

'Seriously' considering running for President: Tulsi Gabbard



Tulsi Gabbard is the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress

WASHINGTON (TIP): Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress, has said she was "seriously" considering running for the White House in 2020.

This is for the first time that the four-time Democratic lawmaker in the US House of Representatives from Hawaii has indicated that she may run for the presidency. If she announced her candidature, she would be the first Hindu ever to be running for the presidency in the US. And if elected in 2020, she would be the first Hindu president of

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BJP Loses Hindi Heartland States of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan to Congress

Opposition sees its opportunity in 2019

NEW DELHI (TIP): A resurgent Congress on Tuesday, December 11 made significant gains in the Assembly elections, dealing a body blow to the BJP in Chhattisgarh Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

The reverses for the BJP in the Hindi heartland threw wide open the 2019 Lok Sabha elections which until a few months ago appeared to be in the grip of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party.

The Assembly polls held for five states also saw the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) recording a landslide win for a second consecutive term and the Mizo National

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Congress supporters celebrate party's victory in assembly election outside AICC HQ in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday, December 11, 2018. Photo Courtesy HT

The INDIAN PANORAMA

New Year Special Edition

Articles and advertisements are invited for the New Year Special edition by December 30, 2018.

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Court orders FIR against Manjit Singh GK in Gurdwara Financial Irregularities Case

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) dissolves Delhi, UP, Rajasthan units



Former DSGMC President Manjit Singh GK at a press conference (file photo)

NEW DELHI (TIP): A court on Thursday, December 13, ordered filing of a FIR against DSGMC leader Manjit Singh GK and others in a financial irregularities case. Metropolitan Magistrate Vijaita Singh, Patiala House Court, in her judgement, ordered the Delhi Police to lodge a complaint against DSGMC leader Manjit Singh GK, general manager Harjit Singh

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Trump's ex-lawyer gets 3-yr prison term for financial crimes

NEW YORK (TIP):

President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen was sentenced to three years in prison on Wednesday, December 12, for financial crimes and orchestrating hush payments to women before the 2016 election, telling the judge his "blind loyalty" led him to cover up for Trump. The sentencing by US District Judge William Pauley in Manhattan capped a stunning about-face by a lawyer who once said he would "take a bullet" for Trump but has now implicated the Republican President in criminal conduct.



Michael Cohen in New York City (File photo)

contd on Page 20

Apple to Add \$1 Billion Texas Campus and Thousands of Jobs Across U.S.

The company said it was building a new facility that would double the size of its workforce in the city.

DALLAS, TX (TIP): Apple said on Thursday, December 13, that it would expand its operations in Austin, Tex., with a new \$1 billion campus on the north side of the city that would nearly double the size of the company's current 6,000-employee work force in the area.

The technology giant said it also planned to establish new, 1,000-worker operations in San Diego, Seattle and Culver City, Calif., and to add hundreds of workers in offices in New York, Pittsburgh and Boulder, Colo. over the next three years.

The new 133-acre campus in North Austin will initially employ 5,000 workers in engineering, research and development, operations, finance, sales and customer support. It will ultimately have the capacity to accommodate up to 15,000 workers. Apple said it expected that its expanded presence would make it the area's largest employer.

"Apple is proud to bring new



investment, jobs and opportunity to cities across the United States and to significantly deepen our quarter-century partnership with the city and people of Austin," Tim Cook, Apple's chief executive, said in a statement.

Apple had become synonymous with hoarding money overseas after deferring tax payments on its foreign earnings for years. In January, it said that it would increase its spending in the United States

substantially after last year's tax cuts led it to bring back most of the \$252 billion it had stashed abroad.

The company said at the time that it planned to invest more than \$30 billion in the United States over the next five years and to create 20,000 jobs by expanding its operations and adding a new campus.

President Trump, who had chided Apple over various issues in the past, reacted to the January announcement by praising the company while crediting his own policies for getting it to make the investments.

In September, though, Mr. Trump took aim at Apple over jobs after the company told trade officials in a letter that the administration's tariffs would affect a wide range of products.

"Make your products in the United States instead of China," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. "Start building new plants now." (Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)

The INDIAN PANORAMA

NEW YORK- DALLAS

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Air India raises JFK International-Mumbai connection to ten flights a week

NEW YORK (TIP): Air India has revealed it has boosted its connections to the United States this week by announcing the introduction of three new non-stop flights covering the JFK International to Mumbai route.

As of 7 December of this year the new route, operated by Air India's Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, depart at 1105 from JFK on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday on 777-300ER planes. They will arrive in Mumbai at 12:10 the following day.

Commenting on the new route, Bhuvana Rao, Air India's regional head in the Americas, highlighted how the new flights reflect the growth of India as a hot spot for North American travelers when she said:

"The additional New York to Mumbai non-stop service reflects the growing popularity of India as a business and leisure destination. Our flights are also among the most convenient for passengers travelling beyond Mumbai and Delhi, with customs and immigration formalities completed at the final destination on select connecting flights to major cities across India."

All flights to India from the US feature convenient transfers onto from the US Indian destinations, such as Bangalore, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Pune.

The airline already operates a daily service between New York's most well-known airport



JFK - Mumbai inaugural flight

and the Indian capital and the new flights will take this coverage from seven flights a week to ten. And, increasing Air India's total non-stop services from the US to India to the US to 36 nationwide, including Newark-Delhi (daily), Chicago-Delhi (daily), Washington-Delhi (weekly) and San Francisco-Delhi (nine times



Ms Bhuvana Rao, Air India's regional head for Americas said, "The additional New York to Mumbai non-stop service reflects the growing popularity of India as a business and leisure destination".

a week).

To celebrate the launch Air India is offering special fares on the new route, good for travel from 9 December 2018 to 11 May 2019. All of Air India's non-stop flights from the United States feature first, business, and economy class.

Indian origin techie sentenced to 9 years for sexual assault inside airplane

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Indian IT professional was sentenced to nine years of imprisonment on Thursday, December 14, on charges of a "brazen sexual assault" against a fellow female passenger inside a commercial airplane earlier this year.

Prabhu Ramamoorthy, 35, who came to the US on an H-1B visa in 2015, will be deported after he serves his sentence, a federal court in Detroit said as it sentenced the Indian national to nine years of imprisonment.

Judge Terrence Berge hoped it would be grave enough to deter others from committing similar crimes. Federal prosecutors had sought 11 years of imprisonment for Ramamoorthy.

"Everyone has the right to be secure and safe when they travel on airplanes. We will not tolerate the behavior of anyone who takes advantage of victims who are in a vulnerable position. We appreciate the victim in this case for her courage to speak out," US Attorney Matthew Schneider said after the sentencing was announced.

Ramamoorthy was convicted in August after a five-day trial that was conducted before United States District Judge Terrence Berg. The jury deliberated approximately three-and-a-half hours before returning the guilty verdict.

According to the evidence presented at the trial, on January 3, Ramamoorthy had engaged in a sexual act with a female, while she was sleeping on a flight from Las Vegas to Detroit. Ramamoorthy was seated along with his wife, when he sexually assaulted his co-passenger. During the trial, the government admitted evidence demonstrating that Ramamoorthy had digitally penetrated the woman sleeping next to him during the overnight flight. The sexual assault woke her up, she found her pants unbuttoned and unzipped, and sought help from the flight attendants.

The sentence was proof that the safety and security of all aircraft passengers was a priority for the FBI, said Timothy R Slater, Special Agent in Charge, Detroit Division of the FBI.

In recent years, a number of Indian nationals have been arrested or charged with sexual assaults inside a plane. The FBI says airplane sexual assault is a serious offence that is on the rise. FBI statistics indicate that investigations of mid-air sexual assaults increased by 66 per cent from 2014 to 2017. That was in part due to increasingly "cramped, confined spaces; alcohol and drugs; fewer flight attendants; and dark cabins on night flights"--factors that "likely embolden offenders"--the FBI said in a recent report. The cramped style of airplane seating can exacerbate trauma for victims. According to mental health professionals, victims who are violated in confined spaces feel even more helpless, vulnerable and powerless.

Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian origin Members of International Movie Piracy Ring Indicted in Scheme to Steal and Sell Pre-Release Hollywood Films and TV Shows

LOS ANGELES (TIP): A federal grand jury, on December 12, indicted five men in four countries on federal charges alleging they distributed or offered for sale stolen digital versions of hundreds of motion pictures and television shows - including "Fifty Shades of Grey," "The Expendables 3" and "The Walking Dead" - prior to their official release.

According to the indictment filed this afternoon in United States District Court, members of the hacking conspiracy broke into computer systems used by Hollywood film production companies and stole digital files, including feature films, trailers, television series episodes and audio tracks. The ring allegedly put the stolen files on a server in France, which contained more than 25,000 motion picture-related files, including the feature films "Godzilla," "How to Train Your Dragon 2" and "Horrible Bosses 2."

The defendants also illicitly acquired copies of films by other means, including recording cinema screenings and obtaining copies of motion pictures distributed to movie industry professionals, according to the indictment, which outlines criminal conduct beginning in early 2013 and continuing into the spring of 2015.

Once they obtained the movies and other content, the defendants allegedly altered the properties of the computer files to make them easier to distribute online. According to the indictment, they offered the stolen motion picture files for sale via private electronic communications, but they also uploaded stolen movies onto pirate movie websites. The defendants used a shared PayPal account to receive and distribute money from the sale of the pirated motion pictures, the indictment states.

In February 2015, one of the defendants allegedly told a prospective buyer that the ring would be offering copies of the films "Kingsman: The Secret Service" and "Fifty Shades of Grey" for sale on the same day as their U.S. theatrical release.

The defendants charged in the indictment are:

Malik Luqman Farooq, 30, a resident of the United Kingdom, who allegedly sold more than a dozen stolen pre-release or contemporaneous-release films over a period of two years. Farooq was previously arrested by the City of London Police on related charges and is awaiting trial in the United Kingdom.

Aditya Raj, believed to reside in India, who allegedly released pirated movies on the internet and helped arrange for the camcording of various films in India.

Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian social worker commits suicide in UAE



Sandeep Vellaloor suffered financial loss which prompted him to hang himself
Facebook photo

DUBAI (TIP): A 35-year-old prominent Indian social worker in the UAE has allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan in his apartment, a media report has said.

Sandeep Vellaloor, a staff surveyor in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) emirate, suffered a huge financial loss after setting up a transport company, which is believed to have prompted him to hang himself, Khaleej Times reported on Sunday, December 9.

The father of three was a prominent social worker. His two roommates were not at home when he apparently committed suicide, it said.

Police have started an investigation into the incident, the report said.

"After coming back from work, they found the door locked from inside, and had to break open the lock to get in. To their shock, they found him hanging from the ceiling," said Prasad Sreedharan, a social worker affiliated with a medical committee recently constituted by the Consulate General of India in Dubai.

Vellaloor was the general secretary of Yulan Kala Sahiti and team leader of the Friends Cricket Association.

"He regularly organized blood donation camps in RAK. The Ministry of Health and Prevention had honored him in 2016 with a certificate of appreciation and memento for the humanitarian act," Sreedharan said.

"He contributed Rs 400,000 to the family of an Indian worker who was paralyzed and then died in a road accident here in RAK in 2017," he said.

Vellaloor sent his family to India three years ago and was staying with two of his friends in a villa behind the RAK immigration department.

His body has been shifted to the morgue at the Ibrahim Bin Obaidulla Hospital and the repatriation process will be initiated shortly, said Nisham Nooruddeen, president RAK Indian Relief Committee (IRC). (Source: PTI)

Indian arrested on charges of smuggling foreign nationals into US

WASHINGTON (TIP): A 38-year-old Indian national has been arrested on charges of smuggling foreign nationals into the US for private financial gain, according to Department of Justice.

Bhavin Patel, is charged by indictment with one count of conspiracy to bring in and harbor aliens and six counts of smuggling foreign nationals into the US via commercial airline flights, New Jersey US Attorney Craig Carpenito said on Monday, December 10. (Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)

Senate votes to condemn Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as responsible for Khashoggi killing

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Senate cast two historic votes Thursday, December 13, to end U.S. participation in the Saudi-led war effort in Yemen and condemn the Saudi crown prince as responsible for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, delivering clear political rebukes of President Trump's continued embrace of the kingdom.

The unanimous vote to hold Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman responsible for Khashoggi's murder reflects the extent to which senators of both parties have grown tired of Trump's continued defense of Mohammed's denials. It also puts significant pressure on leaders in the House - where the president's Saudi policy is a much more partisan issue - to allow members to cast a similar vote condemning the crown prince before the end of the year.

Regardless, the two Senate votes Thursday set the stage for broader strategic debates about Saudi policy when Congress regroups next year.

Just before the Senate voted to condemn Mohammed over Khashoggi's murder, senators voted 56-to-41 vote to end U.S. participation in the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen by invoking the War Powers Resolution - the first time a chamber of Congress has ever done so.

More importantly, the 56-vote majority - a figure that includes seven Republicans - suggests that Saudi critics will still have a majority next year to challenge Trump on Saudi policy. Both Republicans and Democrats have said they plan to pursue sanctions against Saudi officials involved in Khashoggi's murder, to stop the transfer of nondefensive weapons until Saudi forces withdraw from Yemen, and other measures to restrain a crown prince whom many



Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., joined at left by Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., holds a news conference

lawmakers see as out of control.

"Today we tell the despotic regime in Saudi Arabia that we will not be part of their military adventurism," said Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who co-sponsored the Yemen resolution with Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah). "Today, for the first time, we are going to go forward .??. and tell the president of the United States, and any president ... that the constitutional responsibility of making war rests in the United States Congress, not the White House."

The votes came just hours after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis briefed House lawmakers behind closed doors - a meeting from which Republicans and Democrats emerged urging very different responses to Saudi Arabia and its crown prince.

A recent CIA assessment found Mohammed was probably responsible for the killing of Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributing columnist, in a Saudi consulate in Istanbul on Oct. 2. "They have to be held responsible," Rep. Eliot L. Engel (D-N.Y.), the incoming

chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said after the briefing, referring to Mohammed and Saudi King Salman.

But there remain Republicans in the House who defend the crown prince - and those who think that even if he should be called out for his involvement in Khashoggi's death, the punishment should stop there.

"We recognize killing journalists is absolutely evil and despicable, but to completely realign our interests in the Middle East as a result of this, when for instance the Russians kill journalists .??. Turkey imprisons journalists?" Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) said. "It's not a sinless world out there."

That stands in sharp contrast to the Senate, where several Republicans have been encouraging a broad response to Saudi Arabia over not just Khashoggi's killing and the Yemen war, but the Kingdom's blockade in Qatar, its recent detainment of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, and a slate of human rights abuses they say have compromised the U.S.-Saudi alliance.

Trump has refused to condemn Mohammed

for the killing of Khashoggi, a Saudi national. Pompeo has echoed Trump's stance in public interviews, and behind closed doors as well, lawmakers said.

"All we heard today was more disgraceful ducking and dodging by the secretary," said Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Tex.), who supports bringing up a War Powers resolution in the House to cut off U.S. support for the Saudis' Yemen war effort. On Wednesday, the House narrowly voted to block rank-and-file members from demanding a floor vote on any such Yemen resolution, after leaders slipped in a rule change to do so into an unrelated agricultural bill.

House leaders also met with CIA director Gina Haspel on Wednesday to hear the details of Khashoggi's slaying. But they emerged offering few details about the briefing - or about what step House Democrats would take, once they assume the majority in January, to pursue more punitive measures against Saudi Arabia, beyond holding hearings.

In the Senate, meanwhile, both Republican and Democratic lawmakers are making plans to capi-tal-ize on the Yemen resolution vote with further measures next year - including sanctions on Mohammed and the other Saudis implicated in Khashoggi's killing, and an order to halt all nondefensive weapons transfers to Saudi Arabia until hostilities in Yemen cease.

"The current relationship with Saudi Arabia is not working for America," Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said Wednesday, in comments to reporters about what next steps senators planned to take to address Saudi policy. "I'm never going to let this go until things change in Saudi Arabia." killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. (Source: Agencies)

Maria Butina pleads guilty to conspiring to act as a Russian agent

WASHINGTON (TIP): Maria Butina, a 30-year-old Russian gun rights activist, has signed onto a plea agreement with the U.S. government, officially pivoting away from her months-long campaign to prove her innocence after standing accused of developing a covert influence operation in the United States.

As part of her plea deal, the details of which ABC News reported earlier this week, Butina agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy and cooperate with federal, state and local authorities in any ongoing investigations.

ABC News reported earlier this week that, as part of her deal, Butina admitted that she and an unnamed "U.S. Person 1," which sources have identified as longtime Republican operative Paul Erickson, with whom she had a multiyear romantic relationship, "agreed and conspired, with a Russian government official ("Russian Official") and at least one other person, for Butina to act in the United States under the direction of Russian Official without prior notification to the Attorney General."

Based on the description, the "Russian Official" appears to be Alexander Torshin, deputy governor of the Russian Central Bank and a close ally of Russian President Vladimir

Putin. Under his Torshin direction, the agreement said, she "sought to establish unofficial lines of communication with Americans having power and influence over U.S. politics."

As Butina prepared to change her plea before a federal judge in Washington, DC, Thursday morning, the judge confronted directly questions raised about the stark conditions of her confinement-which this week has brought a rebuke from the Russian government. Butina's lawyer had complained she was held alone in her cell for long stretches and had little personal or sensory contact.

