

## Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announces \$170 Million for women's empowerment



Bill Gates and Melinda Gates are for women empowerment

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** On the eve of International Women's Day, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has announced a USD 170 million project aimed at advancing women's economic empowerment in four countries, including in India. Announced on Tuesday, March 6, the investments focused in India, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda will target four key priorities - advancing *contd on page 20*

## TRUMP AGREES TO MEET NORTH KOREA'S KIM

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** US President Donald Trump has agreed to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-un by May, a top South Korean official announced on Friday, March 9, even as the White House said the two leaders would meet "at a place and time to be determined".

South Korean National Security Adviser Chung Eui-Yong, who led his country's delegation to Pyongyang for talks with the North Korean leaders, made the announcement at the White House hours *contd on page 20*



U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un

## Trump announces new trade tariff plans, Faces Opposition within and without



President Trump approves steel and aluminum tariffs, 'defending America's national security'

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Republicans on Capitol Hill reacted angrily to President Donald Trump's announcement Thursday, March 8, that he is going forward with new tariffs on steel and aluminum, arguing that the move will harm the economy and that it threatens to start a broader trade war. And while there are limits to what they can do to stop it, members are contemplating *contd on page 20*

## Indian American's \$ 1 Million Research May Change Cancer Treatment



Navin Vardarajan, along with another University of Houston researcher Sanghyuk Chung, has been awarded huge grants by Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT)

**HOUSTON (TIP):** An Indian American scientist has been awarded a grant of over \$1.1 million for his ground-breaking research on cancer.

Navin Vardarajan, along with another University of Houston researcher Sanghyuk Chung, were awarded huge grants by Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), an organization that funds pioneering cancer research and prevention programs in the state.

Associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering, Navin was given \$1,173,420 to improve effectiveness of T-cell immunotherapy, while his fellow researcher

Sanghyuk Chung, associate professor of biology and biochemistry, was awarded \$811,617 to define molecular targets for the treatment of cervical cancer.

Mr Varadarajan will use his grant to bring consistent results to cancer patients undergoing T-cell immunotherapy by manufacturing programmed T cells to meet, recognize and destroy tumors, a statement said. "We have to understand every single T cell and what each one is capable of," said Mr Varadarajan, who is looking for a perfect cell composition in order to manufacture only those that cure tumors. *contd on page 20*

## US Navy veteran pleads guilty to killing Indian techie in Kansas

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** A US Navy veteran, on March 7, pleaded guilty to the murder of Indian engineer Srinivas Kuchibhotla in a racially motivated hate crime at a bar in Kansas City last year that raised fears of growing intolerance in America following President Donald Trump's tough rhetoric on immigration.

Adam Purinton, 52, pleaded guilty before a Kansas court. He was charged with first-degree murder of Kuchibhotla, 32, and two counts of attempted first-degree murder in the shootings of his friend, Alok Madasani, and a bystander, who chased Purinton after he fled the Austin's Bar and Grill in Olathe city on February 22 last year. *contd on page 20*



Engineer Srinivas Kuchibhotla was gunned down last year



Former Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano goes on trial on March 12

## Former Nassau County Executive Mangano's Trial to begin on schedule

**CENTRAL ISLIP, NY (TIP):** Newsday reported March 8 that despite a late turnover of text messages recovered from the star witness against former Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano and former Oyster Bay Supervisor John Venditto, a federal judge said Thursday, March 8, the corruption trial is on schedule to begin next week. Jury selection will take a day to complete on Monday and opening statements will be Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Joan Azrack said. *contd on page 20*

## Hindus term Holi shoes launched by Pharrell Williams & Adidas as "inappropriate"

**DALLAS (TIP):** Hindus feel that Holi footwear collaboratively launched by American singer Pharrell Williams and multinational sportswear corporation Adidas is trivialization of traditions-concepts-symbols-beliefs of Hinduism.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement urged Pharrell Williams and Adidas CEO Kasper Rorsted to rename their Holi shoes which many Hindus felt were highly insensitive as religious festival of Holi was linked to various deities; and offer formal apology. Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, indicated that Pharrell Williams and Adidas should have done some homework *contd on page 20*





# Forbes

## INDIAN AMERICANS MAKE IT TO THE FORBES BILLIONAIRES LIST

**NEW YORK(TIP):** Rakesh Gangwal, is the richest Indian American. The cofounder of India's budget airline Indigo is worth \$3.3 billion, according to Forbes' latest list of The World's Billionaires, which was released on March 6. Information technology entrepreneur and philanthropist Romesh T. Wadhvani, who led the list last year, is the second richest Indian American, with a net worth of \$3.1 billion.

The latest Forbes list, which has record 2,208 members, has two new Indian American billionaires: Niraj Shah, CEO and cofounder of e-commerce company Wayfair; and Arista Networks CEO Jayshree Ullal. According to Forbes, the 44-year-old Shah, a second generation Indian American based in Boston, is worth \$1.6 billion. Ullal, who was born in London and raised in Delhi, is worth \$1.3 billion.

Other Indian Americans billionaires are venture capitalist Vinod Khosla (who is worth \$2.3 billion); venture capitalist and Google investor Kavitar Ram Shriram (\$2.1 billion); Vista Equity Partners cofounder Brian Sheth (\$2 billion); pharmaceutical executive John Kapoor (\$1.8 billion); software executive and investor Aneel Bhusri (\$1.6 billion); and Syntel cofounder Bharat Desai (\$1.1 billion).

The wealth of Gangwal, who owns more than a third of IndiGo, increased by a whopping \$1.2 billion in the past year. Sheth, the youngest Indian American billionaire at 42, saw his wealth go up by \$900 million, while Khosla's net worth increased by \$700 million. The net worth of Wadhvani, Shriram, Kapoor and Desai increased by \$100 million each in the past 12 months. The combined net worth of Indian American billionaires is \$20.2 billion.

The richest South Asian American is Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shahid Khan, who has a net worth of \$7.2 billion.

## INDIAN ORIGIN FAMILY PROHIBITED FROM FLYING BABY TO INDIA FOR GENITAL MUTILATION PROCEDURE



**MANCHESTER, UK (TIP):** A UK court has prohibited an Indian origin family from flying their baby daughter to India because she is at risk of being subjected to an "utterly unacceptable" genital mutilation procedure. A judge at Manchester County and Family Court ruled that the child, who will turn two this year, is at risk because religious and cultural pressure had overridden her mother's "maternal instinct".

Social workers in the UK believe three other girls from the family, which cannot be named for legal reasons, had been subjected to a similar procedure. Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision, involves ritual intimate cutting, sometimes without an anesthetic, and has been banned in the UK.

Judge Robert Jordan made an "FGM protection order" in Manchester after a private family court hearing. 'Manchester Evening News' reported. *(Read full story on [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))*

# Indian American Aruna Miller wins Maryland 6th district straw poll

**MARYLAND (TIP):** Maryland Democrat Aruna Miller, who is running for Congress from the state's open 6th district, won a straw poll held after the "Our Revolution" candidate forum on March 3.

Miller, a Maryland statehouse delegate, thanked the party faithful who attended the forum. "It's exciting to see so many people come out on a Saturday (March 3) afternoon to hear from candidates running in a Congressional primary," she said. "It's even more exciting to see that our message is resonating with these engaged voters."

"After a vigorous 3-hour debate involving six candidates, Delegate Miller won the post-debate straw poll," the campaign said in a press release on March 6.

The campaign also announced reaching the \$1 million donations. It said the \$1 million mark was reached as of February 28, 2018.

The Miller campaign said more than 97 percent of the contributions have come



Aruna Miller won the post-debate straw poll

from individuals and it has "far outpaced her rivals in both the number of contributions (1,723) and individual donors (1,402)."

"By comparison, in 2017, the other six Democrats in the CD6 race as a group only had raised approximately \$600,000 in donations from 500 individual supporters and political action committees," the campaign said.

"Our campaign is continuing to gain momentum and strong support," Miller said. "While the million-dollar milestone is notable, I am most excited about taking my issue-oriented message directly to the voters when the Maryland legislative session ends next month."

The campaign also cited a series of high-profile endorsement it received. Among the Democrats who endorsed Miller are Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett, former Maryland Democratic Party Chair Terry Lierman and Maryland House Speaker Michael Busch.

## Indian American Sri Preston Kulkarni finishes first in Texas 22nd district



Sri Preston Kulkarni will now have to face fellow Democrat Letitia Plummer in the May 22 runoff

**HOUSTON, TX (TIP):** Indian American Sri Preston Kulkarni finished first in the Democratic primary in Texas' 22nd congressional district with nearly 32 percent of the vote.

He will now have to face fellow Democrat Letitia Plummer in the May 22 runoff to earn the right to take on the incumbent GOP Rep. Pete Olson.

According to Texas election law, if a candidate doesn't get more than 50 percent of

the votes, there will be a runoff between the top two finishers.

With all the 129 precincts reporting, Kulkarni received 9,466 votes, while Plummer got 7,230 votes (24.3 percent). Mark Gibson, the Democratic nominee in 2016, finished last in a field of five, with 3,046 votes (10.2 percent). The other two candidates in the race, Steve Brown and Margarita Johnson, received 6,246 (21 percent) and 3,767 (12.7 percent) votes, respectively.

Olson, who has been representing the district since 2009, was the winner of the Republican primary, trouncing his nearest rival by nearly 65 percentage points.

Kulkarni, a former US diplomat who served in Iraq and Russia, among other places, had expressed cautious optimism ahead of the primaries.

But his acknowledgement, two weeks before the election, that he was arrested at the age of 18, in 1997, for possessing less than a gram of cocaine may have denied Kulkarni outright victory on March 6th night.

The charges were dropped after a two-year probation - which is usual for first-time drug offenders.

Acknowledging the incident, the candidate said it was due to youthful indiscretion and he did it at a time when his father was terminally ill and he was going to through a difficult time.

"We should not be stigmatizing our youth for the rest of their lives," Kulkarni said.

His father Venkatesh Kulkarni, a professor and novelist, died in 1998 after battling leukemia for a year. His mother Margaret Preston Kulkarni is from West Virginia.

If elected, the biracial Kulkarni will become the first Indian American congressman from the state of Texas.

He is one of the nearly two-dozen Indian Americans who are running for Congress this year.

## Justice prevails for the Indian Origin group killed in the UK road crash last year

**LONDON (TIP):** Two truck drivers have been accused and one was found guilty of causing the death of eight Indians in one of Britain's worst road accidents last year.

The victims from Nottingham's Malayali community and their relatives named as Pannerselvam Annamalai, Rishi Ranjeev Kumar, Vivek Baskaran, Lavanyalakshmi Seetharaman, Karthikeyan Pugalur Ramasubramanian, Subramanian Arachelvan and Tamilmani Arachelvan were on their way to London to catch a bus to Disneyland in Paris. Among them were IT professionals employed by software major Wipro.

Ryszard Masierak, a 31-year-old Polish national, was convicted at the end of a trial at Reading Crown Court. The jury heard that he was two times over the legal drink-drive limit and had stopped in the inside lane of the highway when he was involved in the crash with a minibus and another truck near Newport Pagnell in southern England on August 26.

He had denied the charges of causing the deaths of Nottingham-based Keralite minibus driver Cyriac Joseph and seven of his passengers- all Indians.

The 52-year-old had been hired to drive his passengers from Nottingham to London to join a European holiday tour group when they met with the fatal accident.

The jury is yet to pronounce its verdict on David Wagstaff, a 53-year-old British citizen who was driving the second truck involved in the collision, and will continue deliberations on March 7.

However, it reached a unanimous verdict on the guilt of Masierak, who was also convicted of four counts of causing serious injury by dangerous driving, in relation to injuring four other passengers including a four-year-old girl orphaned by the crash.

The trial was told that a drunk Masierak had stopped for 12 minutes in the slow lane of the highway just before the crash. His truck caused an obstruction on the motorway forcing others to slow down before moving around him.

As Joseph waited with his hazard lights on for a chance to go around the heavy goods vehicle (HGV), a second truck driven by Wagstaff smashed into the back of the van, forcing it to crash into and then go under Masierak's truck, the court was told.

"In Mr Wagstaff's case, on a hands-free call, his lorry on cruise control and he on auto-pilot, completely failing to notice what was ahead of him in full view for some time, inattention on a gross scale," said Prosecutor Oliver Saxby.

The sentencing in the case will take place after the jury has decided on both accused.





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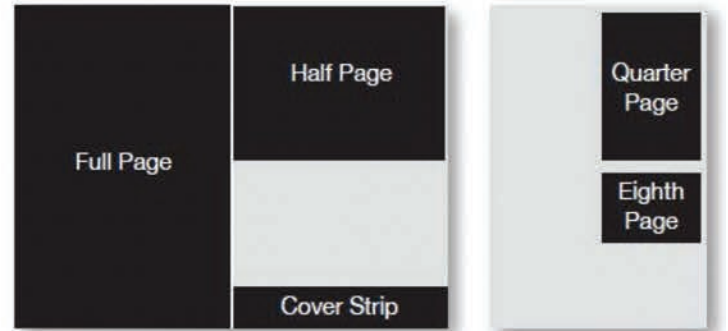


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The Indian Panorama is a South-Asian English newspaper with print editions in New York City, the Tristate area and now also as the first English Asian Newspaper from Dallas, printed weekly every Friday.



## Trump denies adult star affair allegation



Trump and Stormy Daniels

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** US President Donald Trump has denied accusations by a porn star that he had sexual encounters with her; the White House said on Thursday, March 8, a day after she sued him to invalidate a deal that prevented her from discussing the alleged relationship. Stephanie Clifford, who is known as Stormy Daniels in the adult film industry, filed a lawsuit in a California State court on Tuesday.

"The President has denied the allegations against him and again this case has already been won in arbitration," the White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters at her daily news conference.

The former adult film actress has sued Donald Trump, claiming that his lawyer forced her to sign a statement in 2016 to stop her from going public about her alleged relationship with the then Republican-presidential candidate. Stephanie Clifford filed a lawsuit in a California State court. The lawsuit alleges that she was paid \$130,000 by Michael Cohen, Trump's personal lawyer, to not to go public with her alleged sexual encounters with Trump when he was the then presidential candidate.

# Amazon removes Lord Ganesha stockings after Hindu protest

**NEVADA (TIP):** World's largest online retailer Amazon.com withdrew stockings carrying image of Hindu deity Lord Ganesha from its website within two days after upset Hindus protested, calling it "highly inappropriate".

Three stockings carrying images of Lord Ganesha, which were selling at Amazon.com from \$9.69 to \$16.30, do not show up anymore.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, who spearheaded the protest urging for immediate withdrawal of these objectionable products, in a statement in Nevada, thanked Amazon.com for understanding the concerns of Hindu community which thought image of Lord Ganesha on such a product was highly insensitive.

Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, however, pointed out that a formal apology from Amazon.com President Jeffrey P. Bezos to the upset Hindu community was still due, as this was not the first time for the company to offer such products which were deemed offensive by Hindu devotees.

Rajan Zed suggested that Amazon.com and other companies should send their senior executives for training in religious and cultural sensitivity so that they had an understanding of the feelings of customers and communities when introducing new products or launching advertising campaigns.

Zed had said that Lord Ganesha was highly



revered in Hinduism and was meant to be worshipped in temples or home shrines and not to cover your feet and legs or touch with your feet and legs. Inappropriate usage of Hindu deities or symbols or concepts for commercial or other agenda was not okay as it hurt the faithful.

Hinduism was the oldest and third largest religion of the world with about 1.1 billion adherents and a rich philosophical thought and it should not be taken frivolously. Symbols of any faith, larger or smaller, should not be mishandled, Rajan Zed had indicated.

Zed had stated that such trivialization of Lord Ganesha was disturbing to the Hindus world over. Hindus were for free artistic expression and speech as much as anybody else if not more. But faith was something sacred and attempts at trivializing it hurt the followers, Zed added.

Hindus have protested and contacted Amazon.com many times in the past over what they felt was trivialization of Hindu deities on various products sold on its website and had been mostly successful in persuading the company to remove those.

In Hinduism, Lord Ganesha is worshipped as god of wisdom and remover of obstacles and is invoked before the beginning of any major undertaking. There are about three million Hindus in USA.

Amazon.com, Inc., a Fortune 500 company founded in 1994, and headquartered in Seattle, claims to offer earth's biggest selection.

# United States Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi urges Chicagoans to vote for Illinois primary election

**CHICAGO, IL(TIP):** A Press Conference for media was held on behalf of United States Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, at Mysore Woodlands on 2548 W. Devon Ave. Chicago, IL. At this press conference Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi covered a wide range of significant topics including his legislative accomplishments, future legislation agenda and other relevant current topics.

Democratic Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois has urged suburban Chicago residents to vote for Illinois primary election.

"Indian-Americans and all suburban Chicago residents must register to vote to allow their voices to be heard," he said and added, "As I have said many times, if you don't have a seat at the table, then you are on the menu. Registering to vote and voting ensures that your voice is heard, and you have a proverbial seat at the table when important decisions are made affecting you."

Volunteers and friends of Krishnamoorthi helped register voters at the Itasca temple last week. The efforts at the event will be replicated by him elsewhere to help increase the number of registered voters in the Indian-American community.

## Fund Raising Efforts

Meanwhile, Raja Krishnamoorthi continued his incredible fundraising success by bringing in more than \$650,000 in the 4th quarter of 2017.

The first-term Member of Congress from the 8th District of Illinois that includes Chicago's west and northwest suburbs has more than \$3.31 million cash on hand to begin



9997United States Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi with media at Press Conference

his re-election campaign as of the end of the fourth fundraising quarter that ended December 31.

"My constituents sent me to Washington to work every day on growing and strengthening the middle class, and that's what we've done," Krishnamoorthi said. "These resources will help us amplify that message to continue our important work in Congress. Krishnamoorthi and Republican Congressman Glenn "GT" Thompson of Pennsylvania are the two lead sponsors of bipartisan legislation that passed the House of Representatives unanimously to improve career and technical education, as

well as to help give Americans the skills they need to compete for in-demand jobs.

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 2353) reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and is the first major overhaul of the program since 2006.

"As President Trump said in his State of the Union speech, career and technical education is going to be a critical part of our country's economy, and this legislation will help strengthen and modernize it," Krishnamoorthi said. "The bill works to close the skills gap by pairing businesses and



United States Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi

educators together to establish training programs to prepare students for in-demand careers." The son of immigrants, Krishnamoorthi was elected to Congress in November 2016 with nearly 60 percent of the vote against his Republican opponent.

(Photographs and Press release by Asian Media USA)



# TRUMP'S ECONOMIC ADVISER QUILTS OVER TARIFFS

Gary Cohn, architect of tax reforms, differed with President on trade policies

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Gary Cohn, the top economic adviser to US President Donald Trump and a voice for Wall Street in the White House, resigned on March 7, in yet another jolt to the embattled White House that has seen a series of high-profile departures.

