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B R E A K I N G U P

# BIG TECH



A R E T E C H C O M P A N I E S G R O W I N G

## “TOO BIG TO FAIL”?

*When companies are bigger than nations,  
are they immune to challengers?*

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# Insurance

**Home Business Auto**

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# In Hour of Need "Ekal Foundation" Stands By The Community.

**-Prakash Waghmare**

When the 'Covid-19' pandemic brought the worldwide life to a grinding halt, it posed a grave economic concern to Ekal movement. Currently, it has presence in over 102,000 villages and reach to 300,000 such pockets of humanity. In absence of usual stage performances for fundraising, the future of its numerous projects was in jeopardy. Concerts or no-concerts, Ekal has always enjoyed generosity of its loyal donors to shoulder a portion of movement's annual tab but that wasn't enough in this critical phase. Moreover, as a brand name in North America, 'Ekal' was part of the Indian community's social consciousness - *an institution* - for classy entertainment, everywhere. The community longed for Ekal to provide refreshing relief - even in this 'new world order'. Therefore, 'Ekal-USA' launched a series of virtual concerts across North America, with groups of Ekal chapters as focal points for each of them. In essence, Ekal, was obligated to preserve the heightened enthusiasm



and expectations of the countless volunteers, well-wishers and the supporters. The two troupes engaged for virtual concerts had, not only, the huge fan following, but also, had the proven record of success for fund-raising. One of the troupes was headed by Sa, Re, Ga, Ma contest winner 'Sanjeevani Bhelande' and another was headlined by Milind Oak's 'Niche' banner. 'Event committee', in consultation with 'Technology-Team' provided significant support to the chapters in strategic transatlantic hook ups while the Artistes performed live in the Indian studios. The Chapter-groups assigned for each concert did a remarkable

job in marketing their concert by engaging the community and social organizations around them. Chapters beyond the spheres of the concert-regions also helped out in propagating these events. Between May 23 and July 25, Sanjeevani's troupe had four virtual concerts and Milind Oak had two. All concerts were interactive and the donations were realized 'live' in 'real time'. The montage of Video-clips and narration about 'Present day's Ekal' prepared by 'Media-Teams' were very helpful. The Concert on May 23 for Midwest Regions by Sanjeevani raised \$162,510; Concert on June 20 for Central Regions by



Sanjeevani raised \$367,830; Concert on June 28 for Northeast Regions by Milind Oak raised \$239,800; Concert on July 11 for Washington DC by Sanjeevani raised \$381,290 and the Concert on July 18 for Central Regions by Milind Oak raised \$177,100. In this endeavor, Ekal-Canada has also come a long way in last 5 years. With their Concert for Canada-East on July 25 by Sanjeevani it has raised CA \$420,000 for the year, so far. Essentially in two months, 'Ekal' has managed to raise approx. \$1.65 Million during virtual concerts. There are still couple of more concerts yet to follow - e.g. on Aug 1, there is concert for

Southwest region by 'Hemant Kumar Group' and on Aug 8 for Canada-West by Milind Oak's group. Before the official 'clamp-down' in late-March, Ekal in fact, had started the year by hosting 10 fund-raising stage-events that highlighted fascinating rural-tribal artistry and their unique culture. These events took place basically in sunshine and southern states and raised \$650,000. According to Arun Gupta, Chairman of 'BOD' of Ekal-USA, "this is a splendid testament to donor's trust in Ekal movement". During 'Covid-19' pandemic, the schools were closed and virtual tutoring & home

assignments for the students had come to an end. Outdoor group-activities were not available either. Therefore, Ekal undertook a creative approach to channelize youth's pent-up energy and brain-power for their mutual benefit. It was the need of the hour. Numerous 'Do-it-yourself' (DIY) projects - *where youths provided virtual tutoring to other youths* - were floated on Ekal platform. Since the youths opted to tutor subjects that touched with Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math, this campaign was headlined with 'STEAM' as its acronym. This is an on-going effort till the schools open. As of this moment, in 17 such active series youths from 7 states have been enrolled, raising sizable amount for Ekal. Swetha Mulukutla, Isabelle Bodkhe & Spandana Gandhi raised \$4130 by tutoring PSAT classes to support 'skill-training' for migrant workers in EKAL villages while Ritvik Shah raised more than \$3314 by tutoring Python classes to equip few Ekal schools with tablets.

## Indian Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu talks trade and investment with Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers



(By our staff reporter) - Ambassador of India to the United States, Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers today held a virtual meeting and discussed trade and investment as well as people-to-people relations between Wisconsin and India. Both discussed strategies to tap the potential in the agriculture, infrastructure and manufacturing sectors

common to India and Wisconsin that would lead to win-win outcomes for both. The Ambassador briefed the Governor about the initiatives India has taken in healthcare and education and discussed collaboration in these sectors. India and Wisconsin share a robust trade and investment relationship. The total trade between India and Wisconsin is over US\$ 1

billion. Many Indian companies in the IT, engineering services, medical equipment, and manufacturing sectors have invested in Wisconsin. These companies have invested close to \$185 million in Wisconsin, creating over 2,460 jobs in the state. They also add value to local economies and communities through their CSR initiatives. Similarly, Wisconsin-based

companies in the automobile, electrical equipment, financial services and technology sectors have established a strong presence in India. They include Harley Davidson, Rockwell Automation Inc., ManPower Group, etc. The Indian presence in Wisconsin, which is also an important destination for Indian students. Close to 1,500 Indian students are studying in educational institutions in Wisconsin. India has a strong education connection with Wisconsin. The tradition of Indian studies started on the University of Wisconsin campus in the mid-1880s, when a Professorship of Sanskrit was established.

## Rep. Ami Bera Hails Passage of Gandhi-King Exchange Act Bill Written by the Late Congressman John Lewis, Cosponsored by Congressman Bera

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Ami Bera, M.D. (D-CA) today hailed the passage of the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative Act out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The bill, written by the late Congressman John Lewis and cosponsored by Congressman Bera, would establish an exchange initiative between the United States and India to study the work and legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. "John Lewis was a civil rights hero not only in the United States, but across the globe. John fought for human rights, equality and justice, and democracy for all. Just like Gandhi and Dr.

King, Congressman Lewis shaped the world through his actions of nonviolence, and his life story will reverberate throughout history. The Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative Act is a fitting tribute to his incredible legacy," said Representative Bera, who is the longest serving Indian-American Member of Congress in history. "As the world's oldest and largest democracies, the United States and India have long traditions of upholding these shared values championed by figures like Gandhi, King, and Congressman Lewis. But they are increasingly under threat in both countries.

## Leading Indian American Political Group Embarks on New Chapter of Growth with Prominent Executive Director Hire, Groundbreaking Investment

- Public interest lawyer Neil Makhija will lead IMPACT's national efforts to harness South Asians' burgeoning political influence
- Group will commit \$10M to supporting Indian American candidates
- Sen. Kamala Harris: "I look forward to being joined in the Capitol by even more Indian Americans to move our country forward for everyone"

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. — IMPACT, the leading political organization devoted to boosting the number of Indian Americans in public office by recruiting, training, funding, and electing talented Indian American candidates, announced today that public interest lawyer Neil Makhija will be its new Executive Director. The group also announced a \$10 million commitment to support Indian American candidates nationwide, as well as plans to create a new program to identify, elevate, and support Indian American elected officials running for higher office. The groundbreaking investment and prominent

hire signals a new phase in the organization's development at a time when Indian Americans - the second largest immigrant group in the U.S. - are beginning to flex their political muscle on the national stage: an Indian American woman is a top contender to be the Democratic nominee for Vice President; the number of Indian Americans in Congress has grown five-fold in just the past eight years; a record number of dollars are going to Indian American candidates; and just last week, the campaign arm charged with electing Democrats to Congress released its first-ever Hindi-language

political ad. All of these developments have come less than 75 years since South Asians began emigrating to the U.S., and 55 years after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which ended discriminatory quotas and opened the doors to Asian immigrants.

"I'm excited about the Indian-American community's growing engagement in the political process — not just as an Indian American, but as someone who believes the more Americans of all ethnicities and backgrounds feel ownership in our democracy, the stronger

our democracy will be," said U.S. Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA), whose mother immigrated to the U.S. from India. "As IMPACT moves to its next phase of leadership, I look forward to being joined in the Capitol by even more Indian Americans to move our country forward for everyone."

Indian Americans are one of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population — doubling in size over the last two decades — ensuring their footprint on the political landscape will only grow in the coming decades.

"This is a pivotal moment for our community and our country," said Executive

Director Neil Makhija. "After significant gains in previous election cycles, Indian Americans are poised to assert our emerging power by electing more Indian American candidates at every level of government, and by supporting excellent candidates of all backgrounds who share our ideals of inclusivity, equity, and civil rights. Over the next 100 days, IMPACT will be laser-focused on supporting these efforts to maximize the far-reaching potential of the Indian American community through powerful fundraising, targeted outreach, and grassroots mobilization." "We've seen Indian

American engagement grow from a community on the margins of American politics to a burgeoning force," said investor Deepak Raj and Raj Goyle, co-founders of IMPACT. "We're thrilled to have Neil lead IMPACT into the next chapter of growth and scaling Indian American political power."

"By organizing to win elected office, Indian-Americans are infusing politics with new experiences, ideas, and global connections," said Nikil Saval, State Senator-elect in Philadelphia and the first Indian American elected to the Pennsylvania legislature. "Though our history in the United States dates to the early 20th century, and the first Indian-American elected to Congress served in the 1950s, the last decade has seen our ranks grow up and down the ballot.

## COUNCIL MEMBER ADRIENNE ADAMS KICKS OFF CENSUS PUSH WEEK

RICHMOND HILL, NEW YORK- As part of a collective effort to get a complete count in the upcoming 2020 Census, Council Member Adrienne Adams kicked off Census Push week with a community rally. Council Member Adams was joined by Borough President Sharon Lee, Assembly Member David Weprin, Council Member Karen Koslowitz, community leaders and Census partners to start a week of action in an effort to educate and motivate the hardest to count communities in Queens. Census results help determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into communities each year. The importance of education and outreach cannot be understated and the rally began a week long push to inspire every individual and family, regardless of economic or immigration status, so that these neighborhoods will



not be short-changed. The event highlighted a shared commitment to ensuring that hard-to-reach populations will be included in the decennial census. Local community groups in attendance include: Sadhana, the Sikh Cultural Society, Baba Makhan Shah Lobana Gurdwara, Chhaya CDC, United Madrassi Association, ABNY, LifeCamp and Caribbean Equality Project.

"It is important for every man, woman and child who lives in New York City to be counted in the 2020 Census as it will determine our allocation of federal

funding for the next ten years," said Council Member Adrienne Adams. "Regardless of immigration status, income or if your family just moved here, we need every household to participate in the census. The funding we receive based on census data has a direct impact on the quality of life for everyone who lives here and I am proud to work with my colleagues in government and local community groups to increase the local census count for the benefit of all residents."

"It's important to remember that the 2020 Census is safe, easy and important,"



said Jeff T. Behler, Regional Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. "Census data is critical for public services like healthcare clinics, emergency response and education programs. The 2020 Census is your census — the future of your community depends on you and your community's responses. Encourage response now and lead your community to self-respond at 2020census.gov."

"In this time of economic uncertainty, when budgetary pressures are threatening to undermine the delivery of so many vital

programs and services, it has become more important than ever to make sure every Queens resident is counted," said Acting Queens Borough President Sharon Lee. "More people filling out the Census means more money for our borough for schools, jobs, hospitals, senior centers, roads and more. Our office is participating in the Census Bureau's PUSH WEEK and launching our own 30 DAYS OF CENSUS ACTION to tell Queens residents that filling out the Census is safe, quick and easy, as well as critically important for our borough's

future." "At its core, the census is about the fair distribution of money, power, and respect to every community based on a demonstration of strength in numbers, and when there are no numbers, there's no strength," said Amit Singh Bagga, Deputy Director, NYC Census 2020. "When it comes to our fair share of \$1.5 trillion in federal funds and the political representation of which we've been long robbed, we South Asians are not going to be fooled by the hate-driven sideshow of ethical bankruptcy in Washington — we will be showing up, we will be participating in the census, and we will be making sure decisions about us are being made with us."

"In my own district, nearly 18 percent of residents are non-citizens but if everyone is not completely counted everyone in my district will be short changed," said Assemblyman David I.

# 57 Per Cent Residents In Mumbai Slums Have COVID Antibodies: Sero-Survey



Findings of the first round of sero-survey indicated that the spread of novel Coronavirus is significantly higher in the slums, where more than 50 per cent of the infected people developed antibodies, as compared to the residential areas. The BMC collected samples from 6,936 people of the R North (Dahisar), M West (Chembur) and F North (Matunga) wards, and tested them for the presence of the neutralising antibodies in the blood to determine whether they have been infected and recovered from COVID-19.

Antibodies more in women According to the data, antibodies were present in 57 per cent of the participants from the slums, whereas only 16 per cent people from the residential areas were found to have antibodies. It also indicated that prevalence of antibodies was marginally higher in women than in men. Health workers screen people for the symptoms of novel Coronavirus at Khar Danda slum

Additional Municipal Commissioner Suresh Kakani said the findings reflect a positive trend. "The 57 per cent of

slum residents who tested positive for novel Coronavirus have developed the antibodies and won't contract the virus again for at least two-three months. It shows that the virus resistance among people living in slums is better. People in residential buildings protected themselves through physical distancing, use of masks and maintaining hand hygiene," he said. The survey report also stated that the infection fatality rate (the ratio of the number of deaths based on the actual number of people infected) of the city stands at below 0.10 per

cent, which is much lower than the case fatality rate (ratio of the number of deaths based on number of confirmed cases) of around 5-6 per cent. The results suggested that the number of asymptomatic positive people is likely to be in higher proportions T Cell response study needed Civic officials hinted at the possibility of herd immunity in slum areas, however, COVID task force member Dr Shashank Joshi felt that the ratios, like IFR, are relative and referred to them as 'biostatistical gimmicks'. "The sero-survey only tells us the status of the

survey, Dr Joshi said, "It tells us that a large population was exposed and was possibly infected. Many of them were asymptomatic and have recovered. Now, there needs to be a comparison between the number of actual deaths, actual infections and the actual population of the area," he said. "The mortality rate is currently around 4 per cent and our aim is to bring it down to under 1 per cent." The municipal corporation had aimed at 10,000 samples in the first round, but could collect only close to 7,000 as heavy rain caused hindrance, a civic official from the health department said. "We had a specific deadline to work with. Collection was affected by heavy rain and the response from the slum areas was sluggish. We will try to get a similar number of samples for the second round." The second round of the survey is expected to begin in the second week of August.

## Congress chief Sonia Gandhi in Delhi hospital; stable, say doctors

Earlier in the day, Sonia Gandhi held a meeting with party's Rajya Sabha members and discussed the current political situation with them.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Ganga Ram hospital on Thursday evening for what the doctors called "routine tests and investigations". "Congress President, Mrs Sonia Gandhi has been admitted today

evening at 7 p.m to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. She has been admitted for routine tests and investigations. Her condition is currently stable," said Dr D S Rana, Chairman (Board of Management), Sir Ganga

Ram Hospital. The Congress president was admitted to the same hospital in February after she complained of stomach ache. Earlier in the day, Sonia Gandhi held a meeting with party's Rajya Sabha

members and discussed the current political situation with them. The meeting was organised through video conference in which its top leaders, including former prime minister Manmohan Singh, participated.

### 11 dead, 40 lakh affected as flood situation worsens in Bihar

Most of the rivers are flowing above danger marks at several places while others are showing a rising trend, an official of the water resource department of north Bihar said on Thursday.

The flood situation in north Bihar has worsened following incessant rains in the catchment areas of all major rivers of the region, including Gandak, Budhi Gandak, Bagmati, Lakhandei, Kamala Balan and their tributaries. Over 39.6 lakh people in 972 panchayats in 108 blocks of 14 districts have been affected by floods while 11 people have lost their lives.

Most of the rivers are flowing above danger marks at several places while others are showing a rising trend, an official of the water resource department of north Bihar said on Thursday. The Burhi Gandak was flowing nearly 1.5 meter above the danger mark at Sikandapur in Muzaffarpur town while the Bagmati had touched 56 meter at Kataujha, nearly 0.75 meter above the danger mark. Gandak was flowing at 54.31 meter near Rewaghat, barely 10 cm below the danger mark. A Darbhanga-based lawyer Sudhir Kumar Choudhary, who is stranded in his native village under Hanuman Nagar block for a week due to

floods, said, "The power supply was snapped in the entire area after inundation of Poariya sub-station over a week ago." The state-highway between Darbhanga and Samastipur was flooded at several places between Taralahi village to Bishunpur. The district administration has enforced restrictions on plying of heavy vehicles through the marooned region. A bulletin issued by the Central Flood Control Room stated that extreme flood situation continued even as the Adhwara river at Bishunpur was flowing at 48.71 metre, 1.31 metre above the danger level on Thursday morning.

The flood situation in Kusheshwar Asthan block continues to remain grim even as swollen Kosi, Kamla Balan and Kareh rivers inundate villages. Darbhanga district magistrate Thiyagrajan SM said district administration was taking all measures to mitigate the miseries of flood-hit people by setting up community kitchens, providing boats and medical assistance.

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# Rafale reaches India

## PM Modi greets jets with Sanskrit tweet, Rajnath says dawn of new era 10 points

The first batch of the Rafale fighter aircraft finally landed at the Ambala air base in Haryana on Wednesday to join the Indian Air Force, though a formal induction ceremony for the jets will be held later. Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria was in Ambala to welcome the Rafale jets.

Welcoming the French-made Rafale, a medium multi-role combat aircraft, Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted a tweet in Sanskrit outlining the importance of national security, while Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the Rafale has given a timely boost to the capabilities of the Indian Air Force.

The first Rafale jet was handed over to the IAF in October last year during Rajnath Singh's visit to France. While the first squadron of the Rafale jets will be stationed at Ambala air base, the second one will be based at Hasimara air base in West Bengal. The IAF has reportedly spent around Rs 400 crore to develop required

infrastructure such as shelters, hangars and maintenance facilities at the two bases.

Out of the total 36 Rafale jets, 30 will be combat jets and six will be trainers. The trainer jets will be twin-seater and they will have almost all the features of the combat jets.

Here are the top 10 developments on Rafale:

1) The five aircraft landed at the Ambala Air Force base at around 3:10 PM after covering a distance of 7,000 km from the Merignac airbase in the French port city of Bordeaux.

2) As the Rafale entered Indian territories, Captain of the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kolkata welcomed Rafale Arrow Leader in the Indian Ocean by saying, "May you touch the sky with glory."

3) The Rafales were escorted by two Sukhoi 30 MKIs after they entered the Indian air space and were given a water salute when they landed in Ambala.

4) Welcoming the Rafale fighter jets, PM Modi said in a tweet

there is no virtue that is greater than protecting the nation. Accompanied with a tweet in Sanskrit, PM Modi also shared a short video of a Rafale fighter aircraft landing at the Ambala Air Force station.

5) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh welcomed the Rafale jets in a series of tweets saying, "The Birds have entered the Indian airspace Happy landing in Ambala!" Congratulating the Indian Air Force, Rajnath Singh said he is sure that the 17 Squadron, the Golden Arrows, will continue to live up to their motto of 'UdayamAjasram'. "I am extremely happy that IAF's combat capability has got a timely boost."

6) Speaking about the significance of the Rafale aircraft, Rajnath Singh said their inclusion into the IAF marks the "beginning of a new era in our military history". "These multirole aircraft will revolutionise the capabilities of the IAF," he said.

7) Union Home Minister Amit

Shah described the arrival of Rafale jets as a historic day for the Indian Air Force. He said it was a proud moment for India, as these aircraft will prove to be a "game changer".

"Rafale touchdown is a historic day for our vigorous @IAF\_MCC and a proud moment for India! These are the world's most powerful machines capable to thwart any challenge in the sky. I am sure Rafale will help our Air warriors to safeguard our skies with its mighty superiority," Amit Shah said.

8) Meanwhile, the Congress too congratulated the IAF but posed questions to the Modi government over the procurement of the Rafale jets. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a tweet said, "Congratulations to IAF for Rafale. Meanwhile, can GOI answer: 1) Why each aircraft costs Rs 1,670 Crores instead of Rs 526 Crores? 2) Why 36 aircraft were bought instead of 126? 3) Why was bankrupt Anil

given a Rs 30,000 crores contract instead of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited?

9) Authorities had imposed prohibitory orders (including Section 144) near the Ambala Air Force Station and banned taking of pictures and videos. A large number of police personnel were also deployed in a three-kilometre radius.

10) The delivery of all 36 aircraft is expected to be completed by the end of 2021. The Rafale jets, known for air-superiority and precision strikes, are India's first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 year after the Sukhoi jets were imported from Russia. The touchdown of five Rafale jets on Indian soil also caps years of intense political dogfight, with the ruling BJP projecting the purchase as a huge boost to national security and the Congress alleging corruption, before a clean chit by the Supreme Court to the deal removed any hurdle in its acquisition.

# Priyanka Gandhi vacates Delhi bungalow, will be residing in temporary accommodation says Congress

She will be residing in a temporary accommodation until a more permanent accommodation in Delhi rented by her is ready for use, Congress said in a statement on Thursday.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra vacated her government allocated Lodhi Estate house on Thursday, a day before the deadline for the eviction notice issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, officials aware of the development confirmed.