The judge asked Butina and her attorney if conditions had impaired her psychologically to the point she had agreed to plead guilty.

"Is your mind clear?" the judge asked.

"Absolutely clear," Butina replied in a firm voice. Driscoll told the court that while he remains concerned about the overuse of solitary confinement, he did not consider that a factor in her change of plea.

"As of today, I believe she is doing well mentally," Driscoll said.

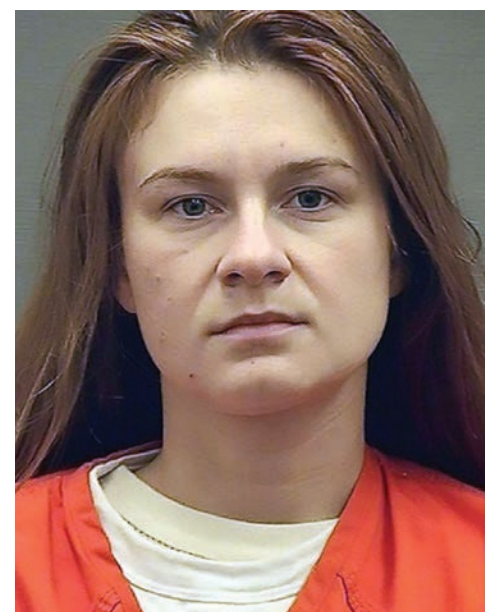
Ahead of Thursday's hearing, a spokeswoman with the Russian Foreign

Ministry told reporters in Moscow again called for Butina's "soonest release from custody" and said the Russian government "will support any decision she might take aimed at her liberation."

"Once again, we demand that Washington observe her lawful rights and ensure her soonest release from custody," the spokeswoman said, adding that whatever decision Butina makes with her lawyers, "she would take them in order to be freed, considering that she is a political prisoner."

Butina was arrested in Washington, DC, in July on charges of conspiracy and failure to register as a foreign agent. Her indictment attracted headlines at the time for salacious claims made by the government that she used sex as part of an alleged effort to infiltrate powerful conservative groups and build relationships with prominent Americans, drawing comparisons to the recent Hollywood film, *Red Sparrow*, which focused on the seductive aspects of spycraft.

But the government was later forced to back away from some of those allegations, conceding that they were based on a misreading of a series of text messages. Prosecutors wrote that "the government's



Maria Butina's booking photograph when she was admitted into the Alexandria Detention Center August 17, 2018.

Photo / courtesy Alexandria, Va. Sheriff's Office

understanding of this particular text conversation was mistaken," according to court filings.

Butina has been held in jail since her arrest and indictment, with a federal judge claiming in September that she "cannot imagine a scenario where it is not possible" that Butina would flee the country if allowed out on bail.

(Source: ABC News)

The First-Ever Diwali Fireworks Show in San Francisco Makes History: An estimated 10,000 people attend to usher in the Indian New Year



SAN FRANCISCO, CA(TIP): November 10th, 2018, marked a historic day as an estimated 10,000 excited children and nostalgic parents came out to experience the first-ever Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Diwali Day held at San Francisco's iconic Pier 39 to commemorate Diwali, the Festival of Lights, celebrated by Indians around the globe. The family-friendly event culminated with a spectacular firework show, an especially meaningful element of the program since it is the traditional form of celebration in India.

While fireworks are commonly associated with major U.S. holidays such as the 4th of July and New Year's Eve, this was the first time they were launched over the San Francisco Bay to celebrate Diwali. It was a beautiful example of cultures coming together and an understandably proud moment for the over 350,000 Asian Indians that call San Francisco and the Bay Area home-making them the second largest population of Indians in the United States.

Not to be missed, close to 60,000 people tuned in via Facebook Live to view special moments

from the event including the fireworks finale.

Sponsored by Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Tea and produced by MIKADO International, the day-long event was free and open to the public, thoughtfully curated for the entire family to enjoy in the celebrations. In addition to savoring delicious tea samplings from the Brooke Bond Taj Mahal tea cart throughout the day, attendees eagerly lined up to receive henna tattoos, paint personalized diyas (ceremonial clay oil lamps), go for a spin on the teacup ride, snap selfies for the photo mosaic wall and participate in a meet and greet with celebrity Bollywood dancer Manpreet Toor and comedian Rajiv Satyal.

The much-anticipated fireworks display did not disappoint, lighting up the sky and the hearts of the tens of thousands of spectators on site and online. It was a memorable moment for all South Asians witnessing the recognition of a holiday so dear to them on display over the iconic San Francisco Bay.

"Asian Indians are a strong, proud and culturally rich population with traditions that have not only survived but continue to thrive outside of our motherland. We at Brooke Bond



Taj Mahal are committed to ensuring South Asian immigrants feel at home, no matter where they live, which is why we are thrilled to have been able to provide the South Asian community of the Bay Area with an authentic Diwali celebration experience echoing the traditions of home,"commented Partha Guha, Sr. Manager - Marketing & Business Development at Unilever International.

"We were honored to have produced the Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Diwali Day at Pier 39" says Sandrine Vohra, CEO of MIKADO International, a global multicultural advertising agency.

"Representation matters. Who tells your story and how they communicate your message matters, which is why it was so important for us to design an experience on such a public platform that fully represented the beauty and significance of the traditions around Diwali, from the diyas and dancing to the family fun and fireworks."

Highlights from this year's Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Diwali Day, including the 10-minute fireworks display can be viewed on the event's

Facebook page. Professional photos available upon request.

ABOUT BROOKE BOND TAJ MAHAL TEA

With over 50 years of experience, Brooke Bond Taj Mahal is one of India's greatest refreshment brands, offering the finest premium teas. Its tea is made from carefully selected leaves from the choicest gardens of the Upper Assam, which give it an unmatched aroma and flavor: Brooke Bond Taj Mahal Tea

ABOUT MIKADO INTERNATIONAL

MIKADO International is a culture first advertising agency that strives to create a world more connected. Through opportunity analysis, research, and market planning, it helps brands effectively cater to underserved and fragmented cultural and/or religious communities with unparalleled expertise. MIKADO works with startups and Fortune 500 companies, utilizing native language-based marketing as well as social and cultural elements to target these communities. MIKADO International.

House Democrats to seek Trump tax returns: Pelosi

WASHINGTON (TIP): A Reuter report has quoted Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi as saying on Thursday, December 13, that members of congress from her party will seek to obtain President Donald Trump's tax returns when they take control of the U.S. House of Representatives in January - a move the White House is likely to strongly resist.

The House Ways and Means Committee will "take the first steps" toward obtaining the documents, said Pelosi, who has the backing of her members to become speaker of the House next month. As it is likely to be a challenging process, it will be up to the committee to figure out how to proceed, she said. "There is popular demand for the Congress to request the president's tax returns," she told reporters in the Capitol.

"I'm sure the White House will resist and so the question is where do we go from there," she said. Trump defied decades of tradition when he refused to release his tax records as a candidate and after his victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. No law or rule compels a president or candidate to disclose their returns, but nearly every nominee and president has done so in recent decades. As they prepare to take over majority control of the House, Democratic leaders have tried to walk a fine line in



"There is popular demand for the Congress to request the president's tax returns," Pelosi told reporters in the Capitol.

articulating their goals. They have said they plan to pursue policies popular with their

voter base, but have also said they will not shy away from examining Trump, his personal business dealings and his presidency.

Representative Bill Pascrell praised the plan to seek Trump's records. "I am confident we will have the will and the tools to finally expose Trump's financial history to sunlight," he said. The records would provide congressional investigators from various House committees with information crucial to efforts to determine if Trump's business generates conflicts of interest. Democrats have alleged Trump is violating the U.S. Constitution's emoluments clause, which bars presidents from receiving gifts of value from foreign governments, citing Trump's continued ownership of hotels that foreign government delegations patronize.

Trump denies ties to ex-lawyer Cohen's crimes

Democratic leaders on the House Intelligence Committee have said Trump's personal financial information would help illuminate whether foreign leaders might have leverage over the president.

Pelosi said committees will also take up issues like healthcare and trade.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment. (Source: Reuters)

U.S. Budget Deficit Hits Widest on Record for Month of November

U.S. ran largest fiscal gap in six years in fiscal 2018

WASHINGTON (TIP): Outlays jumped 18 percent to \$411 billion last month, while receipts were little changed at \$206 billion, the Treasury Department said in a monthly report on Thursday, December 13. That left a \$205 billion shortfall, compared with a \$139 billion gap a year earlier.

The U.S. ran the largest deficit in six years in fiscal 2018, the first full year of Donald Trump's presidency when his Republican party enacted a tax-cut package and raised federal spending for the military and other priorities. The measures have added to the growing federal deficit, which is forecast to push past \$1 trillion by 2020 when the U.S. next holds presidential elections.

In the first two months of the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, the gap widened to \$305.4 billion, compared with \$201.8 billion the same period a year earlier.

Spending on Department of Defense military programs rose 18 percent in October and November from the same two months a year earlier, while outlays for total interest on the public debt jumped by 7 percent. (Source: Bloomberg)

Akali Dal rakes up 1984 against Kamal Nath's appointment as Madhya Pradesh CM

CHANDIGARH (TIP): With the Congress leadership finalising Kamal Nath's name for the post of chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Thursday accused the Gandhi family of "protecting the perpetrators" of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The Akali Dal alleges that Nath had a hand in the anti-Sikh riots that broke out in the national capital following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. "Whenever the Gandhi family comes to power, it protects the perpetrators of the 1984 riots. Now Rahul Gandhi and the Gandhi family are rewarding Kamal Nath as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh..." Akali Dal leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa told reporters. "Rahul Gandhi wants to give a message that those involved in the killings of Sikhs in 1984 now need not worry... that they are behind them and will reward them instead," he added.

"He (Kamal Nath) himself had agreed before the J Ranganath Misra and J Nanawati commissions set up in 1985 that on November 1, 1984, he was very much present on the premises of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib when two Sikhs were burnt to death," said Sirsa.

Sirsa said Kamal Nath's presence at the gurdwara was also confirmed by two senior government officers. He said the then reporter of an English daily, Sanjay Suri, had reportedly seen Kamal Nath leading a mob.

A section of Sikhs had raised objections when Nath was appointed general secretary in-charge of Punjab and Haryana. While Nath continued to hold the charge for Haryana affairs, he was replaced in Punjab.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP spokesperson Tajinder Singh Bagga claimed the Congress is aware of Nath's involvement in the riots and that was why he was "removed" as the Punjab in-charge of the Congress before assembly elections in that state in 2017. He said Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh should register his protest against the party's decision to make Nath the Madhya Pradesh CM and should resign if Rahul Gandhi does not agree to his demand.

Leader of opposition in the Punjab assembly Harpal Singh Cheema on Thursday asked chief minister Capt Amarinder to clarify his stand on Congress leader Kamal Nath's likely elevation as Madhya Pradesh CM. *Source: HT*

Kamal Nath named chief minister of Madhya Pradesh

NEW DELHI (TIP): Senior Congress leader Kamal Nath will be the next chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, the party announced late on Thursday, Dec 13. The announcement came after a day of meetings between Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and the two contenders for the post in New Delhi. Jyotiraditya Scindia was the other front-runner.

Nath is a nine-time Lok Sabha MP from Chhindwara constituency in Madhya Pradesh and is the state president of the Congress. He succeeds Shivraj Singh Chouhan of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which had been in power for 15 years.

Nath and Scindia had arrived in Delhi on Thursday to meet Rahul Gandhi at his residence, where they remained till late evening. They left for Bhopal around 8 pm and said a decision would be announced by night.

As the suspense continued till late Thursday, Gandhi posted a tweet with a picture of himself flanked by Scindia and Nath, with a quote attributed to Leo Tolstoy: "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."

In an interview with The Indian Express published on Thursday, Nath had said the Congress will focus on improving the state's fiscal health and exposing the prime minister for his policies such as the Goods and Services Tax regime and demonetisation.

Final results of the recently-held Assembly elections in the state were declared on Wednesday morning. The



Congress emerged the single-largest party with 114 seats, while the BJP got 109 – both parties were short of the majority mark of 116. Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party have offered support to the Congress, which will help them cross the majority.

Besides Madhya Pradesh, the Congress won a clear majority in Chhattisgarh and was the single largest party in Rajasthan. The party finished just two short of the majority mark, at 99, in Rajasthan, with the BJP winning 73 seats. In Chhattisgarh, the Congress won 68 seats and the saffron party 15.

On Wednesday, a single-line proposal had been passed at the Madhya Pradesh

Congress Legislature Party meeting in Bhopal. The Congress high command was expected to decide the chief minister.

Outgoing Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan did not stake claim to form the government, saying the BJP did not get a majority. After submitting his resignation, he said he took full responsibility for his party's loss. "I worked tirelessly for the poor and farmers," Chouhan said at a press conference on Wednesday. "I apologise if I upset the people of Madhya Pradesh."

Chouhan said the BJP will be a strong Opposition. "My job is to provide constructive support, we now have the responsibility to be the watchdog," he said.

How Cong led by Rahul turned the party around in 3 states

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Congress is back, winning the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. And it is back in the region where it was most deeply vulnerable. If there is a pattern in this set of elections, here are five factors Congress got right.

Ironically, or perhaps appropriately, those are the same factors the BJP has got right since it embarked on its winning spree since 2014.

The first is leadership. This was always Narendra Modi's forte. What changed?

Rahul Gandhi got it right — not because he won the election on his own steam but because a leader has to take the right decisions. He took the right decisions in Madhya Pradesh. The state president was the old, but the resourceful, Kamal Nath who knew how to rev up an organisation. Jyotiraditya Scindia was the most popular of all leaders across regions and demographics. Digvijay Singh knew the state organisation inside out but was kept in the background because of his perceived public unpopularity. In Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot was most popular. Sachin Pilot worked hard, and rebuilt the organisation. In Chhattisgarh, TS Singh Deo, as the Thakur leader and leader of opposition, and Tamardhwaj Sahu and Bhupesh Bagel, as the key swingers of the crucial Other Backward Classes vote, were empowered. Gandhi picked no chief ministerial candidate, although he will have to do so now (but everyone worked hard believing that they had a chance). But in a loose organisational setup, to manage leadership, and reconcile factions, is



testament to Gandhi's underestimated management skills. Once he had figured leadership, he led from the front with an aggressive and energetic campaign.

The second is religion. In Indian elections, you have to get religion right. The BJP has always relied on polarisation, portraying itself as the Hindu and the Congress as the pro-Muslim party.

The Congress, soon after the 2014 elections but definitely after the Uttar Pradesh elections, realised that it had to change its game. And this led to Rahul Gandhi picking up straight from his grandmother's textbook of displaying Hindu religiosity rather than from his great grandfather's practice of aggressive agnosticism. Many criticised this as the Congress' turn to soft Hindutva. But Gandhi

stayed on the path, convinced that he needed to be in tune with the beliefs, but not necessarily the prejudices, of his society. The polarisation trick did not work.

The third is the economic narrative. The BJP constructed the vikas (development) promise as an overarching platform. It is unravelling.

The Congress picked up local issues in each district and constituency. It helped that the party was the challenger and thus had the advantage of taking on an incumbent. But as Gandhi said in each state, there were two pillars of the party's strategy, a promise to protect farmers, reeling from low prices, and a promise to provide jobs to the young. Agrarian distress and unemployment have become the two biggest failures of the government. The

Congress capitalised on the resentment, and promised both short term measures such as loan waivers and longer term measures of promising ways to encourage small and medium industries everywhere to create jobs. These are not easy promises to keep, but for now they have worked. It also built on the anger that has been accumulating over both demonetisation and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax.

No Indian election can be won without getting caste right, and this is the fourth factor. The BJP has, since 2014, become an inclusive Hindu party. It has consolidated upper castes, and gone beyond them to win over the support of OBCs, Dalits and tribals.

The Congress recognised it had to be as all-embracing. It went back to the upper castes and leveraged on their latent sense that the BJP has betrayed them by turning pro backward and Dalit. It went to the Dalits and constantly emphasised the BJP's upper caste character. It picked on local issues, from the encounter of a Rajput gangster in Rajasthan to putting up its own upper caste candidates in several constituencies. It also sought to win back the OBC vote by giving them representation in leadership in both Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. All of this helped the Congress create a far more inclusive and umbrella coalition within the Hindu fold than it has at any point since 2014.

The fifth is organisation, which matters. And the BJP has got this right with the extensive use of its booth committee and panna pramukhs and cadre based machine.

Source: HT

Rafale: No favouritism, rules apex court while rejecting court-monitored probe

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a big relief to the Narendra Modi government, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed petitions seeking a court-monitored probe into the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter jets from France under an inter government agreement.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice KM Joseph said there were no irregularities in the deal and the decision making process for the purchase 36 Rafale fighter jets from Dassault was above board.

The court said the need for fighter jets and Rafale's quality we're never under question and it was not the court's job to get into comparative pricing details.

"We cannot go into the wisdom of why the deal for 36 Rafale jets was made and not the original 126 aircraft. We cannot ask the government to go for 126 aircraft," the Bench said.

