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USUALSUSPECTS
SWAPAN DASGUPTA

Again, arrogance may fail anti-Modi brigade

Over the past fortnight I have had to undertake many long car journeys in West Bengal. Since few of them involved travelling through what the Americans call 'scenic routes', much of the time in the backseat of a car has involved playing with my iPad and scrolling through Twitter.

Predictably, the main topic of conversation these days is the general election. If Twitter is any guide, the world of India seems to be sharply divided between those who want Narendra Modi to secure another five-year term and those who can't wait for counting day to show the Prime Minister the door. When Modi came to power in 2014, perceptions of him were somewhat hazy. Yes he had a significant fan following across the country and, equally, there were people whose 'idea of India' was seriously offended by his mere existence. However, apart from Gujarat where he was a known commodity, the perceptions of Modi varied according to individual tastes. I remember writing in 2014 that Modi was seen very differently — as a modern version of Chhatrapati Shivaji, as a free market enthusiast, as a non-nonsense administrator, as a poor boy made good and even as just another BJP leader. Despite the Modi-centric quasi-presidential election campaign, Modi was moulded to suit individual convenience.

This isn't the case in 2019. Today, after nearly five years of sustained exposure, almost every Indian has a view of their Prime Minister. Some dote on him while others are unrelenting in their hate. Few are indifferent. Whether this awareness will help him or go against him will be tested in the general election, especially if voting becomes a referendum on Modi's leadership.

I don't want to dwell on why many people think that Modi is the best thing that has happened to India since Independence. I think the reasons for his amazing popularity are well known. In any case, they will be debated and discussed during the long campaign. It is the perceived negatives I want to focus on — at least as far as they become apparent in social media.

It is the sheer arrogance of those who believe that they have a monopoly of the truth that marks the liberal resistance to Modi. This is one reason they failed in 2014 and this will be a reason why they may not succeed in 2019

Delhi, she told us, before announcing somewhat grandly that she was an 'academic'. I suppose I should have got the hell out there and then, but I was enjoying my cigarette. Anyway, we chatted briefly about the university at which she worked and shortly after this she said that at the moment she was 'preparing for 29 March' and was aghast at the whole Brexit business.

"Oh, I said, I voted Leave. She responded somewhat acidly: 'And this is where the conversation ends. I cannot talk to irrational people.' I demurred a little... um, you know, I don't think I'm actually irrational and it's a little bit rude to suggest that I am.

"At which point she told me to 'check your privilege — I have brown skin and you are old and white'. I suggested to her that when it came to privilege, holding a university post wasn't too bad, was it, which was when she called me a 'jackass' and the conversation sadly ended.

It seemed to me a bit rich that a woman who came to the UK on a nice scholarship and had landed a good job in a university could be so blithely dismissive of the views of the majority of people in this country, even if it is a small majority. She struck me as being smug and stupid, a fairly lethal combination...

Unlike writers in the UK who can get away by calling people 'smug and stupid', we in India tend to be more circumspect in expressing our displeasure. However, if we're to scroll through the posts of the anti-Modi brigade, especially those who see themselves as being fairly cosmopolitan, you will realise that the lady from Delhi in the pub, was fairly representative of those who threaten to buy one-way tickets out of the country in the event Modi gets a second term.

It is not the actual policies and performance of the Modi Government that invites ire, although they seem to have reserved a special place in hell for demonetisation. Their main grouse seems to me is that the Government is stupid and the BJP is even more stupid. A Congress spokesman, hardly known for his astonishing erudition and profundity, for example, expressed bewilderment that the BJP has an 'intellectual cell'. Another, thought it unlikely that a BJP spokesman could ever have been employed by a global organisation, except perhaps in their call centre. A young man who is listed as an AAP candidate for one of the Delhi (unless he is left high and dry by a deal with the Congress) even put out a photograph of two cows with the caption: 'BJP workers seeking votes.'

The examples can be multiplied but point to unmistakable signs of condescension. Like the Indian lady in the pub who couldn't countenance the idea that anyone decent could have voted for Brexit, there is incomprehension that anyone can support Modi and vote BJP. During the 2014 election, I encountered foreign journalists who were taken aback by the suggestion that the BJP looked like winning since he hadn't met a single person who was supporting Modi. Of course he didn't since the ecosystem around the foreign press corps tend to be vociferously anti-Modi. Had they been covering the Brexit referendum they wouldn't have met anyone voting to leave the EU.

It is the sheer arrogance of those who believe that they have a monopoly of the truth that marks the liberal resistance to Modi. This is one reason they failed in 2014 and this will be a reason why they may not succeed in 2019.

Loyalty shifts at full throttle

Many leaders switch to other parties to better their prospects ahead of LS elections

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

A 'change of heart' and 'switchovers' go hand-in-hand during the election festival when ideology also goes for a quick toss if political leaders are denied tickets to contest or ignored by their parent parties.

As the Lok Sabha contest 2019 nears and nervous energy is in the air with parties finalising their lists of candidates on the basis of their 'winnability', a whole lot of veterans and newbies on Saturday jettisoned their parties unabashedly finding a 'new cause' to be in the political war field.

Danish Ali, JD(S) general secretary, joined BSP "with the blessings" of his party chief HD Deve Gowda. Ali's move came as a surprise as he was a go-between HD Deve Gowda and Congress president Rahul Gandhi in settling Lok Sabha seat sharing between the two parties in Karnataka. Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy dubbed his move a "political arrangement".

"I never asked for anything even when I was in JD(S), it was up to Deve Gowda ji to decide what work to assign me. I have come here after taking the blessings and permission of



Former BJD MP Balabhadra Majhi from Nabarangpur joins BJP in the presence of Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and BJP leader Baijayant Jay Panda at party headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Deve Gowda ji. I will work wherever Behen ji assigns me", he said. There were more shockwaves as the day progressed. If Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Balabhadra Majhi switched over to BJP, Congress MLA from Salepur (Cuttack district) Prakash Chandra Behera resigned from his party. With a loss of one, the BJD soon got one back as Harish Chandra Panda, nephew of Odisha BJP president Basant Kumar Panda, joined the party in the presence of Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik.

Similar developments marked Uttarakhanda, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. In a real shocker, former Uttarakhanda

Chief Minister Maj Gen (ret'd) BC Khanduri's son Manish, a former journalist, joined Congress at a rally in Dehradun, addressed by Rahul

Gandhi. The Congress president claimed that the son quit as his father was insulted when he dared to ask a question as the chairman of Standing Committee on Defence.

"He (BC Khanduri) gave all his life to Army. But when he asked a question on national security in Parliament & spoke the truth that the way Government should help Army, it is not there, then he was removed from the chairmanship of that Committee", Rahul said after he presented Manish before the public.

On his part Manish spoke of him taking blessings of his father before deciding his cross-over to the Congress.

Manifestos can't be released in last 48 hrs before polling, says EC

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India on Saturday fixed a timeline for the release of manifesto by political parties. Manifestos for both single and multi-phase elections cannot be released during the prohibitory period, which is 48 hours before the completion of the polls, as prescribed under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The provision will, henceforth, be applicable and implemented as a part of the Model Code of Conduct for all future elections. PNS



President Ram Nath Kovind being blessed by renowned environmentalist Saalumara Thimmakka after she was awarded Padma Shri during 'Padma Awards 2019' in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Snubbed MSY unlikely to campaign for party leaders

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Angry over denial of party ticket to his younger daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav from Sambhal for the Lok Sabha polls, Samajwadi Party patron Mulayam Singh is unlikely to campaign for the party and alliance candidates during the election.

Mulayam is also said to be unhappy with the idea of Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, along with Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal leaders, campaigning for him in Mainpuri. Mulayam is the SP candidate from Mainpuri.

Since the very beginning, Mulayam has been against the SP-BSP alliance in which the SP has had to part with over 40 of the total 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh. Recently, the SP founder had publicly admonished his son and party Chief Akhilesh Yadav for forging AN alliance with the BSP, saying, "You have ruined the party... the SP could have won over two dozen seats on its own without the alliance."

MP Balabhadra Majhi joins BJP



Salepur MLA Prakash Behera quits Cong

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Two days after he resigned from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Nabarangpur MP Balabhadra Majhi on Saturday joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the elections.

He joined the saffron party in the presence of BJP national vice-president Baijayant Panda, Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Jugal Oram and BJP Odisha in-charge Arun Singh during a programme in New Delhi.

Dharmendra Pradhan said, "Majhi joined the BJP for the development of tribals in Nabarangpur and Koraput districts. He came to the party being inspired by the ideals of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and developmental works of the Union Government. His joining will strengthen the BJP further in the State."

Pradhan said rail lines have been laid in Nabarangpur and Malkangiri districts due to efforts of Majhi.



Balabhadra Majhi is most likely to be the BJD candidate for the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat in the coming elections. He had defeated his nearest Congress rival Pradeep Majhi in this constituency in the 2014 polls.

Notably, Balabhadra Majhi had resigned from the BJD alleging that he was "ignored" by the party.

As was expected, Salepur MLA Prakash Behera resigned from the Congress' primary membership on Saturday citing "humiliation" by the party time and again.

He sent his resignation to All India Congress Committee president Rahul Gandhi.

Speculations are on rife that Behera is likely to join the BJP soon.

Behera said, "After being removed as Cuttack District Congress Committee (DCC) president, I have been humiliated by the party leadership time and again. In spite of my appeal to the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president, my grievance was not duly considered by the OPCC."

"I had been working for the Congress since last 20 years," he added.

BJP State chief's nephew joins BJD



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In yet another interesting development prior to elections, BJP State president Basant Panda's nephew Harishchandra Panda joined the BJD on Saturday.

Harishchandra Panda visited the Naveen Niwas along with his supporters and joined the BJD in the presence of party supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

"Being inspired by the developmental works carried out under the BJD rule in Odisha, I decided to serve the people being part of the party," he told media.

Hitting out at his uncle Basant Panda, Harishchandra said, "Basant Panda is working for his party not the soil (referring to the State)."

Naveen Patnaik welcomed him to the BJD, saying his joining would strengthen the party.

Indian techie, student killed in New Zealand mosque attacks

IAN ■ HYDERABAD/THRISSUR

A software engineer from Hyderabad and a woman post-graduate student from Kerala's Thrissur were among the 49 people killed in Friday's terror attacks on two mosques in New Zealand's Christchurch, while the whereabouts of at least two visitors from Gujarat where not known.

The shootings — the first fatal terror attack in the South Pacific island nation in many decades, was allegedly carried out by Brenton Tarrant, 28, who was charged with murder at a court in Christchurch on Saturday. Ancy Ali, a 25-year-old married woman from Kerala's Thrissur, was among the victims, the Kerala Police said.

Candidates' list sent to CEC for approval

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR:

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) Screening Committee, which is scrutinising the list of candidates for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha, on Saturday sent the list of selected candidates to the Central Election Committee (CEC) for its approval.

Sources said on the day, marathon discussions were held by the committee in New Delhi to select the candidates for the fourth phase of the polls.

Discussions were held on the list sent by Pradesh Election Committee (PEC) for six Lok Sabha and 42 Assembly constituencies.

AICC Odisha in-charge Jeetendra Singh said, "Today

AICC screening committee meet

discussions were held by the screening committee for 50 to 60 seats. The list of candidates sent by the screening committee for the first phase elections was considered by the CEC today."

The name of probable women candidates was also discussed in the meeting.

PCC president Niranjan Patnaik, Congress youth leader Pradeep Majhi and MLA Chiranjib Biswal were present at the meeting.

It may be noted that the PEC had earlier sent names of probable candidates to the AICC screening committee for consideration and approval.

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SHOW TIME

It is subtle and endearing



PHOTOGRAPH
*ing: Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sanya Malhotra, Vijay Raaz, Jim Sarbh, Abdul Quadir Amin
Rated: 6/10

Should *Photograph* be even compared to *The Lunch Box*? The only connection between the two films is that they have the same director. While it is not correct to compare two films because the actors are different and so is the storyline, but as an audience, after a movie has set a benchmark — *The Lunch Box* did it — any project on somewhat similar path will be juxtaposed.

If one were to see *Photograph* in its entirety, one can sit back and enjoy this slow burner love story with Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Sanya Malhotra as leads. Though the two on the face of make an odd couple, they are perfectly suited here.

That Nawazuddin Siddiqui is brilliant here, would be putting it mildly. It actually looks as if he is going about doing his what he does best — an effortless acting.

Given that Ritesh Batra is the director here, there are bound to be a few things that find their way in the same

platform. First, an unlikely pair who meet by chance and happen to like each other to the extent that they want to meet each other and our hero — Nawazuddin — getting a bit possessive when the heroine's coaching instructor touches her — she is studying for CA intermediary. Our hero is a street photographer. In reality the two shall never meet.

But when you fall in love and money and family background seldom matters. That is what most of the Raj Kapoor films were about. A poor boy who falls in love with rich girl. The father raises objections but all is well that ends well.

Does the same hold true for our pair? Batra is known to leave the audience with open-ended climaxes. *Photograph* is no different.

If you are a pessimist and want realism, *Photograph* will not disappoint. But if you are an optimist you may take heart from — *Mujhe pata hai is (movie) ka kya end hoga... Laadka mechanic, ladki bade ghar ki... Ma-baap ki narazgi...* We also know how most of such films ended back in the 50s and 60s. The hero always got the girl.

— Shalini Saksena

Splendiferous idea

WONDER PARK
*ing (Voice Over): Brianna Denski, Ken Hudson Campbell, Kenan Thompson, Ken Jeong, Mila Kunis, John Oliver, Jenniffer Garner, Matthew Broderick
Rated: 7/10

We all know that nobody make animation better than Hollywood. Some of us would also agree that the genre is no longer associated with kids. We also acknowledge that the present technology allows the filmmakers a free rein to their imagination.

And the makers of *Wonder Park* have done exactly this. You have a little girl — June who along with her mother create a wonder park where Peanut the monkey can conjure a ride with a magic pen provided it is whispered into the ears of a stuffed toy — a monkey. Confused? Don't be. It is a wonderland inside a magical world of animation.

A magical world can't be all about fun, frolic and splash of colour and cute and cuddly animals. It has to come up with a message. *Wonder Park* comes with its share.

Don't give up hope, don't give up on your dreams and passion whatever the circumstances. Last but not the least, if your intentions are right, you will always be able to defeat the darkness. However, tough it may be, if your heart is pure, there will always be light at the end of the tunnel.

Given that our cinemas get few kid movies, this one will make interest the tiny tots.

— Shalini Saksena



Tale of love and loss

HAMID
*ing: Rasika Duggal, Sumit Kaul, Vikas Kumar, Talha Arshad Reshi
Rated: 6/10

Any story that comes from the Valley and talks about humanity over politics is bound to touch the audience. More so, if the story is told with a seven-year-old at the helm.

Aijaz Khan through Hamid (Talha Arshad) tells you the story of love for a father, belief in God that he will make things right, even in the Valley where terror reigns high, the dejection in the system and that you are all alone and how people with vested interest are looking for a weakness in you so that they can take advantage of that and mould you to their way of thinking.

The good is that the film doesn't take sides nor passes any judgement — just tells you a story that despite the gloom there is a glimmer of hope.

Arshad as Hamid is really good as is Rasika Duggal as his mother. It is no wonder that the film got a standing ovation at Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival and Dharamshala International Film Festival.

— Shalini Saksena

TELLYTALE



GAUHAH IN GATHBANDHAN
With the on going story track in Colors' show *Gathbandhan* Savitri Mai (Sonali Naik) will throw a big function for Dhanak's (Shruti Sharma) Muh Dikhai rituals and will invite all the Dons of different area to attend.

Gauhar will glam up the function with her sultry dance moves as she will shake a leg to her famous item number *Hua Chokra Jawan* from the movie *Ishaqzaade*, leaving the viewers awestruck.

Speaking about her entry Gauhar Khan said: "I've had some special memories and some of my biggest moments of life with Colors. Everytime I am associated with a show on Colors it feels like being home. I was a part of a celebration on *Gathbandhan* and I performed to a medley of famous Bollywood songs. I was happy to be a part of this show as it portrays women in light of confidence."

Meanwhile on Monday it will be Mika who will be making an entry. He will be performing for a grand Holi party. Mika will set the *mahol* and sing a medley of his songs through which he will also try to bring the couple (Raghu and Dhanak leads) a bit close by playing cupid and try to brew love between with the touch of his music.

Talking about his association Mika said, "My past association with Colors has been a great experience for me. This is my first time that I am part of a fiction show on COLORS, and I am really excited to celebrate Holi with the cast of *Gathbandhan*. I am also here to bring two people fall in love with each other through my music and my songs."

FARAH'S HOME COOKED TREAT
Farah Khan dons many hats and effortlessly manages different roles. Farah is not only known as a dance choreographer and director but also known as an excellent cook. Farah is

very passionate about cooking and likes to treat her friends. So, when Farah visited the sets of *Super Dancer Chapter 3* for *guru-shishya* special episode, she ensured to treat the super judges with her home cooked food.

Farah is a foodie and so are our judges of *Super Dancer*. Farah told the Super judges to not carry food and she packed some delicious food. They all enjoyed the meal together. Now we wonder if Farah had got her famous



Yakhani pulao or some other dish.

AVINASH WHIPS UP DRAMA
Zee TV's popular fiction show, *Yeh Teri Galiyaan* has been keeping the audience on the edge of their seats with many intriguing twists and turns.

Recently, the viewers witnessed Hridoy going insane over Asmita missing whereas Shaan tries to calm him down. As the drama continues to unfold, inspector Aditya informs the entire Mazumdar family that Asmita is on her way to Mumbai. Hearing this news, Shaan blames himself as he was the one to throw Asmita out of the house. To vent out his frustration, he starts hurting and whipping. To make the sequence authentic, Avinash decided to whip himself for real. He even got bruises on his body but he still continued with the scene.



Sharing his experience, Avinash said: "It was an intense scene which had to be shot in one go and I was too

nervous to shoot it as this was my first performance where I am doing a stunt and I had to beat myself with a 'whip'. I always prefer to give my sequences a touch of reality. So, instead of using a dupe, I decided to do it myself. I am very thankful to the stunt experts on the set who helped me understand the technicalities and pull it off flawlessly."

A LEAP IN KUMKUM BHAGYA
Zee TV's *Kumkum Bhagya* has been ruling the television space as everyone's favourite dinner-time soap for the past five years. Now it is time for yet another journey to begin as the show takes a 20-year leap and introduces viewers to the next generation of the Mehra — Abhi-Pragya's twin daughters. Post the leap, the track will focus on Abhi, Pragya and their young college-going



daughters. Essaying the role of Prachi will be actor Mugdha Chaphekar and on the other hand, Naina Singh has been roped in to play the role of Rhea. Though twins by birth, Rhea and Prachi are two strong personalities who are complete opposites of each other. On one hand, Prachi is a complete replica of Pragya in terms of her simplicity, practicality, and sensitivity, on the other hand, Rhea is born in the lap of luxury making her a somewhat spoilt, pampered daughter of a successful rockstar.

Speaking about being a part of the show, Mugdha said: "I am making a comeback on Zee TV after four years and what better way to start a new journey than the extremely popular show *Kumkum Bhagya*. I have been an ardent follower of the show and I am glad that I am going to be a part of it. I hope that the audience enjoy the new twist."

'Homemakers are not given prominence'

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with NEELIMA AZEEM about her new show Mom & Co on Zoom TV and experiences in the industry

■ Tell us about the show *Mom & Co*.

The show is about a woman — Suhasini Rao. She is a simple and sincere lady. She has gone through a lot in life. She goes through her own moments of loneliness and some special moments with her son. The show revolves around mother-son relationship and captures the complexities as well as the beauty of it.

■ What attracted you to play Suhasini?

Women who are not overtly exciting and who are homemakers, they do a lot in life. They are the ones who make their families and keep them together whatever the cost. These women have their identity and emotional issues and face a lot of challenges in life. Homemakers are huge anchors, they steer everything, they nurture their children and support their husbands and families. They create the people that their children become but they are not given enough prominence. I think they are not even given their due respect. In our society a woman like this should be brought out through a well told story and a well-edged out character and Suhasini is a character that brings out all this effortlessly. She is enduring and people will relate to her. Women who have gone through all this in their life will be emotionally attached to her. This is what attracted me to play this role.

■ Was there something you did going out of your comfort zone?

Yes, wearing sarees all the time and wearing them the right way, (laughs) But honestly, I don't see my work as a matter of comfort or discomfort. I see work as challenging or difficult. I define work based on the complexities of my character and the kind of storyline the show follows. But thankfully there have been



I don't see my work as a matter of comfort or discomfort. I see work as challenging or difficult. I define work based on the complexities of my character

■ How have you evolved as an actor?

It is difficult to talk about my own evolution. But when I started I tried to be more spectacular on screen but, now my basic evolution is that I rather want to be in the moment and the graph of the story.

■ How do you define acting and what is your approach towards it?

Acting is what propels you to play different people. And it comes naturally to be an actor. It is what excites and motivates you to live various lives in various worlds, playing different people.

■ Who has been your inspiration?

My inspiration has been Meena Kumari. She was a very versatile actor.

■ What does success mean to you?

It is very difficult to define it in just one word but, I think success for me is being able to do what you love to.

■ One change you would like to see in the industry for actors and other working professionals.

It is important that for actors we pick up subjects where they get to play more realistic and interesting characters. Also for actors of our age there should be more subjects centred around people who are older because it is interesting to show their life and there is more to their life than just the age brackets. Actors should also be given more workshops and time to prepare for their projects and there should be a proper system for this in our country.

■ Apart from acting what else keeps you busy?

Predominantly, my family and dancing. I have learned dance from Pandit Birju Maharaj and I am hugely involved in this dance form. I was the youngest exponent of Kathak which then became so popular. I like reading and munching along with it at night.

have seen many women who have played a mother's role brilliantly in films, like Nargis in *Mother India*.
■ How has your journey been so far?
To say the least, it has been interesting. There were ups and downs but, at the end of the day this is what you love to do and we get paid for it so I am happy to be an actor.

Arjun Bijlani's balancing act

Actor Arjun Bijlani has his plate full at the moment. The actor is simultaneously shooting for two shows - *Kitchen Champion*, which he is hosting, and *Ishq Mein Marjawan*, where he plays the role of Deep Raj Singh. However, the actor isn't complaining. "I think my shows are a little heavy.

They are full of thriller and action. So, I thought hosting will make the atmosphere light and will balance things out. I love hosting too. Acting is something which I am very passionate about. I love to play my character in *Ishq Mein Marjawan*. Hosting is fun as well and it has more of me. It makes me feel more alive too and boosts my spirits. Hosting is something where I am myself and I am not playing a character. Right now, I am enjoying doing both," says the actor.

He adds, "Hosting gives provides you with an opportunity to really connect with your audience. They get to know you more. You get to be who you are and not your character. Acting and hosting both are very tough to do and I am glad I am getting to do both together."



Celebrating Holi with Lil' Champs

Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Lil' Champs contestants have surely been winning the hearts of the audiences and judges with their powerful voices and brilliant renditions. Ushering in the festival of Holi, the contestants will light up the atmosphere with Holi themed songs.

While all the kids sang to the best of their abilities, contestant Ritik Gupta and Abhiroop performance to *Rang Barse* got everyone in a festive mode! While everyone spoke about their fond memories of celebrating Holi, Ritik revealed that he hasn't celebrated Holi for the last three years as he has been staying away from his family in Delhi to pursue music and that he is happy to be celebrating it with his extended *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Lil' Champs* family this year. He also said that since judge Richa Sharma is like his sister, he would like to play Holi with her. She said: "Everyone sitting here, the musicians, contestants, jury, Shaan, Amaal, there is this relationship that we all have built with each other over the period of time. On and off, we keep doing entertaining and fun stuff as we are all a family now. To everyone present here and ones behind the camera, a very very Happy Holi!"

Even for Ritik, *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Lil' Champs* has become a home away from home. The mothers of all contestants take care of him as their own son. In fact, contestant Pritam lent his headphone to Ritik after the latter's got damaged. When Richa Sharma heard about this, she gave her headphones to Ritik and said, "I don't want any kid to suffer, so I would like to give him my headphones."

The contestants will amp up the entertainment quotient and have lots of fun on the sets. Banwaari and Troupe from Vrindavan set the right mood as they performed with judges Shaan and Richa who turned Radha and Krishna respectively for the



performance. Contestant Pritam and Mohammad's duet performance to *Badri Ki dulhaniya* and *Khaike Paan Banaras wala* impressed everyone thoroughly. Moreover, contestants Vansh and Bhavish's magical performance to *Jhoom Barabar Jhoom* for everyone grooving and moving. All in all, the episode calls for great Holi celebrations and amazing performances!

CERTIFICATE LOST

I, Smiti Patnaik, D/o - D.P. Pattanaik, R/o D/19, MCL Colony, Jagriti Vihar, P.S - Burla, Dist. - Sambalpur do hereby inform that, on Dt.10.03.2019 at about 1.00 P.M. when I was returning from Burla DAV School to Jagriti Vihar unfortunately I have lost my Original Certificates & Mark Sheets of Class-X of ICSE passed in the year 2014 from Carmel School, Dhanbad & Class-XII of CBSE passed in the year 2016 from DAV School, Burla.
Sd/-
Smiti Patnaik

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1400-A
2nd Corrigendum to Bid ID No.EE,MID, KHD 27/2018-19 and
1st Corrigendum to Bid ID No. EE,MID,KHD 28/2018-19
The date of transparent lottery for the above notice schedule to be held on 20.03.2019 and 23.03.2019 respectively are hereby postponed due to declaration of Model Code of Conduct.
All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer
M.I.Division, Khurda
32042/11/0025/1819

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
1397-A
1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No- EEMDN 10/ 2018-19
No.611 Dated 12.03.2019
The Date of transparent Lottery of Bid Identification No. EEMDN 10/ 2018-19 scheduled on 20.03.2019 at 11.00 A.M. is hereby postponed in connection with imposition of model code of conduct for ensuing General Election, 2019. The next date of transparent Lottery if required will be notified separately.
All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
M.I.Division,Nayagarh
32260/11/0015/1819

Jagatsinghpur Assembly seat: Aspirants galore for BJD ticket

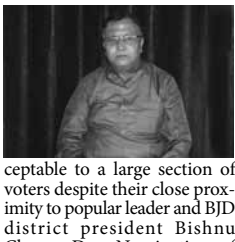


PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Highly politically-sensitive district Jagatsinghpur is all agog with leaders vying with each other for nominations for different constituencies from the BJD. According to sources, as many as over half a dozen aspirants intend to have the BJD cake on their way.

With the announcement of a 33-per cent reservation for women, hope tells a flattering tale in the ears of women aspirants; and so, Kanak Lenka has offered her candidature from the BJD for the Jagatsinghpur Assembly seat. But she may find it difficult to cross the bridge as she has earned more enemies than friends during her stints in different position in the constituency.

Greenhorns like Pradeep Swain and student leader Amarendra Das appear unac-



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

ceptable to a large section of voters despite their close proximity to popular leader and BJD district president Bishnu Charan Das. Nomination of Minati Das is also a matter of speculation.

Another aspirant and a leading cooperative activist, Narayan Biswal, though a contender for this Assembly segment, is reportedly facing health problems. Candidature of former Balikuda MLA Umesh Swain for the Jagatsinghpur constituency is viewed with skepticism since he is like a bad coin out of circulation.

BJD district chief, veteran Dalit leader, former Minister, former Rajya Sabha member MP Bishnu Das, who is Vice-Chairman of State Planning Board, has his strong holds in the district. Sources say Das is interested to fight from the Tirtol reserved constituency as a major portion of this segment includes Biridi block, which is an impregnable fortress for him. Das enjoys a groundswell

of support by the voters of Biridi and Tirtol blocks; and if he gets ticket for Tirtol, the BJD is expected to win the seat without much difficulty.