Cohn, 57, who is a former Goldman Sachs executive, resigned as the White House National Economic Council director over differences with the Trump's trade policies, including a move to impose a hefty 25 per cent tariff on the import of steel and 10 per cent on aluminium.

White House officials said the tariffs dispute contributed to Cohn's decision to leave but that it was not the sole reason. For several weeks, Cohn had been discussing with the President that it was nearing time for him to transition out. His departure date is to be determined but will be a few weeks from now, a White House official said.

"Gary has been my chief economic adviser and did a superb job in driving our agenda, helping to deliver historic tax cuts and reforms and unleashing the American economy once again. He is a rare talent, and I thank him for his dedicated service to the American people," Trump said. He tweeted



*Gary Cohn has quit over policy perception differences with President Trump*

that he "will be making a decision soon" on replacing Cohn. Administration officials said Peter Navarro, director of the White House National Trade Council, and conservative commentator Larry Kudlow

were the "top two candidates" for the job.

During his stay at the White House, Cohn led coordination of Trump's pro-growth domestic and global economic policy agenda, including the passage of historic tax cuts and reforms in December 2017. "It has been an honor to serve my country and enact pro-growth economic policies to benefit the Americans. I am grateful to the President for giving me this opportunity," Cohn said. - Agencies

## Trump threatens to tax European cars

Donald Trump on Tuesday, March 6, threatened to slap a 25% tax on import of cars from Europe if the EU retaliated on its decision to impose import tariffs on steel and aluminium

Swedish PM Stefan Lofven during his meeting with Trump had conveyed the message of the EU president that if the US put tariffs on steel and aluminum, they will slap back with punitive tariffs on bourbon, jeans and motorcycles

They can do whatever they'd like, but if they do that, we put 25% tax on their cars, and believe me, they won't be doing it long, Trump said

## Florida passes Bill to restrict guns, minimum age to buy firearms raised to 21

**MIAMI (TIP):** The US state of Florida, scene of America's latest school shooting, has passed Bill that raises the minimum age to buy firearms to 21 while funding a program that allows some teachers and school employees to be armed.

The "Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act," which takes its name from February 14 massacre in which 17 persons, including 14 students were killed, passed the legislature's lower house a day after clearing the senate.

It will now be sent to Governor Rick Scott to sign. The Republican has not indicated whether he would veto the law, but he has previously expressed opposition to US President Donald Trump's call to arm teachers.

America's long moribund gun control debate was revived by survivors of the Parkland shooting, who a day after their school was attacked launched the "Never Again" movement demanding legislative action.

The Bill raises the minimum age to purchase all firearms from 18 to 21, a move opposed by the powerful National Rifle Association lobby group, bans modification devices that make a semi-automatic weapon fully automatic, and increases mental health funding.

It also includes a voluntary "guardian program" named after Coach Aaron Feis who was slain in the Parkland attack, which is intended to "aid in the prevention or abatement of active assailant incidents on school premises" by allowing some school employees to be armed.

The program is mainly aimed at staff such as coaches and school personnel, with teachers eligible if they have military or law enforcement experience. Bringing more guns into school has been a controversial idea, but lawmakers defended the Bill.

Meanwhile, Democrat legislators said the guardian program was a "poison pill" in a law otherwise taking necessary steps towards gun control. African-American representatives also expressed fears that arming black school employees could leave them vulnerable to being mistaken for attackers by police arriving on the scene of a mass shooting.

However, the Bill does not ban the sale of the AR-15 assault rifle-the weapon used by Nikolas Cruz-one of activists' key demands.

## Student dead, another hurt by gunshot in Alabama high school

**BIRMINGHAM (US) (TIP):** Birmingham closed one of its largest schools for a thorough safety sweep Thursday after metal detectors and other security measures failed to keep students from handling a gun in a classroom where one 17-year-old was fatally shot and another wounded in an apparent accident.

Birmingham Interim Police Chief Orlando Wilson said investigators are reviewing surveillance video for clues and interviewing students and staff to figure out exactly what led to Wednesday afternoon's shooting at dismissal time at Huffman High School.

"We consider it accidental until the investigation takes us elsewhere," Wilson said. "We have a lot of unanswered questions. There are so many unknowns at this time." The gun was recovered, but Wilson declined to say who fired it. No arrests were immediately reported. "We're hoping if we have footage, that it will reveal it," he said. "If we have witnesses, we're hoping they will tell it."

The two students weren't officially identified, but Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin said young woman killed was a senior, about to turn 18 and had been accepted at college, with "aspirations and dreams to be a nurse." "We are not just talking about some person, we're talking about losing a part of our future. Our hearts are heavy," the mayor said.

The chief said he had not been told of any kind of argument, fight or struggle that preceded the shooting, which also wounded a 17-year-old junior on the football team, al.com reported. "We're not saying he shot her, we're not saying he didn't shoot her," the chief said. "We're asking those questions ourselves so we can determine exactly what happened."

The shooting prompted a brief lockdown, with students and teachers sheltering in place. Wilson also confirmed that metal detectors were in place and functioning in the school. "This should not happen in schools," he said. Birmingham City Schools Superintendent Lisa Herring announced late Wednesday night that school will be closed on Thursday, to give authorities time and space for a thorough security sweep and enable collaboration with community organizations to counsel students and staff. (AP)

## US announces \$5 million reward for information on Pakistan Taliban leader

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The US today announced a \$5 million award for information leading to the arrest of Afghanistan-based Maulana Fazlullah, leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an outfit which carries out terrorist attacks inside Pakistan.

Under its rewards for justice program, the US also announced a \$3 million reward each for information on Abdul Wali, of Jamaat ul-Ahrar (JuA), and Mangal Bagh leader of Lashkar-e-Islam.

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar is a terrorist organization that split away from TTP while the Lashkar-e-Islam is based in the Khyber Tribal Agency in Pakistan.

The announcement came as the Pakistani Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua held meetings with officials of the Trump administration including the White House and the State Department.

The State Department said TTP is a terrorist organization based in the tribal areas of eastern Afghanistan. It has historically maintained close ties to al-Qaida.

Since being appointed by the group's central Shura Council in November 2013, Fazlullah has organized and directed several TTP attacks against Pakistani interests and has publicly blamed the US for military operations against the group.

In December 2014, Fazlullah's operatives carried out the most lethal terrorist attack in Pakistani history when its operatives killed 151 people, including more than 130 children, during an attack against the Army Public School in Peshawar, Pakistan.

In 2012, Fazlullah ordered the failed assassination of Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai who promoted girls' right to education and publicly criticized Fazlullah and the TTP, the State Department said.

Abdul Wali reportedly operates from Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces. Under Wali's leadership, JuA has been one of the most operationally active TTP networks in Punjab Province and has claimed multiple suicide bombings and other attacks throughout Pakistan.

In March 2016, JuA conducted a suicide bombing at a public park in Lahore, Pakistan, that killed 75 people and injured 340. In August 2015, JuA claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Punjab that killed Punjab Home Minister Shuja Khanzada and 18 of his supporters.

Wali is also known as Omar Khalid Khorasani. He was born in Mohmand Agency, Pakistan, and is believed to be in his late 30s. He is a former journalist and poet and studied at a number of madrasas in Karachi.

According to the State Department, Mangal Bagh and his group earns revenue from drug trafficking, smuggling, kidnapping, raids on NATO convoys, and taxes on transit trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Bagh has led Lashkar-e-Islam since 2006 and has routinely shifted alliances to protect illicit revenue streams while enforcing an extreme version of Deobandi Islam in the areas of eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan that he controls, particularly Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan.

Born in Khyber Agency, Pakistan, he is believed to be in his mid-40s. Bagh is a member of the Afridi tribe. He studied at a madrasa for several years and later fought alongside militant groups in Afghanistan. (PTI)

### The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act

**I**mposes a three-day waiting period for the purchase of all firearms, not just handguns, or until a background check is completed, whichever is longer

Raises the minimum legal age to purchase a rifle or shotgun to 21 from 18. Federal law already prohibits anyone under 21 from buying a handgun

Outlaws bump stocks, which enable a semi-automatic weapon to be fired as an automatic weapon. Such devices were used in a mass shooting in Las Vegas last year

Allows local sheriff's departments to establish a "guardian program" in which school personnel can be permitted to voluntarily carry a gun on the job

Allows police to temporarily seize firearms from someone who has been taken into custody for an involuntary mental examination under Florida's so-called Baker Act statute

Prohibits anyone from owning or possessing a firearm who has been judged mentally incompetent or has been committed to a mental institution, until a court rules otherwise



## Sufi singer Pyare Lal Wadali dies of cardiac arrest

**AMRITSAR (TIP):** Ustad Pyarelal Wadali, younger brother of Ustad Puran Chand Wadali died in Amritsar on March 9 morning. He was 75.

He breathed his last at Fortis Escorts Hospital in Amritsar where he was admitted on Thursday.

Wadali Brothers, who hail from a village near Amritsar, are famous for their Punjabi Sufi music.

The duo began performing at Harballah temple in Jalandhar. They are adept in various styles of singing including Kaafian, ghazal and bhajan.

The Wadali Brothers, famous for their Bollywood songs such as Aye Rangrez Mere (Tanu Weds Manu; 2011) and Ik Tu Hi Tu Hi (Mausam; 2011), have carried on the legacy of famous saint poets such as Bulle Shah, Kabir, Amir Khusro and Surdas for years.



## APEX COURT UPHOLDS PASSIVE EUTHANASIA WITH GUIDELINES

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Supreme Court ruled on March 9 that individuals had a right to die with dignity, allowing passive euthanasia with guidelines in a landmark verdict.

The top court also permitted individuals to draft a "living will" specifying that they not be put on life support if they slip into an incurable coma.

The five-judge Constitution Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India said, "Human beings have a right to die with dignity."

Passive euthanasia will be applicable to only a terminally ill person with no hope for recovery, the court said.

In 2015, the death of a 66-year-old nurse Aruna Shanbaug, who was sexually assaulted and left in a vegetative state for more than 40 years, had sparked a national debate over the legalisation of euthanasia.

Source: Reuters

## Was India really a black hole before 2014: Sonia Gandhi

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Friday wondered if India really was a black hole before the BJP government was formed in 2014.

Speaking at an event of India Today, she said: "Was India really a giant black hole before May 26 2014? Did India march to progress, prosperity and greatness just four years ago? Is this claim not an insult to the intelligence of our people?"

She said: "Our judiciary is in turmoil. RTI was brought to bring transparency, but today that law is in cold storage. Aadhaar is being turned into intrusive instrument of control." She said, "We were out-marketed. We have to really develop a new style of connecting with people. We have to look how we project our programmes and policies."



## TREATMENT TOO COSTLY, WORK ON IT: SC TO GOVT

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The "exorbitant" cost of medical treatment in India today drew attention of the Supreme Court which told the government to "do something" as the people were unable to get treatment due to the "huge cost".

The apex court's remarks assume significance as the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) had recently said that non-scheduled drugs and diagnostic services constituted major components of charges billed to patients in four private hospitals in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) with margins as high as 1,192 per cent.

As per an analysis done by the NPPA, the margin on procurement price of drugs used in emergency cases for treatment of potentially life-threatening low blood pressure was 1,192 per cent.

# Chandrababu Naidu' TDP exits Modi govt but not NDA

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Andhra Pradesh's ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP), led by N Chandrababu Naidu, on March 8 pulled out of the Narendra Modi government, with two of its minister in the Union Cabinet tendering their resignations. TDP's exit from the Narendra Modi-led central government came as a result of the Centre's refusal to grant Andhra Pradesh a special-category status.

However, a split within the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre was averted for now, with the party deciding to remain in the alliance, a move many view as TDP's attempt to keep the window for rapprochement open.

Civil Aviation Minister P Ashok Gajapathi Raju and Minister of State for Science and Technology & Earth Sciences Y S Chowdary, the two TDP ministers in the Modi government, met the prime minister on Thursday evening and tendered their letters of resignation. However, as of the time this report was filed, there had been no official word on whether the resignation letters were forwarded to President Ram Nath Kovind for acceptance. This has also set off speculations that back-channel talks could still be taking place to iron out differences.

The Union ministers' resignation came after a 20-minute talk between the TDP boss and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Prime Minister Modi. Apparently, the conversation was not successful in



TDP leaders Y S Chowdary (left) and Ashok Gajapathi Raju resigned from the Modi government as their party continued its demand for special-category status for Andhra Pradesh.

removing the irritants plaguing the TDP's ties with the BJP-led government at the Centre.

In a tit-for-tat response, the two BJP ministers in the Andhra Pradesh government – K Srinivasa Rao and T Manikyala Rao – also quit.

While speaking to the media after tendering his resignation letter, Raju said the TDP would continue to be part of the NDA. Chowdary, for his part, said the issue of a special-category status was very emotive for Andhra Pradesh and that the Centre had not addressed it. He added that the special package put

forth by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley was not adequate.

Government sources have ruled out the possibility of any compromise on N Chandrababu Naidu's demand for giving Andhra Pradesh a special-category status. In off-the-record briefings, BJP leaders said granting a special-category status to the state was impossible after the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission were accepted. The party's leadership added that doing so would also open a Pandora's Box, with states like Punjab, Bihar and Odisha also demanding a similar treatment.

## Mahatma's bust defaced now



Mahatma Gandhi and BR Ambedkar's defaced busts.

**KANNUR (TIP):** A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was found defaced in Kannur district's Taliparamba town today, the police said. The spectacle carving was damaged and a garland on the statue was lying nearby, an official said, giving details of the vandalism, the latest in a series of similar incidents being reported from various parts of the country.

The Gandhi statue was close to the Taliparamba Taluk office, the official said, adding that a probe was on to identify those behind the incident.

A CCTV visual showed the suspected man behind the incident walking away from the site. Some locals on the spot were reported as saying that they saw a man hurling a stone at the statue before fleeing the spot. A complaint was received from Deputy Tahsildar CV Prakasan, based on which investigations are on, the official said. Yesterday, a bust of Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee was vandalised in Kolkata. The day before, a statue of Dalit icon BR Ambedkar was damaged in Meerut. The incidents came close on the heels of Communist leader Lenin's statues being damaged in Tripura and Dravidan movement founder EV Ramasamy Periyar's bust being desecrated in Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

## Statues vandalised: Tamil Nadu BJP expels party worker arrested for damaging Periyar's bust

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Bharatiya Janata Party's Tamil Nadu chief Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday expelled party worker R Muthuraman, who was arrested on Tuesday for damaging a statue of social reformer EV Ramaswamy – also known as Periyar – in Vellore.

"Our party never accepts such activities," Soundararajan said on Twitter.

There have been cases of violence in parts of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Tripura after statues of Lenin and Periyar were vandalised.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday asked state governments to deal with instances of vandalism "sternly". Reports on Tuesday said Muthuraman and a Communist Party of India (Marxist) worker, identified as Francis, were arrested after they damaged the bust. The Tamil Nadu Police said the two men were in an inebriated state at the time of arrest. The Tamil Nadu government told the Madras High Court on Wednesday afternoon that the police had arrested four people, so far.

Their arrest came hours after BJP leader H Raja said on Facebook: "Today Lenin's statue, tomorrow Tamil Nadu's EV Ramaswami's statue," referring to an incident in Tripura, where a statue of communist icon Lenin was brought down, allegedly by BJP workers.



Statue of EV Ramaswamy – also known as Periyar



# CBI registers fresh Rs 321-crore fraud case against Nirav Modi

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The CBI on March 8 said it has registered a fresh case against diamantaire Nirav Modi for causing a loss of Rs 321 crore to Punjab National Bank (PNB) by availing different credit facilities between 2013 and 2017.

According to a Central Bureau of Investigation official, the case was registered following a fresh complaint.

Former finance president of Nirav Modi's Firestar Diamonds International Ltd Vipul Ambani, chief finance officer Ravi Gupta, other directors and officials, and unidentified public servants of the bank were also named in the complaint, he said. This is the second CBI case in which Nirav has been named.

After months of debate around exempting sanitary napkins from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) net, the government today chose the occasion of International Women's Day to launch

## CBI summons again

The CBI has sent fresh summons to Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi to join probe as early as possible and made it clear that they were "obliged" to cooperate with the probe agency, officials said. This came as Choksi, in an e-mail reply to a CBI's notice, said it was "impossible" for him to return and join investigation due to suspension of his passport and ill-health.

Source: PTI



centrally-sourced and distributed low-cost biodegradable sanitary pads for anyone who would care to use.

The bank alleged that during its internal investigation, it had spotted circular transactions between the Nirav-promoted partnership firms — Solar Exports, Stellar Diamonds and Diamond R Us — and Firestar group.

The head office of the bank had

declared the accounts of Firestar Diamonds and Firestar International as fraud and reported it to the RBI on Sunday, it said.

Nirav, along with uncle Mehul Choksi of Gitanjali Group, has been accused of defrauding the PNB of Rs 12,600 crore, with Rs 1,300 crore being added to the fraud kitty on February 26.

Source: IANS

# CHINESE DRAGON, INDIAN ELEPHANT MUST DANCE TOGETHER: WANG

**BEIJING (TIP):**

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on March 8 said both countries, which nearly came to war over a two-month military standoff along their border last year, should replace suspicion with trust.

Sounding positive on bilateral ties in the coming year, the minister said: "The Chinese dragon and Indian elephant must not fight each other, but dance with each other."

India-China ties took a nosedive after their militaries faced-off each other in their worst standoff at Doklam. China's opposition to a UN ban on Pakistani terrorist Masood Azhar and India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) has also tested their relationship.

"Despite some tests and difficulties, the China-India relationship continues to grow. In the process, China has both upheld its legitimate rights and interests and taken care to preserve the relationship. Chinese and Indian leaders have developed a strategic vision for the future of our relations. The Chinese dragon and Indian elephant must not fight each other, but dance with each other," Wang said.

"China and India must do everything to empathise with and support each other and avoid mutual suspicion and attrition. "Mutual trust is the most precious commodity in China-India relations. With political trust, not even Himalayas can stop from friendly exchanges. Without it, even level land cannot bring us together," Wang said.

"Let me put this to our Indian friends, our shared understanding far outstrips our differences and far outweigh our frictions. China is ready to forward traditional friendship."

Source: IANS



Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister.

## Karti again fails to get relief in Supreme Court



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** After the Supreme Court, for the second time in a row, refused to grant interim protection against the possible arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the anti-money laundering law, Karti Chidambaram rushed to the Delhi High Court for relief on March 8.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra granted Karti liberty to approach the High Court in the course of the day after apprehensions were raised of his arrest.

The Supreme Court asked the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court to post Mr. Karti's case on March 9 before an appropriate Bench. The Supreme Court said the High Court would deal with the plea for interim relief in accordance with law.

