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Trump praises Indian-American Officials at the Diwali Celebrations in the White House

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian Americans were praised by the US President Donald Trump for their "incredible" performance in his administration. Trump has appointed more than two dozen Indian Americans to senior positions since he assumed office in 2017.

"I'm grateful to have numerous Americans of Indian and Southeast Asian heritage who fulfill critical roles across my administration. And they've done an incredible job," Trump said as he hosted Diwali celebrations in the Roosevelt Room, November 13.

Except for the former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, around two dozen of his top Indian-American lieutenants were present at the celebrations.

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Trump lights lamp. India's Ambassador to the US Navtej Singh Sarna is seen to Trump's left. Except for the former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, around two dozen of Trump's top Indian-American lieutenants were present at the celebrations.

Photo / CNN screenshot

Indian American Lawyer Neomi Rao to Replace Kavanaugh in US Court



Photo caption: Trump's nomination of Ms Rao is in recognition of her contribution in cutting down regulations. Photo / courtesy Facebook

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Neomi Rao has been nominated by US President Donald Trump to fill Justice Brett Kavanaugh's seat on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

Trump, during Diwali celebrations at the Roosevelt Room of the White House, announced the nomination of the 45-year-old regulatory czar for the DC Circuit which is considered next to the US Supreme Court.

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2 Indian-origin Ministers quit British govt.

LONDON (TIP): Two Indian-origin Ministers on Thursday, November 15 resigned their positions in protest at the draft withdrawal agreement passed by the British Cabinet, while a Pakistani-origin politician resigned from his role as trade envoy to Pakistan over the government's approach to offering asylum to Asia Bibi as well as the Brexit deal. Shailesh Vara, the Minister of State for Northern Ireland and Suella Braverman, a Minister within the Ministry for Exiting the EU, both tendered their resignations

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California's Deadliest Fire: At least 63 are dead and more than 600 are missing



A home burns as the Camp Fire rages through Paradise, Calif., on Thursday, November 15

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea told reporters that crews found three bodies in Magalia

SACRAMENTO (TIP): The death toll from the devastating Camp fire jumped to 63 on Thursday, November 15, as search crews recovered seven more bodies in the burn area.

The number of people unaccounted for jumped dramatically to 631 people, up from 130 on Wednesday evening.

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Julian Assange has been charged, prosecutors reveal in inadvertent court filing

WASHINGTON (TIP): A November 15 Washington Post report says WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange has been charged under seal, prosecutors inadvertently revealed in a recently unsealed court filing - a development that could

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The Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has been charged under seal with unspecified offences in the US, prosecutors have accidentally revealed in an unintentional court filing. (A File Photo)

Diwali and Annakut Celebrated at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs across North America

DALLAS, TX (TIP): A glittering array of twinkles filled the night as traditional candles were lit by devotees. The ancient tradition of lighting candles, or divos, during Diwali symbolizes the transition from darkness to light. While the divoslit on Diwali erase physical darkness, the festival's rich traditions and rituals go deeper -inviting individuals to make efforts in removing darkness in the forms of anger,envy, greed, arrogance, and resentment. Diwali presents a time to reflect and introspect. The five days of Diwali (including the Hindu New Year) are rich in cultural traditions and rituals that symbolize new beginnings and a renewed commitment to family. The bright colors of Rangoli(intricate designs made of colored powder), the lighting of divos, and the elaborate variety of vegetarian foods offered to God (in a display called an Annakut), all mark a renewal of the good within and the goodwill towardseverything around us. Diwali presents Hindus with an opportunity to connect with and celebrate the traditions of their roots with great fanfare.

Offering his prayers to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, His HolinessMahant Swami Maharaj, guru and current spiritual leader of BAPS, prayed for devotees around the world for continued personal, and professional growth in this new year. Mahant Swami Maharaj took the occasion of Diwali to remind individuals and families about the importance of leading spiritually-centric lives, grounded in strong values and increased attachment to God. This year, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs across North America marked the auspicious festival of Diwali and its associated five days of



celebrations with an elaborate Annakut, lighted divos, fireworks, and even a special children's Diwali celebration. For many visitors, the most popular attraction and a highlight of the festivities is the Annakut festival on the fifth day. As practiced by BAPS Swaminarayan Mandirs, the Annakut is a unique and awe-inspiring sight of devotion where hundreds of different traditional Indian foods and even some fusions with western cuisine are prepared by devotees in the community and arranged in front of the Mandir's sacred images.

In the evening, the offered dishes are served at dinner to everyone. Vandan Shahsaid, "Diwali is all about good food, family gatherings, crackers, and I love it because of the



excitement that fills the air when the festival nears. After coming to the Diwali Celebrations at BAPS ShriSwaminarayan Mandir, Robbinsville, I felt like I was in India. I experienced Indian culture while getting a taste of fine Indian cuisine. I truly felt at home. "Being away from India, I brought my children to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Edison, NJ so they can learn about Diwali and our rich tradition", said, Dinesh Prajapati. In addition to the Annakut, the BAPS' Diwali celebrations featured spiritual and cultural themed events, which engaged both children and adults, in order to bring positive energy into the New Year.

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Get
to the
Point



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Indian American Mona Das wins Washington State Senate race

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Businesswoman Mona Das has become the second Indian American woman elected to the Washington State Senate after the election. The Democrat defeated the incumbent Republican Joe Fain in a highly competitive race in the 47th district by 548 votes.

According to the official results posted on the website of the state secretary of state, Das, a mortgage business owner, received 27,303 votes (50.15 percent). Fain's tally was 26,755 votes (49.49 percent.)

"It's official! I have the proud honor of being Senator-elect of the wonderful 47th district of WA State!" Das wrote in a post on her Facebook page on Saturday, after the Republican conceded. "I can't even begin to thank the thousands of people who stepped up to help on this journey."

With her victory, the number of Indian American women serving in the Washington State Legislature will increase to three. The other two are Democratic Sen. Manka Dhirga and Rep. Vandana Slatter, also a Democrat.

Dhirga, who was first elected in a special election last year, was re-elected from the 37th district. Slatter was re-elected from the 48th district on Tuesday.

It will be the first time in US history that



Democrat Mona Das has become the second Indian American woman elected to the Washington State Senate

three Indian American women will be serving at a state legislature at the same time. It will be the second time three Indian Americans will be serving in a state legislature. From January 2011 to January 2015, three Indian Americans had served in the Maryland House of Delegates: Kumar Barve, Sam Arora and

Aruna Miller.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, who was re-elected to US Congress from the state's 7th congressional district, had served in the state Senate from January 2015 to December 2016.

Das wrote on her Facebook page that the "real work begins now" and she is looking "forward to working with my new colleagues in the Senate and House to make sure every Washingtonian has access to healthcare, education, an affordable place to live and can live in a state where they are accepted for who they are." Education and healthcare are two of the issues she campaigned heavily on.

The Democrat had initially decided to run for US Congress from the state's 8th congressional district, but subsequently pulled out from the primary chose to challenge Fain.

Das was born in India and came to the United States when she was 8 months old, along with her parents who immigrated to this country.

Das attended the University of Cincinnati where she earned her BA in psychology. She later moved to the Pacific Northwest where she established herself as a successful businesswoman and tech leader. She went back to school in 2012 to earn an MBA in sustainable business at Pinchot University.

Indian-Origin British Woman Accuses Peer of Indecency



Jasvinder Sanghera spoke out against Lord Anthony Lester after it emerged that the House of Lords is to vote on suspending the Liberal Democrat peer on sexual harassment charges dating back over a decade.

LONDON (TIP): An Indian-origin British women's rights campaigner waived her right to anonymity to reveal that a UK peer had offered to make her a Baroness in the House of Lords if she agreed to have sex with him.

Jasvinder Sanghera is well-known in the UK as the founder of 'Karma Nirvana', a charity set up to combat the problems of young people, a majority from South Asian backgrounds, being forced into marriage. Ms Sanghera spoke out against Lord Anthony Lester after it emerged that the House of Lords is to vote on suspending the Liberal Democrat peer on sexual harassment charges dating back over a decade.

A Lords' Privileges and Conduct Committee investigation had concluded that Lester groped Ms Sanghera and offered her "corrupt inducements" to become his mistress and has recommended that he be suspended till June 2022. The 82-year-old peer, a prominent lawyer, has strongly denied the allegations as "completely untrue".

Ms Sanghera, who was honored with a CBE by Queen Elizabeth II for her charity work in 2013, disclosed that she was the woman who lodged the complaint after finding the courage to speak out and highlight that "what he did to me wasn't acceptable and wasn't honorable". "I'm supposed to be this empowered woman, but I began to feel like a phony," she said.

Born in the town of Derby in the East Midlands region of England, Ms Sanghera was disowned by her British Sikh family when she ran away as a 16-year-old to escape a forced marriage to a much older man chosen by her parents. She has since been instrumental in campaigning against the practice. "I speak about forced marriage in front of thousands of people. I talk about breaking the silence, but I hadn't spoken about what he did to me," said Ms Sanghera, who wrote about her experiences in her autobiography 'Shame' in 2007.

She said she was contacted by Lester in 2006 to support his private member's bill on making forced marriage a civil offence. After a late meeting in Parliament, he allegedly made the indecent proposal to make her a "Baroness within a year" if she slept with him, warning that there would be repercussions if she refused. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, Ms Sanghera sought legal advice and complained to the Lords Commissioner for Standards in November 2017. The investigation concluded recently, with the committee recommending Lester's suspension.

"The sense of relief was overwhelming," she said, calling for a proper system in place for other victims to feel confident about speaking out against men in positions of power. The decision to investigate a peer for alleged sexual misconduct marks an unprecedented step for the UK Parliament. The Lords sub-committee concluded that it was a "tragic irony" that Lester had for a short time become "obsessively attracted to the complainant to the extent that he completely lost all sense of judgment and propriety".

Indian-Origin Lawmaker Urges Action in Temple Burglaries in London



Virendra Sharma raised the issue during Justice Questions in the House of Commons on Tuesday, November 13, following break-ins at two Swaminarayan temples in north London.

LONDON (TIP): Indian-origin veteran MP in the UK has urged the British government to take a decisive action against the recent burglaries at two temples in London and treat them as a hate crime.

Virendra Sharma, a Labour Party MP who represents the suburb of Ealing Southall which has a sizeable population of the Indian-origin people, raised the issue during Justice Questions in the House of Commons on Tuesday, November 13, following break-ins at two Swaminarayan temples in north London.

"Within the last week, two separate Hindu Temples, Shree Swaminarayan Temple in Willesden and Shree Kutch Satsang Swaminarayan Temple in Kenton, have been broken into and religious icons have been

stolen," Mr Sharma said during questions addressed to UK Secretary of State for Justice David Gauke.

"Can the minister confirm that this will be treated as a hate crime, and not just ignored by the police, since it targeted people of one faith," he asked.

The minister condemned the robberies and said that the specific incidents were a matter for the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

"Activity of this sort, and if it is targeted on the basis of religious belief, is completely unacceptable. I am sure the whole House is united in condemning that," Mr Gauke told MPs.

The latest break-in took place at the Shree Kutch Satsang Swaminarayan Temple on Westfield Lane in Kenton in the early hours of Tuesday. This followed a previous break-in at Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Willesden last Friday, when three Krishna idols were stolen.

Scotland Yard said that investigations remain ongoing in both cases and that they are looking into a potential link between the two burglaries.

"Police were called to an alarm activation on Tuesday, 13 November, at 03:50 hours at a temple in Westfield Lane, Harrow. Officers attended and found entry had been forced," a Metropolitan Police statement said, adding that no arrests have been made in either case so far.

Officers continued to review CCTV footage and conduct forensic searches as part of their enquiries. It remains unclear what was stolen during Tuesday's robbery, but cash and idols were stolen in last week's break-in.

According to the President of the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir, Kurjibhai Kera, the Hari Krishna idols stolen last week had been with the temple since its opening in 1975. While the idols are made of brass, the temple authorities fear the robbers may have mistaken them for gold and hope they would be returned as they are more precious to the community than in terms of their monetary value.

Both burglaries took place around the time the temples had played host to annual Diwali festivities, attended by hundreds of members of the local community.

Indian-Origin Pregnant Woman Killed in Crossbow Attack in UK

LONDON (TIP): An Indian-origin pregnant woman has been killed after an arrow pierced through her abdomen in a crossbow attack in London, UK. Devi Unmathallegadoo's unborn baby survived after an emergency Caesarean section.



The baby is fighting for his life in hospital following the attack on Monday, November 12 evening in Ilford area of east London.

On Tuesday, November 12, Scotland Yard officers charged Ramanodge Unmathallegadoo, 50, with the murder of 35-year-old woman, believed to be his former partner.

"The victim was found suffering an abdominal injury. She was taken to hospital where she later died," the Metropolitan Police said.

"This is a tragic incident and our sympathies are with the loved ones and friends of the victim," police said.

Devi Unmathallegadoo was known locally as Sana Muhammad after reportedly converting to Islam when she married her husband Imtiaz Muhammad around seven years ago.

She had three children, aged 18, 14 and 12, with her former partner and two young girls, aged five and two, with Muhammad. The baby boy who was born as a result of an emergency Caesarean operation on Monday has been named Ibrahim by his father.

"She was a wonderful mother and wife. We were together seven years. I am heartbroken; we were inseparable," Imtiaz Muhammad told the media.

Mr Imtiaz was at home when he noticed the attacker in their shed with a loaded crossbow. He ran back into the home to alert his wife and children, but she was shot with the arrow in her abdomen soon after.

"The arrow went up into her heart but did not touch the unborn baby. The baby was due in four weeks. They operated with the arrow still in because it would have been too dangerous to take out," he said.

Neighbors heard Mr Muhammad screaming for help outside the house and described seeing a 30-cm-long crossbow being carried out of the home by police officers as evidence.

Ramanodge Unmathallegadoo remains in custody and will now appear before the Old Bailey court in London.

Mike Pence says South China Sea doesn't belong to any one nation

WASHINGTON (TIP): US Vice President Mike Pence said on November 15 the South China Sea does not belong to any one nation and the United States will continue to sail and fly wherever international law allows, comments sure to rile China which claims the strategic sea route.

The United States has conducted a series of "freedom of navigation" exercises in the contested South China Sea, angering Beijing, which says the moves threaten its sovereignty.

"The South China Sea doesn't belong to any one nation, and you can be sure: The United States will continue to sail and fly wherever international law allows and our national interests demand," Pence said.

China, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan, all have claims in the South China Sea, through which some \$3 trillion of shipborne trade passes each year.

Pence on Nov 15 told leaders of Southeast Asian nations on there was no place for "empire and aggression" in the Indo-Pacific region, a comment that could be interpreted as a reference to China's rise.

Pence's latest comments follow a major speech in October in which he flagged a tougher approach by Washington towards Beijing, accusing China of "malign" efforts to undermine US President Donald Trump and reckless military actions in the South China Sea. (Reuters)

Trump Jr's business trip to India in February cost US taxpayers nearly \$100,000: report

WASHINGTON (TIP): A business trip by Donald J Trump Jr, the son of the US president, this year to India cost the American tax payers about \$100,000 in fees related to the Secret Service agents guarding him and other costs, according to a media report.

In February this year, Donald J Trump Jr, 40, had travelled to four Indian cities, New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Kolkatta, to promote the high-rise luxurious condos being built by the Trump Organization, of which US president Donald Trump is the sole owner. Trump Jr is the vice president of his family owned company.

The Washington Post reported on Nov 15 that it calculated this figure from the documents it obtained from the Department of Homeland through the Freedom of Information Act, which is similar to India's Right to Information Act.

The documents showed that "Trump Jr's February trip cost more than USD 97,805 for hotel rooms, airfare, car rental and overtime for Secret Service agents," the daily reported.

The White House and Donald J Trump Jr did not immediately respond to the news report, which their political opponents on the social media alleged the Secret Service expenses for his trip to promote condos in India was misuse of tax payers money.

As per US laws, the President and his immediate family members are entitled to protection by the Secret Service. Same is the case with the former presidents and their family members too.

"Donald Trump Jr went to India to promote condo sales. His trip cost taxpayers almost USD 100,000. That's essentially the government spending money on the president's private business," Citizens for Ethics, a watch dog, alleged in a tweet.

(PTI)

Donald Trump's summit no-show draws Asian nations closer together

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Donald Trump didn't make it to this week's summit of Asian nations in Singapore, but his influence was still keenly felt among the leaders who gathered in the city.

One prime minister warned that the trade war between Washington and Beijing could trigger a "domino effect" of protectionist steps by other countries. Another fretted that the international order could splinter into rival blocs.

"The most important and talked-about ... leader, President Trump, is the only one that did not turn up," said Malcolm Cook, a senior fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore.

And yet, in Trump's absence, countries from South to East Asia pressed on with forging multilateral ties on trade and investment among themselves, including with China.

China's representative at the meetings, Premier Li Keqiang, egged them on.

"Now the world is facing rising protectionism. It is all the more important for us to come together and respond to the complex world situation to uphold multilateralism and free trade," Li said on Thursday.

The US president's lack of engagement with Asian nations came just days after a trip to France for World War One commemorations at which he appeared isolated from NATO allies.

Simon Tay, chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, said Trump was inadvertently bringing Asian nations together. "Not necessarily by design, but because he is not being a consistent and reassuring presence, and because his policies have tended to fracture the natural order that Asia is dependent upon," he said. "Asians are trying to figure out what else they can do without relying on America too much."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

TWO POWERS: TWO STRATEGIES

As well as the summits of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian nations in Singapore, Trump will also skip the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Papua New Guinea at the end of the week.