In an event of Das finally contesting from Tirtol, the BJD high command may seriously weigh the candidature of former Balikuda MLA Jyotish Das for the Jagatsinghpur general constituency, it is learnt from sources. Jyotish Das is a leader quite accessible to all sections of voters. As a former Congress leader, he can make inroads into the Congress pockets owing to his continued good relations with large numbers of Congress workers who are still loyal to him. Besides, he enjoys support of a section of BJP cadres as he was also once in this party. Above all, Das is an affable personality known for his suave manners.

According to political observers, the BJD high command can kill two birds in one stone by fielding Bishnu Das in Tirtol and Jyotish Das in Jagatsinghpur.

Notably, Chiranjib Biswal of the Congress won the Jagatsinghpur seat in the 2014 elections and is expected to be a strong contender against the BJD candidate this time too.

17 firms share concerns with State Government

From Baleswar, Bhadrak, Keonjhar

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The fifth meeting under the initiative 'Industry Care' of the State Industries Department was held with representatives from Baleswar, Bhadrak and Keonjhar-based industries joining it at the Idco office here.

Baleswar, Bhadrak and Keonjhar are critical to Odisha's industrialisation and many industries across sectors operating in these districts have planned expansion. The meeting was attended by 17 companies including Dhamra Port Company Limited (Adani Ports), Emami Cement, Welspun, Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Ardent Steel and Oriplast among others.

The meeting began with a presentation on all the business reforms and facilitation mechanisms institutionalised by the State Government.

This was followed by a discussion on industry feedback to the business reforms.

One-on-one meetings with companies which had specific issues were conducted. The meeting was co-chaired by Principal Secretary, Industries Department and Chairman, IPICOL Sanjeev Chopra along with Idco CMD Sanjay Singh and MD, IPICOL Dr Nitin Jawale.

The senior officials from State Level Facilitation Cell (SLFC), Odisha State Pollution Control Board, Directorate of Factories and Boilers and Directorate of Fire Services were present apart from officials from IPICOL and Idco.

"The objective of the initiative, being organised on a fortnightly basis, is to raise awareness about business reforms and facilitation mechanisms made available by the State Government and resolve the issues faced by industries with various Government departments," said Principal Secretary, Industries, Chopra.

Sharing an industry perspective, CEO, Dhamra Port Company Limited, Subrat Tripathy said, "This is a welcome step forward to enhance the ease of doing business in the State." Offering a home-

grown entrepreneur's perspective, Oriplast Executive Director Ashish Agarwal said, "The intent and efforts of the State Government to resolve the issues is indeed praiseworthy."

"The objective of the initiative, being organised on a fortnightly basis, is to raise awareness about business reforms and facilitation mechanisms made available by the State Government and resolve the issues faced by industries with various Government departments," said Principal Secretary, Industries, Chopra

IN BRIEF

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICE OPENS 24X7 CONTROL ROOM

Bhubaneswar: The State Chief Electoral Office (CEO) has opened a control room in view of the upcoming elections. The control room will operate 24 hours a day and seven days a week till completion of the election process. Poll-related complaints and incidents of violation of Model Code of Conduct can be reported to the control room by dialling 0674-2395015. People can also contact the CEO through the number.



UMARKOTE LI SDO HELD TAKING BRIBE FROM FARMERS

Umarkote: Umarkote Lift Irrigation Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Bharat Mandal was held by the Vigilance police on Saturday while demanding and accepting bribe of ₹8,000 from four farmers towards sanctioning of bore-well projects. Mandal allegedly demanded ₹2,000 each from Balaram Khara, Rabindra Guga, Duryadhan Guga and Sunadhar Pakuli of Mahanda panchayat under Raigarh block of Nabarangpur district to sanction digging of bore-wells in their lands. Basing on the complaint lodged by the farmers, Vigilance sleuths, led by Nabarangpur DSP Pramod Bag, laid a trap and nabbed Mandal red-handed while accepting the bribe. Mandal was forwarded to the Jeypore Vigilance Court.



SBI STAFF PENSIONERS' BODY MEET HELD

Bhubaneswar: A meeting of the State Bank of India (SBI) Staff Pensioners' Association was held here on Saturday. SBI Bhubaneswar Circle CGM Praveena Kala inaugurated the meeting in the presence of GM Devi Shankar Mishra and association president GC Mishra and general secretary Upendra Das. Among others, circle DGM ST Lama was present. All the staff pensioners gave a commitment to act as ambassadors for the bank.



SAKAHARI RANGNI SAMAJ HOLDS ANNUAL DAY

Khordha: The Nikhila Utkal Sakahari Rangni Samaj celebrated its foundation day here recently. A torch rally was taken out and a plantation drive organised. Bolgarh Paramananda College Reader Rabindra Nath Panigrahi and Begunia PS IIC Rashmi Ranjan Sahu attended as guests. The Rangni Samaj in association with the Ama Odisha organised a blood donation camp in which 24 units of blood were collected. In the evening, a cultural programme also held where local MLA Prasant Jagadev and Braja Subudhi attended as guests. Among others, Rangni Samaj president Kishore Sahu, secretary Harihar Sahu, Sarangdar Rout and cultural secretary Sushant Kumar Rout were present.



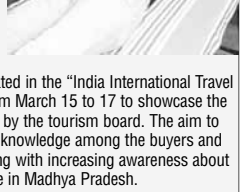
BRAJAJNAGAR MARWARI YOUTHS HOLD BLOOD DONATION CAMP

Brajrajnagar: The Marwari Yuva Manch (MYM), Brajrajnagar unit in association with the Jagruti Mahila Samiti organised blood donation and blood checkup camps here. A total of 51 units of blood were collected and more than 100 patients were examined. The camps were held in support of businessman Gobind Agarwal and former Municipality Chairman Kishore Agarwal. It was inaugurated in the presence of MYM president Pankaj Rungta, secretary Abhinav Agarwal, Samiti head Sangita Sharma and Sudha Agarwal. Among others, Manch PRO Bhawant Agarwal was present.



MP TOURISM TAKES PART IN INT'L TRAVEL MEET IN BBSR

Bhubaneswar: The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB) has participated in the "India International Travel Exhibition 2019" being held here from March 15 to 17 to showcase the diversity in different travel segments by the tourism board. The aim to participate in the fair was to provide knowledge among the buyers and operators on the latest offerings along with increasing awareness about the vast travel opportunities available in Madhya Pradesh.



BJD may field MP Jhina's wife Kaushalya

Koraput LS seat fight to be triangular

BJP hopefuls are Gamang, Pang; chance for Ullaka in Cong

NISHAN PATTANAİK ■ KORAPUT

With the BJD announcing to field women in 33 per cent of the Parliamentary seats in the coming polls, Kaushalya Hikaka, wife of sitting MP Jhina Hikaka, may be given ticket for the Koraput Lok Sabha seat.

Kaushalya had met Naveen on Tuesday in connection with her candidature from the seat. Koraput was a stronghold of Congress till 2009. Former Chief Minister Giridhar Gamang had won from the constituency for nine consecutive times while Jayaram Pang of BJD won the seat in 2009 and in 2014 Jhina won the seat.

The high drama of being abducted, kept in captivity for

34 days and later released by Maoists in 2012, Jhina then a MLA of Laxmipur, had shot to limelight. CM patnaik had kept Jhina in Bhubaneswar as he was still under Maoist threat. Kaushalya is a teacher in Unit I school in Bhubaneswar.

But this time, Jhina may not be given ticket as he is facing anti-incumbency. Though he had won the 2014 election riding high on the popularity of CM Patnaik, but he failed to reach out to the people at the grassroots through development projects.

The Pitaguda panchayat in Semiliguda block which was under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana in 2015 did not see much of development. Even Jhina did not visit the village in the last five years.

In the BJP the two former MPs Giridhar Gamang and Jayram Pang are hopeful of getting the ticket, while Saptagiri Ullaka, son of late Rama Chandra Ullaka, is a strong aspirant of Congress

ticket.

Under these circumstances, it will be difficult for a political figure like Kaushalya to ensure win for the ruling party as she would have to fight the poll battle with veterans like Gamang and Pang. She has no connect with locals and has been staying in Bhubaneswar after being transferred by Government on security grounds. Further, if sources are to be believed, Hikaka's chances of contesting from Laxmipur Assembly constituency in the ensuing elections also seem bleak.

The Pitaguda panchayat in Semiliguda block which was under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana in 2015 did not see much of development

Paralakhemundi Assembly seat

Too many aspirants: Cong, BJD, BJP in a fix

Panigrahi, Kalyani Devi, Venkatarabana among new faces

TARINI PRASAD PANDA ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

With less than a month left for the elections, the rising numbers of aspirants for the prestigious Paralakhemundi Assembly seat have left the three main political parties, the BJD, the Congress and the BJP, in a quandary.

The Paralakhemundi constituency comprises Paralakhemundi Municipality, Kashinagar NAC and three blocks, Gumma, Goshani and Kashinagar.

The Congress, which holds the seat currently, seems facing difficulties in selecting a candidate. Apart from incumbent MLA K Surya Rao, Hi-Tech Group chairman Dr Tirupati Panigrahi and Paralakhemundi town president Basant Kumar



Panda are in the race. Panigrahi and Panda have worked a lot in maintaining peoples' contact and strengthening the party organisation in their own ways and are hopeful of getting party ticket.

The number of aspirants in the BJD is still more. K Narayan Rao, Reader Maruta Kumar Pal, Parala Princess Kalyani Devi and SWWS chief D Jagannath Raju are in the race. While Rao had lost the last election by a very low margin, Pal has a very strong organisation in the Gumma block. Kalyani Devi, who joined the BJD recently, has been in contact with people for long. As a head of a NGO, Raju has served people in dif-



ferent blocks during the Cyclone Titli.

Similarly, BJP district president G Venkatarabana, former president and State executive member Siddheshwar Mishra and last time MLA candidate and former Municipality Chairman Tripati Nayak seek tickets from the saffron party.

Meenakshi may be BJD choice for Champua

She is wife of Sana Mahakud's aide

RAJENDRA K SAHU ■ CHAMPUA

Meenakshi Mahanta, a protégé of Champua Independent MLA Santatan Mahakud, might be picked up by the BJD for the Champua seat this time.

After his recent resignation from the post of president of Jana Samruddhi Party, a political outfit launched by Mahakud, it was thought that there would be an end to his political career, but Mahakud proved the speculation wrong.

Sources revealed that recently, Mahakud had gone to the Naveen Niwas to meet BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik and claim his nomination from BJD for Champua, but Patnaik who didn't like to displease local Minister Badri Narayan Patra on the one hand and Jitu Patnaik, a former Champua MLA, on the other, as the duo is opposed to Mahakud, is said to have agreed to field a candidate sponsored by Mahakud.

Sources also informed that Patnaik assured Mahakud to nominate him to Rajya Sabha in lieu of his support for the victory of the BJD candidates in Keonjhar district.

Accordingly, Meenakshi Mahanta, wife of Bhakta Mahanta, a close confidant of

Mahakud, may be BJD nominee for Champua. Now all eyes are on Kusha Apat who has a large support base and has worked extensively for strengthening the organization of the BJD in the district.

Meanwhile, Bijaya Mahakud, secretary, Biju Labour wing of Keonjhar district, and Reena Barik, working president of Keonjhar BJD are

hopeful that they will be the BJD candidates for Champua.

Sources revealed that recently, Mahakud had gone to the Naveen Niwas to meet BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik and claim his nomination from BJD for Champua, but Patnaik who didn't like to displease local Minister Badri Narayan Patra on the one hand and Jitu Patnaik, a former Champua MLA, on the other, as the duo is opposed to Mahakud, is said to have agreed to field a candidate sponsored by Mahakud

Anti-graft body to sensitise people on right candidate



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Durniti Sangharsh Manch, in its executive committee meeting here on Friday, has decided to create awareness among voters to ensure that they elect the appropriate candidates in the coming elections.

In the meeting presided over by Manch president Nandanandan Dash, it was decided that an awareness campaign would be carried out in different places of the State and in the branches of the Manch in different districts.

Besides, a conference on the subject would be held soon in the State capital in which mediapersons and people would be present.

Among others, Manch State secretary Jagabandhu Sarangi, former president Umacharan Mishra, vice-president Banshidhar Padhi, assistant secretary Kshitish Palta Singh, assistant secretary Upasana Rao, Prabhat Kumar Sahu, Mahila Morcha coordinator Banagibasani Tripathi, Gourprasana Mishra, Kamini Mohan Samantray and Tarun Patnaik were present.

Answer Rahul's claims with data: Cong to BJP, BJD

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Congress has dared the BJD and the BJP to respond to the issues concerning the people of the State raised by AICC president Rahul Gandhi with data during the elections.

"During his Friday's visit to Bargarh, Rahul Gandhi raised various problems being faced by people of Odisha and held the BJD and its erstwhile partner BJP responsible. Gandhi's visits have panicked both the parties. They should respond to issues raised by him in the public with appropriate data," said PCC Media Cell chief Satya Prakash Nayak, senior Congress leader Panchanan Kanungo and party's State vice-president Aryakumar Jnanendra at a Press conference here.

They said issues of acute unemployment problem, lying of over 1.5 lakh posts in differ-



ent Government offices, Government's failure in returning money to chit fund depositors and occurrence of mining scam of over ₹60,000 crore need to be clarified in the public by both the BJD and the BJP as they had ruled the State together for nine years.

Stating that many developmental and employment-oriented projects had been set up during the Congress rule, Kanungo blamed the Naveen Patnaik for closure of the Orissa Textile Mills and over 15,000 small and medium industries.

Among others, Pressperson Ashok Samal, Prashant Satpathy and Deepak Mahapatra were present.

Security guard injured in firing in city

Two youths attacked, hospitalised

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as elections are round the corner, a series of crimes like dacoity, snatching and firing have rocked the State capital throwing up a major challenge to the Commissionerate police.

On Saturday, two miscreants opened fire at a security guard of a marriage mandap on Tankapani Road under the Badagada police station. While the reason behind the attack is yet to be ascertained, it is being suspected that the assailants had come looking for the owner of the marriage mandap.

The guard Gyanendra Mallick, who received bullet injuries on his left shoulder, was

initially admitted to the Capital Hospital and later shifted to a private hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Sources said the two miscreants called Mallick, who was on duty at the Kalyan Mandap and asked him about the whereabouts of the owner. After knowing from Mallick that the owner was not present at the mandap, they asked him water. When Mallick went near them, they opened fire at him.

Police rushed to the spot after getting information and started investigation into the incident.

In another incident, two unidentified miscreants attacked two youths with stones and lathis while they were sleeping on a footpath near Master Canteen late on Friday night. The injured youths were admitted to the Capital

Hospital.

On the wee hours of Friday, a former Army officer was looted and attacked with sharp weapons by some armed miscreants when he was on morning walk with his wife near Raghunathpur on the Patia-Nandanakan Road.

Similarly, five bike-borne assailants looted gold ornaments from a woman at gunpoint and attacked her husband and a neighbour with sharp weapons at Sailashree Vihar on Friday early morning. The series of crimes have shell-shocked the city residents.

A former Army officer was looted and attacked with sharp weapons by some armed miscreants

BCCM signs pact with B'desh Varsity

For sharing of resources in various fields

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bhavan's Centre for Communication and Management (BCCM), functioning under the aegis of Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, entered into an MoU with the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

on Saturday.

The agreement would facilitate both the institutions in sharing their valuable resources in the areas of teaching, training, consultancy and research through various student and faculty exchange initiatives.

Prof Naheem Mahtab, CPA of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) represented IUB and the MoU was signed between Prof Mahtab and Dr SK Tamotia, Director General of BCCM. Col. PK Sahoo,

senior Director (F&A), staff and faculty members and students of the institute were present.

Dr Tamotia felicitated Dr Naheem Mahtab for his outstanding contribution to academics especially in the field of management education and expressed his great satisfaction for entering into a MoU with a prestigious university of Bangladesh. Both the institutions will be immensely benefited by professional exchange programmes and share their



resources for integrated development, he added.

BJP moves CEO against hoarding demolition



Demands refund of cost from CMC, BMC

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Saturday moved the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) against demolition of its hoardings and banners from different places in the twin cities by the BMC and the BMC and sought his early intervention in the matter.

"The State Government is using the BMC and the CMC machineries for the BJP's political interest. The BJP hoardings were erected with party funds.

This move is very disappointing. Kindly take it seriously and ask the urban bodies to refund the hoarding prices to the party," a team led by vice-president Samir Mohanty urged the CEO.

They too urged the CEO to ask the CMC and the BMC to reinstall the hoardings.

Among others, party's State executive member Jagannath Pradhan, BJYM president Tankadhar Tripathy, election cell member Jayant Jena, Satyabrata Nayak, Bishwaranjan Pattanaik, Bijay Sinjha, Panchanan Nayak and Deepak Gochhayat were present.

Three from Odisha conferred Padma Shri



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday awarded the Padma Shri award to three personalities from Odisha, Devarapalli Prakash Rao, Kalama Pujari and Daitari Naik.

Prakash Rao, who is a tea seller in Cuttack, was conferred the nation's fourth highest civilian award for his social works including providing free education to slum children by running a school for them in Cuttack.

Daitari Naik from Keonjhar district was conferred Padma Shri in recognition of his exemplary endeavour in providing irrigation to farmland in his area by cutting hills to bring water.

Besides, Kalama Pujari

received the award for her excellent contribution in agriculture.

Notably, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's sister Gita Mehta was selected for Padma Shri for her contribution in 'Literature and Education' as an NRI. However, she declined to accept the award, saying that the timing of the award months before the general elections may be misconstrued.

The awards are announced on the Republic Day every year and conferred by the President at ceremonial functions at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in March.

The awards are announced on the Republic Day every year

DGP reviews poll situation in southern dists

Asks officers to curb flow of liquor, money

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of elections for Brahmapur Lok Sabha seat on April 11 and polls for Aska and Kandhamal Lok seats in the second phase on April 18, DGP Dr RP Sharma reviewed the situation and held discussions on various aspects with senior officials of the Southern Police Range here on Friday.

In the southern range Kandhamal and Boudh district are Maoist-infested. As the first phase elections are being held in the districts under Southern Police Range, the sensitive and highly sensitive booths have been identified earlier. Besides, the officers have been instructed to continue their crackdown on anti-social elements.

All those possessing licensed arms have been asked to surrender their weapons at the nearest police station. Security has been also beefed up at different places.

DGP Sharma asked the range officers to keep an eye on distribution of liquor and



money. To prevent the flow of money, illegal arms and anti-social elements from neighbouring States, patrolling would be carried out in the border regions of the district, said the DGP.

Among others, ADG Operations RP Koche, ADG Law and Order Sanjeeb Panda, Director Intelligence Sunik Kumar Ray, SIW IG Ghanshyam Upadhyaya, Southern Range IG Jatindranath Koyal and SPs of southern districts were present.

Don't stop KALIA under BJP pressure'

BJD moves CEO



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJD on Saturday moved the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) against the reported pressure of the BJP on the Election Commission of India to stop disbursement of KALIA assistance to farmers of the State.

"The Odisha Government has launched the KALIA Yojana to provide assistance to the farming community and farmers of the State. More than 37 lakh farmers have been benefitted as of now. This is a much needed programme for the development of agriculture as well as the life and livelihood of the farmers. However, it has come to our notice that the BJP has been trying to pressurise the Election Commission to stop the flow of KALIA funds to the farmers. If this comes true, then more than 20 lakh farmers, whose name are already displayed at the grama panchayats would be severely affected. Their preparations for the upcoming cropping season would be severely hit. The BJP should not be allowed to succeed in its design to stop the KALIA assistance to farmers," the memorandum read.

The party urged the Election Commission not to be pressurized by the arm-twisting tactics of the BJP as they were in power at the Centre so that farmers would not be deprived of the assistance.

BJP State secretary Bijay Nayak, MLA Tukuni Sahoo, Puspendra Singdeo, Lambodhar Nayak and Purna Chandra Sethi met the CEO and handed over a memorandum to him.

Begunia Manch to oppose outside candidates

PNS ■ KHORDHA

The Bhumiputra Swabhimani Manch organised a 'Sankalp Samabesh' at Begunia on Saturday under the chairmanship of former local Sarpanch Naba Kishore Swain.

Social activist Bhikari Charan Sahu, Botalma Sarpanch Bharat Charan Chhotray, State Kinner Association president Meera Parida, educationist



Godavarish Patnaik, Kahnu Charan Nag and many other

prominent attended the programme. They condemned the move of different political parties for fielding candidates from outside even if the area has many befitting persons.

They threatened that if anyone is made a candidate from outside, they would strongly oppose it.

ICAI BBSR releases special postal cover

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI), Bhubaneswar Chapter released a "Special Postal Cover" to mark its golden jubilee year (2018-19) here on Saturday.

Bhubaneswar GPO Director of Postal Service G Gurunathan released the postal cover and handed it over to chapter founder member and former Chairman Nilamani Mohapatra in presence of RCs and Chapters' Coordination



Committee Council Member and Chairman Niranjan Mishra, ICAI-EIRC Regional Council Member Shiba Prasad Padhi and chapter Chairman

Damodar Mishra. On the occasion, Mishra said that it is one of the special drives taken by the chapter to mark its golden jubilee year and ded-

icated same to its founder members and stakeholders for their whole hearted support and cooperation extended since last 50 years.

HC judge opens Boden JMFC Court

PNS ■ NUAPADA

Justice KR Mahapatra of the Orissa High Court inaugurated a Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court at Boden of Nuapada district on Saturday in the presence of District Judge Ashim Kumar Dalabehera, District Vigilance Judge AK Samal, District Court Registrar Raghunandan Dash and lawyers of the area.

A meeting was held after the inauguration. "Opening of this court here will help the poor people of this area, I will request the friends of the Bar here to provide support to the poor people of this area and be sensitive towards their needs so that they get justice," said Justice Mahapatra. District Judge Dalabehera said that this court was a longstanding due for Boden block.

District Vigilance Judge Samal, who was the officer on duty to declare the notifica-



tion of the High Court, read out the notification and declared about the opening of the court.

Other officials present on the occasion were Nuapada ASP Sunil Acharya, Khariar SDPO Dehuri and other police officials. Tree saplings were planted in the court

precincts by the judges on this occasion. Senior members of the Khariar Bar like Sarada Panda, Chittaranjan Singh Deo, Bhabesh Panigrahi, Sibaprasad Meher and Sushanta Tandi were present. The meeting was presided over by advocate Hiralal Majhi of Boden.

JSpur LS seat: Dhurutidhar BJP aspirant

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR



While the number of aspirants for the

Jagatsinghpur Lok Sabha constituency is rising by the day, people seem to have been fed up to see any old face and, instead, want a new and energetic candidate to win the seat.

Dhurutidhar Das, a BJP leader, received warm welcome from party workers at different places in the district.

"People want a new face. I am inspired by the ideals of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A strong nation can be built by Modi only. People are eagerly waiting to exercise franchise in favour of Modi. The chorus 'Har Har Modi Ghar Ghar Modi' proves this. Being a Shree Jagannath research scholar, I have people's support. If I get a ticket, I will be helpful in fulfilling Modi's dream of a new and strong India," Das said.

Royal Pharmacy college annual day held

Sushreeta Panda best BPharm student

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Royal College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences celebrated its annual function "Royal Vibrations 2019" in its premises here on Friday.

Chief guest Brahmapur University Vice-Chancellor Prof Rajendra Prasad Das emphasised the importance of pharmacy profession in the healthcare system and advised the students to acquire the best possible knowledge and skills during their studies.

Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Brahmapur Director Prof KVR Chary and Royal Educational and Research Society president Dr T Prakasa Rao highlighted the role of education in building the career in particular and importance of youth power and their role in nation building in general.

College Director-cum-Principal Prof PN Murthy also spoke.

The Dr Sileswar Roy Memorial Award for best BPharm student 2018 was conferred on Sushreeta Kumari Panda while Kiran Kumari Saliu received the Dr Sileswar Roy Memorial Best MPharm student Award-2018.

Similarly, Akash Ranjan Sahu received the Dr Sileswar Roy Memorial Award for best DPharm.

Student-2018, Sushreeta Kumari Panda received the Devdeep Roy Memorial Best Pharmacology Student Award-2018 and Debasis

Panda received the Devdeep Roy Memorial Badminton Championship 2018.

Besides, a mega blood donation camp was organised in which 86 units of blood were donated by the students and staffs and many competitions were held.



Odisha Parba off to a flying start in Delhi

Cultural shows enthral audience on inaugural evening

PNS ■ NEW DELHI:

The 'Odisha Parba-2019', a three day-long mega celebration of Odisha's culture, tradition, heritage, ethnic cuisine and handlooms and handicrafts, commenced in the heart of National Capital on Friday at Lawn No-5, India Gate, New Delhi.

Chief Guest of the ceremony was former President of India Pranab Mukherjee. Among others, Rajya Sabha MP Padma Vibhushan Raghunath Mohapatra and the entire fraternity of Odia Samaj were also present.

Inaugurating the event, Mukherjee reminisced the rich maritime trade legacy of Odisha in past. President of Odia Samaj Sidhartha Pradhan said, "This is the 3rd edition of Odisha Parba after the suc-



cessful two editions held in the National capital of India, New Delhi. People can see glimpses of Odisha's rich cultural legacy in the vibrant festival and mouth-watering street foods from classic cities of Odisha like Cuttack and Brahmapur etc."

Gananayak Panchakam by Debadhara Group, Mahuria dada, a colourful dance by Bhumia tribes of Odisha, traditional Mukha dance, an Odishi dance titled 'Moksha' and a fusion of Odishi and Bharatnatyam titled

'Tandanu' by Guru Madhumita Raut and troupe held the audience spellbound.

Apart from this Sikari-a primitive tribal dance and Aranya, an animal mask dance added colour and zest to the evening. Smruti Pasara, a live music show specially dedicated to Akshya Mohanty by his son Chitrabhanu Mohanty took people down the memory lane. Eventually glorious sambalpur songs by prominent Odia singers Pankaj Jal and Aseema Panda notched up the entertainment quotient.

One held in Rourkela for duping youths

Mastermind at large

PNS ■ ROURKELA

A person of Balangir district was arrested allegedly for duping 29 unemployed youths of ₹10 lakh on the promise of job in different airports. Mastermind of the case has gone absconded and is still at large.

One Smruti Ranjan Basa and one Dhiren Sahu of Balangir had done an agreement with a computer centre at Koelnagar to use their two computers on monthly basis and had started operating their office from that computer centre. Smruti Ranjan had given an online advertisement for different vacancies at different airports, including Rourkela airstrip. As many as 29 unemployed youths applied for jobs and met Dhiren and Smruti Ranjan at Koelnagar computer centre which they had partially hired.

Dhiren and Smruti Ranjan demanded ₹35,000 to ₹40,000 from each youth and collected total about ₹10 lakh from them and issued them appointment letter on airport letter head. After getting the appointment letter when the victims asked about their joining, they had asked them to wait for two to three months to join in job at airport. They had also asked the youths to do duty in computer centre which they had hired, till they are posted at different airports. The innocent unemployed youths also sat in computer centre regularly and did some jobs as instructed by Dhiren and Smruti Ranjan. When the unemployed youths did not get any salary, they suspected the act of Dhiren and Smruti Ranjan. They gheraoed Dhiren and Smruti Ranjan three days back and had demanded their salary. Mastermind Smruti Ranjan cunningly fled the spot. When the youths did not get their salary or money, they lodged an FIR.

National security likely to be major poll issue in HP

PTI ■ SHIMLA

National security can become a major issue in the upcoming general election in Himachal Pradesh, where a good number of voters are either ex-servicemen or currently serving in the security forces.

Most of these personnel can hold sway in at least three out of the state's four Lok Sabha seats -- Kangra, Hamirpur and Mandi.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is raising the issue of the surgical and airstrikes carried out by the Modi government in its public meetings, while the Congress is reminding the public how a new country, Bangladesh, had been carved out of Pakistan in 1971 during the Indira Gandhi government.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur claimed that the nation was "fully secure" in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hands.