The high-voltage hearing saw the Chief Justice take strong exception to a remark by Mr. Karti's lawyer and senior advocate Kapil Sibal that Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta was "day in and day out dictating orders to the court on what to say and not to say."

# Love jihad row: Supreme Court restores Hadiya's marriage

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Supreme Court (SC) on March 8 restored the marriage between Akhila aka Hadiya and Shafin Jahan - a couple at the centre of a 'love jihad' row - but made it clear that the NIA can continue with its probe to find out if any criminality was involved in the wedlock.

Setting aside the May 24, 2017 judgment of the Kerala HC which quashed the marriage, a bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra said Hadiya is "free to pursue her future endeavours according to law" and no court can interfere in the marriage between two consenting adults.

But the bench, which took the NIA probe report into record, added: "We clarify that the investigations in respect of any matter of criminality may continue in accordance with law."

The judges, acting on a petition filed by Jahan challenging the HC order, said they were reviving the marriage convinced after the interaction with Hadiya on November 27 last year in open courtroom during which she admitted the marriage and indicated that she had exercised her free consent.

The Kerala HC had observed that Hadiya seemed to be mentally indoctrinated and needed her parents' involvement in order to make such an important decision.

It also found merit in her father KM Asokan's statement that his daughter had been recruited by Islamic State's mission in Syria and Jahan was "only a stooge who had been assigned to play the role of going through a marriage ceremony".

The father and the NIA raised this argument in the SC too. Significantly, the HC had also directed 'comprehensive' investigation into cases of 'love jihad' and has incidents of forced conversion probed thoroughly.

Asokan and NIA vehemently argued that the marriage was part of a well-oiled machinery prevailing in Kerala to indoctrinate vulnerable youth to embrace Islam and lure them away to countries like Syria but the bench was not inclined to accept the argument and said "when two consenting



Hadiya, who was born Akhila, had her marriage annulled by the Kerala High Court in 2017.

adults marry we cannot get into correctness, justness.. its not fair".

"Shafin Jahan is a radicalised man, a stooge of the ISIS who was trying to wean away Hadiya to Syria under the pretext of marriage which is only a guise to take her away from the jurisdiction of her parents and any court," Shyam Diwan, senior advocate who appeared for Asokan told the SC.

The order also came on a day when Additional Solicitor General Maninder Singh for NIA said that it had issued look-out circulars for two witnesses F Musthafa and S Shahana who "initiated" Hadiya into Islam. Singh urged the court not to take the case lightly saying it was "not a one-off case, there was a common pattern and modus operandi for luring vulnerable girls to convert to Islam by feigning love and the same group of people, who have been identified by the NIA, was behind it".

The NIA referred to "psychological kidnapping" too and said that an indoctrinated person like Hadiya may be incapable of giving free consent. Singh said: "Investigation is almost complete except two persons who left abroad.

The CJJI retorted: "you can continue with your investigation, lodge FIRs, make arrests, do whatever you want. But we cannot touch the marriage. If the marriage is a disguise to commit an offence then you can proceed against the offender".

## Dawood Ibrahim aide Farooq Takla extradited from UAE

**NEW DELHI (TIP):**

Twenty-five years after Mumbai serial blasts, Farooq Takla, who was part of the inner circle of Karachi-based underworld don Dawood Ibrahim, has been arrested.

Takla, at the behest of Dawood Ibrahim, had given logistic support to the co-accused and sent them to Pakistan for training via Dubai.

The arrest comes ahead of the 25th anniversary of the March 12, 1993, serial blasts.

Dubai-based Yasin Mansoor Mohammed Farooq alias Farooq Takla (57), who faced a Red Corner Notice of the Interpol, was arrested from New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport.

The CBI, whose Special Task Force (STF) investigates the serial blasts, said that Takla was extradited from the United Arab Emirates following a request from the Government of India and regular follow-ups. From New Delhi, he was flown to the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai.

In the evening, he was taken to the special court set up under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), which sent him to CBI custody till March 19.

"The accused participated in the criminal conspiracy as a conspirator; perpetrator in the other case with other accused like Dawood Ibrahim, Anees Ibrahim and others," special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam told the court.

"Farooq Takla is part of the inner circle of Dawood Ibrahim," informed sources said.

Takla has been booked for murder, attempt to murder, destruction of public and private property, besides criminal conspiracy and common intention.

Over the course of next 10 days, he will be questioned by the CBI-STF, which investigates the 1993 serial blasts case. "His custodial interrogation is necessary," CBI-STF deputy superintendent of police Shiv Kumar pleaded in the remand note.



Farooq Takla





## GUEST COMMENT

### Trump's warning shot: Protectionism can unleash a global trade war

US President Donald Trump appeared to be at his wits' end when he made a rash comment after his chief economic adviser Gary Cohn put in his papers: "Will be making a decision soon on the appointment of new chief economic advisor. Many people wanting the job - will choose wisely!" It is both a confession of his poor judgment and a desire to have a yes-man. This is an ominous sign of rising protectionism that threatens to disrupt global trade. Although, China appears to be in the President Trump's direct firing line, India needs to be prepared for collateral damage. The signs are there when the US President in an emotional outburst hauled up India for high import duties on the iconic Harley-Davidson motorbike despite its "insignificant" contribution in the total bilateral trade. Indeed, jingoism in any form is irrational.

President Trump's protectionism may, however, hamper the American economy the most. In a last-ditch effort, adviser Cohn tried to make Trump understand that undue tariff protection to domestic steel and aluminum makers would hurt upstream manufacturers like cars and cans. It is unfortunate that the US, which once championed free trade ring-fenced by WTO, is resorting to unilateral trading barriers instead of sharpening the competitiveness of the domestic industry. Apparently under pressure, India has already started importing energy all the way from America, which makes little commercial sense, especially when such resources are freely available in the neighborhood. Indian airlines have placed orders worth several billions of dollars to purchase more than 300 American aircraft.

President Trump's decision to impose steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports is primarily targeted at Canada and China but the impact will be felt by steel and aluminum producers across the world. The decision has the seeds to unleash a global trade war as the US imports steel from more than 100 countries. China has already communicated that it would retaliate if its interests were harmed. For Indian manufacturers, it is the time to become more competitive. Once the US market gets closed, Chinese exporters would turn towards India in a big way.

(Tribune, India)

## AS I SEE IT

# Pak trips on free run: 37-nation Financial Action Task Force to probe terror funding



By G Parthasarathy

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), set up in 1989 by the G7 countries, and with headquarters in Paris, acts as an "international watchdog" on issues of money laundering and financing of terrorism. It has 37 members, including all five permanent members of the Security Council, and countries with economic influence all across the world. Two regional organizations - the Gulf Cooperation and the European Commission - are members of the FATF. Saudi Arabia and Israel are observers. India became a full member of the FATF in June 2010. The FATF is empowered to ensure that financing of UN-designated terrorist organizations is blocked. It has the power to publicly name countries not abiding by its norms, making it difficult for them to source financial flows internationally.

Pakistan is particularly vulnerable to pressures from this task force as the Afghan Taliban, Haqqani network, LeT and JeM - all internationally designated terrorist groups - operate from its soil. Pakistan has long claimed that it has done its best to prevent terrorism emanating from its soil. It has also averred that there is no firm evidence against the LeT and the JeM, even after these groups have publicly acknowledged that they were promoting terrorism in India. Pakistan has also rejected evidence like wireless transcripts of conversations of Jaish terrorists involved in the Pathankot airport and the vast evidence available internationally of the Lashkar role in the Mumbai 26/11 attack. The Americans and their allies have focused attention primarily on Pakistan support for the Haqqani network in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has believed that sooner, rather than later, the Americans would cut their losses and withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving the country open for a Pakistan-backed Taliban takeover. President Donald Trump, however, made it clear that he was determined that the US would not "lose" in Afghanistan. He is augmenting the US troop presence and moving fast to strengthen the Afghan armed forces, including its air force. American economic assistance to Pakistan has been placed on hold. In addition, the US has mobilized its NATO allies to take a tougher line on Pakistan. The NATO allies are also expanding their deployments in Afghanistan. More recently, the US has initiated moves to get the task force to place Pakistan on its "grey list" at its next meeting in June.

The American effort in the FATF on Pakistan funding of terrorist groups predictably ran into problems initially. Pakistan had mobilized support from China, the Gulf Cooperation Council led by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and quite evidently Russia to counter the American-led move. Islamabad banked on Russian support,

Pakistan will now have to provide a detailed action plan on actions it proposes to take on curbing funding for UN-designated terrorist groups. It would then be placed on the FATF grey list, where its financial flows would be subject to intense international scrutiny. Pakistan would, thereafter, be placed on the FATF "black list" if it fails to present a credible and comprehensive action plan to the FATF by June. This would virtually end any prospect of it receiving adequate financial flows.



A heavily escorted Hafiz Saeed. Pakistan's calculations have back-fired; it will have to be accountable.

given the bonhomie that Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov manifested when he invited his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Asif to Moscow on the eve of the FATF meeting. Further, despite parliamentary opposition, Pakistan declared, just over a week before the FATF meeting, that it would be deploying additional troops in Saudi Arabia. It clearly expected Saudi support in the FATF after its decision was announced. The Lavrov bonhomie led the inexperienced Khawaja Asif to proclaim hastily and prematurely that Pakistan had succeeded in prevailing over moves to place it on the FATF "grey list" involving monitoring of its international financial flows.

The Americans responded immediately to these developments. Saudi Arabia and the GCC fell in line with American demands for the FATF to act against Pakistan. European powers like the UK, Germany and France remained steadfast in their determination to corner Pakistan. Russia quietly receded to the background. Recognizing that its support for Pakistan would leave it isolated in the FATF, where it was aspiring to become its vice-chairman at the forthcoming FATF session in June, Pakistan's "all-weather friend" China pulled back its support for Pakistan. The only country that steadfastly continued supporting Pakistan was Turkey, whose egotistic President Recep Erdogan would certainly not win an international popularity contest today!

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is time for Pakistan's rogue army to end support on its soil to armed terrorist groups, acting against India and Afghanistan. While Pakistan recently claimed it had closed Lashkar offices, it was soon found that only the gates of these offices were closed, while routine activities continued inside.

In these circumstances, India should urge members of the European Union and Japan to join the US and end providing concessional credits to Pakistan. Given its precarious foreign exchange position, Pakistan will inevitably have to go to the IMF for a bailout in a few months. Institutions like the IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank need to be persuaded to withhold providing concessional credits to Pakistan, even if it takes some token measures to claim it has acted against UN-designated terrorist outfits. India should urge that no concessional credits should be provided to Pakistan till it dismantles the infrastructure of terrorism on its soil irrevocably. China will not follow suit; but its "aid" for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will only increase Pakistan's already heavy debt burden.

The withdrawal of Chinese support in the FATF has shaken the Pakistan establishment's belief that Chinese support to "contain India" has no limitations. China recognizes that backing Pakistan unconditionally in the FATF would not only earn it the ire of the mercurial Donald Trump but would also sully its image internationally. At the same time, this does not mean that there will be any change in China's policies on issues like declaring Jaish chief Masood Azhar an international terrorist. Moreover, we should also clearly recognize that President Trump's actions are primarily in response to Pakistan's support for the Haqqani network in Afghanistan. They are not highly or significantly focused on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism on Indian soil. That is a battle that will have to be fought primarily by us.

(The author is an Indian career diplomat. He was High Commissioner of India to Pakistan in 1998-2000)

## THE INDIAN PANORAMA

**PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER:** Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja  
**VICE PRESIDENT:** Chitagam Saluja  
**CHIEF EDITOR:** Prof Indrajit S. Saluja  
**ASSISTANT EDITOR:** Bidisha Roy  
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**The Indian Panorama**  
P.O. Box No. 190067, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419,  
Tel: 646-247-9458  
Email: editor@theindianpanorama.com  
**DALLAS EDITION**  
P.O. BOX 121695, ARLINGTON, TX 76012  
**Lovlien Kaurr, VP & Bureau Chief**

E-mail tipdallas01@gmail.com; Phone: 646-247-9458  
www.theindianpanorama.news  
**Published by Prof. Indrajit Saluja**

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# NIRAV MODI SCAM: a case of deceit and plunder of the public exchequer

There is a pattern to mega fraud cases- involvement of bank officials and government



By George Abraham

“At present, the bad debt of these Banks is greater than that of the GNP of the 137 countries in the world

“The data shows that between years 2012-2013 and 2016-2017, Indian banks saw a total number of 22,949 instances of fraud, with total losses to the banks amounting to 10.8 billion dollars.

“The deep mystery surrounding some of the biggest fraud cases is that many of these perpetrators were simply allowed to flee the country, including this one! Nirav Modi and his accomplices appeared to have fled India just before Punjab National Bank filed the complaint with the CBI on 29th January 2018.

“The bankruptcy declarations by jeweler Nirav Modi's companies - Firestar Diamond Inc, A Jaffe Inc and Fantasy Inc - may offer some clues to where the money went in the ₹12,622-crore Punjab National Bank.

According to a Chapter 11 filing, A Jaffe owes more than \$6 million to "unsecured creditors" in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) - Pacific Diamonds and Tricolor Diamonds FZE. The CBI FIR names these two as "exporters" who were beneficiaries of the letters of undertaking issued by the PNB employees accused of perpetrating the fraud along with Modi, his uncle Mehul Choksi, also a jeweler, and their companies.

The fraudulent financial behavior of some of the wealthiest people in India was once again on full display as the diamond jeweler Nirav Modi, a billionaire and the preferred jeweler of celebrities, was accused of orchestrating the biggest banking scam the nation has ever witnessed. He is now a target of the investigation by CBI after Punjab National Bank alleged that Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, defrauded the bank to the tune of 2 billion dollars using the cover of several shell companies abroad.

According to the complaint by PNB, two junior officers of a Mumbai branch of the Bank issued "letters of undertaking" to firms linked to Modi and Choksi for them to obtain credit from overseas branches of other Indian lenders.

A recent NDTV investigation has also unearthed links between money from Indian Banks allegedly embezzled by the Jeweler Nirav Modi and his US-based companies. In its formal charges, CBI claims that the loans Mr. Modi took from Punjab National bank to pay off his overseas suppliers may have been diverted elsewhere.

The latest report from New York also indicates that Firestar Diamond Inc., a registered business by Nirav Modi in the U.S. has filed the Chapter 11 voluntary petition for the protection from its creditors. Prime Minister Modi who claimed to be the 'chowkidar' of the country has gone relatively silent on this matter other than to make a general statement.

How is it possible for a businessman in India to defraud a bank of such a large sum of money? Where is the due diligence and what happened to the risk management mechanism? Was the Reserve Bank of India asleep on the wheel? Why there was no oversight by the Finance Ministry dealing with such a huge transfer of reserve currency? Where is the accountability of the Modi government?

The deep mystery surrounding some of the biggest fraud cases is that many of the fraudsters were simply allowed to flee the country, including this one! Nirav Modi and his accomplices appeared to have fled India just before Punjab National Bank filed the complaint with the CBI on 29th January 2018. It was reported that top officials including the Prime Minister were made aware of this case that included 42 FIRs on 22nd July 2016. Why then were these perpetrators not stopped from running away that included Choksi (Nirav's uncle who ran the 'Gitanjali Gems') whose spurious activities were already exposed by a whistleblower and was under active investigation?

This is not the first time since Modi took the reins of the government that a high flying billionaire has evaded justice by escaping abroad before he could be caught. Liquor magnate Vijay Mallya was accused of defaulting on 1.4 billion worth of loans before leaving the country in March 2016. It is not far-fetched to believe that these bad actors might have solicited some inside help that allowed them to leave the country and to stay beyond the reach of Indian jurisprudence.

Punjab National Bank, India's second-largest bank, is known as a Public Sector Bank (PSB) whose major shares are owned by the government. That means, when a bank accumulates NPA (non-performing assets) also known as bad debt, it is the Indian taxpayers and the shareholders that ultimately pay the price.

The data shows that between years 2012-



Nirav Modi at his New York City Store on Madison Avenue. CBI has issued Non-bailable warrants against him.

“Punjab National Bank, India's second-largest bank, is known as a Public Sector Bank (PSB) whose major shares are owned by the government. That means, when a bank accumulates NPA (non-performing assets) also known as bad debt, it is the Indian taxpayers and the shareholders that ultimately pay the price

2013 and 2016-2017, Indian banks saw a total number of 22,949 instances of fraud, with total losses to the banks amounting to 10.8 billion dollars. In the last three-and-half years, the government pumped in more than Rs. 51000 crore capital to the public sector banks. They are expected to infuse PSBs with another Rs.2.11 lakh crore in the coming two years. Non-performing assets (bad debt) of the Public sector banks alone are calculated to be around Rs. 7.33 lakh crores as of June 2017, from Rs. 2.78 lakh crore in March 2015.

Further analysis of the data reveals that the bad debt at these PSBs has increased almost fourfold in the last three years. Significant portions of these bank loans are from Corporates who have borrowed and now unwilling to pay back. Recent research brought out by Ernst and Young said the following: "While corporate borrowers have repeatedly blamed economic slowdown as the primary factor behind defaulting on bank loans, periodic independent audits on borrowers have revealed diversion of funds or willful default leading to stress situations."

How do we explain this massive level of willful default other than systematic manipulation of this institution by the rich and well-connected? We are asked to believe that two junior officers in a Mumbai branch of PNB made decisions to transfer 12000 crores of Rupees to a business entity especially dealing with Diamonds where Banks have little or no expertise!

On the other hand, an ordinary Indian will have such an arduous task on hand if he ventures out into requesting a personal loan from one of these PSBs. Even farmers are often subjected to voluminous paperwork and harsh scrutiny before securing even a small amount in a loan. In case of delay or default, many of them are subjected to harassment, lien attachment on their primary residence and too often have witnessed auctioning off their property. Many of the ongoing suicides are directly attributed to these stressful situations.

In the meantime, the crony capitalists are getting away with murder. They siphon off the taxpayer's money often presenting bogus

project plans using influential connections in the banking as well as in politics facilitating the process. Upon default, they tend to flee the country and spend their time abroad while enjoying the loot. Recently, it was also revealed that Mr. Vikram Kothari, of the 'Rotomac Pen' (a company that manufactures various types of pens), is charged with defrauding Rs 3695 crores from the public sector banks!

When these banks finally reach a real crisis mode, the government steps in to 'recapitalize' or in other words get 'bailed out'. The process is said to be as follows: through budgetary allocations, the government may buy so many crores of shares, then the banks will further raise additional crores from the market, and the government may issue Bank recapitalization bonds to buy even more shares of the banks.

Under the Modi regime, the crony capitalism has flourished, and a high transfer of wealth is allowed to take place from the ordinary taxpayers to these wealthy billionaires; many of them hail from Gujarat, Prime Minister's home state. While poor folks are penalized for not keeping a minimum balance in their government-mandated bank accounts, these so-called industrialists are accorded unprecedented access to public money, without any matching equity, which should have gone to building schools, bridges, health facilities and other infrastructure while creating prosperity for all its citizens.