Gandhi on July 1 was asked to vacate her bungalow, 35 Lodhi Estate in Delhi, within a month on the ground that she is ineligible for the entitlement, as she no longer enjoys the security cover of the Special Protection Group (SPG). She will be residing in a temporary accommodation until a more permanent accommodation in Delhi rented by her is ready for use, Congress said in a statement on Thursday. "Priyanka Gandhi Vadra handed over the possession of 35 Lodhi Estate, previously allotted to her on Security Grounds, to the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) today. JE of CPWD Shri. P Senthil Kumar in the presence of Shri.

Vikas Rana, CE (NDZ-I) CPWD, Shri. Yogesh Kumar Kardam, AE (PAWD-I, CPWD), Shri. Manoj Kumar Chauhan, AE, CPWD Services, Shri B.S. Rana, JE (PAWD-I, CPWD) accepted the keys to the bungalow on behalf of the CPWD after a full inspection establishing that the house was handed over in good condition. They have issued her a "Vacation Report" for the premises on behalf of the CPWD," Congress said in a statement on Thursday. Hindustan Times has reviewed a copy of the vacation report issued on Thursday. The department of estate confirmed the development to HT. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs did not comment on the matter when contacted by HT.

"This is FAKE NEWS. I have not made any such request to the government. As per the eviction letter handed to me on July 1, I will be vacating the government accommodation at 35 Lodhi Estate by August 1," she had tweeted. Urban affairs

minister Hardeep Puri had alleged that a "powerful Congress leader" had requested him to let her stay on at 35 Lodhi Estate on July 4, three days after the eviction notice was served on her. "Facts speak for themselves! A powerful Congress leader with much clout in the party called me on July 4 at 12.05 pm to request that 35, Lodhi Estate be allotted to another Congress MP so that Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra can stay on. Let's not sensationalise everything please," Puri had tweeted.

In the order issued by the department of estate, the ministry had stated that any stay longer than August 1, the government order said, will attract "damage charges and penal rent" as per rules.

Hours after the notice was served to her on July 1, she paid off all her pending dues, amounting to Rs 3,46,677, until June 30, the ministry had said.

"Upon withdrawal of SPG protection and grant of Z+ security cover my ministry of

home affairs, which does not have provision for allotment/retention of government accommodation on security grounds to you, the allotment of Type 6B house No 35, Lodhi estate is cancelled," the notice had said.

The allotment of Central government bungalows is done through the General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) Rules, 2017, of the directorate of estates. The ministry has already allotted the bungalow to Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Rajya Sabha member and party spokesperson, Anil Baluni. Officials familiar with the development told HT that the ministry has allotted the type 6B bungalow to Baluni. "Talked to Mr Anil Baluni and his wife today. I pray to God for his good health and happiness. I give my best wishes to them for the new house and hope that they too get as much happiness in the house as I and my family got," Gandhi had tweeted on Monday.

## Tax on auto fuel in India is fifth highest after UK, Italy, France and Germany: EY Report



Taxes on auto fuels in Spain, Japan, Canada and the US are; however, lower than India, the consultancy firm said in its latest edition of Economy Watch.

Taxes on petrol and diesel in India is about 66% of their pump rates, which is the fifth highest after the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Germany, an EY India's report said.

Taxes on auto fuels in Spain, Japan, Canada and the US are; however, lower than India, the consultancy firm said in its latest edition of Economy Watch.

"According to our estimate, the share of petroleum taxes in India in the case of petrol and diesel accounted for 66.4% and 65.8% respectively in June 2020. These rates indicate the average share for the month in Delhi which is taken as representative of the Indian situation," it said on Thursday.

While the UK had the highest tax rates among the nine

countries – 71.1% of the retail rate of petrol and 68.1% of diesel in June -- the levy was the lowest in the US at 23.1% on petrol and 23.3% on diesel, it said.

"Since retail prices of petroleum products have a potential inflationary impact through transport and energy costs, this matter needs to be carefully monitored as the fiscal year progresses," the report said. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) data released on July 13 recorded an inflation rate of 6.1% in June 2020.

DK Srivastava, chief policy advisor of EY India said the CPI inflation rate was in excess of the prescribed upper tolerance limit of 6% in December 2019, January 2020 and February 2020 at 7.4%, 7.6% and 6.6%,

respectively, indicating that the monetary policy framework has been breached in the Covid-19 period and some months preceding it.

"The Centre's Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBMA)

threshold for fiscal deficit is also likely to be breached in FY21 with the Centre's estimated fiscal deficit at 5.6% or above of the estimated GDP [gross domestic product]. These exceptions may well be justified given the extraordinary situation

created by the global pandemic. These also point to weaknesses in the monetary and fiscal policy frameworks since these were not designed to cope with such structural economic breaks as posed by a calamity like Covid-19," he said.

## Mayawati targeting Congress under BJP's pressure, says Ashok Gehlot

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday accused Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) of creating unnecessary fuss over its six MLAs merging with the Congress in the state and claimed that BSP boss Mayawati was acting under pressure from the BJP. His statement came hours after the Rajasthan high court issued notices to the Speaker, assembly secretary and the six MLAs, who had joined the Congress from BSP in September 2019. The court issued the notices on a petition by the BSP seeking disqualification of these MLAs. "With two-third majority, a party can merge and defect, here all six merged into Congress...Mayawati's complaint is not justified as all six MLAs joined the Congress. I believe she is making statements on directions of the BJP. The way BJP is misusing CBI, ED, IT to threaten

all has never been seen. Mayawati is also fearful and is making statements under pressure," Gehlot said outside the Fairmont hotel on the outskirts of Jaipur, where MLAs loyal to him have been camping. The BSP said Gehlot's comments were baseless. BSP state president Bhagwan Singh Baba said the merger of six MLAs was illegal as a national party cannot be merged at state level without the approval of the party chief. "The CM allegations are baseless. The BSP chief had conveyed her annoyance twice as Gehlot poached our MLAs. It's not the first time but in 2008 when they first poached, we had approached court and the Speaker. Then, the BSP was supporting the Congress at the Centre and there was no BJP at the Centre. Mayawati had stated that Gehlot wants to wipe out BSP in Rajasthan," he said.

# Covid-19 herd immunity can't be a strategic option for country of India's size: Govt

**A health ministry official said that effective clinical management lead to a decrease in case fatality rate. In June it was 3.33 per cent and now 2.21 per cent.**



Given the size of India's population, herd immunity "cannot be a strategic choice or option", the health ministry said on Thursday as it urged people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour till a vaccine is developed.

At a press briefing, when asked whether India was approaching herd immunity against the coronavirus infection, Officer on Special Duty in the Health Ministry Rajesh Bhushan replied that herd immunity is a kind of indirect protection from an infectious disease like Covid-19. It happens only when a population becomes immune either through vaccination or immunity is developed through a previous infection, he said.

"In a country with the size of the population like India, herd immunity cannot be a strategic choice or option. It can only be an outcome, and that too at a

very high cost as it means lakhs of people would have to be infected, get hospitalised and many would die in the process," Bhushan said.

He said herd immunity can be achieved through immunisation but that is in the future.

"Are we approaching herd immunity? The health ministry believes it still far away and in the future. For now, we have to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour like wearing masks, avoiding gatherings, following hand hygiene and maintaining 'do gaz ki doori (maintaining distance of two yards)," the OSD said.

"Till a vaccine comes up, following COVID-appropriate behaviour is the social vaccine against the disease." The officer also said phase 1 and 2 human clinical trials of two indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine candidates have started.

Bhushan also said the government has so far received 131 claims under the Rs 50 lakh Covid-19 insurance scheme for healthcare providers and payments have already been made in 20 cases.

"Under the scheme, we have received 131 claims. The claims

are a bit slow in coming as the families are initially in a state of shock and therefore it takes time to sign and fill up the necessary paperwork. "Out of these 131 claims, in 20 cases payments have already been made. In Sixty-four cases payment has been processed

and would be made in the coming few days while 47 cases are with different state governments," he said.

About the spread of coronavirus infection in the country, Bhushan said Maharashtra, Delhi and Telangana have reported the maximum number of cases.

## 2 minor sisters gang-raped by 8, including 3 minors, in Chhattisgarh

Two minor sisters were allegedly gang-raped by eight people, which included three minors, in Balodabazar district in Chhattisgarh two months back, police said on Thursday.

Superintendent of Police (SP), Balodabazar, Indira Kalyan Elesela told HT that five accused were arrested and three minors were detained by police on Wednesday night and a case has been registered under relevant sections of the IPC and POCSO Act.

"We have booked a total of 11 people, including eight people who raped the minors and three others," said the SP.

"The incident took place on May 31. On Wednesday evening, one

of the victims reached a wing of the Women and Child Development department and said that two months back eight people had raped her. The father



of the girl was then called who repeated the same charge. The victim also told police that two days back, a person called her and claimed that he has a video of the rape in his possession and blackmailed her," said the SP. Subsequently, the girl

understood that it was not the one time incident and now they will trouble her in future as well, said the officer.

"We found that these two girls had two friends, and the day the incident took place, the girls were out with them. On their way back, these eight accused approached them and scared away the friends. Then, they raped these two minor girls," said the SP.

The officer said the two who went with the girls were booked for kidnapping since the girls were minor.

The police have registered a case of rape attempt against one accused for calling the girl and threatening to make the video viral.

## Eid-ul-Adha to be low key affair in south India due to Covid-19 pandemic

There will be no mass congregation prayers in view of the Covid-19 pandemic and sacrifice of animals will be strictly regulated.

Eid-ul-Adha is likely to be a low-key affair in most southern states in view of the steep surge in Covid-19 cases. In Telangana, it will be celebrated on August 1 but in Kerala and parts of Karnataka, Eid it will be on Friday (July 31). In Telangana, the government has said that there will be no mass congregation prayers nor will there be open slaughtering of cattle, goats, and sheep for distribution of meat among the poor, which is an integral part of the festival. Muslims normally sacrifice an animal on Eid-ul-Adha.

In Karnataka too the government has said that only 50 people would be allowed at a time in mosques for prayers and there will be no mass congregations due to the pandemic.

The historic Mecca Masjid near Charminar in the old city of Hyderabad will not open for the general public to offer Eid

namaz. It was a similar case for Eid-ul-Fitr on May 24 due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Maulana Hafeez Mohd Rizwan Qureshi, Imam of Mecca Masjid said the mosque would not be opened for namaz because of the alarming situation prevailing in Hyderabad.

"In fact, even after the lifting of the lockdown for places of worship, we have not been allowing the general public regular as well as Friday prayers. Only five persons are being allowed for prayers every Friday," he said.

The Maulana appealed to the people to visit mosques in their respective areas and attend the prayers following guidelines like social distancing and wearing masks. "Stay at your homes after prayers," he said.

Telangana State Wakf Board chairman Mohd Saleem said no congregations for mass prayers would be allowed in any Eidgahs across Telangana for Eid-ul-

Adha on August 1.

"Namaz-e-Eid will not be held at Eidgah or the open grounds which see large congregations of Muslims. We shall, however, allow prayers in local mosques for a limited number of people," he said.

The Wakf Board chairman said not more than 50 people should offer prayers at each mosque, that too by following the social distancing norms and other precautions to contain the possible spread of the virus. "If necessary, the prayers may be held twice during the day to allow more worshippers," Saleem said.

The mosque committees have been asked to advise senior citizens and children below 10 years not to come to mosques for Eid prayers. Those suffering from cold, fever, cough and comorbidities like diabetes and blood pressure have also been urged to pray at home. The Wakf Board also advised imams to



keep their Eid sermons brief. The authorities have also imposed restrictions on sale of cattle, sheep or goats in view of the possibility of spread of Covid-19 at the markets.

The Telangana high court on Thursday directed the municipal authorities to see that the slaughtering of cattle, sheep or goats should be done only according to the prescribed norms and there shall be no indiscriminate slaughtering of animals, including camels.

The high court pointed out that there were reports of diseases being spread through meat as

well. "We know how coronavirus has spread from bat meat in China. So, we need to take all precautions," the court observed.

The municipal authorities have appealed to the people to avoid visiting public places to buy sheep or goats and instead avail the facility provided by officials in every town by earmarking a place on the outskirts for sale and purchase of the animals. "For slaughtering, they should visit the slaughterhouses instead of doing it in public places," a GHMC official said.

# 5 Big Little Lies Tech CEOs Told Congress And Us

**Watching the leaders of Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google face a filleting in front of the House antitrust panel on Wednesday, I kept a running list of the little half-truths they told.**

Sometimes, it's the little lies that are the most telling. Watching the leaders of Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google face a filleting in front of the House antitrust panel on Wednesday, I kept a running list of the little half-truths they told.

If I only had a dollar for every time a big tech CEO said he cared deeply about our privacy.

But this time in front of the spotlight, some of the claims didn't work so well. I'm not talking about the kind of outright lies that could land Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Tim Cook of Apple, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook or Sundar Pichai of Google in trouble after taking an oath to tell the truth. But members of Congress, especially Democrats who run the committee and shepherded its months-long investigation, came prepared with questions that poked holes in Big Tech's aging arguments - talking points that might sound reasonable on the surface, but collapse under scrutiny.

(Bezos owns The Washington Post, but I review all technology with the same critical eye.)

Tech giants' products may still be very popular with consumers. But more and more of us are separating out what we love to do with our smartphone or smart-speaker from the behavior of the company that makes it.

Here's the five biggest little lies that I think have run their course.

1. You're in control of your data  
Google's Pichai repeated this tech platitude when pressed by Rep. Val Demings, D-Fla., over the company's decision to combine its existing trove of data with the data held by DoubleClick, a big ad network it bought. "We today make it very easy for users to be in control of their data. We have simplified their settings," he said.

It's true that Google, along with Facebook and other tech giants, offer consumers lots of privacy knobs and switches. But if you don't know to use them - and if they're not easy to use - does

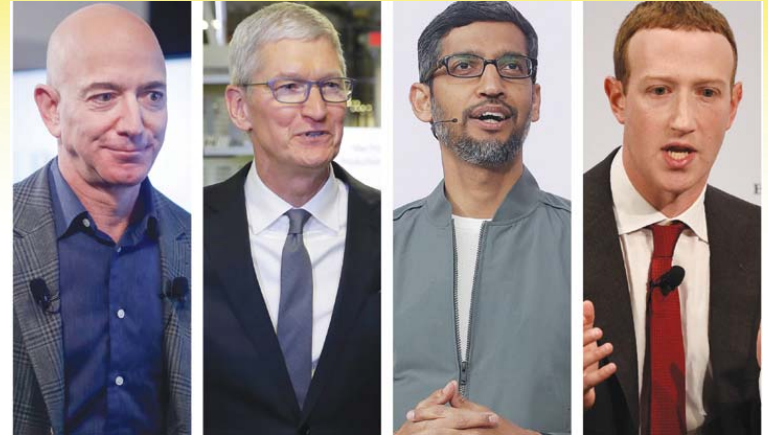
that really put you in control? Most people don't think so. In 2019, Pew Research found that 81% of Americans think they have very little or no control over the collection of their data - and 59% have little or no understanding about what companies do with their data.

I've likened the situation to saying anyone can fly a 747 because it has a lot of knobs and controls.

Pichai borrowed this line from Facebook's Zuckerberg, who similarly asserted that consumers are "in control" of their data in his 2018 testimony to Congress no fewer than 45 times.

Framing the debate around control actually ignores a bigger issue. Big Tech likes to say it's collecting all this data to serve us better, when that data also means incredible power - and profit - for Silicon Valley.

While questioning Pichai on why Google wanted the DoubleClick data, Demings said, "You're saying more user data does not



mean the more money that Google can collect?"

"Most of the data today we collect is to help users and provide personalized experiences back," he replied. This much is clear: Google's is the world's largest advertising company, and the data it collects about us is fuel that powers it. As Demings told Pichai, "Because of Google's dominance, users have no choice but to surrender."

2. You have lots of choice  
When Rep. Hank Johnson, D-Ga., asked Apple's Cook about the total control it has over the iPhone app store, Cook pivoted to the idea that it faces lots of competition for selling software.

"There is a competition for developers, just like there's a competition for customers. . . . Developers, they can write their apps for Android or Windows or Xbox or PlayStation," he said. "I would describe it as a street fight for market share in the smartphone business."

But wait: Apple has made switching from an iPhone to an Android phone as painful as possible. (Just try to get your family and friends to switch to a texting platform other than Apple's proprietary iMessage.) And last time I checked, there weren't a ton of mobile apps for the now-defunct Windows Mobile store, much less Xbox or PlayStation.

## Why I Defend Prashant Bhushan's Right To Offend

**There may be issues of national importance, sovereignty, and security where a contrarian view against national consensus is not acceptable.**

**Otherwise, the right to dissent is at the heart of a democracy.**

Prashant Bhushan likes to wear many hats. He is an indefatigable anti-corruption activist and has always fought for probity in public life. He has campaigned for transparency and accountability in the judiciary. Bhushan is also a political activist. He was associated with the anti-corruption movement, India Against Corruption. Later, he was one of the founding members of the Aam Aadmi Party, only to part ways with the Arvind Kejriwal-led party.

Bhushan has a politics which is deeply problematic. He has, for instance, stood for plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. It's known to everyone how Pakistan fans trouble in the Valley and sponsors terrorism to target the innocent and security forces. To call for a plebiscite (or referendum) in this environment is to play in Pakistan's hands. This proposition would never find acceptance in the Indian

mainstream as long as Pakistan sees sponsoring terror in the Valley as a national priority.

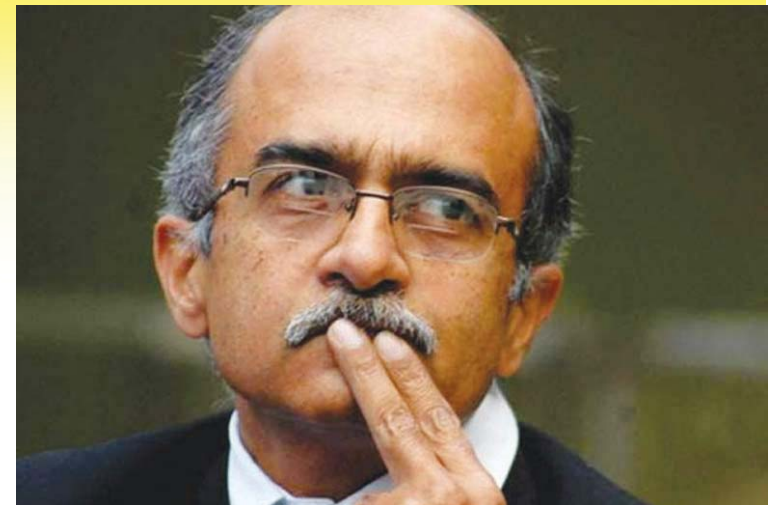
As a lawyer, Bhushan has taken up multiple issues of public interest. So, when a couple of his tweets raised the hackles of the Supreme Court, it was rightly disapproved by the media. While few national dailies were among those to write editorials questioning the Supreme Court move to issue the notice over contempt proceedings to Bhushan, Outlook ran an op-ed. A group of public figures later came out with an appeal requesting the top court to take back the notice. In another matter, currently being heard in the Supreme Court, the top court said that "voice of dissent in a democracy cannot be shut down". Surely, Bhushan has a right to dissent, too.

Among our public institutions, the Supreme Court enjoys the highest credibility and trust of the

people. It's only expected that it will do everything to retain that trust.

There's another dimension to this debate. It deals with the ability of our systems, and the political class to deal with dissent.

It's significant to recall how Bhushan was assaulted due to his views on Kashmir by an activist, who rose to become a spokesperson of Delhi BJP, and a BJP candidate in the Delhi Assembly elections. Most of the family-run parties, that like to be known as regional parties, would brook no dissent. India's tryst with the Emergency remains the most telling example of how the Congress would deal with dissent, though it likes to be known as an umbrella organisation. It's the BJP that has the most interesting views on dissent. In 2016, Home Minister Amit Shah spoke on 'Democracy, Development and Dissent' at an event in Goa. Shah said that



"development" and "dissent" were included in the idea called "democracy". He explained how this land always welcomed new ideas and their proponents including the Buddha and Mahavir. He added that Narendra Modi had faced in Independent India the "most vicious negative (sabse katu) criticism". Then came the crux of his argument. "Criticise the government, but not the nation-the country won't accept or tolerate it." No one should have a problem with this elaborate explanation of dissent and democracy. Except that the

BJP government critics would argue that "anything against the government is portrayed as against the country in the present environment." How does one then deal with any contrarian view-like one should hold a plebiscite/referendum in Kashmir, espoused by the likes of Bhushan? The challenge, I think, is to make such views irrelevant by making the national resolve on the issue stronger on the one hand, and making democracy at the grassroots level in Kashmir deeper, on the other.



