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WE WISH OUR READERS

2019

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Nancy Pelosi is Speaker for a second time



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi holds the gavel Thursday, January 3 during the opening session of the 116th Congress

WASHINGTON (TIP): As expected, Democrats exhibited great unity and elected Rep Nancy Pelosi D-Calif., as the speaker of the House on Thursday, January 3 for a second time, as Democrats took control of the lower chamber.

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AAPI's Historic Global Healthcare Summit 2018 in Mumbai Concludes with Commitment to Give Back to Mother India

Urging AAPI to bring in traditional Indian wellness practices to modern medical systems, President describes "AAPI as a link between two vibrant and democratic societies"

MUMBAI /NEW YORK (TIP): The 12th edition of the annual Global Healthcare Summit at the glamour capital of India, Mumbai concluded here on December 30th with Physicians of Indian Origin rededicating themselves to work and collaborate towards bringing in high quality, innovative, preventable, cost-effective ways to the delivery of healthcare to millions of people in India.

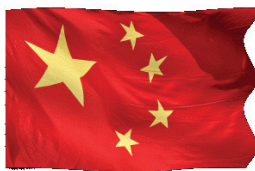
contd on Page 7

President of India Ram Nath Kovind delivering inaugural address at the 12th Annual Health Care Summit of AAPI in Mumbai, December 28.



China develops its own 'Mother of All Bombs', says report

BEIJING (TIP): China has developed a massive bomb, said to be the country's answer to the US-built 'Mother of All Bombs', the most powerful non-nuclear weapon, official media reported on Friday, January 4.



China's defense industry giant NORINCO for the first time showcased the aerial bomb, the country's largest non-nuclear bomb, state-run Global Times reported.

It is dubbed as the Chinese version of the 'Mother of All Bombs' due to its huge destruction potential that is claimed to be only second to nuclear weapons, the daily said. The bomb was airdropped by an H-6K bomber and caused a gigantic explosion, showed a promotional video released by China North Industries Group Corporation Limited (NORINCO)

contd on Page 66

Sen. Elizabeth Warren has announced she will seek the presidency in 2020

CAMBRIDGE, MASS (TIP): Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Democratic Senator of Massachusetts, has announced her likely candidacy for the 2020 U.S. presidential race. In her statement she put racial and gender-based inequality front and center in her campaign agenda, as much as income inequality faced by the middle class. For these ills of the American economy, she blamed the excesses of under-regulated Wall Street corporations and billionaires with the money muscle to bend political rules. Although Ms. Warren, who won a second six-year Senate term in November, had declined to enter the 2016 general election and challenge Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary, she made a name for herself as a top-tier Democrat by taking on President Donald Trump, describing him as a "thin-skinned racist bully".

contd on Page 66



Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren is the first Democratic leader to announce she will seek presidency in 2020.

Photo/ Elizabeth Warren website

Trump-Imran summit proposal being discussed: Pak official **P-26**



Consulate General of India in New York hosts PBD and World Hindi Day celebrations on January 12

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Indian Consulate in New York to celebrate 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji

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Karamvir Dahiya

हरदीप एस पुरी
HARDEEP S PURI

Message

आवासन और शहरी कार्य
राज्य मंत्री (स्वतंत्र प्रभार)
भारत सरकार
MINISTER OF STATE (I/C)
HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

It gives me great pleasure to note that The Indian Panorama is publishing a special issue to celebrate the start of the New Year. Through this message, I would like to first and foremost wish the readers of The Indian Panorama, and the larger Indian diaspora living in the United States of America, a very happy New Year.

History will remember the year 2018 as one which witnessed the acceleration of the transformation of India's urban landscape. It's no hidden secret that for much of India's seventy years of independence, the urban space had been subjected to criminal neglect. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, it is for the first time that the Union Government sees urbanization as a win-win proposition. As a result, what we are seeing today is the world's most comprehensive and ambitious effort towards planned urbanization in India.

As Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, it gives me great pride to note that we have been successful in changing the landscape of our urban centers. Flagship missions such as Swachh Bharat, Prime Minister Awas Yojana, and Smart Cities, are changing the lives of India's city dwellers. We have, by the end of 2018, built over 6 million household toilets and over 0.4 million community toilets; handed over 1.2 million and sanctioned over 6.5 million affordable homes; and launched Integrated Command and Control Centers in 13 smart cities, among other milestones.

I have no doubt that 2019 will yield similar results for India's economy and society. Prime Minister Modi has laid out his vision for a New India by 2022 – the year in which we as a nation celebrate 75 years of India as an independent nation.

The Government of India will continue to work hard and deliver to India's citizens the public goods and services that they rightly deserve.

New Delhi
28 December 2018

(Hardeep S Puri)

Office : Room No. 104-C, Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi-110011; Phone : 011-23061166, 23061162, 23062089 (Fax)

Syed Akbaruddin



MESSAGE

संयुक्त राष्ट्र स्थित भारत का स्थायी प्रतिनिधि
न्यूयॉर्क
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

I am happy to know that The Indian Panorama is publishing a special edition on the occasion of New Year 2019.

2. In an increasingly globalised world, the solutions to existing problems and new challenges lie in dialogue, partnership and effective multilateralism.
3. India's engagement with the rest of the world further evolved and deepened during 2018.
4. India continued to play an active role at the United Nations in shaping global discourses on a range of issues related to peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, reform of the United Nations, climate change, clean energy, terrorism, health and migration.
5. The projects being undertaken by the India-UN Development Partnership Fund in partner countries are demonstrating that working in together can bring about positive changes on the ground. The International Solar Alliance (ISA), another global initiative led by India, is finding resonance across the world in addressing the need for clean and sustainable sources of energy.
6. India's leadership role in addressing climate change was recognised by the United Nations which conferred Champions of the Earth award to Prime Minister Modi.
7. India is committed to reformed multilateralism and it will continue to engage actively with other countries in the quest for lasting peace and sustainable development.
8. I compliment Chief Editor Prof. Indrajit Saluja and his team for their commitment to promote greater friendship and understanding between India and the USA. I also take this opportunity to extend to the readers of The Indian Panorama greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

(Syed Akbaruddin)
December 27, 2018
235 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017 / Tel: (212) 490-9670 / Fax: (212) 490-9656
www.pminewyork.org / email: ind_pr@indiaun.netभारत का प्रधान कौंसल
न्यू यार्कCONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
NEW YORK

December 26, 2018

MESSAGE

On behalf of the Consulate General of India in New York I would like to wish a very Happy New Year to Indian Panorama and its reader and I would also like to congratulate the team of Indian Panorama for bringing out this illustrated Special Edition on the occasion of New Year.

Since 2006, Indian Panorama has been one of the leading voice of the Indian Diaspora in the Tri-State area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. It is a vibrant and important link between India and the Indian Community in USA.

2019 is a special year for India in USA when we are commemorating "150 years of the Mahatma" and "550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji". A large number of events will be organized by the Consulate and the Community in partnership and in association. In this endeavour, I would like to urge the Indian Panorama to become the vehicle of connecting the Consulate to the Community and give wide publicity to these two celebrations.

I congratulate Indian Panorama and its members for success in their endeavours and once again I wish everyone a happy New Year and may 2019 be filled with peace and prosperity.

संदीप चक्रवर्ती
Sandeep Chakravorty
भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
Consul General of India
न्यू यॉर्क
New York3 East 64th Street, New York, NY 10065 (USA)
Tel: General (212) 774-0600 • Consul General's Office (212) 774-0622/0621 • Fax: (212) 988-6423
Email: cg.newyork@mea.gov.in, cgoffice.newyork@mea.gov.in
Website: www.indiainnnewyork.gov.inDr. Swati V. Kulkarni
Consul GeneralConsulate General of India
5549 Glenridge Drive NE,
Atlanta, Georgia 30342
United States of America (USA)
Tel: 404-549-8358
Fax: 678-935-7054
Email: cg.atlanta@mea.gov.in

MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure to extend my best wishes to all readers of "The Indian Panorama", the new edition of which will be published on the occasion of New Year.

By bringing history in capsule, the New Year Special edition will serve as a treasure trove of stories and photographs of vibrant Indian community in America and beyond. It will highlight their impressive successes, valuable contributions, their diligence, optimism and integration within the host country. It will also underscore that they are enduring human link between India and USA, a bridge of innovation and enterprise between the two countries. Above all, it will nurture appreciation and respect. My congratulations to all of you.

I take this opportunity to wish all happy and prosperous 2019.

(Dr. Swati V. Kulkarni)
Consul General
December 26, 2018



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Indian-origin Student wins World Memory Championship



Indian-origin Singaporean boy Dhruv Manoj wins two golds at World Memory Championships

SINGAPORE (TIP): Dhruv Manoj, a 12-year-old Indian-origin student from Singapore has bagged two gold medals at the World Memory Championship that was held in Hong Kong. Manoj won the title in the 'names and faces' and 'random words' categories, beating 56 other contestants in the 'kids' category' in the competition held from December 20-22.

Dhruv has just finished primary school. His wonder magic is that he can memorize more than seven decks of shuffled cards in an hour; 1,155 binary numbers in half that time; and 87 names and faces in 15 minutes. He was the only boy to represent Singapore in the competition where over 260 contestants from China, Russia, India, Taiwan and Malaysia participated.

News agency PTI, in a report, said Dhruv has mastered the Roman memory technique of creating 'memory places', which works by associating the ideas or objects to be memorized with scenes imagined at familiar locations, such as one's house.

Last year, Dhruv broke the children's category world record in 'Names and Faces' section of the World Memory Championship which was held in Jakarta. He was able to match 96 names to faces correctly, of the 240 given. The competitors were given only 15 minutes to memorize names and faces and 30 minutes to recall and pen their answers.

Indian-American Doctor Killed by Falling Tree in Texas

FORT WORTH, TX (TIP): An Indian-American pediatrician was killed on December 27 when a tree fell on her while she was hiking with her family in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee, according to news reports.



Dr Laila Jiwani had been a doctor with Cook Children's since 2007

Dr. Laila Jiwani, 42, of Plano, a doctor with Cook Children's, died Thursday, December 27 when she was struck by a tree on Porter Creek Trail at the park. Jiwani and her husband were hiking in the park with their three sons at the time. Her 6-year-old son suffered a broken leg, according to news reports. Jiwani's husband, Taufiq Jiwani, wrote in a Facebook post that doctors said his wife saved their son by taking the brunt of the impact, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported. The post has since been deleted.

Jiwani received her medical education at New York University School of Medicine and was certified by the American Board of Pediatrics.

She had been a doctor with Cook Children's since 2007.

Indian-American's start-up could revolutionize the fight against marine litter

LOS ANGELES (TIP): Based in Los Angeles, 'Moral Fiber' has developed a three-step chemical process that can extract polyester from mixed blend materials and will be useful in recycling other plastics.

A start-up by an Indian-American in Los Angeles can completely change the battle against marine plastic litter that is plaguing the world's oceans at this moment.

Akshay Sethi, a chemistry student from the University of California, Davis and co-student, Moby Ahmed started exploring ways to recover polyester, the most common fabric in mass-produced clothing, while studying. They founded Ambercycle (now 'Moral Fiber') in 2015, working initially with microbes to break down polyesters.

Moral Fiber has now developed a three-step chemical process that can extract polyester from mixed blend materials to create a new yarn, billed as the world's first textile product made entirely from old clothing. The equipment needed for this transformation can fit into a small shipping container, making it easy to deploy.

During the process, polyester is extracted at the molecular level from mixed material containing the plastic and some cotton, to produce a new yarn. The leftover material is incinerated to power the pilot plant, but the final box could also be powered by solar panels placed on the roof. The process requires around 45-50 amps of power at peak consumption.

Sethi says the process will be useful in



recycling other plastics.

"We'll start with fabric, but it can process packaging, bottles, containers, films, multilayer packaging. We see this box as the box that is tailor-made for textiles but in the future, we want to make a box for packaging, a box for carpets and for all sorts of different materials," Sethi was quoted as saying by the United Nations Environment Program.

Sethi sees Moral Fiber as another weapon in the battle against marine plastic pollution.

"What we've seen so far is you can make a polyester fiber that doesn't shed. You can do it, it's just a question of making it in such a way that it's scalable," he says. "We are working on ways to do that right now. You can't have materials that go into the oceans and biodegrade there and turn into microfibers."

According to some estimates, as many as 51 trillion microplastic particles-500 times more than the stars in our galaxy-litter the seas.

(Source: Down to Earth)

Indian-American Sworn in as Fort Bend County Judge in Texas

According to census, Fort Bend is now the most diverse county in Texas with 35% Anglos, 24% Hispanics, 21% Asians and others.

HOUSTON(TIP): Indian-American KP George sworn in as the Fort Bend County Judge, becoming the first person from the community to hold the office of one of America's most diverse counties.

George, 53, a Democrat and Fort Bend Independent School District Board trustee, defeated Republican Judge Robert Hebert in November polls.

In the US, county judges' duties vary from state to state. Depending upon the size of the county, they perform a wide range of judicial and administrative duties.

The Fort Bend county has a sizeable population of Indian-Americans.

According to the latest census, Fort Bend is now the most diverse county in Texas, and among the most diverse in the country with 35 per cent Anglos, 24 per cent Hispanics, 21 per cent Asians and others; and 20 per cent African-Americans.

KP George, who hails from Kerala's Kakkodu city, said his father, a truck driver, earned only a couple of US dollars a day. He studied using a kerosene lamp.

He said that community engagement will be the top priority for his administration.

"I will continue spreading the word of county services and involving all people into the process. It is a historic moment for me as well as for the county.

"We will continue to have an open-door policy for the most diverse county which represents people who speak over 100 languages. We are here to represent each one of them and ensure a better place for residents and children of this county," Mr



KP George being sworn in

George said. Rice University professor Mark Jones said George is now the most prominent Indian-American to hold an executive position in the US government.

Mr George, 33, will govern a county with a larger population and a bigger budget than the Indian-American mayors of cities like Anaheim, California and Hoboken, Jones said, adding that as a county judge, he wields more outright power than most mayors.

While in India, George grew up speaking Malayalam and lived in a straw-thatch hut. When he was 15, his family moved to a bigger city where he attended college.

After his graduation, he got a job in Mumbai, where for the first time he started speaking English. He worked in the Middle East before moving to New York in 1993 to work for a financial firm.

Later, he moved to Texas and has been

living in the Fort Bend county ever since along with his family.

"I strongly believe that success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It is what you do for others," Mr George said.

He first ran for office in 2010, hoping to be elected as the county treasurer.

"People asked me in Richmond and Rosenberg, 'Why are you running?' It's not easy for a person like me, brown in color, with no political power, no name recognition. I'd say, 'Because I can. I'm not a felon. I'm a citizen. Thank you, USA! I hold your values close to my heart.

"I honestly believe this is the time for me to do public service rather than complain. I am taking responsibility to get involved and work for the US, the country that has given me everything I've dreamed of," Mr George added.

AAPI's Historic Global Healthcare Summit 2018 in Mumbai Concludes with Commitment to Give Back to Mother India

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

The three-day historic event, inaugurated by the Honorable President of India on December 28th at the Taj Palace Hotel in Mumbai, was for the first time, jointly organized by American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) and Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (GAPIO), from December 28th - 30th December 2018 at Hotel Trident, Nariman Point, Mumbai.

In his inaugural address, the President of India said, AAPI is "more than just a platform of doctors and medical practitioners, the Indian President told the nearly 500 delegates who had come from around the world to attend the landmark Summit in Mumbai. "It is a link between two vibrant and democratic societies, both of which have addressed major public health challenges in their own way."

The Indian President praised AAPI and the over 100,000 Physicians of Indian Origin in the United States for their great contributions. "The professional-ism and goodwill of Indian doctors in America has won them - won you, I should say - a well-deserved reputation," he told the AAPI leaders. "In fact, it has occasionally led to diplomatic gains for India for which your Association must be appreciated."

The President of India urged AAPI to continue its efforts in the prevention and management of life-style diseases, diabetes and obesity, where physicians of Indian origin can bring in "traditional Indian wellness practices to modern medical systems. Please see what your Association can do in this area," he told AAPI delegates

Dr. Naresh Parikh, President AAPI in his opening remarks, provided an overview of some of the major contributions of the past 11 Summits organized by AAPI. "Over the past 12 years AAPI physicians have collaborated with several professional medical associations, academic institutions, Government of India, and have made significant contributions towards addressing diabetes with the launch of Sevak program, CPR-AED training for first responders with expert faculty from the American University of Antigua, Traumatic Brain Injury - the scourge of young India, and development of management guidelines thereby helping prevent deaths due to road traffic accidents, raising the importance and awareness on smoking cessation, Adopt a Village program and taking the initiatives to make quality healthcare accessible universally to village and taluka and district levels, and most recently a strong collaborative on making India TB Free with the signing of a MOU with USAID. Ten city pilots are well under way and significant progress is being made," he told a captive audience.

Packed with strategic planning sessions such as the much anticipated CEO Forum, Women's Forum, Launching Free Health Clinic, First Responders Training, CMEs, Research Contest, Fashion Show, Cultural extravaganza, pre and post visits to Kerala and Goa, the GHS 2018 has promised to be one with the greatest impact and significant contributions towards harnessing the power of international Indian diaspora to bring the most innovative, efficient, cost effective healthcare solutions to India.

Dr. Ravi Jahagirdar, Chairman for GHS 2018 said that with a view to help the delivery of healthcare to millions across the nation, said, "AAPI has capped the voluminous achievements of the past 37 years with a clear vision to move forward taking this noble organization and its vision for better healthcare to newer heights." Dr. Jahagirdar



A section of the audience at the inaugural event of AAPI's GHS 2018 in Mumbai



AAPI leaders and collaborators recommitting to render India TB Free by 2025



AAPI leadership with President of India and Maharashtra Chief Minister

and his wife Dr. Uditia Jahagirdar contributed funds towards the Burns Unit Seth G.S. Medical College and Hospital in Mumbai and the Unit was dedicated during GHS 2018.

With a view to encourage and recognize research by upcoming generation of physicians, AAPI organized a Young Investigator Research Competition as part of the GHS 2018 at G.S. Medical College and Hospital in Mumbai had several dozens of participation from Medical Students from across the nation. Winners were recognized and awarded at the Gala on December 28th.

Leading Physicians and healthcare professionals from across the country and internationally converged onto Mumbai to further the exchange of knowledge and best practices on recent global medical advances, to develop vibrant and viable health policy agendas, and address growing healthcare challenges.

"The focus of the 12th Global Health Summit was an India-centric approach, with special events such as, Global Impact and India's contribution in providing cost effective medicines, addressing global shortages of healthcare professionals, Young Investigators Research contest, Women's Leadership

Forum, with focus on stopping violence against women and round tables to develop practical solutions for strengthening TB Free India initiative and addressing non-communicable diseases," Anwar Feroz, AAPI's Strategic Advisor said.

The many themes chosen for CMEs included, Healthcare, Career and Commerce, with the focus on Women's Healthcare, including high priority areas such as Cardiology, Maternal & Child Health, Diabetes, Oncology, Surgery, Mental Health, HIT, Allergy, Immunology & Lung Health, Gastroenterology, Transplant and impact of comorbidities.

Neal Simon, President of AUA commended the efforts of AAPI and its collaboration with The American University of Antigua (AUA) and P D Hinduja Hospital for successfully conducting First Responders Training, including CPR-AED and BLS for more than 150 Mumbai Police Officers on December 22nd, 23rd & 24th after successfully completing training in Jharkhand, Rajasthan and West Bengal to provide assistance to accident victims and save lives. =.

Dr. Prathap C Reddy, Founder GAPIO has envisioned the evolution of developing a

united front for all NRI physicians to develop strong and effective programs that can be implemented with precision to face the challenges posed by Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Dr. Ramesh Mehta, President GAPIO in his opening address said that AAPI GHS 2018 is the beginning of a strong collaborative approach along with the Global Association of Physicians of Indian origin (GAPIO) that together will make constructive and tangible ways of ensuring that healthcare is affordable and accessible to millions of people in India.

The CEO Forum, addressed by leaders from Indian Pharmaceutical Companies, including Dr. Preetha Rajaraman, Health Attaché, US Government; Dr. Shailesh Ayyangar, MD Sanofi; Sudarshan Jain. Former MD Abbott; Madan Rohini Krishnan, MD Medtronic India; Dr. William Pinsky, President ECFMG; Neal Simon, President AUA; DG Shah, Secretary Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance; Dr. Gurpreet Sandhu, President CHPF; Dr. Naresh Parikh, President of AAPI; Dr. Vinod Shah, AAPI Past President; Dr. Raj Bhayani, Co-Chair, GHS; and, Dr Ravi Jahagirdar, Chairman GHS.

The Forum discussed ways to ensure that lower cost and effective medicines with the highest quality continue to make India the world leader in this field. The CEO Forum focused on identifying ways to successfully implement "AYUSHMAN BHARAT" - a brainchild of the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, whose vision is to provide quality healthcare to India's billion people - a project that is being watched intently across the Globe for emulation, these sessions are designed to complement the enormous effort by several agencies and Government of India, said Anwar Feroz Siddiqi, Chief Strategy Adviser, AAPI, Honorary Adviser GAPIO and BAPIO.

The Women's Forum had Amruta Fadnavis, First Lady of Maharashtra and Vice President of Axis Bank; Deana Uppal, Entrepreneur & Winner Miss India U; Dr. Nandita Palshetkar, President FOGSI; Dr. Ratna Jain, Former Mayor Kota, Rajasthan; and, Sangita Reddy, Executive Director, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospital Group as panelists. Dr. Asha Parikh, Chair, AAPI Women's Forum and Dr. Udaya Shivangi, Vice Chair, AAPI Women's Forum led the panelists to a lively discussion on ways to prevent and address violence against women.

Building on its collaborative efforts with several non-governmental organizations and the US-AID, AAPI committed itself to strengthen its initiatives to "make every city, every district, every village in India TB free." The planning/review session at the GHS was an Introduction and Review of Building on A Roadmap for a TB-Free India - A Combined effort of AAPI and CETI under guidance of Government of India, US-AID, where the progress in the 10 cities, where the program has been on for several months, was reviewed through a live webcast from each of these 10 cities.

Participants at the strategic planning session included, Dr. Naresh Parikh MD, President of AAPI; Anwar Feroz, AAPI's Strategic Advisor; Dr. Salil Bhargava, CETI; Reuben Seamineken from US-AID; Vikas Sheel, IAS, Joint Secretary of Health, Indian Government; Kush Sachdeva, Deputy Director General of TB, Government of India; Dr. Manoj Jain; Dr. Rajesh Deshmukh; and, Dr. Thakor G. Patel. AAPI had already launched the TB Free India project in April 2018 in strong association with Ministry for Health, WHO, CETI, USAID and industry partners such as Johnson & Johnson and Mylan.

contd on Page 12



GUEST COMMENT

On Elizabeth Warren's U.S. presidential bid: Democratic hope?

Elizabeth Warren makes the first move towards a U.S. presidential bid

Elizabeth Warren, Democratic Senator of Massachusetts, has announced her likely candidacy for the 2020 U.S. presidential race. Although Ms. Warren, who won a second six-year Senate term in November, had declined to enter the 2016 general election and challenge Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary, she made a name for herself as a top-tier Democrat by taking on President Donald Trump, describing him as a "thin-skinned racist bully". However, she attracted criticism for an unnecessary controversy over taking a DNA test to establish her Native American heritage, after Mr. Trump used racist epithets to provoke and smear her ethnic antecedents. Notwithstanding that blip, the former Harvard law professor, who hails from a blue-collar background in Oklahoma, has repeatedly underscored her credentials as a champion of multiracial populism. Over the past year she has sharpened her attack on Mr. Trump's politics, arguing that he deflects attention from the impact of his divisive policies on ordinary American families and instead blames "other working people, people who are black, or brown, people born somewhere else."

Despite the considerable achievements of Ms. Warren, who had not held public office before 2013, the obstacles ahead for her proposed presidential run are formidable. First, the general expectation is that the field for the Democratic nomination will widen considerably over through 2019, given that more than three dozen Democratic candidates-in-the-making are said to be considering joining the race, several of them for the first time. Some, such as Kamala Harris of California or Cory Booker of New Jersey, could hold stronger appeal with millennial voters and people of color. Second, it is hard to predict how Ms. Warren will fare against self-professed Democratic socialist candidate Bernie Sanders, or Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio, both economic populists who could hypothetically cut into her share of voters of a similar ideological persuasion. Finally, the risk of pursuing a populist theme from the center-left of the political spectrum is that she would be an easy target for Mr. Trump and conservatives, who are likely to deride her as an out-of-touch liberal academic and a threat to free enterprise. Nevertheless, as a candidate for the nation's highest office, Ms. Warren's ideological moorings are set. It is not inconceivable that, given how bitterly polarized the electorate is today, Ms. Warren's bold liberalism could offer hope to millions of voters dismayed at what Mr. Trump has done to their nation.

(The Hindu)

AS I SEE IT

After the inevitable exit

India must be prepared for the potential consequences of withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan



By Suhasini Haidar

Despite the White House's spirited denial of reports that it has issued no orders for the pullout of U.S. troops, the course seems set for a thinning of American presence in Afghanistan. U.S. President Donald Trump had promised this during his campaign, and several advisers have said since then that he is keen to bring back most, if not all, troops before his re-election bid in 2020. If anything, Mr. Trump's ill-judged remarks this week only underline his desire to leave: he suggested that regional players like Russia, India and Pakistan should be more involved in stabilizing the situation, and mocked India for not doing enough.

As a result, the U.S. war in Afghanistan, that began as revenge for the 9/11 attacks, evolved into a mission for ensuring democracy and prosperity in Afghanistan. In recent years, challenged by the resurgence of the Taliban, it has now become a mission mainly to ensure an honorable exit. This isn't the first time the U.S. has sought to do this: President Barack Obama had faced similar challenges in 2010, just before he announced the big drawdown. As Mr. Trump now moves to cutting American presence to a few well-guarded military bases, India must consider the consequences closely.

SHIFT IN POLICY: To begin with, it is time to recognize that the U.S.'s South Asia Strategy for Afghanistan, as announced by Mr. Trump in August 2017, has been discarded. Mr. Trump had defined the strategy with three features: that U.S. troops would remain involved in the country until "conditions", not a timeline, mandated their return; that the U.S. would put Pakistan on notice for its support to the Taliban and a political settlement with the Taliban would only follow "after an effective military effort"; and that the policy would hinge on further developing the strategic partnership with India.

Sixteen months later, it is easy to see that each element of the U.S.'s policy on the ground has shifted, if not been entirely reversed. The appointment of special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in September to lead talks with the Taliban after a particularly brutal year shows that the U.S. is no longer waiting for military operations to take effect. According to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report to the U.S. Congress, casualties of Afghan National and Defense Security Forces (ANDSF) in May-September 2018 were the "greatest it has ever been" compared to corresponding periods since 2001, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan "documented more civilian deaths in the first nine months of 2018 than they had during the same nine-month reporting period since 2014".

Mr. Khalilzad's direct talks with the Taliban that cut out the National Unity government (NUG) in Kabul reportedly didn't even have

"Mr. Trump's administration has no doubt been much more welcoming of Indian investment in Afghanistan, but that itself is symptomatic of his desire to pare down "Pax Americana" in every part of the world. The removal or reduction of the U.S. presence from most theatres of action has created space for regional players: leaving Syria to Iran and its allies; Yemen to Saudi Arabia; Afghanistan to players like Russia, Pakistan and Iran; and Pakistan to China."



President Ashraf Ghani in the loop until after the first talks were held in Qatar - this reversed the previous U.S. position not to engage the Taliban until it engages the NUG. Far from the tough talk on Pakistan for support to the Taliban, Mr. Trump wrote a letter to Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan thanking him for his efforts. Afghanistan's High Peace Council members also disclosed that Mr. Khalilzad was on a deadline: Mr. Trump has reportedly given him six months to show results with the talks process, failing which the pullout may be speeded up.

The departure from the avowed U.S. position on an "Afghan-owned, Afghan-led" process has clearly ruffled feathers in Kabul. In December, Mr. Ghani appointed two aides of former President Hamid Karzai known for their hardline position on the Taliban and Pakistan as his Defense and Interior Ministers. Putting the seal on the clear drift in the U.S. Afghanistan and South Asia policy from the past was the exit of Defense Secretary James Mattis, author of the South Asia policy. Mr. Mattis had pushed most strenuously to keep India in the Afghan game by swinging a waiver for India on Chabahar and Iran oil purchases. It remains to be seen whether Mr. Trump will continue those waivers past May this year.

The internal situation in Afghanistan is aggravated now by the uncertainty of the democratic process. Parliamentary elections were held in October after being delayed by more than two years, but even their preliminary results haven't yet been declared, casting doubt on the government's ability to conduct elections. Presidential elections have been postponed till July, despite the constitutional clause that they were to be completed by April 22, 2019. Meanwhile, Mr. Ghani has been unable to keep his commitment to hold a Loya Jirga (grand council of representatives) to turn Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah's post in the NUG into an executive Prime Ministership.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA: For India, these developments may appear discouraging, but a more pragmatic view is necessary to deal with all possible outcomes. The U.S.'s eventual pullout as Afghanistan's peacekeeper is inevitable, and it would make more sense to prepare for it than to deny it will

happen. New Delhi was caught off guard in 2010 when Mr. Obama planned the drawdown and discouraged India from a stake in projects there in an effort to placate Pakistan.

Mr. Trump's administration has no doubt been much more welcoming of Indian investment in Afghanistan, but that itself is symptomatic of his desire to pare down "Pax Americana" in every part of the world. The removal or reduction of the U.S. presence from most theatres of action has created space for regional players: leaving Syria to Iran and its allies; Yemen to Saudi Arabia; Afghanistan to players like Russia, Pakistan and Iran; and Pakistan to China.

Some other hard truths must be faced: India cannot replace Pakistan's position geographically, nor can it ever offer the U.S. or any other force what Pakistan has offered in the past, including bases and permission for U.S. forces to bomb its own territory. The decision to abandon the SAARC in favor of groupings like BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) and IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) may have provided some short-term returns in "isolating Pakistan", but it has had the effect of cutting Afghanistan loose from Indian leadership of South Asia as well. India's best course with Afghanistan remains its own regional strategy, not becoming a part of any other country's strategy. Close bilateral consultations like this week's visit to Delhi of National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib may not always yield dramatic headlines but are the basis of India's ability to help Afghanistan according to its needs, not India's ambitions, and the reason for the immense popularity and goodwill India continues to enjoy in Afghanistan.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize the cyclical nature of interventions in Afghanistan, which has been called the "graveyard of empires" for forcing all world powers to retreat at some point or the other. The words of Rev. George Gleig, a soldier who survived the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42), are worth remembering: "A war begun for no wise purpose, carried on with a strange mixture of rashness and timidity, brought to a close after suffering and disaster, without much glory attached either to the government which directed, or the great body of troops which waged it." Greig's description of the British retreat could ring true for Soviet forces in the 1980s, and American forces post-9/11 as well.

(The author can be reached at suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in)

(Courtesy The Hindu)

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PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER: Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja
VICE PRESIDENT: Chitagam Saluja
CHIEF EDITOR: Prof Indrajit S. Saluja
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Bidisha Roy
GRAPHICS DIRECTOR: Om Parkash Malik
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CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:
Baldev Singh / BJ Videos
Gunjesh Desai / Masala Junction
Jay Mandal,
Mohammad Jaffer/ SnapsIndia

Mohammad Shahzad, Zia Khan
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The Indian Panorama
P.O. Box No. 190067, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419,
Tel: 646-247-9458
Email: editor@theindianpanorama.com
DALLAS EDITION
P.O. BOX 121695, ARLINGTON, TX 76012
Lovlien Kaurr, VP & Bureau Chief

Bureau Chief Phone: 972-330-3139
E-mail tipdallas01@gmail.com; Phone: 646-247-9458
www.theindianpanorama.news
Published by Prof. Indrajit Saluja

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The U.S. robust economy will continue

The Dow Likely To Make A New High Of 30,000 In 2019



By Ven Parameswaran

Like it or not, during President Trump's administration, the US has been enjoying a very robust economy. I am listing important statistics because the main stream media is anti-Trump 24/7 and will not give any credit to Trump to prevent his approval ratings going up.

1. The GDP for the four quarters of 2018: 1st 2.2%; 2nd 3.5%; 3rd 4.2%; 4th 3.3 (estimate). The GDP average for the 2018 could be 3.3%. This is a fantastic record.
2. The Unemployment is a record low of 3.7% for 49 years
3. The Unemployment for all the minorities including the Blacks has been historical low. This is a huge achievement.
4. Manufacturing jobs grew at the fastest rate in 23 years and the unemployment record for Americans without high school diploma reached the lowest point ever recorded.
5. The wages rose 3.1% --the biggest jump since 2009 - and that "low-skilled workers are among the biggest beneficiaries."
6. Almost full employment has brought down the dependence on Food Stamps and the Welfare, creating respect and dignity for the minorities. Unemployment compensation claims historical low.
7. The stock market added 50% from the day Trump announced his candidacy in 2015. For 2018, the Dow Jones Average all time Low was 21,712; High 26,951; Closed at 23,327 losing 5.63% in 2018 (3,624 points).
8. The confidence level index is the highest ever.
9. The inflation is comparatively low not impacting the higher wages.
10. The price of oil under \$50 is very low helping the economy.
11. The trade deficits with Mexico, Canada, Western European countries, Japan, S. Korea and China have been substantially reduced because of tough negotiations by President Trump.
12. President Trump has diffused tensions with North Korea; ISIS has been won; Less crisis in the Middle East even after creating Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

PREDICTION FOR THE ECONOMY AND THE STOCK MARKET

In 1987, the Wall Street had the worst crash since 1930. On October 19, the Black Monday, the DOW JONES AVERAGE sank 25% in a couple of hours. At that time, I was the President & CEO of First Asian Securities that had been started from the scratch only a few months before the crash. Fortunately, I had some inkling of the markets and we were going short and also buying Put options for our customers. On October 21, 1987, the Wall Street Journal carried a big story by James P Sterba on "Short Sellers, Data Processing Firms Won Big as others Wailed Monday." We decided to quick cash all our Puts and the Shorts and made big gains. The Journal highlighted my foresight and trading strategies in its article that kept us busy

When Ven Parameswaran was President, First Asian Securities, he had predicted the stock market crash of October 19, 1987. In 3 hours, the DOW came down 25%. The Wall Street Journal highlighted him in its story the next day.- EDITOR

"I am predicting the DOW is likely to go up to 30,000 in 2019. I expect a jump of 3624 in January alone recovering its loss in 2018. Historically speaking, the markets always go up in January", says the author.



opening many accounts for several months. My firm was also in the good company of Goldman Sachs. I am not trying to brag but it may be relevant to what I am going to predict for 2019.

Based on my experience in Wall Street and the study of the American economy and politics for the past 65 years, I have no hesitation in predicting the continuation of a robust economy in 2019. In addition to the strong foundation and economic environment President Trump has already created, economic activity and productivity will continue to increase and shock the world.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi is very ambitious politically and is more anxious than anyone to pass a couple of bills with bipartisan support. President Trump also campaigned on the need for modernizing our infrastructure, especially major airports, bridges, highways, etc. I am expecting Trump-Pelosi bipartisan deals will create extraordinary economic booms accompanied by millions of new jobs for the blacks, Latinos, and the blue collar workers. No doubt there will be competition on who gets the credit and that is politics.

I am smelling success in negotiations with China that could result in substantial reduction by China on trade tariffs. The negotiations with the Western European countries could very well result in Free Trade.



The aggressive but progressive trade policies will result in increased international trade and business opportunities for the USA and others.

The impact of the Trump massive tax cuts for the corporations will start bearing fruit. The Republicans will also be successful in negotiations with the Democrats for another tax cut for the middle-class, as part of a package deal.

Speaker Pelosi has no choice but to pass a couple of good legislations that will help the voters and she can will try to take the credit. Shutting of the government is creating a huge opportunity for Trump-Pelosi-Schumer-McConnell to compromise and deliver results. I am expecting a comprehensive immigration reform. It is possible President Trump will also compromise and negotiate hard. Regularizing the status of 11 million illegal immigrants could benefit all. Trump may be seeking to create more goodwill with the Latin Americans to increase his share of their votes.

Of course, the Democrats will want to investigate, and investigate Trump administration with a view to impeach him. Nancy Pelosi knows too well that the impeachment politics is a two-edged sword. Even if impeached only in the House of Representatives, it may motivate the main stream media and the extreme left. But based

on Clinton impeachment it will hurt the Party in the election. Also, the Democrats cannot get anything done without the cooperation of the Republican Senate and President Trump who has veto power.