It is about time; the Modi government takes a serious look at this mushrooming scandal of deceit and plunder which has grave implications for the financial stability and the well-being of the nation. At present, the bad debt of these Banks is greater than that of the GNP of the 137 countries in the world and a thorough audit of many of these large loans for accountability will very much be in order. But it needs will on the part of the government.

(The author is a former UN Technical Officer and is presently the Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA. He can be reached at gta777@gmail.com)



## UK terror arrests hit record levels in 2017

**LONDON (TIP):** The number of arrests made for terror offences in Britain hit a new record of 412 in 2017, according to latest UK government figures released on March 8.

This marks a rise of more than 58 per cent over the previous year, when there were 216 arrests.

"This was the highest number of arrests in a year since the data collection began," the UK Home Office data notes.

The arrests include 61 women, accounting for 15 per cent of total arrests, and a record number of suspects of white ethnic appearance, and 66 per cent who considered themselves to be British or dual citizens.

The year 2017 witnessed 36 victims killed and hundreds injured in high-profile terrorist attacks in the country, including attacks on Parliament, Manchester Arena, London Bridge and Finsbury Park. Part of the increase in arrests was accounted for by large-scale police operations in the wake of the terror attacks.

A third of the arrests resulted in a criminal charge, but not all for terror-related offences, with some people detained released without further action, on bail or under alternative measures, the figures reveal.

"Of the 110 persons charged with a terrorism-related offence in the year ending 31 December 2017, 29 had been prosecuted (as at 15 January 2018, the time of data provision to the Home Office), all of which were convicted. A further 76 were awaiting prosecution, four were not proceeded against, and one case was pending," the Home Office said.

As at December 31, 2017, there were 224 persons in custody in Britain for terrorism-related offences, an increase of 24 per cent on the 181 persons in custody in the previous year, continuing the upward trend seen in terrorist prisoners over the last few years. Of those in custody last year, the majority (86 per cent) held Islamist extremist views, a further 9 per cent held far right-wing ideologies and 5 per cent other ideologies.

Police revealed the use of a variety of legal powers to investigate terror suspects, including 767 stop and searches under the UK's Terrorism Act - which resulted in 61 arrests - and more than 16,000 checks at land, sea and airports.

There were increases in the number of arrests across all ethnic groups in Britain last year, with the largest for those of white ethnic appearance - 61 per cent, from 90 to a record 145 arrests. There was also a 37 per cent increase in the number of arrests of Asian people (from 124 to 170), the report stated. (PTI)

## UK defends secrecy of Operation Blue Star files

**LONDON (TIP):** Senior civil servants from the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) today gave evidence in a closed tribunal session to explain the reasons over some Cabinet Office files related to 1984's Operation Blue Star not being made public over 30 years later. A three-day hearing of the First Tier Tribunal (Information Rights) opened here, with a bulk of the session being held in secret as FCO officials explained their stand that the declassification of the files posed a threat to national security and international relations with India.

"It is quite unusual that we are not allowed to be part of our own appeal," said a spokesperson for KRW Law, the human rights law firm that has undertaken the Freedom of Information (FOI) appeal on behalf of UK-based freelance journalist Phil Miller on a pro bono basis. "Our understanding is that the BJP government of India has no objection to these files being made public. Yet, the British government continues to argue in favour of them remaining classified despite an overwhelming public interest in them," the spokesperson said. Miller's initial FOI request was turned down by the UK Cabinet Office, a decision upheld by the UK Information Commissioner in 2015.

The appeal this week is aimed at declassifying the secret files, which Miller believes could lead to further evidence of British involvement in advising the Indian government and its forces in the military operation at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, in order to secure trade and arms deals worth billions of pounds. "Disclosing documents from three decades ago will not harm diplomatic relations," said Miller, the author of the report titled 'Sacrificing Sikhs: The Need for an Investigation' released last year. In 2014, some UK government documents declassified under the 30-year rule to make such material public had revealed that British military advice was given to Indian forces prior to Operation Blue Star to flush out militants holed up in the Sikh holy shrine. (PTI)

# North Korea fires 5 short-range projectiles into sea



**SEOUL (TIP):** North Korea fired five short-range projectiles into the sea on Monday, Seoul officials said, in a continuation of weapon launches it has carried out in an apparent response to ongoing South Korea-US military drills it sees as a provocation.

The projectiles launched from a site near the northeastern city of Hamhung flew about 200 kilometers (125 miles) before landing in waters off North Korea's east coast, South Korea's joint chiefs of staff said.

The firings came three days after Seoul said North Korea launched its first medium-range missile into the sea since early 2014, ignoring UN resolutions against such tests.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency initially reported that a missile had also been launched on Monday, but later changed that to say projectiles had been fired.

In recent weeks, North Korea has stepped up its bellicose rhetoric, threatening pre-emptive nuclear strikes against Washington and Seoul and firing short-range missiles and artillery into the sea.

The firings appear to be North Korea's response to annual springtime US-South Korean military exercises that it says are a rehearsal for an invasion. Earlier this month, North Korea fired several short-range missiles and artillery shells

into the sea and threatened pre-emptive nuclear strikes against Washington and Seoul.

This year's drills are the largest ever, and come after North Korea conducted a nuclear test and a long-range rocket launch earlier this year, leading the UN Security Council to impose its toughest sanctions on the country in two decades.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un recently ordered tests of a nuclear warhead and ballistic missiles capable of carrying such warheads. He issued the orders while overseeing what state media called a successful simulated test of a re-entry vehicle aimed at returning a nuclear warhead to the atmosphere from space so it could hit its intended target. The re-entry vehicle is considered one of the last major technologies North Korea must master to develop long-range missiles equipped with nuclear weapons capable of reaching the US mainland.

Analysts in South Korea said the medium-range missile launch last Friday may have been a test of the re-entry technology. North Korean state media have not commented on the reported launch.

South Korean defense officials say North Korea doesn't yet have functioning intercontinental ballistic missiles. (Agencies)

## China eyes greater global leadership role, downplays fears

**BEIJING (TIP):** The world can only benefit as China marches toward "irresistible" national rejuvenation and assumes greater global leadership under President Xi Jinping, China's top diplomat said Thursday as he sought to dismiss concerns about China's rise while also underscoring its inevitability.

From providing the most peacekeepers of any U.N. Security Council member to facilitating talks in world conflicts, "the China of today should play a more active role in resolving hot issues in the region and the world," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said. "This is not only something we should do, but what is widely expected of us."

Wang spoke on the fringes of China's annual, largely ceremonial legislative session at a news conference, where he was asked whether China's recent

efforts to push for peace talks in Myanmar and between Israeli and Palestinian delegations, for instance, represented a shift in its longstanding non-interference foreign policy.

China remains committed to non-interference, Wang said, arguing that those in the West who are alarmed by China's growing clout and overseas activity are affected by bias.

"The development and rejuvenation of China is irresistible," Wang said. "Some people in the United States believe that China therefore wants to replace the role of the U.S. in the international arena. This is a fundamental, strategic misjudgment."

"China and the United States can compete without necessarily being opponents, they should more be partners," he added, while warning that a possible trade war mullied by

President Donald Trump would hurt the U.S.

"Especially in today's globalized world, a trade war is the wrong prescription," he said.

Wang emphasized what he called the key role played in China's more proactive foreign policy by President Xi Jinping, who is likely to remain leader indefinitely after the legislature lifts presidential term limits.

"Since 2012, President Xi Jinping has been the chief architect of China's major-country diplomacy. He was personally involved in the planning and conduct of head of state diplomacy, which by world acclaim has been brilliant," Wang said.

Xi has visited 57 countries and received more than 110 foreign heads of state, Wang said, citing Xi's "leadership and charisma." (AP)



# Kurdish, Arab fighters drop Islamic State fight to defend Syria's Afrin

**QAMISHLI (SYRIA) (TIP):** Hundreds of miles away from family and friends facing an attack by Turkey, Kurdish and Arab forces deployed in the eastern Syrian desert against jihadists have become increasingly frustrated.

Six weeks into the Turkey-led assault on the Kurdish enclave of Afrin, young men and women are leaving the fight against the Islamic State group in droves to head west to help.

Kurdish militia have formed the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance that has successfully expelled IS from much of Syria with the backing of a US-led military coalition.

But as news of the battle in Afrin reaches them, the fighters have become reluctant to hunt down jihadists in their last hideouts in Deir Ezzor province.

"We're preparing to head to Afrin," SDF fighter Roshavam Qamishlo told AFP on Saturday. The enclave "needs us now more than ever".

He spoke at the funeral of three comrades-in-arms in the northeastern town of Qamishli, where dozens came to pay their respects to those killed in Deir Ezzor.

"They should have died in Afrin," he said, as their coffins were displayed in the middle of the crowd, draped in the Kurdish colours of yellow, red and green.

Arab fighters, too, have opted to ditch battlefronts against IS to shore up lines of defence in Afrin.

On Tuesday, SDF commander Abu Omar al-Idlibi said 1,700 of his fighters - mostly Arabs from northern Syria whose families had sought refuge in Afrin -- would be sent to defend the enclave in the coming week.

Afrin, which is controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, is one of three regions Syria's Kurds hope will be part of a self-ruled federal region in the country's north.

Turkey sees the YPG as a "terrorist" group and has bombarded the region with air strikes and artillery fire since January 20.



More than 170 civilians have died in the assault, says the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor.

Ankara however denies the claim and says it takes the "utmost care" to avoid civilian casualties.

The offensive has prompted a call-to-arms for the YPG and SDF, and one senior SDF official says "hundreds of fighters from Afrin and who have relatives there have returned to defend" their people.

As a result, the US-led coalition declared an "operational pause" to its anti-IS fight in eastern Syria on Monday.

US and coalition officials have said they will not get involved in the Afrin fighting and expressed concern it would detract from the SDF's operations against IS. In addition to reinforcements from IS battlefronts, other fighters have streamed into Afrin from Qamishli, Hasakeh in the northeast and Kobane further west, says Rezan Hedo, an adviser to the YPG in Afrin.

Others even travelled from the Kurdish neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsud in the northern city of Aleppo, Hedo tells AFP.

In Qamishli, another fighter who gave his nom de guerre as Nushin Qamishlo

said he would also join the fight on the Turkish border.

"We all want to go," said the 25-year-old, who sported a thick beard and whose head was wrapped in a bright blue scarf.

"We're highly capable and will take on the Turks even without the coalition's help." Fighter Al-Ashqar Nuseen feared losing Afrin could be a huge blow to his long-awaited dreams of a federal Syrian Kurdish region.

"We will defend Afrin with all our might, taking on the Turks like we did Daesh," he said, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

Ali Omar, 65, a Syrian Kurdish bystander at the funeral in Qamishli, said he supported the Kurdish fighters withdrawing from Deir Ezzor.

"When it's our interests, our people, our villages and our towns that are threatened, we're forced to leave everything and head to defend our homeland," he said.

But he questioned why the US-led coalition, which the Kurds have aided in its fight against IS in Syria, had not intervened to help the Kurds in Afrin.

"Why are we helping you in Deir Ezzor and other places, and you don't help us in Afrin?" (AFP)

## EU's Tusk: No Brexit progress without Irish border solution

**LONDON (TIP):** European Council President Donald Tusk has warned that there can't be progress toward a post-Brexit trade deal until the issue of the Irish border is resolved.

Tusk says that until Britain presents a plan to keep the all-but-invisible border open, "it is very difficult to imagine substantive progress in Brexit negotiations."

Britain and the EU agreed in December that there must be no customs posts or other impediments along the border between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland. But they have not agreed on how to do it.

Britain has rejected the EU's suggestion, which is to keep Northern Ireland inside the bloc's customs union.

Speaking Thursday alongside Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar in Dublin, Tusk said Britain must propose "a specific and realistic solution to avoid a hard border." (AP)

## Iraqi teenager held for 'bomb attack plot' in Germany or Britain

**BERLIN (TIP):** Germany has remanded in custody a 17-year-old Iraqi suspected of having planned an explosives attack for the Islamic State jihadist group in Germany or Britain, prosecutors said on March 8.

The teenager, identified only as Deday A., hoarded a large amount of pyrotechnics at his home and allegedly planned to use the black powder to make an explosive device, said federal prosecutors.

The suspect, who was first arrested on February 13 in the state of Hesse, faced a judge Wednesday who ordered him remanded in pre-trial custody on charges of having planned an attack.

"The accused is alleged to have procured explosives to commit an Islamist attack in Germany or Britain," the prosecutors said in a statement, adding that he was a suspected member of IS. German authorities have been on heightened alert since IS claimed a lorry assault on a Berlin Christmas market in December 2016 which killed 12 people. Dozens of suspects have been arrested or charged over alleged terror plots. (AFP)

## Germany to get new foreign minister as Gabriel loses job

**BERLIN:** Germany's Sigmar Gabriel, foreign minister for the last year, confirmed on Thursday that he would not be a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's new government.

Merkel's conservatives and the Social Democrats (SPD) agreed in their coalition talks that the SPD will retain control of the Foreign Ministry and the party has said it will announce who the minister will be on Friday.

The frontrunners are Heiko Maas, 51, justice minister in the last 'grand coalition', and Katarina Barley, 49, who has been family minister since 2017 with a strong interest in European affairs and whose father is British.

Maas brought in new laws forcing social media companies like Facebook and Twitter to remove hate speech from their sites and is a vocal critic of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Gabriel, a former leader of the SPD, said the party's new leaders, Olaf Scholz and Andrea Nahles, had told him he would not be part of the government due to be sworn in next week. The move is no surprise, partly because he is known to have a tense relationship with Nahles.

Tensions between the two spiked last month when Gabriel complained publicly that he learned from the media that Martin Schulz, the party's previous leader, would take over as foreign minister. Schulz subsequently withdrew from the post and the leadership role.

In his statement on Thursday, Gabriel struck a more gracious tone, saying it had been a "big honour for which I am deeply grateful" to serve his party and his country.

"It was an exciting and eventful time which opened up big opportunities and experiences that went way beyond what I would dare to dream of as a younger person," he said on Facebook.

Before taking over the Foreign Ministry, he had been economy minister where he oversaw renewable energy reforms.

Respected by some for plain speaking and taking a clear stance with countries including Saudi Arabia and Turkey, he was also widely seen as something of a loose cannon. He is known for changing his mind on issues, such as on migrant policy and on phasing out coal. (Reuters)

## Saudi women take the wheel, test-driving a new freedom

**JIDDAH (TIP):** In a few short months, women in Saudi Arabia will be allowed to take the wheel - but first there's driver's ed.

At a university in Jiddah, dozens of women who have never driven before are learning to buckle up, check their mirrors and gently brake. Like first-time drivers anywhere, they are giddy with anticipation, and perhaps a bit nervous, as they look forward to gaining a new level of freedom.

A stunning royal decree issued last year by King Salman announcing that women would be allowed to drive in 2018 upended one of the most visible forms of discrimination against women in Saudi Arabia, where guardianship laws still give men the final say on whether a woman can travel abroad, obtain a passport or marry.

## S. Korea leader sees more obstacles ahead to disarm N. Korea

**SEOUL (TIP):** South Korea's president said on March 8 that many "critical moments" still lie ahead to end the nuclear crisis despite North Korea's recent outreach to Seoul and Washington. Moon Jae-in spoke before two senior Seoul officials left for the United States to brief officials about the outcome of their recent visit to North Korea. The Seoul officials said North Korea offered talks with the United States over normalizing ties and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Seoul said the North also agreed to suspend nuclear and missile tests during such future talks.

Some experts question how sincere North Korea is about its reported offers, citing what they call its track record of using past disarmament talks to wrest aid and concessions while covertly continuing its bomb program.

According to the South Korean officials, North Korea said it has no reason to possess nuclear weapons as long as military threats against the country are removed and its security is guaranteed. That's the same position North Korea has long maintained to justify its nuclear program or call for the withdrawal of 28,500 U.S. troops and a halt to annual U.S.-South Korean military drills as a condition for scrapping its nuclear program. The North sees the allies' drills as an invasion rehearsal. "We've overcome one critical moment. But there are many critical moments that we still have to go through before reaching the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a permanent peace," Moon said in a meeting with church leaders. (AP)





## Raveena Tandon booked for shooting ad inside Lingaraj Temple

The authorities of Sri Lingaraj Temple have lodged an FIR against Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon for allegedly shooting an advertisement in the 'No Camera Zone' inside the premises of the 11th century and ASI protected lord Shiva shrine.

The incident came to the fore after a video surfaced in social media featuring Tandon offering beauty tips inside the temple premises and it is recorded by a person with a mobile phone. She had visited the temple on Sunday.

"The temple administration has filed a complaint against Raveena Tandon at Lingaraj Police Station for shooting an advertisement film in the no camera zone," said Rajiv Lochan Parida, the management-in-charge of the temple administration.

Admitting that such an FIR has been lodged, Bhubaneswar DCP Satybrat Bhoi said the police are examining the allegations.

Only servitors are allowed to carry mobile phones inside the temple, Parida said adding it is a clear case of violation of the security norms.

The incident has also hurt sentiments of the devotees, he said.

The Archaeological Survey of India has also launched an investigation into the matter.

Source: PTI

# SUNNY LEONE, DANIEL WEBER NOW WELCOME TWIN BABY BOYS



Sunny Leone and Daniel Weber show off their big happy family in new photo. Pic Courtesy: Instagram

Sunny Leone shared an amazing, happy news with her fans on Monday morning. The actor revealed that she and her husband, Daniel Weber became parents to two baby boys 'a few weeks ago.'

Sunny called it 'God's plan' in an Instagram post. "God's Plan!! June 21st, 2017 was the day @dirrty99 and I found out that we might possibly be having 3 children within a short amount of time. We planned and tried to have

a family and after so many years, our family is now complete with Asher Singh Weber, Noah Singh Weber and Nisha Kaur Weber. Our boys were born a few weeks ago but were alive in our hearts and eyes for many years. God planned something so special for us and gave us a large family. We are both the proud parents of three beautiful children. Surprise everyone!," she wrote in the post.

"Say Hello to Noah and Asher Weber !!!

#family @sunnyleone @dirrty99 :))). The next chapter of life !!! Karen, Nisha, Noah, Asher and Me!!!! Proud!!!!," Daniel wrote on Instagram.

Nisha, whom the couple adopted in July 2017 from Latur, Maharashtra, looks happy and excited about her brothers' arrival in the photo. It is not yet revealed by the couple if the babies were adopted or born via a surrogate.

Source: HT

## BOLLYWOOD ACTOR IRRFAN KHAN SUFFERING FROM 'RARE DISEASE'

Bollywood actor Irrfan Khan has revealed that he is suffering from a "rare disease".

