

North Korea offers to denuclearize without demanding withdrawal of US troops from peninsula

Offer conveyed via South Korean president ahead of critical talks between Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un



WASHINGTON (TIP): As a planned summit between Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un approaches, Pyongyang has indicated it would abandon its nuclear program without requiring American troops to leave the Korean Peninsula.

Will the two leaders celebrate an accord? That's the question

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Barbara Bush, the former First Lady married to George H.W. Bush, has died at age 92



The former First Lady Barbara Bush has died at age 92

Photo: Courtesy USA Today/ Robert Deutsch

child, Pauline 'Robin' Bush, and her siblings Martha Rafferty and James R. Pierce."

DALLAS (TIP): The Office of George H. W. Bush confirmed the death of Barbara Bush on Tuesday, April 17, saying in a statement, "A former First Lady of the United States of America and relentless proponent of family literacy, Barbara Pierce Bush passed away Tuesday, April 17, 2018 at the age of 92.

"She is survived by her husband of 73 years, President George H. W. Bush; five children and their spouses, 17 grandchildren, seven great grandchildren; and her brother Scott Pierce. She was preceded in death by her second

Modi, May hold talks on infusing new energy into post-Brexit bilateral ties

Modi launches Bharat Ki Baat Sabke Saath at a meeting with NRIs

LONDON (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, April 16, assured his British counterpart Theresa May that the UK's withdrawal from the European Union offers opportunities to "further increase" bilateral trade ties as the two leaders had "fruitful discussions" on multiple aspects of India-UK relations and issues like counter-terrorism, radicalization and online extremism.

Modi, who arrived at 10 Downing Street for a breakfast meeting, was greeted with the customary handshake by May. "Very welcome to London, Prime Minister," May said as she greeted Modi.

Both leaders discussed ways to boost cooperation between India and UK.

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PM Narendra Modi speaks at Bharat Ki Baat Sabke Saath in London on April 18. He said the government had plans to open around 1.5 lakh wellness centers across the country Photo / Courtesy PIB-Twitter



Giuliani Joining Trump's Legal Team 'For the Good of the Country'

A beleaguered president seeks a close ally's help to rescue him

NEW YORK (TIP): Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani said he is joining President Donald Trump's personal legal team to help with Special Counsel Bob Mueller's investigation into potential Russian meddling in the 2016 election, The Washington Post reported on Thursday, April 17.

News that the two had been discussing a role was first reported by The Daily Beast earlier in the day. The New York Times, too, followed up with the news of Giuliani joining Trump's legal team.

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Old buddies. Donald Trump and Rudy Giuliani File Photo / Courtesy New York Daily News courtesy



Wells Fargo Expected to be Fined \$1 Billion



An expected \$1 billion penalty against Wells Fargo would mark the toughest action that the Trump administration has taken against a major bank.

NEW YORK (TIP): Federal regulators are poised to impose a \$1 billion penalty on Wells Fargo for a variety of alleged misdeeds, including forcing customers to buy auto insurance policies that they didn't need, according to people briefed on the regulatory action, says a New York Times report, April 19. The expected penalty, levied by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, is likely to be announced Friday, April 20.

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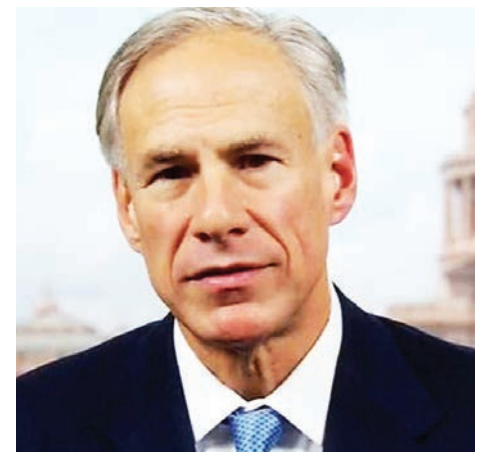
Arizona, Texas Governors respond to President Trump's request for sending National Guard to Border

DALLAS, TX (TIP): Arizona and Texas announced Friday, April 6, that they were preparing to deploy National Guard members to the US-Mexico border in response to President Trump's call for more border security. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey said about 150 Guard members would deploy next week. And the Texas Military Department, the umbrella agency over the Texas National Guard branches, said on its Twitter account that it would hold a Friday night news conference on its preparations, though further details were not immediately available, per the AP. Trump told reporters Thursday that he wants to send between 2,000 and 4,000 National Guard members to the border to help fight illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

That would be lower than the roughly 6,000 National Guard members that former President George W. Bush sent in 2006 during another border security operation, though more than the 1,200 Guard members President Barack Obama sent in 2010. A spokesman for Ducey said Friday that the



Arizona Governor Doug Ducey and Texas Governor Greg Abbott are sending National Guard to US-Mexico border



deployment would be funded under a federal law called Title 32. Under that law, the National Guard remains under the command and control of each state's governor. Department of Homeland Security officials have said Guard members could

support Border Patrol agents and other law enforcement agencies. DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said this week that Guard members could "help look at the technology, the surveillance," and that the department might ask for fleet mechanics.

Indian American teenage singer eliminated from 'American Idol'



Alyssa Raghu, despite of being out of race in American Idol, is happy with her experience "being there".

ORLANDO (TIP): Orlando based Indian American singer Alyssa Raghu's run on "American Idol" has ended.

The 16-year-old, a sophomore at Lake Nona High School, made it to the Top 24. But she was not among the singers who advanced to the Top 14 on April 16 episode. Raghu had done well in the previous episode with her version of Rihanna's "Stay." Judge Katy Perry had championed Raghu and praised the teen's tone. But Raghu's duet with Banners on Coldplay's "Yellow" underwhelmed the judges on April 16th telecast. In an interview last week, Raghu appreciated the experience of being on the show. "They've just helped me grow as an artist. I really can't ask for much more," she said. "They helped me grow and get exposure. I have to thank 'American Idol' for that. I'm doing what I love every single day. I really can't tell you how happy that makes me."

Indian Americans protest outside Indian Embassy in Washington to demand justice for rape victims in India



The peaceful protest near the Gandhi statue outside the Indian Embassy in Washington.

WASHINGTON (TIP): The members of the Indian American community turned up for the protest in large numbers in total dismay after knowing the heart-wrenching details of gang rape and murder of Asifa in Jammu and Kashmir, killing of Unnao rape victim's father, and the rape and killing of a juvenile in Surat. The protest organized by Alliance for Justice and Accountability saw women and children protesting in front of the Indian embassy raising slogans such as "Hate Murder, hate Crime: No more. No More." The protesters who gathered near the Gandhi statue outside the Indian Embassy in Washington had banners and placards that sought swift justice for the victims and their families.

"Friends in DC, plz join a protest in front of Indian Embassy, Wednesday Apr 18 from 4 pm to 7 pm called by Alliance for Justice and Accountability to demand #JusticeForAsifa," tweeted Shehla Rashid, former vice-president, Jawaharlal Nehru University's students' union, Delhi.

The Indian American Muslim Council, an advocacy group dedicated to safeguarding India's pluralist and tolerant ethos, has announced that it will hold a candlelight vigil in Seattle on April 21 to express its outrage and disgust, not only over the gang-rape and murder of 8-year old Asifa Bano in January, but also over the rape of 17-year-old girl in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh. In addition to this, the organization also submitted a memorandum to the Indian Ambassador over the recent atrocities against women and children. "The details of rape and sexual assault cases being reported in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir which saw the 7-year-old Muslim girl brutally raped and killed, and Unnao, Uttar Pradesh where the victim was a teenager preyed upon by a state legislator, are shocking," the Hindu American Foundation said in a statement.

Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian American family that went missing confirmed dead after a fatal accident in Eel river

SAN JOSE (TIP): The hopes of finding the Thottapilly family alive have ended as the investigators on April 16 announced that they have found the bodies of all four members of the Indian American family that went missing while on a road trip to San Jose.

After a week of thorough search and rescue operation undertaken by the California Highway Patrol, the authorities found the Honda Pilot car that the family was traveling submerged in the Eel River. An eyewitness in Mendocino County had reportedly seen an SUV being swept away in Eel River.

According to the latest release from the Mendocino Sheriff, they found the SUV that met with the fatal accident submerged under Eel River, half a mile away from the location where they believe the car plunged into the river.

"Search divers entered the water and were able to feel what they believed to be a person inside of the vehicle. Visibility was extremely poor and divers noted the vehicle was encased in a large amount of sediment from the river current," said the press statement from the Sheriff's office.

"Recovery efforts continued for



It is believed that the vehicle that the Thottapillys were traveling "disappeared" into the Eel River near Mendocino County on April 6.

several hours and at approximately 6:30 PM the vehicle was partially removed from the Eel River by use of a tow truck. This provided searchers the ability to conduct a visual inspection of the inside of the vehicle. Searchers subsequently recovered the bodies of Sandeep Thottapilly and Saachi Thottapilly from inside the vehicle," the press release added.

The authorities had earlier found the body of Soumya Thottapilly, 7 miles

away from the crash site.

On April 16, CNN reported that the body of the 12-year-old boy, Siddhant Thottapilly, was found in 6 miles away from where the rest of his family was found dead.

Sandeep Thottapilly (42), his wife, Soumya (38), and their two children Siddhant (12) and Saachi (9) had been missing since April 5. They had left for a road trip from Portland, Oregon, to San Jose, California, last month.

Indian American Navrang Dance Academy organized dance workshop conducted by ABCD-fame Dharmesh Yelande

NEW JERSEY (TIP): Indian American, New Jersey-based Navrang Dance Academy, in association with TV Asia, organized the first dance workshop conducted by ABCD-fame Dharmesh Yelande in New Jersey.

"Dance with Dharmesh" workshop was held in the TV Asia auditorium. Padmashri H. R. Shah, CEO and chairman of TV Asia, who was present during the workshop said he was mesmerized by Yelande's talent.

Shah honored Yelande with an award and said New Jersey is booming with talent, and his effort is to encourage people of all ages to come out and show their talents. He also asked the community to come together and support Varsha Naik of Navrang Dance Academy in all her efforts to encourage young and budding artist and talents.

Yelande led a three-hour workshop and taught 60 young and talented individuals of New Jersey. The artist showcased his unique dancing style and acting and inspired the dancers to achieve new heights.

Impressed by the talent in New Jersey, Yelande said, "Everyone in the room understood the magic of dancing." At the event, Yelande also shared a glimpse of his journey and what motivates him to keep dancing.

Yelande was the winner on the dance show in India named Boogie Woogie (TV series) and was first runner-up on Dance India Dance (season 2). He has starred in the Hindi movies ABCD: AnyBody Can Dance, and ABCD 2. He has also choreographed for the movie Tees Maar Khan.

Naik acknowledged and thanked the entire staff of TV Asia and Radio Chai for helping her promote this event. She also thanked her team from Navrang Dance Academy for making arrangements for the event, which was managed in a smooth manner. Naik has had several workshops to her credit including those with Master Saroj Khan, Sandip Soparrkar, Master Satya and kathak guru Nishi Singh.

"This event was another great opportunity for young and talented dancers to come and learn the unique techniques from a star dancer and choreographer like Dharmesh," Naik said. The workshop provided the local talent an opportunity



to learn from the best in the industry.

The event received a lot of community support from various businesses and volunteers. The participants of the workshop also received a certificate from Yelande.

"We would love to have Dharmesh sir come back for another session soon," said one of the participants.

Yelande encouraged all the participants to pursue their passion and ended the session with a message for all the budding artists saying that they should "keep dancing."

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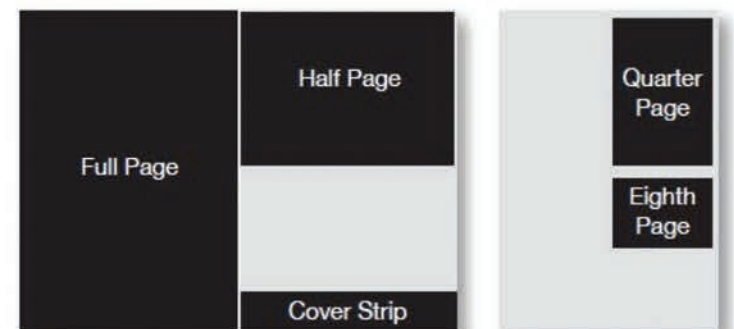


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ASIAN INDIANS in NEW YORK-
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The Indian Panorama is a South-Asian English newspaper with print editions in New York City, the Tristate area and now also as the first English Asian Newspaper from Dallas,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

Nielsen says SCOTUS ruling on deportation 'undermines' DHS efforts to safeguard US



YUMA COUNTY, ARIZONA (TIP): Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen blasted the Supreme Court on Wednesday, April 18, for making the country less safe, saying at the southern border that a recent court decision on deportation "undermines" her agency's work, according to a CNN report.

In prepared remarks at a news conference with Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey held in between the dual border fencing system at San Luis Port of Entry in Arizona, Nielsen cited the ruling as part of the need for Congress to grant her department's requests for more enforcement powers.

"The Supreme Court ruling (Tuesday) was just one further example of a system that undermines our efforts to keep the country secure," Nielsen said. "By preventing the federal government from removing known criminal aliens, we allow our country to be a safe haven for criminals. This is not border security, this is not national security. We need Congress' help ... only Congress can make or change laws." In the ruling on Tuesday, the Supreme Court decided 5-4 that one of the pieces of immigration law that required mandatory deportation of immigrants with certain criminal convictions was unconstitutional.

Struck down was one of the definitions of "aggravated felony" that qualified green card holders in the US for automatic deportation -- convictions for "crimes of violence." The liberal justices were joined by President Donald Trump's recent conservative appointee Justice Neil Gorsuch in deciding the category was unconstitutionally vague. A variety of state criminal laws create a wide range of crimes under that category.

The ruling only applied to the "crimes of violence" definition. A number of other serious crimes that define aggravated felony under immigration law were unaffected by the ruling, meaning many serious criminals still qualify for the mandatory deportation.

The case originated under the Obama administration when the government sought to deport a Filipino man who came to the US in 1992 at the age of 13 who had been convicted in 2007 and 2009 of residential burglary in California.

Trump himself reacted similarly to Nielsen regarding the ruling on Tuesday evening, tweeting, "Today's Court decision means that Congress must close loopholes that block the removal of dangerous criminal aliens, including aggravated felons. This is a public safety crisis that can only be fixed by Congress -- House and Senate must quickly pass a legislative fix to ensure violent criminal aliens can be removed from our society. Keep America Safe!"

Facebook to put 1.5bn users out of reach of strict EU privacy law

WASHINGTON (TIP): Starting next month, 1.5 billion Facebook users outside of the European Union, including those in India, will not be governed by the Terms of Service (ToS) framed under its operations in Ireland, news agency Reuters said on Thursday.

While the move is being seen as the social networking behemoth's hedge against the impending stringent General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which comes into force in the European Union on May 25, Facebook claimed that it is "offering everyone who uses Facebook the same privacy protections, controls and settings, no matter where they live."

Simply put, the Facebook move means that any user outside of EU will not be able to file complaints with the Ireland's Data Protection Commissioner or in Irish courts which will be governed by the GDPR; instead, the complaint will be judged by the relatively lenient US laws on privacy. India is yet to adopt a data protection law.

Last year, the government released a white paper on the same and invited comments. A committee headed by Justice BN Srikrishna is currently deliberating the issue to draft a data protection framework. Facebook currently says that if "you are a resident of or have your principal place of business in the United States or Canada", the ToS are an agreement between you and Facebook Inc which is based in the US, otherwise, it is an agreement with Facebook Ireland Limited.

"Next month, Facebook is planning to make that the case for only European users, meaning 1.5 billion members in Africa, Asia, Australia and Latin America will not fall under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation," Reuters reported. Facebook said that the changes will not mean different policies for different jurisdictions. "The GDPR and EU consumer law set out specific rules for terms and data policies which we have incorporated for EU users. We have been clear that we are offering everyone who uses Facebook the same privacy protections, controls and settings, no matter where they live. These updates do not change that," Stephen Deadman, Facebook's deputy chief global privacy officer, told TOI over email.

The GDPR imposes heavy penalties on



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privacy violations and unauthorised use of users' data, with fines of up to four per cent of global annual revenue for the same. "The previously unreported move, which Facebook confirmed to Reuters on Tuesday, shows the world's largest online social network is keen to reduce its exposure to GDPR, which allows

European regulators to fine companies for collecting or using personal data without users' consent," the Reuters report said. Ireland was unaware of the change, said Reuters, quoting an Irish official who on condition of anonymity "said he did not know of any plans by Facebook to transfer responsibilities wholesale to the United States or to decrease Facebook's presence in Ireland, where the social network is seeking to recruit more than 100 new staff."

This report comes after Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg appeared for a hearing with the US Congress last week, answering questions about the social network's use of user data for advertising, data harvesting, censorship, and meddling by foreign actors in the US elections. Last month, a whistleblower from UK-based political consultancy Cambridge Analytica made startling revelations about how data of tens of millions of users from Facebook was harvested for psychographic assessment and subsequent targeting with political messaging, prompting the hearing by US lawmakers. (TNN)

Yoga can help schoolchildren manage anxiety & stress, per Tulane University study

LOUISIANA (TIP): Yoga/mindfulness activities may facilitate stress management among elementary school students and may be added as a complement to social and emotional learning activities, according to a Tulane University study.

Published April 10 in Psychology Research and Behavior Management Journal, the school-based study "Effect of mindfulness and yoga on quality of life for elementary school students and teachers" suggested that "yoga/mindfulness interventions may improve symptoms of anxiety among students".

The intervention was associated with a significant improvement in emotional and psychosocial quality of life in the intervention group when compared to the control group, the study concluded.

Welcoming the results of the study, distinguished Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement to The Indian Panorama, urged all the elementary schools of Louisiana to

introduce yoga in their curriculums so that the students could explore various benefits yoga offered.

Yoga, referred as "a living fossil", was a mental and physical discipline, for everybody to share and benefit from, whose traces went back to around 2,000 BCE to Indus Valley civilization, Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, noted.

Rajan Zed further said that yoga, although introduced and nourished by Hinduism, was a world heritage and liberation powerhouse to be utilized by all. According to Patanjali who codified it in Yoga Sutra, yoga was a methodical effort to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical.

According to US National Institutes of Health, yoga may help one to feel more relaxed, be more flexible, improve posture, breathe deeply, and get rid of stress. According to a "2016 Yoga in America Study", about 37 million Americans (which included

many celebrities) now practice yoga; and yoga is strongly correlated with having a positive self-image. Yoga was the repository of something basic in the human soul and psyche, Zed added.

Objective of the Tulane study included: To assess the impact of a yoga curriculum in an elementary school on student quality of life... benefits of introducing yoga and mindfulness into the classroom. Study group included 20 third-grade students of a public school in New Orleans who screened positive for symptoms of anxiety and participated in yoga/mindfulness activities for eight weeks. Researchers included Alessandra Bazzano, Christopher Anderson, Chelsea Hylton and Jeanette Gustat; reports suggest.