The stock market climbed 50% since President Trump announced his candidacy. The Dow lost only about 5% in 2018. The market has had a 15 to 20% correction already. The hedge funds and professional traders call the market many times. Therefore, technically speaking, the market has no place to go but up. I am predicting the DOW is likely to go up to 30,000 in 2019. I expect a jump of 3624 in January alone recovering its loss in 2018. Historically speaking, the markets always go up in January.

As the stock market, wages and income go up it will be followed by Real Estate boom in the Spring. The robust economy and confidence in the American economy will deliver the American Dream to many.

Both President Trump and the Democratic leaders will try to make policies that will help them in 2020 Presidential election. In this process, the American people could benefit and some of them will make the American Dream!

(Ven Parameswaran, who lives in Scarsdale, N.Y. was President & CEO, First Asian Securities Corporation, New York)



HAL gets nod to make Tejas jet's next version

NEW DELHI (TIP): Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has got permission to produce the next version of Tejas fighter jets. Dubbed final operational clearance (FOC) version, 20 of these are to be produced by HAL before it graduates onto the next version called the Tejas Mark 1A.

The Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC) has given the green signal to start manufacturing of the Tejas FOC version, sources in the HAL said. The IAF has ordered 123 Tejas, of which 20 are the initial operational clearance (IOC) version while another 20 are the FOC version. The remaining 83 are Mark 1A.

The first FOC plane will be produced by the year-end. The CEMILAC clearance was needed as it would take some 10 to 12 months to start ordering various components. About 10 to 11 IOC-configured Tejas have been inducted by the Air Force.

CBI Jt Dir to continue probe against Asthana

NEW DELHI (TIP): Minutes after transfer of Joint Director V Murugesan was reported, the CBI issued a fresh order stating that he would continue to be in-charge of probe against Special Director Rakesh Asthana, officials said Friday.

The agency had issued an order Friday transferring Murugesan from Anti-Corruption wing which was probing the case against Asthana to Economic Offences wing.

Within minutes the transfer was reported in the media, the agency issued a subsequent order stating that Murugesan will continue to "supervise" case against Special Director Rakesh Asthana, officials in the know of development told PTI.

The earlier order accessed by PTI shows that Murugesan, who was deputed by Director (in-charge) M Nageswara Rao to lead the investigation against Asthana, was transferred as part of efforts to give an "impetus to expeditious completion of coal scam cases".

PNB fraud: ED attaches Choski's Thai unit

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached a Mehul Choksi-owned factory in Thailand worth over Rs 13 crore in connection with the alleged \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case, the agency said in a statement.

The attached property is part of Choski-owned Gitanjali group, the agency said, adding that it had issued a provisional order for attachment of Abbeycrest (Thailand) Limited under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

"Investigations under the PMLA revealed that Abbeycrest (Thailand) Limited is the beneficiary of LoUs (letters of undertaking) issued fraudulently from the PNB to the tune of Rs 92.3 crore," the ED statement reads.

Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case: Supreme Court to pass further orders on January 10

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court on Friday said that further orders in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute would be passed by an appropriate bench on 10 January. Accordingly, on that day, the matter will be listed before a newly constituted three-judge bench which will decide the way forward.

Despite attempts for an early hearing in the case, it has been on the back burner for a while. The issue could potentially become central to 2019 Lok Sabha elections, thereby further polarizing voter preferences.

The apex court had on 27 September refused to refer to a larger bench its 1994 judgement holding that a mosque was not integral to the practice of Islam. The issue had arisen from a judgement in the Ismail Faruqi vs Union of India case where the court considered the acquisition of a religious place and held that a mosque was not integral to the practice of Islam.

On 7 February, the court had said that the matter would be heard as a "pure land dispute", directed the registry to complete all procedural requirements and asked the parties to bring on record all documents, exhibits, translations etc. for final arguments.

The court is hearing a total of 13 appeals filed against the 2010 judgment of the



Allahabad high court in four civil suits. They challenge the high court verdict that mandated a three-way division of the disputed 2.77-acre site.

The Lucknow bench of Allahabad high court had ruled in favour of partitioning the land equally among three parties—the Sunni Waqf Board, Nirmohi Akhara and 'Ram Lalla' (infant Lord Ram), represented by the Hindu Mahasabha. A civil suit for deciding the title of

the property on which the Babri Masjid stood before it was demolished on 6 December 1992 had been filed before the high court. The apex court stayed this decision in 2011.

The Shia Central Waqf Board of Uttar Pradesh told the Supreme Court in August that it was amenable to building a mosque in a Muslim-dominated area, at a reasonable distance from the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site.

Kerala tense as 1,800 arrested over Sabarimala violence

CPM worker stabbed, bomb thrown at BJP leader's house



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM (TIP): Violence continued in many parts of Kerala on Saturday over the entry of two women in their 40s into the Sabarimala temple even as the police have arrested more than 1800 people.

A worker of the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) was stabbed in Iritti in Kannur on Friday night while party MLA AN Shamseer's house was attacked and he alleged that the Sangh Parivar was out to vitiate the atmosphere in the state. Bombs were thrown at Bharatiya Janata Party MP V Muralidharan's house in Thalassery.

In Kannur, which is notorious for clashes between RSS and Left workers that claimed more than 300 lives in three decades, a RSS office was set on fire early on Saturday. 18 persons were taken into preventive custody while more police deployed in restive area as

intelligence warned of more trouble

A bomb blast was reported from Perambra in Kozhikode district, while a CPI (M) worker's house was attacked.

The sporadic incidents of violence since Friday night and early Saturday have left authorities worried. Prohibitory orders were clamped in many areas as tension mounted.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday announced that the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state on Sunday has been "postponed". Widespread violence had broken out since Thursday when a strike was called by the Sabarimala Karma Samithi, an umbrella group of Hindu groups, and supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to protest the entry of two women - Bindu Ammini, 42, and Kanakadurga, 44 - into the temple on Wednesday.

As GST compliance rate takes a hit, Centre scrambles to locate missing taxpayers

NEW DELHI (TIP): As compliance rate of tax filers, including composition scheme dealers, under Goods and Services Tax (GST) shows a declining trend, authorities are working on hunting these missing taxpayers.

The percentage of taxpayers who have not filed returns under GST has steadily increased over the last 12 months to over 28 per cent in November 2018 as against 10.56 per cent in November 2017, data shared by Minister of State for Finance Shiv Pratap Shukla in response to a Lok Sabha question on Friday showed.

The composition scheme fares along similar lines, with the percentage of filers who have not filed returns rising to 25.37 per cent in July-September 2018 as against 15.03 per cent in July-September 2017, the data showed.

Under the composition scheme, traders, manufacturers and restaurants pay a low nominal tax rate.

On a question on whether the authorities are considering putting in place an extensive plan to hunt for these missing GST taxpayers, which includes visiting their premises, the MoS for Finance replied in the affirmative.

"The details of the non-filers of returns are regularly shared with the jurisdictional tax authorities and measures including inspection, visit of premises, search and seizure are being undertaken wherever required," Shukla said in his written reply.

The government has also detected cases wherein fake invoices are being used to claim input tax credit.

In 2018-19, upto December, 499 cases of fake invoices used for claiming input tax credit have been detected involving amount of Rs 3,894.94 crore as against detection of 4 cases involving Rs 9.75 crore in July 2017-March 2018, the details in reply showed.

"The government is committed to increase the percentage of compliance by taxpayers under Goods and Services Tax. In this regard, an extensive outreach program has been carried out across the country to create awareness among traders, industry bodies and other stakeholders," the minister said in his reply.

Further, effective enforcement measures are being undertaken to check cases of tax evasion and fake invoices," it further said.

Source: The Indian Express

Day after quitting AAP, Phoolka says joining politics was wrong

To form non-political outfit, launch Anna-like movement

NEW DELHI (TIP): A day after quitting the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Supreme Court lawyer HS Phoolka today said his decision to join politics was “wrong”. He said he would launch an agitation similar to the anti-corruption movement launched by Anna Hazare in 2011.

In the next six months, a non-political outfit would be launched in Punjab against drugs menace and de-politicisation of the Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), he said. He would not contest the SGPC or Lok Sabha elections, he declared.

Addressing reporters at the Delhi Press Club, Phoolka said, “My biggest reason to quit AAP is to launch an



agitation similar to the Anna movement. The need is to begin another such Anna movement so that political parties don't take it lightly and listen to the people.”

He alleged drugs were widely distributed during the last SGPC poll. “The SGPC is a religious body and I am against its politisation,” he added. Like-minded people and other organisations would be roped in to launch the new outfit, he said. He didn't rule out the possibility of aligning with Swaraj Abhian leaders. He said he would continue to struggle for justice to anti-Sikh riot victims and to ensure that Congress leaders Jagdish Tytler and Kamal Nath were also punished like Sajjan Kumar. “I entered politics thinking that my efforts will get a boost, but over the past five years I realised that joining politics was a wrong decision,” he said. *Source: The Tribune*

Bofors brought Congress down, Rafale will bring Modi back: Sitharaman

NEW DELHI (TIP): Tearing into the Congress on the Rafale deal issue, defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday alleged that the party stalled the deal when it was in power as it “didn't get money” and ignored national security.

During her nearly two-hour-long reply to a discussion on Rafale issue in Lok Sabha, Sitharaman accused the Congress of resorting to falsehood to mislead the country and gave “point-by-point” rebuttal to opposition's allegations including on price of the fighter aircraft and HAL not getting the Countering the Congress' charge, she said that it was the Indian Air Force which suggested that the government buy two squadrons or 36 Rafale jets in fly-away condition instead of 18, as was planned to be purchased under the Congress-led UPA government.

She accused the Congress of compromising with national security in the interest of the party's “treasury” while deciding on buying 126 fighter jets.

Under the deal finalised by the NDA government, the delivery of first Rafale will happen in 2019, while the last of 36 jets will be delivered in 2022, the minister informed the house.

With regard to pricing difference, Sitharaman said there was no formal price noting by the Congress of Rs 526 crore as the deal price. But the price negotiated by the NDA government is nine per cent lower than what was negotiated by UPA.

“Comparing the cost of Rs 526 crore with Rs 1,600 crore, is like comparing apples to oranges. The cost quoted in 2007 will it remain the same in 2016, because there is escalation cost and there is exchange rate variation,” she said.

“The price of the basic aircraft cannot be compared with price of weaponised aircraft,” the minister further said.

Sitharaman alleged that the Congress was only shedding “crocodile tears” on the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) not getting the offset contract as it did nothing to scale up the capacity of

DEFENCE MINISTER ‘RAN AWAY’ FROM MY QUESTIONS ON RAFALE: RAHUL

NEW DELHI (TIP): Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday said Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gave a long speech in Parliament but did not answer any of his posers on the Rafale deal and “ran away”.

Gandhi's assertion came after Sitharaman gave the government's reply on the Rafale fighter jet deal issue in the Lok Sabha.

“The defence minister did not answer any of the questions I asked on the Rafale deal. She did not even take the name of Anil Ambani,” Gandhi told reporters outside Parliament.

Gandhi said he put two questions to the minister towards the end of the debate and asked her to reply in yes or no.

“I asked that after a long negotiation process, those people who participated in that negotiations—Air Force chief, defence minister, secretaries, Air Force officials—when the prime minister did a ‘bypass surgery’... did the Air Force people object, yes or no,” Gandhi said.

“And you saw that instead of answering this, the defence minister



started doing drama that ‘I have been insulted, I was called a liar’,” he said.

Addressing the country's youth, Gandhi said the minister was attempting to mislead them.

It was a straight question and without answering that she “ran away”, the Congress chief said.

“The PM cannot come (to Parliament), and the chief minister of Goa is saying I have a file and I will get back at the PM. She gave a two-and-a-half hour speech and did not answer any questions,” Gandhi said.

Source: PTI



the state-run firm.

Whereas the BJP-led NDA government gave Rs one lakh crore worth of contracts to HAL, she said.

Referring to negotiations of the Rafale deal during the rule of Congress-led UPA, the minister said, “You stopped the deal,

Criminal investigation in Rafale deal, if Congress comes to power: Rahul Gandhi forgetting Air Force was suffering.

“You didn't conclude the deal, because it didn't suit you. The deal didn't get you money,” she alleged.

“They did not intend to buy the aircraft till something else was done. There is something different between defence deal and

deal in defence,” she said, asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government gave priority to national security. *Source: PTI*

Lok Sabha passes Aadhaar amendment Bill

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Lok Sabha on Friday passed a Bill to amend the Aadhaar Act and two related laws which will allow individuals to offer voluntarily biometric ID as a means of identity verification for obtaining services such as opening bank account and procuring mobile phone connection.

The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill proposes changes in the Aadhaar Act, Indian Telegraph Act and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act to comply with a Supreme Court judgment pronounced on September 26 last year, in which it upheld the constitutional validity of unique identification project with certain restrictions and changes.

The compulsory use of Aadhaar-based KYC for mobile connections and bank accounts was prohibited by the apex court.

Speaking on the Bill, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, “Aadhaar being a digital identity has removed the role of a middleman in a substantial measure whose basic role was cutting, fitting and setting.”

In an emotive speech in the Lower House of Parliament, Prasad displayed his Aadhaar card and said, “It doesn't tell about my caste, religion and medical condition. It is safe and secured and is for India and Indians.”

Ajay Maken resigns as Delhi Congress chief

NEW DELHI (TIP): Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday accepted the resignation of Ajay Maken as Delhi Congress chief setting the stage for replacement.

Maken, who has been ailing for a while now, had put in his papers about two months ago and was waiting for his resignation to be accepted. The decision was taken late last night by Rahul in a meeting with AICC Delhi in-charge PC Chacko and Maken.

The move comes in amidst the ongoing parleys between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party about possible dear sharing for the Delhi Lok Sabha polls, but no final decision has been taken. Reports are Rahul Gandhi could bring in former Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit to stem the electoral damage done to the party in the city state.

Congress continues to struggle in Delhi after 2015 when all its candidates lost state elections and Maken lost his personal deposit. Thereafter, in the MC election polls, the Congress was pushed to the third position.

With the picture looking gloomy for LS polls Maken cited ill health to quit and said he would not be able to spare the time the party would want him to spare.

BSP may use Mayawati's birthday to brighten prospects

LUCKNOW (TIP): With the 63rd birthday celebrations of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati a fortnight away, party leaders and supporters are set to launch a campaign to project her as the next prime minister and the leader of a non-Congress, non-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) third front, if such an alliance takes shape.

The party, which champions the cause of the Dalits and minorities, has been using Mayawati's birthday celebrations on January 15 over the years to send across political message to the people, said a BSP leader who did not wish to be named.

“As the Lok Sabha elections are round the corner, the function is likely to mark the launch of the party's election campaign and may also raise the curtain on the proposed SP-BSP alliance,” he said, referring to a likely alliance with Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party, once a bitter rival of the BSP. Talks on seat sharing in Uttar Pradesh in the Lok Sabha elections have been underway since November, he added. After consecutive defeats in the 2012 and 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, and the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the party leadership will use Mayawati's birthday celebrations to lift spirits. Riding on an alliance, the BSP also hopes to regain ground in UP and check the BJP's gains in the state that sends 80 members to the 543-member Lok Sabha.



New York Dr. Raj Bhayani presented AAPI SERVICE APPRECIATION AWARD

MUMBAI (TIP): Dr. Raj Bhayani was presented AAPI Service Award for his services to the premier organization of Indian American physicians at the recently concluded AAPI Healthcare Summit in Mumbai.

Dr. Bhayani told The Indian Panorama from Mumbai that it was an "humbling moment to be awarded with AAPI SERVICE APPRECIATION AWARD which was presented to him by Minister of Health Shri Sawant and Whip Shri Raj Purohit and AAPI leaders." Congratulations, Dr. Bhayani.



Maharashtra Minister of Health Shri Sawant, Whip Shri Raj Purohit and AAPI leadership present the AAPI Service Appreciation Award to Dr. Raj Bhayani

Philanthropist and community activist Peter Bheddah Recognized

QUEENS, NY (TIP): Gujarati Samaj of New York recognized, December 29, the organization's Past Presidents for their services. They were presented plaques.

A presidential wall with the pictures of past presidents was inaugurated by Consul General of India, Sandeep Chakravorty.

Peter Bheddah served the organization as its president some years ago. His wife Dorothy commented that she felt proud of the work of her husband. Peter said he was humbled.



Consul General of India in New York Sandeep Chakravorty (center) presented the plaque to Peter Bheddah (right)



Dorothy Bheddah (left) and Peter Bheddah pose for a photograph in front of the Presidential wall

**Consulate General of India
New York**

cordially invites all Indian Nationals/PIOs/NRIs to a special event to celebrate

**Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
&
World Hindi Day**

(प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस / विश्व हिन्दी दिवस)

at Consulate General of India
3 East, 64th Street, New York, NY, 10065
5:00pm; January 12th, 2019

Consulate General of India in New York hosts PBD and World Hindi Day celebrations on January 12

NEW YORK (TIP): The Consulate General of India has invited all Indian Nationals / PIOs/ NRIs to a special event on Saturday, January 12 at 5 PM at the Indian Consulate in Manhattan to celebrate Pravasi Bhartiya Divas and World Hindi Day.

Consulate General of India, New York
cordially invites you to the celebration of

**550th Birth Anniversary of
Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji**

Gurbani by Bhai Baldeep Singh
January 14th 2019
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Consulate General of India,
3 E 64th St, New York, NY 10065
RSVP: culture.newyork@mea.gov.in

Indian Consulate in New York to celebrate 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji

NEW YORK (TIP): The Consulate General of India has cordially invited all a Gurbani Recital by Bhai Baldeep Singh, a renowned Sikh scholar at a special event to celebrate Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550th birth anniversary on Monday, January 14 from 6 to 8 P.M. at the Indian Consulate 3 E 64th Street, New York, NY 10065. Please RSVP to culture.newyork@mea.gov.in

AAPI's Historic Global Healthcare Summit 2018 in Mumbai Concludes with Commitment to Give Back to Mother India

CONTD FROM PAGE 12

AAPI and the TB Free India collaborative is implementing pilot projects in 10 cities across India. The initial findings were presented during the GHS 2018 in Mumbai under the leadership of Dr. Manoj Jain and Dr. Thakor Patel. The special pilots in Varanasi and Nagpur are supported by Dr. Raj Bhayani, Co-Chair AAPI GHS and Dr. Surendra Purohit, Senior Adviser AAPI. Dr. Sampat Shivangi and Dr. Vinod Shah, past AAPI Presidents have served as the senior advisors and have contributed immensely to the success of the GHS.

Dr. Naresh Parikh praised the dedication, contributions and efforts of Dr. Ravi

Jahagirdar, Chair of GHS 2018, Dr. Vinod Shah, Chair of AAPI Legislative Committee, Dr. Sampat Shivangi, Co-Chair of GHS 2018, Dr. Raj Bhayani, Co-Chair of GHS 2018, Anwar Feroz, AAPI's Strategic Advisor, Dr. Asha Parikh, Women's Forum Chair, and his entire Executive Committee consisting of Dr. Suresh Reddy, President-Elect; Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, Vice President; Dr. Anupama Gotimukula, Secretary; Dr. Anjana Samadder, Treasurer; and Dr. Ajeeth Kothari, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

GHS 2018 provided the participants and world leaders in the Healthcare industry a rare platform to interact with and listen to leading physicians, healthcare professionals,

academicians, scientists, and leaders of the hospitals, technology, medical device and pharmaceutical companies to develop solutions that will make cost effective and quality healthcare accessible to all Indians.

One in seven Americans is touched by a physician of Indian origin. There is an equally large percentage of medical residents, fellows and students in the USA serving millions of Americans. AAPI's GHS has provided a venue for medical education programs and symposia with world-renowned physicians on the cutting edge of medicine.

Dr. Suresh Reddy invited all delegates to the 13th edition of Global Healthcare Summit planned to be held from July 19th to 21st in

Hyderabad, India. Organized by AAPI in collaboration with BAPIO & GAPIO, as well as Host Alumni Chapters, including OGKTMA, ATMGUSA, and GMCGA, the GHS 2019 will focus on preventive health, targeting women's health, and providing special CPR Trainings, Dr. Reddy, who will assume charge as the President of AAPI in July next year at the convention in Atlanta, said.

Representing the interests of the over 100,000 physicians of Indian origin, leaders of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), the largest ethnic organization of physicians, for 37 years. For more details, please visit: <https://aapisummit.org/www.aapiusa.org>.



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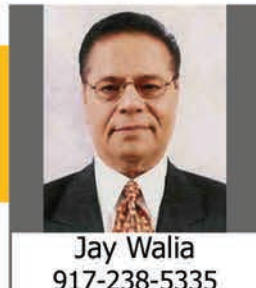
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"I want Eros to be Pre-eminent in the US": Prem Parameswaran

Love springs eternal in the human breast. Prem Parameswaran at the Taj in Agra, India



Prem Parameswaran is an institution in himself. A financial wizard, Prem achieved phenomenal success as investment banker. In his 23-year career in Investment Banking, Prem became one of the top Media and Telecom bankers on Wall Street. He advised clients and many Fortune 10 companies on mergers and acquisitions, as well as both public and private equity and debt financings.

In 2015, after a long and successful career as an investment banker in the Global Media and Telecom sector, Prem Parameswaran joined Eros as the Group Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and President of Eros International's North America Operations. A new feather was added to his crown when on December 20, 2018 Eros announced that Prem had been appointed to the Company's Board of Directors.

Established in 1977, Eros is a respected global brand name in the Indian cinema world, which focuses on distributing films and other content through various mediums. Its relatively new OTT (Over-the-Top Service) platform, Eros Now, has over 75 million registered users globally with over 3.6 million paid



Prem with US President Trump

subscribers. People term Eros Now as the "Netflix" of India, which owns rights for about 11,000 films from Bollywood and regional languages of India spanning several decades. No other company in the world has such a rich and vast Indian content to offer to its viewers.

Prior to joining Eros, Prem had served as the Global Head of Media and Telecommunications Investment Banking at Jefferies LLC. Prior to Jefferies he was the Americas Head of



Prem with Priyanka Chopra at the Bajirao Mastani Press Conference

Media and Telecom Investment Banking at Deutsche Bank Securities Inc. He had been with Goldman Sachs for 7 years prior to joining Deutsche Bank, where he was a Vice President and Head of the Integrated Communications Providers within Investment Banking. Prior to Goldman Sachs, Prem started his career at Salomon Brothers where he worked his way up from an Analyst to a Vice President.

Prem graduated from Columbia University with a BA and received an MBA from Columbia Business School. He was awarded Indian American Businessman of the Year in 2012 by the Asian American Republican Committee. He also serves on the Boards of Columbia University Alumni Trustee Nominating Committee and The Program for Financial Studies at Columbia Business School. Prem is a member of very exclusive Winged Foot Golf Club and The Golf Club of Purchase.

Prem's inspiration is his father Ven Parameswaran who came to USA in 1954 on a boat with less than \$100 in his pocket and an academic scholarship to Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey. He worked three jobs to make ends meet and received a master's degree from Columbia Business School. Later she earned a PhD also. He served as secretary to the legendary Krishna Menon, Defense Minister of India and chairman of Indian Delegation to the UN. He was also president and CEO of First Asian Securities after working



Prem with daughters Trinity (13), Kayla (10), and son Hudson (8)



Son Hudson on field at Yankee Stadium



Prem with daughter Trinity at Manchester United

CONTD ON PAGE 15

CONTD FROM PAGE 14



Hudson at NY Rangers Practice Facility

with Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns and Morgan Stanley.

Later, Ven Parameswaran moved to Wall Street and became the first Indian family to move to Scarsdale, Upstate New York. His wife Priscilla too had come as a student. They are among the earliest political activists from the community in America. Active in the Republican Party, Priscilla founded the New York Asian American Republican Committee three decades ago, which is still very active.

Prem grew up in Scarsdale, New York but currently resides in Purchase, New York with his three children, Trinity, Kayla and Hudson. Like his parents, Prem is a staunch Republican. He was invited to the White House Oval Office Reception for Diwali in 2017 with President Trump.

So much about the brief biography of the man who, at a relatively young age, has distinguished himself in his profession.

There is much more to know and learn from this gentleman. So, The Indian Panorama requested him for an interview to know about his vision, plans, and views on any thing and everything under the Sun which may interest him. He did not disappoint. So, two days before the end of 2018, on December



Prem is with Bruce Springsteen



Prem and Derek Jeter



Ven Parameswaran, Priscilla, Hudson, Prem Parameswaran



Father-son duo: Prem with his inspiration, dad Ven



The Family



Prem and Tino Martinez



Golfing with NY Rangers - Marc Staal, Kevin Hayes, Kevin Shattenkirk and Brady Skjei

29, to be exact, the chief editor of The Indian Panorama Prof. Indrajit S Saluja walked in to his Purchase, NY big house to speak with him.

We will bring to our readers the rather longish interview in

our India's Republic Day special edition on Friday, January 25. Please do look for the enlightened views of Mr. Prem Parameswaran, a man who is a synonym of success.

THE YEAR THAT WAS – 2018

From the killing of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi to major US turnarounds under President Donald Trump, here are some of the major events that marked 2018.



The exit called Brexit

On November 25, after 17 months of negotiations, the European Union and Britain agree on an accord covering Britain's exit from the bloc by March 2019.

But British Prime Minister Theresa May on December 10 postpones a parliament vote on the deal set for the following day, acknowledging it would be rejected. She survives an internal party no-confidence vote on December 12.

The 'Auto' quake



On November 19, the head of the giant Nissan-Renault-Mitsubishi auto alliance, tycoon Carlos Ghosn, is arrested in Japan over allegations of under-reporting his salary for years, which he denies.

He is fired as chairman of Nissan and Mitsubishi and formally charged on December 10, when his detention is extended.

The new French revolution



On November 17, protests flare across France in opposition to rising fuel taxes and living costs, later swelling into a broad movement against the policies of the government of President Emmanuel Macron.

The "yellow vest" protests, named after the fluorescent safety jackets worn by demonstrators, come to a head with rioting and looting in Paris.

After the government backs down on the planned fuel tax, Macron on December 10 outlines other measures to calm the anger, including a boost to the minimum wage.

Fire of the year



In November, California is ravaged by its deadliest fire ever, with 85 people dying before it comes under control after two weeks.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization announces in November that 2018 is set to be the fourth hottest year on record.

The midterm fever



Midterm elections on November 6 saw the Democrats win control of the House of Representatives while the Republicans bolster their majority in the Senate. The last days of campaigning are rocked by the worst anti-Semitic attack in US history, when a gunman kills 11 people in a synagogue in Pittsburgh, and the mailing of pipe bombs to high-profile Democrats including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The Brazilian stab

On October 28, Latin America's biggest country swerves to the right in an election that sees former army captain Jair Bolsonaro elected as Brazil's new president. During a particularly virulent campaign animated by hate speeches and peppered with outbreaks of violence, Bolsonaro was stabbed in the belly at a rally in September.

The dissident Saudi

On October 2, dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a contributor to The Washington Post, enters his country's consulate in Istanbul and is never seen again.

After more than two weeks of denials and contradictory statements, Riyadh admits that he had been killed inside the consulate after a brawl. It fires various officials and arrests others, also acknowledging the journalist's body had been dismembered.

Thai cave rescue

There was a global sigh of relief on July 10 when the last of 12 young football players and their coach are extracted safe and sound from a flooded cave in northern Thailand where they had become trapped 17 days earlier. The fate of the junior football team had captured world attention, with US and British diving experts joining the rescue effort and former Thai navy diver losing his life.

The step up in Yemen war



On June 13, the war in Yemen steps up a notch when pro-government forces, supported by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, launch an assault to wrest back control of the vital aid port of Hodeida from Huthi rebels, backed by Iran.

The war, which started in 2014, has already killed about 10,000 people with 20 million at risk of starvation, according to aid agencies.

The two sides meet for UN-brokered peace talks in Sweden in early December.

Singapore summit

On June 12, Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meet in Singapore in the first-ever meeting between sitting leaders of the two countries.

They sign an agreement which reaffirms Pyongyang's commitment to the "complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula".

But so far North Korea has taken few concrete steps to abandon its nuclear weapons, and the two sides have sparred over the meaning of the vaguely worded agreement.

Jolt in Jerusalem

On May 14, the United States opens its new embassy in Jerusalem, infuriating the Palestinians -- who also claim the holy city as their capital -- and flouting years of international policy.

Clashes erupt on the border with Israel and the Palestinian territory of Gaza: after the bloodiest day in the dragging conflict in years, around 60 Palestinians are dead, killed by Israeli gunfire.

Iran: The Trump target



On May 8, President Donald Trump pulls the United States out of the hard-won 2015 accord that limits Iran's nuclear weapons programme in exchange for an easing of sanctions against the Islamic republic.

The "one-sided deal" does not go far enough in preventing Iran from creating a nuclear bomb, Trump says, among other criticisms.

The remaining parties to the accord -- Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China -- insist Iran has abided by its commitments and vow to keep the deal intact.

The syrian turmoil



On April 14, the Syrian army declares that all anti-regime forces have been forced out of the Eastern Ghouta area adjoining Damascus after a blistering two-month offensive that leaves more than 1,700 people dead.

It is a major victory in the government's effort to reassert control after the 2011 uprising that pulled the entire country into a devastating conflict.

The same day the United States, Britain and France carry out pre-dawn strikes against President Bashar al-Assad's regime in response to a suspected chemical attack on the Eastern Ghouta town of Douma that killed scores of civilians. The regime denies the allegations.

A YEAR OF LANDMARK JUDGMENTS

This year was a tumultuous one for a number of India's institutions. The year saw the country's biggest institutions, from the CBI to the RBI face a credibility crisis. But one institution proved rightfully why it has the word supreme in its name. The Supreme Court with its milestone judgments in several cases -- from granting the right to love freely to securing citizen's privacy, won citizen's hearts with its verdicts.

Here are some of the landmark judgments delivered in 2018:

Sabarimala verdict



The Sabarimala temple in Kerala, a shrine to Lord Ayappa, had an age-old tradition of not allowing women between the age of 10 and 50 years to enter the premises. The reason? The women, who fall in the menstruating age group, were considered to be "impure".

In a 4-1 majority decision, the Supreme Court on September 28, lifted the ban, which it termed as a violation of women's right to practice religion.

Top quotes: "In the theatre of life, it seems, man has put the autograph and there is no space for a woman even to put her signature", "Patriarchy in religion cannot be allowed to trump right to pray and practise religion" and "To treat women as children of lesser god is to blink at the Constitution."

Aadhaar verdict



A Supreme Court bench in September held the constitutional validity of the government's Aadhaar project. However, it set boundaries to the use of Aadhaar for verification -- Aadhaar can be used for payment of government benefits and taxation records but private companies were barred from accessing it. The judgment dealt a body blow to the government's ambitions to make the world's largest biometric project mandatory for a slew of services.

The landmark ruling sent banks, telecom operators and fintech companies -- who relied heavily on Aadhaar eKYC -- scrambling in search of other viable means of customer verification.

Top quotes: "Education took us from thumb impression to signature; technology has taken us from signature to thumb impression, again", "Dignity and rights of individuals cannot be based on algorithms or probabilities" and "Aadhaar gives dignity to the marginalised. Dignity to the marginalised outweighs privacy."

National anthem verdict

In January, the apex court modified a 2016 order which made playing the national anthem in movie theatres compulsory. By changing the word 'shall' to 'may', it decreed that the order was no longer mandatory. However, it clarified that should a movie hall choose to play the national anthem, it was compulsory for all moviegoers to stand up in respect unless exempted on account of disability.



Top quote: "The national anthem is a tool for the integration of India, regardless of the many castes and religions."

Section 377 verdict



Proving that love wins, the Supreme Court in a unanimous judgment repealed Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code -- the draconian law that criminalised same-sex relations as well as unnatural sex between consenting adults. The Supreme Court said due to Section 377, members of the LGBT community were forced to live in hiding, and as second-class citizens, while others enjoyed the right to sexual orientation. The landmark judgment held that sexual orientation was a biological phenomenon and not a mental disorder or something against the order of nature.

Top quotes: "The human instinct to love was caged by constraining the physical manifestation of their sexuality", "History owes an apology to members of the LGBTQ community" and "I am what I am, So take me as I am."

Euthanasia verdict



In a historic judgment, the Supreme Court in March broke new ground, giving legal sanction to the living will of patients by observing that "Right to refuse medical treatment and die with dignity is a fundamental right; and a part of the right to live, as guaranteed by the Constitution". The important observation came in a landmark verdict of a five-judge

constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra which recognised the right of a terminally ill patient to execute a "living will" to refuse medical treatment for dying with dignity.

Living will is a written document that allows a patient to give explicit instructions in advance about treatment to be administered when he or she is terminally ill or no longer able to express consent.

Top quotes: "Every human being of adult years and sound mind has a right to determine what shall be done with his own body...", "Life is seemingly lost and questions about our own mortality confront us in the twilight of existence" and "To deprive an individual of dignity towards the end of life is to deprive the individual of a meaningful existence."

Adultery verdict



Furthering its championing of women's rights, the apex court struck down Section 497, a 158-year-old law that considers adultery to be an offence committed by one man against another, and has been criticised for treating women as possessions rather than human beings. Adultery is no longer a crime, but it will continue to be grounds for divorce. The judgment was a landmark for championing women's sexual autonomy.

Top quotes: "It's time to say the husband is not the master of the woman", "A woman loses her voice, autonomy after entering marriage" and "Society ascribes impossible virtues to a woman and confines her to a narrow sphere of behaviour by an expectation of conformity."

The Rafale Deal



Questionable affidavits and documents were at the heart of the court's judgment refusing a probe into the Rafale deal. CJI Gogoi and two other judges held that the information submitted by the Centre in a sealed cover was sufficient to show that required procedures had been followed for the deal, and there was no need to look into its pricing or offset contract process.

In what was to become a fiasco that will only be resolved after the court resumes after its winter break on 2 January, the judges noted that the pricing of the deal had been reviewed by the CAG whose report had been submitted to the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament and was in the public domain. This had not in fact happened, and the Centre submitted an application saying the judges had misinterpreted the grammar of the statement in their confidential note. How the judges arrived at the position they did is a matter of mystery, as even if this misunderstanding had taken place, they should not have accepted this without some proof.

Source: India Today and Quint

EVENTS THAT SHOOK WORLD

The year gone by had its fair share of diplomatic drama, power struggles and back-room manoeuvring.

Imran Khan becomes 'captain' of Pakistan



Pakistan, perhaps for the first time, got a prime minister who has a strong name recall and brand value in India. Cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan became prime minister of Pakistan in August. Though it's a bit early to adequately judge Imran Khan's performance at the helm of Pakistan, he has vowed to build what he says will be a "naya Pakistan".



Putin, Xi consolidate power



Vladimir Putin reasserted his dominance in Russian politics as he was elected as president in elections concluded in September. Putin has been at the helm of Russian government either as a prime minister or president since the 2000s.

In China, Xi Jinping was re-elected as president. China's parliament not only elected Jinping but amended the constitution to remove presidential term limits. This, at least in theory, means that Xi Jinping can remain president indefinitely.

Jamal Khashoggi murder

Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent journalist and critic of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul (Turkey) on October 2. He was seen entering the consulate but never left. It is believed that he was killed inside the consulate and his body was dismembered. His body is yet to be found. For two weeks, Saudi Arabia denied having any knowledge but after global outrage and mounting pressure claimed that he was killed in a "rogue operation". Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president has claimed that orders to kill Khashoggi came from the "high levels" of Saudi government.

American exit from Iran nuclear deal

Donald Trump declared America's exit from the nuclear deal with Iran. The US had struck the deal with Iran in 2015 during Barack Obama's presidency. The deal has helped ease tension between the two countries. However, US's sudden exit



unravelling years of meticulous diplomacy.

Crisis in Sri Lanka

South Asian politics went into a tizzy in October as Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena sacked Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to end an increasingly uneasy alliance. The president then appointed Mahinda Rajapaksa as PM. Wickremesinghe deemed this to be unconstitutional and sought an emergency session of Parliament to prove his majority. President Sirisena responded by suspending the Parliament. Political uncertainty in Sri Lanka came at a time when it emerged as a key player in the tussle between India and China for dominance in the Indian Ocean region.



Kerala floods



A more-than-normal southwest monsoon in Kerala unleashed massive floods and landslides in the state. The state government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, with support from Opposition Congress, battled the calamity that was unprecedented in magnitude for nearly a century. It claimed almost 500 lives and displaced almost a million people. Even after 3 months of the disaster, the biggest challenge for the state has been to raise money for the relief and rehabilitation process as the Centre's allocation has been pretty measly.

