

# The INDIAN PANORAMA



EVER TRUTHFUL

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## PM Modi Arrives in Wuhan for talks with Xi Jinping

**Both leaders are expected to define a pathway that could transform India-China ties into a major force for tackling global problems.**



**WUHAN (TIP):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Wuhan late Thursday, April 26 night for a two-day informal summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping. He is due to hold one-to-one talks with Xi.

*contd on page 20*

## Kim Jong Un makes history, crosses border to meet his rival



**South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meet in the truce village of Panmunjom inside the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas.**

**This the first time one of the ruling leaders has crossed over the Demilitarized Zone since the Korean War ended in 1953.**

**GAYANG, SOUTH KOREA (TIP):** With a single step over a weathered, cracked slab of concrete, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made history on Friday, April 27, by crossing over the world's most heavily armed border to greet his rival, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, for talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons. Mr. Kim then invited Mr. Moon to cross briefly north with him before they returned to the southern side.

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## Indian American arrested in Texas for trying to hire hitman to kill ex-lover and family

**DALLAS (TIP):** An Indian American man was arrested last week for allegedly trying to hire a hitman to kill four people, including his ex-girlfriend.

According to the official press release of the Harris County District Attorney's Office, Rajesh Bakshi, 54, was arrested on April 17, after his plot to murder four Houston residents was foiled by an undercover police officer who pretended as the hitman.

Bakshi, a jilted-lover, wanted to kill his ex-girlfriend, her current boyfriend and her parents, and hired a hitman by paying a down payment of \$1,500, said DA's office.

"This operation saved lives in a very sensitive situation," District Attorney Kim Ogg said. "Imagine how bad this could have been had it not been uncovered before it got to a real hitman."

The DA's office said Bakshi has been harassing the woman, whom he dated some time ago, for months before hiring a killer to wipe her and her family.

The woman reported to the court that Bakshi has been subjecting her to violence while they were in a relationship and



Rajesh Bakshi, 54, faces four charges of soliciting capital murder  
Photo / Courtesy Chron

after being rejected he started harassing her and the family. It has been reported in the court document that the undercover police official disguised as a hitman was instructed by Bakshi to sprinkle cocaine near the bodies, once he completes his contract.

He also reportedly guided the contract killer on the pattern and method in which each member on the hit list has to be murdered. Bakshi insisted the police officer also take photographs of the victims once his mission is complete.

When he was arrested, Bakshi had nearly \$13,000 in cash with him. If found guilty of solicitation of capital murder, Bakshi may face life imprisonment.

Bakshi, who is an employee at Dixie Corner Store, lives in Pearland with his wife, a 14-year-old son and twin daughters. His bail is set at \$150,000 for each count.

Bakshi's lawyer has requested the court to put his bail at \$30,000. The lawyer told the court that he has a history of health issues, including diabetes and neurological disorders. Bakshi, an Indian citizen, has also been asked to surrender his travel documents.

## Asaram gets jail till death: Co-accused sentenced to 20 years in prison

**JODHPUR (TIP):** A special trial court set up at the heavily fortified Jodhpur Central Jail on Wednesday, April 25, sentenced self-styled godman Asaram Bapu to jail till death, finding him guilty of raping a teenaged girl in his ashram in August 2013.

This is the second conviction in a high-profile sexual offence case involving a self-styled guru after Dera Sacha Sauda head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh was sent to jail for 20 years last August. Special Judge Madhusudhan Sharma

*contd on page 20*



Asaram Bapu gets life term in minor rape case

## INDIA, US NEED A FULL-SCALE RELATIONSHIP: FORMER US AMBASSADOR TO INDIA RICHARD VERMA

**NEW YORK CITY, NY (TIP):** India and the US need a "full scale relationship" that encompasses defense, strategic and economic ties, former US Ambassador to India Richard Verma said stressing that the two countries cannot be "fighting every day on trade" while cooperating on defense. They need to fire on all cylinders to achieve their ambitious relationship.

"We need a full-scale relationship, not just the defense relationship, not just the strategic relationship. We need to focus on the economic side too. We somehow need to navigate America First with Make in India," Verma said, speaking at the third New India Lecture at Indian Consulate, April 23. Verma said Washington and New Delhi want an "ambitious relationship" and to become

*contd on page 20*



Ambassador Richard Verma answering a question. To his left is Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty. P. Vaidyanathan Iyer, National Affairs Editor of The Indian Express is seen on extreme left.

## Senate approves Pompeo as US Secretary of State

**WASHINGTON (TIP):**

The US Senate voted on Thursday, April 26 to approve former CIA director Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State after a bruising battle by Democrats against President Donald Trump's nominee.

Pompeo, who was confirmed on a 57-42

vote, was sworn in early Thursday afternoon by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, according to State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert.

Trump applauded Pompeo's confirmation, hailing him as a "patriot" with "immense talent, energy and intellect" who will be an asset for the United States.

Pompeo, who has earned Trump's confidence after a year at the CIA, was accused by Democrats as being too bellicose and harboring deep anti-Muslim and anti-LGBTQ sentiments.

The approval came in time for Pompeo to arrange a summit between Trump and Kim in the coming months.



Mike Pompeo was sworn in early Thursday, April 26 afternoon by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito

## Indian American Nipam Patel appointed director of the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, MA



**Patel currently serves as the William V. Power Endowed Chair in Biology at the University of California, Berkeley.**

For the past 17 years, Patel has been teaching a course on Embryology at the Marine Biological Laboratory.

His prior engagement with the institution was in 2007 to 2011, when he was the co-director and from 1995 to 2003 serving as a professor in the Department of Organismal Biology and Anatomy.

"From a pool of extraordinarily accomplished candidates, Nipam distinguished himself as particularly passionate about MBL's rich history and even more so about its promising future," said David Fithian, executive vice president of the University of Chicago, MBL trustee and co-chair of the search advisory committee. "He will be a compelling spokesperson for and determined leader of the MBL's next chapter."

"It is an incredible honor to have the opportunity to lead the MBL, an institution that has had a remarkable influence on my own career through the teaching and research opportunities it has provided me over almost 20 years," Patel said. "I am excited to build upon the MBL's extraordinary history to elevate it to even greater prominence, and to partner with the University of Chicago in this endeavor. I look forward to working with all the dedicated MBL scientists and staff, as well as all those who come to visit and share in the magic of the MBL."

Patel received a bachelor's degree in biology from Princeton University and a PhD in biological sciences from Stanford University. An early resident of Texas he joined the University of California, Berkeley in 2003, where he has held the Schubert Endowed Chair, and serves as faculty curator at the Essig Museum of Entomology.

Patel has served as an investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Genetics in Shizuoka, Japan. He began his career as a staff associate in the Department of Embryology at the Carnegie Institution in Baltimore, Maryland.

The MBL in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, is a leading international center for investigation in the biological and ecological sciences. Founded in 1888, the laboratory convenes scientists from institutions around the world to collaborate in its resident and visiting research centers and to teach in its education division. University of Chicago and the MBL formed an affiliation in 2013.

## Indian American Aruna Miller wins Kennedy Townsend's endorsement



**Miller thanked the former lieutenant governor**

**MARYLAND (TIP):** Indian American Aruna Miller, who is running for Congress from Maryland's open 6th district, has won a key endorsement from Former Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend.

"Aruna Miller devotes her enormous energies and talents to her constituents, rising early, staying up late, all the while focused on results," Kennedy Townsend said in a statement. "She has strong values and is able to work across the aisle. She is just the leader we need right now in Congress. I am proud to endorse her."

*Read full story on [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)*

## Indian American teen owned Nonprofit donates \$50,000 to kids in India



**Sajni Vederey launched STEM All Stars in 2015**



**Vederey was in India from March 29 to April 1 to facilitate delivery of the donations and the construction of the new library**

**ALEXANDRIA, VA (TIP):** STEM All Stars, a nonprofit founded by a 16-year old Indian American Sajni Vederey, a high school student at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, VA, has made a donation of \$50,000 to underprivileged kids in India.

The nonprofit donated 25 digital boards and 100 computers to 21 underprivileged schools. Most of these schools (19) are in the state of Andhra Pradesh. One school is in the neighboring Telangana, and one is in Kerala, another southern state.

The organization also constructed a new library in the village of Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh. It will stock the library with books in the fields of computer science, math, biology and other fields. The mission of STEM All Stars is to raise awareness about science, technology, engineering and math subjects, and empower girls around the world to pursue careers in these areas.

"As a girl, learning the magic of

science, technology and math empowered me to dream big," Vederey, 16, said in a press release. "It's important for children to learn how to use emerging technologies, such as computers, phones and tablets. STEM All Stars believes that it is paramount for girls to receive STEM education to succeed in society."

Last December, STEM All Stars received a grant of \$50,000 from Venkata Siva Rama Raju, a lawmaker from Andhra Pradesh, who donated the amount through a grant in the Corporate Social Responsibility program.

"STEM All Stars is deeply grateful to the important support we have received from Mr. Siva Rama Raju," Vederey said. "We will be able to directly invest in the futures of young children in Andhra Pradesh by strengthening the curriculum of the schools with more STEM education." In less than three years, STEM All Stars has raised a total of \$200,000, and impacted more than 15,000

girls worldwide. It provided supplies, books, computers, science lab equipment and digital boards to about 55 schools in India.

The organization has hosted a number of events, including annual galas in the United States, public awareness events and STEM competitions.

Vederey, who wants to be a lawyer, has authored a book, *Roo and His New Habitat*, a fictional work that about a group of students who builds a home for their new classroom pet bunny using STEM skills. The book, which she wrote while in 9th grade, is available on Amazon.

Her Amazon author bio states that Vederey, who is "extremely passionate about literature and poetry," started writing stories at the age of 6.

Born in Dallas, Texas, to parents who emigrated from India, Vederey moved to the Washington, DC, area after finishing kindergarten.

## INDIAN AMERICAN AAKASH PATEL RECEIVED ENDORSEMENT OF FLORIDA LAWMAKER BURGESS



**Florida lawmaker Burgess endorses Aakash Patel in Hillsborough Commission race**

**FLORIDA (TIP):** Indian American Aakash Patel, a Republican running for Hillsborough County Commission, received the endorsement of Danny Burgess, a member of the Florida House of Representatives.

"I am honored to offer my support and endorsement to Aakash," Burgess said. "He is a very successful businessman and I know he will take his strong drive and dedication to our community to the County Commission. I am certain he will apply his conservative ideals and objectives to important issues in Hillsborough County and I look forward to working with him in that capacity."

Last week, Patel had received the endorsement of District 2 Commissioner Victor Crest.

Last month, former Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Will Weatherford endorsed him.

The election is being held for the District 1 seat, which is being vacated by Sandy Murman, who is running for a four-year term from District 7.

Patel said, "I am honored to have Rep. Burgess support and endorse me in this county commission race. I have known Danny for a long time and I truly

respect the work he has done to bring conservative policies to all levels of government he has served. From Zephyrhills City Hall to the Florida State Capitol, I appreciate all that he does, and I look forward to working with him on important conservative issues when I am elected to the county commission."

Patel, who earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science and English Literature from Florida State University, worked at The Tampa Bay

Times' Tallahassee Bureau.

He is also a graduate of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Tampa (2012), FBI Citizen's Academy (2012), Tampa Police Citizen's Academy (2012), Tampa Bay Public Leadership Institute (2013) Leadership Tampa Bay (2011), and Tampa Connection (2010), and College Leadership Florida (2005).

He is enrolled in City of Tampa's Mayor's Neighborhood University, according to his LinkedIn profile.

The EXPERIENCE

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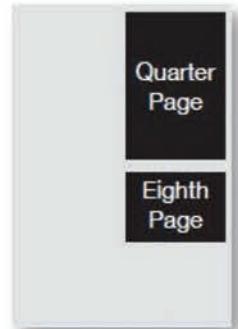
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The Indian Panorama is a South-Asian English newspaper with print editions in New York City, the Tristate area and now also as the first English Asian Newspaper from Dallas, printed weekly every Friday.

Bespoke CONTENT

**USCIS says administration plans to propose regulatory changes to end H-4 work permit program**

**The Trump administration is moving forward with its plan to end an Obama-era program that allowed spouses of H-1B visa holders to work in the United States.**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** In a letter sent to Sen. Chuck Grassley, a critic of the H-1B program, Lee Francis Cissna, the director of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, signaled that the agency is going ahead with its plan to end the practice of providing Employment Authorization Documents (EAD) to H4 visa holders and an announcement will come later this summer.

Whenever that happens, tens of thousands of H-4 spouses - a vast majority of them Indian nationals - will be jobless again. The Obama-era rule allowed spouses of H-1B visa holders that are awaiting Green Card approval to apply for employment authorization.

According to USCIS data, there are currently 100,000 H-4 spouses who are benefiting from the rule.

"With regards to regulations, our plans include proposing regulatory changes to remove H-4 dependent spouses from the class of aliens eligible for employment authorization, thereby reversing the 2015 final rule that granted such eligibility," Cissna wrote in the letter, dated April 4, addressed to Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"We announced this intention earlier this year in the semiannual regulatory agenda of the department of homeland security (DHS)," Cissna added.

The letter stated that the withdrawal of work authorization falls in line with "the Buy American Hire American Executive" order issued by President Trump, which had directed federal agencies including USCIS to come up with drastic changes to fix what it termed as a flawed immigration system.

As with other revisions to regulations, the public will have an opportunity to provide feedback during a notice and comment period, Cissna said.

Indian nationals on H4 visas have the most to lose by the move. Some 90 percent of H4 EAD program beneficiaries have been Indian nationals.

**Chicago police not reporting mentally ill gun owners: Report**

**CHICAGO (TIP):** Chicago's inspector general says police are failing on a requirement to tell the state when people are mentally unfit to carry a gun.

Inspector General Joe Ferguson said in a report released Wednesday that the state Firearm Owners Identification Card Act requires the Chicago Police Department to notify Illinois State Police within 24 hours of determining a person poses "a clear and present danger." The ISP can revoke a permit to carry if the holder has been admitted to a mental health facility within five years.

The report says Chicago police reported only one of 37 incidents over 3 years when officers confiscated a gun from a person whom they had taken to a mental health facility. (AP)

# Former Indian Ambassador to US Jaishankar joins Tata Sons

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, a former Indian Ambassador to the United States and former foreign secretary of India, has joined Tata Sons. He will serve as the group's Global Corporate Affairs head.

Jaishankar, who served as the Indian Ambassador to the United States from 2013 to 2015, served as the Foreign Secretary of India till January this year.

He joined Indian Foreign Service in 1977 and has held several key positions over four decades. He played a key role in the negotiation of the US-India Civil Nuclear agreement.

Jaishankar also served as the High Commissioner to Singapore and Ambassador to China.

In his new role, the former diplomat will be responsible for the Tata group's global corporate affairs and international strategy development and Tata Sons' international offices will report to him. He will work with Tata companies to help them strengthen their business presence and positioning in their respective geographies globally.

"I am delighted to welcome Dr. Jaishankar to the Tata group," Natarajan Chandrasekaran, chairman of Tata Sons, said. "His extensive experience and knowledge on international affairs will be very valuable to the group as we work to reinforce our brand and leadership globally."



*Jaishankar, served as Indian Ambassador to the United States from 2013 to 2015, and as Foreign Secretary of India till January this year.*

Jaishankar said, "The Tata group is an iconic institution known for its value-based leadership as well as India's most respected brand globally. I look forward to being part of the Tata group and working with key stakeholders to make an impact."

Jaishankar is a graduate of St Stephen's College at the University of Delhi. He has an MA in political science and an MPhil. and Ph.D.

in international relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Tata Sons is the promoter of the major operating Tata companies and hold significant shareholdings in these companies. Notably, Tata Sons is the parent company that owns Tata Consultancy Services, which is one of the top Indian IT outsourcing companies. TCS along provides Tata Sons with 70% of its dividend.

## Indian American lawmaker Pramila Jayapal welcomes court ruling on DACA



*In an official press release, the Indian American lawmaker said she is "thrilled" by the ruling of Bates.*

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Indian American Rep. Pramila Jayapal has applauded a ruling by US District Judge John Bates asking the Trump administration to continue accepting DACA applications without ending the program. "I'm thrilled that Judge Bates upheld the rule of law and force Trump administration to resume accepting DACA applications," wrote Jayapal. "Donald Trump created this crisis. He single-handedly made DACA recipients deportable and rejected the bipartisan proposal that would have helped these young people."

The ruling of the federal judge is a blow to the Trump administration, which decided to end the DACA program on April 24.

In addition to overturning the move to end DACA, the judge also ruled that the government should accept new DACA applications.

The DACA program allows those undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States illegally as children by their parents to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation.

Urging Trump to stop trying to strip DACA recipients of their right to live in the United States, the Washington Democrat said she would continue to push for a clean Dream Act in Congress, so that these young people who know only the United States as their home can live without the fear of deportation.

"Time and again courts have determined that the inhumane decision to end DACA was 'arbitrary and capricious.' We will continue to loudly say that immigrants are welcome here," read Jayapal's statement.

Earlier, Trump had said that he will protect the DACA recipients and allow them to stay in the country if Congress approves his campaign promise to build the border wall and make changes to the immigration system.

## Indian American Hiral Tipirneni loses a close race in Arizona special election



*Hiral Tipirneni & Debbie Lesko*

**ARIZONA (TIP):** Indian American Tipirneni on April 24th received more than 82,300 votes (47.4 percent), roughly 9,000 fewer than Lesko, who received nearly 91,400 (52.6 percent). The Arizona Secretary of State's website reports that Democrat Hiral Tipirneni came within six percentage points of her Republican rival Debbie Lesko in special election to Arizona's 8th Congressional District. The special election was warranted because Rep. Trent Franks, who represented the district for several terms, resigned in December after he was embroiled in a sexual misconduct scandal.

Tipirneni wrote on Twitter, "whatever happens tonight or tomorrow, we're not giving up. Regardless of the outcome, we're taking this to November." That she came within 6 percentage point in a district that was carried by President Trump with more than 21 percentage points in the last presidential election should give Tipirneni a lot of momentum if she wins the Democratic Party nomination again.

She did it without much of a support from the House Democratic campaign arm. On the other hand, Lesko received help from the GOP House campaign committee to the tune of \$1 million. Trump also recorded robo calls urging voters to back Lesko. The narrow margin of Lesko's victory leaves Republicans with much to ponder as they prepare for a tough midterm election in November.

Tipirneni, a former emergency room physician, won her party's nomination after defeating Brianna Westbrook in the primary. Tipirneni's campaign had focused on issues such as affordable healthcare, strengthening the economy, retirement security, quality education, and government accountability.