The actor took to Twitter on March 5 to talk about his illness. "Sometimes you wake up with a jolt with life shaking you up. The last fifteen days, my life has been a suspense story. Little had I known that my search for rare stories would make me find a rare disease," he wrote.

"I have never given up and have always fought for my choices and always will. My family and friends are with me and we are working it out the best way possible," he added.

The actor asked his fans not to speculate on his condition, adding that he would share more when "further investigations come with a conclusive diagnosis".

Irrfan, 51, has acted in more than 100 films, including Bollywood hits Piku, Maqbool, Haasil and Paan Singh Tomar. His English language films include Life of Pi, Slumdog Millionaire and The Amazing Spider-Man.



In 2013, he won India's National Film Award for his leading role in Paan Singh Tomar.

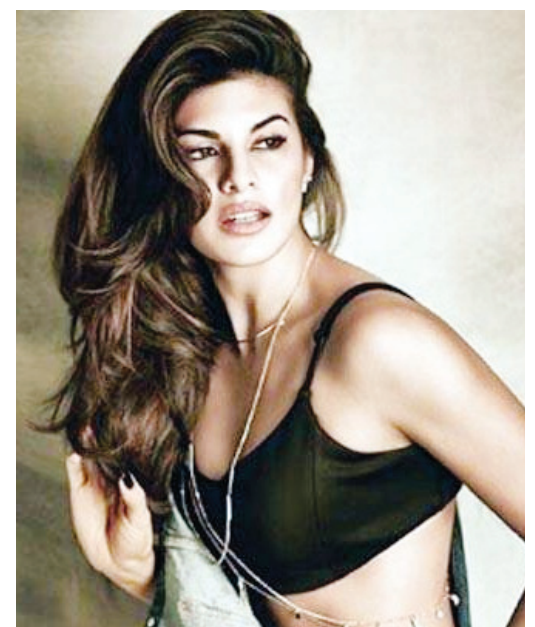
He has also won the Viewers' Choice Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013 for the film The Lunchbox. It was also the only Indian film to be selected for competition at the London Film Festival that year.

## I will be working with Salman in Kick 2: Jacqueline

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez, who was said to have been replaced in Kick 2, says if filmmaker Sajid Nadiadwala has confirmed her presence in the upcoming film, then she will be starring alongside superstar Salman Khan in it. Jacqueline worked with Salman in the blockbuster film Kick in 2014. There were rumours about Jacqueline not starring in its sequel. However, Nadiadwala put these rumours to rest in an interview last month.

Reacting to it, Jacqueline said: "Sajid Nadiadwala has confirmed then yes, I will be working with Salman (Khan) in Kick 2." Jacqueline was interacting with media at Super Fight League (SFL), as the brand ambassador of Goa Pirates team on Saturday. The actor, also a fitness enthusiast, feels happy to bag the opportunity to support the MMA Super Fight League.

Source: IANS







## JENNIFER LAWRENCE DEFENDS GOING NUDE FOR RED SPARROW

Actor Jennifer Lawrence has defended her decision to do nude scenes for *Red Sparrow*, saying she felt it fit in the narrative of the film.

The 27-year-old actor plays the Russian prima ballerina turned Soviet operative Dominika Egorova in the Francis Lawrence-directed film, which is based on a best-selling novel by former CIA agent Jason Matthews.

"Red Sparrow really scared the hell out of me because I get nude. I tried to do the movie without nudity but realized it just wouldn't be right to put the character through something that I, myself, am not willing to go through," Lawrence said.

The mother! actor, who was a victim of the 2014 phone hack in which her private nude photos were leaked to the internet, said she feared backlash for her choice.

"My biggest fear was that people would say, 'Oh, how can you complain about the hack if you're going to get nude anyway?'," Lawrence told *Vanity Fair*.

Lawrence said that the movie presented her an opportunity to reclaim her sexual empowerment as she made a contrast between the hack and her choice to bare all for a film.

"One is my choice. I got something back that was taken from me, and it also felt normal," Lawrence added.

# 'THE SHAPE OF WATER' WINS BEST PICTURE OSCAR



Best Actress Frances McDormand, Best Supporting actor Sam Rockwell, Best Supporting Actress Allison Janney and Best Actor Gary Oldman leave the press room holding their Oscars during the 90th Annual Academy Awards.

The Oscars went all in for a tale of a lady and her beloved fish-man.

Guillermo del Toro's fantasy romance *The Shape of Water* picked up four honors — including the night's big prize, best picture — at the 90th Academy Awards Sunday night. Del Toro took home best director for his film, which also won for original score and production design.

The acting Oscars went to a bevy of favorites this awards season. Frances McDormand received best actress for the darkly comedic drama *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, while her co-star Sam Rockwell was named best supporting actor. Gary Oldman won best actor for playing Winston Churchill in the World War II drama *Darkest Hour*, and Allison Janney earned her first Academy

Award — for supporting actress — as Tonya Harding's mother in the biopic *I, Tonya*.

History was made in the writing categories: Get Out filmmaker Jordan Peele became the first African American to take original screenplay, and 89-year-old James Ivory is now the oldest Oscar winner after winning adapted screenplay for *Call Me By Your Name*.

## EMMA WATSON FLAUNTS 'TIME'S UP' TATTOO AT OSCARS AFTERPARTY

Hollywood actor Emma Watson lent her support to the Time's Up movement at the Oscars afterparty as she sported a tattoo promoting the cause. The actor, however, has not commented if the tattoo is permanent or temporary. The ink read 'Times Up' on her arm, missing the apostrophe for the organisation.

Watson, 27, has been an outspoken proponent of the Time's Up movement, which began after bombshell exposes revealed decades of alleged sexual misconduct by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. The movement calls on people who have experienced sexual misconduct in the workplace to speak up. A number of Hollywood stars, including Watson, have voiced their support and donated to the movement.

"There is no question that #TIMESUP should be and will be a global movement. A movement that is defined and led by those affected by the problem, not by those in power," Watson wrote in a recent Instagram post.

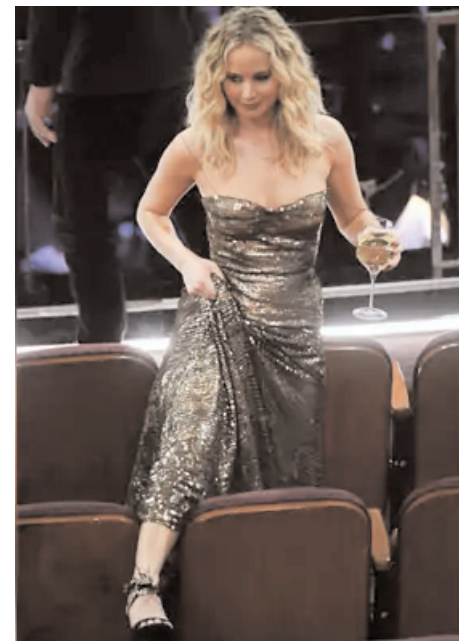


## Jennifer Lawrence climbs over chairs at Oscars

Actress Jennifer Lawrence was seen hitching up her sequined dress to climb over rows of chairs to get to her seat at the 90th Academy Awards here — and that too with a wine glass in hand.

Lawrence, 27, dazzled in a platinum sequin Dior gown and strappy heels. She did not fall. According to reports, she hiked up her dress and raised a leg over a chair at the Dolby Theatre, holding her floor-length gown in one hand and a full wine glass in another.

The *'Red Sparrow'* star had famously slipped on stage at the 2013 Oscars as she made her way up the stairs to accept her award for Best Actress in *'Silver Linings Playbook'*. In the following year, she tripped on the red carpet. At this year's Oscars, Lawrence and Jodie Foster presented the trophy for Best Actress in a Leading Role to Frances McDormand for *'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri'*.





## Vinay Kumar appointed India's Ambassador to Afghanistan



Vinay Kumar succeeds Manpreet Vohra as India's Ambassador to Afghanistan

**NEW DELHI(TIP)** : Senior diplomat Vinay Kumar has been appointed as India's ambassador to strategically key Afghanistan.

He will replace Manpreet Vohra in Kabul.

Kumar, a 1992 batch Indian Foreign Service officer, is currently serving as Joint Secretary (South) in the headquarters of the external affairs ministry here.

"He is expected to take up his assignment shortly," the ministry said in a release, March 1. Vohra has been serving as ambassador of India to Afghanistan since January 2016.

Kumar, a graduate from IIT Kharagpur, has served in various positions. He had also worked in India's permanent mission to the United Nations in New York.

India and Afghanistan are strategic partners and relations between the two countries have been on an upswing in the last few years.

India has invested over \$2 billion in aid and in development projects in the war-ravaged country.

In September last year, India made a fresh announcement of taking up 116 "high impact community developmental projects" in 31 provinces of Afghanistan.

## Pakistan appoints investment banking expert as envoy to US

**ISLAMABAD (TIP)**: Pakistan has appointed investment banking expert Ali Jahangir Siddiqui as its next ambassador to the US, government sources said on Thursday. Siddiqui, son of prominent businessman and banker Jahangir Siddiqui, will replace Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry.

Chaudhry's tenure is due to expire and the government hasn't offered him an extension.

Sources in the government said that Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi after consultations approved the appointment and Siddiqui is expected to take up responsibilities next month after completion of formalities.

His appointment comes at a time of fresh strain in ties between Islamabad and Washington after the US successfully moved the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to place Pakistan on the global terror financing watch-list. Siddiqui was appointed as the special assistant to the PM on economic and business matters in August last.

He had also served as chairman of JS Bank Ltd, which was founded by his stockbroker-turned-banker father Jahangir Siddiqui. He separated from business after his appointment as the special assistant.

Siddiqui has no direct experience of diplomacy as he served at different positions in various business and commercial entities in Pakistan and abroad. He was honoured by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader in 2014. (PTI)

# Mosque, shops attacked in anti-Muslim riots in Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO (TIP)**: Sri Lankan police said petrol bombs were hurled at a mosque on March 8 as hundreds of troops patrolled a troubled central district where anti-Muslim violence has left three people dead.

Muslim-owned businesses were set on fire and vandalised in several parts of Sri Lanka, police said, days after an island-wide state of emergency was imposed to curb riots in Kandy.

Armoured vehicles and heavily-armed troops fortified the hill district, where internet services remain suspended and an evening curfew is in place.

The government ordered the internet blackout after police discovered mobs of Sinhalese rioters were using social media to coordinate attacks on Muslim establishments.

More than 200 homes, businesses and vehicles have been torched in three days of violence by mobs from the mainly Buddhist Sinhalese majority.

A 24-hour curfew was imposed on Wednesday afternoon after a hand grenade exploded in the hands of an attacker, killing him and wounding 11 others, officials said.

The day-time curfew was eased following a calm night but tensions remain high in the tourist hotspot and schools shuttered.

But in Kuruvita, 125 kilometres (78 miles) south of Kandy, police said petrol bombs were lobbed at a mosque. Little damage was inflicted and three suspects are being pursued.

In Weligama, 240 kilometres south of Kandy, a Muslim-owned business was attacked, police said, while Muslim establishments were pelted with stones in at least two other locations outside Kandy.

Sri Lanka's telecoms regulator asked internet providers to block access to Facebook and other social media platforms to prevent the spread of anti-Muslim hate speech.

Police have already identified anti-Muslim messages being shared on social networks, including a video posted by a hardline Buddhist monk urging violence against



Muslims.

Muslims in Kandy complained that security forces and police -- equipped with special powers to detain under the emergency provision -- were slow to react as the violence unfolded. "The main junction is going up in flames. At the same time, the authorities are folding their arms and watching," said Muslim businessman M. Jaffer, as quoted in Thursday's DailyFT newspaper.

Former Sri Lankan cricket captain Kumar Sangakkara alluded to the island's history of ethnic violence in urging his countrymen "to say no to racism".

"We have to make sure that in Sri Lanka anyone and everyone feels safe, loved and accepted regardless of ethnicity or religion," he said in a video posted to Twitter.

President Maithripala Sirisena toured Kandy on Wednesday and ordered security forces to use the full force of the law against troublemakers.

Military officials said more reinforcements were sent to the area on Wednesday night to assist police who resorted to teargas to

disperse rioters the previous evening.

The United Nations has condemned the violence and urged Colombo "to ensure that appropriate measures are swiftly taken to restore normalcy in affected areas".

The Kandy region, 115 kilometres (72 miles) east of the capital Colombo, is popular with tourists as well as Buddhist pilgrims.

Holidaymakers have been urged to avoid the hill resort but no foreigners have been reported involved in the unrest.

"Shops are opening, and more people can be seen on the roads since the curfew was lifted," a police official in the area said by telephone.

Kandy is home to Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist shrine, the Temple of the Tooth Relic. The chief custodian of the UNESCO-listed temple, Pradeep Nilanga Dela, said foreign tourists and pilgrims were flocking to the shrine despite the tensions.

The unrest began Monday after a Sinhalese man died following injuries sustained at the hands of a Muslim mob last week. Conflict escalated when a Muslim man was found dead in a burnt building on Tuesday. (AFP)

## Serial killer, two others sentenced to death in Bangladesh

**DHAKA (TIP)**: A notorious serial killer who allegedly killed 11 women in Bangladesh has been sentenced to death along with his two accomplices for raping and murdering a woman, according to a media report.

Rashu Khan, Jahirul Islam and Yunus Miah raped and killed the 35-year-old victim in Hasa village of the Chandpur district, bdnews reported.

Chandpur Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal and District and Sessions Judge Abul Mannan handed down the verdict yesterday after examining all records and witnesses, Mir Kashem, sub-inspector of Chandpur Sadar police station, was quoted as saying bdnews.

Earlier on April 22, 2015, the self-confessed killer was sentenced to death for killing a garment worker in Chandpur.

The worker was killed after being raped near Nanupur canal of Faridganj in Chandpur on August 18, 2008.

Rashu was arrested on October 7, 2009 from Nirashpur of Tongi for stealing a fan from a mosque. He later confessed to the killing 11 women after raping them.

He wanted to kill a total of 101 women and then take refuge at the Shahjalal shrine in Sylhet, the report said.

Rashu's first victim was the wife of his brother-in-law in 2007. He used to have relations with women on the pretext of marrying them but instead killed them after raping them in remote areas of Chandpur. (PTI)

## Islamic State group calls on Muslims to immigrate to Afghanistan

**KABUL (TIP)**: The Islamic State group in Afghanistan is inviting Muslims worldwide to come to the war-torn country if they cannot reach Syria or Iraq, as it seeks to expand its foothold.

A 25-minute propaganda film released by the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K) on March 4 promotes IS strongholds in Afghanistan's north and east as an "option for immigration", the SITE Intelligence Group said Tuesday.

"O you Muslims in every corner of the world! Immigrate to Khorasan! If you are incapable of immigrating to Iraq and Sham (Syria), come to Khorasan," a fighter said on the video.

The name Khorasan refers to a historic region which includes parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan and neighbouring countries.

The video comes amid growing concerns that IS fighters fleeing battlefields in Syria and Iraq are finding their way to Afghanistan, where the group has a small but potent presence.

AFP recently reported that French and Algerian fighters, some arriving from Syria, had joined IS in the northern Afghan province of Jowzjan.

A German national was also recently arrested with the Taliban in the restive southern province of Helmand, Afghan officials said last week. He is one of the only Europeans found among the militants throughout the 16-year war. The IS video published with an Arabic narration showed some fighters delivering messages in Pashto, Persian and Uzbek languages.

It opens with a narration mocking US President Donald Trump's vow to destroy the group in Afghanistan and goes on to show executions of prisoners and the training of child soldiers.

IS-K was attempting to turn "rumours" of foreign fighters moving to Afghanistan from Syria "into reality", Borhan Osman, a senior analyst at International Crisis Group, told AFP.

But the group would struggle to persuade fighters to travel as far as Afghanistan, said Emily Winterbotham, a senior research fellow at the UK-based Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. (AFP)



Sikkim is the second smallest state in India, and is wedged between Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and West Bengal, but encompasses an astounding range of pristine natural beauty of the Himalayas. A traveller's guide to Sikkim explores the stunning beauty of this Himalayas hill town. The Sikkimese call their land 'Ney Mayal Lyang' that translates to 'heaven.'

Sikkim is located in the north eastern part of India, but is not a part of the Seven Sister states. The state is famous for dazzling waterfalls, virgin forests, Tibetan style Buddhist Gompas, alpine meadows, rhododendron flowers and more. Kanchenjunga (also Kanchenzonga) at 8598 m is the third highest peak in the world, and lies in Sikkim.

More than 60 percent of the former Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim is mountainous, and there are sizeable numbers of 6000 m peaks on the eastern and western borders of the state. Sikkim has an impressive literacy rate of more than 70 percent. It was merged with India in 1975, and is a prosperous state today.

Weather in most parts of Sikkim is pleasant throughout the year (except in higher altitudes), and that makes it a favourite of holidaymakers from the Indian plains in the summer months. Bengalis through the tourist towns of Sikkim during their holiday season of Durga Puja in October-November. The state abounds in a variety of flora and fauna, and lucky ones may also sight the endangered red panda.

### PELLING

Pelling lies in West Sikkim, perched at an altitude of 2100 m and is approximately 120 km away from Gangtok. At first glance Pelling looks like a cluster of concrete hotels, but there are unparalleled views of the snowy peaks. Sunrise over the Kanchenjunga is Pelling's biggest charm. With plenty of budget accommodation options, it also makes for a great base to explore other parts of West Sikkim.

Chief sights in and around Pelling are Pemangyatse Monastery, built more than 300 years ago, which is beautifully located amid green gardens; a huge Buddha statue and statues of reincarnations of Padmasambhava; and Pemangyatse Monastery, famous for the Chaam dances (masked dances) held in February/March.

### YUKSOM

The historic little town of Yuksom was the first capital of Sikkim when three Lamas converged from different directions and crowned the first Chogyal (King) in 1641. There is still a stone throne that marks the coronation spot, and is known as Norbugang Chorten, the site is called Norbugang Park. Yuksom has the charming feel of a hamlet; it is lower in altitude than Pelling and is situated in a valley.

If you are coming to Yuksom (Also Yuksam) from Pelling, then a short detour will bring you to Rimbi Waterfalls which is quite a sight in the monsoon. Just 9 km before Yuksom, you will cross the Kanchenjunga Waterfall, which is a majestic waterfall falling from a great height.

There is a small pond known by the name of Kathok Lake in Yuksom, a short walk will bring you to a ridge where once stood a palace of the King of Sikkim. There are also two new colourful Gompas above Yuksom, but the most beautiful monastery is the 1701 built Dubdi Monastery. The path to Dubdi Monastery is lined with prayer flags and is located amid lush greenery.

### TASHIDING

If coming from Yuksom, you will come across one of Sikkim's prettiest falls. The Phamrong waterfalls are around halfway on the Yuksom-Tashiding route. Tashiding is a small town located high above the confluence

# SIKKIM: A WINDOW ONTO THE HIMALAYA



of the Rangeet and Rathong rivers.