At APEC on Nov 16, President Xi Jinping will showcase China's Belt and Road initiative to Pacific leaders, several of whom are expected to sign up to the infrastructure investment drive.

Xi's multi-billion-dollar plan, which aims to bolster a sprawling network of land and sea links with Asian neighbours and far beyond, is viewed with suspicion in Western capitals



as an attempt to assert Chinese influence.

Trump attended both the ASEAN and APEC meetings in 2017, and his decision to stay away this year has raised questions about Washington's commitment to a regional strategy to counter China.

Vice President Mike Pence, who represented Trump in Singapore, told the meeting that United States' commitment to the Indo-Pacific is "steadfast and enduring."

Asia presents the Trump administration with some of its most pressing foreign policy challenges, including its strategic rivalry with China and efforts to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons programme. Washington has touted what it calls an "Indo-Pacific" strategy aimed at greater regional cooperation, notably with India, Australia and Japan, to counter China's influence, including in the disputed South China Sea, where it conducts naval patrols to challenge what it sees as Beijing's excessive territorial claims.

Pence said on Nov 15 – without naming China – that there was no place for "empire and aggression" in the Indo-Pacific.

His comments follow a major speech in October in which he flagged a tougher approach by Washington toward Beijing, accusing China of "malign" efforts to undermine Trump and reckless military actions in the South China Sea.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said: "We welcome contributions by China to regional development, so long as it adheres to the highest standards the people of the region demand. We are concerned by China's use of coercion, influence operations, and implied military threats to persuade other states to heed China's strategic agenda."

Shortly before Pence spoke in Singapore, the U.S. Navy announced that two of its aircraft carriers with around 150 fighter jets

were conducting warfare drills in the Philippine Sea, a show of force in waters south of China and within striking distance of North Korea.

TAKING SIDES

Pence told reporters in Singapore that he had been struck in conversations with world leaders by "the connection that President Trump has made" with them through his vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

However, analysts say that countries across Asia are waiting for the United States to put substance behind its Indo-Pacific rhetoric, and Trump's absence from the summits only served to heighten concerns among Southeast Asian states that Washington no longer has their back. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Thursday it was "very desirable" for ASEAN not to have to take sides with world powers, but there may come a time when it would "have to choose one or the other."

Some Southeast Asian nations may be quietly impressed by the United States' robust approach to Beijing on trade, intellectual property issues and the South China Sea, but others have made it clear they already see China's rise as inevitable.

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, asked on Nov 15 about the U.S. Navy drills, noted that China already occupies contested South China Sea islands and added: "Why do you have to create frictions ... that will prompt a response from China?."

But Cook said Southeast Asian states' hedging and unwillingness to publicly criticise Chinese aggression have contributed to Washington's posture shift in Asia.

"This change is certainly not all because of Trump," he said. "The choices of Southeast Asian states in the end bear some responsibility" (Reuters)

Justice Department and CNN spar over Jim Acosta's press pass

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump's administration is trying to fend off a legal challenge from CNN and other outlets over the revocation of journalist Jim Acosta's White House "hard pass."

US District Court Judge Timothy Kelly heard arguments on Nov 14 afternoon from lawyers representing CNN and the Justice Department. The news network is seeking an immediate restraining order that would force the White House to return Acosta's press credentials — which grant reporters as-needed access to the 18-acre complex.

Kelly said he would announce his decision on Nov 15 afternoon.

Acosta has repeatedly clashed with Trump and press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders in briefings over the last two years. But the dynamic devolved into a near-shouting match during a combative press conference last week following midterm elections in which Republicans lost control of the House. Acosta refused to give up a microphone when the president said he didn't want to hear anything more from him. Trump called Acosta a "rude, terrible person." The White House quickly announced that Acosta's White House access would be revoked. The CNN lawsuit calls the revocation "an unabashed attempt to censor the press and exclude reporters from the White House who challenge and dispute the President's point of view."

The Associated Press joined with a group of 12 other news organizations, including Fox News, in filing an amicus brief Wednesday in support of CNN. (AP)

US midterm polls: Florida to recount ballots by hand in tight Senate race

Elections officials were expected to inspect by hand any ballots that were designated undervotes or overvotes

TAMPA (FLORIDA) (TIP): Florida election officials on Nov 15 ordered a hand recount of ballots in a closely fought U.S. Senate race between Democratic incumbent Bill Nelson and his Republican challenger, Governor Rick Scott. Nelson trailed Scott by about 12,600 votes, or 0.15 percent of the more than 8 million ballots cast following an electronic recount.

Under state law, the Florida Department of State must trigger a manual recount if an electronic recount of ballots finds a margin of victory of less than 0.25 percent. Elections officials were expected to inspect by hand any ballots that were designated undervotes or overvotes, cases where the machine that reviewed the ballot concluded that a voter had skipped a contest or marked more than one selection.

If the voter's intentions are clear on review by a person, the ballot could be counted. The order came after U.S. District Judge Mark Walker in Tallahassee, Florida, cleared the way to include ballots from as many as 5,000 people across the state who submitted ballots by mail that were rejected by election officials. A Georgia federal judge issued a similar ruling as that state worked to resolve a close governor's race.

In Florida, the recount of close races and attendant legal disputes over the validity of votes have stirred memories of the 2000 U.S. presidential election, when the U.S. Supreme Court stopped an ongoing recount in the state and sent George W. Bush to the White House.

State election officials said the machine recount of ballots in the governor's race pitting Republican Ron DeSantis against Democrat Andrew Gillum showed DeSantis with an 0.41 percentage point lead, below the threshold to trigger a manual recount.

Gillum signaled that he had not yet given



up. "A vote denied is justice denied — the State of Florida must count every legally cast vote," Gillum said in a statement after the machine recount concluded. "We plan to do all we can to ensure that every voice is heard in this process."

The Scott campaign in a statement called on Nelson to concede. "Last week, Florida voters elected me as their next U.S. Senator and now the ballots have been counted twice," Scott said in a statement.

Overall control of the U.S. Senate is not at stake in the Florida race. President Donald Trump's fellow Republicans extended their majority in the chamber while Democrats took a majority in the House of Representatives. But both the Senate and governor's races are being closely scrutinized as Florida is traditionally a key swing state in presidential elections.

'LAUGHING STOCK'

Walker grew testy during a series of Nov

15 hearings about lawsuits over the recounts, voicing frustration about how to handle uneven progress in different counties and also the Florida legislature's response to historic election problems.

"We have been the laughing stock of the world election after election," Walker said. "But we've still chosen not to fix this."

Separately, a federal judge in Georgia ordered state election officials to count some previously rejected ballots in that state's governor's race, where ballots are still being tallied but Republican former Secretary of State Brian Kemp has declared victory over Democrat Stacey Abrams.

This year's campaigns went down as the most expensive midterm elections in U.S. history, with some \$5.25 billion spent on advertising, up 78 percent from the last midterm elections in 2014, according to a Kantar Media analysis released on Thursday. Spending was 20 percent higher than the 2016 presidential election. (Reuters)

California town's wildfire evacuation plan raises questions

WASHINGTON (TIP): Ten years ago, as two wildfires advanced on Paradise, residents jumped into their vehicles to flee and got stuck in gridlock. That led authorities to devise a staggered evacuation plan — one that they used when fire came again last week.

But Paradise's carefully laid plans quickly devolved into a panicked exodus on Nov. 8. Some survivors said that by the time they got warnings, the flames were already extremely close, and they barely escaped with their lives. Others said they received no warnings at all.

Now, with at least 56 people dead and perhaps 300 unaccounted for in the nation's deadliest wildfire in a century, authorities are facing questions of whether they took the right approach.

It's also a lesson for other communities across the West that could be threatened as climate change and overgrown forests contribute to longer, more destructive fire seasons.

Reeny Victoria Breevaart, who lives in Magalia, a forested community of 11,000 people north of Paradise, said she couldn't receive warnings because cellphones weren't working. She also lost electrical power.

Just over an hour after the first evacuation order was issued at 8 a.m., she said, neighbors came to her door to say: "You have to get out of here."

Shari Bernacett, who with her husband managed a mobile home park in Paradise where they also lived, received a text ordering an evacuation. "Within minutes the flames were on top of us," she said.

Bernacett packed two duffel bags while her husband and another neighbor knocked on doors, yelling for people to get out. The couple grabbed their dog and drove through 12-foot (4-meter) flames to escape.

In the aftermath of the disaster, survivors said authorities need to devise a plan to reach residents who can't get a cellphone signal in the hilly terrain or don't have cellphones at all.

In his defense, Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said evacuation orders were issued through 5,227 emails, 25,643 phone calls and 5,445 texts, in addition to social media and the use of loudspeakers. As cellphone service went down, authorities went into neighborhoods with bullhorns to tell people to leave, and that saved some lives.

Honea said he was too busy with the emergency and the recovery of human remains to analyze how the evacuation went. But he said it was a big, chaotic, fast-moving situation, and there weren't enough law enforcement officers to go out and warn everyone.

"The fact that we have thousands and thousands of people in shelters would clearly indicate that we were able to notify a significant number of people," the sheriff said.

Some evacuees were staying in tents and cars at a Walmart parking lot and in a nearby field in Chico, though volunteers planning to close the makeshift shelter by Sunday were working to transition people to other locations.

A Sunday closure "gives us enough time to maybe figure something out," said Mike Robertson, an evacuee who arrived there on Monday with his wife and two daughters. On Nov 15, firefighters reported progress in battling the nearly 220-square-mile (570-square-kilometer) blaze. It was 40 percent contained, fire officials said. Crews slowed the flames' advance on populated areas. (AP)

Donald Trump to nominate handbag designer as new South African ambassador

WASHINGTON / JOHANNESBURG (TIP): US President Donald Trump intends to nominate luxury handbag designer Lana Marks as the new ambassador to South Africa, the White House said, almost two years after the last ambassador left under Barack Obama.

The nomination comes at a time of frayed relations between the two countries after a tweet in August in which Trump asked his secretary of state to study South African "land and farm seizures".

South Africa accused Trump of stoking racial divisions with the comments, which it called "misinformed".

African politicians also labelled Trump a racist in January after he was reported to have described some immigrants from Africa and Haiti as coming from "shithole" countries.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa told reporters this month that he had met Trump since the tweets on "farm seizures"

The nomination comes at a time of frayed relations between the two countries after a tweet in August in which Trump asked his secretary of state to study South African "land and farm seizures".

but that the US president mainly talked to him about golf.

Ramaphosa has said repeatedly that plans to accelerate the pace of land reform to address racial disparities in land ownership will follow a parliamentary process and that "land grabs" will not be tolerated.

"President Donald J. Trump announced his intent to nominate ... Lana J. Marks of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and

Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to South Africa," the White House said in a statement on Wednesday.

The United States has not had an ambassador in South Africa since Patrick Gaspard vacated his post in December 2016, with its mission being overseen by a chargé d'affaires. The Trump administration has dedicated relatively little attention to ties with African countries, focusing its foreign policy instead on issues like North Korea.

Incoming Ambassador Marks was born in South Africa and attended Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand. She speaks Afrikaans and Xhosa, the White House said. She is now based in Florida.

The website for her premium handbag firm, Lana Marks, offers handbags selling for as much as \$20,000 and says they have become favourites for celebrities including Oprah Winfrey, Kate Winslet and Madonna.

Her biography did not mention any previous diplomatic postings. (Reuter)

CONGRESS FIELDS BIGWIGS IN FIRST RAJASTHAN LIST; GEHLOT, PILOT IN FRAY



AICC general secretary organisation Ashok Gehlot and state Congress president Sachin Pilot.

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Congress on Thursday night declared its first list of 152 candidates for the December 7 Rajasthan elections fielding all its bigwigs to take on the ruling BJP.

Former state chief minister and sitting AICC general secretary organisation Ashok Gehlot will defend his current Assembly segment of Sardarpura in Jodhpur while state Congress president Sachin Pilot will contest his first state election from Tonk.

Former rural development minister CP Joshi has also been nominated from Nathdwara, from where he had lost the Assembly election by one vote in 2008.

Girja Vyas, who is member of the Congress central election committee and was former MP, has been fielded from Udaipur.

Gehlot, Pilot and Joshi are all described in Congress circles as CM probables should the Congress win the state on December 11.

Also in the fray is Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly Rameshwar Lal Dudi from Nokha. Dudi is a formidable Jat Leader in the state and has nurtured chief ministerial ambitions for decades.

AICC Secretary for Punjab Harish Choudhry will contest from Baytoo, while Harish Meena, the former BJP MP from Dausa who joined Congress recently, has been fielded from Deoli Uniara.

The Congress is hopeful of trouncing the BJP in Rajasthan and has held hectic and prolonged deliberations before releasing the first list past midnight on Thursday.

The state assembly has 200 seats. Rajya Sabha MP from Haryana Kumari Selja is the screening committee chairperson for the Rajasthan elections.

The list was delayed on account of differences between leaders on the winnable candidates in a section of controversial seats plus due to debate on whether to field all stalwarts in the polls.

Source: The Tribune

Cyclone Gaja claims 11 lives, wreaks havoc in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI (TIP): At least eleven people were killed and one was injured in Cuddalore district on Friday as Cyclone Gaja slammed into the Tamil Nadu coast between Nagapattinam and nearby Vedaranniyam uprooting trees and destroying houses in its path and leaving thousands without electricity.

"People who have lost their lives in the cyclone will be given ex-gratia by the state government," state minister MC Sampath said, according to news agency ANI.

The Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority said 76,290 people were evacuated from low lying areas and sheltered at over 300 relief centres in six districts including Nagapattinam, Pudukottai, Ramanathapuram and Tiruvarur before the cyclone hit the state early on Friday.

A holiday has been declared for educational institutions in Nagapattinam.

"The severe cyclonic storm Gaja crossed Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coast between Nagapattinam and Vedaranniyam ... with a wind speed of 100-110 kmph gusting up to 120 kmph..." the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its latest bulletin at 4am.

"It is very likely to move nearly westwards and weaken gradually into a cyclonic storm during next 06 hours. Though center of cyclone lies over land, the rear sector of eyewall is still over the sea. It will take about an hour to move over land," it said.

Sabarimala row: Kerala proposes women-only slots

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM (TIP):

An all-party meeting called by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan to resolve the Sabarimala stand-off failed to make headway on Thursday with the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staging a walkout after Vijayan stood firm that he was "duty-bound" to implement the Supreme Court order allowing women of all ages entry into the temple. The annual Sabarimala pilgrimage season starts Friday.

A suggestion by Vijayan that certain dates be reserved for only women to worship at the hilltop temple, including those in the reproductive age whose entry into the shrine is opposed by traditionalists, also had no takers. A senior official of the Travancore Dewasom Board (TDB), which runs the temple, said the board had no idea of the proposal.

"The government suggested many (ways) to end the impasse and reserving a particular time slot was one among them. The TDB also favoured it. But since opposition parties insisted on a blanket ban, we couldn't go further on this," said a senior government official who was part of the discussions and requested anonymity.

The Opposition has been demanding that Kerala's Left Front government back down from its stand of implementing the SC's September order. The top court has agreed to hear review petitions against its verdict on January 22 but made it clear that it has not stayed the original order. In Thursday's meeting, the opposition parties sprang the demand that implementation of the SC order be put off till January 22.

But Vijayan turned it down, saying that since the verdict had not been



stayed, the state had no option but to allow women of all ages entry into the shrine.

With no consensus emerging after nearly three hours of talks, the opposition parties walked out. "Now the chief minister will be responsible for any eventuality at the temple," Congress leader of the opposition Ramesh Chennithala said after the meeting, blaming Vijayan's "adamant" stand and alleged refusal to compromise for the walkout. "The government has wasted a golden opportunity."

State Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief PS Sreedharan Pillai, too, pinned the blame on Vijayan. "The chief minister wants to make Sabarimala a battleground," he said. "We wasted more than two hours."

Later in the day, CM Vijayan held another round of discussion with the tantr (supreme priest) of Sabarimala and scions of the erstwhile Pandalam royal family, custodians of the shrine,

but the talks failed to yield any results. "We told the CM that we are not ready to flout the temple custom. He also came out with some suggestions. Since both sides stick to their versions, we can say problem persists," said Sasikumar Varma of Pandalam family.

Tantri Rajeevaru Kandamaru appealed to women not to flout the age-old customs of the temple. "We are not against women. We respect them. It is due to the peculiar nature of the deity that women in certain age groups are not allowed. It is nothing to do with the gender issue," he said.

Vijayan told reporters after the opposition walkout: "The government was not stubborn. But we have no other option but to implement the SC verdict. If tomorrow the court takes another decision, the government will follow that."

"The government is with the believers. There is no need for any concern," he said.

Source: HT

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue agrees to expand cooperation in indo-pacific

NEW DELHI (TIP): India and the other members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, aka Quad, agreed on Thursday to expand their cooperation to promote a free, rules-based and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific region by including other countries and forums.

This was the third consultative meeting of the informal strategic group comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US since it was revived on the margins of the Asean Summit in the Philippines in November last year as a counterbalance to China's growing presence in the region.

Senior officials of the Quad held the latest meeting in Singapore, also the venue of the second meet in June.

"The participants reaffirmed the Asean centrality as the cornerstone of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific," said a statement from the external affairs ministry.

This is the first time, though, that the Congress is using such tactics at the booth level. The BJP's plan for 2019, too, revolves around booths and a "booth action plan" prepared by party president Amit Shah, who has already asked state units to compile a list of smartphone carrying



India and the other members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, aka Quad, agreed on Thursday to expand their cooperation to promote a free, rules-based and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific region by including other countries and forums.

voters in every polling station.