Tulane University in New Orleans (Louisiana), whose history goes back to 1834, claims to be "one of the most well-respected research universities in the country". Douglas J. Hertz and Michael A. Fitts are Board Chair and President respectively.

More Americans are dying from Suicide, Drug Use and Diarrhea

WASHINGTON (TIP): A report on public health in US, published in Five Thirty-Eight, April 2, 2018 says that more Americans are dying in different ways than they used to. As of 2014, more were dying from drug use than in years past, even as deaths from alcohol had largely remained unchanged. Deaths resulting from interpersonal violence were on the decline, but fluctuations (and a recent increase) in deaths from suicide meant that violence was still a relatively common cause of death. Over the previous decade, deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease - the main types are chronic bronchitis and emphysema - had steadied, even beginning to slowly decline, but it remained a leading cause of death.

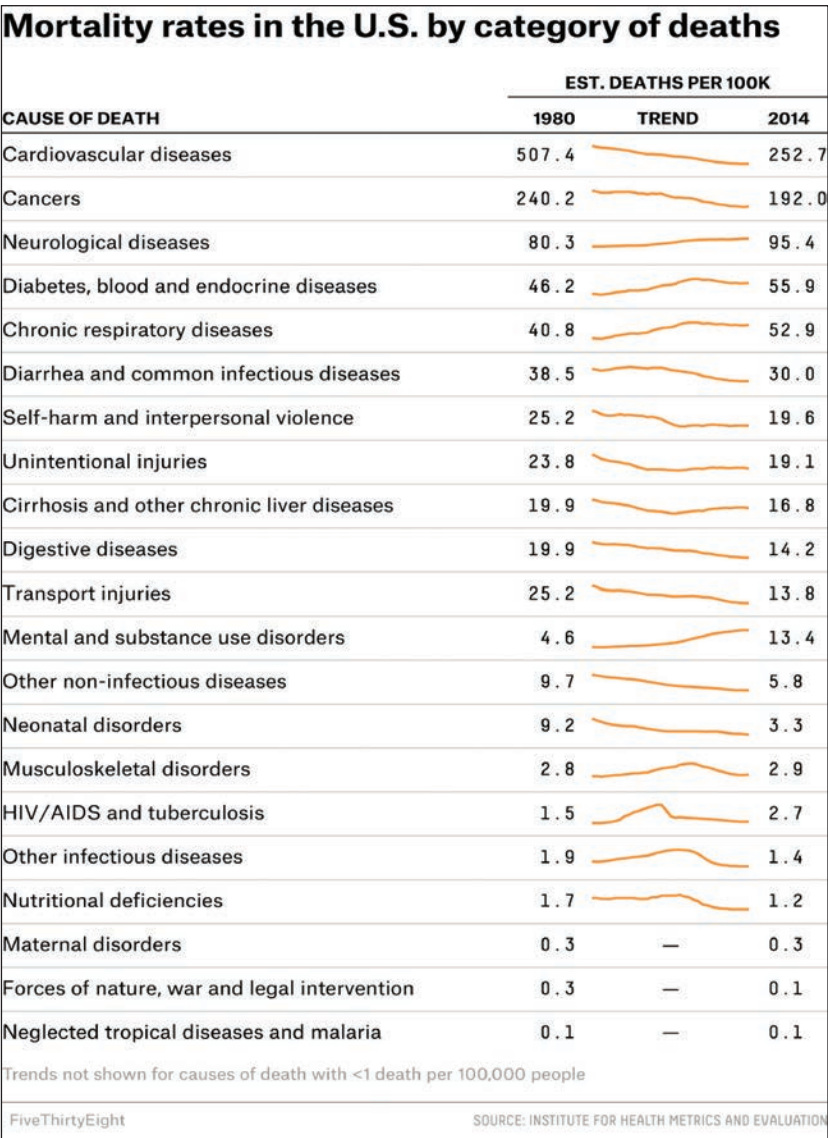
Even as the trends differ, however, they have something in common: huge disparities by region and sometimes even within states. Some of the biggest increases in diarrhea-related deaths have taken place in the Northeast and Midwest, for example - likely as a result of infections that stem from antibiotic use. All of this can be seen in 35 years of county-level mortality estimates, covering 1980 to 2014, that have been released by academic researchers who attempted to fill in the gaps on mortality statistics, painting one of the clearest pictures yet of how people die in the U.S.

In recent years, there's been a focus on how much we're spending on health care in the U.S., but to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's Ali Mokdad, the more distressing problem is how little we seem to be getting for all that money. Generally, U.S. mortality is higher than almost every other wealthy country, for nearly every disease, he said. "We talk about health more than anybody else, we talk about guns more than anybody else, we talk about violence more than anybody else, and you still see these huge disparities," Mokdad said. "It makes you wonder why."

Mokdad is part of a team at the institute, which is based at the University of Washington, that has published an analysis of 21 mortality categories, including more than 80 causes of death, within the U.S.2 - an analysis that we're also publishing in our interactive map of the ways Americans die. The most recent update to it - which adds several new death categories - provides a deeper look at some of those ways and how they've changed over time.

Infectious diseases

The mortality rate (the number of deaths per 100,000 people) from lower respiratory infections, which include pneumonia and acute bronchitis, declined nationally by 25.8 percent from 1980 to 2014. Not every part of the country experienced a decline, however. More than 50 percent of counties had a decrease3 in mortality from lower respiratory infections during that time, but 12.3 percent had an increase. Those increases were heavily concentrated in Appalachia, parts of the Southeast, and a few counties in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. Lower respiratory infections made up 79 percent of all infectious



disease mortality in 2014, so those percentage increases translate into a lot of deaths. "The trends of disparity are getting worse - they are increasing," Mokdad said. "For us, that's really sad."

Of the major infectious diseases, diarrheal diseases were the only cause of mortality that increased nationally from 2000 to 2014. Much of that can be attributed to deaths from C. difficile, a bacterium that can cause life-threatening intestinal issues, which are most commonly found among older patients whose immune systems have been weakened by antibiotic usage - making many of these deaths the result of medical treatment. A corridor running from Missouri to Maine, with its heart in the Rust Belt, saw some of the highest rates of mortality from diarrheal diseases in 2014.

Substance use

The rise in opioid deaths has been called an epidemic in recent years, and the data from the institute backs that up. It found an increase in the drug use mortality rate in just about4 every county in the U.S. from 1980 to 2014.

Alcohol and drug use deaths also vary geographically. Notably, the Southern Black Belt, which has high rates of mortality for most causes of death has some of the lowest rates of death from substance use.

Violence

An overall decline in violence-related deaths took off in the 1990s because of a precipitous decline in deaths from interpersonal violence, a

category that includes5 assault, domestic violence and child abuse. However, a recent uptick in suicide has kept the combined category among the leading causes of death. Some of the decrease in mortality from interpersonal violence is the result of improvements in medicine that have increased survival rates after an incident.

Many of these deaths result from firearms, which are once again under increased scrutiny after 17 people were killed in a school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Mass casualty events understandably capture a lot of the headlines around gun violence in the U.S. But as FiveThirtyEight has explored previously,6 the majority of gun deaths are from suicide - categorized as "self-harm" in the institute's data - a problem that has grown since the late 1990s.

There are clear regional patterns for violent deaths, with suicides happening at a high rate in the Mountain West, and interpersonal violence death rates high in the rural Southeast, on some Native American reservations and in a handful of large cities.

Chronic respiratory diseases

The rate of death from chronic respiratory diseases was dramatically higher in 2014 than it was in 1980. And more than 4.6 million people died from those diseases over that 35-year period. The vast majority of those deaths are from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which is most commonly caused by cigarette smoke.



Indian American lawmakers to grace Second Annual Congressional Roundtable on April 25

WASHINGTON D.C.(TIP): Desis for Progress (DFP) has announced that it will hold the second annual Congressional Roundtable on April 25, which will be graced by Indian American lawmakers Ami Bera, Pramila Jayapal and Raja Krishnamoorthi.

The event is open to the public and will give an opportunity to the attendees to submit questions for the representatives.

DFP is an organization made up of South Asians who self-identify as progressive and want to create a stronger community. It aims at creating a network that can quickly mobilize, support progressive policies and values and progressive South Asian American leaders.

The Congressional Roundtable will take place from 6 p.m. till 7 p.m. at Capitol Visitors Center. HVC-215 will be closed for press. During the last Congressional Roundtable held on March 21, 2017, over 100 DFP supporters came together to learn from the experiences and advice of Representatives Ami Bera, Pramila Jayapal, and Raja Krishnamoorthi.

Indian Origin Investment Adviser Charged by US Federal authorities with Million Dollar Fraud



NEW YORK (TIP): An Indian origin investment adviser has been charged by US federal authorities for orchestrating a fraudulent million-dollar investment scheme over several years.

Amrit JS Chahal, 30, of Fairfax, Virginia has been charged by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia also announced criminal charges against Mr Chahal. The Commodities Futures Trading Commission also charged him.

The Securities and Exchange Commission's complaint alleges that, from at least February 2015, Mr Chahal used his company, Kane Capital Investment Group to fraudulently solicit approximately \$1.4 million from about 50 individuals, including friends and family members.

Mr Chahal is the President, Chief Executive Officer, and sole employee of Kane Capital. He has never held any securities licenses, nor has he ever been associated with a registered broker-dealer or investment adviser other than Kane Capital.

According to the complaint, Mr Chahal lured investors by falsely claiming to be an experienced and successful trader who could generate above-market returns for clients through a low-risk trading strategy.

The Securities and Exchange Commission alleges that Mr Chahal had substantially no experience working in the financial or securities industry or trading securities on behalf of clients. The complaint further alleges that Mr Chahal initially invested client funds in a variety of investments, but suffered significant trading losses. According to the complaint, instead of disclosing the losses, Mr Chahal lied to his clients about their investment returns, continued raising funds, then used the money for his personal benefit, including to pay for his luxury car, rent, travel, dining, and other living expenses, and to make Ponzi-like payments to earlier investors.

48 MPs, MLAs FACE CHARGES OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN



NEW DELHI (TIP): At least 48 MPs and MLAs have declared cases related to crime against women, with BJP having the highest number of such politicians at 12, a report said on April 19 amid a nationwide outrage over rape incidents, including in UP's Unnao where a ruling party lawmaker is an accused.

"Out of 1,580 (33 per cent) MPs/MLAs analysed with declared criminal cases, 48 have declared cases related to crime against women," as per the report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

This comprises 45 MLAs and three MPs, who have declared cases of crime against women such as charges related to assault of woman with intent to outrage her modesty, kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her to marriage, rape, domestic violence and trafficking, the Delhi-based think-tank said.

Giving party-wise details, the report said the BJP has the highest number of MPs and MLAs (12), followed by Shiv Sena (7) and Trinamool Congress (6) who have declared cases related to crime against women.

The report is based on an analysis of 4,845 out of 4,896 election affidavits of current MPs and MLAs. This includes 768 out of 776 affidavits of MPs and 4,077 out of 4,120 MLAs across the country.

"All major political parties give ticket to candidates with cases of crime against women especially rape and therefore hindering the safety and dignity of women as citizens. These are serious cases where charges have been framed and cognisance has been taken by the courts. Hence, political parties have been in a way abetting to circumstances that lead to such events that they so easily but vehemently condemn in Parliament," the report said.

Among states, Maharashtra has the highest number of MPs and MLAs (12), followed by West Bengal (11), Odisha and Andhra Pradesh each with five MPs and MLAs who have declared cases related to crime against women.

ADR and National Election Watch (NEW) have recommended that candidates with serious criminal background should be debarred from contesting elections. Also, political parties should disclose the criteria on which candidates are given ticket and that cases against MPs and MLAs should be fast-tracked and decided upon in a time-bound manner; they added.

According to the report, in the last five years, recognised parties have given ticket to 26 candidates who had declared cases related to rape.

Source: PTI

AFTER CHINA, SUSHMA SWARAJ TO VISIT MONGOLIA

NEW DELHI (TIP): External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will be on a two-day visit to Mongolia from April 25, the stopover coming on her way back home after attending the April 21-24 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meet in China.

Swaraj's will be the first visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to Mongolia in 42 years. Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Mongolia in 2015. New Delhi had then extended a credit line of \$1 billion.

Mongolia considers India a strategic partner and a counter-weight to its neighbours, including China. Interestingly, Mongolian President Khaltmaa Batulga had won elections in July last year on an anti-China rhetoric and India revitalising ties with it would not be without geo-strategic significance for Beijing. In Mongolia, Swaraj will hold talks with her counterpart Damdin Tsogtbaatar; the duo co-chairing the sixth round of India-Mongolia Joint Consultative Committee meeting. The last round was held in Delhi in 2016. A range of issues, including political, strategic, economic, educational and cultural ties, are expected to be discussed.

Source: The Tribune

Opposition's move to impeach CJI Dipak Misra gaining momentum

NEW DELHI (TIP): The opposition parties, especially the Congress and CPI (M), have been mulling for quite sometime to move an impeachment motion against Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra. April 19 Supreme Court order that no further probe is needed in the death of judge B H Loya has definitely not gone down well with the opposition and now reports say that intense discussions are being held behind the closed doors to oust CJI Misra.

The Congress' Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad has sought a meeting with Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, on Friday. The opposition has reportedly collected 67 signatures of RS members for the motion which it may submit to Naidu. Initially, it was the CPI(M) which mooted the idea and said it was in talks with various opposition leaders regarding the issue. Congress later decided to back the move.

Before meeting Naidu, the opposition will hold a meeting in which leaders from Communist Party of India (Marxist), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) are expected to take part. "Azad's office has called us for a meeting. We will discuss a range of issues," a Hindustan Times report quoted CPI leader D Raja as saying. The HT reported quoted a Congress leader as saying that deliberations would be held



to take forward the motion for the removal of the CJI. On March 28, it was reported that the Congress has circulated a draft proposal for moving an impeachment motion against Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra to the other opposition parties.

It was then reported that Leaders of the Congress, the Trinamool Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) discussed the possibility of moving an impeachment motion against Misra in Parliament.

As per latest reports, The Trinamool Congress (TMC), a key opposition party, has not signed the motion. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) had also backed out of the move.

How is a judge impeached in India

A judge of the Supreme Court can

be removed by an order of the President of India. The order can be issued following an address the Parliament which is supported by a special majority of each house- a majority of the total membership of that House and a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that house present and voting.

Impeachment process

- First, a removal motion has to be supported by 100 members in case of the Lok Sabha and 50 in the Rajya Sabha. The same is to be given to the Speaker of the House and it can be introduced in any of the two Houses.
- It is up to the Speaker/Chairman to admit to rejecting the motion.
- If admitted then a three-member committee is formed to investigate the charges.
- The Committee will comprise either the Chief Justice of India or Judge of the SC, Chief Justice of a High Court and an eminent jurist.
- If the Committee finds the judge guilty then the House in which the motion was introduced can take up the matter.
- Once the House passes the motion with a special majority, an address is presented to the President of India.
- The President then passes an order to remove the judge.

Deaf-and-mute girl who returned from Pak gets 20 marriage proposals

INDORE (TIP): Twenty men, including a priest and a 'writer', have responded to a Facebook advert seeking a match for Geeta, a deaf-and-mute girl who returned from Pakistan after accidentally landing in that country when she was a child.

A social activist here, who is involved in the search for Geeta's long-lost parents, put up a post on Facebook nine days ago, seeking marriage proposals for her.

Gyanendra Purohit, the activist, today said 20 men have shown interest in marrying her and sent bio-data. Of them, 12 persons are disabled, while the rest do not have any disability, he said.

One of them is a temple priest while another claims to be a writer, he said.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj—who was instrumental in bringing Geeta back to India—had asked him to look for a match for the girl, Purohit had claimed earlier.

He put up a post on the Facebook page 'Reunite Geeta, a deaf girl, with her family', which was originally created to search for Geeta's parents, on April 10.

The advert said they were looking for a "good and smart deaf boy", age above 25 years, for "India's daughter Geeta".

It also made it clear that it is Geeta who would decide on the proposals, and the Union Government would take further steps. Geeta is staying in a



External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj with Geeta.

Geeta had drifted to Pakistan when she was a child and was under the care of the Edhi Foundation, a Pakistani charity. Since her return to India, efforts to reunite her with her family have proved futile

facility run by Muk-Badhir Sangathan, an NGO, here. The MP Social Justice Department is her caretaker.

Geeta was found alone aboard the Samjhauta Express at Lahore when she was seven or eight years old. It is surmised that she accidentally boarded the train somewhere in India.

Karachi-based Edhi Foundation took care of her while she lived in Pakistan. She returned to India in 2015.

So far more than ten couples from different parts of India have claimed that Geeta is their long-lost daughter, but none of them could establish the claim.

Source: PTI

ALL FIVE ACCUSED WALK FREE IN 2007 MECCA MASJID BLAST CASE



HYDERABAD (TIP): A National Investigation Agency (NIA) Special Court at Nampally in Hyderabad on April 16, citing lack of evidence, acquitted five accused, including Naba Kumar Sarkar alias Swami Aseemanand, in the case of the bomb attack on the Mecca Masjid in the city 11 years ago.

The blast, using an improvised explosive device, killed nine persons inside the masjid near the historic Charminar of Old City.

The others acquitted are Devendra Gupta, Lokesh Sharma, Bharath Mohan Lal Rateswar and Rajendra Choundary.

The NIA had originally charged 10 persons with plotting and carrying out the attack on May 18, 2007.

Accused Sunil Joshi of Madhya Pradesh, a former Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) pracharak, was murdered when the case was investigated.

Two other accused, former RSS pracharak Sandeep V. Dange and RSS activist and electrician Ramchandra Kalsangra, also from Madhya Pradesh, have been eluding the investigators.

Investigations against two others from the same State, Tejram Parmar and Amith Chowhan, are continuing.

The verdict was pronounced amidst tight security around the Nampally Courts Complex, where all the accused were present.

Police restricted the movement on roads leading to the court. Vehicles were directed to be parked more than a kilometre away from the court hall.

Income tax dept warns salaried class against filing wrong returns



NEW DELHI (TIP): The Income Tax Department on Wednesday cautioned salaried class taxpayers against using illegal means like under-reporting of income or "inflating" deductions while filing their returns, stating violators will be prosecuted and their employers will be intimidated to take action against them.

The Central Processing Centre (CPC) of the department in Bengaluru, that receives and processes the Income Tax Returns (ITRs), has issued an advisory specifying such taxpayers should not "fall prey" to unscrupulous tax advisers or planners who help them in preparing wrong claims to get tax benefits.

Calling it a "cautionary advisory" on reports of tax evasion by under-reporting of income or inflating deductions or exemptions by salaried taxpayers, the department said such attempts "aided and abetted by unscrupulous intermediaries have been noted with concern".

"Such offences are punishable under various penal and prosecution provisions of the Income Tax Act," it said.

The advisory comes in the backdrop of the investigation wing of the department, in January, unearthing a racket of extracting fraudulent tax refunds by employees of bellwether information technology companies based in Bengaluru, in alleged connivance with a tax adviser.