Resignation of RBI Governor

Urjit Patel resigned as RBI Governor as the year drew to a close, amid a bitter dispute with the Centre over the Central Bank's autonomy. Bureaucrat Shaktikanta Das, who has a Masters in History, was appointed the new RBI Governor. The government had earlier invoked Section 7 of the RBI Act which sought to infringe on the autonomy of the institution. It has been widely speculated that the government was eyeing the RBI's surplus to bail it out in face of falling revenue

A year of disappointments, reflections and good news for India

collections. The new Governor will have to juggle the issues of loan restructuring and infusing liquidity.

First women fighter pilots

In February, 24-year-old Flight Lieutenant Avani Chaturvedi became the first woman in India to fly a fighter jet alone. The flying officer flew a MiG-21 Bison. Her maiden sortie lasted 30 minutes and put India on a global list of countries like USA, Israel and the UK which have women combat pilots. Mohana Singh and Bhawana Kanth complete the trio of India's first women fighter pilots.



Dipa Karmakar: Golden girl

In July 2018, Karmakar became the first Indian gymnast to win a gold medal at a global event, when she finished first in the vault

event of the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup at Mersin, Turkey. Karmakar is one of the only five women in the history of gymnastics who have successfully landed the Produnova, which is regarded as the most difficult vault currently performed in women's gymnastics.

31 satellites on single rocket

ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its forty second flight, successfully launched the 710 kg Cartosat-2 Series Remote Sensing Satellite along with 30 co-passenger satellites today (January 12, 2018) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. This flight was designated as PSLV-C40. Nearly a year before this launch, PSLV-C37, in the 39th mission of the Indian Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) successfully carried and deployed a record number of 104 satellites in sun-synchronous orbits. Launched on February 15, 2017, it broke the earlier record of launching 37 satellites by a Russian Dnepr rocket on June 19, 2014.

The #MeToo storm

#MeToo had its India moment in 2018 with many women coming out to accuse and name men who had harassed or sexually assaulted them. Several prominent media and



entertainment industry professionals were outed like Alok Nath, Nana Patekar, Sajid Khan, Subhash Ghai, Kailash Kher, Anu Malik, Vinod Dua, Prashant Jha, Suhel Seth, BJP leader MJ Akbar, author Chetan Bhagat among others. MJ Akbar had to resign from his ministry. The campaign spread like a wildfire after actor Tanushree Dutta accused Nana Patekar of sexually harassing her during a film shoot that had taken place ten years before. It is a good thing Indian women are finally outing harassers and sexual predators.

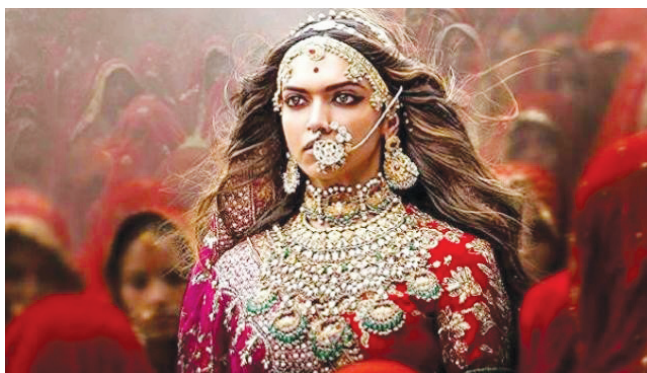
CONTROVERSIES THAT ROCKED INDIA IN 2018

It's a roller coaster ride being an Indian. We are fierce, emotional, efficient, not-so-much sometimes. But we like to ponder, imagine, argue even fight for what we think is right. This doesn't end well all the time and makes news for wrong reasons. As we prepare to welcome the year 2019, let's take a look at what hit headlines and even created controversies in 2018.

Well they don't happen only in India but controversies in our country surely are peculiar. There is no telling as to what will catch the fancy of this culturally, politically and emotionally diverse country of ours.

It is indeed a sign of a healthy society when debates arise. But sometimes they capture the imagination of the public to such an extent, the situation soon spirals into a controversy.

Padmaavat



The makers of the much-anticipated movie perhaps did not expect situation to escalate so quickly. In dock was portrayal of Queen Padmavati, played by Deepika Padukone. Several Rajput organisations launched agitations as they claimed that the movie brings "dishonour" to the mythical Rajput queen. Posters were burnt, property was destroyed, even threats were made to Deepika Padukone and director Sanjay Leela Bhansali. The furore prompted the filmmakers to edit 'controversial' scenes. Even a saree-clad Deepika Padukone's midriff had to be 'covered' using special effects. The movie released on January 25 and crossed the Rs 150-crore mark in eight days.

CBI vs CBI



This didn't have anything to do with a certain comedy serial but the hashtag reminded everyone of the hit series nonetheless. For the first time ever, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted raids inside its own headquarters on October 22. As details emerged, it became clear that raids were part of a feud between CBI Director Alok Verma and Special Director Rakesh Asthana. The war between the top two officers of India's premier investigative agency spilled out into the public domain so much that the government had to intervene to do damage control. Both the officers were sent on leave. An Art of Living workshop was carried out inside CBI headquarters after a few days.

Ram Mandir

This issue perhaps has a mention in every article covering top controversies for more than two decades. 2018 was no exception. A clamour for legislation to construct Ram mandir in Ayodhya grew as the year wore on. Political leaders, personalities like Baba Ramdev and even one of the litigants in the Babri Masjid case supported bringing in a law to build a



Ram mandir in Ayodhya. That Uttar Pradesh government decided to change the name of Faizabad district to Ayodhya did nothing to pacify supporters of the legislation. However, there were prominent voices who spoke in support of a Supreme Court decision to solve the issue. As we welcome the year 2019, no solution is in sight for the issue that has come to shape Indian politics.

Name changing spree



The cliched Shakespearian quote was seemingly taken to heart by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Mughalsarai station was renamed as Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction, Allahabad became Prayagraj, Faizabad district became Ayodhya district. Many proposals of name change were made across the country. One of them included renaming Shimla as Shyamala. It's only after CM Yogi Adityanath promised to rename Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar did the pace of the name changing spree appeared to slow down. Results of assembly elections in five states including Telangana were declared soon after the controversial statement.

National Register of Citizens (NRC)



Assam is only state in the country to have a National Register of Citizens (NRC). The first draft of NRC was released in December 2017. The first draft identified 1.9 crore people in Assam as Indian citizens. Assam's population is 3.2 crore. Panic and furore in equal doses rose from those excluded from

the list. Parties like Trinamool Congress warned of social unrest after exclusion of large number of people from the list. There were demands from within the BJP as well as other political parties across the country to undertake such an exercise in respective regions. The final draft of the NRC was released in July this year. The final draft recognised 2.89 crore people as Indian citizens as opposed to 1.9 crore in the first draft. However, the names of 40 lakh people are still missing from the NRC.

Triple Talaq



The practice of instant triple talaq has always been scoffed at, rightfully so, for being unfair to Muslim women. The Supreme Court in 2017 declared that the practice is unconstitutional. The court had asked Parliament to make a law against triple talaq.

The issue became contentious this year when the Modi government introduced a bill in Parliament that made instant triple talaq a criminal offence with three-year imprisonment. The bill was passed in the Lok Sabha but could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha.

Thereafter, the government issued an ordinance in September. A fresh bill was introduced in Lok Sabha and passed on December 27, even though the Opposition staged a walkout. The bill however faces hurdles in the Rajya Sabha where the NDA does not have a majority.

The bill came up for discussion on December 31, but House could not discuss it and the House was adjourned. The Opposition has been demanding that the bill should be sent to a select committee to deliberate it further.

Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi's bank loot

Diamond merchant Nirav Modi and his maternal uncle Mehul Choksi, a jeweller, duped Punjab National Bank to the tune of Rs 13,600 crore through fraudulent issue of LoUs and foreign letters of credit. PNB told the CBI said that the bank found out about the fraud in the third week of January. Both Modi and Choksi left India in the first week of January. Nirav Modi is in the UK where he has applied for asylum in June, 2018. Choksi became a citizen of Antigua and Barbuda. Both the fugitives were allegedly close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In one video that surfaced in the aftermath of the fraud, the PM is seen calling Choksi "Mehulbhai".



NOBEL LAUREATES 2018

This year 12 new laureates have been bestowed for achievements that have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind. Their work and discoveries range from cancer therapy and laser physics to developing proteins that can solve humankind's chemical problems. The work of the 2018 Nobel Laureates also included combating war crimes, as well as integrating innovation and climate with economic growth. So, let's have a look on who are 2018 Nobel laureates.

Chemistry

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2018 was divided, one half awarded to Frances H. Arnold "for the directed evolution of enzymes", the other half jointly to George P. Smith and Sir Gregory P. Winter "for the phage display of peptides and antibodies."

Physics

The Nobel Prize in Physics 2018 was awarded "for ground breaking inventions in the field of laser physics" with one half to Arthur Ashkin "for the optical tweezers and their application to biological systems" and the other half jointly to Gérard Mourou and Donna Strickland "for their method of generating high-intensity, ultra-short optical pulses".

Peace

Both laureates have made a crucial contribution to focusing attention on, and



Frances H. Arnold



George P. Smith



Gregory P. Winter



Arthur Ashkin



Gérard Mourou



Donna Strickland



Denis Mukwege



Nadia Murad



William D. Nordhaus



Paul M. Romer



James P. Allison



Tasuku Honjo

combating, war crimes. Denis Mukwege is the helper who has devoted his life to defending these victims. Nadia Murad is the witness who tells of the abuses perpetrated against herself and others. Each of them in their own way has helped to give greater visibility to war-time sexual violence, so that the perpetrators can be held accountable for their actions.

Economics

The Prize in Economic Sciences 2018 has been awarded to William D. Nordhaus "for integrating climate change into long-run macroeconomic analysis" and Paul M. Romer "for integrating technological innovations into long-run macroeconomic analysis." Their findings have significantly broadened the scope of economic analysis by constructing

models that explain how the market economy interacts with nature and knowledge.

Medicine

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2018 was awarded jointly to James P. Allison and Tasuku Honjo "for their discovery of cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation."

PM Modi once again India's top newsmaker, Taimur Ali Khan youngest entrant

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** was once again the top newsmaker in India in the year 2018, according to the Yahoo Year in Review list.

Modi has featured at the top of the list for at least a couple of years now and is followed this year by Congress president Rahul Gandhi.

Former Chief Justice of India **Dipak Misra** wrote his way into the list with third position after landmark verdicts on triple talaq and Article 377, among others, Yahoo said.

M J Akbar, who resigned as Minister of State for External Affairs after allegations of sexual harassment, also featured on the list at number 6, behind alleged economic fraudsters Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi.

The excitement surrounding Bollywood's biggest wedding ensured actors **Deepika Padukone** and **Ranveer Singh** were 'couple' newsmakers.

At under two years, **Taimur Ali Khan** was the youngest entrant to this list -- the son of Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan boasts a formidable following online.

Also joining the list was actress **Priya Prakash Varrier**, whose wink in the Malayalam film Oru Adaar Love "almost broke the Internet", the statement by Yahoo said.

"There was plenty of fake news swirling online in 2018. Did Modi really touch Owaisi's feet? (photoshopped!), Modi hires personal make-up artist for Rs 15 lakh a month (an old photo from when Madame Tussaud's took PM Modi's measurements) and Rahul Gandhi holds woman's hand on stage (taken before a large group lifted hands in solidarity at a Jan andolan rally)," the statement said listing out the top three fake news doing the rounds online during the year.

Year in Review (YIR) chronicles the top



choices of Internet users in India, spotlighting the newsmakers, stories and topics that went viral and were trending online during the year, the Yahoo statement said. It is based on users' search habits and a selection of what they read, recommended and shared most on Yahoo.

"Over the last decade, YIR has documented the growing empowerment of the country's online audience, seen in the expression and sharing of new ideas online. This year, the collective power of India's Internet users fuelled the watershed #MeTooIndia movement. India's #MeToo Survivors, who started a conversation with wide-reaching impact, are YIR's 2018 Personality of the year," it said.

The year saw several women taking to social media to share accounts of sexual harassment by men in positions of power. The movement crossed over to the mainstream, garnering huge support and

mobilizing every section of the media, it said.

The Karnataka election -- one of the most important events on this year's political calendar -- was the Most Searched for Term in 2018. A HuffPost India investigation into the hacking of the Aadhaar software came in at No. 2 on this list, sparking a nation-wide debate and trending online, it noted.

Scam-riddled **Vijay Mallya** and **Nirav Modi** also bagged spots on the list of Most Searched for Terms in 2018.

RBI governor **Urjit Patel** came in at the top of 2018's Finance Newsmakers, holding his own against the government. India's richest man and Reliance Industries Chairman **Mukesh Ambani** - whose wealth reportedly increased by Rs 300 crore per day in 2018 - came in second on this list. Brother Anil Ambani, Reliance Group Chairman, also features on the list for the Rafale deal controversy, Yahoo said.

"Users bid farewell to Bollywood actress Sridevi with an outpouring of grief and love online, making her one of the Most Searched for Female Celebrities in 2018. They also rooted for **Sonali Bendre**, who shared her fight against cancer online with #switchonthesunshine, putting her on the list," it said.

Sunny Leone was the Most Searched Female Celebrity yet again, with Priya Prakash Varrier coming in close to the top.

"**Salman Khan** proved he was the 'biggest boss,' as the Most Searched Male Celebrity of 2018," it said adding that American singer Nick Jonas was a close second as he zoomed up the list with his engagement to actress **Priyanka Chopra**.

"While staying loyal to Ranveer-Deepika, users also brought in newbies like actor Janhvi Kapoor, and Sara Ali Khan, besides Sprinter Hima Das into India's Top 10 heartthrobs of 2018," Yahoo said.

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO LEFT US IN 2018

2018 was a year where we lost some of India's top politicians, actors, and important personalities. These people made a huge impact on our lives and contributed aplenty in their respective fields.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee



Just a day after India's 71st Independence Day, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the former Prime Minister, passed away in New Delhi.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee served as the Prime Minister from 1998 to 2004. He will always be remembered for his work in some bold policies in India including privatisation, nuclearisation and most importantly his efforts towards Indo-Pak relations.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee played a key role in making Pokhran Nuclear Tests—India's secret exercise carried under the nose of America. He also led the two-day historic Agra summit between India and Pakistan.

Somnath Chatterjee



The country suffered a great loss with the demise of former Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee — who died on 14 August 2018 in Kolkata at the age of 89. Somnath Chatterjee served as the 10-time Member of Parliament and was defeated only once in 1984. He was also one of the longest-serving politicians in Parliament, who quit active politics in 2009.

Remembering his achievements and contribution in shaping Indian politics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Somnath Chatterjee 'stalwart of Indian politics'.

Sridevi



Sridevi, India's first female superstar and recipient of the country's fourth highest civilian award, the legendary actor breathed her last on 24, February 2018. She was found dead in a bathtub of her hotel room in Dubai.

The entire nation was shocked by her sudden death. However, the nature of death led to a lot of controversies. The autopsy report has cited 'accidental drowning' as the reason

behind her death and ruled out any foul play.

She had a fulfilling career that lasted for four decades. She is survived by two children, Jhanvi and Khushi. Jhanvi debuted in the Indian film industry with her film Dhadak. Her husband, Boney Kapoor, is a Bollywood producer.

Sridevi last did a cameo in the recently released movie 'Zero', also starring Shahrukh Khan, Katrina Kaif and Anushka Sharma.

Chandni, Mr. India, and English-Vinglish are some of her most-remembered roles.

Ajit Wadekar



Former captain of the Indian cricket team rose to fame after defeating West Indies in 1971. He passed away at Mumbai's Jaslok Hospital on August 15 after a prolonged illness. In his career spanning over 16 years, he played 37 tests for India and scored 2,113 runs.

Ajit Wadekar, also known as the 'aggressive batsman' marked his entry into International cricket in 1966. He led Indian cricket to witness remarkable victories including test series against England.

Ananth Kumar

The Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs died at the age of 59 because of cancer on 12 November 2018.

Ananth Kumar was one of the few BJP leaders who served as cabinet minister for both Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the Narendra Modi. He monitored the mid-launch of Goods and Service Tax (GST).

He became the youngest minister in the cabinet of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998. Apart from this, he served several ministries in India including civil aviation, tourism, sports, urban development, and parliamentary affairs.

He was among the few politicians who helped BJP gain traction in South India.

Anthony Bourdain



Famed American chef, author and Parts Unknown host Anthony Bourdain, died at the age of 61 on June 8.

Bourdain took his own life in a hotel room in Kaysersberg. He was found unresponsive by his close friend and French chef, Eric Ripert.

French prosecutor Christian de Rocquigny revealed there were no traces of narcotics, medication or alcohol in his system. Thousands took to social media to share their memories with Bourdain. Many added on with local suicide prevention lines, urging supporters to seek help when necessary.

Stan Lee

Stan Lee, the legendary comic book creator of some of



Marvel's most iconic heroes, including Spiderman, The Incredible Hulk and Iron Man, died on Nov. 12 at the age of 95.

Lee inspired the likes of millions throughout his life by interacting with his fans and treating them as if they were his own close friends.

He was a kindhearted man and cared deeply for those who supported and surrounded him.

Lee faced many underlying health issues during a difficult battle with pneumonia. He was rushed to the hospital in the morning and died shortly after suffering cardiac arrest.

Mac Miller

American rapper and record producer Mac Miller (born Malcolm James McCormick) died on Sept. 7 at the age of 26.

He was found unresponsive at his San Fernando Valley home by a friend and was pronounced dead at the scene by local authorities.

Miller's cause of death was declared an accidental drug overdose. In November, the L.A. County Coroners Office released a toxicology report, revealing that a combination of cocaine, fentanyl and alcohol were found in his system.



Stephen Hawking

The best-known theoretical physicist and author of our time, Stephen Hawking, died at the age of 76 on March 14.

He lived with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) for more than 55 years before it eventually took his life. According to his family, he died peacefully at his home in Cambridge, England.

Hawking was diagnosed with ALS at the age of 21 and led a very successful life even with the malicious disease's presence. The world was struck with grief after the loss of such a great mind.

Aretha Franklin

Aretha Franklin, the American Queen of Soul, passed away in August. She was 76 years old.

She was known and loved for 1960 classics such as I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You) and Respect.

A pancreatic neuroendocrine tumour took her life on Aug. 16. She died in her home with close friends and family by her side. She struggled with her health starting in 2010 when she was diagnosed with cancer.

Burt Reynolds

Legendary '70s and '80s Hollywood actor, Burt Reynolds, died at age 82 on Sept. 6. He was known for his roles in films such as: Deliverance (1972), The Longest Yard (1974) and the world-renowned action/comedy, Smokey and the Bandit (1977).

Hollywood stars took to Twitter to share their memories of Reynolds and how he paved the way forward for their own careers.

TOP NEWS STORIES OF 2018

The mass shooting at a Parkland, Florida, high school — which killed 17 students and staff, and sparked nationwide student-led marches for gun control — was the top news story of 2018, according to The Associated Press' annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors.

The No. 2 story was the investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller into whether Donald Trump's election campaign coordinated with Russia. It was one of several major stories — in a year jam-packed with dramatic developments — in which the U.S. president played a role.

A year ago, the surge of #MeToo sexual misconduct allegations that toppled many powerful men was voted the top news story of 2017. The continuing momentum of #MeToo in 2018 was this year's No. 3 story.

The first AP top-stories poll was conducted in 1936, when editors chose the abdication of Britain's King Edward VIII.

Here are 2018's top 10 stories, in order:

Parkland school shooting

It happened on Valentine's Day — an act of senseless hate by a gunman with a semi-automatic rifle who killed 14 students and three staff members at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Previous mass shootings had prompted passionate calls for tighter gun-control laws, but this time was different. A group of student survivors at the school, soon joined by allies nationwide, launched the March for Our Lives movement that organized massive walkouts and peaceful protests at schools across the country. The movement remains active, and has helped energize the broader campaign for tougher gun laws.

Trump-Russia probe

Throughout 2018, Mueller's team investigated whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia ahead of the 2016 election and whether the president obstructed the investigation. The evidence so far shows a broad range of Trump associates had Russia-related contacts during the campaign and transition period; some former Trump aides have been indicted for lying. In a separate case in New York, prosecutors say Trump directed his personal lawyer Michael Cohen to make illegal hush money payments to two women in a bid to quash potential sex scandals during the campaign.

MeToo

The #MeToo movement, which surfaced late in 2017, maintained its momentum throughout 2018 as many more powerful men were forced to account for past instances of sexual assault and misconduct. Once-revered comedian Bill Cosby was sentenced to prison; so was Larry Nassar, the former Michigan State and USA Gymnastics sports doctor convicted of molesting hundreds of young women. Disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein was charged with rape. And Les Moonves was ousted as top executive at CBS after a dozen women accused him of sexual misconduct.

Mass shootings

When a Marine combat veteran shot dead 12 people at a country music bar in California in November, it was a grim "Not again" moment for many Americans — the fifth mass shooting of the year in the U.S. that produced nationwide shock and sorrow. In May, two months after the Parkland shooting, eight students and two teachers were killed at a high school in Santa Fe, Texas. In June, a gunman shot dead five



employees at the Capital Gazette newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland. And in October, 11 people were killed at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh during Shabbat morning services.

U.S. immigration

Events along the U.S.-Mexico border produced yearlong drama and controversy. At the height of the midterm election campaign, President Trump deployed thousands of Army troops to the border, warning of threats from a caravan of migrants who'd journeyed from Central America. Earlier, a zero-tolerance order from Trump resulted in more than 2,500 migrant children being separated from their families. The practice sparked global outrage from politicians, humanitarians and religious groups; images of weeping children and anguished parents were splashed across newspapers and television.

Kavanaugh hearings

Trump nominee Brett Kavanaugh was narrowly confirmed to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court after explosive Senate hearings on allegations of sexual harassment and assault stemming from his high school and college years. While millions of Americans watched on TV, senators heard testimony from Kavanaugh, who denied any wrongdoing, and accuser Christine Blasey Ford, who said he attempted to rape her during a party when they were in high school. Kavanaugh's presence on the high court gives its conservative bloc a 5-4 majority.

Climate change

Worsening natural disasters around the world intensified the focus on climate change; delegates at a global summit in Poland negotiated an agreement on the next steps to minimize harm. In the U.S., a government report warned of devastating impact, prompting pushback by President Trump.

Source: AP

POLITICAL EVENTS THAT MADE HEADLINES IN INDIA

The year 2018 will be remembered for political slugfest and controversies, with two top parties taking on each other in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections 2019. While the Narendra Modi government came under direct attack from the Opposition for the Rafale jet deal and the snooping row, Congress president Rahul Gandhi has emerged as a matured, more credible leader after his party's victories in the assembly polls held recently. Here are top political events of 2018:

Congress' surge

The defeats in the Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh assembly elections, results of which were declared on December 11, turned out to be the biggest setbacks for the BJP ever since the Narendra Modi government came to power at Centre in 2014. Interestingly, exactly a year back, Rahul Gandhi was appointed as Congress president on December 11, 2017. In the two-phase polls on November 12 and November 20, the Congress romped home to power in Chhattisgarh after 15 years with a two-third majority, winning 68 seats in the 90-member House. The BJP, in power in the state since 2003, was reduced to 15 seats. In Madhya Pradesh, the party won 114 seats in the 230-member House. It has secured support of a total of 121 MLAs, including SP - 1 and BSP - 2 legislators as also of four independents, to cross the majority mark of 116 seats. In Rajasthan, the Congress went from 21 seats against the BJP's 163 in 2013 to getting 99 seats (plus one of the Rashtriya Lok Dal) in the assembly elections. Bhupesh Baghel, Kamal Nath and Ashok Gehlot became chief ministers in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively. However, the Congress suffered a defeat in Mizoram as its chief minister Lal Thanhawla lost both the seats he had contested. The Mizo National Front (MNF) returned to power after a gap of 10 years by defeating the Congress in its last bastion in the northeast with a lead of 26 seats. In the southern state Telangana, K Chandrashekhara Rao, popularly known as KCR, established his supremacy. His TRS had won a whopping 88 seats, way more than the 59 it needs for a majority in the 119-member assembly.

End of 'Sarkar' raj in Tripura

The biggest nightmare for the Left this year came in March when the BJP-IPFT alliance scripted history by securing a majority in the Tripura Assembly, marking the end of 25-year long reign of Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the state. The BJP won 36 seats on its own, while its ally, the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), was victorious in 8 constituencies. Surprisingly, the CPI (M) only bagged 16 seats in total. The Left front party had won 50 out of the 60 Assembly constituencies in the state in 2013. The secured 43 per cent vote share, which was less than two per cent votes in the 2013 Assembly election in the state. Its ally IPFT, which fielded candidates in nine seats, got nearly 8 per cent votes. The CPI (M), on the other hand, saw a little over 42 per cent voting in its favour. The Congress has not won a single seat in the state. Relatively new in politics, Biplab Kumar Deb, 46, became the Chief Minister.

10 agencies can now 'spy' your computer

In December, the Union Home Ministry

While the Modi government came under direct attack for Rafale jet deal and snooping row, Rahul Gandhi emerged as a matured, more credible leader



authorised central agencies to intercept, monitor, and decrypt "any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer". The move created a political storm with the opposition parties decrying it as unconstitutional, undemocratic and an assault on fundamental rights. The issue rocked Rajya Sabha as Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad alleged that "undeclared Emergency has taken final shape" and "all federal agencies have been let loose". According to the order, the subscriber or service provider or any person in charge of the computer resource will be bound to extend all facilities and technical assistance to the agencies. Failing to do so will invite a seven-year imprisonment and a fine. The central agencies authorised to the government are Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency, Cabinet Secretariat (R&AW), Directorate of Signal Intelligence (for service areas of Jammu & Kashmir, Northeast and Assam only) and Commissioner of Police, Delhi.

Union Minister Arun Jaitley hit back saying the Congress was crying foul over powers

created by it when it was in government, adding that the opposition parties were playing with the national security and "making a mountain where even a molehill doesn't exist".

J&K political turmoil

In June, Jammu and Kashmir was pushed into a major political crisis on after the BJP suddenly pulled out of the ruling combine with the PDP, bringing down Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's 27-month-old government amid surging violence in the state. The decision, which surprised the Mufti-led Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and came days after the central government decided not to extend the Ramadan ceasefire, made another round of Governor's Rule imminent in the state where no political group or alliance won enough seats in the December 2014 elections to form a government on its own. Mehbooba Mufti resigned as the Chief Minister immediately after BJP announced its decision in a televised news conference. On November 21, Governor Satya Pal Malik dissolved the 87-member state assembly after the PDP, supported by the Congress and their arch rivals National Conference, had staked claim to form the government.



Simultaneously, the two-member People's Conference led by Sajjad Lone had also staked claim to form a government with 25 members of the BJP and other 18 unknown members. The governor had dissolved the assembly citing horse-trading and lack of stability to form a government as the reasons. On December 20, after completion of six months of Governor's rule, the state came under President's rule from midnight paving the way for the Union cabinet to take all policy decisions related to the militancy-hit state.

Rahul Gandhi's 'jaadu ki jhappi'

He is known for his hugs, but this was one hug Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not expecting. After a no-holds barred and scathing criticism of Modi on several issues, including Rafale jet deal on June 20, Congress president Rahul Gandhi walked across the green-carpeted well of Lok Sabha to Modi and hugged him, a gesture which took the Treasury Bench members by surprise. Gandhi's unexpected gesture, which quickly became a favoured video clip for television channels, came during a debate on no-confidence motion moved by the TDP against the Modi government during the Monsoon Session. Gandhi's speech was frequently disrupted and prompting Speaker Sumitra Mahajan to adjourn the House for 15 minutes. When he resumed his speech, Gandhi continued his attack. Just before wrapping up, he strode over to Modi for the now-famous hug.

'Mahagathbandhan' in the making

Karnataka saw attempts at coming together of "like-minded secular parties" against the BJP-led NDA ahead of the Lok Sabha polls next year, with top opposition leaders attending the swearing-in ceremony of the new Congress-JDS coalition chief minister H D Kumaraswamy. After the elections threw up a hung assembly, the Congress and JDS stitched together a post-poll alliance to clinch power. From Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan to West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee, chief ministers of the few states that are yet to have a BJP dispensation in power joined hands with leaders of former UPA, and Third Front constituents like the NCP and CPI(M). However, the Congress's strategy to stitch a Grand Alliance appears to be farfetched one. Despite the Congress's decent show in Assembly elections, Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav are not ready to form an alliance with Rahul Gandhi's party. In fact, in a big blow to Rahul's grand alliance dreams, the Samajwadi Party chief said his party would go for a Congress-less alliance in Uttar Pradesh. Yadav's big statement came a day after the Congress didn't induct Samajwadi Party's sole MLA in the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet.

DEADLY DISASTERS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD IN 2018

Indonesia: Earthquake and Tsunami | Death toll: 2783

The biggest and deadliest disaster of 2018, the twin quake-tsunami in Indonesia's Sulawesi island claimed more than 2700 dead and 10,000+ injured. The coastal city of Palu bore the maximum brunt of the 7.5-magnitude quake that struck on September 28. The earthquake was followed by a tsunami, with waves as high as three metres (9.8 feet). Strong aftershocks, with some measuring 6.1 continued for the next few days. Rescue operations were stunted for a long time with agencies trying to access remote and cut-off locations for days. Millions of houses, residential and commercial buildings were damaged with survivors being forced to live in shelters and tents.

Indonesia Anak Krakatau Volcano | Death toll: 430+

Indonesia, which suffered its worst annual death toll from disasters in 2018 in more than a decade, suffered another natural calamity this Christmas season. The Saturday evening tsunami of December 23 followed after Anak Krakatau volcano erupted. Rescue teams are still struggling to reach remote areas on the western coast of Java after the tsunami killed more than 400 people last week. The island nation sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire", the world's most tectonically active region, and its 260 million people remain hugely vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions.

Guatemala Volcanic Eruption | Death toll: 425

Guatemalan authorities reacted slowly to signs of the Fuego volcano's impending eruption on June 3, contributing to one of the most tragic natural disasters in recent Guatemalan history. Over 400 died, several still buried under the rubbles in the distant hamlet villages on the fertile lower slopes of the volcano. Fuego - Spanish for "fire" - rises between the regions of Sacatepequez, Escuintla and Chimaltenango about 30 miles (50 km) from Guatemala City, the nation's capital.

Algerian plane crash Death toll: 257

An Ilyushin Il-76 military transport aircraft of the Algerian Air Force crashed shortly after take-off from Algeria's Boufarik Airport on April 11, 2018. All 257 people onboard were killed, making it the deadliest aviation accident on Algerian soil.

Japan Floods - Death toll: 225

Torrential rainfall and flooding in southern and southwestern Japan led to the death of more than 200, primarily due to mudslides, landslides and vehicles being swept away by the flood waters. Few persons are missing till date.

Nigeria Floods - Death toll: 200

Nigeria declared a national disaster after 100 died in floods across central and southern Nigeria in September. Within three weeks, the death toll reached 200. Following weeks of rainfall and flood, thousands were displaced, the country's emergency response agency, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Lion Air Flight 610 - Death toll: 189

Indonesian passenger flight Lion Air flight JT610 crashed into the sea killing all on-board. The flight lost contact 13 minutes after takeoff from Jakarta. All 189 people, including 181 passengers, two pilots and six crew members, on board the ill-fated aircraft are feared to have died.

Pakistan Heat Wave | Death toll: 180

An intense heatwave killed at least 180 in Pakistan's southern city Karachi and nearby areas. The heatwave struck during the holy month of Ramadan when many were fasting.

California wildfire | Death toll: 85+

The deadliest wildfire in California killed at least 85 people and injured thousands. Millions of homes and properties were destroyed as authorities struggled to contain more than 8,500 fires. The Camp Fire that started on November 8 destroyed nearly 14,000 homes and burned nearly 154,000 acres (62,000



hectares) - an area five times the size of San Francisco.

Kerala floods | Death toll: 483

From 9 August 2018, severe floods affected the south Indian state of Kerala, due to unusually high rainfall during the monsoon season.

It was the worst flood in Kerala in nearly a century. Over 483

people died, and 14 are missing. About a million people were evacuated, mainly from Chengannur, Pandanad, Edanad, Aranmula, Kozhencherry, Ayiroor, Ranni, Pandalam, Kuttanad, Malappuram, Aluva, Chalakudy, Thiruvalla, Eraviperor, Vallamkulam, N.Paravur, Chendamangalam, Eloor and few places in Vypin Island and Palakkad. All 14 districts of the state were placed on red alert.

VIRAT KOHLI CONTINUES TO RULE

India defeated Australia by 137 runs in the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne to conclude the year on a high. This is for the second time that India have won more than one Test in a series Down Under. They earlier won two Tests in 1978. Apart from India's recent dominance on overseas tours, concluding year 2018 also witnessed many feats achieved by the team and the individuals. Captain Virat Kohli became the top-ranked batsman in the ICC Test rankings, replacing banned Australian batsman Steve Smith in 2018. The right-handed batsman also regained the number one ODI rank with 1,202 runs in 14 matches at an average of 133.55. On the women's front, Smriti Mandhana was on a high, being named the ICC Woman Cricketer of the Year and the ICC Woman ODI Player of 2018. Smriti Mandhana was also included in the ICC ODI and T20I squads, while Harmanpreet Kaur was named skipper of the T20I outfit. Poonam Yadav also named in both squads.

The Indian men's skipper Virat Kohli's rise to the top spot in Tests came after Smith was given a one-year ban by the Cricket Australia for his involvement in the infamous ball-tampering scandal in a Test in South Africa in March this year.

Virat Kohli made the best of the opportunity and amassed 200 runs in successive innings of the first Test against England in Edgbaston to claim the number one rank in August. With this, he became the first Indian batsman to gain the top spot in Tests since legendary



Sachin Tendulkar in 2011.

This made a perfect equation for cricket fanatics as Kohli reached the pinnacle at the back of India maintaining the number one rank in the ICC Test team rankings.

Not just the longest format, King Kohli continued to rule the shorter formats as well. Having turned 30 in November, the Delhi-born batsman became the only Indian batsman to score three consecutive hundreds and tenth in world cricket.

Kohli's three consecutive centuries came in

a five-match ODI series against the Windies that India won 3-1 in November. This marked to be his fourth successive ODI ton in India. South Africa's batting great AB de Villiers, who retired from international cricket in August, is the only other batsman to achieve this rare feat. With 2,735 runs in 37 international matches, Kohli smashed 11 hundreds in 2018, six in ODIs and five in Tests.

In December, India defeated Australia by 31 runs in Adelaide to register their first Test triumph Down Under in 10 years and first ever

in an opening match of a Test series in Australia. Thanks to that, Kohli became the first Asian captain to win Test matches in England, Australia and South Africa in a calendar year.

While Kohli led India from the front throughout the year, bowlers' contribution was no less impressive in their improved overseas show. The pace battery, comprising Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav, became more lethal than ever.

Spinners Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja continued to deceive the best of the world batsmen with their twists and turns.

In 2018, Indian bowlers claimed 257 Test wickets, the highest ever for the national team in a calendar year. With 48 wickets in his debut Test year, in nine matches and all away from home, Jasprit Bumrah became the highest wicket-taking fast bowler in a debut Test season.

Besides Bumrah, Ishant and Shami also impressed with the cherry on India's overseas tour in the calendar year. Ishant picked up 40 wickets while Shami took 46 wickets to break a 34-year-old record with Bumrah.

Bumrah, Ishant and Shami collected 134 wickets in away Tests in 2018 and surpassed the tally of former Windies trio of Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding and Joel Garner, who claimed 130 wickets collectively in away tours in 1984.

It has been a dramatic year for sports. Like the previous years, there have been epoch-making events, feats of individual brilliance, moments of sheer madness and also unwanted controversies. As the year comes to a close, Outlook revisits some of the unforgettable events and moments from the world of sports which made headlines, starting with France's World Cup triumph in Russia.

'Black, Blanc, Beur'



In a World Cup year, football always dominates. No other sport come close to football, in every sense – the importance, the popularity, et al. This simple ball game has been arguably the strongest unifying force in a divisive world. That's why France's win in Russia will be remembered for ages as a triumph of brotherhood rather than a nation claiming the biggest prize in world sport.