In the states going to polls, Congress nominees are given details of the booths where the party is strong and also workers who can be depended upon in each booth. Not surprisingly, "there is a mad rush from our candidates asking us to give them the details of the workers," says Chakravarty. The Congress' new efforts

come even as the BJP has a clear playbook for reaching out to its ground force. Prime Minister Narendra Modi frequently interacts with BJP's booth-level workers across the states via video conferencing. Senior BJP leaders have also been asked to hold regular meetings at the gram panchayats to get genuine feedback from the people and party workers.

Verma and Special Director Rakesh Asthana, who have been engaged in a tussle, were divested of their duties by the Department of Personnel and Training on October 23.



GUEST COMMENT

Salve for wounds of '84

Justice delayed is better than no justice

A conviction, in the court of an additional sessions judge, of two individuals held guilty of killing two others shows how the dogged pursuit of justice can deliver results. The murders were among the thousands in Delhi in 1984, and the murderers may have gone scot free had it not been for the work of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up in 2015, which secured a conviction in the first case it presented before a court.

Victims of the 1984 Delhi riots have cried for justice for long and battled with indifference, the police not registering cases, active interference in investigations, as well as decades of delay, but some of them have continued their quest for justice. Successive governments have paid more lip service than taken action. This SIT, however, identified 52 of the 280 cases it scanned for further investigation. The dedicated team has shown that passage of time and indifference still allow for evidence to be found and presented in a manner which can bring justice.

The shame of the killings of 1984 forced the horror to be brushed under the carpet. The survivors lived with the trauma of having seen their friends and family members murdered by mobs. Even when cases were registered, only shoddy action followed. A number of inquiry commissions were set up, but convictions were few and far between. The Delhi Police in 1994 had closed 'for want of evidence' even the case that has resulted now in convictions. The negative attitude and tardy progress have led to a feeling of injustice among the Sikhs. This, even though a certain number of men have been convicted of murder over the years. The sentencing of Naresh Sherawat and Yashpal Singh by Additional Sessions Judge Ajay Pandey for killing Hardev Singh and Avtar Singh in the Mahipalpur area on November 1, 1984, in South Delhi during the riots is a salve on the wounds of victims. It is also an example that justice delayed may not always mean justice denied.

(Tribune India)



By George Abraham

Ever since the ascendance of BJP to the pinnacle of power in India, a visible campaign against one of the most influential leaders India had ever seen - Jawaharlal Nehru - is underway. One may wonder about this vitriolic campaign waged against a man who has contributed so much to the development of a nation and may ask why now?

As Shashi Tharoor has pointed out in his biography of Nehru "Nehru's legacy is ours, whether we agree with everything he stood for or not. What we are today, both for good or for ill, we owe in great measure to one man". He was a true visionary who has not only built many of India's venerable institutions but also laid the foundation for a pluralistic India. However, many in the opposition today are afraid that Prime Minister Modi's plan may include dismantling the legacy of Nehru while appropriating the legacy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, another great leader of the Congress Party.

As Indians, we do take pride in the age-old civilization and culture and its lasting imprint on our lives. However, when the nation gained its independence, India was an impoverished country with 80 percent of the people who could not afford two meals a day. The average life span of an Indian was 31 years with only 20% of people who could read or write.

From that Nehru built a country that is democratic and inclusive uplifting the masses that previously held no hopes of redemption from feudalism and Casteism that plagued the land. He was a great advocate for equity and justice in an unequal society and used his superb influence to incorporate those protective provisions into the Constitution.

The constitution of India was amongst the largest in the world with 395 Articles and 9 Schedules. The preamble spells out the underlying philosophy and the solemn resolve of the people of India to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for all its citizens. What Nehru has accomplished through this document with significant help and support from B.R. Ambedkar also is part of his vision to empower marginalized sections of the society.

Nehru was a strong proponent of self-reliance, apparently recognizing that underdevelopment was the result of a lack of technological progress. Consequently, a new Industrial policy was enacted to develop critical industries. While Independent India was in its infancy, he identified the production of power and steel for self-sufficiency and planning. In collaboration with other countries, India built steel plants in Rourkela (Orissa), Bhilai (M.P.) and Durgapur (W. Bengal). Dam projects were undertaken in

AS I SEE IT

Attempts to Undo Nehru's Legacy: Are we better off?

"Times have changed indeed, and some of the policies Nehru has pursued may have become irrelevant. However, critics would be deluding themselves if they are to deny his extraordinary legacy and his outstanding contribution in building a modern India in a traditional society. Nehru's wisdom was the wisdom of the time, and we may be able to draw many lessons from that today. Our lives are not merely self-made instead we stand on the shoulders of those who have preceded us. Jawaharlal Nehru may have made his share of mistakes as any other human being, and yet, if we are to deny his rightful place in history, we will be doing it at our peril!"



Jawaharlal Nehru and India have been synonymous

various places to produce hydro-electric power, including the flagship Dam at Bhakra Nangal, Punjab. The first oil refinery was inaugurated in Noonmati, Assam in 1962 as another leap forward towards industrialization. Nehru called them 'the temples of modern India'.

He built IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS for higher level education and thousands of Primary, Secondary and higher-secondary schools that have transformed the lives of millions of its citizens and many of those graduates from these prestigious institutions are heading multi-national corporations across the globe today and it is a matter of great pride and joy to India.

Nehru belonged to the privileged class, and he could have carried on while protecting the status-quo, yet he did not. He was a true visionary who saw the dire need to change the direction of the country in order to have a real transformation in the social order. Seventy years later, many of his dreams have come to fruition and at the uppermost; thanks to his stewardship, India remains a vibrant democracy and a beacon to many nations particularly in the developing world.

However, BJP and the RSS are carrying on a campaign to place blame on Nehru and criticize him for his failure on the partition and the current stalemate in Kashmir. They have not forgiven him either for pursuing a policy of non-alignment globally or upholding the values of secularism at home. For the hardcore Sangh Parivar forces, Nehru has become anathema, a legacy that has to be erased.

Since 2014, the status of Nehru Memorial and library has been diminished, and an earnest effort is underway to change the character and focus of the Museum. The Culture Minister in the BJP government not

only approves discussions and seminars opposing Nehruvian ideology within its four walls but openly boasts about the place that it is no longer confined to Nehru. To add insult to injury, Mr. Arnab Goswami, a strident critic of Nehru family, has been added as a member of the Board to oversee the museum. According to some sources, the long-term plan may include converting the Nehru Memorial library into a Museum that houses the memory of all Prime Ministers.

The right-wing bodies including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have been on an overdrive to erase Nehru's name from history books after the BJP government unveiled a new education policy in 2015. In Rajasthan, a BJP-ruled state, references to Nehru has been already removed from textbooks. Students of Class VIII will no longer learn that Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first Prime Minister. Asked about this serious omission, Education Minister Vasudev Devnani said the following "it was the decision of an autonomous body and the government and I have nothing to do with it."

Prime Minister Modi, in his first Independence Day address to the nation, although he invoked great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, and Jayaprakash Narayan but omitted any reference to Nehru. He also used the occasion to sentence the planning commission as the relics of the past, the signature machinery, Nehru promoted for making five-year plans for the effective use of the resources for development. The new President of India, Ramnath Kovind did not mention Nehru's name either in his maiden address to the nation.

Times have changed indeed, and some of the policies Nehru has pursued may have become irrelevant. However, critics would be deluding themselves if they are to deny his extraordinary legacy and his outstanding contribution in building a modern India in a traditional society. Nehru's wisdom was the wisdom of the time, and we may be able to draw many lessons from that today. Our lives are not merely self-made instead we stand on the shoulders of those who have preceded us. Jawaharlal Nehru may have made his share of mistakes as any other human being, and yet, if we are to deny his rightful place in history, we will be doing it at our peril!

(The author is a former Chief Technology Officer of the United Nations and Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA)

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INDIA'S PROSPERITY HINGES ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



By Mike Ghouse

The Indian-Americans have a moral duty to prevent India from being labeled as a "Country of Particular Concern" by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

"The quality of life is directly proportional to freedom from religious and cultural tensions", says the author.

If India were to be ascribed with such a label, it would hinder the flow of foreign direct investments and subsequent reversal of economic prosperity achieved in the last twenty years. This label may not affect the poor Indians, but it will severely impact all those Indians working in information technology related jobs and businesses involved in software development and services.

South Africa once was an apartheid nation, and its prosperity came to a grinding halt when the foreign corporations realized that they are supporting a regime that discriminates her citizens. The harassment, lynching, and killing of Dalits, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others in India needs to stop; if not, it will hurt all Indians as the investors will start pulling out of the country. Who wants to invest in a place where their investment is not secure?

The success of the American economy is based on the rule of law, the law is enforced equally, and no criminal will get away with the power of his or her monies. If someone violates the rules, the individual or the company will pay the penalty, and this builds confidence and trust in the society and frees them from tensions. Every Indian should feel secure about his or her faith, ethnicity, language and culture.

The First Amendment of America's constitution serves as a model of success for any government. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Ambassador Sam Brownback had once said that the prosperity of a nation hinges on religious freedom. Indeed, the success of a country is directly proportional to religious liberty. It frees people from the daily tensions of what to eat, drink, wear and believe. It allows them to become a productive employee to the company, and a fully participating member of the family by giving the family the full attention it deserves instead of worrying about a fellow employee at the place of work.

Furthermore, the quality of life is directly proportional to freedom from religious and cultural tensions.

The sense of security is diminishing rapidly. A Christian is apprehensive of going to the Church on a Sunday, and a Muslim is afraid of storing meat in his refrigerator should the vigilantes descend on him. The women including little girls are not safe either. The murderers and rapists got felicitated with Garlands from among the current leaders instead of sending them to prison. The man who lynched and brutally killed a Muslim man was videotaped and shared on WhatsApp, and the lyncher was rewarded with a party ticket to contest elections. This is shamefully a weekly occurrence.

Ambassador Brownback had once said referring to mob violence around the world. If the leaders respond immediately to such incidents and tell the nation that the lynching and harassment of fellow citizens will not be acceptable, then the violence will cease or at

least mitigate. Unfortunately, the current Indian leadership has remained silent when vigilantes kill and maim the people, causing every Indian to live in fear - both the minorities and the ones who frighten.

Please note that Hindutva ideology propagated by RSS and its family of parties is not Hinduism. Hindutva is to Hinduism; what Islam is to Islamists. Hindutva and Islamist are anti-Hinduism and anti-Islam respectively. It may take a few generations for Hindutvavadis and Islamists to see the value of respecting the otherness of the other and accepting the God-given uniqueness of the other. When we get there, conflicts will fade, and solutions emerge. Ultimately, every Indian wants to live in peace and feel secure about his faith and focus on contributing to the common good of the nation.

The Indian Americans have equal access to all the opportunities in the market without discrimination, and I hope the Indian Americans would want India to treat her minorities as America does hers. It is an embarrassment to note that a few Indian Americans don't want Muslims, Christians, and Dalits to have equal rights in India. On top of it, they are poisoning their children with ill-will towards each other.

The good news is that most of the American Indian youth are rejecting the ugliness of their parents and choose to respect the otherness of the other. After all, they have to work with people of different faiths and races, and it would be a pain for them to work with others if their parents have dumped their biases on their children. Should parents poison their children?

We appeal to all the India oriented American organizations including the Hindu America Foundation, the Indian American Muslim Council, Federation of Indian American Christian Organization of North America to support our petition.

The petition will be addressed to the Government of India to issue Visa's to the Commissioners of USCIRF. They can do the investigations about the plight of Kashmiri Pandits, Sikh Genocides, Gujarat Massacre, Lynching and harassment of Dalits, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and others.

If India gets a "Clean Chit" it will ensure continued prosperity and investor confidence in India's democracy. However, if the Indian government is found guilty of the violations of religious freedoms, then two choices left to deal with are; risk losing the confidence of the investors in the stability of India or fix the problems and earn a clean chit. Every Indian American must ensure the sustainability of India's democracy and prosperity.

In Washington DC, there are three Indians who regularly attend the meetings about religious freedom issues from among about seventy-five individuals to talk about the concerns in different nations. Jay Kansara has been representing the Hindu America Foundation, John Prabhudoss represents Federation of Indian American Christians of North America, and Mike Ghouse serves the Center for Pluralism, standing up for the rights of people from all faiths. Now, Ajit Sahi of Indian American Muslim Council has joined the group to address Religious freedom issues of Indian minorities. The Dalits and

Sikhs have been represented on an off by different visitors.

Swami Agnivesh was in Washington DC and spoke to a group of defenders of religious freedom across the world. The Ambassador of religious liberty Hon. Sam Brownback presided the meeting. He was eloquent and precise, and it was an honor to meet the man whom I have come to admire for his stand on eradicating bonded labor and fighting for religious freedom of all Indians.



There is a grave threat today to civil liberties in general and religious freedom in particular in India.

Full speech of Swami Agnivesh

"Dear Ambassador Brownback and my fellow campaigners for human rights and religious freedom. I am grateful to you for this opportunity to speak here. Since the time allotted for me to speak is limited, I will get to the point immediately.

There is a grave threat today to civil liberties in general and religious freedom in particular in India. Indeed, the levels of violence we see in today's India against the social and religious minorities are in many ways unprecedented in recent decades. The victims of such vicious violence are some of India's poorest and most disadvantaged communities. They include Muslims, Christians, the Dalits, who are the former untouchables of the Hindu caste society, and the Adivasis, or the indigenous tribal people whose very existence is under threat.

Moreover, the perpetrators of this violence are directly linked with the RSS, which is the mother organization of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP party. Especially since Mr. Modi became India's prime minister in 2014, the attacks on the religious minorities have sharply increased. Armed mobs owing allegiance to the RSS and other Hindu groups have been lynching to death Muslims at will, accusing them of eating beef or slaughtering a cow. Such Hindu mobs also disrupt mixed-religion weddings in which the groom is Muslim, and the bride is Hindu because they don't want Hindu girls to marry Muslim boys. There have been instances in which such Muslim grooms have been killed, too.

Similarly, these vigilante groups owing allegiance to the RSS have been attacking Christian Churches, priests, and congregants all over India. Once again, they blame the victims for the violence, accusing the Christians of converting Hindus to Christianity.

For thousands of years, the Dalits have suffered the worst violence and indignities at the hands of upper caste Hindus. However, now, that indignity is doubled because laws have been created to deny positive quota benefits to Dalits who convert out of Hinduism to Christianity and Islam. Converted Dalits face even greater violence and assault.

As for the Adivasis, the indigenous people, the RSS-BJP have for decades been forcing Hinduism on them even though millions of these Adivasis clearly state that they are not Hindus and they have their indigenous faiths. I have myself been a victim of their violence over the years. Twice in the last six months only I have been attacked by these violent mobs. Of course, it is futile to expect any police action against such violent perpetrators.

If I, being a prominent human rights defender in India, cannot expect the police to act against my attackers, you can imagine what would be the story of these social and religious minorities I have spoken about, the Dalits, the Adivasis, the Christians and the Muslims, who are being targeted in their hundreds of thousands across India.

Even more worrying is that some organizations in the United States that claim to represent the interest of the Hindus defend the highly divisive and violent activities of the RSS-BJP and instead blame the religious minorities. They try to create a false equivalence between the highly organized and structural violence of the RSS-BJP, who are in power in the federal government in India as well as more than a dozen and a half of India's 29 states, and random acts of violence against Hindus that may occur.

The truth is that the biggest perpetrator of anti-minority violence in India is the RSS-BJP, which is now in power across India and is therefore grossly abusing its control of government machinery to provide impunity to its henchmen carrying out such violence. It would be a pity if the international community did not open its eyes and take notice of this worsening situation in the India of Mahatma Gandhi".

Swami Agnivesh also added that he was coming from giving the keynote address at the Parliament for World's Religions in Toronto, Canada and that the Hindu rightwing forces tried to prevent him from speaking there. He also said he had been a campaigner for justice for 50 years and had faced numerous attacks on his life, the most recent in Jharkhand in July, when hundreds of goons attacked him, and then again in Delhi in August. Swami Ji also spoke of his work with bonded laborers and said his organization had secured freedom and rehabilitation for more than 170,000 bonded laborers in India in the last thirty plus years.

(The author is a public speaker and the Executive Director of the Center for Pluralism in Washington, DC. He is committed to building cohesive societies and offers pluralistic solutions on issues of the day.

More about him at

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British PM Theresa May vows to fight for her Brexit deal and carry on

LONDON (TIP): Prime Minister Theresa May vowed to fight for her draft divorce deal with the European Union on Nov 15 after the resignation of her Brexit secretary and other ministers put her strategy and her job in peril. Just over 12 hours after May announced that her cabinet had agreed to the terms of the deal, Brexit minister Dominic Raab and work and pensions minister Esther McVey resigned. Eurosceptics in May's Conservative Party said they had submitted letters calling for a vote of no confidence in her leadership.

"Am I going to see this through? Yes," May told reporters at her Downing Street office.

Two junior ministers, two ministerial aides and the Conservatives' vice chairman also quit. Hostility to the deal from government and opposition lawmakers raised the risk that the deal would be rejected and Britain would leave the EU on March 29 without a safety net.

May said she was sorry at the resignations and understood their unhappiness, but believed her deal was the right one. "I believe with every fibre of my being that the course I have set out is the right one for our country and all our people," she said. May said she was sorry at the resignations and understood their unhappiness, but believed her deal was the right one.