Tipirneni, born in India, came to the United States with her family at the age of three. According to her campaign website, she earned her medical degree through an accelerated, competitive program at Northeast Ohio Medical University. She chose to pursue emergency medicine because of the wide variety of challenges it presented, and it allowed her to be the first point of contact for patients.

# China sends bombers around Taiwan in new show of force

**BEIJING (TIP):** China flew bombers and fighter jets around Taiwan on April 26, officials said, in a new show of force that the defence ministry said was directed at "independence forces" on the self-ruled island.

H-6K bombers, early warning aircraft, reconnaissance planes and several types of fighter jets took off from multiple airports for "combat drills", the air force said in a statement on its official microblog.

The planes flew over Bashi Strait, south of Taiwan and the Miyako Strait, near Japan's Okinawa Island, it said.

The air force said its H-6K bombers have completed several drills that involved circling Taiwan since April 18 "to strengthen its capacity to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity".

"The series of operations we are carrying out is directed against Taiwan independence forces and activities in the island," defence ministry spokesman Wu Qian told a monthly press conference.

"Their purpose is to prevent that the Taiwan independence forces' plot damages the welfare of the Taiwanese people. If the independence forces continue to wantonly take rash actions, we will take further actions," Wu said. China sees the democratically-governed island -- which has never formally declared



independence from the mainland -- as a renegade part of its territory to be brought back into the fold, and has not ruled out reunification by force.

Taipei has accused Beijing of "sabre rattling" and trying to stoke regional tensions with its recent drills.

Taiwan announced on Tuesday that it will practise thwarting a Chinese "invasion" in annual live fire drills in June by simulating surprise coastal assaults. Chinese H-6K bombers and spy planes had previously flown around Taiwan last week.

Chinese combat helicopters conducted live-fire drills with missiles

off southeast China on April 18, state media said last week without confirming whether the exercises took place in the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

Beijing has stepped up military patrols around Taiwan and used diplomatic pressure to isolate it internationally since President Tsai Ing-wen, of the traditionally pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, took office in 2016.

Beijing's sole aircraft carrier and two destroyers crossed waters south of Taiwan Saturday and carried out "offensive and defensive" drills in the Pacific, China's navy said. (AFP)

# Chemical weapons inspectors visit second site in Syria town

**BEIRUT (TIP):** Chemical weapons inspectors collected samples April 25 from a new location in the Syrian town of Douma, their second visit to the area that was hit by a suspected gas attack nearly three weeks ago.

The Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said samples taken by the team in Douma will be sent to the organization's laboratories for analysis. An earlier visit took place on Saturday after the inspectors were delayed for days from getting to the town, just east of Damascus, over security reasons.

The United States, France, and Britain have blamed President Bashar Assad's government for the April 7 attack, which Syrian activists said killed more than 40 people. The three countries struck suspected Syrian chemical weapons facilities in joint airstrikes a week later.

The OPSW visit to Douma and sample collection would allow the international watchdog to proceed with an independent investigation to determine what chemicals, if any, were used in the attack.

The watchdog is not mandated to apportion blame for the attack. The mandate of a joint U.N.-OPCW body delegated to investigate who may be behind such attacks has expired and Russia has vetoed its renewal. The joint body had found the Syrian government responsible for several previous attacks.

Syria's government and its main

backer Russia have denied responsibility for the April 7 attack. They repeatedly blamed the rebels and opposition activists for possessing and deploying chemical weapons.

Russia had even said the attack was staged and on Wednesday, Russian diplomats said they plan to bring evidence of this to the OPCW.

Russian Embassy spokesman Mikhail Sobolev said it would bring a group of 15 Syrians who they claim were filmed in "staged videos" of the alleged attack to a meeting at the OPCW on Thursday.

The development is part of an ongoing clash of narratives between the West on one side and Syria and Russia on the other concerning the suspected attack. Thousands of Douma residents left the town after the attack while Russian military police and Syrian security forces deployed in Douma, raising criticism from opposition activists. The evidence may be tempered with.

Others have said that those Douma residents who stayed in the town under government control would be too afraid to challenge the Russian and Syrian narrative, fearing persecution.

Responding to Russian plans to visit its headquarters with the Syrians, the OPCW in The Hague, Netherlands, said Wednesday it has advised the Russian delegation that "these persons should be first interviewed" by the inspectors who are currently in Damascus.

"It was also recommended that such a

briefing take place once the (fact-finding mission) has completed its work," the statement said. "Nevertheless, the Russian delegation stated that it would go ahead with the briefing and that its intention was not to interfere" with the work of the mission currently in Syria.

Six days after the suspected attack, Russia's Defense Ministry accused Britain of direct involvement in staging video images of alleged victims. Britain vehemently denied the accusation.

The suspected attack and retaliatory strikes ratcheted up tension between the West and Russia.

On Wednesday, Russian Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoi said Russia will supply Syria with "new missile defense systems soon." Rudskoi's statement did not specify the type of weapons, but his remarks follow reports in Russian media that Moscow is considering selling its S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Syria.

Top Russian officials said that in light of the airstrikes on Syria earlier this month, Moscow may reconsider a pledge it gave a decade ago not to provide Syria with the S-300 system.

Transferring upgraded air-defense systems to Syria could be seen as an escalation by neighboring Israel and raises the risk of Israeli attacks.

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned Tuesday that if Syria uses Russian-made air defense missiles against Israel, the Israeli military would strike back. (AP)

## Indian Origin Woman Killed, Buried at UAE Home



**SHARJAH (TIP):** According to a local media report, a 36-year-old Indian origin woman's decomposed body was found by the police at her house in UAE's Sharjah city on April 26th.

The woman's body was hidden underneath the floor of her house and was only recovered after the police used sniffer dogs to help find the body. Police suspect the woman's husband to have killed and buried her inside the house. The reports further said that the husband, who belongs to Kerala, had left the United Arab Emirates and returned to India leaving a 'For Rent' sign put up on the front door of the house.

Initial investigations by the police revealed that the accused husband, who also had another wife, had sent his other wife to India with his two children before committing the crime.

It was only after the woman's brother could not find anybody at her house that the incident surfaced, according to Sharjah police.

The woman's brother used to speak to her every day, according to police officials. When she had stopped responding to her brother's calls, he had come to Sharjah from India to look for the woman.

He also filed a missing person complaint with the Sharjah police on April 9.

"A missing person report was received from the woman's brother, who told police that he used to speak to his sister daily but one day, she stopped answering her phone," Commander-in-Chief of Sharjah Police, Major-General Saif Al Ziri Al Shamsi was quoted by Gulf News.

It was further reported that the police acted on the complaint and sent a search team to the woman's house in Sharjah's Maysaloon area after receiving permission from the public prosecution.

During the search, the police found a few tiles from the floor of a room missing. It was then that the police brought in sniffer dogs and uncovered the woman's body from underneath.

The woman's body was sent to a forensic laboratory for an autopsy after the brother identified her.

The police have also identified the woman's husband through an iris scan and fingerprints they recovered from the house.

An arrest warrant has been issued for the husband by Interpol, the police said.

## UK parliamentary committee grills Facebook executive

**LONDON (TIP):** The UK parliament's media committee has criticized Facebook's response to allegations that data from millions of accounts was misused during elections in the United States and Britain as they grilled one of the company's senior executives about the scandal.

Committee members didn't hide their frustration with Facebook chief technical officer Mike Schroepfer during questioning Thursday. Chairman Damian Collins said the panel was unhappy that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg didn't appear even though he testified before US lawmakers.

In some of the most pointed questioning, lawmaker Julian Knight accused Facebook of "bullying journalists, threatening academic institutions and impeding investigations by legal authorities," before declaring the company to be "a morality-free zone."

Schroepfer said he "respectfully disagreed" with such characterizations. (AP)

Rahul Gandhi chooses Kamal Nath over Jyotiraditya Scindia as MP Congress chief



Jyotiraditya Scindia and Kamal Nath

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** It's now a settled affair that veteran Congress leader Kamal Nath will head the party in Madhya Pradesh in the run-up to the state elections due this year.

The Congress high command, insiders say, took almost a year to arrive at this decision, given the tussle for supremacy between the party's young and old guard.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi faced a difficult choice. On one hand, it was Chhindwara's nine-term MP Kamal Nath and on the other, it was Jyotiraditya Scindia, a youthful "Maharaja" of Gwalior.

According to party sources, Gandhi held consultations with all the stakeholders.

Scindia, insiders say, was his favourite. But, stalwart Digvijay Singh rallied around the 71-year-old loyalist of the Gandhi family. A factor that also weighed heavily on Rahul Gandhi was Kamal Nath's age. At 71, he probably would have one more opportunity to conquer the final miles of his marathon in active politics, the sources said.

Besides, he was never projected as the party's CM face for Madhya Pradesh before.

He was found to be more skillful than Scindia in taking warhorses like Digvijay Singh, Kantilal Bhuria, and Ajay Singh along.

According to party sources, the political rivalry between Digvijay Singh and Scindia was also a factor behind Rahul Gandhi's final decision.

Before his recent Narmada Yatra, Singh named Kamal Nath as his first preference for the leadership of the Madhya Pradesh Congress when Gandhi asked him about his opinion. Nath's support base in the state unit got a boost when elders in the Sonia camp also threw their weight behind it. And that's when the Congress had set his seal of approval on the appointment of the new MPCC chief, the sources said. A formal announcement is expected after the party's Jan Aakrosh rally on April 29, they added.

## Snag hits Rahul Gandhi's plane, Cong demands probe

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Congress on Thursday demanded a probe into an unexplained technical snag in an aircraft carrying party president Rahul Gandhi from Delhi to Hubli and said the violent shuddering of the aircraft endangered the life of passengers, including Rahul Gandhi.



In a letter to Karnataka DGP Neelmani Raji, Rahul's aide Kaushal Vidyarthi, a co-passenger, said the aircraft descended rapidly while tilting to one side and shuddered severely until descent at Hubli at 11.25 am.

Rahul and four co-passengers boarded the special flight, VT-AVH, at 9.25 am and were to land at Hubli at 11.25 am.

"Around 10.45 am, the aircraft tilted to one side and the altitude dipped steeply combined with heavy shuddering. For some time, the flight was out of radar as the auto pilot was not functioning," Vidyarthi said. He claimed the possibility of intentional tampering could not be ruled out.

Congress media head Randeep Surjewala said normally, flight details of an SPG protectee is submitted to the DGCA and only then the flight is cleared. What happened in this case was very serious, he said as the Congress added that the snags were not related to weather.

# Now, govt to make sexual assault of under-12 boys punishable by death penalty

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Less than a week after the Criminal Law (Amendment) ordinance, 2018 — which provides for death penalty for those convicted of raping a girl below 12 years — was promulgated, the Union women and child development (WCD) ministry is set to move the Cabinet seeking approval for the same punishment for those guilty of sexually abusing young boys of the same age, two senior government officials familiar with the matter said.

The April 22 ordinance amended Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that deals with rape. It also changed Section 42 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act, a special legislation enacted in 2012 to address sexual offences committed against those below 18 years of age, to say that newly amended IPC section would apply to children below 12 years of age.

But while POCSO is gender-neutral, the amended Section 376 mentions the word "woman". This meant that those guilty of raping boys below the age of 12 years old would not be subject to the death penalty provision.

"It resulted in an anomaly where the same crime committed against a girl and a boy is treated differently. The ordinance that was brought in to punish those raping girls less than 12 years contradicts the spirit of POCSO, which is gender-neutral," one of the officials cited above said on condition of anonymity.

To correct this, the WCD ministry has finalised the proposal to amend sections 4, 5 and 6 of the POCSO Act, which will make rape committed against "any child" below 12 punishable with the death penalty.

"We are in the process of sending the proposal to all stakeholder ministries including law for consultation after



which we will go to the cabinet," the second official said.

Sections 4, 5 and 6 deal with aggravated penetrative sexual assault on children under 18 years, which is currently punishable with up to 10 years in jail, extendable to life imprisonment, under the POCSO Act.

One of the officials said that the ordinance that was promulgated on April 22 has to be approved by the Parliament within six weeks of reassembling, failing which it will cease to be functional. "By the time the Parliament reconvenes and the ordinance is approved and made into a law, we will try to get the POCSO amendments approved by the Cabinet and make them part of the common law," he added.

Asked why similar punishment for sexual offences committed against minor boys was not part of the April 22 ordinance, the first official said, "Ordinances are temporary laws and are brought in as a response to extraordinary situation that required immediate intervention. In the present case it came in the aftermath of the

brutal rape of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua district of Jammu & Kashmir."

But legal experts said the Criminal Law (amendment) ordinance was "constitutionally unsound" and "legally questionable."

"Article 14 & 16 of the Constitution provides for equality before law. One cannot differentiate between genders. The ordinance does not reflect equality of sexes. How can you have different punishment for male and female child when it comes to heinous crimes," said Anil Malhotra, a family law practitioner.

Malhotra was part of the special investigation team constituted by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in 2012 to inquire into allegations of rampant sexual abuse of minors at Apna Ghar, a childrens' home in Rohtak, Haryana.

"In the course of our investigation, we had come across several cases where minor boys were sexually abused by the accused who ran the children home. The boys were as traumatised as the girls. Having different punishment based on gender is legally untenable in such a scenario," Malhotra said.

Source: HT

## Pakistan's JF-17 aircraft of present, but India's Tejas of future: IAF chief

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Air Force chief BS Dhanoa has said if Pakistan's fighter jet JF-17 is an aircraft of the present, then India's indigenously developed Tejas is the future.

JF-17 is a lightweight, single-engine, multi-role combat aircraft developed jointly by Pakistan and China.

"There is a very good article in one of the aviation journals. He (the author) says JF-17 is not as technologically advanced as Tejas. So, he said JF-17 aircraft is of today because they have fielded much more squadrons than us, and Tejas is the aircraft of the future. It has much better systems. It depends on how we equip it. I am sure we can come up with a better plane," Dhanoa said on Thursday in response to a question on which one is a better aircraft.

Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, built by



Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), was inducted into the Indian Air Force in July 2016. It was also pressed into service during the Air Force drill "Gaganshakti 2018" held this month.

Asked whether there were issues regarding Tejas during the exercise, Dhanoa responded in the affirmative. He said this could be because of moving the

jets from Bengaluru, which has a temperate climate, to hot desert during the operation.

"But HAL got it up in less than six hours and thereafter, Tejas matched with other aircraft detail for detail," he said.

Replying to another question on whether Tejas can be compared to Rafale, the Air Force Chief said every fighter jet has different capability.

"If all the fighter (jets) of the Indian Air Force were high-end fighters then we have to be very rich. You got to have fighter jets which are high end and medium capability and low-end. So, Tejas comes in the medium capability aircraft (category)," he said.

Dhanoa added that the Air Force is moving towards making the aircraft better.

Source: PTI

# Indu Malhotra takes oath as Supreme Court judge amid row over appointments

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Senior lawyer Indu Malhotra was administered oath of office by Chief Justice Dipak Misra this morning, making her the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a Supreme Court judge.

Malhotra was one of the two people recommended by the collegium - a group of top judges - to be elevated to the top court bench. Her appointment comes amid a row over the government's rejection of Uttarakhand Chief Justice KM Joseph's elevation.

Indu Malhotra, 61, is the seventh woman judge in the top court since Independence. Only six women judges have made it to the Supreme Court so far. Other women judges were elevated to the Supreme Court from high courts.

The law ministry's approval to Ms



Indu Malhotra

Malhotra's name on Wednesday came after the collegium, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, recommended Justice Joseph and Malhotra's name for the top court in January. Yesterday, the

chief justice said there was "nothing wrong" in the government sending back Justice Joseph's name.

Indu Malhotra has been a prominent senior advocate regularly appearing in educational matters connected to medical and engineering colleges. She was one of the members of the Vishaka Committee on sexual harassment at workplaces. She was also part of a 10-member committee formed by the top court to deal with complaints of sexual harassment within the court. Indu Malhotra was the second woman to be designated as a senior advocate in the Supreme Court in 2007 after a gap of over 30 years.

The first woman judge of the top court was Justice Fathima Beevi who was appointed in 1989, 39 years after the Supreme Court was set up in 1950.

The law ministry's approval to Ms

## GST, demonetisation brought 1.8 mn more people into I-T net: India

**UNITED NATIONS (TIP):** India has informed the UN that the Goods and Services Tax reform implemented by it, coupled with the demonetisation of high-value currency notes, has brought 1.8 million more people into the income-tax net.

Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs A Gitesh Sarma, addressing the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow Up, said India is currently implementing a wave of reforms.

Apart from encouraging digital over cash transactions, India introduced the Goods and Service Tax regime which provides for uniform taxes. He said this has led to a 50 per cent increase in the number of indirect taxpayers.

"Coupled with demonetisation of high-value currency notes, the GST brought 1.8 million more people into the income-tax net, he said at the forum here yesterday.

He added that India stands firm on its stand on the fundamental principles of the World Trade , including multilateralism, rule-based consensual decision-making, an independent and credible dispute resolution and appellate process, the centrality of development, which underlies the Doha Development Agenda, and special and differential treatment for all developing countries.

He said the global economic recovery is progressing gradually, with improved resilience and emergence of new sources of growth.

"However, there are concerns that a durable recovery may remain constrained by factors such as the persistence of low productivity and debt overhang problems in advanced economies as well as in some emerging



market economies, rising populism and protectionism, and the slow pace of structural reforms, he said.

India has also committed to remaining mindful of new gaps in the domestic resource mobilisation that may result from financial innovations, including digital finance, and the implications of fin-tech and the weightless economy on financial inclusion and access to finance, Sarma said.

Further, stepping up its cooperation with the southern countries in the spirit of solidarity, last year India established the India-UN Development Partnership Fund that supports Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world, with a focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

"I would like to reiterate that the international community must step up its efforts to fulfill the commitments already undertaken not as a charity but with full realisation that it will be in our collective interest, he said. Source: PTI

## Indrani Mukerjea to end 16-year marriage with Peter, sends notice for divorce



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Indrani Mukerjea has sought a divorce from her husband Peter, marking the beginning of the end of a marriage that started with love at first sight, wound its way through business success and failure, and then started breaking down, especially after both partners were accused of being involved in the murder of Indrani's daughter from a previous marriage, Sheena Bora.

Indrani's lawyer Edith Dey sent a notice to dissolve the marriage by courier to Peter on April 25. It was sent on a courier after he refused to accept a delivery by hand when in court. Peter and Indrani are both in jail. She was arrested in August 2015, and he, a few months later. "My client states that your marriage is now irretrievably broken down and there is no chance of reconciliation. My client states this fact has been acknowledged by you as well," reads the notice.