# America is witnessing a brazen power grab

## *A contrasting tale of aid assistance*

### China is predatory; India is benign, but needs reforms

After two months of rioting and political chaos, there are still people out there who claim this is all about the death of George Floyd. Believe it or not, there are. Some of the people who say that may actually believe it and we're giving them the benefit of the doubt. The liberal mom who lives next door to you, for example. She is probably entirely sincere when she lectures you about the scourge of police brutality, she means it. She has no idea BLM is about anything else. We're not judging, and that's not surprising. Most Americans are nice people. They're literal and ingenuous. They tend to take claims at face value because they want to believe the best. But in this case, they are wrong. None of what you are watching is about civil rights. Violence and race-baiting are the enemies of civil rights. What you're watching instead is a power grab. It's being coordinated by the most ruthless and cynical figures in American politics. They don't want you to know what they're doing. They're not honorable enough to state their intentions. They're not like you at all. When normal people want something, they can be aggressive. But the professional left never is. It's invariably passive-aggressive. Their first instinct is to manipulate rather than persuade, they hide their real beliefs. They say precisely the opposite of what they mean every time. They accuse you of the crimes they themselves are committing. It makes your head spin. Arguing with them is pointless, by the way, they're nihilists. They don't believe in the existence of truth or in the fixed meaning of words. They care only about power. It's painful to say this. It hurts to admit there are people in our country who are like this, but there are, and they have more power than ever.

If you need more evidence of that, Barack Obama showed up at Congressman John Lewis' funeral today. Obama claimed he was there to eulogize his own friend, but that's not true, and that's not what he did. Instead, Obama gave a divisive and deeply dishonest campaign speech in church. Here's part of what he said.

CARLSON: It's hard to believe that clip is real, but it is, down to the cloying fake accent, Mr. Hawaii guy. But take three steps back, imagine if some greasy politician showed up at your loved one's funeral and started throwing around stupid partisan talking points about Senate procedure, can you imagine that? You'd be shocked if that happened. You'd probably walk out. Desecrating a funeral with campaign slogans? What kind of person would do that? But Democrats in the audience didn't seem offended. They didn't blink, they cheered. It all seemed normal to them, and why wouldn't it? Political power is their religion. It's not

out of place in a church. It's what they worship. People who will politicize a funeral will do anything, and they're trying to. Democrats are working systematically to dismantle the core institutions of American life, beginning with the family and with faith. They're subverting the core system in our government, the justice system. They're nullifying laws, burning police stations, attacking courthouses, working to eliminate the legal equality of American citizens, the foundation of it all. They've systematically repurposed Federal law enforcement agencies as political weapons. They have imprisoned their political opponents. Their leaders have called for making all of these changes permanent by packing the Supreme Court, packing the United States Senate, packing the electorate itself by importing tens of millions of new voters. Why are they doing all of this? They'll tell you, it's to make the country better and more just, but the country isn't improving and it's not fairer. They're doing this for one reason: to ensure they have complete control of the United States. We're watching it happen right now, though almost no one ever admits it and those who do come close to getting shut down. We can tell you stories. So how should the rest of us respond to what we're seeing? And let's be clear, by the rest of us we're not just talking about conservatives or people who watch the show. We're talking about literally, everybody else -- moderates, the politically non-aligned, traditional liberals who still care about civil liberties -- there are some of those -- sincere religious people of all faiths, immigrants from abroad who came to this country because of our Bill of Rights, only to watch it evaporate once they got here. In other words, everyone who fundamentally loves this country, which is still most Americans. What are people like that do in the face of this? This revolution? Well, it's simple. Defend the system that we have. That's our job. The American system is flawed. No one doubts that, but it works better than any other system in history and tearing it down will not help. In fact, it will benefit only a few of the ones pushing for it, and it will crush millions. So if you care about the United States, fight for its institutions. They have served us well. This country has survived almost 250 years through a Civil War. Let's keep going. The president this morning vented his frustrations on Twitter about potential voter fraud in the upcoming election. He wrote this quote, "With universal mail-in voting, not absentee voting, which is good, 2020 will be the most inaccurate and fraudulent election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the United States."

By Tucker Carlson

India gives assistance but does not take advantage is the message Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to convey at the inauguration of the Mauritius Supreme Court building. Mr Modi underlined that Indian development assistance comes without conditions and is not influenced by political or commercial considerations. While this is a mild exaggeration, there is nonetheless a sharp contrast between the nature of Indian aid and the more rapacious assistance provided by China. This difference, whose core element is transparency regarding the aid project's finances, is something New Delhi needs to propagate as international aid becomes increasingly strategic in nature.

China's international assistance programme has a black box at its centre. Bribing governments, imposing debt levels that constrain sovereignty, and attaching strings that include military access are par for the course when it comes to Beijing's assistance. There is also evidence that Beijing's supposed price advantage is largely mythical, especially if one includes life cycle costs. China has already taken things to the next level. Its Digital Silk Road and similar projects demand the alignment of a recipient country's standards and rules for data or infrastructure with those of Beijing's. This gives China a long-term hammerlock on that country's

future.

India's response has to be manifold. One, India needs to introduce an element of rules-setting in its own aid programmes, though legitimate ones drawn from multilateral agencies. Two, it needs to become more cooperative about aid. China does not lack money power. But its aid programmes are no match for the combined funding provided by Japan, the United States, India and other like-minded countries. Three, assistance protocols have become infected by the agendas of non-governmental organisations. This has made projects by multilateral financial institutions nightmarishly difficult to implement. As one African leader noted, it takes five years to do the World Bank's paperwork to build a road, more time than the Chinese take to survey and build the road. India needs to take the lead in propagating a more streamlined aid process. Finally, New Delhi has made its own assistance increasingly more structured and transparent than it was done in the past. However, it needs to go beyond the normal and begin to hard sell its unique accomplishments such as using biometric identity to better target welfare systems or promoting digital payments through smartphones.



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# Competing with China? The United States has disarmed itself



The Trump administration's decision to eject China from its Houston consulate on a spying accusation is the latest move in a spate of US policies and actions that target Beijing. In recent weeks, the administration has sanctioned high-level Chinese officials, revoked Hong Kong's special commercial status, and delivered several high-level speeches directed at China - including on Thursday, in which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stopped just short of calling for regime change. China, for its part, has retaliated by ordering the US to close its consulate in Chengdu. The timing of this escalation is no coincidence: Trump has claimed to be tough on China for years

but, in reality, he has often fawned over President Xi Jinping, praising his leadership through the early months of the coronavirus pandemic. Only when the administration failed to contain the virus at home has it pivoted to a hardline stance, calling Covid-19 the "China virus" and seeking to deflect responsibility for its own domestic incompetence by blaming a foreign rival.

For all this recent tough talk, the Trump administration long ago sabotaged its best chances of competing with or standing up to Beijing, by alienating its allies in Europe and Asia. The early months of the coronavirus crisis have revealed an undeniable truth: China is increasingly assertive on the global stage, but

the United States cannot respond economically, diplomatically or militarily if it acts alone. If it seeks to protect its national security and prosperity as China continues to rise, it must save the alliance system that has long kept it on top. Well before the pandemic, the Trump administration's approach to China had run aground. The administration has claimed to stand up to China's unfair economic practices, aggressiveness toward its neighbors in Asia, and export of digital technologies with serious national security consequences - all of which are worrisome.

The headline-grabbing decision to shutter China's Houston consulate came after US prosecutors accused Chinese hackers of seeking to steal information on Covid-19 treatments and vaccine research. National security experts have been voicing legitimate complaints about Chinese hacking and corporate espionage for years. But the closure of a consulate - an uncommon step in diplomatic relations, and a big deal between two countries that deal with each other regularly - is not the same as an effective strategy.

More to the point, Washington's failure to work with allies in confronting Beijing has undermined its aims at every turn. While waging its trade war against China, the US also put tariffs on close partners, ensuring they would not take its side - and even that trade deal is now on the brink of collapse, as its promised second phase appears unlikely to arrive. It pressured allies against working with Huawei, China's 5G telecommunications giant, but did not help them to find alternatives. It has identified China as a top military competitor, but it failed to work with Japan, South Korea and Australia to craft a common approach. Confrontation has masqueraded as strength and has delivered little. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has preferred to scold NATO allies over their defense budgets, and the President has warned that the US will not help to protect them unless they pay up. Washington has demanded that South Korea and Japan up their spending to levels they're unlikely to be able to meet, possibly as a pretext for withdrawing American troops. These are precisely the

countries the US needs to work with to counter China's most problematic behaviors, but the alliance damage done in Asia may never be fully repaired. Beijing could hardly have hoped for better outcomes as it seeks to increase its own power at America's expense. Since the coronavirus outbreak, China has taken an already bold foreign policy to new levels of brazenness, criticizing western democracies for their handling of the virus, escalating a border dispute with India, and passing a law that rolls back freedom of speech and extends Beijing's security apparatus into Hong Kong. Many have pointed the finger at China over recent cyberattacks against Australia. (Chinese foreign-ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian has denied the accusations, saying China is a "staunch upholder of cyberspace security" and is "firmly opposed to all forms of cyber attacks.") The US could pledge support for Canberra, show solidarity with the European partners China has maligned, or work with allies to shed light on deteriorating human rights in Xinjiang and the plight of Hong Kong. Instead, Washington is going it alone.

## India must speak up for human rights at UNSC

By improving its own record, and speaking up against violations globally, New Delhi can provide leadership

When India joins the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member in January 2021, it will confront a range of issues. How can the UN help wind down conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan, while ensuring humanitarian aid for civilians and justice for wrongdoers? How can it protect refugees fleeing these and many other conflicts? How to address the human rights impact, including structural racism and inequality, of the coronavirus pandemic?

Human rights groups have repeatedly criticised UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres for his reluctance to rebuke powerful countries such as China, Russia, or the United States (US) for their human rights violations. In response, he initiated a "Call to Action on

Human Rights" aimed at urging the UN and member-states to focus more attention on growing rights challenges.

People facing oppression around the world will have high expectations of India to firmly defend their rights. The Indian government has said that on the Council, it would "act as a voice of reason and moderation and a firm believer in respect for international law."

Unfortunately, India's record on promoting respect for rights abroad is poor. At the UN Human Rights Council, India has usually abstained on country-specific resolutions. It has failed to support UN initiatives to address Myanmar's ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya or Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's "drug war".

India has, at times, spoken, whether to support a call for accountability for alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka in the past, or recently, when it said that

concerns around rights protections in Hong Kong should be considered "properly, seriously and objectively".

Human rights abuses are typically either a cause or effect of international crises on the Security Council's agenda. India is a significant contributor of UN peacekeepers to missions around the world and has aspirations of becoming a permanent member of an expanded Security Council. UN peacekeeping missions increasingly focus on monitoring, investigating, and reporting human rights abuses in post-conflict situations. India should demonstrate leadership and support, expanding such efforts. To stand for rights abroad, India should also address its record at home. While it has long contrasted its more open society with China's one-party authoritarian State, the government has recently emulated some of China's



restrictions.

India's large number of capricious Internet shutdowns puts it in league with Myanmar, Iran, and Zimbabwe. Despite a Supreme Court ruling that Internet communication is a fundamental freedom, access remains restricted in Jammu and Kashmir. Even during a lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19, when the Internet has become the primary means of information, communication, entertainment, education, and business, the authorities have not relented.

Nor did the spread of the Black Lives Matter movement around the world, after police in the US killed George Floyd, have a noticeable impact in India. The Indian police continued their longstanding practice of torturing suspects, resulting recently in the deaths of a father and son for keeping their electronics shop open longer than Covid-19 lockdown rules allowed. The authorities remain silent on the need to protect marginalised groups at home.

# The infectiousness of SARS-CoV-2

**The two-judge bench of Supreme Court will hear the Shaheen Bagh case on March 23, when the court reopens after the Holi vacation.**

The coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented, and has infected 16.8 million in at least 180 countries in seven months. India has reported 1.5 million cases and 34,000 deaths. By April end, 0.78% of India's 1.3 billion population was infected as per the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) studies. By mid-July, 24% of Delhi's 20 million population was infected as per the National Centre for Disease Control's (NCDC) sero-surveillance survey.

Sero-prevalence studies from many countries indicate that the infection numbers are about 20-50 times more than the test positives reported in the same areas. This implies that the number of very mild and asymptomatic cases is much higher, and is not captured by the health system.

Yet, this fast-spreading virus does not infect all the members of an infected person's family. On an average, only 10-20% of family members develop the

infection after one infection in their family. This rate of secondary cases in a close contact in the family is called household Secondary Attack Rate (SAR). A global literature review we conducted at the Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar (IIPHG) on SAR showed that the rate is variable - from 4.6% to 50%. Infection rates are higher among the spouse or partner of the primary case and elderly members of the family, but it is lower in children. But most studies showed that 80-90% family members do not develop Covid-19 after a primary case is diagnosed in the family.

Early ICMR data indicates SAR in India is 6%, which means that 94% of family members did not develop Covid-19 even when one member tested positive. This is surprising as the virus is infectious and we are told that one can get infected during a brief five-10 minute exposure at public places such as shops, vegetable vendors or banks. Studies have

shown that a person with Covid-19 is most infectious two days before symptoms appear. This means a person begins infecting others on an average at least three to five days before being diagnosed, when no one around them at home is using masks or maintaining social distancing. Family members are in close contact with each other, sleeping, eating and living in close proximity. In spite of this close contact with an infected person, only 10-20% family members get infected as per most studies published in scientific literature globally. This is surprising for a highly infectious disease. This tells us something about the infectiousness of the virus and individual immunity against disease. One obvious interpretation is that around 80% people who remain uninfected in a family are resistant or not susceptible to the coronavirus in spite of close contact without any precautions.

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This contradicts the notion of a highly infectious disease agent. A low SAR rate of 10-20% questions the assumption that everyone is susceptible to the infection because no one has immunity against it.

One competing explanation is that most cases are very mild with a low viral load, which carries a lower risk of transmission. Only 7-15% of cases have a moderate or high viral load, which leads to the transmission of infection in many others. But such families will be few, and 85% people with mild disease will not have secondary cases in their families.

A similar phenomenon is observed in epidemics caused by other new viruses, such as chikungunya, that saw 1.4 million cases and thousands of deaths in India in 2006. Even then, not all family members were affected and many people in the community did not fall ill even though the mosquitoes that transmit the disease were ubiquitous.

The explanation there also seems to be that many people have resistance to the new infection and individual-centric immunity or resistance plays a critical role in the transmission of the disease in a population even in the case of new infections.

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## Why the anti-defection law has failed to deliver

**Its inbuilt loopholes, the partisan role of institutions, and the influence of money in politics have weakened the law**



The ongoing political crisis in Rajasthan is neither new nor uncommon. Turbulence in governments - involving the "switching of sides" by elected representatives - has been increasingly frequent in recent months. The past year has seen the toppling of two state governments in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh amid allegations of political defections and horse-trading. There has also been turmoil in Goa and Manipur.

The phenomenon in question - i.e., bringing down an elected government by depriving it of its

majority through the defection of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) - goes back a long way. To resolve this problem, in 1985, the Constitution was amended to include the Tenth Schedule (also known as the anti-defection law). The anti-defection law provides that members of political parties who disobey the whip or vote against the party in a confidence motion, will face disqualification. As recent events have made clear, however, the Tenth Schedule is no longer an effective check on the phenomenon of defection, and an urgent reconsideration is

required. There are a few reasons why this is so. The first is that the defecting MLAs have found a way around the restrictions in the Tenth Schedule. Instead of formally "crossing the floor" or voting against their party in a confidence motion, they resign from the party. This brings down the party's strength in the House, and the government is toppled. A few months later, when by-elections are held, the same MLAs then stand for election on the ticket of the opposition party, and are returned to the assembly. This, it should be clear, is defection in all, but the most formal sense. Unfortunately, in their recent judgments, the courts have failed to stop this practice (although, arguably, the language of the Tenth Schedule does not leave much room to the judiciary). The second reason is that no matter how well-drafted a constitutional provision is, ultimately, its implementation depends upon constitutional functionaries acting in good faith. As BR Ambedkar pointed out

soon after the framing of the Constitution, every constitutional text can be subverted if those charged with running the affairs of government are inclined to do so. In recent times, it has become clear that the major constitutional actors involved in times of constitutional instability - i.e., the governors and the speakers - do not act in good faith. In every constitutional crisis over the last few years, governors have acted like partisan representatives of the political party that appointed them, and have flouted constitutional conventions with impunity (from deciding which party to call first to form the government in a hung house, to ordering - or refusing to order - floor tests to prove majorities). Thus, despite the fact that the governor - as an unelected functionary - is supposed to play a minimal role in the affairs of the state, the individuals in that position have interfered on behalf of their erstwhile political parties. Speakers have done little better.

Third, the judiciary itself has not proved up to the mark. For example, during the Karnataka crisis last year, the Supreme Court (SC)? - while ostensibly passing a "balanced order" - effectively overrode the provisions of the Tenth Schedule. It said that rebel MLAs, whose disqualification petitions were being considered by the Speaker, could not be compelled to participate in the proceedings of the House. The rebels were happy for they did not have to obey the party whip. This reduced the effective majority of the government. More recently, the Rajasthan High Court effectively enjoined the Speaker of the Rajasthan Assembly from acting upon disqualification notices, despite clear SC precedent to the contrary. As observers have pointed out, if it is the case that horse-trading is in progress, then an indefinite injunction on the Speaker's ability to act under the Tenth Schedule will only provide further fillip to such actions.

**Some Call us a Media House  
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# Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

**FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW:** If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

## Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



## Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
  - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
  - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



## Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



## Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



## Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



## Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



## Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



# At the root of today's crisis, an intellectual void, writes Ram Madhav

**With rising authoritarianism and a crisis of democracy, the world needs new ideas. Can India show the way?**

Weak minds discuss people; average minds discuss events; strong minds discuss ideas," said Greek philosopher Socrates. People and events dominate public discourse because they matter to the bread and butter issues of the people. But then, as Jesus Christ said, man does not live by bread alone. He needs ideas - "God's word," according to Jesus. We need strong minds to germinate transformative ideas.

There will be times when humanity yearns for such ideas. The coronavirus pandemic is one such occasion when the world is desperately looking for fresh ideas to shape its future.

Historically, Europe has been the intellectual kernel of mankind. Several avant-garde ideas originated in the minds of European philosophers and thinkers. In the last few centuries, all the important political ideas that impacted the

world extensively came from Europe. From John Locke's Enlightenment thinking to Karl Marx's Marxism, from the Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill to the Social Contract tradition of Thomas Hobbs, from Edmund Burke's Conservatism to Frederick Nietzsche's Nihilism - Europe produced many grand political ideas in the last two centuries. The democratic institutions that evolved during the same period are also the product of the continuous churning in Europe's intellectual milieu.

One grand idea that India contributed to world political thought in the last century was Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence. From Martin Luther King Jr to Nelson Mandela to Barack Obama - the list of leaders who admired and adopted non-violence as a political ideology is long. Interestingly, after India's

successful experimentation with non-violence in 1947, dozens of countries adopted it and subsequently secured independence. Most of those countries became democracies and the world witnessed a "democracy boom" by the end of the last century. The collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War also helped further democratisation. But the dawn of the 21st century saw matters drifting fast. Democratic deficit and fatigue are setting in with alarming speed. Authoritarian regimes have bounced back with a vengeance. Terrorism, that acquired new dimensions and legitimacy towards the end of the last century, has led to the resurgence of the politics of violence. The first quarter of the 21st century witnessed the rise of "wolf warriors" and "lone wolfs". It is in this political climate that the Covid-19 has struck the



world. It has affected all existing political systems, authoritarians and democrats alike, diminishing the credibility of each one. A leaderless and rudderless world is emerging out of these two-decades of churning culminating in the pandemic. What the post-pandemic world needs is not just a new leadership, but also ideas for a new world order.

Regarded for long as the crown jewel of democratic liberalism, the United States (US) is yielding ground quickly and significantly, signalling the decisive decline of those values in the world. In the last

three decades, at least two dozen countries have turned authoritarian.

Authoritarian regimes such as China have emerged powerful during the same period. Authoritarianism does not affect the people of the respective countries alone. It puts a lot of pressure on others too. Democracies, by very nature, become vulnerable to the onslaught of authoritarianism. In the process, they too gradually turn to authoritarian measures to ward off the challenge of authoritarian regimes. The net result will be a world less liberal and less democratic.

## India's farm sector needs help to get back on its feet. Here are 5 ideas



**A crisis like Covid-19 presents a good opportunity to re-examine underlying assumptions in the way we operate**

The agriculture sector is critical for India from a consistent growth and food security perspective as the sector and allied activities account for approximately 55% of India's workforce and nearly 15% of India's GDP. Today, India has come a long way from facing severe food shortages after Independence to becoming a net exporter of food. While the agricultural sector has made considerable progress, in India, we still have a long way to go when it comes to global benchmarks. The nation-wide lockdown due to the Covid-19 outbreak has further exposed the vulnerabilities in our agricultural supply chain and the prevalence of the Agricultural Produce

Market Committee, or APMC, model that made farmers highly dependent on mandis.

Never waste a good crisis

In many ways, a crisis like Covid-19 presents a good opportunity to re-examine underlying assumptions in the way we operate and take a fresh look at the art of the possible. To its credit, the government has been swift in announcing the Covid-19 stimulus package worth Rs 1.63 lakh crore aimed at boosting credit availability for farmers and improving supply chain infrastructure for agriculture and allied industries. The government also announced key reforms related to the deregulation of commodities in the Essential Commodities Act,

promoting barrier-free inter-state trade of agricultural produce and legal framework for contract farming. Here are five recommendations that could help propel Indian agriculture on to a high performing trajectory.