"I believe with every fibre of my being that the course I have set out is the right one for our country and all our people," she said. (Reuters)

China says high-level trade talks with US have resumed

Gao gave no details of the talks or of which officials were conducting them. Xi and Trump are due to meet this month at a gathering of the Group of 20 major economies in Argentina.



BEIJING (TIP): China's Commerce Ministry says high-level trade talks between Beijing and Washington have resumed. A ministry spokesman, Gao Feng, said on Nov 15 the two sides are "maintaining close contact" following a November 1 phone call between President Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump.

The two sides have raised tariffs on billions of dollars of each other's goods in a dispute over Beijing's technology policy. Gao said: "High-level contacts between the two sides on economics and trade have resumed following the November 1 conversation between the Chinese and American heads of state."

Gao gave no details of the talks or of which officials were conducting them. Xi and Trump are due to meet this month at a gathering of the Group of 20 major economies in Argentina. (AP)

North Korea says it has tested 'ultramodern tactical weapon'

Last year's string of increasingly powerful weapons tests, many experts believe, put the North on the brink of a viable arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles that can target anywhere in the mainland United States.

SEOUL (TIP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed the successful test of "a newly developed ultramodern tactical weapon," the nation's state media reported on Nov 16, though it didn't describe what sort of weapon it was.

It didn't appear to be a nuclear or missile-related test, a string of which last year had many fearing war before the North turned to engagement and diplomacy early this year. Still, any mention of weapons testing could influence the direction of currently stalled diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang that's meant to rid the North of its nuclear weapons.

The North hasn't publicly tested any weapons since November of last year, but in recent days Pyongyang reportedly expressed anger at South Korea's resumption of small-scale military drills with the United States, and Friday's announcement could be in response to those drills.

Even if the test was a message for Washington and Seoul, Nov 16 report from the North was noticeably less belligerent than past announcements of weapons tests, and didn't focus on North Korean claims of U.S. and South Korean hostility.

It's the first publicly known field inspection of a weapons test by Kim Jong Un since he observed the testing of the Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile in November of last year, according



to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

The North said the test took place at the Academy of National Defense Science and that Kim couldn't suppress his "passionate joy" at the success of the test. He was described as "so excited to say that another great work was done by the defence scientists and munitions industrial workers to increase the defence capability of the country."

The North said this new, unspecified weapon has been under development for a long time and will help strengthen the combat power of its army.

Last year's string of increasingly powerful

weapons tests, many experts believe, put the North on the brink of a viable arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles that can target anywhere in the mainland United States.

Diplomacy has stalled since a June summit between President Donald Trump and Kim in Singapore, with Washington pushing for more action on nuclear disarmament and the North insisting that the U.S. first approve a peace declaration formally ending the Korean War. Trump and Kim are both interested in another summit, but it's unclear when it might happen. (AP)

Brexit deal turmoil pushes Theresa May's ministers to exit from UK govt

LONDON (TIP): British Prime Minister Theresa May on Nov 15 was dealt a severe blow when four of her ministers resigned over a "half-way house" divorce deal with the European Union, within 12 hours of her announcement that the Cabinet had agreed to the terms of the draft agreement.

Shailesh Vara, a Northern Ireland Minister to the Prime Minister, was the first to announce his resignation on Nov 15. Vara resigned from the government saying this will leave the UK "in a half-way house with no time limit on when we will finally be a sovereign nation".

This was followed by the resignation of Britain's Brexit secretary Dominic Raab, the man who was involved with the drafting of the agreement with EU counterparts. It came as a big blow to Prime Minister May throwing her leadership in turmoil. Raab, 44, criticised May's deal saying that it threatened the integrity of Britain and he could not support an indefinite backstop arrangement — to prevent a return to a hard border on the island of Ireland — where the EU had a veto over Britain's ability to exit.

"No democratic nation has ever signed up to be bound by such an extensive regime, imposed externally without any democratic control over the laws to be applied, nor the



ability to decide to exit the arrangement," Raab said in his resignation letter.

"Above all, I cannot reconcile the terms of the proposed deal with the promises we made to the country in our manifesto at the last election," Raab said. "This is, at its heart, a matter of public trust," Raab said. "I cannot support the proposed deal," the minister further said, according to Reuters.

Later, the welfare minister Esther McVey also called it quits accusing the prime minister of failing to honour the result of the 2016 referendum, saying she could not support

it.

Another junior minister, Suella Braverman, too resigned on Nov 15 saying the proposed divorce deal was not what the British people voted for and risked breaking up the United Kingdom.

With less than five months remaining till Britain leaves the European Union on March 29, the resignations put PM May's Brexit strategy in doubt.

Leaders of EU will meet on November 25 to sign off on the divorce deal, or Withdrawal Agreement, but with the ensuing drama in London, the question remains if the May government will survive till the end of the month. Britain's opposition Labour Party said the government was "falling apart".

"Theresa May has no authority left and is clearly incapable of delivering a Brexit deal that commands even the support of her cabinet, let alone parliament and the people of our country," said Jon Trickett, a member of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's senior team.

One lawmaker in May's Conservative Party said more colleagues were either putting in letters to trigger a no-confidence vote in her leadership or were increasingly minded to do so. May's administration could be toppled if a majority of her lawmakers vote against her. (Express news desk)

Khashoggi murder case: Saudi Arabia prosecutor seeks death penalty for five accused

The Public Prosecutor has requested the death penalty for 5 individuals who are charged with ordering and committing the crime and for the appropriate sentences for the other indicted individuals.

RIYADH (TIP): Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor is seeking the death penalty for five out of 11 suspects charged in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, in a case that has strained the kingdom's ties with key Western allies, his office said on Nov 15.

Khashoggi, a prominent critic of Saudi policy, was killed in the country's Istanbul consulate on October 2, after a struggle, by a lethal injection dose and his body was dismembered and taken out of the building, deputy public prosecutor and spokesman Shaalan al-Shaalan told reporters.

He said the Washington Post columnist was murdered after "negotiations" for his return to the kingdom failed and that the person who ordered the killing was the head of the negotiating team that was sent to repatriate Khashoggi. The whereabouts of Khashoggi's body remain unknown, he said.

Riyadh had offered numerous contradictory explanations for Khashoggi's disappearance before saying he was killed in a rogue operation, in a case that has sparked a global outcry, opened the kingdom to possible sanctions and tarnished the image of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Turkish officials have accused Prince Mohammed of ordering the murder while President Erdogan said the killing was ordered at the "highest levels" of the Saudi government. US President Donald Trump has suggested ultimate responsibility lies with the



prince as de facto ruler.

"The Public Prosecutor has requested the death penalty for 5 individuals who are charged with ordering and committing the crime and for the appropriate sentences for the other indicted individuals," Shaalan said, without naming the five. He said 11 out of 21 suspects have been indicted and that their cases will be referred to court, while the investigation with the remaining suspects will continue in order to determine their role in the crime.

A travel ban has been imposed on a top aide

to the crown prince, Saud al-Qahtani, while investigations continue over his role, Shaalan said, adding Qahtani had met the team ordered to repatriate Khashoggi ahead of their journey to Istanbul to brief them on the journalist's activities. Qahtani has already been fired from the royal court.

Turkey says it has a recording related to the killing which it has shared with Western allies. President Tayyip Erdogan said the recordings are "appalling" and shocked a Saudi intelligence officer who listened to them, Turkish media reported on Nov 12. (Reuters)

Vladimir Putin: Arms control to top agenda for his meeting with Donald Trump

MOSCOW (TIP): Russian President Vladimir Putin says arms control issues will likely top the agenda of his planned meeting with US President Donald Trump. Putin says the leaders need to discuss the future of the 2011 New START agreement and the situation around the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty.

Trump has declared his intention to withdraw from the INF, which was signed by US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Putin said Thursday that if he and Trump meet as expected at the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Argentina later this month, they would also discuss Syria, North Korea and Iran.

Putin says he spoke Thursday with US Vice President Mike Pence at the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Singapore, touching on arms control and other issues. (AP)

South Korea suspends flights, delay office hours as thousands attempt nine-hour entrance exam

PENINSULA (TIP): As thousands sat for the crucial national university exam in South Korea, the country's government undertook some extraordinary measures to minimise possible distractions for the school students. The timings of all public offices, major businesses and the opening of the stock market were delayed by an hour to ease the traffic in order to ensure that the students reached their exam venues on time. Also, there were provisions for police cars and motorbikes for those stuck in traffic.

All takeoffs and landings at South Korean airports were suspended for 25 minutes to coincide with an English listening test, and all airborne planes were ordered to maintain an altitude higher than 3,000m (10,000 feet), according to a Channel News Asia report. According to South Korea's Transport Ministry, 134 flights were rescheduled because of the exam.

About 595,000 students sat for this year's exam which holds key to admission in top universities, raised social recognition, elite jobs, and even marriage prospects.

President Moon Jae-in, who is attending a regional summit in Singapore, wished the students on his Facebook page.

The intense effort they had put in over years of study was coming to fruition, he said in his Facebook post. "Believe in it and you will be able to show your full competence," he wrote.

School students from lower grades had gathered in huge numbers in front of exam centres, singing in chorus and holding colourful banners that said, "Don't mess up!" Jung Ho-yun, a student at Ehwa Girls' Foreign Language High School in central Seoul, told Channel News Asia report: "Their lives depend on this exam, so it's very important." Parents who came to drop their wards gave them long hugs, wiping away their tears. Some even went to church to offer prayers before the exam. Strict rules for the exam meant that electronics were strictly prohibited and leaving the school premises before the test ends is also forbidden to reduce the possibilities of cheating. (Express News Desk)

Bipartisan legislation introduced against China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang

BEIJING (TIP): A powerful bipartisan group of over a dozen American senators has introduced a legislation against China, accusing it of committing "gross" human rights abuses of a million Uyghur Muslims in its restive Xinjiang province.

The Uyghur Human Right Policy Act accuses China of gross violations of human rights in Uyghur Autonomous Region, including the mass internment of over one million Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities.

It also accuses China of intimidation and threats against US citizens and legal permanent residents (LPRs) on American soil. "The United States must hold accountable officials in the Chinese government and Communist Party responsible for gross violations of human rights and possible crimes against humanity, including the internment in 'political reeducation' camps of as many as a million Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim minorities," Senator Marco Rubio said.

Alleging that China's treatment of its Uyghurs is beyond abhorrent, Senator Bob Menendez said Beijing's surveillance state

tactics threaten basic human dignity. "The President needs to have a clear and consistent approach to China, and not turn a blind eye as a million Muslims are unjustly imprisoned and forced into labour camps by an autocratic regime," he said. US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping are scheduled to meet in Argentina later this month on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit.

Among other co-sponsors of the legislation include senators Cory Gardner, Chuck Grassley, John Cornyn, Ed Markey, Richard Blumenthal and Elizabeth Warren.

Seeking a State Department report regarding the scale and scope of the crackdown, the legislation urges high-level US engagement on the issue, the establishment of a new "double-hatted" position at the State Department (a Special Coordinator for Xinjiang) while the crisis persists. The legislation calls for a report by the Director of National Intelligence regarding the regional security threat posed by the crackdown and the frequency with which Central Asian countries are forcibly returning Turkic Muslim refugees and asylum seekers. The report will also include a

list of Chinese companies involved in the construction and operation of the camps.

Congressman Chris Smith, co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, along with Thomas Suozzi and eight other lawmakers introduced a similar bipartisan legislation in the House of Representatives.

"The internment of over a million Uyghurs and other Muslims in China is a staggering evil and should be treated by the international community as a crime against humanity," said Smith. "The Chinese government's creation of a vast system of what can only be called concentration camps cannot be tolerated in the 21st century," he asserted.

This legislation gives the administration the tools to take a firm stand against Beijing's plans to erase the religious identity, culture and language of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China's western province, he added. Smith said the Chinese government officials should be held accountable for their complicity in "gross violations" of human rights and US businesses should be barred from helping China create a high-tech police state in Xinjiang province. (PTI)



SUNNY LEONE TO SHAKE A LEG IN VISHAL'S AYOGYA?

Bollywood actress Sunny Leone is all set to make her South debut with director Vadivudaiyan's Veeramadevi. According to reports, the actress will be seen in another Tamil film much sooner.

Going by the rumours, Sunny Leone is said to have been approached by the makers of Tamil film Ayogya. Sources reveal that she wouldn't be seen in an important role, but would perform for a special number in the film.

Ayogya, directed by Venkat Mohan, stars Vishal, Raashi Khanna, KS Ravikumar and Parthiepan in the lead roles. The Tamil film is said to be a remake of Telugu hit film Temper. In Temper, Nora Fatehi grooved to the song 'Ittage Rechchipodam'. Initially, the makers considered Shruti Haasan for the song.

An official confirmation regarding the same will be out in the coming days.

Venkat Mohan is an erstwhile assistant to filmmaker AR Murugadoss, who is enjoying the success of Vijay-starrer Sarkar. It is said that Venkat has made considerable changes in Ayogya's script to suit the Tamil audience.

Bankrolled by B Madhu of Light House Movie Makers, Ayogya has music by Sam CS and editing by Antony L Ruben.

DEEPIKA, RANVEER SINGH TIE THE KNOT AMID PRIESTS' CHANTS, TIGHT SECURITY



Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh tied the knot in an intimate wedding ceremony at Lake Como in Italy on Wednesday. The couple married as per Konkani rituals amid the recital of the holy mantras. The wedding took place at the picturesque Villa Del Belbianello with around 30-40 guests in attendance. The mandap was decorated with white flowers while the sprawling venue decked up by about 12 florists specially flown in from Florence.

The wedding will be followed by a grand lunch at the villa with several cuisines on display, including the South Indian staples like rice and dosa. A report suggests that

special chefs from Switzerland have been flown to Italy to bake the perfect wedding cake along with some amazing desserts.

Heavy security is in place at the venue in order to avoid any trespassers and paparazzi. A no-picture policy also bars the guests from sharing any pictures of the event.

The Padmaavat actors will get married again as per Sindhi rituals on November 15. The wedding was preceded by a romantic engagement ceremony on November 12. According to the reports, the sangeet and mehendi ceremonies were held at different venues with Ranveer's ceremony at the decked up CastaDiva Resort and Deepika's function at Villa d'Este, situated five

kilometers away.

Singers Harshdeep Kaur and Shubha Mudgal sang mehendi and thumri songs respectively during the mehendi ceremony. It is to be noted, Harshdeep had shared a picture from the venue during the sangeet which was later deleted under the no picture policy.

The lavish Italian wedding will be followed by a Bengaluru reception on November 21 and Mumbai reception on November 28. The wedding invites came with QR codes which were to be scanned at the time of the entry. The visitors and the guests were also handed over special wrist bands to be presented for entry at the Casta Diva villa.

Katrina Kaif says she has a 'lot of comfort' with Alia Bhatt, remains friends with Deepika Padukone

When Katrina Kaif and Varun Dhawan took the couch at Karan Johar-hosted Koffee With Karan, the inevitable question did crop up. How is Katrina's friendship with Alia Bhatt now that the 25-year-old actor is dating Ranbir Kapoor. Katrina and Ranbir have dated in the past and their relationship ended on a sour note.

Katrina insisted that she has a one-on-one relationship with Alia. "There is a lot of enjoyment and comfort when Alia and I are together," she said on the show, claiming that she has a strong bond with another of Ranbir's ex's, Deepika Padukone. Katrina said she and Deepika work out at Yasmin Karachiwala's gym and that keeps their bond strong, according to Mumbai Mirror.

When Alia and Deepika had come together for the season opener of Koffee With Karan, the host had asked them about their equation with Katrina. Alia had said that she used to work out with Katrina Kaif so they used to stay

In answer to Karan Johar's query whether Alia dating Ranbir has altered their friendship, Katrina Kaif said she has a stand-alone bond with the Raazi star

connected while Deepika asserted that they don't communicate with her everyday but are comfortable with each other. Karan asked them if there has been an instance when Alia, Deepika and Katrina have been in the same gym together. Alia and Deepika both said yes to it. Praising them for looking good together in the promo, host Karan Johar can be seen asking Katrina that since she is single, has she considered Varun as an option. The Thugs of Hindostan actor can be seen cringing at the idea itself. Karan is also expected to raise a lot of eyebrows by asking Varun's opinion on "should Katrina marry Salman Khan."





CARRIE UNDERWOOD REVEALS SHE IS HAVING A BABY BOY

Carrie Underwood accidentally let it slip that she is having a "Willie" while co-hosting the 52nd Annual CMA Awards on Wednesday night. Her good friend and fellow country crooner Brad Paisley managed to learn the sex of the baby by pressing Carrie for the deets on live TV.

"Seriously, Carrie, give me a baby hint," he insisted. Then, after rattling off a list of potential boy or girl names, Carrie exasperatedly said, "Oh, my gosh, Willie, it's a Willie!"

"Carrie blew it! Trending worldwide! Way bigger than when I did it, and worse," Brad joked.

And it's good Carrie was the one with the loose lips this time around, since the last time she was pregnant he accidentally revealed the sex of the baby. Brad asked Carrie, "Hey, you remember last time when I accidentally revealed the gender of your baby?"

During their opening monologue, Brad even joked that Carrie's husband Mike Fisher may not be the daddy. He asked, "Mike, we're all rooting for you, buddy. What's your gut feeling, here, Carrie?"

PAMELA ANDERSON SLAMS #METOO MOVEMENT AND CALLS FEMINISM BORING

The sexual harassment allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein in October 2017 sparked the #MeToo movement in Hollywood, and women came forward and shared their horror stories of sexual assault, inappropriate behaviour and misconduct at the hands of powerful men in the industry.