Tashiding Gompa is the most sacred monastery in Sikkim, the mere sight of Thongwa Rangdol Chorten – a chorten inside the complex, is said to cleanse every one of their sins. The monastery is said to have been built in 1641 and is set in an idyllic location surrounded by many ancient looking white chortens. Tall prayer flags in white (called Darchor) line up the staircase path to Tashiding Monastery, while the views from the Gompa are superb. Intricately carved mani stones with the Buddhist mantra, Om Mani Padme Hum are piled up on one another to form a mani wall near the monastery complex.

### RUMTEK MONASTERY

Undoubtedly, this is Sikkim's most famous monastery, and every visitor to Sikkim is likely to visit the Rumtek Monastery, even in a 3-4 day trip to Sikkim. Rumtek Village is 24 km away from Gangtok (Sikkim's capital), and the monastery is the headquarters of the Black Hat Sect (one of the oldest sects of Tibetan Buddhism).

There are two buildings of Rumtek Monastery, one is relatively newer (built in 1966), and the older Rumtek Monastery was founded in 1740 by the fourth Chogyal of Sikkim. A path leads to a shrine called Golden Stupa, it is a chorten made of silver and gold, and studded with precious stones such as turquoise, amber and coral. It is recommended to attend the morning prayers at Rumtek Monastery.

### TSOMGO LAKE

Pronounced Changu, this scenic lake is perched at 3750 m above sea level and lies 40 km away from Gangtok on the way to Nathu La. The drive to Tsomgo Lake is spectacular, and the lake itself is a pristine water body surrounded by wildflowers for most of the year. A particularly mentionable tourist attraction is that visitors can go for yak rides near the periphery of the lake. Tsomgo Lake freezes in the cold winters, but can still be accessed if the road is open.

A visit to the lake requires a special permit



from the Tourism Office in Gangtok. The permit can be arranged by a travel agent for a small fee, and there are lots of taxis and shared taxis available for a visit to Tsomgo Lake. There are a few dhabas near Tsomgo

Lake serving maggi and other fast food, and also shops that sell woollens.

The best views of the lake are after climbing up a nearby hilltop from where the entire lake is visible.



# TINDER MAKES IT EASY FOR YOUTH TO CHEAT ON THEIR PARTNERS

The popular dating app Tinder, which is supposed to help people form new relationships, is increasingly helping youngsters cheat on their romantic partners, a study claims. However, the app also makes it easier to catch cheaters, researchers said. Scientists from the Texas Tech University in the US showed that a significant number of college students are using Tinder to meet what they called "extradyadic partners" - that is, a partner outside of and in addition to the partner in a committed, romantic relationship.

"A couple of years ago, one of my students shared the story that she had come across a friend's boyfriend on Tinder, and she was not sure whether she should tell her friend," said Dana Weiser, an assistant professor at Texas Tech. "So, although Tinder may make it easy to meet potential partners, the potential for exposure may be high," Weiser said.

Among the 550 undergraduate students who participated in the study, 12.5 per cent had spent time with someone they met on Tinder, 17.1 per cent had messaged someone on Tinder, 8.9 per cent had been physically intimate and 7.2 per cent reported having sexual relations with someone they met on Tinder while in an exclusive relationship.

"We know infidelity is quite common among college-aged adults as they grow and learn about relationships, not to mention there is quite a bit of opportunity," Weiser said. "Our results are consistent with previous research and suggest Tinder may be one way college students meet extradyadic partners," he said. Ironically, although the numbers show college students are



using Tinder to find partners outside their relationships, many of these same participants said they were not sure Tinder was a good way to do so. "The participants are quite mixed though as to whether Tinder is an effective way to meet extradyadic partners," Weiser said.

"This may be because, while it is easy to meet individuals via Tinder, it may also be very easy to get caught, as a percentage of our participants also indicated they saw people who they knew were in relationships on Tinder," she said.

Researchers found two personality traits they said could predict a

person's likelihood to cheat on a partner: willingness and intention to engage in infidelity. "We expected that these same personality traits that predict in-person infidelity would also be associated with engaging in infidelity via Tinder," Weiser said. "We found those traits were more important for predicting infidelity than gender. Basically, men and women looked very similar when we accounted for personality," he said. Researchers emphasised that it is unclear if Tinder is actually increasing rates of infidelity or simply giving people a different way to meet extradyadic partners. *Source: PTI*

## FOODS FOR GLOWING SKIN

### Avocado

Packed with antioxidants like lutein and beta carotene, avocados help soften the skin as well as hydrate it if applied topically. You can use a moisturising mask of avocado with 1 teaspoon honey to reap the benefits of this super fruit. You'll feel the difference instantly! You can also check our interesting recipes to include avocado in your daily diet; perhaps, combine avocado with orange juice as a salad dressing or mix it up with cilantro and cumin for a dip or a sauce for a creamy portion of pasta.



### Oranges



The peel of the orange, actually contains more vitamin C than the orange itself. The peel contains antimicrobial and antibacterial properties so using it regularly in face packs will give you clear and brighter skin in no time. What's in season will make your skin glow. Orange peel and yoghurt face pack can instantly rejuvenate your skin; all you need is 1 tablespoon of orange peel powder and 2 tablespoon of yoghurt to do the trick. You can also add 1 tablespoon of sandalwood powder and 1 tablespoon of walnut powder to 1 tablespoon of orange peel powder with a few drops of lemon juice and rose water to get bright skin.

### Pumpkin

Pumpkins have it all - antioxidants, vitamins (A and C) and minerals. Pumpkins are rich in zinc which is vital in the creation of new skin cells, and also helps regulate oil production, improve skin tone and reduce the appearance of open pores. All you have to do is eat a handful of pumpkin seeds to brighten your complexion and get the glow you've always wanted. You can also apply a DIY face mask of 3 teaspoons pumpkin, ½ teaspoon honey and ½ teaspoon milk for 15-20 minutes.

### Tomato

Tomatoes are packed with natural vitamins and minerals, including Vitamin A, K, B1, B3, B5, B6, B7, and vitamin C. But what makes tomatoes stand out in the beauty world, is lycopene, an antioxidant which has amazing anti-ageing properties. You can apply the pulp or juice of tomatoes on your skin to activate the lycopene benefits. And if this couldn't get any better, the pulp of tomatoes also helps tighten pores and prevent pimples since tomatoes are acidic in nature. It also acts as a natural sunscreen.



## FOOD CORNER

### SPICY CHICKEN MASALA

#### Ingredients

2 Tbsp Mustard oil, 2 Tbsp Curry leaves, 1 tsp Kalonjee, 1 tsp Saunf, 2 tsp Garlic, 1 Cup Onion, chopped, 1 Cup Tomatoes, chopped, 1/2 tsp Ginger, 5 Nos Green Chillies, 1 Kg Boneless Chicken, 1 tsp Salt, 1 tsp Tomato puree, 1 Tbsp Red chilli powder, 1 tsp Cumin powder, 1 tsp Black salt, 1 tsp Peppercorn (crushed), 1 Cup Water, 1 Tbsp Mint, 1 Cup Coriander

#### Method

- Heat mustard oil in a pan.
- Add curry leaves and fry on a low flame.
- Take out the fried curry leaves and put kalonjee, saunf and garlic in the same oil. Roast them together until yellowish-brown.
- Now add chopped onion and mix them until golden brown.
- Add tomato puree, ginger and green chillies to the pan and mix well.
- Cover the pan and let it cook for a while.
- Now open the pan and add the boneless chicken pieces to the cooked masala.



- Mix the chicken thoroughly to coat it well with the masala.
- Add some salt and tomato puree. Stir well.
- Bring to simmer, and add red chilli powder, cumin powder, black salt and crushed peppercorn. Mix well.
- Add a cup of water and let it cook till simmer.
- Put a cup of mint leaves followed by coriander leaves. Mix thoroughly.
- Add the fried curry leaves in the end. Mix well and cook till simmer.
- Serve hot with little garnishing of coriander leaves.

### MATAR PANEER MASALA

#### Ingredients

1 Cup Peas, 2 Nos Onions, 2 Cups Oil, 12-13 Paneer Cubes, 2 Nos Bay Leaves, 1 tsp Cumin Seeds, 1 tsp Ginger- Garlic Paste, 1 tsp Salt, 1 tsp Turmeric Powder, 1 tsp Coriander Powder, 1/2 tsp Red Chilli Powder, 1 Green Chilli, chopped, 1/2 Cup Tomato pureed, 1 tsp Coriander Leaves, 1 tsp Garam Masala

#### Method

In a bowl of boiling water add peas to soften them. Boil long chopped onions in water for better grinding. Turn off the flame and grind it to a fine paste. Heat oil in a pan and deep fry the paneer cubes.

In a heavy bottomed pan heat a tablespoon of oil and add bay leaves and cumin seeds. When they crackle add ginger garlic paste and onion paste. Mix well and cook for a minute.

Now add the spices such as salt, turmeric powder, coriander powder and red chilli powder. Put the chopped green chilli and mix thoroughly to combine the masalas well. Cook until oil starts separating spices and releases aroma. Now add the tomato puree and cook on medium flame for thorough mixing of ingredients.

Now add peas and fried paneer to it. Stir with light hands and coat them well with the gravy.



# NOVEL BLOOD TEST MAY DETECT ZIKA MORE ACCURATELY

A new blood test may extend the window of accurate detection from weeks to months after the onset of Zika infection, giving clinicians a powerful new tool to screen for Zika throughout pregnancy, a new study led by an Indian-origin researcher suggests. Infection with Zika virus during pregnancy raises risk for neurodevelopmental problems in the offspring, including fetal microcephaly - a condition in which a baby's head is significantly smaller than expected -- in at least one in ten pregnancies.

The blood test called ZIKV-NS2B-concat ELISA improves on existing options, providing an accurate and cost-effective means to determine whether a patient was infected, days or months after exposure, the researcher said. "Many people infected by Zika have only mild illness, or are unable to see a clinician in the early, acute phase of infection. Our new test greatly extends the window during which an individual can be assessed with accuracy," said Nischay Mishra from the Center for Infection and Immunity (CII) at Columbia University.

The blood test quickly detects up to 200 samples in four hours and the researchers anticipate its cost will be similar to other ELISA tests used in



clinical settings, the researcher said. "An affordable and accurate test for Zika virus is critical for public health," said W. Ian Lipkin, co-author of the study published in the journal mBio. To develop and evaluate the test, the researchers analysed blood samples collected from children in the Nicaraguan Pediatric Dengue Cohort Study, all of whom had previously tested positive for Zika virus.

Using a microarray, they identified a

unique peptide sequence -- a short section of amino acids -- that binds with antibodies to Zika virus but not with antibodies to similar viruses like dengue, yellow fever, and Japanese encephalitis. Next, the researchers customised a low-cost testing technology called enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) to work with the sequence-improving on current versions of the ELISA test which use larger sections proteins that bind to the virus. *Source: IANS*



## BRISK WALKING MAY REDUCE HEART FAILURE RISK IN OLDER WOMEN

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Older women who find it difficult to hit the gym or follow a workout routine may now ward off their risk of developing heart failure by taking brisk walks, finds a study.

Heart failure—a condition in which the heart becomes too weak to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs—rises with age. The study found that women above 60 years of age were three times more prone to heart failure risk.

The paper presented in at the American College of Cardiology's 67th Annual Scientific Session, noted that post-menopausal women who walk for 40 minutes or more at a time had a 21 to 25 per cent lower risk of heart failure than those taking shorter walks.

Women walking at an average or fast pace showed a 26 and 38 per cent lower risk of heart failure, respectively, compared with women who walked at a casual pace.

"We already know that physical activity lowers the risk of heart failure, but there may be a misconception that simply walking isn't enough," said Somwail Rasla, cardiology student at Saint Vincent Hospital in Massachusetts.

"Our analysis shows walking is not only an accessible form of exercise but almost equal to all different types of exercise that have been studied before in terms of lowering heart failure risk" Rasla added.

The study examined the benefits of walking by parsing the effects of walking frequency, duration and speed in 89,000 women over a more than 10-year period, between 50 to 79 years of age.

Researchers also assessed the women's overall energy expenditure from walking by combining all three of these variables into a calculation known as Metabolic Equivalent of Task (MET).

Those in the highest tertile for MET per week were 25 per cent less likely to develop heart failure compared with those in the lowest tertile. *Source: IANS*

# Listening to music may help you exercise longer and more regularly, finds study

Listening to music while exercising can help you work out for a longer time than those who do not have music playing in their ears, a team of researchers has suggested.

Music can have a powerful impact on our mood, signalling the brain to release feel-good and energy-boosting chemicals. Being inactive or not exercising ranks alongside high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking and obesity as one of the five major risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

"At least on a small scale, this study provides some evidence that music may help serve as an extra tool to help motivate someone to exercise more, which is critical to heart health," said lead author Waseem Shami, cardiology fellow at Texas Tech University Health Sciences in the US.

For the study, to be presented at the American College of Cardiology's 67th Annual Scientific Session in Orlando, the team randomly selected 127 heart patients in two groups for a routine electrocardiogram (ECG) treadmill stress test and assigned to either listen to up-tempo music or have no music playing during their stress tests.

The results showed that the exercise time was significantly longer in the music group compared with the control group, 505.8 versus 455.2 seconds,



respectively -- an absolute difference of about 50.6 seconds.

Adults need to get at least 30 minutes of moderate (aerobic) activity most days, including taking a brisk walk, swimming, playing tennis, riding a bicycle, dancing, water aerobics, gardening and even busy housework, experts suggested.

"Our findings reinforce the idea that upbeat music has a synergistic effect in terms of making you want to exercise longer and stick with a daily exercise routine," Shami said. "When doctors are recommending exercise, they might suggest listening to music too," he noted. *Source: IANS*

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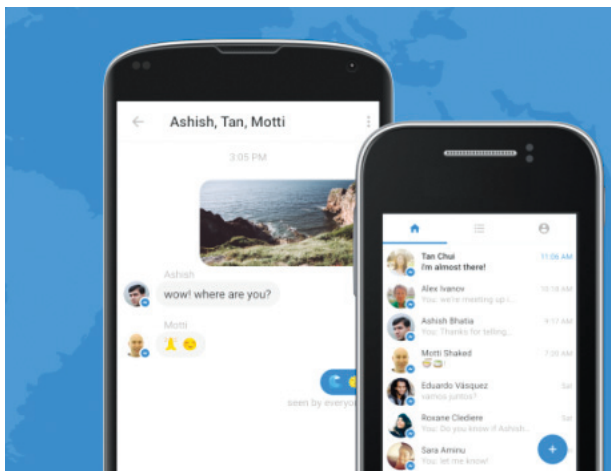


**DR. SATISH ANAND**  
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National  
E-Mail: [sanandmd@gmail.com](mailto:sanandmd@gmail.com)

**GITANJLI ANAND**  
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)  
E-mail: [gitanjlianand@gmail.com](mailto:gitanjlianand@gmail.com)



## FACEBOOK BRINGS VIDEO CHAT TO MESSENGER LITE



**SAN FRANCISCO (TIP):** Facebook has introduced video chat in Messenger Lite, a slimmed down version of Messenger for Android intended for people with older devices and/or slower Internet connections.

Messenger Lite is under 10MB, making it fast to install and quick to start up.

It offers core messaging capabilities like sending text, photos, links, and audio calls to people with either Messenger Lite or Messenger.

"Now people who use Messenger Lite can have the same rich and expressive face-to-face conversations as those who use the core Messenger app, no matter which technology they use or have access to," Facebook said in a statement late on Wednesday.

To use video chats on Messenger Lite, users need to open an existing conversation or find the person they would like to chat with in their contact list, then tap the video icon on the upper right corner of the screen.

You can also upgrade an audio call to a video chat while still in the call by tapping the video icon in the bottom right corner of the screen, Facebook said.

Video chats are an expected and essential part of everyday communication in today's messaging experience.

This form of communication is incredibly popular for people who use the Messenger core app.

In 2017, there were 17 billion video chats in Messenger, twice as many video chats compared to 2016. *Source: IANS*

## Samsung 4K QLED TVs with Bixby voice control launched

A second Nor'easter that hit the storm-weary US East Coast in less than a week with heavy snowfall, power outages and crippled transportation on Wednesday did not deter Samsung Electronics from unveiling its next-generation 4K QLED TVs that are set to redefine our living rooms.

The new line-up of flagship QLED (Quantum dot Light Emitting Diode) TVs - including the 85-inch, 8K Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered TV - houses an "Ambient Mode" feature that mimics the pattern on the wall behind the TV to create a visual effect, in which the TV blends seamlessly into the wall like a chameleon.

To achieve this effect, download the "Samsung SmartThings" app on your smartphone and take a picture of the wall. Samsung SmartThings app is available for both iOS and Android devices.

The app then sends the image to the wall-mounted TV and figures out how to fill the screen with that image.

In a demonstration, this left only the TV frame to be visible, and the screen seamlessly merged with the colour of the wall.

"Ambient Mode" also provides useful information throughout the day like weather reports and important news of the day etc, even when someone is not actively watching the TV.

With the intelligence platform "Bixby," you can use voice commands to ask for your favourite movies or songs -- along with controlling compatible Internet of Things (IoT) home devices like a robotic vacuum cleaner or cameras inside your home.

"Our 2018 line-up of televisions are most innovative and sophisticated yet, designed for today's consumer who is mindful of the aesthetics of their space," Jonghee Han, President of Visual Display Business at Samsung Electronics, told the gathering during the launch event at the American Stock Exchange here.

*Source: IANS*

# YOUR SMARTPHONE IS DAMAGING ENVIRONMENT

**TORONTO (TIP):** Smartphones and data centres will be the most damaging information and communications technologies to the environment by 2040, warns a new study.

For the study, the researchers studied the carbon footprint of consumer devices such as smartphones, laptops, tablets, desktops as well as data centres and communication networks.

Their findings, published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, showed ICT has a greater impact on emissions than previously thought and most emissions come from production and operation.

"Today, it sits at about 1.5 per cent. If trends continue, ICT will account for as much as 14 per cent for the total global footprint by 2040, or about half of the entire transportation sector worldwide," said Lotfi Belkhir, Associate Professor at W Booth School of Engineering Practice and Technology, McMaster University, Canada.

"For every text message, for every phone call, every video you upload or download, there's a data centre making this happen. Telecommunications networks and data centres consume a lot of energy to serve you and most data centres continue to be powered by electricity generated by fossil fuels. It's the energy consumption we don't see," Belkhir added.

Among all the devices, trends suggest



that by 2020, the most damaging devices to the environment will be smartphones.

While smartphones consume little energy to operate, 85 per cent of their emissions impact comes from production.

A smartphone's chip and motherboard require the most amount of energy to produce as they are made up of precious metals that are mined at a high cost, the study said.