"When Modi became the prime minister, several of our jawans were killed in Uri. The Army successfully carried out a surgical strike in retaliation under Modi's strong leadership," Thakur said at a public meeting in his home district of Mandi on Friday.

"Forty jawans of the CRPF were martyred in the Pulwama attack. Tilak Raj of Kangra was among the martyrs... Our Air Force carried out air strikes within days and destroyed terrorist camps in Pakistan," the BJP leader said.

The chief minister also blamed the previous Congress government of "doing nothing" after the Mumbai terror attack in 2008.

Taking a strong exception, Congress leader Mukesh Agnihotri said politics should not be played in the name of the slain soldiers.

"National security always remains a top priority for the Congress. The BJP leaders should not forget how a new country had come into existence in 1971 when the Indira Gandhi-led Congress government was at the Centre," he added.

Meanwhile, Brigadier (retired) Khushal Thakur, who was the commanding officer of the 18 Grenadiers that captured the strategic peaks during the Kargil conflict, said the defence forces were discharging their duties with bravery and dedication since Independence -- be it surgical strikes, air strikes, wars or insurgency.

Congress leader Mukesh Agnihotri said politics should not be played in the name of the slain soldiers

Pak conducting sham ops to please Int'l community

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid intense international pressure to act against terror groups operating from its soil post-Pulwama, Pakistan is back at sham operations against terrorists to please the global community.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the unified PR arm of the Pakistani forces, has issued a Press release claiming the security forces there conducted an intelligence-based operation in Mahnsheera and arrested "two important terrorists and three of their accomplices."

The ISPR has released photographs of five alleged terrorists but has neither identified them nor their organisation, a pointer to the old tactic of the Pakistan Army which picks up people and brands them terrorists. In many cases, Pakistan army is known to produce missing people in their extrajudicial custody or those undergoing enforced disappearances.

Operation Radd ul Fassaad: Security Forces along with CTD conducted an intelligence based operation in Mahnsheera.



Two Important Terrorists including their 3 accomplices arrested. The apprehended terrorists were involved in sabotage activities in Hazara including targeting police and military convoys, target killing of LEAs and attack on Imambargha," reads the ISPR release issued on March 12.

The photographs of the five alleged terrorists have been appended with the release. However, the ISPR has not even mentioned the offences allegedly committed or any terror case in which they could be wanted.

According to the European Union Parliament records, Pakistan ranks sixth in the world in the Modern Slavery Index, with an estimated 2.13 million people or 1.13 per cent

of its population is living in modern slavery. "Pakistan was one of the leading executioners in the world in 2017, the EU parliament has said in a recent report.

Pakistan army is known to indulge in human rights violations, custodial killings, enforced disappearances, torture and is the biggest executioner of so called terrorist including even minors and religious minorities in the world besides atrocities against religious and ethnic minorities.

Since Pakistan army runs as many as 150 companies in businesses involving milk production, sugar, construction, property and a host of other areas, the slavery is mostly perpetrated by the uniformed men who are also engaged in human rights excesses.

Pakistan is under pressure to act against terrorist groups operating from its soil after one of its terror outfit—Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing on a CRPF convoy on February 14 in which 40 paramilitary men were killed in Pulwama in Jammu & Kashmir.

India will be patient with China on listing Azhar as a terrorist: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that India will show patience with China for "as long as it takes" but will neither compromise its position nor cut a deal on terrorism, Government sources said in the wake of Beijing blocking a fresh move at the UN to designate Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist.

They said China has adequate information that certain terror groups are operating from Pakistani soil and they are against Chinese interests as well, government sources said on Saturday even while maintaining that it is for Beijing to resolve the issues with Islamabad.

Sources said New Delhi has shared evidence against Azhar with all the UN Security Council members including China, which for the fourth time blocked the bid in the UN Security Council to designate

Azhar by putting a technical hold on the proposal. The Chinese move was termed "disappointing" by India.

They said India was "cautiously" confident that eventually Azhar will get listed as it has a solid case against the JeM chief.

India is not going to make any compromise or cut any deal with any member nation of the UN Security Council or UN Sanctions Committee on designating Azhar as global terrorists, sources said, adding New Delhi is ready for a long-haul on the issue.

They said 14 out of the 15 members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) supported India on the issue while seven members were co-sponsoring the resolution to list Azhar. India will not rest until he is proscribed by the UN, they said.

"India continues to work with the UNSC's sanction committee

on listing of JeM chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist," official sources said adding the steps taken by Pakistan in the last few days against terror groups are cosmetic in nature.

The fresh proposal to designate Azhar under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council was moved by France, the UK and the US, in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed. JeM had claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack.

Sources said India was not going to approach the UN Security Council on the issue of Azhar and that if there was any other option to list Azhar, then it was for the members of the powerful body to explore.

They also ruled out the possibility of any mediation by any country to resolve issues between India and Pakistan.

JeM commander releases video, vows to target Guj, South India in coming days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The top Jaish-e-Mohammad commander in Jammu & Kashmir, Abu Hamas has released a video wherein he has vowed to target Gujarat and South Indian States. Incidentally, the video was released on March 13, almost a month after the JeM executed the deadliest strike in Jammu & Kashmir's three decades of insurgency on February 14 when a suicide bomber of the Pakistani terror group hit a convoy of the CRPF killing 40 paramilitary men.

Abu Hamas, is the top commander of the JeM in Kashmir Valley and is also a points-person of the Al Qaeda Central and has been coordinating Islamist terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir through the Al Qaeda's arm in Jammu & Kashmir under the banner of Ansar Ghazwatul Hind headed by Zakir Musa.

Hamas has exhorted that the jihadis in the Kashmir Valley to commit their jihad to the Almighty and bring down the secular and democratic rule and put in place a Khalifat or Islamic rule.

Hamas also underscored that the jihadis under the banner of JeM, Ansar Ghazwatul Hind and other such outfits acting as proxies of Pakistani Government and army are not only supposed to carry of jihad in the Kashmir Valley but have to target Gujarat and Hyderabad as also the rest of the world.

Swaraj to begin two-day visit to Maldives today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In what will be the first full-fledged bilateral trip from India to the island nation after the Government of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih came to power in November, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will travel to the Maldives on a two-day visit beginning on Sunday.

Announcing the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it is aimed at further strengthening the "close and friendly" relations between the two countries.

"India attaches the highest importance to its relationship with the Maldives which is marked by trust, transparency, mutual understanding and sensitivity," the MEA said.

In Male, Swaraj will have a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid and delegation-level talks with Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi, Finance Minister Ibrahim Ameer, National Planning and Infrastructure Minister Mohamed Aslam, Transport and Civil Aviation



Minister Aishath Nahula and Economic Development Minister Fayyaz Ismail. The ministers will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations and discuss future programme of action," the MEA said.

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale and a number of senior officials will accompany Swaraj during the trip. Swaraj will also call on President Solih on Monday and Speaker of the Parliament Qasim Ibrahim on Sunday. Minister of Home Affairs Sheikh Imran Abdulla will

also call on Swaraj. Officials said it will be the first full-fledged bilateral visit at the political level from India to the Maldives after the new government assumed office.

They said Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Maldives in November only to attend Solih's swearing-in ceremony and no substantive discussion had taken place then. Sources said the Maldives was aware of Indian government's limitations due to the election code of conduct and that Swaraj's visit will be to

enhance overall ties which came under strain during the presidency of Abdulla Yameen, who was known to be close to China.

Solih had visited India in December last year during which India announced a USD 1.4 billion financial assistance to the island nation. The two countries had also agreed to remain mindful of each other's concerns and aspirations for the stability of the Indian Ocean region and not allow their respective territories to be used for any activity inimical to their interests.

Relations between India and the Maldives deteriorated after the then President Abdulla Yameen imposed emergency on February 5 last year.

India had criticised his decision and asked his government to restore the credibility of the electoral and political process by releasing political prisoners. The emergency lasted for 45 days. Solih became president in November after he defeated Yameen in presidential elections.

Ayushman Bharat not for common man: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday took up the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme to launch a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The party said the Modi dispensation's flagship scheme is not for common man but actually a "lifesaver" for private insurance companies and hospitals.

Asserting that the Government's claims about the success of the scheme are "fake and false", senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said beneficiaries can avail treatment costing only up to ₹50,000 under this scheme on the premium of ₹1,100 paid by the Government.

It is "not ₹5 lakh promised by Modi, he has exaggerated it 10 times," the Congress leader alleged. "The claim that 'Modicare' has provided each household insurance cover of ₹5 lakh is a huge fraud," he



Ayushman Bharat.

He further said that 11 crore people across the country are already covered under respective health insurance schemes of various states and the Centre's Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). RSBY was started by the Congress-led UPA Government, he added.

As many as 10 crore people to be benefited under Ayushman Bharat are not over and above the 11 crore beneficiaries who are already availing benefits, he said, adding "Modi is trying to take credit for various health schemes through

claimed.

Stressing that the Ayushman Bharat Yojana or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), which is also described as "Modicare", is conceptually wrong, the Congress leader said, "It doesn't cover diabetes and high blood pressure, the two common ailments in India."

"Patients will not have access to adequate healthcare under PMJAY because it excludes outpatient treatment, which 87 per cent of ailing persons need. Outpatient treatment is a serious financial burden that accounted for 63 per cent of the ₹4,955 spent by households out of their pockets on health in 2014," he said.

The country does not need health insurance which benefits private players but health assurance which helps common man, which is possible through Right to Health as promised by Congress chief Rahul Gandhi.

'#I too am watchman' trends top on twitter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday urged his supporters to take the 'main bhi chowkidar' (I too am watchman) pledge, saying he is not alone in the fight against graft and social evils. And within hours the campaign became Twitter's top worldwide trend.

"Your Chowkidar is standing firm & serving the nation. But, I am not alone. Everyone who is fighting corruption, dirt, social evils is a Chowkidar. Everyone working hard for the progress of India is a Chowkidar. Today, every Indian is saying #MainBhiChowkidar," he wrote on Twitter.

He also posted a short video to drive home his message. Modi has often described himself as a "chowkidar" who would neither allow corruption nor get corrupted himself.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi has been repeatedly hurling the "chowkidar chor hai" (watchman is the thief) jibe at Modi to claim irregularities and favouritism in the Rafale fighter jet deal, a charge the BJP-led government has rejected. Soon after Modi's tweet, Rahul mocked him and tweeted, "Defensive tweet Mr Modi! You feeling a little guilty today" while a tagging a picture of Modi along with businessmen such as Vijay Malviya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi, Anil Ambani and Gautam Adani.

When 'Mother of Trees' blessed President Kovind

New Delhi: The strict protocol of Rashtrapati Bhavan could not curb the motherly instincts of 106-year-old Saalumara Thimmakka, who was awarded Padma Shri for planting thousands of trees in Karnataka, as she touched the forehead of President Ram Nath Kovind to bless him.

Thimmakka, who has

earned the sobriquet of 'Vriksha Mathe (mother of trees)' for planting 8,000 trees including over 400 banyan trees, was honoured along with other personalities at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Saturday.

In a ceremony marked by strict protocols, Thimmakka, dressed in a light green sari, with a smiling face and 'tripundra' on

her forehead, approached the dias to receive the award from President Ram Nath Kovind.

As the president, 33 years younger to Thimmakka, asked her to face the camera, the centenarian touched his forehead to bless him.

Her innocuous move brought a smile on the faces of the President, Prime Minister

and all the guests who burst into a rapturous applause for her.

Thimmakka's story is of grit and determination. She reportedly wanted to commit suicide in her 40s as she could not conceive, but with the support of her husband, she found solace in planting trees.

The couple arduously worked in the fields during the

day, planted trees and cared for them. From 10 plants in the first year, they kept planting more saplings in the later years. Sometimes even bringing water from over 4 kilometers for their plants. Born in Hulikal village in Karnataka, Thimmakka has planted over 8,000 trees during a period of 65 years. Her husband passed away in 1991.

Later in the evening, the president wrote on Twitter, "At the Padma awards ceremony, it is the President's privilege to honour India's best and most deserving. But today I was deeply touched when Saalumara Thimmakka, an environmentalist from Karnataka, and at 107 the oldest Padma awardee this year,

thought it fit to bless me." Saalumara Thimmakka represents the resilience and perseverance of the ordinary Indian citizen, especially of women in our country. May her example, and that of every Padma awardee, inspire our India to greater heights #PresidentKovind," he tweeted. PTT

CBI files case to probe defence land grab in J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case of graft, cheating and criminal conspiracy against two former CEOs and a junior engineer of Badami Bagh Cantonment in Srinagar and three private persons for alleged encroachment of defence land worth crores of rupees by hotel owners in the sensitive cantonment area in the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir.

The agency has booked then Chief Executive Officers of the Cantonment Ajay Kumar Choudhary and B K Kaul, Junior Engineer Tariq Ahmad Khanday, Tramboob Joinery Mills owner Muzaffar Rashid Wani, owner of an under construction hotel Tariq Ahmad Wani and owner of Solomon Heights hotel Muneer Ahmad Bakshi, reads the FIR registered on Friday.

The agency had registered a Preliminary Enquiry in the case on November 27, 2018 which revealed that officials of the cantonment board allegedly facilitated the hotel and mill owners in grabbing defence land.



Hotel Solomon Heights, under-construction hotel of Tariq Ahmad Wani and Tramboob Joinery Mills were standing on defence land, reads the FIR.

Their lease deed had expired and further lease deed was executed without permission of defence authorities, which was illegal and unauthorised, according to the findings of the PE.

"The concerned JE and CEOs submitted false report being fully aware about the status of land and facilitated the accused private persons to obtain permission from the board on the defence land by putting the status of land as private in Tramboob Joinery Mills," the CBI alleged.

The FIR accused Kaul (now retired), Chaudhary and Khandey of entering into criminal conspiracy to facilitate

illegal occupants, causing huge loss to the defence ministry.

The CBI alleged that land measuring 11 kanals and nine marla was given on a 20-year lease by the defence authority to Indraj Sharma from 1954 to 1974. Sharma allegedly leased out the land to one Abdul Majid Bakshi in 1960 on which Hotel Solomon Heights was constructed.

"The value of the said land is in crores as it is on the highway at Sonwar area in Srinagar which is very posh and a secure location in Srinagar. It is presently occupied by Muneer Ahmad Bakshi, son of A M Bakshi, and was constructed on defence land and its lease already stands expired," the FIR alleged.

In the case of the under construction hotel, the agency alleged that Durganag Trust president P N Takoo illegally leased out the land to Tariq Ahmad Wani. The preliminary inquiry found that the lease of the Trust through Takoo had already expired, ruling out any question of further lease to Wani, but the officials did not stop fresh construction, facilitating the illegal occupation. PTT

Delhi Court asks Bihar to give CCTV jail footage

New Delhi: A Delhi court directed the Bihar jail authorities on Saturday to produce CCTV footage on allegations of torture levelled by Christian Michel, an alleged middleman arrested in the AgustaWestland choppers scam case.

Special judge Arvind Kumar directed the jail authorities to bring the CCTV recording of February 13 to 17 of jail number 7, where Michel was kept last month.

The court had earlier sought the CCTV footage of jail number 1 and after going through it, had noted that the premises were clean and that good facilities were provided to Michel.

On March 14, the jail authorities had denied the allegations of torture levelled by Michel. Special public prosecutors D P Singh and N K Matta, appearing for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) respectively, had told the court that the accused was a foreigner and was brought to India through extradition. PTT

WHO calls for ban on tobacco promotion at sporting events

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Various tobacco companies' attempt to partnership with motor-racing teams has not gone down well with the World Health Organisation (WHO) which has asked the countries to enforce ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship at sporting events, including when hosting or receiving broadcasts of Formula 1 and MotoGP events.

The WHO has also urged all sporting bodies, including Formula 1 and MotoGP, to adopt strong tobacco free policies that ensure their events are smoke-free and their activities and participants, including race teams, are not sponsored by tobacco firms.

These calls come in light of tobacco companies like British American Tobacco (BAT) recently announcing "a new global partnership" with the Formula 1 team McLaren using the logo "a better tomorrow."



company's intent is to promote tobacco use," said the WHO in its statement.

In the case of Philip Morris International (PMI), the company has created a new logo (Mission Winnow) to be carried by Ferrari on cars, and Ducati on motorbikes, that previously carried branding of the cigarette brand Marlboro. The PMI has also registered the Mission Winnow logo as a trademark, including for use with respect to tobacco products. Ducati carried this branding at a recent MotoGP, the statement added.

The WHO noted that comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship reduce the consumption of tobacco products, including among young people. Article 13 of the WHO Framework Convention on

Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) obliges Parties to the Convention to implement a comprehensive ban (or restrictions) on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

The definitions of "tobacco advertising and promotion" and "tobacco sponsorship" are broad and cover activities with the effect or likely effect of promoting a tobacco product or tobacco use either directly or indirectly, said the health agency.

The actions of the companies result in advertisement and promotion of tobacco products and tobacco use to the world at large, including young people. Tobacco product advertising and promotion occurs both in countries that host events and in countries that receive transmissions of these events, the WHO noted.

Besides pitching in for domestic laws banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in the strongest possible ways, the WHO also called the countries to slap penalties applicable under domestic laws and taking preventative action, such as by preventing screening of events that violate domestic legislations.

नालको NALCO
National Aluminium Company Limited
(A Government of India Enterprise)

Nalco Bhawan, Nayapalli,
Bhubaneswar-751013, Odisha, India
CIN : L27203OR1981GOI000920
A NAVRATNA COMPANY

GLOBAL TENDER NOTICE
NO.NBC/MM/NT/CSL-02/2019, Date: 08.03.2019
Digitally signed online bids are invited in CPP Portal for supply of **Caustic Soda Lye** for Alumina Refinery Damanjodi and CPP Argul, Odisha from Indigenous as well as overseas manufacturer/suppliers or their accredited agents. **GM (Materials)**

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Online digitally signed offers in two parts in Central Public Procurement Portal (CPPP) are invited from indigenous manufacturer/suppliers for the following:
1.Ref. No. NBC/MM/LP/PS/SAP Data Loss Prevention Solution/2019, Dtd: 02.03.2019 : **SAP Data Loss Prevention Solution**.
2.Ref. No. NBC/MM/LP/PS/Tape Library with Expansion Module/2019, Dtd: 02.03.2019: **Tape Library with Expansion Module**.
3.Ref. No. NBC/MM/LP/PS/VMMWare & EDB Licenses/201, Dtd: 08.03.2019 : **VMMWare & EDB Licenses**.
DGM (Materials)

Digitally signed online bids for **Two Part, Open Tender** through Central Public Procurement e-procure Portal are invited on for the following Works.
1.RFP NO. TNCC-003/2019 : **AMC for Computer Equipments & Peripherals of NALCO**. **AGM (Elect.), T&C**

Details are available at www.nalcoindia.com and www.eprocure.gov.in. For any updates/changes on the tenders, bidders are requested to visit above sites.

Bank staffers seek option to shift to other PSBs

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The employees of IDBI Bank have opposed the bank's categorisation as a private lender and are seeking the option to switch to any other nationalised bank with protection of pay and service.

"The All India IDBI Officers' Association (AIIOBIOA) proposes to go on a one-day hunger strike on March 30 seeking options to be given to all officers as on date to switch over to any nationalised bank with protection to pay/salary and service," AIIOBIOA Secretary A.V. Vithal Koteswara Rao said in a letter addressed to Banking Secretary Rajeev Kumar, the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central) and the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central).

Expressing concern over the recent re-categorisation of IDBI Bank as a private sector lender by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), AIIOBIOA demanded a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to be signed between the govern-



ment, the IDBI Bank and itself confirming that the existing service conditions and welfare measures for the officers as on date will be protected till the time of their retirement.

In January, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) completed the process of picking up a controlling 51 per cent stake in IDBI Bank.

"IDBI Bank has been categorised as a 'private sector bank' for regulatory purposes by the Reserve Bank of India with effect from January 21, 2019 consequent upon LIC acquiring 51 per cent of the

total paid-up equity share capital of the bank," the RBI said in a recent statement.

The employees' association also demanded a bilateral transfer policy between the IDBI Bank and the AIIOBIOA to be signed keeping in mind the difficulties being faced by the officers in getting transfers.

The association has also demanded that accountability should be fixed on all those concerned for the burgeoning non-performing assets (NPAs) and huge write-offs.

The bank's gross NPAs shot up to 29.67 per cent of gross advances as on December 31, 2018 against 24.72 per cent in the year-ago period. For the December quarter of the present fiscal, IDBI Bank reported widening of loss to Rs 4,185.48 crore as bad loans mounted.

Pollachi traders plan protest, shutdown on March 19

IAN S ■ POLLACHI/CHENNAI

The trading community here is planning a protest shutdown on Tuesday and a rally demanding a court-monitored probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Pollachi serial sexual abuse-cum-blackmail case, said a shopkeeper.

Speaking to IANS, the trader said the shutdown and rally will see participation of different political parties and social organisations.

After days of protests by students, political parties and various other social organisations it was relatively calm on Saturday here.

Four persons — Thirunavukkarasu, Sathish, Sabarirajan, Vasanthakumar — all in their 20s, have been accused of sexually assaulting women in Pollachi and filming the act to blackmail them for

culprits. The Crime Branch-Crime Investigation Department (CBCID) has taken one of the prime accused — Thirunavukkarasu — to an undisclosed location for interrogation. The CBCID got Thirunavukkarasu's custody on Friday. It has already written to social media organisations requesting them to remove the videos pertaining to the Pollachi abuse case. On Friday, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court told the central government to remove all videos related to the Pollachi serial sexual assaults from the Internet. In Chennai, a lawyer has filed a public interest litigation in the High Court for a court-monitored CBI probe. The petition was expected to come up for hearing next week.

money or for physical submission for over seven years. Students and other organisations hit the roads for the past several days demanding stringent punishment for the

Amazon PVD to pay royalty based on show performance

IAN S ■ SAN FRANCISCO

To reward content according to performance, Amazon is introducing a new payment structure for its self-publishing programme "Prime Video Direct" (PVD) that would go into effect from April 1, starting with the US.

Launched in 2016, PVD was introduced to offer content suppliers flat rate royalties of 15 cents per hour of video streamed in the US and six cents in other territories for content in Prime Video, Variety reported on Friday.

Based on the "customer engagement ranking" score noted on Amazon's site for PVD users, the new payment scheme would reward the highest performing content with higher royalty rates and reduce the rates for less popular shows.

"Starting April 1, the standard license fee for all titles made available through Amazon's 'Direct for Prime' subscription access in the US will range between four and 10 cents per hour streaming," Variety reported.

The ranking on the shows

LAUNCHED IN 2016, PVD WAS INTRODUCED TO OFFER CONTENT SUPPLIERS FLAT RATE ROYALTIES OF 15 CENTS PER HOUR OF VIDEO STREAMED IN THE US

would be evaluated on several points including the number of Prime users who view the content, the time each user spends watching a title, popularity of a title, the IMDb presence and rating, box office performance as well as over all quality of the show, including posters and subtitles.

Under its existing royalty payment structure, Amazon has paid PVD content partners opting for Prime Video distribution a base rate of six cents per hour for up to 99,999 hours streamed in a 365-day window.

US jury awards Qualcomm \$31mn in Apple case

IAN S ■ SAN FRANCISCO

A US jury has decided that Apple needs to pay chip-maker Qualcomm \$31 million for violating three of its patents.

According to a report in CNET on Friday, the jury in San Diego, California awarded Qualcomm full amount it had requested at the start of the two-week trial.

"Apple violated three Qualcomm patents and should pay the chip-maker \$31 million for infringing on its technology," the jury decided.

One Qualcomm patent allows a smartphone to quickly connect to the Internet once the device is turned on. Another one deals with graphics processing and battery life, while the third lets apps on smartphone download data more easily.

The verdict sets the stage for a bigger trial in April between the two companies next month in San Diego. The dispute over Qualcomm's patent royalties with Apple

"Apple violated three Qualcomm patents and should pay the chip-maker \$31 million for infringing on its technology"

involves billions of dollars.

"Today's unanimous jury verdict is the latest victory in our worldwide patent litigation directed at holding Apple accountable for using our valuable technologies without paying for them," Qualcomm General Counsel Don Rosenberg said in a statement. Apple said it was "disappointed".

"Qualcomm's ongoing campaign of patent infringement claims is nothing more than an attempt to distract from the larger issues they face with investigations into their business practices in US federal court, and around the world," an Apple spokesman was quoted as saying.

US: Door open for India to bring serious trade proposal to table

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Observing that trade has been an area of frustration in bilateral ties, the US has said that the door is open if India is prepared to bring a serious proposal to the table to address the issues related to trade and market access.

The US in November last year revoked duty-free concessions on import of at least 50 Indian products, mostly from handloom and agriculture sectors, reflecting the Trump administration's tough stand on trade-related issues with New Delhi.

A senior State Department official said Friday that the US is proud to be India's largest export market and most important economic partner.

"But we have struggled with regulatory issues that get in the way of the ease of doing business and market access for American companies and products," said the official.

"Trade has frankly been an area of frustration in the relationship, but the door is open if India is prepared to bring a serious proposal to the table," he said.

Despite intensive engagement with the Government of India for nearly a year, India did not assure the US that it would provide equitable and reasonable access to its market, which led to its termination from the Generalised System of Preferences programme, the official said.

"While we were pleased that the growing US exports to India, largely crude oil and LNG, led to a 7.1 per cent

The US in November last year revoked duty-free concessions on import of at least 50 Indian products, mostly from handloom and agriculture sectors, reflecting the Trump Administration's tough stand on trade-related issues with New Delhi

reduction in our bilateral goods trade deficit last year, many structural challenges in our trade relationship have yet to be resolved," said the senior State Department official.

During the just concluded visit of the Foreign Secretary, while the focus was on strategic, defence and regional issues, in particular Pakistan and Afghanistan, but the visiting diplomat is believed to have been conveyed that the ball is in India's court on resolving the trade related issues.

The US is understood to have told India that the Trump administration is willing to review its decision to revoke its GSP privileges to India, if New Delhi comes with a credible proposal to address the market access issues that America has

been talking about for nearly a year.

The GSP notification is still within the 60 days period, after which the benefits would formally be withdrawn, it is reliably learnt that the US has told India that it is not too late. But it is unlikely to happen, given that India is now into an election campaign mode, officials on both sides said.

While India argues that it is difficult to take any policy decision at this point of time because of the elections and the model code of conduct, American points out that it has decided to take its decision on revoking GSP privileges only after it exhausted all its options with India.

During talks with India, America is believed to have said that there are creative ways of solving all the trade related issues that addressed concerns of both the countries.

For instance, there are creative ways of certifying that the dairy products meet Indian standards, and have believed to have talked about creative solutions to certifying vegetarian cows. Similarly access to high end cell phones can be addressed in a way that does not open up the market to China, Americans are believed to have pointed out.

The United States, it is learnt, had been extraordinarily clear since April last year on addressing certain market access issues in the absence of which it reportedly told India that it risked losing GSP privileges.