For the first time, four senior IAF officers – three Air Marshalls and an Air Vice Marshall – and Additional Secretary (Defence) had appeared in the top court to explain various aspects of a defence deal.

CJI Gogoi had asked several questions about previous acquisitions, which generation of aircraft IAF was using. Air Vice Marshall J Chalpathi had told the Bench that the last acquisition was Sukhoi-30 and before that Mirage Aircraft were bought in 1985.

He had said while most of the countries were using 4th and 5th generation fighter planes, IAF was using 3rd or sub-4th generation (3.5) aircraft.

"Our country can't remain unprepared when adversaries have acquired 4th & 5th generation fighter jets compared to none by India. We have interacted with senior Indian Air Force officers and there is no doubt about



need and quality of Rafale jets," the Bench said.

It's not correct for the court to sit as an appellate authority on every aspect of the deal," the Bench added.

Terming it "unfortunate", Prashant Bhushan, counsel for one of the petitioners said, "It's a totally incorrect judgment given by the Supreme Court."

The top court had reserved the verdict on November 13 on the contentious issue after hearing arguments from counsel for the petitioners, including Prashant Bhushan, senior journalist Arun Shourie and Attorney General KK Venugopal who had defended secrecy clause of the deal estimated to be of Rs 58,000 crore.

Alleging irregularities in the deal, petitioners ML Sharma, Prashant Bhushan, Vineet Dhanda and Sanjay Singh had demanded registration of an FIR and a court-monitored investigation into it. Following the court's October 31 order, the Centre had submitted in a sealed cover the pricing details of 36 Rafale jets.

The process of acquisition had started

in 2001 and India was to purchase 126 Medium Multi Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) but the contract negotiations reached a stalemate and Request for Proposal compliance was finally withdrawn in June 2015. During the protracted process India's adversaries modernized their combat capabilities, the AG had submitted.

It was in this background that India signed an agreement with France in September 2016 for the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter aircraft in a fly-away condition as part of upgrading process of the Indian Air Force equipment.

It has better deliverables, the AG had said, adding norms prescribed under Defence Procurement Policy -2013 were followed.

The Bench said, "Minor variations in clauses should not amount to setting aside of the Rafale jet deal.

The Bench agreed with Attorney General's argument that the decision on types of aircraft and weapons needed to be procured was a matter for experts and could not be adjudicated upon by the judiciary. *Source: The Tribune*

CBI SECURES INTERPOL RED CORNER AGAINST CHOKSI

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has managed to secure an Interpol Red Notice against fugitive diamond trader Mehul Choksi, in what is seen as a big boost to its efforts to bring him back to India to face trial in the Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud.



Choksi became a citizen of the Caribbean country Antigua and Barbuda under a programme in which a certain quantum of investment entitles an individual to citizenship.

Investigations have showed that Choksi began the process to take citizenship of the twin-island nation last year, well before he left India in the first week of January.

The fraud came out a little later.

Choksi was formally granted citizenship in November last year but took oath as an Antiguan citizen on January 15.

Choksi, who, along with his nephew, diamond jeweller Nirav Modi, who, too, is a fugitive from India, perpetrated a fraud on PNB amounting to over Rs 13,500 crore, according to CBI.

Neither has returned to India despite repeated summons from the investigation agencies and courts.

"In July, Choksi, 59, was traced to Antigua after US authorities informed their India counterparts about his travel to the Caribbean nation. The CBI, through the ministry of external affairs, immediately approached the Antiguan authorities asking for extradition of Choksi. The island nation has informed the Indian authorities that it would honour any legitimate request to extradite him. The process has begun," said a government official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Antiguan authorities also pointed out the absence of a Red Notice against Choksi and the fact that one has now been secured means that gap has been addressed, this official added.

A lawyer for Mehul Choksi said Mehul Choksi's legal team will work on setting aside the notice.

"This [notice] appears to have been obtained by making misrepresentations to Interpol. As we didn't get an opportunity to represent our stand, this Red Notice has been issued. We shall be exposing the misrepresentations at various forums and we are confident that this Red Notice shall be set aside in due course," said Sanjay Abbot.

The Red Notice is basically an appeal to all Interpol member countries to arrest the person and send him or her back to the country which requested issuance of the same.

A Central Bureau of Investigation official disputed Abbot's version.

India, Russia agree to extend bilateral cooperation on defence

NEW DELHI (TIP): India and Russia agreed to extend bilateral cooperation on defence joint-venture (JV) manufacturing projects on Thursday (December 13) at the 18th meeting of the India-Russia Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC).

The meeting was co-chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her Russian counterpart General Sergei Shoigu.

With regards to the framework of Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership', the minister discussed a wide range of issues related to defence equipment, industry and technological engagement between India and Russia.

Both ministers expressed satisfaction citing dynamism and progress in bilateral defence cooperation.

Intensive discussions were held on joint manufacturing projects, including the Kamov-226T helicopters, naval frigates and projects related to land systems.

The two countries also agreed to take

forward inter-governmental arrangements for facilitating joint manufacturing of spares for Russian origin equipment in India, under the Make in India' initiative.

With a view to enhancing military-to-military engagement and rationalising the functioning of the Commission, a revised Inter-Governmental Agreement was signed by the two defence ministers.

It will help restructure the existing IRIGC-MTC to the IRIGC on Military and Military Technical Cooperation. An additional institutional working group would also be set up under the expanded Commission.

The ministers expressed satisfaction over the level of progress in structured engagement between the two armed forces, including joint exercises and resumption of training exchanges, as per the framework of the Bilateral Road Map on Defence Cooperation' signed in June 2017.

The inaugural meeting of the IRIGC-MTC is proposed to be held in Russia next year.



Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu along with Indian counterpart Nirmala Sitharaman.



COMMENT

Prof I.S. Saluja

Not Much for Congress to Feel Elated About

Recent Assembly election wins may not replicate

The recent Assembly elections in India in which the Congress Party wrested three Hindi heartland States from BJP should alarm the BJP. However, the Congress Party had better not have the misconception that it is their victory. In fact, the BJP lost to Congress in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh because it failed to come up to the expectations of people who were desperate to get rid of a non-performing government. They rejected the BJP. Since there was no other choice for people in these States which do not have regional parties, they voted for Congress Party. Where there was a regional party, as in Telangana, or in Mizoram, voters rejected both the BJP and the Congress.

These results are not likely to replicate in other Assembly elections or in Parliamentary elections. In large States, like Bihar and UP (Hindi heartland again), there are so many regional parties who have in the past given ample evidence of their sway over voters. The BJP which won a landslide in Parliamentary elections in UP will have a lot to worry, going by its performance in the 3 States it recently lost. It is not the Congress Party which will pose a threat to BJP; it is the regional parties in these two States which have a large number of Parliamentary seats. In fact, for both the national parties, real threat comes from regional parties. Congress will be handicapped in asking for a bigger slice of seats when it sits down with the partners in alliance which include all kinds of regional parties- BSP, SP in UP, and RJD and other outfits in Bihar.

What the Congress Party need to focus on is good governance which means taking care of the people. May be, the performance of Congress governments as people-friendly governments in the freshly acquired States will send a message to other States and people will regain their lost faith in the Congress Party. It alone can revive the Congress Party. It alone can make once again Congress Yukt Bharat, as against Congress mukt Bharat.

AS I SEE IT

Keep the Pakistan door ajar

India needs to be cautious, but should not completely shut itself to talks



By G Parthasarathy

Pakistan's sudden decision to open the Kartarpur shrine for Indian pilgrims predictably raised suspicions in India. Pakistan had earlier opened other Sikh holy shrines, like Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Dera Sahib Gurdwara in Lahore, under a bilateral agreement. The decision to open the Kartarpur shrine, located virtually on the India-Pakistan border, was, however, conveyed 'informally' by Pakistan's army chief Gen Bajwa to Punjab's tempestuous minister, Navjot Sidhu. Interestingly, General Bajwa's sudden interest was manifested much after repeated requests by Indian leaders, including former PM Vajpayee, were ignored.

This unusual action by Pakistan's army chief raised hackles in New Delhi, as the Pakistan army controls the gurdwaras there through the Pakistani Gurudwara Prabandak Committee. This committee's first head was former ISI chief, Lt Gen Javed Nasir, the mastermind of the 1993 Mumbai blasts. 'Khalistani' flags are often provocatively raised during visits of Sikh pilgrims from India. They are also constantly sought to be incited by specially invited 'Khalistani' activists from countries like Canada, the US and the UK. Obviously, the ISI is now again looking to fish in troubled waters in Punjab, evident from the recent terrorist strike in Amritsar and the continuing smuggling of narcotics across the border.

These developments took place when PM Imran Khan was engaged in organizing countrywide celebrations for his first hundred days in office. Contrary to his expectations, his first hundred days have been marked by a less than satisfactory performance in fulfilling the expectations he had raised. This happened despite being the blue-eyed boy of the army, which had facilitated his election as Prime Minister. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have reached the perilously low level of \$8 billion. With the country expecting to have a further \$12 billion trade deficit in the current financial year, Pakistan had to go with bended knees to its past financial mentors - Saudi Arabia, China, US, EU, UAE and IMF - for a bailout.

The Saudis were not quite as generous as they have been in the past. On offer was a short-term deposit of \$3 billion in a Pakistani bank and a similar offer of petroleum under a short-term, deferred payment arrangement. The IMF imposed strict conditionalities, including asking for details of repayment liabilities on Chinese loans for CPEC. Negotiations with the IMF are presently on hold. Pakistan's expectations of long-term, low-interest/interest-free credits from China were not fulfilled. The US has ended military

"Imran Khan has reached out to India, urging the resumption of dialogue and India's participation at SAARC summit in Islamabad. Our standard reply 'talks and terrorism can't go together' is not endorsed internationally and conveys rigidity. It needs to be nuanced", says the author.



Imran Khan has reached out to India. The opportunity should not be lost

and economic aid for Pakistan. Pakistan's finance minister Asad Umar recently proclaimed: 'Right now, we have a \$18 billion deficit and \$9 billion of debt repayment due this year, which brings the total to \$27 billion... we cannot afford that.'

Imran Khan has reached out to India, urging the resumption of dialogue and India's participation at SAARC summit in Islamabad. Our standard reply 'talks and terrorism can't go together' is not endorsed internationally and conveys rigidity. It needs to be nuanced. Detailed 'back-channel' negotiations after the JeM attack on our Parliament, resulted in an agreement in which General Musharraf assured Vajpayee that 'territory under Pakistan's control' would not be used for terrorism against India. Pakistan abided by that assurance till 2007. The Composite Dialogue Process also resumed on all issues, including Kashmir. There was progress, based on PM Manmohan Singh's offer that while 'borders can't be redrawn', we can work towards making them 'irrelevant' by making them 'just lines on a map'. The 26/11 attacks ended it.

Pakistan would like to resume the Composite Dialogue Process. This should be rejected as terrorism is accorded a low priority. This does not mean that India should cut off all diplomatic contacts with Pakistan. It is essential that we stand firm on refusing to discuss J&K unless the sponsorship of terrorism ends.

But we go wrong by equating the priorities of the Pakistan army, with the interest about India across wide sections of ordinary Pakistanis. Vajpayee's directive on liberal issue of visas, particularly to Mohajirs in Karachi and urban Sind, produced dramatic results in changing public opinion about

India. It pays us richly to expose ordinary Pakistanis to realities in contemporary India. We need to welcome exchanges of visits by students, academics, business organizations, cultural troupes and those with familial ties.

There also has to be firmness and realism in dealing with the Pakistan military establishment. Pakistan has to be told bluntly that it has rendered SAARC non-functional and SAARC Free Trade Agreement meaningless by its restrictions on Indian exports and by denial of transit to Afghanistan. Not just India, Bangladesh and Afghanistan should also have reservations on the next summit being hosted in Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan wastes time and resources in pushing for China, which is not a South Asian country, to be admitted to SAARC. This is a proposal India will not accept. We need not, therefore, be in a hurry to respond positively to Imran Khan's call for an early summit.

Apart from reaching out to people, back-channel contacts - free from the glare of publicity - between diplomats, army officials and intelligence agencies are essential to deal with terrorism and bilateral cooperation, while at the same time, maintaining pressure to respond to challenges of terrorism. With the snows closing the passes, cross-border terrorism in the Valley falls. Imran Khan has shown some readiness to consider moving forward on proposals to address the J&K issue, on lines akin to what happened in 2004-2007, when terrorism was minimal. We can, however, address major issues only after the general election. But we should spare no effort to raise the costs of sponsoring terrorism for the military establishment of Pakistan.

(The author is a former diplomat)

THE INDIAN PANORAMA

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Published by Prof. Indrajit Saluja

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India awakened, democracy restored



By Mike Ghose



“

If Congress were to win elections in 2019, the BJP supporters will go ballistic against the elected government and that is the time Congress party needs to show its civility, and they will, as they have a proven record. Unlike our Goonga Prime Minister, the Congress Prime Minister will speak out against anyone calling the BJP supporters anti-National or anti-Hindu. No one is anti-National or anti-Hindu, it is the wild imagination of fanatics among BJP to sow the seeds of discord.

”

A tsunami of good news has just hit India, five of the 29 states of India held the elections in December 2018, and produced amazing results, and the winner is the Indian Democracy.

Parties come and go, but what is constant is our freedom. Freedom to speak, freedom to prosper, and freedom to marry whom you want, eat what you want, drink what appeals to you, wear what works for you, and believe whatever the hell suits you.

Whether you align with BJP, INC or other parties, you have the freedom to speak and prosper because the foundation of our nation was laid out on the principles of Democracy. We cannot let anyone curb those freedoms, the media needs to be free and people need to free.

I am sure no Indian wants someone to tell him or her how to live. The BJP followers will not like what the Congress may tell them to do, and the same is true the other way around. The durable policy is to follow the principles of freedom.

Modi has time to show that he really believes in Democracy and is not authoritarian. He can do that by initiating three national awards; Patriotic Citizen, Patriotic Media and National Chamcha Award. The award goes to those individuals and News Media who relentlessly criticize the government to keep them on their toes, and National Chamcha Award goes to the individuals who consistently equate support for Government as a Patriotic act. A true patriot would hold the feet of the government to the fire rather than do the chamchagiri and let the country make mistake after mistake.

If Congress were to win elections in 2019, the BJP supporters will go ballistic against the elected government and that is the time Congress party needs to show its civility, and they will, as they have a proven record. Unlike our Goonga Prime Minister, the Congress Prime Minister will speak out against anyone calling the BJP supporters anti-National or anti-Hindu. No one is anti-National or anti-Hindu, it is the wild imagination of fanatics among BJP to sow the seeds of discord.

I am proud of India's freedom and salute the

men and women who went to jail and took the beatings but chose to fight for freedom. They not only got the freedom but set up great institutions for India. Today India is among the top 7 powerful nations, and the credit goes to Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, Ambedkar and a few others who had the vision and laid the foundation of a great nation.

Whether you align with BJP, INC or other parties, you have the freedom to speak and prosper because the foundation of our nation was laid out on the principles of Democracy. We cannot let anyone curb those freedoms, the media needs to be free and people need to free.

I admire Modi's supporters in America and their loyalty. I wish they show the same devotion to India by respecting every Indian without prejudice.

Do you recall a tyrant grandfather or even a father, who is all about control, he claims to live a simple life, but wants to keep everyone under his thumb? Our Prime Minister, under the guise of Sanyasi (hermit), claims that he has nothing to gain and wants nothing. How does he account for enriching his friends? Would a Sanyasi do that?

We cannot blame Modi for who he is, he is conditioned by the RSS schools where they teach exclusive ideology and disrespect to others who do not think like them. A majority of Hindus innocently believe that RSS is a service organization but fail to see the poison it injects into the innocent children. I wish Modi frees himself from the petty Hindutva ideology and becomes an all-embracing leader and a giant like Nehru.

I pray that a handful of right-leaning Hindu Americans fight their temptations to support the forces in India who want to deny the freedoms to 'other' Indians. Their American born children think they are stupid to have such hatred towards the other.

A young Hindu Medical doctor doing his residency stayed with me for a month while attending a conference in Washington DC. We had terrific conversations on a daily basis. He wished his parents had the opportunity to know Muslims, Christians, Dalits, Sikhs, and the Blacks. He deplored their hatred towards them. He said, he has lived in the dorms, and everything they have said about others was wrong.

There are parents out there who are selfish and poison their kids by injecting ill-will towards others. Some Hindu parents tell their kids how bad Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are and vice versa goes as well, they even believe Dalits are untouchables. The dumb men (women are not as hateful) don't realize that when the kids grow up in America, they have to work with the very people they were told to stay away from. It must be painful for

the kids to work with others, many of them wish they did not have such ugly parents. I urge the Indian Americans not to poison their kids, the kids have sixty to seventy years to live, let them decide whom to love or hate based on their personal experience and not prejudice.

The Law of Karma does not spare anyone. Modi's arrogance will bring him down in 2019. He has got to stop bullshitting Indians with

Two BJP contestants in two states, a Minister for Cow Welfare and Minister for Happiness lost the elections badly. This is a major loss and a clear signal to the party that Indians cannot be fooled over and over again with the issue of cow or the building of a temple.

issues that don't put food on their tables or clothe their kids or have clean drinking water. Let him make one promise and keep rather than make ten and cheat.

