promises they make to consumers."

But consumer advocacy groups are less than optimistic. "Not only is the FCC eliminating basic net neutrality rules, but it's joining forces with the FTC to say it will only act when a broadband provider is deceiving the public," Chris Lewis, VP at Public Knowledge, a nonprofit that focuses on the open internet, said in a statement this week. "This gives free reign to broadband providers to block or throttle your broadband service as long as they inform you of it."

**AND HOW WILL REPEALING NET NEUTRALITY AFFECT ME?** First, it's important to say what won't happen: Billion-dollar services like Netflix are not going to disappear overnight without net neutrality. They have large enough audiences and bank accounts to survive in a changing regulatory landscape. Instead, net neutrality advocates worry how repeal will impact the next Netflix. Upstart companies may struggle to strike deals with providers and pay up to have their content delivered faster. That could fundamentally alter the future internet landscape. The repeal could change how customers are billed for services, both for good and bad. T-Mobile, for example, was criticized by net neutrality supporters for effectively making it cheaper for customers to stream videos from Netflix and HBO, putting other video services at a disadvantage.

Without net neutrality, internet providers may pursue similar offers more aggressively, which would likely be viewed as a positive by consumers looking to save money on their streaming media. Yet, some fear it's also possible internet providers will one day begin charging customers more to access services like Netflix that are currently included as part of your monthly bill.

**SO, IS THIS A DONE DEAL?** Not quite. It's very like this issue could end up being decided in court, or perhaps even by legislation in Congress. "Whenever we do anything big and major, people go to court," a senior FCC official said last month. "I certainly would not rule that out."

(Source: CNN Money)

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### SUNSET POINT

One of the most well-known spots in Mount Abu, Sunset Point is located to the south-west of Nakki Lake. Best visited at dusk, this picturesque point commands magnificent views of the Aravali ranges. Thronged by travellers throughout the year, it is surrounded by numerous food stalls and souvenir shops. To get to Sunset Point, grab your camera and walk up the cobblestone pathways along the Nakki Lake for about a km. Those who do not wish to take a walk can also opt for pony rides.

### DILWARA TEMPLES

The five marble temples of Dilwara are a sacred pilgrimage place for the Jain community, and rank among India's finest temple architecture. Located in the northern part of the hill-station, these Jain temples are about two-and-a-half-kms away from the bustling town of Mount Abu. They comprise of five temples—Vimal Vasahi, Luna Vasahi, Pithalhar, Parshvanath, Mahavir Swami—each of which is dedicated to a revered Jain guru. Built in 11th and 13th centuries, the temples boast of opulent entrances, minutely-carved ceilings, doorways, pillars and panels and intricately-designed domes. Mahavir Jayanti, the most important festival of Jains, is celebrated with full vigour here and many Jain pilgrims visit the temples during the festival each year.

### NAKKI LAKE

Believed to have been dug out by a god using his nails, the sacred Nakki Lake is one of the landmarks of the hill town of Mount Abu. About half a mile long, the lake is deeper towards the dam on the west. Carry your picnic hamper, a book and camera and spend a peaceful afternoon on the banks of the lake. Boat riding is another activity that interests visitors here. A pleasant stroll around the lake will lead you to Toad Rock, a boulder that looks just like a toad about to hop into the lake. The 14th-century Raghunath Temple stands near the lake's southern shore.

### ACHALGARH FORT

Bordered by massive walls that enclose a few beautiful temples inside, the Achalgarh

# MOUNT ABU: RAJASTHAN'S ONLY HILL STATION



Fort offers interesting glimpses of Mewar architecture. Built in the year 1452 by the famous Rajput ruler of Mewar, Rana Kumbha, the fort is situated 11 kms to the north of Mount Abu. Various viewpoints from the fort offer scenic lookouts onto the hill town, the Aravali ranges and the picturesque sunset views.

### ADHAR DEVI TEMPLE

Situated atop a cliff in a cave, a visit to the Adhar Devi Temple, also known as Arbuda Devi Temple requires you to climb 365 steep steps, but the strenuous journey is worth the effort. Offering a bird-eye-view of the hill-

station from the top, the temple is constructed out of a large rock, and visitors have to stoop and crawl to enter the inner shrine. Located 3 km away from Mount Abu, the temple is dedicated to Goddess Durga and is considered as one of the prominent religious spots in the hill town. The temple is visited by hordes of Hindu pilgrims during Navratri, a nine-day Hindu festival that is celebrated with full gusto.

Adhar Devi Temple is quite old and legend has it that 'Adhar' of the Goddess fell here. It

is also believed that goddess's image hangs in the mid air. Besides, the temple has a number of gorgeous statues that you can admire and looking at those arts will make you praise the artists from the bygone era. And the view of mountains and forests you get to see after climbing those hundreds of stairs will make you forget all the tiredness and fatigue. It is recommended you wear proper and comfortable clothes and footwear because the climb uphill is really tiring.



# RUTHLESS ROHIT DOUBLE LEADS INDIA TO SERIES-LEVELLING WIN

**MOHALI (TIP):** Skipper Rohit Sharma rose to the occasion when it mattered most as his record breaking third double hundred guided India to a series-levelling 141-run win against Sri Lanka in the second ODI on Wednesday.

Rohit smashed an unbeaten 208 off 153 balls to fire India to a mammoth 392 for four, a total that proved to be too much for Sri Lanka as the visitors ended way behind at 251 for 8 with Angelo Mathews' unbeaten 111 going in-vain.

While Rohit stole the show with another sensational knock, Shikhar Dhawan (68 off 67) and rookie Shreyas Iyer (88 off 70) played the supporting role to perfection.

India virtually batted Sri Lanka out of the game by posting the highest-total at this ground, surpassing the 351 for five South Africa made against Netherlands in 2011.