From fragmentation of production to planned production

Indian agriculture needs to move from the current fragmented production model, where each farmer produces what he thinks is right, to a planned production at a district level. This leads to a mismatch in supply-demand and price fluctuations. For instance, domestic onion prices rose by almost 700-800% between January 2019 and December 2019 (Delhi's Azadpur Mandi). The government should focus on developing a robust sales and operation planning process to estimate the cultivated area under different crops and educate farmers on cropping patterns. This will not only stabilise price fluctuations but also improve farmer income and reduce waste. Soil health card-based nutrition

enhancement programme

Rampant use of urea, partly caused by Nutrient Based Subsidy, has led to worsening soil health, decline in crop response ratio and contamination of surface water. The NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium) usage ratio has widened from 4.7:2.3:1 in 2010-11 to 6.6:2.6:1 in 2018-19. Further, the crop response ratio to fertilisers has fallen from 12.1 kg grains/kg of fertiliser during 1960-69 to 5 kg grains/kg fertiliser during 2010-17. To address this, a Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme was launched by the government to recommend dosage of different nutrients based on soil health. However, the implementation has suffered due to poor infrastructure support and continued push on urea subsidy.

Digital push to improve farming practices

Digital adoption will be key to improving the reach and delivery of services like agronomy advice (fertiliser, ag-chem usage,

farming practices), enhance adoption of Precision Agriculture practices and improve price transparency through digital platforms.

Informal credit dependence to institutional financial products support

With farmer incomes highly dependent on external factors such as climate change and commodity price fluctuations, it is important to have robust risk management and financial solutions for the farmers. The availability of credit through Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and associated crop insurance is one such instrument. The government needs to strengthen the implementation through policy and infrastructural improvements such as digitisation of land records which will improve the timely disbursement of KCC loans by banks. Additionally, the development of the agricultural commodities futures market will help to ensure that farmers' sowing, selling decisions are based on forward-looking prices vs.

# Militarising Andamans: The costs and the benefits



**There is merit in collaborating with Indo-Pacific partners in the islands, but it will entail information-sharing too**

The Ladakh stand-off with China has catalysed India's efforts to strengthen its military presence at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI). New Delhi recently moved to expedite plans for basing additional military forces, including facilities for additional warships, aircraft, missile batteries and infantry soldiers at the strategically-located Andaman Islands. Naval air stations INS Kohassa in Shibpur and INS Baaz in Campbell Bay are reportedly having their runways extended to support operations by large aircraft, even as a 10-year infrastructure development "roll-on" plan - pegged at Rs 5,000 crores - is on the fast-track. Indian strategic commentators are even urging New Delhi to permit friendly foreign navies access to the ANI's military bases. The idea of militarising the Andaman Islands isn't new. Since the 1980s, Indian commentators have advocated building strategic muscle at the ANI. What has often seemed like a straightforward choice for Indian policymakers, however, has never been an easy decision to make. On the matter of the strategic development of the Andamans, India's defence and foreign policy

establishments have not always been on the same page. A section of India's diplomatic community has opposed militarising the ANI, arguing that turning the islands into a strategic-military garrison would militarise the littorals - an outcome that would not sit well with countries in South and Southeast Asia. When India first began developing the ANI in the mid-1980s, observers say Malaysia and Indonesia had been wary. Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur feared that India would use its military facilities in the ANI to dominate its region, and project power east of Malacca. In time, New Delhi's willingness to keep its security presence at the strategic islands to a minimum assured many in Asia that its motives were benign. Today, amid growing threats from China, New Delhi seems open to the idea of militarising the islands. But, many say opening up the ANI's military facilities to foreign navies could still spook regional states. There is also an ecological aspect to militarising the ANI. Since 2015, when the government had first announced its intention to transform the islands into a maritime hub - allocating Rs 10,000 crores for the purpose

- efforts to promote tourism and port development have hugely expanded. To improve tourism and trade potential, Niti Aayog has a plan to construct hotels, resorts and a trans-shipment hub at Campbell Bay. The flurry of recent infrastructure projects, environmentalists warn, could devastate the fragile ecology of the Andaman. Already many islands are facing significant damage from the climate crisis. The proponents of the Andaman's militarisation point to a different kind of asymmetry: The apparent lack of reciprocity in India's bilateral logistics agreements. The Indian navy's plans to offer logistical support to partner navies does not, ostensibly, include its ANI facilities. Four years after signing a logistics pact with the United States (US), its navy ships still have no access the ANI. France, Singapore and Australia - India's other logistics partners - too haven't had their warships repaired or replenished at Indian island facilities. With New Delhi unwilling to open up its island bases to foreign warships, observers say India's logistics arrangements haven't performed to potential. To counter China's expanding footprint in India's sphere of maritime interest, militarisation advocates aver New Delhi must permit Japan, Australia and France and the US

to build strategic capabilities at the ANI. In the past, Indian policymakers have considered cooperative avenues with Indo-Pacific partners. In 2016, New Delhi and Tokyo discussed a joint project to upgrade infrastructure in the ANI, including a proposal to install a sound surveillance sensors (SOSUS) chain to improve India's underwater domain awareness. The plan was to integrate India's undersea sensor chain with the existing US-Japan "Fish Hook" SOSUS network meant specifically to monitor People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) submarine activity in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean Rim. But, notwithstanding its utility in detecting Chinese submarines, a region-wide undersea chain of sensors has implications that call for a degree of caution. In particular, Delhi needs to consider the possibility that operating sensitive equipment with foreign partners might involve sharing of critical undersea' data with foreign collaborators. The Japan-US SOSUS provides some useful pointers. While the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) and US Navy personnel jointly manage the JMSDF Oceanographic Observation Centre in Okinawa, the information is available to the US Pacific Command, and the facility is controlled by the US

Navy. Needless to say, an Indo-Japanese-US project in the Andaman Sea might require a level of informational access that the Indian Navy may not be comfortable with. While China's presence in the Indian Ocean is growing, Beijing hasn't so far militarised key Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) outposts in the Bay of Bengal (Hambantota, Chittagong and Kyaukpyu). In recent weeks, as Indian warships have held exercises with the US and Japanese navy in the Indian Ocean, New Delhi's resolve to counter China in its maritime backyard has been amply evident. If New Delhi pushes for greater military presence in the ANI, Beijing could well seek military access in friendly Bay countries. This isn't to suggest that inviting foreign navies to the ANI or joint military projects in the Andaman sea is a bad idea. Strengthening collaboration with Indo-Pacific partners at the ANI is very much an option for Indian decision-makers to consider. But New Delhi must also take into account the downsides of offering foreign navies access to its island facilities. The final decision should be based on a dispassionate weighing of costs and benefits.

# How Justin Trudeau's latest ethics scandal could spell the end of his career



political capital that could regain his majority if an election were called.

Pollster Shachi Kurl told me Trudeau's handling of the pandemic accounts for about a 20-point increase in his approval ratings but has "not restored him to his original glory."

"It only took the worst-ever pandemic to hit Canada to help restore his brand," she said. His latest apparent lapse in judgment means Trudeau may add one more ethics violation to the two he has already

placements.

As the controversy deepens, the federal contract with WE was canceled in a "mutually agreed" upon decision and it is unclear when the federal bureaucrats now in charge of the program will be in a position to disburse the grant money to students.

But the ugly fact remains that a charity that paid more than \$200,000 to immediate members of the Trudeau family appears to have benefited from the intimate connections with the prime minister. (Prominent figures in

weekend event that featured his mother, Margaret Trudeau. The newspaper reported that WE paid her an average of \$8,000 per appearance (WE did not confirm or deny that she was paid for this specific event).

This week, the charity announced it was launching a restructuring and organizational review after making "important decisions to refocus our mission."

Parliamentary committee probes commenced Thursday and will continue into next week. On

First there was the secretive trip to the Bahamas in 2016 when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his family rode in a helicopter owned by the Aga Khan, the billionaire and Ismaili Muslim spiritual leader whose organization has received hundreds of millions of dollars in Canadian federal grants to advance its work overseas.

Then, some three years later, the Trudeau government was found to have pressured then-Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould to spare SNC Lavalin, one of Canada's largest engineering companies, from prosecution for bribing Libyan officials in return for lucrative government contracts between 2001 and 2011.

After the Canadian ethics commissioner said Trudeau had violated federal conflict of interest rules, he said, "I assume responsibility for everything that happened in my office." He added, "We recognize the way this happened shouldn't have happened," but said his government was acting in the interest of the national economy. Ultimately, Trudeau lost two star female cabinet ministers (they resigned) — including the first indigenous woman to become minister of justice — and the scandal almost cost his Liberal Party's hold on power.

Now the charismatic G7 leader has a different problem on his hands. It not only threatens to deal a fatal blow to the once impenetrable Trudeau brand, it also casts unwelcome scrutiny on his immediate family and on an international charity juggernaut with links to Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey and several other well-known celebrities and leaders.

The latest imbroglio is related to the government contract handed to the WE Charity to run a \$660 million program for students unable to find summer work due to Covid-19.

Despite the fact that the charity

paid Trudeau's family members for speaking engagements, Trudeau never thought to recuse himself from the cabinet decision on the contract. The federal ethics commissioner will also investigate Finance Minister Bill Morneau's involvement in the decision, since his daughter currently works for the charity. Since the revelations, Trudeau and his finance minister have both publicly apologized for not removing themselves from cabinet conversations regarding WE. On Thursday, Bardish Chagger, the

minister of diversity and inclusion and youth, revealed that WE could have received a maximum of about \$32 million for its role in administering the program. This controversy comes just as Trudeau, thanks to a savvy response to the Covid-19 epidemic that prioritized science over politics, began to recover the



earned from the Bahamas trip and SNC Lavalin scandal.

It's not me but we

Trudeau has claimed it was the public service that recommended WE as the only charity in Canada able to manage the multimillion dollar contract aimed at giving students paid summer volunteer

Trudeau's inner circle have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the charity.) Initially, WE said Margaret Trudeau was "never paid an honorarium" to appear at their events. On Wednesday, Canada's National Post reported that the government gave WE \$869,000 when Trudeau asked the charity to host a 2017 Canada Day

Thursday, it was revealed that WE stood to gain more than double the amount the federal government initially said it would receive for administering the program, and testimony raised questions about the extent of the charity's interactions with the government around the time the program was announced.

WE was founded by brothers Marc and Craig Kielburger, two "social

entrepreneurs" who launched the charity to alleviate poverty internationally and create learning programs for children in the US, UK and Canada. The two are listed as best-selling authors with 20 books between them, many of which focus on self-help and their charities.

## The world waits for November

### A second-term Trump will damage both US and multilateralism irreversibly

No United States (US) presidential election will be watched as closely by non-Americans as the one that will take place just less than 100 days from now. In the past, US candidates argued about differences in domestic policy and had almost indistinguishable stances on foreign policy. The Republican incumbent, Donald Trump, and the Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, are almost polar opposites on almost every major issue whether at home or abroad.

A second-term President Trump will feel even less shackled by the niceties and traditions of the past in pursuing his domestic and international agenda. The multilateral system, whether in trade or security, will struggle to



survive another five years of "America First". His willingness to batter China economically and diplomatically will probably be enhanced, but may become even more unilateral and erratic than it has been so far. A Biden

administration will resurrect much of the postwar consensus, especially in regards to the US alliance structure, and bring the US back into the climate fold. However, on China and even trade, the difference will be more in style

than in substance.

The real task of a President Biden — who has favourable poll numbers at the moment — would be to restore the legitimacy of the US establishment with its citizens because that, more than anything else, is what is undermining Washington and empowering Beijing today. And that continues to be Mr Trump's biggest failure. Whatever his forceful responses towards China, and many of them are ones India has reason to be pleased about, he has done remarkable damage to the US internally. What Mr Trump is encouraging on the streets of Portland, Oregon, in a strange and unfortunate way has geopolitical consequences in the Indo-Pacific.



# In the quest for power, the ethical decline of the BJP

*The party is willing to use all instruments for absolute dominance, becoming another Congress in the process*

In Indian politics, where you stand depends on where you sit. The latest instance of this truism is provided by the genial Rajasthan governor, Kalraj Mishra. In 1998, Mishra was part of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dharna to protest the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh government in Uttar Pradesh (UP) by the then governor Romesh Bhandari. This time, it was the Congress Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who staged a sit-in protest on the lawns of the Jaipur Raj Bhavan against Mishra's refusal to call an urgent assembly session as had been demanded by Rajasthan chief minister (CM) Ashok Gehlot. The governor has now prevailed on the need for a 21-day notice period for convening the House, which provides enough time for horse-trading of MLAs. Clearly, Mishra's primary allegiance seems to be to the Centre and

not the Constitution.

Mishra is not the only governor in recent times to court controversy. In 2017, Mridula Sinha in Goa and Najma Heptullah in Manipur hurriedly swore in BJP-led governments even though the party was not the single largest in the Assembly. In 2018 in Karnataka, Vajubhai Vala, a former Gujarat BJP president, invited BS Yediyurappa to form the government even though he didn't have the numbers: The government fell in 48 hours after Supreme Court (SC)

intervened. In 2019 in Maharashtra, BS Koshiyari had a crack of dawn swearing-in for Devendra Fadnavis; the CM resigned in a week. What unites them is their status as veteran 75-plus BJP margdarshak mandal politicians.

The best defence offered for the partisan actions of these constitutional authorities is to engage in whataboutery by

claiming that they are only following the hoary traditions set by the Congress. In a sense, this is further proof of the creeping Congressification of the BJP in the Modi-Shah era, of how a self-proclaimed party with a difference is now a party of absolute power. The much-hyped tagline of being different was not just about providing a political alternative to the Congress, but also an alternative political culture. The value-based politics that the Vajpayee-Advani generation claimed to represent has been replaced by the politics of high value, with a price tag attached.

Take, for example, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) summons to Gehlot's brother in an alleged fertiliser scam case that dates back to 2007. ED is often accused of being the BJP's closest ally, a preferred weapon of political vendetta, used to harass and intimidate rivals. That



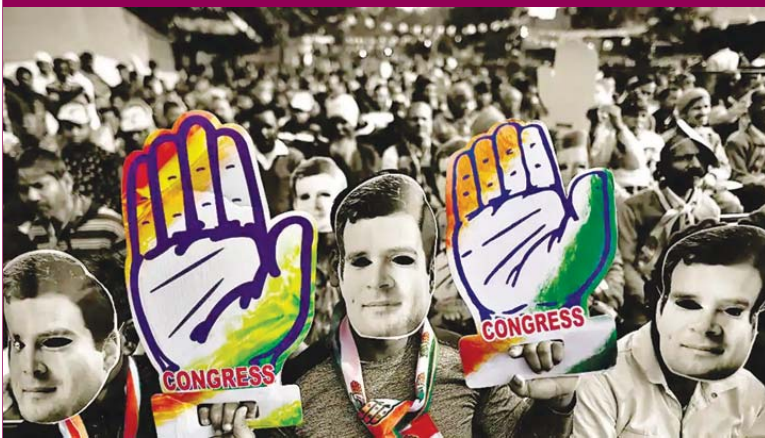
a decade-old case is revived in the midst of political turmoil in Rajasthan is no coincidence. Here, too, the counter-argument rests on the Congress' deeply flawed track record of exploiting State agencies. But then if the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was a caged parrot in the Congress-ruled times, must ED become a rottweiler in a BJP regime?

Examine also the allegations of large sums of money being offered to switch sides in Rajasthan. Even if the amounts cited are largely conjecture, the lure of ministerial perks is an undeniable cause for defections.

As the BJP has journeyed from being a party of opposition to a party of power, its idealism and ideology lie compromised in the quest for total supremacy. A growing number of the BJP "conquests" are actually of former Congresspersons who have gone with the saffron wind. Manipur's CM N Biren Singh was a Congressman for over a decade before joining the BJP. Goa's deputy CM, Chandrakant Kavlekar, won four consecutive terms as a Congress MLA before joining the BJP. The Karnataka Cabinet has at least 10 ministers who were once in the Congress.

## The decay of the Grand Old Party

*It is paying the price for its blind opposition to Modi, suppression of talent, and refusal to learn*



If, as seems likely at the time of writing, my friend Sachin Pilot parts ways with the Congress party, it would hardly be a novelty. Starting shortly after Independence, when the venerable Acharya JB Kripalani split to form his own party in 1952, the Congress has experienced over 70 such splits. But the severe decline of the party in recent years has left it incapable of surviving many more. Contrary to allegations of external interference, the party's leadership has demonstrably been its own worst enemy. A well-known definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results. As the Congress collapses all

around him, its heir apparent continues his unrelenting criticism and disrespect of every single thing that Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi says or does.

That strategy has been deployed for years now, and all it has achieved is earn its proponent a reputation for lack of political acumen, and understanding of history, and of voters. This attitude that if Modi says or does something, it is inherently bad and must be opposed at all costs is irrational. It is also no longer exhibited by other political opponents of PM and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and they have a better recent track record than the Congress.

The most prominent example of that is the Delhi chief minister

(CM), Arvind Kejriwal, who abandoned his earlier blind opposition to PM a couple of years ago after registering that voters did not resonate with it, and that it was costing Aam Aadmi Party dearly. Since then, though, of course, he continues to be a bitter political opponent, his stand is much more nuanced, especially on issues of national security such as Balakot and the clash with China.

There are many other political leaders, far more successful than the Congress scion, who have similarly adjusted their party line. They sensibly avoid criticising national security choices, but also carefully avoid picking fights on other topics where the Modi government is perceived to have performed well and earned voter appreciation. The classic example of this is the now grand old man of Odisha politics, CM Naveen Patnaik, who, in the past six years, has shrewdly avoided clashing with PM on most national issues,

while bitterly opposing the BJP on local issues.

The lack of course correction for strategies that have repeatedly failed is one of several reasons for the Congress' decimation. Frustrated Congress leaders privately say that this obduracy contributed to the party's dismal performance in the last year's general elections. While it was clear that a particular derogatory slogan against PM was not only not working, but boomeranging, the then Congress president nevertheless insisted on doubling down on it, even accusing reluctant colleagues of cowardice.

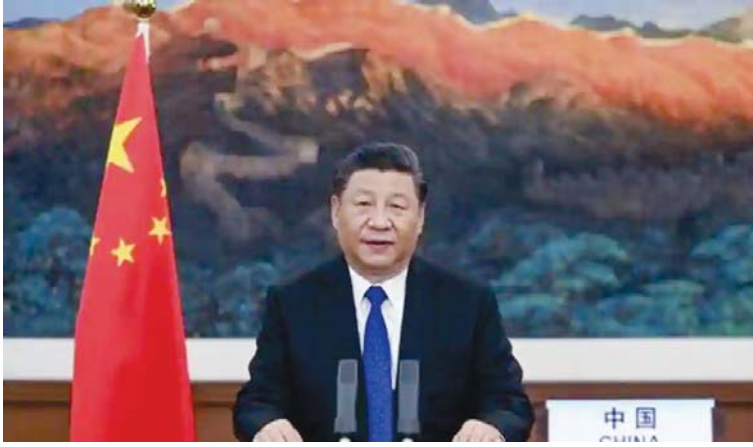
There is an even more fundamental reason behind the Congress' collapse: Any organisation that deliberately suppresses talent, will sooner or later pay dearly for it. It is no secret that my young friends now abandoning the Congress were repeatedly denied their due. Though the high command's last remaining loyalists contest this, claiming that they had all

achieved positions over the years, the fact remains that they are more popular and capable than others who continue to lord over them in the party.

Of course, the Congress is not the only party that deliberately suppresses its talent for feudal reasons; it just has the longest record of this and has suffered the most damage from it. Several regional parties that emulated its transition to family fiefdoms are now showing signs of the same atrophy. On the other hand, one of the biggest contributors to the BJP's rise over the decades is its ingrained culture of actively nurturing talent. There seems to be a feeble attempt within the Congress to rectify some other longstanding blunders, as with the recent commemoration of late PM PV Narasimha Rao's centenary. But it is simply too little, too late. The downplaying of its non-family former leaders has become part of the party's DNA since the 1950s.

# What is driving China's aggression?

*Centralised foreign policymaking; the return of ideology; and the need to act like a major power*



There has been growing debate in recent times in India and other countries about China's aggression. What's driving Beijing to engage in contests on multiple fronts, be it Hong Kong, the near seas, or India, particularly amid a pandemic and economic weakness? Is it opportunism? Is it hubris? Is internal turmoil and insecurity leading to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) lashing out? Or are there structural factors that one must consider? Last week, the Chinese foreign ministry formally established a new research centre, the Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy.

State media reported that the centre would be useful in distilling the paramount leader's thoughts to "serve the construction of theory, system and mechanism, and capacity of the major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in a new era". This development demonstrates three structural features of China's approach to the world under President Xi Jinping. Each of these impinge on what, by all measures, appear to be strategically damaging choices that the Chinese leadership has made over the past seven months.

First, the trend of top-level design

dominating foreign policy has been firmly cemented. Much has already been written about Xi's ascent as the core leader, his consolidation of power within the CCP, and control over the armed forces. His thoughts on diplomacy were adopted at the 2018 foreign affairs work conference. It called for prioritising "the centralised, unified leadership of the Party" when it came to foreign affairs. Unlike his predecessors, foreign policy decisions under Xi carry the distinct imprimatur of the core leader, at least that's what the propaganda apparatus has told the world. For instance, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is seen as Xi's legacy initiative. In 2017, the Central Party School's publication Study Times reported that Xi "personally made decisions on building islands and consolidating the reefs" in the South China Sea (SCS). Not since Mao Zedong's era has

personality, instead of institutions, mattered so much in China's approach to the world. This, in itself, limits discourse and innovation, heightening the risk of cloistered thinking. Of course, given that the leader enjoys overwhelming, if not absolute, control, there can also be 180-degree turns. After all, it was Mao who pivoted towards the United States (US) in 1972. But such an outcome seems unlikely in the present scenario. Second, Xi's ascent has also been accompanied by a return of ideology as a key driving force in Chinese politics. Over the years, Chinese leaders haven't necessarily ignored ideology. It's always been present in public rhetoric. But in practice, it was relegated to secondary place to economic performance and political pragmatism. In contrast, under Xi, the need for loyalty has come to dominate political discourse. A demonstration of

this was evident earlier this month as the CCP and State institutions reported their efforts to uphold the "two safeguards," which essentially refer to upholding Xi's authority as core leader of the party. Days later, Qiushi, the party's journal, published an article of excerpts from Xi's speeches over the years, underscoring the centrality of the CPP.