While the movement has received overpowering support from people, there are many who have expressed their reservations about it. Recently, Pamela Anderson, who was popular for her 90's TV show Baywatch, slammed the movement on a talk show.

"I think this feminism can go too far. I'm a feminist, but I think that this third wave of feminism is a bore. I think it paralyzes men," she said, adding, "I think that this #MeToo movement is a bit too much for me. I'm sorry, I'll probably get killed for saying that." To which her interviewer replied, "Yes, you will."

She went on to speak about Harvey Weinstein and the accusations against him and implied that women who went to meet him in hotel rooms should have used "common sense".

Pamela said, "My mother taught me, don't go into a hotel with a stranger. And if someone answers the door in a bathrobe and it's supposed to be a business meeting, maybe I should go with somebody else. I think that some things are just common sense." She then proceeded to say, "Or if you go in, get the job," and laughed.

In October, the #MeToo movement was sparked in India, after Tanushree Dutta came forward and accused Nana Patekar of sexually harassing her on the sets of Horn Ok Pleassss in 2008. Soon, faces were unmasked in Bollywood, as veteran filmmakers and actors like Subhash Ghai, Sajid Khan, Vikas Bahl and Rajat Kapoor were accused of sexual misconduct.



Stan Lee, creator of a galaxy of Marvel superheroes, dies at 95

Stan Lee, the creative dynamo who revolutionized the comic book and helped make billions for Hollywood by introducing human frailties in Marvel superheroes such as Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and the Incredible Hulk, died Monday. He was 95.

Lee was declared dead at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, according to Kirk Schenck, an attorney for Lee's daughter, J.C. Lee.

As the top writer at Marvel Comics and later as its publisher, Lee was widely considered the architect of the contemporary comic book. He revived the industry in the 1960s by offering the costumes and action craved by younger readers while insisting on sophisticated plots, college-level dialogue, satire, science fiction, even philosophy.

Millions responded to the unlikely mix of realistic fantasy, and many of his characters, including Spider-Man, the Hulk and X-Men went on to become stars of blockbuster films. He won the National Medal of Arts in 2008.

Recent projects Lee helped make possible range from the films "Avengers: Infinity War," "Black Panther" and "Guardians of the Galaxy" to such TV series as "Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D" and "Daredevil." Lee was recognizable to his fans, having had cameos in many Marvel films and TV projects, often delivering his trademark motto, "Excelsior!"

"Captain America" actor Chris Evans mourned the loss on Twitter: "There will never be another Stan Lee. For decades he provided both young and old with adventure, escape, comfort, confidence, inspiration, strength, friendship and joy. He exuded love and kindness and will leave an indelible mark on so, so, so many lives.

Excelsior!!" Lee considered the comic-book medium an art form and he was prolific: By some accounts, he came up with a new comic book every day for 10 years. "I wrote so many I don't even know. I wrote either hundreds or thousands of them," he told The Associated Press in 2006.

He hit his stride in the 1960s when he brought the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Spider-Man, Iron Man and numerous others to life. "It was like there was something in the air. I couldn't do anything wrong," he said.

His heroes, meanwhile, were a far cry from virtuous do-gooders such as rival DC Comics' Superman. The Fantastic Four fought with each other. Spider-Man was goaded into superhero work by his alter ego, Peter Parker, who suffered from unrequited crushes, money problems and dandruff. The Silver Surfer, an alien doomed to wander Earth's atmosphere, waxed about the woeful nature of man. The Hulk was marked by self-loathing. Daredevil was blind and Iron Man had a weak heart.

"The beauty of Stan Lee's characters is that they were characters first and superheroes next," Jeff Kline, executive producer of the "Men in Black" animated television series, told The Blade of Toledo, Ohio, in 1998.

Source: AP



Wife of Malaysian ex-leader hit with 2 new graft charges

KUALA LUMPUR (MALAYSIA) (TIP): The wife of Malaysian ex-Prime Minister Najib Razak has been charged with corruption related to a solar energy project in addition to earlier charges brought against her last month. A former minister and a former aide to Najib were also charged with graft.

Rosmah Mansor pleaded not guilty Nov 15 to allegedly soliciting 187.5 million ringgit (\$44.8 million) from Jepak Holdings in 2016 for her help in securing a 1.25 billion (\$299 million) solar energy project involving rural schools in eastern Sarawak state. She also denied any wrongdoing in allegedly receiving 1.5 million ringgit (\$358,400) in 2017 from a Jepak official over the project.

Rosmah already faces multiple charges of money laundering in a multibillion-dollar graft scandal that led to her husband's shocking electoral loss in May. (AP)

Bangladesh says Rohingya who volunteer will go to Myanmar

COX'S BAZAR (TIP): Bangladesh authorities say repatriation of some Rohingya Muslims to Myanmar will begin Nov 15 as scheduled if people are willing to go despite calls from United Nations officials and human rights groups for the refugees' safety to be verified first.

Refugee commissioner Abul Kalam said at a news conference that officials will go to a camp to speak to refugees in the afternoon and transfer any who volunteer across the border to Myanmar.

A UN-brokered deal with Bangladesh and Myanmar says refugees can't be forced to repatriate.

At Jamtoli camp, 25-year-old Setara says she and her two children, ages 4 and 7, are on a repatriation list but don't want to go. She sent her children to school Thursday morning as usual. (AP)

Taliban kill 30 policemen in west province

KABUL (TIP): Afghan officials say the Taliban have killed 30 policemen in a blistering overnight attack in western Farah province.

Provincial council member Dadullah Qani said on Thursday that the onslaught on the police outpost in the province's district of Khaki Safed began late on Wednesday and continued for more than four hours.

In Kabul, lawmaker Samiullah Samim said the district police commander, Abdul Jabbar, was among those killed. The Taliban managed to flee with a large amount of weapons and ammunition.

Samim says retaliatory airstrikes killed 17 Taliban fighters. The Taliban have in recent months been staging near-daily attacks across Afghanistan, inflicting heavy casualties on Afghan forces.

Authorities no longer regularly provide casualty figures but unofficial estimates say about 45 Afghan police or soldiers are killed or wounded daily. (AP)

Sri Lankan lawmakers fight in Parliament over PM dispute

More than 50 lawmakers in the 225-member house fought and some who fell on the floor were kicked by rivals. Some of the lawmakers supporting Rajapaksa threw water bottles, books and trash cans at the speaker.

COLOMBO (TIP): Rival lawmakers exchanged blows in Sri Lanka's Parliament on Nov 15 as disputed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa claimed the speaker had no authority to remove him from office by voice vote.

The fighting in the chamber came a day after it passed a no-confidence vote against Rajapaksa's government. When Parliament re-convened, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said the country had no government and there was no prime minister — either Rajapaksa or his rival whose ousting in late October by the president started the crisis.

Rajapaksa disagreed, saying "a vote should have been taken. Such important motions should not be passed by a voice vote." He added that Jayasuriya has no power to remove or appoint the prime minister and Cabinet members.

He accused the speaker of being partial and representing the position of his party, the United National Party, which is led by ousted Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Rajapaksa also called for fresh elections, suggesting that it was the best way to resolve the crisis. A brawl erupted after the opposition asked for a vote on Rajapaksa's statement, with lawmakers supporting him gathering in the middle of the house while some ran toward the speaker shouting slogans condemning his behaviour.

More than 50 lawmakers in the 225-member house fought and some who fell on the floor were kicked by rivals. Some of the lawmakers supporting Rajapaksa threw water bottles, books and trash cans at the speaker. Those opposed to Rajapaksa surrounded Jayasuriya to protect him. The commotion went on for about half an hour before Jayasuriya adjourned the house.

"The speaker was under complete siege, he came very close to being physically assaulted by MPs supporting Rajapaksa," said Chandani Kirinde, a senior correspondent of



the Sunday Times, a weekly paper in Sri Lanka. "While clashes have happened in the house, this is probably the first time the speaker came under so much intimidation and abuse."

On Wednesday, Jayasuriya said the debate on the no-confidence motion was not possible after the chamber descended into chaos and he had no choice but to take an oral vote.

In January, lawmakers also exchanged blows during a debate over alleged corruption that marred the reputation of Wickremesinghe's government that was elected on a platform of good governance.

Sri Lanka has been in a crisis since Oct. 26, when President Maithripala Sirisena suddenly fired Wickremesinghe and replaced him with Rajapaksa. The former president is considered a hero by some of the ethnic Sinhalese majority for ending a long civil war by crushing Tamil Tiger rebels. However, his

time in power was marred by allegations of wartime atrocities, corruption and nepotism.

Tensions had been building between Sirisena and Wickremesinghe for some time, as the president did not approve of economic reforms introduced by the prime minister. Sirisena has also accused Wickremesinghe and another Cabinet member of plotting to assassinate him, a charge Wickremesinghe has repeatedly denied.

Sirisena had also suspended Parliament, apparently to allow Rajapaksa time to gather support among lawmakers. But Wickremesinghe insisted his firing was unconstitutional. He refused to vacate his official residence and demanded that Parliament be summoned to prove he still has support. On Nov 10, the Supreme Court suspended Sirisena's order to dissolve Parliament and hold new elections until next month. (AP)

Pakistan PM Imran Khan to visit Malaysia next week; likely to seek monetary aid

This would be Khan's first bilateral visit to Malaysia. Khan and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will have a tete-a-tete, followed by the delegation-level talks.

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Prime Minister Imran Khan will visit Malaysia next week where he is likely to seek monetary assistance to minimise cash-strapped Pakistan's dependence on an IMF bailout package. The Foreign Office said that Prime Minister Khan would be accompanied by a high-level delegation during his official trip to Malaysia on November 20-21.

This would be Khan's first bilateral visit to Malaysia. Khan and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will have a tete-a-tete, followed by the delegation-level talks. The two countries enjoy warm brotherly relations founded in mutual respect friendship and understanding reinforced by strong cultural and religious affinities, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

Khan's visit "would provide an opportunity to further cement the existing friendly and cordial bilateral relations by enhancing economic, trade and commercial

ties, for our mutual benefit," the statement said.

Pakistan was facing a \$12 billion financing gap for the current fiscal year.

The Pakistan government is keen to minimise the amount borrowed from the International Monetary Fund by getting loans from "friendly" countries like Saudi Arabia, China and Malaysia as officials here believe that the global lender could attach tough conditions.

Early this month, Prime Minister Khan visited China, which reportedly agreed to provide USD 6 billion in aid to Pakistan. Last month, Saudi Arabia said it would provide Pakistan with a USD 6 billion rescue package during Khan's visit to the Gulf Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Pakistan Ikram Bin Mohammad Ibrahim called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi here and discussed a wide range of issues. Qureshi briefed the High Commissioner about Prime Minister Khan's upcoming visit to Malaysia.

He also highlighted that the prime minister's visit would help further strengthen bilateral relations between two countries and open new avenues of bilateral cooperation.

The Malaysian diplomat assured his government's full support to enhance bilateral relations with Pakistan and said that the Malaysian leadership looks forward to Khan's visit. (PTI)

EXPERIENCE KERALA

Golden beaches, emerald backwaters, lofty mountain ranges, powerful art forms... the choices are many and so are the wonders that await you in Kerala. Come and take home what they call 'memories', the kind that makes life worth living.

Things to do in Kerala

When in Kerala all you do is to LET GO. Let the lazy backwaters set pace to your day and village folksongs croon to your heart. Let the clarion call of the jungles awaken the wilderness in you. Bathe elephants. Discover remote festivals that leave imprints on your soul. Take your taste buds on rides through flavours they never dreamt existed. Camp in the woods lying awake listening to the symphony of Nature at night and early in the morning let the mountain mists awake you with whispered tales of long forgotten travellers...

Houseboat in Alleppey

Alleppey tops in the list of places to visit in Kerala. Looking at the lush green landscape and being served a freshly prepared meal as you travel through the tranquil backwaters is just as amazing as it is made out to be. The boat accommodates the whole family and includes breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Prices vary from Rs 6500-11500 and its better to call in advance and reserve.

Watch the Neelakurinji Bloom in Munnar

Eravikulam National Park is one the most frequented tourist attractions in Kerala because of Neelakurinji, which bloom once in 12 years and this rare view is a fascinating experience. Also see the Nigiri Thar, an endangered mountain goat while going on a trek to the peak of the hill.

Enjoy Village life for a day

Have an authentic rural experience at Kumbalangi Integrated Tourism Village. Exploring the local paddy cultivation, canoeing in mangrove forests, fishing, crab farming are amongst the many things to do in the village. Many homestays are available in the village which can be booked by the visitors. The village is 14 kms from Ernakulam railway station.

Meal at the Veli Tourist Village

From all the places to visit on your trip to Kerala, exploring the Veli Lake and dining in the floating restaurant at the lake is an incredible experience. Paddle boat in the lake and check out the floating bridge that links the tourist village with the beach. Veli Tourist Village is located at a distance of 8 Km from Thiruvananthapuram.

Go on Shikara rides in Alappuzha

About 4 hours from Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha offers some stunning views of the backwaters. Other than looking at the village life, the coconut tress, you will also see an array of birds. The double deck boats give a 3-4 hour ride without the expense of a houseboat and costs Rs 600 per hour.

Watch the Snake Boat Races

Watching the colourful Snake Boat races in Alappuzha is one of the amazing things to do in Kerala. Snake boat races are mostly held from July to September particularly during Onam festival. You can even rent a boat to look at the race from close-by. The closest station is Alleppey which is accessible from



Ernakulam.

Stay in a Tree house

Next on our list of things to do in Kerala is staying in a Tree House. Get closer to nature and experience the fun of staying in a Tree House at Wayanad, Munnar, Athirapally or Thekkady. You can indulge in activities like rappelling, rock climbing, nature walks and mountain biking.

Take a spice tour

Take a tour of the spice plantations or gardens in Munnar, Thekkady or Wayanad. Taste some authentic black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and the exotic vanilla and explore the farms on a nature walk. Most hotels include these tours in their packages but you can visit on your own too, like the Abraham's Spice garden in Thekkady.

Coffee plantation visit in Wayanad
Drink your cuppa joe where it gets made.
Stay at a coffee plantation resort or homestay



and it would include all the activities like trekking, night safaris, camp fire and plantation walks.

Architecture tour in Fort Kochi

Fort Kochi is an amazing place to visit in Kerala. With the influence of Arabs, British,

Dutch, Chinese, and Portuguese, Fort Kochi has a lot of eclectic architecture to gawk at. Explore the place on foot or on a bicycle including the Jewish synagogue, Indo portuguese museum, Chinese fishing nets, Santa Cruz Basilica and Fort Kochi beach.

HAIR-SAVING TIPS FOR BLEACHING HAIR BLONDE

Icy blonde hair is the look of the moment but to achieve the super-light look, it means reaching for the bleach bottle.

Not only does blonde hair need a lot of care, but, as many of us have found out, bleach, if used incorrectly, can be extremely damaging.

But there are a number of ways you can protect your hair to avoid damaging it in the process of going blonde.

A professional hairstylist is best to ensure you get the look you want, with the minimum of damage, so save your coins.

"Bleaching hair will always incur some damage and the hair will need a lot of TLC afterwards but this can be manageable," explains Ross Charles, owner of Ross Charles Hairdressing. "Your stylist should consult with you in detail prior to bleaching your hair to discuss your hair type and hair care routine."

Protect your locks

Advances in hair technology can help you strengthen hair ahead of the bleaching process.

"Technology available today has also dramatically reduced the risks and consequences of bleaching hair; treatments like Olaplex are incredible at fortifying the strands and ensuring your hair remains healthy and strong during the bleaching process," explains Krysia Eddery, owner of Perfectly Posh Hair Design. "As an Aveda salon we use Aveda Enlightener Powder which contains sunflower, castor and jojoba oils that will protect your hair as it processes and adds incredible shine. This particular product also conditions your hair to ensure hair health remains intact."

Don't neglect it

This isn't a wash and go look. Conditioning is really important and a weekly mask a must.

"Once you have decided to go ahead you must be prepared to put in the work at home to get your hair back to prime condition," adds Ross. "Your stylist will be able to help you with this but as a



general rule, use a deep conditioning mask once per week, do not overuse heated styling tools and always use heat protection after each wash."

Be realistic

Don't think you can go from Cher black, to Madonna blonde in one simple step. "If your hair is very dark and you would like to go lighter, you need to be

prepared for a lengthy journey to your desired result," Ross advises. "It is not recommended to apply a full head of bleach to dark hair in order to reach that light blonde shade in one sitting. This will need to be carried out over a number of appointments and will require a level of commitment to it is important to decide if you are definitely ready to commit 100 per cent."

Source: covermg.com

FOOD CORNER

ALOO CHAAT

Ingredients

- 2 potatoes boiled and peeled, 2 tbsp oil
- ½ small sized onion finely chopped
- ½ tsp kashmiri chili powder / lal mirch powder, salt to taste
- ¼ tsp cumin powder / jeera powder roasted
- ½ tsp chaat masala, 2 tbsp green chutney
- 2 tbsp sweet tamarind chutney /imli-chutney, ¼ cup sev
- 2 tsp curd / yogurt, 1 tsp coriander leaves
- 2 tsp pomegranate seeds

Instructions

- Firstly, pressure cook the potatoes for 2 whistle and peel the skin.
- Furthermore, cut the potatoes into cubes.
- And pan fry in 2 tbsp of oil. add more oil if you are not using nonstick pan.
- Do not over mix, as the potatoes will break apart.
- Saute the potatoes till they turn golden brown from all the sides.
- Transfer the fried potatoes into bowl.
- Add finely chopped onions. adding onions is optional.
- Also add chili powder, roasted cumin powder, chaat masala and salt.
- Additionally add green chutney and sweet tamarind chutney /imli-chutney.
- Mix gently without breaking the aloo / potato pieces.
- Transfer the chaat into a serving plate.
- Top with generous amount of sev.
- And also spread a tsp of curd and coriander leaves.
- Finally, garnish with pomegranate seeds and serve with cutting chai.