Loya case: SC anguished over attempts made to scandalise judiciary

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court today took strong exception over attempts made in judge B H Loya death case to "scandalises the process of the court" which prima facie constituted criminal contempt as lawyers did not even spare the apex court judges hearing the matter from the "vituperative assault on the judiciary".

The top court said serious attacks were made on the credibility of two judges of the Bombay High Court and aspersions were also cast on the high courts administrative committee against whom lawyers had called for issuance of contempt notices.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud said the conduct of the petitioners and the intervenors scandalised the process of the court and prima facie constituted criminal contempt.

However, on a dispassionate view of the matter, "we have chosen not to initiate proceedings by way of criminal contempt if only not to give an impression that the litigants and the lawyers appearing for them have been subjected to an unequal battle with the authority of law", it said.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, had argued that two of three judges in the bench -- justices Khanwilkar and Chandrachud -- should recuse from hearing the case as they were earlier judges in the Bombay High Court and might have known the judicial officers who submitted statements or justices Bhushan Gavai and S B Shukre who had visited judge Loya in the hospital.



The bench said if this was to be the test, it was rather ironical that the petitioners had instituted proceedings before the Bombay High Court whose judges were expected to be faced with the same situation.

"We informed Mr Bhushan that a decision as to whether a judge should hear a case is a matter of conscience for the judge. There is absolutely no ground or basis to recuse. Judges of the high court hear intra court appeals against orders of their own colleagues.

"References are made to larger benches when there are differences of view. Judges of the Supreme Court hear appeals arising from judgments rendered by judges of the high courts in which they served, either as judges or on appointments as Chief Justices. Maintaining institutional civilities between or towards judges is distinct from the fiercely independent role of the judge as adjudicator," it said.

The top court, which was critical of

the petitioners and their lawyers for casting insinuations against the judicial officers and judges, said an attempt was made to cause prejudice against them and it was a "vituperative assault on the judiciary."

The bench also took note of the submissions of senior advocate Dushyant Dave, representing another petitioner, that he wanted to cross-examine the four judicial officers -- Shrikant Kulkarni, S M Modak, V C Barde and Roopesh Rathi -- whom he did not believe in.

It said that senior advocate Indira Jaising also joined the fray by requesting the court to issue contempt notices to the administrative committee of the Bombay High Court and another junior counsel, appearing with senior advocate V Giri, went to the extent of urging that the judicial officers whose statements were recorded during the discreet inquiry were suspect.

Source: PTI

Willing to pay price for standing up for my belief, says Smriti Irani

NEW DELHI (TIP): Union Minister Smriti Irani on Thursday said she was willing to pay the price for standing up for her beliefs, asserting that the "true mettle" of politicians is determined on whether they are able to stick to their stand in the face of criticism.

The comments by the Information and Broadcasting Minister came in the backdrop of her ministry withdrawing its contentious press release on fake news following a directive from the Prime Minister's Office after wide-spread criticism by media and opposition parties.

"I felt that if belief systems change as per political convenience then what kind of a leader or what kind of a Parliamentarian will that make you? So for me, what is tough possibly is to believe in something, and at times there is cacophony which goes against your very belief," the minister said at a panel discussion.

"Your true mettle as a politician or a leader is then determined as to whether you are swayed by that cacophony or whether you still stand your ground. And I am willing to pay the price for it and I am," Irani said, without elaborating. Irani was responding to a query by Hero Enterprise Chairman Sunil Kant Munjal who asked how difficult it was for her to get her daily work done when she holds on to her guns despite opposition to her beliefs or action.



Source: PTI

After Doklam standoff, India and China may revive military ties

NEW DELHI (TIP): India and China are expected to take their first steps to revive military-to-military ties after the 2017 Doklam stand-off with both the Indian Army and the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) opening up select military colleges for training each other's officers on a reciprocal basis, according to officials familiar with the matter.

A decision to this effect is expected to be taken when defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman meets her Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe in Beijing on April 24. Sitharaman will be on a two-day trip to China for a ministerial meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) next week.

The revival of military-to-military follows a positive meeting between national security advisor Ajit Doval and China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi in Shanghai last week. Yang is a member of Politburo of the Communist Party of China and is currently director of the newly formed Central Foreign Affairs Commission. He is said to directly report to China's paramount leader Xi Jinping.

Both Doval and Yang were of the opinion that India and China needed to cooperate to make the 21st century an Asian one. With the two interlocutors sharing a close personal chemistry, it was agreed that the atmosphere of confrontation must give way to cooperation in all spheres. Doval had gone to Shanghai to do the spadework for the much anticipated summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi meeting before the SCO summit in June. While Indian armed forces are in favour of exercising with their Chinese counterparts and want a hotline between the military operation wings in New Delhi and Beijing, the Modi government is prepared to wait for a decision on these by the Xi regime.

Source: HT


**GUEST
COMMENT**

Modi in London: New turn to old ties

For the first time in 40 years, a British Prime Minister met her Indian counterpart without the overhang, obligations and requirements of the European Union. The Skripal poisoning episode has detracted British domestic attention and muted criticism of their PM Theresa May's inept handling of Brexit. But there is obviously a different approach. Britain has closed its doors to the kind of liberal immigration Indians have availed of in the past. Instead, Britain seeks improved accessibility of its businesses in India, a copy-paste of the UK-Israel model of tech partnership, lower barriers to commerce in IT, food and drink and life science, and a massive overlay in India of the British National Health Service (NHS) along with its attendant equipment supplier companies.

While the British wait for the barriers to come down or consensus to develop, there is a conscious effort to handhold India's quest to blend technology with agriculture and medicine. Essentially, London wants to retain its recent trade advantage: the 15 per cent rise in bilateral trade in 2017 was all accounted for by Britain. Clearly, there is a huge dollop of self-interest guiding Britain as it seeks to mould the Commonwealth into a primary tool for engaging with the non-European world. And it doesn't end at trade. Britain has thrown the baits of a security relationship with a focus on "ensuring freedom of navigation" (the code for anti-China grouping in South China Sea) and assistance in cyber security.

Most of the focus on R&D is ostensibly in keeping with Britain's claim as India's second largest research partner. But a closer look shows the plans to invest £400 million by 2021 are spread too thin. London will retain its salience as a global hub of finance but impetus to other ties will rest on British strategic assistance to India as a UNSC member and incubator of high technology. There has been little cause for cheer on those fronts. Britain is attempting a new turn with India. But it needs to be more proactive and less expectant considering that other competing countries can easily top most of these offers.

(Tribune, India)

AS I SEE IT

The Geopolitics of Oil: Gulf region volatile amid threat of US embargo


By G Parthasarathy

As sectarian Shia-Sunni and civilizational Arab-Persian-Israeli rivalries dominate the geopolitics of our western neighborhood today, India faces a very different situation from what it confronted four decades ago, when the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict flared up. The Organisation of Arab Petroleum Oil Exporting Countries (OAPEC), led by Saudi Arabia, announced an oil boycott of countries like Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, the US and the UK, considered to be pro-Israeli. They found themselves squeezed by an Arab embargo on oil supplies. A cash-strapped India found itself in a desperate economic situation, as oil prices rose rapidly from \$3 to \$43 per barrel. Saudi Arabia demanded that New Delhi should close the Israeli Consulate in Mumbai or face an Arab oil boycott. An enraged Prime Minister Indira Gandhi refused to comply. India emerged relatively unscathed, thanks to developments like oil supplies from the Soviet Union, the discovery of Bombay High oil and gas and "assistance" by the Shah of Iran, who enjoyed a cozy relationship with Israel.

Four decades later, the global energy and geopolitical scenario stands drastically changed. With the discovery of shale oil/gas in the US and Canada and huge oil reserves in Venezuela, untapped shale gas reserves in Argentina, and with Mexico adding to world oil supplies, North America and parts of Europe are relatively immune to blackmail. This is more so as Russian oil and gas contribute to meeting energy demands in Europe and across Eurasia. Saudi Arabia is now forced to seek Russian cooperation in regulating world energy supplies. Oil prices once at \$130 a barrel slumped to \$30 and now hover around \$60-70 per barrel. The major markets for oil supplies from the Arab/Persian Gulf countries are China (8.4 million barrels per day, bpd), India (4.4 million bpd) and Japan (3.4 million bpd). In the meantime, the oil producing Gulf monarchies, who are major suppliers of oil, are today preoccupied in dealing with a resurgent Iran, which is presently free from Western-led international sanctions. Iran is evidently seeking to become the dominant power in the energy-rich Gulf region.

The strategic scenario in our oil-rich West is now very different from what it was earlier. The advent of the Islamic Republic in Iran has led to a drastic downturn in Iran's relations with Israel. Tel Aviv has fomented the hostility to Iran across the world. Iran, in turn, has behaved irresponsibly towards Israel, backing the radical Palestinian group Hamas and even calling for the destruction of Israel. Iran has also sought to change the balance of power in the Arab world, challenging Saudi pre-

Given the bitter rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the likelihood of the Trump administration reimposing sanctions on Iran, India will have to navigate its path through its western neighborhood with dexterity. Our primary interests lie in the safety and welfare of the over 7 million Indians living in Arab Gulf countries. These countries together with Iraq, which can remain our largest supplier of oil, should remain the focal point of our attention, even as we make every effort to sustain economic cooperation with Iran, especially on issues of connectivity", says the author.



eminence, provoking former Saudi king Abdullah to ask American military Commander Petraeus to "cut off the head of the snake". With the ambitious and impetuous Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman now urging an all too willing President Trump to reimpose crippling economic sanctions on Iran, tensions are set to escalate in our western neighborhood. With some deft handling by Prime Minister Modi, our relations with the Arab Gulf states, notably Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have improved significantly, with the Saudis reaching out to us, to permit Air India over-flights to Israel.

Despite these developments, the Gulf region is tense, given the Saudi intervention in neighboring Yemen, where thousands of innocents have perished amidst a bitter conflict with Iran-backed Yemeni rebels. There is today a significant Shia-Sunni dimension in rivalries across the Islamic world. With the American intervention in Iraq leading to majority Shia rule there, its effect is being inevitably felt in Shia-ruled, Sunni-majority Syria, where the Russians have intervened decisively in favor of the Iran-backed Assad regime, forcing the Americans on the back foot. India has wisely stayed away from any participation in this rivalry. Iraq is now our largest supplier of oil, overtaking Iran and even Saudi Arabia.

Given the bitter rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the likelihood of the Trump administration reimposing sanctions on Iran, India will have to navigate its path through its western neighborhood with dexterity. Our primary interests lie in the safety and welfare of the over 7 million Indians living in Arab Gulf countries. These countries together with Iraq, which can remain our largest supplier of oil, should remain the focal point of our attention, even as we make every effort to sustain economic cooperation with Iran, especially on issues of

connectivity. India should continue its emphasis on ties with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman. While Iran remains the third largest supplier of oil to India, imports from Iran are showing signs of decline. Iran has notably been less than forthcoming, or transparent in dealing with projects for oil and gas exploration by India. We would, however, have to reassess the global energy scenario if, as appears likely, American sanctions are reimposed on Iran by the Trump administration, in coming months, though given the glut in global oil supplies, the effect on global oil prices would be manageable.

Venezuela now has an important role to play in India's oil imports. The new entrant is the US, where Indian companies have invested significantly in the exploration of shale gas, like they have done for oil and gas in Russia. The US will soon become the largest producer of oil and gas in the world. Gas supplies from the US have now commenced and are set to grow significantly. Thus India, which is today the third largest consumer of oil in the world, after the US and China, has wisely cast its net far and wide to meet its energy needs. We have learnt lessons from the past and are not over-dependent on any single country. While doing so, we have avoided getting involved in regional rivalries, tensions and conflicts in the Islamic world. We must always be prepared for crises in Islamic oil supplying countries, which may necessitate the use of our naval and air assets for evacuation and ensuring the safety and security of Indians living there. We are preparing to develop a significant storage capacity of petroleum in the event of any cut off of oil supplies because of regional tensions. We are also, wisely, placing greater emphasis on the country's energy security. We are today, a significant exporter of refined petroleum products, estimated at \$35.9 billion in 2017.

(The author is a career diplomat)

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Modi will sink India if he does not rein in the rapists



By Mike Ghouse

“Whenever adharma takes over a nation, it needs a Krishna to restore faith and trust in the society, and that Krishna is the collective consciousness of Indians resting in women, businessmen, and young men. They have to take their nation back from irresponsible chaotic governance and restore the good old days of the past where people were not afraid of each other and lived their lives instead of battling their lives.”

The brutal rape of an 8-year old and the 4-year-old is beyond anyone's understanding. It was a brutal rape and murder. I hope as a nation we condemn what is bad and encourage what is good regardless of the politics or religion of the individual.

This tragedy has united most of the Indians except a few party members of Mr. Modi and Mr. Yogi who are defending the rapists. What is disgusting is even women members of the party like Kirron Kher are discounting it by saying that the rape culture is not new in India. With friends like her, BJP does not need enemies.

My first response was apprehension. How difficult must it have been for the child to

endure the last few minutes of her life? Several images of 8-year-olds ran through my mind and could not help feel the anguish and anger. How must mothers and fathers feel if their daughter is out on her way to school?

My second response was, punish the criminals swiftly and restore the trust in society.

I hoped the Prime Minister, and each Chief Minister with the State Police commissioners will jointly announce zero tolerance and severe punishment to criminals who hurt innocent people. If they don't, we the people need to harass them to do it. At last, we the people have a right to decide whom we appoint to govern us, and how they are accountable to us.

A Bill must be introduced in the Parliament that would require "married men and women" to run the public office, preference must be given to those candidates who have daughters. It is not to discriminate against single people but to ensure the men and women who are responsible for public safety have the heart to empathize with the pain of mothers.

I urge Modi and Yogi to get married, and I am sure they are potent enough for God to bless them with a daughter each to understand at least the anguish of fathers, if not mothers. Sloganeering is good, but their actions determine if they are shooting their mouth off, or if they respect every man and woman of India.

I would appeal to the moderate members of the BJP to take bold steps and correct the mistakes and restore justice and the rule of law in India.

Ms. Prathiba Prahlad from New Delhi was one of the first few individuals in the nation to express her outrage well, and it reflects the sentiments of most mothers of India. Prathiba is a Dancer, Scholar, Culture Specialist, Festival Director at DIAF, Padma & Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee.

"I'm sick in the pit of my stomach & in deep,

deep anguish! Just imagine what horrendous pain, fright & brutality little baby Asifa would have gone through! I'm ashamed of our politicians, I'm ashamed of our society, I'm ashamed of myself & my helplessness! I wish I didn't live to see this day! India - hang your head in shame ... so many of our children, adolescents & youngsters are brutalized every other day! And we call our land a holy land??? A holy land filled with ugly, twisted, violent, brutal, heartless, soulless psychos who commit beastly crimes in the name of religion, caste, honour or just because they view the innocent & the vulnerable an easy prey ??? This land can never be holy unless justice is done to these innocents - unless laws are amended, justice is fast-tracked & the guilty are castrated, tortured & publicly killed ... they don't deserve a trial for god's sake - even at the risk of being termed undemocratic!"

Whenever adharma takes over a nation, it needs a Krishna to restore faith and trust in the society, and that Krishna is the collective consciousness of Indians resting in women, businessmen, and young men. They have to take their nation back from irresponsible chaotic governance and restore the good old days of the past where people were not afraid of each other and lived their lives instead of battling their lives. We did not have the lynchings, harassments, and murdering of people who differed with us. We did not regulate what one should eat, and that freedom had offered relative peace.

Why should a mother support BJP? What security she has for her daughter if these men don't feel the pain of the mothers? Women tourists are scared to go to Modi's India and Yogi's Taj Mahal for fear of being raped. Is this the India we want?

Ban those lawyers from practicing the law for defending the rapists, and ban the politicians from holding public office if they support and abet rapists.

I am not sure if Modi has the guts to do it, but I urge him to take action before people completely write him off.

I urge Hindus and Muslims to feel the pain together and never let the divisive men pit Hindus against Muslims or vice versa. Let them be the losers and not the general public.

What we need is sane voices - and not a Hindu Muslim conflict which the politicians would love it, but you and I will lose it. In the last two months, we had two fathers; a Hindu and a Muslim; two great heroic fathers in India. Each one of them lost their sons to hate by Muslim and Hindus each, but the patriotic fathers urged the politicians keep calm and not allow them to pit one group of Indians against the other. It must have been painful for them not to seek revenge. I hope Mr. Modi honors them as heroes of India. More at <http://mikeghouseforindia.blogspot.com/2018/04/a-way-out-of-hell-forgive-them-for-they.html>

WARNING TO INDIANS: Let this be a warning to Indian businessmen, Indian women, and all the young people who are enjoying a good life at this time. All of this will come to an end if Law and Order are not restored. Modi and Yogi have nothing to lose, but ordinary people do, it is their livelihood. Much of our prosperity hinges on foreign direct investments, export of software and contracting work and tourism including medical tourism.

If the investors continue to see the chaos, rape, communal strife, lynching, harassment, and restrictions on what one eats and who he or she marries, they will pull out of India. Who wants to invest in a place where their investment is not secure? Would you invest in Burma, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Ethiopia and even Pakistan?

(The author is the president of the Center for Pluralism in Washington, DC. He is committed to building cohesive societies and offers pluralistic solutions on issues of the day.)

Indian Overseas Congress, USA condemns the rape and murder of the eight-year-old Asifa Bano



By George Abraham

Indian Overseas Congress, USA joins millions of non-resident Indians across the globe in condemning the horrific rape and murder of an eight-year-old child Asifa Bano in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua. The barbarity and the bestiality involved in the killing of this little girl show the depraved and criminal mindsets of those who perpetrated such heinous acts. The ghastly way this girl was raped and murdered has indeed shaken the nation to its core and terrorized the people of conscience across the world.

Asifa Bano, belonging to the Bakarwal community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, was kidnapped, drugged and brutally gang-raped for three days. Her strangled body that was found on January 17, 2018, bore mute testimony to the inhumanity of her tormentors.

Police reports indicate Asifa was locked inside a temple and repeatedly raped for three days and finally strangled to death. A police charge sheet also said before her head was bashed with a stone, one of the

assailants - a police officer - had asked the killer to wait so he could rape the child for one last time.

Days before this horrific murder was reported, another young girl from Unnao in U.P. had tried to commit suicide outside Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's house. She said she had been raped by BJP lawmaker Kuldeep Singh Sehgar and his brother a year ago. A day later, her father, who had been mercilessly thrashed for his refusal to withdraw the case, died.

Holding him responsible for the "terrifying state of affairs," 49 retired civil servants, in an open letter urged Prime Minister Modi to reach out to the families of the Kathua and Unnao rape victims to "seek their forgiveness." Part of the statement reads as follows:

"Prime Minister, it is your party which is in power. Given your supremacy within the party and the centralized control you and your party president exercise, you more than anyone else, have to be held responsible for this terrifying state of affairs. Instead of owning up and making reparations, however, you had until yesterday chosen to remain silent, breaking your silence only when public outrage both in India and internationally reached a point when you could no longer ignore it."