In it, Xi exhorts cadres to "maintain a high degree of ideological consciousness, political consciousness, and action consciousness". This intensification of ideological consciousness bleeds into perceptions of and narratives about competition between systems and models. Long before we stood at the cusp of what now appears to be a Cold War-like contest between China and the US, Beijing was talking about the challenges of a Cold War mentality.

## Red flags in Delhi over Erdogan's Turkey funding anti-India activities: Official



Islamist radical organisations in parts of the country including Kerala and Kashmir are being supported and funded by Turkish outfits backed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government in Ankara, people familiar with the development have told Hindustan Times.

"There is an effort to radicalise Indian muslims and recruit fundamentalists coordinated from Turkey," a senior government official said, underlining that a recent assessment in New Delhi had noted the emergence of Turkey as "the hub of anti-India activities" next only to Pakistan. Ankara's attempt to expand its influence among South Asian muslims comes against the backdrop of President Erdogan's continuing pitch to challenge Saudi Arabia's dominance in the

Islamic world at a global level and offering a reshaped, conservative Turkey with Ottoman traditions as the model for other Islamic nations to follow.

The reconversion of the Byzantine cathedral Hagia Sophia to a mosque last week was a giant step in this direction, counted by commentators as a milestone in Turkey's rebirth as a powerful, muslim nation. The church had been converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, now Istanbul - and from mosque to museum in 1934.

The change fits in with Erdogan's long-term plan to project himself as a global protector of muslims, much like the Ottoman Caliphs. He had last year taken baby steps to build an alliance of non-Arab Islamic countries along with a handful of countries including

Pakistan's Imran Khan and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad. Iran and Qatar were also roped in. Pakistan watchers say Islamabad latched on to Turkey's Erdogan after India deepened its ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Imran Khan, however, backed

minute due to pressure from Riyadh but has made up by feting Erdogan - called Sultan by some supporters - at home, even emulating some of his policies back home.

Officials believe that Erdogan's political agenda has driven his government to expand its influence with South Asian

muslims, particularly those in India. Indian officials said the Turkish government had funded Kashmir's hardline separatist leader such as Syed Ali Shah Geelani for years. But it is the rapidly expanding scale of the effort that recently nudged security agencies to carry out an extensive review.

## Focus on Bangladesh Delhi must not let ties with Dhaka dip

The India-Bangladesh relationship, over the past decade, has been the brightest spot in Indian foreign policy. After a tense 1990s and 2000s, when power alternated between the moderate Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, and the extremist Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Begun Khaleda Zia, and a short period of indirect army rule, the Awami League returned to power in 2009. Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Bangladesh's iconic freedom fighter and first president, Mujibur Rahman, was clear that having good relations with India, externally, was essential for Bangladesh's progress and cracking down on Islamists, internally, was essential for maintaining democracy and peace. This translated into unprecedented security cooperation between the two countries, when Dhaka cracked down on militants and terrorists



who used Bangladesh as a base to conduct activities in India, particularly the Northeast. Delhi consistently backed Ms Hasina in her domestic political battles. This often meant arguing against the international community, particularly the United States and European Union, which was worried about the growing democratic deficit in Bangladesh. Delhi and Dhaka also signed a landmark boundary deal, resolving a four-decade-old problem. But it was not all smooth. India was unable to deliver on a Teesta water-sharing seal, which undermined Ms Hasina's political standing. But in recent years, two other significant developments have taken place. The Indian political discourse over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act-National Register of Citizens appeared, on the Dhaka street, as targeted towards Bangladesh.



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# Indo-Pacific encouraged by India standing up to China: US NSC official

**“Few countries are more familiar with China’s malign influence than India,” US National Security Council official Lisa Curtis said.**

India showed “will and capability to stand up to China” in the recent border conflict, said Lisa Curtis, senior director for South and Central Asia, US National Security Council. The rest of the Indo-Pacific countries are “watching this carefully” and have been “encouraged by India’s resolve.” Curtis said this during a Brookings Institution webinar on Wednesday assessing China’s growing regional influence. India, she noted, had “played the economic card” by banning Chinese apps and putting a hold on Chinese investments. “Thankfully,” she said, we are “beginning to see disengagement of forces” and “hoped it continues.” But the “pressure that China put on India on the Line of Actual Control” will have a long-term impact on how India views China and will “change the dynamics between the two.” An experienced South Asia hand who has served the US government in both India and Pakistan, Curtis said, “Few countries are more familiar with China’s malign influence than India.” China’s “recent aggressive

stance [in Ladakh] fits with the larger pattern of Chinese aggressiveness in other parts of the world.” Strengthening the US-India defence and security relationship has been a major element of Washington’s response and seeks to make India a “net security provider.” The relationship is more than just defence, she said, and cited the highlights of US President Donald Trump’s state visit to India in areas like economics and the present scientific collaboration in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. Twenty-five years ago China did not take India seriously, she said. India was seen as “inward-looking and lagging in its economic indicators.” Fifteen years ago, as India’s growth and military capabilities began taking off, there was a line of thinking that India and China would work together and “usher in a new Asian century.” From about 2010 or so differences over the long standing border dispute reemerged and each side became “uncomfortable” with the rise of the other. China’s influence in India’s neighbourhood, such as

in Sri Lanka and Nepal, moved from economic to “more and more interference in domestic politics.” Curtis said China’s influence in South Asia had grown significantly over the past 20 years. And Beijing’s actions were causing blowback. The Maldivian people had “pushed back” attempts by former president, Mohammed Yameen, to make his country dependent on Chinese debt by voting him out of office. Yameen had “awarded construction contracts to Chinese companies at inflated prices and without transparent bidding, leaving the Maldivian people with enormous debt.” While the US had provided counterterrorism help to Sri Lanka after the 2019 Easter terrorist bombings, Beijing had “tried to obstruct Sri Lanka’s investigations and spread disinformation about US assistance.” Bangladesh was “carefully balancing” between China and the rest, but praised their acceptance of one million Rohingya refugees. Nepal and Bhutan were examples of China disregarding the



sovereignty of its neighbours. Chinese official media in May had claiming the the entirety of Mount Everest for China and, more recently, Beijing claiming a natural park in eastern Bhutan. After discussing US attempts to roll back Chinese influence in Central Asia, Curtis mentioned Pakistan at the end of her written comments. “Nowhere in South and Central Asia has Chinese influence been more invasive than in Pakistan.” The \$60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor was neither aid nor an equity investment of the kind that had propelled China’s own growth. CPEC is being financed through sovereign debt which means the “risks are

borne by the Pakistani people and the benefits accrue to China.” However, she cited Beijing and Washington’s common support for an end to violence in Afghanistan as evidence the two countries could work together and stressed the US had “deep and abiding respect for the Chinese people.” India had been a sceptic of China’s Belt Road Initiative “from the beginning” and proven “very prescient” and its scepticism “was bearing out.” Countries in the region recovering from the pandemic should turn to international financial institutions to help their recovery or new US agencies like the Development Finance Corporation.

## Australia opposes unilateral actions to change status quo along LAC



**Australian high commissioner Barry O’Farrell conveyed his country’s position to external affairs minister S Jaishankar during a meeting, at which the two sides discussed developments across the Indo-Pacific region amid the Covid-19 pandemic.**

India’s position on the border standoff with China was backed on Thursday by Australia, which said it opposed attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as that could increase the risk of instability. Australian high commissioner Barry O’Farrell conveyed his country’s position to external affairs minister S Jaishankar during a meeting, at which the two sides discussed developments across the Indo-

Pacific region amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The Australian side urges restraint along the LAC and supports continued moves towards de-escalation, said a statement from the Australian high commission. “As I told the external affairs minister of India today, Australia opposes any attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo, which only serve to increase tension and the risk of instability,” O’Farrell was quoted as saying

in the statement. “It is important that the bilaterally-agreed principles and norms that have helped prevent escalation or miscalculation in the border areas over many decades continue to be observed,” the statement added. India has repeatedly said in recent weeks that it is opposed to any unilateral efforts to change the status quo along the LAC, along which tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese troops continue to be deployed.

There has been growing convergence between India and Australia on security issues and the role of China in the Indo-Pacific in recent months. The two sides elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed an agreement for reciprocal access to military logistics during a virtual summit last month. Australia, which is set to be invited to join the Malabar naval exercise conducted by India, Japan and the US, has also backed India’s calls for reform of international bodies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and sought a probe into the origins of the pandemic. During a meeting of the US and Australian defence and foreign ministers in Washington on Tuesday, the two countries envisaged a key role for India in defence cooperation and post-Covid-19 recovery efforts in the Indo-Pacific. The Australian mission’s statement further said that “Australia remains vigilant about strategic trends inimical to our vision of the region” even

as it focuses on the health and economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. Australia envisages an Indo-Pacific that is an open, free, rules-based region that is “resilient to coercion” and supported by inclusive institutions, the statement said. “Territorial disputes and competing claims should be resolved peacefully by the claimant countries, and in ways consistent with international law,” it added. Australia also continues to be deeply concerned by China’s actions in the South China Sea that are “destabilising and could provoke escalation”, the statement said. On July 23, Australia lodged a note with the UN Secretary General refuting China’s “unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea”. It added: “It rejects China’s claim to historic rights and internal waters, its assertion of certain maritime zones, and its contention there is wide international recognition of its South China Sea sovereignty claims.”

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# Meghan Markle fights to keep friends anonymous in newspaper lawsuit

**Meghan Markle's lawyers have asked a judge to keep the names of five of her friends out of the public domain.**

awyers for the Duchess of Sussex asked a judge at a London court on Wednesday to keep the names of five of her friends out of the public domain as she wages a privacy-infringement battle against a British newspaper. Meghan's attorney said the female friends, who defended her in anonymous magazine interviews last year, are innocent parties who fear intrusion, if their names come out. The target of her lawsuit, Associated Newspapers Ltd., argues that the principle of open justice — the public's right to know — means the friends should be identified. The former, Meghan Markle is suing the publisher of the Mail on Sunday newspaper and the MailOnline website at Britain's High Court over five articles that published portions of a handwritten letter she wrote to her estranged father, Thomas Markle, after her marriage to

Prince Harry in 2018. Meghan, 38, is seeking damages from the publisher for alleged misuse of private information, copyright infringement and data protection breaches. Her lawyers say publishing the letter was "a flagrant and unjustified intrusion into her private and family life." Associated Newspapers says it will strongly contest the claim. At a half-day pretrial hearing, Meghan's lawyers asked judge Mark Warby to prohibit publishing the personal details of the friends who spoke to People magazine in early 2019 to condemn alleged bullying of the duchess by the UK press. The women's names are included in a confidential court document, but they have been identified in public only as A to E. Meghan's attorney, Justin Rushbrooke, argued that the court had a duty to "protect the identity of confidential journalistic sources." He said that with the full high-profile libel trial yet to begin,

the court should be cautious and protect "the innocent party who fears intrusion." But the Mail's lawyer, Antony White, said granting anonymity would undermine the "vitally important open justice principle. The friends are important potential witnesses on a key issue," White said in a written argument. He said removing their names "would be a heavy curtailment of the media's and the defendant's entitlement to report this case and the public's right to know about it." Associated Newspapers says it was Meghan's friends who brought the letter to Thomas Markle into the public domain by describing it in the People article. It argues that details of the letter in that article must have come "directly or indirectly" from the duchess. But Rushbrooke said Meghan did not know at the time that her friends were speaking to the magazine. He said the



anonymous interviews were arranged by one of the five friends, who were concerned about the toll media criticism was taking on the duchess, pregnant at the time with her first child. In a witness statement submitted in the case, the duchess said "each of these women is a private citizen, young mother, and each has a basic right to privacy. These five women are not on trial, and nor am I," she wrote. "The publisher of the Mail on Sunday is the one on trial. It is this publisher that acted unlawfully and is attempting to evade accountability; to create a circus and distract from the point of this

case — that the Mail on Sunday unlawfully published my private letter." American actress Meghan Markle, former star of the TV legal drama Suits, married Queen Elizabeth II's grandson Harry in a lavish ceremony at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Their son Archie was born the following year, in January the couple announced they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said was an unbearable intrusion from the British media. Neither Harry nor Meghan was in court for Wednesday's hearing. The judge said he would give his ruling "as soon as I can."

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# Covid-19 deaths top 150,000 in worst-hit US as it deals with renewed surge in infections

**The United States is still battling its first wave, having never taken control of the coronavirus, and on Wednesday alone the country recorded 1,267 new deaths in the past 24 hours and notched more than 68,000 new daily cases.**

Southern and western regions of the United States were grappling Thursday with a renewed surge of coronavirus infections as the death toll in the world's worst-affected nation passed 150,000. Brazil is second to the US in terms of cases and fatalities, and also reported a sobering figure as it surpassed 90,000 deaths. Exactly six months after the World Health Organization declared an international emergency over the deadly pathogen, countries around the globe are seeing rises in infections that are damaging economies and forcing disruptive protection measures. Even nations that believed they had largely curbed the disease are being gripped by worrying second and third-wave resurgences, with Australia on Thursday reporting a record number of new infections and its

deadliest day of the pandemic so far. Despite efforts in place to contain the virus, Covid19 has killed more than 666,000 people around the world and total infections have passed 17 million, according to an AFP tally. Global daily cases are now approaching the 300,000 mark, with the curve showing no sign of flattening — it took just 100 hours for one million new cases to be recorded. Surge in Australia Days after Australian authorities expressed hope that a Melbourne lockdown — now in its third week — was bringing persistent outbreaks under control, the surge is a potent warning that initial successes in managing Covid-19 can quickly unravel. Thirteen deaths and 723 positive tests were reported in the southeastern state of Victoria alone, well beyond the previous nationwide record of 549 cases

set on Monday. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the steep rise in numbers was “very concerning”. In Hong Kong, where authorities fear a worrying third-wave of infections could cripple the healthcare system, the government reversed a day-old ban on restaurants serving dine-in customers following widespread public anger. All restaurants in the city of 7.5 million were ordered to only serve takeaways as part of a raft of ramped-up social distancing measures aimed at combating the fresh wave of virus cases. But social media was quickly swamped by photos of primarily blue-collar workers forced to eat on pavements and in parks — and even inside public toilets to escape a torrential downpour. The United States, however, is still battling its first wave, having never taken control of the virus,



and on Wednesday alone the country recorded 1,267 new deaths in the past 24 hours and notched more than 68,000 new daily cases. Southern and western states have been particularly hard-hit — especially Florida, where more than 6,300 people have died. The EU is due Thursday to update its list of countries approved for travel to the European bloc, which it reviews every two weeks. The United States was not on the list and is not expected to be included. The EU's safe list does, however, include Australia, Canada,

Georgia, Japan, Morocco, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia and Uruguay. The bloc is expected to announce that Algeria is being removed from the list after a resurgence of coronavirus. Meanwhile several countries in Europe have slapped restrictions on travel to and from Spain, while officials elsewhere bicker over the seriousness of the current outbreak. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, fresh from announcing quarantine for travelers returning from Spain, suggested the rest of Europe could be facing a second wave — despite his own country's dismal figures.

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- Stay home and call your doctor if you have symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat.
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- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.



### PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

- If you have chronic conditions like lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, avoid unnecessary gatherings and events.
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# Washington takes on Beijing

The US has finally woken up to the Chinese threat. This is good

Washington takes on Beijing The United States (US) and China are the world's two superpowers and they can barely stand each other. Senior US officials have given four speeches explaining why their government feels it is no longer possible to do business-as-usual with China. The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, gave the last one, adding a call for other democracies to recognise the nature of the threat, and suggesting that perhaps an "alliance of democracies" was the need of the hour, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. Earlier, the US' national security adviser, attorney general and head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation gave expositions on elements of Beijing's "designs for hegemony". The statements portrayed present-day China as a powerful entity, controlled by a malevolent leader, Xi Jinping, and a communist party, whose ideology of control and repression was being offered as a template for governance. China, they argued, seeks to extend its technology-enhanced thought control beyond its own borders. Mr Pompeo pointed to Beijing's overseas behaviour — treating treaties as "suggestions," violating every possible economic norm, disrespecting territorial norms — as predatory and unprecedented.



Friction between a rising power and a status quo power is basic international relations theory. The US argument is that China has become a major global player by working within an international order of which it is a primary beneficiary. Instead of seeking to embrace this order, Mr Xi has taken China down a darker path in which his own people have been the first victims and the rest of the world could be next. Mr Pompeo admits containment is no longer possible, but if "like-minded nations" push back concertedly, China can still be kept at bay. This will be music to New Delhi's ears. Few governments have consistently had as unblinkered a view of China as New Delhi. Mr Pompeo now calls for others to practise this, but India has long insisted on reciprocity and transparency from China. In the past, India preferred not to raise its concerns in the international arena because its views of the Middle Kingdom were seen as petulance, including by Washington. But New Delhi should still wait to see if these speeches represent a new US consensus. Strikingly, the new "Trump doctrine" was laid out by everyone except the president. And the other candidate for the Oval Office, while agreeing China is a competitor, believes he can still do business with it. The US policy remains a work-in-progress.

# UK Rapper Solo 45 Jailed For 24 Years For Rapes



London, United Kingdom: A British court Thursday jailed for 24 years a fast-rising rap artist who was found guilty of repeatedly raping and assaulting four women he had held against their will. Andy Anokye was known by his stage name Solo 45 and had collaborated with stars such as Wiley and Stormzy when he was caught in 2017. The 33-year-old was convicted of 21 rapes and five counts of false imprisonment by a court in the southwestern city of Bristol. Judge William Hart told Anokye during sentencing that the rapper had "become addicted" to "perverted pleasure". "You were part of a well-known collective — Boy

Better Know. The fellow artists from that collective have achieved great success," the judge said. "They are in no way tarnished by your misdeeds which you carried out in a private way." The grime collective was founded in London by musicians known as Jme and Skepta. The Guardian newspaper said one of Anokye's victims testified that she was water-boarded. "He put me on the bed and put a flannel over my face and poured a bottle of water over it, which made me feel like I was drowning," she said. Another said she was stabbed in the thigh and held at knife point.

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# Republicans openly challenge Trump's tweet on delaying election



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell similarly insisted that the election will go on as planned.

"Never in the history of the country, through wars, depressions and the Civil War, have we ever not had a federally-scheduled election on time. We'll find a way to do that again this November 3rd," the majority leader said in an interview with WNKY.

Earlier on Thursday, Trump tweeted, "With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the USA. Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???" CNN has previously fact checked claims by Trump that there is a distinction between mail-in voting and absentee voting -- and experts say those voting systems are essentially the same thing. There is also no widespread fraud in US elections.

An array of congressional Republicans, including more than a dozen members in both the House and Senate and in the party's leadership, openly rejected President Donald Trump's suggestion Thursday that November's presidential election should be delayed, a move that the President would have no authority to make because the Constitution gives Congress the power to set the date for voting. It was the latest example of the President making incendiary comments on Twitter -- and putting Republicans in an awkward spot to deal with the fallout.

Senate Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican and Trump ally, told CNN when asked about the President's call to delay the election: "I don't think that's a particularly good idea." Majority Whip Sen. John Thune, a member of Republican leadership, told CNN that there will be an election in November despite the President's tweet. "I think that's probably a statement that gets some press attention, but I doubt it gets any serious traction," Thune said. "I think we've had elections every November since about 1788, and I expect that will be the case again this year," he said.

# This is the only city in America where unemployment is actually down

The small city of Owensboro, Kentucky, has been extremely lucky in this recession. While the rest of America grapples with historically high unemployment, Owensboro's job market has emerged relatively unscathed. Out of 389 metropolitan areas tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it's the only city in the nation where the unemployment rate hasn't risen over the past year. City officials chalk that up to its biggest employers: health care providers, bourbon and tobacco producers, and makers of personal protective equipment.

"We've managed it as a community," Owensboro Mayor Tom Watson told CNN Business on Wednesday.

To date, Watson said the city had about 500 confirmed coronavirus cases, which have led to 53 people being hospitalized and eight deaths. Whereas national unemployment was about 11% in June, Owensboro's unemployment rate was just 4.2%. That was down slightly from June 2019, according to a

new report from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The city's working population of nearly 54,000 had just over 2,200 unemployed people in June, down from 2,499 a year ago. The city hasn't been immune to job cuts; it lost about 3,200 jobs from a year ago, according to BLS. Some workers have also dropped out of the labor force, which is partly why the unemployment rate fell — but even so, joblessness there remains well below the rest of the country. Owensboro's restaurant and small business communities were forced to furlough and lay off staff in March when government-ordered shutdowns began. But according to Mayor Watson, the city's major private employers compete in some of the few industries seeing economic gains during the pandemic and have been hiring as a result. Owensboro's largest employer — its hospital, Owensboro Health — has been doing well financially throughout the pandemic, according to the mayor.