All of us want the best for fellow humans including Modi. Mr. Modi can make a comeback in 2024 if he turns BJP into a party where every Indian, be it a Muslim, Sikh, Christian or Dalit wants to become a member of his party. He has got to do his praischit (repentance) for quietly letting a few goons to go on a killing spree in 2001. Indians will forgive him if seeks forgiveness. Hinduism is not a religion of violence or revenge, it is not about forcing others to eat, drink or believe against their will. It Hinduism is not a violent religion, then the moderate Hindus have an obligation to protect the image of Hinduism and not let the Hindutva guys tarnish it.

Indians are good people, they are as good as gold. They are clamoring for a leader who can bring jobs and don't want to be fooled again.

Two BJP contestants in two states, a Minister for Cow Welfare and Minister for Happiness lost the elections badly. This is a major loss and a clear signal to the party that Indians cannot be fooled over and over again with the issue of cow or the building of a temple.

(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 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikeghose/>)

France: Yellow vest protester dies in road accident

STRASBOURG (TIP): A sixth “yellow vest” protester has been killed in France after being hit by a truck at a road blockade near the southern city of Avignon, French authorities said Dec 13, as the protest movement showed no signs of abating. Officials in the Vaucluse department said the driver was arrested and taken into custody after he tried to flee the scene.

The Vaucluse prefect’s office said the protester got emergency treatment but died from his wounds overnight. The prefect urged the protesters — who wear the yellow fluorescent safety vests that France requires drivers to keep in their cars — to use “the utmost caution,” especially at night, in order to avoid more accidents.

In an effort to defuse tensions, French President Emmanuel Macron has acknowledged he’s partially responsible for the anger that has fuelled the protests and has announced a series of measures aimed at improving the spending power of ordinary French workers.

But many yellow vest protesters have expressed disappointment at the measures and are planning more protests across France on Saturday. Macron’s centrist government is also going to face a no-confidence vote in the lower house of parliament later on Dec 13.

The vote, prompted by far-left and Socialist lawmakers, is not expected to succeed, however, as Macron’s party and its allies have a strong majority at the National Assembly.

Fearing more violence at protests this weekend, authorities have already postponed five French league soccer matches as the government diverts police to deploy extra security around the country following the extremist attack Dec 13 that left three people dead in Strasbourg.

The French league says the reason for the cancellations is because police forces are being stretched.

France has raised its three-stage threat index to the highest level and deployed 1,800 additional soldiers across France to help patrol streets and secure crowded events in the wake of the Strasbourg attack on a Christmas market. More than 700 officers are involved in the manhunt for the 29-year-old suspect, Cherif Chekatt, who had a long criminal record and had been flagged for extremism, according to government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux. He urged the “yellow vest” protesters not to take to the streets. (AP)

Gandhi statue removed from University of Ghana following student protests

ACCRA (TIP): A statue of Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi has been removed from Ghana’s most prestigious university after complaints that he was racist against black Africans. India’s former president Pranab Mukherjee unveiled the statue to the global peace icon at the University of Ghana in Accra two years ago as a symbol of ties between the two nations. But lecturers soon began a petition calling for its removal, citing passages written by Gandhi claiming that Indians were “infinitely superior” to black Africans. (PTI)

In a first under Justin Trudeau, Canada lists Khalistani extremism as threat

Sikh groups Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation, which are already on Canada’s watch list, remain listed as terror entities under the criminal code, the report mentions.

TORONTO (TIP): Taking into account India’s concerns over support of Khalistani militants on its soil, Canada has for the first time under the Justin Trudeau regime listed Sikh extremism as a threat to the country. Public Safety Canada, an arm of the Canadian government, said some individuals in the country continue to support Sikh (Khalistani) extremist ideologies and movements in its “2018 Public Report on the Terrorism Threat to Canada”.

Sikh groups Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation, which are already on Canada’s watch list, remain listed as terror entities under the criminal code, the report mentions.

The report notes that while violent activities in support of an independent Sikh homeland (Khalistan) in India have fallen since the 1980s when terrorists carried out the bombing of an Air India flight, killing 331 people, “support for the extreme ideologies of such groups remains”.

“Violent activities in support of an independent Sikh homeland have fallen since their height during the 1982-1993 period when individuals and groups conducted numerous terrorist attacks. While attacks around the world in support of this movement have declined, support for the extreme ideologies of such groups remains,” the report mentions.

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The Canadian PM has repeatedly failed to

take into account the sensitivities in India regarding support to Sikh terror groups in Canada.

His visit to India earlier this year had made the Khalistan movement a talking point once again. During his meeting with Trudeau, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh said he had raised the issue of Khalistan. In an incident that caused further embarrassment to the Canadian premiere, Trudeau’s wife was clicked with Jaspal Atwal, a member of an illegal Sikh separatist group, who was invited to an event hosted by the Canadian High Commission.

(Express Web Desk)

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un unlikely to visit Seoul this month: Official

SEOUL (TIP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s return visit to Seoul appears unlikely to take place this month, a senior South Korean official said. Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in had agreed on Kim’s visit to Seoul “in the near future” following their September summit in Pyongyang. Moon later said that Kim would come “within this year.” Kim’s possible trip to Seoul has been the focus of media attention in South Korea in the past two weeks.

The presidential Blue House on Dec 13 quoted senior presidential adviser Yoon Young-chan as saying in a text message to local reporters on Wednesday that Kim’s visit this year was “difficult.” Yoon said Kim’s trip early next year was still possible.

Experts say Kim is reluctant to come because of stalled nuclear negotiations with the United States and worries about security arrangements in the South. If Kim does visit Seoul, he will become the first North Korean leader to do so since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The Koreas are divided by the world’s most heavily fortified border, and about 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea to deter potential aggression from North Korea. Kim and Moon have taken a series of steps to reduce military tensions and boost ties



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this year. But they find it difficult to launch economic cooperation projects as the United States says it will maintain international sanctions on the North until it completes its nuclear disarmament.

The negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea have produced no major breakthrough since Kim’s summit with President Donald Trump in Singapore in June. (AP)

Turkey: Train crash in Ankara kills nine, injures 47

There were 206 passengers on the high-speed train, according to state-owned Anadolu news agency, which also reported that the Ankara state prosecutor's office had launched an investigation.

ANKARA (TIP): Nine people were killed and nearly 50 injured in Turkey when a high-speed train collided with a locomotive and crashed into a station platform and overpass in an Ankara suburb early on Dec 13, officials said.

Rescuers worked to free people trapped under the mangled wreckage at Marsandiz train station, 8 km (5 miles) from central Ankara. It was not clear at which speed the train and locomotive were travelling when the collision occurred. There was light snow on the tracks.

The train had been heading from Ankara to the central Turkish province of Konya and was not due to stop at Marsandiz. Ankara Governor Vasip Sahin said the locomotive, which lay battered 20 metres (22 yards) further ahead, carried out track inspections.

Three train drivers were among the nine killed in the crash, Transport Minister Cahit Turhan told reporters on the scene.

There were 206 passengers on the high-speed train, according to state-owned Anadolu



news agency, which also reported that the Ankara state prosecutor's office had launched an investigation.

Turkey has been developing a network of

high-speed rail links during Tayyip Erdogan's 16-year-old rule as it looks to ease the burden on increasingly congested highways. (Reuters)

Second Canadian missing in China after detention of former diplomat

BEIJING, OTTAWA (TIP): Canadian businessman Michael Spavor, who worked with North Korea, is missing in China, a Canadian official said, days after Chinese authorities detained a former Canadian diplomat amid an escalating diplomatic row.

His disappearance follows the detention in Beijing on Monday of former diplomat Michael Kovrig, who works for the International Crisis Group. State media in China has reported Kovrig is being investigated "on suspicion of engaging in activities that harm China's state security".

China has reacted angrily to Canada's arrest on Dec 1 of Chinese executive Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of China's Huawei Technologies, and Spavor's disappearance is likely to further escalate the diplomatic row.

Meng's arrest was made at Washington's request. She has been accused by U.S. prosecutors of misleading banks about transactions linked to Iran, putting the banks at risk of violating sanctions.

Canada has been unable to contact Spavor since he notified the Canadian government that he was being questioned by Chinese authorities, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guillaume Bérubé said in statement issued in Canada late on Dec 12.

Canada was working hard to ascertain Spavor's whereabouts and would continue to raise the issue with the Chinese government, Bérubé said. Phone calls, messages and emails to Spavor went unanswered on Dec 13.

Friends of Spavor told Reuters he was due to fly out of Dalian on a Korean Air flight to South Korea at 2:05 p.m. (0605 GMT) on Dec 10 but had not arrived. Spavor, who is based in the northern Chinese city of Dandong, on the border with North Korea, is the head of Paektu Cultural Exchange, a China- and UK-based non-profit social enterprise.

More recently he has been trying to facilitate investment in North Korea in anticipation of sanctions being lifted, often hosting both North Korean officials and potential investors at his office in Dandong as well as on trips inside North Korea, Spavor told Reuters in previous interviews. (Reuters)

China to continue strict bans on trading of rhino, tiger products: official

BEIJING (TIP): China will continue to strictly ban the trade and use of rhinos, tigers and their byproducts, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) said on Dec 13.

The agency's spokesperson Huang Caiyi said the following "three strict bans" will continue to be enforced: strictly ban the importing and exporting of rhinos, tigers and their byproducts; strictly ban the sales, purchasing, transporting, carrying and mailing of rhinos, tigers and their byproducts; and strictly ban the use of rhino horns and tiger bones in medicine.

Since Nov 13, the NFGA has been staging special crackdown campaigns that target the illegal trade of rhinos, tigers, their byproducts and related illegalities, Huang told a news conference. (UNI)

Theresa May wins confidence vote, loses over one-third of her party support

BRUSSELS (TIP): British Prime Minister Theresa May survived a confidence vote with the support of 200 lawmakers from her party Dec 12. However, 117 lawmakers, more than a third of the Tories, dissented indicating a split within the conservative party over the Brexit deal. May, who needed 159 votes to win the vote, cannot be challenged for another year.

With Britain due to leave the EU on March 29, Wednesday's vote has suddenly opened up possibilities including a potentially disorderly exit with no deal or even another referendum on the country's membership.

Why the confidence vote was called?

The confidence vote was called after weeks of discord over the Brexit deal when at least 48 Conservative lawmakers submitted letters of protest challenging May's leadership. Graham Brady, chairman of the 1922 committee — the body that represents Conservative backbenchers — announced Wednesday that he had received more than the required number of letters to proceed with the confidence vote. May had cancelled a trip to Dublin where she had hoped to talk to her Irish counterpart, Leo Varadkar, about changes that might help build support in the British Parliament for her Brexit proposals. But it had already been clear that she was in deep waters, battered from multiple directions by her management of the European Union withdrawal.

What Theresa May said after winning?

After winning the confidence vote, May said she would get on with the job of pulling Britain out of the European Union. Speaking in Downing Street, the British PM said, "This has been a long and challenging day but at the end of it I am pleased to have received the backing of my colleagues in tonight's ballot. Whilst I am grateful for that support, a



significant number of colleagues did cast a vote against me and I have listened to what they said. Following this ballot, we now need to get on with the job of delivering Brexit for the British people and building a better future for this country. A Brexit that delivers on the vote that people gave, that brings back control of our money, our borders and our laws, that protects jobs, security and the Union, that brings the country back together rather than entrenching division. That must start here in Westminster, with politicians on all sides coming together and acting in the national interest."

"For my part, I have heard what the House of Commons said about the Northern Ireland backstop and when I go to the European Council tomorrow I will be seeking legal and political assurances that will assuage the concerns that members of Parliament have on that issue. But while delivering Brexit is important, we also need to focus on the other issues that people feel are vital to them, that matter to them day-to-day, the issues that we

came into politics to deal with. Building a stronger economy, delivering first-class public services, building the homes that families need. We owe it to people who put us here to put their priorities first. So here is our renewed mission: delivering the Brexit that people voted for, bringing the country back together, and building the country that truly works for everyone."

What would have happened if Theresa May had lost?

In this case, May would no longer be the leader of the Conservative Party, and Brady would have begun the process to choose a successor. Lawmakers would have voted in rounds of secret ballots, with the least-popular candidate eliminated each time, until two contenders remain. Brady said he believed that part of the process could be done by the end of business next Thursday when Parliament is scheduled to break for the Christmas vacation.

(Express Desk)



ANUSHKA SHARMA: RAB NE BANA DI JODI CHANGED MY LIFE

Actor Anushka Sharma says her debut film *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi*, which clocks 10 years on Wednesday, has a special place in her heart as she got to work with people who had faith in her.

The actor said she is close to producer Aditya Chopra and her co-star Shah Rukh Khan even today. "Adi (Aditya Chopra, director) used to say that 'we have taken you because you can stand on your own against anyone'. Yashji (Yash Chopra) had also said the same. For a young person like me to hear that was a huge confidence booster," Anushka said.

"I got to work with people who were very nice and generous to me. I share a beautiful equation with all of them even now. I am blessed to be working on this film. It changed my life. It is something that is going to be the most special thing I have done," she added.

The actor, who was 20 when she made her debut, was praised for her confidence on screen, something that she says, came after a lot of hardwork.

I valued the art I was in, I valued acting a lot, I paid attention and worked towards it. I would read the same script almost everyday, finding something new in it to do. They understood the hard work I was putting into the film. And the only reason I was so confident when I did the film is because I was so prepared. Confidence comes because you work so hard," she said.

AISHWARYA AND KARISMA DANCE TOGETHER AT THE AMBANI'S CELEBRATION

Isha Ambani's pre-wedding ceremonies like the recently concluded sangeet at Udaipur has seen many firsts, like the three Khans —Salman, Shah Rukh and Aamir — dancing at the same event. Now, yet another 'wall' seems to have been broken. At the sangeet ceremony, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Karisma Kapoor were seen dancing together.

Why would that be of any consequence? Well, that is because Aishwarya is the wife of actor Abhishek Bachchan while Karisma dated Abhishek for seven years before they were engaged to get married. However, the engagement was broken off and Karisma went on to marry her now-ex husband, Sunjay Kapur. So seeing them dance together was pleasant indeed.

It seems, all the concerned parties have let bygones be bygones. In fact, it would not be inappropriate to add here that showing the way for such an attitude is the young brigade of Bollywood.

Some time back, a picture was online which showed Karan Johar in the company of Deepika Padukone, Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Ranveer Singh, Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan. Nothing out of place there, other than the fact that Deepika and Ranbir are ex-lovers (Deepika even had a tattoo of his initials on her nape, at one time). The fact that ex-lovers and their current partners could meet and enjoy time together showed how these stars weren't letting themselves be victims of their past.

Deepika and Ranbir have realised that being friends is more important, it seems. The result was that they have walked the ramp together and done films opposite each other. In fact, Deepika and Alia even appeared on *Koffee With Karan* together in this season's inaugural episode.

Meanwhile, the Isha Ambani wedding functions' juggernaut rolls on. After a



dreamy engagement at Italy's scenic Lake Como in September this year and an exciting sangeet ceremony in Udaipur, the couple is all set to tie the knot at Mukesh Ambani's residence Antilia, in South

Mumbai on December 12. Isha will marry Anand Piramal, son of Swati and Ajay Piramal - founder of Piramal Realty, a leading real estate firm.

Source: HT



Kartik Aaryan on why he wants to have babies with Katrina

Kartik Aaryan is among the hottest young actors in Bollywood, thanks to the spectacular showing of his film, *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety*. So much so that Sara Ali Khan recently said that she wants to date him. Speaking on *Koffee With Karan*, the Kedarnath actor said she finds him hot.

Now, it is Kartik's turn to speak and he has done so with flourish. Speaking on Neha Dhupia's *No Filter* Neha, the actor was in his elements as he did not duck any questions and answered all head on. On an earlier occasion, he had mentioned that he would like to have babies with Katrina Kaif. On *No Filter* Neha, he finally explained his stance, stating that he had a thing for

accents. Since Katrina had one, she fitted the bill. On Neha's insistence that Jacqueline Fernandez too had one, Kartik feigned innocence, adding that he didn't know that.

Speaking about his equation with Sara and asked if any sparks few between the two at a recent party, Kartik replied saying that since Saif was present at the do, everything was "eco friendly". "I think Saif (Ali Khan) sir was also there, so it was all eco-friendly."

He was further asked he pretends to drink, to which, he answered in the affirmative. He reportedly said that when he entered the industry, he pretended to drink at parties, else

everyone tries to force a person to drink. "So from my first party, I ask the bartender to give me a glass of water, put lemon and ice in it. Then, I look at the colour of other people's drink and add orange juice or any other juice to it so that it looks like a proper mocktail," Indian Express quoted him as saying.

On the question to which Bollywood couple ought to admit to being together, he named Arjun Kapoor and Malaika Arora and gave the tag of being the couple of 2018, he named Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt. He also said that one actor who ought to delete his social media account is Sushant Singh Rajput.



I'D BE 'VICTIM-SHAMED' IF I SHARED MY METOO STORY: MEGAN FOX

Megan Fox thinks she'd be "victim-shamed" if she was to come forward with her own #MeToo experiences.

The 32-year-old actress has claimed the reason she hasn't joined the dozens of women speaking out about alleged sexual misconduct in Hollywood is because she thinks she'd be painted as an "unsympathetic victim".