"And even then, while you have

condemned the act and expressed a sense of shame, you have not condemned the communal pathology behind the act nor shown the resolve to change the social, political and administrative conditions under which such communal hate is bred. We have had enough of these belated remonstrations and promises to bring justice when the communal cauldron is forever kept boiling by forces nested within the Sangh Parivar" the statement added.

It is believed that this was done as part of a deliberate terror tactic to drive out a Muslim nomad community to which Asifa belonged. Different arms of the local government and political groups conspired to subvert the initial investigation and are using extrajudicial means to protect the accused.

The United Nations on Friday termed the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district as horrific, PTI reported.

"I think we have seen the media reports of this horrific case, of the abuse and the murder of a young girl," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters. "We very much hope that the authorities will bring the perpetrators to justice, so they can be held accountable for the murder of this young girl." "It is indeed the growing culture of violence emanating out of the wrong-headed



sense of ultra-nationalism and majoritarian arrogance that is polarizing the communities and dividing the nation," said George Abraham, Vice-Chairman for the Indian Overseas Congress, USA. "We call upon the Modi Government to stop paying lip service with slogans like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" and provide true leadership in bringing perpetrators of this pervasive rape and abuse of women culture across the country to justice regardless of their party affiliations and oust any government official who remain stumbling blocks to that effort" Abraham added.

(The author is Vice Chairman of Indian Overseas Congress)

World War II bomb to force mass evacuation in central Berlin

BERLIN (TIP): The discovery of an unexploded World War II bomb will force a mass evacuation around Berlin's central railway station Friday, covering several government ministries and a hospital, police said.

Buildings and streets in a radius of 800 metres (875 yards) around the site north of the busy train station will be cleared from 0700 GMT until the 500-kilogramme (1,100-pound) explosive is safely defused, they said on Twitter Wednesday.

The evacuation zone covers the central railway station, the economy and transport ministries, an army hospital and the embassies of Indonesia and Uzbekistan, a police spokesman told AFP.

Police said it was not yet clear how many thousands of people would be affected but predicted to local media that "it will be big, it will be a major hassle". The Deutsche Bahn rail company and urban transport operators prepared for large-scale disruptions around the central hub for trains, trams and buses.

The bomb, which was discovered during construction work on Heidestrasse in the district of Mitte, was "safe for now", police said, reassuring nearby residents that "there is no immediate danger".

Allied planes blasted Nazi Germany during the Second World War, and vast urban and industrial areas remain littered with unexploded bombs and other ordnance often found during construction projects.

Last Friday in the state of Bavaria, an ordnance disposal team defused a 500 kilogramme bomb which had forced the evacuation of 12,000 people in the city of Neu-Ulm -- the third unexploded bomb to be disarmed in recent weeks in the city of 50,000 people. (AFP)

China says Nepal a natural area for cooperation with India

BEIJING (TIP): Nepal is a natural area for cooperation between China and India, the Chinese government's top diplomat State Councillor Wang Yi said on April 18, as he invited India to participate in connectivity projects between the three nations.

The landlocked Himalayan nation has traditionally looked to India for economic support and trade, but Nepal has increasingly been courted by China with transport deals, to New Delhi's unease.

In 2016 Nepal's then prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, sealed deals with Beijing to use Chinese roads and ports, seeking to reduce Nepal's dependence on India for trade and transit.

While relations between China and India have been strained in recent years, with spats over everything from their disputed border with Tibet, current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought to re-set ties and will visit China in June for a regional summit.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali in Beijing, Wang dismissed the notion that Nepal had to carefully balance its relations with China and India.

"I believe that China, Nepal and India are natural friends and partners. We are neighbours connected by the same mountains and rivers," Wang said. "As we say in China, family members and neighbours wish each other well."

Support for Nepal's development should be a common understanding between China and India, he added.

"Nepal stands as a natural beneficiary for cooperation and development from China and India. I think this is a logical desire that should be supported by both China and India," Wang said.

China and Nepal have agreed to a long-term vision for a cross-Himalaya connectivity network, part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, he added.

"We believe that such a network when well developed can also create conditions for an economic corridor connecting China, Nepal and India. We hope that such cooperation can contribute to the development and prosperity of all three countries."

Gyawali, visiting Beijing about a week after Oli was in New Delhi, said he and Wang had agreed to start a feasibility study for a cross-border railway linking Nepal and China. (Reuters)

GERMANY'S ANGELA MERKEL APPEARS OPEN TO COMPROMISE ON EU REFORMS

BERLIN (TIP): German Chancellor Angela Merkel signaled her willingness to find compromises with France when it comes to reforming the European Union, as she hosted French President Emmanuel Macron for talks on April 19 in Berlin.

Macron has outlined ambitious plans for greater economic integration across the 28-nation bloc, but his proposals have met resistance in some member countries, including among conservatives in Merkel's party.

Merkel, who was recently confirmed for a fourth term at the helm of Europe's biggest economy, said at the very least she is willing to talk.

"There are of course always different starting points when it comes to the opinions of Germany and France," she told reporters at a joint news conference with Macron. "We need open debates _ and in the end we need the ability to compromise."

While Germany and France agree on the need to better protect the EU's external borders and forge a common asylum policy, it's unclear how much backing Macron can expect from Germany for his plans to reform the bloc's financial structure.

In their deal to form a new German government, Merkel's conservative party and its center-left partners agreed that Germany like France is prepared to pay more into the EU budget.

But Berlin has been skeptical in its response so far to the possibility of a shared budget and Merkel is lukewarm about Macron's idea of a eurozone finance minister.

The French president made clear he won't drop his demand for greater financial solidarity, particularly among the 19 countries that share the euro as a currency, which includes both Germany



and France.

"No currency union can survive if there aren't instruments for convergence," Macron said, citing the need for a banking union something Germany has resisted for fear of being held liable for future bailouts abroad.

Merkel said Germany would be willing to agree in the long term to a pan-European deposit insurance scheme, but insisted that solidarity shouldn't undermine economic competitiveness among the bloc's economies.

Macron's flying visit to Berlin started at the unfinished Humboldt Forum, a museum that's being built on the site where the German Kaiser's palace stood until it was largely destroyed in World War II. The forum is named after the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, two 19th-century German intellectuals who spent many years in Paris.

Both leaders noted the intentional symbolism of their visit to the building site at a time when Europe is being reshaped.

Closed doors talks between Merkel and Macron later Thursday were likely to touch on Europe's stance on the crisis in Syria and the fate of the nuclear deal with Iran.

Both leaders fly to Washington next week for separate meetings with President Donald Trump at which those issues will play a central role.

France and Germany were part of the six-nation group that negotiated the 2015 deal to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, and both countries are keen to prevent it from falling apart when Trump's May 12 deadline for major changes to the pact expires.

On Syria, Berlin's decision not to join the U.S., Britain and France in attacking suspected chemical weapons sites last week highlighted Germany's hesitancy when it comes to military action abroad. Berlin has stressed the need for a diplomatic solution to the war that's seen more than 700,000 Syrians seek refuge in Germany at considerable political cost to Merkel, who insists that giving them shelter has been the right thing to do. (AP)

India to invest more than 1 billion pounds in UK

LONDON (TIP): India will invest more than 1 billion pounds in the UK that will create or safeguard 5,750 British jobs, as part of a new partnership forged during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit as the two sides signed a wide range of MoUs, agreements and initiatives across technology, trade and investment.

The British government yesterday announced a new India-UK trade partnership after Prime Minister Modi held talks with his British counterpart Theresa May. The UK's Department for International Trade (DIT) said a range of new Indian investments worth more than 1 billion pounds will create or safeguard 5,750 British jobs for the economy as part of the new partnership, which builds on the recommendations of the Joint Trade Review (JTR) between the two countries which concluded earlier this year.

"Removing barriers to trade is a key way in which the UK can capitalise on the predicted growth in world markets and so I'm delighted we have come to this new

trade partnership with India," said Liam Fox, UK international trade secretary.

"It is clear that the opportunities for growth in trade with India are plenty, and as an international economic department we will continue to use tools such as trade missions not only to boost UK exports, but also to help businesses of all sizes forge ties and build cultivate relationships with potential buyers and investors," he said.

According to DIT figures, total trade in goods and services between the UK and India was 18 billion pounds in 2017, a 15 per cent increase from 2016.

The new partnership will seek to improve the accessibility of trade for businesses in both countries, as the UK gets ready to leave the European Union (EU). Focusing on the three key sectors of life sciences, information technology (IT) and food and drink, the partnership will seek to reduce barriers to trade with an eye on Brexit.

The UK also intends to recruit a British

cyber security industry expert to be based at the high commission in New Delhi, with a remit to share British expertise and connecting Indian private and public sector organisations with cutting-edge UK companies who can supply their specific requirements.

"The visit of Prime Minister Modi will see the launch of a package of technical assistance to help India climb further up the rankings for ease of doing business, benefitting UK companies and the Indian economy alike. Additionally, the two countries have also agreed to strengthen ties between their respective agriculture industries," the DIT statement said. Meanwhile, the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) and techUK have set up the UK - India Tech Alliance, which will facilitate collaboration on building future skills in new technologies by nurturing a solid skills base in the UK and India, with the support of both the governments. (PTI)

China flies bombers around Taiwan, holds live-fire drills

BEIJING (TIP): Chinese bombers and spy planes have flown around Taiwan, the air force said on April 19 as Taipei accused Beijing of trying to stoke regional tensions with its military drills.

China sees the democratically-governed island as a renegade part of its territory to be brought back into the fold and has not ruled out reunification by force.

In a statement on its microblog, the Chinese air force said it had "recently" flown a patrol, which included H-6K bombers, around Taiwan.

"We are confident to meet any challenge. The motherland is in our hearts, and the jewelled island is in the bosom of the motherland," an H-6K captain, Zhai Peisong, was quoted as saying, referring to Taiwan.

Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Ma Xiaoguang said it served as a warning against those pushing for Taiwanese independence.

Taiwan's defence ministry said today multiple Chinese aircraft including bombers and reconnaissance planes were spotted on yesterday afternoon flying over Miyako Strait -- near Japan's southern Okinawa island -- into the western Pacific before returning to their base via Bashi Channel off southern Taiwan.

"China has deliberately manipulated (the exercise) to pressure and harass Taiwan in an attempt to spark tensions between the two sides and in the region," Chiu Chui-cheng of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council told a regular briefing. "(We) will never bow down to any military threat and incentive."

Chinese combat helicopters also conducted live-fire drills with missiles off southeast China, state media said,



without confirming whether the exercises took place in the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) exercise took place yesterday and involved various types of helicopters that tested "all-weather operational capability of the air force at sea," the official Xinhua news agency said.

State broadcaster CCTV showed footage of helicopters firing missiles at distant objects in the water.

The reports did not say exactly where the exercises took place, but they occurred on the same day that China conducted live-fire drills in the Taiwan Strait. Beijing had announced the Taiwan Strait drills last week, further ramping up tensions following stark warnings against any independence moves by the self-ruled island.

Vessels had been ordered to avoid a certain area off the Chinese mainland, triggering speculation that a flotilla spearheaded by China's sole aircraft

carrier would take part in the exercise.

But Taiwan's defence ministry said yesterday that the drills only involved land-based artillery conducting "routine" shooting practice, accusing Beijing of exaggerating its plans as a form of "verbal intimidation and sabre-rattling".

The drills coincided with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's visit to Swaziland, one of Taipei's few remaining international allies.

Beijing has stepped up military patrols around Taiwan and used diplomatic pressure to isolate it internationally since Tsai took office.

Beijing has also been angered by Washington's arms sales to Taipei, and China protested last month after President Donald Trump signed a bill allowing top-level US officials to travel to Taiwan. Washington switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in 1979 but maintains trade relations with the island. (AFP)

N. Korean leader removes major nuclear sticking point: Seoul

SEOUL (TIP): South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Thursday that his rival, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, isn't asking for the withdrawal of US troops from the Korean Peninsula as a precondition for abandoning his nuclear weapons. If true, this would seem to remove a major sticking point to a potential nuclear disarmament deal.

North Korea, a small, authoritarian nation surrounded by bigger and richer neighbors, has always linked its pursuit of nuclear weapons to what it calls a "hostile" US policy that is embodied by the 28,500 US troops stationed in South Korea, the 50,000 stationed in Japan, and the "nuclear umbrella" security guarantee that Washington offers allies Seoul and Tokyo.

Although Moon reported that North Korea isn't asking for the US troops to leave, he said the North still wants the United States to end its "hostile" policy and offer security guarantees. When North Korea has previously talked about "hostility" it has been linked to the US troops in South Korea.

It won't be until Moon and Kim meet next week, and then when Kim is to meet US President Donald Trump sometime in May or June, that outsiders might

know just what North Korea intends. Until then, caution is needed over the statements the various leaders are using to set up their high-stakes negotiations.

Moon and Kim's summit on April 27 will be only the third such meeting between the countries' leaders. Moon, a liberal who is committed to engaging the North despite being forced to take a hard line in the face of repeated North Korean weapons tests last year, is eager to make the summit a success and pave the way for Kim and Trump to settle the deep differences they have over the North's decades-long pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Many analysts believe that Kim sees the meeting with Trump as a way to bestow legitimacy on his own leadership and on a rogue nuclear program that he has built in the face of international criticism and crippling sanctions. Many say it is unlikely that the North will trade away its hard-won nuclear weapons without getting what it wants in return.

"North Korea is expressing a commitment to a complete denuclearization," Moon said during a meeting with the heads of media organizations in South Korea on

Thursday. "They are not presenting a condition that the US cannot accept, such as the withdrawal of the American troops in South Korea. ... North Korea is only talking about the end of a hostile policy against it and then a security guarantee for the country."

Trump revealed Tuesday that the US and North Korea had been holding direct talks at "extremely high levels" in preparation for their summit. Trump also said that North and South Korea are negotiating an end to hostilities before next week's summit.

North Korea has long sought a peace treaty with the United States to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War. Some South Koreans fear the North could use such a treaty as a pretext for demanding the withdrawal of the American troops in the South. Some worry that potential discussions on formally ending the war may distract from already difficult efforts to rid the North of nuclear weapons and apply robust verification of that process. The armistice that halted fighting in the war was signed by the US-led United Nations Command, North Korea and China. South Korea was a member of the U.N. Command but was not a direct signatory. (AP)

Turkey's weak opposition scrambles to challenge Erdogan

ANKARA (TIP): Turkey's weak opposition is scrambling to mount a meaningful challenge against strongman President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with just nine weeks to prepare for snap elections.

One party leader is in jail. Another doesn't have a candidate. A third might face eligibility issues for her party.

Erdogan set the presidential and parliamentary elections for June 24, in a move that will usher in a new system cementing the president's grip on power more than a year ahead of schedule. Turkey is switching from a parliamentary system to an executive presidential system after a narrowly approved referendum last year, in the wake of a failed 2016 coup attempt.

The changes take effect with the next election, which had originally been set for November 2019. (AP)

Iraq carries out air strikes on Islamic State in Syria

BAGHDAD (TIP) : Iraq on April 19 carried out air strikes on Islamic State positions in Syria a week after Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said his country would defend itself from militant threats across the border.

Irai F-16 warplanes crossed into Syria to carry out the strikes after coordination with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government, an Iraqi military spokesman said.

"Carrying out air strikes on Daesh gangs in Syrian territories is because of the dangers posed by said gangs to Iraqi territories and is proof of the improved capabilities of our armed forces," the Iraqi military said in a statement.

Earlier this month, Abadi had said Iraq would "take all necessary measures if they threaten the security of Iraq", referring to the jihadist militants who just three years ago overran a third of Iraq.

The prime minister declared final victory over the ultra hardline group in December but it still poses a threat from pockets along the border with Syria and has continued to carry out ambushes, assassinations and bombings across Iraq.

Iraq currently has good relations with Iran and Russia, Assad's main backers in the seven-year Syrian civil war, while also enjoying strong support from the US-led coalition. (Reuters)

Japan to trial urine test to spot cancer

TOKYO (TIP): A Japanese firm will carry out what it hailed as the world's first experiment to test for cancer using urine samples. Hitachi developed the technology to detect breast or colon cancer from urine samples two years ago. It will begin testing the method using 250 urine samples, to see if samples at room temperature are suitable for analysis, Hitachi spokesman Chiharu Odaira told AFP. "If this method is put to practical use, it will be easier for people to get a cancer test, as there will be no need to go to a medical organisation for a blood test," he said.

It is also intended to be used to detect paediatric cancers. "That will be especially beneficial in testing for small children" who are often afraid of needles, added Odaira.

The Hitachi technology centres around detecting waste materials inside urine samples that act as a "biomarker" — a naturally occurring substance by which a particular disease can be identified, the company said.

The experiment will start this month until through September in cooperation with Nagoya University. (AFP)

No-go warning as Japan volcano erupts for first time in 250 years

TOKYO (TIP): A volcano in southern Japan erupted for the first time in 250 years on Thursday, spewing steam and ash hundreds of metres into the air, as authorities warned locals not to approach the mountain.

"There is a possibility that (Mount Io) will become more active," said Makoto Saito, an official from the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), confirming the eruption.

In a televised press conference, he warned residents in the area to stay away from the mountain, part of the Mount Kirishima group of volcanoes, as major ash deposits spread from the crater. (AFP)



VIDYA BALAN ADDS WEIGHT TO FIGHT AGAINST PIRACY

Actress Vidya Balan says the film industry needs to come together to try and put a stop to piracy, which continues to hamper the entertainment business.

"I am happy to be part of this important initiative for the film industry. All of us need to come together and work towards putting a stop to piracy," Vidya tweeted.

She retweeted a link shared earlier by Union Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu of a video in support of a campaign launched in collaboration with the Producers Guild of India on anti-piracy.

In the video, Vidya takes viewers on a nostalgic trip about the cinema-watching experience in theatres.

She says: "Think back of a time when you watched a film in a theatre with your entire family. The lights going dim, the flicker of a projector, the entire collective human experience made better by crunchy popcorn and hot samosas as you settled in your seat. When was the last time when you enjoyed such a time basking in this kind of a glorious cinematic experience? Cinema's conception in itself lies on this very principle of warmth and togetherness." *Source: IANS*

WHY MAJID MAJIDI DIDN'T CAST KANGANA, DEEPIKA IN BEYOND THE CLOUDS

Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi has admitted that he had approached both Kangana Ranaut and Deepika Padukone for *Beyond the Clouds* but added that things did not work out and he finally decided to cast Malavika Mohanan.

"With Kangana, we could not work together. I heard something from her office and that made me upset. She had said 'I did not accept the role', which was not true. Then we followed it up and it was not Kangana but her office that had published this," Majidi said.

The director was referring at a report where Kangana was quoted as saying that she declined the film as she found her character "submissive". "I mention this because I never reacted to what she said. I feel now I can say this. We did have some meetings, we talked together. I don't want to go into detail. The only thing I want to say is that it is not true that she did not accept the role," Majidi said.