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## मोदी का एलान-ए-जंग

# बूंद-बूंद को तरसेगा पाक

नहीं बका आ रहा पाकिस्तान, तीसरे दिन भी की गोरीबंदी, भारत ने दिया कटाक गवाब

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## Does Biden Really Need A Black Running Mate?



made deliberately difficult. The other Trump attack is on law and order. He is using the Black Lives Matter protests to show white America that he is the strongman that will maintain law and order while his challenger Joe Biden would allow many Portlands to flower. In fact, yesterday's promise to send federal forces to Detroit (Michigan) Milwaukee (Wisconsin) and Cleveland (Ohio) to curb protests and stop murders, is directed at white fears in these three key battleground states which helped him win the presidency in 2016 but where he is trailing in opinion polls right now.

White fears over law and order were much of the reason why after the rioting in Chicago at the Democratic convention in 1968, Richard Nixon focused his campaign on those events and called on the silent majority to come out and support him.

Trump strongly believes that racism and law and order (which he intertwines) are what will bring the suburbs back.

An academic study by Loran Collingwood et al says that of the nine per cent of the voters who switched loyalties in 2016, the main reason was race and that this may be a continuing phenomenon.

"Our findings suggest that racial and immigration attitudes may be continuing to sort White voters into new partisan camps and

further polarize the parties," says the study.

So why should Biden select a black woman as his Vice Presidential running mate? (He has already committed that the running mate will be a woman) The argument is that it would solidify black support for him and would specifically help bring back the 6 per cent blacks that didn't turn up in 2016 for Hillary Clinton. One study has showed that in the three key blue states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, just under 1 million potential black voters did not turn up. That's a very powerful argument. Consolidate the black vote with a black on the ticket. But there are problems with that approach.

The first is to recognise that anyone voting for Biden is also taking into account the fact that his Vice president may succeed to office, given Biden's age. Therefore those voting for the Democratic ticket with a Black as the running mate must consciously acknowledge that they are happy to have a black woman President. The question then is how many Americans want another Black president?

If you were to scratch the surface of many white independents (who are almost a third of the electorate), it is highly unlikely that they would support another black president.

Obama managed to lose the support of independents by seven per cent, dropping from 52% to 45%. Hillary Clinton managed to push that down to 42 per cent. A recent CBS poll (July 24) found Biden trailing Trump marginally in independent voter support by 40 to 43 per cent. The fact is the Obama presidency is the reason that Trump is in office. Obama managed to lose white support within days of becoming President.

His support dropped by four per cent in 2012 compared to 2008, and it was only the huge black support (93%) and the Hispanic (71%) and Asian (73%) votes that took him over the line in 2012.

The second point - how many blacks are likely to not vote for the Democratic ticket, irrespective of who the running mate is?

Black support to democrats has remained close to 90 per cent for decades, even though the turnout dropped in 2016. Black voters know that Trump isn't a real option for them. In 2018, the off year election, the black turnout surged to 51 per cent from 41 per cent in 2014. And the same CBS shows that the majority of blacks are voting against Trump or because they are Democrats.

As Beyonce said about black voters, "We have to vote because our life depends on it, because it does."

There are less than 100 days left in the race for the US Presidency. And Race is becoming a major issue in the campaign, no thanks to a struggling President Donald Trump.

On Wednesday, in Texas, he hit at the core white Americas' way of living in saying that he had stopped the Democrats from bringing in low income housing to white suburbs and changing the racial profile of these places. It is core because it was the Black immigration in the fifties and sixties that drove White America to the suburbs, and has more recently driven them to sub-suburbs. It was white suburban America that pushed Trump into the White House, when he shattered the blue (Democrats)

wall in three key states -- Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan. With narrow margins of less than one per cent in each of these states, he stole 46 electoral votes from Hillary Clinton. And the presidency.

For the first time since 2008, the Democrats seem to be regaining White support (the above chart shows exit poll data till 2016) and this is critical to winning an election. Non-Hispanic white America is only 60 per cent of the population when it comes to votes, but it is still the dominating force accounting for 73 per cent of the total vote share. The reason for the low minority turnout ranges from economic (no time off) to lack of registration. In Republican states like Texas, registration for minorities is

## Was Money Laundered? In Sushant Singh Rajput Case, A New Angle: 10 Facts

**Sushant Singh Rajput was found dead in his apartment in Mumbai's Bandra on June 14. The Mumbai Police is investigating allegations of professional rivalry along with his reported clinical depression.**

A "suspicious transaction" worth ? 15 crore is under the lens of the Enforcement Directorate, which probes financial crimes, in the investigation into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, sources have said. The agency has sought details of a police case filed by the actor's father in Bihar to probe the transaction allegedly involving the brother of Sushant's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty. The 34-year-old actor had died by suicide at his Mumbai apartment last month, the police have said.

**Here are the 10 latest developments in this story:**

1. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has sought details, including a copy of the First Information Report or FIR filed this week based on a complaint by Sushant

Singh Rajput's father KK Singh, from the Bihar Police.

2. The FIR named six people, including actor Rhea Chakraborty, her brother and other family members, and accused her of cheating Sushant financially, harassing him mentally and driving him to suicide.

3. The FIR mentions a "suspicious transaction" worth ? 15 crore that has piqued the interest of the Enforcement Directorate which has sought details to look into a possible money laundering angle.

4. "No PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) case has been registered by ED yet. We have just sought case details from Bihar Police. A decision regarding initiating money laundering probe will be made after examining the

details and documents from Bihar Police," sources in the agency told NDTV.

5. Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court dismissed an appeal for transferring the probe into Sushant Singh Rajput's death to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

6. "Let the police do its job," said Chief Justice SA Bobde, directing petitioner Alka Priya to "Go to the Bombay High Court if you have anything concrete".

7. To calls from various political leaders for a CBI investigation, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh had said on Wednesday that there is "no question" of transferring the case. Ms Chakraborty had also requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah to transfer the case



to the CBI earlier this month. 8. The Supreme Court has also been approached by Sushant Singh Rajput's father who has asked it to hear him before deciding on Rhea Chakraborty's petition to transfer the case filed by him from Patna to Mumbai. The Bihar government has backed his petition.

9. Sushant Singh Rajput was found dead in his apartment in Mumbai's Bandra on June 14.

The Mumbai Police is investigating allegations of professional rivalry along with his reported clinical depression.

10. Over 40 people have recorded their statements so far in the case, including Rhea Chakraborty, director-producer Sanjay Leela Bhansali, filmmaker Aditya Chopra, director Mukesh Chhabra, filmmaker Shekhar Kapoor, film critic Rajeev Masand among others.



***In Ladakh, both sides had agreed to a phased withdrawal and the creation of buffer zones with limits of patrolling to avoid any further clashes. As events are playing out, it is evident that China is dragging its feet on a pullback beyond symbolic gestures.***

At a time when the world is immersed in combating a pandemic, China has upped the ante with its military manoeuvres and territorial onslaughts on nations in the South China Sea and cartographic aggression in the Indo-Pacific region combined with an aggressive display of naval and air power. Forays into the Indian territory were an adjunct. Nations at the receiving end scampered to put up a united front against this unexpected rampage. The US responded by sending two Carrier Battle Groups with their aircraft, cruisers, guided missiles, destroyers and submarines to operate in the South China Sea, and also to maintain surveillance over the choke point of the Malacca Straits through which some 94,000 vessels pass each year carrying a fourth of the world trade. There was accelerated focus on the QUAD and a desire for a combined front at international forums.

Even as these events were unfolding, China engineered a significant manoeuvre with wide-ranging ramifications. It signed a \$400 billion deal with Iran encompassing a wide range of important sectors of Iranian economy such as banking, ports, rail and telecommunications. India has also been put on notice for the development of the Chabahar Port, the Chabahar-Zahedan rail link as also the development and exploitation of the Farzad-B oil field. Add to this the reported handover of another port of Jash, merely 300 km from Chabahar, which will deny India access to Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. With India

hampered by the US sanctions on Iran, this was something waiting to happen. The situation can be retrieved as this deal has its opponents within the Gulf region, even as it hampers the US trade agreements with the Central Asian republics. Simultaneously, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated the Daimar Basha dam which has been built by China in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and signed up for another two-Azad Pattan and Kohalu, all part of the CPEC to which India has objected to vigorously. Ultimately it boils down to dexterity and speed in decision-making while putting money on the table. A quote from Shakespeare would drive the point closer home: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads onto fortune: omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows." Closer home, towards the end of April, the Chinese Western Theatre Command, having completed their exercises on the edge of the Gobi Desert, took to the Xinjiang highway with one motorised and one mechanised division. In a well-rehearsed move, they branched off on to a series of feeder roads along the LAC in Ladakh. Once the troops were in position, they initiated multiple incursions across the LAC. A mirror deployment by the Indian Army resulted in a clash at the Galwan Valley about which much has been written. After the Doklam incident, this was the next provocation. The Doklam plateau is of extreme strategic value, poised as it is to dominate the Chumbi Valley dagger which in turn is the Sword of Damocles

hanging over the "Chicken Neck" of the Siliguri corridor. China has now laid claim to the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary in eastern Bhutan. A first for a country laying claim to a territory not contiguous to its own and passing through a third country.

In Ladakh, both sides had agreed to a phased withdrawal and the creation of buffer zones with limits of patrolling to avoid any further clashes. As events are playing out, it is evident that China is dragging its feet on a pullback beyond symbolic gestures. Now that we are in for the long haul, do we have a well thought out long-term plan? To my mind, this is just a pause in an extended game of checkmate. We are dealing with a bellicose neighbour obsessed with reasserting rights over land which their predecessors may have acquired through conquest or guile. Their own history of submission for over a century to the Mongols, then to the Japanese, followed by the colonial powers that ruled over them are glossed over, as of little consequence.

China has land borders with 14 neighbours covering an estimated 22100 kilometres. As its economic status burgeoned, so did its military muscle. Based on a medieval mindset of the Middle Kingdom, the Centre of the Universe and head of the Confucian family, China has embarked on claims based on perceived imbalances of treaties forced on them when the country was weak. Some of these have been resolved after bloody clashes such as with

Russia and Vietnam, while others were resolved through a combination of lucrative offers of money, trade and guile. In most cases, the result has been such that victory can be claimed by both sides. Russia accepted half of China's claim, Kazakhstan was given lucrative economic deals, who in turn promised help with the Uighurs, and Kyrgyzstan retained 70 % of the land, ceding 30% to China. Tajikistan gave up 1000 square kms, less than 5% of the claim, while the Myanmar issue was settled with an oil deal. Generally, nations wish to avoid war and prefer a settlement. India with a strong central leadership which has an overwhelming majority in Parliament, and with battle hardened armed forces is no push over. We have displayed a strong resolve with our build up post Galwan. What next? Now that there is a pause, it is time to plan our strategy for our Northern borders.

The Sino-Indian border stretches over 4056 kms (2520 miles) and traverses one Union Territory (Ladakh) and the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. Mobilisation of considerable sections of the army, air force, naval has a high economic cost. Factor into this the stocking supplies for the additional troops and equipment which will be positioned there during the winter months, when temperatures plunge below zero degree. Add to this the value of weapon systems and platforms being procured expeditiously from across the world. An economic cost has been imposed on us even without a single shot having been fired. As a soldier who has witnessed the death, destruction and devastation during the 1971 war and Kargil war, I would opt for the adage of Sun Tzu - "The supreme art of warfare is to subdue the enemy without fighting."

Out of the box solutions, based on years of experience, sensitive details of which cannot be shared in articles or debated on television channels could and should be examined. There is a

need to create a Border Vigilance Force along the entire Northern border to lessen the strain on the Army and the ITBP. As per reports, the ITBP is seeking an expansion of its personnel deployed along the entire length of the border to assist in turnover and relief. We have another valuable armed asset of approximately the same strength-the Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB)-raised in 1963 for employment along our Northern borders. It is currently looking after the Indo-Nepal border. Since this is not a very active border, the present situation can easily be handled by the respective state police forces with their armed wings. It would be worthwhile to deploy both the ITBP and the SSB on the LAC, one to the eastern and the other to the western sector of the LAC. Stiffened by Scouts Battalions from the Army, they can maintain vigil across the entire LAC. Given intelligence resources, satellite imagery, drones and Intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance systems, they can easily maintain vigilance along the entire border during the winter months.

The Army can then be pulled back closer to base areas from where they can be redeployed in any sector in which the need may arise. Here they can integrate and familiarise with the new equipment being procured as also prepare for the next summer. It is obvious that the Chinese cannot use tanks and mechanised columns in the mountainous terrain prevailing on our side of the LAC during the winter months. Also, we need much lesser troops in a defensive role enabling us to use the surpluses thus created open to options for a strike by a larger force. If the head of the opponent is an obstacle, we can strike at the middle or the tail to force a recoil. A potent threat to help deter a war. Taking up the cause of suppressed and antagonistic groups in Tibet and along the CPEC at world forums will be a great force multiplier.\

## **China's Pullback In Ladakh Pause In Game Of Checkmate; Time India Plans Strategy For Northern Borders**

# China says disengagement process almost complete in eastern Ladakh, India disagrees

China's Ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, on Thursday addressed a webinar on India-China relations. The webinar was titled 'India-China Relations: The Way Forward'.

Pinning the blame squarely on India, the Chinese envoy said that they are not to blame for the Galwan valley incident of June 15.

"China and India have signed a number of protocols to abide by. Clearly the Chinese troops always patrol on the Chinese side and not across the Line of Actual

Control (LAC). That is very clear that the right and wrong of these incidents and frictions are very clear. It was the Indian side that first went across the line and violently attacked Chinese officers and soldiers," said the Chinese envoy.

When asked about the perception of the LAC and the Chinese have violated the understanding he alluded to New Delhi "unilaterally" deciding on the perceptions which is far from the truth since there are five agreements that have been

signed between the two countries since 1996.

He said, "One side has unilaterally put its own side of the LAC during the negotiations. That will create new disputes and that's why this process cannot move on. That itself is a departure from the purpose of defining the LAC. Before we can solve this problem, we need to maintain peace and tranquility at the border."

On the situation at the border he said, "with the joint efforts of both sides, the border troops have

disengaged in most localities.

The situation on the ground is de-escalating and the temperature is coming down." But the Indian side differed on the ground realities. Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said during his weekly briefing of Thursday, "There has been some progress made towards this objective but the disengagement process has as yet not been completed. The Senior Commanders of the two sides will be meeting in the near future to work out steps in this regard."

Ambassador Sun Weidong said that China has never claimed any territory which is not theirs rejecting the label of "expansionist".

"China firmly upholds its sovereignty & meanwhile will never engage in aggression or expansion. China has firmly safeguard its national sovereignty, security & development interests. We have never been aggressive & pursued own development at expense of other countries" he said.

He also warned India not to interfere in China's internal affairs amid calls from various quarters asking the Indian administration to be more aggressive in its stand on the issues of Taiwan, Hong Kong and the human rights abuse in Xinjiang and Tibet.

"Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Xizang affairs are totally China's internal affairs and bear on China's sovereignty and security. While China doesn't interfere in other country's internal affairs, it allows no external interference and never trades its core interests either," he said.

He emphasised on five points. He

said "China advocates win-win cooperation & opposes zero-sum game. Our economies are highly complementary, interwoven & interdependent. Forced decoupling is against the trend and will only lead to a "lose-lose" outcome."

"Our economic & trade exchanges should be a positive cycle of mutual accomplishment. It should not become a knockout nor a zero-sum game deliberately suppressing others. We should recognize mutually beneficial and win-win nature and jointly create an open, fair, just business environment," he added.

"Our relations today are hard-earned and should be cherished all the more. At this critical moment, we should handle relations cautiously, calmly and rationally, conform to international trend, always look forward and move forward, resolutely avoid whirlpool of suspicion & confrontation," said the Chinese envoy.

While China asks India to meet halfway, India said that the onus was on Beijing to adhere to the understanding reached by both sides in various meetings.

"As we have stated earlier, the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is the basis of our bilateral relationship. Therefore, we expect that the Chinese side will sincerely work with us for complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas at the earliest as agreed to by the Special Representatives," said Srivastava.

## Coronavirus cases in India cross 16 lakh-mark; 10 lakh recoveries and over 35,000 deaths

which is updated in the morning, India's Covid tally by 8 am was 15,83,792 and the death toll stood at 34,968. Since then, data updated by several states have sent the tally past 16 lakhs and toll over 35,000. The worst-affected state of India, Maharashtra reported 11,147 cases of novel coronavirus on Thursday evening, while Delhi added 1093 new cases to its tally. Andhra Pradesh, which is among the top 5 worst-affected states by the coronavirus, reported over 10,000 new cases, Tamil Nadu reported 5,864 and Karnataka 6,128. Meanwhile, Kerala has reported 506 new cases of the novel coronavirus. Adding these numbers to the national tally, the total figure comes to 16,18,697. The official number of total coronavirus cases however remains at 15.84 lakh as the Ministry of Health's data dashboard is updated in the morning.

According to information on the Union health ministry portal, over 10 lakh people have recovered and nearly 35,000 have died due to the virus. However, the government expressed hope for the country as it has said that India's recovery rate has shown positive trends. "It was 7.85 per cent in April and today it is 64.4 per cent," a health ministry official told media at the presser on Thursday. The case fatality rate in India today is 2.21 per cent and it's among the lowest in the world, he said.

## Dunkin' is closing 800 US locations



Dunkin' is permanently closing 8% of its United States locations, which amounts to roughly 800 restaurants.

The company announced the changes in its second quarter earnings, released Thursday. Dunkin' described the closures as "real estate portfolio rationalization" and said the affected locations are in "low-volume sales locations" that only represent 2% of its US sales as of 2019.

More than half of the closures

are in Speedway convenience stores, a change it previously announced in February. These locations are set to be closed by the end of this year.

Dunkin' (DNKN) also said approximately 350 locations "may permanently close" outside of the US.

Earlier this week, McDonald's (MCD) also said it was closing about 200 "low-volume" locations with more than half being in Walmart

(WMT) stores.

## Lord Ram's Images, Ayodhya Temple Model To Be Displayed At New York's Times Square On August 5

Mr Sewhani told news agency Press Trust of India that among the prominent billboards that are being leased for the occasion are the giant Nasdaq screen and the 17,000-square-foot wrap-around LED display screen, considered among the largest continuous exterior displays in the world and the highest-resolution exterior LED screen in Times Square.

Beginning from 8 a.m. on August 5 till 10 p.m., images of the words 'Jai Shri Ram' in Hindi and English, Lord Ram's portraits and videos, 3D portraits of the temple's design and architecture as well as pictures of the laying of the foundation stone by Prime Minister Modi will be displayed across

several billboards, which are among the most striking and popular features of Times Square, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Mr Sewhani said that members of the Indian community will also gather at Times Square on August 5 to mark the celebration and distribute sweets. "This is not a once-in-a-lifetime or a once-in-a-century event. This is an event that comes once in the life of mankind. We had to give it a befitting celebration and what better place than the iconic Times Square to commemorate the 'Ram Janma Bhoomi shilanyas' (groundbreaking ceremony), Mr Sewhani said. "Under Prime Minister Modi, the construction of the Ram Temple is a

dream come true for Hindus all over the world. Till six years back, we never thought that this day will come soon but due to Prime Minister Modi's leadership, this day has come and we want to celebrate it in a befitting way," he said, adding that on August 5, images of Lord Ram will flood Times Square. Mr Sewhani said that the Times Square commemoration is being made possible with the help and support of the community and sponsors. Prime Minister Modi had announced the formation of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust in February. The Trust has invited PM Modi to lay the foundation stone of the grand Ram Temple.

# India extends ban on international flights till August 31

**Earlier this month, in the wake of a surge in Covid-19 cases across the country, the civil aviation ministry had extended the ban on international flights till July 31. Prior to that, the earlier order had said the ban would be in place till July 15.**

India on Friday aviation ministry had extended the ban on international commercial passenger flights till August 31. But the restriction shall not apply to international cargo operations and flights specifically approved by aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

"The government has decided to extend the suspension on the Scheduled International Commercial Passenger Services to/from India up to 2359 hours IST of 31st August," the statement read. Earlier this month, in the wake of a surge in Covid-19 cases across the country, the civil

India.

The country has also signed a travel bubble agreement with Kuwait to evacuate stranded passengers both to and from India. Further similar arrangements are likely to be put in place by the aviation ministry to ease passenger movements from different countries. On July 9, India had announced an air bubble with the United Arab Emirates that would be in place from July 12 to 26.

A bilateral air bubble refers to a travel corridor between two countries that wish to reopen their borders and re-establish connections with each other. International flights to and from



India have been suspended since March 23 as the Covid-19 pandemic spread across the world to nearly 185 countries. Limited domestic flights have since resumed on certain sectors from May 25.

During the suspension of international flights due to the Covid-19 outbreak in India and other countries, more than 2,500 repatriation flights by foreign carriers to evacuate

stranded nationals to and from India were approved by the government.

Under the Centre's massive Vande Bharat Mission, national carrier Air India and its subsidiary Air India Express have evacuated 2,67,436 stranded passengers and other flights have brought back 4,86,811 passengers between May 6 to July 30.