The US still hopes that the issue can still be resolved before the election and certainly after the elections.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C. Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Shafi S/o Idris R/o T3/A, Ward No. 8 Mehrauli, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under Case FIR No. 1864/14 u/s, 376/34 IPC has been registered at P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said Shafi S/o Idris cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, Shafi S/o Idris has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Shafi S/o Idris accused of FIR No. 1864/14 u/s, 376/34 IPC required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 24.04.2019. By Order DP/5315/SD/19- Sh. Vaibhav Mehta, MM-05 (South) Court matter Room No. 210 Saket Court, New Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C. Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Sachin Pandey, S/o Sh. Shatrughan Pandey, R/o Pooja Apartments, 1st Floor, Amravati Road, Duttawadi, Nagpur, Maharashtra and Office at - A-4, Mahipalpur Extn., Main Vasant Kunj Road, Opp. Jagannath Complex, New Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 434/13 u/s 420/406/34 IPC P.S. Kirti Nagar, Delhi and his warrant of arrest there upon issued has been return with the report that the said Sachin Pandey has absconded (or is evading himself to avoid the service of the warrant.) Proclamation is hereby made that said Sachin Pandey accused in FIR No. 434/13 u/s 420/406/34 IPC P.S. Kirti Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 29/04/2019. By Order Sh. Ajay Singh Shekhawat, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, West Distt., Room No. 146, 1st Floor, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi DP/8154/WD/19-(Court Matter)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is given on behalf of my client M/S A.G Apprels Pvt Ltd. that the flat bearing number 708, Block-P-5, KHELGAON, ASIA GAMES VILLAGE, NEW DELHI measuring 1887.88 SQ.Ft. was sold via E-Auction conducted by Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) on 8th March 2019 wherein my client was declared as successful bidder. My client has decided to confirm the aforesaid sale of the above-mentioned property. As per OBC the Original Conveyance Deed dated 03.04.2003 and the allotment letter, payment challans & etc. are misplaced/lost for the aforesaid flat. Therefore any person(s) having any claim, interest or right in respect of the above referred property or part thereof by virtue of any sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, gift, maintenance, inheritance, possession, lease, tenancy, sub tenancy, lien, hypothecation, will, licensing, transfer of title or beneficial interest under any trust right of prescription or pre-emption or under any Agreement or other disposition or under any decree, order, award or otherwise, are hereby request to make the same known in writing together with supporting documents to the undersigned at their office at 117 (G/F) Netaji enclave east, Kalkaji New Delhi-110019 within 15 days from the publication hereof failing which the claim of such person(s) shall be deemed to have been waived and abandoned. Place - Delhi Sd/- Date - 15/3/19 Yashraj Singh (Advocate)

No dilution on Feb 12 circular over stressed assets: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India Saturday maintained that there is no dilution in its stand with regard to February 12 circular on stressed assets recognition and resolution.

"It is reiterated that the Reserve Bank maintains its stand on all aspects of the Framework as has been consistently articulated in its communications, including the clarification given during the post-monetary policy press conference on February 7, 2019," the central bank said in a statement.

The statement comes amid reports that the RBI seems to be toeing the government line and considering relaxation of some of the aspects of the Revised Framework on Resolution of Stressed Assets issued on February 12, 2018.

As the matter is sub-judice and the Supreme Court has reserved its orders on the matter, the Reserve Bank will not comment on the specific details, it said.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das last month had said there would be no changes in the circular.

The circular directed lenders to refer any loan account over Rs 2,000 crore under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) if it is not resolved within 180 days of default.

It also underscored IBC's status as the cornerstone of the bad loan resolution framework, scrapping all previous mechanisms. The circular imposed a one-day default rule. Banks have to treat a company as a defaulter even if it misses repayment schedule by a day.

USFDA classifies Lupin's Somerset facility as 'Official Action Indicated'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Lupin on Saturday said it has been cautioned by the US health regulator that its Somerset (New Jersey) facility may be subject to regulatory or administrative action and that it may withhold approval of any pending applications or supplements in which this facility is listed.

The company's subsidiary Novel Laboratories Inc has received a letter from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) classifying the inspection conducted at its Somerset (New Jersey) facility in December 2018, as Official Action Indicated (OAI), Lupin said in a regulatory filing.

"Official Action Indicated," means approvals of pending applications or supplements from this site maybe withheld. The USFDA has stated that this facility may be subject to regulatory or administrative action and that it may withhold approval of any pending applications or supplements in which this facility is listed, the company added.

Lupin said the company does not believe that this classification will have an impact on disruption of supplies or the existing revenues from operations of this facility.

"The company is in the process of sending further updates of its corrective actions to the USFDA and is hopeful of a positive outcome," Lupin added.

The company said, it is of view that the aforesaid order is not tenable in law. "The necessary action(s) against the order is being taken by the company," Grasim Industries added.

Grasim gets ₹5,872 cr tax demand on its mega merger

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla Group firm Grasim Industries Saturday said it has received Rs 5,872.13 crore tax demand from the Income Tax department with respect to its merger with Aditya Birla Nuvo and Aditya Birla Financial Services.

"The company has, on March 15, 2019, received an order dated March 14, 2019, issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (DCIT) raising a demand of Rs 5,872.13 crore on account of dividend distribution tax (including interest)," Grasim Industries said in regulatory filing.

DCIT held that as the demerger of the demerged undertaking is not in compliance with Section 2(19 AA) of the Act, the value of shares allotted by Aditya Birla Capital Ltd (ABCL) to the shareholders Grasim Industries, in consideration of the transfer and vesting of the Demerged Undertaking into ABCL, amounted to dividend, within the meaning of the Act, the filing added.

The company said, it is of view that the aforesaid order is not tenable in law.

"The necessary action(s) against the order is being taken by the company," Grasim Industries added.

The company said, DCIT had issued a show cause notice on February 11, 2019, subsequently revised on March 1, 2019, as to why the provisions of section 115-Q read with section 115-Q of the Income Tax Act, 1961 should not be applied on the allotment of equity shares by ABCL to the shareholders Grasim Industries, pursuant to the mega merger between the three entities.

AXIS BANK Retail Asset Centre, Delhi: Lower Ground Floor and Upper Ground Floor, Himalaya House, K.G. Marg, Delhi-110015. Also at: Axis Bank Ltd., Axis House, Tower T-2, 2nd Floor, 1-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee City Centre, NRI Khand-1, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad-201012. Retail Asset Centre Faridabad: Axis Bank Ltd., Huda Shopping Centre, Sec. 16, Faridabad, Haryana-121002. Retail Asset Centre Gurgaon: Axis Bank Ltd., ASC Gurgaon, SG-107, DLF Galleria Complex, Near Post Office, DLF City Phase 4, Gurgaon-122009 Corporate Office: Axis House, Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Butkar Marg, Work, Mumbai-400025 Registered Office: Trishul, 3rd floor, opposite Samarveswar Temple, Law Garden, Ahmedabad-380006

S-12, Green Park Extn. Branch, New Delhi-110016 Tel.: 011-26564471, 26963168, Fax: 011-26568582 RTGS/IFSC: Sybn0009048 E-mail: sr.9048@syndicatebank.co.in Ref. No. 101/9048/GPE/SN/125/2019 Date: 16.03.2019

PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Barnali Basumaty W/o Mr. Bijender who is purchasing the Second Floor Flat No. 13, area measuring 765 sq. ft. Part of Property bearing No. 136, area measuring 330 sq. Yds. out of Khana No. 322, Situated at Lal Dora Village in the revenue estate of Village Noh Sarai, Tehsil Haryana, New Delhi from Mrs. Aruna Joshi and further will be mortgaging against the financial assistance from VASTU HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LTD. To comply the requirements of bank/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 08 days from the date of this notice, at below address: Laxmi Legal LLP 369, Rama Heesu, Ground Floor, Masjid Moh. Opp. Uday Park, South Extn. II, Delhi-49 011-40945316

New Zealand vows gun reforms after massacre

AFP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand's prime minister vowed to toughen the country's gun laws after revealing on Saturday that the man accused of murdering 49 people in two mosques legally purchased the arsenal of firearms used in the massacre.

Jacinda Ardern said the gunman, 28-year-old Australian Brenton Tarrant, obtained a "Category A" gun licence in November 2017 and began purchasing the five weapons used in Friday's attacks in the southern city of Christchurch the following month.

The firearms included two semi-automatic rifles, two shotguns and a lever-action weapon, she said, speaking to reporters in Wellington before heading to Christchurch.

"The mere fact... That this individual had acquired a gun licence and acquired weapons of that range, then obviously I think people will be seeking change, and I'm committing to that," she said.

"While work is being done as to the chain of events that led to both the holding of this gun licence, and the possession of these weapons, I can tell you one thing right now — our gun laws will change."

She confirmed that the gunman and two suspected

associates who were also arrested had not been on the radar of any intelligence agencies, even though he had published a manifesto online indicating plans for attacks on Muslims.

"They were not on any watchlists either here or in Australia," she said. "The individual charged with murder had not come to the attention of the intelligence community, nor the police, for extremism," she added.

"I have asked our agencies this morning to work swiftly on assessing whether there was any activity on social media or otherwise, that should have triggered a response. That work is already underway."

"Given global indicators around far-right extremism, our intelligence community has been stepping up their investigations in this area."

Relaxed laws in New Zealand tightened its gun laws to restrict access to semi-automatic rifles in 1992, two years after a mentally ill man shot dead 13 people in the southern town of Aramoana.

But firearms laws are lax compared to neighbouring Australia, which enacted a strict gun control regime in the wake of a similar massacre in 1996, and most other developed nations outside of the

United States.

Anyone over 16 can apply for a New Zealand firearms licence, valid for 10 years after completing a safety course and a police background check.

Most guns do not require registration under New Zealand's Arms Act and police do not know "how many legally or illegally owned firearms there are in New Zealand", according to a police statement last year.

In 2014, police estimated there were up to 1.2 million legal firearms in civilian ownership, or around one for every four members of the public — twice the per capita number of guns in Australia.

Separate "endorsements" are required to own semi-automatic weapons like those used in Friday's attack, as well as pistols and other restricted weapons.

But police and firearms experts have pointed to several loopholes allowing owners to bypass registration of semi-automatics.

Ardern noted the failure of several earlier attempts to reform gun laws and said a ban on semi-automatic weapons would be considered.

A 1997 police review of gun laws called for such a ban, but attempts to update the Arms Act since 1992 have stalled in parliament.

Iran's Zarif accuses West of fuelling Islamophobia after Christchurch mosque attack

AFP ■ TEHRAN

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani accused Western governments of encouraging Islamophobia, after the attacks on two mosques in New Zealand that killed 49 worshippers and wounded dozens.

In a statement carried by the official government website on Friday, Rouhani said the shootings showed the need for "all out confrontation against... The Islamophobia pervasive in the West which is unfortunately encouraged by some Western governments."

Rouhani promised Iran's foreign ministry would "diligently" follow the "arrest and trial of the perpetrators of this heinous act."

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also blamed "Western democracies" for the attack.

"Western hypocrisy of defending demonisation of Muslims as freedom of expression MUST end," Zarif tweeted.

"Impunity in Western 'democracies' to promote bigotry leads to this," the tweet read. In another tweet Zarif said that while Iranians were "deeply shocked and saddened," they were not surprised by the "Christchurch terror."

"Banned from travel to the US, and not allowed to abide by our faith if attending French schools, we Iranians know too



"WESTERN HYPOCRISY OF DEFENDING DEMONISATION OF MUSLIMS AS 'FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION' MUST END"

well what bigotry and hatred of Islam augur," Zarif said referring to France's tradition of secular education.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi earlier "strongly condemned the... Inhuman and savage" attacks and urged New Zealand's government to punish "the perpetrators... Without any reservations."

'What's next?': Christchurch Muslims struggle with shock, fear

AFP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

A few months ago, Christchurch's Linwood Mosque proudly laid down new carpets in its halls.

On Friday, the light brown carpets were stained red after a gunman stormed the building, spraying bullets at worshippers.

"There was blood everywhere. Everything was out of control," Ibrahim AbdelHalim, imam of Linwood Mosque, told AFP.

Like the wider Muslim community in Christchurch, Egypt-born AbdelHalim is struggling to come to terms with the violence wrought upon worshippers this week as he waits to bury the dead.

Working together with the local Islamic community, AbdelHalim had sought to refresh the mosque after a trust bought it over in early 2018.

Some of the seven worshippers who died at Linwood were among the most enthusiastic contributors, donating their personal time to help in fundraising efforts.

One woman, a local Kiwi, fell down beside his wife when she was shot dead, AbdelHalim said. His wife, Falwa El-Shazly, was shot in the arm but survived the attack.

Another man, a Fijian-Indian New Zealander who would regularly bring boxes of food from his restaurant during mosque donation dri-

ves, was also killed.

"They are dear to me, these are people who offer to us work for free," AbdelHalim said. "It was a very bad day, not just all of us, all of New Zealand."

At Hedley College, the main meeting centre for the survivors and victims' families, local Muslims from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds shared wordless hugs and fought back tears as they exchanged news about their loved ones.

With Muslims making up just one percent of New Zealand's population, some members of the close-knit community raced to the mosques when they heard about the shootings.

"I did not go to the prayer yesterday due to work... But received a call from my friends and rushed to the spot," Mohammad Kamruzzaman, originally from Bangladesh, told AFP.

"Five of (our Bangladeshi friends) are still missing, only Allah knows where they are. We have lost... A guardian lady for our community, who taught children the Koran for free. It feels like we have lost a parent."

Fiji-born Azan Ali, 43, who was in the Linwood Mosque with his Auckland-based father when the attack occurred, trembled when he thought back to crack of the gun shots on Friday.

"Will I see my parents, my kids, my loved ones again

or not? All the people you pray with, you see beside you..." he added, his voice trailing off.

"My kids are scared, you know. You just have to work through it as a community."

His father, Sheikh Aeshad, who saw a worshipper shot in the neck, said he could not understand how such violence could take part in New Zealand, a small nation better known for its rolling, green hills and snow-capped mountains.

"We never thought in New Zealand, this could happen. New Zealand's so friendly a place, you can leave your door open and go. But not now," he added.

"I'm thinking what's going to happen the next time... It could be more people targeting somewhere else."

It was a sentiment shared by Sahra Ahmed, a New Zealander of Somali origin and a nurse active in her local community.

Sahra said the attacks showed the South Pacific island nation could not escape the global wave of right-wing extremism.

"This is a global movement, for better or worst, it's happened in all parts of the world. And some people like to import ideas from everywhere else. So we're not immune from what's happening," she told AFP.

"It doesn't matter where you go, the world is very small."

SCO to hold joint anti-terrorism exercise in 2019

PTI ■ BEIJING

India, Pakistan and the other members states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will take part in a joint anti-terrorism exercise to be held this year by the grouping.

The decision to hold the joint exercise 'Sary-Arka-Antiterror 2019' was announced during the 34th meeting of the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) council held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Xinhua news agency reported.

The SCO, in which China plays an influential role, is also comprised of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan were admitted into the bloc in 2017.

Delegations of the competent authorities of India,

Kazakhstan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the RATS Executive Committee attended the meeting.

Chaired by Russia, the meeting also declared plans to hold the first stage of the joint border operation 'Solidarity 2019-2021,' the 7th meeting of the heads of the border services, and training workshops on identifying and preventing the use of the Internet for terrorist, separatist and extremist purposes.

RATS is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism. It is headquartered in Tashkent.

The next meeting of the Council of the RATS SCO is scheduled to be held in Russia in September 2019.

Chinese envoy calls Muslim detention centres 'campuses'

Geneva: A top Chinese diplomat claimed that detention centres for Muslims in China's western province of Xinjiang are "campuses, not camps" and said they are eventually going to be closed as a "training programme" for ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang — and played ping pong and ate halal food there. He didn't specify when the detention centers would be closed, other than telling reporters later that would happen "at the appropriate time." He also took aim at a US-led event in Geneva on Friday China's insistence that the detention centres are designed to provide training and fight regional terrorism.

He also claimed that officials from around the world, including from the UN, had visited the region and that the detention centres in Xinjiang are "actually boarding schools or campuses, not camps" as reported by critics.

The US State Department said this week that China has "significantly intensified" a campaign of mass detentions of minority Uighurs over the last

year, with between 800,000 and 2 million people from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region interned in camps. The centres have drawn condemnation from across the world.

Le told reporters he had recently visited some Uighur centres in Xinjiang — and played ping pong and ate halal food there. He didn't specify when the detention centers would be closed, other than telling reporters later that would happen "at the appropriate time." He also took aim at a US-led event in Geneva on Friday China's insistence that the detention centres are designed to provide training and fight regional terrorism.

The envoy's comments came as China was responding to more than 200 recommendations by other countries on ways that Beijing could improve human rights as part of a Human Rights Council process known as the Universal Periodic Review. AP

Azhar listing: US, France, Britain working on compromise with China

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US and two other permanent Security Council members, France and Britain, are believed to be in intense "good faith" discussions with China to arrive at a "compromise" on the UN designation of Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist.

And if that effort does not end up in the formal designation of Azhar, the three permanent members are planning to soon move a resolution for his listing in the most powerful wing of the UN which would be preceded by an open debate on the issue, according to people familiar with the matter.

On Wednesday, China blocked for the fourth consecutive time a resolution at a UN Security Council Committee on designating Azhar, head of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad group, as a global terrorist. The proposal was moved by the US, France and the UK.

India had expressed disappointment over the Chinese

stance and the original co-sponsors of the resolution had warned they will consider "other actions" to achieve their goal.

While the internal consultations of the Security Council committee remain private, this time several Council members, frustrated at China's unreasonable stance to protect a terrorist, privately spoke to the media the negative role being played by Beijing.

"If China continues to block this designation, responsible member-states may be forced to pursue other actions at the Security Council. It shouldn't have to come to that," a Security Council diplomat told PTI on Wednesday in an unusual tough warning to Beijing.

In the last 50 hours, it is believed that the original sponsors of the Azhar resolution are having intense "good faith" consultations with China on what many familiar with the matter describe as a "compromise". This probably means Azhar would be designated as a global terrorist by the UN body, but the language of designation

would include a language acceptable to China.

China is believed to have suggested "certain changes" in the language of the terrorist designation. The US, Britain and France are believed to be currently looking at the suggestions.

It is understood that there is back-and-forth exchange of texts on the matter.

The three countries have indicated that they are willing to accommodate Chinese request for changes in the language as long as it does not change the substance of the resolution and it ends up designating Azhar as a UN global terrorist.

But unlike in the past, the US, France, Britain and other members of the Security Council are not willing to wait for long to conclude their discussion with China.

It is learnt that China has been informed by these countries that they are seriously looking for other options, in particular an open debate followed by a vote on a resolution to designate Azhar as a global terrorist, pretty soon.

24 DEAD, DOZENS MISSING IN ZIMBABWE AFTER CYCLONE

HARARE ■ AFP

At least 24 people have been killed and dozens are missing in parts of eastern Zimbabwe hit by the peripheral effects of tropical cyclone Idai which lashed neighbouring Mozambique, Government said Saturday.

Zimbabwe's Ministry of Information announced on Twitter that so far the "number of deaths is confirmed at 24 mainly from Chimanimani East," including two students, while at least 40 other people have been injured.

Many houses have been damaged and bridges washed away in parts of the Manicaland province which borders Mozambique.

A group of people who fled their homes were "marooned" on top of a mountain waiting to be rescued, but strong winds were hampering helicopter flights, the ministry said.

Earlier a lawmaker told AFP that thousands of people have been affected, power cut off and major bridges flooded.

Indian students to benefit from improved UK post-study visa offer

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian students are set to benefit from an improved post-study visa regime as part of a new "International Education Strategy" launched by the UK government on Saturday in preparation for its post-Brexit policies.

The strategy is aimed at increasing the total number of international students from around the world choosing to study in the UK higher education system from the current level of 460,000 to 600,000 each year by 2030.

Indian students, who account for a major chunk of applicants from outside the European Union (EU) after China, are believed to be particularly sensitive to the post-study work option of being able to gain work experience following their degree courses at UK universities.

The new strategy, set to be rolled out in the coming years, will offer undergraduate and Masters' students the chance to stay in the UK to look for work for six months after graduating.

"We know that our Indian students are ambitious and passionate about their chosen career paths, and we welcome the focus on employability in the international education strategy," said Vivienne Stern, Director of the Universities UK International (UUK), the higher education representative body which worked with the government on

the new strategy. "The target to grow the number of international students in the UK to 600,000 should send a clear message to students around the world: we want you here," she said.

Under the plans being formalised, undergraduate and Masters' students will also have three months before graduating during which they can find work and change from a study visa to a work visa. At present, the process to switch from a student to work visa while in the UK is extremely complex.

Besides, PhD students will be able to stay in the UK for up to a year to find work after graduating and will also have three months before graduating during which they can find work and change from a study visa to a work visa. "During the post-study leave period, students will have unrestricted access to work," the strategy paper notes.

Additionally, international graduates will be given two years after graduating during which they can apply to switch their UK study visa to a UK work visa from outside the UK.

"The withdrawal of the PSW (post-study work) visa was attributed with a decline in international student recruitment in the UK from key markets, notably India. Between 2010-11 and 2016-17, the number of higher education students from India more than halved," noted a report by the

UK's All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Students in November last year.

"Even Canada attracts more students from India than the UK does," warned Indian-origin peer Lord Karan Bilimoria, who has been lobbying for the return of a post-study visa option as the co-chair of the APPG and President of the UK Council for International Student Affairs.

While Indian student visa numbers for 2018 registered a 35 per cent hike to hit 19,505, that figure is seen as way below the potential applications when compared to China at 99,723 student visas.

"As we prepare to leave the EU it is more important than ever to reach out to our global partners and maximise the potential of our best assets — that includes our education offer and the international students this attracts," said UK education secretary Damian Hinds as he unveiled the new strategy, which is also aimed at streamlining the student application procedures for all international students.

"Our education exports are ripe for growth, and my international economic department stands ready to engage and support UK providers from across the education sector to grow their global activity as we implement this new International Education Strategy," added UK trade secretary Liam Fox.

Russia slams 'hypocrisy' of new Western sanctions

AFP ■ MOSCOW

Russia on Saturday slammed the "hypocrisy" of new Western sanctions against its officials over their role in a naval confrontation with Ukraine last year, and vowed to respond to the "unfriendly" move.

The United States, Canada and the European Union Friday slapped new sanctions on more than a dozen Russian officials and businesses in response to Moscow's "continued aggression in Ukraine."

"The pretext for including our countrymen in the illegitimate sanctions list of the EU astounds with hypocrisy and cynicism," the Russian foreign ministry said.

In a previous statement late on Friday, it said Russia "will not leave the unfriendly act of the EU without a response" and accused Brussels of siding with Kiev on the eve of its presidential election due on March 31.

"It cannot be ignored that the decision came not long before the presidential election in Ukraine," it said. It also accused Washington and Ottawa of "Russophobia" and said the sanctions will "not lead to the results the US and Canada want."

A US Treasury statement Friday said six Russian officials, six defence firms and two ener-

gy and construction firms had been targeted, either over the seizure of Ukrainian vessels in the Kerch Strait last November, or for their activities in Russian-annexed Crimea or separatist eastern Ukraine.

The US sanctions freeze all property and interests in property belonging to the designated individuals and entities, and prohibit US persons from transacting with them.

Four of the individuals are border guard or coast guard officials, singled out for their role in a November 25, 2018 naval confrontation, in which Russian ships fired on and seized three Ukrainian vessels in the narrow Kerch Strait the two countries share.

The four were targeted jointly with the EU and Canada according to the State Department.

Twenty-four Ukrainian crew members were detained in the naval incident. In the statement on Saturday, Russia said its border guards were "bravely fulfilling their duty to defend the state borders of our country" and that the confrontation was the result of a "provocation" by the Ukrainian side.

It said Moscow was acting "within the norms of international law" in arresting the Ukrainians.

Italy probes mystery death of Berlusconi sex trial witness

AFP ■ ROME

Italy is investigating the mysterious death of a former model and witness at Silvio Berlusconi's sex trial, with a newspaper suggesting on Saturday she may have been poisoned with a radioactive substance.

Milan prosecutor Francesco Greco said an investigation had been opened following the death on March 1 of Moroccan-born Imane Fadil at one of the city's hospitals.

The 33-year-old had been brought to the hospital on January 29 with unexplained stomach pains.

Fadil was one of the witnesses who testified at the trial of the former Italian premier and media mogul on charges of having sex with an underage prostitute at one of his notoriously hedonistic bunga-bunga parties.

According to Italy's Corriere della Sera daily, the hospital had run a battery of tests to determine the cause of her failing health, but finding nothing, had sent off samples to a specialised laboratory in the northern town of Pavia.

The results came back on March 6, five days after her death, suggesting the presence of "a mixture of radioactive substances which are not normally available for purchase," the paper said, citing unnamed sources.

New US military budget focused on China despite border talk

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Chinese bombers. Chinese hypersonic missiles. Chinese cyberattacks. Chinese anti-satellite weapons.

To a remarkable degree, the 2020 Pentagon budget proposal is shaped by national security threats that Acting Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan has summarised in three words: "China, China, China."

The US is still fighting small wars against Islamic extremists, and Russia remains a serious concern, but Shanahan seeks to shift the military's main focus to what he considers the more pressing security problem of a rapidly growing Chinese military.

This theme, which Shanahan outlined Thursday in presenting the administration's proposed 2020 defence budget to the Senate Armed Services Committee, is competing for attention with narrower, more immediate problems like President Donald Trump's effort to use the military to build a border wall.

The hearing, for example, spent more time on the wall and prospects for using military funds to build parts of it than on any aspect of foreign policy, including the conflict in Syria or military competition with China, Russia or North Korea.

Shanahan is hardly the

first defence chief to worry about China.

Several predecessors pursued what the Obama administration called a "pivot" to the Pacific, with China in mind.

But Shanahan sees it as an increasingly urgent problem that exceeds traditional measures of military strength and transcends partisan priorities.

"We've been ignoring the problem for too long," Shanahan told a senator.

"China is aggressively modernising its military, systematically stealing science and technology, and seeking military advantage through a strategy of military-civil fusion," he wrote in prepared testimony to the committee, which is considering a USD 718 billion Pentagon budget designed in part to counter China's momentum.

The USD 25 billion the Pentagon is proposing to spend on nuclear weapons in 2020, for example, is meant in part to stay ahead of China's nuclear arsenal, which is much smaller than America's but growing.

Shanahan said China is developing a nuclear-capable long-range bomber that, if successful, would enable China to join the United States and Russia as the only nations with air-, sea- and land-based nuclear weapons.

ROGER, RAFA SET SEMIS DATE

Record chasing Federer secures easy win to fix 39th career battle against familiar foe Nadal

AFP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Rafael Nadal withstood the challenge of Russian Karen Khachanov to set up a blockbuster semi-final with Roger Federer at the ATP Indian Wells Masters on Friday despite a flare-up of right knee trouble that required mid-match treatment.

World number two Nadal, the highest seed left in the draw after the early ouster of No 1 Novak Djokovic, dominated both tiebreakers to beat the towering Russian 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/2).

He booked a 39th career meeting with Federer, a five-time champion at Indian Wells who breezed past 67th-ranked Hubert Hurkacz of Poland 6-4, 6-4.

"Hopefully I will be ready for it," said Nadal, who recovered an early break in the opening set and powered through the tiebreaker, but called for the trainer to have supportive tape applied below his right knee three games into the second.

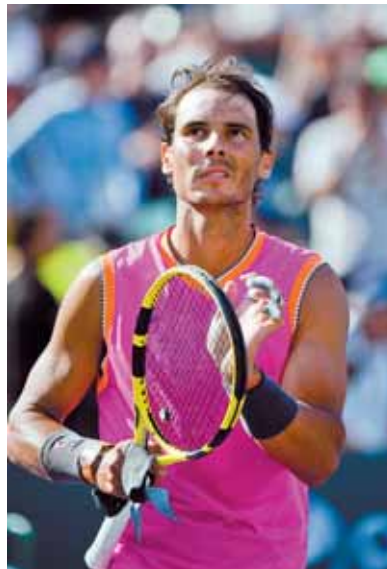
Although he wasn't moving as well, Nadal gained the first break of the second set to lead 3-2, but was immediately broken himself.

He saved a set point in a fierce 10th game that went to deuce three times before Nadal held to make it 5-5. He couldn't convert a break chance in the 11th game as they went to another tiebreaker which the Spaniard again controlled.

"I just had to give my best



Roger Federer prepares for a return shot during his Indian Wells quarter final game against Hubert Hurkacz; (right) Rafael Nadal acknowledges crowd after win



Rafael Nadal acknowledges crowd after win

and that's what I did," said Nadal, who has battled tendinitis in his knees throughout his career. "I'm very happy to be in the semi-finals."

Khachanov, who peppered Nadal with 17 aces in the two-hour, 17-minute match, has now lost all six of his career meetings with the Spaniard.