This isn't the first time there has been talk of a divorce of the couple. In 2016, Peter Mukerjea's lawyer told the media that his client was keen to divorce his wife. In January 2017, Indrani Mukerjea's sought the court's permission to file for divorce. At the time, this was considered part of the duo's legal strategy.

## DELHI COURT DISCHARGES KEJRIWAL IN 2012 CASE

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** A Delhi court has discharged Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a case of alleged rioting in front of the Prime Minister's house in 2012, noting that the protest march was peaceful and a citizen has a 'fundamental right' to assemble peacefully without arms and exercise his or her right of speech and expression.



Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Samar Vishal granted the relief to Kejriwal and others after finding that the police order to impose section 144 CrPC, which was intended to protect public order, was without assigning any reason and the reasons disclosed later did not show any situation of emergency which warrants its imposition.

"It is not the case of the prosecution that the citizens sought to be prosecuted were having arms or that they have any criminal intent in their assembly. It's also not the case of the prosecution that there was any general problem of traffic or that any inconvenience was caused to the other users of the road.

"Whatever commotion happened there was due to the use of the force by the police and in consequent retaliation by the protesters," it said.

The court said that while "the citizens had the fundamental rights to assemble peacefully without arms and to exercise their right of speech and expression", the public authorities too had a "right to maintain law and order".

"Since the assembly in this case was not an unlawful assembly and has not committed any offence, I have no doubt in my mind to opt for upholding the fundamental rights of citizens under Article 19 of the constitution and finding that neither the prohibition of section 144 CrPC was valid nor validly communicated," the court said.

According to the prosecution, on August 26, 2012, the volunteers of India Against Corruption held a demonstration against coal scam at the house of the prime minister and to stop them, water cannons were used due to which the volunteers became violent.

Thereafter, police fired several rounds of tear gas and used to drive them off after that, certain mischievous elements attacked the police with the flag sticks. The barricade was damaged along with certain plants, the police said.

An FIR was filed by the police against Kejriwal, Banwari Lal Sharma, Dalbir Singh, Mukesh Kumar, Mohan Singh, Balbir Singh, Jagmohan Gupta, Azad Kasana, Harish Singh Rawat and Anand Singh Bisht.

Source: PTI

## Bhaichung Bhutia launches 'Hamro Sikkim Party'

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Former Indian football captain Bhaichung Bhutia on Thursday launched his political party "Hamro Sikkim" here.



He said he "felt like an outsider" in the Trinamool Congress. The party will be based in his native state Sikkim.

Bhutia said even after being part of West Bengal politics and playing for top Bengal clubs for years, he could not get rid of the "outsider" tag and now he had returned to his roots. "I was dropped from the top in the TMC. Let's not forget that when I contested from Siliguri, there was an outsider tag on me as well."

"I played in Bengal for many years, but the tag was always there. My commitment to the TMC was not there. I think it was unfair on my part to be in a party I am not committed to," he said.

"Now, I am going back. My family, my house, all are in Sikkim. I am the son of the soil. Now, I will be able to commit myself. I think I can contribute much more here," Bhutia added.

Soon after his defeat in the West Bengal Assembly elections, difference of opinions cropped up between the TMC and Bhutia as he did not support the party's stand on the Gorkhaland issue.



## GUEST COMMENT

### Judgment day: on Asaram case verdict

**Asaram's rise and fall is reflective of the lives of some self-styled godmen of our times**

In sentencing Asaram Bapu to imprisonment for the rest of his natural life for the rape of a 16-year-old girl in 2013, a Special Court in Jodhpur has reinvigorated faith in the criminal justice system. Two aides who facilitated the crime have been sentenced to 20 years in prison. At a time when sexual offences against women and minor girls are being reported with numbing regularity, a verdict of this sort reinforces public trust. Holding powerful and influential heads of religious institutions is not easy in this country, given the wide public support and political patronage they enjoy. Fortunately, neither the investigators nor the prosecutors in the case of the 77-year-old Asumal Harpalani, who named himself Asaram, seem to have been overawed by his large following or intimidated by his belligerent supporters. High-ranking police officers received letters and phone calls threatening them and their families with dire consequences, and witnesses were killed or attacked in the course of the investigation and trial. Against this backdrop, it took courage and determination for the victim and her family to seek justice. The facts are chilling. The victim's parents, who were Asaram's devotees, were asked to take her from the ashram's residential school at Chhindwara to the godman's home in Manai, near Jodhpur, ostensibly to exorcise 'evil spirits' that had possessed her. The parents were asked to leave, and the girl had to be alone with him. She was sexually assaulted and threatened against speaking out. Fortunately, her father

It is also a sign of the times that every time the final verdict is set to be delivered in a criminal case involving a self-styled godman, the State concerned has to be on high alert and massive police deployment is required to quell possible trouble by followers. After the violence and mayhem that gripped Panchkula town in the immediate aftermath of the sentencing of Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh last year in a rape case, this time the police took no chances, and the judgment was delivered in a makeshift courtroom in a prison. There is nothing more mortifying to the devout than witnessing jet-age godmen betraying the trust of their followers. Asaram fits into the template of the self-styled godman: graduating from running a liquor business to peddling spiritual succor, leading a lavish lifestyle, expanding into business and enjoying the patronage of the rich and powerful, and, ultimately, misusing his power to exploit his unquestioning devotees. Special Judge Madhusudan Sharma has underscored how the accused had broken the victim's trust in him. Verdicts such as these are needed at a time when sections of society see tainted men as guardians of India's age-old spiritual tradition.

(The Hindu)

### The Macron-Merkel-May trio hopes to bear upon Trump to keep pact

BY ARUN KUMAR

French President Emmanuel Macron has just ended a glitzy visit with President Donald Trump. German Chancellor Angela Merkel came calling today and British Prime Minister Theresa May has been burning the phone across the Atlantic. Their mission: to persuade the mercurial occupant of the White House not to tear up the Obama era 2015 landmark Iran nuclear deal as he threatened on the campaign trail.

The wily Donald is not telling anyone what he would do on May 12 when he must either sign a fresh waiver on Western sanctions against Iran or walk away from what Trump has decried as an "insane" and "ridiculous" deal signed by P5+1 - the US, Russia, China, UK, France and Germany - world powers with Tehran to end its nuclear weapons program.

But swept off his feet by what the American media called "Le Bromance" unleashed by Trump at the first State dinner of his presidency, Macron ended up calling for a new "big deal" with the old one limiting Iran's uranium enrichment for 15 years serving as one of its four pillars.

Or did the suave Frenchman charm the Manhattan mogul into buying these side deals he Merkel and May have been working on to convince Trump to stay on in the Iran deal? European leaders are also said to be crafting a "Plan B" to continue without the US. But Iran is unlikely to come on board without the US.

The three new pillars that Macron suggested in Washington would rework the sunset clause in the accord to ensure there is no nuclear activity by Iran in the long run, as feared by the critics who have accused Europeans, particularly Germany, of putting business before security.

The Macron proposal would also seek to limit Tehran's ballistic missile program and curb its "regional influence" by ceasing support for militant groups across the Middle East, particularly Yemen and Syria.

Even as he declined to show his hand, Trump suggested: "I think we will have a great shot at doing a much bigger maybe deal, maybe not deal" built on solid foundations. In an escalating war of words, he also cautioned Iran against restarting its nuclear program, warning it may "have bigger problems than they have ever had before."

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who during his February visit to India - the first by an Iranian head of state in 10 years - had dismissed Trump as a "haggler", was quick to heap fresh insults on "a tradesman" with no understanding of diplomacy. Western powers, he asserted, had no right to make changes in the deal now.

Earlier in February, Iranian deputy foreign minister Abbas Araghchi had assured that Iran's commitment to not seek nuclear weapons is permanent and that there was no sunset clause in the deal.

Besides the Europeans, the looming May 12 deadline also has India worried, as since

### AS I SEE IT

# Can the 3 Ms save Iran deal?

**"Besides the Europeans, the looming May 12 deadline also has India worried, as since the end of sanctions, it has greatly strengthened its bilateral relations and economic partnership with Iran. During Rouhani's visit, the two countries signed nine agreements, including a crucial one on connectivity via the strategic Chabahar Port. India has also committed itself to completing the Chabahar-Zahedan rail link to provide an alternative route to Afghanistan, completely bypassing Pakistan", say the author.**

the end of sanctions, it has greatly strengthened its bilateral relations and economic partnership with Iran. During Rouhani's visit, the two countries signed nine agreements, including a crucial one on connectivity via the strategic Chabahar Port. India has also committed itself to completing the Chabahar-Zahedan rail link to provide an alternative route to Afghanistan, completely bypassing Pakistan.

Chabahar Port, Rouhani declared, can serve as a bridge connecting India to Afghanistan, Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

India, which backs "full and effective implementation" of the Iran nuclear deal, could use Afghanistan as a bargaining chip at the next India-US two plus two dialogue between Trump's incoming Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary James Mattis and their Indian counterparts, Sushma Swaraj and Nirmala Sitharaman. The dialogue earlier set for April 18-19 in New Delhi was postponed with the unceremonious dismissal of Trump's previous chief diplomat Rex Tillerson.

Pompeo, currently CIA Director, who is set to join Trump's equally hawkish new National Security Adviser John Bolton, assured the Congress during his confirmation hearings that he would work to fix the "terrible flaws" in the Iran nuclear deal even if Trump walks away from it.

Unlike Tillerson, who favored a somewhat softer approach towards Pakistan, Pompeo, Bolton and Mattis are all for ramping up US pressure on Pakistan to roll up its terrorism infrastructure to allow India to engage in institution building in Afghanistan.

Trump's declaration of a virtual trade war against friends and foes alike has sent diplomats across the world scrambling for new options. India and China, too, are coming closer with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi declaring that the upcoming informal summit between Indian PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping would be a "new starting point in relationship." The two have, for long, put their vexed boundary dispute on the back burner to let their trade relations bloom. China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with an 18 per cent growth,



**Suspense.** The deadline also has India worried as it may affect its ties with Iran

taking bilateral trade to \$84 billion.

The fate of the Iran deal would certainly cast a shadow on the upcoming nuclear summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. If Trump tears up the Iran accord, can Kim trust him to keep his word on a peace pact with Pyongyang?

Would the author of "The Art of the Deal", who looks at every issue as a transaction, risk a legacy building landmark accord with Kim after bringing him to the negotiating table with threats of "fire and fury"?

Not likely, as after a secret preparatory visit by Pompeo, a la Henry Kissinger, the legendary architect of Richard Nixon's opening to China, he now sees Kim whom he once dismissed as the "Little Rocket Man" as "very open and very honorable."

At their joint presser, Macron declared that "together US and France would defeat terrorism, curtail weapons of mass destruction in North Korea and Iran and act together on behalf of the planet." The last bit was seen as a hint that Trump may be open to revisiting the Paris Climate accord too.

Earlier in January, Trump declared that he would reconsider joining the "terrible" Trans Pacific Partnership if the US got a "substantially better deal."

At his presser with Macron, Trump declared in a conspiratorial tone: "Nobody knows what I am going to do on the 12th (of May), although Mr President, you have a pretty good idea." Macron responded with just a wink.

It would, indeed, be hazardous to guess what Trump would or would not do. But given that he is open to revisiting every "terrible" deal in search for a "better" one, it may be safe to presume that the Iran accord will live another day.

*(The author is an expert on international affairs)*

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# Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China should be seen in the context of the flux of global geopolitics

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi goes to China on April 27, against the background of turbulence in global geopolitics and some domestic disquiet about "softening" of India's China policy.**

BY P.S. RAGHAVAN

The international backdrop is worrying in many respects. The face-off between the U.S. (and its allies) and Russia is arguably worse than during the Cold War. They confront each other, through proxy forces, in three active conflict zones - Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan. The recent U.S.-French-British missile strikes in Syria were a stark reminder. It now emerges that prior communication to the Russians had ensured that equipment, personnel and civilians had been evacuated in advance. However, such deconfliction arrangements seem to be episodic, and there is a lurking danger that miscalculation or brinkmanship might spark off a direct conflict at a local level.

**EDGY CONFRONTATION :** Sanctions - particularly the new U.S. legislation, CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), under which it can impose sanctions on any company which engages with Russia in the defense or energy sector - impart a sharper edge to the confrontation. This weapon was not wielded in anything like this form in the Cold War; its impact could be far more devastating in today's globalized world. Recent American sanctions on major Russian multinationals, whose stocks are internationally traded, widened the target beyond Russian oligarchs to a larger body of shareholders within and outside Russia.

As the U.S. ratchets up pressure on Russia, it has donned kid gloves in dealing with China, as indicated by U.S. President Donald Trump's tweets. A recent tweet appreciates Chinese President Xi Jinping's "kind words on tariffs and automobile barriers" and "his enlightenment on intellectual property and technology transfers".

**TRADE ISSUES:** While India is being asked to address its trade surplus of about \$25 billion with the U.S., Mr. Trump asked China (in a tweet last month) to reduce its massive trade surplus of about \$375 billion with the U.S. by just \$1 billion! He probably meant \$100 billion, as has been suggested by his Administration, but it is worth noting that in 2017 alone, the U.S.'s trade imbalance rose by about \$28 billion. America's decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a free trade grouping excluding China, effectively benefited China.

India itself, running a trade deficit of over \$50 billion with China, is in difficult negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping  
File photo

Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade grouping that includes China, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

**UNPREDICTABLE U.S.:** The unpredictability of U.S. foreign policy is driving even its closest allies to hedge their options. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Mr. Xi are to exchange visits in the near future - a significant breakthrough in relations between two strategic rivals, who were on the verge of a military confrontation about five years ago. Japan (like India) is concerned about China's assertiveness in its neighborhood and the geopolitical implications of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Yet, having failed to persuade Mr. Trump (with whom he claims excellent personal chemistry) to rethink U.S. withdrawal from the TPP and uncertain about the consistency of U.S. policy in the region, Mr. Abe sees benefit in sustaining a dialogue with China, whose positive response reflects its own desire to keep in touch with a U.S. ally in the face of conflicting U.S. signals on trade and security policies. The sharpening of U.S.-Russia acrimony has complicated India's relations with both countries. Besides pressure to address the India-U.S. trade imbalance, India has been warned that its defense and energy links with Russia could attract U.S. sanctions under CAATSA - a development which could have a major impact on our defense preparedness. Russia's intensifying defense cooperation with China and its actions in Afghanistan and with Pakistan are areas on which serious and delicate high-

level India-Russia dialogue is being pursued.

**MUTUAL INTEREST IN SERENITY:** This is the backdrop to the current "reset" in India-China relations. With a strengthening Russia-China axis and with the U.S. taking its eye off China to deal with Russia, it is prudent for India to maintain a harmonious dialogue with China, even as we deal with the wrinkles in our relations with the other two great powers. China's motivation in extending the olive branch may be similar: to maintain serenity in relations while it deals with its other challenges.

This is not to say that India should not stand firm on its core interests, political, economic or strategic. We cannot overlook Chinese designs in our neighborhood - from Doklam to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives - or ignore the larger geopolitical threat posed by the land and sea corridors of the BRI. It is just that circumstances may have opened up some space for furthering mutual interests, without compromising on our other interests.

Countries do not publicly admit adverse asymmetries in relations, but their policymakers have to factor them into their policies and actions. Of course, even countries in adverse asymmetric relationships have levers which can and should be used to further their vital interests. In most cases, this is best done through quiet dialogue instead of public airing of differences, which hardens attitudes.

**IMPORTANCE OF MESSAGING:** It is a valid point that the public messaging on this change in tone of the India-China relationship could have been better. The course of India-China relations in the past couple of years had created a public narrative of bilateral frictions over CPEC, Doklam, our Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and other issues, on which India had to take strong public positions. The transformation in the international environment, creating opportunities for non-confrontational dialogue, could perhaps have been better explained. Foreign policy can be pursued far more effectively when it is supported by public perceptions.

The reality is that India has to maintain a pragmatic balance in its relations with the three major powers, remaining conscious of the fact that elements of these relations will be continuously impacted by the dynamic flux of today's global geopolitics.

The Prime Minister's visit to China should be seen in this context.

(The author, a former diplomat, is Convener of the National Security Advisory Board)

## Maharaja bites the dust

BY MYTHILI BHUSNURMATH

**Merely because we have failed to turn AI around in the past, it does not mean we should compound the error and settle for a distress sale. It is better to bide time.**

The best laid schemes of men and mice oft go awry. This oft-quoted line from English poet Robert Burns' 'To a mouse' might have been written for the much-awaited, much-debated stake sale by the government in the national carrier, Air India (AI). With less than a month left to go before the deadline (May 14, 2018) for the submission of EOI (expression of interest) and domestic airlines showing no interest, the government's much-vaunted plan seems headed for an ignominious end. Despite the fact that, unlike most disinvestments where the government, typically, sells a small stake, here it is willing to cede control, reducing its stake to just 24 per cent, post divestment.

So why are there no takers for what was once regarded as the jewel in the crown and cherished as the Maharaja? What ails the Maharaja and, in turn, is apparently souring the offer government has put on the table? Is there a fine line between being flexible and conceding too much? A danger of being carried away by the (mistaken?) view that privatization will be construed as a measure of government's commitment to reform?

There are no easy answers. Most, apart from Leftists caught in time warp, will agree there is no case for the government to run an airline. More so, one that's been losing money hand over fist for years now and needs costly infusion of scarce taxpayer resources to stay airborne. Remember, AI has been the subject of not one, but many attempts to turn the airline around; the latest being the turnaround plan approved by the previous UPA government, under which Air India was to receive a bailout package of up to Rs 30,231 crore for a period of 10 years, starting 2012.

However, all that changed with the new government. With the airline not showing any sign of improvement despite infusion of funds and Niti Aayog opining that 'further financial support to an unviable non-priority company in a matured and competitive aviation sector would not be best use of scarce financial resources of the government', the die was cast. In what was hailed as a landmark decision, in June 2017, the Cabinet approved strategic disinvestment of the airline. The government, it was announced, would sell 76 per cent in AI, after hiving off a substantial amount of debt to a special purpose vehicle, along with 100 per cent stake in Air India Express and 50 per cent stake in Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd, a joint venture services company managing airport logistics. Only to find that, contrary to expectations of huge investor interest, the announcement seems to have left potential buyers cold.