# Mapping education inequalities

**Students from the richest 20% of the society are seventeen times more likely to be studying law than those from the poorest 20%.**

Earlier this week, the government released the New Education Policy after a gap of 34 years. Among other things the NEP seeks to encourage school education in mother tongue, do away with a Chinese wall between professional and non-professional education and promote an inter-disciplinary approach. An HT analysis of unit level data from a recently released National Statistical Office (NSO) survey on education, which was conducted in 2017-18 shows that these are exactly the fields where India's education landscape has massive inequalities has been undergoing a lot of churning. This two-part data journalism series seeks to highlight some of these aspects.

The first part will highlight that there is a deep aspiration for imparting English medium education to children, access to which continues to remain unequal. It will also highlight how socio-economic hierarchies determine access to professional education. The second part will discuss how share of students getting into

professional courses, especially engineering, has fallen in this decade. This according to experts could be a result of their falling utility in the job market.

Students from the richest 20% of the society are seventeen times more likely to be studying law than those from the poorest 20%. And a student who does not belong to an other backward class (OBC), scheduled class (SC) or scheduled tribe (ST) is six times more likely to be studying management than a Scheduled Tribe (ST) student in India. Girls are less likely to be getting English medium education than boys, and more women take up humanities than men in India. India's education landscape is extremely unequal. These inequalities manifest themselves in the form of differences based on caste, class and, in some cases, gender. Those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder are more likely to be studying humanities than a professional course. They are also much less likely to have

access to English medium education. Differences in geographical location can increase or decrease these inequalities.

Stereotyping, however, is of little help in understanding India's education landscape. For example, the commonly held belief that most Muslims send their children to Madrasas (religious seminaries) and not proper schools is a myth which is not supported by data.

These findings are based on an HT analysis of unit level data of a nationally representative survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) in 2017-18 and released in July.

The data points cited above are in keeping with the larger trend of students from privileged sections of the society, who are more likely to be studying professional courses. (See Chart 1A and 1B)

The socio-economic have-nots also have a much lower likelihood of receiving English medium education. A student who does not belong to an other backward class (OBC),



scheduled class (SC) or scheduled tribe (ST) is almost three times more likely to getting English medium education than a Scheduled Caste (SC) student. A student from the top 20% of society is ten times more likely to be studying in an English medium school than someone who belongs to the bottom 20%. (See Chart 2)

To be sure, both humanities and non-English medium education are the most common among Indian students.

Interestingly, even India's poorest and socially most deprived parents are doing all they can, including spending beyond their means, to send their children to English-medium schools. The inequality in English-medium education is the lowest at the

pre-primary level. For example, the share of students who do not belong to an other backward class (OBC), scheduled class (SC) or scheduled tribe (ST) receiving English-medium education at the pre-primary level is 1.4 times more than the share of SC students. This gap increases to 2.7, 2.9, 2.8 and 2.4 at the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary level. Similarly, a student from the top 20% of the society is 5.4 times more likely to study in an English-medium school than a student from the bottom 20% at the pre-primary level. At the primary and upper-primary levels, this number increases to 11.6; and to 12.1. At the secondary and higher-secondary levels this ratio is 6.1.

# Despite Trump tweet, election won't be delayed - but all-mail voting poses grave dangers

## Concerns that Trump has raised about mail-in voting are based on documented problems

Many people misinterpreted President Trump's tweet Thursday morning about a possible delay in the Nov. 3 election as a threat by him to postpone the election. But that's not what his tweet said - and in any event, no president has the power to delay Election Day.

"The president is simply raising a question, whereas Democrats are proposing an entirely new system (of massive mail-in voting) that will result in enormous delays in the election results," a senior Trump administration official told Fox News Thursday afternoon.

In a morning tweet, the president wrote: "With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the USA. Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???" As I have explained previously, only Congress has the constitutional authority to change the date of the federal general election. Article I, Section 4 of the Constitution gives Congress the authority to set the "Times, Places and Manner" of congressional elections. Similarly, Article II, Section 1 gives Congress the authority to set the date on which we vote for the slates of presidential electors through the Electoral College.

The date for both congressional and presidential elections has been set by law as the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November since 1845.

Congress could delay the November election if it passed an amendment to federal law and the president signed it. But the likelihood of that happening is virtually nil, and this was made clear by bipartisan criticism of the president's morning tweet from House and Senate members. Congress has never delayed a federal election, even during the Civil War and World War II. Doing

so would be a mistake, and it's clear that isn't going to happen. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, experience shows that we can vote safely in-person as long as election officials implement the safety protocols recommended by health experts in polling places - the same protocols we are all using when we go to the grocery store or pharmacy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released such guidelines June 22. I voted safely in-person in my town council election recently in Virginia with those types of health precautions in place.

Even during the coronavirus pandemic that has so disrupted our lives, it would be a mistake to go to an all-mail election. Concerns that President Trump has raised about mail-in voting are based on documented problems we have seen with such voting.

Mail-in ballots are the ballots most vulnerable to being altered, stolen, or forged. Just look at the current investigation going on in Paterson, N.J., over a recent municipal election conducted entirely by mail.

Four Paterson residents have already been charged with criminal election fraud, including a councilman and councilman-elect. Evidence is surfacing of everything from voters reporting that they never received their absentee ballots (even though they are recorded as having voted) to accusations that one of the campaigns may have submitted fraudulent ballots.

Mail-in ballots also have a higher rejection rate than votes cast in person. In the Paterson case, election officials apparently rejected one in five ballots for everything from signatures on the ballots not matching the signatures of voters on file, to ballots not complying with the technical rules that apply to absentee ballots.

New York, which has taken more than a month to count the ballots from its June 23

primary election, is also reporting a similar rejection rate. This should be considered unacceptable by anyone believing in fair and accurate elections.

These kinds of technical problems - when a voter doesn't provide all of the information required with an absentee ballot - occur because there is no election official in people's homes to answer their questions. At polling places, by contrast, election officials can try to remedy any problems a voter encounters.

Then there is the problem of mail-in ballots being miscarried or not delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. States with recent primaries, including Wisconsin and Maryland, have reported voters not receiving their ballots or not getting them in time to be voted and returned.

In addition, there have been problems with the Postal



Service not postmarking ballots, making it impossible for election officials to determine whether the ballots were mailed in time to be counted. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission says that in the last four federal elections, 2.7 million mail-in ballots were misdelivered and 1.3 million were rejected by election officials. In the 2016 election, almost 130 million Americans voted. Does anyone really think the Postal Service will be able to suddenly handle 260 million pieces of additional mail - that is, the ballots being mailed out by election officials, and then mailed back by voters? Just from a practical standpoint, that

is asking for chaos and mass disenfranchisement.

Inevitably, it will take longer to tabulate the results of the election if there is a massive amount of mail-in voting, particularly in close races for the presidency and down-ballot offices. But if the outcome of the election is still in doubt by Jan. 20, 2021 - the day the Constitution says the winner of the presidential election is supposed to be sworn into office - due to litigation and/or the long delays in counting mailed ballots, the 20th Amendment to the Constitution provides that Congress "may by law provide...who shall then act as President."

By Hans von Spakovsky

## Ayodhya Ram Temple will help Indians reconnect with past, honour our brave ancestors: Amish Tripathi

"Many of us Indians, especially the educated ones, don't realise that we are the only surviving pre-Bronze age culture. Every other pre-Bronze age culture has been wiped out. China is also an ancient culture but it is not pre-Bronze age," Amish Tripathi said. "Therefore for us to be rebuilding and reconnecting with what our ancient past was in some ways it helps us make peace with the pain of the invasions that were suffered over the last 1,000 years. And helps us acknowledge bravery of our ancestors who kept their culture alive. This in a sense is a statement to the world and to ourselves and our descendants that our culture is eternal it will not die," he said. Asked if the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya will divide society further because a mosque stood at the very same spot, Amish Tripathi said we need to acknowledge the past only then can we make peace with it. No one calls the British colonial rule in India as the Christian rule. So why is

the Turkish colonial rule over India called the Muslim rule? Indian Muslims under those invaders were as oppressed as Indian Hindus. Those were foreigners who were ruling us. Our films have added to this confusion by portraying Indian invaders like Ranvir Singh as Alaaddin Khilji and Hrithik Roshan as Akbar. In reality, the Turkish invaders looked very different from Indians," he said. Amish said denying the truth of what happened during the invasions on India is not going to take away the poison from society. "We need to accept the truth of what happened and realise that those were horrific and barbaric invaders who did terrible crimes upon Indians, but they have nothing to do with Indian Muslims. Once we realise this, we can make peace with our painful past," he said.

"Our past greatness should not be a cover for our present failures. It should instead be the fuel for greater progress. We must take everyone along,

but it must be done with an acknowledgement of truth," Amish Tripathi said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending the ground-breaking ceremony (bhumi puja) on August 5. Besides him, BJP veterans LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will also be present in Ayodhya for the ceremony. However, days ahead of the August 5 bhumi puja of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, a priest and 16 cops posted at the Ram Mandir site have tested positive for Covid-19. The junior priest is reportedly a disciple of the head priest.

The Supreme Court in November last year ruled in favour of the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site where the Babri Masjid once stood. The Babri Masjid was demolished in December 1992 by "kar sevaks" who claimed that the mosque in Ayodhya was built on the site of an ancient Ram temple.

# Are the leading tech companies "Too big to fail"?

**Whether you are aware of it or not, we have become dependent of a handful of internet companies. With almost 100% certainty you have used one of their products, simply because otherwise you were probably not able to read this article. Begging the question, have these companies become too big to fail?**

Introducing the leading tech companies (MAAAFAT)

Before answering the main question, we need to dig in to some terminology. If you are not an investor, you probably never heard of the FAANG [1], BAT [2] or the MAAN [3], and why should you? Well maybe you should, just because they are so important to us. Simply put, these acronyms stand for a selection of stocks. Hence, FAANG stands for Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google (although that is now called Alphabet), MAAN stands for Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and Netflix and BAT stands for Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent. But why do we use these names? Well, the FAANG was born since these stocks have something in common: they are the best performing tech stocks and are called growth stocks, since their value increases almost steadily year on year. The other acronyms are just some competitor combinations, where the BAT is China's equivalent.

As told in the introduction, you are probably using one of their products. If you are on a phone you either are using an Apple or an Android phone (which is owned by Alphabet/Google) since they have a combined market share of about 99% [4] in the phone operating systems market. One may think there was a time when there was a battle between more platforms/companies. Although this is true, the only smartphone competitor that had quite some market share was Microsoft, which is basically just another big tech company. So if you are using a computer, you may think you are better off. This is true, but only marginally. The desktop operating system market is dominated by Windows (Microsoft) and Mac OS (Apple). Their dominance ranges from 94 to 97% [5][6], so the total operating system market is dominated by Microsoft, Google and Apple (96-97%)[7]. So yeah, there is a possibility that you are not using a product from these companies (you're among the 3-4%) just to get to this article, but it seems very unlikely. And then we're not even considering which browser, search engine



or web host you are using to get here.

When looking at other markets, we find similar but less extreme cases. The web browser market is dominated by Google, Apple and, to some extent, Microsoft. The search engine market is dominated by Google and, to some extent, Microsoft. But also the cloud market is dominated by big tech companies: Amazon, Microsoft and Google. The list goes on, but you will see they especially dominate the tech market. Special attention should be paid to Facebook. Although they are relatively new to this tech landscape, they're quickly becoming dominant in the social media world. Of course they own Facebook, but they also own Instagram, Whatsapp and Messenger, all of which have more than 1 billion users each. In total Facebook counts around 2.5 billion users, that is close to 1 out of every 3 humans on earth (numbers no one can compete against). Especially since there exists a networking effect on social media, you want to go where others are too. Hence, going to another platform is even less likely.

How does too big to fail apply on tech companies?

The question we're looking to answer here: have these companies become too big to fail? This term "too big to fail"

is a term that was widely used for financial institutions during the crisis. If one of them would fail, what systematic risk to the financial sector would they cause. Hence, would the costs of their failure be greater than the costs required to save them? For this, we need to look at several factors. First, let's determine which companies we will be looking at. Although the FAANG do have a lot in common, it feels wrong to exclude Microsoft here. Actually, it feels like Microsoft, Alibaba and Tencent belong here more than Netflix does, as Netflix is still a relatively small player. Whereas Alibaba is similar to Amazon, Tencent has more in common with Facebook (especially with WhatsApp). So let us dubb a new acronym, the MAAAFAT; Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Alphabet, Facebook, Alibaba and Tencent. We are thus not considering Netflix and Baidu, since they are a relatively small companies in comparison to the others. So what is small? Well, Netflix has a market capitalization of about 120 billion. Tencent being the smallest of the others has about 400 billion.

Market Capitalization

Some more elaboration on the market capitalization is valuable for the general understanding of the situation.

The MAAAFAT are 7 of the 9 most valuable companies in

the entire world. Yes, these predominantly tech companies are dominating our world. The only companies not included from the 9 are Berkshire Hathaway and Saudi Aramco. Berkshire Hathaway is an investment company and has a stake of \$50 billion in Apple. Saudi Aramco is a Saudi Arabian oil company which just went to market. The market capitalizations of these companies are as follows:

Apple \$1.09 trillion, Microsoft \$1.06 trillion, Amazon \$880 billion. All of these three companies have crossed the \$1000 billion mark and were ranked #1 on market value at some point in time. Continuing, Alphabet \$860 billion and then the relative smaller ones: Facebook \$540 billion, Alibaba \$450 billion and Tencent about \$400 billion. Those numbers are probably a bit vague, so let's compare them to the Dutch stock market. Altogether, the companies in the AEX, which includes well-known companies such as Shell, Unilever, ASML, Heineken, Philips, ING and many more (24 in total) are worth around \$930 billion together, which is roughly the same as one of the largest companies of MAAAFAT.

At the time of the financial crisis, the "too big to fail" companies of that time did not

even come close to these numbers, neither were they as dominant. So in that sense, these companies have grown far beyond too big to fail. Imagine if a company worth a \$1000 billion suddenly goes bankrupt, meaning that other companies and people lose this value. Many more companies will go bankrupt, people would lose significant amounts of money. Besides, if such a company can fail, distrust will spread quickly, just as it did during the financial crisis. Whether it is \$1000 billion or \$400 billion, if one of the 9 most valuable companies goes bankrupt, there will be huge consequences.

Impact of their bankruptcy

So yes, in financial terms, these companies have grown to be too big to fail. But, we are actually more interested in what will happen if their infrastructure disappears. Prior, we have been talking about their dominant position in several markets and we will work from there. Although these companies have a lot in common, it becomes interesting to go over what influence they have on our lives, one by one.

**Apple**

Let us start with Apple, by now the second most valuable company. They are famous for their iPhone, iPad, Macbook, but also the iPod, iWatch and iTunes. How dependent of Apple have we become? The conclusion that a bankruptcy of Apple would cause a huge financial problem has been made, but what about our services? Hundreds of millions of people use an iPhone, iPad or Macbook. But also iCloud, the App store and many more products are dependent on their mother company Apple. If Apple would go bankrupt, you will no longer have warranty, the app store and iTunes would no longer be supported, your product would no longer be updated and would become prone to malware. Your cloud services will go offline, the Apple browser (Safari) will stop working and many more services will be disrupted. Of course, some companies will try to solve some of these



# Are the leading tech companies "Too big to fail"?

issues. You can buy another computer or phone, but the world is not ready to take on such a scale of production. Recovery will take months, companies will no longer be able to use their products, they need new licenses, support desks must learn to work with new operating systems, and so on. Summarizing, Apple's bankruptcy would result in a gigantic problem in the tech world. Billions would be lost at other companies and recovery for individuals and companies will be problematic. YES, Apple has become too big to fail.

## Microsoft

Apple might be a bad omen with regards to the other companies. Where we have millions of Apple fanatics, there are less Microsoft fanatics. However, our dependency on Microsoft might be even bigger. When buying a computer, you almost certainly use Windows and it is even more likely to use Office products (like Word, Excel and PowerPoint). Yes, there are alternatives, but no one can work with them. Apple has their own set of utilities but it only works on Macbooks, Linux works fine on the same computer, but certainly most people will not be able to work with it due to its complexity. Hence, our dependency on Word, Excel and PowerPoint is huge. There are several competitors in the market, but they all work differently. It may sound like a pure apocalypse, but when support for Window XP ended, many companies got in trouble. Imagine what will happen if all support ends. Servers, web hosting and several other Microsoft services (like LinkedIn and GitHub) will stop working. Many companies would barely be able to execute anything, everyone would have to be re-trained and things would almost stop moving entirely. The difference being that Microsoft provides less of a structural demand to their suppliers (since it is a software company, they have significantly less suppliers compared to a hardware company). Thus, less suppliers are dependent on its demand. However, make no mistake, it is certainly too big to fail, maybe even more so than Apple, due to Microsoft's operating systems, Azure and Navision.

## Amazon

If we look at Amazon then we are looking at quite a different type of company. Whilst they initially were an online marketplace for books, they have now expanded into many areas (such as cloud computing and E-commerce). Their core business is obviously their webshop, but they are also an important player in the cloud market. Although financially it would definitely be too big to fail, it seems that there is higher possibility that their business, although huge, does not necessarily have to be accounted for as too big to fail. Yes, the cloud market will get a huge shock, but there are quite a lot of competitors.

A lot of websites will have troubles (Netflix for example) and it will be chaos, but most business and our daily lives will be able to continue and can quickly be taken care of by a competitor. Of course it will become more difficult to buy goods online, but the physical network of stores is still present and there are competitors in the market that can flourish now. Although life might get harder for some, it does not seem like everything will go wrong. Although massive, Amazon does not seem too big to fail.

Another giant created by the internet world, is Alphabet, where the core component is Google. So before even going in depth let us consider what services we should consider. First of all, we have the search engine Google. However, also services like Gmail, Google Maps, Google Drive, Google Chrome and Google Calendar are widely used products. So, what will happen if Alphabet would fail? Well, searching the web through Google will no longer be able, many people will lose their email, road navigation will break down, managing your calendar will be troublesome and you might need a new browser. However, for all of these services, alternatives are readily available. Many other search engines exist (whether they are better or not is another discussion), but also competitors for email services, browsers and calendars exist. Maybe the biggest impact would be Google Maps. Although there are competitors, the massive collection of the data for maps is expensive and only few rivaling networks exist. However, there are some competitors (like TomTom). So for all of these services rivals exist, and searching the web through another search engine may lead to different results, but in essence it will not create chaos. Switching to another email is different, but in essence an email server works the same (especially since a lot of companies already work with Outlook). Maybe the biggest chaos will be on routing. Competitors might not be able to handle the new users, so people have to navigate the old fashioned way again. It might lead to more mistakes and some people getting lost, but eventually, the chaos created will be limited. Maybe surprisingly (thinking about how much we use it), Alphabet has not become too big to fail.

## Facebook

Will our social media giant Facebook switch this around again and be too big to fail? There are clear signs that they might. With around 2.5 billion users, it has a huge impact. It is the appearance platform for most companies and actually so many services are connected to it, that a collapse of this giant should almost certainly create chaos. Although we might be addicted to social media, we are not completely dependent on it, we do not need Facebook. It is one of the

ways we stay in contact with many people, messages get spread easily and you can convey your message quickly. Organizing an event might be harder without creating a Facebook event, but the old fashioned way or reaching out to people still exists. The downfall of WhatsApp might actually influence more lives than the downfall of Facebook. Many people do not use other messaging platforms than WhatsApp, so what happens if WhatsApp goes bankrupt? Like some of the earlier cases, enough competitors exist in this field. Together they will be able to take care of a lot of users. Also, the old fashioned SMS does still work, we still have email and if we combine this with competitors we can quickly get around this problem. Hence, there will be short lived chaos, but it will be contained quickly. Another NO.

## Alibaba

After making the case for Amazon, we can make a similar case for Alibaba. Certainly, products might get more expensive when the cheap competitor disappears, but there are competitors in the market, and the local shops will flourish. So NO, Alibaba is not too big to fail.

Then we reach our final company. Although probably less known, it is a true social media giant in China. We are talking about Tencent. The most striking of these might actually be WeChat, but also QQ IM is very important. Both are chatting tools, though QQ is for messaging on desktops, while Wechat is an app more similar to WhatsApp. However, Tencent also owns major stakes in gaming companies, e-commerce and many other branches. However, for now we stick with WeChat for the evaluation (though the valuation of the company is also largely derived by the gaming revenues). WeChat is more than just a chatting platform. Connected to WeChat is a payment platform, a social media platform (similar to Facebook) and even a trading platform (comparable to Ebay). WeChat is called a "Super app" for a reason. It has integrated so many services in one, that you can do almost everything with it. Although it's primary market is China, it still has a huge potential due to China's growing dominance in the world market. A shutdown of WeChat would cause huge problems in China, since so much is connected. While there are competitors, nothing is integrated to take care of this shutdown. Business will respond quickly and other alternatives will thrive individually. Imagine though, if 50% of the Chinese population can do just 50% less for only 4 months, that is 25% of the Chinese economy shut down for 4 months. There are no preparations for such a massive impact. Chaos will be spread mainly in China and, although in lesser extend, will hit the rest of the

world (because so much is related). So maybe surprisingly, Tencent fits the scale of too big to fail, although less certainly.