He'll be gunning for a chance to claim a fourth Indian Wells title while Federer is seeking to break out of a tie with Djokovic with a record sixth.

Nadal leads the head-to-

head rivalry with Federer 23-15, but Federer has won 11 of their 20 hard-court meetings, including their last five.

However, they haven't met since October of 2017, when Federer triumphed in straight sets in the final of the Shanghai Masters.

EXTRA ENERGY

Federer said he might not feel quite the same tingle of anticipation as fans at the prospect of facing Nadal, but he acknowledged that their clash-

es always raise the stakes.

"If I play Rafa there's extra energy in the building — there's always a lot on the line," said Federer, who added that so much time has passed since their last meeting that his own current five-match winning streak is of little significance.

"I don't think those five matches matter that much, to be honest," he said. "A lot of time has gone by."

Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam champion who captured

his 100th career title at Dubai last month, overcame breezy conditions on stadium court and a hungry Hurkacz — a 22-year-old ranked 67th in the world who was playing in his first Masters 1000 quarter-final and just the second quarter-final of his career.

One break in each set was all Federer needed to seal the win after an hour and 14 minutes.

Binaca to face Kerber in final

AFP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Canadian sensation Bianca Andreescu topped sixth-ranked Elina Svitolina 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 on Friday and will face Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber for the WTA title in Indian Wells.

Germany's Kerber, ranked eighth in the world, ended Belinda Bencic's 12-match winning streak with a 6-4, 6-2 victory to reach the final in the California desert for the first time in her third semi-final appearance.

Kerber won the last four games of the opening set and the last three games of the second to subdue Bencic, who was coming off her first WTA title in four years in Dubai.

The 22-year-old Swiss, whose career was disrupted by a string of back and wrist injuries, had beaten six top-10 players in her winning streak, including world number one and defending Indian Wells champion Naomi Osaka in the fourth round.

But she couldn't find a way past Kerber, who broke Bencic from 30-0 down in the final game of the opening set.

"It's always tough to play against Belinda," Kerber said. "She played so great in the past few weeks."

"I was trying to focus only on my side of the court. I was trying to play concentrated, and going for it when I had the chance."

"I really enjoy the semi-finals here — it was already twice here, and I'm really happy to be in the final for the first time now," Kerber,



Binaca Andreescu celebrates after beating Elina Svitolina in semi-final

31, will be playing 18-year-old Andreescu for the first time.

"I'm really looking forward to a really tough battle. She's here as a wild card, and she beat a lot of good players," Kerber said.

"She has nothing to lose, she enjoys her tennis and she's a great player." Andreescu, ranked 60th in the world after starting the year at 152, continued a stellar run that included a quarter-final victory over former world number one Garbine Muguruza.

She's the first wild card to reach the women's final at Indian Wells.

MAKING HISTORY

"It's incredible," she beamed when told of the achievement. "Another goal of mine was to make history and I just did." "I really need a moment to soak this all in. This is just so incred-

ible," an emotional Andreescu told the crowd.

"This past week has been a dream come true." Andreescu, who came through qualifying to reach the final at Auckland and made the semi-finals in Acapulco in February, had to dig deep to close it out against Svitolina, who saved on match point against her serve in the penultimate game to force Andreescu to serve it out.

It would take three more match points for a weary-looking Andreescu to succeed, when another baseline rally ended with Svitolina firing a forehand into the net.

"I really need a moment to soak all this in," said an emotional Andreescu, who was battling cramp in the closing games.

"It was a roller coaster," she said. "I'm really happy I pulled through."



Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas relax after qualifying race

Hamilton snatches Australian pole

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Mercedes' world champion Lewis Hamilton picked up where he left off last year to reassert his authority and snatch a record-extending eighth pole position at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Saturday.

The Briton clocked a fastest lap of one minute 20.486 to narrowly pip team-mate Valtteri Bottas, with Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel third, but a massive 0.704 seconds behind his arch-rival.

The German will start on the second row with Red Bull's Max Verstappen while Ferrari newcomer Charles Leclerc and Haas' Romain Grosjean make up row three.

Fellow Haas driver Kevin Magnussen is behind them alongside British young gun Lando Norris, who steered his McLaren to an admirable eighth in his debut qualifying session.

Hamilton, 34, is the pole master in Melbourne, claiming it eight times and every year since 2014, although he has only twice won a race at Albert Park, in 2008 and 2015.

He knocked out his rivals with a blistering lap at the death to claim an 84th career grid-leading time and said afterwards he was "shaking, it was so close out there".

Hamilton, who is bidding for a sixth world title to move within one of Michael Schumacher's record seven, had complained after pre-season testing in Barcelona that Ferrari was much quicker.

But this has proved to be a fallacy with the Briton fastest in all three free practice sessions.

'BETTER THAN THIS'

Vettel, who has won the last two races in Melbourne, admitted he too was surprised at the size of the gap with Mercedes.

"I think everybody is, probably even themselves," he said. "For sure there is some homework for us to understand, but I still think we have a great car, we should be better than this. We have 58 laps tomorrow to get a proper read on where we are."

"We have got to live with it today, but tomorrow is a new day," he added.

Mercedes and Hamilton have been dominant in Formula One in recent years, winning the drivers' and constructors' titles five years in a row and Ferrari — and Vettel — are desperate to catch up.

While the German won in Melbourne last year and backed it up with victory at the next race in Bahrain, Hamilton roared back to sweep 11 of the remaining 19 to be crowned champion.

Dipa's Olympic hopes suffer massive jolt

Karmakar aggravates knee injury during vault final at Artistic Gymnastics WC

PTI ■ BAKU

As Indian gymnast Dipa Karmakar's hopes of qualifying for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics suffered a jolt after aggravating her knee injury during the vault final at the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup on Saturday, forcing her to withdraw from next week's Doha World Cup.

The 25-year-old from Tripura had performed a higher-difficulty Handfront 540 vault, scoring 14.466 and 14.133 points in the two qualifying rounds for an average of 14.299 to qualify for the vault final at the third position.

But she was left crestfallen after aggravating a knee injury while landing during the first vault final.

"She had some problems in her knee before today's final. She was feeling some pain yesterday but felt better after working with physio. She attempted the vault finals today but fell on her first vault, aggravating the injury due to undesired landing," Gymnastic Federation of India (GFI) vice president Riyaz Bhati said.

"She did not attempt the second vault due to the injury and finished her campaign at the Baku World Cup. She will now skip the World Cup in



Doha and come back to India for rehabilitation and aim for Asian and World Championships this year."

The two World Cups are part of an eight-event qualifying system for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, under which the gymnasts will make the cut based on their top three scores.

The Asian Championship is scheduled to be held in Mongolia from June 13-16, while the World Championship is slated for October 4-13 in Germany later this year.

"Dipa can still qualify by doing well at World Championship this year," Bhati said.

Dipa had claimed the bronze at the vault event of the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup in Cottbus, Germany, in November last year to fuel her Olympic dream. It was her first appearance after recovering from a knee strain, which had forced her to miss the vault final in the Jakarta Asian Games.



FIFA backs 48-team World Cup in 2022

AFP ■ MIAMI

FIFA moved a step closer on Friday to expanding the 2022 World Cup in Qatar to 48 teams and hopes to confirm the plans in June if a suitable co-host can be found.

An internal feasibility study supporting the expansion, which is being strongly pushed by president Gianni Infantino, was given full backing by the FIFA council in Miami.

A final decision will now be taken in Paris on June 6 after FIFA and Qatar jointly submit the names of potential co-host nations to the governing body's Congress.

Infantino, who also confirmed a new Club World Cup with 24 teams will begin in 2021 to replace the Confederations Cup, told a press conference: "You have in front of you a happy FIFA president."

"I am always happy but especially today because we have taken some important decisions."

"We came to conclusion, yes it's feasible to move from 32 to 48 teams at the World Cup provided certain conditions are met."

"We have the duty to look into it, 90 percent are in favour of an increase but it's not as easy as that. We have to analyse matters carefully and we are working closely with Qatar."

The move away from the traditional 32 teams which will see 80 matches instead of 64 — the notion was originally slated to come into effect for the 2026 tournament in North America — means one or more other countries will be asked to help Qatar stage the shortened 28-day event which is scheduled to kick off in November 2022.

India to host U-17 Women's WC in 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will host the U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020, International Football Federation (FIFA) President Gianni Infantino announced on Friday.

"We are delighted to announce that India has been confirmed as the host of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020," Infantino said after the FIFA Council meeting in Miami.

This will be the second FIFA tournament India will be hosting, after the U-17 Men's World Cup in 2017.

Confirming the development, All India Football Federation General Secretary Kushal Das said: "We are thankful to FIFA for giving the right to host the U-17 Women's World Cup. This will raise the profile of women's football in the country."

"We have been giving a lot of emphasis on the development of women's football in the country. So we bid for the U-17 Women's World Cup and now we have got it."

The bidding process for the tournament started last year. France had also expressed interest to host the tournament.

Das said the venues to host the mega event will be decided soon.

"We have four-five venues in mind and we will finalise them soon."

As host country, India automatically qualifies for the 16-team showpiece event. The six continental qualifying tournaments is yet to begin.

Besides the U-17 Women's WC, India had also expressed interest in hosting the U-20 Women's World Cup.

The U-17 women's tournament began in 2008, when New Zealand hosted it. Spain are the current champions and they had beaten Mexico 2-1 in the final in



"Bigger challenge lies ahead"

NEW DELHI: All India Football Federation president Praful Patel on Saturday expressed his delight at winning the bid for hosting the tournament, but said the bigger challenge lies ahead.

"I would like to thank FIFA for keeping their trust in us and granting us the rights to host the tournament," he said.

"The tournament will be massive as this time it will also galvanise the girls of the country, making it more popular," he added.

"However, winning the bid was a lesser challenge. The bigger challenge of hosting the showpiece actually lies ahead, especially after the standards which we have set for ourselves in the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017," the AIFF chief said.

Uruguay last year. The tournament in India will be the seventh edition.

Asian teams are the most successful teams in the tournament, with North Korea (2008 and 2016) having won it twice while Japan (2014) and South Korea (2010) had won it once each.

France (2012) and Spain (2018) are the only non-Asian teams to have won the tournament.

Mary opts out of Asian C'ship

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary MC Mary Kom has decided to skip the Asian Women's Championship to prepare for the bigger events ahead and in her absence, world championship Silver medalist Sonia Chahal will lead the 20-member Indian contingent at the event, to be held in Bangkok from April 16 to 27.

Six-time world champion Mary Kom, who won India's solitary Gold medal at the 2017 edition in Vietnam, wants to focus on the World Championships to be held later this year.

In Mary Kom's absence, Sonia and former Gold medalist Sarita Devi and ex-world junior champion Nikhat Zareen will spearhead the Indian contingent.

A lot of talented youngsters made it to the team on the basis of the three-day trials held at the Indra Gandhi Stadium.

Strandja Memorial boxing tournament Gold medalist



Nikhat defeated Pinki Rani 4-1 to secure the pole position in the final of the trial in the 51kg.

The 54kg challenge will be led by World Championship quarter-finalist, Manisha. While Sonia will represent in 57kg following a decisive 5-0 win over Sakshi in the final trial.

In 60kg, veteran Sarita will make her comeback after losing narrowly in the pre-quarter-finals at last year's World Championships.

India's hopes in 64kg will rest on Punjab's Simranjit Kaur and Assam's Lovlina Borgohain. Bronze medalist in 2017, will be the one to watch out for in 69kg.

Haryana boxers Nupur and Pooja Rani secured their berths in the 75kg and 81kg respectively.

Experienced boxer, Seema Poonia will be vying for the title in the 81+kg category following a 4-1 victory over Kavita Chahal.

After seven successful editions, the women's competition will be held simultaneously alongside the men at the Asian Championships for the very first time.

In the last edition, the Indian women grabbed a total of seven medals, including one Gold, one Silver and five Bronze.

Dharun betters 400m hurdles Nat'l record

PTI ■ PATIALA

Dharun Ayyasamy bettered his own national record to claim Gold medal in the men's 400m hurdles at the 23rd Federation Cup even as eight athletes qualified for the Doha Asian Athletics Championships on the second day of the competition on Saturday.

Ayyasamy clocked 48.80 seconds to erase his own national mark of 48.96, which he had set at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

Ayyasamy's effort was more than enough to meet the qualification standard of 50.00 for the Asian Championships, set by the Athletics Federation of India.

"I can go even faster. My goal is to record a time of 48.50. Maybe I will do it at the Asian Championships," said



Ayyasamy after the race. Saritaben Gayakwad set a new meet record in the women's 400m hurdles with a timing of 57.21.

The previous meet record of 57.39 stood in the name of Anu Rani who had recorded that mark in the 2017 edition of the tournament.

Arpitha M closely followed Gayakwad, stopping the clock at 57.45. With the qualifying guideline standing at 57.50, both booked their ticket to Doha.

Two more runners —

Gomathi Marimuthu and Twinkle Chaudhary — qualified for the Doha event in the women's 800m. Marimuthu clocked 2.03.21 while Chaudhary followed her with a time of 2.03.67. Both times were well under the qualification standard of 2.05.00.

A surprise was in store in the men's triple jump competition with Youth Olympics Bronze medalist Praveen Chitavel upsetting Asian Games Gold medalist Arpinder Singh. Chitavel recorded a per-

sonal best jump of 16.51m to both claim Gold medal and also qualify for the Asian Championships.

While Chitavel claimed his first Gold, Arpinder finished outside the medal bracket. Singh who was training in Chula Vista, California, finished in fourth place with a best jump of 16.34m.

While jumps were not of the highest standard in the men's triple jump, the men's javelin throw saw several throws of the highest quality.

The competition was won by Shivpal Singh who threw the spear to 82.56m. He was followed by Vipin Kasana (81.23m). While Singh had already qualified for the tourney with a throw of 81.48m in the qualifying round, Kasana reserved ticket to Doha with his throw which exceeded the AFI qualification standard of 80.75m.

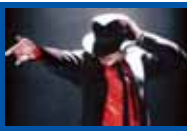
the pioneer agenda

I hate receiving compliments; I hate being told I'm talented or people think I'm going to be a movie star. I always feel that it's forced and fake
— Megan Fox



3 Tales of love and loss

Neel Patel's new book, *If You See Me Don't Say Hi*, has 11 stories with intricate, realistic modern plots with abrupt and bow-tie endings



6 A conspiracy of silence?

As new MJ sex abuse claims emerge, is the music industry — hotbed of scandal and debauchery — guilty of turning a blind eye?



7 Are we really robots?

Souls come programmed, but if we pursue the spiritual path, we will no longer be robots but free souls making spiritual progress

Late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi hated marigold flower, although in death it was strewn all over her body. Many such hitherto unknown aspects of 11 'newsmakers' have been unravelled by Kumkum Chadha in her book, *The Marigold Story*. This is not a gushing account of their accomplishments; rather it captures their weaknesses. An edited excerpt:

WHEN THE HEROES ERR

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, India's third Prime Minister, was allergic to marigolds. Throughout her life, her lieutenants stopped people from taking the gold-flower near her. While no one could stop her admirers from bringing them in bunches, the garlands were immediately taken away, and the petals were swiftly brushed aside. If someone still managed to smuggle the flower in, Indira Gandhi would frown to show her displeasure. Her silence was signal enough that she hadn't taken well to the transgression.

But her anger was never directed at people who spent days, often weeks, to meet her. It was her staff who had to face her ire, for they were trained rigorously to handle her likes and dislikes. It was incumbent upon them to ensure that things went the way she wanted: Perfectly, with clockwork precision. A slip-up may not have cost them their jobs, but it did earn her indignation. For the faithful, including the man who routinely carried an umbrella over her head, it was worse than being booted out.

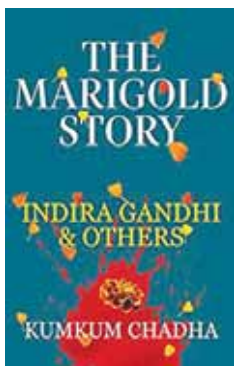
It was, therefore, ironic that in her death, several such details were missed out. Were Indira Gandhi to have her way, she would have never allowed for what she may have described as 'violations'. But she lay still and lifeless: Her bullet-ridden body bedecked in marigolds. The gold-flower that was kept away during her entire life, clung to her in death. But the shock of her sudden and violent death was so intense that even for her coterie, the issue of her allergy to the flower may have seemed trivial. Death numbs everyone, but for someone like Indira Gandhi to die the way she did, it was nothing short of a catastrophe. For India, it was like hitting a dead end, or at least that is what it had seemed like at that point in time.

She had ruled with an iron hand for almost 16 years and for most parts, turned around the country when few had the grit and determination to steer the fortunes of hundreds and thousands of deprived Indians. Equally it was true that she did not encourage a second line of leadership, making it clear that none other than a Nehru-Gandhi was fit to rule India.

Indira Gandhi's death had decidedly created a vacuum. For people like me, who were a generation apart, it had also posed the 'who next' question. Sanjay Gandhi, the obvious heir-apparent, had died before his mother, and Rajiv Gandhi, the reluctant one. More than Indira Gandhi's death and the sorrow that came with it, what was worrying was India's future and the lonely road that lay ahead.

On some lonely, dark nights, Alfred Tennyson and William Butler Yeats are my companions. I can't explain the how and why of it, but I have often read and re-read their verses and liberally quoted and often misquoted them while churning a story in my head. But in the context of 'India without Indira', I'd failed to evoke Tennyson's optimism about the old order changing, yielding place to the new or like the Victorian poet, comfort myself. His lines simply did not fit in the turbulent times India was facing. Introspect what I'd felt was more in sync with Yeats' *The Second Coming*: *Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

Like millions of Indians, I was unsure if the Second Coming was at hand; whether another messiah would descend from the heavens to bail out a country that had more problems than solutions. Of course, Indira Gandhi was no messiah. She was more of a cross between a goddess and the poet's vision of a rough beast. Among the uninitiated, she was worshipped; in the politics she practiced, her opponents likened her to a



“IT WAS HER STAFF WHO HAD TO FACE HER IRE, FOR THEY WERE TRAINED RIGOROUSLY TO HANDLE HER LIKES AND DISLIKES. IT WAS INCUMBENT UPON THEM TO ENSURE THAT THINGS WENT THE WAY SHE WANTED: PERFECTLY, WITH CLOCKWORK PRECISION



typhoon which destroyed at will. At one level, she had built India; at another, perhaps, destroyed its core. But as I had felt then, and do so even now, I believe that she did more good than harm.

From a distance, I watched Mrs Gandhi's body lie in state. It was in New Delhi's Teen Murti House, where she had spent several years as a young woman with her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. It was the late Vasant Sathe, the Congress leader from Maharashtra and once Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting in Mrs Gandhi's

Cabinet, who had taken me along to Teen Murti House. All through the drive, I don't recall how long it was, but Vasant Sathe had sobbed like child. For him, it was like losing his mother, as his wife later told me. We entered from the ante-room and stood near where her head lay: Bereft of the uneasy crown that she had symbolically and willingly worn. Her head was covered with the *pallu* of her sari. Her face was swollen and looked nothing like it once had. It was difficult to see her the way she was. Silent and still.

It was equally tough to see people bringing in marigolds and add to the lay-

ers over her body. I wanted to step over and remove each one... specially those which touched her face. That I thought would be my tribute to a woman who had allowed me easy access into her home.

There was no special bond between us, except as journalist, I would often hover around her for off-beat stories, and Mrs Gandhi cooperated to the extent that I usually went back with one. "Marigolds," Indira Gandhi often told me, "are not for me." Her words came back as I helplessly watched hundreds of people come in and heap them over her.

Her marigold allergy seemed to

have skipped RK Dhawan's mind too. He was in a daze. It was too much to expect him to worry about such details; it really didn't matter anymore. But Mrs Gandhi was a woman who had a keen eye for detail. Had this happened to anyone else, she sure would have stepped in to correct it. RK Dhawan was Indira Gandhi's closest aide. As long as she lived, he was forever by her side, ensuring that nothing went amiss. There are, however, no easy answers for how things had gone so horribly wrong on the last day of a nippy October morning in 1984.

Excerpted with permission from *The Marigold Story* by Kumkum Chadha; Westland, ₹699



SOME HISTORIANS ARGUE THAT MUGHAL EMPEROR AKBAR, WHO COULD NOT READ OR WRITE, WAS DYSLEXIC

FATEHPUR SIKRI

AN ARCHEOLOGICAL MARVEL

Fatehpur Sikri might not have fully enjoyed its position as the capital of Mughal empire, but its architectural grandeur still mesmerises all. There's something about this place that doesn't allow time to rob it of its magic, writes SOMEN SENGUPTA

If one goes through the detailed chronology of Islamic rule in India, he/she will come across several archeological marvels, each more astounding than the other. In this rich archeological heritage, there is one 450-year-old magnum opus that still stands tall. Fatehpur Sikri refers to a town in the Agra District. It was founded by Mughal emperor Akbar as the capital city of his empire. The monument that is metonymously referred to by the same name is so beautiful that it still manages to amaze tourists.

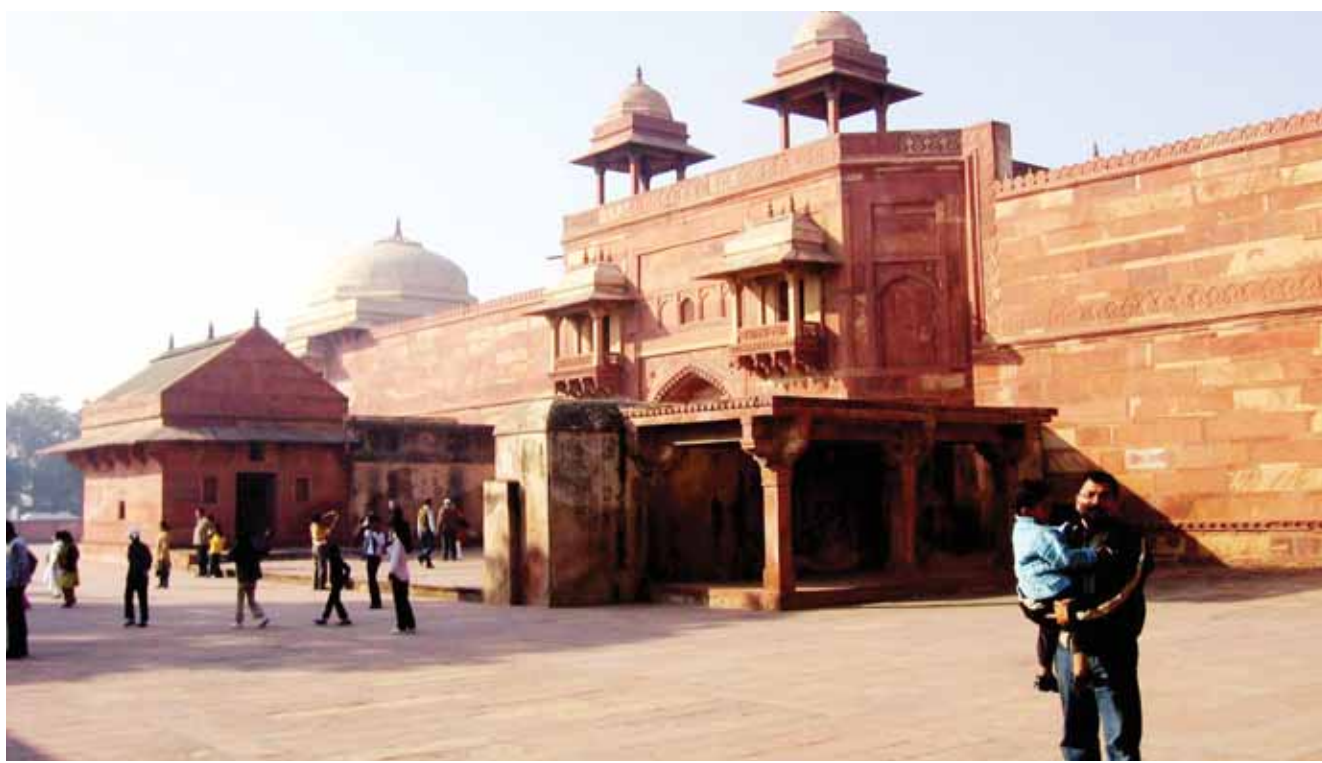
Even though Fatehpur Sikri is largely associated with Akbar, this place was first named by his grandfather Babur. Babur had named a village Shukhria. This name transformed into Sikri in common parlance and around the 16th century, it gained popularity as the place where Salim Chisti, a Sufi saint, used to stay. Legend has it that Akbar sought this saint's blessing in order to have a male child. The emperor had been childless for a long time. The prophecy of Salim Chisti worked like magic and Akbar's third wife, who was a Rajput princess, became pregnant. The grateful king took his pregnant wife to the village of Sikri. The royal couple had a son on August 30, 1569. Akbar named the child Salim after the saint who had made his birth possible. Soon, Akbar was blessed with two more sons from his two other wives. One son was born in 1570 and another in 1572. As a gesture of his gratitude, Akbar decided to set up his new capital in the village of Sikri.

So, a huge construction project was undertaken on the rocky ridge of a dusty village in 1569. The material used for this was high quality red sand stone that still shines on every wall. The design of this Indo-Islamic masterpiece included a royal court, pavilions, gardens, palaces, entertainment arena, mosque, majestic gates, zone for games and amusement, residential apartments and, needless to say, provision for religious activities. Researchers argue this was the first planned city of Mughal India. It was imagined and executed at a phenomenal speed. And the result turned out to be the perfect combination of intense emotion and effort.

What we today know as the monument of Fatehpur Sikri can be divided into three parts — section for religious practices, administrative section, and private residential section. The three-km-long and one-km-wide city is surrounded by a six-km wall on three sides. The entry passage is decorated with several majestic gates named as Delhi Gate, Lal Gate, Chandanpal Gate, Gwalior Gate, Ajmer Gate, and Tehra Gate.

It all started with construction of a massive mosque which was completed between 1571 to 1572. Known as Jama Masjid, this 540-ft-long mosque is one of the biggest mosques in India. Still in use, the mosque houses a massive congregational space and a central courtyard. The domes are made of marble with a *chhatra* (umbrella-like structure) decorated over sanctuary. Like most of the other monument in Fatehpur Sikri, this too reflects strong Hindu influence in its design, especially the domes.

At the courtyard of the mosque stands the grave of Salim Chisti (1478-1572) which is a pure marble tomb deeply influenced by the 15th century Gujarat sultanate school of architecture. The marvellous work on marble with serpentine brackets that covers the entire tomb is breathtaking. The brackets look like English alphabet "S". They have been decorated with floral design that hold the running marble canopy. Even the rain water drainage system of

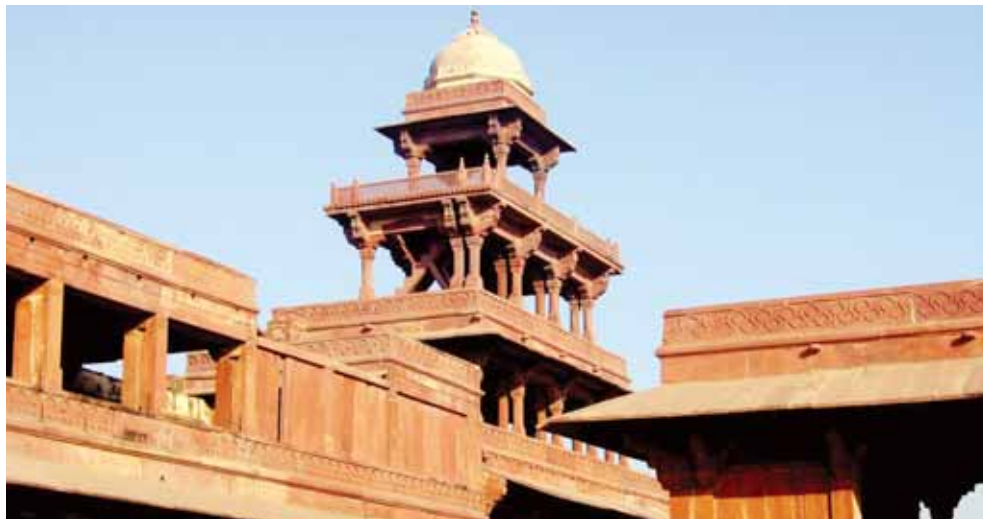


the tomb is so modern that it has the provision of passing water directly from the roof to the underground level through a hollow pillar. The tomb is still counted a sacred place for childless couples who come here for blessings.