So, what are the sticking points? Principally, two, (apart from the huge debt): one, the 24 per cent stake that the government intends to retain, post divestment, and two, the employees. Take the first. True, company law requires a minimum of 26 per cent to block special resolutions, so the scope for interference is limited. Nonetheless, this is unlikely to reassure potential investors. Governments are not like other shareholders. They can, and do, interfere even with much smaller stakes.

Agreed, the bid document does contain a clause that the government will sell the balance 24 per cent 'in time'. However, 'in time' has not been defined. Granted, the aviation sector is notoriously cyclical and few airlines anywhere in the world have made profits on a sustained basis. But the alternative of leaving it open-ended is just as problematic. Especially given government's track record in strategic divestments like Balco and Hindustan Zinc Ltd, where the government residual share



AIR INDIA

is yet to be transferred.

In that case, is selling the entire stake, ie 100 per cent rather than 76 per cent a better option? On paper, the argument of retaining 24 per cent is that the government will be able to cash in on the upside of a higher share price once the airline is listed. So, there is a strong case for the government to exit, totally.

The second sticking point, AI's huge staff, is just as tricky, if not trickier. Any potential buyer is bound to want a free hand to deal with the, admittedly, bloated staff strength. But can a government, especially one that is headed for elections in little over a year, afford to antagonize powerful labor unions by giving potential buyers a free hand to rationalize (retrench?) staff? Will the promise to give stock options to employees act as a sweetener? A generous VRS (voluntary retirement scheme) could be an option. But how will it be funded?

Again, there are no easy answers. What is certain is that some flexibility in the terms and conditions is essential if the sale is to elicit greater interest. What is also certain is that given the tepid response, the proposed timelines - selecting the winning bid by September 2018 and completing legal transfer of ownership by December 2018, are both unrealistic and overly ambitious.

Yes, as Jitendra Bhargava, former executive director, AI, and vociferous advocate of complete government exit, says, "For last two decades, the Air India's turnaround plan failed to work. This is the perfect time to disinvest as the airline will only go from bad to worse in future if it remains under bureaucratic control."

But what if the present proposal does not attract meaningful bids? Should we act in haste and sell the Maharaja for a song? As the experience of Alitalia and Japan Airlines has shown, there is no guarantee that once an airline is in private hands, the government will be able to wash its hands off and let it sink if it is no longer viable. Merely because we have tried and failed to turn AI around in the past, we should not compound the error and settle for a distress sale. Having waited so long, it is better to bide time. By all means sell AI, fully. But make haste, slowly!

(The author is an economist and former central banker)

The culture of India refers collectively to the thousands of distinct and unique cultures of all religions and communities present in India. India's languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food, and customs differ from place to place within the country. The Indian culture often labeled as an amalgamation of several cultures, spans across the Indian subcontinent and has been influenced by a history that is several millennia old. Many elements of India's diverse cultures, such as Indian religions, Indian philosophy and Indian cuisine, have a profound impact across the world.

Indian-origin religions include Hinduism and its offshoots Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, all of which are based on the concept of dharma and karma.

Indian-origin religions have been persecuting by for centuries. Muslim rulers massacred Hindus and Buddhists while attacking temples and monasteries, while also forcing them to convert including on the battlefield. Most of the great temples in North India were destroyed during the Muslim rule. Consequently, between the years 1000 AD and 1500 AD, the population of the Indian subcontinent decreased from 200 to 125 million. Foreign-origin religion, including Abrahamic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are also present in India, as well as Zoroastrianism and Bahá'í Faith both escaping persecution by Islam have also found shelter in India over the centuries.

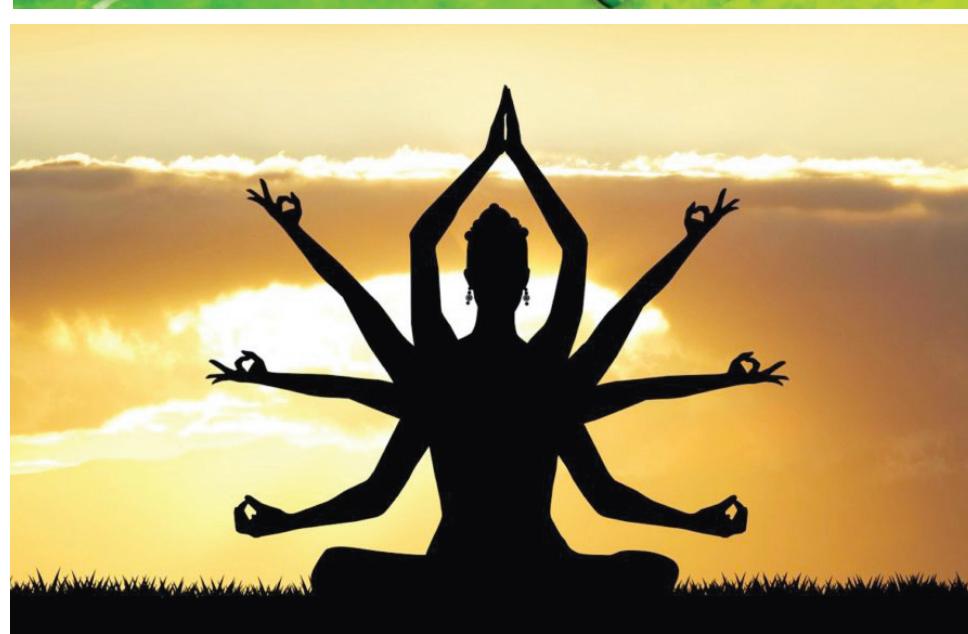
India has 29 states with different culture and civilizations and one of the most populated countries in the world. The Indian culture, often labeled as an amalgamation of several various cultures, spans across the Indian subcontinent and has been influenced and shaped by a history that is several thousand years old. Throughout the history of India, Indian culture has been heavily influenced by Dharmic religions. They have been credited with shaping much of Indian philosophy, literature, architecture, art and music.

Greater India was the historical extent of Indian culture beyond the Indian subcontinent. This particularly concerns the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, architecture, administration and writing system from India to other parts of Asia through the Silk Road by the travelers and maritime traders during the early centuries of the Common Era. To the west, Greater India overlaps with Greater Persia in the Hindu Kush and Pamir Mountains. Over the centuries, there has been significant fusion of cultures between Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs and various tribal populations in India.

India is the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and other religions. They are collectively known as Indian religions. Indian religions are a major form of world religions along with Abrahamic ones. Today, Hinduism and Buddhism are the world's third and fourth-largest religions respectively, with over 2 billion followers altogether, and possibly as many as 2.5 or 2.6 billion followers. Followers of Indian religions - Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists make up around 80-82% population of India.

India is one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse nations in the world, with some of the most deeply religious societies and cultures. Religion plays a central and definitive role in the life of many of its people. Although India is a secular Hindu-majority country, it has a large Muslim population. Except for Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Lakshadweep, Hindus form the predominant population in all 29 states and 7 union territories. Muslims are present throughout India, with large populations in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Kerala, Telangana, West Bengal and Assam; while

# WHAT MAKES INDIA A GREAT COUNTRY



only Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshadweep have majority Muslim populations. Sikhs and Christians are other significant minorities of India.

## Ancient India

The period between the 4th century and 6th century AD is known as the Golden Age of India because of the large achievements Indians made in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, sculpting and painting during the Gupta Empire. Significant contributions to the decimal numeral system, including the concept of zero happened during this period in India. The Golden Age in India came to an end when the Hunas invaded the Gupta Empire in the 6th century AD.

The Gupta Empire saw a vast range of scientific and cultural achievements. To the chagrin of many high school math students, trigonometry and geometry got their start during this golden age. And Guptan mathematicians developed the concept of zero and the number system. Other major contributions from this era helped improve human health. Not only did scientists and doctors expand the alternative system of medicine called Ayurveda, but they also improved surgical practices and helped popularize vaccinations.

But the Guptan Empire didn't focus solely on science and math. Art and architecture were abundant during this time. In fact, the son of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, was an avid art lover and commissioned works that can be found in museums to this day. The Gupta Empire is also responsible for a game still popular around the globe today: chess.

## Medieval India

South India in the 10th and 11th century AD under the imperial Chola Dynasty has been called Golden Age as well. The period saw extensive achievements in architecture, literature, sculpture and bronze working, maritime conquests with extensive trade, and quasi-democratic reforms.

## INDIA'S HISTORY AND FUTURE MAKE IT GREAT

- Indians invented Zero without which mathematics wouldn't have existed.
- Indian epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata are voluminous, unlike other epics in the world.
- Indians gave Yoga to the world.
- Pearls, diamonds were sold on the streets of Vijayanagara Empire in India.
- Until 18th century, India was the only source of diamonds in the entire world.
- Kings from other countries looted wealth from India. (e.g. Somanatheshwara Temple in Gujarat was looted 17 times)
- Ashoka the Great spread Buddhism all over Asia.
- Ayurveda took its birth in India.
- We have the largest English-speaking population in the world.
- We believe in Unity in Diversity. Each and every state in India speaks a different language and still we are united and living together happily.
- Indians discovered that there were 9 planets in the solar system 1000's of

Contd on page 11

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- years ago. (Navagraha)
- Though British ruled India for over 300 odd years, we overtook them in terms of GDP and we lead them, they trail us.
- We treat everything as God here, water as Ganga, food as Annapurna, money as Lakshmi, education as Saraswati and our country as our mother.
- India is considered as the youngest nation in the world because of its young population.
- India still follows agriculture as her primary occupation and became the fastest growing economy in the world.

### Indians lead many top companies in the current corporate world

- Google led by Sundar Pichai
- Microsoft led by Satya Nadella
- Berkshire Hathaway Insurance led by Ajit Jain
- Master Card led by Ajay Banga
- Adobe led by Shantanu Narayan
- Delloite led by Punit Renjen
- Pepsi led by Indra Nooyi.
- To add more, we are the largest democracy in the world, more than we need the world...the world needs us because we are the largest exporters of food crops, software, spices, milk etc.

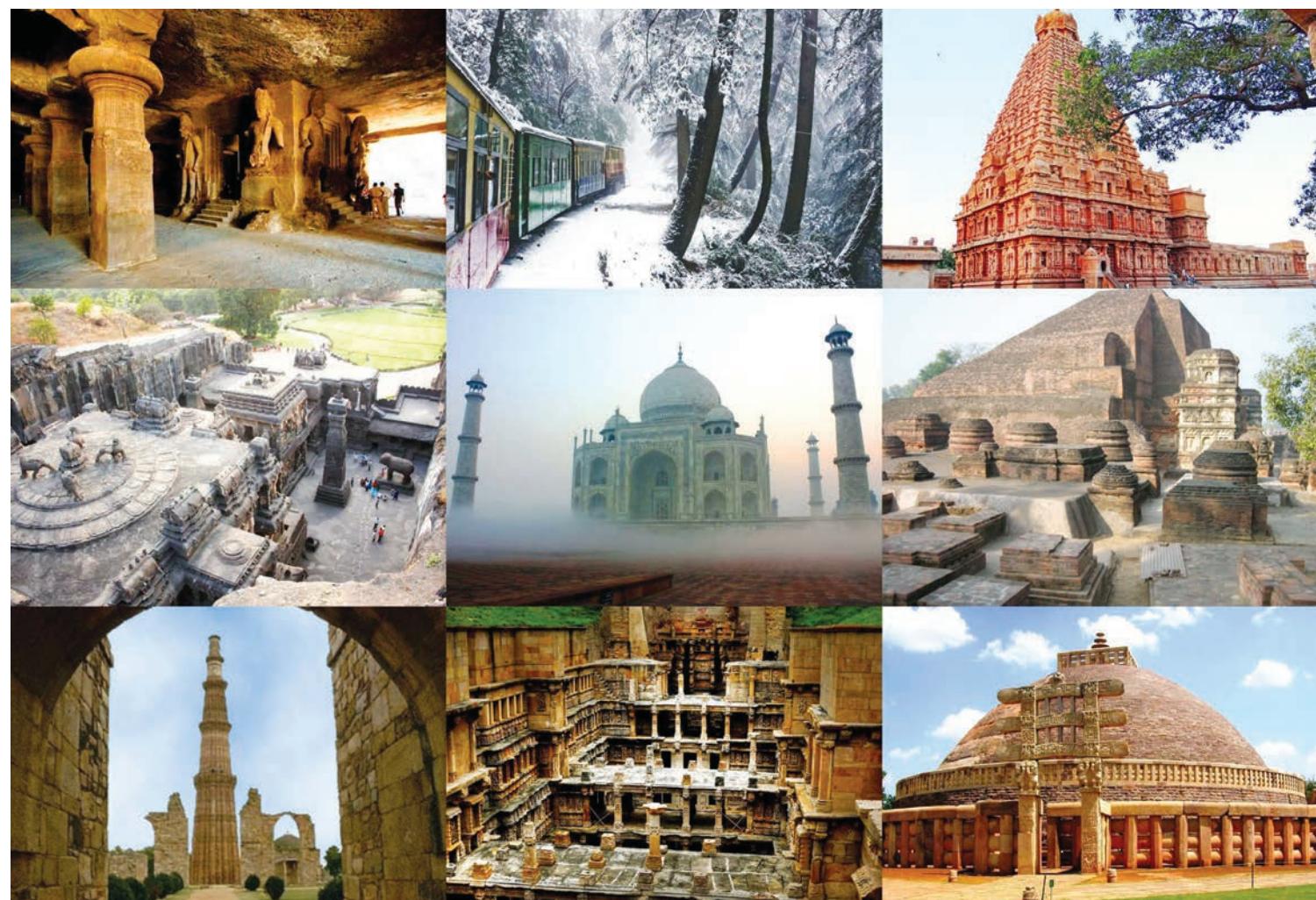
### WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN INDIA

There are 35 World Heritage Sites (27 cultural and 7 natural sites and 1 mixed) in India that are recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as on July 2016.

These World Heritage Sites in India are considered to be of immense cultural and natural importance in the world.

These sites are:

- Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University), Bihar
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim
- Capitol Complex, Chandigarh
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Rani Ki Vav, Patan, Gujarat
- Group of Monuments at Hampi, Karnataka
- Group of Monuments at Pattadakal, Karnataka
- Khajuraho Group of Monuments, Madhya Pradesh
- Hill Forts of Rajasthan
- Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya, Bihar
- Churches and Convents of Goa
- Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh
- Great Living Chola Temples, Tamil Nadu
- Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh
- Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra
- Ellora Caves, Maharashtra
- Elephanta Caves, Maharashtra
- Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary, Assam
- Manas Wild Life Sanctuary, Assam
- Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan
- Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Uttarakhand
- Sundarbans National Park, West Bengal
- Western Ghats
- Humayun's Tomb, New Delhi
- Red Fort Complex, Delhi
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus), Maharashtra
- Sun Temple, Konark, Odisha
- Jantar Mantar, Jaipur, Rajasthan
- Agra Fort, Uttar Pradesh
- Fatehpur Sikri, Uttar Pradesh
- Taj Mahal, Agra, Uttar Pradesh



WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN INDIA.

- Mountain Railways of India
- Qutab Minar and its Monuments, New Delhi
- Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park, Gujarat

### CLASSICAL DANCE FORMS

India has a very rich culture of dance and music including traditional, classical, folk and Tribal dances styles and music.

In the Indian culture, classical dance has a lot of significance. Because it serves as a fabulous way to express the innate feelings of the heart.

The Classical Dances of India includes Bharatanatyam, the oldest form of the classical dance in the country and one of the Most Popular Classical Dance in India also ancient in Natya Shastra.

There are eight forms of famous Indian classical dance-Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Odissi, Sattriya, Mohiniyattam, Gaudiya Nritya.

### FAIREST GROWING ECONOMY

Coming to material progress India has made, India today is the fastest growing economy, at over 7%.

India regained its status as the world's fastest growing major economy in the October-December quarter, surpassing China for the first time in a year as government spending, manufacturing and services all picked up.

Asia's third-largest economy grew 7.2 percent in the December quarter, its fastest in five quarters, Ministry of Statistics data showed on Wednesday. That beat China's 6.8 percent and a forecast of 6.9 percent by analysts polled by Reuters.

In a data set that some economists said had put an early interest rate hike on the agenda, India also edged up its 2017/18 GDP growth forecast to 6.6 percent from 6.5 percent.

With 31 new Indians on the list, India comes third after China and USA on Hurun's Global Rich List 2018.

India added these 31 billionaires in the past year due to a record performance by Indian stock markets.

Although Mukesh Ambani remains the richest Indian, one of the Indians to see a massive growth in wealth is Gautam Adani



whose wealth doubled and grew by 109% to USD 14 billion. Ambani's wealth soared by 73% to USD 45 billion. Adani is in the 98th spot, while Ambani is ranked 19th.

Three of the youngest billionaires in India are Shraddha Agarwal, 32, of Outcome Wealth, Divyank Turakhia, 35, of Directi and Vijay Shekhar Sharma, 39, of Paytm.

The report mentioned that the most number of billionaires - 19 - in India were produced by the pharmaceuticals sector, followed by automobiles with 14 and consumer products with 11.

The total number of Indians on that list is 131, but if Indian-origin are considered then the tally would move up to 170.

Lakshmi Mittal, with USD 18 million is the second-richest Indian on the list. The Godrej Group has added 5 billionaires to the list, while Hero Honda and Asian Paints have added three each.

So far, why India is great. But the question is how India can continue not only to remain great but acquire still higher greatness. Only one thing which can sustain the momentum of India's greatness is the unity of people and commitment to the nation.

All Indians, whether in India, or abroad need always to keep in mind that it is one Bharat which belongs to all equally and must always be loved, respected and protected at all costs.

Vande Mataram!

**Sponsored by ARISH SAHANI,**  
**President, Indian American Intellectuals Forum, New York. Mr. Sahani can be reached at arish.sahani@gmail.com**





## MIRA WANTED TO SHARE PREGNANCY NEWS WITH THE WORLD: SHAHID

**A**ctor Shahid Kapoor is elated that he is going to become a father for the second time, and says it was his wife Mira Rajput's decision to break the news on Instagram. Shahid and Mira, who are already parents to 20-months-old Misha, shared a picture of their daughter alongside a caption, "Big sister," announcing they are expecting their second child.

"I am very happy. We just felt like sharing it with everybody. Mira said she wanted to put it on Instagram, and I felt the photograph was really cute. So, it was a spontaneous decision and it just happened," Shahid said at the red carpet of Dadasaheb Phalke Foundation Awards on Saturday.