Smartphones also have a short life that drives further production of new models and an extraordinary amount of waste.

"Anyone can acquire a smartphone,

and telecommunications companies make it easy for people to acquire a new one every two years. We found that by 2020 the energy consumption of a smartphone is going to be more than that of PCs and laptops," Belkhir said.

Belkhir has made policy recommendations based on his findings.

"Communication and data centres have to go under renewable energy now. The good news is Google and Facebook data centres are going to run on renewable energy. But there needs to be a policy in place so that all data centres follow suit," Belkhir said.

*Source: IANS*

## Google's 'Learn with AI' machine learning course now available for everyone

Google has launched "Learn with Google AI" -- a set of educational resources developed by Machine Learning (ML) experts at the company, for people to learn about concepts, develop skills and apply Artificial Intelligence (AI) to real-world problems.

"Learn with Google AI" comes with existing content as well as the new Machine Learning Crash Course (MLCC).

"We believe it's important that the development of AI reflects as diverse a range of human perspectives and needs as possible. So, Google AI is making it easier for everyone to learn ML by providing a huge range of free, in-depth educational content," Zuri Kemp, Programme Manager for Google's machine learning education, said in a statement.

"This is for everyone -- from deep ML experts looking for advanced developer tutorials and materials, to curious people who are ready to try to learn what ML is in the first place," Kemp added.

The course features videos from ML experts at Google, interactive visualisations illustrating ML concepts, coding exercises using cutting-edge TensorFlow APIs and a focus that teaches how practitioners implement ML in the real world.

Originally developed by Google's engineering education team, more than 18,000 Googlers have enrolled in MLCC so far.

*Source: IANS*

## WOMEN'S DAY: GOOGLE LAUNCHES 'HERSTORYOURSTORY' CAMPAIGN



Aiming to celebrate women's voices and uncover their inspiring stories of trials, hope and success in everyday life, Google India on Tuesday launched #HerStoryOurStory campaign ahead of International Women's Day.

As part of the campaign, Google will be sharing woman hero stories through online videos, putting spotlight on women who have not just fought societal, cultural and economic barriers to achieve their dreams but are also redefining women's role in the society and business through technology.

The campaign will showcase stories of trials, hope and success of women across India.

"Many studies show that one of the major barriers that prevent women in India from growing is the lack of relatable and realistic role models from a similar background.

"We are committed to empowering women, across both urban and rural India, by investing in providing access to tools and skill sets required to grow and succeed," Sapna Chadha, Director Marketing (SEA and India) Google, said in a statement.



# Bank fraud: Impossible to return to India, Mehul Choksi tells CBI

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Gitanjali Gems promoter Mehul Choksi, who is under the scanner of investigating agencies following a complaint by the Punjab National Bank, has said it was impossible for him to return to India and join the investigation due to the suspension of his passport and ill-health.

In a detailed e-mail reply to the CBIs notice seeking his appearance, Choksi said he was not in a position to travel as his passport has been suspended by the authorities and he was undergoing medical treatment.

"I want to assure your good office and good self that I am in no manner dictating the terms of my appearance. However, as my passport stands suspended by the Regional Passport Office under Section 10(3)(c) of the Passport Act, it is impossible for me to travel back to India," the 7-page letter said.

He said that on February 16, 2018, he had received an e-mail from the Passport Office which stated that his passport has been suspended due to the reason Security Threat to India, however, the Regional Passport Office, Mumbai, did not give him any explanation as to why his passport was suspended and as to how he was a security threat.

"I am also not in a position to travel due to my persisting health problem. I had a cardiac procedure which was conducted in the first week of February 2018 and there is still pending work to be done on the same. The entire procedure could not be completed on all veins due to danger to kidney and therefore I am not allowed to travel for at least a period



Mehul Choksi

of four to six months," he said.

The letter said he was being threatened by the individuals with whom he has business relationship and due to the seizure of his assets, his employees, customers and creditors have started to show animosity towards him.

"I am concerned about my health and well-being. In case I am arrested, then I would not be able to get proper healthcare and would be provided treatment only in a government hospital. I would be further denied treatment in a private hospital," he said.

Choksi also alleged that the issue was being "politicised" and the media was conducting a trial which was causing great prejudice to his fundamental rights.

"Various political parties in India have been politicising the issue with a view to glorify their own interests. The

entire reports being published in newspapers, various statements made by members of various political parties and the trial by media has therefore left me remediless and therefore a bias has been caused against me.

"The different media reports portray as if I have already been convicted by the courts of India. They have caused great prejudice to my fundamental rights enshrined by the Constitution of India. Right to life and right to fair trial are quintessential fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The various news reports and publications against me violate those rights," he said, adding that multiple probe agencies were after his life in a "gross abuse of process of law".

Choksi and designer diamond jewellery businessman Nirav Modi and others are being investigated by the CBI and ED after the bank fraud recently came to light, following a complaint by the PNB that they had allegedly cheated the nationalised bank to the tune of Rs 12,000 crore, with the purported involvement of a few employees of the bank

The CBI and the ED have registered two FIRs each to probe the case. Both Choksi and Modi are said to have left the country before criminal cases were lodged against them. They have, however, denied any wrongdoing.

The ED, a central probe agency under the union finance ministry, is investigating if the allegedly defrauded bank funds were laundered and proceeds of crime were subsequently used by the accused to create illegal assets and black money.

Source: PTI

## WORLD BANK WARNS TRUMP TO BE 'CAREFUL' ON TARIFFS

**BRUSSELS (TIP):** The chief executive of the World Bank urged US President Donald Trump on Thursday to be "careful" before imposing controversial steel and aluminium tariffs, warning that they could affect global trade.



Kristalina Georgieva said Trump should "assess the implications" before going ahead with a plan that has sparked fears of a trade war with China and Europe and spooked world markets.

The Bulgarian former EU commissioner said that her message to Trump, who is expected to sign off on the tariffs later Wednesday, was to make a "careful assessment before taking any further step".

"If you take a step for a reason then you need to project on a couple of steps for the implications," Georgieva told a small group of media outlets including AFP in Brussels. "Assess what are the implications and then advise about these implications."

The EU has vowed to retaliate against the tariffs with its own measures targeting not only US steel but also products such as bourbon whiskey, jeans, motorcycles, orange juice and cranberries.

Georgieva, whose organisation specialises in lending money to poor countries, added that Trump should take a "carefully calibrated approach to what happens in world trade".

Source: AFP

## GOVT EASES NORMS FOR E-WAY BILL GENERATION

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The government has changed e-way bill rules which are expected to help e-commerce companies in smooth transportation of goods and ease the method of calculating the value of goods.

The government has notified changes in rules of e-way bill which includes permitting even job workers to generate the electronic receipt for movement of goods.

Electronic way or e-way bill will be required from April 1 for transporting goods valued over Rs 50,000 between states.

In a major relief to FMCG companies, the government has allowed businesses to consider only the value of taxable supply for the purpose of generating e-way bill in cases where sales invoice includes both exempted and taxable supply of goods. This would mean that if food products which are subject to GST are being sent along with items that are exempt from the tax, say milk, then only the value of food products shall be considered for e-way bill.

Besides, to help smaller businesses operate within a particular state, it has said vehicle details will not be required in case of movement of goods up to 50 km (between the consigner/consignee and transporter place). The limit was 10 km earlier, said tax consultancy firm PwC.

Source: PTI

## COCA-COLA PLANS TO LAUNCH FIRST ALCOHOLIC DRINK

**LOS ANGELES/TOKYO (TIP):** Coca-Cola Co., which has sold its famous soft drink for more than 130 years, is giving customers in Japan something harder. The company is launching a canned version of Chu-Hi, a carbonated drink made with shochu, a spirit distilled from barley, sweet potatoes



or other ingredients. Chu-Hi, an abbreviation of "shochu highball," is considered a low-alcohol beverage, but proofs can range as high as 18 (9% alcohol by volume).

The move is a first for Coke globally, which has stuck to cola and other non-alcoholic drinks except for its brief ownership of a wine subsidiary that ended in 1983. The launching of Chu-Hi comes as the overall category of "ready-to-drink" canned mixed alcoholic drinks is growing in Japan amid a decline in beer sales.

# Mukesh Ambani richest Indian, Jeff Bezos tops Forbes world's rich list

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Mukesh Ambani's net worth has soared to \$40.1 billion, making him the richest Indian for the 11th year in a row, while Amazon founder Jeff Bezos toppled Bill Gates as the world's wealthiest person, says Forbes.

According to Forbes' 2018 'World's Billionaires' list, Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani's wealth surged a whopping 72.84% to \$40.1 billion— highest among the 119 Indian billionaires on the list. Ambani was ranked 19th globally, up from 33rd position in 2017. "Mukesh Ambani chairs and runs \$51 billion (revenues) oil and gas giant Reliance Industries, among India's most valuable companies," Forbes said.

Bezos, referred to as the "Centi-billionaire", topped the list with a net worth of \$112 billion, becoming the only person to appear in the Forbes list with a 12-figure fortune. "Shares of his e-commerce giant Amazon rose 59% in 12 months, helping boost his fortune by \$39.2 billion. It was the biggest one year gain since Forbes started tracking billionaires in 1987," it said. The Amazon founder moved ahead of Bill Gates, who is now the second richest



Mukesh Ambani

person globally with a fortune of \$90 billion.

According to Forbes, India is home to 119 billionaires, 18 more than last year. This year's list consists of 2,043 of the richest people in the world. The combined net worth of this elite group is a whopping \$9.1 trillion, up 18% since last year. Their average net worth is a record \$4.1 billion. Azim Premji is the second richest Indian and was ranked 58th on the overall list with a net worth of \$18.8 billion, followed by Lakshmi Mittal (62nd position, net worth of \$18.5 billion), Shiv Nadar (98th, \$14.6 billion) and Dilip Shanghvi (115th, \$12.8 billion).

The 10 richest Indians include Kumar



Jeff Bezos

Birla, ranked 127th overall with a fortune of \$11.8 billion, Uday Kotak (143, \$10.7 billion), Radhakishan Damani (151, \$10 billion), Gautam Adani (154, \$9.7 billion) and Cyrus Poonawalla (170, \$9.1 billion). Acharya Balkrishna, the co-founder of FMCG company Patanjali Ayurved, was ranked 274th on the list with a net worth of \$6.3 billion.

"Acharya Balkrishna derives his fortune from fast-growing consumer goods giant Patanjali Ayurved. Balkrishna owns 98.6% of the privately-held company, which he cofounded with politically well-connected yoga guru Baba Ramdev," Forbes said.

Source: PTI



CONTD FROM PAGE 1

## Trump agrees to meet...

after he briefed Trump and his national security team.

Reading from a prepared statement, Chung said the North Korean leader has expressed his "eagerness to meet with President Trump as soon as possible."

Chung attributed the North Korean turnaround to Trump's leadership and his maximum pressure policy together with international solidarity.

In his meeting with the North Korean leader, Chung said Trump is committed to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

"Kim pledged that North Korea will refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests. He understands that the routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States must continue. He expressed his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible," he said.

"President Trump appreciated the briefing and said he would meet Kim Jong-un by May to achieve permanent denuclearization. The Republic of Korea, along with the United States, Japan, and our many partners around the world, remain fully and resolutely committed to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Chung said.

"Along with Trump, we are optimistic about continuing a diplomatic process to test the possibility of a peaceful resolution," he said.

"The Republic of Korea, the United States, and our partners stand together in insisting that we not repeat the mistakes of the past, and that the pressure will continue until North Korea matches its words with concrete actions," the South Korean national security adviser said.

Reacting to the announcement White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said, "President Trump greatly appreciates the nice words of the South Korean delegation and President Moon. He will accept the invitation to meet with Kim Jong Un at a place and time to be determined." She added that the sanctions on the reclusive nation must remain.

"We look forward to the denuclearization of North Korea. In the meantime, all sanctions and maximum pressure must remain," Sanders said.

According to a senior administration official, Trump may meet the North Korean leader in couple of months.

Congressman Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee said Kim's desire to talk shows sanctions the administration has implemented are starting to work.

"We can pursue more diplomacy, as we keep applying pressure ounce by ounce. Remember, North Korean regimes have repeatedly used talks and empty promises to extract concessions and buy time," he said.

"North Korea uses this to advance its nuclear and missile programs. We've got to break this cycle. The United States and South Korea must stand shoulder-to-shoulder in applying the sustained pressure needed to peacefully end this threat. And Beijing must do its part," Royce said. (Source: PTI)

## Bill & Melinda Gates...

gender equality, spreading digital financial inclusion, increasing job opportunities, and supporting the agricultural sector and women's support groups.

"One of the most profound ways a woman can make life better for herself and her family is to take control of her economic future," said Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"When women have money in their hands

and the authority to choose how to spend it, they grow in confidence and power. They change the unwritten rules that say women are lesser than men," she said in a statement.

The investments will build on the foundation's previous financial commitments to advance progress on gender equality, including USD 80 million for gender data, advocacy and accountability, of which USD 20 million was dedicated to supporting women's movements, a statement said.

According to the foundation, the data show that when a woman has the option of working outside the home and access to financial services to participate in the formal economy, families break the cycle of poverty and national GDPs rise.

When women have access to financial resources such as cash or mobile money, the ability to control those resources and the ability to make decisions that affect her, and her family's future, women are empowered in ways beyond economics, it said.

The investments will not only help better understand what works to ensure women are able to fully participate in economies, but also dismantle the barriers that have held women back for far too long, said Sarah Hendriks, director, gender equality at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"Our strategy is aimed at giving more women and girls the economic opportunities they need to engage as equals in society," Hendriks said.

International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 every year. It commemorates the movement for women's rights. (Source: PTI)

## Trump announces new...

measures that could block the president from fully implementing his proposal.

"I don't think Republicans will put up with this, and I personally believe that we may be able to stop it in the Congress," Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said.

Sen. Hatch: Trump has 'been misled' over tariffs

Play

Sen. Hatch: Trump has 'been misled' over tariffs 1:07

The president announced a 10 percent tax on imported aluminum and a 25 percent tax on imported steel, carving out exceptions for imports from Canada and Mexico. But those exemptions weren't enough to placate congressional Republicans who have traditionally opposed protectionist action on trade.

GOP leaders had lobbied the White House from moving forward, writing letters, speaking out in the media and through outreach to the president and his advisers.

During a conference call between White House officials and GOP Hill staffers Thursday, administration representatives requested favorable comments from members on the president's plan, a suggestion that the staff in one office laughed at, according to a Republican aide.

In a rare rebuke of the president, Republicans are vowing to continue challenging him in ways that could result in either new legislation or support for expected legal challenges to the move.

"I disagree with this action and fear its unintended consequences," House Speaker Paul Ryan said. "There are unquestionably bad trade practices by nations like China, but the better approach is targeted enforcement against those practices."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the exemptions for Canada and Mexico are not enough.

"Members of the Senate, myself included, are concerned about the scope of the proposed tariffs on steel and aluminum and their impact on American citizens and businesses, including many I represent in Kentucky," McConnell said.

And, outside, EU talked tough. "If Donald



Trump puts in place the measures this evening, we have a whole arsenal at our disposal with which to respond," European Financial Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici said.

Counter-measures would include European tariffs on US oranges, tobacco and bourbon, he said, adding that some products under consideration for an EU riposte were largely produced in constituencies controlled by Trump's Republicans. "We want Congress to understand that this would be a lose-lose situation," Moscovici told BFM TV.

The EU is by far the biggest trading partner of the United States by value and, after China, member states have together the biggest trade surplus with the country. Once approved by Trump, the tariffs would go into effect after two months.

In Beijing, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said history showed that trade wars were not the correct way to resolve problems. "Especially given today's globalization, choosing a trade war is a mistaken prescription. The outcome will only be harmful," he said on the sidelines of an annual meeting of China's Parliament.

## US Navy veteran...

Purinton, yelled, "Get out of my country", before shooting Kuchibhotla, who later died from injuries sustained in the attack. Kuchibhotla and Madasani worked as engineers at Garmin, a tech company that makes GPS devices.

Kuchibhotla's widow Sunayana Dumala welcomed the guilty plea. "Today's guilty verdict will not bring back my Srinu, but it will send a strong message that hate is never acceptable," she said.

Purinton sentencing is scheduled for May 4.

Prosecutors alleged Purinton committed offences after substantial planning and premeditation, attempted to kill more than one person in a single criminal episode.

(Source:PTI)

## Former Nassau County...

Testimony is scheduled to begin Wednesday, most likely with the key witness in the case, restaurateur Harendra Singh, who has pleaded guilty to bribing Manganano and Venditto.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lara Treinis Gatz said she expected Singh to be on the stand for two days on direct examination, before the defense cross-examines him the following week.

Manganano has been charged with conspiracy, bribery, wire fraud and extortion. His wife, Linda, has been charged with making false statements, conspiracy and obstruction of justice. Venditto is charged with conspiracy, bribery, securities fraud, wire fraud, making false statements and obstruction of justice.

All three have pleaded not guilty and will stand trial together.

## Indian American's \$1...

"Once we know what is required to get a

positive response, we can control the composition of the cells so that they all can work to fight cancer," he said.

Mr Varadarajan said studying what makes better T cells will guide the development of the next generation of genetically modified cells, and all of immunotherapy in general.

"The big challenge with T cells is that there isn't one single thing that can be used to define what a T cell is supposed to do. Because it's a living cell, it's capable of so many different things but studying them at the single-cell level allows us to map all of these different things onto the same cell," he said.

Although cervical cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in women worldwide, there has been little progress in the treatment of it over the past decade.

Mr. Chung will use his award to delve into the little-researched topic - the role of estrogen in the development of cervical cancer.

"It is clearly demonstrated that human papillomavirus (HPV) is required for the development of cervical cancer, but evidence indicates that other co-factors are required for cervical cancer," Mr Chung said.

## Hindus term Holi shoes...

before taking Hinduism concepts frivolously and using these to make a fashion statement and sell shoes for mercantile greed, some of which contain leather.

Hinduism was the oldest and third largest religion of the world with about 1.1 billion adherents and a rich philosophical thought and it should not be taken frivolously. Symbols of any faith, larger or smaller, should not be mishandled, Rajan Zed noted.

Improper usage of Hinduism concepts or symbols or imagery for commercial or other agenda was not okay as it might be painful to many devotees. Hindus were for free artistic expression and speech as much as anybody else if not more. But faith was something sacred and attempts at trivializing it hurt many followers, Zed added.

Twelve Holi shoes, ranging between \$95 and \$250, appear on Adidas website; five of which are "coming soon", six are "new" and one is "sold out". General release date is March 16, while pre-release was on March two. Adidas states: "inspired by a Hindu festival, artist Pharrell Williams designs these shoes". Adidas describes Holi as ancient spiritual festival.