In 1573, Akbar's conquest of Gujarat gave a new gem to this city. Akbar added the word Fatehpur meaning the "city of victory" to the word Sikri. To commemorate the victory, a 176-ft-high Buland Darwaza was added to the structure. It replaced an existing gate on the south of the courtyard of the mosque.

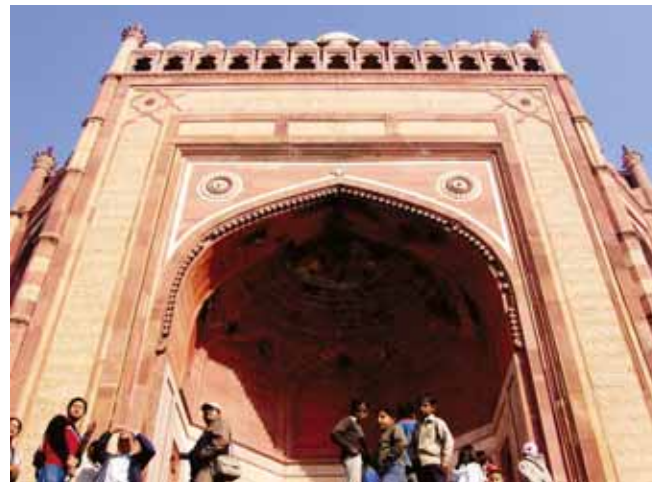
The idea behind this was to make the structure accessible through a grand number of stairs from a lower slope. Upon climbing them, one would see a gate so massive that it will leave a lasting impression. The intention was that the impact would combine three different *rasas* or themes. These included the Bhayanak Rasa that would generate a sense of fear — at a glance, the front of the gate looks like a demon with its mouth wide open. Veer Rasa was supposed to be the second theme — parts of the gate are designed like a regal crown. Shanta Rasa was supposed to be third theme as one idea behind such a grand gate was to remind human beings of the massiveness of almighty. The side and top panels the gate are embellished with quotes from the *Quran*.

Fatehpur Sikri also houses Diwan-i-Khas and Diwan-i-Am. The former boasts of a rather unique architectural design where a central pillar made of red sand stone is very richly designed in a blending of Hindu and Islamic motifs. The design expands on top to make a provision of a royal seat which is reachable from four elevated pathways. The pillar is square at the base. The crowning of the pillar is expanded with several layers of decorated brackets. It seems that the members of court had their seats on the ground floor. There is a hanging balcony on the second floor. The multi-religious influence has led certain groups of historians to believe that Akbar used to dis-



PICS: SOMEN SENGUPTA

EVEN THOUGH FATEHPUR SIKRI IS ASSOCIATED WITH AKBAR, IT WAS FIRST NAMED BY HIS GRANDFATHER BABUR. BABUR HAD NAMED A VILLAGE SHUKHRIA. THIS NAME TRANSFORMED INTO 'SIKRI' IN COMMON PARLANCE, AND AROUND THE 16TH CENTURY, IT GAINED POPULARITY AS THE PLACE WHERE SALIM CHISTI, A SUFI SAINT, USED TO STAY



Infertile women more likely to develop cancer

A recent study found that women with fertility problems were 18 per cent more likely to develop cancer, writes LAURA DONNELLY

Infertility could increase the chance of cancer in mid-life by almost a fifth, research suggests. The study of more than three million women of childbearing age found that those with fertility problems were 18 per cent more likely to develop the disease. Scientists from Stanford University said it was not possible to show whether infertility — or treatment for it — was a cause of cancer.

The explanation could be an underlying mechanism which increased the risk of cancer and infertility, they said. But the four-year study of women who were in their 30s when monitoring began, found that those who suffered infertility problems were 18 per

cent more likely to develop any type of cancer during the period. Researchers stressed that the overall risk of cancer at this stage in life remained low. Overall, those with fertility problems had an absolute risk of 2 per cent, compared with that of 1.7 per cent among other women.

The findings were published in the journal *Human Reproduction*. Study leader Dr Gayathree Murugappan, a fellow in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at Stanford University School of Medicine in California, said: "We do not know the causes of the increase in cancer that we found in this study, whether it might be the infertility



RESEARCHERS ANALYSED DATA FROM 64,345 WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED AS BEING INFERTILE BY DIAGNOSIS, TESTING OR TREATMENT BETWEEN 2003 AND 2016

itself, the causes of the infertility, or the infertility treatment.

"We can only show there is an association between them. In the future, we hope that we will be able to understand why infertile women are at higher risk of cancer; for example, by identifying a common, underlying mechanism that can cause cancer and infertility."

Researchers analysed data from 64,345 women who had been identified as being infertile by diagnosis, testing or treatment between 2003 and 2016. The researchers compared them with more than 3.1 million women who were not infertile and who were seeking routine gynaecological care.

During the follow-up period

there were 1,310 cancers diagnosed among the infertile women and 53,116 among the control group of women who were not infertile. Breast cancer was the most common cancer in both groups. Study senior author Associate Professor Michael Eisenberg, of Stanford University School of Medicine, said: "Although the absolute increase in cancer risk among infertile women was small, this increase was seen in only a short period of four years of follow-up. "We need to carry out further research with longer follow-up to determine what factors may be influencing the long-term risk of cancer for infertile women."

The Daily Telegraph

OF CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

This book uses a combination of theory and real-life case studies of marketers to analyse the state of businesses in the midst of climate change and technological disruption. It shows how some have managed to find the balance, says GAUTAM MUKHERJEE

This book, *Balance*, seeks to tell the story via a tour of the main markers. There are “externalities and their implications” meaning the impact of a given commercial or industrial activity on others. The “Social return on investment (SROI)” is a formula for measuring the social profits against the investments made, controversial as it may be in terms of accounting principles adopted. But it does set up an index for comparing scores. One of the most interesting explorations in this book are on the “frictionless” uses of Blockchain technology. It could, say the authors, “support green supply chains, measuring water use, emissions management,” and can support the “sharing economy”. Cryptocurrencies are already legal tender in Japan.

There is an urgent need to understand climate change better. The World Economic Forum projects that by 2020, which is almost upon us, “about \$5.7 trillion will need to be invested annually in green infrastructure”. This is definitely a tall order, given that most of the investment has to come from a concept called “climate financing,” a kind of World Bank for climate change mitigation by adopting projects and programmes. Again, there are controversies of what kind of project qualifies. There is a need for instruments like “Green bonds” and “Catastrophe bonds” and qualification on the basis of “impact testing”. The whole caboodle is commonsensically very difficult to get started and flourishing, as the tangible short term returns are negligible. However, the importance of doing something, almost anything, cannot be denied.

There are UN developed Sustainable Development goals (SDGs), some 17 in number, and extremely macroeconomic in scale. They list, for example, “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and pro-

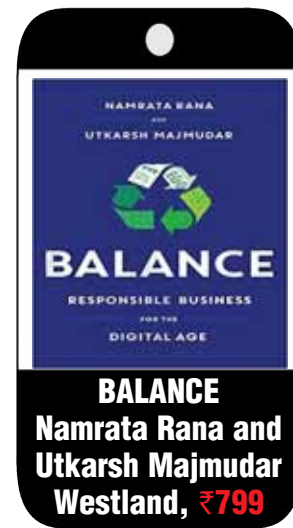


ductive employment, and decent work for all” and “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”. And then there is corporate social responsibility to do things in an ecologically friendly way that makes for sustainability. Broad Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms are increasingly mandatory, but is this enforced around the country and the globe? India only mandates 2 per cent

of turnover spend on CSR, but a survey of its top 166 companies in 2016-17 clocked just 1.88 per cent. And about 45 per cent of this was used on health and education, while the list includes poverty alleviation, water, energy, capacity building and many other heads. Still, the CSR spend has risen from about 1 per cent before it was made mandatory. Of course, this CSR approach is

going to stay largely cosmetic, given the size of the problem and its overhang that threatens to engulf us all. However, to get the largest economies to take on extra here-and-now costs, which are far from negligible, to fuel a cleaner, more sustainable future, is a difficult task.

Much of the clean-up therefore has to be undertaken at Government expense, as in the sewage processing



BALANCE
Namrata Rana and Utkarsh Majmudar
Westland, ₹799

stations and other effluent management infrastructure being developed in the Namami Gange projects. However, these are showing good results in short order, after years of trying to tell municipalities and industry to do something about it failed. The book lays out case studies taken from a number of companies in different fields such as Kirloskar Motors, Toyota Motor Corporation, Yes Bank, Ambuja Cement, ITC and Dr Reddy’s.

It reviews the challenges faced by various and diverse sectors such as cement, automobiles, oil and gas, telecom, mining and metals, banking and financial services, information technology, towards not only controlling and sanitising effluents and emissions, but even toxic electronic waste. Laws play their part, as does enforcement or lack of it. India has quite a few laws in this

space — Waste Management Laws, Environmental Protection Acts, Bio-Medical Waste Management and Handling Rules, Batteries Management and Handling Rules, Hazardous Wastes Management and Handling Rules, Transboundary Movement Rules, Plastic Waste Management and Handling Rules, E-waste Management and Handling Rules, Solid Waste Management Rules.

Data is another great frontier that has got its European law even as India is starting to enact its own. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is applied in the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA) towards data protection and privacy for individuals. How privacy of personal data impacts sustainable development, however, is unclear. The authors of this book are Namrata Rana, who works in the area of strategy and brands at Futurescape and is visiting faculty at IIM Udaipur, and Utkarsh Majmudar, who teaches at leading business schools and writes on sustainability and business responsibility. This volume covers a lot of ground, but the authors are probably most comfortable with the growth and improvement matrix for a responsible corporate sector, where both authors display the confidence of domain knowledge.

Many of the global initiatives described, however, have failed to touch many lives, even as they have underscored that efforts are indeed underway. But will the answer to a cleaner world eventually come from inexpensive new technology adoption that renders older, polluting ways obsolete, and too expensive to carry on with? The history of the industrial revolution, now apparently in its 4th wave, as well as the socio-political advancements we have seen over the last century, seem to suggest as much.

The reviewer is an entrepreneur and former corporate executive

NEW ARRIVALS

THE CONFIDENCE PROJECT
Dr Rob Yeung
John Murray
Learning, ₹399



Follow the practical advice within the book and undertake *The Confidence Project*; a complete plan for helping you make better decisions and take action in order to fulfill your true potential. Often the only thing separating successful people from the crowd is the self-belief they have running around inside their heads and their innate self-confidence. This book isn’t about promoting unrealistic positive thinking — it will help you understand the complex psychology of your beliefs.

HOW TO GET TO GREAT IDEAS
Dave Birss
Nicholas Brealey
Publishing, ₹399

The highly practical lessons in *How to Get to Great Ideas* are based on neuroscience, psychology and sociology. Written by former advertising creative director Dave Birss, this book offers a brilliant new system for conceiving original and valuable ideas. It looks at how to frame a problem, how to push your thinking, how to sell the idea, how to build support for it and how to inspire others to have great ideas. It proves that any organisation — and any individual — can create a fertile environment for ideas.

OUR START-UP AFFAIR
Sheila Kumar
Speaking Tiger, ₹299



A romance about modern lives as lived in India’s tech capital and city of youth, Bangalore. He opened his mouth to say something, then seemed to think the better of it. Their eyes met in the rear-view mirror and Aditi raised her well-shaped eyebrows in query. ‘I prefer start-ups,’ he said flatly. Aditi Pillai is an entrepreneur — part-owner of the Snack Team, a food start-up. Sitting in her shared cab one day, in Bangalore’s gridlocked traffic, she suddenly notices that her cab driver is extraordinarily good-looking. Turns out he is Aditya Shenoy, owner of cab aggregator start-up Caboyea.

Tales of love and loss in Newfoundland

In this novel, each character is looking for his/her own place in the world — whether it is a house of their own, their identity, a place in the school peer group, or a permanent place in the arms of a lover, writes SANYA DANG

Short stories are sometimes more difficult to write than novels. They also sometimes showcase a writer’s talent more visibly. That is the case with this particular collection — the stories not only have a deep impact on the reader but also ring true with a profundity that is impressive. The cover design is very interesting — simple yet layered, the many shades of brown speak about the different and multifarious experiences of Indian immigrants in USA. The blocks of colour remind us of wall paint shade cards with their funny specific names — burnt sienna, brick rust, dark tan. Some of them are like Crayola shades — peach, yellow, brown, black. On these colorful boxes are the words that have a strange, universal appeal — *If You See Me Don’t Say Hi*.

This anthology contains stories on many different themes — on deception, class discrepancy, society’s negative effects on the psyche, arranged marriages, mixed marriages, unrequited love, childhood crushes, same sex relationships, adultery and the power of love. Neel Patel tries to go beyond the obvious, he doesn’t write of Indians in the typical way — his characters rise from being mere caricatures and stereotypes to having a unique identity and even more unique problems. His characters are Indians, but not the ‘super achievers’ or the ‘good kids’. They have different expectations from themselves even though their parents’ pressures weigh heavily on their psyches. They are modern cosmopolitan individuals with a liberated sexual identity, with a hitherto unseen problem of alcohol or drug abuse. This hidden side is a revelation — Indians can’t always be reduced to people who get good grades and win Spell Bees. The characters deal with the pain of not fitting in, the feeling of not belonging to any peer group or community, the sense of alienation that comes with growing up in a country where they do not have their roots.

There are 11 stories in all — 11 narrators with as many similarities as differences, intricate, realistic modern plots with abrupt and bow tie endings. It is an incredible debut



collection, thoughtful and poignant with unique stories and perceptive people. The title of the stories refer to Indian gods, monuments and popular American slangs.

The power of perspective is very significant here as seen in the last two stories. They are the same stories with the same characters but from two different perspectives. This is a very new way of dealing with ‘perspective’ and ‘voice’. The stories are full of many motifs and symbols that define the Indian immigrant experience in America — sacrifice, success, expectation, identity, sense of belonging. Each story contains wonderful insights into human nature, culture and relationships, especially in the Indian context. Some stories are believable, some leave a bad taste in the mouth

This book takes you on a journey where you not only realise the power of perspective but also the power of community. The power of love is not

given a very high status. Love not only tests endurance, tolerance but is also tested time and again by external factors — society, norms, personal circumstances. Lust is a very important part of the narratives, sometimes given as much importance as love.

The Epigraph is a quotation from *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and the author acknowledges his debt to her in terms of characterisation. He says that her books showed him for the first time how Indian immigrants are like and how they are depicted. He dedicates this book to his parents. The over-arching theme in many of the stories is the power of society and how community gossip can break bonds, sour relationships and ruin lives in the process. This particular trope is known in the Indian context as — “log kya kaheinge?” We are all familiar with this hiding of face and showing off at community gatherings, suffering the taunts and being party to the cruel rumours that float.

The writing style is classic, fresh, beautiful, languid, fluid, visual, sensual and poetic. The language is simple enough for anyone to understand yet the simplicity does not take away from the ornate beauty of the overall effect it creates. This is a novel where each of the characters is looking for his/her own place in the world — whether it is a house of their own, their identity, a place in the school peer group or a permanent place in the arms of the man/woman they love.

Each story has its own irresistible trait — some have a very interesting plot, some end in a way that make us ponder about the fate of those characters, some deal with homosexual relationships and some have characters we have never met before. Women characters here have been given a lot of agency where they are calling the shots, managing their lives well yet we see women characters trapped in loveless marriages, forced into arranged marriages and also dealing with husbands committing adultery.

Even though many characters are aware of their behaviour, what they should or should not do, what is ‘expected’ of them, yet there are many who are rebellious, troubled and indulge in things that any parent would disapprove of. Thus, Patel does not stick to a few good people, he shows us a range of characters who break hearts, try to come out of the closet, care a damn about their parents, are selfish to the core, embarrassed about ‘everything Indian’ and there are others who listen to their parents, try to fulfill their expectations, achieve success by getting into Ivy Leagues and marrying within their community.

Patel doesn’t put his characters on pedestal, he shows their weaknesses, failures, inner thoughts and emotions, however flawed and tragic they maybe. His characters face moments of truth and need to make split second decisions with significant consequences. Their dilemmas make the story deep and profound. In the words of Emily Smith Gilbert, “These characters struggle to break away from the confines of their parents’ home and stifling suburbs.”



IF YOU SEE ME, DON'T SAY HI
Neel Patel
Penguin, ₹399

China IP theft: A Herculean task for Trump

The trade war between the US and China is taking an ugly turn. At the centre of the trade war between the two economy giants is the stealing of massive Intellectual Property (IP) of the US enterprises by the Chinese business firms and other dubious entities.

It is to be noted that irrespective of the current stand-off between Washington and Beijing — starting from the Huawei to an incessant trade war to blocking of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the UN — US President Trump needs to be careful about the immediate consequences of falling apart with the \$14trn worth Chinese economy at the moment.

Amid claims and counter-claims by both Washington and Beijing, it is worth noting how both are veering around the IP issue and defending one another. For Trump Administration, making China listen and take necessary steps to curb sheer violations of IP rights that amounts to some good billions each year is the aim for now.

For President Trump, what is good for him is that a large business and political community in his country agree that China can spoil the global trading system in the long run. China's steroidal State capitalist regime poses a serious threat to the current international business system.

But then, China strongly refuses such claims constantly made by both the American Chamber of Commerce in China (AmCham China) and the European Union of Chamber of Commerce in



In this Feb 15, 2019, file photo, Chinese Vice Premier Liu He talks with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, while they line up for a group photo at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. AP

China (European Chamber). Last year, China's Vice-Minister of Commerce Wang Shouwen publicly declared that accusations that China steals IPRs and forces technology transfers are sheer fabrications out of nothing and groundless.

The Xi regime has outrightly rejected US and EU allegations.

Indeed, the Chinese Government says that it is keen on protecting IPRs and has already taken serious steps in doing so. Ironically, the AmCham China and European Chamber in their China business climate survey, ranked

the IPR issue as the 12th and the 11th last year. But this has given fresh ammunition to Beijing to reclaim that if China had forced technological transfers, failed in IPR protection or even stolen IPRs, the concerned enterprises would have complained directly.

It has been constantly aired by the Government that in terms of IPR legislation, China has enacted adequate laws and regulations which are truly compliant to WTO directives.

Meanwhile China has set up three IPR courts in Shanghai, Beijing and in Guangzhou and special judicial

branches in more than 15 cities to handle cross regional IP cases. This all is fine on official records. What makes foreign enterprises fighting IP issues see it as a herculean task is to fight China's opaque judicial system. And moreover, all these organs are party-controlled and cases are always bias either towards the locals or state owned enterprises.

Now the question is how the Trump Administration will wade through this crisis and find a way out wherein; first, the interests of American enterprises are served, and second, most of the European and

other corporate houses are well protected from the clutches of Xi's new-found market socialism. Besides, as the presidential election fever is about to grip America, the President must bring an end to the current trade war between the US and China. Again, his team demands a robust public relations campaign to respond to the Opposition and special interest groups.

Many in the US argue that President Trump has done right to unsettle the global behemoth China. The 2016 Report of the US Trade Representative (USTR) to

Congress on WTO Compliance rightly noted: "Many of the problems that arise in the US-China trade and investment relationship can be traced to the Chinese Government's interventionist policies and practices and the large role of state-owned enterprises and other national champions in China's economy, which continue to generate significant trade distortions that inevitably give rise to trade frictions. The United States notes that China's current leadership, in place since 2013, has highlighted the need to pursue further economic reforms in China, but to date not much progress is evident."

Contrary to what Xi proclaimed, he is turning all his efforts to mount a nationalist fervour so as to drum up continued support for strengthening the Communist Party at home and expansion of China's shady deals abroad.

It must be noted here that when China joined the WTO in 2001, it clearly pledged not to demand technology transfer from the MNCs coming to operate inside as one of the prime conditions for market entry. Global experts say it is really difficult to make a case against China because it has generally observed by the letter of its WTO commitments.

In reality, what makes running business tricky in China is the indispensable role of the local partners that play on the global corporate houses. It has been noticed that from car manufacturing to cloud computing, only with the aid of the local agents and partners, the MNCs can make their business happen.

When it comes to the project implementation level, the Chinese regulators demand methods of product testing and approval procedures which results in compelling the foreign companies to divulge their IP secrets in the process. Various global trade experts say the unstated goal behind the entire process is to help the Chinese companies getting easy access to foreign technology.

But then the Beijing smartly replies quite often that these business regulations and verification procedures are completely voluntary and are purely commercial agreements made between concerned MNCs and the Chinese Government.

Another serious problem that directly hits the foreign MNCs in China is the issue of "quojin mintui" (the State advances, the private sector retreats), particularly under the Xi Government. The Government and its banks systematically funnels cheap capitals towards these state owned firms at times at the cost of the advancement of the big corporate houses.

Simply speaking, economic reforms if at all carried out by Xi, it would be a win-win situation for both China and America. However, looking at China's poor global compliance records so far, Trump requires more manoeuvring tactics to encounter a recalcitrant Beijing administration either through tariffs or with the help of arbitration to save the treasured IPs of global giants.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)

China's opaque judicial system makes foreign enterprises' fight to secure IP rights a formidable task. Looking at China's poor global trade compliance records so far, President Trump requires more manoeuvring tactics to encounter a recalcitrant Beijing administration either through tariffs or with the help of arbitration to save the treasured IPs of global giants



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

How not to do Defence forces a great disservice

The root cause of all problems with our 'fauj eclipse' has been that a former Prime Minister allowed the Ministry of Defence to be infested with non-military Government servants



PAMARTY VENKATARAMANA

The department of Defence has been in the news throughout the history of India's democracy more than the department of Agriculture or the department of Health, thanks to all the controversial occurrences often orchestrated by politicians and their side-kicks.

Even as there can be no two opinions about the courage, valour and dedication of our men and women in uniform, the cause for all those acrimonious debates and sad tales of supposedly rampant cobwebs in the corridors of power can, on a dispassionate analysis, be pinpointed to the colossal damage caused by a deliberate machination of a dictatorial lady Prime Minister through tinkering of administrative structures.

The fallout is the fallen morale of upright, honest rank & file in the defence forces.

Let me begin with an episode which drew my attention — as a practising lawyer — to this wing of Government.

To cut a long story short, I accepted the brief of the then topmost tank-expert of our county, a Brigadier and his boss, then Director of a defence research establishment, who were both thrust with orders of "compulsory retirement".

Why? Apparently because they were not participating in a huge continuing act of misdeemeanour: about ₹115 crore was spent to develop the prototype of a main battle tank over 15 long years. The honest duo protested and they were unceremoniously removed.

I can place on record as a matter of pride that with high malarial fever running, I was able to argue for a record num-

ber of hours in then AP High Court and have them both reinstated (with structures passed against then defence secretary).

If the MBT Arjun prototype scam is not as much publicised as the Bofors Gun scam or later day controversies of AgustaWestland Helicopters purchase and the ongoing storm over the Rafale aircraft purchase order, there is but a common thread which weaves beyond the tenure of a certain elected Government or any particular acquisition from a certain jurisdiction.

That there are ghosts hidden in the corridors of power leading to the seeming "self-destruction" of outdated ships, fighter jets and other such most-expensive assets inducted into our armed forces is a foregone conclusion.

A moment of pride for Indian soldiers has in recent centuries been their incomparable valour during the First World War with all of them fighting shoulder-to-shoulder, regardless of religious faith they subscribed to!

Wickedness had its say and colonial rulers began to play the cartridge-trick (beef & pork bullets) to eliminate Brahmin castes from Army and divide the rank and file along the religious and caste lines.

This "divide-and-rule" game was the one that was later on aped by a desperate head of State who wished to cling on to seat of power. As a much-praised 'empress of India'!

Here began the murky twist.

As an incisive study reveals, even though the Ministry of Defence is into long-term planning, a former



A textile merchant displays a saree printed with a picture of IAF Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman at his shop in Surat on March 2. PTI

lady PM dismantled the organisational structure of Ministry of Defence by flooding civilian staff under control of IAS officers.

The root cause of all problems with our "fauj eclipse" has been that the Ministry of Defence has been infested with Government servants (the IAS category) who are the root-cause of all acts of corruption springing out of defence deals — ranging from kickbacks in imports to running of dedicated public sector units.

From the embezzlement of PSU-assets to deliberately ensuring that former military officers are not involved in matters of the military, and policy-making to the exercise of financial powers, the nexus is not a simple wedlock of babudom and netalog but a more deadly, vicious and deeply entrenched witchcraft stretching over four plus decades of foul play by a "IAS cartel and the dynasty-owned political party".

The unholy nexus has caused the downside in spirit and image of the most pristine department of the country's Government.

Pentagon of the USA does long-term military planning and is staffed by more than 95 per cent military uniformed staff (and not by civil-servants as in India). Similar is the case with Russia, Israel, France, China and the UK.

This is a most noteworthy point that any contender for being a "Global Economic superpower" has to firstly com-

mand (emphasis placed on word "command") respect as a "military-superpower" in today's age and time.

To make matters worse, salaries of the military personnel, housing facilities, pensions have been reduced under supervision of the IAS — masters by dynasty. Thereby the IAS retains about 99 per cent of the financial powers in arms production, procurement to MES, infra-development or the maintenance of military-areas with complete "loot".

All soldiers in the military are retired at age of 35-38 years so as to keep the forces young. These experienced, trained soldiers should be placed in the respective State Police forces (of their native, home State), on higher standards with basic police retraining being imparted. Such a move would help ensure prevalence of an honest police force, countrywide!

Such a pragmatic move would ensure that they get pension from age-60 years, thereby also saving taxpayers' hard-earned money on early pensions. For instance, appoint or depute the IAS-IPS-IFS officers only if and after they put in a mandatory seven-years' military service.

Moreover, five years of field posting in such a prescribed seven-year period of military-service would endow a qualitatively refined bureaucratic structure.

And so, the urgent dismantling of UPSC conducted recruitment measures as a springboard to elite military services is an equally vital element in the creation of a strong and robust military services cadre. National security cannot be allowed to be compromised at any cost.

Yet another startling question India must ponder over is "Where are all those bullets being manufactured by the lakhs everyday at our ammunition factories going?"

Why are we importing arms and ammunition when we possess the best of facilities created by the British colonialists and many of which possess idle capacities?

Also, when India rules and drives the software-cum-hardware technological capabili-

ties of the western world in several frontiers and applications, what is the need for continued imports of such "advanced" weaponry systems at huge costs to the exchequer that otherwise may be better utilised?

The imports often are generations old, outdated ones by the time they are inducted in the Indian territory.

Not to miss the trump-card in favour of the case to oust devilry of "scams in defence sector". It is an universal truth that when a certain product is manufactured in one corner of the globe and is imported into another country for use, the purchase is made through a middleman or a marketing representative (who taps the most powerful contacts of buyer-land to close the transaction).

Under such a trading situation, those who cry "wolf" seated in Opposition-ranks or are wild with rage for not receiving a "share-in-the-pie" would be doing greater disservice to their homeland than the recipients of the "bribes" or "commissions".

So long as we let the media ecosystem to bypass the niceties of a set constitutional system to govern the democracy, the largely illiterate society would continue to dishonour its heroic ones while prostrating before the evil flock.

I hope this cry of the unsung patriotic defence forces would reach the ears of the Government of the day who certainly can bring in these evolutionary changes to restore the pride and strength of Defence Realm of India!

Jai Hind!