The 37-year-old actor also expressed his happiness over the praise that younger brother Ishaan has been receiving for his debut film, "Beyond The Clouds". Shahid said Ishaan now needs to work harder with humility and grace. "It's a great weekend. There's a lot of happiness within the family and Ishaan has given a spectacular performance. He is getting love from everywhere. He is very deserving of all the applause. He is a talented boy. Of course, he has just started. He has to work a lot, learn a lot and he has to work hard with humility. He has to put down his head and work," he added.

Source: PTI

# HAVE ALWAYS TRIED EXPERIMENTING WITH MY ROLES: ANUSHKA SHARMA

**A**nushka Sharma says experimenting with roles has been a mainstay in her career from the start. Anushka spoke on the sidelines of an event organised by Standard Chartered Bank, where she was announced its brand ambassador.

In a promotional campaign for her latest endorsement, Anushka plays the triple role of a daughter, mother and grandmother. On the experience, Anushka said, "I have always tried to experiment with my roles right from the beginning. This year, I am doing films in which all my characters are very different from one another in terms of physical and emotional appearance. So, when you get to do that in an advertisement, you feel great. Playing a triple role was something which I had never done before, so I was very excited. It takes a lot of time while doing prosthetic make-up, but the end result was great. So, I was all up for it."

Anushka's upcoming Bollywood projects include Zero and the biopic on Sanjay Dutt. "I am really happy that this year, I am doing different kind of films and both films are going to release very soon. As far as the Dutt biopic is concerned, that's one film that the audience will be very excited about and will be happy while watching it. I recently saw a teaser of it and I really liked it. I am doing a cameo in it. Nevertheless, I am really looking forward to watching the film."

The actor-producer also shared her thoughts on the ordinance to introduce death penalty for rapists of children, after the nationwide uproar on Kathua and Unnao rape cases. "I was deeply hurt and affected by the incident. Even now, when I think or talk about it, I feel disgusted and extremely emotional. I feel the most severe punishment has to be meted out to the people involved. The most severe punishment should be served to those who spoil something as innocent as a child because it's the worst thing that a human being can do."

Source: ANI



## Saroj Khan apologises for her casting couch comments

**V**eteran choreographer Saroj Khan has apologised for defending the casting couch culture. Addressing the media, Saroj had said the Indian film industry "at least" provided jobs and did not abandon women after raping them.

"I have already said I am sorry. But you don't know the question that was asked... And now there's so much ruckus," Khan told PTI as a video of her interaction with the media did the rounds of television networks and social media.

In comments that came in the wake of the #MeToo campaign, which calls out sexual offenders, Khan put the onus on the woman and said the casting couch was not a new phenomenon. Even people in the government indulge in it, the 69-year-old choreographer. She was responding to a question from a journalist on Telugu actor Sri Reddy stripping in protest against the casting couch culture in the Telugu film industry.

"This has been happening since time immemorial. Somebody or the other tries to get cozy with every girl. Even people in the government do it. Why are you after the film industry? At least the industry provides employment. After all, it isn't as if you are raped and abandoned. (Yeh chala aa raha hai baba aadam ke zamaane se. Har ladki ke upar koi na koi haath saaf karne ki koshish karta hai. Government ke log bhi karte hain. Tum film industry ke peeche kyun pade ho? Woh kam se kam roti toh deti hai. Rape karke chhod toh nahi deti)," she said.



Khan is heard as saying in the video.

The National Award-winning choreographer, famous for songs such as Ek Do Teen and Choli ke Peeche, added that the onus of staying safe and avoiding such situations was on women and pressed the media not to target the film industry. "It's up to the girl - what does she want to do? If you don't want to be caught, you won't. When you are an artiste, why will you sell yourself? Don't say anything about the film industry. It's like our mother-father. (Yeh ladki ke upar hai ki tum kya karna chahti ho. Tum uske haath mein nahi aana chahti ho toh nahi aogi. Tumhare paas art hai toh tum kyun bechoge apne aap ko? Film industry ko kuch mat kehna, woh humara mai-baap hai)," she said.

Last year, Hollywood spoke out against sexual misconduct after disclosures about media mogul Harvey Weinstein. The incident had a domino effect, with many questions being raised about sexual harassment and abuse at the workplace, particularly the entertainment industry.

Though filmdom was slow to react to Khan's comments, Sri Reddy, whose protest triggered widespread debate on exploitation of women in the entertainment industry, said she had lost "respect" for the choreographer. "Saroj Khan madam, you are an elder, so I should respect you. But I have lost respect for you because what kind of a tradition are you encouraging? Also, being an elder, you have to show the (right) path to actresses. How can you say that we have to be like that. It is giving wrong indication that you have to be a slave to heroes, producers..." she told a television channel.

Others were more guarded in their comments.

Richa Chadda told ANI, "I think people are making mountain of molehill. There's narrative that people in Bollywood are the worst & indulge in malpractices which isn't the case. She meant to say it takes place in all industries, why is Bollywood being singled out?"

Bollywood biggies, producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra and actor Ranbir Kapoor, evaded a direct answer. "It is an amazing question. What do you think our view should be?", Chopra shot back when asked to respond at a teaser launch of his latest film Sanju.

Source: PTI



## DANIEL CRAIG, RACHEL WEISZ EXPECTING FIRST CHILD TOGETHER

Actor Rachel Weisz has revealed that she and husband, Daniel Craig, are expecting their first child together. The star shared the news during an interview with New York Times, saying the couple are going to have "a little human".

"I'll be showing soon. Daniel and I are so happy. We're going to have a little human. 'We can't wait to meet him or her. It's all such a mystery,' Weisz said.

The 48-year-old actor got married to the James Bond star in June, 2011.

Weisz already has an 11-year-old son with director Darren Aronofsky, while Craig has a 25-year-old daughter with his former partner, actor Fiona Loudon.

Source: PTI

Actor Charlize Theron said now that her kids are grown up, she can spare some time for dating.

The 'Tully' actor, who is a mother to two-year-old August and six-year-old Jackson, whom she adopted as a single parent, said she had 'no interest' in finding a new partner while her kids were younger.

But with her daughter getting a year older, Theron admitted she could change her mind.

"With both of my kids, the first two years, I had absolutely no interest in dating. It wasn't even a struggle - it was a case where my body chemistry and my mind just wanted to go to the place where I was 100 per cent satisfied with being a mom," Theron said.

"And then... Well it kind of changes. My little one will be three soon and I'm starting to feel like, 'Ok, I'm not dealing with diapers and wipes anymore and you know something? Right now I'm really happy,' she added.

Theron, 42, said her friends are trying to set her up on dates but feels it was too much 'work' to do. "Sometimes my friends will try to set me up and I'll say, 'Right now that feels like more work than something I would really enjoy. I think I would have to change that mindset before I start dating again,'" Theron said.

Theron had dated actor Stuart Townsend from 2002-2010. She later got engaged to Sean Penn in 2014 after meeting him a year ago. But the couple

Source: PTI



# SARAH JESSICA PARKER ON KIM CATTRALL: THERE IS NO CATFIGHT

**S**arah Jessica Parker said she has no hard feelings for her 'Sex and the City' co-star Kim Cattrall as there is no catfight. Multiple reports surfaced detailing decades of alleged hostility between the two actors, after Cattrall made it clear she has zero interest in reprising her role as Samantha Jones in a third 'Sex and the City' movie.

"I'd just like to remind everybody that there is no catfight. I have never uttered an unkind, unsupportive, unfriendly word, so I would love to redefine it," she told.

"There is no catfight. There never has been a catfight. I've never fought with someone publicly in my life, nor would I. And I spent time with all of the women on the set. People need to recall that it wasn't just two women on the set fighting because that just never happened," she added.

She insisted that she always got along with Cattrall off camera. "There were four women on the set and I spent equal time with all of them, so this was not a set with two women who didn't get along. I've always held Kim's work in high regard and always appreciative of her contributions."

"If she chooses not to do the third movie, there's not a lot I can do to change her mind and we must respect it. That's the only thing I've ever said about it, you know?"

Parker said she is not sure if they would even revisit the 'Sex and the City' anytime soon as she has not discussed it with director/writer Patrick Michael King. "Whether we choose to revisit it at another time and reimagine that story - that's something Michael and I just haven't talked about yet. That doesn't mean we won't, but we haven't at this time."



Source: PTI

ended their relationship in June 2015.

## DOESN'T WANT MORE KIDS

Charlize Theron said she will not have more children as she is not sure if she could make a bigger family work.

The 42-year-old actor is a single parent to Jackson, seven, and two-year-old August - who she adopted as babies.

"I think you have to know what you want and for me, it very much feels like this is my family and I am for sure finished. I don't admire (those with three or more children) or judge it or feel any way about it other than it works for them because they are making it work. But that doesn't necessarily mean I could make it work for myself," Theron said.

The Hollywood star said though being patient does not come naturally to her, the kids have taught her to be tolerant.

"They do push you. It's not their fault - they just don't quite know what the barrier is and they will go as far as they can. Patience is a virtue that's come to me in spades since becoming a parent because I don't think I was that patient before."

Source: PTI

## Charlize Theron open to dating again

## Pakistan jails man in country's first child porn conviction

**LAHORE (TIP):** A Pakistan court on April 26 jailed a man for seven years in the country's first ever conviction for child pornography.

Sadat Amin was found guilty by a Lahore court of being part of a global child pornography racket spread across Europe and the United States.

Pakistan only criminalised child pornography, as well as sexual assault against minors, for the first time in March last year, following the passage of a bill in the Senate.

According to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Amin was arrested on the complaint of the Norwegian Embassy in April last year.

Investigators recovered more than 650,000 photographs and videos of child pornography in his possession.

Amin was also given a fine of 1.2 million rupees (\$10,000) by the court in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore.

The amendment to the penal code last March also criminalised human trafficking within Pakistan, and raised the age of criminal responsibility from seven to 10.

Under the revised legislation, sexual assaults against minors are now punishable by up to seven years in prison. Previously only rape was criminalised.

Likewise, child pornography, which was previously not mentioned in the law, is now punishable by seven years in prison. (AFP)

## Sri Lanka imposes liquor, meat ban for Buddhist festival

**COLOMBO (TIP):** Sri Lanka on April 26 banned the sale of meat and liquor and ordered casinos to close on the Buddha's birthday in a move to appease the island's religious majority.

The restrictions, which come just days after the government shifted May Day celebrations in a sop to Buddhist monks, will extend to tourist hotels for the two-day Vesak festival starting Sunday.

"Meat and liquor sales at supermarkets and hotels will be banned during this period," the government said in a statement.

Casinos will be closed and gambling elsewhere also prohibited, the government said.

Bars are usually closed on Buddhist holidays but the decision to ban meat sales at supermarkets is a first and was broadly seen as a gesture to the island's powerful clergy.

It follows the government's surprise decision this month to delay May Day festivities by a week after Buddhist leaders complained the date clashed with Vesak celebrations.

It is the first time the holiday has been shifted from May 1 since Sri Lanka began celebrating the labour day festivities in 1956. Sri Lanka, a Buddhist-majority nation of 21 million, celebrates 26 public holidays. The island's 1.5 million civil servants also enjoy another 45 days paid leave every year. (AFP)

## Bangladesh official says no rush for free trade pact with China

**DHAKA (TIP):** Bangladesh is in no rush to sign a free trade agreement with China, a senior Bangladeshi trade official said on April 26, though Chinese officials said it would help the poor South Asian country cut its deficit with its largest trading partner. China is expected to host talks in June, having first floated the idea of an FTA in 2016. Bangladesh does not have an FTA with any trade partner. "We have no intention to sign such an agreement right now and we are not in a hurry, but we may continue to discuss this," Shubhashish Bose, secretary of the commerce ministry, told Reuters on Tuesday. Bangladesh mainly imports machinery, cotton, consumer products and chemical and chemical products from China, while exporting jute, jute products, readymade garments and processed leather the other way. Li Guangjun, economic and commercial counselor at the China's embassy in Dhaka, said an agreement would help Bangladesh reduce its deficit, as exports to China only accounted for \$1 billion of the \$16 billion annual trade between the two countries. "We would like to see more exports from Bangladesh and for that it needs to become more competitive," Li told Reuters. (Reuters)

# Pakistan netas worse than Indian or Bangladesh counterparts? Interior minister to CJP

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Are Pakistani politicians worse than their Indian and Bangladeshi counterparts?

This was the strange query of Pakistan's Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal as he attacked Supreme Court Chief Justice Saqib Nisar for allegedly exceeding his brief.

Chief Justice Nisar is under attack ever since the apex court disqualified prime minister Nawaz Sharif last year and ended his political career by barring the three-time premier from holding public office for life.

Sharif had been criticising the judiciary, especially chief justice Nisar, accusing him of imposing the "worst kind of dictatorship" in the country.

Sharif told reporters yesterday that suo motu actions of the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) against the federal and provincial governments in the country were nothing less than a "judicial martial law".

Joining hands with Sharif, Ahsan said: "If a judge is patriot, so is a politician."

Ahsan, who is also the minister for planning, development and reforms, said one has to understand that politicians also have self-respect and dignity just as much as any army official or any judge.



Addressing a seminar on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor here, the interior minister wondered if politicians in Pakistan are worse than their Indian and Bangladeshi counterparts, the Express Tribune reported.

"Look, the chief justice can sit on the bench and say Ahsan Iqbal got a vice chancellor appointed," thundered Iqbal, referring to Chief Justice Nisar's remarks during a case.

"Mr Chief Justice have a heart. When

you are disrespected, we are also disrespected," he was quoted as saying by Geo TV.

"You have no right to name-call people. You must issue me [a] charge sheet. If you have evidence, produce it before me but enough is enough."

The 59-year-old leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) further said if he had levelled baseless allegations against anyone, evidence should be given to substantiate them instead of insulting him. (PTI)

## Nepal-China agree to expand connectivity, build railway line

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** Nepal and China have agreed to expand connectivity and development of Trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional transport network, according to an official statement today.

The agreement has been made "for attaining common prosperity by incorporating areas such as railway line, trading port, air transport, electricity and communication", said a press communiqué issued by the Foreign Ministry of Nepal on conclusion of the five-day official visit to China by Foreign Minister Pradip Gyawali, who returned Kathmandu today.

"During his bilateral talk with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, the two leaders agreed to expedite works relating to implementing various agreements and understandings reached during the visits paid by Prime Minister K P Oli and (former) Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" in 2016 and 2017 respectively," according to the release.

"We have also agreed to give continuity to exchange of high level visits between the two countries for promoting bilateral relations based on mutual trust and friendship," Gyawali told media at the Tribhuvan International Airport upon arrival here.

The two sides also agreed to set up a bilateral coordination and implementation mechanism in order to facilitate effective implementation of projects being operated under Nepal-China cooperation, he said.

During the visit, Gyawali also discussed with his Chinese counterpart matters relating to preparation of feasibility study and detailed project report of a trans-national railway line connecting Kerung (Nepal-China border) Kathmandu and Lumbini (Nepal-India border).

During bilateral talks the two leaders also stressed on the need for promoting bilateral relations through construction of road network, infrastructure, trade and tourism under Belt and Road Initiative and to identify various projects so as to facilitate formulating time frame for their implementation, according to Foreign Ministry sources.

Gyawali has asked the Chinese business community to make more investments in Nepal and to transfer technology for promoting business relations between the two countries, the sources said.

He also appreciated Chinese President Xi Jinping's initiative for "building a community of shared future for humanity" during his meeting with Vice President Wang Quishan. (PTI)

## 14 Taliban militants killed in Afghanistan

**KABUL (TIP):** At least 14 Taliban militants were killed in military operations in two Afghan provinces, authorities said on April 26.

"Six terrorists were killed and five others injured following an Afghan National Army (ANA) cleanup operation in Takhar province on Sunday," Xinhua news agency quoted defence officials as saying.

In the neighbouring Kunduz province, eight militants were killed and four others wounded after Afghan army and intelligence agency operatives launched an operation in Aqtash district.

The victims included two Taliban commanders, the sources added. (IANS)

## 500,000 Afghan children affected by drought: Unicef

**KABUL:** Unicef announced on Tuesday that 500,000 Afghan children have been affected by a drought in the country.

Out of the country's 34 provinces, 10 were worst hit where 20 to 30 per cent water sources are reportedly dry, threatening the lives of about 1 million people, Xinhua news agency quoted Unicef as saying in a statement.

An additional 2 million people could feel its effects over the coming months.

"These areas have pre-existing high rates of malnutrition. Without adequate nutritious food and safe water for drinking, as well as for hygiene and sanitation, children's health will only worsen," the statement said.

The impact of the drought couldn't have come at a worse time, as cases of severe acute malnutrition, or seasonal malnutrition, are on the rise by about 25 per cent. Some 1.6 million children and 443,000 pregnant and lactating women suffer from malnutrition across Afghanistan, according to the statement.

"The priority is to prevent the situation from deteriorating, by responding to the needs of children and families in the worst affected areas," said Adele Khodr, Unicef's Afghanistan Representative. (IANS)

# JAISALMER: ANCIENT BATTLEMENTS UNDER DESERT SKIES



Take the road to Jaisalmer from Jodhpur, and you'll see small villages, the odd hillocks and miles and miles of glistening sand. Cars are few, and it's possible that you'd spot more livestock than people on this stretch. And when you do get there, as locals will tell you, you'll realise that this city is one of contrasts.

The summer is harsh, and the winter freezing. The parched land - a result of low precipitation and extreme temperatures - is hostile, and not suitable for farming. But the sand dunes - a result of the same mix - attract visitors by the hordes, giving residents a source of income during peak season.

"It's a difficult life. Most people earn for three months (December to February) during the tourist season, and live off it for the rest of the year," informs our guide.

Jaisalmer's commercial side is on display at the Sam Sand Dunes - probably the most-visited tourist spot in the city. The approach road is dotted with hotels catering to every budget. And for those looking for a more local experience, a night at a desert camp is recommended. These camps offer traditional entertainment and local cuisine - one even comes with a swimming pool.

On the dunes across the road, camel rides, four-wheeler drives and carriages await. But if it is tranquillity that you are looking for while soaking in the magnificent sights, it might be a little hard to come by. During the peak season, the area could easily hold over 40,000 tourists. Add to that the trash left behind, and it is easy to see why several people have begun to prefer the sands of Dubai in recent years.

The tourist season also brings out members of the local tribes. Camel herders ferry tourists on the dunes, while women belonging to nomadic tribes sing folk songs and perform traditional dances at the various desert camps.