In February 2017, Kangana was quoted by Pinkvilla as saying, "It's a brother-sister story where the brother is the one doing all the fighting. Since I'm jumping straight into Ketan Mehta's *Jhansi ki Rani*, who was an iconic heroine, why would I take on such a submissive role?"

The filmmaker, however, hopes to work with Kangana in future. "She is a very good actress. (She is) strong, I hope to work with Kangana in the future," he added.

Talking about Deepika, the director said he was impressed that she did not have any qualms in giving a screen test for the film. "Deepika was very nice to accept the test. It was not to check whether she had the ability to act or not. I just wanted to see how she would look in that costume. We had some meetings. But Deepika had a very big film, which released recently, and she had to shoot for that. We did not find common time to work together," he added.

Actor Priyanka Chopra was also approached but their schedules did not match. *Source: PTI*



Shilpa Shetty to make digital debut as blind dating show host



Actress-entrepreneur Shilpa Shetty Kundra is set to make her digital debut as host "Hear Me. Love Me.", reality show that aims to redefine the concept of blind dating.

Amazon Prime Video announced the show on Tuesday.

Thrilled about her digital debut, Shilpa said in a statement: "I am sure all of us have wondered if looks are everything when it comes to dating.

"Hear Me. Love Me.' puts this concept to the test. The format of this unusual and edgy reality show revolves around dating through the heart. The show tries to uncover what each contestant values the most in their date."

The show combines modern day technology with the rules of old world romance to uncover the perfect recipe for love.

The format takes a single young woman looking for love and sets her up on three dates in a single day. The catch? She is not allowed to see what her dates look like.

Produced by FremantleMedia India, the

series provides a window into what contemporary India thinks of love, romance and dating.

Vijay Subramaniam, Director, Content, Amazon Prime Video India, said: "This show is fun and fresh. It is based on the premise of choosing a date, but with a big twist and in a never before seen format in India."

The makers considered Shilpa a "great fit" to host the show, in which young women between 21 to 32 years of age, with different aspirations and from different walks of life, make an attempt to find love and companionship.

"Shilpa's innate warmth and joie de vivre blend beautifully with the show format to create irresistible entertainment, said Aradhana Bhola, Managing Director, FremantleMedia India.

"Hear Me. Love Me." is produced in seven countries, and was originally devised by FremantleMedia's Israeli production company Abot Hameiri.

Source: IANS



CATE BLANCHETT TO HEAD CANNES FILM FESTIVAL JURY

Actress Cate Blanchett will lead the jury of the 71st Cannes Film Festival. Filmmakers Ava DuVernay and Denis Villeneuve and actors Kristen Stewart and Lea Seydoux are also a part of it.

According to reports, the jury will include five men and four women from seven nationalities and five continents.

Also serving on the jury are Chinese actor Chang Chen, French director Robert Guediguian, Burundian singer Khadja Nin and Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev.

While some have criticised the relatively low number of women directors in official competition, Cannes artistic director Thierry Fremaux said that he has been conscious of the gender balance in the jury.

"For the last four years, I've become much more concerned about the presence of women at the festival. I've been having discussions with intelligent women like Jessica Chastain and have listened to their advice about ways to improve certain things," he said.

"We've started paying more attention to the gender ratio on our selection committees, for instance. Right now, two out of the three committees have as many women as men," he added.

EVA LONGORIA GETS STAR ON THE WALK OF FAME

A star was unveiled Monday on the Hollywood Walk of Fame to honor Eva Longoria who is best known for her eight seasons on the ABC comedy-drama-mystery "Desperate Housewives."

Felicity Huffman, a co-star of Longoria's on "Desperate Housewives," Anna Faris and singer Ricky Martin joined Longoria in speaking at the ceremony.

The star is the 2,633rd since the completion of the Walk of Fame in 1961 with the first 1,558 stars.

The ceremony was held in connection with the May 4 release of Longoria's latest film, the romantic comedy "Overboard," in which she plays the best friend of a single mother struggling to make ends meet (Faris).

Born March 15, 1975, in Corpus Christi, Texas, Longoria received a bachelor's degree in kinesiology from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. After graduating from college, she entered a talent contest that brought her to Los Angeles, where she was spotted and subsequently signed by a theatrical agent.

Longoria began her television career in 2000 by portraying a flight attendant on an episode of "Beverly Hills, 90210." She was a cast member of the CBS daytime drama "The Young and The Restless" from 2001-03.

Longoria's first prime-time series as a cast member was the 2003 ABC crime drama "L.A. Dragnet."

Longoria was nominated for a Golden Globe for best performance by an actress in a television comedy or musical series in 2006 and joined her castmates in receiving five SAG Award nominations for outstanding performance by an ensemble in a comedy series for her portrayal of Gabrielle Solis on "Desperate Housewives," which ran from 2004-12.

Longoria starred in and executive-produced the short-lived NBC 2015-16 comedy "Telenovela." She has also directed episodes of the ABC comedy "black-ish,"



The CW romantic comedy "Jane the Virgin," the Fox comedies "LA to Vegas" and "The Mick" and "Teleovolea."

Outside of her career in entertainment, Longoria spoke at the 2016 Democratic National Convention and received a master's degree in Chicana/o studies from Cal State Northridge in 2013, beginning work on it while "Desperate Housewives" was in production.

"I was terrified," Longoria told CSUN Magazine. "I don't have time to do this, but

for some reason you make time. I'd have to go to class, 7 to 10 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays after shooting. And it was so fulfilling in a way I couldn't even imagine.

"The reason I wanted to do it was because I wanted to understand the immigration issue better. But you can't understand where we're going if you don't know where we came from. This history is important, and that's what really motivated me to finish my master's."

Are Gwyneth Paltrow and Brad Falchuk married?

Practically all of Hollywood turned up to Gwyneth Paltrow and Brad Falchuk's black-tie engagement party Saturday night — which was rumored to be a secret wedding.

Paltrow, 45, was beaming when she arrived at the Los Angeles Theater in a floor-length maroon dress, fresh from a VIP bachelorette party in Mexico, which Page Six exclusively reported on.

Her producer beau, Falchuk, 47, arrived separately in a white tux.

The star-studded, 400-person bash was organized by Falchuk's business partner, Ryan Murphy, who has worked with him on hit series like "Glee" and "American Horror Story."

The black-tie dress code had some insiders buzzing that the event was actually going to be the couple's nuptials, Page Six reported exclusively. It's also been rumored they'll tie the knot in the Hamptons later this year.

Paltrow's mom, Blythe Danner, was spotted leaving Saturday's shindig carrying a gray Monique Lhuillier dress bag, the Daily Mail reported. The A-list designer is known for her bridal looks and her dresses are celebrity favorites.



Paltrow's rep did not immediately return a request for comment.

The venue's marquee boasted sweet messages: "GP Loves BF" and "BF Loves GP."

Stars in attendance included Cameron Diaz, who planned Paltrow's bachelorette party, and other Hollywood A-listers Reese Witherspoon, Kate Hudson, Jennifer Aniston, Julia Roberts, Liv Tyler and Demi Moore.

Noticeably absent was Paltrow's ex-husband, Coldplay rocker Chris Martin, whom she's famously remained on "familial" terms with and with whom she has two children.

Since Paltrow and husband No.1 eloped, she's said she's treating this wedding as her first and pulling out the traditions.

"I've never had a wedding before so even though I'm 45, I sort of feel like a 21-year-old," she told People after announcing her engagement in her own Goop magazine's "Sex & Love" issue. "It's kind of fun to talk about with my girlfriends. They send me pictures of dresses — they're as excited about it as I am," she added.

Paltrow and Falchuk met when the actress guest-starred on "Glee" in 2010 and the pair have been dating since 2014, after her split.

Acid attack on 3 girls in Pakistan by uncle for rejecting marriage proposal

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Three girls, including a sister duo, in Pakistan's Punjab province suffered burn injuries in an acid attack today when they were allegedly attacked by the sisters' uncle for rejecting a marriage proposal, according to media reports.

The sisters and their friend -- all said to be university students -- were standing at a bus stop in Dang district of Gujrat in the morning when the men arrived on a motorcycle and hurled acid on the girls, DawnNewsTV reported.

The girls suffered burns on their face and arms and were admitted to a hospital, according to police.

"The primary suspect was the uncle of the two sisters who were attacked. Another accused was identified as the uncle's friend," Dang police station SHO Ameer Abbas was quoted as saying in the report.

The SHO's statements were seconded by one of the victims, it added.

One of the girls had refused a marriage proposal which was the reason behind the attack, the police said, adding that the uncle and his friend are still absconding while the third accused has been arrested.

Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Inspector General of Police Arif Nawaz have sought a detailed report of the case.

They have also instructed senior police officials to ensure the arrest of the accused within 24 hours, the report said. (PTI)

Over 5 lakh still affected by Sri Lanka drought

COLOMBO (TIP): Over 500,000 people still remain affected by the drought in 10 districts of Sri Lanka, according to a report released by the Sri Lankan Disaster Management Centre (DMC) on April 19.

The DMC said the 10 districts located in the northern, northwestern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka had been affected.

The Puttalam district in the northwestern province is the worst-affected with 216,670 people suffering from the drought, Xinhua news agency reported.

DMC spokesman Pradeep Kodippili said people had been affected in terms of scarcity of drinking water and crop failures. However, he said the southern, central and western parts of Sri Lanka were experiencing rain. (IANS)

Myanmar minister says conditions in Rohingya refugee camps 'very poor'

YANGON (TIP): A Myanmar minister expressed concerns on April 19 about "very poor conditions" in Rohingya refugee camps in neighbouring Bangladesh, and said repatriation of the Muslim minority should start as soon as possible due to the coming monsoon season.

The United Nations and rights groups say a Myanmar military operation in the country's northwest in August has sent nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims fleeing to Bangladesh. Most live in flimsy, bamboo-and-plastic structures perched on hills around Cox's Bazar, in southern Bangladesh.

Fleeing Rohingya refugees have reported killings, rapes and arson on a large scale. The United States and the UN have described the military crackdown as ethnic cleansing, an accusation that Myanmar denies. "Seeing is believing and we saw all the people in the camps are in very poor condition," Myanmar's Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye told reporters in the country's main city, Yangon, after his two-day visit to camps near Cox's Bazar.

"Our main thing is to start the repatriation process as soon as possible because the monsoon is very near and we are very worried for those who fled to Bangladesh," he said.

Myanmar said on Saturday it had repatriated the first Rohingya family. The Bangladeshi government and the United Nations refugee agency, however, said they had no knowledge of any such repatriation.

After months of fraught talks, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed in January to complete a voluntary repatriation of the refugees within two years. Myanmar set up two reception centres and what it says is a temporary camp near the border to house the first arrivals. (Reuters)

Indian Sikh woman accepts Islam, marries Muslim man in Pakistan: Reports

ISLAMABAD (TIP): An Indian Sikh woman, who went to Pakistan to attend the Baisakhi festival, has sought extension of her visa after marrying a man in Lahore and embracing Islam, media reports said on April 19.

Kiran Bala, daughter of Manohar Lal from Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, wrote to the Pakistan Foreign Office that her visa should be extended as she married one Mohammad Azam, resident of Lahore, during a ceremony held at Jamia Naeemia seminary in Lahore on April 16, The Express Tribune reported.

She also changed her name to Amna Bibi which she used to sign the letter addressed to the foreign ministry, the report said.

"Now in the given circumstances, the undersigned could not return back to India and the undersigned have received life threats of assassination, therefore, the undersigned intends to extend her visa," she wrote in the letter, published by the local media.

The FO or the Indian High Commission have not said anything about the letter.

She arrived in Pakistan on April 12



with other Sikh pilgrims to attend the festival in Gurdwara Panja Sahib located in Hasan Abdal near Islamabad. Her visa will expire on April 21.

The ongoing Baisakhi festival is the fresh subject of controversy between

Pakistan and India.

It has already created bitterness after India accused Pakistan of using it to incite Indian pilgrims on the issue of 'Khalistan', which was rejected by Islamabad. (PTI)

Bangladesh eyes settlement in US cyber heist suit ahead of its own case

NEW YORK/DHAKA (TIP) : An Ecuadorian bank and Wells Fargo have reached an out-of-court settlement over a 2015 cyber heist, providing a possible precedent for the Bangladesh central bank's planned suit to recover \$66 million still lost in one of the world's biggest such cases.

A suit by Ecuador's Banco del Austro against Wells Fargo & Co (WFC.N) was quietly settled in February, less than a month before a trial date was set, and the U.S. district court in Manhattan sealed all discussions, according to court documents. No other major media has reported the settlement.

Wells Fargo did not comment on the settlement, and a representative for Banco del Austro could not be immediately reached.

Banco had sought to hold Wells responsible for authorizing the fraudulent transfer of \$12 million from its account in 2015.

Hackers breached Bangladesh Bank's systems in early 2016 and tricked the Federal Reserve Bank of New York into sending as much as \$81 million to accounts at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC) (RCB.PS) in the Philippines. The accounts were held in fake names and most of the money disappeared into casinos in Manila. (reut.rs/2jk1W74)

Some of the funds were recovered but about \$66 million remains untraced.

No one has been criminally charged for the heist despite an international investigation and two years of finger-pointing among Bangladesh, Philippines, the Fed and the SWIFT communication network that was used. Bangladesh Bank has threatened to sue Manila-based RCBC, and any legal fallout could set a precedent amid a rash of electronic heists at financial institutions around the world. "This is a tricky issue. We can't reveal our strategy. But yes we are reviewing each and every case, including the Ecuador one," Bangladesh Bank's deputy governor Abu Hena Mohd. Razee Hassan said in a recent interview.

While Bangladesh has not taken any legal action, bankers and lawyers saw the cyber-heist suit by Banco against Wells Fargo as a test for any options available to Bangladesh. They said the settlement could signal that Wells compensated Banco in some way, a possibly encouraging sign for Bangladesh Bank, But it could still struggle to get a hearing in the United States and prove that Manila-based RCBC had a contractual obligation to freeze the stolen funds.

"There are an awful lot of reasons for people to settle (and) there are all sorts of laws that may or may not apply," said Peter Jaffe, a senior associate at Washington-based law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP.

"RCBC was not the one that was hacked. Someone may think that RCBC should have done something different when it saw money coming through its accounts, but that is not really a cyber security issue at that point," Jaffe said. "I don't think you would necessarily look to cyber security law (or U.S. commercial code) to determine ... obligations and rights."

OBLIGATION UNCLEAR : At issue is the New York Uniform Commercial Code, which says a bank that is tricked by thieves must reimburse the customer, unless it can prove it used a mutually-agreed protocol for verifying the payment messages. The customer could counter that the security protocol was not "commercially reasonable." (Reuters)

Gunmen attack vehicle, kill 6 civilians in Afghanistan: Official

KABUL (TIP): An Afghan official says at least six civilians were shot and killed by gunmen in western Ghor province this morning.

Iqbal Nezami, spokesman for the provincial police chief, said that four other civilians were wounded after their vehicle was attacked near Faroz Koh, the provincial capital. The victims were all ethnic Hazaras, a Shia minority in Afghanistan that is frequently targeted by Sunni extremists in different parts of the country. Nezami says the Hazaras were travelling from Herat, another western province, to Ghor when they came under attack. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

Both the Taliban and militants from the rival Islamic State terror group are active in Ghor and have previously claimed attacks in the province. (AP)

Afghan, Pakistani forces clash near border, 2 killed

KABUL (TIP): Afghan troops clashed with Pakistani forces near the disputed border on Sunday, in fighting that killed two Pakistani paramilitaries and wounded five others, officials said. Pakistan's military said in a statement that the Frontier Corps was carrying out "routine surveillance" along the border when it was "fired upon from the Afghanistan side." It said the paramilitaries showed "maximum restraint" to avoid civilian casualties, and that "military engagement" is underway to defuse the situation. (AP)

LEH & LADAKH, COLD DESERT IN THE HIMALAYAS

Leh and Ladakh offer some interesting as well as unique options for those looking for action ranging from the adventurous to the offbeat. You could be stargazing, capturing the scenery and its hues with your camera. Adventure lovers can have a heyday by joining a bike expedition to Khardung La, rafting down the Zaskar river or trekking up the awe-inducing Stok Kangri.

A lot of volunteering options are also available for those who have the leisure of time and would like to contribute to the cause of not just conservation but also social upliftment by contributing to the development efforts in the region. Camel safari in the sand dunes of Hunder is another surreal experience, perfect for a family trip. All this if you can take a break from gaping at the larger than life landscapes here!

STOK KANGRI

Stok Kangri is the highest mountain peak in the Stok range of the Himalayas. At 20,500 ft, it is also the highest trekkable summit in India. It has always been a great lure for trekkers from all over the world and is quite popular since it requires relatively less trekking skills. Ideally done between 6-10 days, it is one of the must have Ladakh experiences.

You need to be properly acclimatised to the high altitude conditions before attempting this one. It is advisable to make a summit attempt if you have prior experience of scaling some 14,000 ft peaks. A lot of mental fitness also goes into this one, for weather can take sudden turns on the trek to Stok Kangri. Still, it is a must do if adventure is your calling and you harbour a secret wish to scale a world-famous Indian peak.

BIKING

This one is for the more ardent adventurers. Leh Ladakh offer one of the toughest terrains and the most alluring landscapes in the world, making the region perfect for biking expeditions. You can rent a bicycle (at INR 300-500 per cycle per day) or a motorbike (at INR 800-1600 per bike per day) from one of the rental points in Leh and explore the region at your pace. Though Khardung (17,582 ft), one of the highest motorable passes in the world, is right at the top of bikers' favourite list, there is a lot more. You can join an expedition or go solo on some of the most awe-inducing stretches that include Leh-Pangong Tso, Leh-Nubra Valley, Leh-Alchi, Leh-Tso Moriri and Leh-Hunder. Time to set some new records.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Leh and Ladakh are such great loves of photographers that you will see hordes of them, trekking in high-altitude zones, lugging their bulky camera equipment with them. If you, too, share their love or harbour a wish to shoot some fascinating photos or time-lapse videos, get ready to be enthralled. Some of the best vantage points for photography in Leh and Ladakh are the Shanti Stupa, Leh Palace, the sand dunes of Hunder, Stakna Monastery, Diskit Monastery, Chang La, Khardung La, Pangong Tso and Tso Moriri, which offers some fascinating views of the Changthang region. Changpas and Ladakhis of course make for some of the best portraits that you can capture. Their bright smiles might just be



too hard to catch with a camera though.

CAMEL SAFARI AT HUNDER

Hopping on for a ride on the Bactrian camels and exploring the sand dunes at

Hunder is another must do in Ladakh. These camels are one of the few reminders of the Silk Route days, when Hunder was a major business port. With most of the camels domesticated now, you can approach the

village people to arrange a ride for you. These safaris can extend from hours to days, depending on your choice. Sunsets are the best time to go on the safari, for the dunes turn golden under the setting Sun.