Joie de vivre festival of Holi welcomes the beginning of spring and starts about ten days before the full moon of Phalguna. The ceremonies include the lighting of the bonfires, during which all evils are symbolically burnt. Holi also commemorates the frolics of youthful Lord Krishna; celebrates the death of demoness Putana, burning of demoness Holika, and destruction of Kama by Shiva. Holi fell on March two this year.

Adidas, headquartered in Herzogenaurach (Germany) and whose history goes back to 1924, claims to "produce more than 850 million product units every year". "Creating the New" is its 2020 strategy. Adidas-Pharrell Williams collaboration is said to be in its fourth year.





### Shree Ganeshaya Namah

**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)**

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE MARCH 12 - MARCH 18, 2018

### Aries:

Aries is active, energetic, excitable and impulsive, optimistic, and open to change and new experiences. Your magical birthstones are coral and diamonds that attract love, financial success, and bring luck in new ventures. Red, scarlet and carmine are your colors, and geranium is your flower. Iron and steel are your metals, and you incense associations are honeysuckle and musk. The direction most beneficial to you is the east, and you will benefit from the use of candles

### Taurus:

Taurus is quite affectionate, patient, stable, determined and practical, stubborn, and resistant to change. Turquoise and emerald will protect you against infidelity and deceit, ensure loyalty, and improve memory, pale blue, yellow, pink and pale green are your colors, and your flower is violet. Copper is your metal, and seeds and stones are your natural symbols. The direction most beneficial to you is the south, and your incense association is frankincense.

### Gemini:

Gemini is lively, energetic, versatile and intellectual, lives primarily in the mind rather than the emotions, and is extremely adaptable to new situations. Your magical birthstones are emerald and agate, which will protect you from deception and falsehood; and bestow eloquence (especially in declarations of love). Yellow, slate grey and spotted mixtures are your colors, and your flower is lavender. Your natural symbol is feathers and mercury is your metal. The direction most beneficial to you is the west and your incense is jasmine.

### Cancer:

Cancer is receptive, sensitive and imaginative, sympathetic, kind, emotional and active, and shrewd with an intuitive mind. Pearl will change bad fortune into good and discord to harmony for you, and brings support from influential people. Your colors are shooting white, opal, iridescent silvery hues, smoky grey, sea green and blue, and your metal is silver. Not surprisingly shells are your natural symbol. Your flower is lily, incense association is patchouli, and the direction most beneficial to you is the north.

### Leo:

Leo is enthusiastic, powerful, expansive and creative, generous and extravagant. Not surprisingly, gold is your metal, flame is your natural symbol, sunflower is your flower, and your colors are orange, gold, rich shades of yellow and brown. Rubies will protect you against physical injury and ensure faithfulness and will bring you serenity. A rose incense will greatly benefit you and the direction beneficial to you is the east.

### Virgo:

Virgo is reserved, modest, practical, discriminating and industrious, analytical and painstaking, seeking to know and understand. Emerald and sapphire bring you tranquility of mind and protect against illness. Shades of green, dark brown, slate and spotted patterns work best for you, as the metal mercury. Pansies are your flower, and your incense is myrrh. The south is most beneficial for you, and grains and seeds are your natural symbols.

### Libra:

Libra is active, artistic, easygoing, peaceable, diplomatic, polished and very socially inclined, and prizes beauty and harmony. Opal, your magical birthstone, brings financial success, frees you from jealousy and greed and imparts clear sight. Surround yourself with roses, gladioli and other fragrant flowers. Your colors are blue and white, metal is copper and most beneficial direction is west. Firangipani is your incense association.

### Scorpio:

Scorpio is imaginative, passionate and emotional, subtle and persistent, intense, obstinate and unyielding. Coral and topaz, your magical birthstones, release your occult powers and bring serenity, and also protect from enemies and illness, and your metal is plutonium. Dark red, maroon, crimson and colors of smoky cloud formations are your colors, and the rhododendron is your flower. Sandalwood is your association and the direction most beneficial to you is the north.

### Sagittarius:

Sagittarius is energetic, ambitious, generous, freedom-loving, and a seeker of challenge, open to new ideas and exploration. Topaz and turquoise, your magical birthstones, attract love and protect from harm. Your colors are rich purple, violet and indigo, the dandelion is your flower. Tin is your metal and sword, your magical tool! Your most beneficial direction is the east, and pine is your incense of choice.

### Capricorn:

Capricorn is sure-footed, reserved, acquisitive, cautious, disciplined and determined, and seeks security. Your colors are dark grey, dark green, black, dark brown and indigo, and magical birthstone is the garnet that attracts popularity, high esteem and true love. Lead is your metal and your magical tool is spade. Your flower is ivy, though your incense association is lotus. Your most beneficial direction is south.

### Aquarius:

Aquarius is assertive, independent, progressive, analytical, original and inventive and has strong dislikes and firm opinions. Your magical birthstone, amethyst, brings faithfulness in love and bestows on you the gift of prescience. Aquamarine, turquoise and electric blue are your colors, uranium is your metal. Your flower is the orchid, while incense association is vanilla. Your most favorable direction is the west, and chimes are your magical tool.

### Pisces:

Pisces is receptive, intuitive and emotional, imaginative, romantic impressionable and mystical, adaptable, and very changeable. Cats eye and aquamarine, your magical birthstones, magnify occult powers and bring serenity of mind. Mauve, purple, violet, sea green and silver are your colors, while platinum is your metal. Your magical tool is a mirror and beneficial direction is north. White poppies are your flower, while your incense association is copal.



# India thrash Bangladesh in Nidahas Trophy 2018

**COLOMBO (TIP):** Shikhar Dhawan continued his blazing form in Twenty20 Internationals as his second consecutive fifty in the Nidahas Trophy 2018 tri-series helped India bounce back with a convincing six-wicket win over Bangladesh at the R Premadasa stadium on Thursday.

Dhawan's brilliant fifty was the bright spot on a day when India's sloppy fielding and slightly wayward bowling was not capitalized by a Bangladesh team that looked lackluster. Chasing 140, Rohit Sharma and Dhawan started off with some boundaries.

However, the Indian skipper looked to guide a good length ball to third man but ended up dragging the delivery back on to the stumps. Rohit's dismissal for 17 continued his poor run, having managed scores of 15,21,0,11,0 in his previous games.

Rishabh Pant(7) failed to capitalize as he fell to Rubel Hossain and the bowler was unlucky to have not got his second wicket as Mehidy Hasan spilled a chance at leg gully off Suresh Raina on 1. Both left-handers strung a solid partnership of 68 runs, with Dhawan getting to his sixth fifty with a sweep off left-arm orthodox spinner Nazmul Islam.

Raina (28) and Dhawan (55) fell relatively quickly but Dinesh Karthik and Manish Pandey guided India over the line. Despite



Shikhar Dhawan (L) celebrates after scoring his fifty during the Nidahas Trophy 2018 encounter between India and Bangladesh in Colombo on March 8.

the win, Rohit's side will feel lucky that their fielding mishaps were not punished severely.

India dropped four catches, missed a run-out, bowlers conceded 15 extras, yet

managed to restrict Bangladesh to 139/8. The fact India tied Bangladesh down to a slightly below-par score spoke of the ineptitude of the batsmen, who did not capitalize on their

chances.

Opting to bowl, India failed to latch on to a chance off Soumya Sarkar in the first over with three fielders converging on the top-edge bit none going for the catch at fine leg.

The first fielding lapse set the tone for India for the rest of the innings. Shardul Thakur trapped Tamim Iqbal LBW but the decision was overturned as the ball was pitching outside the line of leg stump. Buoyed by the successful review, the left-hander hit two boundaries before the batsman top-edged a pull to short fine leg.

In the seventh over of the innings, Vijay Shankar's quest for a Twenty20 International wicket was denied twice, with Liton Das benefiting both times. The first catch was spilled by Suresh Raina as he ran from mid-off but failed to latch on. Two balls later, Liton top-edged a short-arm pull but Washington Sundar put the catch down at fine leg.

Shankar finally turned his luck around by getting Mushfiqur Rahim (18) and skipper Mahmudullah (1). In the death overs, Mahmudullah's side needed Liton (34) and Sabbir (30) to fire but both fell in quick succession. Bangladesh's inability to make India pay for fielding lapses hurt them in a big way. *Source: HT*

## Virat Kohli & boys get massive pay hike, Dhoni & Ashwin miss A-plus grade

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** : The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on March 7 announced a new contract system and compensation structure for Indian cricket that will see the cricketers earn a lot more than what they used to in previous years.

"The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) for BCCI on Wednesday announced the Annual Player Contracts for the period from October 2017 to September 2018. The CoA was of the view that the performance and position of Indian Cricket needs to be recognised with the fee structure comparable to the best in the world," the BCCI wrote in a statement.

The BCCI have introduced a new grade system altogether - Grade A+ : Rs 7 Cr, Grade A: Rs 5 Cr, Grade B: Rs 3 Cr, Grade C: Rs 1 Cr. Earlier, there was no Grade A+ in the list while Grade A players used to get Rs 2 Cr and Grade B and C cricketers received Rs 1 Cr and Rs 50 Lakh respectively.

Five players will receive Rs 7 Cr annually from BCCI as they have been placed in the top grade - Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah. Meanwhile, former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni remains in Grade A and will receive Rs 5 Cr per annum. Dhoni hasn't been playing Test cricket for a long time now and that is being seen by many as the reason why he wasn't promoted to Grade A+.

Dhoni is one of the seven players to be named in Grade A and the others are - Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Murali Vijay, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane and Wriddhiman Saha. Grade B players will be richer by Rs 3 Cr per annum and the seven cricketers are: KL Rahul, Umesh Yadav, Kuldeep Yadav,



Yuzvendra Chahal, Hardik Pandya, Ishant Sharma and Dinesh Karthik.

Kedar Jadhav, Manish Pandey, Axar Patel, Karun Nair, Suresh Raina, Parthiv Patel and Jayant Yadav will receive Rs 1 Cr each for being named in Group C.

As for the Women's team, the Indian cricket board have announced a new grade C, which will see players earning Rs 10 Lakh per annum, in addition to Grade A: Rs 50 Lakh and Grade B: Rs 30 Lakh.

## MOHAMMAD SHAMI: CONTRACT ON HOLD AFTER ADULTERY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLAIMS



Mohammed Shami took to Facebook to deny reports where his wife accused him of marital affair and torture.

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Fast bowler Mohammad Shami's contract with India's Cricket Board has been put on hold while an investigation is carried out into "unsavoury" claims.

Shami's wife has accused the cricketer of adultery and domestic violence, claims the player has denied.

He has been dropped from a list of contracted players unveiled by the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

"It's definitely a part of a big conspiracy against me," said Shami, 27, who has won 30 Test caps.

A BCCI supervisory committee said the allegations, made by Shami's wife, Hasin Jahan, had put them in a difficult position.

She has made public a series of messages that Shami allegedly sent to women during their four-year marriage and accused the cricketer, whom she married in 2014, of domestic violence.

"We are in a bit of Catch 22," Vinod Rai, chairman of the committee, told cricket website ESPNcricinfo.

"Ordinarily you would distinguish and say that is a personal issue and the contract is a professional issue.

"But someone could easily point out and say this allegation is an unsavoury one and you are still rewarding him."

Shami, who has represented his country 87 times in all formats of the game, added: "What is being said about my personal life is completely false.

"This is just an attempt to defame me."

In December 2016, Shami criticised social media users who trolled his wife because of her choice of clothes.



# SACRED SYMBOLS OF HINDUISM



## Om or Aum

Om, or Aum, is the root mantra and primal sound from which all creation issues forth. It is associated with Lord Ganesha. Its three syllables stand at the beginning and end of every sacred verse, every human act.

## Ganesha

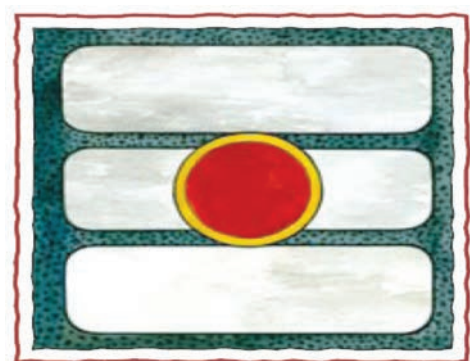


Ganesha is the Lord of Obstacles and Ruler of Dharma. Seated upon His throne, He guides our karmas through creating and removing obstacles from our path. We seek His permission and blessings in every undertaking.

## Vata or Banyan Tree

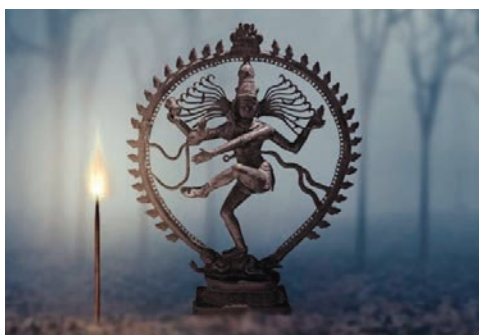
Vata, the banyan tree, *Ficus indicus*, symbolizes Hinduism, which branches out in all directions, draws from many roots, spreads shade far and wide, yet stems from one great trunk. Siva as Silent Sage sits beneath it.

## Tripundra and Bindi



Tripundra is a Saivite's great mark, three stripes of white vibhuti on the brow. This holy ash signifies purity and the burning away of anava, karma and maya. The bindu, or dot, at the third eye quickens spiritual insight.

## Nataraja or Dancing Shiva



Nataraja is Siva as "King of Dance." Carved

in stone or cast in bronze, His ananda tandava, the fierce ballet of bliss, dances the cosmos into and out of existence within the fiery arch of flames denoting consciousness. Aum.

## Mayil or Mayur (Peacock)

Mayil, "peacock," is Lord Murugan's mount, swift and beautiful like Karttikeya Himself. The proud display of the dancing peacock symbolizes religion in full, unfolded glory. His shrill cry warns of approaching harm.

## Nandi, Shiva's Vehicle



Nandi is Lord Siva's mount, or vahana. This huge white bull with a black tail, whose name means "joyful," disciplined animality kneeling at Siva's feet, is the ideal devotee, the pure joy and strength of Saiva Dharma. Aum.

## Bilva or Bael Tree

Bilva is the bael tree. Its fruit, flowers and leaves are all sacred to Siva, liberation's summit. Planting Aegle marmelos trees around home or temple is sanctifying, as is worshipping a Linga with bilva leaves and water.

## Padma or Lotus

Padma is the lotus flower, *Nelumbo nucifera*, perfection of beauty, associated with Deities and the chakras, especially the 1,000-petaled 'sahasrara.' Rooted in the mud, its blossom is a promise of purity and unfoldment.

## Swastika

Swastika is the symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune-literally, "It is well." The right-angled arms of this ancient sun-sign denote the indirect way that Divinity is apprehended: by intuition and not by intellect.

## Mahakala or 'Great Time'

Mahakala, "Great Time," presides above creation's golden arch. Devouring instants and eons, with a ferocious face, He is Time beyond time, reminder of this world's transitoriness, that sin and suffering will pass.

## Ankusa or Ganesha's Goad

Ankusha, the goad held in Lord Ganesha's right hand, is used to remove obstacles from dharma's path. It is the force by which all wrongful things are repelled from us, the sharp prod which spurs the dullards onward.

## The Anjali Gesture

Anjali, the gesture of two hands brought together near the heart, means to "honor or celebrate." It is our Hindu greeting, two joined as one, the bringing together of matter and spirit, the self meeting the Self in all.

## 'Go' or Cow

'Go,' the cow, is a symbol of the earth, the nourisher, the ever-giving, undemanding provider. To the Hindu, all animals are sacred, and we acknowledge this reverence of life in our special affection for the gentle cow.

## The Mankolam Design

Mankolam, the pleasing paisley design, is modeled after a mango and associated with Lord Ganesha. Mangos are the sweetest of fruits, symbolizing auspiciousness and the happy fulfillment of legitimate worldly desires.

## 'Shatkona' or Six-pointed Star

Shatkona, "six-pointed star," is two interlocking triangles; the upper stands for Siva, 'purusha' (male energy) and fire, the lower for Shakti, 'prakriti' (female power) and water. Their union gives birth to Sanatkumara, whose sacred number is six.

## Mushika or Mouse

Mushika is Lord Ganesha's mount, the mouse, traditionally associated with abundance in family life. Under cover of darkness, seldom visible yet always at work, Mushika is like God's unseen grace in our lives.

## 'Konrai' Blossoms

Konrai, Golden Shower, blossoms are the flowering symbol of Siva's honeyed grace in our life. Associated with His shrines and temples throughout India, the *Cassia fistula* is lauded in numberless Tirumurai hymns.

## The 'Homakunda' or Fire Altar

Homakunda, the fire altar, is the symbol of ancient Vedic rites. It is through the fire element, denoting divine consciousness, that we make offerings to the Gods. Hindu sacraments are solemnized before the homa fire.



## The 'Ghanta' or Bell

Ghanta is the bell used in ritual puja, which engages all senses, including hearing. Its ringing summons the Gods, stimulates the inner ear and reminds us that, like sound, the world may be perceived but not possessed.

## The 'Gopura' or 'Gopuram'

'Gopuras' are the towering stone gateways through which pilgrims enter the South Indian temple. Richly ornamented with

myriad sculptures of the divine pantheon, their tiers symbolize the several planes of existence.

## The 'Kalasha' or Sacred Pot

Kalasha, a husked coconut circled by five mango leaves on a pot, is used in puja to represent any God, especially Lord Ganesha. Breaking a coconut before His shrine is the ego's shattering to reveal the sweet fruit inside.

## 'Kuttuvilaku' Standing Oil Lamp

'Kuttuvilaku,' the standing oil lamp, symbolizes the dispelling of ignorance and awakening of the divine light within us. Its soft glow illumines the temple or shrine room, keeping the atmosphere pure and serene.

## The Rudraksha Seed



Rudraksha seeds, *Eleocarpus ganitrus*, are prized as the compassionate tears Lord Siva shed for mankind's suffering. Saivites wear 'malas' (necklaces) of them always as a symbol of God's love, chanting on each bead, "Aum Namah Sivaya."

## 'Kamandalu' or Water Vessel

'Kamandalu,' the water vessel, is carried by the Hindu monastic. It symbolizes his simple, self-contained life, his freedom from worldly needs, his constant 'sadhana' and 'tapas' (devotion and austerity) and his oath to seek God everywhere.

## 'Tiruvadi' or Sacred Sandals

Tiruvadi, the sacred sandals worn by saints, sages and satgurus, symbolize the preceptor's holy feet, which are the source of his grace. Prostrating before him, we humbly touch his feet for release from worldliness. Aum.

## The 'Trikona' or Triangle

'Trikona,' the triangle, is a symbol of God Siva which, like the Sivalinga, denotes His Absolute Being. It represents the element fire and portrays the process of spiritual ascent and liberation spoken of in scripture.

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