How a breakup can damage your friendship

Flaking out last minute or forgetting to text back – it's easy to get so consumed in your romantic relationship that you end up neglecting your mates.

But what happens if that relationship ends? Will you still be able to call on the unwavering support of your friends? This is what a new study aimed to find out.

Published in the journal Families, Relationships and Societies, it explored how friendships change, and can even be lost, following a relationship breakdown.

Study authors Dr Jenny van Hooff (senior lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan) and Dr Gaëlle Aeby (honorary research fellow at University of Manchester) trawled through relationship and divorce internet forum discussions, analysing some 370 posts written as far back as 2009.

They wanted to assess users' experience of transitioning from coupled-up to single, and how this might affect their friendship circles. It made for some interesting observations.

The researchers found that users' failure to properly maintain friendships while in a couple meant that their friends' support was often not forthcoming when their romantic relationships



ended. Users were often left feeling isolated and betrayed, thus exacerbating the trauma of their break-up.

Not only that, but they also found a relationship breakdown can uncover "previously unacknowledged couple privilege", which can have negative and unexpected consequences when the relationship ends. "Our findings indicate that intimate partner breakdown often has unexpected consequences for other social ties," Dr van Hooff explained. "When the expected 'drawing in' of

close friends failed to materialise, forum users expressed feelings of abandonment and confusion, far removed from individualised understandings of friendships as an easily disposed of tie."

Users were found to have disproportionately high expectations of their friends. People who had neglected their friends while in a relationship still expected them to be there to comfort them in their time of need.

"The valorisation of the sexual couple as the ideal relationship form coexists with idealised representations of friendship as providing high levels of emotional support during critical life transitions," the study reads. "Unlike partners, friends are expected to have a certain amount of intrinsic flexibility, to be available during emotional trials and to be of more significance in the lives of the unattached." Naturally, however, the called-upon friends weren't always willing to meet these expectations, which left the newly single individuals feeling a sense of having been deeply betrayed, and leading them to deem these friends 'shallow as puddles', 'fake', 'false' or 'superficial' in some threads – particularly if they had taken their ex-partner's side in the break-up.

Source: Evening Standard

PEDAL DESKS MAY REDUCE HEALTH RISKS OF SEDENTARY WORKPLACE

Pedal desks can help sedentary employees achieve their health goals, and lower the risk of diseases linked to physical inactivity, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease, a study has found.

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the US found that pedalling while conducting work tasks improved insulin responses to a test meal.

Insulin levels following the meal were lower when sedentary workers used a pedal desk compared to a standard desk. In addition, work skills were not decreased in the pedalling condition.

Researchers said that pedal desks "could have the potential to achieve public and occupational health goals in sedentary work environments." They point out that physical inactivity and sedentary work environments have been linked to higher rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease through insulin resistance and other mechanisms.

"Instead of approaching the problem by trying to squeeze intermittent activity into a largely sedentary work routine, we chose to consider integrating physical activity into the workday," said Stuart Chipkin, who led the study published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

Researchers felt that the alternatives now available for office workers—standing desks and treadmill desks—are not feasible to use for whole shifts and may even pose some barriers, such as standing too long.

By contrast, a pedal desk can be used in a seated position at the user's own pace for as little or as much time as the worker chooses.

Though there are currently no commercial pedal desks on the market,



researchers were able to use a prototype pedal desk.

They recruited 12 overweight/obese full-time sedentary office workers, six men and six women, and tested them in two conditions, pedalling at self-selected light-intensity pace for two hours, and working while seated for two hours at a conventional desk. In both conditions, participants performed computer-based tasks and were tested on mouse proficiency, typing speed and accuracy, reading comprehension and concentration/attention.

The participants also provided blood samples after eating a light meal for analysis of metabolic responses of glucose, insulin and free fatty acids, a

link between obesity, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

Researchers report that pedal desk use required significantly less insulin to maintain glucose concentrations compared with using the standard desk.

"It took much less insulin to keep their blood sugars the same. This means that the body doesn't work so hard to maintain blood glucose and fatty acid levels with use of the pedal desk compared to a standard desk," said Chipkin.

"From the metabolic point of view, the pedal desk seems to be helpful and the from the work point of view, work tasks were not impaired," he said.

Source: PTI

Breastfeeding may prevent non-alcoholic fatty liver disease

Women, take note! Breastfeeding for six months or more could lower your risk of developing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) years later during mid-life.

The study, conducted by researchers at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine and Kaiser Permanente, is published in the *Journal of Hepatology*.

"Breastfeeding and its benefits to the child have been widely studied for years," said Veeral Ajmera, a researcher. "However, this new analysis contributes to the growing body of evidence showing that breastfeeding a child also offers significant health benefits to the mother - namely, protecting her from developing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in middle age."

"The study's unique strength is the evaluation of cardiovascular and metabolic risk factors in young women before pregnancy and across the childbearing years," said senior author Erica P. Gunderson. "This design accounts for pre-pregnancy risk factors and identifies more closely the specific relation of lactation to a woman's future disease risk."

According to study findings, women in the cohort who breastfed one or more children for longer than six months had a lower risk of NAFLD compared to those who did not breastfeed or breastfed for under one month. Typical of NAFLD, women diagnosed with the disease 25 years later had a higher body mass index, larger waist circumference, higher triglycerides, and lower HDL cholesterol when compared to those without NAFLD.

NAFLD is usually asymptomatic until advanced stages of liver disease and includes a spectrum of disease severity, with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) being the most aggressive type. Multiple genetic and environmental factors contribute to NAFLD, and certain health conditions, such as obesity and type 2 diabetes, can be predisposing factors.

It is estimated that tens of millions of people globally are living with NAFLD and NASH. Weight loss and a healthier diet are the current standards of care.

"Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and all metabolic diseases have a unique relationship with socioeconomic factors," said Ajmera. "The inclusion of additional information regarding diet and exercise only further strengthen our claim that breastfeeding is beneficial in the prevention of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease."

Source: ANI



How eating veggies, fish can keep your heart healthy, lower heart disease risk

If you are suffering from high blood pressure, consuming fish, seafood and a primarily vegetarian diet may help reduce hypertension-related heart disease symptoms, a study suggests.

Intake of fish, seafood and vegetarian food increases levels of a compound called trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO), known to boost heart health, said researchers from the Medical University of Warsaw in Poland. The study showed that low-dose treatment with TMAO reduced heart thickening (cardiac fibrosis) and markers of heart failure in an animal model of hypertension. "Our study provides new evidence for a potential beneficial effect of a moderate increase in plasma TMAO on pressure-overloaded heart," the researchers said.

For the study, published in the *American Journal of Physiology - Heart and Circulatory Physiology*, researchers



analysed the effect of TMAO on rats, which have a genetic tendency to develop high blood pressure. One group of hypertensive rats were given low-dose TMAO supplements in their drinking water, and another group received plain water. They were given the TMAO therapy for either 12 weeks or 56 weeks and were assessed for heart and kidney damage as well as high blood pressure.

The results showed that TMAO treatment did not affect the development of high blood pressure in any of the spontaneously hypertensive rats. However, condition of the animals given the compound was better than expected, even after more than a year of low-dose TMAO treatment. In addition, four- to five-fold increase in plasma TMAO does not exert negative effects on the circulatory system. This is in contrast to the previous research that showed TMAO blood plasma levels -- and heart disease risk -- rise after the consumption of red meat and eggs, the researchers said.

"It seems that a fish-rich and vegetarian diet, is associated with a significantly higher plasma TMAO than red meat-and egg-rich diets, considered to increase the cardiovascular risk," the researchers noted.

Source: IANS

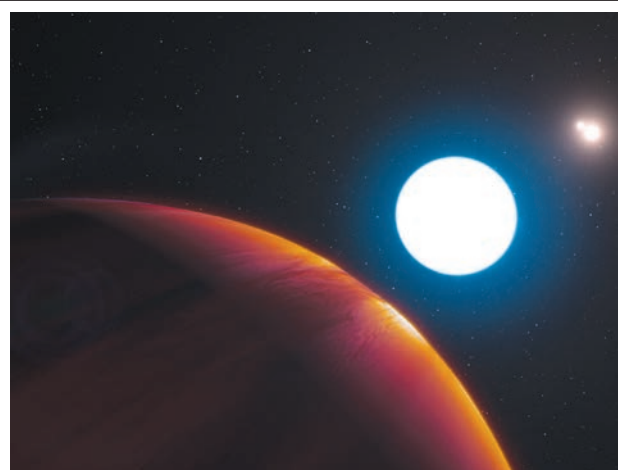
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'SUPER-EARTH' FOUND ORBITING SUN'S NEAREST SOLITARY STAR

Astronomers have discovered a frozen 'super Earth' orbiting the closest solitary star to the Sun, a breakthrough that could shine light on our planet's nearest planetary neighbours.

The potentially rocky planet, known as Barnard's star b, is a 'super-Earth' and orbits around its host star once every 233 days, said researchers from Queen Mary University of London in the UK.

The findings, published in the journal Nature, show the planet lies at a distant region from the star known as the 'snow line'.

This is well beyond the habitable zone in which liquid water, and possibly life, could exist, researchers said.

The planet's surface temperature is estimated to be around minus 170 degrees Celsius, meaning it is likely to be a frozen world that is uninviting to Earth-like life, they said.

However, if the planet has a substantial atmosphere the temperature could be higher and conditions potentially more hospitable.

"Barnard's star is an infamous object among astronomers and exoplanet scientists, as it was one of the first stars where planets were initially claimed but later proven to be incorrect. Hopefully we got it right this time," said Guillem Anglada Escude from Queen Mary's School of Physics and Astronomy.

"If the planet can be observed directly it will provide vital information about its properties and extend our understanding of the kinds of planets that form around red dwarf stars," researchers said.

At nearly six light-years away Barnard's star is the next closest star to the Sun after the Alpha Centauri triple system.

It is a type of faint, low-mass star called a red dwarf. Red dwarfs are considered to be the best places to look for exoplanet candidates, which are planets outside our solar system.

Barnard's star b is the second closest known exoplanet to our Sun. The closest lies just over four light-years from Earth.

Source: PTI

SOON A PLANE COULD FLY THROUGH VENUS'S ATMOSPHERE

AUS aerospace company is planning to build an inflatable propeller plane that could fly through Venus's atmosphere in 2021.

The ambitious project would see the plane cruise through the sulfurous skies of Venus for years, sampling the acidic alien atmosphere directly and observe the venusian surface from 50 kilometres up.

However, the plane faces a battle to get USD 1 billion in funding from NASA in order to get off the ground.

Called the Venus Atmospheric Maneuverable Platform (VAMP), the concept for the vehicle is currently being drawn up by the company Northrop Grumman. VAMP would have a wingspan of 55 metres with an estimated top speed of 220km/h. The ground temperature on Venus hovers around 460 degrees Celsius. Ambient surface pressure is about 90 Earth atmospheres, 'Space News' reported.

"Surviving on the surface for any longer than four hours and getting high-resolution data is a challenge," said Constantine Tsang, a researcher at the Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado.

VAMP, however, would fly in a more forgiving environment.

It would be flown 50 to 70km above the surface of Venus, in a region of the atmosphere where the pressure is roughly equal to that on Earth.

Source: PTI

THIS SMARTPHONE APP CAN IDENTIFY HEART ATTACKS

A novel smartphone app can help determine if you are having the most serious and deadliest form of heart attack and could turn out to be a valuable tool to save lives, say researchers.

The AliveCor app, administered through a smartphone with a two-wire attachment, can monitor heart activity and determine if someone is having an ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) -- a heart attack in which the artery is completely blocked.

The app has nearly the same accuracy as a standard 12-lead electrocardiogram (ECG), which is used to diagnose heart attacks.

It can take ECG on the spot, send the results into the cloud where a cardiologist can review and, if a STEMI is found, tell the person so they can be rushed to the hospital.

"The sooner you can get the artery open, the better the patient is going to do. We found this app may dramatically speed things up and save your life," said J. Brent Muhlestein, lead investigator from the Intermountain Medical Centre Heart Institute in Salt Lake City in the US.

The results were presented at the American Heart Association's 2018 Scientific Session in Chicago.



In the study, 204 patients with chest pain received both a standard 12-lead ECG and an ECG through the AliveCor app.

It was able to effectively distinguish STEMI from non-STEMI ECGs accurately with high sensitivity compared to a traditional 12-lead ECG.

While a typical ECG has 12 leads, which improves the accuracy of a diagnosis because heart attacks

happen in different parts of the heart, the AliveCor app has two wire leads that are moved around the body in order to record all 12 parts.

Besides speeding up treatment after a STEMI heart attack, the app, which is low on cost, can also make ECGs accessible in places like third world countries where people have smartphones but expensive ECG machines are hard to find, the researchers noted.

Source: IANS

New feature on Pixel phones to improve low-light photography

Google is launching a new feature to the front and rear cameras of all three generations of their Pixel devices called—'Night Sight'--to produce better images when clicked in low-lighting.

"We developed 'Night Sight'--a new feature for the Pixel camera that helps you capture vibrant and detailed low-light photos without a flash or tripod," Alexander Schiffhauer, Product Manager, Computational Photography, Pixel,

Google, wrote in a blog post on Wednesday.

'Night Sight' is designed to use machine learning to adapt to night-lighting conditions and balance the colour of the photos so that objects show their natural colour at night--whether the device is kept still or it experiences the natural hand-shaking.

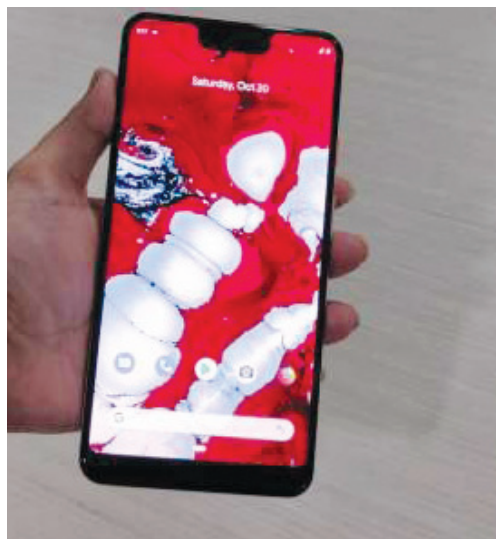
"If you're taking a photo in low light, Pixel will suggest using 'Night Sight'. You can enter 'Night Sight' by tapping this suggestion or manually navigating to the mode. After you tap the shutter button, try to hold still until 'Night Sight' finishes capturing the photo," Schiffhauer added.

The feature would be rolling out over the next few days with an update to the Google Camera app on Pixel smartphones.

The search engine giant released the third generation of its Pixel family with 'Pixel 3' and '3 XL' in October.

The 'Pixel 3' costs Rs 71,000 for the 64GB variant in India and up to Rs 80,000 for the 128GB storage variant where as 'Pixel 3 XL' is available at Rs 83,000 for the 64GB variant and goes up to Rs 92,000 for the 128GB model.

Source: IANS



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BOOSTS DRUG DELIVERY TO ERADICATE MALARIA

Using the next generation Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tools, a team of researchers has developed a new end-to-end drug discovery pipeline to eradicate malaria.

Insilico Taiwan, a Taipei-based subsidiary of Insilico Medicine, announced the results in a paper published in Scientific Reports, a journal published by the Nature Publishing Group.

Plasmodium falciparum, the most dangerous human malaria parasite, is believed to cause hundreds of millions of illnesses and about half a million deaths a year. Plasmodium falciparum causes malaria in humans by destroying human haemoglobin through falcipain-2 (FP2).

"The control of malaria has been hindered by increasing resistance of malaria parasites to available drugs. New anti-malarial drugs, ideally directed against new targets, are urgently needed," said the researchers.

To counter this challenge, the team from Insilico Taiwan extensively studied the mechanisms by which the protease inhibitor E64 approaches, interacts with, and inhibits FP2.

The results showed that the binding of E64 and FP2 are facilitated by the "amino acids of FP2 located within and nearby the previously identified binding pocket of FP2".

This suggests that the anti-malarial drug design should not only focus on finding drug candidates that will bind tightly to the residues of established binding pocket, but also consider the need for the drug candidate to be able to bind to the residues surrounding the established binding pocket subsites. "Insilico Taiwan is happy to present the work on malaria which potentially can help save millions of lives", says Artur Kadurin, CEO, Insilico Medicine Taiwan. "It is a fascinating experience for me working with our team on solving the malaria which remains one of the deadliest diseases killing about half a million people annually", added Dr Emmanuel Salawu.

Flipkart billionaire CEO Binny Bansal's exit puts corporate India on notice

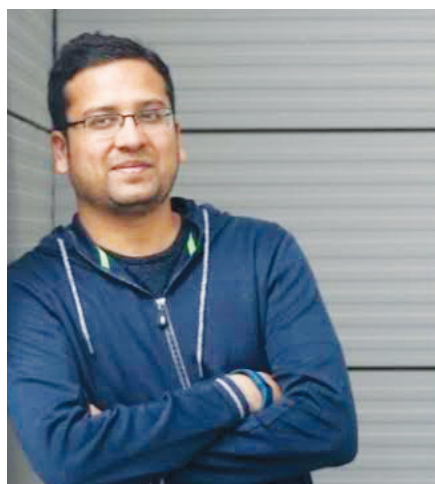
NEW DELHI (TIP): The surprise resignation of an Indian tech billionaire has pulled corporate India deeper into the #MeToo firestorm that's been sweeping through the American business community for more than a year.