End Of Messi-Ronaldo Duopoly



Continuing with Russia World Cup, the video assistant referee (VAR) emerged as the unlikely 'hero' playing a decisive part in many games. Then, a certain Luka Modric, who

BEST AND WORST OF SPORTS

went on to end the Lionel Messi-Cristiano Ronaldo duopoly in the 'world's best player' fight by winning both the FIFA Best and Ballon d'Or awards, enthralled everyone with his selfless plays.

Game Of The Century

Despite the hype surrounding the many glorified leagues and rivalries, the Copa Libertadores final between two Argentinean clubs became probably the second most important match after the World Cup final.

Hailed as 'The Game of the Century', the final witnessed a never before seen frenzy in football-crazed Argentina. The second leg was moved thousands of miles away to Spain after fan troubles. River Plate beat Boca Juniors to win South America's biggest club trophy.

Dream Debut For Shaw



The year also witnessed the graduation of prodigious Prithvi Shaw. The teen-sensation became the youngest Indian score a century on Test debut during the first match against the Windies. The match also marked India's 100th Test win at home.

James Anderson - The Most Successful Pacer In Test

During England-India series, James Anderson took five wickets at The Oval which took him past Australia great Glenn McGrath as the most successful pacer in Test cricket. Now, he is only behind the spin trio of Muttiah Muralitharan, Shane Warne and Anil Kumble. The Oval Test was England opener

Alastair Cook's final international match. The series started with England playing their 1000th Test.

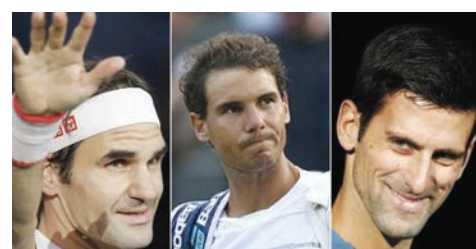
Polishing With Sandpaper



But what shook the sport was the ball-tampering scandal which resulted in the banning of Australian trio, including two of world's best batsmen in Steve Smith and David Warner, and Cameron Bancroft.

In the never-ending list of expressions suffixed with 'gate', a new word 'Sandpapergate' found its entry into sporting lexicon when Aussie captain Smith, his deputy Warner and batsman Bancroft were found guilty of using a yellow abrasive tap to change the condition of the ball during a Test match against South Africa at Cape Town.

Old Guard Stood Firm



Despite the arrival of hosts insanely talented players, the old guard remained firm in their bid to extend their collective rule in the tennis firmament. The year started with

Roger Federer defending the Australian Open title. It was followed by Rafael Nadal winning his 11th French Open title, before Novak Djokovic capture both the Wimbledon and the US Open crowns. And they finished the year as the top three players in the ATP year-end ranking, in the reverse order.

Mother Of All Outbursts



But tennis witnessed possibly its worst crisis when legendary American Serena Williams confronted the chair umpire Carlos Ramos, calling him a liar, during her US Open women's final defeat to Naomi Osaka of Japan. Williams' outburst at the Flushing Meadows threatened to jeopardise the sport's future.

India's Giant Strides In Olympics Sports

In the field, India continued to make massive progress. India won a total of 66 medals to finish third in the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. Performances of Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, shooter Anish Bhanwala, boxer Mary Kom, paddler Manika Batra, quarter-miler Anas Yahiya, lifter Mirabai Chanu were the highlights of the event. There was also the thrilling Saina Nehwal-PV Sindhu final. At the Asiad, India recorded its best-ever haul with 69 medals. There were many firsts for India, but Chopra's throw of 88.06m to win gold was the high point. Vinesh Phogat became the first Indian female wrestler to win gold. Manjit Singh and Jinson Johnson finished achieved the rare feat of finishing 1-2 in men's 800m while Hima Das broke the national record in women's 400m. Tajinderpal Singh Toor created a new Games record in men's shot put. And young shooters hit the bullseyes.

Source: Outlook

Indian American Police Officer's killer arrested



The suspect is identified as 33-year-old Gustavo Perez Arriaga

NEW YORK (TIP): A Mexican man was arrested for allegedly killing Indian-origin police officer Corporal Ronil Singh in California's Newman County, when he was planning to flee to his native Mexico, police said.

The suspect, identified as 33-year-old Gustavo Perez Arriaga, was living illegally and arrested from a home in the Kern County, about 200 miles south from the place of the shooting, Stanislaus County Sheriff Adam Christianson was quoted as saying in the CNN.

Corporal Ronil Singh was shot and killed while conducting a vehicle stop at the intersection of Merced Street and Eucalyptus Avenue shortly before 1:00 am on December 26.

33-year-old Singh had served with the Newman Police Department for seven years. Newman is located in Stanislaus County in central California, east of San Jose. He had previously served with the Merced County Sheriff's Office and the Turlock Police Department.

Donald Trump says Democrats' impeachment talk is 2020 ploy

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump pushed back Friday against some Democrats' calls to impeach him, saying they're only seeking impeachment because they know they can't win the White House in 2020.

"How do you impeach a president who has won perhaps the greatest election of all time, done nothing wrong" and has had the "most successful two years of any president," Trump tweeted. He said he is 'the most popular Republican in party history.'

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been cautious about whether her new Democratic majority would ever impeach Trump, but at least two of her members are ready to move forward. California Rep. Brad Sherman and Texas Rep. Al Green introduced articles of impeachment against Trump on Thursday, the first day of the new Congress.

Sherman and Green pushed to impeach Trump in 2017 and 2018 but the House blocked those resolutions twice, with the help of Democrats who said the effort was premature. Pelosi hasn't ruled out impeachment but has called it a "divisive activity" that needs support from both parties.

She and House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., have said they want to wait for the outcome of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and contacts with the Trump campaign.

Trump said his campaign did not collude with Russia. (AP)

Trump-Imran summit proposal being discussed: Pak official

ISLAMABAD / WASHINGTON (TIP) Pakistan and the US are discussing plans to hold a maiden meeting between Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Donald Trump, but it hinges on the "positive outcome" of the Pakistan-brokered talks to strike a peace deal in Afghanistan, a senior official said in Islamabad.

In his first comments in 2019, President Trump on Wednesday, January 3 said that he wants a "great relationship" with Pakistan and is looking forward to meeting the new leadership.

"The proposal for a summit meeting is being discussed but the final decision hinges on the positive outcome of the ongoing efforts to strike a peace deal in Afghanistan," a senior Pakistani official was quoted as saying by The Express Tribune.

Khan, who took over as the Prime Minister in August, is likely to travel to the US if "all goes well", the official said on the condition of anonymity.

Trump told his Cabinet colleagues on Wednesday that Pakistan has not been fair to the United States.

"We want to have a great relationship with Pakistan, but they house the enemy. They take care of the enemy. We just can't do that," Trump said. "So, I look forward to meeting with the new leadership in Pakistan. We will be doing that in the not too distant future. But I ended USD 1.3 billion that we paid. I think it was water; we were just paying to Pakistan. So, I ended that."

When asked to comment on the Trump's statement and whether there was any chance of the meeting between the two leaders,



President Trump and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will be meeting for the first time in case the proposal materializes



Foreign Office spokesperson Muhammad Faisal said Pakistan looked forward to "positive engagement" with the US at the leadership level.

"President Trump's remarks are indeed a departure from his tweet of January 1, 2018," Faisal told a weekly news briefing.

Trump blasted Pakistan in his first tweet of 2018, saying its leaders have given the US "nothing but lies & deceit."

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" he added, he had tweeted.

The positive vibes coming from the White House are attributed to the recent push for seeking a peace deal in Afghanistan. Pakistan recently brokered direct talks between the Afghan Taliban and the US in the UAE.

The next round is expected in Saudi Arabia, which suggests a positive movement of the talks. "If the process moves forward in

positive direction, certainly there is a possibility of engagement between Pakistan and the US at the highest level," another official said.

Some sources said that the proposal for the Khan-Trump meeting first came from Pakistan.

Officials here believe that engagement at the highest level could help reduce the trust deficit between the two countries.

Ties between the US and Pakistan strained after Trump, while announcing his Afghanistan and South Asia policy in August 2017, hit out at Pakistan for providing safe havens to "agents of chaos" that kill Americans in Afghanistan and warned Islamabad that it has "much to lose" by harboring terrorists.

In November, The US suspended USD 1.66 billion in security assistance to Pakistan and in September, the Trump administration cancelled USD 300 million in military aid to Islamabad for not doing enough against terror groups like the Haqqani Network and the Taliban active on its soil. (Source: PTI)

Ford recalls nearly 1 million vehicles over exploding Takata air bags

WASHINGTON (TIP): Ford is recalling more than 953,000 vehicles worldwide to replace Takata passenger air bag inflators that can explode and hurl shrapnel. That includes 782,000 vehicles in the U.S. and is part of the largest series of recalls in U.S. history.

The recall is for the following vehicles:

- 2010 Ford Edge and Lincoln MKX vehicles built at Oakville Assembly Plant, Nov. 28, 2008 to July 12, 2010
- 2010 and 2011 Ford Ranger built at Twin Cities, Aug. 14, 2008 to June 21, 2014
- 2010 to 2012 Ford Fusion, the 2010 to 2012 Lincoln MKZ and the 2010 and 2011 Mercury Milan built at Hermosillo Assembly Plant, July 3, 2008 to July 29, 2012
- 2010 to 2014 Ford Mustang built at Flat Rock Assembly Plant, June 8, 2009 to Dec. 16, 2011

At least 23 people have been killed worldwide by the inflators.

Ford says it doesn't know of any injuries in vehicles included in this recall. Dealers will replace the inflators. Ford owners with questions about the Takata airbag recall can look up their vehicles and get other information at the automaker's recall site.

Takata uses the chemical ammonium nitrate to create an explosion to inflate air bags. But it can deteriorate over time due to heat and humidity and explode with too much force, blowing apart a metal canister designed to contain the explosion.

Roughly 37 million vehicles are equipped with approximately 50 million potentially defective Takata air bags. The ongoing recall is occurring in stages through 2020, with the vehicles most likely to be at the most risk of experiencing an explosive air bag failure being recalled first.

Separately, Ford said it is issuing a recall on fewer than 100 of its 2019 EcoSport vehicles for "insufficient front seat back weld." The issue means some seat backs may not meet seat-back strength requirements, which could increase the risk of injury in a crash.

That recall covers about 87 EcoSport vehicles, including 63 in the U.S. and 13 in Canada.



'The wall is coming', Trump uses GOT-inspired photo on Mexico wall

WASHINGTON (TIP): "The wall is coming", this was US President Donald Trump's message on his Instagram post Thursday, which came two months after his similar post in which he had warned that "sanctions are coming".

Taking a cue from show's iconic line, 'Winter is coming', Trump used a Game of Thrones meme which saw his face positioned above the border barrier and used the font from the HBO-show's title.

Trump made the wall – a project estimated to cost about \$23 billion – a key campaign promise in 2016, saying Mexico would pay for it and arguing it is needed to combat illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

Interestingly, the post was shared on the same day Nancy Pelosi was elected Speaker of the US House of Representatives and had completely ignored Trump's demand for \$5 billion for a border wall.

About two months back, the US President had shared a GOT inspired parody poster of himself to make an announcement about sanctions on Iran. The message came after the Trump administration announced it would reinstate sanctions on Iran removed under the 2015 nuclear deal. (AP)

Federal judge extends Mueller grand jury by up to another six months

WASHINGTON (TIP): A federal judge has extended by up to six months the authorization for a grand jury that is being used by special counsel Robert Mueller to conduct his investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and related issues, according to a CNN report.

The chief judge of U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. has allowed the grand jury to continue sitting until early July.

The grand jury's term was set to expire Sunday, January 6.

That original 18-month authorization for the grand jury designated "17-1," which began sitting in July 2017, was set to expire Sunday.

"I can confirm that grand jury 17-1 has been extended, can continue to sit," said Lisa Klem, administrative assistant to Judge Beryl Howell, chief judge of U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C.

Under federal rules, a grand jury can serve no longer than 18 months unless the chief judge extends its service by a period of six months or less "upon determination that such extension is in the public interest."

That grand jury's work of reviewing



Robert Mueller

CNN Screenshot

evidence and hearing testimony from witnesses has led to multiple criminal cases against people connected to Trump, as well as to indictments against Russian nationals accused to interfering in the election and U.S. political processes.

Mueller is continuing to probe possible

collusion by Trump's campaign with Russians, and also is investigating possible obstruction of justice by the president.

Trump has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing. And to date, the special counsel has not charged anyone in Trump's orbit with crimes related to foreign interference in the presidential election.

Since being appointed special counsel in 2017, Mueller, a former FBI director, has obtained guilty pleas from Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen for lying to Congress, Trump's first national security advisor, retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, for making false statements and Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, for multiple crimes.

Manafort's business associate, Rick Gates, who also worked on Trump's campaign, pleaded guilty in early 2018 to making false statements and financial crimes. George Papadopoulos, who had been an advisor on Trump's presidential campaign, pleaded guilty in October 2017 to making false statements to the FBI in another case lodged by Mueller.

Shutdown causing chaos at IRS: tax refunds may be delayed

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service is one of the many federal agencies that has closed its doors since Dec. 22. Only 12 percent of its staff are working without pay—mostly focused on security and technology. The agency is not issuing refunds, updating tax forms or answering phone help lines, according to its shutdown plans.

Trump says shutdown could last for months or years

That's making tax professionals sweat as they gird for an abridged filing window. The shutdown complicates an already complex tax season due to the myriad new regulations created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the sweeping bill signed into law by President Donald Trump in late 2017.

"When I look in my tax software, which is professional tax software, there are many forms that haven't been finalized," said Steven Zelin, a CPA based in Manhattan. "We can't file. And since the tax law changed so much, there's a likelihood that there may be a delay" in starting the filing season, he added.

Anyone hoping that an IRS shutdown means getting a breather on their taxes will be disappointed. The agency's website says taxpayers "should file and pay their taxes as normal."

The problem is, the weeks before tax season are anything but "normal" at the IRS. They mark the end of its annual late-year closure and, this year, follow the biggest overhaul to the tax code since the 1980s.

The IRS typically shuts down from November through the end of the year to update its systems with annual tax changes. That includes changes to many tax forms, which make the basis of calculations done by tax software, both professional software and programs used by consumers.

In the last two years, the IRS has announced on Jan. 4 or 5 the date that people can start filing their taxes electronically, usually in the second or third week of January. As of Friday, it's unclear when filing season begins. The IRS wasn't immediately available for



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

comment.

"Typically around now, the first couple of weeks [of the year], we would hear something," said Lisa Greene-Lewis, a CPA with TurboTax. Greene-Lewis and other tax preparers interviewed for this article said they hadn't heard from the IRS ahead of the shutdown about how to proceed if the agency were closed.

Greene-Lewis said TurboTax's filing systems are ready to go even with IRS business at a standstill. Taxpayers can still file via the online tax tool, but the company will simply store their information until electronic filing opens, at which point they will transmit it.

IRS won't issue refunds during shutdown

If the shutdown continues into the tax filing season, the IRS could recall additional staff, according to a union official. The agency still won't issue refunds, however. That is considered less-than-essential (or "non-expected," in IRS jargon) activity, according to the agency's shutdown plan.

Far greater challenges face Americans who are in the midst of sorting out tax problems with the IRS, like audits, or those who have questions about tax returns.

Angela Reed, a partner at Tarbell & Co., a CPA firm in Iowa, is trying to help a client who filed some nonprofit tax returns late. But with the IRS unstaffed, she's at a standstill. "I can't do anything with that, currently. I can't

call the IRS and have a discussion."

Reed, whose firm prepares about 4,000 tax returns every year, said she isn't feeling a severe impact from the shutdown -- yet. But she worries about potential delays in processing tax refunds if the shutdown drags on.

Taxpayers who've been counting on a refund to pay off credit card bills wracked up during the holidays may feel themselves squeezed, in other words. The IRS issued 102 million tax refunds last year with a total value of \$285 billion, according to eFile, a tax software site.

Even before the shutdown, there were concerns IRS staffers wouldn't be ready in time for tax season, given the extent of the changes in the 2017 tax law.

"We just had the largest tax reform since 1986, and the IRS is having to do a lot of work to get ready for that," said Tony Reardon, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents workers at the IRS and elsewhere.

"What I've heard from our members is concern that the training they were getting was in some instances outdated, incomplete—and this was before the shutdown," Reardon said. "There's a very real possibility that the tax filing season would have to be delayed."

"I was bracing for this," said Jonathan Medows, a CPA in Manhattan. "I noticed years ago when the IRS makes these changes, [tax software companies] struggle to implement them.... And that's in a good year, when you have just a few tax changes."

There's no precedent for the IRS being shut down so close to tax season, added Mark Mazur, a former tax policy official at the Treasury and current director of the Tax Policy Center. The one that comes closest is the 27-day government shutdown in 1995, which stemmed from a conflict between Democratic President Bill Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress. That impasse ended on Jan. 6, 1996.

"We're currently in unprecedented territory here," he said. **(Source: Agencies)**

USIBC Industry Delegation to visit Gujarat & Uttar Pradesh



USIBC has designed a three-day engagement agenda at Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) has designed a three-day engagement agenda at Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (Gandhinagar & Ahmedabad, Gujarat | January 18-20, 2019), which includes prominent participation at the inauguration of the Summit, including U.S. focused seminars, Global Conclave of International Chambers and the Global Trade Show.

The delegation will have the opportunity to engage with Chief Minister of Gujarat Vijay Rupani, senior Government of India Officials, and senior State-Level Sector-specific Ministers.

The USIBC delegation will also have the opportunity to engage with the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath to discuss investment opportunities and private sector collaboration.

Uttar Pradesh, a state and market of 200 million people and the fourth-largest economy in India, presents a high-impact opportunity for U.S. businesses to access for new development and continued growth.

Vibrant Gujarat Summit was conceptualized in 2003 by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Mr. Narendra Modi, to re-establish Gujarat as a preferred investment destination within India.

Today, the Summit has evolved into a platform for brainstorming on agendas of global socio-economic development, in addition to being a facilitator for knowledge sharing and forging effective partnerships.

The 8th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, held in January 2017, witnessed participation from 25,000+ delegates from 100+ countries, including 4 Heads of States, Nobel Laureates, Captains of global industry and Thought Leaders.

Formed in 1975 at the request of the U.S. and Indian governments, the U.S.-India Business Council is the premier business advocacy organization, comprised of 350 top-tier U.S. and Indian companies advancing U.S.-India commercial ties.

USIBC is the largest bilateral trade association in the United States, based in Washington, D.C., with a global presence in New York, San Francisco, New Delhi, and Mumbai.

Indonesia temporarily stops sending students to Taiwan after reports of mistreatment

JAKARTA (TIP): Indonesia will temporarily stop sending students to universities in Taiwan, the foreign ministry said on Friday, after it asked Taipei to investigate media reports that up to 300 students were being forced to work in factories.

The Southeast Asian nation sends students to Taiwan under a work-study programme that allows them to do internships while studying. Officials said students under this scheme had “faced problems”, without providing details.

“We have asked for an explanation...and for authorities to take steps needed to protect the interests and safety of these students,” Indonesian foreign ministry spokesman Armanatha Nasir said in a statement.

Taiwan’s education ministry said in a statement on Thursday the media reports were not accurate and that it found no violations of local labour laws after speaking to the students. If any illegal practice was found in any school, the ministry would suspend the programmes there, it added.

A Taiwanese lawmaker, Ko Chih-en, said last week that six universities had been “forcing” their Southeast Asian students, especially Indonesians, to work long hours in factories making contact lenses, according to Taiwan News website.

Reuters was not able to independently verify the accusation.

There are around 6,000 Indonesian university students in Taiwan, around 1,000 of whom were sent under the work-study scheme, Nasir said. (Reuters)

Kabul: Three dead as gas station fire spreads to building

KABUL (TIP): An Afghan official says an overnight fire that began at a gas station in the Afghan capital and spread to a nearby apartment complex has killed three people and injured 27 others.

Health Ministry spokesman Wahidullah Mayer says six women are in critical condition in a hospital.

Saifullah, an eyewitness who, like many Afghans uses only one name, says the fire began shortly after midnight at a gas station in Kabul’s eastern Macroyan neighbourhood. It quickly spread to a nearby cement block apartment complex.

Police officials contacted by The Associated Press say the fire is still under investigation and have so far refused to speculate on the cause. Eyewitnesses say a gas-filled tanker parked on the gas station premises also caught fire, causing the blaze to spread quickly. (AP)

In Nepal, children may’ve to give 10% of income to parents

KATHMANDU (TIP): The Nepal government is set to introduce a law which makes it mandatory for the children to deposit 5 to 10% of their income into the bank accounts of parents to ensure their wellbeing, a spokesperson said on January 5. According to PM’s press advisor Kundan Aryal a Cabinet meeting has decided to present a bill on amendment to the Senior Citizen Act-2006 with such a provision at the Parliament. (TOI)

2016 surgical strike a 'figment of Indian imagination', there was no such event : Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan on Jan 3 again rejected the 2016 surgical strike as a "figment of Indian imagination", saying there was no such 'event'.

The Indian Army conducted surgical strikes on terror launch pads across the Line of Control on September 29, 2016, but Pakistan denied any such attacks.

Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Mohammad Faisal said this at his weekly briefing when asked about the assertions made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the surgical strikes in an interview on the New Year.

"There was no such event. It is a figment of Indian imagination. The Indian media is itself doubting the claims of their government," he said.

In an interview on January 1, Modi asserted that it would be a "big mistake" to think that Pakistan will mend its ways after just "one war", referring to the 2016 surgical strike.

A surgical strike is a military attack aimed to harm only the intended target and ensure minimal collateral damage to general public infrastructure and utilities around it.

"Pakistan will never improve on the basis of one war. That nation will still take some time to improve. But, can we hear anything in the midst of bombs? Today, terror supporting Pakistan is isolated," Modi quoted as saying in tweets by the PMO.

He also said all PMs of India, across all parties never opposed dialogue with Pakistan.

On a dialogue between India and Pakistan, Faisal said that Islamabad wanted a dialogue with India but New Delhi was shying away.



"If India shies away from dialogue, we cannot do much. It takes two to tango. Our position on the matter is clear," he said, adding that a letter by Prime Minister Imran Khan, written to his Indian counterpart on September 14, clearly laid down Pakistan's policy.

India has also made it clear to Islamabad that talks and terror cannot go together.

"Obviously we would like to discuss the dispute of Jammu and Kashmir, first and foremost, in addition to all other matters. We, unlike India do not shy away from having a dialogue for resolution of all outstanding issues between the two countries," he said.

Faisal also said that Pakistan's desire for peace must not be misconstrued as its "weakness". Terming India-Pakistan

relations as a "difficult and complicated one", he said, "We are slowly moving forward."

Condemning the alleged violation of the Line of Control by Indian drones, he said Pakistan was vigilant and responded effectively to these threats.

"Any misadventure by India would be responded in a befitting manner," he said.

Asked about the reports claiming 23 Indian passports were misplaced by the High Commission for Pakistan in New Delhi, he said "the matter has been looked into. There is no evidence that the alleged missing 23 passports were received by the Mission. As such, reports in this regard are baseless and speculative." To a question on abduction of a retired Pakistan Army Colonel from Nepal, he said Pakistan was pursuing the matter. (ET)

Sri Lanka police arrest two for bribing life-size cutout

COLOMBO (TIP): Sri Lankan police have arrested two people who posted a Facebook video showing one of them pretending to give a bribe to a traffic police cutout.

In the footage, a motorcyclist is seen offering money to the life-size figure of an officer with a speed gun in the northern town of Vavuniya.

The man in the video and his friend who filmed it have been released on bail.

They are charged with damaging public property, and humiliating and creating a bad public image of the police.

The cardboard cutout, which police say had its head damaged, is one of many which were placed on main roads last year to deter speeding and dangerous driving.

A few months ago, local police arrested two youths who had taken one home.

‘Satire, not crime’

Bribing traffic police to avoid formal fines and a long-drawn out process in court is common in Sri Lanka.

People have taken to social media to criticise the police action against the two men, said to be aged 23.

"The youth were sending a powerful message aimed at eliminating the bribery culture," Twitter user Ameen Izzadeen told the BBC. "It's satire, not a crime."

Another social media user wrote: "This is not some joke. So many people are killed every year due to bad driving. There is so much the cops can do to enforce the law."

Why is this controversial?

Transparency International, an anti-corruption NGO, told the BBC that it considers the police one of Sri Lanka's most corrupt institutions.

"This issue is further evidenced by the lack of will to incorporate basic systems to combat petty bribery amongst traffic police," said country head Asoka Obeysekara. Last week police suspended two officers after a viral video showed them allegedly taking a bribe near the president's office, which is also close to Sri Lanka's police headquarters.

The country's head of traffic police, Ajith Rohana, told the BBC last year they were taking measures to punish wrongdoers and urged the public to complain against such officers. (BBC)

Hasina’s win is welcome but India must choose caution

DHAKA (TIP): The re-election of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for a third consecutive term with a landslide victory in the general elections, is strategically desirable for India.

However, New Delhi must caution and refrain from celebrations while the opposition, Bangladesh National Party (BNP) has levelled allegations of widespread rigging.

Hasina’s Awami League, a secular and liberal party in Bangladesh, has historically been an ally of India. Under the Hasina government in the last two terms, Dhaka has remained sensitive to India’s concerns about the northeast militancy fostered by ISI-backed Islamists operating from Bangladesh during the opposition BNP-Jamaat regime.

The militancy in the region including Tripura and Meghalaya has declined considerably ever since a crackdown by Hasina. After the Awami League government arrested the leaders of the factions of the ULFA and the NDFB and handed them over to India, the window for talks between insurgents and New Delhi has opened up. Overall, Hasina's tough stance against Islamist terrorism is vital to India's security interests in the northeast.

However, India cannot choose to overlook the allegations of electoral fraud, intimidation and abuse that the media and human rights organizations of the West have been highlighting. It is clear that Hasina’s secular policies and decimation of religious radicals, have the potential to invite retaliation with vengeance if democracy weakens and democratic institutions are eroded in Bangladesh. Such a scenario will have serious ramifications for India’s security too. It is in Bangladesh’s interests that Prime Minister Hasina does everything to restore faith of media and the West in her leadership. (TOI)

Hackers dump data on Chancellor Angela Merkel, hundreds of German politicians

LATVIA (TIP): Hackers have released personal data linked to Chancellor Angela Merkel and hundreds of other politicians in Germany in the biggest data dump of its kind in the country.

The information includes email addresses, mobile phone numbers, photos of IDs and personal chat transcripts, according to an initial review on January 5. It was leaked over the past weeks via a Twitter account called “G0d” that identifies itself as based in Hamburg and describes itself using the words “security researching,” “artist” and “satire & irony.”

It looks like the hackers got the passwords to Facebook accounts and Twitter profiles and worked their way up from there, collecting additional data in the process, said Simon Hegelich, a political scientist at Munich’s Technical University who has studied the manipulation of social networks.

“It’s a very elaborately done social engineering attack,” he said Friday by phone. “It’s a lot of data that’s been dumped.” Bundestag Hack Germany has seen a range of intrusions in recent years.

Hackers tried to infiltrate computers of think tanks associated with the governing CDU and SPD parties in 2017. A year earlier, scammers set up a fake server in Latvia to flood German lawmakers with phishing emails.

In 2015, unidentified criminals breached the network of the Bundestag parliament, stealing 16 gigabytes of data. Security firm Trend Micro Inc. has linked the Bundestag attack and others to Pawn Storm, a group with ties to Russia — whose government has repeatedly denied it’s hacking foreign powers.

There was never any information leaked from the Bundestag hack despite its severity: Attackers roamed the network for more than a week before they were detected. The Bundestag’s entire IT system had to be taken



down for several days to fix the problem. The German government has since bolstered its technology protections, setting up a cyber-defense unit in 2017 staffed by thousands of soldiers and IT experts to protect military networks and key infrastructure such as power plants and hospitals.

Germany’s Federal Office for Information Security, known as BSI, is heading the investigation into the data dump at its cyber defense center. So far the agency has no information that government networks have been affected, the BSI said on Twitter. Germany’s domestic intelligence agency BfV is reviewing the data and can’t yet comment because of the volume of the volume, a spokeswoman said.

‘Erode Trust’

“The perpetrators want to erode trust in our democracy and in our institutions,” German Justice Minister Katarina Barley said, according to news agency DPA. “Criminals and their backers must not be allowed to dictate debate in our nation.”

It’s unclear at this point whether the data release is linked to the 2015 Bundestag hack, and how significant it is. It includes two email addresses and a fax number the perpetrators link to Merkel, and a letter by SPD lawmakers sent to the chancellor in 2016 that criticizes her handling of the refugee crisis. There’s also what appears to be chat transcripts from Economy Minister Peter Altmaier. More mundane material includes rental-car contracts and letters, some of them several years old.

‘No Kids’

The attack appears to have affected all major German political parties with the exception of the populist Alternative for Germany. The Merkel’s CDU/CSU party caucus declined to immediately comment.

The leaks were coordinated by four Twitter accounts that appear to be linked to the political right, Hegelich said. For now, there’s no evidence pointing to Russia or the Bundestag hack from 2015, he said. (bloomberg)

China’s Xi Jinping calls on army to be battle-ready

SHANGHAI (TIP): China’s armed forces must strengthen their sense of urgency and do everything they can to prepare for battle, President Xi Jinping told a meeting of top brass on Friday. China is keen to beef up its armed forces amid territorial disputes in the South China Sea and escalating tension with the United States over issues ranging from trade to the status of Taiwan.

The official Xinhua news agency said Xi told a meeting of the top military authority that China faced increasing risks and challenges, and the armed forces must work to secure its security and development needs.

Xi, who is also chairman of the Central Military Commission, said the armed forces must devise strategies for the new era and take on responsibilities for preparing and waging war.

“The world is facing a period of major changes never seen in a century, and China is still in an important period of strategic opportunity for development,” he was quoted as saying.

He said the armed forces needed to be able to respond quickly to emergencies, needed to upgrade their joint operations capabilities and nurture new types of combat forces.

Xi’s comments followed his remarks on Wednesday that China still reserved the right to use force to achieve “reunification” with Taiwan and prevent the island’s independence.

Xi’s Taiwan speech came just days after US President Donald Trump signed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act into law, reaffirming the US commitment to the island’s security. (Reuters)

Twitter account which posted data of German politicians, celebs suspended

BERLIN (TIP): Twitter suspended on January 4 an account that posted links to sensitive personal data and documents stolen by hackers from hundreds of German public figures and politicians — from every political party but the far-right Alternative for Germany. The exposed material included addresses, cellphone numbers and chat records, along with banking, credit card and other financial information, German news media said.

The exposed material included addresses, cellphone numbers and chat records, along with banking, credit card and other financial information, German news media said.

Fietz told reporters that “it appears, at first sight, that no sensitive information and data are included in what was published, including regarding the chancellor.” The German news agency dpa reported that the information included a fax number and email address belonging to Merkel and several letters to and from the chancellor. Cybersecurity analysts compared the hack in scale and affected population to that of prominent US Democrats including Hillary Clinton presidential campaign workers and other Americans targeted by state-backed Russian hackers in 2015-2016.

“This hack clearly isn’t about extortion or financially-motivated. This is about attempting to destabilise Germany society,” British security expert Graham Cluley blogged. (AP)

Britain’s Conservatives prefer a ‘no deal’ Brexit to Theresa May’s plan

LONDON (TIP): With less than three months until Britain is to leave the European Union, most members of the country’s Conservative Party prefer leaving with no deal to the plan negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May, a survey of party members released on January 5 shows.

Rejecting May’s proposal, respondents shrugged off warnings that a cliff-edge departure could lead to steep price hikes and shortages of food and medicine, fallout predicted by economists, analysts and, increasingly, members of the Cabinet out plugging the deal.

The poll of 1,215 Tory Party members, carried out in late December as part of a continuing academic study, found them in no mood for compromise.

May delayed a vote on her unpopular Brexit deal last month, hoping the pressure of the approaching March 29 deadline would force lawmakers to accept that her deal is better than the alternatives, like a no-deal exit or a second referendum. Parliament resumes next week, and the vote is scheduled for the week beginning Jan. 14.

Yet May will be hard-pressed to build support for the compromise within her own

party, judging by the findings of the Party Members Project, which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Given the choice between a no-deal exit, May’s deal or remaining in the EU, 57 percent preferred no agreement, 23 percent preferred May’s compromise deal and 15 percent opted to remain in the EU.

“What’s really noteworthy is how pro-no-deal they are, and how unconvinced by their own government’s argument that it would be very, very difficult to manage and economically damaging,” said the study’s leader, Tim Bale of Queen Mary University of London. “They seem to believe that actually, it will be a good thing for the economy.”

The results are at odds with public opinion as a whole. When a broad group of voters were asked to choose between the same options, 42 percent opted to remain in the EU, 25 percent chose no deal and 13 percent backed May’s agreement. (The rest said they would not vote, didn’t know or declined to answer.)

There is a yawning gulf in the perception of the economic effect of leaving the union without an agreement.

Government officials have warned that a no-deal exit could clog ports, starve factories

and disrupt supplies of food and medicine. At a Cabinet meeting before Christmas, Gavin Williamson, the minister of defense, agreed to put 3,500 troops on standby. The environment minister, Michael Gove, on Thursday warned farmers that British exports to the EU could be subject to 40 percent tariffs, and that inspections could cause delays, posing a threat to small farmers.

But 76 percent of Conservative party members contacted for the poll dismissed those warnings as “exaggerated or invented,” and 64 percent maintained that a no-deal exit would have a positive rather than a negative effect. “In some ways, what we see is a kind of repeat of what we saw under David Cameron, which is a leadership unable to convince its own members to back the party line,” said Bale, referring to the former prime minister.

The risks of a no-deal exit, he added, had been played down by right-wing news outlets like the Telegraph and Express tabloids, and by “the celebrity politicians so many of them admire.” The government itself has walked a fine line on projecting the fallout, trying to simultaneously warn the public of danger and reassure it that the state is prepared. (New York Times)

2200 Years of Jewish Transition with the Hindus: 'We Never Experienced Discrimination in India'



BY A.D. AMAR

“Jewish existence in India, where they came seeking refuge from religious persecutions in Europe, the Middle East and the Arab world, signifies their coexistence and assimilation with the Indians. The integration with the Hindus in particular had been so perfect that a large number of Jewish immigrants have been completely absorbed.”

With New Delhi's luxurious Taj Palace Hotel as a backdrop, the Jewish cemetery displays rows of headstones inscribed with many names strange to the local Hindu population. Located in the heart of the posh section of the city, it presents a total contrast from many other Jewish cemeteries in large cities of the West. There is no sign of vandalism, graffiti, or dilapidation. The Monsoon-nourished, thick green shrubbery and heavy tree lines add to the calm serene setting in which rest the Jews who made India their home - sometime around 2200 years ago.

Coming from the Jewish temple adjoining the cemetery are the sounds of Hebrew prayers being sung to the accompaniment of a grand piano in a Hindu chant that the Jews have acquired during their millennia in India. The door to this beautiful, brick structure temple bears a thick patterned stone with carving: "Judah Hyam Synagogue." It serves the spiritual needs of about 50 practicing Jews who remain in Delhi and others who visit the Indian capital. The children were singing, some unwillingly, to the lead of Elizabeth Narrowe, a diplomat with the embassy of Sweden who had just finished Sunday school instruction. The blackboard behind Narrowe indicated Hebrew alphabets in one column against Hindi alphabets in another - teaching Hebrew via the medium of Hindi. "It's hard to impress upon these children the relevance of these activities," remarked the curly-haired, sharp-featured, white complexioned Narrowe in a soft voice. "Namaste, namaste," the departing children were greeting Narrowe in Hindu tradition.

Jewish existence in India, where they came seeking refuge from religious persecutions in Europe, the Middle East and the Arab world, signifies their coexistence and assimilation with the Indians. The integration with the Hindus in particular had been so perfect that a large number of Jewish immigrants have been

Although most of the Jews have left, many ancient Torah-scrolls and other Jewish relics remain in India - a reminders to Hindus and the Jewish Indians left behind of the good times during the period of Jewish transition - the more than two millennia of the toughest period in Jewish history.

completely absorbed. In fact, before the Jewish homeland became a reality in recent times, the majority of Jews in India knew little about their ancestry or heritage. "Many Jews actually rediscovered their roots after creation of Israel," says Yoel Kolet, a Jewish Indian who migrated to Israel and is currently working as a doctoral student there.

The Jews have been exemplary citizens of India through many kings, rulers and governments. They lived, played and ate with the Hindus - even fought beside them in defense of their newly chosen homeland. They fought in 1550 A.D. to defend the South Indian Hindu kingdom of Cochin(the home of early Jewish immigrants) and, again 400 years later when interests of India were threatened by Pakistan. In the 1971-72 India-Pakistan war that created the nation of Bangladesh, General Jacob, a Jewish Indian military hero, fought, strategized and planned the operation with the Indian General J.S. Arora.