She said: "I didn't speak out for many reasons. I just didn't think based on how I'd been received by people, and by feminists, that I would be a sympathetic victim."

"I thought if ever there were a time when the world would agree that it's appropriate to victim-shame someone, it would be when I came forward with my story."

The "Transformers" star claims she has "quite a few stories" involving sexual misconduct that she could tell, but insisted she wouldn't be commenting on them in public as she doesn't believe it's her "job to punish someone" for their past actions.

She added: "I don't feel it's my job to punish someone because they did something bad to me. I'm not the universal hammer of justice."

But although she might not be speaking out about her past, Megan is determined to raise her sons - Noah, six, Bodhi, four, and Journey, two, all of whom she has with husband Brian Austin Green - to respect women.

JENNIFER LOPEZ CAN SEE WHY PEOPLE WANT HER AND ALEX RODRIGUEZ TO GET MARRIED

Jennifer Lopez understands why people want her and boyfriend Alex Rodriguez to get married.

"Everyone wants a fairy tale," she told USA Today during an interview. "They all want a romantic comedy, a happy ending. We all do. But it's not a movie, even if you see us on Instagram or on the shows."

The "Second Act" star added that even though she and the former baseball player have been going steady for more than one year, they're not rushing into tying the knot.

"We're happy," she said. "We're taking it day-by-day. And it's great."

In recent months, Lopez and Rodriguez have shared videos from their joint workout sessions, red carpet appearances, and photos with their children. The singer has two kids named Max and Emme with ex-husband Marc Anthony and Rodriguez has two daughters, Natasha and Ella, from his previous marriage to Cynthia Scurtis.

"2018 has really moved us to place where we feel like a real family," Lopez said. "That's nice. And it's good enough right now." Recently, Lopez was grilled about her relationship during an appearance on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show." The talk show host sneakily lied to the 49-year-old and said that Rodriguez told her that he was planning on proposing to Lopez, but the singer didn't fall for it. When DeGeneres asked if Lopez and Rodriguez are actually getting married, Lopez explained that she wasn't sure, but they've "been together a couple of years and it's nice."

In July, the "Dinero" singer also said that she wasn't rushing into a wedding with Rodriguez because she's "made plenty of mistakes" in the past. Lopez married Anthony in 2004 and separated in 2011. Before that, she was married to Ojani Noa in the late '90s, married to Cris Judd in the early 2000s, and engaged to Ben Affleck.



MARGOT ROBBIE WAS 'TERRIFIED' TO PLAY QUEEN ELIZABETH I

Actor Margot Robbie has revealed that she was initially hesitant to play Queen Elizabeth in "Mary Queen of Scots" as she felt "terrified".

The 28-year-old actor believes that to take on a character which has been previously portrayed by the likes of Judi Dench, Helen Mirren and Cate Blanchett is too big a task.

"That (history of portrayals) was definitely something that ran through my mind many times. I'm not going to lie, I was terrified, and I initially passed on the role," Robbie told Entertainment Weekly in an interview.

The actor said director Josie Rourke was adamant that she play the part and relentlessly pursued her.

The film is based on John Guy's 2004 biography of 'Mary, Mary Queen of Scots' and chronicles the deterioration of Mary and Elizabeth's relationship in the years after she returns to Scotland.

Margot Robbie exudes old Hollywood glamour

She's been on a worldwide promotional

trail with her latest historical drama film Mary Queen of Scots.

And Margot Robbie pulled all out the stops as she joined Saoirse Ronan for the European Premiere of the film at Cineworld Leicester Square in London on Monday evening.

The Wolf Of Wall Street star, 28, oozed Old Hollywood glamour as she donned a polka dot gown, embellished a plunging neckline and rose details on its bodice.

Putting her best fashion foot forward, the blonde's busty ensemble was embroidered with pleated trimming along the ends.

Margot ensured focus remained on her outfit as she went accessory-free for her red carpet appearance in the English capital.

The Australian actress appeared to take style inspiration from the 60s as she styled her glossy tresses into pin-up curls.

Maintaining the red colour scheme, she enhanced her out-of-this-world beauty with matte crimson lipstick, rose-tinted eyeshadow and a heavy winged eyeliner look.



Sri Lankan Parliament dissolution 'unconstitutional', rules Supreme Court

COLOMBO (TIP): The Sri Lankan Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to dissolve the Parliament 20 months before the end of its term was "unconstitutional". A seven-member apex court bench said that the President cannot dissolve Parliament until it completes a four-and-a-half year term, the Colombo Gazette reported.

The ruling comes as a double blow to Sirisena a day after Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe proved his majority in Parliament, with 117 out of 225 lawmakers voting to pass a confidence motion in his leadership. Rajapaksa has so far failed to prove his majority in Parliament.

The island nation plunged into political crisis after Sirisena removed PM Wickremesinghe on October 26 and appointed former president Mahinda Rajapaksa in his place. When it appeared that Rajapaksa would not be able to muster the support of the majority in the Parliament, Sirisena dissolved the House on November 9 and called for a snap election on January 5.

As many as 13 petitions had been filed against Sirisena's dissolution of the Parliament. However, in an interim order on November 13, the Supreme Court ruled Sirisena's gazette notification as temporarily illegal and halted the preparations for snap polls.

Sirisena has said that he had always taken decisions in the best interest of the country and the people. He had also said that he would honour the court's decision. (Express desk)

Scores of migrant girls quietly vanishing from Indonesia

FATUKOKO (TIP): The stranger showed up at the girl's door one night with a tantalizing job offer: Give up your world, and I will give you a future.

It was a chance for 16-year-old Marselina Neonbota to leave her isolated village in one of the poorest parts of Indonesia for neighbouring Malaysia, where some migrant workers can earn more in a few years than in a lifetime at home. A way out for a girl so hungry for a life beyond subsistence farming that she walked 22 kilometres (14 miles) every day to the schoolhouse and back.

She grabbed the opportunity — and disappeared.

The cheerful child known to her family as Lina joined the army of Indonesians who migrate every year to wealthier countries in Asia and the Middle East for work. Thousands come home in coffins, or vanish. Among them, possibly hundreds of trafficked girls have quietly disappeared from the impoverished western half of Timor island and elsewhere in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara province. The National Agency for Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers has counted more than 2,600 cases of dead or missing Indonesian migrants since 2014. And even those numbers mostly leave out people like Lina who are recruited illegally — an estimated 30 per cent of Indonesia's 6.2 million migrant workers.

On that night in 2010, Lina didn't seem to sense the danger posed by the stranger named Sarah. But Lina's great-aunt and great-uncle, who had raised her, were hesitant. Sarah insisted they could trust her; she was related to the village chief. And Lina would only be gone two years. (AP)

Saudi package would be 'biggest foreign investment' in history: Pakistan finance minister

Saudi Arabia announced to provide cash-strapped Pakistan \$3 billion in balance of payment support and additionally give oil worth \$3 billion on deferred payment.

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan's Finance Minister Asad Umar said Thursday that an incoming investment package from Saudi Arabia would be "the biggest foreign investment" in the country's history. The announcement of the package will be made following a cabinet approval next week, the Dawn reported.

"The ball is in our court. We have to get cabinet approval next week, after which an announcement will be made," the paper quoted Umar as saying at an event in Islamabad. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been in talks recently over a bailout package for Islamabad.

At a time when various foreign countries and business delegations were pulling out of an investment conference in Saudi after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Kingdom's consulate in Istanbul, Prime Minister Imran Khan attended the event, inviting foreign investors to put their money into projects in Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia announced to provide cash-strapped Pakistan \$3 billion in balance of payment support and additionally give oil worth \$3 billion on deferred payment after Prime Minister Khan met Saudi King Salman in Riyadh October. (PTI)



India's negative attitude unhelpful in improving ties: Pakistan Foreign Secretary

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Accusing India of perpetuating "dynamic rivalry", Pakistan Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua has said New Delhi's negative attitude was not only unhelpful for improving bilateral ties, but was also stopping South Asia from making progress and attaining peace.

Speaking at a conference on 'Conflict and Cooperation in South Asia: Role of Major Powers' hosted by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Janjua said that India, by refusing to attend the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Islamabad, was holding the regional body's summit process hostage. Referring to India's approach on ties with Pakistan, Janjua said India was "spinning hatred" and perpetuating "dynamic rivalry", according to Dawn newspaper.

Malaysian ex-PM Najib Razak slapped with new charge over 1MDB scandal

KUALA LUMPUR (TIP): Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was charged Wednesday with tampering with the final audit report into a defunct state investment fund, adding to a long list of corruption allegations against him since his ouster in May elections.

Najib was charged along with Arul Kanda Kandasamy, the former head of the 1MDB fund, which is being investigated in the US and other countries for alleged cross-border embezzlement and money laundering.

Najib pleaded not guilty to abusing power to order the modification of the report in February 2016 before it was presented to the Public Accounts Committee, in order to protect himself from disciplinary and legal action. Kandasamy, who was detained overnight by anti-graft officials, pleaded not guilty to abetting Najib.

The charges came after the auditor-general revealed last month that some details had been removed from the 1MDB report. Kandasamy led 1MDB from 2015 until he was terminated in June. The two men were released on bail, and face up to 20 years in prison if found guilty.

Najib set up 1MDB when he took power in 2009 to promote economic development, but



the fund amassed billions in debts. U.S. investigators say Najib's associates stole and laundered \$4.5 billion from the fund, including some that landed in Najib's bank account.

Public anger over the scandal led to the defeat of Najib's long-ruling coalition in May 9 elections and ushered in the first change of power since Malaysia gained independence

from Britain in 1957.

The new government reopened the investigations stifled under Najib's rule. Najib, his wife and several top-ranking former government officials have been charged with multiple counts of corruption, criminal breach of trust and money laundering.

Najib, 65, has accused the new government of political vengeance. (AP)

KOLKATA: CULTURAL HUB OF INDIA

The former British capital of India boasts of an illustrious past which reflects through the fascinating art, marvellous architecture, and declamatory literature of the city. Being the cultural and intellectual hub of India, this vibrant city invites you to witness its artistic grandeur, dazzling culture, and literary legacy through an exhilarating Kolkata sightseeing tour. Apart from its rich history, and ancient culture, here are some of the best places to visit in Kolkata which form an essential part of the city's tourism.

Victoria Memorial

Spread over 57 acres of land, housing 21 lush green gardens, 28,394 artefacts, and 3,900 artistic paintings, Victoria Memorial is one of the best places to visit in Kolkata. Built in the memory of Queen Victoria, this white marble beauty is a host to 20 lakhs annual visitors.

Fort William

Situated on the eastern banks of Hooghly river, Fort Williams is a huge building from the colonial era that has served multiple purposes till date. It is one of the few Kolkata points of interest which is a must visit place during your Kolkata sightseeing tour. Known as the 'black hole of Calcutta', this place was once a temporary jail where prisoners were hauled, but now it serves as the headquarters of the Eastern Command.

Marble Palace

This nineteenth century palatial mansion in North Kolkata, is one of the most visited tourist places in Kolkata. It is one of the best restored royal family palaces in India that boasts of artistic statues, elegant glassware, and noteworthy paintings of illustrious artists of the British Raj.

Howrah Bridge

A Kolkata sightseeing tour is truly incomplete without visiting the 'Harbour Bridge of India', the Howrah Bridge. Titled as the 'oldest but the busiest' place in Kolkata, the Howrah Bridge was built over the Hooghly river to ensure connectivity between the two major cities of Kolkata and Howrah.

Tagore's House

Known as the 'Jorasanko Thakur Bari', Tagore's house is one of the most important historical places in Kolkata. The former residence of India's most renowned literaries, Rabindranath Tagore, is now converted into a museum which houses a photo gallery, fascinating paintings, and Tagore's literary works.

Sunderbans

The most famous Kolkata tourist spot, Sunderbans is one of the natural wonders of the world. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sunderbans is a part of the world's largest delta formed by the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna. It is also the largest Tiger reserve, and national park in India.

Rabindra Sarovar

Previously known as Dhakuria lake, Rabindra Sarovar is an artificial lake in Kolkata. It is one of the best places to visit in Kolkata if you are looking for a quiet, and peaceful time. Every morning one would find numerous people jogging, or walking along the shores of the lake. It is also a perfect spot for nature admirers who wish to get close to the beauty of nature.

Botanical Gardens



Located along the western banks of River Ganga, Botanical Garden is a 273 acre garden known for its extensive floral diversity. Housing more than 12,000 different species of plants, it is one of the most beautiful places to see in Kolkata for travelers who wish to witness the mesmerising beauty of nature.

Aquatica

Spread across a huge 75,000 square feet area, Aquatica is one of the largest water amusement parks in Eastern India. For people who seek light hearted adventure along with some fun filled activities, Aquatica is one of the best places to visit in Kolkata with friends where one can enjoy numerous thrilling rides and activities.

Nicco Park

One of the best places to visit in Kolkata, Nicco Park is an exhilarating amusement park developed for the sole purpose of recreational activities for families. It is one of the oldest amusement parks in Kolkata that houses various adventurous, and fun filled rides for children as well as adults where they can spend some rejuvenating time with their families.

Dakshineswar Kali Temple

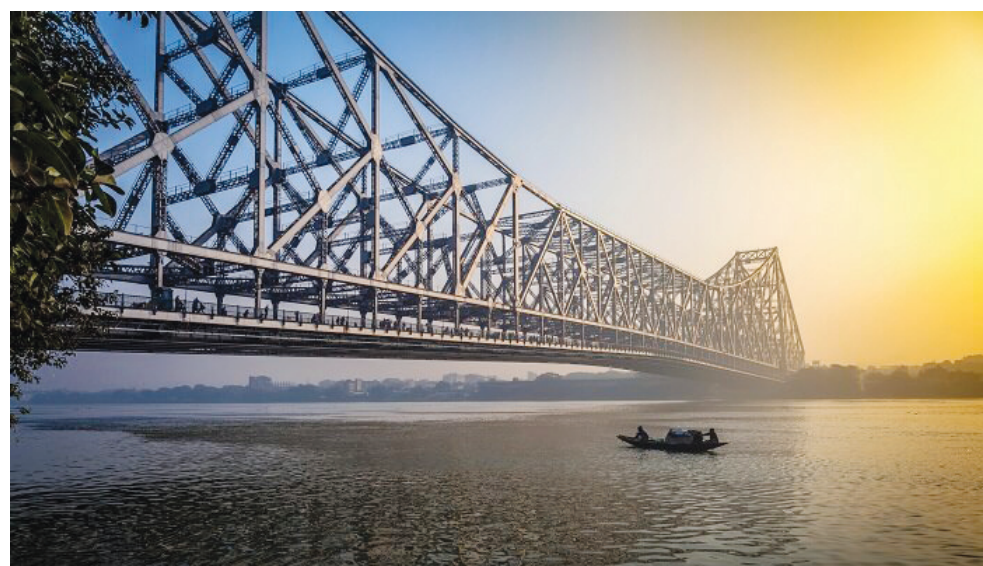
Located in the Dakshineswar town of Kolkata, the Dakshineswar Kali Temple is a popular pilgrimage site dedicated to Goddess Kali. It is one of the must visit places to visit in Kolkata in one day as one cannot afford to miss out on this architectural masterpiece which is also considered as one of the holiest places in the city.

Kalighat Kali Temple

Seek blessings from Goddess Kali during your trip to Kolkata when you visit the mystical Kali Temple. It is one of the best places to visit in Kolkata to get familiar with the culture, traditions, and religious beliefs of the people of this beautiful city.

St. Paul's Cathedral

Known for its Gothic style of architecture, St. Paul's Cathedral is the largest cathedral in Kolkata. Resembling closely to Norwich Cathedral, St Paul's Cathedral is also one of



the best places to visit in Kolkata for people seeking a religious tour.

Birla Mandir

Built by the renowned Birla family, Birla Mandir is a famous Hindu Temple in Kolkata

known for its magnificent architecture. This temple is an epitome of craftsmanship that is a product of amalgamation of traditional, and contemporary art, and is also one of the best places to visit in Kolkata.

METHODS TO REMOVE UNWANTED BODY HAIR



Most women prefer getting rid of excess body hair using different hair removal methods. While shaving and waxing are popular choices, there are many other ways to get rid of unwanted hair.

Shaving

Shaving works by cutting off the hair at the skin level. It's the most commonly used method of hair removal. You can choose between electric shavers and disposable razors, depending on your budget.

ADVANTAGES: Shaving is painless as long as you are careful to not cut yourself. Make sure you use shaving cream or soap and sharp blades. That way you can decrease the chance of having razor burn or post-shave irritation. It is also the least expensive and fastest way to remove unwanted hair.

DISADVANTAGES: Since the hair is only removed at the skin level, it tends to grow back soon.

Where does it work best: Shaving works on various body parts but many women avoid shaving their face for the fear of thick hair growth post the session. However, shaving your legs, arms, underarms and even pubic area is safe.

HOW TO USE IT: Shaving in the shower especially when you are using disposable razors is the best way to get a smooth, hair-free body. Wet the area you want to shave and then lather it up with shaving gel or cream. Then, wet the razor with water and shave in the opposite direction of the hair growth. Hold the skin taut if needed for a smoother glide. This step is essential when using an electric shaver as there is no cream used. Once done, pat dry the skin and apply moisturiser to prevent dryness.