It was not the only record that was shattered on a day when India were under pressure to perform after the debacle in Dharamsala.

Rohit, captaining the side in his first full series, singlehandedly won the game for India with an innings that comprised as many as a dozen sixes and 13 fours.

After completing his first 100 runs off 115 balls, the stylish opener was simply unstoppable, blasting the next 100 runs off 36 balls to complete a famous double ton in the 50th over of the innings.

His last double hundred, 264 at the Eden Gardens three years ago, had also come against Sri Lanka while the maiden one (209) was recorded against Australia at Bengaluru in 2013.

Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Chris Gayle and Martin Guptill are the others who have breached the 200-run mark in 50-over cricket. However, the Rohit special came on a batting beauty, two days after Indian batsmen failed miserably against the moving ball in Dharamsala.

Sri Lanka pacers were on the money in the series opener but they put up a performance they would like to forget sooner than later.

They offered too many freebies including



Rohit Sharma hits a maximum during his double ton against Sri Lanka cricket team in the second ODI in at the PCA Stadium in Mohali .

lead pacer Suranga Lakmal who had an off day leaking 71 runs in eight overs.

The other pacers, captain Thisara Perera (3/80) and Nuwan Pradeep (0/106), too were guilty of bowling too many low full tosses and half trackers, making the job easier for Rohit and Co. Though Rohit ran amok in the death overs, he took time early on. It was Dhawan who attacked the opposition bowlers initially before the dangerous opening duo completed their 12th century stand to lay the foundation for a big total.

En route to his double hundred, Rohit crossed the 100-run mark in ODIs for the 16th time in his career, sixth this year and first ever as captain.

Another record shattered was of the highest individual score here with Rohit surpassing the 154 Virat Kohli made against New Zealand last year.

After Dhawan departed, Iyer batted well

alongside Rohit and came up with the big shots just when his team needed to step on the accelerator.

It was cold and overcast over the past two days but the sun came out just before the start of the game, sucking the moisture out of the pitch to make batting easier.

Sri Lanka had no hesitation in bowling first, just like they did in Dharamsala, but the conditions changed quickly to the favour of the hosts.

Unlike the first ODI, there was not enough swing early on to trouble the Indian batsmen, who exploited the conditions to good effect. Rohit and Dhawan got the measure of the pitch in the first Powerplay, where they made just 33, and started playing their strokes thereafter to take India to 108 for no loss in 20 overs.

Rohit and Iyer then got together to hammer the Sri Lankan bowlers all around

the park. Lakmal tormented the Indian batsmen two days ago but today he bowled too full or too short.

Most of his low full-tosses were sent sailing over midwicket by Rohit, who batted like a six hitting machine in the last 10 overs.

One such instance was the 43rd over when Rohit smashed Lakmal for four sixes off four legal balls in an over that went for 26 runs. It was raining runs in the last 10 overs where India added as many as 147 for the loss of three wickets. In response to India's huge total, Sri Lanka were never in the game despite a fighting effort from Mathews.

India bowled well with the cushion of mountain of runs. It was a memorable day for 18-year-old Washington Sundar, who picked the wicket of Lahiru Thirimanne on his India debut.

Source: PTI

## Fixing claims rock Ashes , ICC, CA say no evidence

**PERTH (TIP):** Cricket chiefs voiced "grave concern" but said there was no evidence that the third Ashes Test between Australia and England has been corrupted after a match-fixing bombshell rocked the series. British newspaper The Sun alleged two bookmakers, both Indians, one called "Mr Big", had offered to sell it details of the rigged periods of play in the Perth Test, which could be bet on to win huge sums.

One of them claimed to have worked on the scam with former and current internationals, including a World Cup-winning all-rounder. They said they liaised with a fixer in Australian cricket known as "The Silent Man". No Australia or England players were named as being involved. The tabloid said their undercover reporters were asked for up to £140,000 (\$187,000) to "spot fix" markets such as the exact amount of runs scored in an over. "I will tell you this over, this runs and then you have to put all the bets on that over," one of the bookmakers was quoted as saying. Asked if it was a good source, he said: "Absolutely correct information."

### ICC says no evidence

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said the revelations were of "grave concern" and an investigation had been launched, but it did not believe the match had been tainted. "From my initial assessment of the material, there is no evidence, either from The Sun or via our own intelligence, to



David Malan hit his maiden Test match century as England made a strong start to the crucial third Ashes Test in Perth, closing on 305-4.

suggest the current Test match has been corrupted," said ICC's anti-corruption chief Alex Marshall.

"At this stage of the investigation, there is no indication that any players in this Test have been in contact with the alleged fixers." Cricket Australia chief James Sutherland said the

allegations were serious, but he was confident, based on the dossier handed to ICC, there was no reason "to suspect that this Test match or indeed the Ashes series as a whole is subject to corrupt activities".

He added that all players were educated on a regular basis about the risks of corruption. The England Cricket Board pledged to work closely with ICC, while also insisting "there is no suggestion that any of the England team is involved in any way".

### Follow scripts

The Indian pair — secretly filmed at hotels in Dubai and Delhi during the paper's four-month investigation — claimed the corrupt players would signal the fix was on by making a subtle gesture on the field, such as changing their gloves. Spotters in the crowd would then tell bookies, who put millions of bets into the illegal Indian betting market.

The Indian fixers claimed they could get players to follow "scripts" — such how many runs would be scored in a session, or an innings, when a wicket would fall and what a team would do if it won the toss, The Sun said. "I will give you work in an Ashes Test. Session runs, maybe day one, two, three. We have two session work, one session costs Rs 60 lakh rupees (£69,000), two sessions 120 lakh rupees (£138,000)," it cited one of the men as saying.

Source: AFP



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