The records talk about the Jewish principality in Cranganore and quarters in Cochine that go back to 72 A.D. - one of the oldest Jewish quarters in the world. "The migration of Jews to India began more than 2000 years ago," states Rabbi Ezekiel Issac Malekar, with a wet glare in his hazel eyes and in a soft, clear voice typical of the Indians. Jews found their way into India using the trading route to Odu when they left Palestine after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans. Cochine was a popular spot for the Odu spice traders from the West and was well frequented by the Jewish merchants. Moses Pereira de Paiva, a Dutch Jew, writes that Jews arrived on the south-west coast of India during 370 A.D. According to him they came from Majorca after their forefathers there were taken captive by Titus Vespasianus. "The first Jews to India came during the second century B.C." proudly claims Kolet. David Gentleman, in his book India, corroborates Kolet's timing. He writes that white Jews migrated there during the second century B.C.

In addition to the groups of Jews that came to India through Cochine, there are two other groups. The Bene Israel group came to the west coast of India, entering through the Maharashtra state. The second group, the Baghdadi Jews, came from Iraq mainly to the metropolis of Calcutta and Bombay. The number of Jews in India grew as they sought reprieve from the Iranians and Iraqi imposition of anti-Jewish manifestation and measures. Even in recent times, after the creation of Israel, there were as many as 50,000 known Jews in India. According to the London based Institute of Jewish Affairs, during 1970's India had 15,000 Jews - more than any other country in Asia except Iran and Turkey. By contrast, Asia's largest country, China, had only 21 Jews.

Malekar, an attorney by training, continues after a respite, "The Bible refers to the Jews who came to India as one of the 10 Lost Tribes of Jews." Judging by his hair, skin color and the color of his eyes, he could easily get lost among the Jewish crowds in Brooklyn, Queens or Manhattan. This devout pallbearer of the Hebrew culture in India, Rabbi and Secretary of the Judah Hyam Synagogue of Delhi, could very well be taken for a 'foreigner' in India - a mistake quickly corrected as soon as one talked with him. Inside, he is as seasoned an Indian as there can be. But, then, he is a Jew as you can find anywhere.

The melting if Jews in India, first with the Hindus, and then with the Hindus and Muslims- mostly under duress with the Muslims,

according to Malekar-had been rather complete. Those who maintained their identity adapted several Hindu customs and rituals into their way of life. Malekar and Kolet explained that Jews in India celebrated "Diwali," the Hindu festival of lights. Jewish Indian women behave like Hindu women in many ways. They wear Sari. At their weddings, they decorate themselves with Haldi (powdered turmeric) and Mehndi (myrtle leaves), and after marriage, start wearing 'Mangalasutra' (a particular, symbolic Hindu neckwear identifying a married woman). In general, Jewish Indians adopted some Hindu or Hinduized first names, or Hindu last names, like Malekar - meaning someone who came from village Malek in western India - mainly to show their allegiance with the part of India from where they entered. In reverence to the Hindu taboo on beef-eating. "The Jews of India do not eat beef," states Malekar. (Muslims in India do.)

"My son," Malekar turns the topic to his 10-year old son, "does not eat meat at all. All our efforts stressing the importance of meat eating for the growth of development of the young have fallen flat on him. He will not even allow mixing of the service spoons for meats and vegetables. We call him the 'Brahmin' in our family," cheerfully remarks Malekar.

Assimilation has not been one-sided. There are recorded cases of Hindus converting to Judaism. One such convert during the early Jewish migration to India was Rabbi Judah, as documented by Pereira de Paiva in his year 1686 book on the history of Cochine Jews. Judah actually helped further establish Jews in their new homeland. There are many commonalities among the Jews and the Hindus, today. The more obvious ones are the sanctity of the six-pronged star - the Star of David, the limitations on what can and cannot be done on Saturdays, and the sacredness of Shabat in general. Malekar states that Hindus allowed the Jews special privileges on Saturdays. An English historian writes how the Hindu Raja of Cochine, whose best fighting men were in his Jewish battalion, deferred a war because it fell on that day.

With the establishment of Israel and the increased tolerance towards Semitism all over the world, there were fewer reasons for the remaining Jews in India to continue to live there: They wanted to rejoin their people. "Jewish Indians want to avail of the opportunity to step on, and live in the land of their heritage," says enthused Yoel Kolet. They want to fulfill the wishes of their ancestors by touching the Israeli soil." Kolet with typical Indian brown eyes, dark hair, and tanned skin, adds "Jerusalem's soil is my soul." Kolet is like many other young Jewish Indians who left their old folks back in India and immigrated to Israel both in search of opportunities and to fulfill their dream.

"Dying for Israel is a dream. We are returning to the motherland after 2000 years in India," says Kolet with a heave. "Emigration from India is a very hard question for Jews in India. Unlike other Jews who have migrated to Israel from many other countries, our people enjoyed full freedom here. We are strongly rooted in Indian culture. We don't have the reasons here for which other Jews have migrated to Israel from other countries. Leaving India was a heart-breaking decision. India is my blood, Israel my soul." Says Kolet. He continues, "We are first Indians, then Jews."

Not all Jewish Indians who migrated to Israel find life there easy. Many have returned to India after giving it a try. They felt a cultural



Rabbi Malekar of the Delhi's Judah Hyam Synagogue displays one of the many Sefer Torahs remaining in India. India has the world's largest collection of Sefer Torahs."

breakdown. Kolet relates the reason for such a decision. "Indian culture is very strong and hard to break away. Israel has greater demands which many can't fulfill." Kolet compares the value conflicts that arise. "In Israel, the country is first, individual is next. In India it is the reverse. "Strange as it may sound coming from a Jew, Kolet describes Jew-on-Jew discrimination in Israel. "That is new for us. We never experienced discrimination in India," says Kolet. "Different nationalities in Israel make assimilation harder. Indian culture has made us soft. Other nationalities are more aggressive," he observes. Kolet concludes by commenting, "Culture in India is holding many Jews here who can freely migrate to Israel."

The number of Jews in India is reduced to approximately a mere 8000. Cochine, once an ancient, vibrant Jewish community, has a Jewish heritage comparable to one anywhere in the whole world: It is the site of the oldest Jewish quarters, and a synagogue that is the fifth oldest in the world(the oldest in the British Commonwealth - including Britain itself). But, very few Jews are left there, today. At times, they cannot even gather ten males for the minyan. Instead, non-Jews join in to help perform the prayer.

Malekar proudly displays a fat daily prayer book (Siddur), publication year 1889, in Hebrew on one side and in Marathi (a local language) on the other side. "This is the only book of its kind in the whole world giving the text in these two languages," he says, highlighting the integration that has taken place. In India, we have the world's largest number of Sefer Torah's," he prides, reminiscing how several Jewish organizations from other countries have come to India to take ancient Sefer Torahs - invaluable Jewish Indian relics. Although most of the Jews have left, many ancient Torah-scrolls and other Jewish relics remain in India - a reminders to Hindus and the Jewish Indians left behind of the good times during the period of Jewish transition - the more than two millennia of the toughest period in Jewish history.

(The author is a Professor at Stillman School of Business, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ USA. He can be reached at ad.amar@shu.edu / amaramar@shu.edu)



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RANVEER SINGH, ALIA BHATT SHARE FIRST GULLY BOY POSTER

Actors Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt have shared the first poster for their upcoming film, *Gully Boy*, directed by Zoya Akhtar. The film will trace the story of a young Mumbai street rapper, inspired by the life of Divine and others like him.

The poster shows Ranveer's character with his back to the camera, staring into the distance at a building. He appears to be wearing the same hoodie from the first-look images released in February, 2018. There are faint notes that one can make out on the poster, perhaps of lyrics written by Ranveer's character. The tagline reads, "Apna time aayega (Our time will come)."

Videos of the actor rapping along with Divine went viral on social media earlier in 2018. "Ranveer is the man," Divine said in an interview to Hindustan Times. "He's the best man to do the movie and he's killed it."

Gully Boy was recently announced as being a part of the Berlin International Film Festival. It will be screened in the Berlinale Special section of the prestigious festival, which will be held between February 7 and February 17. "Gully Boy turned out to be a really fulfilling creative experience. It getting selected for the Berlin Film Fest came as an awesome piece of news," Ranveer told HT.

The actor recently delivered the biggest solo hit of his career with *Simmba*, the action-drama directed by Rohit Shetty. The film has made over Rs 100 crore worldwide in five days of release. Earlier in the year, he starred opposite wife Deepika Padukone in their third collaboration with director Sanjay Leela Bhansali, *Padmaavat*, which made close to Rs 600 crore worldwide.

Source: HT

DID KATRINA-RANBIR BREAKUP INSPIRE BABITA KUMARI'S STORY IN ZERO?



Shah Rukh Khan's *Zero* released last week but failed to make a mark. The film garnered mixed reviews, with a sizable number of people panning it, while a small group appreciating its performances. Among the three principal characters, Katrina Kaif's portrayal as Babita Kumari has come up for praise.

Playing a dark and disturbed character, Katrina got into the skin of the character with all its complexities. However, on social media, her portrayal as a star who is caught in the midst of a nasty break-up with another actor, played by Abhay Deol, seems to reflect her real-life break-up with Ranbir Kapoor. Now, speaking to Film Companion,

Katrina has cleared the air on the similarities between the fictional character and its supposed reflection of her life.

Speaking to Anupama Chopra, Katrina said: "I knew that people are gonna try (and connect the dots) but I also knew that when they see the film they can't do that because the pitch of that character is so different. The pitch of that character is not me... that's not me. That's not my behaviour. To me the way she's talking, to me it is outlandish as a person that I am."

Zero is the journey of a dwarf who travels from Meerut to America and in the process, meets and falls for reigning superstar called Babita Kumari, played by

Katrina Kaif. His inspiration is Aafia Yusufzai Bhinder, played by Anushka Sharma, a brilliant scientist with cerebral palsy.

Katrina's last film, *Thugs of Hindostan*, bombed badly at the box office. The Yash Raj Films was mounted on very large sets, boasted of three big stars including Amitabh Bachchan, Aamir Khan and Katrina and one of its songs was a rather catchy one, *Suraiyya Jaan*. However, the story's disconnect with the audience and its VFX which reminded many of Hollywood's *Pirates of Caribbean*, meant that the film was a disaster at the box office.

Source: HT

As Twinkle Khanna is on a career high, Akshay Kumar jokes it's the beginning of Abhimaan 2

Actor-turned-author Twinkle Khanna has made it big in the world of writing ever since she came out with her first novel. She continues to be a successful writer and recently released her third book, *Pyjamas Are Forgiving*. She has now shared a stern warning for her family to not disturb her when she is busy writing. The disclaimer seems to be clearly addressed to her family members including husband Akshay Kumar, son Aarav and daughter Nitaara.

Twinkle emerged as the highest selling female author of 2018, according to a top ten list released by Nielson Bookscan. She has also been named the top-selling female author by a leading bookstore chain. As her book's publishing company shared the good news on Twitter, she posted it on social media with a stern warning for her family. She wrote, "Now if anyone bothers me when I am at my desk to find missing socks, a missing phone or even a missing child I have a valid reason to say - Talk to the hand:) #PyjamasAreForgiving."

Akshay also responded to his wife in an equally candid manner with the tweet, "And this seems to be the beginning of *Abhimaan* Part 2. On a more serious note...I'm so so proud of you."

Twinkle's first book was a compilation of her columns, *Mrs Funnybones*. Its success was followed by her second bestseller, *The Legend of Lakshmi Prasad*. Twinkle is also the co-owner of the production house, *Grazing Goat Pictures*. Her last production venture was *PadMan*, based on a story written by her. Akshay and Twinkle often engage in fun banter on Twitter. They had recently shared pictures of themselves dressed as Santa at a Christmas party.

Twinkle Khanna was named as the bestselling female author of 2018, following which she warned her family members to not disturb her when she is at work.





COULD MEGHAN'S BABY SHARE BIRTHDAY WITH PRINCE LOUIS OR QUEEN?

The NEW Year has arrived and Meghan's due date is slowly approaching. The Duchess of Sussex is set to give birth in the spring of 2019, which means the royal baby could potentially share a birthday with cousin-to-be Prince Louis or grandmother Queen Elizabeth II.

Meghan and Prince Harry confirmed they were expecting a baby on October 15, 2018. The announcement came after weeks of speculations from royal fans. The newlyweds announced the news on Twitter and said the royal baby is due in the Spring of 2019.

The full statement read: "Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are very pleased to announce that The Duchess of Sussex is expecting a baby in the Spring of 2019.

"Their Royal Highnesses have appreciated all of the support they have received from people around the world since their wedding in May and are delighted to be able to share this happy news with the public."

Since the happy news was announced, royal fans have been speculating in when Meghan is due to give birth, as the only information given by the royals was that the child is due sometime in the Spring of 2019.

And now some people are wondering if the royal baby could share a birthday with cousin Prince Louis, who turns one on April 23 or Queen Elizabeth II, who was born on April 21.

Kate and Prince William's third child Prince Louis will turn one on April 23, which is also St George's Day.

And as Meghan is due to give birth sometime in the spring this year, Baby Sussex could potentially share a birthday with its upcoming cousin.

Bookies Coral has slashed the odds on Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's first child to be born in April to 6/4.

MILEY CYRUS REVEALS 'WILD' NEW YEAR'S EVE HONEYMOON

Miley Cyrus has shared photos of her New Year's Eve celebrations while on a "family honeymoon" with the Hemsworth clan.

Cyrus and her new husband Liam Hemsworth are at a ski resort in Montana with Chris Hemsworth, his wife Elsa Pataky and Chris' brother Luke.

Cyrus posted photos to her Instagram of herself kicking back with a bottle of Veuve Clicquot champagne.

She captioned the image: "Same Sh*t. New Year."

She also posted a photo of herself playfully flipping the bird to the camera with her two hands at the New Year's bash with the Hemsworths.

Chris and Elsa also posted an image from the private party of the two of them packing on the PDA with a caption that said: "Happy New Year everyone!! Love you all!!"

Pataky also posted a group shot of herself with Miley and other close friends who were partying the night away.

Cyrus also posted another photo where she appeared to be dressed up in a party costume. She wrote: "I can try & act cool, but this is me FoReVeR #NewYearsFit #FindYouSomeoneWhoCanDoBoth".

Earlier, Cyrus had posted an image of herself outside in the snow.

The new photos come after Pataky, 42, shared a photo with her husband while on holiday at the ski resort.

She later posted a photo of her three children — six-year-old India Rose, and twin sons Tristan and Sasha, four — as they built a snowman together.

Liam, who found fame in The Hunger Games movie franchise and Miley, the former Disney child star recently got married in front of family and friends in Nashville.

Miley's famous father, Billy Ray Cyrus posted photos to Instagram, revealing more of the celebrations.

One of the images was taken on Billy Ray's "out dated blackberry camera", and it shows Miley and Liam cutting their wedding cake in front of close family and friends.



Billy Ray posted the image with the caption: "Wedding wouldn't be complete without one shot from Dads out dated blackberry camera. Love seeing all so happy."

He also shared a photograph of the happy couple embracing, with the caption: "Congratulations @LiamHemsworth @MileyCyrus Long live love !!!!!"

The country music singer also posted a photo of Miley with him and his wife Tish as they stood in front of a beautiful floral arch and the famous pop star was wearing her ivory Vivienne Westwood bridal gown while holding her bouquet.

Tish also shared the picture on her Instagram, gushing: "This makes my heart so happy ..."

Liam's famous brothers Luke and Chris were also captured in social media images posted to Instagram, where they could be seen lining up to drink shots from a wooden

plank.

Liam's father Craig Hemsworth was seen at the event too, taking part in the celebrations where he lined up to drink shots with his boys.

In the days, that followed the A-list couple's nuptials, there was no official announcement but they first posted multiple photos and videos on social media to confirm it.

Some of their famous friends, including British DJ and producer Mark Ronson and romance author Nicholas Sparks, also posted congratulatory messages on Twitter.

"They always wanted a small, private celebration with family and close friends and that's what they got," a source told People.com.

"Miley seems ecstatic.

"She loves her Tennessee home and was very happy about having the ceremony there."

Women have been mistreated for long: Katherine Waterston

Actress Katherine Waterston feels that Hollywood is changing in terms of gender parity and women empowerment. But the "Fantastic Beasts" star says that it is a long, painful and slow process. "Women for so long have been mistreated or undervalued. It perpetuates the abuse. The more the world and young boys see that women are represented equally to men, that they are making the same amount of money...they will be like 'I should respect them equally'," Waterston told IANS here when asked about the ongoing #MeToo movement and discussions around gender equality in Hollywood. "It is a long, painful and slow process and I am hopeful that I am going to continue to see progress," she added.

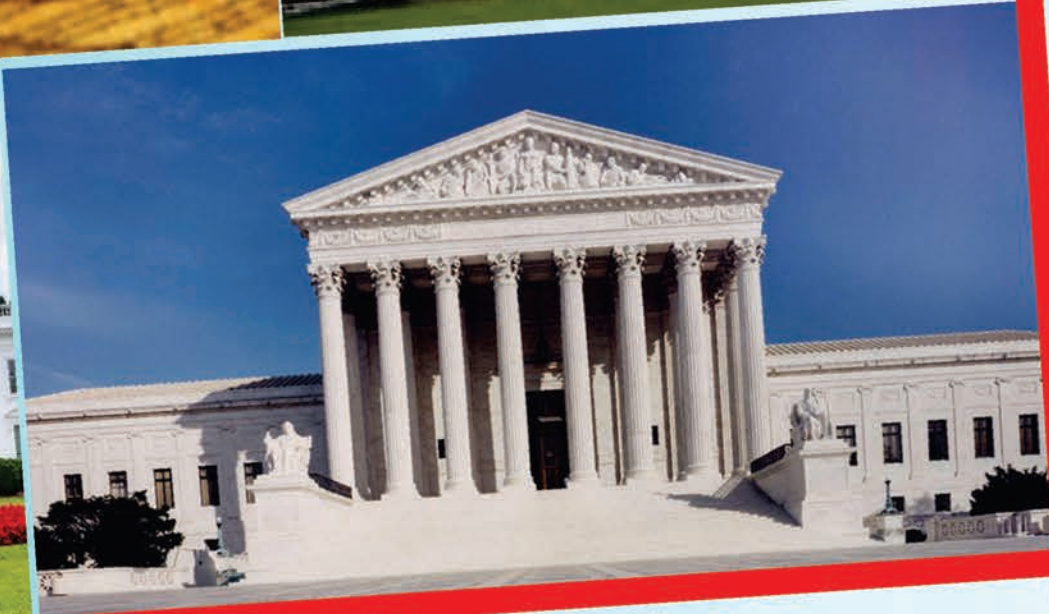
The actress said one has to wait for at least 10 years to witness an actual change. "We are in the middle of it right now. I am very optimistic that it will get better and better. But in a way we don't have a perspective on that yet that how much it is going to change things."

The actress continued: "I always say that I wish journalists would talk to very young actresses. They might have a hard time getting access to because people are the most vulnerable when they first start out.... I wonder what it is like for those girls for who some agent or producer or someone in a position or in power might think 'Well, this person doesn't have the platform to call me out. People will believe me over her'.

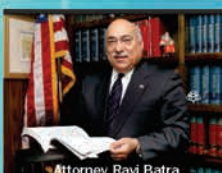
Source:



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- * 2 million + outpatients
- * 300 thousand + eye surgeries
- * 25 thousand + on children

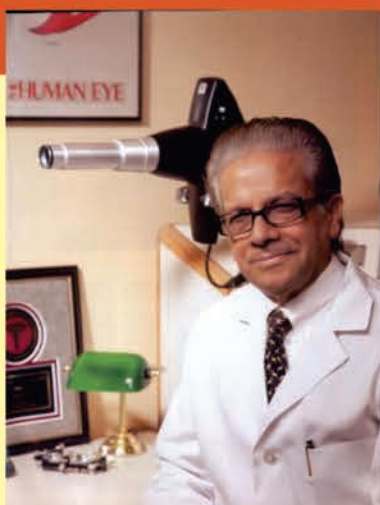
This work by the Eye Foundation of America team started in 1977 and has spread from India to 21 different countries. Additionally, EFA Focuses on teaching and training of health professionals who receive the Foundation's support at every level.

<https://youtube/B23VvUaloN4><https://youtube/KICzqLQe2VE>

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"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." - **Nelson Mandela**
"You be the change you want to see." **M.K. Gandhi**

DR. V.K. RAJU
MD, FRCS, FACS
Founder and
president of the Eye
Foundation of America



The Eye Foundation of America,
695 West View Avenue, Morgantown, WV 26505,
Phone: 304-599-0705
www.eyefoundationofamerica.org
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PICTURES OF THE YEAR 2018

Pic courtesy: Reuters



A child sleeps in a bag in the village of Beit Sawa, eastern Ghouta, Syria, March 15.



South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shake hands at the truce village of Panmunjom inside the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas, South Korea, April 27.



Luis Acosta holds 5-year-old Angel Jesus, both from Honduras, as a caravan of migrants from Central America en route to the US.



U.S. President Donald Trump observes a demonstration featuring U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division troops, an attack helicopter and artillery during a visit to Fort Drum, New York, August 13.



McLaren's Fernando Alonso and Sauber's Charles Leclerc crash at the first corner during the F1 Belgian Grand Prix, August 26.



A Palestinian man argues with an Israeli soldier during clashes over an Israeli order to shut down a Palestinian school near Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, October 15.



Saleh Hassan al-Faqeh holds the hand of his 4-month-old daughter, Hajar, who died at the malnutrition ward of al-Sabeen hospital in Sanaa, Yemen, November 15.



Afghan journalists are seen after a second blast in Kabul, Afghanistan, April 30. The explosion killed nine reporters, photographers and cameramen covering the attack.



Mahto In The Woods jumps over a small creek on foot while his cousin Jayden Lookinghorse jumps over on his horse on the Cheyenne River Reservation in Green Grass, South Dakota, May 31.



A wounded Palestinian demonstrator, Haitham Abu Sabla, 23, is hit in the face with a tear gas canister fired by Israeli troops during a protest marking al-Quds Day (Jerusalem Day) at the Israel-Gaza border in the southern Gaza Strip, June 8.

2019: CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD



A reveler celebrates as confetti falls during a New Year's celebration in New York's Times Square. (Pic courtesy: AP)



Fireworks light up the Reunion Tower in Dallas, Texas, Jan. 1, 2019, as Texans welcomed the New Year.



A man watches the fireworks exploding over Copacabana Beach during the New Year's celebrations in Rio de Janeiro.



Fireworks illuminate the sky over the Arc de Triomphe during the New Year's Day celebrations on the Champs Elysees, Paris.



Revellers take selfies during a New Year's Eve rehearsal celebration in Madrid, Spain, Monday, Dec. 31, 2018.



People run into the chilly water of Lake Balaton in Szigliget, southwest of Budapest, Hungary, on Jan.1, 2019.



Fireworks explode over the London Eye during the New Year's eve celebrations after midnight in London, Jan. 1, 2019.



Fireworks explode at the Burj Khalifah, considered the world's tallest building, on New Year's Eve to welcome 2019 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



Fireworks explode over the Sydney Harbour during New Year's Eve celebrations in Sydney.



Ms. Bhuvana Rao, Deputy General Manager Americas Air India in conversation with Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, Chief Editor of The Indian Panorama.

Ms. Bhuvana Rao, Deputy General Manager America, Air India succeeded Ms. Vandana Sharma who, upon completion of her tenure was moved to Indira Gandhi International airport as Deputy General Manager. Ms. Rao who was Deputy General Manager Sales & Marketing for Western Region in Mumbai, took charge of her present position on October 17, 2018.

Now, New York is a happening place. No sooner had she come than a new proposal for a direct flight from JFK to Mumbai was in the pipeline. Not much time between October 17 and December 7 when the flight was to be launched.

So, she asked us to wait until after the launch of the flight before she could give us an interview.

So, once she was free after the inaugural flight, Ms. Rao sent a word that she was ready for the interview.

It was a long interview during which we asked Ms. Rao about her personal and professional life, and, of course about the airline-its strengths and weaknesses, its past, present and a possible future. Ms. Rao candidly answered our questions.

We learnt from Ms. Rao that she was born in Delhi. When she was 2 months old, she was taken to Mumbai where she was brought up. She pursued her education until Class 10. Then there came a turning point in her life. In 1980, her father took up a project based out of Nangal, Punjab for a chemical plant being put up by the government. So the entire family, including Bhuvana moved to Chandigarh.

"It was a great change for us", Bhuvana said. "You know coming from a big city like Mumbai to a small place like Chandigarh was very exciting for us. Chandigarh is beautiful for one and we had a lot of amenities like housing etc., So, it was really beautiful."

"The community was great", she continued with her impressions of Chandigarh. "We being outsiders from Punjab, coming from Mumbai but being South Indians, enjoyed the company of our South Indian community members. There is a large set of South Indian community members in Chandigarh. We stayed in Sector 10. We enjoyed our stay."

Custodian of Maharaja in New York - Ms. Bhuvana Rao wants Air India to regain Navratna status

Q. What did you study in Chandigarh?

I did my Pre-University. In fact I was a topper.

Q. And where did you do your Post Graduation from?

I did my MBA at the University in Chandigarh and It was a great experience there as students from all over India would come to study.

Q. How did you like the Punjab University?

It is a great University and teaching is comparable to the World Standards of education. It is one of the finest Universities we have in India.

Q. And you did your MBA in what year?

I did my MBA in 1984. It was in marketing. MBA at that time wasn't a very well-known course and I did not want to go away from the family and preferred being a day scholar. We have students from across who came to study the course.

Q. And then where did you start your career from?

Yeah, my focus was always to start my career in Mumbai. So, I applied for jobs accordingly and When I got through Air India, I was elated. Air India was considered the top PSU's in India. Even though it was a public-sector company, and this had not been in public sector that time, but it had an illustrious background of having had services internationally, with JRD Tata and the reputation of being a Navratna PSU, I naturally felt that it was the greatest option. And the second this is that my mother when in Delhi, once expressed that she sees me working for Air India one day. So maybe it was her wish that was translating into reality. So that's how I ended up with Air India.

Q. So, Air India was your first and last love?

When I was in school, I have vivid memories, you know if your dad travelled abroad it was a big event. So my dad undertook Air India to travel abroad and he used to bring home the centerfolds that we have in Air India and which I still have the one and imagine it was the 747 Aircraft, colorful aircraft and I used to be fascinated by that and used to carry it every day to my school also to show it off to my friends. So, consciously or sub-consciously I had developed love for Air India. I remember that we used to go to Air India building to modify booking and those days Air India building was an iconic one. It was the only building that had an escalator in Mumbai. As kids also I remember going there.

Q. So that was the reason for your love for Air India. I remember 60's and 70's of India, for men the best career choice was Air Force, a lot of romanticism was attached to it and in the 60's I remember for girls, it was the ambition of every beautiful girl to be an air hostess. So what did you join?

I had no ambition to be an Air hostess and since I had done my MBA, I wanted to join a management position and hence I joined as a management trainee. I did not start in flight.

Q. You said this was Navratna PSU, Air India has a very checkered history, I was going through how it started. It is almost 86 years old and that is when TATA started TATA airlines and then couple of years later around 46, it became Air India. It has been doing so well, it has been carrying the best of the people of India and around the world but somewhere around the line, Air India lost the status of its Navratna PSU, you having been with Air India, seen the ups and downs, being resuscitated with some financial infusion from time to time; what do you think went wrong and when did things go wrong with air India?

It's a very good question because frankly the real decline of Air India started because of the lack of customer orientation. The moment it lost sight of the customer and this happened because of the emergence of mass travel to the gulf. So when, as I had joined Air India and I could see the signs that Air India was no longer focusing on the customer or on quality, it was rather focused on the gulf boon, which was when I joined. So there was a lot of focus on this mass traffic, which was very lucrative for Air India and as a result there seem to have been an oversight where the customer did not figure anything. According to me that was the beginning of an end for Air India. Any company in order to survive unless you are keeping the customer as a center of focus you will not be able to in the long run sustain.

Q. When did this happen?

The gulf boon was in the 80's. When I joined Air India, I found that the aircrafts were older than our box and that is what struck me that how can we operate with such old aircrafts because old aircrafts automatically means poor upkeep and poor facilities for the customers and it means high costs as well. So as a result of that, all out operations seem to be becoming unviable because of one the passenger appeal was lacking in the kind of services we were having and secondly the costs were very high and thirdly we had this huge competition. So Air India has always had competition.

Q. Who were the competitors?

The western carriers, at that time also they spread their wings in India way beyond the what their two traffic between the country and India warranted. You had Lufthansa, British Airways. They were called Euro majors and they were operating multiple services to India far higher than what was warranted by the market potential between our respective countries.

Q. This situation was probably remedied when you joined Star Alliance?

That has happened very recently, I am talking about the 80's and 90's. So in 80's and 90's one we were expanding in a big way beyond their market potential as I said. Air India on the other hand was skinned below because of old aircrafts and this was a huge disadvantage. These other Airlines were getting more and more rights to operate and it was not justified by the market and we used to see a huge outflow of foreign exchange because of that because they were operating services and the money that they earned in India had to be repatriated and all these things were known and there was no will to, I mean Air India unfortunately had its hands and legs tied and there was no renewal of aircraft.

Q. What was that authority that decided on the share for each airline to operate globally?

Any services into and outside India, there is something called an Air agreement between the 2 countries, it's a bilateral agreement and usually the bilateral between the 2 countries are negotiated by the civil authorities of both countries and it is based on the true market existing between the 2 countries. Like for e.g. If you have services between Germany and India, the services of the 2 countries will be operated by the 2 carriers of the countries and it should be commensurate to the market between India and Germany. But we found that these entitlements being given, and the services being later operated by the airlines of Europe were far in excess of what they were carrying.

CONTD ON PAGE 39



CONTD FROM PAGE 38

Q. That means that the civil aviation ministry was at fault

Well they were doing it for the development of aviation and for the development of aviation in India.

Q But at the cost of Air India, national carrier?

Also yes, it was at the cost of Air India , definitely and this has been bought out to them many times. We used to study the traffic of other airlines and we used to find that 70% and more was even beyond the hub.For example, if a Lufthansa is operating Frankfurt to India, we used to find that most of the traffic is beyond going to US and that is not their legitimate market.They were making inroads into that.Of course the civil aviation being the national body wants to look at overall picture and I would say you look at the overall picture but also see that your airline is also given the same opportunity and the Govt. being the owner of Air India , that's exactly where the capital must come from.So that was a lacunar ate happened in those days and at the same time in those days it just so happened that the Gulf carriers were born, mid 80's actually 85 Emirates was born and before that Singapore Airlines and other airlines also had come up with a good product and they infact, took the help of Air India to set up their services because Air India was vendor for their service. Then when Emirates came, they started with the exact same strategy that the European Airlines had by building a hub in Dubai. They had he gulf oil which was giving them economical operation and they had the aircraft and the capital and finance to buy so they were able to grow very fast.

Q. Who could have done something to save Air India in that scenario?

That scenario I mean the only way would have been that Air India would have been given the right financing and the ability to be competitive.

Q. Today we are stressed with huge debt, you know the figures, we are faced with the operational losses, we are faced with the lack of confidence among passengers in Air India, I have seen here, and I can tell you more Indian Americans fly by other Airlines than by Air India.May be those who get some benefits they fly, May be those whom you sponsor organizations like FIA has no other choice because they are getting free tickets from you, but then what could be the reasons huge debts, Losses, lack of confidence f customers in Air India , what could be the reasons?

See, there are multiple causes that I told you initially we were handicapped because of the lack of renewal of fleet etc. and also the fact that Air India being a govt. owned airline we do have certain restrictions in being very competitive. All said and done the Airline industry is not an easy one as you know very well that this industry is known to be one of the most difficult ones worldwide not just in India. If you see all Airlines in America go through chapter 11 at some point of time . So we all know that this industry is not an easy one to survive and as Richard Branson famously said that "If you want to be a millionaire, start an airline" start as a billionaire and you will be a millionaire so this industry has certain unique challenges which are not there in any other industry like retail or something you know that this product let's say pen you bought it for Rs. 5 and you can see for Rs. 10 and

you are going to make your profit but in the airline industry it is not so.

There are so many factors outside your control which can change at any time : your cost is not in your hands , most of the cost is uncontrollable costs and



Ms.Bhvana Rao

50%, fuel is playing such an important role and the uncertainty of fuel price is there by the time, I always quote this example, you have bought a ticket today you say for \$1000 based on our cost and by the time you travel the fuel prices have gone up.

Q They have come down also?

Sometimes they come down but very rarely.So in this industry, one there are all these very uncontrollable factors and there is an uncertainty of a very high degree, there are fluctuations in the exchange rate which you cannot do away with I mean you need to cope with them and its fiercely competitive too because of huge competition so there is for example between India and USA there are about 70 or 80 airlines you can travel, you can travel via any point in this world Kazakhstan, Kirgizstanname it and so there are so many options available but the pricing power is automatically effective. So on the revenue side on one hand you have these challenges and on the other side any slightest change in the environment effects the airline for e.g. We have had time when there have been an outbreak or surge effecting services , then we have other event happening in some part of the world you know like say volcanic ash and all the flights are affected and lot of times like 9-11 because of this people were scared to travel. So, all these kind of unanticipated events affect this industry so this industry is one of the most vulnerable ones to any external environmental factors , it's also hugely dependable on controllable factors like fuel and exchange rates and its highly highly competitive so these 3 reasons and the product is highly perishable of course as we all know that you have to decide your price based on demand and supply so we are different family members in the industry. It's not the same as any traditional industry where you know what your cost is, and you know what you are going to get as a margin.

Q.Done , upto this point you are talking about passenger traffic. How about Cargo? The same principles do not apply to cargo?

Yes, I understand. Cargo is a very important and huge market I understand.

Q. Given so much of export and import?

Correct, you see because of the same reasons of capitalization etc. Air India was never able to grow into all these areas which it could have because Cargo is a missed opportunity for Air India considering the fact that the market in India is mind boggling but Air India is a very small presence in that area as in that we operate cargo as a part of our services so it's only a small component meaning we do not have freighters. We

are in a small way. Then talking about passenger confidence that is one of the points in the earlier thing you had mentioned , now so when you have older aircraft you are bound to have people come out with a feeling that the product is not good and that will automatically lead to a lack of confidence and yes at one time this was true but I feel in the last 8 to 10 years ever since we bought the new aircraft, passenger confidence has returned and in fact now Air India is enjoying extremely good load factors on all its international flights and I have also had a lot of passengers like I was also earlier in France that telling me people used to avoid Air India because of the old aircraft and now ever since we have got the new aircrafts the Dreamliner which it was at that time in Europe, we have started and come back to India and the same is the case herein US, ever since we have had the 747 400's have been doing extremely well and now the 777 300 which is a great aircraft in terms of comfort, it's one of the best aircraft and the Air India seat pitch is so comfortable that it is as good as the premium economy of any other airline. I cannot share the statistics for obvious reasons, but I can probably just give you an idea pf them but definitely we are doing extremely well as far as financial factors are concerned and operationally too our US flights are doing very well and in spite of a lot of competition. This is in the phase of as I told you every Airline under the sun.

Q. In today's world Ms. Bhvana when transparency is made possible through internet even a child can find out. We compare the prices you know , So Air India is always offering tickets at a much higher rate you know than other airlines, what is the problem?

Let me make it very clear, when you say prices , there is no such thing as a static price that's one. You will have the price on the flight depending on the demand or the supply. Price is something that is totally determined in a market like this . These are not markets where you can dictate prices. It's all dependent upon competitive forces and your own requirement. If you have a flight to fill up and you find that the loads are not picking up there are revenue management systems which are analyzing on a day to day basis as to how is the demand picking up on a flight as against how it should be at the end of the flight or how it was earlier. So, this data based on that its extrapolating and telling you that we do not have one price.

Q. On any given day Bhuavana, if I want to go to Delhi and I am looking for a ticket, I find Air India costlier than the tickets of other Airlines, particularly the Gulf Airline.