Even children are out on the sands, coaxing tourists to buy chips, soft drinks or a beer while watching the sun go down on the dunes. Once the season ends, they go back to their everyday life - the camels carry water to far-off villages, the women return to their tribes and the kids go back to school. But there's more to Jaisalmer. Here are places you shouldn't miss, if the Golden City of India is next on your travel list:

## Desert National Park

Most national parks in India boast of dense forests and large water bodies, this one is an exception. Although one may not see a tiger or rhino, spotting wildlife that calls the desert their home is a thrill in itself. Keep your eyes out for hares, foxes, the blackbuck, the endangered Great Indian Bustard, Russell's viper and several migratory birds in the



winter months.

## Jaisalmer Fort

What sets it apart is that unlike most forts in Rajasthan, locals inhabit this one. One can shop, eat and sightsee while strolling through it. What is unusual to see though is the large number of 'Free Tibet' banners that dot shops.

## Longewala

JP Dutta's Border (1997) was a hit at the box office. And while most believe it is a work of fiction, a visit to Longewala - on the road to Tanot - will prove otherwise. Border Security Force (BSF) officers stationed here show you the well that was poisoned by Pakistanis in the 1971 war, an enemy tank and crane still there and a memorial to those who sacrificed their lives for the country.

## Border

The Indo-Pak border lies less than 20 km from Tanot. Though not as famous as the Wagah Border, one can see the last Indian pillar and the Pakistani outpost from here. Visitors, however, are not allowed after sunset. One also needs prior approvals from the BSF to go there. Interestingly, Jaisalmer's proximity to Pakistan is also visible in the local markets with paan masala from across the border sold openly in shops.

## Bada Bagh

Other points of interest you could also head to are Patwaon-Ki-Haveli, Thar Heritage Museum, Maharaja's Palace, Gadi Sar Lake (with boating) and Vyas Chhatri.

## Kuldhara

Rajasthan may be famous for India's most haunted spot, Bhangarh, but you could get a dose of the eerie in Jaisalmer too. According to legend, an entire community vanished overnight 200 years ago at a place close to Jaisalmer. Though there are several tales on the reason behind their sudden disappearance, today all that remains - as proof of their existence - is the abandoned village of Kuldhara. What's more, according to locals, the villagers left behind a curse bringing death to anyone who tried to inhabit it.

## Tanot Mata's Temple

This serene spot lies about 120 km from Jaisalmer. It is the last village before the Indo-Pak border. What makes it unique is that the BSF maintains it. They took over the day-to-day functioning after bombs dropped by Pakistan in the vicinity of the temple in the 1965 did not explode. In fact, they now lie on display within the temple premises.

# SUMMER HAIRSTYLES TO BEAT THE HEAT



## Rope Braid

Split your hair into two sections. Twist each section AWAY from your face. Once you're done with the two sections, twist them together TOWARDS your face, creating a rope-like effect on your hair. Secure with an elastic.

## Half-Up Bun

Take some hair from the top section of your head and make a ponytail. Pull it tightly to put it on top of your head. You can actually stop here and achieve a rocky Ariana Grande hairstyle but for a more chic look, twist the ponytail and wrap it around itself to form a bun. Secure it with a bobby pin.

## Braided Braids

Divide your hair into three sections. Braid each section separately. Once you're done, braid all three sections together creating one big, complicated-looking but very-easy-to-do braid. You can remove the three elastics that you used in each braid and secure your hair altogether with just one elastic. For a more feminine look, slightly loosen it.

## Braided Top Knot

To start with, bring your hair into a ponytail. Braid the ponytail downwards



and secure it with an elastic. Wrap around itself to make a bun, like what we did with the half-up bun except that this one is braided. Secure with a bobby pin.

## Twisted Back Braid

Take the front sections of your hair and twist it backwards. Pin it together at the back of your head. Create a braid using the hair that you've just pinned. Secure it with an elastic upon reaching the desired length of your braid.



## COCONUT CHICKEN CURRY

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 lemongrass stalks
- 1 large shallot, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 (2-inch) piece ginger, peeled, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 chicken legs, drumsticks and thighs separated
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
- 4 kaffir lime leaves (optional)
- 1 (3-inch) cinnamon stick
- 4 cardamom pods, cracked
- 2 star anise pods
- 1 (15-ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 teaspoon coconut sugar or light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- Chopped cilantro and chives (for serving)



### Method

- Remove tough outer layers from lemongrass. Finely grate bottom third of 1 stalk and set aside; discard the

## TRICKS TO MAKE PERFUME LAST ALL DAY



### Moisturize that skin

If you have naturally oily skin, you're in luck — a scent will last much longer on you. For those of you with dry skin, find out if your scent comes in lotion form, and use that first for maximum scent capacity. If it doesn't come in a lotion, first use an unscented moisturizer on damp skin wherever you plan to apply your scent.

### Apply to pulse points

Heat is what activates perfume. The pulse points on your body (where your heart rate can be felt) are the best spots to apply a scent, due to the warmth of your blood. Some such points are located behind your ear, at the bottom of your throat, on your wrist, inside your elbow, and behind your knee.

### Don't rub

After applying a fragrance, many people feel a need to rub it in in order to warm the skin or spread the scent. This is a big mistake! Rubbing a perfume breaks down its molecules, diminishing the scent into thin air.

### Store it the right way

Heat, light, and humidity can all break down the compounds in a perfume, causing it to be less fragrant. To keep your scent at its best, store it in a cool place, away from direct sunlight. Make sure to keep it out of the bathroom, as the heat and humidity from showers and baths could damage it greatly.

## FOOD CORNER

rest of the stalk. Trim and discard top third of remaining stalk, then bruise stalk by giving it a few whacks against a cutting board (this helps release the essential oils). Tie it in a loose knot; set aside.

- Pulse reserved grated lemongrass with shallot, garlic, ginger, red pepper flakes, turmeric, and 2 Tbsp. water in a food processor, adding a splash or two of water if needed, until a paste forms.
- Heat oil in a large skillet over medium. Season chicken with salt and pepper and cook, skin side down, until skin is lightly browned and crisp, 8–10 minutes. Transfer to a plate.
- Cook spice paste in same skillet, stirring, until very fragrant, about 5 minutes (it will begin to darken slightly as the water evaporates and the paste begins to fry in the fat left behind).
- Add kaffir lime leaves (if using), cinnamon, cardamom, star anise, coconut milk, coconut sugar, and reserved knotted lemongrass to skillet. Bring to a simmer, add chicken, and cook, turning pieces occasionally and scraping bottom of skillet often, until chicken is falling-apart tender and coconut milk has broken (the fat will separate from the liquid and start to brown the chicken and other aromatics), about 1 1/2 hours.
- Toast shredded coconut in a dry small skillet over medium heat, tossing occasionally, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Let cool.

# GLOW-IN-THE-DARK CONTACT LENSES CAN FIGHT BLINDNESS

**LOS ANGELES (TIP):** Scientists have developed glow-in-the-dark contact lenses that can painlessly fight blindness caused by diabetes.

Hundreds of millions of people suffer from diabetes worldwide, putting them at risk for a creeping blindness, or diabetic retinopathy, that comes with the disease in its more advanced stages.

Existing treatments, though effective, are painful and invasive, involving lasers and injections into the eyeball.

Researchers from California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in the US developed a potential treatment that could be a lot less scary and invasive, in the form of a glow-in-the-dark contact lens.

The loss of vision that accompanies diabetes is the result of the damage the disease causes to tiny blood vessels throughout the body, including those in the eye.

That damage results in reduced blood flow to the nerve cells in the retina and their eventual death. As the disease progresses, the body attempts to counteract the effects of the damaged blood vessels by growing new ones within the retina.

In diabetes patients, however, these vessels tend to be badly developed and



bleed into the clear fluid inside the eye, obscuring vision and compounding eyesight problems.

As the blood vessels bleed, they cause additional damage to the retina that the body repairs with scar tissue rather than new light-sensing cells. Over time, a diabetic patient's vision becomes blurry and patchy before fading away completely.

However, damage to the retina begins with an insufficient supply of oxygen, it should be possible to stave off further eyesight loss by reducing the retina's oxygen demands.

Until now, that has been achieved by using a laser to burn away the cells in the peripheral parts of the retina, so the oxygen those cells would have required

can be used by the more important vision cells in the centre of the retina.

Another treatment requires injecting medication that reduces the growth of new blood vessels directly into the eyeball.

The lenses reduce the metabolic demands of the retina, but in a different fashion. Key to their success are the eye's rod cells, which provide vision in low-light conditions.

"Your rod cells, as it turns out, consume about twice as much oxygen in the dark as they do in the light," said Colin Cook, a graduate student at Caltech.

For that reason, the contact lenses are designed to reduce the retina's nighttime oxygen demand by giving the rod cells the faintest amount of light to look at while the wearer sleeps.

"If we turn metabolism in the retina down, we should be able to prevent some of the damage that occurs," he said.

To provide light to the retina throughout the night, the lenses borrow technology from wristwatches that have glowing markers on their faces. The illumination is provided by tiny vials filled with tritium, a radioactive form of hydrogen gas that emits electrons as it decays.

Source: PTI



## DRINKING WATER MAY HELP EXERCISING SENIORS STAY MENTALLY SHARP

**BOSTON (TIP):** Older people should drink more water to reap the full cognitive benefits of exercise, a study suggests.

The study presented at the American Physiological Society (APS) annual meeting in San Diego, US explores the association between hydration status before exercising and exercise-enhanced cognition in older adults.

Dehydration has been shown to impair exercise performance and brain function in young people, but less is known about its impact on older populations.

"Middle-age and older adults often display a blunted thirst perception, which places them at risk for dehydration and subsequently may reduce the cognitive health-related benefits of exercise," said Brandon Yates from Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in the US.

The researchers recruited recreational cyclists (average age 55) who participated in a large cycling event on a warm day.

The cyclists performed a "trail-making" executive function test - quickly and accurately connecting numbered dots using paper and pencil - before and after the event.

Executive function includes the skills needed to plan, focus, remember and multitask. Exercise has been shown to improve intellectual health, including executive function.

The research team tested the volunteers' urine before they exercised and divided them into two groups - normal hydration and dehydrated - based on their hydration status.

The normal hydration group showed noticeable improvement in the completion time of the trail-making test after cycling when compared to their pre-cycling test.

The dehydration group also completed their post-cycling test more quickly, but the time reduction was not significant.

"This suggests that older adults should adopt adequate drinking behaviours to reduce cognitive fatigue and potentially enhance the cognitive benefits of regular exercise participation," Yates said.

Source: PTI

## This new form of male contraception doesn't have any side effects

**T**urns out, there is male contraception which can stop sperms without affecting hormones. According to a study published by the University of North Carolina Health Care, a compound called EP055 binds to sperm proteins to significantly slow the overall mobility of the sperm without affecting hormones, making EP055 a potential "male pill" without side effects.

"Simply put, the compound turns-off the sperm's ability to swim, significantly limiting fertilisation capabilities," said lead investigator Michael O'Rand. "This makes EP055 an ideal candidate for non-hormonal male contraception."

Currently, condoms and surgical vasectomy are the only safe forms of birth control currently available for men. There are hormonal drugs in clinical trials that target the production of sperm, but these affect the natural hormones in men much like female contraceptives affect hormones in women.

During the study, thirty hours following a high-dose intravenous infusion of EP055 in male rhesus macaques, O'Rand and researchers found no indication of normal sperm motility. Further, no physical side effects were observed. "At 18 days post-infusion, all macaques showed signs of



**A study has discovered a form of male contraception which can stop sperms without affecting hormones, thanks to a compound that binds to sperm proteins and slows the overall mobility of the sperm without affecting hormones**

complete recovery, suggesting that the EP055 compound is indeed reversible," said study co-investigator Mary Zelinski.

O'Rand and Zelinski indicate that more work is needed before EP055

becomes available for human use. They and their teams have begun to test a pill form of the compound and will eventually conduct a mating trial of EP055's effectiveness against pregnancy.

Source: ANI.

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## NOVEL PAINT CAN MAKE YOUR WALLS 'SMART'



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Scientists have developed a conductive paint that can turn any wall 'smart' by enabling it to sense human touch, and detect gestures and appliances used.

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University and Disney Research in the US found that they could transform 'dumb' walls into smart ones at relatively low cost - about USD 20 per square metre - using simple tools and techniques, such as a paint roller.

"Walls are usually the largest surface area in a room, yet we don't make much use of them other than to separate spaces, and perhaps hold up pictures and shelves," said Chris Harrison, assistant professor at Carnegie Mellon.

"As the internet of things and ubiquitous computing become reality, it is tempting to think that walls can become active parts of our living and work environments," said Harrison.

The researchers found that they could use conductive paint to create electrodes across the surface of a wall, enabling users to place or move light switches or other controls anywhere on a wall that is most convenient, or to control video games by using gestures.

By monitoring activity in the room, this system could adjust light levels when a TV is turned on or alert a user in another location when a laundry machine or electric kettle turns off.

"Walls are large, so we knew that whatever technique we invented for smart walls would have to be low cost," said Yang Zhang, a PhD student at Carnegie Mellon University.

Researchers wanted to make it easy to apply the special coating with simple tools and without special skills. Using painter's tape, they found they could create a cross-hatched pattern on a wall to create a grid of diamonds, which testing showed was the most effective electrode pattern.

After applying two coats of conductive paint with a roller, they removed the tape and connected the electrodes. They then finished the wall with a top coat of standard latex paint to improve durability and hide the electrodes.

The electrode wall can operate in two modes - capacitive sensing and electromagnetic (EM) sensing.

In capacitive sensing, the wall functions like any other capacitive touchpad: when a person touches the wall, the touch distorts the wall's electrostatic field at that point.

In EM sensing mode, the electrode can detect the distinctive electromagnetic signatures of electrical or electronic devices, enabling the system to identify the devices and their locations.

Similarly, if a person is wearing a device that emits an EM signature, the system can track the location of that person, Zhang said.

Although the technology has not been optimised for energy consumption, Zhang said, he estimated the wall-sized electrodes consume about as much power as a standard touch screen.

*Source: PTI*

## You can't opt out of ads if on Facebook but can control them

**SAN FRANCISCO (TIP):** If you are on Facebook, you can't opt out of ads altogether because ads are what keep Facebook free but you do have different options to control how your data can and can't be used to show you ads, the social media giant has said.

According to Rob Goldman, Vice-President, Ads at Facebook, you can decide which of your profile fields you want used for ad targeting in the Information section under "About You." "You can remove yourself from interests under 'Interests' and categories under 'Your Categories.' You can turn off ads that use data from apps or websites that you visit in the Ads Settings section under 'Ads based on use of websites and apps,'" Goldman said in a blog post late on Monday.

Facebook said that it does not tell advertisers who you are or sell your information to anyone.

*Source: IANS*

# Facebook stops third-party apps from stealing users' data

**SAN FRANCISCO (TIP):** Facebook has finally begun its crackdown on third-party apps from stealing, sharing or spamming your data without permission from its platform as well as from Instagram.

In a post on its developers' page late on Tuesday, Facebook said the new apps "created from today onwards will not have access to publish posts to Facebook as the logged in user".

According to Facebook, the publish actions permission will be deprecated. This permission granted apps access to publish posts to Facebook as the logged in user.

"Apps created before today that have been previously approved to request publish actions can continue to do so until August 1. No further apps will be approved to use publish actions via app review," the Facebook post noted.

British political consultancy firm Cambridge Analytical was found misusing users' data collected by a Facebook quiz app which used the "Login with Facebook" feature.

"Developers currently utilising publish actions are encouraged to switch to Facebook's Share dialogs for web, iOS and Android," Facebook said.

"Effective today, name and bio from comments on your own media will be removed; you will continue to receive username and comment text."

"On August 1, the Live application



programming interface (API) Apublish actions permission, which allows an app to publish on behalf of its Users, will be reserved for approved partners.

"A new permission model that allows apps to publish Videos to their User's Groups and Timeline will be created instead," said Facebook.

There is also an Instagram "Graph API" change which removes the ability to pull the profile of users who leave comments on your posts.

Several third-party trackers are still abusing Facebook Login, exfiltrating

users' data including name, email address, age range, gender, locale and profile photo, claimed a new security research report from Freedom to Tinker — a digital initiative by Princeton University's Centre for Information Technology Policy.

The researchers found two types of vulnerabilities: Seven third parties abusing websites' access to Facebook user data and one-third party using its own Facebook "application" to track users around the web.

*Source: IANS*

# Wearable devices may lead to distracted driving



**HOUSTON (TIP):** Using wearable devices such as Google Glass for texting while driving may be just as dangerous as sending messages with an ordinary cell phone, a study led by an Indian-origin scientist has found.

Researchers led by Murtuza Jadliwala, an assistant professor at The University of Texas at San Antonio in the US recruited about 20 volunteers on a university campus.

They used a driving simulator in a laboratory that included a three-screen display, a wheel and pedals.

Student volunteers were tasked with "driving" in the simulator, using either a smart phone or Google Glass, an optical head-mounted display designed in the shape of a pair of eyeglasses.

Jadliwala and his collaborators sent the participants text messages and challenged them to drive safely while receiving and responding to the messages.

The simulator recorded deviations in the steering wheel and whether the volunteers drifted out of their lane.

"We found that the Google Glass distracts the driver slightly less. But that also gave the participants a false sense of safety," Jadliwala said.

Because the wearable device responded quicker and used voice-activated controls, the drivers noticed

the increased efficiency but also were more likely to engage with the device, which negated the marginal safety difference between the smart phone and the wearable device.

While Google stopped producing Google Glass in 2015, wearable technology is becoming increasingly popular, researchers said.

Jadliwala noted that wrist wearables such as Apple Watch has been very successful and that more modern head-mounted displays like Google Glass are in development.

"It's important to keep asking these questions as technology becomes a bigger part of our everyday lives," he

said.

"A wearable device feels more accessible because it's on your body, which is why it's important to study how it could impact tasks like driving," Jadliwala said.

"The research on evaluating the influence of technology on consumer safety and privacy is timely and significant," said Rajendra Boppana from The University of Texas.

More than a quarter of car accidents reported each year is attributed to some form of distraction among drivers, often the result of talking or texting while driving, researchers said.

*Source: PTI*

# Bharti Infratel, Indus Towers merger to create largest tower firm in world

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Bharti Airtel's tower subsidiary Bharti Infratel and Indus Towers have decided to merge their companies to create one entity that will be a towering behemoth. With a combined revenue of around Rs 25,360 crore, and whopping 1.63 lakh towers across 22 telecom service areas of the country, this new pan-India tower company, which will be named Indus Towers Ltd, will easily become the world's largest tower company.

However, Bharti Airtel is planning a stake sale in the new tower company that will be formed after the merger. "The board has decided to engage with the potential investors for evaluating a strategic stake sale post the completion of the merger," the company said in a regulatory statement on Wednesday.