(The writer is an eminent jurist, based in New Delhi)



Theresa May's EU withdrawal deal has been rejected by MPs by an overwhelming majority for a second time

BJP needs strong alliances to fight robust Opposition

**sunday
gupshup**

HARI SHANKAR VYAS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah are brimming with confidence in the run-up to elections. Some BJP leaders claim that after the Pulwama and Balakot incidents, the party is certain of victory, although the Opposition is trying to ensure that their path is not without hurdles. This is thought to be the reason behind the BJP's "surrender" before smaller parties, in the hope of forging alliances. A case in point being Jharkhand, where the BJP has left one Lok Sabha seat for its partner, the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU). Not long ago, it was being said that the BJP was not in the mood to kneel before the AJSU, and Amit Shah had asked its leaders to either merge into the BJP or fight alone. But in no time, the BJP changed tack and left the Giridih seat for the AJSU. This indicates that the BJP needs strong alliances to fight against a strong Opposition.

That is why the BJP has gone into alliances with its old partners in States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab — and compromised everywhere. In Maharashtra, the BJP changed its old formula and agreed to fight on 25 seats instead of 26. Before this, the BJP used to fight on 26 seats, and the Shiv Sena got 22 seats. But this time, the Sena has managed to get 23 seats in its kitty. In the same manner, the JDU — which has only two MPs — has got 17 seats. In Tamil Nadu, the BJP had to make do with only five seats, while in UP, it has tried its best to continue with both partners.

THE CASE OF SECOND SEAT

The preferred seats of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi have been revealed. The Congress recently released a list of 15 candidates in UP, and Rahul is set to fight from his conventional seats, Amethi. In the recently held meeting of the BJP's Parliamentary Board, Modi's candidature was also fixed. He will fight from Varanasi again. It is being said that both leaders will fight from at least one more seat. The last time too, Modi had fought from two seats — Varanasi and Vadodara, leaving the latter later. There is speculation that he will contest from Vadodara this time around, but seats from other States are also on the discussion table. Puri seat is the most talked about for PM Modi. The BJP leaders feel that if Modi fights from Odisha, the party will benefit in the Lok Sabha as well as Assembly Elections. Some time ago, it was being said that Modi might fight from Patna Sahib too, but that spec-



ulation is now over.

On the other hand, Rahul has won from Amethi thrice and not fought from any other State. This time, there is speculation that he will contest from a seat from a Southern State. His mother and grandmother have both fought from South India. The Congress leaders feel that if Rahul fights from some other State also, the party prospects could be better. Though it is also true that the Congress is very weak in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, but in the other three States, it has forged strong alliances. That is why the party is also mulling over a State either from North or West India for Rahul to contest.

MULAYAM KIN IN THE RACE

This time, some more members of Mulayam Singh Yadav's family will fight the Lok Sabha Elections. In 2004, the number was four: Mulayam had fought from two seats, Mainpuri and Azamgarh. Apart from him, Mulayam's daughter-in-law Dimple Yadav had fought from Kannauj, nephew Dharmendra Yadav from Budaun, and grandson Akshay Yadav from Firozabad. The SP was able to win only these five seats. Later, Mulayam had left the Mainpuri seat and his grandson Tej

Pratap Yadav fought from there and won. Then Tej Pratap became the son-in-law of Lalul Yadav. This time, Mulayam will fight from only Mainpuri seat. So, Akhilesh Yadav will have to find another seat for Tej Pratap. The SP has released a list of nine candidates, which has four members of the Mulayam family. Mulayam will fight from Mainpuri, Dimple from Kannauj, Dharmendra from Budaun, and Akshay from Firozabad. Earlier, Akhilesh had said that his wife would not fight this time and he would contest from Kannauj. But, at last, he has roped in his wife. It is being said that he might fight the Lok Sabha Elections. Apart from the seats, which are said to be the den of the Yadav family, two other seats are also Yadav dominated and the SP has a strong vote base there. That is why there is speculation that Akhilesh might either fight from Azamgarh or Sambhal. These two seats might go to Akhilesh and Tej Pratap. Shivpal Yadav has formed a separate party and is gearing up to fight elections. He could be the seventh member of Mulayam's family to contest this time.

FIGHT OVER VOTE BANK

Many top leaders of the country are trying to break the ice between the

BSP and Congress. Even the SP's supremo, Akhilesh, wants to take the Congress on board. The Opposition leaders are considering it necessary not only for UP but for the entire country. But Mayawati is not paying heed to anyone and has announced solo fight in many States. In Haryana, she has tied up with Raj Kumar Saini's party, the LSP. She is gearing up to go alone in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, and Delhi. It is no secret that Mayawati is miffed with the Congress. She feels that Rahul's party is trying to usurp its vote bank. She is upset with the Congress politics in UP.

In fact, Dalit, Brahmins, and Muslims have been the conventional vote bank of the Congress. The BSP has also made these three vote banks its own at different times. Now, when the Congress has roped in Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Mayawati feels that its vote bank could shrink. Recently, Priyanka managed to persuade Dalit leader, Savitribai Phule, to join the Congress, and this has made Mayawati angrier.

CONG ALLIANCE COMMITTEE

A few months ago, the Congress formed a committee to talk with probable partners and finalise alliances.

AK Antony was the chairman of this committee. Apart from Antony, Ahmed Patel, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and Ashok Gehlot were also a part of the committee. Now, when the Lok Sabha Elections have been announced, questions are being raised over what the committee has done. Did the committee and its members talk to any of the alliance partners in any State? Did they try to search for new partners? When all decisions regarding alliances are being taken either by the General Secretary or Rahul, then what was the need of this committee? Rahul is talking with all parties regarding alliances. Many Congress leaders are not happy with this strategy and say that all negotiations must be done by other leaders and Rahul should come into the picture only in the final stage. However, Rahul has his own style of working. He wants to hold alliance talks, like he did with Tejashwi Yadav in Bihar.

In Maharashtra also, Rahul held discussions with the NCP leader Sharad Pawar. They had four rounds of talks over the seat-sharing formula. Rahul also talked to Sitaram Yechury over seat sharing. Where Rahul didn't talk directly, his general secretaries stepped in. Even then, the AK Antony-led alliance committee was not roped in at any stage.

Some BJP leaders claim that after the Pulwama and Balakot incidents, the party is certain of victory, although the Opposition is trying to ensure that their path is not without hurdles. This is thought to be the reason behind the BJP's "surrender" before smaller parties, in the hope of forging alliances

US won't accept 'incremental' disarmament

Stephen Biegun, the United States envoy to Pyongyang, has stressed that Washington will not settle for the incremental disarmament of North Korea and that it is aiming for complete denuclearisation by the end of US President Donald Trump's first term in 2021. "We are not going to do denuclearisation incrementally," Biegun told a conference in Washington hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in his first comments since the failed summit between Trump and Kim Jong-un in Hanoi, Vietnam, last month. Biegun insisted that sanctions would not be lifted unless Pyongyang completely eliminated its nuclear weapons, stressing that it was Washington's goal to achieve this within the current administration.

"We stand by the expectation that if we fully mobilise our resources... we could align ourselves in a manner sufficient to achieve this in something approaching a year," he said. His statements marked a reversal from previous pronouncements emerging from the White House, with analysts warning that the hardening of the US position is an unrealistic strategy that will end in further stalemate with Pyongyang. Ahead of the Hanoi meeting, Trump had declared that he had "no pressing schedule" on denuclearisation. "As long as there is no [missile] testing, I'm in no rush," he said.

Biegun, meanwhile, had indicated in a speech at Stanford University at the end of January that the US was willing to take a more stage by stage approach to

The United States envoy to Pyongyang has stressed that Washington will not settle for the incremental disarmament of North Korea, writes NICOLA SMITH

the issue — a policy favoured by Pyongyang.

"We have communicated to our North Korean counterparts that we are prepared to pursue — simultaneously and in parallel — all of the commitments our two leaders made in their joint statement at Singapore last summer," he said, referring to the two leaders' first meeting in the city-state last June. Their second summit in Hanoi in late February ended abruptly without any kind of deal.

Trump said that Kim had insisted all economic sanctions were lifted before he agreed to give up his entire nuclear arsenal — a position he could not accept. "Sometimes you just have to walk," he said. However, Ri Yong Ho, the North Korean foreign minister, countered that Pyongyang had only requested "partial relief" on sanctions enacted between 2016 and 2017, and had offered a "realistic proposal" to dismantle uranium enrichment facilities in return.

The talks ended on friendly terms, but North Korea has since shown frustration at the collapse of the summit, with the state-run Rodong Sinmun commenting that the public "are feeling regretful, blaming the US for the summit that ended without an agreement."

In a more alarming development, experts at California's Middlebury Institute of



International Studies, said last week that satellite images suggested that Pyongyang could be preparing to launch a missile or space rocket. In response to questions about what the signs of activity at rocket launch facilities meant, Biegun replied: "The short answer is: We don't know." He added that "the door remains open" for further negotiations. "Nothing can be agreed until everything's agreed," he said. Nuclear and North Korea ana-

lysts expressed scepticism about his statements.

"Biegun: 'Nothing can be agreed until everything can be agreed.' — a losing strategy," tweeted Jenny Town, a Korea specialist at the Stimson Centre, a Washington think tank. Others commented that the insistence on full denuclearisation before the lifting of any sanctions would create a bottleneck with Pyongyang, which has consistently argued for recipro-

cal concessions.

"If we don't move off this position, we have nowhere to go," Vipin Narang, an MIT nuclear expert, told Vox. "There's no zone of agreement if we insist on everything — I mean everything, complete surrender — up front."

Let's review and go back to last month when US President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un's summit in Vietnam was abruptly cut short as the pair failed to reach an agreement over

how North Korea should denuclearise. A working lunch and signing ceremony pre-announced by the White House was cancelled at the last minute as talks in Hanoi hit a sudden impasse around midday.

Trump said that Kim had insisted all economic sanctions against North Korea were lifted while not agreeing to give up his entire nuclear arsenal — a position he could not accept. "Sometimes you just have to walk," Trump said at a press conference, adding that he did not want to sign a bad deal. No new summit date was agreed.

The US president insisted that progress had been made and that he and Kim shook hands and remained on good terms. He said Kim had agreed not to restart nuclear and missile tests and the US would not restart military exercises in South Korea — a continuation of the status quo.

However, the failure to make progress disappointed allies. A spokesman for South Korea's president called it "regrettable". Trump also drew criticism at home by admitting he took Kim "at his word" when the dictator said he had not known of the imprisonment and torture of Otto Warmbier, which led to the US student's death in 2017. "I don't believe he knew about it. He felt very badly about it," Trump said. "I did speak to him. He knew about it, but he knew

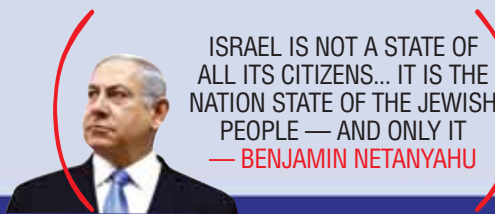
about it after."

The comments, which recalled the president's support for authoritarian regimes in Saudi Arabia and Russia, were rebuked across the aisle. Adam Schiff, the Democratic Chair of the House Intelligence Committee, described the remarks as "detestable", while Republican Senator Rob Portman said "we should never let North Korea off the hook" for Warmbier's death.

The first sign that the talks had gone wrong came as reporters waited for the leaders and their teams to arrive for lunch in an elegant dining room at the French colonial-era Metropole hotel hosting the summit. Name cards had already been laid out on eight empty chairs and bouquets of flowers placed on the pristine white tablecloth in anticipation of the dishes to come.

The lunch was first delayed then suddenly cancelled. Outside the Metropole, Kim's stern league of bodyguards sprang into action, jumping into moving cars as his cavalcade roared off into Hanoi.

Confusion reigned for 20 minutes until a statement from Sarah Sanders, the White House spokesperson. President Trump and Kim Jong-un had enjoyed "very good and constructive meetings" while discussing "various ways to advance denuclearisation and economic driven concepts," she said. However, "no agreement was reached at this time." The statement was a dramatic twist to a morning that had begun in a promising way.



A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE?

As new MJ sex abuse claims emerge, is the music industry — hotbed of scandal and debauchery — guilty of turning a blind eye? LESLEY-ANN JONES finds out

I have slept in a bed with many children," the King of Pop admitted in the 2003 documentary, *Living with Michael Jackson*. "It's not sexual, we're going to sleep. I tucked them in... It's very charming, it's very sweet." Who among us didn't hear alarm bells? Who never wondered, 'where were the parents?' Who didn't think to themselves, what kind of family surrenders its infants into the care of an adult stranger; a globally-acknowledged eccentric, if not downright weirdo at that — a superstar known for cavorting with chimps and sleeping in hyperbaric oxygen chambers?

During his lifetime, Jackson was never found guilty of child abuse, instead settling a string of charges against him out of court for considerable fortunes. Yet *Leaving Neverland*, a new two-part documentary which aired recently, makes allegations so visceral in nature, they are impossible to ignore. British filmmaker Dan Reed presents two grown men in his programme — James Safechuck and Wade Robson — who accuse Jackson of having molested them when they were children. Both tried but failed to have him convicted through the courts: Robson was five years old when he met Jackson after winning a competition to dance on stage with him. In 1993 and again in 2005, he denied that anything untoward had happened between them.

But in 2013, four years after Jackson's death, he declared that the singer had both brainwashed and subjected him to seven years of abuse from the age of seven, claimed to have suffered a nervous breakdown, explaining his perspective on events had changed after having become the father of a son himself. Safechuck, 40, met Michael in the 1980s after being cast in a Pepsi advert aged 10, before joining the star on his 1988 BAD tour. In 2014, he filed a lawsuit accusing Jackson of having abused him hundreds of times between 1988 and 1992, with the additional disturbing detail that Jackson staged a freak mock wedding between them only surfacing later on.

Though similar stories were levelled against Jackson when he was alive, these latest claims, made in an era keen to make amends for decades in which bad

behaviour went unpunished, have taken on a seemingly more powerful quality, marking a turning point for both our impressions of the man and the industry that brought him staggering fame, too. I cannot speak to their accusations, but knew Jackson for a time in 1988, having joined the Rome leg of his BAD Tour, where his show at the Flaminio Stadium was billed as the greatest rock spectacle the Eternal City had ever seen.

Having been close to and at one point shared accommodation with his sister La Toya in New York, and known libidinous Jermaine and industrious Janet, then forging her own pop career, I had heard a great deal about their bleak, fun-starved upbringing in Gary, Indiana, and about the abuse they had been subjected to by their steel-worship father, Joe. Michael had been singing and dancing for a living before he'd even started school; his Peter Pan-sense, then, of being unable to part with the childhood he ought to have left behind, seemed almost inevitable.

And so I would find the biggest artist on the planet one day, down by the Trevi Fountain, a familiar face peeping out through cascading curls, a false moustache and the raised collar of an old raincoat dropping dimes into the gush. He recognised me straight away.

We were not strangers: I'd had dinner with him and La Toya in New York; visited his mother Katherine at the family abode in Encino, attended a barbecue at the home of Barry White, at which Jackson was a fellow guest, and had even visited the Neverland ranch. Yet the two of us had not conversed at length — he never seemed that confident in adult company. Under-educated and insecure, he seemed happier among children. When he met my then three-year-old daughter, Mia, he seemed enchanted by her, calling her "Snow White". His incognito day out in Rome was a reaction to a life spent having "been everywhere [but] see[ing] nowhere. I just wanted to see something for myself, on my own, just one time". And so this was his chance, before the two of us went off for an ice-cream.

That night, he wowed us on stage, but failed to attend his own party afterwards. I never saw him or his family again. Twenty one years later in 2009, I

was looking forward to catching up with him when he rented the home of a friend, ahead of his ill-fated 50-night 02 Arena residency, the "This is It" tour. Somehow, I had a feeling he'd never make it. At the time of Jackson's death, he was worth reportedly worth \$500m, and remains the third-best selling artist of all time, behind Elvis Presley — who, while in his early twenties, turned his attentions to a then 14-year-old Priscilla, who would later become his wife. Having worked as a music journalist for three decades and published eight books on some of its biggest stars, I know only too well that minimal digging is required when it comes to the questionable behaviour of many of the music's luminaries: Bill Wyman, 52, married Mandy Smith, then 18, who he had been grooming since she was 13 — the same age at which Myra Gale Brown married her cousin, Jerry Lee Lewis, in 1957.

Consider the Allman Brothers Band, too, whose tour manager used to provide a chart detailing the legal age of consent in every US State: He would make copies for everyone in the band and hand them out at the start of each tour to avoid their getting into trouble. Then there's Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, claimed to have had a relationship with 14-year-old Lori Maddox, or more recently the indiscretions of R&B singer R Kelly, first accused of sex abuse during the Nineties — allegations that only brought him to a criminal court last month.

Different times, different morals, so the mentality goes. As one household-name rockstar friend admitted to me recently, "Nobody was asking for birth certificates. We would all have got done, down at Top of the Pops." Certainly, the culture seemed to almost celebrate the idea of illicit relations, appearing to favour the pairing of the randy rocker and underage schoolgirl as the most desirable state of affairs — 'Brown Shoes Don't Make It' by Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention in 1967 was described as 'Zappa's first masterpiece', in which he fantasised about sex with a 13-year-old; Aerosmith's 'Jailbait' made its intentions clear; Depeche Mode's 'A Question of

Time' features the unequivocal line 'Well now you're only 15 and you look good, I'll take you under my wing.' And what were ABBA thinking with 'Does Your Mother Know?', or Police's 'Don't Stand So Close to Me' or 'Young Girl' by Gary Puckett and the Union Gap? The list is endless.

For all this time, the music industry has remained immune on the grounds it is a different country — a final frontier, the last place where truly, anything goes. It is still a realm of fantasy and myth: What else is rock'n'roll but Disneyland — Neverland — for grown-ups? No matter what nefarious activity its key players involve themselves in, music is still the place we all secretly aspire to, if only we could write songs and play guitar. And so a blind eye has permanently been turned.

Forget hurling television sets out of hotel windows or driving Rolls Royces into pools, darker forces are often at work; scandal and debauchery, after all, have always been the blood and guts of rock'n'roll. I wince as I call to mind a particular orgy in LA, long since swept under the carpet, that resulted in the death of a teenage groupie; of the rent boy injected with heroin so that the band could get off on watching him convulse; of the rock fan left for dead in a hotel garbage bin.

Why was no one ever brought to justice for such crimes? Because those party to these, and many other misdemeanours, couldn't risk losing their place in the inner sanctum, perhaps; because remaining one of the in-crowd mattered more than life or because, given the status of the perpetrators, they feared that they would never be believed? The light being back on Jackson's alleged indiscretions proves that like the acting world before it, glamorous industries — while among the last to fall — are no longer safe.

What Robson, now 36, and Safechuck are trying to achieve is unknown. Setting the record straight? Peace of mind? Wherever their motivation lies, having presumably taken into consideration the effect their horrific allegations will have on their own families, they must feel convinced that the fallout will be worthwhile.

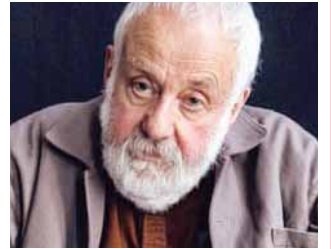
The Daily Telegraph

CULTURE LANE

'Netflix, Amazon killing creativity'

Film and TV drama is booming, with the streaming services Netflix, Hulu and Amazon offering audiences hit after hit on demand. But, according to the acclaimed director Mike Leigh, this comes with an unfortunate side effect: That young British filmmakers are being held back by a powerful "new breed of executive". "It is just not on," said Leigh, 75. "The next lot of young directors face such a long wait to get any project off the ground. That's my biggest worry. I've talked to two of them in the last few weeks and one said she expected it to take six years to get her first feature together. That's terrible, and it is because you have got this whole new breed or culture of executives and producers who will not simply press the button, and say 'go for it and see what happens'."

Leigh, speaking to the *Observer* before the launch of the DVD of his latest film, *Peterloo*, laments the arrival of a complex commissioning hierarchy, although it does not affect his own work. A veteran of 21 films, Leigh is renowned for brooking no creative



interference and is keen to champion creative freedom for those who follow him. "I'm not talking about my own experience with Amazon, who backed *Peterloo* and who behaved impeccably; the problem really exists for younger filmmakers," he said. It is, he claims, inexperienced, untested directors who are expected to cater to commissioning editors' whims. "By suggesting a director works with a particular team, or asking why you are not using a female cinematographer, they are behaving in a traditional Hollywood, Louis B Mayer-way."

Parody of Yalitza draws criticism

A television personality for the Mexican-based Televisa network is facing criticism for dressing up in brownface and wearing a prosthetic nose to make fun of indigenous Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio. Televisa's Yeka Rosales posted photos and videos of herself on social media wearing brown skin paint in an apparent parody of Aparicio, who attended the Oscars after being nominated for best actress for her role in *Roma*.



The stunt, designed to promote Televisa's season premiere of the comedy show *La Parodia*, highlights the racism some scholars say indigenous people in Latin America still face in the media. In the photo, Rosales wore a dress similar to the one Aparicio wore at the Oscars, donned a straight, black wig and made exaggerated facial expressions typically used to stereotype indigenous people.

In an email to the Associated Press, Televisa spokesman Alejandro Olmos said the network strongly con-

demns any form of racism or discrimination. "We do not believe that the production of *La Parodia* engages in this type of practice," Olmos said, adding that some of the comments were made in "bad taste" and will be edited from the show. Televisa later deleted a tweet with a video of Rosales in brownface mimicking Aparicio. Rosales drew immediate condemnation on social media in Mexico and the US. "It's disgusting. I'm kind of shaken up about it," said Jennie Luna, a professor in Camarillo.

New 007 film title not *Shatterhand*?



Barbara Broccoli, who along with her half-brother Michael G Wilson is the lead producer on the Bond movie series, has indicated that *Shatterhand* is not the title of the upcoming 007 film, currently known as Bond 25. According to Bond news site MI6 HQ, Broccoli signed a piece of fan art for India Grace that included the word *Shatterhand*, adding the words "It's not" and an arrow. This would appear to set to rest rumours that the working title under which Bond 25 had been listed in industry publication *Production Weekly* would

become its official one. Shooting is due to start at Pinewood studios on April 6, and there had been long-standing rumours that *Shatterhand* would be Bond 25's official title. The name comes from an alias used by series supervillain Ernst Stavro Blofeld in Ian Fleming's 1964 Bond novel, *You Only Live Twice*. The much delayed release has been pushed back to April 2020 amid reports of extensive script rewrites. *Bourne Ultimatum* writer Scott Z Burns has been hired to rework the screenplay for Daniel Craig's fifth and final outing as 007.

ODDLY ENOUGH

SURROGATE BONDS WITH BABY GORILLA REJECTED BY MOTHER

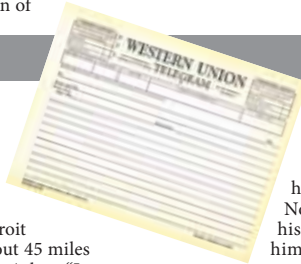
A 30-year-old gorilla at a Florida zoo has become a surrogate mother to a baby gorilla whose mother hasn't shown sufficient interest in her baby. Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens spokeswoman JJ Vitale tells the *Florida Times-Union* that Bulera began holding five-month-old Gandai as soon as they were introduced on February 27. She says that within minutes Bulera was "comforting her with soft vocal rumbles." The gorilla's mother, Kumbuka, had already lost two infants at the zoo. Officials believe that because she is deaf she didn't hear their distress cries. They intervened when they observed Kumbuka incorrectly holding the baby. Zookeepers took turns providing round-the-clock care until a surrogate was found.



MAN RECEIVES CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAM 50 YEARS LATER

A man who graduated from the University of Michigan in 1969 has finally received a congratulatory telegram from family friends that was sent more than 50 years ago. Robert Fink received the Western Union telegram this year. Western Union ended its telegram business in 2006. The *Washington Post* first reported on the telegram finally being delivered to Fink. The telegram originally arrived in 1969 at an Ann Arbor apartment Fink shared with three classmates a day after he had left to attend graduate school in New York. Christina Zaskie rediscovered the telegram in December after removing the bottom drawer of an old filing cabinet now owned by Ann Arbor-based digital marketing agency ICON Interactive to retrieve a piece of paper that had fallen inside. "I looked inside, mostly because I was curious to see an actual telegram," Zaskie told *The Ann Arbor News*. Zaskie saw Fink's name on the paper and used the internet to

find him and return the note. Fink is now a professor at Oakland University in Rochester, a Detroit suburb that's about 45 miles northeast of Ann Arbor. "I was surprised to learn that he had never received the telegram and was glad that I could reunite it with its intended recipient all of these years later," Zaskie said. Fink said the letter has brought back memories and made him reflect on his old connections. "The theme for me has been that the long arm of the past is reaching out and grabbing me, and I should take it seriously," he said. Fink said he's regretful he never had the chance to thank Ben and Lillian Fischman for sending the telegram, noting that they've both died. "It also left me with a funny sense of guilt that they had thought about me that way," Fink said. "It took some effort to send a telegram — it's not like texting someone. It touched me they had thought about me and made the effort to do so."



ORANGE JUMPSUIT BETRAYS DETAINEE

A detainee briefly escaped after a court hearing and ran through a North Carolina town, but his orange jumpsuit gave him away. *The Shelby Star* reports that Joseph Lee Short had just appeared in court Wednesday and was waiting with others to be taken back to jail when he removed a leg restraint and ran out of a parking garage. Sheriff's Office Maj. Durwin Briscoe says Short ran through several parking lots as deputies tracked him down after about five minutes. Briscoe says the "orange jumpsuit helped him stand out." He has been in jail since May after being charged with robbing a Kings Mountain bank. Officials at the sheriff's office didn't immediately respond to an email asking if Short has a lawyer who can speak on his behalf.

JUDGE: JAIL TIME FOR MAN WHO ATTACKED MCDONALD'S WORKER

A Florida man who grabbed a McDonald's worker by the collar

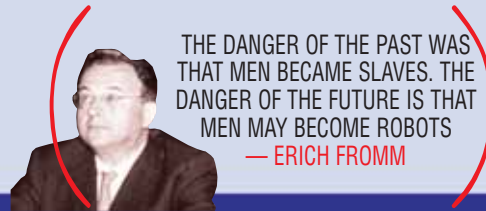
because he couldn't find a straw was sentenced to 60 days in jail. A Pinellas County judge also ordered 40-year-old Daniel Willis Taylor to stay away from the restaurant and the workers he attacked in an incident caught on video. Taylor was credited with the 58 days in jail he already served. He also must pay a \$1,000 fine. Authorities say Taylor became irate when he couldn't find a straw on New Year's Eve. The video shows him standing at the counter, screaming at 20-year-old Yasmine James before grabbing and holding onto her shirt collar. She responded by hitting him several times. *The Tampa Bay Times* reports Taylor kicked another worker while being escorted out.



Bugatti luxury sports car that has gone for 16.7 million euros (\$18.9 million). "La Voiture Noire" — French for "The Black Car" — is a low-slung sports car with a huge 16-cylinder engine and Bugatti's trademark grille. The manufacturer unveiled it at the Geneva auto show this week, and said Thursday that it had been sold at what it and industry experts said was a record price for a new car. The identity of the buyer was not revealed, though the buzz surrounding the move will have burnished Bugatti's image as a maker of luxury trophy cars. Stephan Winkelmann, the president of Volkswagen-owned Bugatti, said: "The true form of luxury is individuality." (AP)

MOST EXPENSIVE NEW CAR: BUGATTI SELLS FOR \$19 M

The most expensive new car ever sold is a one-off



Briefly Speaking



VITAMIN D TO HELP CONTROL ASTHMA?