Walmart Inc. announced Tuesday that Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal was leaving the company after an independent probe into allegations of sexual assault. While Bansal denies any wrongdoing and the investigators didn't find evidence of assault, the process revealed "lapses in judgment" that troubled the parent company's leadership.

By buying Flipkart, Walmart made Bansal a billionaire and a national icon. By forcing his resignation, the company turned him into an example of the kind of zero-tolerance corporate policy that's come to be expected in the US, where the #MeToo movement has brought consequences for dozens of CEOs and senior leaders in business and finance.

Many have been fired, resigned or otherwise sidelined. American companies have been called on to articulate and, in many cases, strengthen their sexual harassment policies. Investors have begun to consider sexual harassment risk when allocating capital.

India's own #MeToo movement exploded this fall, and it's still gathering momentum. A handful of prominent men in entertainment and in government -- executives at local units of Dentsu Aegis and Fox Star Studios; a minister, MJ Akbar -- have faced



professional consequences. But corporate leaders have remained largely untouched.

Walmart's dismissal of Bansal is significant, said Zoe Kinias, a Singapore-based professor at INSEAD business school, because it sends a clear signal to the country's top executives: "There are consequences for these sort of actions."

"I'm not sure that global businesses handle these situations perfectly but they have processes in place," she added.

Many Flipkart employees and other observers found Walmart's action confusing. Bansal denied any sexual assault, and the company's internal investigation agreed. But the executives in Bentonville thought the angry accuser represented a business risk, and they wanted to know why Bansal hadn't disclosed it. At Flipkart, that information would have been considered personal. Culture clash is inevitable

when one company buys another. But as multinational companies increasingly look to grow in India -- often by acquiring or buying stakes in local companies like Walmart did -- it may put additional pressure on corporate India to strengthen its own policies and practices with respect to sexual harassment, in and outside of the office.

Many Indian businesses will have a steep learning curve ahead, said Kannan Ramaswamy, a professor at Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management. He specializes in management strategy in India. "We don't have the mechanisms in place to really drive this problem out with the haste that it has to be done," he said. "The awareness is not there, the legal infrastructure is not supported and you're fighting against the weight of tradition and culture."

Source: Bloomberg

Amazon picks New York, Northern Virginia for its split second headquarters: Reports

Amazon.com Inc plans to announce on Tuesday that it has selected New York and Northern Virginia as locations for its second headquarters, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Monday.

In the announcement, that could come as early as Tuesday morning, Amazon will announce a significant investment in one additional city, the source said.

The decision would bring to an end a more-than-year-long contest that started with 238 candidates and ended with a surprise split of its "HQ2".

The company was planning to split its second headquarters, dubbed "HQ2", evenly between two cities, and among the finalists that Amazon was holding advanced talks with were Dallas, Long Island City in New York and Arlington near Washington, DC., Reuters reported last week, citing sources.

Amazon sparked a bidding frenzy in September 2017 when it announced it would invest over \$5 billion to create an "HQ2" in addition to its home base in Seattle and hire up to 50,000 people.

Cities and states promised billions of



dollars of tax breaks and other inducements in exchange for Amazon's "HQ2". They also handed over infrastructure, labor and other data that could prove useful in other ways to the world's largest online retailer.

The Wall Street Journal reported Amazon's proposed plans earlier on Monday.

The New York Times had also reported last week that Amazon was finalizing plans to select the Long Island City neighbourhood of Queens, New York and the Crystal City area of Arlington, Virginia.

Source: Reuters

Chinese phones pose threat to iPhone

A raft of profit warnings from Apple Inc suppliers this week has fuelled investor concerns that iPhone sales, in terms of volume, have hit a wall that could spell trouble for the company's plans to make services its main pillar of growth.

For the past year, investors had largely been willing to overlook stagnating unit sales of the iPhone because average selling prices kept rising. But it now faces fierce competition from mid-priced phones from makers such as Xiaomi Corp.

Apple has often stated its plan to increase its revenue from paid services, such as Apple Music and iCloud. That, at least in part, requires a growing base of device owners driven by its iPhone, which analysts believe accounts for about two-thirds of the 1.3 billion Apple devices in use around the world.

INDIA PLANS TO EXPORT TWO MILLION TONNES OF SUGAR TO CHINA FROM NEXT YEAR



NEW DELHI (TIP): India plans to export two million tonnes of raw sugar to China from next year, the trade ministry said on Thursday, as part of efforts to trim bulging stocks of the sweetener and bridge a widening trade deficit.

Producers' body Indian Sugar Mills Association and China's state trader COFCO have already signed an initial deal for 15,000 tonnes of sugar, the ministry said in a statement.

Last month, the ministry said India was keen to sell more rice and sugar to China to help cut the widening trade deficit.

India's export to China in 2017-18 amounted to \$ 33 billion, while imports stood at \$ 76.2 billion.

India is the largest producer of sugar in the world with 32 million tonnes production in 2018.

It produces sugar of all three grades- raw, refined and white.

"Indian sugar is also of a high quality and is Dextran free because of the minimum time taken from cut to crush. India is in a position to become a regular and dependable exporter of high quality sugar in significant volumes to China," the ministry added.

Glenmark gets USFDA nod for multiple sclerosis medication

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals on Thursday said it had received approval from the US health regulator for Teriflunomide tablets used to treat multiple sclerosis.

The approved product is generic version of Sanofi-Aventis US' Aubagio.

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, USA, has been granted final approval by the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for Teriflunomide tablets in the strengths of 7 mg and 14 mg, the company said in a BSE filing.

Glenmark said with respect to 180-day generic drug exclusivity, it was one of the applicants to submit a substantially complete first abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for Teriflunomide tablets.

"Therefore, with this approval, Glenmark is eligible for 180 days of shared generic drug exclusivity for Teriflunomide Tablets, 7 mg and 14 mg," it added.

Citing IQVIA sales data for the 12-month period ending September 2018, the company said the Aubagio tablets market achieved annual sales of approximately USD 1.6 billion.

The company's current portfolio consists of 142 products authorised for distribution at the US marketplace and 57 Abbreviated New Drug Applications (ANDAs) pending approval with the USFDA.

The company's stock was trading at Rs 658.75 apiece, down 0.86 per cent, on the BSE.

Source: PTI



contd from page 1

Trump praises Indian...

Ms Haley, the first-Indian-American appointed to top Cabinet-level position, resigned last month as the US ambassador to the UN. In eight years, former president Barack Obama had appointed more than 50 Indian-Americans to key administration positions, including Raj Shah as United States Agency for International Development administrator; Nisha Desai Biswal as the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia and Richard Verma as the US Ambassador to India. By appointing more than two dozen Indian Americans in key administrative positions, Trump seems to be on the track to breaking the record set by his predecessor.

"Many of them are here today, including the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commissions, Ajit Pai," Trump said as he called upon him.

"Ajit, where's Ajit? Come here, Ajit. I just didn't like one decision he made, but that's all right," he said as the small audience burst into laughter. "Not even a little bit. But he's independent," said the president.

Seema Verma, who in her capacity as administrator of the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, is playing a key role in healthcare reforms, Trump said.

"Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Neil Chatterjee. Where is Neil? Good. Nice to see you," said the US president indicating that he personally knows each one of these Indian-Americans. "The acting administrator of Drug Enforcement, and another person that I've become very close to, Uttam Dhillon," Trump said.

Indian American Lawyer...

If confirmed by the Senate, Ms Rao, who is currently administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), would be the second Indian-American judge in this powerful court after judge Sree Srinivasan, who was appointed during the previous Obama regime. "She is going to be fantastic. Great person," Trump said.

Ms Rao will fill the seat vacated by Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh, who served on the appeals court for 12 years.

A formal announcement on her nomination is expected to be made by the White House. "I just nominated Rao to be on the DC circuit court of appeals, the seat of justice Brett Kavanaugh. That could be a big story," Trump announced.

Ms Rao thanked the President for the "confidence" he has shown in her. In the 'regulatory czar' of Trump administration in her current capacity, she oversees implementation of the administration's deregulatory agenda and regulation-related executive orders. She was confirmed by the Senate with a 54-41 vote in July 2017 to head the OIRA and is known among legal circles as a highly respected administrative law scholar who has distinguished herself for her right-of-center views, media reports stated. A former clerk for conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, Ms Rao was recommended for the post by former White House counsel Don McGahn. Trump's nomination of Ms Rao is in recognition of her contribution in cutting down regulations. Ms Rao has previously served in all three branches of the federal government, and before taking on her current role in the executive branch, she was associate counsel and special assistant to the president for the George W Bush administration.

A graduate of Yale University and the University of Chicago Law School, Ms Rao also worked in the private sector, in the international arbitration group of the London-based law firm, Clifford Chance LLP.

2 Indian-origin Ministers...

to the Prime Minister in letters made public on Thursday morning, joining more senior figures, including Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab and Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey. Sri Lankan-origin Ranil Jayawardena also stepped down as a Minister. Rehman Chishti said he was stepping down as the Conservative Party's vice chairman and the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Pakistan.

Mr. Vara became the first Minister to tender his resignation following the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday. In his letter, he said that he could not support an agreement that left Britain in a "half-way house with no time limit on when we will finally be a sovereign nation." "There is every possibility that the U.K.-EU trade deal that we seek will take years to conclude. We will be locked in a customs arrangement indefinitely, bound by rules determined by the EU over which we have no say," he warned.

Pointing to Northern Ireland, he warned that it would be subject to a different relationship with the EU with the rest of U.K., threatening the economic and constitutional integrity of the U.K. While Mr. Vara had supported the Remain campaign in the run up to the referendum, he supported the leadership bid of Brexiteer Michael Gove in his party leadership campaign in 2016 following the resignation of David Cameron.

"The proposed Northern Ireland Backstop is not Brexit,"

insisted Ms. Braverman in her resignation letter. "It prevents an unequivocal exit from a customs union with the EU."

Ms. Braverman was an influential campaigner to leave the EU, chairing the European Research Group, which has been campaigning for a "hard" Brexit, until she joined the government earlier this year.

Mr. Chishti also expressed his disagreement with the withdrawal agreement and his disagreement with the "lack of leadership shown by the U.K. government" over the Asia Bibi case. "What I found shocking is that this British government is failing to put into practice the core values that our country stands for; religious freedom, justice, morally doing the right thing... the government should not wait to see if another country offers sanctuary, we should have had the conviction to lead on this matter and offer sanctuary ourselves straight away," he wrote in his letter. The resignations further reduce the presence of Indian-origin Ministers in the U.K. government, following the high-profile resignation of Priti Patel last year. Rishi Sunak, the son-in-law of Infosys' Narayana Murthy, remains a Minister within the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as does Alok Sharma, Britain's Minister for Employment.

Julian Assange has...

significantly advance the probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election and have major implications for those who publish government secrets.

The disclosure came in a filing in a case unrelated to Assange. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kellen S. Dwyer, urging a judge to keep the matter sealed, wrote "due to the sophistication of the defendant and the publicity surrounding the case, no other procedure is likely to keep confidential the fact that Assange has been charged." Later, Dwyer wrote the charges would "need to remain sealed until Assange is arrested." Dwyer is also assigned to the WikiLeaks case. People familiar with the matter said what Dwyer was disclosing was true, but unintentional.

Joshua Stueve, a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of Virginia said, "The court filing was made in error. That was not the intended name for this filing."

An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment.

Federal prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia have long been investigating Assange, and in the Trump administration had begun taking a second look at whether to charge members of the WikiLeaks organization for the 2010 leak of diplomatic cables and military documents which the anti-secrecy group published. Investigators also had explored whether WikiLeaks could face criminal liability for the more recent revelation of sensitive CIA cyber-tools.

Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III has also exploring the publication by WikiLeaks of emails from the Democratic National Committee and the account of Hillary Clinton campaign chairman John D. Podesta. Officials have alleged the emails were hacked by Russian spies and transferred to WikiLeaks. Mueller has also been exploring, among other things, communications between the group and associates of President Trump, including political operative Roger Stone and commentator and conspiracy theorist Jerome Corsi.

In July, his office charged 12 Russian military spies with conspiring to hack DNC computers, steal the organization's data and publish the files in an effort to disrupt the election and referred in an indictment to WikiLeaks, described only as "Organization 1," as the platform the Russians used to release the stolen emails. A spokesman for the special counsel's office declined to comment. It was not immediately clear what charges Assange would face. In the past, prosecutors had contemplated pursuing a case involving conspiracy, theft of government property or violating the Espionage Act. But whether to charge the WikiLeaks founder was hardly a foregone conclusion. In the Obama administration, the Justice Department had concluded that pursuing Assange would be akin to prosecuting a news organization. Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, though, had taken a more aggressive stance and vowed to crack down on all government leaks.

Barry J. Pollack, one of Assange's attorneys, said, "The only thing more irresponsible than charging a person for publishing truthful information would be to put in a public filing information that clearly was not intended for the public and without any notice to Mr. Assange. Obviously, I have no idea if he has actually been charged or for what, but the notion that the federal criminal charges could be brought based on the publication of truthful information is an incredibly dangerous precedent to set."

The filing in the Eastern District of Virginia came on August 22, in a case that combines national security and sex trafficking. Seitu Sulayman Kokayi, 29, was charged with enticing a 15-year-old girl to have sex with him and send him pornographic images of herself. But he was detained in part, according to the court filing, because he "has a substantial interest in terrorist acts."

His father-in-law, according to the filing, has been convicted of terrorist acts. The case involves previously classified information, according to government filings, and prosecutors plan to use information obtained under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance

Act. Kokayi was indicted last week and is set to be arraigned Friday morning. The case had been sealed until early September, though by itself it attracted little notice. On Thursday, November 15 evening, Seamus Hughes, the deputy director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University who is known for scrubbing court filings, joked about the apparent error on Twitter - which first brought it to the attention of reporters.

Even if he is charged, Assange's coming to the United States to face trial is no sure thing. Since June 2012, Assange has been living in the Ecuadorian embassy, afraid that if he steps outside he will be arrested.

When he first sought asylum in the embassy, he was facing possible extradition to Sweden in a sex crimes case. He has argued that case was a pretext for what he predicted would be his arrest and extradition to the United States.

In the years since, the Swedish case has been closed, but Assange has said he cannot risk leaving the embassy because the U.S. would attempt to have him arrested and extradited for disclosures of U.S. government secrets. Throughout that time, the U.S. has refused to say whether there are any sealed charges against Assange. If Assange were to leave the embassy and be arrested by British authorities, he would likely still fight extradition in the British courts.

California's Deadliest Fire...

three in Paradise and one in Concow. One body in Paradise was found in a car that had been flipped on its side. The blaze has scorched 141,000 acres and destroyed 11,862 structures. It was 40% contained as of Wednesday evening. The Paradise fire is now by far the worst fire in California history, destroying an entire town in a matter of hours. Officials said it could take weeks to complete the search for victims, Thousands of survivors are now without homes and living in shelters and tent cities. The fire is also causing a major public health problem as smoke choked huge swaths of Northern California, including Sacramento and the Bay Area. It has pushed the region's air quality into the unhealthy zone on the Environmental Protection Agency's index. Many schools have been closed. (Source: Agencies)

Diwali and Annakut Celebrated...

Further more, visitors and members learned about scriptural events related to Diwali and observed traditions such as rangolis and other traditional forms of decorations. Finally, all children were invited to participate in a children's fair and Kids Diwali Celebration which included food, games and fun activities. Attractions included a fireworks display. The celebrations were open to all. Visitors participated in celebration activities, offered prayers for new beginnings and had the opportunity to taste in the delicious offerings of the Annakut.

ABOUT BAPS: The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) is a worldwide spiritual and humanitarian organization that is dedicated to community service, peace, and harmony. Motivated by Hindu principles, BAPS strive to care for the world by caring for societies, families, and individuals. Through various spiritual and humanitarian activities, BAPS endeavors to develop better citizens of tomorrow with high esteem for their roots and culture. Its 3,300 international centers support these character-building activities. Under the guidance and leadership of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, BAPS aspires to build a community that is free of addictions as well as morally, ethically and spiritually pure. For more details, please visit www.baps.org.

ABOUT MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ: His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj is the sixth and current spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He was ordained a swami by Yogiji Maharaj in 1961 and named Sadhu Keshavjivandas. As he was appointed the head (Mahant) of the Mandir in Mumbai, he became known as Mahant Swami. His devout, humble and service-focused life earned him the innermost blessings of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Mahant Swami Maharaj travels throughout the world inspiring people through his insightful spiritual discourses and disciplined conduct. His virtuous lifestyle and profound devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and gurus are ideals toward which devotees strive. Mahant Swami Maharaj became the guru and President of BAPS upon Pramukh Swami Maharaj's passing in 2016. About Pramukh Swami Maharaj Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Under his leadership, BAPS grew into an international spiritual and humanitarian organization with over 3,300 centers worldwide. He dedicated his life to the well-being of others, traveling throughout the world to foster love, peace, harmony, righteousness, faith in God, and service to humanity. With genuine care and compassion, he reached out to all members of society irrespective of class, color, or age. Recognized and respected as one of India's greatest spiritual teachers, he lived by and promoted the principle: "In the joy of others, lies our own."