The merger between Bharti Infratel and Indus Towers is happening at a time when Bharti Airtel's tower arm registered 8 per cent annual growth in revenues to Rs 14,490 crore while its net profit slipped by 9 per cent to Rs 2,494 crore.

The combined company, which will fully own the respective businesses of Bharti Infratel and Indus Towers, will continue to be listed on the Indian Stock Exchanges, the announcement said.

As per the regulatory filing, these companies said the combination of the two companies' footprints will create a tower operator with the ability to offer the high-quality shared passive infrastructure services. These services would be required to support the pan-India expansion of wireless broadband services using 4G/4G+/5G technologies, they said.

Bharti Airtel, in its board meeting on



April 24, had received the recommendation from its committee of directors, following which it reviewed the options with regard to its stake in its subsidiary Bharti Infratel. The board evaluated two options - one an offer for the sale of a significant stake in Bharti Infratel from a consortium of leading PE investors and the other a proposal for merger of Indus Towers into Bharti Infratel. Hence, the board has approved the proposal for the merger of Indus Towers into Bharti Infratel.

Indus Towers is jointly owned by Bharti Infratel (42 per cent), Vodafone (42 per cent), Idea Group (11.15 per cent) and Providence (4.85 per cent). After the merger deal, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone will jointly control the combined company, in accordance with the terms of

a new shareholders' agreement.

According to the proposal, Vodafone will be issued with 783.1 million new shares in the combined company, in exchange for its 42 per cent shareholding in Indus Towers. Besides, Providence, which has 4.85 per cent shareholding in Indus Towers, has decided to sell 3.35 per cent of its stake, while Idea Group will also sell its full 11.15 per cent stake in Indus Towers for cash.

After this deal, Vodafone's share in the new company could be around 29.4 per cent, while Airtel's stake in newly combined tower behemoth may be diluted to 37.2 per cent from 53.5 per cent it holds in Bharti Infratel.

Bharti Airtel on Tuesday posted a 78 per cent drop in its net profit to Rs 83 crore for the quarter ended March. Blaming the 'artificially suppressed pricing' for tepid Q4 numbers, Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, Airtel India & South Asia said, "The telecom industry continues to witness below cost, artificially suppressed pricing. Industry revenues were further adversely impacted this quarter due to the reduction in international termination rates." Airtel's revenues and net profits have some component of Bharti Infratel's revenues and net profits. Since Airtel and its wholly-owned subsidiaries own around 53.5 per cent stake in Bharti Infratel, Airtel revenue and net profit numbers would have been worse if the company didn't own a stake in Bharti Infratel. Besides, Bharti Infratel was instrumental in helping the parent company to pare a huge debt in 2017 when it sold 83 million shares of Bharti Infratel for Rs 3,325 crore.

*Source: Business Today*

## Prices of oil, natural gas, coal set to rise by 20% this year: World Bank



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Prices for energy commodities like oil, natural gas and coal are expected to jump by a whopping 20 per cent this year, the World Bank has said in a report.

The increase in energy prices is expected to have adverse impact on India, given that the country is heavily dependent on import of major energy commodities.

The latest World Bank forecast is a 16-percentage point upward revision from October's outlook, the World Bank said in its April Commodity Markets Outlook released yesterday.

Oil prices are forecast to average USD 65 a barrel over 2018, up from an average of USD 53 a barrel in 2017, on strong demand from consumers and restraint by oil producers, while metals prices are expected to rise nine per cent this year, also on a pick-up in demand and supply constraints, the World Bank said.

Agricultural commodities, including food commodities and raw materials, are anticipated to see a price rise of over 2 per cent this year on diminished planting prospects. Weather disruptions are expected to be minimal, the report said.

"Accelerating global growth and rising

demand are important factors behind broad-based price increases for most commodities and the forecast of higher commodities prices ahead," said Shantanayanan Devarajan, World Bank Senior Director for Development Economics and acting Chief Economist.

"At the same time, policy actions currently under discussion add uncertainty to the outlook," he added.

The World Bank said oil prices are expected to average USD 65 a barrel over 2019 as well. Although prices are projected to decline from April 2018 levels, they should be supported by continued production restraint by OPEC and non-OPEC producers and strong demand, the bank said. "Oil prices have more than

doubled since bottoming in early 2016, as the large overhang of inventories has been reduced significantly," said John Baffes, Senior Economist and lead author of the Commodity Markets Outlook.

"Strong oil demand and greater compliance by the OPEC and non-OPEC producers with their agreed output pledges helped tip the market into deficit," he added.

According to the World Bank, in the first quarter of 2018, world oil consumption is estimated to have risen 1.6 per cent. Consumption growth accelerated to 1.4 per cent in OECD members with gains primarily in North America, as cold weather boosted heating oil demand.

*Source: PTI*

## PNB TO HIRE DETECTIVES TO LOCATE BORROWERS



**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Fraud-hit Punjab National Bank (PNB) has invited applications for empanelment of detective agencies to locate its untraceable borrowers as it looks to "significantly" supplement efforts to recover bad loans which surged to Rs 57,519 crore at December end.

In its efforts to recover NPAs, the PNB has also resorted to 'Gandhigiri' wherein its staff hope to 'name and shame' defaulting borrowers to recover up to Rs 150 crore worth bad loans every month.

The Delhi-headquartered bank has been at the receiving end of the over Rs 13,000 crore fraud involving diamond merchants Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

The bank on Tuesday invited applications to empanel detective agencies with an aim to "significantly supplement efforts of the field officials in recovering bank's dues in NPA accounts by utilising services of the detective agencies", it said.

All NPA accounts (sub-standard, doubtful and loss category) would be allocated to detective agencies for gathering information required by the bank.

Services of detectives will be hired to locate the borrower(s), co-borrower(s), guarantor(s), mortgagor(s), (in/outside India) including their legal heirs who are either untraceable or not available at the addresses given in bank's records. The selected agencies will have to ascertain latest information about defaulters present address, occupation, business, income streams, details of their all assets, among other things.

*Source: PTI*

## 'India's average GDP growth to rise to 7.8% in first half of this year'

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Indian economy is expected to witness a cyclical recovery driven by investments as well as consumption, and the average GDP growth is expected to rise to 7.8 per cent in the first half of this year, says a report.

According to the Japanese financial services major Nomura, investment and consumption demand are the main drivers for India's growth, amid worsening net exports.

"Our leading indicators suggest the cyclical recovery, which started in the second half of 2017, is set to continue through the first half of 2018," Nomura said in a research note.

Consistent with these data, "we expect average GDP growth to rise to 7.8 per cent year-on-year in the first half 2018 from 7.2 per cent in October-December 2017".

The report, however, noted that rising oil prices, tighter financial conditions and a likely slowdown in investment activity ahead of the elections suggest growth will start to moderate in the second half of this year "towards our Q4 2018 forecast of 6.9 per cent".

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank expects India's economic growth rate to strengthen to 7.4 per cent in the current fiscal, from 6.6 per cent in 2017-18, on account of revival in investment activity.

On RBI's monetary policy stance, the report said the rising oil prices are changing the macro dynamics and may put pressure on inflation.

According to Nomura, for every USD 10/bbl rise in oil prices CPI inflation may rise by 30-40 bps and worsen the current account balance by 0.4 percentage points.

"Thus, if oil prices remain at these levels, then monetary policy is likely to move towards tightening versus our base case of no change," the report said.

The six-member MPC, headed by RBI Governor Urjit Patel, had left the benchmark repo rate unchanged for the third time in a row after deliberations on April 4-5, citing inflationary concerns.

The minutes of the April MPC meeting released by the RBI noted that RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya favoured withdrawal of monetary accommodation in the next policy review meeting scheduled for June 4-5.

*Source: PTI*

**contd from Page 1**

## Asaram gets jail till death...

### SAINT TO SINNER

Aug 15, 2013: A 16-year-old girl accuses Asaram of raping her in his Jodhpur ashram

Sept 1: Asaram brought to Jodhpur, remanded in custody

October: Three women accuse Asaram and his son Narayan Sai of rape in Surat, Gujarat

June 11: Surat case witness dies after being shot at in Rajkot hospital

January 2015: Asaram's cook Akhil Gupta, another witness, shot in Muzaffarnagar

May 13: Mahendra Chawla, prime witness in case against Sai, shot at in Panipat

March 14, 2016: Accused of killing Akhil Gupta, Asaram's henchman Kartik Halder held

Nov 6: Charge sheet against Asaram and four co-accused

March 19, 2017: Trial begins against Asaram in Jodhpur

April 7, 2018: Special court hears final arguments

April 17: Rajasthan High Court orders the special court to deliver verdict in Jodhpur Central Jail

April 25: Special Judge Madhusudhan Sharma sentences co-accused Shilpi and Sharad to 20 years' jail each and acquits two others, Prakash and Shiva. The court also slaps a fine of Rs 1 lakh on Asaram and Rs 50,000 each on the other convicts.

sentenced co-accused Shilpi and Sharad to 20 years' jail each and acquitted two others, Prakash and Shiva. Besides, the court slapped a fine of Rs 1 lakh on Asaram and Rs 50,000 each on the other convicts, public prosecutor Pokhar Ram Vishnoi said. "Soon after the verdict, 77-year-old Asaram and other convicts broke down. The court considered Asaram's act under the heinous crime category," victim-family's counsel Rajendra Singh told media persons.

"A self-claimed spiritual guru has done the disgusting act of sexual exploitation with his teenaged disciple who had full faith on him. The convict should not be spared, and the maximum punishment be awarded, lifer to Asaram till natural life time, and 20 years each to his assistants who felicitated him in the act," Singh said, quoting from the 453-page verdict. "We had complete faith in the judiciary and are happy that we got justice," the victim's father said, adding that the family had been living in constant fear and their business had been hit. Asaram sexually exploited a 16-year-old girl from UP's Shahjahanpur in his Manal ashram near Jodhpur on the intervening night of August 15-16, 2013. The charge sheet against Asaram and the four co-accused was filed by the police on November 6, 2013, under various Sections of the POSCO (Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences) Act, Juvenile Justice Act and the Indian Penal Code.

But rape is not the only charge against Asaram. He is also facing prosecution in a Rs 700-crore land grab case of 2000 in Madhya Pradesh. The case pertains to 200 acres of land in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh. Arrested in Indore and brought to Jodhpur on September 1, 2013, Asaram was under judicial custody since September 2, 2013. He also faces a rape case in Surat in which the Supreme Court earlier this month gave five weeks to the prosecution to complete the trial.

Asaram unsuccessfully moved 12 bail applications, of which six were rejected by the trial court, three each by the Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court in the last 56 months.

The city of Jodhpur on Wednesday turned into a fortress with the deployment of the RAC, RPF and the state police in strength. Also, flag marches were held throughout the city. DCP-East Aman Deep Singh said. Several die-hard Asaram followers were detained early this morning from the railway station, bus terminals and in the vicinity of the jail. The Union Home Ministry had issued an advisory to Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana to remain alert.

## PM Modi Arrives in Wuhan for...

"A special moment past midnight as PM @narendramodi was warmly welcomed in Wuhan for the 1st Informal Summit with Chinese President Xi. The two leaders will review the developments in our bilateral relations from a strategic and long-term perspective," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted. Both leaders are expected to define a pathway that could transform India-China ties into a major force for tackling global problems. The ambitious undertaking hopes to realign the underlying premises of India-China ties, so that festering irritants are removed, and the two countries can work together to fulfill common global aspirations. They will meet in the famous villa, which was once Mao Zedong's retreat. The property - a total of three buildings--at the bank of the East Lake of Wuchang-- is set amid pine, bamboo and plum trees. A

boat ride by the two principals or a walk among the pines is expected during the two-day event. In a statement released ahead of his departure to Wuhan, Mr. Modi underscored that both leaders, during their upcoming dialogue, would be looking at the big picture. Discussions on "a range of issues of bilateral and global importance," would be shaped by the "visions and priorities for national development, particularly in the context of the current and future international situation," the dense statement said.

It also highlighted that during the talks, both countries would take a long view of their ties. "We will also review the developments in the India-China relations from a strategic and long-term perspective." Diplomatic sources said that the two leaders, in their free-wheeling dialogue, would discuss the border row, and look for underlying principles to resolve it.

"This time the two sides have decided to hold the informal summit between the two leaders. This is because both our countries attach great importance to each other on external strategy and not because of boundary question that still remains unresolved, and we need talk about it during the informal summit," Chinese vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou said during a media briefing on Tuesday. Analysts say that China may be gradually shifting its position from "managing" and shelving the border issue, to a fledgling stance of resolving the China-India border dispute. Such a position would align well with Prime Minister Modi's approach of seeking a final resolution of the boundary dispute. (*Source: PTI*)

## Kim Jong Un makes history...

It was all smiles as Mr. Moon grasped Mr. Kim's hand and led him along a red carpet into South Korean territory, where school children placed flowers and an honor guard stood at attention for inspection. Mr. Kim's news agency said that the leader would "open-heartedly" discuss "all the issues arising in improving inter-Korean relations and achieving peace, prosperity and reunification of the Korean peninsula" in a "historic" summit. It's the first time one of the ruling leaders has crossed over to the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone since the Korean War ended in 1953.

The greeting of the two leaders was planned to the last detail. Thousands of journalists were kept in a huge conference center well away from the summit, except for a small group of tightly-controlled pool reporters at the border. Mr. Moon stood near the Koreas' dividing line, moving forward the moment he glimpsed Kim appearing in front of a building on the northern side. They shook hands with the border line between them. Mr. Moon then invited Mr. Kim to cross into the South; Mr. Kim invited Mr. Moon into the North, and they then took a ceremonial photo facing the North and then another photo facing the South. Two fifth-grade students from the Daesongdong Elementary School, the only South Korean school within the DMZ, greeted the leaders and gave them flowers. The leaders then saluted an honor guard and military band, and Mr. Kim was introduced to South Korean government officials. They were to take a photo inside the Peace House, where the summit was to take place, in front of a painting of South Korea's Bukhan Mountain, which towers over the South Korean Blue House presidential mansion.

Nuclear weapons will top the agenda, and Friday's summit will be the clearest sign yet of whether it's possible to peacefully negotiate those weapons away from a country that has spent decades doggedly building its bombs despite crippling sanctions and near-constant international opprobrium. Expectations are generally low, given that past so-called breakthroughs on North Korea's weapons have collapsed amid acrimonious charges of cheating and bad faith. (*Source: AP*)

## India, US need a full-scale...

natural allies for that they need to be "firing on all cylinders", including economic and military.

"We can't be fighting every day on trade, cooperating on defense and think we are just going to have a great relationship. We need to be firing on all cylinders, that means economic, that means military," he said. He further stressed that the US needs to take its defense relationship with India to the next level. "That means we ought to be providing India with the most advanced technology, we ought to make sure that if India is in trouble they have the means to win, if they are challenged," he said.

Verma spoke at length on a wide range of topics pertaining to India-US relations, including H1B work visas, immigration as well as geo-political issues relating to China and Pakistan.

Verma, Vice Chairman and Partner at the Asia Group and a board member of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), said the India-US relationship has been a "slightly underperforming" one for decades. "We have got some history that weighs us down. We still have some trust issues and neither side wants to be in an alliance," he said in his address on 'US-

India: Natural Allies -- Absent the Alliance.'

Responding to a question on concerns among Indian workers over H1B visas, Verma said last year about 1.1 million visas were issued to Indian nationals to come to the US in every category and out of these, about 50,000-60,000 were H1B visas. "A very small percentage of the visa pool is for H1 B visas," he said. Verma, who had served as the US Ambassador to India from 2014 to 2017, said he had conveyed to Indian CEOs and software companies that they have to be aware of the "political realities" in the US. While they should pay their employees in the US competitive wages, they also need to be "sensitive" towards people's fear of losing jobs in an era of globalization.

"If your consultants are coming here and advising about downsizing or scaling back and then that operation or function ends up in India, people are not going to be necessarily happy," he said. "You have to understand the political realities that people are facing here, fear about globalization. I think we are getting to a better understanding. I hope we don't run into a huge fight on H1B," he said.

Verma, who has previously served as the Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, noted that "some reforms are probably necessary", adding that the H1B visas are an important but "small part" of the overall people-to-people relationship between India and the US. "I think US-India trade relationship is one relationship where you can get distinct wins on both sides," he said.

Highlighting the critical role of the diaspora in strengthening relations between India and the US, Verma said "we have to increase our people-to-people connections and we should be celebrating and standing up for the immigrants who come into this country and not looking at ways to shrink the pool of people coming here." On the trajectory of India-US relations under the Trump administration, Verma said looking at Washington's all other bilateral relations, the one with India is "still on a pretty good trajectory."

While things have been moving along on the strategic side, on the economic side there are some growing pains. However, he said he is "more concerned about how we treat people who may not necessarily look like and sound like the rest of middle America and that's the part I keep the most eye out for in this environment." Recalling the journey of his parents from India to the US, Verma said that immigrants and immigration have played a hugely important role in America. "It is not just one group of immigrants or immigrants who look a certain way but immigrants from all over the world and it's really important that we stand up for that group of people."

On ties with Pakistan, Verma said the US has made the message quite clear to Pakistani leaders that "this continuing support and facilitation" of terrorist groups along the border to create a "perpetual state of conflict" with India is "not sustainable. "It's not in their interest, and it's not the way to have that goal of a functioning normal state in the international system," he said.

He stressed that the US can't lose the connections to all the people and moderate voices in Pakistan that want peace with India and a better future for their children. "It's a very difficult situation but we have to get there with a variety of economic and political tools," he said.

Responding to a question on relations with China, Verma said India and the US have remarkably similar situations with regard to China, including economic inter-dependencies, trade and commercial activities. "But we also have security concerns. We have concerns about what China is doing in the international systems, we have concerns about their failure to adhere to rules and norms, we have concerns about the Belt and Road Initiative and what they are doing in the South China Seas," he said. Verma stressed on the need to be able to balance some of these concerns. "No one wants to see a conflict with China. But we also have to be able to stand up for our basic values," he added. He further noted that in India-China and US-China relations, there is a lot of dialogue at all levels.

However, "it is a very difficult, complicated and contentious relationship but I don't think anyone wants to see the spark that leads to an actual conflict," he said.

Verma emphasized that there is need for an international system that reflects India's role in the world today. He lamented that India is not on the UN Security Council, is not a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and doesn't play the kind of role that it probably should on the G-20 bloc of nations or in other international Institutions.

"The US needs to pave the way forward for India so that it actually has the seat at the table in this century, a seat that is appropriate for a country of the size and stature of India. We have to be working very hard for that," he said.