Now the reason for that is very simple. Any Indian here who calculates dollar in rupee thinks I had better buy a gift for my family there. So, to answer this basic thing is that Air India is a nonstopcarrier; so we can't be putting ourselves at the level of the one stop. Having said that there are times in the year when there is a low season .There is need for us to fill up our flights and demand is low and at that time we do give the passengers ample opportunity and again as I told you it's a dynamic thing , prices are not fixed forever , they are going up and down. They may close a departure, it may go up. It all depends on what time do you do it and if at that time the flight happens to be experiencing high demand then it will be sold in a higher price bucket . So when we work in revenue management, our whole objective is to optimize the fare , we don't try to maximize because if we sell all the tickets at a high price, we cannot have the buyers . So it's an art and our revenue management people are doing a very good job by monitoring everyday how the flight is viz a viz what the demand levels are and how the competitors are priced. So one of the important things that has always factored into it is the competitor prices.

Read full interview at www.theindianpanorama.news



Bejan Daruwalla: An Ardent Devotee of Lord Ganesha who can foresee the Future

"Live, love and laugh", recommends "The Astrologer of the Millennium"

Bejan Daruwalla has many feathers in his crown. Known as 'The Astrologer-Par-Excellence', 'The King Astrologer', 'The Man with Power to Foresee' Ganesha Bejan Daruwalla is acknowledged as one of the 100 great astrologers in the last 1000 years in The Millennium Book of Prophecy, published by Harper Collins, USA. His clients list features world's who's who including Head of States, Politicians, film stars among others. But this humble man considers the highest and the most precious reward and award is the love and affection that his followers shower upon him.

World-renowned astrologer and prophet Bejan Daruwalla does not need a lyrical and eloquent introduction as his illustrious line of work speaks well enough for him.

Born on 11th July 1931, Bejanji is an ardent devotee of Lord Ganesha even though he hails from a Parsi (Zoroastrian) background. He has also served as a professor of English in Ahmedabad.

Bejanji has won numerous accolades and widespread recognition for his unerring predictions such as the death of Sanjay Gandhi, the rise of Bharatiya Janata Party, the Kargil War and the Gujarat earthquake. He also predicted future of three Prime Ministers of India - Morarji Desai, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Narendra Modi.

While a plenty of astrologers tend to follow one or two techniques to make astrologer's predictions, Bejanji is known to combine the principles of Vedic and Western astrology, I-Ching, Tarot, Numerology, the Kabalah and even Palmistry. The right combination of these principles enables him to make highly accurate and relevant predictions. Moreover, naturally gifted with a spectacular intuitive prowess, he listens to and relies on his inner voice, and seeks Ganesha's blessings to foresee and predict.

"By the grace of Ganesha, I have spent most of my life studying and practising astrology, and have thus acquired a lot of experience and knowledge. I want to leave it behind for the betterment of mankind", says India's most famous astrologer.

With this vision, he had formally inaugurated his website GaneshaSpeaks.com with its path-breaking range of astrological services in the year 2003.

Bejanji has been closely associated with a number of newspapers including The Indian Panorama, magazines, television channels and publishing houses all over the world. He has also appeared on NBC and ABC TV channels in Columbus, Ohio, and was featured on the BBC in Hard Talk India in August 1999. Moreover, Bejanji's vision and accurate predictions have earned him a place in the coveted group of best-selling Indian authors. His articles/ predictions are regularly published and carried in The Sunday Times of India (Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai), Telegraph (Kolkata), Navhind Times (Goa), Dell Annual Horoscope (New York), News India (New York), Berkley Communications (London), besides others.

Bejanji's achievements and accuracy have been appreciated and acknowledged by many. Bharat Nirman, an all India organization that promotes and takes up constructive program in all walks of life, awarded him the title of "The Astrologer of the Millennium" on August 27, 2000. Also, the Federation of Indian Astrologers has awarded him the highest degree of Vedic Astrology - Jyotishi Mahahopadhyaya, whilst The Russian Society of Astrologers



With Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijay Rupani at his residence in Gandhinagar. L to R: Bejan Daruwalla, unidentified lady, Chirag, Rupani



Bejan Daruwalla (left) is addressing a gathering Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India in Gujarat



Bejan Daruwalla is cutting cake with Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Devendra Fadnavis at his residence in Mumbai. Chirag is seen to the extreme right.



of St. Petersburg had conferred on him the Best Astrologer of 2009 award.

But if someone asks Bejan about the best moment of his life, his answer will be - when the Dalai Lama asked Bejan to put his own hand on Dalai Lama's head at the India International Centre, Delhi. Bejan has never completely got over it.

His philosophy of life is "Live, love and laugh. Keep this as the motto of your life. You will always be happy." In the Penguin book, "Change your Life" Bejan was mentioned

With his favorite Prince Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar at City Palace, Udaipur



Bejan Daruwalla with Sadhguru at Shri Gautam Adani's house in Ahmedabad. From L to R: Vijay Rupani, Chirag, Bejan Daruwalla, Sadhguru



Bejan Daruwalla was at the wedding reception of Kapil Sharma in Mumbai to bless the couple

as one of those who could motivate and inspire others to give their very best.

MOTTO IN LIFE: To leave the world a better place to stay in for all.

Fond of Bollywood, Bejan's favorites actors are Amitabh Bachchan and Salman Khan, and the favorite actress is Karishma Kapoor.

His favorite singers are Bhimsen Joshi and Pandit Jasraj whom he considers the living legends in the field of classical music.

Bejan has hundreds of well-known personalities, from Heads of State and Heads of governments down, but he is particularly fond of a few, among whom is the youthful Prince of Mewar Lakshyaraj Singh, and former Home Minister of India Sushil Kumar Shinde.

Now at the age of 87, Bejan has come to one firm conclusion that we all have a right to have our own opinion and ideas. We may differ but must do so with decorum and dignity and consider the other person's point of view also. Intuition, imagination, inspiration, investigation, identification are the five I's Bejan believes in.

His advice to astrology students: Be patient, as tolerance is the key to success. This patient and humble man proved this to be true with his own life.

Bejan Daruwalla is based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. He can be reached over phone at 91 8141234275, and by email at info@bejandaruwalla.com (The Indian Panorama Bureau)

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Best Wishes for a
Happy New Year



**Shiv Dass, President, Jackson Heights
Indian Merchants' Association, New York**



Ellis Island Medal of Honor awardee, Shiv Dass is the First Vice Chair of Queens Borough Community Board 3, of which he has been a member for 16 long years. He is a member of Advisory Board of Elmhurst Hospital since 2016. For decades Shiv Dass has been a voice for the South Asian business community in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York. He is a business leader, a community organizer, and member of the local community board and has worked tirelessly to establish a positive and open relationship between the community and the elected officials, and in turn, he is often sought out by politicians seeking to get their message out.

SLIMMING SURGERY PUTS WOMEN AT RISK OF LIFE-THREATENING CONDITION

Ladies, you may want to rethink going under the knife as according to a recent study, liposuction puts you at the risk of developing a rare genetic condition that can lead to fat globules entering their lungs.

Liposuction is a technique in cosmetic surgery for removing excess fat from under the skin by suction.

According to researchers, the condition, known as fat embolism syndrome (FES), is a rare but very serious complication, in which fat travels through the body and blocks blood vessels, but it is notoriously difficult to recognise and diagnose.

The team found that a 45-year-old woman developed a serious life threatening condition after having liposuction.

The authors stressed that liposuction is generally a safe procedure, but it is important for doctors to consider diagnosis of FES, especially in patients with underlying risk factors, such as high body mass index (BMI) and fluid retention (lymphoedema).

Shortly after the procedure, the woman became drowsy and confused and had a high heart rate.

Her condition worsened as she was transferred to intensive care where the doctors suspected that she had dangerously low oxygen levels in her body had acute respiratory distress syndrome.

After further tests, the doctors realised that her symptoms pointed to FES.

The woman remained in hospital and was given oxygen and drugs to help with her heart rate and her breathing.

"FES is a difficult condition to initially diagnose," the authors noted.

"What makes it even harder is the lack of a standardised set of diagnostic criteria to assist the clinician in making the diagnosis," they explained.



Excess skin

As you lose weight after surgery, you may be left with excess folds and rolls of skin, particularly around your breasts, tummy, hips and limbs.

Surgery, such as a tummy tuck, can be carried out to remove the excess skin, although it's generally considered cosmetic surgery so it isn't always available on the NHS.

Ask your GP if surgery to remove excess skin after weight loss surgery is

provided on the NHS where you live.

Risk of dying

Weight loss surgery is a major operation and there is a chance of dying during the procedure or as a result of a serious complication afterwards.

But this is very rare. Recent statistics suggest that only around 1 in 1,400 people who have weight loss surgery in the UK die within a month of the operation.

FOOD CORNER

CASHEW CHICKEN FRIED RICE



Ingredients

1 lb. chicken breasts, cut into cubes 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided 2 eggs, beaten with a dash of soy sauce 1 1/2 cups cubed fresh or canned pineapple 1 large red bell pepper, diced 1/2 cup frozen peas, defrosted 3 green onions, green and white parts, thinly sliced 2 cloves garlic, finely minced 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh ginger 1/2 cup chopped raw, unsalted cashews 2 cups cooked and chilled rice, white or brown 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce 1 to 2 teaspoons chili garlic sauce 1 small lime, juiced 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves, finely chopped

Method

- Marinate chicken in 2 teaspoons of soy sauce and freshly ground black pepper and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
- Heat one tablespoon of oil in a large skillet or wok over medium high heat. Add the chicken to the pan and cook until the chicken is no longer pink, about 7 to 8 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.
- In the same pan, add a teaspoon of oil and gently scramble the eggs. Scoop the eggs into a bowl and set aside.
- Add one tablespoon of oil to the pan and add the pineapple and red pepper. Cook, stirring constantly, until the pineapple is caramelized on the edges and the red pepper has softened, about 3 to 5 minutes. Then add the green onion, peas, ginger and garlic. Cook, while stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds or longer. Transfer the contents of the pan to your bowl of eggs.
- Add the remaining two teaspoons of oil to the pan. Pour in the cashews and toast them, stirring constantly, until the cashews smell fragrant and have turned golden brown, about 30 seconds. Add the rice to the pan and stir to combine. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the rice is hot, about 3 minutes.
- Pour the cooked vegetables and eggs back into the pan with the rice and stir to combine. Season with soy sauce, chili garlic sauce, and lime juice. Taste and adjust seasoning as necessary. Garnish with fresh cilantro.

LIGHT WHITE DOSA

INGREDIENTS

1 cup soaked rice (soaked for at least 3 hrs), 1/2 cup grated coconut, 1/2 tsp salt, 5 cups water, 1 tbsp oil

METHOD

- Grind rice and coconut to a very fine paste then add 5 cups water and salt, Heat a non-stick pan and pour a small amount of batter in the pan, Lower the heat and cover pan for 1/2 a minute or so, Then dribble a few drops of oil around the dosa and serve.



Ways to make your hair grow faster

Trim your hair every month

The ideal way to ensure that your hair grows faster is by trimming your hair every four to eight weeks. Since your hair grows from the roots, by the time it grows out, the end of your gets split ends because of which your hair gets damaged and rough. Trimming your hair will ensure that your hair breathes oxygen and is healthy and grows long.

Hot oil massage

A hot oil massage if done every alternate week works wonders for your hair. Not only do they ensure that your hair grows faster, but it also makes your hair healthy and reduces hair fall. Oils like jojoba oil, olive oil, coconut oil and lavender oil brings shine and volume to your hair.

Vitamin and proteins for your hair

Just a massage of vitamin E or the application of egg yolk on your hair will bring volume and make your hair



healthy. They are also known to heal damaged hair and makes your hair stronger from the roots.

Brush your hair before bedtime

Make sure that you are combing your hair for at least 50 times before you retire for the night. Brushing the hair makes your roots stronger and also reduces hair fall manifold.

IS FRUCTOSE IN FRUIT MAKING YOU FAT?

Fructose, in its pure form, is a simple sugar found naturally in fruit. It's also found in honey, maple sugar, some vegetables (e.g., onions, potatoes), some grains (e.g., wheat, rice, barley and rye), and it makes up half (50 per cent) of sucrose (table sugar) — the most common form of 'added sugar' to processed food and drinks, and consequently a major source of fructose in Australia. Making headlines this week was a small study published in the PNAS, which showed that fruit sugars 'may worsen food cravings'.

Why? The study suggests that fructose, compared to glucose, activates regions in the brain involved in attention and reward, which in turn bring on a feeding frenzy. Subjects in this study consumed a sugary drink sweetened with fructose on one day and glucose on another day. Compared with glucose, the fructose drink led to increased hunger and desire for sugary foods suggesting different sugars behave differently in the body.

This study adds to previous research that shows large amounts of fructose triggers processes in the body like fat accumulation around the belly, a rise in triglycerides (harmful blood fats that increase the risk of a heart attack), an increased risk of insulin resistance (the precursor to diabetes), as well as liver toxicity.

Consuming too much fructose?

First of all, the problem with studies pointing the finger at "fructose" is that it doesn't paint the whole picture. The reality is we rarely eat pure refined fructose in isolation (except exclusively in fruit), let alone in the amounts required to cause adverse health problems. In other words, it's impossible to overeat fructose by eating fruit.



Secondly, eating fructose or glucose in isolation is very different to eating them within the context of a food. For example, whole fruits — along with its naturally occurring fructose is packaged up with a bounty of antioxidants and diluted with water and other nutrients giving metabolic advantages such as slow digestion and satiety (feelings of fullness). What's more, most of the research concerning the effects of fructose has used very high doses — much more than people would normally eat in real life.

For example there is evidence that consuming large amounts (> 24 teaspoons) of pure refined fructose a day on top of a regular diet might be converted to fat — but experts would argue this is most likely from the extra calories.

Needless to say, there is strong evidence to shows increasing sugar — in sweetened beverages, including fruit juice — does cause modest weight gain. That's because fruit juice is basically a concentrated source of sugar and

chances are guzzling down liquid calories in juice is not compensated by a reduction in calories from other foods. Fruit juices are also acidic and frequent consumption may increase the risk of dental decay. This is why nutritionist always recommend choosing whole fruit over fruit juice. Similarly, dried fruits (like sultanas) are also a concentrated source of sugar, and likewise with fruit juice are easy to consume large amounts.

How much is too much?

There are currently no specific recommendations for fructose but there are for sugars in general. Consuming no more than 10 per cent of total energy intake, or less than 13 teaspoons of added sugar for an average Australian, which is similar to that recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). However, the WHO states that a further reduction to below 5 per cent or roughly 25 grams (6 teaspoons) per day would provide additional health benefits.



SIGNS OF HEART ATTACK WOMEN SHOULD KNOW

Studies show heart attacks and heart disease are under-diagnosed in women, as their symptoms do not match that of men. To prevent a heart attack from sneaking up on you, watch for these seven little-known signs of heart attack:

Fatigue

More than 70 per cent of women reported extreme fatigue in the months prior to their heart attacks. This was an overwhelming fatigue that sidelined them from their usual schedules for a few days at a time.

Insomnia

Despite their fatigue, women who've had heart attacks remember experiencing unexplained inability to fall asleep during the month before their heart attacks.

Anxiety and stress

Stress has long been known to up the risk of heart attack. But what women report is the emotional experience; before their heart attacks they felt anxious and stressed, more than usual.

Indigestion or nausea

Stomach pain, intestinal cramps, nausea, and digestive disruptions are other signs reported by women heart attack patients.

Shortness of breath

Women couldn't catch their breath while walking up the stairs or doing other daily tasks.

Flu-like symptoms

Clammy, sweaty skin, along with feeling light-headed and weak, can lead women to wonder if they have flu when, in fact, they're having a heart attack.

Jaw, ear, neck, or shoulder pain

Many women say they felt pain and a sensation of tightness running along their jaw and down the neck, and sometimes up to the ear, as well. The pain may extend down to the shoulder and arm—particularly on the left side—or it may feel like a backache or pulled muscle in the neck and back.

Treat diabetes at home

Natural uncooked food

Natural uncooked food is the best medicine for all types of diseases. They have got their own enzymes. They are not diluted with chemicals. Food such as sprouts, fruits, juices, nuts and so on can be taken raw. Eating a diet rich in fibre helps the body to absorb sugars slowly, which in turn keeps blood sugar levels balanced. Soluble type of fibre does the best job of stabilising blood sugar levels. Apples, apricots, beets, berries, carrots, citrus fruits, parsnips, and winter squash are some fruits and vegetables which are rich in soluble fibre. Soluble fibre is also helpful in lowering elevated LDL cholesterol levels, a serious problem in many people with diabetes.

Whole sum diet

Diet which is a combination of vegetables and fruits get a rich array of antioxidants such as vitamin C. Antioxidants prevents the oxidation and damage of artery walls, which otherwise can lead to plaque build-up and heart disease.

Exercise

Exercise has the potential to control the diabetes by nonmedical means. It reduces the severity of the disease and significantly reduces the risk of long-term complications. The energy needed for exercise can help people to lose weight which helps to take some of the risk related to central obesity. Exercise is known to increase insulin sensitivity which essentially helps to tackle the root cause of type 2 diabetes. Also, regular exercise can also help to reduce cholesterol levels



and help people to reduce high blood pressure. Even a little extra activity each day can help.

Meditation

Meditation lowers the insulin resistance in our body. Stress hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenalin intensify the production of insulin and glucose levels. Reducing these neurohormones through the Transcendental Meditation technique helps to balance glucose and insulin in the blood. This helps to normalize metabolic syndrome and diabetes.

Basil leaves

Basil leaves have power to lower blood sugar levels. Basil leaves contain potent antioxidants that relieve oxidative stress; it's this stress that compounds problems in diabetics.

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DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND



DR. SATISH ANAND
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National
E-Mail: sanandmd@gmail.com

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



BEWARE, NETFLIX USERS. A NEW PHISHING SCAM IS TARGETING YOU

If you are a Netflix subscriber and have received a strange email, it is likely to be another phishing scam. The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has issued a warning for a reported email phishing scam targeted at users of the streaming service.

In a phishing scam, scammers can use fake emails to pose as authentic company in order to steal personal data of the users such as account numbers, social security numbers, even passwords.

According to Mashable, FTC has warned Netflix users to avoid clicking on a suspicious email that asks for personal information to be sent over an email over 'some trouble' with the current billing information.

Netflix clarifies that it never asks for any personal information to be sent over email. If you have received the email, the first thing to do is not to click on anything within the email and look for signs of suspicious emails such as bad grammar and spelling error or if there is no user name.

Users are encouraged to report such email to Netflix's Help Center or forward it to phishing@netflix.com. Source: ANI



Programmer turns Roomba vacuum cleaner into Doom map

A game programmer decided to turn the already powerful smart vacuum cleaner Roomba into an even enviable gaming bot.

According to Mashable, game programmer and designer Rich Whitehouse has released a script via Twitter which allows you to convert the robotic cleaner's trip around your home into a playable Doom map. The script, called Doomba, works with Whitehouse's Noesis software that allows developers to convert models and animations to various formats. Basically, the script tracks your Roomba as it creates its own map in the journey. Once the tracking is completed, you can convert the journey into a Doom-compatible map.

Beware of this fake 'Alexa setup' app for iPhones

Since the time app stores have become a thing, the Apple App Store has arguably been the safest and difficult-to-get-to place for malicious apps. However, a fake Amazon Alexa Setup app still was able to get listed on the App Store and as a surprise, is listed in the "Top Free" apps section.

As per a new report by 9to5Mac, a fake Amazon Alexa setup app, going by the name 'Setup For Amazon Alexa' was found in the US App Store ranking on #6 position under the Utilities category. Additionally, the app was able to acquire thousands of reviews mostly with a five-star rating.

The dupe app claimed to be a guide to the users to set up the Amazon Alexa devices along with listing down various commands, however, actually didn't help at all.

The fake app gaining popularity is attributed to the hike in the sales of the Amazon Alexa devices, providing the fraud app with the opportunity to trick users.

3D-PRINTED ROBOT HAND PLAYS THE PIANO

Scientists have developed a 3D-printed robotic hand which can play simple musical phrases on the piano by just moving its wrist. And while the robot is no virtuoso, it demonstrates just how challenging it is to replicate all the abilities of a human hand, and how much complex movement can still be achieved through design.

The robot hand, developed by researchers at the University of Cambridge, was made by 3D-printing soft and rigid materials together to replicate of all the bones and ligaments - but not the muscles or tendons - in a human hand. Even though this limited the robot hand's range of motion compared to a human hand, the researchers found that a surprisingly wide range of movement was still possible by relying on the hand's mechanical design.

Using this 'passive' movement -- in which the fingers cannot move independently -- the robot was able to mimic different styles of piano playing without changing the material or mechanical properties of the hand. The results, reported in the journal Science Robotics, could help inform the design of robots that are capable of more natural movement with minimal energy use.

Complex movement in animals and machines results from the interplay between the brain (or controller), the environment and the mechanical body. The mechanical properties and design of systems are important for intelligent functioning, and help both animals and machines to move in complex ways



without expending unnecessary amounts of energy.

"We can use passivity to achieve a wide range of movement in robots: walking, swimming or flying, for example," said Josie Hughes from Cambridge's Department of Engineering, the paper's first author. "Smart mechanical design enables us to achieve the maximum range of movement with minimal control costs: we wanted to see just how much movement we could get with mechanics alone."

Over the past several years, soft components have begun to be integrated into robotics design thanks to advances in 3D printing techniques, which has allowed researchers to add complexity to these passive systems.

The human hand is incredibly complex, and recreating all of its

dexterity and adaptability in a robot is a massive research challenge. Most of today's advanced robots are not capable of manipulation tasks which small children can perform with ease.

"The basic motivation of this project is to understand embodied intelligence, that is, the intelligence in our mechanical body," said Dr Fumiya Iida, who led the research. "Our bodies consist of smart mechanical designs such as bones, ligaments, and skins that help us behave intelligently even without active brain-led control. By using the state-of-the-art 3D printing technology to print human-like soft hands, we are now able to explore the importance of physical designs, in isolation from active control, which is impossible to do with human piano players as the brain cannot be 'switched off' like our robot."

This neural network can detect age, gender of people in videos with more accuracy

A team of researchers has trained neural networks to identify certain people on video, detecting their age and gender more quickly -- almost 20% more accurately.

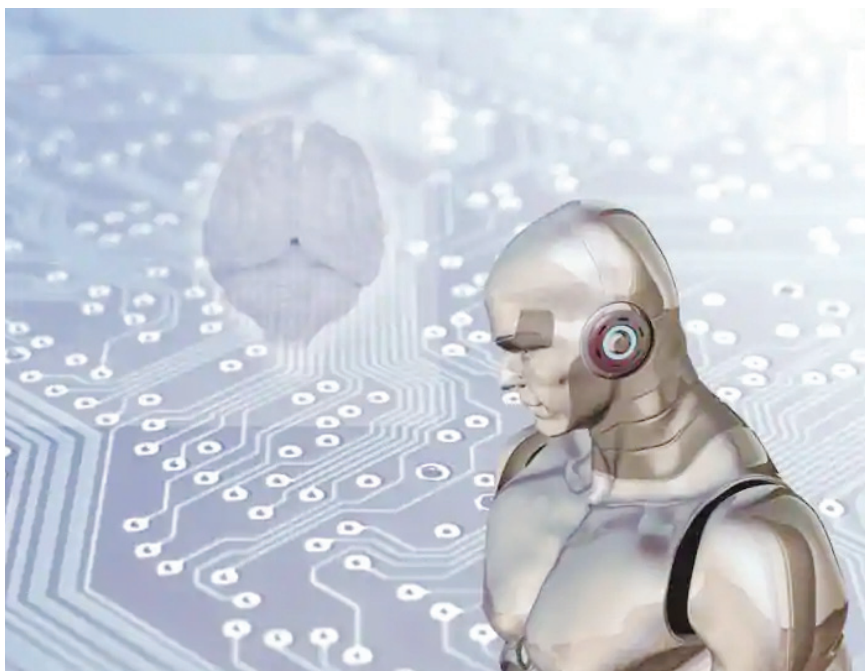
The development has already become the basis for offline detection systems in Android mobile apps, said researchers from National Research University's Higher School of Economics.

Modern neural networks detect gender on videos with a 90% accuracy and the situation with age prediction is much more complicated.

Due to various conditions of observations or even slight head rotation, prediction of the same person's age in different video frames varies in the range of 5 years, plus or minus.

Experts in computer vision headed by Professor Andrey Savchenko found a way to optimise neural networks' operations.

Experiments on several video datasets proved that their technology allows for implementation of today's most accurate algorithms of gender and age recognition on video as compared to other popular convolutional neural networks, said the study published in an article titled "Video-based age and gender recognition in mobile applications". The findings may be used by the smartphone manufacturer to



create various recommendation systems. For example, if a user has a considerable amount of content with a toddler, he or she would be offered an advertisement for a children's store.

"If they have a lot of friends in photos taken on certain days, the smartphone will suggest a restaurant for a party. This technology has already attracted

interest of the biggest smartphone manufacturer," said the study.

"To avoid wasting time and battery charge, we use our efficient convolutional neural network to analyse the images," said Savchenko, adding that "we also pay a lot of attention to privacy: processing is done only on the user's smartphone in offline mode".

INDIA'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES UP BY OVER \$167 MN

NEW DELHI (TIP): India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves rose by \$167.2 million during the week ending December 21, official data showed on Friday.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s weekly statistical supplement, the overall forex reserves increased to \$393.287 billion from \$393.120 billion reported for the week ended December 14.

India's forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, special drawing rights (SDRs) and India's position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged higher by \$105.2 million to \$367.97 billion during the week ended December 21.

Besides the US dollar, FCAs consist of 20-30 per cent of other major global currencies. The RBI's weekly data showed that the value of the country's gold reserves rose by \$37.2 million to \$21.22 billion.

Similarly, the SDR value went up by \$8.9 million to \$1.459 billion, while the country's reserve position with the IMF increased by \$15.9 million to \$2.63 billion.

RBI?autonomy in focus after a tumultuous year

Differences between the finance ministry and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) over the direction of monetary policy and the level of borrowing costs are not uncommon. In 2018, the discord was on full public display until, finally, RBI Governor Urjit Patel quit abruptly on December 10, citing personal reasons.

The points of conflict between the RBI under Patel and the government were



wider than they had been in the past, ranging from the government's proposed use of RBI's capital reserves, a demand rebuffed by the central bank, more liquidity support for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), a dedicated liquidity window for NBFCs, and easing of lending restrictions on 11 state-run banks with a low capital base and laden by bad debt. The government admitted that it used Section 7 of the RBI Act to give directives to the central bank on matters of public interest.

"They (differences) played out much more in the public domain. Earlier, the friction between RBI and the ministry of finance was on specific policy issues. This time round, the differences were wide ranging and on a wider canvas. Another difference is that this time round, the issues are being fought

through the board of the RBI while earlier the standoff used to be typically between the governor and the finance minister," former RBI governor D. Subbarao said.

At the heart of the discord was the issue of the autonomy that RBI has tried to jealously protect in the face of attempted encroachments by the government on its turf.

RBI expressed its dissent multiple times in 2018 through public speeches, the most notably one being an October oration by deputy governor Viral Acharya on RBI's autonomy. "Governments that do not respect central bank independence will sooner or later incur the wrath of financial markets, ignite economic fire, and come to rue the day they undermined an important regulatory institution," Acharya warned.

RBI UNVEILS LOAN RECAST SCHEME FOR SMALL UNITS



NEW DELHI (TIP): The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday announced a one-time restructuring scheme for stressed loan accounts of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), one of the key demands of the government.

Unveiling the scheme on Tuesday, the RBI said the aggregate exposure, including non-fund based facilities of banks and non-bank entities, to a small borrower should not exceed Rs 25 crore as on January 1, 2019. The restructuring has to be implemented by March 31, 2020. "A provision of 5 per cent in addition to the provisions already held, should be made in respect of accounts restructured under this scheme," it said in a notification.

The issue of restructuring of MSME accounts was discussed in the meeting of the Central Board of RBI on November 19, 2018. The matter was also discussed during RBI's recent interactions with the banks and other stakeholders. The RBI was initially reluctant to sanction such a forbearance but relented in the wake of pressure from several board members who pushed for the bail-out small borrowers hit by demonetization and implementation of GST.

This is the second major announcement after Shaktikanta Das took over as the RBI Governor. The central bank had last week announced the formation of a committee headed by Bimal Jalan to look into the issue of surplus reserves of the RBI, another contentious issue between the government and the RBI.

Despite better compliance, December GST collections slide to Rs 94,726 crore

NEW DELHI (TIP): Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections continued to slide downwards for the second straight month, falling to Rs 94,726 crore in December (for November), data released by Finance Ministry on Tuesday showed. The compliance rate, however, improved with 72.44 lakh businesses filing the summary GSTR-3B returns in December as against 69.6 lakh businesses filing GST returns in the previous month.

Cumulatively, the government has collected Rs 8,71,043 crore as GST revenue in April-December, the first nine months of this financial year. With Rs 8.71 lakh crore collected so far and only a quarter remaining in this financial year, the government is still short of the overall target by Rs 4.77 lakh crore, giving rise to concerns about meeting Budget targets. Government finances are already under strain, with government's fiscal deficit for April-November period rising to Rs 7.17 lakh crore or 114.8 per cent of the full-year target of Rs 6.24 lakh crore. In the Budget for 2018-19,

GST collections, including compensation cess, have been pegged at Rs 7.44 lakh crore, out of which the Centre aims to collect Central GST (CGST) of Rs 6.04 lakh crore and Integrated GST (IGST) of Rs 50,000 crore. In theory, IGST is supposed to be equally divided between Centre and the states. Adding State GST (SGST) collections equivalent to CGST would mean the total GST collections have been pegged at Rs 13.48 lakh crore, implying a monthly target of Rs 1.12 lakh crore.

GST collections are expected to slip further after the recent round of rate cuts on 23 goods and services announced in the 31st GST Council meeting held on December 22 and became effective from January 1.

The revenue cost of the latest rate cuts is estimated to be Rs 5,500 crore a year and Rs 1,375 crore in the January-March quarter. Out of the total Rs 94,726 crore collected, central GST (CGST) collection is Rs 16,442 crore, state GST (SGST) is Rs 22,459 crore, integrated GST (IGST) is Rs 47,936 crore (including Rs 23,635 crore collected on imports) and cess is Rs 7,888 crore (including Rs 838 crore collected on imports).

Jet fuel price cut by 14.7%, cheaper than petrol, diesel

NEW DELHI (TIP): Jet fuel price Tuesday was cut by a record 14.7 per cent on the back of decline in international rates, making it cheaper than both petrol and diesel.

The price of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) -- used to power airplanes -- was slashed by Rs 9,990 per kilolitre, or 14.7 per cent, to Rs 58,060.97 per kl, according to price notification issued by state-owned oil firms.

This is the second straight monthly reduction in rates and the biggest single cut ever. Prices were slashed by Rs 8,327.83 per kl, or 10.9 per cent, on December 1.

The two consecutive price reduction has brought ATF rates to their lowest levels in a year and will provide much-needed relief to cash-strapped airlines.

Rates are now cheaper than both petrol and diesel in most parts of the country and it is less expensive than even non-PDS kerosene in cities like Mumbai.

A litre of petrol, used in motorcycles and cars, costs Rs 68.65 in Delhi as compared to Rs 58,060.97 per kl or Rs 58.06 per litre price for ATF. A litre of diesel, which is mostly used as fuel in trucks and buses, comes for Rs 62.66.

ATF costs just a shade higher than the price charged for kerosene sold through non-PDS (public distribution system) outlets in Delhi. Non-PDS in Delhi is priced at Rs 56.59 per litre.

ATF in Mumbai, home to one of the busiest airport in the country, costs Rs 58,017.33 per kl or Rs 58.01 per litre. A litre of petrol in the city costs Rs 74.30 and diesel is priced at Rs 65.56



per litre. It costs less than even non-PDS kerosene in the city which is sold at Rs 59.53 a litre.

Rates vary from city to city depending on local taxes.

Continuing its downward march, petrol price Tuesday was cut by 19 paise a litre and diesel rates were reduced by 20 paise.

Petrol now costs Rs 68.65 a litre in Delhi and diesel is priced at Rs 62.66. Rates have been on the decline since October 18 and cumulatively prices have been cut by Rs 14.18 per litre in case of petrol and Rs 13.03 a litre for diesel.

State-owned fuel retailers revise rates of ATF on 1st of every month based on average international oil rate and rupee-US dollar exchange rate in the preceding month. Petrol and diesel prices are revised on a daily basis.

Kumbh Mela is a religious gathering of Hindu devotees along a holy river for bathing and prayers. The largest congregation on Earth is inscribed on the representative list of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of India. It is held every 12 years at four places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad (Prayag), Nasik and Ujjain. Each of these sites celebrate the occasion along a holy river- Ganga in Haridwar, Triveni Sangam-confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, Shipra in Ujjain and Godavari in Nasik. The mini versions of the event, Ardh Kumbh Mela is held at only two places, Haridwar and Allahabad, every sixth year between two Purna Kumbha Melas.

The recent Ardh Kumbh Mela is all set to commence in 2019 on the holy banks of Triveni Sangam in Allahabad. The auspicious occasion falls in the month of Magh, according to Hindu calendar that is mostly between January-Februarys. According to astrological calculations the occurrence happens when Jupiter is in Aries, Sun and Moon in Capricorn; or Jupiter in Taurus and Sun in Capricorn. Also a Mini Kumbh Mela in the Hindu month of Magh (January-February) Mela is held every year in Allahabad only.

Kumbh Mela legend and significance

There is no concrete proof to the start of the Kumbh Mela. According to Hindu mythology, it dates back to the episode of Samudra Manthan, when Devas and Asuras churned the sea. From the event came forward a pot of Amrit (nectar of immortality). Both parties got involved and fought for 12 days. 1 day of the celestial beings were equated to 12 years in the human world, therefore Kumbh Melas are held after 12 years. During the struggle, few drops of nectar fell on Earth at these locations which are now deemed as holy spots. Ardh Kumbh Mela is held in 6 years in between two Purna Kumbh Melas, while the Maha Kumbh Mela comes in 144 years.

During the Kumbh Mela it is believed that the river waters at these holy sites are charged with divine powers. Therefore, ascetics, devotees and people from all walks of life take a dip in the river waters and cleanse their sins and ultimately attain salvation.

Dates of Allahabad Ardh Kumbh Mela-2019

The Ardh Kumbh Mela in 2019 will start from the auspicious Makar Sankranti that will fall on 14th January and continue till the Maha Shivaratri that will occur on the 4th March.

The auspicious bathing dates are:

- Makar Sankranti (1st shahi Snan) - 14/15 January 2019
- Paush Purnima - 21 January 2019
- Paush Ekadashi Snan - 31 January 2019
- Mauni Amavasya (Main Royal Bath 2nd Shahi Snan) - 04 February 2019
- Basant Panchami (3rd shahi Snan) - 10 February 2019
- Maghi Ekadashi - 16 February 2019
- Maghi Poornima - 19 February 2019
- Maha Shivaratri - 04 March 2019

History of Kumbh Mela

Kumbh Mela, recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, has a history that dates back to thousands of years.

The story of the Samudra Manthan: Legend has it that the forces of good and the forces of evil churned the depths of the ocean together in a quest for a pot (kalasha) that contained the nectar of immortality (Amrit) and other rare jewels. Jayanta, the son of Indra hoped to save the Amrit for the forces of good and fled with the pot of Amrit. Noticing this, Shukracharya, the king of the forces of evil, sent the demons to chase Jayanta.

According to Hindu mythology, one day of the Gods is equivalent to a year to the mortal beings. Jayanta was on the go for 12 days in

ARDH KUMBH MELA



order to save the Amrit from falling into the wrong hands. As he ran, the 4 lands where Jayanta had put down the Amrit Kalasha in these twelve years were Haridwar, Prayag (modern Allahabad), Nashik-Trimbakeshwar and Ujjain. The Amrit enriched the soils of these cities and bestowed on them divine healing properties. And the rivers that flow through the heart of these holy lands are believed to turn into nectar during the time of the Kumbh Mela.

Kumbh means urn. It is believed that drops of Amrit from the urn had given mystical powers to the 4 places that it fell on to. The history behind the Kumbh Mela when both the forces of good and evil churned the ocean to find priceless items is symbolic to the churning deep into one's own mind.

Also, a holy dip into sacred rivers during the Kumbh Mela eternally blesses mortal beings. The soul is cleansed of all sins and humans thus gain the mystical powers of the Amrit as their souls are detached from the infinite cycle of life and death, finally leading to an eternal union with God.

A major driving force to the spiritual life of a Hindu is the inevitable cycle of life. It is believed that the mortal being are bound to an infinite cycle of living, dying and reincarnation. Each rebirth depends on the quality of the last life lived on Earth and thus brings back the soul in a new form in every life. Although, the ultimate purpose of life is to get closer to God by attaining a spiritual epitome.