CONTACT: BAPS North American Headquarters Phone: 732-777-1414 Email: media@na.baps.org (SOURCE: BAPS)

MANASA: THE SNAKE GODDESS

Ma Manasa Devi, the snake goddess, is worshiped by Hindus, mainly for the prevention and cure of snakebites and infectious diseases like smallpox and chicken pox as well as for prosperity and fertility. She stands for both 'destruction' and 'regeneration', almost akin to a snake shedding its skin and being reborn.

A Graceful Goddess

The idol of the goddess is depicted as a graceful lady with her body, adorned with snakes and sitting on a lotus or standing on a snake, under a hooded canopy of seven cobras. She is often seen as 'the one-eyed goddess' and sometimes portrayed with her son Astika on her lap.

Mythological Lineage of Manasa

Also known as 'Nagini,' the female serpentine avatar or 'Vishahara,' the goddess who annihilates poison, Manasa, in the Hindu mythology, is believed to be the daughter of sage Kasyapa and Kadru, the sister of the serpent-king Sesha. She is the sister of Vasuki, king of Nagas and wife of sage Jagatkaru. A simplified version of the myth regards Manasa as the daughter of Lord Shiva. Legends have it that she was rejected by her father Shiva and husband Jagatkaru, and hated by her stepmother, Chandi, who scooped out one of Manasa's eyes. So, she appears to be foul-tempered, and benevolent only towards her devotees.

Manasa, a Powerful Demigoddess

Manasa, due to her mixed parentage, is denied full Godhead. Ancient Hindu legends in the Puranas, narrate the story of the birth of this powerful serpentine goddess. Sage Kashyapa created goddess Manasa from his 'mana,' or mind, so she could control the reptiles that were creating havoc on earth and Lord Brahma made her the presiding deity of snakes. It is believed that Lord Krishna granted her divine status and she established herself in the pantheon of gods.

Manasa Puja

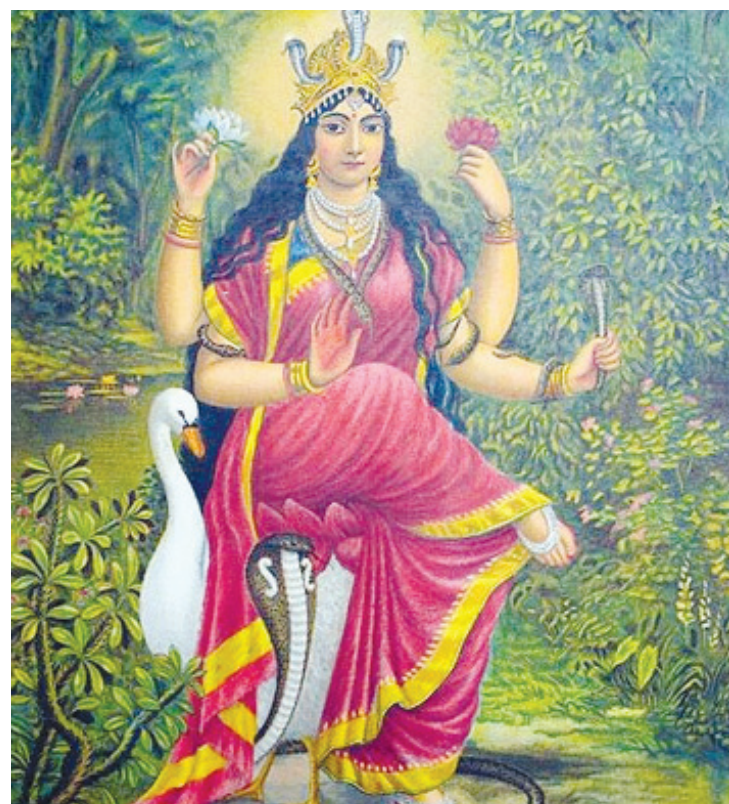
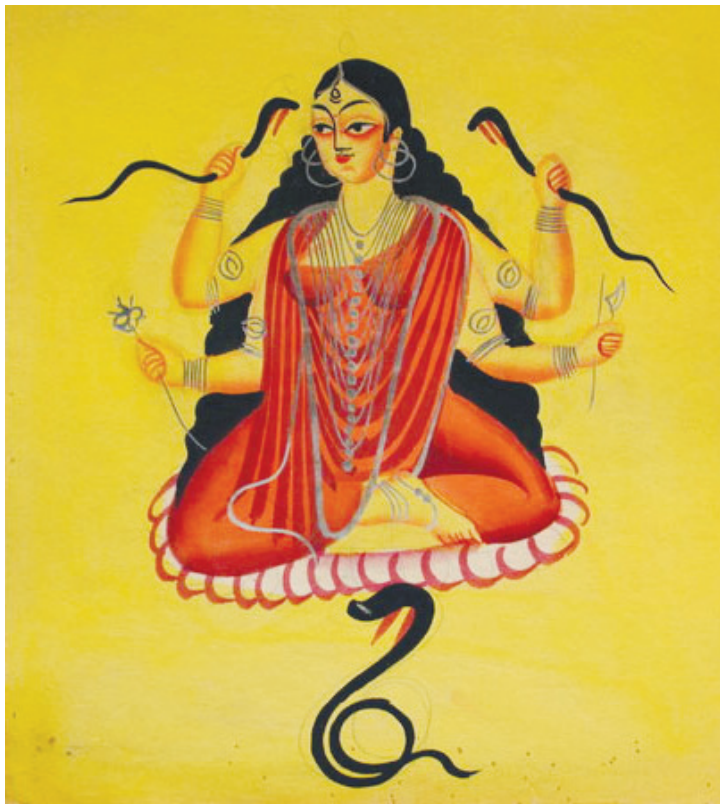
During the monsoon season, Goddess Manasa is worshiped, mainly in the eastern Indian states of Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, and Orissa, throughout the months of June, July and August (Ashar - Shravan), a time when the snakes leave their nesting ground and come out into the open and become active. In Bangladesh, the Manasa and Ashtanaag Puja is a month-long affair spanning July and August. Devotees pay obeisance to goddess Manasa and perform various 'pujas' or rituals to appease her. Special 'murtis' or statues of the goddess are sculpted, various sacrifices made, and prayers chanted. In some places, worshippers are seen to pierce their bodies, poisonous snakes are displayed on the altar, and live shows depicting the life and legends of Manasa Devi are performed.

Mixed Parentage

According to scriptures the parentage of Manasa Devi is under confusion. Some legends suggest that She was born to Sage Kashyap and Kadru who was the sister of serpent-king Sesha. While some other scriptures suggest that Manasa was Lord Shiva's daughter. But popular stories suggest that Manasa was born from Sage Kashyapa's mind. Hence Her name is 'Manasa' meaning born out of mind.

Rejected By Husband

According to the Puranas, Sage Kashyapa married Goddess Manasa to Sage Jaratkaru who married Her on a condition. Jaratkaru said that if Manasa ever disobeys him, then



he will desert Her. Once Goddess Manasa awakened Jaratkaru very late in the morning and he was late for his morning prayers. He became furious at Manasa and deserted Her. Later he came back and they had a son named Astika.

A Powerful Demi-goddess

Goddess Manasa is the presiding deity of the snakes. According to the folklores of Bengal, Manasa was the one who saved Lord Shiva from the deadly poison. She is very kind and loving towards Her devotees and is equally destructive to those who refuse to worship Her.

The Snake Goddess

Manasa is depicted as a graceful Goddess adorned with the ornaments which are actually snakes. She sits on a lotus under a hooded canopy of the seven cobras. She is often portrayed as a 'one-eyed Goddess' or sometimes with Her son Astika on Her lap.

Worshipping Manasa

Goddess Manasa is generally worshipped during the rainy season because the snakes are more active during the time. The cult of Manasa Devi is mainly concentrated in the

North-East region of India. She is an important deity worshipped for fertility, getting cured of snake bites and also to get rid of diseases like smallpox, chicken pox etc.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

Virat Kohli wants Indian batsmen to show 'more character' in Australia

NEW DELHI (TIP): Virat Kohli wants Indian players to take "more responsibility" and showing "more character" during the Australia tour.

He also wants them to avoid making "extreme" mistakes that cost the team Test series in England. "We understand within the group what we need to work on. It's upto the individuals to take ownership of that responsibility and the things that are explained, that are laid out as expectations from team culture point of view," Kohli said in Mumbai on Thursday.

"That can only be achieved when individuals go and work on those things. "There were a lot of things we sat down and discussed after England, (about) what went wrong. To be honest, we all felt there wasn't much that went wrong. Whatever was not right was very extreme also. We played good cricket, but the mistakes were also very extreme, that's why we lost that many number of games rather than winning those moments and winning the games.

"Individuals need to take more responsibility, show more character in such situations and assess it, and then find a solution rather than thinking that the solution will appear from somewhere. Those are the things we are really keen on, going now in our next venture and especially in Test cricket."

The bowlers did well in the last two away tours but Kohli said all departments must fire in unison to achieve a series win. "From the last time we went there (to Australia), fitness



levels of the bowlers are surely up, which is the most important factor in Australia. The pitches can get boring at times, the Kookaburra doesn't do much. So, it is about maintaining the pace with which you start your day."

"That is why South Africa have done well. They have relentlessly bowled in the right areas to get those wickets. The

batsmen need to step up as well." The captain reiterated that importance of lower-order scoring runs. "Definitely, the lower-order contribution is crucial. It made the difference in the England series."

The specialist batsmen cannot afford to repeat the mistakes committed in England, stressed Kohli.

Don't think current Indian side is better than ones I played against, says Steve Waugh

NEW DELHI (TIP): Former Australia captain Steve Waugh is "not sure" if the current Indian team led by Virat Kohli is any better than some of the sides he played against during his international career.

Waugh's comment came in response to India coach Ravi Shastri's remark that is "the best Indian side in the last 15 years". "Look I have played against some great Indian sides and I am not sure the current side is better than the ones we played against," said Waugh.

The 53-year-old said such comments could have been avoided as it puts pressure on the team.

"I am not really sure but probably not a great thing to say as it puts extra pressure on the team. Once they start losing, they will get a lot of criticism for that. Look, it's good that Ravi Shastri believes in his side but comments like these could be kept to himself," Waugh said. *Source: PTI*



No more chopping, changing in ODIs for India

MUMBAI (TIP): India's period of experimenting with their one-day international side is over with a little over six months before the World Cup in England, head coach Ravi Shastri has said.

India have tried to manage the workload of key players like Virat Kohli and their frontline fast bowlers by resting them for their previous ODI series.

With the top three spots in the batting order locked in and wicket-keeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni a floating option, a number of players have been given the chance to audition for the middle order over the last couple of years.

The auditions are now over, Shastri suggested.

"We will try and play close to a 15 that will go to the World Cup," he told reporters before India's departure for Australia. *Source: Reuters*

ROGER FEDERER ADVANCES TO RECORD-EXTENDING 15TH ATP FINALS SEMI-FINALS

LONDON (TIP): Roger Federer is peaking at the right time — again.

The six-time champion advanced to the last four of the ATP Finals for a record-extending 15th time with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Kevin Anderson on Thursday.

Federer, chasing the 100th title of his career, needed only a set to advance and produced his best performance at the season-ending tournament to end the round-robin stages with a 2-1 win-loss record.

"I've always tried to pace myself in a way ... that I would have something left in the tank," Federer said. "I'm happy that this is another week like this. (It) didn't look like it maybe 72 hours ago."

Dominic Thiem's 6-1, 6-4 victory over Kei Nishikori earlier had left Federer with a modest task and ensured that Anderson became the first South African ever to reach the semifinals.

Federer looked as if he was about to give up a break advantage for the second time in as many service games when he dropped to 0-40 attempting to close out the opening set at 5-4, but the 20-time Grand Slam champion found his first serve when it mattered most to hold.



ICC WOMEN'S WORLD T20

Mithali Raj now has more T20 runs than any male cricketer

NEW DELHI (TIP): Mithali Raj has been a stalwart for the Indian women's cricket team and the veteran has a number of records under her belt across all formats of the sport. The 35-year-old added two new accolades to her already illustrious career as she guided her team to victory against Ireland in the the ICC Women's World T20 2018 match on Thursday.

Thanks to a brilliant half century, she surpassed New Zealand's Martin Guptill, who is the highest T20I run-scorer among men's cricketers. However, she is still the fourth-highest T20I scorer in the world, standing behind Suzie Bates (2961), Stafanie Taylor (2691) and Charlotte Edwards (2605).

Raj struck an assured 51 as India posted a total of 145-6 that was always likely to be too strong for Ireland, and the tournament's lowest-ranked team struggled to 93-8 in reply as Radha Yadav finished with three for 25.

With Mithali hitting her 17th T20I half century, she also managed to surpass Bates,



Alyssa Healy and Pakistan's Babar Azam to have the most 50-plus scores in a calendar year combining both men's and women's cricketers.

"I'm sure my knee will get better," she

said after the encounter. "Today the wicket was quite challenging. The pitch was soft. And playing slower bowlers was difficult, but the partnership with Smriti was crucial." *Source: HT*



Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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



Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at info@bejandaruwalla.com and on phone

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WEEKLY HOROSCOPE NOVEMBER 19 - NOVEMBER 25, 2018

Aries:

Ganesha says all that secret, arcane, hush-hush wheeling and dealing will click / gel / pay off / whatever, now. New deals / ventures will be smoothly initiated. Foreign and distant connections, transfer of skills and technologies, the exchange of ideas and information will happen. Your social life will be a combination of business / work and pleasure. You realise that this is very necessary for you to get ahead in life!

Taurus:

You can afford to let down your guard, let down your hair, too. You find the time to relax, to adopt a more carefree and laid-back approach. Plans and projects are off to a flying start (a metaphor from hunting!) and you're ready to be in at the finish. You can afford to take things a bit easy now, with your quarry in sight. Good money, glorious love, satisfying acquisitions add to the glamour of this phase in your sign.

Gemini:

You experience a level of satisfaction, contentment, gratitude to Ganesha that is visibly genuine, and a joy to behold! You have faith - in your Maker, in your destiny, in yourself. You also have hope - for the future. How can you leave out the third cardinal virtue of charity? You are generous, giving and loving to all around you. Romance and family matters also gain.

Cancer:

Good family boding gives you both confidence and courage, as well as a safe heaven. From here, you sail out to take on the Armada itself. Work is productive, though full of challenging situations but you convert them into achievement and gains. Your own health, vitality, enhanced energy - levels make all this possible, and of course, a special depth and intensity in love, romance, marriage. You are renewed and revitalised by these. And by Ganesha, of course.

Leo:

All kinds of gains come to you from Ganesha - in the spheres of work, love, career and home, family issues. You are full of contentment, satisfaction, replete with success. You are much more loving and caring, too. Not just where love is reciprocated, but of mankind (do I say human - kind or people - kind to be politically correct?) in general. You understand your place and your duty in the cosmic order!

Virgo:

You bask in the love, affection, liking that surround you. What it gives you is the desire to be more lovable, more likeable. You therefore hold up a mirror to yourself, looking for defects, shortcomings, hang-ups that can detract from this. You realise also that you need to be more gentle and tolerant, more forgiving - as others are to you. You address financial issues like trade, buying and selling with a view to creating enhanced family prosperity. You've putting in some hard work to ensure this!

Libra:

You are truly blessed by Ganesha this period - and it's a trend for this entire period. It could even go further. Closeness in ties, entertainment, hospitality, the success of your ventures, true love in all its glory are yours. As if this weren't enough, there is the likelihood of a dream / wish / hope being realised. It could even happen this period itself; if not, in the not too distant future! Ganesha warns that there may be some conflicts, controversies in the areas of romance, group activities. There often are, but you need to tread carefully!

Scorpio:

You have come very far, made huge strides of progress, huge leaps of faith. Ganesha warns you that there could be the risk or chance of losing it all, if you don't keep to a gentle, humble approach. If there is someone moving away, causing sorrow or separation, there will be the added joy of a new bond being forged, a new love or an addition to the family. It's truly you win some, you lose some!

Sagittarius:

You have displayed ingenuity, skill, intuition. You have approached things with a very positive attitude / outlook. Now you get the rewards / prizes and these are manifold. Job / work / career give satisfaction and prospects of further advancement; pretty satisfying finances and even more satisfying love, bonding, relationships. You're popular, you're loved, you're respected - and it's all your own doing, with a few nudges from Ganesha now and then. A fine period to look back on - and there's more to come.

Capricorn:

Two themes now, both strong, both demanding. But with the state of mind you're in, you'll manage to do more than justice to both. On the one hand there will be vital work demands and equally vital demands on the home front, especially in terms of cash outlay. You'll be willing, even eager to fulfil them. On the other hand, love in all its glory and joy could send you into orbit, or a separation could send you plummeting to the depths. Right now Ganesha watches to see that you have the strength, confidence, determination to take it all in your leonine stride!

Aquarius:

The scope of last period's theme of communication and reaching out was widespread, long - distance, even global. Now it's your own piece of earth, property, home, ground that you'll be functioning at. Money-wise, you'll be making some carefully thought-out deals and investments with long - term results in mind. It is with this rationale, too, that you embrace faith, religion, spiritual pursuits, charity and welfare work.

Pisces:

The spiritual leanings and insights of last period crystallize and become more powerful, with an aura all their own. Once again let me tell you that this will manifest itself specially, definitely, and oh-so-rewardingly in the sphere of love, affection, passion. You will try a novel, original, oven - fresh approach in everything, of course, but most particularly in matters of the heart and closest to your heart.



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