A group of students from a Bangalore Engineering College, who were on way to Boston to take part in an auto engineering fair also attended the lecture. Ambassador Verma, Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty, Vaidyanathan Aiyer, and Air India Regional Manager Vandana Sharma posed for a photograph with the young students.

(With inputs from PTI)



### Shree Ganeshaya Namah

**Bejan Daruwalla is world's most famous astrologer today. He appears regularly on world wide TV shows. Bejan who has been a professor in English, has authored a number of books on astrology. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 29, 2012, lunched one of Bejan's books, '2012- End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of journals and newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama (New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.**



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

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE APRIL 30 - MAY 6, 2018

### Aries:

Ganesha says the period is action packed. Even the temperature starts sizzling and you are not left out of the furnace in your dealings. You slog away and make deep inroads into success. At many levels, it is a frantic, frenetic and hectic period. There will be scope for the creative expression of your personality and you examine life with vision, optimism and faith. Your thirst for knowledge gains momentum and you pore over whatever you can lay your hands on.

### Taurus:

You look at bonds, connections, relationships, associations, marriages, engagements, concerts, get-togethers and everything to do with people. You will be in a frenzy of communication as people rally around you. You are in the limelight and much sought after. Your work is going as you want it to and you are super charged. You are a special invitee everywhere. You are in harmony and living and sharing love. There is a new-found finesse in whatever you do.

### Gemini:

You are stricken by beautiful objects. There may be a whirlwind affair that catches you off balance, or you spend time and money decorating the home and office. You are oozing charm and feel virile / fertile. You get away from the pulls of work and loot at the other areas of your life which need refurbishing. You widen your horizons and increase your interactions and relationships. You reach out to people and places.

### Cancer:

Your focus at work may suffer as a result of all your other interests and activities. You spend a lot of time with others and, once again, allow mood swings and a fickle temperament to take over your joys. You are very sensitive and emotional and can get buried in the hurts and unsavory episodes of the past. You get out of this soon, but it does take a toll. Watch out for undue stress and possible illness. You give a lot of yourself and are leached on my emotional vampires who find you rare game.

### Leo:

The tide thankfully changes, and you enter a phase of hard work. You see the immediate rewards and are encouraged to work harder. You put in all that you have. With the work that you have started, and your mind seemingly occupied now, your health improves. You are filled with energy and are set to take off on an exciting, new trajectory. You dazzle with your creativity and charisma. There could also be an addition to the family.

### Virgo:

Your life is like an unending celebration now. There is better rapport with colleagues, associates, peers and family. You party and entertain lavishly. You are optimistic and are able to fulfil all your obligations. There could be travel on work or a holiday with the family, but the portents are happy moments away from home. You enjoy the good things of life and the sun shines on you in more ways than one.

### Libra:

You are not laidback or relaxed this period but are full of progressive, even daring ideas for future career advancement and financial success. There is a new intensity in all your dealings as you look for innovative methods to make money. There are new responsibilities at home and you are also looking at serious career advancement. This is a good time to embark on new projects. The stars shine on you.

### Scorpio:

Watch out for your famed mood swings. This is a volatile period and could get tremendously emotional about some aspect of your life and it could get out of hand like a soap opera gone all wrong. Your family life is important, and it is essential that you work on it. There will be unnecessary misunderstandings and you could be pitch forked into bitter family feuds over inheritance and other issues.

### Sagittarius:

This is an interesting phase with many contradictory forces at play. You are full of wisdom and caring, exceptionally creative, and, as always, willing to help the needy and downtrodden. On the other hand, you may also be rubbing shoulders with the top honchos of business and industry and signing big deals. Many facets of your personality come to the fore here. You don't really care about money, but it comes to you nevertheless in bushels.

### Capricorn:

The dust settles as it has to, and you are back to earth and to the cares, worries and duties of the world. You will be sorting out family issues and work-related problems. It will not be easy, and you will have to walk over burning coal before favorable decisions are arrived at. All issues will be finally resolved but it will take its toll on you and the others. You are full of positive energy, work hard and achieve the desired results.

### Aquarius:

You are moving ahead at a rapid pace now. There is joy in relationships and sustained progress at work. So, the major aspects of your life are doing well. Health is also good. This is a period marked by the return of old associated to the fold and there will be a lot of partying and merrymaking. You are on stable ground and zooming ahead without a care in the world.

### Pisces:

The momentum and the pace continue unabated. You are making rapid progress and win laurels for it. There is a surge in your will power, optimism, vision and aspirations. You are expanding on all fronts and the luck of the draw favors you. Your kitty is full, and you can see quite clearly that you are on the right track. You are focused on the growth fast track, and engage yourself with money matters. You set the house in order which is essential to surge ahead. You also find the time to meet up with those who mean a lot to you.

# Bowlers shine again as Sunrisers Hyderabad register victory over Kings XI Punjab

**HYDERABAD (TIP):** Sunrisers Hyderabad continued their good habit of stealing victory from the jaws of defeat as they defended a low total once again to register a 13-run win over Kings XI Punjab in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Rashid Khan picked 3/19 and Sandeep Sharma picked 2/17 as KXIP were dismissed for 119, chasing 133 to win. KXIP had started the chase well after in-form openers KL Rahul and Chris Gayle put on a 55-run stand for the 1st wicket.

Both departed in quick succession with Rashid cleaning up Rahul and then Basil Thampi getting the better of Gayle with a quick short-pitched delivery. The pitch was a bit slow and sluggish, assisting the Hyderabad spinners who put on a good show. Rashid was supported by Shakib-Al-Hasan who ended with figures of 3/18. He accounted for Mayank Agarwal, whose dismissal for 12 due to a poor shot sparked panic in the Kings XI batting. Rashid then accounted for Karun Nair, getting him lbw.

None of the other Kings XI batsmen scored in double figures, till no.11 Mujeeb scored a couple of boundaries and remained unbeaten on 10. Earlier, it was a brilliant effort from young Ankit Rajpoot who picked career-best figures of 5/14 to reduce Sunrisers to 132 in their 20 overs. He was also named man-of-the-match for his effort.

The figure could have been a lot less had



Kings XI held onto the chances that were presented to them. Manish Pandey top scored with 54 off 51 balls but he was dropped twice - by Ashwin and then Mayank Agarwal - and he made Kings XI pay for those errors.

SRH top-order didn't last long and they were reduced to 27/3 with Rajpoot doing the maximum damage. The top-order's form will certainly worry Tom Moody as Shikhar Dhawan and Wriddhiman Saha have been struggling for form. Kane Williamson had a

rare bad outing as he was dismissed for a 0.

Shakib-Al-Hasan and Pandey then put on 52-runs for the fourth wicket, but that too after Shakib had been dismissed on what later turned out to be a no-ball.

The Bangladeshi ended up scoring 28 runs and then Yusuf Pathan scored 21 runs to help Sunrisers post a respectable total.

Sunrisers will now take on the Rajasthan Royals in their next fixture on Sunday meanwhile Kings XI will enjoy a 7-day break before taking on Mumbai Indians.

## 2019 WORLD CUP SCHEDULE

### 46 days | 48 matches

All teams will play one another once in a round-robin league format, and the top-four will make the semis. It's the same format as used in the 1992 World Cup in Australia.

May 30	Eng vs SA	London
May 31	Pak vs WI	Nottingham
June 1	NZ vs SL	Cardiff
June 1	Aus vs Afg	Bristol (D/N)
June 2	SA vs Ban	London
June 3	Eng vs Pak	Nottingham
June 4	SL vs Afg	Cardiff
June 5	India vs SA	Southampton
June 5	NZ vs Ban	London (D/N)
June 6	Aus vs WI	Nottingham
June 7	SL vs Pak	Bristol
June 8	Eng vs Ban	Cardiff
June 8	NZ vs Afg	Taunton (D/N)
June 9	Aus vs India	London
June 10	SA vs WI	Southampton
June 11	SL vs Ban	Bristol
June 12	Aus vs Pak	Taunton
June 13	India vs NZ	Nottingham
June 14	Eng vs WI	Southampton
June 15	Aus vs SL	London
June 15	SA vs Afg	Cardiff (D/N)
June 16	India vs Pak	Manchester
June 17	Ban vs WI	Taunton
June 18	Eng vs Afg	Manchester
June 19	NZ vs SA	Birmingham
June 20	Aus vs Ban	Nottingham
June 21	Eng vs SLLeeds	Southampton
June 22	India vs Afg	Manchester (D/N)
June 22	NZ vs WI	London
June 23	Pak vs SA	Southampton
June 24	Afg vs Ban	London
June 25	Eng vs Aus	London
June 26	Pak vs NZ	Birmingham
June 27	India vs WI	Manchester
June 28	SL vs SA	Chester-le-Street
June 29	Pak vs Afg	Leeds
June 29	Aus vs NZ	London (D/N)
June 30	Eng vs India	Birmingham
July 1	SL vs WI	Chester-le-Street
July 2	India vs Ban	Birmingham
July 3	Eng vs NZ	Chester-le-Street
July 4	WI vs Afg	Leeds
July 5	Pak vs Ban	London
July 6	SL vs India	Leeds
July 6	Aus vs SA	Manchester (D/N)
July 9	Semifinal 1	Manchester
July 11	Semifinal 2	Birmingham
July 14	Final	London

# Gautam Gambhir steps down as Delhi Daredevils skipper, career looks done

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Indian Premier League (IPL) has provided popularity and commercial windfall to players, but there is no place for sentiment in the glitzy tournament. Gautam Gambhir is the latest to realise that after quitting as Delhi Daredevils skipper mid-tournament.

The former India opener led Kolkata Knight Riders to two IPL titles and was bought for Rs. 2.8 crore by Daredevils to inspire a turnaround in the underperforming team. However, he announced on Wednesday that he was stepping away as his poor batting form has compounded the woes of a team that lies last on the points table.

Shreyas Iyer, Mumbai's talented 23-year-old batsman will be the new skipper – he was one of two players to be retained – as Daredevils looked to make a fresh start though playoff hopes are fast receding.

Daredevils have struggled with poor team balance and performances in the last few seasons. Their hopes of riding on Gambhir's acumen have been dashed. The team has won one game out of six.

With eight games to go, chances of a playoff is all but gone. Gambhir, 36, has looked out of touch since scoring 55 in the first game, a six-wicket loss to Kings XI Punjab.

His 85 runs in five innings at an average of 17 seems to have all but ended the IPL, and possibly domestic, career of a player who has the fifth highest league games (154), fourth highest aggregate (4,217) and most fours (491).

Gambhir addressed a media conference with chief coach, Ricky Ponting, Daredevils CEO, Hemant Dua and Shreyas Iyer and the mood was sombre. "As a leader of this ship, I take complete responsibility for where we are in the points table and I have decided to step down," he announced.

The batsman, Ponting and Dua made it clear it was entirely Gambhir's decision. The batsman said Monday's four-run loss to



Kings XI Punjab at the Ferozeshah Kotla, failing to chase down a modest 144, "rang a bell". It was in keeping with Daredevils' underwhelming efforts.

"I absolutely believe we got the group to turn it around. We still need to win seven out of eight, which is absolutely possible in this format. Teams have done it in the past, we have the capability to do that this year as well," he said.

"Maybe the only thing I can point out is I was desperate to turn things around. Sometimes you are too keen, it just makes you hard on yourself. Maybe I just couldn't handle the pressure which came with the position, responsibility I was given."

## ICC scraps Champions Trophy

**KOLKATA (TIP):** The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday decided to convert the 2021 Champions Trophy scheduled in India into a World T20 event, finally scrapping the eight-team ODI tournament, the context and relevance of which has been questioned repeatedly.

At the end of its five-day board meeting, ICC Chief Executive David Richardson said the global body has "unanimously agreed" that the 2021 meet in India would now be a 16-team event in the shortest format. Richardson's announcement meant that BCCI representative Amitabh Chaudhary also voted in favour of the change after the initial opposition to the move. This means there would be an unprecedented two ICC World T20 events in two years -- the 2020 edition in Australia and the 2021 edition in India.

**B**uddha Purnima during Vaishakha month is celebrated as birth anniversary of Gautama Buddha. Gautama Buddha whose birth name was Siddhartha Gautama was a spiritual teacher on whose teachings Buddhism was founded.

The time of Gautama Buddha's birth and death is uncertain. However, most historians date his lifetime between 563-483 B.C. Most people consider Lumbini, Nepal as birth place of Buddha. Buddha died at the age of 80 at Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh.

For Buddhists, Bodh Gaya is the most important pilgrimage site related to the life of Gautama Buddha. The other three important pilgrimage sites are Kushinagar, Lumbini, and Sarnath. It is believed that Gautama Buddha obtained Enlightenment at Bodhgaya and he first taught the Dharma at Sarnath.

It is believed that Gautama Buddha obtained Enlightenment and passed away on the same day. Buddha Purnima is also known as Buddha Jayanti, Vesak, Vaishaka and Buddha's Birthday.

In North India Buddha is considered as the 9th incarnation and Lord Krishna as the 8th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. However Buddha is never considered as an Avatar of Vishnu in South Indian belief. In South India Balarama is considered as the 8th incarnation and Krishna as the 9th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Balarama is counted as an incarnation of Vishnu by the majority of Vaishnava movements. Even Buddhists don't consider Buddha as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Buddha Purnima 2018 will be commemorated on 30 May by followers of Buddhism, and the festival is also recognised as Vesak or Buddha Day. Vesak holds immense significance for followers of Gautam Buddha and his path. Also known as Buddha Jayanti, Buddhists seek the blessings of Gautam Buddha and celebrate the teachings of their spiritual teacher. Buddha Purnima is an international festival which is celebrated by people who have chosen to walk on the path of Gautam Buddha and is also observed as a public holiday in countries like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and others.

Gautam Buddha who was earlier known by the name of Prince Siddhartha Gautama has a long history, and his stories that led to the foundation of Buddhism are inspiring and enlightening at the same time. Buddha Purnima celebrations all over the world promote the two basic beliefs in Buddhism, karuna or kindness and ahimsa or non-violence. The Purnima tithi for Buddha Purnima begins on 10th May 2017 and extends up to 11th May. Buddhist temples are usually flooded with devotees who remember the birth, enlightenment and death of their spiritual teacher who spread the ideologies of non-violence and kind-heartedness.

#### History of Buddha Purnima

Buddha Purnima has been a traditional celebration in the Mahayana Buddhism from centuries. According to the Theravada Tripitaka scriptures, Gautam Buddha was born in 563 BCE in Lumbini which is a part of modern day Nepal. Vesak was first considered as Buddha Purnima in 1950 when the first conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists made this decision in Sri Lanka. 49 years after this decision, the United Nations recognised the celebration of Vesak as Buddha Purnima in 1999.

#### Significance of Vesak

Buddha Purnima or Vesak is the one significant day when Buddhists all over the world commemorate the significance events of Buddhism, i.e., the birth, enlightenment and passing away of their spiritual leader. The celebration of Vesak usually takes place on the Full moon in the month of May according to the Gregorian calendar. Buddha Purnima is one of the most widely celebrated festivals in this religion and Buddhists visits temples and other places of religious significance on this day to

# BUDDHA PURNIMA



celebrate the two main virtues of Buddhism, kindness and non-violence.

Apart from following the teachings of Gautam Buddha, the day is also celebrated by displaying the dharma chakra or the wheel of Buddha's teaching. While Buddha Purnima is day Gautam Buddha was born, this day celebrates the entire life and teachings of Gautam Buddha. The founder of Buddhism, Gautama is said to have lived a complete life and died at the age of 80 in Kushinagar, India. Gautam Buddha is believed to have received his enlightenment at the religious site of Bodh Gaya in Bihar India, and it is considered as one of the most famous Buddhist pilgrims that is filled with devotees on this auspicious day.

#### Celebrations of Buddha Purnima

Buddha-purnima There are many activities performed to commemorate the birth of Buddha. These activities include prayer meets, recital of Buddhist scriptures, religious discussions and sermons, group meditations, and worshipping of the Buddha's idol.

Many Buddhist devotees visit Buddhist shrines on this sacred festival. The devotees recite verses and spend the day in temples. Some of the Buddhist temples present a small idol of Lord Buddha as an infant, which is put

in a basin full of water and decorated with beautiful and aromatic flowers. The devotees pour water on this idol. This signifies a complete new start of life. The worship of Buddha is done by offering flowers, fruits and candles.

The teachings of Buddha are given special attention on this sanctified festival. Money,

goods and food are offered to poor. Generally, the devotees wear white dress on this day and avoid the non-vegetarian food. Kheer (A sweet made from rice and milk) is served to remember the tale of Sujata who offered a bowl of kheer to Lord Buddha.

The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya puts on a celebratory look on the day of Buddha Purnima. This temple is beautified with hued decorations. There are also held special prayers under the Bodhi Tree, under which Gautama Buddha took enlightenment. The holy remains of Lord Buddha are open for public viewing by the National Museum in Delhi.

#### Celebrating Vesakha

Celebrating Vesakha also means making special efforts to bring happiness to the unfortunate like the aged, the handicapped and the sick. To this day, Buddhists will distribute gifts in cash and kind toious charitable homes throughout the country. Vesakha is also a time for great joy and happiness, expressed not by pandering to one's appetites but by concentrating on useful activities such as decorating and illuminating temples, painting and creating exquisite scenes from the life of the Buddha for public dissemination.

In Japan – It is also known as Kanbutsue. It is not a public holiday. Celebrated on the 8th day of the fourth month in the Chinese calendar based on one of the legends that proclaim the day as Buddha's birthday.

In Nepal – Known as "Buddha Jayanti" is widely celebrated all across the country including Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, and Swayambhu the holy temple for Buddhists also known as "the Monkey Temple". The main door of Swayambhu is opened only on this very day.

In Sri Lanka – Celebrated as a religious and a cultural festival in for about one week. During this week, the selling of alcohol and fresh meat is usually prohibited.

In Korea - Celebrated on the 8th day of the 4th month in the Korean lunar calendar and is an official holiday and one of the nation's biggest cultural festivals.

In Laos – Celebrations include dances, poems, parades, processions, deep meditation, theatrical performances, and puppet shows.

In Vietnam – It was a public festival with float and lantern parades on the streets.

In Indonesia – At Borobudur, thousands of Buddhist monks will join together to repeat mantras and meditate as they circuit the temple in a ritual called "Pradaksina". Monks celebrate the special day by bottling holy water which symbolises humility and transporting flames which symbolize light and enlightenment from location to location.

In Singapore – Celebrated it along with their National Day in a two-day event.

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