According to Hinduism, human ash symbolises rebirth. And so, when it has been smeared on the body, it simply means that the person has been born again. Another major aspect of that enriches the soul is Karma. Devotees believe that good karma (good deeds)



help the soul release itself from the continuous cycle of life, suffering and death to eventually unite with the divine. A pilgrimage

to the Kumbh Mela strengthens the soul, adding to Karma so the human soul can reach a higher state of being.

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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."



Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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



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

**011-91-8141234275
www.bejandaruwalla.com**

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE JANUARY 7 - JANUARY 13, 2019

Aries:

Ganesha says - A larger canvas for you this period. You reach out in every way you can - from meetings and rendezvous to fax, email, voice-mail, the works, in short. Not just to people, please remember, but places. The environment, eco-concerns, wider issues also keep you busy. And how: A huge level of awareness and commitment is to be seen in you this period. You are the world, now. Not in confrontation but in fine accord.

Taurus:

The growing awareness of last period develops further. After the pleasures and pain of the material plane, your mind is irresistibly drawn to a higher level. You set your sights on a higher and superior consciousness, spirituality, the cosmic cycle of karma. Also research, higher studies and imbibing knowledge for its own sake. Travel of the mind, and perhaps actual journeys, too, not just spiritual ones, keep you firmly anchored in this world even while you seek another. Conference, business meets, seminars, study tours, pilgrimages.

Gemini:

A somewhat taxing and certainly demanding period lies ahead. A little stress may develop. You could be over-wrought perhaps about unfairness in your work / business and somewhat depleted in health. At the same time, there are useful discussions, meaningful dialogues with those to whom you can reveal your innermost thoughts. Perhaps a mystery could be revealed. The possibility is there, says Ganesha.

Cancer:

A strengthening of commitment comes now - and it's really needed, too. Money will be easy, though not wonderful. Nor will your health. More rest will be very desirable to you as once again, all kinds of pulls could level you feeling as if your batteries are running low and you just can't cope with all that you're required to do. Your faith will energize you, as will your warm interactions with loved ones. Once again you focus very definitely on home, family, property, in several ways.

Leo:

A time when Ganesha endows you with a large measure of satisfaction, the belief that you're going the right way to a better life. Harmony and contentment are your goals now. All that the preceding forecast was about is now sought to be put into action, or motion, by you. You get off to a dramatic, stylish start in the work arena. You are redefining your attitudes to home and career, refocusing on fresh goals in terms of advancement.

Virgo:

A truly fine period, again, in which you find satisfaction in all spheres - work, family, love and marriage. You gain in effortless ways both at home and at work. Understanding and rapport with people who are part of your personal "think-tank" lends to an energizing effect on both money matters and affairs of the heart. You work with equal zest and energy as you play.

Libra:

Energy, inspiration, enthusiasm all comes to you in a torrent with this new moon. The operative word here is new - most definitely. It's ideal for creating a new product / project / venture / piece of art / book / a symphony / poem. Creativity manifests itself even in getting a new job or a new addition to the family. Also a wonderful time for those in the media, publicity, writing, copywriting, the e-world (and that in itself is really a universe, isn't it?)

Scorpio:

A typical Scorpio with its emphasis on faith, religion, spirituality. You feel an urge to live less in the material world and more in the spiritual, but it is material concerns that will force themselves on your attention. Finances, joint-funds, debts and loans will all have to be dealt with or handled in some form or the other. If not your own, they could pertain to the family interactions of the last period.

Sagittarius:

Much comes to you now, and in easy, harmonious ways; you don't have to struggle to achieve. Your efforts produce effects far beyond your expectations. Fun and games are embraced joyfully in a spirit of celebration. Don't let go of the cleanliness of communication and sharing you've established with those around you - friends as well as workmates. You realize and appreciate the role of good people in your life.

Capricorn:

Solid gains - in this world and the higher one too makes it a period of progress. You ponder on deeper questions, undertake further study / training / orientation and gain much in terms of ultimate wisdom and maturity. Good ideas at work, solid interaction with friends, family, mate or lover, all add to the creation of deeper ties. So, travel and ties with a whole new connotation. Not armchair travelling, but travel of the spirit.

Aquarius:

Right now you're really a fine person to know and this will continue, since it's a trend for the month. You are full of grace in your public position, and exercise authority with affection and charm. And that is probably the least of your gains, though it brings mind-bogglingly good results at work and in the family scene. You feel a little more internal, more reflective, more introspective.

Pisces:

Your spiritual and emotional growth has been steady and sustained. It's a much larger canvas that you are painting on, once again leaving your own individual imprint. You function as a part of a group or social organization, see your place in the world order and open up the vistas of your mind. Original studies, research, higher learning, these, hypothesis - even the media, and particularly television - are all part of your sphere.

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Shree Saini Redefines Power of Faith and Courage in her Ascendance to World Stage against All Odds

The reigning Miss India Worldwide survived a heart ailment and a car accident

For Shree, it is just the beginning. Pastures are green. But there are greener pastures ahead. She may as well be thinking of the lovely poem by Robert Frost "Woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And, miles to go before I sleep, And, miles to go before I sleep".

Shree was born in Ludhiana, Punjab. At the age of 5 the little girl came to America with her parents and was brought up in small towns of Colville and Moses Lake in Washington State. Dancing was her passion and she used to dream of being on the world stage one day. But life was not bed of roses for her. For six years, she was an outcast at school for being a person of color. That could not take away her dream and she began dancing in her living room. She was just 15 years old when she was diagnosed with heart disease and got a pacemaker. She had to take years away from dance, but used that time to enroll in public speaking courses and audio book programs. When she was 15, her mom became seriously ill for months. When she was 19, she survived what should have been a fatal car accident...leaving her entire face covered by third degree burns. But nothing could stop her as she wanted to shape her life the way she wanted.

Looks like a Bollywood script? It could be. But this is the real life story of Shree Saini - 2017 Miss India USA who won 2018 Miss India Worldwide crown on December 14th, 2018. Shree's journey as Miss India Worldwide began when she was crowned the national title of Miss India USA December 17th, 2017, amongst hundreds of girls from all over USA. Miss India USA is the longest running India pageant in USA for last 38 years. Shree was also voted by her contestants as "Miss Congeniality". At Miss India USA, there were over 50 exceptionally kind, talented and stunning contestants from all around USA states. The pageants in USA are not only beauty based, they require high quality academies, world class talents like public speaking, dance, singing or musical instrument, exemplifying charity work and extraordinary volunteer hours. Miss India Worldwide is a competition organized by New York-based India Festival Committee led by

Shree Saini - Miss India Worldwide 2018-2019; Miss India USA 2017-2018

Photo / Friday Films



Crowning Glory on Top of the world

Photo / KK Photography, NJ



Let's Celebrate - It's party time for 2017 Miss India USA

Photo / KK Photography, NJ

chairman and founder Dharmatma Saran and Neelam Saran. This was the 27th Miss India Worldwide pageant is dedicated to people of Indian origin in the diaspora. The IFC selects distinguished local organizations in various parts of the world and authorize them to conduct national pageants in their respective countries. At this time, they have affiliates in over 42 countries. For Shree, the preparation to the worldwide stage truly happened at each moment she faced an obstacle and she responded with consistent hard work and kindness. "For my talent competition, I shared my personal life struggles (that I've never shared before) and the message of rising up against any adversity with resilience and kindness. My

CONTD ON PAGE 51



When India's Shree is the Face of USA's Biggest India Day Parade in New York City Photo / KK Photography, NJ

CONTD FROM PAGE 50

dance talked about being bullied for many years, almost losing my mother to illness, suffering from third degree burns on my entire face and living with a heart defeat" reveals Shree. "At age 12, my heart stopped working; I received an open-heart surgery in order to get a pacemaker. I was told I could never dance again or live a normal life. Because of my physical disability, I had to work extra hard to reach my life goals and against all odds, I pushed myself to dance again. Throughout all of my life struggles, I made a choice to RISE UP by responding with love and wisdom to my bullies and responding with resilience to any physical hardships."

Shree gives full credit to her parents for being able to defuse the negativity in any situation and focus on the light within. "Throughout my life struggles, my parents brought me

up with the guidance to Rise Up from emotional and physical hardships by responding with endless love and resilience. My parents taught me about the "Charity of Spirit" that means overlooking offenses and highlighting only the good in others. Winning "Miss India Worldwide" is not just my win, it is a victory of Pure Love & Dedication in hardships and it is a victory of constant kindness when others are not so kind to you."

In order to reprogram her brain towards more positive thoughts and reach an understanding of how mom could find inner peace in spite of all the negativity, she read extensively. "I read books and essays on achieving a more powerful mindset, responding to acts of hate with compassion, and the true value of emotional fitness and what can be done to address the lack of education around it. From what I have learned, I have formed my personal mantra: 'Giving loving and powerful responses to life's



I'm here to stay -Shree with other contestants Photo / KK Photography, NJ



Recognition: Shree honored by India's Consul General in New York Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty Photo / KK Photography, NJ



Shouldering with Kim Wyman, Secretary of State, State of Washington. Photo / KK Photography, NJ

struggles while being a positive contributor to every situation."

In order to give back to the society, Shreestarted her nonprofit shreesaini.org which advocates for hearth health, growth mindset, and the importance of emotional fitness. She is a published author of over thousands of articles in USA newspapers. She also studied tirelessly to finally be accepted to Harvard University, Stanford University and Yale University. Currently she is finishing up senior year at University of Washington.

During her reign as Miss India USA, Shree has performed and spoken hundreds of times in over 70 cities, 11 states and 5 countries, while being a full-time college student. She believes her work as Miss India USA truly prepared her to be an even stronger advocate for charitable causes. "Best part of my reign is being able to make my humble difference in this world. My life goal is to make the most positive impact and especially with this year's title as it allows me to make a stronger presence. Let's celebrate women power, diversity, inclusion and all cultures because that is what our great America stands for" says confident Shree. She strongly believes that her personal struggles and experiences will help others who may face similar physical and other problems - how to handle themselves and not let their condition define them. The dreamer is also confident that we can create a new world if we fill our loved ones with much confidence, self-esteem and compassion so they can rise up against all odds.

For Shree, it is just the beginning. Pastures are green. But there are greener pastures ahead. She may as well be thinking of the lovely poem by Robert Frost "Woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep".

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MALALA: We Are Displaced Book Release by BAM

By Mabel Pais

About Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)

The Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) is recognized internationally for its innovative programming of dance, music, theater, opera, and film. Its mission is to be the home for adventurous artists, audiences, and ideas. BAM presents leading national and international artists and companies in its annual Winter/Spring Season and highlights groundbreaking, contemporary work in the performing arts with its Next Wave Festival each fall.

Founded in 1983, the Next Wave is one of the world's most important festivals of contemporary performing arts. BAM Film features new, independent film releases and a curated, daily repertory film program. In 2012, BAM added the Richard B. Fisher Building to its campus, providing an intimate and flexible 250-seat performance venue--the Fishman Space--as well as the Hillman Studio, a rehearsal and performance space.

BAM serves New York City's diverse population through community events, literary series, and a wide variety of educational and family programs. BAM, America's oldest performing arts center, has presented performances since 1861, and attracts an audience of more than 750,000 people each year. For more information, visit BAM.org.

About Greenlight Bookstore

Founded in October 2009, Greenlight Bookstore is a general independent bookstore with two store locations in Brooklyn, as well as kiosks at BAM theaters. Through knowledgeable staff, curated book selection, community partnerships, and a robust e-commerce website as well as beautiful bookstore spaces on Fulton Street and Flatbush Avenue, Greenlight combines the best traditions of the neighborhood bookstore with a forward-looking sensibility. Greenlight has garnered local, national, and international press coverage for its innovative startup model and its continuing success. In addition to partnering with BAM on the Unbound series, Greenlight hosts literary events in its stores several nights a week.

More details, tickets and book purchase information can be found at greenlightbookstore.com.

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.

General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St. Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAM café, operated by Great Performances, offers varied light fare and bar service prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances.

How To Get to BAM: Subway:

2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue - Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater) D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
TRAIN: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal - Barclays Center
BUS: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM



Malala Yousafzai

She is the youngest co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and was named one of Time's 100 Most Influential People in the World.

Unbound, a book launch series co-presented by BAM and Greenlight Bookstore, presents Malala Yousafzai on the release of *We Are Displaced* - Jan 8

Program

UNBOUND: Malala Yousafzai in conversation with Rukmini Callimachi

Launch of *We Are Displaced*: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House (30 Lafayette Ave), Brooklyn, NYC
Jan 8 at 7:30pm

As part of BAM's Unbound series, New York Times best-selling author (I Am Malala and Malala's Magic Pencil) and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai comes to BAM to discuss her powerful new book, *We Are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World*, with New York Times award winning journalist Rukmini Callimachi.

Millions of people are displaced worldwide-too often because they had to choose between life and death. In the book, Yousafzai introduces some of the people behind the statistics and tells her own story

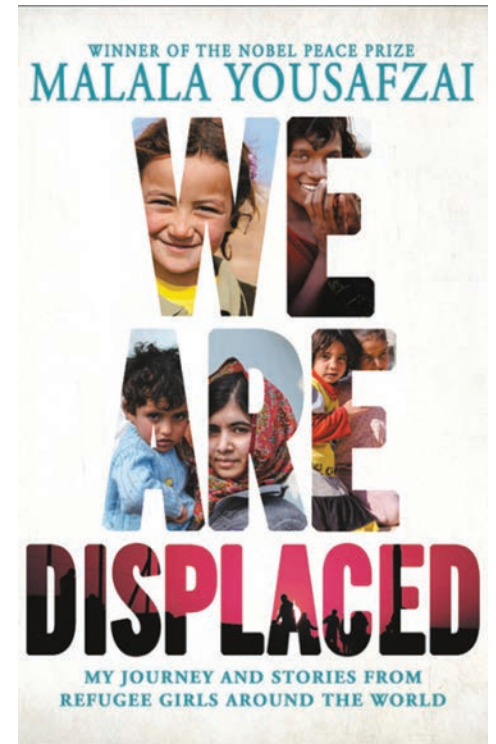
About Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai is a cofounder and board member of Malala Fund. Yousafzai began her campaign for education at age 11, when she anonymously blogged for BBC Urdu about life under the Taliban in Pakistan's Swat Valley. Inspired by her father's activism, Yousafzai soon began advocating publicly for girls' education, attracting international media attention and awards.

At age 15, she was attacked by the Taliban for speaking out. Yousafzai recovered in the United Kingdom and continued her fight for girls. In 2013, she founded Malala Fund with her father, Ziauddin.

A year later, Yousafzai received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her efforts to see every girl complete 12 years of free, safe, and quality education. She is currently a student at Oxford University, pursuing a degree in philosophy, politics, and economics.

of living as an internally displaced person in Pakistan to show readers what it means to have no choice but to leave your home. She also shares the personal stories of some of the incredible girls she has met on her various journeys to refugee camps and the cities where refugee girls and their families have settled-girls who have lost their



Book cover, *We Are Displaced*

community, relatives, and often the only world they've ever known. In a time of immigration crises, war, and border conflicts, *We Are Displaced* is an important reminder of the need for universal human rights.

The evening features a discussion between Yousafzai and Callimachi. Audience questions will be gathered in advance. The event will be American Sign Language (ASL) interpreted.

Copies of *We Are Displaced* will be available for a 15% discount on the night of the program. The author's net sales proceeds from the book will go to Malala Fund, which is a nonprofit organization working for a world where all girls can learn for 12 years and lead without fear. Copies of the book can also be purchased through BAM's website for donation to students participating in BAM's education programs. For more information about donating please visit <https://tickets.bam.org/ace/templates/donate-now-pages/donate-a-book/>

For more information about her latest book, visit <https://www.lbyr.com/titles/malala-yousafzai/we-are-displaced/9780316523646/>

(Mabel Pais writes on Social Issues, The Arts & Entertainment, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness)

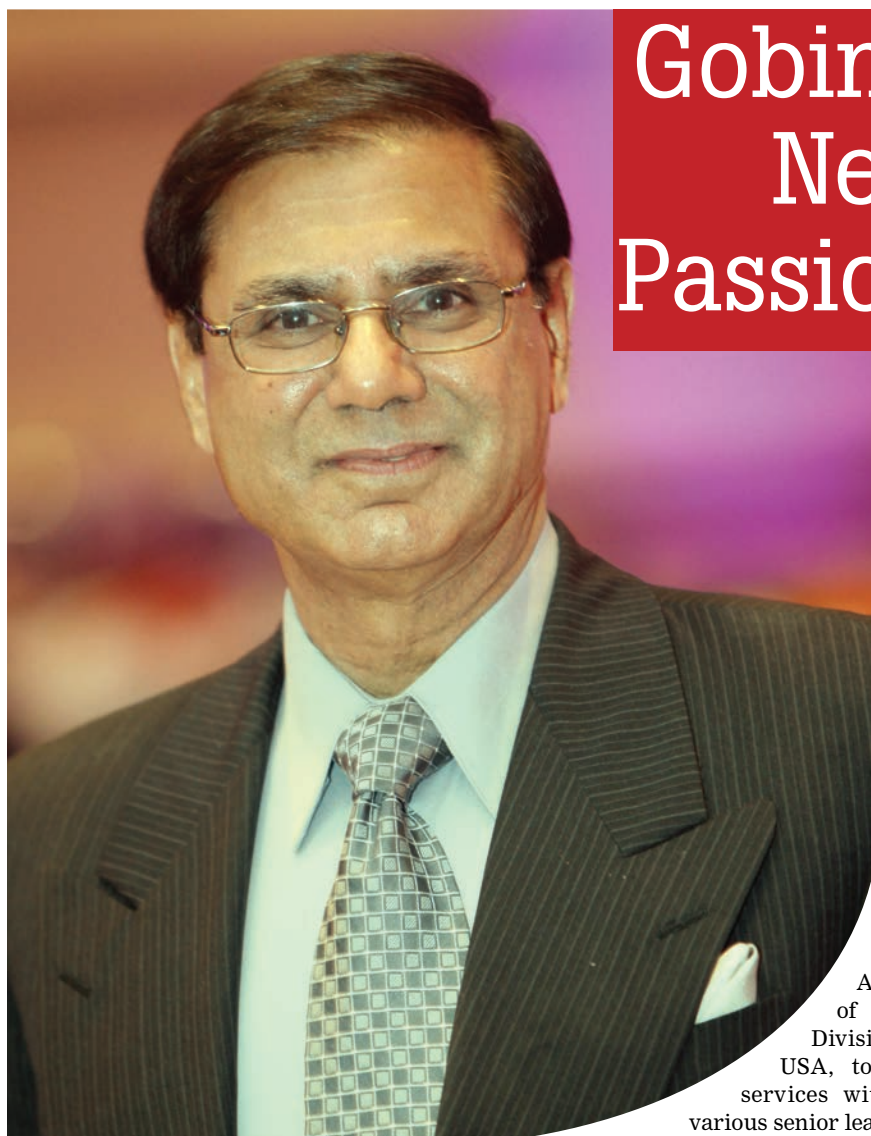
About Rukmini Callimachi

Rukmini Callimachi has been called "arguably the best reporter on the most important beat in the world." A three-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, she covers the Islamic State for The New York Times.

Born in Communist Romania, Callimachi and her family fled the country when she was five years old, becoming refugees in Switzerland before immigrating to America. After years of covering city hall and park district meetings at a small newspaper in Illinois, she joined The Associated Press and was posted to Senegal in 2006. She became the news agency's West Africa bureau chief in 2011. In 2014, she was hired by The New York Times, covering first Al-Qaeda and later ISIS around the world.

Besides being a Pulitzer finalist in 2009, 2014, and 2016, she has won the George Polk Award, the Michael Kelly Award for the Fearless Pursuit and Expression of Truth, and the Sigma Delta Chi Award. She is also the only journalist in the 75-year-history of the Overseas Press Club to win both of the club's top two reporting awards in the same year.





Gobind Munjal: A Leader with Never Ending Spirit and Passion for Community Service

It's very difficult to name any Indian American organization that Gobind Munjal is not associated with. He is a person who actually tries to escape when offers were made to him to head an organization. He is a rare persona who is passionate about acquitting himself when he takes on a responsibility. Gobind Munjal is a 'True Leader' who has inspired his teammates to put the best foot forward and mentored scores of people who very proudly hold responsible positions in their professions and in community.

A successful Chartered Accountant and CPA by profession, Gobind Munjal has worked as a Senior Vice President of Finance and Mergers & Acquisitions and served on the Board of Directors of the International Division of Tata Group of Hotels in the USA, totaling 30 years of professional services with the renowned Tata Group in various senior leadership positions.

In 2006 he started his own advisory and consultancy services.

His involvement in community affairs and activities started long ago when he initiated India Association of Long Island (IALI) home project, the fastest and largest growing not for profit organization in Long Island representing Indians in America with over 2,000 members.

In 2011, he was elected as the President of IALI and successfully led a highly successful India Fest attended by an overwhelming crowd of over 10,000 people, which showcase the rich Indian Culture & traditions, Arts & Crafts, Fashion shows, Shopping, Mehndi, children games, and food stalls with different types of Indian cuisine; and

In 2012, as Convener of the very first highly successful India Day Parade in Hicksville, Long Island, he raised substantial funds and help in bringing all the community-based organizations together.

In 2014, as Chairman of the IALI India Center Committee, Mr. Munjal achieved the goal of owning the IALI India Center, a long-cherished dream of the Indian Community.

Dr. Jagan Pahuja told The Indian Panorama that he knows Gobind Munjal since Munjal got involved in IALI some five years ago. "I have found him to be sincere, conscientious, hardworking and helpful to all. He gets along very well with everybody. I have high regards for him. I consider him a good person and a great friend. So is Suman, his wife".

Gobind Munjal has received numerous Citations and Awards in his year as President of IALI, among them being the Certificate of

Recognition from Hon. Kate Murray, Supervisor, Town of Hempstead and has been honored with a Citation by Nassau County Executive Hon. Ed. Mangano and NYS Comptroller Thomas Di Napoli. During his professional career, he received Outstanding Professional Award from the America's Registry of Outstanding Professionals. IALI events gained not only popularity but commanded a certain amount of respect among the community and administration. As a result, whereas community loved to associate itself with IALI events, lawmakers and administration officials looked upon these events as opportunities to gain support of the community. Mr. Munjal assiduously built bridges of understanding and cooperation between the Indian American community and the mainstream Americans.



IALI Home Inauguration: Chairman Gobind Munjal of IALI India Center committee, responsible for realizing the dream of acquiring India Center seen with Committee and Past Presidents of IALI.

Gobind was the one to moot the idea of having a home for the India Association of Long Island (IALI). It was his vision and constant effort which ultimately led to IALI having a Home of which the IALI community is very proud. In fact, it is the only association of Indian Americans which can claim to have a HOME.

His spirit and passion for community service is never ending. He has been involved in various organizations; as a Secretary of the GOPIO- LI Chapter and Co-Chairperson of Indian American Night, which started Kite Festival. He has also been helping almost all other organizations like RANA, NFIA, India Home, Vegetarian Vision, etc. in whatever way he can.

He is also a life member of a 50-year-old organization - Association of Indians in America (AIA) and Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation (NDMF) and participates in their activities. After having served successfully in AIA, NY Chapter and other community-based organizations for the last 15 years, Mr. Gobind Munjal is the current President of, AIA NY Chapter.

CONTD ON PAGE 55

“Gobind Munjal is an asset to the Indian community in New York. AIA leadership is proud of him for giving his 100% to the community during his tenure as AIA NY President for years 2017 and 2018. He is a role model for all those who have worked and earned enough and can now share their time and wisdom for serving others.”

Sunil Modi, Former President of AIA



All the AIA Presidents at Consulate at Inauguration of Gobind Munjal as President. Seen in the picture are CG, Air India Regional Manager Vandana Sharma, Dr. Nirmal Mattoo, Animesh Goenka, Dr Narinder Kukar, Arish Sahani, Dr Buddhadev Manvar.

CONTD FROM PAGE 54



Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty speaking at the AIA Diwali Mela at South Street Seaport, flanked by AIA President Gobind Munjal (left) and VP Harish Thakkar (right)

For the past 29 years, AIA NY Chapter is proud to host a very iconic and historically prominent Deepavali Festival Event at the South Street Seaport in Manhattan, attended by over 50,000 people followed by a spectacular display of fireworks. Mr. Munjal has played a key role as Vice President and Finance Chair of AIA and has been a very positive and active contributor in raising substantial funds for the Deepavali Event and as a core team member, contributed tremendously towards the success of the Deepavali Festival continuously for past 4 years.



Speaking with Dignitaries at the 31st Deepavali Festival at the South Street Seaport: Seen in the picture are: Democratic Leader Neeta Jain, NY State Senator John Liu, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, From Governor Cuomo's office with Citation Hersh Parekh

Sunil Modi, Former President of AIA describes Gobind Munjal as "an asset to the Indian community in New York." "AIA leadership is proud of him for giving his 100% to the community during his tenure as AIA NY President for years 2017 and 2018. He is a role model for all those who have worked and earned enough and can now share their time and wisdom for serving others."

Now Mr Munjal's goal is to make AIA socially more relevant. "We are planning to add a few socially active programs like networking events, senior health information related seminars and TV interviews on latest community related topics of common interest to increase awareness, picnic and cruises etc. We would also look into helping in any way we can for the senior adult housing," he told The Indian Panorama.

The Charity Project of AIA for helping out the community in India is doing well, thanks to the efforts of Sunil Modi, a former President, and Gobind Munjal who has taken the project to the next level.

Another project of Indian Americans on Long Island was



Gobind Munjal getting citation as President of IALI in 2011 at a very successful Fundraising Gala: Seen in the picture, from L to R: TV Anchor Rene Lobo, Kamlesh Mehta, Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano, NYS Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, CG Prabhu Dayal



Citation to President - AIA NY Chapter; Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, giving citation to Gobind Munjal, President - AIA NY chapter along with the committee members. Seen in the picture seen are Dr Sudhir Parikh, Mohinder Taneja, Mrs Munjal and Air India Regional Manager Mrs. Vandana Sharma.



Picture with Congressman Tom Suozzi: Congressman Tom Suozzi felicitating President Gobind Munjal at their fundraising Gala in his first year of his presidency in 2017



India Day Parade Press Conference with Vinod Khanna: Gobind Munjal, one of the conveners of the very 1st India Day Parade in Hicksville sitting with Mr Harry Singh of Bolla Oil, Actor Vinod Khanna, Mrs Khanna, Kamlesh Mehta, Harendra Singh, and Bobby Kalottee standing.

India Day Parade to mark India's Independence. Gobind Munjal played a key role in the successful bid of the community to have an India Day Parade on the pattern of the iconic India Day Parade in Manhattan organized by Federation of Indian Associations (FIA)



AIA President Gobind Munjal speaking at the Project India - Spread Hope. \$50K was raised.

As far as AIA's future vision is concerned, he is more focused on the involvement of young generation. "My vision is to expand the youth programs and to stress the need for membership drive for the youths and get them involved" he explains. Mr Munjal expressed his expanded program such as Desi Next, a forum for the younger generation, commitment to various local Philanthropic projects to serve the Indian community, the Children Diwali program in schools & Museums, recognition of Diwali holiday in Public Schools, in addition to the continued commitment to Deepavali Festival celebrations at the Iconic South Street Seaport in Manhattan.



The happy Munjal Family: L to R: Grandson Sajin, Suman Munjal, Gobind Munjal, grandson Neilan, Daughter-in-law Iona, Son Gaurav, Son Kevin

Mr Munjal is also concerned about the issues of hate crime and discrimination. "Although we are not a political organization, but we will definitely try to bring the issues of the Indian Community to the forefront, especially issues of hate crime and discrimination etc. and help in anyway we can to increase awareness and write to the appropriate authorities to take the strict steps to stop discrimination and the nonsense killings of the innocent people", he asserts.

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Meet Prachi Makkar—the young South Asian Leader with multiple achievements



The happy graduate Prachi



The poster girl Prachi on Seton Hall University postcard



Prachi at President Obama's Inauguration Ball in Washington



Time to do business. Prachi at NYSE

There are many great young South Asian young men and women who are moving up the ladders today. With grit, dedication, and hard work they are all making a name for themselves and making the community proud. One of such young South Asian leaders is Prachi Makkar.

Prachi, born and raised in New Jersey, is now a Second Year Strategy Analyst at J.P. Morgan in New York City. She graduated from Seton Hall University with a triple concentration in Finance, Business Information Technology, and Marketing.

During her time at Seton Hall, she was a member of the esteemed Leadership Development Honors Program. This is a four-year intensive honors program within the business school that molds students to succeed in the real world through a series of classes, mentorships, case studies, and study abroad trips. She was able to study abroad during every spring break and visited Portugal, Greece, Ireland, and Spain. Prachi was also the Vice President of the Women's Leadership Program that paired female students with powerful women in the workforce to help guide them and learn more. If you ever get a chance to speak to her you will quickly find out that Prachi thoroughly enjoyed her time at Seton Hall! A Peer Adviser to her fellow students, she was able to help students transition into college and assist with their classes. She was also a Tour Guide on campus. You can even catch her in some of the commercials and pamphlets for the school!



Prachi and brother Surya with Baba Ramdev at an event

Along with her academics, Prachi is heavily involved in the South Asian Community. She is currently on the board for the American India Foundation New York Young Professionals Chapter (AIF NYYP). The organization helps serve those less fortunate in India and organizes excellent events that help enable young professionals in New York to get involved, network, and give back to their home country. She also volunteers at the



Never forgetting roots, Prachi and Surya at a performance at a heritage event



Prachi and brother Surya performing at Mata Ki Chowki at Hindu temple in Mahwa, NJ

Bridgewater Gurdwara and Balaji Temple in Bridgewater. Prachi served as the Associate Director and Head Bhajan Teacher at the Balaji Summer Camp for six years. Her favorite part was getting to see the kids perform the bhajans they learned during camp in the Annual Cultural Show. At the Bridgewater Gurdwara, Prachi is heavily involved in the Hemkunt Foundation. After participating and winning in both the Speech and Kirtan Competitions, she has now taken her knowledge to help judge and organize the competition.

Prachi and her brother Surya Makkar, are well known throughout the Tri-state. They both perform at many community events, places of worship, and private events. Prachi started singing at the age of seven and learned both Hindustani Classical and the Harmonium. Surya is also a talented singer and an even more talented musician, playing the table, dholki, dhol, saxophone, and harmonium. The talented brother sister duo has both won many awards and accolades for their talents. They can often be seen performing Mata Ki Chowkis, a two-hour devotional performance. The two are also known for their Punjabi songs performed with a live dhol. Prachi is also an award-winning Speaker and won at the international level of the Hemkunt Foundation.

A well-rounded individual, Prachi carries her learnings with her in the real world. Her parents, Devendra and Rashmi Makkar, have helped to inspire and shape her into the successful young individual she is today. Prachi hopes to see more female South Asians in Finance and is very thankful to her parents for making her into the unique person she is today.



Prachi sings a Punjabi song with brother Surya on Dhol at Vaisakhi celebrations organized by The Indian Panorama at the Indian Consulate in New York in 2016



RECALLING SOME MEMORABLE EVENTS IN NEW YORK IN 2018 THROUGH ACE PHOTOGRAPHER JAY MANDAL'S LENS



Amjad Ali Khan and his two sons, Aaman and Aayan Perform during the UN Day concert at the UN General Assembly in NY City. (October 24, 2018)



State Bank of India Chairman, Rajnish Kumar (Center) and his bank executives at the UN General Assembly hall attending Amjad Ali Khan's UN Day concert. (October 24, 2018)



Bollywood actor, Sonali Bendre took a break from her ongoing cancer treatment in NY City seen exchanging visiting cards with Indian Consul General, Sandeep Chakravorty at the UN Day Concert (October 24, 2018)



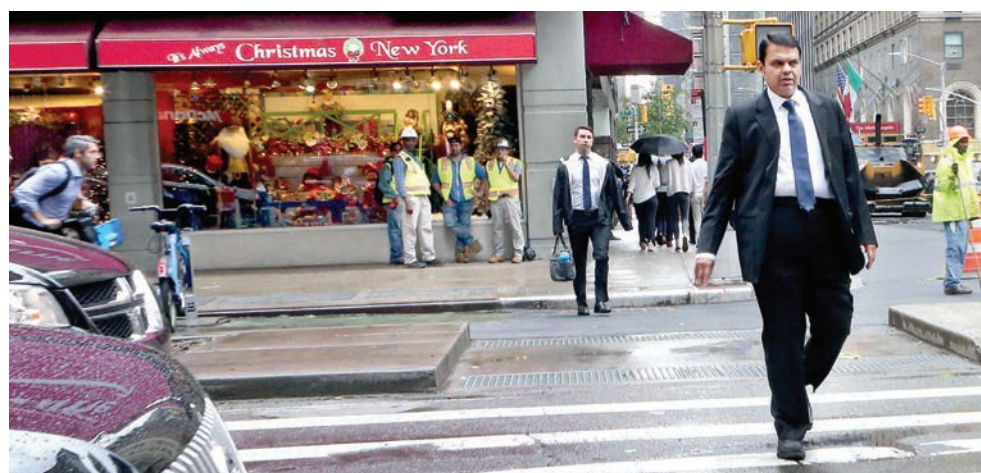
Actor Mrinal Thakur at a special screening of "Love Sonia, a film based on Sex Trafficking at the United Nations in NY City. (October 11, 2018)



Traditional lamp lighting to inaugurate a Passport Seva Kendra at the Indian Consulate in NY City. (November 21, 2018)



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis (left) and Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty, India's Consul General to New York walks up to the arrival terminal at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey. CM Fadnavis is on a 4-day official trip to the US. (June 12, 2018)



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis takes a stroll on the street of Manhattan (June 14, 2018)



MOS Hardeep Singh Puri receives a portrait of himself from artist Anil Kumar (left), a renowned portrait painter, at his office in Delhi (August 13, 2018)



Amitabh Kant, CEO, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), a government of India think-tank speaks on "India 2050 Roadmap for Success" at Asia Society in New York. (September 14, 2018)



Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations speaks during a farewell event for Lakshmi Puri (sitting), UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Director of UN Women at the UN Women HQ in New York. Lakshmi Puri relinquishes her responsibility as Dy Director of UN Women to return to India. (January 18, 2018)



Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres enjoy a lighter moment at an event in NY City. (June 8, 2018)



EAM Sushma Swaraj and her Japanese Counterpart, Taro Kono at a tea break during the G-4 meeting on the sideline of UNGA in NY City. (September 25, 2018)



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev arrives UN Headquarter to participate at a UN conference on water conservation and environment. (March 23, 2018)



US President, Donald Trump chairs a high-level meeting on "counter Narcotics and Global Call to Action on World Drug Problem" on the sideline of UNGA in New York. (September 24, 2018)



An unidentified participant holds up a humorous placard during the Columbus Day Parade in NY City. (October 8, 2018)



Indian Parliamentarian, Shashi Tharoor and former MEA Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao during a conversation on "Indian Parliament and Democracy" at Columbia University in NY City (September 21, 2018)

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The Indian Panorama Readers Debate on Concerns of the Indian American Community

In early December 2018, I sent in the following letter to some of The Indian Panorama readers inviting their comment on the concerns of the community. I am glad many have been kind enough to respond.

Such debates focus on issues which impact our life, and throw up useful suggestions that help us in navigating our course.

I thank those who took out time to participate in the brainstorming session.

Here we go- the editor's letter followed by comments.

"Dear Readers:

We are living in turbulent times. There may be many good things happening to thank the great nation for, but

then there are so many more which cause anxiety and worry. Over the years, we in America have found politics getting more and more partisan and divisive. When it happens, we, the Indian Americans, cannot remain unaffected. We are only 1 per cent, and surely, we do not exercise the kind of leverage in politics as many other ethnic groups with higher populations. What counts, in the end, in any democracy is the numbers. True, we should be proud of having a much higher percentage of graduates compared with the national average. Again, we should be proud that an Indian American household has double the income of the average American household. But, with all educational accomplishments and financial ease we enjoy,

the Indian Americans are not influential compared to many larger groups.

We can always derive satisfaction and even pat ourselves that we have the distinction of having at least 6 Indian Americans as CEO's of Blue-Chip Companies, on top of the rung. Also, we have a couple of Indians in the nation's Congress and Senate, and quite a few in State and City legislatures. But, surely not enough to give us a potent voice.

We have concerns. What are these concerns? What do we plan to do to strengthen ourselves as an ethnic group in this country? It is these issues which The Indian Panorama will like to address.