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST: The hair tends to grow back faster with this hair removal method. Depending on your hair growth, you will notice tiny hair growing back anything between two-three days to a week's time post shaving.

Hair removal creams

Hair removal creams, also known as depilatories, have chemicals that break down the hair structure. In this method, you apply the cream on an area, wait for 5 to 10 minutes for it to break down the hair and then use a towel or a plastic scraper to remove the cream along with the hair.

ADVANTAGES: Hair removal creams provide results that will typically last longer than shaving but less than waxing.

DISADVANTAGES: The chemicals in hair removal creams are strong and can irritate your skin. So do a patch test first and if the skin is fine with no irritation or redness, continue to apply it on a larger area.

WHERE DOES IT WORK BEST: Hair removal creams can be used on large areas like legs and arms and also on patches that are difficult to shave or wax like your upper lip or elbows.

HOW TO USE IT: Simply apply the cream in the direction of the hair growth and leave it on for the required time as mentioned in the instructions. Then wash it off and pat dry your hairless, smooth skin.

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST: These creams can keep your hair growth away for up to a week depending on the thickness.

Waxing

Waxing is a hair removal technique that uses wax to remove hair from the root. It is done by applying warm wax over an area and then using a strip of cloth or paper to remove the wax along with the unwanted hair.

ADVANTAGES: You have to suffer through only a few seconds of pain for at least two weeks of hairlessness. And it doesn't grow back as stubble. It'll have a tapered tip, making the hair growth less obvious than when you shave. Waxing also leaves your skin feeling silky, and over time re-growth of hair is likely to be finer and slower.

DISADVANTAGES: The drawback of

waxing is that you have to let the hair grow enough for the wax to pull it out.

WHERE DOES IT WORK BEST: Waxing is a hair removal technique that can be done on every part of the body including the face and pubic area. It works best when the hair is fully grown so that it can be pulled out in one stroke.

HOW TO USE IT: It is best to go to a salon and get waxed but you also get home waxing kits that have strips coated with wax. You need to apply these strips in the direction of the hair growth and hold the skin taut. Then, in one quick motion, pull the strip in the opposite direction to get rid of the hair. In salons, wax is applied on the skin using a spatula and the same process is followed.

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST: Waxing keeps you hair-free for two-three weeks at least, and in many cases, it can be four weeks too.

Electrolysis

In this method of hair removal, a needle is used to deliver a short blast of electric current into the hair follicle. It's said to result in permanent hair removal after just a few sessions. Unlike lasers, electrolysis works for any type of hair and skin.

ADVANTAGES: The main advantage of electrolysis is that it provides permanent results. But this procedure has to be performed only by a professional. There's no way you can do it on your own. Electrolysis is also much less expensive than laser hair removal, and requires fewer follow-up visits.

DISADVANTAGES: During electrolysis, the hair is removed one at a time. This makes it a much slower process than laser hair removal. There is a stinging sensation for each follicle that could be painful, again depending on your threshold.

WHERE DOES IT WORK BEST: Since the process is long, it works best on smaller areas like the face, neck and underarms.

FOOD CORNER

HALF ROAST CHICKEN

Ingredients

Cooking oil, Whole chicken (skin on- rinsed and dressed), 2-3 Onions (quartered- skin on), 1 bulb Garlic (halved - skin on), 4-5 Carrots (roughly quartered), 1/2 Cup Celery, finely, chopped, 5 sprigs Thyme, 250 ML Dunkleweizen (pour into a glass and keep open at room temperature for an hour or two to make flat), 2 Cups Chicken stock, 3 Tbsp Butter, To taste Sea salt.

Method

- Preheat oven to 220 degree C.
- In a greased oven tray line the carrots, celery, onions, garlic and thyme.
- Place the chicken on the tray and grease with oil and sprinkle with sea salt.
- Roast the chicken for 1.5 hours or till the juices run clear. Remove from the tray and reserve/rest.
- While the chicken is resting, pour the dunkelweizen into the tray turn the oven to the highest heat setting and let it bubble for five minutes.
- Remove the tray from the oven and transfer all contents to a sauce pan before adding in the chicken stock and the butter.
- Reduce the mixture of the beer, and chicken stock till it coats a spoon, adjust the salt.
- Serve with buttery mashed potatoes.



Beauty benefits of banana

This humble fruit can do much more than you think! From treating acne to anti-ageing benefits, this genius fruit needs to be part of your beauty regime. And here's our scoop on top 5 benefits of banana.

Natural moisturiser

Banana is rich in potassium, which makes it a great moisturiser for your skin. All you need to do is mash half a banana and use it as mask to reveal soft and supple skin. For extreme dry skin, you can also add honey to make the mask more effective.

Acne control

Banana peels is as useful as banana; it's rich in antioxidant properties and does wonder to your skin too. For acne solution, you can rub the white part of the peel on acne affected areas till the peel turns brown. Like this the active nutrients on your skin will do its magic. You can do this twice a week to reduce acne and even the scars.

Reduce puffy eyes

For instant DIY solution; you can use banana mash to reduce puffy eyes. Use the mash bananas on the affected area for about 15-20 minutes and rinse with cold water. This will help to reduce the swelling.

Foot care

Just like your face, you can use banana mash on your feet too. Use banana mask on your feet as a foot mask for 15 minutes and wash them with lukewarm water to get smoother and softer feet.

Hair mask

For anti-hair loss treatment, make a paste of yoghurt and banana. Use this pack on your hair for 15 minutes and rinse with cold water. While for dry hair; you can use honey and banana combo to get luscious locks!

NEW SPRAY GEL COULD HELP FIGHT CANCER AFTER SURGERY

Scientists have developed a spray gel embedded with immune-boosting drugs which they say could help the body fight off cancer after surgery.

Many people who are diagnosed with cancer will undergo some type of surgery to treat their disease, said researchers from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the US. Almost 95 per cent of people with early-diagnosed breast cancer will require surgery and it is often the first line of treatment for people with brain tumours, according to the study published in the journal Nature Nanotechnology.

However, despite improvements in surgical techniques over the past decade, the cancer often comes back after the procedure.

The researchers tested the biodegradable spray gel in mice that had advanced melanoma tumours surgically removed.

They found that the gel reduced the growth of the tumour cells that remained after surgery, which helped prevent recurrences of the cancer.

After receiving the treatment, 50 per cent of the mice survived for at least 60 days without their tumours regrowing.

The spray not only inhibited the recurrence of tumours from the area on the body where it was removed, but also controlled the development of tumours



in other parts of the body, said Zhen Gu, a professor at UCLA.

The substance will have to go through further testing and approvals before it could be used in humans, Gu said.

However, the scientists envision the gel being applied to the tumour resection site by surgeons immediately after the tumour is removed during surgery. "This sprayable gel shows promise against one of the greatest obstacles in curing cancer," Gu said.

"One of the trademarks of cancers is that it spreads. In fact, around 90 per cent of people with cancerous tumours end up dying because of tumour recurrence or metastasis," he said.

The researchers loaded nanoparticles with an antibody specifically targeted to block CD47, a protein that cancer cells release as a "don't-eat-me" signal.

By blocking CD47, the antibody enables the immune system to find and ultimately destroy the cancer cells.

The nanoparticles are made of calcium carbonate, a substance that is the main component of egg shells and is often found in rocks.

"We also learned that the gel could activate T cells in the immune system to get them to work together as another line of attack against lingering cancer cells," said Qian Chen, a postdoctoral researcher in Gu's lab.

Once the solution is sprayed on the surgical site, it quickly forms a gel embedded with the nanoparticles.

The gel helps stop at the surgical site and promotes would heal; the nanoparticles gradually dissolve and release the anti-CD47 antibodies into the body. *Source: PTI*



Coffee compounds may help fight Parkinson's

Scientists have identified a compound in coffee that could be teamed up with caffeine to fight Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia—two currently incurable neurodegenerative disorders.

The discovery, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, suggests these two compounds combined may become a therapeutic option to slow brain degeneration.

Prior research has shown that drinking coffee may reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's disease.

While caffeine has traditionally been credited as coffee's special protective agent, coffee beans contain more than a thousand other compounds that are less well known.

Researchers from Rutgers University in the US focused on a fatty acid derivative of the neurotransmitter serotonin, called EHT (Eicosanoyl-5-hydroxytryptamide), found in the bean's waxy coating.

They found that EHT protects the brains of mice against abnormal protein accumulation associated with Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia.

In the current research, the team asked whether EHT and caffeine could work together for even greater brain protection.

They gave mice small doses of caffeine or EHT separately as well as together.

Each compound alone was not effective, but when given together they boosted the activity of a catalyst that helps prevent the accumulation of harmful proteins in the brain.

This suggests the combination of EHT and caffeine may be able to slow or stop the progression of these diseases.

Current treatments address only the symptoms of Parkinson's disease but do not protect against brain degeneration.

Further research is needed to determine the proper amounts and ratio of EHT and caffeine required for the protective effect in people, the scientists said. *Source: PTI*

Vitamin C may offset effects of maternal smoking on baby

Although smoking during pregnancy is reported to have an adverse effect on foetus health, a new study shows that regular intake of Vitamin C by smoker mom-to-be may help reduce harm done to infant's lungs after birth.

The study showed that at three months of age, infants whose mothers took 500 mg of Vitamin C per day in addition to their prenatal vitamin had significantly better forced expiratory flows (FEFs) that measure how fast air can be exhaled from the lung and can detect airway obstruction.

In addition, the researchers also found an association between the infant FEFs and a genetic variant some of the mothers possessed that increased the negative impact of nicotine on the babies before they were born.

"Smoking during pregnancy reflects the highly addictive nature of nicotine that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations," said lead author Cindy T. McEvoy, Professor from the Oregon Health and Science University in the US.

"Finding a way to help infants exposed to smoking and nicotine in uterus recognises the unique dangers posed by a highly advertised, addictive product



and the lifetime effects on offspring who did not choose to be exposed," McEvoy added. For the study, published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, the team randomly assigned 251 pregnant women who smoked, to either receive vitamin C (125 women) or a placebo (126 women).

The study also demonstrated that all participants received counselling sessions of discontinuing tobacco smoking throughout the study, and about 10 per cent of the women quit

smoking during the study.

The researchers mentioned that helping mothers quit smoking should remain the primary goal for health professionals and public health officials.

"Although vitamin C supplementation may protect to some extent the lungs of babies born to mothers who smoke during pregnancy, those children will still be at greater risk for obesity, behavioural disorders and other serious health issues," the team noted.

Source: IANS

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ARCTIC'S RECORD WARMING DRIVING 'BROAD CHANGE' IN ENVIRONMENT

Global warming is heating the Arctic at a record pace, driving broad environmental changes across the planet, including extreme storms in the mid-latitudes, a major US scientific report said Tuesday.

Persistent heat records have rattled the fragile Arctic for each of the past five years, a record-long warming streak, said the 2018 Arctic Report Card, released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The mounting heat in the north is upsetting typical weather patterns, a trend that "coincides" with severe winter storms in the eastern United States and an extreme cold snap in Europe in March, it said.

"Continued warming of the Arctic atmosphere and ocean are driving broad change in the environmental system in predicted and, also, unexpected ways," warned the report.

"New and rapidly emerging threats are taking form and highlighting the level of uncertainty in the breadth of environmental change that is to come."

Arctic air temperatures for the past five years, from 2014 to 2018, "have exceeded all previous records since 1900", when record-keeping began, it said.

This warming trend "is unlike any other period on record", said the peer-reviewed report compiled by 81 scientists working for governments and academia in 12 nations.

During the latest period studied, October 2017 through September 2018, annual average temperature in the Arctic was 3.1 Fahrenheit (1.7 Celsius) higher than the 1981-2010 average.

"The year 2018 was the second warmest year on record in the Arctic since 1900 (after 2016)," it said.

The Arctic also saw the second-lowest overall sea-ice coverage and the lowest recorded winter ice in the Bering Sea.

"One of the more remarkable features of Arctic sea ice in 2018 was the dearth of ice in the Bering Sea, which was at a record low extent for virtually the entire 2017-2018 ice season," said the report. *Source: AFP*



INSTAGRAM ROLLS OUT VOICE MESSAGING FEATURE

If WhatsApp voice messages were not enough, Instagram has also added the new communication feature to its app. A new microphone button has been added to the photo and video app. You simply need to hold down the microphone in Instagram Direct and record a voice message.

Unlike WhatsApp where you first choose the recipient, on Instagram you can first record the message and then share it with a single contact or group, FastCompany reported.

Additionally, these voice messages appear in the receiver's chat window as a Wav file and don't disappear after being listened to.

NASA'S INSIGHT SENDS BACK FIRST SELFIE ON MARS

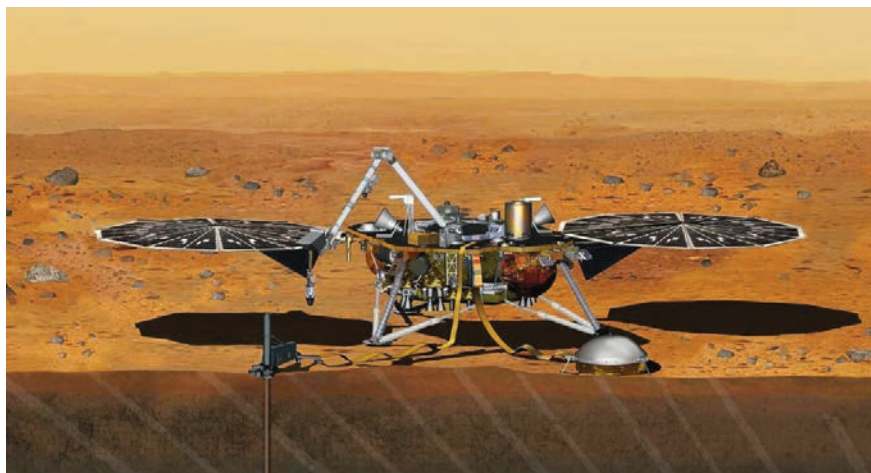
Barely two weeks after touching down on Mars, NASA's InSight lander has taken its first selfie using the spacecraft's robotic arm the US space agency has said.

InSight landed safely at Elysium Planitia on Mars on November 26, kicking off a two-year mission to explore the deep interior of the Red Planet.

On December 6, the InSight lander used a camera on its robotic arm to take its first selfie—a mosaic made up of 11 images. The image includes the lander's solar panel and its entire deck, including its science instruments, weather sensor booms and UHF antenna, NASA said in a statement on Wednesday.

In addition, InSight sent another set of mosaic composed of 52 individual photos.

It showcases the first complete look of "workspace"—the approximately 14-by-7-foot (4-by-2-metre) crescent of terrain directly in front of the spacecraft—where the spacecraft's instruments such as seismometer (called the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure, or



SEIS) and heat-flow probe (known as the Heat Flow and Physical Properties Package, or HP3) can be placed.

"The near-absence of rocks, hills and holes means it'll be extremely safe for our instruments," said InSight's principal investigator Bruce Banerdt of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

"This might seem like a pretty plain

piece of ground if it weren't on Mars, but we're glad to see that," Banerdt added.

InSight's landing team deliberately chose a landing region in Elysium Planitia that is relatively free of rocks.

The spacecraft sits in what appears to be a nearly rock-free "hollow"—a depression created by a meteor impact that later filled with sand. *Source: IANS*

WhatsApp for iPhone now gets new group calling button

WhatsApp Messenger for iPhone has received a new update that brings an easy way to make group calls. The new development was initially a part of an iOS beta that was released last month. There is also a new shortcut to make group calls directly from the New Call screen. As per the official changelog, the latest WhatsApp for iPhone update also brings the ability to play consecutive voice messages in sequence. This change, however, debuted alongside the sticker integration back in October. The app requires an iPhone running iOS 8.0 or later.

The updated WhatsApp for iPhone (version 2.18.110) brings a new group calling button that sits just next to the name of the groups once you open the chat window. This new change gives you an easier way to make group voice or video calls. Once tapped the new group calling button, you'll see a screen from where you can select the members of the group to whom you'd like to call via WhatsApp. You can also select whether you'd like to make a voice call or a video call.

Notably, you'll see only those WhatsApp users on the list after tapping the group calling button whose numbers are saved in your address book. It is also worth pointing out that as the native group calling support on WhatsApp has a limit of four callers on one call, you aren't allowed to add more than three people for your group call.

The new group calling button was previously spotted in iOS beta version 2.18.110.17. The beta update was rolled



out to iPhone users via TestFlight.

In addition to the new group calling button, the updated WhatsApp Messenger for iPhone has included a New Group Call shortcut that comes on the New Call screen. The shortcut essentially works just as the new group calling button and has a limit of up to three participants. However, you have the entire list of the contacts available your address book once you tap the New Group Call shortcut, instead of having some group members.

Interestingly, WhatsApp for Android is due to add both new group calling-focused features. The New Group Call shortcut was spotted in Android beta late last month, but wasn't available for users. However, the Facebook-owned company is yet to bring the new change to the public release of the WhatsApp app for Android devices.

Google+ hit by another major security breach, 52.5 million users affected

Alphabet Inc's Google said on Monday it would shut down its Google+ social media service in April, four months ahead of schedule, after finding a software flaw for the second time this year that allowed partner apps to access its users' private data.