Must see

The Leh Palace, which is situated behind the main market has eight stories and is similar to the Potala Palace of Lhasa and still belongs to the royal family of Ladakh. Just ahead of the palace is the famous Chamba Temple, which is a oneroomed shrine that has a huge icon of Maitreya, the Buddha to come. Since this temple cannot be found easily, it is essential to enquire about it in the second row of shops.

Also in the bazaar, at the top of the street, one can see the Jama Masjid. This has been painted in green and white colour. Another place that you must visit is the Sankar Gompa, which is situated within the city and is one of the oldest structures here. At one time, this monastery only welcomes maximum twenty monks and is a fairly active one. Also the monks here are extremely hospitable and always offer yak butter tea to those visiting the monastery.

Also a visit to the famous Thikse Monastery is a must. This monastery is the largest such structure in central Ladakh and is primarily known for its magnanimous statue of Maitreya (future Buddha) in its Maitreya Temple. This statue is 15 meters (49 ft) high and the largest such statue in Ladakh. The Buddha here is unusually portrayed as seated in the lotus position rather than his usual representations as standing or in a sitting posture on a high throne.

Must do

On Old Leh Road exists the Tibetan Refugee Market which is an ideal place for shopping in Leh. Tibetan markets are popular for their metal-ware. The visitors here who have an eye for artistic pieces would find sonorous bowls made of nine metals like cymbals, decorative brass and copper trumpets. Besides, cymbals that have religious themes that are used in meditation are also found here.

Also if one is fond of jewellery, it is possible to find relevant items like unpolished silver and turquoise jewellery and chunky shell bangles worn by Ladakhi women. There are also a range of excellent rugs and carpets that have traditional Persian and Kashmiri themes. Some other attractions of these markets are the native Thangka paintings, jewellery made of semi-precious stones, small prayer wheels, shawls, stoles and music bowls. One can also find the lapis lazuli from Afghanistan and the rubies from Burma.

Must know

The cheapest way to travel within the region is by the state buses, which ply on fixed routes according to fixed time schedules. The most comfortable and convenient though expensive mode of travel, however, is taxi, which is available for hire on fixed point-to-point tariff basis.

For visits to the newly opened areas of Nubra, Dah-Hanu, Tsomoriri, Tsokar and Pangong Lake, it is mandatory to engage the services of a registered and recognised travel agency that makes the requisite arrangements including internal transport.

WOMAN NEED MORE SLEEP THAN MEN

That males and females have different physical needs is something we all know. Yet, recent research points to an important aspect where men and women are also different. This is something not everyone is aware of. A study has shown that women need more rest than men. It was performed by the Sleep Research Center at England's Loughborough University.

The study found that woman's brains need more time to recover from their daily routine. Sleep deprived females were also more susceptible to distress or anger. This is in comparison to men when getting the same amount of rest. So how much more rest do they need? It turns out that as little as twenty minutes of extra sleep can have significant benefits. The reason behind this is that, while awake, female brains most often work harder. But, let's get into more detail.

THEY HAVE BUSIER SCHEDULES

You should take into account that most women have a day job – part or full-time – and take care of the children. Also, with making dinner after work, it's no wonder women end up needing more sleep. This multi-tasking can be very exhausting to do day in and day out. The expectations that society puts on women in most cultures are evident. They have a visible effect and harmful effect.

GO THROUGH MORE HORMONAL CHANGES

Puberty, regular monthly differences in hormones all have a serious effect on women. This also includes pregnancy and menopause. Physical discomfort and pain are another reason why female brains need more sleep. Aside from that, women are more prone to conditions such as anxiety and depression.

DON'T GET ENOUGH REST

As a result of a more demanding



routine, a lot of women don't get the rest they need. If you have small children, you know the demands of raising them and how you need to sync to their resting patterns. When they finally go down for a nap, you scramble to clean the house or do the cooking. Men should consider helping around the house more. Especially, since the study points to increased irritability from too little sleep.

LINKS TO WEIGHT GAIN

Men don't have as tough of a time losing weight as women do, especially the ones that aren't getting enough rest. Obese women are more likely to be sleep deprived, so there's a link between insomnia and being overweight. Furthermore, the stress hormone cortisol releases in higher amounts thanks to sleep deprivation. More cortisol leads to a bigger appetite and obesity.

THEY ARE WIRED DIFFERENTLY

In comparison to men, women are wired differently. Their connections are optimized for analytical and intuitive thinking. They tend to multi-task, and this higher momentum doesn't slow down as quickly when bedtime comes. So it can be harder for them to fall asleep.

Modern life and society expectations have harmful effects on the health of women. All around the world they are facing too much daily stress. This affects their sleep in the most negative way. Disrupted sleep cycles lead to a lack of concentration and worse quality of life. Getting regular sleep is essential for any individual. This rings more true for women as they perform multiple tasks throughout the day. Increasing the quality of their sleep will improve their health. It will also lead to a more happier every day.

REMEDIES FOR BLEMISHES

LEMON JUICE

Lemon juice works as an excellent skin-lightening home remedy to reduce dark spots and hyperpigmentation due to its bleaching effect.

Its high citric acid content exfoliates the skin, removes excess oil and kills acne-causing bacteria. It also minimizes the appearance of large pores and smoothes the skin.

- Simply apply fresh lemon juice on your skin and leave it on for 15 to 20 minutes before rinsing it off. Do this daily for a month or so.
- Alternatively, combine one-quarter teaspoon each of lemon juice and organic honey. Rub it on your skin and wash it off after 15 to 20 minutes. Repeat a few times a week for one month or until you see improvement.
- You can also mix together equal parts of lemon juice and tomato juice. For extra exfoliation, add one tablespoon of oatmeal (optional). Apply the mixture on the affected area. Leave it on for about 15 minutes, and then rinse it off. Do this daily, or three or four times a week for about a month or until you get encouraging results.

TOMATO JUICE

Being rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, tomato juice is excellent for creating glowing and blemish-free skin. Plus, it helps shrink large pores and cure acne due to its astringent properties. Tomatoes are also good for reducing suntan due to their high lycopene content.

- Massage your skin with tomato pulp.
- Leave it on for 10 to 15 minutes, and then rinse it off with cool water.
- Follow this simple routine daily for several weeks or until you get the desired results.
- To enjoy clear and healthy skin, also include fresh tomatoes in your daily diet.

APPLE CIDER VINEGAR

Apple cider vinegar is rich in alpha hydroxy acids and hence lightens dark spots and blemishes. In addition, it helps balance the skin's pH levels, reduces excess oils and opens clogged pores.

Due to its anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, apple cider vinegar also fights acne breakouts.

- Mix one part organic apple cider vinegar and three parts water. If it seems too strong, you can increase the amount of water.
- Dip a cotton ball in this solution and dab it on the affected area.
- Leave it on for 10 to 15 minutes, and then wash it off.
- Use two or three times a day until the blemish fades away.

FOOD CORNER

DUM KA MURGH

Dum Ka Murgh is a gem from the streets of Hyderabad and it is a must try recipe for all the chicken lovers. This rich and hearty dish can be prepared easily at home by marinating chicken leg pieces and cooking them with fried onions,

Ingredients

500 gm chicken legs, 1/4 teaspoon ginger paste, 2 cashews, 4 soaked overnight almonds, 1/2 tablespoon ghee, 1/4 teaspoon garlic paste, 1/2 teaspoon red chilli powder, 1/2 inch cinnamon stick, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, 1 green cardamom, 1 tablespoon refined oil, 1/2 cup tomato puree, 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon chiraunji, 1/2 cup yoghurt (curd), 1/2 cup onion, 1/2 teaspoon poppy seeds, 1/2 teaspoon crushed to paste green chilli, salt as required, 1 teaspoon coriander leaves, 1/2 teaspoon garam masala powder.

Method

- To prepare this main dish recipe, take the chicken leg pieces in a large bowl. Put it under running water and wash them properly. Pat dry the chicken leg pieces and set these aside. Now, place a non-stick pan over medium flame and let it get hot. Once the pan is hot enough, add cashews, chiraunji seeds, grated coconut, poppy seeds and dry roast them. Once done, take the pan off the flame. Transfer the dry roasted ingredients in a bowl



and let them cool down.

- Now, peel the soaked almonds. Take a grinder jar and add the peeled almonds along with the dry roasted cashews, poppy seeds, grated coconut and chiraunji seeds in it. Grind on high speed and make a paste. If the

paste is too coarse, add 2 tablespoons of water in it and grind again. Transfer the paste in a separate bowl and set it aside.

- Now, marinate the chicken leg pieces with ginger paste, green chilli paste, garlic paste, red chilli powder and salt for about 30 minutes. Next, take a chopping board and finely chop the onions on it.
- Now, place a deep-bottomed pan on medium flame and add 1/2 tablespoon ghee in it. When the ghee is hot enough, add the chopped onions in it. Fry the onions till they are golden brown. Once done, transfer the fried onions in a bowl. Now, in the same pan, add 1 tablespoon refined oil and add the ground almond-coconut paste along with green cardamoms, and cinnamon sticks in it. Saute well and cook the masala until the oil starts separating from the mixture.
- Now, add fried onions, green chilli paste, red chilli powder, yogurt, tomato puree and salt in the pan. Mix it well and cook for about 4-5 minutes or until the gravy starts thickening. Now, add the marinated chicken leg pieces along with black pepper powder, garam masala powder, chopped mint and coriander leaves in the pan. Mix well and cook until the chicken leg pieces are cooked properly.
- Once done, remove the pan from the flame and transfer the dish in a bowl. Garnish with a sprig of mint. You can also add 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice on it to enhance its flavor. Serve it with hot buttery naans to enjoy!

RAW FRUIT, VEGETABLES GOOD FOR MENTAL HEALTH

MELBOURNE (TIP): Eating raw fruits and vegetables may be better for your mental health than cooked, canned and processed products, a study has found.

Public health campaigns have historically focussed on aspects of quantity for the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

However, the study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, found that for mental health in particular, it may also be important to consider the way in which produce was prepared and consumed.

"Our research has highlighted that the consumption of fruit and vegetables in their 'unmodified' state is more strongly associated with better mental health compared to cooked/canned/processed fruit and vegetables," said Tamlin Conner, Psychology Senior Lecturer at University of Otago in New Zealand.

Conner believes this could be because the cooking and processing of fruit and vegetables has the potential to diminish nutrient levels.

"This likely limits the delivery of nutrients that are essential for optimal emotional functioning," said Conner.

For the study, over 400 young adults from New Zealand and the US aged 18 to 25 were surveyed. This age group was chosen as young adults typically have the lowest fruit and vegetable consumption of all age groups and are at high risk for mental health disorders.



The group's typical consumption of raw versus cooked and processed fruits and vegetables were assessed, alongside their negative and positive mental health, and lifestyle and demographic variables that could affect the association between fruit and vegetable intake and mental health (such as exercise, sleep, unhealthy diet, chronic health conditions, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender).

"Controlling for the covariates, raw fruit and vegetable consumption predicted lower levels of mental illness symptomology, such as depression, and improved levels of psychological wellbeing including positive mood, life

satisfaction and flourishing," said Conner.

"These mental health benefits were significantly reduced for cooked, canned, and processed fruits and vegetables," she said.

"This research is increasingly vital as lifestyle approaches such as dietary change may provide an accessible, safe, and adjuvant approach to improving mental health," Conner added.

The top 10 raw foods related to better mental health were: carrots, bananas, apples, dark leafy greens such as spinach, grapefruit, lettuce, citrus fruits, fresh berries, cucumber, and kiwifruit.

Source: PTI



THREE CUPS OF COFFEE, TEA DAILY MAY CUT STROKE RISK: STUDY

SYDNEY(TIP): Are you an ardent coffee or tea lover, but advised to avoid caffeinated beverages due to your heart conditions? Cheer up, drinking up to three cups of coffee or tea a day is safe as well as reduce irregular heartbeat and stroke risk, a study says.

A single cup of coffee contains about 95 mg of caffeine. It acts as a stimulant to the central nervous system and works to block the effects of adenosine -- a chemical that causes atrial fibrillation (AFib).

AFib is the most common heart rhythm disorder, causes the heart to beat rapidly and skip beats, and if left untreated, can cause strokes.

The results suggest that caffeine intake of up to 300 mg per day may be safe for arrhythmic patients.

"There is a public perception, often based on anecdotal experience, that caffeine is a common acute trigger for heart rhythm problems," said lead author Peter Kistler, Director at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital.

But, "caffeinated beverages such as coffee and tea have long-term anti-arrhythmic properties mediated by antioxidant effects and antagonism of adenosine," he added.

For the review, published in the journal *JACC: Clinical Electrophysiology*, the team analysed multiple population-based studies.

A meta-analysis of 228,465 participants showed that AFib frequency decreasing by 6 per cent in regular coffee drinkers, and an analysis of 115,993 patients showed a 13 per cent reduced risk.

Another study of 103 post-heart attack patients who received an average of 353 mg of caffeine a day showed improvement in heart rate and no significant arrhythmias -- or abnormal heart rhythms, that cause the heart to beat too fast, slow or unevenly.

However, in two studies, where patients drank at least 10 cups and nine cups of coffee per day, showed an increased risk for ventricular arrhythmias (VAs) -- a condition in which the lower chambers of the heart (ventricles) beat very quickly.

On the other hand, patients with pre-existing heart conditions who consumed two or more energy drinks -- that contains concentrated caffeine -- per day reported palpitations within 24 hours.

Source: IANS

HERE IS WHY PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD NOT HAVE PAINKILLERS

Doctors have always advised caution against consuming painkillers during pregnancy due to various reasons.

According to the research led by the University Of Edinburgh, taking painkillers during pregnancy could affect the fertility of the unborn child in later life.

The study identified that these drugs may also affect the fertility of future generations, by leaving marks on DNA.

The findings added to a growing body of evidence that certain medicines, including paracetamol, should be used with caution during pregnancy. As of now, guidelines say that, if necessary, paracetamol -- also known as acetaminophen -- should be used at the lowest possible dose for the shortest possible time. Ibuprofen should be avoided during pregnancy.

The team of researchers looked at the effects of paracetamol and ibuprofen on samples of human fetal testes and ovaries. They found similar effects using several different experimental approaches, including lab tests on human tissue samples and animal studies.

Human tissues exposed to either drug for one week in a dish had reduced numbers of cells that give rise to sperm and eggs, called germ cells, the study found. Ovaries exposed to paracetamol for one week had more than 40 percent fewer egg-producing cells. After ibuprofen



exposure, the number of cells was almost halved. Experts say this is important because girls produce all of their eggs in the womb, so if they are born with a reduced number it could lead to an early menopause. Painkiller exposure during development could have effects on unborn boys too, the study found. Testicular tissue exposed to painkillers in a culture dish had around a quarter fewer sperm-producing cells after exposure to paracetamol or ibuprofen. The scientists found that exposure to paracetamol or ibuprofen triggers mechanisms in the cell that make changes in the structure of DNA, called epigenetic marks. These marks can be

inherited, helping to explain how the effects of painkillers on fertility may be passed on to future generations.

Painkillers' effects on germ cells are likely caused by their actions on molecules called prostaglandins, which have key functions in the ovaries and testes, the researchers found.

Rod Mitchell, who led the research, said, "We would encourage women to think carefully before taking painkillers in pregnancy and to follow guidelines -- taking the lowest possible dose for the shortest time possible." The study appears in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Source: ANI

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HUGE ASTEROID GIVES EARTH SURPRISE FLYBY



WASHINGTON (TIP): If you are not aware that a giant asteroid the size of a football field flew past Earth over the weekend, you are not alone as even NASA scientists got to know about the flyby only a few hours before it happened, media reported.

NASA scientists noticed the massive asteroid at an observatory in Arizona just 21 hours prior to the flyby, ScienceAlert reported on Tuesday.

The asteroid, designated 2018 GE3, made its closest approach to Earth at around 2.41 a.m. EDT on Sunday, according to a Space.com report.

Travelling around 106,000 kilometres per hour, the asteroid was as far away from our home planet as half the average distance between Earth and the Moon.

NASA has estimated that the asteroid is somewhere between 47 to 100 metres wide, meaning it is roughly 3.6 times the size of the one that cleared 2,000 square kilometres of forest when it exploded over Russia's Tunguska region in Siberia in 1908.

And that particular asteroid was estimated to have produced about 185 times more energy than the Hiroshima atomic bomb, the report said.

Source: IANS

Pentagon to track soldiers' phones to monitor their health

NEW YORK (TIP): The Pentagon is working on an app that will keep track of US soldiers' health and deliver cost-saving treatment by monitoring the data accumulated on their smartphones, the media reported.

According to The Washington Post, scientists at the Pentagon's secretive weapons development arm wants to use soldiers' smartphone's camera, microphone and motion sensors to monitor signs of illness.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) last week announced that it has awarded a \$5.1 million contract to cybersecurity company Kryptowire to develop "Warfighter Analytics using Smartphones for Health" programme (WASH) to spot diseases based on data that it collects from a person's smartphone.

"Ultimately, this could mean better treatment, cost savings and making treatment available to more people," Tom Karygiannis, Kryptowire's vice-president of product, was quoted as saying.

Source: IANS

SCIENTISTS DEVELOP PLASTIC-EATING ENZYME

WASHINGTON (TIP): Scientists have accidentally developed a plastic-eating enzyme that may be used to combat one of the world's worst pollution problems, a media report said.

Researchers from Britain's University of Portsmouth and the US Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) made the discovery while examining the structure of a natural enzyme found in a waste recycling centre a few years ago in Japan, CNN reported on Tuesday.

The finding was published on Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

They said the enzyme, Ideonella sakaiensis 201-F6, is able to "eat" polyethylene terephthalate, PET, which was patented as a plastic in the 1940s and is used in millions of tonnes of plastic bottles.

Their aim was to study its structure, but they accidentally engineered an enzyme which was even better at breaking down PET plastics.

"We hoped to determine its structure to aid in protein engineering, but we ended up going a step further and accidentally engineered an enzyme with improved performance at breaking down these plastics," said NREL's lead researcher Gregg Beckham.

The discovery could result in a



recycling solution for millions of tonnes of plastic bottles made of PET, which currently persists for hundreds of years in the environment, the University of Portsmouth said on its website.

"Serendipity often plays a significant role in fundamental scientific research and our discovery here is no exception," said Professor McGeehan, director of the Institute of Biological and Biomedical Sciences in the School of Biological Sciences at Portsmouth.

The enzyme can also degrade polyethylene furandicarboxylate, or PEF, a bio-based substitute for PET

plastics that is being hailed as a replacement for glass beer bottles, CNN reported.

PEF plastics, although bio-based, are not biodegradable, and would still end up as waste in landfills and in the seas, the NREL said.

According to a three-year study published in Scientific Reports last month, a huge, swirling pile of trash in the Pacific Ocean, known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, is growing faster than expected and is now three times the size of France, more than double the size of Texas.

Source: IANS

Biodegradable shoes made from mushrooms, chicken feathers

WASHINGTON (TIP): Scientists have created biodegradable shoes using mushrooms, chicken feathers and textile waste, paving the way for more sustainable fashion.