Besides making bones strong, higher levels of Vitamin D can also help children with asthma become more resilient to harmful respiratory effects caused by indoor air pollution, say researchers. "Asthma is an immune-mediated disease," said lead author Sonali Bose, Assistant Professor at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. "From previous scientific studies, we knew that vitamin D was a molecule that may influence asthma by impacting antioxidant or immune-related pathways." The researchers observed that having low blood vitamin D levels was related to harmful respiratory effects of indoor air pollution from sources such as cigarette smoke, cooking, burning of candles, and incense, among children with asthma. Conversely, in homes that had the highest indoor air pollution, higher blood vitamin D levels were associated with fewer asthma symptoms in children.

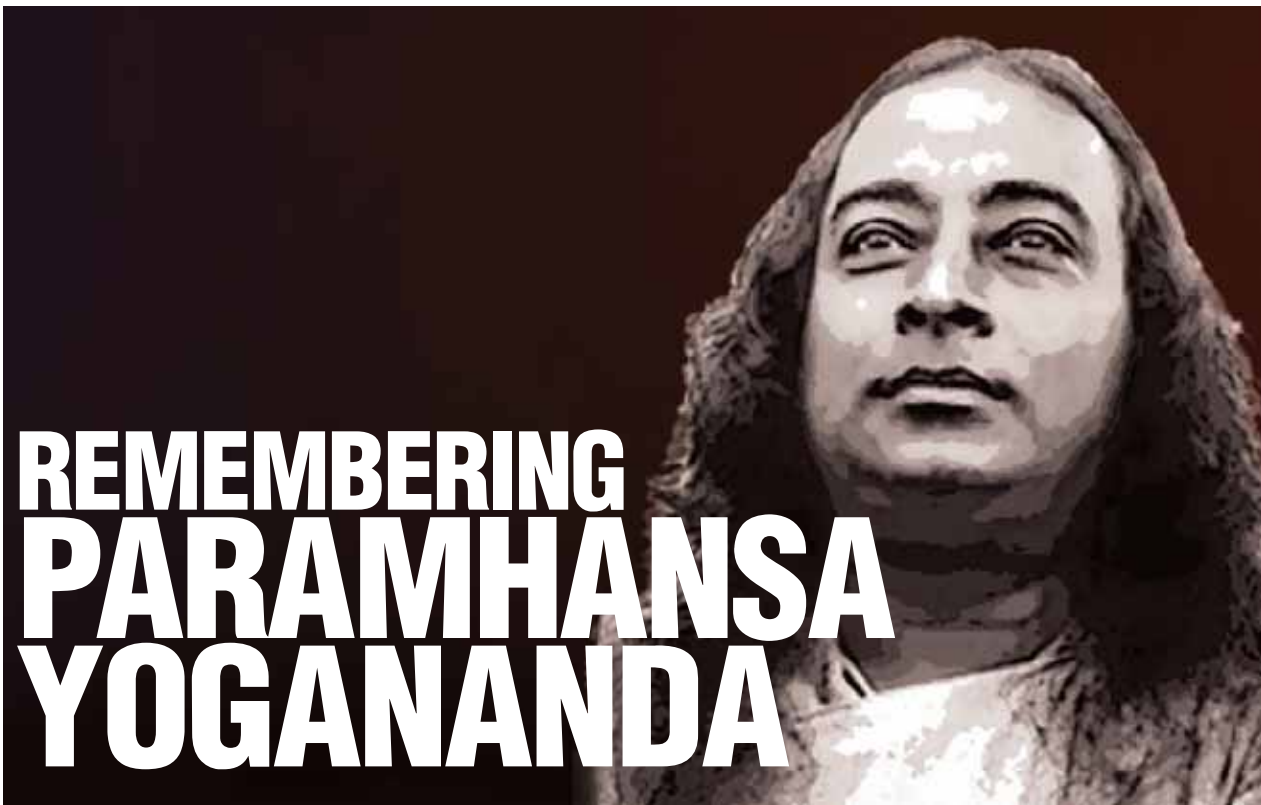
HOW HOOKAH AFFECTS HEART HEALTH

Smoking tobacco through hookah results in inhaling more toxic chemicals than a cigarette. The study published in the American Heart Association's journal, called *Circulation*, states that a single session of hookah, that typically lasts 30 or more minutes, results in greater exposure to carbon monoxide than a cigarette and that the toxic chemicals, in addition to tobacco, harm the heart and blood vessels. Hookah has a water bowl containing tobacco, has a head with holes in the bottom, a body, a flexible hose with a mouthpiece, and burning charcoal that is placed on top of the tobacco bowl. The tobacco for hookah comes in various flavours and the sweetness of the flavours masks the harshness of smoke that makes it easier to continue smoking it.

KIDNEY RISK AND PASSIVE SMOKING



Besides affecting your heart and lungs, exposure to passive smoking can also raise the chances of chronic kidney disease (CKD), which can lead to renal failure, warns a new study. The findings showed that individuals with less or more than three days of exposure per week had nearly double the risk of having kidney disease when compared with participants with no second-hand cigarette exposure. "Second-hand smoke exposure is still prevalent despite legislative actions prohibiting public smoking," said Jung Tak Park from Yonsei University in Seoul. "This exposure was found to be related with CKD, even with less frequent amounts of second-hand smoke exposure." Park added. For the study, the team included 131,196 non-smokers and were classified into three groups: No-exposure, less than three days per week of exposure, and three or more days per week of exposure. Cigarette smoking and exposure to second-hand smoking have been linked with higher risks of various diseases.



REMEMBERING PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

Autobiography of A Yogi has remained my close companion; it has silenced my doubts when the path seemed precarious, writes SWAMI ANAND ARUN

Steve Jobs, one of the greatest innovators of the century, in his last days, planned each detail of his own memorial service to be held at Stanford University in October 2011. Each attendee received a brown box as a farewell gift. This last souvenir — which Jobs believed could do justice to his extraordinary life — was a book that had inspired and shaped his spiritual journey: *Autobiography of A Yogi*. The book has remained a close companion throughout my spiritual journey. I have read this book countless times. It has silenced my doubts when the path seemed precarious, reassured me when the inexplicable unfolded and meditation took me to the eclectic lands of mystery.

Paramhansa Yogananda was born on January 5, 1893, in Gorakhpur, a city near the border of Nepal. His father, Bhagwaticharan Ghosh, was a high-ranking officer in the Indian Railway. Yogananda's childhood name was Mukunda Lal Ghosh. In 1915, he took formal vows into the monastic Swami Order from Sri Yukteshwar Giri and became 'Swami Yogananda Giri'. Sri Yukteshwar Giri later decorated him with the title 'Paramhansa'. Paramahansa means "supreme swan" and is a title indicating the highest spiritual attainment. Swami's parents were the disciples of Lahari Mahashaya, who was the direct disciple of Mahavatar Babaji, the primary guru of the great tradition of Kriya Yoga. It is believed that Mahavatar Babaji has been living in the Indian Himalayas near Badrinath in his physical body for thousands of years and comes to Prayag each Kumbha Mela, the largest gathering of Indian holy men that happens every 12 years. He still guides seekers who are very advanced in their path. In the Kumbha Mela of January 1884, Mahavatar Babaji gave *darshan* to Sri Yukteshwar Giri and told him, "The future of the world is only possible if there is equal exchange between the East and the West. There has been great materialistic growth in the West, but no spiritual progress to match its proportion. Very soon, I will send you a disciple whom you

will have to train in the secrets of Kriya Yoga and send him to the West." Later, that inspired young man became Paramhansa Yogananda.

After meeting with his guru, Yukteshwar Giri, Yogananda's life took a complete turn. Yogananda moved to Serampore, a city close to Kolkata, where Yukteshwar Giri had a small ashram. Yogananda spent most of his time in his guru's hermitage while pursuing his higher studies. Swami's practised yoga and meditation with utmost devotion and patience for the next 10 years. Swami's has beautifully described these years he spent in close proximity to his beloved guru in *Autobiography of A Yogi*. He spent most of his time at the ashram and practised meditation. One night when Swami's was staying with Yukteshwar Giri and enjoying the beauty of the night, suddenly his master inquired about his BA final exams. Yogananda was as though awakened from a spell, and realised the exams were just around the corner. He replied nervously, "The exams start in five days but I haven't prepared for them at all. It is certain that I will fail, so I had better not appear in the exams." Yukteshwar Giri wouldn't listen to his disciple's plan and ordered him, "You have to appear in the exams. If you don't, then your family will also be sad and it will also be a barrier in the divine plan. You appear in the exams and God will surely help you." As ordered by his guru, Yogananda went to his friend Ramesh and studied all night. Miraculously, whatever he studied in the night was to be asked in the exams. But in the English exams, Yogananda calculated that he would get no more than 33 marks when the passing marks were 36. He went straight to his guru's ashram and told him that he would surely fail in English. "Don't worry, the sun and moon might change their course but you will certainly pass your BA exams," Shri Yukteshwar said to Yogananda. When the results came out, Yogananda found out that in that particular year, the Bengal University had reduced the passing marks of

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING

Between 2005 and 2010, I conducted several meditation retreats on a ferry in West Bengal through the Sundarban Delta and Ganga Sagar. I always visit the Belurmath and Dakshineswar temples whenever I am in Kolkata. During my stay in the city, I also visit Yogananda Ashram in Dakshineswar and Swami Yogananda's house at 4 Garpar Road, where he was born. I have met some of Swami's family members including his brother Sananda Lal Ghosh's son, Hare Krishna Ghosh. I also met the granddaughter of his younger brother, Ananta, at Serampore. At the 4 Garpar Road House, we were greeted by Hare Krishna Ghosh, the son of Sananda and nephew of Swami. Ghosh was taking care of the house in those days. He was a rather amicable person. We talked at length about Swami. I told him I was an admirer of Swami and had written several articles on him and spoken about him on national radio and television. He was kind enough to allow us to meditate in the small attic room where Swami had attained enlightenment. It was empty except for a small altar with Swami's picture and a shelf with a few photos and relics. Swami has written in detail about his stay in that house in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. The room was still vibrating with his strong presence. Sitting in that tiny room for half an hour, I was absorbed into deep meditation. After the meditation, Ghosh showed us around the place. Swami had presented a lot of things to him: A tea set, Swami's clothes, and many of his rare pictures. Ghosh was showing me a photo album and both of us were totally absorbed in the photos. He told me that Swami and Rabindranath Tagore had the same ancestral roots. When we were busy peering at the family tree, I noticed a bright orange robe fluttering behind Ghosh. I thought perhaps it was someone from the house. The night was silent and cool and the master's presence was palpable. We spent a long time leafing through the pictures, and the robe kept fluttering. Suddenly, I was seized by this intense desire to look at the person who was wearing the robe. I looked up and what I saw left me dumbfounded! Swami Yogananda was looking at me and smiling. He stood that way for the next few seconds and disappeared into thin air.

English from 36 to 33. Elated and perplexed, he went straight to his guru and prostrated at his feet. Sri Yukteshwar smiled and lovingly said to him, "God probably found it easier to pass you than to change the course of the sun and the moon."

Soon after Yogananda graduated from college in 1920, he received the invitation to participate in the International Conference of the Religious Liberals in Boston. Before he left for America, Mahavatar Babaji gave him a *darshan* and said, "Always remain fearless; you shall always be divinely protected." Yukteshwar Giri also lifted his spirits by saying, "All doors are open to you now. Go to America. Spiritual energy will enter through the eyes of any person you gaze at and their spiritual journey will be kickstarted. Even if you are in the middle of a dense forest, you will find a friend." His guru's blessings came true. Wherever Yogananda went in America, he found a friend and through their help, he established the headquarters of the Yogoda Satsang Society in Los Angeles in 1925.

After making arduous efforts to preach the spiritual significance of yoga in the West for 32 years, Yogananda left his body in California on March 7, 1952. On that day, he was attending a dinner party for Binay Ranjan Sen, the visiting Indian Ambassador to the United States, at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. At the end of the feast, Swami spoke about the possibility of a "United World" through the cohesion of the East and the West. According to Daya Mata, a direct disciple of Yogananda, who was head of the Self Realization Fellowship from 1955-2010, Swami concluded his speech with his poem, 'My India': "...where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves and men dream God I am hallowed my body touched that sod." As soon as he finished the last verse of his poem, he raised his eyes to his third eye and his body flopped on the floor. His body is preserved in Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Glendale, California.

The writer is an early Osho disciple, an international meditation teacher, and author



HIDDEN SOULS PRAMOD PATHAK

Fear is the key



By the time this column gets published, many things would have changed, for good or for bad. That is, in the context of the recent surgical strike of the Indian Air Force. Depending on what course the events take, opinions also may be expressed, not necessarily one-sided. Some may advocate virtues of restraint, while others may want greater offensive. But the point is to understand that India had limited options. The mischief of the terrorist outfits from across the border was getting more and more painful and there is every reason to believe that the military establishment of Pakistan was abetting them. No one is advocating a war, at least on this side of the border. We have all seen the wars India faced and the price we have paid. Wars come at a cost, and a huge cost. So it is always the last option. But there are times when one is left with no choice. The surgical strike was that choice, as the terrorists were getting emboldened with every passing day. It, then, was a timely and fitting action and no questions can be asked. In fact, we may do well to take out a leaf or two from the eternal work of Goswami Tulsidas — the *Ramcharitmanas*. In the *Sundara Kanda of Ramayana*, Lord Rama wants the ocean God to give way so that his army can cross. He has been very humbly requesting the ocean God to allow his men to cross without hassle and reach Lanka. But when this request goes unheeded for three days, Lord Rama loses his temper. He asks his younger brother Laxman to get him the bow and arrow. Lord Rama states that some people do not understand the language of humility because they are pig headed. These people only understand one language: The language of force. They would only respect you if they fear you. Saying thus, Lord Rama picked up his bow and prepared to shoot at the ocean. And that brings a trembling ocean God with folded hands, praying to the Lord that he will do whatever Rama desires. The basic premise of Lord Rama is summed up in the next two couplets of *Ramayana* as paraphrased below. He says that fools do not understand the language of love, nor do the crooked deserve to be loved. The miserly cannot be made broad-minded. The greedy do not listen to the virtues of charity and the short-tempered do not like peace. For such people, these words of wisdom do not work. They need to be shown their place. The same holds good for the terrorists. They will not understand the language of reason. You need to be one degree more unreasonable if you want them to listen. So it was in fitness of things that India used force with precision. It was the best strategy because for such elements, there is a need to instill fear. Further, there is also a need to understand the basic political compulsion of the Pakistani Army for whom India-bating is the only way to rule. And for the Pakistan politician, India bashing is a means to stay in power. Or else there is little reason to beg and borrow to fight a stronger adversary. True, you must avoid wars at all cost and the solution can only come through dialogue. But to bring the unreasonable to the negotiating table, fear is the key.

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ARE WE ROBOTS?

Souls come programmed and we go on with our lives in a robotic fashion. If we pursue the spiritual path, we will no longer be robots but free souls making spiritual progress slowly but surely, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

This is a valid question, which requires careful examination. Referring to the cosmic design, we bring fate from our previous births. This fate consists of many parts. The main ones are: Where will one be born; to which parents; with what bodily features and facial appearance; the level of intelligence; unfinished good and bad *karmas* (deeds), which have not come to fruition as yet; and the life span. This is common knowledge but not many are aware of our deep desires, strongly rooted habits, *sanskars*, and the extent of progress in the spiritual journey, etc. These are equally important, if not more than the fixed part of fate described earlier. These are also programmed into the soul. I will limit myself to clarify the fixed part of the fate. There is no confu-

sion about the first two parts, ie where will one be born and to which parents. The soul enters the mother's womb, as programmed due to the fixed aspects of one's fate. Facial appearance and bodily features will form accordingly, as will the lines on the palm. The brain will develop as programmed till it reaches the predestined intelligence. Yet to fructify *karmas* remain in memory and their fruits come to fruition at their appointed times. These are all fixed as can be predicted by an expert astrologer to a great extent, say up to 80 to 85 per cent. Palmists have a different challenge. The lines on one's palm keep changing as one's life progresses influenced by one's deep desires, deeply entrenched habits, *sanskars*, spiritual awakening,



etc. I will cite a couple of examples to explain what happens. Suppose a soul has deep desire for wealth, and is prepared to work hard habitually, and is morally inclined, and has some faith in God. Driven by these, he will endeavour to make a lot of money in his life, mostly in an honest way. This will go on for the entire duration of his life, unless the God factor comes into play. Then, he develops a link with God and has a desire to improve the quality of his life with the help of God. Then, things begin to change as different from what was originally programmed into the soul because God is the only one who can really change the original programme, otherwise everyone is more or less on autopilot mode throughout one's life. Another example will clarify this matter further. This person also has a deep desire for wealth. He is also habitually prepared to work hard. He is morally inclined too. However, he has a deeper faith in the existence of God. Driven by his deep desire for wealth and strong habit for working hard and his moral inclinations, he too makes a lot of money honestly. However, his enduring faith makes him uncertain about the direction his life is taking him. On top of it, he is a habitual worrier. This serious handicap is forcing him to think of

a solution to his anxiety problem. He tries various means, including consulting many doctors, as he does not lack any resources. Nothing works, therefore, he turns to God for help. However, this is not so simple. Progress in the spiritual domain is always slow and not so apparent also, being subtle. But determined as he is, he pursues and gradually begins to become peaceful, ie he does not get so anxious any more. He has managed to change the direction of his life. He is no longer on the autopilot mode. What is the conclusion? As stated earlier, souls come programmed. These manifest and one goes on with his or her life in a robotic fashion. Some may feel uneasy about the state of affairs but will go on after making some feeble attempts to change the course of their lives because one is unable to fight his own faculties, which all are seats of lust. (*Gita* 7.40) But if one is determined enough to pursue the spiritual path, he succeeds over a long period. God helps both in dealing with the painful part of fate and, most importantly, his poor habits, especially of worrying. Then, he is no longer a robot but a free soul making spiritual progress slowly but surely. He is in cruise control. Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Finally, you will find the determination within yourself to avoid bad habits and start some new activities that are good for you. Be ready for some distressed nerves during this transition. Your physical fitness is of utmost importance, joining a fitness regime class will help you a lot. Take good care of yourself in order to look after others. This week, you can expect some good news related to your career. Those awaiting results of a competitive exam, the result will be positive. People seeking jobs may receive a call letter for a job with a better perspective, perks and facilities. Those waiting for a posting may get the desired destination. For a business person, monetary gains are indicated this week.
Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Friday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Health-wise, this week will be a tough time for you. You may face some illness, but stressing over this will make things worse. Don't let your health problems lead to a decline in your spiritual growth. Stay positive because after every crisis there is a promise of a good time. If required, reach out to others for help, be it a friend or a medical practitioner. At this point in your career, things are not that great. You may face a challenge that will leave your project incomplete. Keep telling yourself that you have the inner strength to overcome any difficulties. You need to be resilient and not be intimidated by others who are pulling you down. Don't worry, you will sail through. It will be a magical time for love. Females should connect with their feminine side and trust their intuition.
Lucky number 9
Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

It is very important that you maintain a positive attitude to stay healthy. If you worry about your health issues, then things will become worse. A positive outlook will work wonders. In case, you are not sure about your physical well-being, then take medical support. Trust your instincts. By facing your fears and turning them to your advantage, you will grow even stronger. This week your career looks good. You will enjoy the outcome of your hard work. If you are in the line of promotion, then celebrate because you will find something that is better than you expected. All your efforts will be valued and appreciated. It is indicated that you might take up the position of a leader or head in some adventurous venture. You will face the agony and pain in your relationship.
Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Tuesday



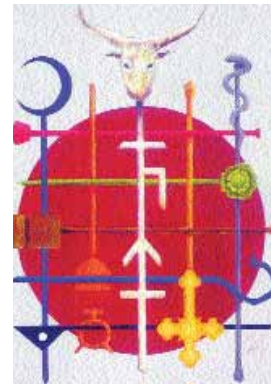
TAURUS April 20-May 20

This will you will enjoy good health, but be careful while exercising as you might be prone to some sprain or injuries. If you are in the process of healing from an injury, then take care and do not stress yourself. Try to have a focused mind and follow your health regime religiously. On the career front, you will be feeling content and will cultivate smooth interpersonal dynamics and harmonious communication patterns. Your words will carry more weight with others now; use that wisely to further your prospects. Those looking for a job, you are likely to get one. On the relationship front, this is not a good week. You will find yourself unmotivated and disengaged with your partner. You need to re-evaluate the situation.
Lucky number 2
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Health-wise, this week is full of energy and vitality. This will make you optimistic about the future. Those who are waiting on test results need to relax as the result will be in your favour. Think about your usual mode of thought; remember that your mindset affects your health. You will be in a position to mentor and share the spiritual insights that you have gained. On the career front, you will be at a stage where you will get work success and recognition. Give your best to be organised and productive. This will pay off. This week you should have a conservative approach in terms of financial dealings and decisions. Those who are thinking to invest, put your money in conservative stocks/ bonds with really good track records. This is not a time to take risks. Good luck will follow you in matters of the heart.
Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Saturday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

Your health will remain good if you pay proper attention to your health regime. The week will start with an uprising in your creative energy; you will be active and enthusiastic. Be careful because as the week progresses, you may face some health issues which need your immediate attention. Go and consult with the doctor. Be positive, there is a cure for everything. In your professional life, if you are not dedicated to your work, you might have to pay for it. You are under scrutiny and every act of yours is being reported to higher authority. Be ready to face the opposition; they might devalue your opinion. This is a highly emotional time in love relationships. Situations can quickly become heated and uncomfortable. Pick your battles; be sure to treat your lover like a friend.
Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Thursday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Till now you did not give attention to your health. Since you have realised that health is very important, you are conscious and aware of the needs of your body and mind. Now, you are following the proverb: Prevention is better than cure. You should attend classes and seminars on healing therapies and apply them in your life to balance your inner strength. On the career front, you need to come out of the self-made limitations which are hampering your progress. In some matters, you are required to be fluent and quick-witted. You have to be very careful while spending money. Be alert to grab the opportunities coming your way. In love life, avoid false commitments else you might have to pay. Married couples too might face some unpleasant situation.
Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Tuesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Your health is likely to be good this week. You will experience high level of energy and enthusiasm. Be a little careful when exercising; minor sprain or injuries are indicated. You need to start on a health regime to attain a healthy lifestyle. It is important to channelise the new found energy in the right manner. At your workplace, you may encounter a person who would like to mentor you. This person has the leadership skills to guide you in the right direction and you can trust him/her. Those who have been facing challenges, this is the right time to take control and find solutions to them. This is beneficial for you and others as well. You will be goal-oriented and visionary, and that will help you to get that leadership position you have been eyeing.
Lucky number 11
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week you likely to feel depressed and gloomy as things are not going your way. You will be stressed due to some or the other health issues. Keep a regular check on your BP, sugar and blood and you will realise that you need regular medical attention. Stay calm because this is a temporary phase. The situation will change, but you need to follow a strict health regime. You need to relax and have a positive approach. You are going to progress in your professional life. There will be money, prestige and honor and you enjoy the parties and good times at work. Those in business are going to earn good money and are likely to invest in a property. This is fairly a good week on the emotional front too. The new love, romance is on the card.
Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Sky blue
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

In terms of health, you are restricted. Your fear, anxiety and negative thoughts are not allowing you to lead a normal life. It is crucial to bring balance with body, mind and spirit. Negative thinking or anxiety always had a bad impact on health. Find help, if you need, to bury these negative thoughts. Meditate and listen to your inner voice and half of your problems will be solved. You will face some injustice at the workplace. The position you have been aspiring for may be given to another candidate. Those looking for a better job option may get one, but with that comes another consideration which will cause tension. You may find yourself indecisive. Difficulty to choose whether to remain in the existing one or join the new one will prevail. Conflict in married life due to the intervention of the third party is indicated.
Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, listen to your inner voice when it comes to health issues. If you are not sure about a diagnosis or not comfortable with your medical attendee, get a second opinion. Those who use alcohol or drugs, this is a high time you avoid it and indulge in some kind of intoxication. On the career front, you need to be a generous person. A friend or colleague may ask for financial help. Your act of generosity and kindness will earn a good name for you. This is the time to invest in property and long term projects. Relationship wise, this week is good. Your relationship will move into a lighter, easier and more balanced phase. Those who are single and are looking for love, there is a need to consider your emotional side and see if there is any issue to be dealt with at the first place.
Lucky number 16
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Thursday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Health remains good this week. You will remain cool and poised amidst of loads of work that will make you exhausted and strained. You will experience unbounded energy and stamina, which will also be your support system. You need to use your energy in a creative direction. It is advisable that you follow a disciplined life for a good physical and mental strength which paves the way for success. Career-wise, your will power and determination will help to achieve your target. In the moment of crisis, your tough decisions will give strength to strategic plans. Chances to choose from job options are indicated, therefore, follow the advice of some senior person who is close to you. The chances of rift and conflicts in the family are likely. This is because you are not able to give them your time and attention.
Lucky number 5
Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Friday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Spirituality is a way of living life

A very interesting question was posed by someone who came seeking guidance last week. "Sir, I am deeply spiritual. My day doesn't begin without an hour-long dedicated puja in service to our family deity. Yet, I am not at peace. My restlessness and anger don't go away. I am not able to perform well even at my works. Why? And what is the way out?"

Had you been spiritual, by now you would have been able to be in better control of yourself, as your thought process should have registered considerable improvement. Remember, perception drives a being — what you aspire in life or the way you react and respond to the issues confronting you. This is primarily guided by the defining principle of each individual mind, coming as it may as Karmic carryover from the past. It, thus, becomes incumbent upon us to be conscious about setting right our thought process, if at all we wish to improve our quality of life. Evidently, the process adopted should be such as could reach out to the inner realms of mind and modify our thought process. Spirituality is the way forward.

You rather seem to be a religious

person emotionally committed to a set belief. You have been offering puja to your dedicated God on the belief that you may benefit out of the boon granted to you. But nothing of the sort happens. Remember, you are bound by a cause-effect chain. In this scheme of things, a cause predates every happening, which becomes the cause for future happening. So, you happen to be a beneficiary or victim of how you look at life and the way you conduct on day-to-day basis. It works almost in a self-automated process. There is no external agency that would be overseeing our Karma and accordingly rewarding or punishing us. Even following religious practice, your thought process could have undergone change if you could imbibe the attributes identified with the deity you worship.

"You mean spirituality and religion are different?" the man countered. Yes of course. A spiritual person may or may not be religious. Spirituality in fact, is a way of life, which is neither moralistic, idealistic, nor ritualistic. It rather takes you through awareness route. The purpose is to evolve into a good human being having full human potential unfolded with all its humane



sense and virtues. Following which, you may lay down the ground to live as a dynamic being in peace and harmony with the self as well as the world around, and with relative ease and comfort. The world may then turn into a beautiful place to live.

The process as such begins with self-reflection upon one's own true-nature. You, thus, get to know your own mirror-image, with all its seed-potential and fault-lines. It, thus, offers you with the opportunity to purify your mind of its limitations and hone your potentials. A purified mind makes accessible its full landscape with its limitless powers. With such an expanded vision, you look at issues in hand with an open mind, free from any pre-conditioning whatsoever, and so get to know them in the right perspective due. Accordingly, you pick up the right lead. Also, true humane spirit and virtues, intrinsic to a being, which otherwise remained dormant because of clouded vision, comes into full play.

Towards the next step, you explore what life is about, individually and collectively. With an already purified mind, you get to understand the existential realities holistically exactly as it is made out. You then get to know that though

individually we may be under limitations but in togetherness we make out a wholesome self-supporting world. You thus realise that the world is a unified organism where no individual holds a reality independent of the totality. Consequently, you give up your assumed sense of perfection, and start looking at things realistically. You no longer live under any self-delusion. Also, you begin to engage with the world around with a sense of equanimity. You, thus, understand not only your own self, but also how you fit into the larger game-plan of life. That makes you conduct in life as an informed being with relative ease and comfort. This is not to underrate the role that religiosity can play in life. All that is needed is to give a spiritual turn to the religious process. Here comes the role of a Guru. He may intuitively figure out your fault lines and accordingly, put you through such practices as would help modify your thought process.

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