However, Google said in a blog post that it found no evidence that any other apps had accessed the data, such as name, email, gender and age, using the latest bug. It affected 52.5 million Google+ accounts, including those of some business customers, for six days after it was introduced last month, Google said.

The disclosure comes a day before Chief Executive Sundar Pichai is set to testify before the House Judiciary Committee of the US Congress about Google's data collection practices. Some US lawmakers from both major political parties have called for new privacy rules to better control Google, Facebook Inc and other large technology companies.

In October, the company said it would shut down the consumer version Google+ in August 2019 because it would be too challenging to maintain the unpopular service. At the time, it said profile data from up to 500,000 users might have been exposed to partner apps by a bug that was present for more than two years.

Apps that pull data from Google+ to personalise their own services with user authorization will lose access in 90 days, the company said. Developing Google+ for business customers would remain a focus, it added.

Source: Reuters

NEW RBI GUV SHAKTIKANTA DAS TAKES CHARGE, HAS A LONG TO-DO LIST

MUMBAI (TIP): Shaktikanta Das on Dec 12 (Wednesday) assumed charge as the 25th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

"Assumed charge as Governor, Reserve Bank of India. Thank you each and everyone for your good wishes," Das tweeted.

The new central bank governor has a list of challenges to face as he takes office: from fixing a banking crisis to convincing investors of the institution's autonomy.

Shaktikanta Das, 61, a former economic affairs secretary at the Finance Ministry, took charge at the Reserve Bank of India for a three-year term on Wednesday, two days after Urjit Patel quit amid worries that the government was encroaching on the central bank's turf. Das, a career bureaucrat, is seen as someone who can ease tensions with the state, prompting a mixed reaction from markets on Wednesday.

Sovereign bonds rallied on optimism he may shift the monetary policy stance to a less hawkish one, while the rupee, Asia's worst-performer among major currencies this year, weakened. The rupee declined for a third day Wednesday, falling as much as 0.4 percent to 72.1712 against the dollar.

"Mr. Das will be initially considered more as a Finance Ministry insider, and only time will tell whether he preserves the RBI's independence," said Sonal Varma, an economist at Nomura Plc in Singapore. "Our analysis of his views suggests that he has a neutral-to-dovish bent on monetary policy. We expect regulatory policies under his governorship to be more sympathetic to the government's arguments."

Das's first test comes on Friday when



Shaktikanta Das assumed charge as the 25th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

the central bank's board is due to meet. The government is expected to push for tighter supervision of the RBI, including setting up committees to have oversight of various functions, from foreign exchange management to financial stability.

A former economic affairs secretary from 2015 to 2017, Das worked closely with the central bank and oversaw Prime Minister Narendra Modi's controversial plan to ban high-value notes in late 2016, an exercise that hurt the economy and led to thousands of job losses. He is currently a member of the Finance Commission of India, and serves as the government's representative at the Group of 20

summits. He will also need to win over colleagues at the RBI. Speculation is rife that Viral Acharya, the deputy governor in charge of monetary policy and Patel's messenger in the public showdown with the government, may step down. It was he who had delivered a hard-hitting speech in October warning about government's interference in central banking. That caused friction between the authorities and Patel, resulting in his departure on Monday.

The government is pushing the RBI to hand over more of its capital to the government and loosen curbs on some of the weakest banks to ensure lending continues ahead of an election next year.

Source: Bloomberg

Liquidity constraints faced by NBFIs to tighten credit supply: Moody's

Liquidity constraints faced by some non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) will tighten credit supply and slow growth to a little over 7 percent for the current fiscal, Moody's Investors Service said.

"The liquidity constraints faced by some NBFIs in India, after the default of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS) in September 2018, will likely tighten overall credit supply in the country," Moody's said in a statement.

Besides, any further distress in the NBFIs sector will pose significant downside risks to India's growth outlook, it said.

Moody's Managing Director and Chief Credit Officer (Asia Pacific) Michael Taylor said India's GDP growth will slow to just above 7 percent for fiscal 2019 and 2020.

Indian economy grew at 7.1 percent in the July-September quarter, lower than 8.2 percent in April-June.

The rating agency said NBFIs are an important provider of credit to the economy and, in the fiscal ended March 31, 2018, accounted for nearly 17 percent of total loans and one third of total retail loans.

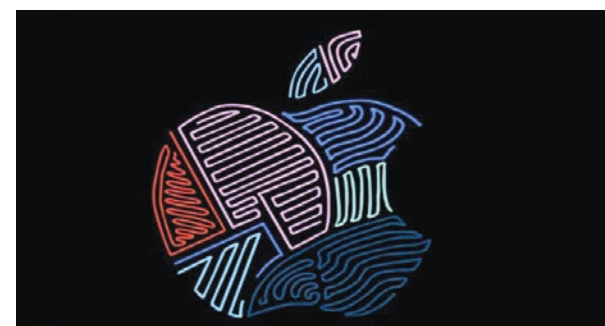
"In a downside scenario, a sharper slowdown in NBFIs credit supply would significantly tighten overall credit availability, drive up borrowing costs and reduce economic growth by



around half a percentage point over a few years," Moody's VP and Senior Analyst Joy Rankothge said.

Weaker nominal GDP growth over a prolonged period would weigh on India's fiscal strength and the overall sovereign credit profile, Rankothge added.

Source: PTI



APPLE PLANS NEW \$1 BILLION CAMPUS FOR AUSTIN, TEXAS

Apple Inc said on Thursday it would spend \$1 billion to build a second campus in Austin, Texas, that will house up to 15,000 workers as part of a broader push by US companies to create more domestic jobs.

The iPhone maker also said it plans to expand in Seattle, San Diego and Culver City, California, and add hundreds of jobs in Pittsburgh, New York and Boulder, Colorado, over the next three years.

Apple said at the start of the year it would invest \$30 billion in the United States, taking advantage of a windfall from US President Donald Trump's sweeping tax code overhaul.

The 133-acre campus in Austin will be less than a mile from Apple's existing facilities and initially have 5,000 employees. The jobs created would be in engineering, research and development, operations and finance.

Amazon.com Inc in November said it will create more than 25,000 jobs in both New York and the Washington, D.C. area by opening massive new offices. The two technology companies chose cities with a wealth of white-collar workers and high employment, bypassing other regions that may have required more investment. Austin is one of the fastest-growing US cities with a population of nearly 1 million, and is home to the University of Texas and other tech companies including Dell Technologies Inc in nearby Round Rock, Texas, and IBM. Apple's existing facility in north Austin has more than 6,000 workers, the most outside its headquarters in Cupertino, California. With the new campus, the company will become the largest private employer in the city.

Source: Reuters

RBI slaps Rs 1 cr fine on bank for violating cyber security norms

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday said it has imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore on Indian Bank for violating cyber security norms.

The RBI has imposed, by an order dated November 30, 2018, a monetary penalty of Rs 10 million on Indian Bank for contravention of Circular on Cyber Security Framework in banks, the central bank said in a release.

The contravention is with regard to RBI's directions on Frauds- Classification and Reporting by Commercial Banks.

"This penalty has been imposed in exercise of powers vested in RBI under the provisions of...the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 taking into account the failure of the bank to adhere to the aforesaid guidelines and directions issued by RBI," it said. This action is based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the bank with its customers, the release added. Source: PTI

Debt-ridden Air India puts its iconic Mumbai building on sale

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a fresh bid to generate funds, loss-making national carrier Air India has put on sale its iconic eponymous 23-storey building in Mumbai's posh Nariman Point, hoping to mop up nearly Rs 2000 crore, an Air India official, familiar with the matter, said.

The latest move is part of the airline's plans to monetise its real estate assets and come less than a month after it invited bids for over 70 residential and commercial properties spread across the country. The national carrier has issued tender inviting bids for the building, which also happens to be the airline's erstwhile headquarters. However, only government entities are eligible to participate in the bidding process.

"Air India will retain approximately 5000 square feet of carpet area on 22nd floor for its office use. It will also retain the logo on the top of the building and will maintain it. Also, the buyer can't change the name of the building and it will continue to be called 'Air India building'," said another airline official.

Trump inaugural committee under criminal investigation: Wall Street Journal



CNN Screenshot

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural committee is currently being investigated by federal prosecutors in New York for possible financial abuses related to the more than \$100 million in donations raised for the event, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday, December 13.

Citing conversations with people familiar with the investigation, which is being handled by the US Attorney's office in Manhattan, the Journal reported that prosecutors are also looking into whether the committee accepted donations from individuals looking to gain influence or access to the new administration.

The paper notes that "giving money in exchange for political favors" is illegal, as is misuse of any donated funds. The committee was registered as a nonprofit.

According to the Journal, sources told the paper that the investigation "partly arises out of materials seized in the federal probe of former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen's business dealings."

(Source: Wall Street Journal)

Bomb threats emailed to multiple locations across the country

NEW YORK (TIP): Dozens of businesses and institutions across the United States and Canada received email threats Thursday, December 13 afternoon, prompting evacuations and sweeps of buildings.

At this time it's unclear if the threats -- which have been received in San Francisco, New York, Seattle, Miami, Washington, DC and other locations nationwide -- are connected. The FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said they are aware of the threats and are working with law enforcement to provide assistance.

"As always, we encourage the public to remain vigilant and to promptly report suspicious activities which could represent a threat to public safety," the FBI said.

Email threats also have been received in Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto, Canada.

This email demanding \$20,000 via Bitcoin was forwarded to CNN affiliate KOCO-TV in Oklahoma City by a viewer who received it at her business. It's unclear whether everyone who received a threat on Thursday received the same email.

The message was identical to an email warning posted on social media by the Cedar Rapids, Iowa Police Department and similar to descriptions of other threats posted on social media nationwide.

The Cedar Rapids Police Department posted: "The Police Department has found NO CREDIBLE EVIDENCE that these emails are authentic. It appears to be a robo-email that has been sent throughout the area hoping to scam businesses out of money. We have also received information that businesses in surrounding counties may have also received this email."

CNN is not disclosing the names of the sender and recipient or specifics of the Bitcoin account.

Threats at universities, media, courthouse

In Seattle, the University of Washington noted in a campus-wide alert that the FBI had "advised that the email is not a credible threat."

The university concluded sweeps of possibly affected buildings.

The Thurston County Courthouse in Olympia, Washington and the Park Record newspaper in Park City, Utah also received similarly threatening emails. People have been allowed back inside buildings at those locations, according to tweets on their verified Twitter accounts.

In California, the Riverside Sheriff's Office had "an influx of email threats" and is taking them seriously, although no threat has been substantiated.

The San Francisco Police Department responded to reports of bomb threats at locations throughout the city.

"We have received information that several other cities across the United States have received similar threats," police said.

Pennsylvania State Police are "investigating some bomb threats in the eastern part of the state," a spokesman for the department tells CNN.

"Penn State University Police, in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is investigating a message received by individuals in multiple locations on campus and across the state," the university said in a statement. "Police say this does not appear to be a legitimate threat, however, an investigation is ongoing."

University police later said the threat appears to be a hoax.

The Chicago Police Department received 15 to 20 reports of emailed threats in the past few hours, according to Officer Jennifer Bryk.

Director of Communications Anthony Guglielmi tweeted, "#ChicagoPolice are working with federal partners on the investigation, and at this time there is no elevated threat level for the city of Chicago."

Threats were also emailed to the Charlotte News & Observer and the Raleigh News & Observer newspapers in North Carolina.

Dozens more threats continued to come in across the country later into the day, authorities reported.

(Source: CNN)

contd from page 1

BJP Loses Hindi Heartland...

Front (MNF) scripting a spectacular victory dislodging the Congress in its last bastion in the Northeast to return to power after 10 years.

Buoyed by the Congress' good showing in the polls that was dubbed as a semi-final for the 2019 general elections, party president Rahul Gandhi said the outcome is a "clear message" to the Modi government that people are not happy with it and time has come for a change.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi got a massive mandate but refused to listen to "heartbeat of the country", Gandhi told reporters.

With Congress set to form governments in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, Gandhi said the selection of chief ministers in the three states will be done "smoothly". "We have defeated the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh... There will be no issue over (selection of) chief minister. It will be done smoothly."

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the results were certainly not as expected and asserted the poll outcome was an opportunity to pause and analyze. (With Inputs from PTI)

'Seriously' considering running...

USA. Also, she could be the youngest ever and first woman to be elected as the US President.

"I'm concerned about the direction of our country. I'm thinking through it very carefully," she said in response to a question on her presidential run.

Before challenging President Donald Trump in the November 2020 elections, she would have to contest against her own Democratic Party colleagues in primary elections beginning early that year.

In the last few weeks, Gabbard has been talking to her party leaders and reaching out to Indian-Americans to get their feedback on the issue.

Among those Democrats speculated to run for the 2020 primaries include former Vice-President Joe Biden, Senators Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand, Amy Klobuchar, Tim Kaine and Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris. (Source: PTI)

Court orders FIR against Manjit...

Subedar and joint secretary Amarjit Singh Pappu for alleged financial irregularities in gurdwara committee.

The court pronounced the order on a petition of Gurmeet Singh Shanty who alleged that the accused had embezzled Rs 51 lakh from the gurdwara fund. Shanty alleged that a fake bill of 82,000 books of Sikh heritage and a fake bill of safari suit were also submitted by the accused.

Shanty had first lodged a complaint with North Avenue police station.

When police allegedly failed to lodge the FIR, Shanty filed a petition in the court. After getting the case investigated, the court, on December 13, ordered for registration of the FIR.

The court also ordered the police to appear before the court on December 14.

Manjit Singh GK was president of the Delhi unit of the SAD and Manjinder Singh Sirsa was the youth president.

Meanwhile, ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Thursday, December 13, dissolved the party units in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan with immediate effect.

The decision, aimed at overhauling the state units, was taken based on suggestions by party observers for the two states and the national capital - MPs Balwinder Singh Bhundar and Prem Singh Chandumajra, and former minister Sikandar Singh Maluka, SAD senior vice-president and spokesperson

Daljit Singh Cheema said.

Cheema said the process of making major changes in the organizational structure of the party had been going on in the wake of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

"New organizational structure will be announced in the next two months after having extensive deliberation with the senior leadership of the party," he said. (With inputs from PTI)

Trump's ex-lawyer gets 3-yr...

Cohen said in his guilty plea in August he was directed by Trump to make hush money payments to two women who said they had sexual affairs with Trump in the past.

Trump has denied the affairs and any involvement in the payments.

The three-year sentence was a modest reduction from the four to five years recommended under federal guidelines, but still underscored the seriousness of the charges of violating campaign finance laws and seeking to influence the outcome of an election.

Pauley sentenced Cohen to 36 months for the payments and to two months for Cohen's lies to Congress about a proposed Trump Tower project in Russia. The two terms will run simultaneously.

The judge set March 6 for Cohen's voluntary surrender. As part of the sentence, the judge ordered Cohen to forfeit \$500,000 and pay restitution of nearly \$1.4 million.

Cohen pleaded guilty in August to charges including tax evasion, bank fraud and campaign finance violations in a case brought by federal prosecutors in New York.

Cohen was sentenced on a separate charge of lying to Congress brought by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russia's role in the 2016 election and possible coordination between Trump's campaign and Moscow. (Source: Reuters)

AVATARS OF LORD SHIVA

Lord Shiva is considered as the supreme God in the Hinduism. For setting up an ideal work on the earth in front of his creatures, he had taken variety of the avatars and incarnations. Some of his avatars are related to protecting his devotees from the devils and proud Gods as well. However, five avatars of all his incarnations are hideously important as well as assumed to be the most valuable and effective for his devotees. The most important five incarnations are: Tatpurush, Namadeva, Aghoresh, Sadhojat and Ishan.

Tatpurush

Tatpurush is the most popular third incarnation of the Lord Shiva which was manifested in the 21st Kalpa of the planet known as Peetavasa. It was appeared by the prayer of the Lord Brahma.

Namadeva

During the 20th Kalpa known as the Rakta, Lord Brahma got his complexion changed to a red. Another entity was appeared from him of the red complexion, which was name by him as a Namadeva. It is considered as the Namadeva was also the incarnation of Lord Shiva.

Aghoresh

In the Shiva Kalpa (after the Peetavasa Kalp), an entity of black color complexion was appeared by the Lord Brahma when he was in deep meditation state. Lord Brahma named that entity as Aghor Shiva and considered as another form of Lord Shiva.

Sadhojat

During the 19th Kalpa known as Shweta Lohit, there appeared an entity by the Lord Brahma while he was meditating, which was named by him as Sadhojat. It is considered that this form of the Lord Shiva was the first incarnation. Four disciples of the Sadhojat were appeared by his own body named Nandan, Vishwanandan, Sunand and Upanandan.

ISHAN

In the Vishwaroop Kalpa, Ishan form of the Lord Shiva and Saraswati were manifested. Four divine entities like Mundi, Shikhandi, Caste and Ardhamundi were manifested from the Ishan Shiva. Lord Brahma was blessed by all of them for the creation facility.