The researchers from University of Delaware (UD) in the US created a bio-composite material - sourced sustainably from common regional products - that forms the sole of their prototype shoe.

"The fashion industry produces a lot of waste, so sustainability is an issue everyone is trying to address," said Jillian Silverman, master's degree student at UD.

"It's hard to believe that people are going to change their consumption

habits, but with this shoe, when someone gets tired of it or it wears out, it can go into the compost pile and not the landfill," said Silverman.

The project began in 2015, when researchers made fabric from mushroom mycelium, the interlocking root system from which the part of the mushroom that we eat on our pizza grows.

The researchers then experimented with growing different species of mushrooms and using different materials, known as substrates, in which the mycelium forms its network of roots. They grew numerous samples, dried them and tested them for potential use as the sole of a shoe.

The nutrients in which the samples grew included chicken feathers and a textile waste product that is most often used as a packing material.

The team hopes to experiment in the future with discarded natural-fibre clothing, perhaps shredding it to create a fluffy addition to the feathers as a growth medium.

"The chicken feathers and the textile products provide the nutrients for the mycelium, and they also are a supporting material for it to grow in. They act like a kind of glue to form a matrix and create a network structure for the mycelium," said Huantian Cao, professor at UD.

Source: PTI

Learn coding on mobile with Google's Grasshopper app

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): To help beginners learn coding on their smartphones, Google has launched a new learn-to-code app called Grasshopper.

Grasshopper has been created by a team of coders from Google's workshop for experimental products - "Area 120".

"Coding is becoming such an essential skill, and we want to make it possible for everyone to learn even when life gets busy.

"We made Grasshopper to help folks like you get into coding in a fun and easy way," the company said in a blog post on Wednesday.

"We put Grasshopper on a phone so you can turn your commute or waiting in line into a learning moment," it added.

The Grasshopper app is now available globally on both iOS and Android. According

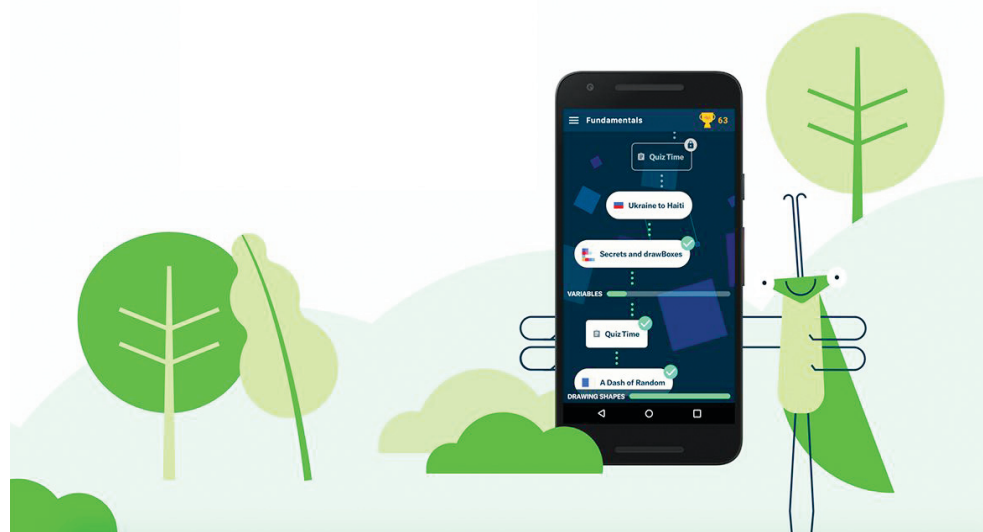
to Tech Crunch, the goal is to get coders proficient in the basics and core concepts, so they can take the next steps in their coding education.

Till date, "Area 120" has released innovations like "Advr"—an advertising format for virtual reality; personal stylist "Tailor"; emoji messenger "Supersonic"; a job-matching service in Bangladesh, a booking tool called "Appointments"; and the YouTube co-watching app "UpTime".

The app offers several courses, beginning with "The Fundamentals," where users learn how code works.

Grasshopper have two more courses where coders learn to draw shapes using the D3 library, and later create more complex functions using D3.

Source: IANS



India is world's sixth largest economy at \$2.6 trillion, says IMF

WASHINGTON (TIP): India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the worth of the economy, clocked in at \$2.6 trillion for 2017, according to the database of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook (WEO) for April 2018.

That is well over the \$2.5 trillion milestone that supposedly separates big economies from pretenders.

India is now the world's sixth largest economy, displacing France. The five economies ahead are the United States, China, Japan, Germany and United Kingdom.

"This is a landmark development for India," said an official in the finance ministry in New Delhi, and insisted that though it might look symbolic, implications were more far-reaching than immediately apparent.

"These horse races and their numbers matter and work to shape opinion, and more importantly we hope, influence investment decisions," the official added.

The ongoing spring meetings of the World Bank-IMF group have brought a steady stream of good news for India, with, it must be acknowledged, the necessary and repetitive caveats, admonitions and prescriptions, such as the dire need for reforms in labour laws (read allow easy exit for failing enterprises, a key trigger for innovation) and land acquisition.



Both the World Bank and IMF have said in their respective reports and projections that India has finally overcome the adverse impact of the predictably but needed measures to demonetise the economy and introduce a unified system of taxation for goods and services, no matter how disruptive they were.

The Fund acknowledged the Indian turnaround but kept its growth forecast unchanged to 7.4% for 2018 — and 7.8% in 2019, up from 6.7% in 2017.

The World Bank was more bullish — forecasting growth from 6.7% in 2017 to 7.3% in 2018 and to subsequently stabilise at 7.5% in 2019 and 2020.

It went on to conclude that the Indian economy had not only recovered but had

made up enough ground to catapult South Asia to the top of the chart as the world's fastest growing region. Again.

In the GDP horse race, France is projected to make up the loss to India, by a very narrow margin, and recover the sixth slot in 2018 relegating India to the seventh position it has held for a few years now, with \$2.9 trillion to India's \$2.8 trillion — separated narrowly as it would be economies of this size by billions.

But Indian officials said they were confident India would hold on to the present position — number sixth — despite the dynamic nature of the GDP projections — based on a certain calculation factoring local prices and the US dollar exchange rate. *Source: HT*

GOLD GAINS AS METALS RALLY SPARKS INFLATION CONCERNS

BENGALURU (TIP): Gold prices rose for a fourth straight session helped by a rally in base metals that has fuelled concerns of inflationary pressures, with lingering US - China trade tensions lending further support to the yellow metal.

Spot gold was up 0.2% to \$1,351.51 per ounce at 0441 GMT, a day after it touched a one-week high of \$1355.74.

US gold futures rose 0.1% to \$1,354.50 per ounce.

"Gold shot up in glittering fashion on haven demand while catching a fillip from the underlying move in commodity prices," said Stephen Innes, head of trading for Asia-Pacific for OANDA in



Singapore.

Resources stocks surged in Asia on Thursday as oil prices climbed to their highest in over three years. Aluminium prices reached their highest since 2011, alumina touched an all-time peak and

nickel jumped the most in 6-and-a-half years.

"With base metals rallying quite strongly it could lead to higher inflation... Gold could be used as a hedge against inflation risk," said OCBC analyst Barnabas Gan.

Inflation fears boost gold, which is seen as a safe haven against rising prices.

"Other important point to note is that the tariff threats being imposed by both Trump and China has not been taken off the table... If trade tensions escalate further gold prices could go up to \$1,600 per ounce," Gan added.

Source: Reuters

PROCTER & GAMBLE TO BUY 51.8% STAKE IN MERCK

NEW DELHI (TIP): Procter & Gamble will acquire 51.8% stake for Rs 1,289.88 crore in India-listed drug firm Merck Ltd as part of a global deal under which it is taking over German firm Merck KGaA's international consumer health business. The global deal is for about 3.4 billion euro (Rs 27,677 crore) in cash. P&G will acquire Merck's majority shareholding in Merck Ltd. (India) and make a mandatory tender offer to minority shareholders. In a regulatory filing, Merck Ltd said Procter & Gamble Overseas India B.V and The Procter & Gamble Company have launched an up to Rs 647.53-crore open offer to acquire up to 4,315,840 equity shares of Merck Ltd, constituting 26% stake from public shareholders. It further said sale of the equity shares held by the sellers is proposed to be executed at a "price of up to Rs 1,500 per fully paid-up equity share aggregating to up to Rs 1,289,88,36,000 total for all equity shares held by the sellers payable as Euro equivalent in cash". *Source: PTI*

INDIA TO INVEST MORE THAN £1 BILLION IN UK

LONDON (TIP): India will invest more than 1 billion pounds in the UK, which will help create or safeguard 5,750 British jobs, as part of a new partnership forged during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit as the two sides signed a wide range of MoUs, agreements and initiatives across technology, trade and investment.

The British government on Wednesday announced a new India-UK trade partnership after Prime Minister Modi held talks with his British counterpart Theresa May.

The UK's Department for International Trade (DIT) said a range of new Indian investments worth more than £1 billion will create or safeguard 5,750 British jobs for the economy as part of the new partnership, which builds on the recommendations of the Joint Trade Review (JTR) between the two countries which concluded earlier this year.

"Removing barriers to trade is a key way in which the UK can capitalise on the predicted growth in world markets and so I'm delighted we have come to this new trade partnership with India," said Liam Fox, UK international trade secretary. *Source: PTI*

'AMAZON INDIA'S MOST VISITED WEBSITE'

NEW DELHI (TIP): Amazon.in is the most visited website in India on both desktop and mobile platforms, Amazon Inc. chief executive officer Jeff Bezos announced to his shareholders on Thursday.

In a letter to Amazon shareholders, Bezos said the e-commerce giant is India's fastest growing marketplace.

Bezos added that the data to highlight Amazon's performance was sourced from website ranking company comScore and digital market intelligence firm SimilarWeb.

The Amazon.in mobile shopping app was also one of the most downloaded shopping apps in India, according to App Annie, Bezos said.

19 crore Indian adults don't have bank accounts: World Bank

WASHINGTON (TIP): India has 19 crore adults without a bank account despite the success of the ambitious Jan Dhan Yojana, making it the world's second largest unbanked population after that of China, the World Bank said.

Besides, almost half of the bank accounts remained inactive in the past year, the multilateral financial institution said in a report, even as it lauded the Indian government's financial inclusion scheme, the Jan Dhan Yojana, for bringing in additional 31 crore Indians into formal banking system by March 2018.

It also said the country's adult population with a bank account has more than doubled to 80% since 2011. The Jan Dhan Yojana was launched by the Modi government in 2014.

According to the latest Global Findex Database released by the World Bank on the sidelines of the annual Spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 11% of the world's unbanked adults are in India.

Globally, 695 of adults – 3.8 billion people – now have an account at a bank or mobile money provider, a crucial step in escaping poverty.

This is up from 62% in 2014 and just 51% in 2011. From 2014 to 2017, 515 million adults obtained an account, and 1.2 billion



have done so since 2011, according to the Global Findex database.

The bank said China and India, despite having relatively high account ownership, claim large shares of the global unbanked population because of their sheer size.

Home to 225 million adults without an account, China has the world's largest unbanked population, followed by India (190 million or 19 crore), Pakistan (100 million), and Indonesia (95 million). The Modi government's massive push in 2014 to

increase account ownership through biometric identification cards has benefited traditionally excluded groups, the World Bank said, but expressed concern that almost half of account owners have an account that remained inactive in the past year. Part of the explanation might be India's Jan-Dhan Yojana scheme, developed by the government to increase account ownership, brought an additional 310 million Indians into the formal banking system by March 2018, many of whom might not yet have had an opportunity to use their new account, it said. In India, the share of adults with an account has more than doubled since 2011, to 80 per cent, the World Bank said, adding that an important factor driving this increase was a government policy launched in 2014 to boost account ownership among unbanked adults through biometric identification cards.

"This policy benefited traditionally excluded groups and helped ensure inclusive growth in account ownership," the report said.

Between 2014 and 2017, account ownership in India rose by more than 30 percentage points among women as well as among adults in the poorest 40 per cent of households.

Source: PTI

contd from page 1

Modi, May hold talks...

"Wonderful meeting with Prime Minister @theresa_may at 10, Downing Street. We had fruitful discussions on multiple aspects of India-UK relations," Prime Minister Modi tweeted after the meeting.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the two leaders had wide-ranging talks on redefining and infusing new energy into the bilateral engagement post-Brexit.

A statement issued by 10 Downing Street after the meeting said that the Syria air strikes, counter-terrorism, radicalization and online extremism were among some of the key topics covered by both leaders.

"Prime Minister Modi said there would be no dilution in the importance of the UK to India post-Brexit. He said the City of London was of great importance to India for accessing the global markets and would remain so," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

"The Prime Minister (May) updated Prime Minister Modi on the progress of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, saying the implementation period agreed in March gives Indian companies and investors the confidence that market access will continue on current terms until the end of 2020," the spokesperson said.

May reiterated the UK's position on Russia's recent "destabilizing behavior", underlined by the attack in Salisbury on former Russian double Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia and the protection provided for the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons against its people.

"They reflected on the progress made on bilateral defense and security cooperation since the Prime Minister's visit to India in 2016 and the agreement to a number of Defense Capability Partnerships in key strategic areas, with closer military-to-military ties underpinned by a succession of high level visits and exchanges," Downing Street said.

During a discussion on cooperation between the two countries on legal matters, which is likely to have covered extradition matters, May also welcomed the return to the UK of the "Chennai Six", the former British soldiers accused of piracy and were freed from an Indian jail last year.

The two leaders said trade between the UK and India had grown strongly over the last year and agreed to build on the recommendations of the UK-India Joint Trade Review to reduce barriers to trade, to make it easier to do business in both countries and enable a stronger bilateral trade relationship for the future.

May and Modi discussed a new UK-India Tech Partnership, which will create thousands of jobs and generate significant investment in both our economies.

Looking ahead at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) on Thursday, they also agreed on the importance of working together to build a more "sustainable, prosperous, secure and fairer future" for all Commonwealth citizens.

A "flash mob" of sari-clad women from Indian Ladies in UK, accompanied by dhols, had gathered outside Downing Street to welcome the Indian PM with banners such as "In India, Peace is always in Fashion".

After his meeting with the British Prime Minister, Modi visited the Science Museum to explore the '5000 Years of Science and Innovation' exhibition and interact with Indian-origin and other scientists and innovators based in the UK.

The event, hosted by Prince Charles, included the launch of a new Ayurvedic Centre of Excellence, aimed at creating a first-of-its-kind global network for evidence-

based research on yoga and Ayurveda.

A note said the exhibition celebrates India's role in the history of science and technology by exploring its contributions to subjects including space exploration and engineering.

Modi had landed in Britain from Stockholm for bilateral engagements as well as multilateral discussions as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

He was received at the airport by UK foreign secretary Boris Johnson, who said he was "excited" that India-UK bilateral trade is growing at 15 per cent a year and the visit will help build on "huge economic advantages". Both leaders held a late night meeting at Heathrow airport.

According to official estimates, India-UK bilateral trade stands at USD 13 billion, with the UK among the largest G20 investors into India. Modi's UK visit this week will have a particular focus on the India-UK technological partnership as well as an enhanced role in the Commonwealth.

PM Modi also addressed a meeting of NRIs and launched Bharat Ki Baat Sabke Saath on April 18. He spoke candidly on a number of issues, from the rape of the 8-year-old girl in Kathua to surgical strike in Pakistan, to creating awareness about Yoga and Ayurveda for wellness. He took the opportunity also to bash the Nehru-Gandhi clan and held them responsible for the ills of the country.

A series of demonstrations, including a silent protest to condemn the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, were staged by various groups at Parliament Square during Modi's visit. *(With inputs from PTI)*

North Korea offers to...

"The North is expressing a will for a complete denuclearization", South Korean president Moon Jae-in said to reporters. "They have not attached any conditions that the U.S. cannot accept, such as the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. All they are talking about is the end of hostile policies against North Korea, followed by a guarantee of security".

Achieving a deal on those terms would represent a resounding success for Mr Trump, who months earlier had threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea during a United Nations speech to world leaders.

North Korea has long decried the presence of US troops, and their regular joint drills with South Korean forces, as provocations that could presage an invasion and necessitate Pyongyang's military buildup.

But any demands for an exit of US troops would likely be a nonstarter for America. Despite nascent diplomatic efforts, the Trump administration has stuck by a campaign of "maximum pressure" and harsh sanctions on the North Korean regime.

The commitment to denuclearize while allowing US forces to remain, conveyed via a South Korean leader who has prioritized better relations with the North, continued diplomatic maneuvering ahead of high-stakes talks. Earlier this month CIA director Mike Pompeo met with Mr Kim in Pyongyang, and Mr Trump said efforts are on pace to convene talks by June.

After spending the first stretch of Mr Trump's term threatening to devastate other countries and testing increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles believed to be capable of hitting the US mainland, North Korea pivoted to talking with the South and extending Mr Trump an invitation to meet with Mr Kim.

Paralleling the American-led efforts to end the North Korean nuclear threat, South

Korea is hoping to use the diplomatic opening to achieve a lasting change to the status quo on the Korean Peninsula.

Earlier in the week, South Korean officials said they hoped to also strike a peace accord to formally bring an end to the Korean War, which halted with a 1953 armistice but never again technically ended in the decades the north and the south spent warily watching each other across a heavily fortified border.

Taken together, the efforts to conclude the war and dismantle Pyongyang's weapons program offer the contours of a sweeping response to one of the world's most intractable issues.

Mr Trump expressed both hopefulness and a willingness to abandon the talks if they prove futile, saying earlier this week that the US would do "everything possible to make it a worldwide success" but adding that America might still walk away.

"If I think that it's a meeting that is not going to be fruitful, we're not going to go", Mr Trump told reporters. "If the meeting, when I'm there, is not fruitful, I will respectfully leave the meeting".

Giuliani Joining Trump's Legal Team 'For the...

Though talks had been ongoing, a formal announcement was delayed by a slew of foreign policy matters that took over much of the president's time and agenda. A source familiar with the arrangement said that Trump had been preoccupied by North Korea and Syria, which limited his availability to speak with potential new members of his legal team.

Giuliani told the Post that he was joining the team "because I hope we can negotiate an end to this for the good of the country and because I have high regard for the president and for Bob Mueller."

In a statement, the president said: "Rudy is great. He has been my friend for a long time and wants to get this matter quickly resolved for the good of the country."

And Trump lawyer Jay Sekulow added: "I have had the privilege of working with Mayor Giuliani for many years, and we welcome his expertise. Mayor Giuliani expressed his deep appreciation to the President for allowing him to assist in this important matter." Sekulow additionally announced the hiring of Jane Serene Raskin and Marty Raskin—both former federal prosecutors—to join the president's legal team.

Trump has had notable difficulties in recruiting new lawyers. And in the former New York City Mayor, he has brought on board a close ally with strong roots in the legal world.