As always, I see the end of the year as a time to retrospect and, also throw a glance at what

future holds for us. We may not be able to change the course of the wind. But, surely, we can adjust and deflect our course to reach our destination.

I invite you to be a part of the animated discussion. Please email, latest by December 31st, 2018 your views in about 200-300 words, with your photograph to salujaindra@gmail.com. Your comment will be carried in the New Year Special edition, being published on January 4, 2019.

Thank you for your co-operation, always.

Please accept my best wishes for Happy Holidays, and a Happy New Year.

Regards.

Prof. Indrajit S Saluja



BY VIBHUTI JHA

Bring back Human Values in Politics

We are witness to a tumultuous and disturbing trend in politics all over the world, be it the US, India, Europe or rest of the world. Politics plays a dominant role in the lives of people whether we choose to ignore it or walk away from it as the "last refuge of a scoundrel"! In a country of 350 million people, the US Congress has 100 senators and over 400 House of Representatives, representing the entire population. Likewise, in India, with a population of 1.3bn the Lok Sabha has about 540 representatives and Rajya Sabha just over 250. If 'We the people' ignore our active and aware participation and involvement in the political process, we do it to our own chagrin and regret.

Today's politicians are far more exposed to the truth and reality thanks to the technologies dominating the media landscape- they can't hide anymore, may be only for a little while perhaps. Thus the DESI approach of non-involvement in politics is not about numbers but about our attitudes. Active involvement at all levels from grounds up is required to make an impact. In addition we Indians, who truly include virtually every segment of religion and societal differences, offer a genuine value and benefits of potential harmonious coexistence. "Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam" is a genuine human value and we Hindus or Sikhs who believe in this beautiful value must propagate it aggressively, just as One Sun, One Earth and One people is an authentic reality regardless of whatever religion one practices.

We need to instill authentic service to the people as a genuine act of God in the politicians of today. They are far too vicious and divisive for reasons of vote bank politics. Hate dominates the statements and words and it percolates down to the individual citizens creating hatred for others as we know and see them. We can do that if we became more active in the political process. Blame game serves no one.



BY ASHOOK RAMSARAN

Enhancing the Indian-American Standing & Stature in USA

As we embark on a new year 2019, it is time of well-deserved celebration and gratitude for major and unprecedented political, professional and economic accomplishments by Indian-American in 2018.

At the same time, we should engage in sober reflection with a renewed vision of enhancing and strengthening the Indian-American agenda with a focus on pro-active engagement of collaboration, cooperation, international relations and community relations to further enhance the Indian-American presence and influence positive changes and upliftment in all segments of US society.

In this respect, Indian-Americans have an enormous opportunity to utilize their above average standing in economics, politics, business and as professionals to be more actively involved at the grassroots level to support social causes in medical services, education, civic engagement and social justice to advance worthwhile change -- while being viewed as distinct, pro-active group in its rightful place within the fabric of American society.

Irrelevant of the winds of political crests and dips, Indian-Americans would be uplifted as a new immigrant group by active engagement in the shared interests and concerns of US society of interest and concern to the average American: Census 2020, early to college level education, social and economic justice, medical needs, elderly care, gender issues, women and infants, and substance abuse problems.

It is incumbent that Indian-American community and organization leaders, professionals, media and social activists to advance the causes of social justice and ideals in USA while enhancing the stature and standing in American society.

(Ashook Ramsaran is President, Indian Diaspora Council International (www.IndianDiasporaCouncil.org). He can be reached at AshookRamsaran@gmail.com)



BY ASHOK OJHA

Indian-Americans must recognize today's new challenges and solve them

As we face the dawn of new year the Indian American communities around USA have a lot to be proud of. It is true that an average Indian American enjoys the fruits of his or her well-earned, well-groomed working career in varieties of fields, spanning from business and commerce to healthcare and teaching. However, we need to do more for folks who need our help. The pursuit of happiness must not mean that harsh realities of American life that impact our communities are ignored by us. Here are some of these realities:

A section of our communities comprises of fellow Indians who came to this country for a better life but remained short of it. They might be lacking legal papers to work for living wages / salary or benefits. They are condemned to working long hours in shops, restaurants, construction sites, delivery service and other similar facilities. We also need to find out how many women are vic-tims of domestic violence in our communities. Are they able to get help or are we able to reach out to them with helping hands?

These, and many other questions need answers. Let us hope that in 2019, Indian American community leaders will find ways to establish and work for support groups for people in need. Let us build voluntary groups with resources to locate and help people in need. It is a good sign that more Indian Americans are entering public life. Some of us have been elected to the House of Representatives. Still we have a long way to go before we could make a real difference in the lives of our neglected brothers and sisters.

(Ashok Ojha is a New Jersey based journalist and teacher. He can be reached at aojha2008@gmail.com)



BY DERVINDER SINGH, ESQ

To be a silent spectator is not a choice

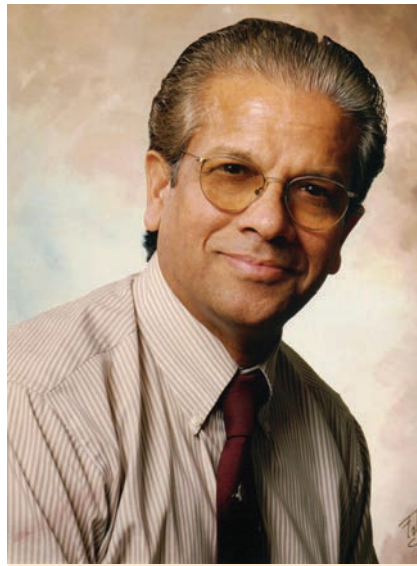
Greetings to the readers of Indian Panorama Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas & Happy New Year. This time of the year is time of celebration it is also a time to reflect on our life, family, society and country we live in. I

In brief, I moved to this country thirty years with certain dreams & aspirations like every other immigrant. With my hard work, commitment and dedication, I ultimately achieved my full potential to the best of my ability and expectations. The uniqueness and beauty of the American system is that despite all its shortcomings it allows everybody to live & achieve their dreams and expectations and this all happens not by accident or default but because of the opportunities available due to a system of rule of law, equal opportunity, fairness, value of hard work, honesty, commitment and dedication. The American society and country are based on the US Constitution, the three branches of government, executive, legislature and judiciary which guarantee every citizen the basic human rights and their ability to live their dreams and aspirations to their full potential.

The American system is not perfect; it had and still has its turmoil's and trials, the history of slavery, racial discrimination and till the sixties the women were not allowed to exercise their right to vote. However, the civil rights movement, active participation of the society and required changes brought by the legislature, executive and judiciary have helped US to evolve into one of the better societies and one of the best countries and systems to live in. The entire world looks up to the US as a beacon of hope for many under privileged and deprived societies.

However, we have seen lately the entire world going into isolation, and slogans of nationalism, the populist message, has taken its toll and had its ill effects on American system. The American institution of freedom of press, and basic human values are seriously under challenge. American leadership and values in the world are missing. I humbly request all the readers and Indian Americans to become US Citizen if for any reason they have not become Citizens, and register themselves as voters, no matter whether Independent, Republican or Democrat and actively participate in holding up these sacred values and institutions which are pillars of truth and make a difference in public life. To be a silent spectator is not a choice.

(Dervinder Singh is a practicing attorney and a Certified Financial Planner. He can be reached at dsinghesq@gmail.com)



BY DR. VK RAJU

We should get Involved

We are living in turbulent times" said a friend recently. It may be, but there were lot of turbulences throughout American history. In 1968 both Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated, throwing the nation into turmoil and symbolizing the end of the idealism of the era and the rise of creeping cynicism and unease that the fabric of the nation was coming apart.

What is happening today in USA is a nasty aberration and soon it will correct itself. Thomas Jefferson once said, "The greatest danger to American freedom is a government that ignores the constitution". We the people are the real keepers of freedom and should get involved. Apathy is unacceptable.

Let me end here with the biting words of Thomas Paine. "Reason observes itself; Ignorance submits to whatever is dictated to it"

God bless America!

(V.K. Raju, MD, FRCS, FACS is President of the Eye Foundation of America. He can be reached at vkrajumd@gmail.com)



BY ANU JAIN

Speak out

America is known as the land of equal opportunities. Everyone has equal chances to enter the political field and represent their community despite their ethnicity. I don't believe in creating ethnic groups. It's great to see Indians are entering politics. I personally believe in values and knowledge of the person who is holding a position in politics and helping government in making right decisions to improve life in America. However, I also know that as voters, we place our primary focus on the representative's values and principles as opposed to their ethnicity and their origin, when electing them.

We shouldn't be looking at where the potential candidate is coming from. What is more important is whether their knowledge, values, and interests benefit and represent us and the community.

Having said that it reminds me of a poem written by Pastor Martin Niemöller:

"First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out..

Because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out

Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me".

(Anu Jain is a Real Estate Sales Professional. She can be reached at Jainanu2005@gmail.com, 516-728-4186)

BY PRABHJOT SINGH

Make 2019 a year of Smiles

End of a year is both time for introspection as well as new resolutions. I often wonder why spirit of joviality, celebrations, wishing each other well and good times start diminishing as the days of New Year start dawning upon us. Bitterness, hatred, greed, violence and jealousy overtake us. Can the last week of outgoing year and first week of New Year continue forever? Can we have what we preach and wish universal brotherhood, peace, communal harmony and smiles all the time? Can we wish away hatred, violence, jealousy and greed forever and have smiling faces instead? We all wish but dare not make these wishes come true. We try to use all nonliving means, including social media, to please and appease each other. We are heading for times when even our talks may lessen, and so might our hellos, our stories might shorten along with our greetings, but remember that no matter what happens, my prayers and wishes for you will never fall short. May this year be the best year by far, and may this year bring with it endless joy and happiness.

Life is a progression of normal and unconstrained changes. This New Year so not try not to oppose them; for that just causes distress. Accept the reality. Let things stream actually forward in whatever way they like. Remember, two words will open all doors Love and Smile. So keep smiling and spread love this year. The coming year will bless you with all happiness I wish New Year ushers in real peace, prosperity and happiness. Let this year be a Year of Smiles.

May this New Year also bring wisdom and honesty among our politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats. Instead of focus in on amassing wealth, they focus on ameliorating the lot of people who starve and suffer for no fault of theirs. May this New Year bring happiness and content among the general populace. Let it be a real Happy 2019. New Year promises fresh start and fill every heart with hopes and aspirations. Here is sending my wishes of love and laughter this day and forever. May you stand up for your own rights this New Year and also the rights of fellow human beings, may nothing stop you from championing a cause that you hold close to your heart.

My New Year's resolution is to avoid meeting people who ask me questions they should not be asking. Wishing you and your family good health, happiness, success and prosperity in the coming year! Have a great start to a great year!

(Prabhjot Singh is executive editor with Punjab Television Channel. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)



BY DEVRAJ AIYAR

Double standards of Indian Americans hurt them

Indians must stop sitting on the laurels and claims about being the most educated community or enjoying a higher income than the national average. They have attained it on account of being at the right place.

The Indians who have landed in the shores of America have in fact done exceedingly well and much better than if they would have remained in India.

USA has opened a window of opportunity to scores of immigrants who over time have attained wealth and security. One must bear in mind, it's easy to perform under US conditions which is not as challenging, given the umbrella of law and order, infrastructure and an encouraging ambience where success is almost assured even for hardworking folks with limited skillsets.

Indians are not a vote bank to as we only constitute 1% of the population with approximately 50000 being doctors. Indians also comprise 8% of the founders of high-tech companies and 1/3 of technology startups in Silicon Valley. But then one must also bear in mind that since 1965, the selection process has favored the migration of the privileged members of Indian society on account of the costs involved while the U.S. immigration policies further advantaged high-achieving students and skilled workers. It is no surprise but natural to expect Indian immigrants to perform well

Most Indians fail to assimilate themselves with the lifestyle and continue to live as Indians in India. The typical examples would be the Indian shopping districts where lack of legal work papers amongst the workforce, lack of hygiene, lack of proper "goods return policies" prevail but then we are willing to overlook all that but expect it all from the malls elsewhere which is seldom Indian.

I have come across several Indians who would donate generously to Indian NGO's based in India but rarely to the Salvation army, St Jude's or Feeding America. Scores of Indians purchase properties in India, maintain healthy NRI accounts in India, while holding green card/citizenship of US or hoping to do so one day.

The irony is the fact that many consider the USA as a pot of gold to draw but not to replenish. This attitude turns conspicuous, when it occurs on a collective front from the major percentage of the Indian population. These double standards hurt us. We are also recognized for this quality though rarely spoken about.

To make an impact Indians must change this mindset. We have been blessed with the opportunity to live in one of mightiest nations and the time to display our gratefulness has arrived. Our loyalty, devotion, contributions to our adopted motherland must become visible and that alone will gain respect and esteem of the community. That alone will pave our path into the mainstream American for our voices to be heard and respected.

(Devraj Aiyar is President of Indo American Quartz, a Kearny, New Jersey based company dealing in marble stone. He can be reached at dev@indoamericanstone.com)



BY VEN PARAMESWARAN

I am proud of 4 million plus Indian Americans and their contributions to the U.S.A.

POLITICS: I am proud, America elected Republicans Bobby Jindal and Niki Haley as Governors of Louisiana and South Carolina for two terms. Niki Haley was also appointed as our Ambassador to the U.N. a very important post. She is a potential Presidential candidate and could run after President Trump leaves office. In all we have elected 7 to U.S.Congress and several to State Legislatures throughout the U.S.A. Sreenivasan has been appointed to the U.S.Circuit Court. Another person has been nominated to the U.S. Circuit Court to replace Supreme Court Judge Kavanaugh. Many Indians have served at very senior levels of the U.S. Government, and as Ambassadors. Dr. Vivek Murthy was our Surgeon General for Health.

BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION: We have 25 Indians serving as CEO's of Fortune 500 corporations, several as C.F.O.'s and Senior Vice Presidents. Several are serving in Wall Street as Managing Director in Investment Banking firms. Indians are also serving as Dean of prestigious universities - Harvard Business School, Harvard Undergraduate Arts & Science, M.I.T., Cornell, University of Chicago, NYU, and many others.

MY ADVICE TO INDIAN IMMIGRANTS:

We need to unite. We must integrate closely with the Americans. Our first loyalty must be to the U.S.A. We should be active in our local community by working as volunteers in Fire Department, School Board, Coaching Sports, and other community activities.

After getting Immigration Visa, we should apply for citizenship and register to vote. It is a pity many Indians have not become citizens here. This is a great country with many opportunities. However, do not forget the character is our backbone. We must protect our character and integrity always. We are the highest educated and earn the highest income beating all other ethnic communities. We will be highly successful in all levels of American society and the sky is our limit! Saraswathi and Lakshmi will always bless Indians.

(Ven Parameswaran is Chairman, Asian American Republican Committee (founded 1988); Diplomat-in-Residence and Senior Adviser, Imagindia Institute, New Delhi (a think tank). He can be reached at vpwaren@gmail.com)



BY INDU JAISWAL

Indian Americans need to have greater participation in main stream

As the year 2018 ends, we have seen a significant number of Indian Americans participating in the political process and also winning some elections.

As our population increases, the needs of our community have increased. We have a significant number of aging population who require assistance and help. We are asking from the elected officials to address these issues. As per your request in order for our voice to be heard, we all need to address issues unanimously. Our voice will be heard only when we show strength in numbers.

As an example from other ethnic groups, we must create our strength with unity. I hope in the upcoming year our community will be focused towards promoting our cultural heritage and traditions in the main stream America along with increasing participation in political forums with a United Front. Wishing all our friends and Family Happy and Healthy New Year 2019.

Thanks to Dr. Saluja for his continued support for our community and excellence in Journalism.

(Indu Jaiswal is a community activist who has helped found a number of Indian American organizations. She can be reached at indu@jaiswal.net)



BY LALIT AERY

We need to get more involved

I am very honored that you asked me to comment on the important community issue in brief. I have very clear views on this matter as living in this country for forty-five years & dealing with all communities as doing Insurance business all my life.

I think we have three major issues.

1. We are too much apart based on state we came from in India, religion & even caste unfortunately. We should be proud of our heritage but consider everyone equal & respect everyone. In spite of our different organizations, we should have one leader for all organizations & get together anytime needed & shows our unity. We should be all together to face our common issues to our voice be heard.
2. Our youth is also very much getting apart from first generation. I feel the major reason is we are not involving them in our temples & organizations with us. If we involve them, we don't make comfortable atmosphere for them to work together with us as we don't give them control.
3. Last but not least, I think we the first generation & even the second generation, those who are not much educated do not mix in the adopted country society, keeping sometime negative views about other people or our own complex. We belong to a very rich culture, which teaches us respect of society & value of education. By keeping in mind, we should work together for our whole Indian community & also must involve more & more in our adopted country society & also involve them in our rich culture. Thank you very much & have a very Happy & peaceful New Year.

Lalit Aery is President, India Association of Long Island. He can be reached at lalitaery@hotmail.com)

BY GEORGE ABRAHAM

Will America remain a beacon of hope?

Another eventful year has quickly passed on. We are once again on the threshold of a new year, a time to introspect and make new resolutions. I have been living in the U.S. for the last 50 years. To be specific, I have arrived on these shores in the fall of 1968. It was a time of great political upheaval across the country. Students at almost every University were protesting the War in Vietnam and expressing their disgust over the draft. The Presidential elections were weeks away and Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey were the opposing candidates fighting to win the highest office in the land.

Despite all the turmoil in the streets and around campuses, foreign students like me were looking forward to a life of learning and opportunities... there was a sense of optimism about the country and its future. Notwithstanding the Cold War challenges abroad, America remained the pre-eminent power house, a land of freedom and innovation. The capitalist system and the market economy the nation championed brought unprecedented growth and prosperity to its citizens. While the countries that implemented socialist models or centralized planning either failed or made slow progress, the American political and economic system provided stability and steady growth. Its dynamism and energy in setting up goals and achieving them were unparalleled in history and the people around the world started paying close attention. It was America everyone wanted to learn about as it became the frontier for many from developing nations to explore.

Therefore, I am quite bewildered to see the young people of today are clamoring for a socialist model that has been experimented with and failed many times. This new movement includes children of the last generation of Indian immigrants who are gaining political traction in the arena. I am beginning to wonder what they have learned from their parents! Previous generations of immigrants came to this country, rolled up their sleeves and worked hard and realized their American dream. I believe that dream is still attainable, though it is getting harder, for this generation as well - if they put their minds into it.

Today, the global situation has dramatically changed with more demand for resources among America's strategic partners and competitors. This nation is also quickly piling up debt with no end in sight. If America was any other country today, it would be knocking at the door of the IMF for debt relief. What saves America today is that special status for the US dollar as the World's Reserve Currency as a result of the Bretton Woods agreement. That enables countries to buy the U.S. debt and allow U.S. to keep on printing the money.

Undoubtedly, America is living beyond its means. On this trajectory, there will come a day of reckoning and it will only be a matter of time before a country like China not only catches up with U.S. but may even surpass it in terms GDP as well as innovation in science and technologies. In that scenario, whose treasury securities will be in demand? I recollect a story a German national told me about how Germany became a power house in engineering and manufacturing of quality products like in Automobiles and heavy machinery. After the industrial revolution, England was the epicenter of manufacturing and Trade. However, as the number of colonies grew, the brightest of its young people were sent abroad to administer territories controlled by the British Empire. Therefore, they have decided to outsource many of the products manufacturing to Germany and the rest is history. For many of us who are skeptical of the quality of Chinese products now, the British history is a good lesson to learn from.

Indian Americans already have a number of legislators in the upper echelons of the power centers at the Capitol. Their parents came from the middle class or upper middle class family background in India who were impatient with the political system and slow growth economics of the country and decided to venture out. With all its deficiencies, America was still the shining city on the hill and a place where their skillset and dynamism would eventually prove to be a bonanza where they built successful families with top-notch education for their children. Now, these same young people appear to be repudiating the very system that has helped them to succeed and become influential voices in this country.

In the United States, what we are witnessing is an unprecedented level of polarization on the basis of race and culture. The leadership appears to be only exploiting those negative sentiments rather than healing the wounds. The new immigrants tend to push the narrative that their language, culture, and traditions are more sacrosanct and need immediate recognition and acceptance from the majority community. The very idea of 'melting pot' has given away to 'balkanization' based on identity politics. Unless this trend is reversed, the United States may be in danger of becoming another third world nation with warring factions always on the prowl.

I hope and pray that there will be great healing across the globe so that current divisions and conflicts come to an end. The warring factions in America ought to sit down together and resolve issues with a focus on keeping the nation still a beacon for the rest of world that promotes freedom, liberty and pursuit of happiness. For India, I am looking forward to a verdict of the people in 2019 that may restore real democracy to the nation so that the country could get back to the business of uplifting the poor and ushering in a new era of peace and prosperity for all its citizens! Wishing you a very happy and peaceful New Year! *(George Abraham is a former Chief Technology Officer of the United Nations)*



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Bluefin sold for \$3 million in first 2019 sale at Tokyo market

TOKYO (TIP): A 612-pound (278-kilogram) bluefin tuna sold for a record 333.6 million yen (\$3 million) in the first auction of 2019, after Tokyo’s famed Tsukiji market was moved to a new site on the city’s waterfront. The winning bid for the prized but threatened species at the predawn auction Saturday was more than double the 2013 annual New Year auction.

It was paid by Kiyomura Corp., whose owner Kiyoshi Kimura runs the Sushi Zanmai chain. Kimura has often won the annual auction in the past.

Japanese broadcaster NHK showed a beaming Kimura saying that he was surprised by the high price of tuna this year. But he added: “The quality of the tuna I bought is the best.”

The auction prices are way above usual for bluefin tuna. The fish normally sells for up to \$40 a pound (\$88 a kilogram) but the price rises to over \$200 a pound near the year’s end, especially for prized catches from Oma in northern Japan.

Last year’s auction was the last at Tsukiji before the market shifted to a new facility on a former gas plant site on Tokyo Bay. The move was delayed repeatedly due to concerns over soil contamination.

Japanese are the biggest consumers of the torpedo-shaped bluefin tuna, and surging consumption here and overseas has led to overfishing of the species. Experts warn it faces possible extinction, with stocks of Pacific bluefin depleted by 96 percent from their pre-industrial levels. “The celebration surrounding the annual Pacific bluefin auction hides how deeply in trouble this species really is,” said Jamie Gibbon, associate manager for global tuna conservation at The Pew Charitable Trusts. (AP)

Not a baby factory: S.Korea tries to fix demographic crisis with more gender equality

SEOUL (KOREA) (TIP): In just over a decade, South Korea has spent the equivalent of a small European economy trying to fix its demographic crisis, yet birthrates have dropped to the lowest in the world.

This year, President Moon Jae-In, who describes himself as a feminist president, is testing a new angle: showing women more respect.

At the end of last year, South Korea announced plans to remove some of the disincentives for employing women, allowing both parents to take parental leave at the same time and extending paid paternal leave. Employers also get incentives to allow either parent to work fewer hours.

“Efforts on gender equality are very timely,” said Shin Eun-kyung, an economist with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. South Korea is the worst place for women to work in the OECD, despite women being among the organisation’s best educated, and more highly so than men.

But the measures go beyond the workplace: mothers can choose to give the baby their own last name and a tickbox on birth certificates showing whether a baby was born outside marriage will be removed.

Fertility treatments will be offered to single women and unmarried couples as well. Social campaigns will encourage men to participate more in child care and household chores. Contrast that with a 2016 effort by the previous government, run by the country’s first woman president, Park Geun-hye, which launched a website carrying a real-time statistical heatmap of women of child-bearing age, marriages and births in the hope of spurring competition between cities and regions.

The website was taken down after one day, with women complaining it made them feel like “reproductive organs”. “The country sees women as baby factories,” says Hong Sook-young, who produces the country’s most popular children TV show. Asked about the latest measures, Hong said “at least pretending to hear what people really want is a start towards change”.

TEMPLE BONDING: South Korea’s demographic time bomb is ticking louder. The government’s latest forecast sees its population declining from 2027, and a presidential committee said the country’s economic growth potential could fall to below 1 per cent. Birth rates have long been a policy priority: since 2006, the government has spent 152.9 trillion won (\$135.65 billion) – about the size of an economy like Hungary or Nevada – on perks for families and subsidies for children from birth through university and beyond. Last year’s 26.3 trillion low birth policy budget was more than half the defence spending of a country technically still at war with its northern neighbour. (Reuters)

Canada says 13 citizens detained in China since Huawei CFO arrest

TORONTO (TIP): Canada said on January 4 that 13 of its citizens have been detained in China since Huawei Technologies Co Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou was arrested last month in Vancouver at the request of the United States.

“At least” eight of those 13 have since been released, a Canadian government statement said, without disclosing what charges if any have been laid.

Prior to Thursday’s statement, detention of only three Canadian citizens had been publicly disclosed. Diplomatic tensions between Canada and China have escalated since Meng’s arrest on Dec. 1.

The Canadian government has said several times it sees no explicit link between the arrest of Meng, the daughter of Huawei’s founder, and the detentions of Canadian citizens. But Beijing-based Western diplomats and former Canadian diplomats have said they believe the detentions were a “tit-for-tat” reprisal by China.

Meng was released on a C\$10 million (\$7.4 million) bail on Dec. 11 and is now living in one of her two multi-million-dollar Vancouver homes as she fights extradition to the United States. The 46-year-old executive must wear an ankle monitor and stay at home from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The 13 Canadians detained include Michael Kovrig, Michael Spavor and Sarah McIver, a Canadian government official who declined to be identified, said on Thursday.

McIver, a teacher, has since been released and returned to Canada. Kovrig and Spavor remain in custody. Canadian consular officials saw them once each in mid-December.

Overall, there are about 200 Canadians who have been detained in China for a variety of alleged infractions who continue to face on-going legal proceedings. “This number has remained relatively stable,” the official said.

In comparison, there are almost 900 Canadians in a similar situation in the United States, the official added. (Reuters)

contd from page 3

Nancy Pelosi is Speaker for a second time

Pelosi, who retook the speaker's gavel after a formal floor vote that lasted about an hour, reclaimed the House's top leadership post amid a congressional face-off with President Donald Trump over border wall funding that has left parts of the federal government shuttered for the third time in a year.

Pelosi, 78, won with 220 votes, with 12 Democrats voting for someone other than Pelosi and three Democrats voting present.

"Two months ago, the American people spoke, and demanded a new dawn," Pelosi said in remarks in the House chamber after the vote. "They called upon the beauty of our Constitution: our system of checks and balances that protects our democracy, remembering that the legislative branch is Article I: the first branch of government, co-equal to the presidency and judiciary."

The California Democrat - who previously served as House speaker from 2007 until 2011, spanning the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and led Democrats under the eight-year Republican majority in the House that followed - secured enough support to win the leadership post late last year, despite a brief insurrection among a small group of Democrats.

The new Democratic Caucus chairman, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, formally nominated Pelosi on the House floor to rousing applause.

Her election came as the partial government shutdown stretched into its 13th day, with no deal to end it on the horizon. The House, under the newly elected speaker, planned to vote Thursday on an

appropriations package that would end it.

"We will debate and advance good ideas no matter where they come from," Pelosi said. "And in that spirit, Democrats will be offering the Senate Republican appropriations legislation to re-open government later today - to meet the needs of the American people, to protect our borders and to respect our workers."

China develops its own 'Mother of All Bombs', says report

on its website at the end of December. This is the first time the new bomb's destructive powers have been shown in public, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

Last year, while waging war against militants in Afghanistan, the US military dropped a GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) weapon, more commonly known as the 'Mother of All Bombs', on the Islamic State.

Although China is using the same nickname for its bomb, said to weigh several tons, the Chinese weapon is smaller and lighter than its American counterpart.

Judging from the video and the size of the H-6K's bomb bay, the bomb is approximately five to six meters long, Beijing-based military analyst Wei Dongxu told the Global Times on Thursday, January 3.

"The massive blast can easily and completely wipe out fortified ground targets such as reinforced buildings, bastions and defense shelters," Wei said.

It can also be used to clear a landing zone for troops on helicopters to rappel down, in case the area is covered by obstacles such as forests, Wei noted.

Wei said the Chinese bomb is smaller and

lighter than the US one, enabling it to be deployed on the H-6K bomber.

"The US bomb is so large that it has to be carried by a larger transport aircraft rather than a bomber," Wei said, noting that a bomber can fly faster and is better at targeting than a transport aircraft, and the Chinese bomb's designer must have had this in mind when it produced the bomb to fit the H-6K.

To match the US weapon, Russia developed the 'Father of All Bombs' which is both bigger and thermobaric, meaning it uses gas to create a huge fireball rather than a shockwave, Wired reported.

A NORINCO representative clarified that the bomb shown in the video is not a thermobaric weapon, but did not provide additional details, the Global Times report said. *(Source: PTI)*

Sen. Elizabeth Warren has announced she will seek the presidency in 2020

She is the best-known Democratic candidate yet to enter what is expected to be a crowded race.

Warren's announcement that she was establishing an exploratory committee - the legal precursor to a run - came as other candidates, including several of her fellow senators, made final preparations for their own announcements, some of which are expected in days.

"America's middle class is under attack," the Massachusetts Democrat said in a four-minute, 30-second video emailed to supporters Monday, December 31. "How did we get here? Billionaires and big corporations decided they wanted more of the pie. And they

enlisted politicians to cut them a bigger slice."

The video is part biographical, showing her hardscrabble Oklahoma upbringing; part economics lesson, replete with charts illustrating how the middle class is losing economic ground; and part red meat for the Democratic base, with images of President Trump and others disliked by liberals: presidential aides Kellyanne Conway and Stephen Miller and former adviser Stephen K. Bannon.

It made no mention of a recent Warren stumble: her October decision to release results of a DNA test that said she probably had a distant Native American ancestor. The move had been meant to stifle Trump's criticism of her but only engendered more mockery from him while also angering Democrats, particularly minorities who objected to her defining ethnicity via a test.

While the race for the Democratic nomination is only starting, even Warren's supporters acknowledge that she has lost ground in the last few months, both by her own hand and because the November midterm elections redefined Democratic success with candidates who were in many cases a generation younger.

Warren is one of more than a half-dozen senators expected to run for president, including Democrats Cory Booker (N.J.), Kamala D. Harris (Calif.), Sherrod Brown (Ohio), Amy Klobuchar (Minn) and Kirsten Gillibrand (N.Y.), as well as independent Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who shares Warren's populist underpinnings.

Warren won her Senate seat in 2012, defeating incumbent Sen. Scott Brown to reclaim the seat long held by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and become the first female senator from Massachusetts. She easily won reelection in November.

A Renowned Physician of Many Parts: Dr. Jagdish Gupta combines professional skill with humanitarian services



New York Times SUPER DOC Jagdish Gupta is Assistant Clinical Professor at SUNY Health Science Center in Brooklyn, NY

The spotlight is not where he likes to be, as he silently works for the community. For years he has served as a mentor for a generation of young physicians who aspire to combine his clinical excellence with sensitivity and compassion towards patients and their families. That's why Dr Jagdish K Gupta, a committed and highly regarded physician with a history of professional achievement and humanitarian philanthropy, is the role model of many Indian Americans.

Born and raised in Hissar, Haryana India, he completed his medical training at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. After graduating with the class of 1966 with distinction, he completed his residency and fellowship training at Long Island College Hospital (LICH). He is a diplomat of the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Gastroenterology. He has been awarded Fellowships by the American College of Physicians and the American College of Gastroenterology. An Assistant Clinical Professor at SUNY Health Science Center in Brooklyn, Dr. Gupta has served as a role

model. Through innovative research exploring the links between gastrointestinal and neurological diseases, Dr. Gupta has made his mark upon medical literature. In addition to his many contributions to peer review journals, he has co-authored chapters in many medical textbooks. As a researcher dedicated to the detection, prevention and treatment of GI disorders including cancer, he has been recognized and awarded numerous teaching awards. He has been on the TOP DOCTORS list of Castle Connolly for more than sixteen years, consecutively. He is also has been designated as SUPER DOC by New York Times magazine for three years.

Dr. Gupta's commitment to leadership is an inspiration to everyone. He has served as President of the Medical staff of LICH and as a member of the Board of Regents of LICH he represented the interests of the entire medical staff to the Board of Continuum Health Partners. For his commitment to teaching, professional achievements, community services and leadership, the Long Island College Hospital bestowed the Spring Ball Honoree 2002 Physician of the Year Award upon him. For over 20 years, he also served as a consultant to the NYSA-ILA Welfare Fund. Dr. Gupta is one of the founding members of his Alumni Association, AIIMSONIANS of AMERICA and served as the chairman of GOLDEN JUBILEE Celebrations held in New York in 2006. Successfully serving in the various roles as Secretary, Vice President and then President for two years each, he is now serving as the Chairman of Board of Trustees of AOA Within the Indian Community Dr. Gupta has served on the Board of Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation and has been privileged to serve as its President, raising a lot of funds during his tenure to sponsor many charitable projects in India. "I have raised a large amount of funds in 1999 which helped with \$25,000



Dr. Jagdish Gupta added a feather in his cap recently with a successful convention of AAPI-QLI of which he is the current President. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Vinni Jayam, Convention Chair, Steven Bellone, Suffolk County Executive, Dr. Jagdish Gupta, President, AAPI-QLI, Congressman Tom Suozzi, AAPI-QLI BTO Chairman Dr. Ajay Lodha



Dr. Gupta and wife Meena at Mayor de Blasio's Diwali celebrations in 2017. Seen L to R: Chirlane McCray, Meena Gupta, Dr. Jagdish Gupta, Mayor Bill de Blasio

contribution to Indo American Cancer Institute for Women and Children in Hyderabad and Cancer Relief Society in Cochin Kerala", he said. The Board of Directors of Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation recognized his contributions with Life Time Achievement Award in 2006.

During his Presidency, All India Institute of Medical Sciences Alumni Association raised more than \$250,000 and opened and

contributed a Primary Care Center in Rural, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh area and it has been flourishing since then with decrease in Infant and Maternal Mortality there.

Dr Gupta has been very actively involved with many community organizations in Long Island. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Hindu Center. "My involvement with Hindu Center began as a Founding Trustee when a group of us got together contributed \$10, 000 each and started the center in Queens. I have been actively involved since then and have contributed regularly including to the reconstruction and expansion of the Temple", he fondly remembers.

He has served as President of India Association of Long Island (IALI) in 2010. He also has served the Association of Indians in America (AIA) as Fund raising and Gala chair for Deepavali 2016. Now he is the Vice President in AIA.

Dr Gupta is particularly proud of his longstanding involvement in American Association of Physicians of Indian origin, Queens Long Island chapter. At present, he is serving as the President of AAPI-QLI. "I have been very actively involved with AAPI-QLI and National AAPI and have encouraged them to contribute to philanthropic activities including Nepal earthquake relief fund", he added. He is also very active at AAPI (National) and is the Chairman of Alumni Committee and a Member of the Membership Committee.

Personally, Dr Gupta and his daughter Anu Gupta donated two dialysis machines to Balaji Action Medical Institute to start a dialysis program in 2005 for poor and needy and it is still going strong now with 12 machines working three shifts a day. He has undertaken many more charitable projects, but he prefers not to make public the charity work he does.

He has been recognized several times for his outstanding services to the community. Most recently he was appointed an Honorary Police Surgeon for his patriotic dedication to New York's finest. Above all, Dr. Gupta is a loving husband to his wife Meena and father of three children, Anu, Srishti and Vishal, and grandfather to Sia, Kabir, Som and Sai.



Dr. Jagdish Gupta with Ambassador Dnyaneshwar Mulay (extreme right), and Dr. Arya (left)



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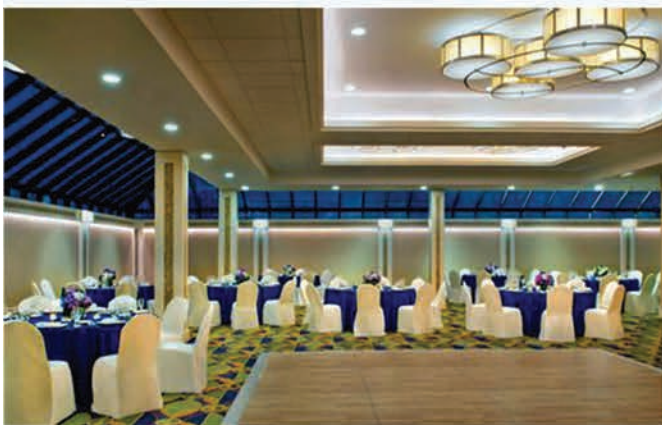
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