Eight Idols of the Lord Shiva

There are eight idols of the Lord Shiva which includes Ugra, Sharva, Bhava, Rudra, Bheema, Pashupati, Ishan and Mahadeva. Ten fastidious incarnations of the God Shiva known as Dash Avatar and 10 incarnations of the Mata Sakti known as the Dash Mahavidya. Describing concerning to the 10 incarnations and their corresponding power (Shakti), the first incarnation of Lord Shiva was the Mahakal and Shakti was Mahakali. Second incarnation of both of them was Tar and Tara. Third incarnation of both of them was Bhuvaneshwar and Bhuvaneshwari. Fourth incarnation was Shodash and Shodashi or Shri. Fifth incarnation was Bhairav and Bhairavi. The sixth incarnation was Chhinamastak and Chhinamasta. Seventh incarnation was Dhoomvan and Dhoomvati. The eighth incarnation was Baglamukh and Baglamukhi. The ninth incarnation was Matang and Matangi. Tenth incarnation was Kamal and Kamala.

Rudra Avatars

Lord Shiva took birth on the earth as the



eleven Rudras from the Kashyap wife's (Surabhi) womb. These forms of the eleven Rudras are associated with the battles with demons in the past in order to save the people and Gods. Following are the name of eleven Rudras: 1) Kapali 2) Pingal 3) Bheem 4) Virupaksha 5) Vilohit 6) Shastra 7) Ajapaad 8) Ahirbudhnya 9) Shambhu 10) Chand and 11) Bhav.

Incarnations of Lord Shiva

Apart from all the above incarnations of the Lord Shiva, he had taken some other incarnations which are described as below:

Ardhnaarishwar Avatar

Ardhnaarishwar form of the Lord Shiva includes half body of Lord Shiva and other half of the Mata Parvati. This form is very calm and peaceful, provides blessings to the devotees.

Nandi Avatar

Lord Shiva had taken lots of avatars on the earth according to the requirement for their devotees. Nandi avatar is one of all the avatars.

Sharabh Avatar

This form of the Lord Shiva was the 6th avatar of him.

Grihpati Avatar

Grihpati avatar of the Lord Shiva was the 7th avatar of him.

Neel Kanth

Neel Kanth avatar is also a main form of him. Once there was arisen a lot of Vish from the churning of the ocean. Lord Shiva had

drunk all the Vish to prevent his beautiful world from the bad effects of Vish. Mata Parvati had stopped the Vish to fall below the neck by putting her palm on his neck. So, this form of him is known as the Neel kanth avatar.

Rishi Durvasha

It is considered as this avatar of the Lord is the main avatar. He has taken this avatar on the earth to maintain the discipline of the universe.

Mahesh Avatar

Mahesh avatar is also a peaceful form of the Lord Shiva which blesses his devotees.

Hanuman Avatar

Hanuman avatar is considered as the supreme avatar of him. Lord Shiva has taken

this avatar during the time Lord Rama to present a good example of the Lord and Bhakt in front of the people.

Brishabh Avatar

Brishabh avatar is the very significant form of the God Shiva.

Piplaad Avatar

Lord Shiva helps their devotees to get free from the Shani Dosh in this form. It is considered as the name of this avatar was given by the Lord Brahma.

Vaishyanath Avatar

This is the main avatar of the Lord Shiva to his devotees.

Yatinath Avatar

Yatinath avatar of the God Shiva represents a peaceful form of him to his devotees.

Krishna Darshan Avatar

Lord Shiva, in this form had represented the significance of the yagya and important religious rituals in Hinduism.

Awdhuteshwar Avatar

In this form Lord Shiva had crushed the ego of proud Indra.

Bhichhuwarya Avatar

In this form, Lord Shiva protects his all creatures from any difficulty.

Sureshwar Avatar

This form of Lord Shiva represents the love and care of him towards his devotees.

Bramhchari Avatar

Lord Shiva had taken this avatar to test the Mata Parvati. When Sati rebirth on the earth to the Himalaya's house as his daughter, Parvati and started worshipping the God Shiva to marry him.

Sunatartak Avatar

Lord Shiva had taken this form to ask the hand of Parvati from her father, Himalaya.

Saddhu Avatar

Lord Shiva had taken Sadhu avatar many times according to the need of his devotees.

Vibhuashwathama Avatar

Lord Shiva had taken this avatar in the Mahabharat as Ashwaththama (son Dronacharya).

Kiraat Avatar

Lord Shiva, in this form had taken the test of Arjuna.

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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."

INDIA KNOCKED OUT AFTER LOSING TO NETHERLANDS IN QUARTERFINAL



BHUBANESWAR (TIP): India's 43-year-long wait to reach the semi-finals of the Hockey World Cup was prolonged by the Netherlands as they beat the hosts 2-1 on Thursday at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. World No.4 Netherlands were clearly the better team as they dominated the hosts from the very beginning. After scoring one in the first quarter, another goal from Mink van der Weerden in the fourth quarter doubled the Netherlands lead, virtually leaving India out of contention. However, India tried to claw their way back in the game but the Netherlands were too strong for them.

Both sides started with a bang in an eventful first quarter that witnessed Akashdeep putting the hosts ahead in the 12th minute with a brilliant reverse flick after the initial penalty corner attempt was parried by the Dutch goalkeeper. The visitors pulled off a stunning equaliser just before the end of the first quarter, thanks to Thierry hitting the box to make it 1-1.

The second half saw both teams battling for the lead even as the tourists managed to keep possession of the ball on most occasions, only to return to the dug out locked at 1-1 by half time.

On resumption, the tourists earned three back-to-back PC's but India blocked away all of them even as the hosts were temporarily reduced to 10 men after Hardik was shown the green card towards the end of the quarter.

With both sides desperate for the lead, the Netherlands started the final quarter by successfully converting their fourth PC to make it 2-1.

It was in the 50th minute, when Van Der Weerden hit the ball dead straight only to find India's custodian PR Sreejesh wrong footed as the ball found the target.

With 10 minutes to go, India were once again penalised after Amit Rohidas was shown the yellow card but the Manpreet Singh-led side kept pressing for the equaliser.

In the next minute, India had a golden opportunity to square things off but Harmanpreet's shot was saved by the Dutch



goalkeeper.

From there on, the Dutch defence did not allow any room to the home side as the tie ended in a heartbreak for the vociferous home crowd.

The Dutch side will meet Australia in the semi-finals on Saturday.

Earlier, Olympic silver medallists Belgium edged out two-time champions Germany 2-1 in a keenly contested quarter-final.

In a neck and neck fight, third ranked Belgium held their nerves and came back from a goal down to enter the semi-finals for the first time.

Belgium will face a resurgent England in the semi-final, who had defeated Argentina 3-2 in the first quarter-final on

Wednesday.

BELGIUM DOWN GERMANY 2-1 TO ENTER MAIDEN SEMIFINAL

They may not have much of a hockey history to boast about but are surely on the lookout to create some. World No.3 Belgium stormed into the semi-finals of the World Cup to set up a clash against England after earning a come from behind 2-1 victory against two-time champions Germany at the Kalinga Stadium here on Thursday.

It was a pure case of Belgian strikers against the German defence throughout 60 minutes as the 2016 Rio Olympics silver medallists entered their maiden semi-finals in the history of the quadrennial event.

BWF World Tour Finals: PV Sindhu snaps six-match losing streak

The invincibility needed to be broken, and it was inevitably PV Sindhu who channeled her vintage Olympic confidence and funneled renewed maturity into her approach, to get past World No. 1 Tai Tzu Ying at the World Tour Finals in Guangzhou. The 14-21, 21-16, 21-18 victory in the tough group match ended a 6-match losing streak against the dominant shuttler from Chinese Taipei, whom the Indian had swept past in the pre-quarters of the Rio Olympics. Tai Tzu looked in visible discomfort in her movements, but Sindhu showed focus to get the job done, and reverse the tide that had been weighing her down against arguably the toughest opponent on the circuit.

The Guangzhou courts played notoriously slow, but PV Sindhu — through the course of her five big finals across the world — has proven that she can master any condition, and remain undeterred by the sluggish shuttle that's tough to kill. The 24-year-old World No. 1, also the Asian games champion, has been particularly difficult to get past since she



immersed herself in getting stronger and tightened her game and temperament in the last two years. Four of Sindhu's past 6 losses have come in straight sets, with the Indian getting a marginal look-in at Australia in June 2017. At Guangzhou, wised from reverses, Sindhu was ready for the champion. To be sure, she has had to dramatically alter her game while beating her. At Rio, Sindhu towered over Tai Tzu, using her power game.

Tai Tzu hadn't been as fit back then, tended to play the charming game more than the gritty one, and was coming into

the Olympics on the back of a ruckusing, triggered by disagreements with her federation. She wears two different sized shoes on her feet, and the confusion arose from the federation's insistence on making her wear the official sponsors' shoes, while she needed a customised pair. "Too tall, too strong," Tai Tzu was left saying, dazed after her loss at Rio. The Guangzhou win for Sindhu was far more well-rounded.

Nothing amplified the enormity of the challenge better than Tai Tzu rushing to 19-14 in the opener. It was one of Tai Tzu's outrageous shots — body turned back from the net, the wrist flicking the shuttle back magically to soar to the lead, pocketing the first set. To compound matters, Sindhu would offer an unforced error to hand her opponent the set at 21-14. While Sindhu's second set aggression was a throwback to the Rio match, it needed more than her down the line smashes to level things on the court. Starting at 6-3, Sindhu would clinically push Tai Tzu back even as she threatened to close in at 10-12.

Ashwin, Rohit out with injury



PERTH (TIP): Key spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and batsman Rohit Sharma were today ruled out of the second Test due to injuries. Rohit jarred his lower back while fielding during India's win in Adelaide and is undergoing treatment, while Ashwin, who took 6/149 in the first Test, is unavailable due to a left-sided abdominal strain. Prithvi Shaw, who missed the first Test after injuring his ankle while fielding during a tour match, is also recovering.

"The team management is closely monitoring these players and a call on their availability for the third test will be taken at an appropriate time," a BCCI statement said. Hanuma Vihari has been named in place of Rohit and left-arm spin bowler Ravindra Jadeja replacing Ashwin.

Honor Sardar Patel, don't forget Gandhi and Nehru



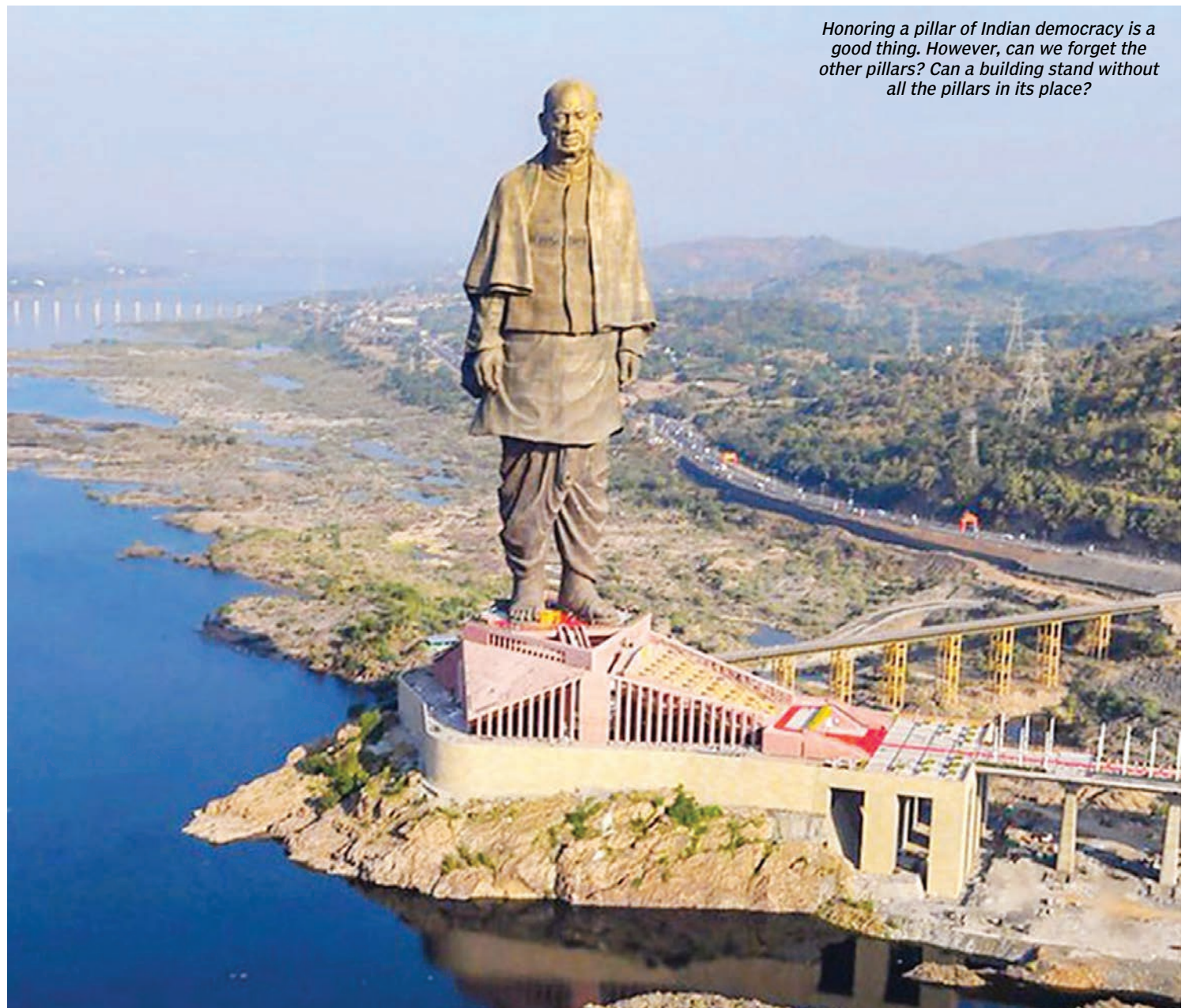
By George Abraham



It is quite confusing for an ordinary Indian to figure out the motivation for the Prime Minister to honor a devoted Congressman and freedom fighter who is a Gujarati ahead of another great leader from the state:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Nevertheless, to the world, Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel will remain great icons of freedom and justice, and the height of the statues will not diminish their greatness one way or the other.



Honoring a pillar of Indian democracy is a good thing. However, can we forget the other pillars? Can a building stand without all the pillars in its place?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the world's tallest statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India, who was the first home minister, on his 143rd birth anniversary in Gujarat recently. The country has spent about Rs 3000 crore (about \$430 million) from the treasury on the monument, which is being promoted as a Statue of Unity. It reflects Patel's efforts after Independence to consolidate the princely states into the current Republic of India.

We owe it ourselves to remember our heroes and icons of history and it is also the legacy of these legends that motivates us to go forward. Our lives are indeed built upon the shoulders of these giants who went through immeasurable hardships to guarantee us the freedom and liberty we enjoy today.

Nobody questions the wisdom of honoring Sardar Patel. However, they will be hard-pressed to explain how in a country that ranks at the bottom of the list of nations in ensuring food security for its people could afford such a luxury. According to the latest report on the Global Hunger Index, India ranks 100 out of 119 on an index that weighs the ability of countries to provide food for its citizens. India fares worse than Iraq, Bangladesh, and North Korea.

Then again, if we were to build the tallest statue for anyone, the first name on anybody's list would be of Mahatma Gandhi, who is not only the father of the nation but also world-renowned for his philosophy of non-violence. Gandhi was considered a great inspiration for world leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr and many cities in the

world are adorned with his statues.

Then there was Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister, and architect of modern India who spent almost ten years in prison under the British and was considered the foremost leader in the freedom struggle. It should be remembered that Patel's heroic effort for national integration was conducted under Nehru's leadership. Nehru inherited an India where life expectancy was 31 years, only 20 percent of the people could read or write, and 80 per cent of the people could not afford two meals a day.

It was Nehru along with B.R. Ambedkar who built institutions that have continued to provide freedom, justice, and opportunities to every Indian citizen regardless of caste, creed, region or religion. However, today, the ruling BJP is engaged in running a bitter campaign to undo and discredit his legacy of secularism and inclusiveness. It would be a grave injustice to forget Nehru's significant role in building a post-independent democratic society and imbuing it with pride and purpose at a time of conflict and chaos.

Sardar Patel was a loyal Congressman who upheld the values and principles of the Congress party which he served throughout his life. Since the ascendance of the BJP to power in New Delhi four years ago, it appears that a carefully crafted strategy is in place to appropriate icons and legacies that the party is sorely lacking. It is as if the party is so embarrassed by the lack of pedigree that it is even willing to go out and create some history of its own.

After Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, it

was Sardar Patel who was instrumental in banning the RSS. He subsequently wrote to RSS chief M.S. Golwalkar on September 11, 1948: 'As regards to RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, our reports do confirm that as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such ghastly tragedy became possible.'

It is known that the RSS remained aloof during the freedom struggle. The words and deeds of erstwhile leaders of the RSS from recorded history indicate that they were not only non-participants in the freedom struggle in which hundreds of people were risking their lives every day but also collaborators who supported the British on critical occasions. The British acknowledged that the RSS had 'scrupulously kept itself within the law, and refrained from taking part in the disturbances that broke out in August 1942.'

Therefore, it is quite confusing for an ordinary Indian to figure out the motivation for the Prime Minister to honor a devoted Congressman and freedom fighter who is a Gujarati ahead of another great leader from the state: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Nevertheless, to the world, Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel will remain great icons of freedom and justice, and the height of the statues will not diminish their greatness one way or the other.

(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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