Giuliani served as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York during the 1980s. But his past several decades have been spent predominantly in politics. During the 2016 election, Giuliani campaigned with Trump and gave an impassioned speech in favor of Trump at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

"What I did for New York City, Donald Trump will do for America," he said at the convention. "I have known Donald Trump for almost 30 years. And he has created and accomplished great things. But beyond that this is a man with a big heart. Every time New York City suffered a tragedy, Donald Trump was there to help."

After Trump's victory, however, Giuliani wasn't selected for any cabinet post, leaving him on the outside of an administration he'd helped elect. Axios reported last summer that Trump had considered replacing Attorney General Jeff Sessions

with Giuliani. But that too never happened.

The former mayor has largely stayed out of public view since then and has said little, if anything, about the Mueller-led investigation.

Giuliani previously represented Reza Zarrab, a Turkish businessman charged with participating in a scheme to evade American sanctions on Iran. Zarrab testified in federal court last November that two of his lawyers—presumably Giuliani and Michael Mukasey—tried to negotiate his release through a prisoner swap with Turkey. A federal judge called one of Giuliani's affidavits about Zarrab's alleged crimes "surprisingly disingenuous."

Giuliani is not the only Trump campaign alum with Turkey ties. Former national security advisor Michael Flynn, who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI, also cultivated close links with the country.

This isn't the first time Giuliani has found himself enmeshed in the president's legal troubles. After Trump announced his first travel ban—restricting immigration from several, predominantly Muslim, countries—Giuliani bragged to Fox News' Judge Jeanine Pirro that he came up with the idea for it.

"When he first announced it, he said 'Muslim ban,'" Giuliani told the host. "He called me up, he said 'put a commission together, show me the right way to do it legally.' I put a commission together."

That quote was referenced frequently by litigants who sued to block the ban as evidence it was motivated by anti-Muslim animus rather than national security concerns. Giuliani later walked back the statement.

Wells Fargo Expected to be Fined \$1 Billion

It would mark the toughest action that the Trump administration has taken against a major bank. And it is the latest blow to Wells Fargo, which for years was regarded as one of the country's best-run banks but lately has been reeling from a string of self-inflicted crises.

President Trump has advocated a rollback of regulations on the banking and other industries. He has nominated industry-friendly officials to oversee key government agencies, including the consumer bureau, which is being run on an interim basis by Mick Mulvaney. Mr. Mulvaney has pledged to defang the agency, criticizing it for wasteful spending and overzealous oversight that is strangling banks and other lenders.

At the same time, though, Mr. Trump has pledged to be especially tough on San Francisco-based Wells Fargo. "I will cut Regs but make penalties severe when caught cheating!" Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter in December.

In addition to punishing Wells Fargo for forcing auto insurance on customers, the regulatory action is expected to cite the bank for improperly charging mortgage customers and for failing to maintain adequate risk management and compliance practices, according to one of the people briefed on the action.

The bank already has been handcuffed by federal regulators. In February, the Federal Reserve barred the bank from expanding until it cleans up its internal financial and risk systems. The Fed also pushed for Wells to bring new blood onto its board of directors.

Friday's expected settlement is likely to intensify pressure on Wells Fargo's chief executive, Tim Sloan. Mr. Sloan, a veteran of the bank, took over as C.E.O. after his predecessor, John Stumpf, resigned after the eruption of a scandal involving Wells Fargo's creation of fake accounts.



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 and on phone 011-91-8141234275 www.bejandaruwalla.com

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE APRIL 23 - APRIL 29, 2018

Aries:

Ganesha says you will be meeting many people from different walks of life and, possibly, from different countries and cultures too. There will be a lot of interaction, ideas and energy exchange at all levels, and you will gain tremendously from it. You will also run strong feelings as you reach out and make contact. There may be moodswings and several periods of depression and elation which follow you throughout the period.

Taurus:

Since many different moods nestle in you and emerge as and when they feel like it, it is important which mood and which aspect of your diverse personality you take out of the bag. At so many levels, you do not belong to the real world and its mundane demands. You like to live free and fly like a bird. You can be a creative genius or a social worker or someone who scales the peaks of fiscal triumph. You must remember that you have many support systems and will always be bailed out in times of need.

Gemini:

You are filled with love and care for those close to you and even for the large mass of humanity. You spend time and money indulging others. Some may feel that you have no respect for your time and that people take advantage of you but that is the way you are and there is no escaping it unless you very badly want to. All this could lead to hurt and disappointment and even a feeling of exploitation and resignation.

Cancer:

Many dark thoughts float through your mind. There will be changes in your interests and there will be new ideas and ingenuity at work. You are attracted to the mysterious and to deep secrets. You will also get into the swing of hard work and apply all your ideas to the issues at hand. You are embarking on a new phase of achievement and hard work and you will brace yourself for it. You know that there is no free lunch in the world and you will have to more than sing for your supper.

Leo:

This is a very significant period with many far-reaching consequences. Every aspect of your life gets heightened. You excel at work and play and are in great demand even to resolve domestic issues. You are a great solution provider and seem to have answers to all ticklish psychological issues. Listen to your inner voice for guidance. There will be prestige, social status, promotion, triumphs, awards and rewards. You have a large social circle and the rewards for your efforts will be seen by all.

Virgo:

You are moving from strength to strength and this is a period of consolidation. You make great strides at work and make money and do the necessary investments. There is buying and selling and speculation in the stock and realty sectors. Your knowledge grows and several work-related avenues open up. You carry through demanding and far-fetched schemes as you begin to exploit your potential to the fullest. It is the start of a wonderful phase and you move ahead with Ganesha's blessings!

Libra:

There is very little to stop you or halt you in your tracks. You are filled with confidence and begin to think really big. You pursue serious issues and also are in a celebratory mood and there is fun and festivity in your life with a series of parties and get-togethers. Your mood is uplifted and all the gloominess which you were associated with is ancient history. You examine uncharted areas like discoveries, inventions, research, astrology, auras, magnets, numerology, new diets, macro food and probiotics.

Scorpio:

You are expanding at a rapid pace and meeting all sorts of people. You are signing the dotted line in a series of profitable collaborations. Finances will dominate the period be it investments, buying / selling, and new acquisitions for yourself, the home and the office. There is money flowing and you use it well too. You are not the type who generally hoards and you like to share your earnings. You get yourself a new wardrobe and add your personal signature to it. You look like a dandy this period.

Sagittarius:

You need to work hard to take a grip on your emotions this period. You will be very sensitive about something and overtly emotional and all this will set you back. You also look at tantra and mantra and spend time in esoteric and spiritual pursuits. You will have close associations and, possibly, the kindling of a new romance. Your sensitivity draws many admirers, and this could well be a time for distraction and a rustle with the opposite sex.

Capricorn:

You are distracted by your many associations and spend a good portion of the period at meetings and with friends that, I dare say, will not be hugely profitable. People come to you with their problems and you love solving them. As a result, a lot of time is wasted more serious work piles up. Domestic affairs also come into sharp focus and you will be attending to the home and family needs. There may be illness and unwanted expenses. Be prepared for all that. As we know, being forewarned is forearmed.

Aquarius:

There is a lot of stability in your dealings and you settle down to the grind. You work hard and see the results easily. You move fast, solve pending issues and lay solid foundations for expansion. Your efforts and endeavors are energized, and you are duly rewarded. There is promotion, perks and progress. You are not one to be moved by all this and you take it in your stride. Money certainly buys goodies but it doesn't find a place in your shrine. You live in a world of ideas and dreams, and money, at best, fuels them.

Pisces:

The concrete and sustained work phase continues. You make steady progress and start new collaborations / ventures / offices. There will be travel and some expenses too. But this is a phase of consolidation and you will be covering a lot of ground. Children will bring joy and there could be happy moments like a child doing well in studies, sports or in extra-curricular activities. There will be family outings, possibly a holiday together. There is all-round growth in this period and you are in harmony and sing a happy tune.

Chris Gayle blasts ton as Kings XI inflict first defeat on Sunrisers Hyderabad

MOHALI (TIP): The bowling unit of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) was hailed as the most balanced by a lot of experts until Chris Gayle blew them away with a fiery 63-ball unbeaten knock of 104 runs, powering Kings XI Punjab to a 15-run win in Mohali on April 19.

Benched in the first two games, he announced his entry into the Kings XI Punjab team with a match-winning half century against Chennai Super Kings in the last game in Mohali and on Thursday, the Jamaican did one better against Sunrisers Hyderabad by smashing first century of the tournament.

Speaking after the win, a satisfied Kings XI Punjab captain Ravichandran Ashwin praised Gayle's knock and said, "Chris batted beautifully and took it away from them. It is more about who we play and what works best. It is about doing well in the Powerplay. For example Mohit vs Dhawan was a clean match-up. It was extremely pleasing to see the crowd cheering us, we have never seen this in Mohali. Chris entertained them. One word won't be enough to describe his knock. His style is hard to replicate, when it comes off, it is hard to match it."

It was Gayle's sixth century in IPL, his 21st in T20s overall. He saw off Bhuvneshwar Kumar's first spell and later unleashed a brutal assault on Rashid Khan's leg-spin to finish with a strike-rate of 165.07.

"This was a complete performance. We could have conceded 10 runs lesser to work on the net run rate, but it did not happen but we are still happy. We thought giving them a reasonable score to chase is something we could handle at the back end," added Ashwin, who went wicket-less in the game.

With this win, Kings XI Punjab are placed at third spot in the points table with six



Chris Gayle scored 104 off 63 balls for Kings XI Punjab in their IPL 2018 match against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Mohali.

points in their kitty. Kolkata Knight Riders are at the top and Sunrisers Hyderabad at second place with six points each and better run-rate.

"We had plans for Chris and had aimed to bowl in the right areas to keep in check but he outplayed us. His plans were executed in a better manner," felt Sunrisers Hyderabad fast bowler Siddharth Kaul.

A 63-ball unbeaten 104 and each of Gayle's 11 sixes kept pushing Sunrisers Hyderabad against the wall. "Hats-off to Chris Gayle for his stunning innings. We know what he can do. This wicket was not a free-flowing wicket.

We can learn a few things from the way they bowled. They bowled a touch short, we were much fuller. Shikhar has been hitting the ball beautifully, he is got a role to play. Tonight, our loss wasn't because of lack of effort. The lengths they bowled was superb, they used the big boundaries well. Now, we've to just look forward to the next game. There's been a clear pattern of play we're looking to execute, we did not do that tonight," felt Sunrisers Hyderabad captain Kane Williamson, whose knock of 54 runs went in vain.

Gayle was the glue Punjab needed and

their third win of the season now pitchforks them as the most dangerous side in this competition - something the visiting Sunrisers Hyderabad team will carry back home. A stinging 15-run defeat halted Sunrisers Hyderabad's winning streak and will pose a few questions for them too.

"The margin of the loss was not that big. It was just 15 runs. We are still positive and one loss won't damage our confidence. We would re-group and win the coming games," said Kaul.

Sunrisers Hyderabad fielded England pacer Chris Jordan replacing another tall quickie Billy Stanlake. Kings XI Punjab surpassed the highest total of 147 runs posted by Mumbai Indians and scored 193 runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Leg-spinner Rashid Khan, who has had a successful outing in the competition, was hit for four sixes in as many balls that really broke the back of Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Meanwhile, Bhuvneshwar was the most economical among others, as he gave away 25 runs in four overs with a dismissal to his credit. When asked why Bhuvneshwar was not given the last over, this is what Kaul said - "Rashid bhai had been our main bowler in previous matches. Unfortunately, he was expensive today in his initial overs. We were aiming to get Gayle's wicket through Bhuvi Paaaji, Chris Jordan and myself. And we thought Rashid Bhai could bowl later after Gayle falls. However, he remained unbeaten and crushed our plans."

Teams will now know Sunrisers Hyderabad's strength indeed is their bowling but without Dhawan, their batting doesn't really have teeth. Meanwhile, run-machine Gayle would have a great birthday bash for his daughter with his partner, post this extraordinary show with the bat.

Rana again leads KKR to big win

JAIPUR (TIP): Nitish Rana's all-round show helped Kolkata Knight Riders ease past Rajasthan Royals and climb to the top of the points table in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday. Rana took two crucial wickets before playing a steady innings with the bat to take KKR to a comfortable seven-wicket win.

With Royals cruising at 54, Rana broke a flourishing opening partnership by dismissing captain Ajinkya Rahane in the seventh over. He then removed Rahane's opening partner, D'Arcy Short, who was looking to break free after getting set.

Three other batsmen got starts but regular wickets kept breaking the partnerships and Rajasthan managed to get to 160.

KKR's innings started with big-hitting Australian Chris Lynn falling on the third ball of the first over. But Sunil Narine, who had a horrible day with the ball, made up with the bat to give Kolkata a fast start. He partnered an aggressive Robin Uthappa to take his team to 70 before getting run out in the ninth over. Rana then played a calm innings, building partnerships with Uthappa and captain Dinesh Karthik to take his team to victory.

Kolkata lead the points table with six points from five matches, while Rajasthan are fifth with four points from four matches.



Kohli disappointed despite amassing highest IPL runs

MUMBAI (TIP): Virat Kohli became the highest run-getter in Indian Premier League during his 92-run innings against Mumbai Indians but the star batsman said it doesn't really matter as his effort couldn't ensure a victory for Royal Challengers Bangalore.

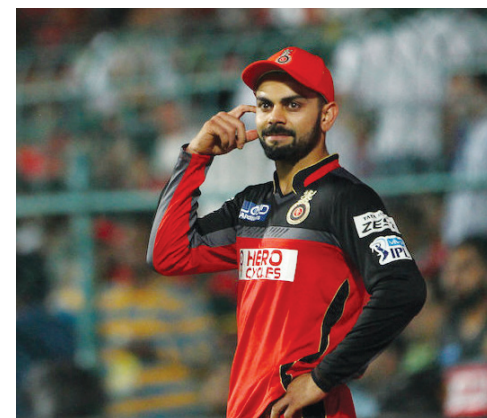
Kohli's 62-ball knock went in vain as RCB finished at 167-9 in 20 overs while chasing MI's 213-6, built largely around skipper Rohit Sharma's 52-ball 94. This was their third defeat in four matches with a 46-run loss.

"I don't feel like wearing this (orange cap) right now because it really doesn't matter," said Kohli, who took his IPL total to 4,619 runs in 153 matches, surpassing Chennai Super Kings' Suresh Raina (4,558).

"We got off to a great start but we just threw it away, and need to reflect on our dismissals. We knew there would be a little bit of dew, we needed not your 40-45s but 80-85s. In the end it was all about making sure that the run-rate doesn't take a hit; credit to Mumbai though, they bowled really well."

Kohli said Mumbai Indians showed great resilience after losing early wickets.

"We didn't get any chances, we bowled in the areas we thought were good but they counter-attacked well. When you have your backs against the wall you do come out with a



performance like this and that's what they did," the 29-year-old said.

"Even after they were two wickets down, they showed resilience like good teams do. We tried our hardest but we just couldn't get wickets in the middle stages." Leg-spinner Mayank Markande was excited after receiving the purple cap.

"I am really glad to get the purple cap again. Really feels nice to compete with world class bowlers like Narine and Woakes. Yes, he (pointing to Krunal beside him) helps a lot both during a match and in the nets. It's been really good."

Source: PTI

RELIGIOUS TREES & THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN HINDUISM

Nature gives us vital resources which are crucial for human and existence. Things like plants, flowers, water, air, animals etc play an important role in our lives and support our existence in direct or indirect manner. In Hinduism we consider almost everything sacred which is given by nature.

Talking about trees and plants, we often grow and worship them in our home like Tulsi, Neem etc which also provide medicinal value for our daily lives.

In Hinduism various trees are associated with Gods and Goddesses and are worshipped accordingly with religious beliefs. Here we are listing some of the sacred trees which are commonly worshiped by Hindu population of India.

Peepal Tree

One of the most sacred trees in Hinduism. Peepal is the tree which is worshiped throughout India. This tree has also a great significance for Buddhist as Lord Buddha gained knowledge and wisdom under Peepal tree.

This tree is huge with deep roots with additional branches that hangs down from the tree. The life of Peepal tree is very long and it grows bigger as the time passes. In hinduism Peepal tree is associated with Lord Vishnu. Red thread or cloth are tied around the trunk of this tree and cutting is considered to be very auspicious.

Banana Tree

This tree has a lot of significance in the daily lives of people in India. In Northern India ladies use to worship banana tree every Thursday and offer prasad to the tree along with holy water. offerings made to Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi are usually made on banana leaf.

In Southern India, many people use banana leaves instead of plates for eating food. In many puja like Satyanarayan etc, banana leaves are used. They are also used at the entrance of gates and are considered very auspicious.

Neem Tree

Neem tree has a vast medicinal value and is easily found throughout India irrespective of climatic conditions. This tree is considered as the express of Goddess Durga. The fully grown Neem tree is tall and huge with big trunk and branches.

The shadow of this Neem tree is very dark and provides reliefs from scorching heat of the Lord Sun. The medicinal value works wonders and major diseases like pox etc are cured easily with Neem leaves.

In Ayurvedic field, Neem has a special place and is used in many forms like juices, raw dried leaves powder, juice extracts in toothpastes etc. It has a fruit called "Neebori" which is very sweet when fully ripe.

Mango Tree

Mango is the fruit which is loved by all in many countries and especially India. In Hinduism Mango trees has importance significance. The leaves and small wood picks are considered very auspicious and are used in Havans and various Pujas.

Mango leaves are usually tied around Kalash during kalash puja which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Some people tie Mango leaves at the gate of their homes as it is believed to bring good luck and prosperity.

Coconut Tree



Coconut is the inseparable part of any puja in Hinduism. In southern India you will find a coconut tree in almost every home.

Coconut tree and fruit is a true gift of God and every bit of it is used for various purposes. Coconut is an expression of Goddess lakshmi. Coconut water ha many health benefits and is specially recommended for patients.

Bel Tree

Bel is a type of fruit which is normally found in Northern India. Bel tree and fruit is considered to be very dear to Lord Shiva. The leaves and the fruit are offered in Shiva temples and is easily available. people normally take bel as prasad and keep in their home mandir.

It is very auspicious and worshipping Lord Shiva without Bel fruit and leaves is incomplete. On the occasion of Shivratri lot of Bel is available in the market and devotees can easily and special ornaments are made of Bel fruit to offer to Shivlinga.

Ashoka Tree

Ashoka tree has a very respected place in Hinduism. It is also known as sorrow-less tree as Ashoka means no sorrows. The tree is associated with the God of love.

Ashoka tree is found in the entire India irrespective of climatic conditions. Its deep green leaves and Red flowers makes a great

colorful combination. There are many types of Ashoka tree like False Ashoka which is easily grown and found in household now a days. being considered as the symbol of Kamdev, Ravana also kept Sita Mata in Ashok Vatika in his kingdom.

There are many other sacred trees which have a place in Hinduism. As said Hinduism is culturally very rich religion and if followed properly helps in attaining inner peace and enlightenment.



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



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