## So, are they too big to fail?

So what can we conclude? Well some of the MAAAFAT are truly too big to fail. If their business would go down due to a bankruptcy, chaos will be widespread and the impact will be enormous. However, there is also hope. Not all of the MAAAFAT companies are strictly necessary and we would survive without their services through the rise of their competitors. Nevertheless, one thing seems certain. Financially, their bankruptcy might cause way more problems than the loss of their services. As famously said by former US Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson: "when confidence goes, it goes". As soon as one of the world's 9 largest companies can go bankrupt, anything can happen, panic will spread, causing the investment market to plummet, resulting in various other companies having serious issues to remain operational. This would lead to a crisis we certainly would not want to risk. Although, by putting one of these companies slowly to rest, we could certainly ensure that most of their services will be taken over. Yet, the impact that one of them goes down might be more in the disbelief than in the direct impact. Therefore, the MAAAFAT has become too big to fail.

## Mitigating the risks

So what should we do next? Well, that is a harder question to answer. Trying to break up these companies will remove much of their synergies and might take away their competitive advantage, causing the very undesired bankruptcy of them which would essentially be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Perhaps it's more important to acknowledge that these companies became giants for a reason. They all have hugely profitable components, that for some cases subsidize their other components. Since they are so profitable at the time, it seems very unlikely that they will suddenly go bankrupt. As long as they stay in their business and manage their risk, they will be around for a while. Therefore, good supervision (from government organizations) might perhaps be better than a call to split these giants.

No longer using their products does not seem to be a solution either, they have already grown too big. Though one could consider not using their products for many other reasons. These companies are driven by one very important aspect, they own a lot of data about you. So you might consider not using their services and avoid the 'big brothers' watching you. This however, could be a topic for another article. For now, we can conclude that the MAAAFAT has become too big to fail. Splitting the giants might be more risky, therefore adequate supervision seems to be a safer possibility of mitigating the risks concerned with their possible downfall.

# Too Big to Fail?

*When companies are bigger than nations, are they immune to challengers?*

Advertising and tech have consolidated into what's known as the Big 5 companies - Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, Google and Amazon (FAMGA) - which have built a seemingly impenetrable fortresses that no new market player will ever be able to breach.

When they see a potential challenge from a competitor, they buy them up (e.g. Google buying Waze); where they see an opportunity for expansion they buy that company (e.g. Amazon buying Wholefoods); and if they can't buy a competitor out, they mimic them (e.g. Facebook recreating Snapchat on Instagram after their \$1 billion offer was rejected).

However market dominance can only last so long before it dwindles. Blockbuster, Nokia, CDs, Kodak and IBM are all cases of seemingly impenetrable fortresses that have faced decline over time. This article seeks to look at the factors that could reduce the dominance of the Big 5 US digital giants and allow more competitors to enter this space.

## A better platform

In the late 1990s Yahoo was the undisputed leader in search. It was the second-most-visited site online behind AOL (most people used AOL for email in the USA at the time).

Yahoo was the first website to index the internet and could therefore provide industry-leading search results. For advertising they had figured out an auction where any company willing to pay the most money could feature at the top of the search results page. This was great for advertisers, who could pay to get their products in front of internet browsers.

Then along came Google. They honed in on relevance and won the battle for user experience. Google's ad rank algorithm was vastly superior to any of their competitors'. They took into account user search queries and matched this to ads, creating a better experience for users while helping advertisers reach more valuable audiences.

Who says a new challenger can't do what Google did and come out of the blue with a better customer experience on their platform, or by giving advertisers

access to more valuable audiences?

## A better device

Apple first released the iPhone in 2007. Along with it came Apple's walled garden of apps and content, which has helped the company grow while protecting it from competitors. As people have become glued to the Apple ecosystem, the company has sold in increasingly more services (think the App Store, Apply Pay, Apple Care, etc.).

The services division is now the second highest revenue generator for Apple behind iPhone sales - it makes more than the Mac computer division in sales. For Apple, being first to market and the major innovator in smartphone technology was what put them in this dominant position.

Now think for a moment if a new technology came out that rendered smartphones obsolete. It could be something wearable; glasses and watches have been popular in the past, but why not a shirt, necklace, neck implant or something else?

The next device could also be something off the body; Google Home and Amazon Echo are trying to surround people with a personal assistant, but every day we're nearing the point where every item we own has access to the internet. How might this affect Facebook when 95% of Facebook users access their platform via smartphones? Would they stay relevant with a major device step change?

Too Big to Fail? With a step change in devices could see a completely new player in the tech world, as long as they can repel FAMGA and their cashed-up acquisition strategies.

## Public opinion

Betrayal of customers' trust is a major risk for tech companies. Public backlash is hard to avoid when much of the ad revenue these companies receive is tied to exploiting customer data and selling this on to third parties. Without properly safeguarding their image and procedures, FAMGA could implode overnight if a major breach of consumer trust occurred.

Another Cambridge Analytica situation could well happen in the future. Facebook

and Google have put in big measures in recent months to try to make sure businesses and customers are safe when using their products and won't have their personal data compromised.

Time will tell if they can continue to avoid a PR disaster, and if their upgraded systems have gone far enough to strengthen their fortress walls.

## Regulation

Governments enforcing higher levels of competition within their jurisdictions and clamping down on monopolistic behaviour could be a threat to big tech companies' ability to grow revenue or maintain market share.

Google has a 90% share of search in Australia and Facebook dominates social media with 15 million active users. This high

market share has also been their downfall; governments have begun to take action to reduce their power and monopolistic grasp, like in the EU where Google was fined \$2.7 billion due to its perceived favouring of certain advertisers' products within its Google Shopping ad section.

The more world governments know about tech companies' methods for keeping customers on their platforms and squashing competitors' means of challenging them, the more they may act out against the likes of Google and Facebook and erode their market share.

## Conclusion

It doesn't seem like any of the FAMGA giants are going to be closing their doors anytime soon. They've become some of

the world's biggest companies by market capitalisation, and continue to grow.

The likelihood of another major player entering this elite group is unlikely in the short term, mainly because FAMGA are cash-rich and can buy any new shiny competitors with attractive consumer offerings. From a digital marketing perspective however it would be beneficial for advertisers to have access to a more diverse range of platforms to sell in more interesting and novel ways.

Who knows, perhaps if a new tech player emerges that can sell products and services better than FAMGA while repelling their competitive advances, they might have a shot at challenging the status quo.

## Big tech - too big to fail, says data whistleblower Wylie

CHIPPING NORTON, England (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Big Tech is becoming "too big to fail" and should not saddle ill-equipped consumers with safekeeping privacy for society at large, data whistleblower Christopher Wylie said on Thursday.

From banking to dating, tech companies such as Facebook, Google and Amazon are so integral to modern life that users have become "dependent" and "vulnerable", said Canadian-born Wylie.

"By the sheer nature of their scale, they exert a force which currently doesn't have any corrective counter-force," Wylie said at a conference in Oxfordshire, west of London.

"You, as a consumer, should not bear the burden of that responsibility," he said in an interview. "You are not the one that is in a position of knowledge and power, you're not the one making a profit off this activity."

"So it is unfair," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

In 2018, Wylie gained notoriety for saying his former employer Cambridge Analytica, a now defunct British data analytics firm, used personal information to aid clients.

The company, with links to

U.S. billionaire Robert Mercer and former White House adviser Steve Bannon, was embroiled in a scandal over reports it harvested the personal data of millions of Facebook users, beginning in 2014.

## HYDRA

Wylie said the world's dominant technology companies had reached into so many pockets of modern life, "it's like a hydra - you cut off one head and several more grow."

Once seen as engines of growth and innovators, tech giants have come under fire on both sides of the Atlantic for allegedly misusing their power and failing to protect users.

As data privacy concerns grow, countries are scrambling to better regulate the fast-moving firms.

European Union countries passed the General Data Protection Regulation rules in 2018, viewed as landmark legislation to rein in technology companies and safeguard personal data and privacy.

Earlier this month, Kenya approved a data protection law that sets out restrictions on how personally identifiable data can be handled, stored and shared, the government said.

The U.S California Consumer Privacy Act is set to take effect on Jan. 1 and will require large businesses to let consumers opt out of the sale of their personal data.

## BANNED

Green-haired Wylie, 30, said he had been banned from using Facebook and Instagram social media platforms since he lifted the lid on Cambridge Analytica's practices in 2018.

He now works with Swedish retail chain H&M on fusing ethics and Artificial Intelligence and spoke to the Thomson Reuters Foundation at VOICES, a Business of Fashion industry gathering.

Tim Berners-Lee, so-called inventor of the World Wide Web, has also voiced concern over the abuse of data and privacy online, and called for a check on Silicon Valley's power.

Yet tech experts point to the positives - from tackling diseases to improving transport, and artificial intelligence.

Many tech companies and internet service providers say they support federal legislation to protect data privacy and giving users more control and transparency over how their data is used.

# Adriana Cohen: Congress should break up Big Tech - companies are far too powerful

Monopolistic companies such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, Apple and others have become far too powerful. They thwart competition and abuse their power, whether it's by failing to protect users' privacy and data or by controlling one of our most basic freedom - free speech - in hopes of influencing, if not, swaying elections.

These actions warrant congressional intervention, especially given Silicon Valley's well-known political bias against conservatives - including the president of the United States of America. President Trump's tweets are routinely "fact-checked" and censored, for example, while his political opponents are not.

This rigged system has far-reaching consequences that, among other things, shape public opinion and culture and taint America's standing in the world, while diminishing our collective rights.

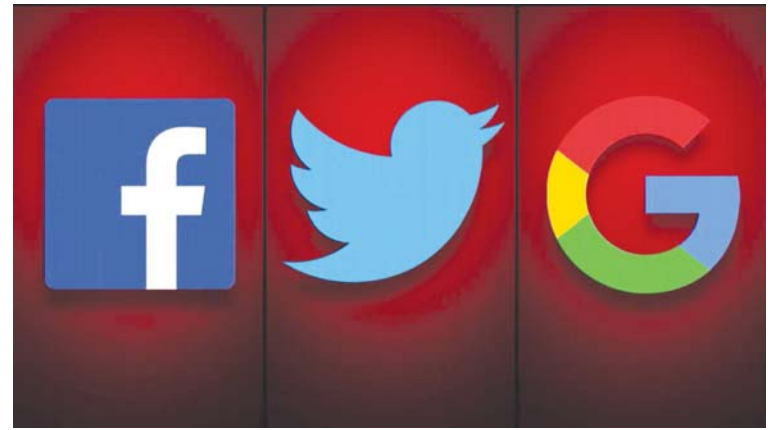
Take Apple. If you ask Siri what "demon" means, she says "an evil spirit or devil, especially one thought to possess a person or act as a tormentor in hell." The second definition Siri offers is "a cruel, evil, or destructive person or thing." Now, brace yourself for Siri's third definition: a police officer.

This prompted a terse response from House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy of California, who tweeted Thursday: "Big Tech Bias in America is real - and it's disgusting. Apple's Siri defines 'demon' as 'a police officer.' Go ahead and try it. Apple needs to answer for why they're instigating this kind of hate in America." Indeed. Especially when you consider that as of April 2017 there were 728 million iPhones in use worldwide, according to Statista, including at least 100 million users in the U.S. The far-left radicals at Apple Inc.

are indoctrinating users to believe law enforcement officers are demons. This not only maligns police officers' character, including black cops and other minorities in uniform, but also puts cops lives at risk given today's extremely volatile political climate.

Then there's Twitter silencing conservatives en masse. This week, the social network censored tweets by the president and his son Donald Trump Jr. for sharing a viral video of doctors speaking about the purported benefits of hydroxychloroquine, a controversial medicine that some experts claim helps COVID-19 patients.

"A Henry Ford Health System study shows the controversial anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine helps lower the death rate of COVID-19 patients, the Detroit-based health system said Thursday," reported the Detroit News. "Officials with the Michigan



health system said the study found the drug 'significantly' decreased the death rate of patients involved in the analysis."

Nonetheless, the overlords at Twitter still censored the tweets.

But that's not all. Google, Facebook and Twitter have also been censoring the right-leaning news site Breitbart, according to its news editor-in-chief, Alex Marlow.

This week, Marlow told Tucker Carlson on his Fox News program that Breitbart's

Google search traffic is down over 99 percent since May. "If you want to search for Joe Biden or Biden, the chances of you getting a Breitbart article are virtually zero," Marlow told Carlson.

See how election meddling works? Conservative voices are being silenced across the spectrum leading up to the November election, while those on the left continue to get full access to voters.

This corrupt system cannot stand in a democracy. Congress must act.

## Breaking up big tech: Are tech companies too big to fail?

Is big tech getting too big to fail? Last year the five biggest tech companies in the United States, nicknamed FAAMG, were responsible for revenues equal to 68% of US GDP growth. Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Google boasts revenues in the billions, and with that kind of money comes a tremendous amount of power. There has been a bipartisan political backlash against the power these companies have to control the exchange of information, leading many to question whether they should be broken up into smaller companies.

Nearly all Americans conduct searches using Google-owned platforms - 88% on Google itself and 73% on YouTube. Facebook also owns a massive amount of the traffic share of global internet traffic: 61% to Facebook, 26% to Instagram, 16% to WhatsApp, and 3% to Messenger. These companies own the information you send, search, and share, and they can block it, too.

Is big tech getting too big

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Elizabeth Warren and Tulsi Gabbard have both been

censored by the tech giants during the Presidential Primary, and Gabbard is currently suing Google alleging her free speech rights were violated. Antitrust laws were created in 1890 in order to promote free competition in the marketplace after consumers complained about exorbitant prices and competitors being shut out of the marketplace. Monopolies and cartels were outlawed in order to promote the common interest. In 1914 these laws were strengthened and clarified and enforcement was put into place. It remains to be seen how these laws will be applied to these tech giants, but breaking them into smaller companies is one of the options on the table.

In 1998 Microsoft went up on antitrust charges and after two years of deliberations, the company was broken into two parts, one to handle the operating system and the other to handle ancillary software programs. The ruling was softened on appeal, but Microsoft had already lost ground to competitors.



# Too big to fail? Tech's decade of scale and impunity



Big tech behaves as though power absolves them of responsibility. Have we learned nothing since the financial crash? Towards the end of the last decade, two American social networks - Facebook and MySpace - were locked in a battle to conquer the rest of the world.

The two companies took "radically different" approaches to their global expansions, TechCrunch reported at the time. MySpace spent time and money building local infrastructure for each new market - hiring a team on the ground, translating the site and performing outreach to local musicians and artists. Facebook simply enlisted volunteers to crowdsource the site's translation into new languages, starting with Spanish, then German, French and more.

By 2010, Facebook had been translated into more than 80 languages by volunteers and had signed up half a billion users worldwide. Meanwhile, MySpace had begun its long decline.

Setting up all those foreign offices had "literally wast[ed] hundreds of millions of dollars," the site's former vice-president of online marketing, Sean Percival, recalled in a postmortem in 2015. "Whereas Facebook said: 'We don't need to set up offices that quick; this thing is gonna scale.'"

Scale. If there is one word that encapsulates the past decade in the tech industry, it is scale. Scale is the holy grail of the venture capital-backed tech startup, the state in which exponential growth in users - and

revenues - can be achieved by linear increases in infrastructure - and costs.

Facebook scaled. Uber scaled. YouTube scaled. Airbnb scaled. Amazon scaled.

In achieving this state, it helped to have a business with minimal physical infrastructure (Facebook, YouTube and other software companies) - or to offload the cost of owning and maintaining that infrastructure to contractors (Uber, Airbnb).



Amazon managed to scale despite requiring significant physical infrastructure; WeWork did not.

The 2010s saw a fundamental reconfiguring of untold numbers of businesses into platform-based markets, from advertising to transportation to travel. Local businesses folded or adapted; either way, the platforms won.

The numbers associated with the size of these platforms defy comprehension.

In 2018, YouTube said users were uploading 500 hours of video every minute, which is 1,250 days of video per hour, or more than 82 years of video per day. Uber says that it gives 45

rides every second - just in the US - adding up to nearly 4m rides a day - just in the US. Facebook deleted 2.8bn fake accounts between October 2017 and November 2018. When hackers stole the personal information of 14 million Facebook users, the breach represented less than 1% of the company's users, a population greater than Tokyo. Airbnb claims to have listings in more than 100,000 cities.

It's impossible for anyone to know everything that's happening on these platforms, and it's obvious that the companies aren't even bothering to try.

It is perhaps one of the small ironies of the 21st century that the foundations for many of the tech leviathans of the 2010s were laid just as the global economy was grappling with the consequences of the catastrophic scale of another industry - banking.

One month after Facebook began its global conquest with minimal investment and maximum speed, the Federal Reserve bailed out Bear Stearns

with a \$25bn loan. Airbnb was founded that summer, just a few weeks before Lehman Brothers crashed. In March 2009, as the Dow Jones hit its nadir, Uber was founded.

"Too big to fail" became the watchword of a policy of the grotesque. Banks got bailed out, homeowners got thrown out. Bankers cashed bonus checks; workers filed for unemployment. The system wobbled but did not collapse. Up close, a million minor tragedies unfolded. But from a high enough vantage point, everything was fine.

Was it a coincidence that the years of "too big to fail" birthed a generation of companies that have in the intervening decade been allowed to grow even bigger and more unmanageable? Or did those who warned of the moral hazard of the bailout see their predictions come true, in another industry?

Because rather than taking the lesson of comic books that with great power comes great responsibility, the tech platforms have adopted the stance that with great scale comes total impunity.

Take Facebook's global presence. The social network is now officially available in 111 languages. The rules that govern what users can or cannot post on the site - on crucial issues ranging from hate speech and incitement, to violence to health misinformation and self-harm - had only been translated into 41 languages as of April 2019, according to an investigation by Reuters. The company's 15,000 content moderators were fluent in just about 50 languages, and the company's much-vaunted automated tools that are supposed to detect dangerous content only worked in about 30.

Facebook did not respond to a query from the Guardian asking if these numbers had changed since April.

Monika Bickert, Facebook's head of global policy, told Reuters that translating the content rulebook, which is about 9,400 words in English, was "a heavy lift".

Since 2010, Facebook's net profit has exceeded \$69.1bn. What may have been opportunistic and strategic in 2008, when Facebook was a

money-losing startup, is simply inexcusable today.

The results of unchecked hate and propaganda can be deadly: Facebook's failures to adequately police hate speech have been implicated in a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and anti-Muslim riots in Sri Lanka. Language barriers hampered its ability to understand and respond to what was happening in both countries.

And this is just one example of the multitude of areas where Facebook and other large platforms have refused to take responsibility for their own companies, with scale used as a shield for blame.

When Uber released a safety report showing that more than 3,000 passengers in the US had reported sexual assaults in 2018, it cast the problem as societal. "In the United States alone, more than 45 rides on Uber happen every second," Uber's chief legal officer, Tony West, wrote in a blogpost. "At that scale, we are not immune to society's most serious safety challenges, including sexual assault." Sure, but society doesn't take a cut of every Uber ride; Uber does.

YouTube launched a specialized platform for children in 2015 and, four years and innumerable scandals later, still does not pre-screen content to ensure that it is actually appropriate for children.

Amazon's market dominance has been fueled by its decision to allow third-party sellers on its platform. The result has been wildly profitable for Amazon, but a Wall Street Journal investigation found thousands of unsafe items for sale on the site, including children's products.

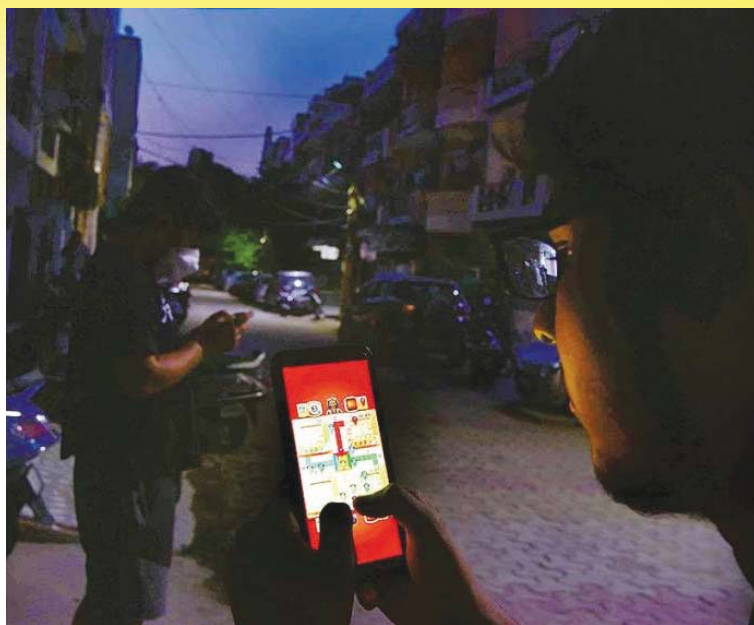
Tech companies tend to operate on the assumption that if you feed meals to 10,000 children, and only poison 10 of them, that's an acceptable rate considering the scale.

On the threshold of a new decade, few things seem clear except that we will be dealing with the ramifications of a handful of tech companies' unmanageable scale for years to come. Because the beauty of scaled platforms is that, while the profits accrue just to the companies, the negative consequences accumulate for all of us.

## From Ludo To Rummy, Online Gaming Comes To Roost During COVID Times, But What Is The Real Deal?

Online gaming has seen a sharp rise during the lockdown. App makers continue to take advantage of an ambiguous law but consumers are happy as long as they are having some real fun

In the beginning, God's dice spun and rolled across the void.... And Creation came to be, in a wanton game of chance. How's that for an account of the universe? Maybe sport-our playful tango with unpredictability-is not just an indulgence of leisure, but the very soul of our existence. The 'ludic' ethos, as they call it-from the Latin ludere, to play, the very word which also gives us Ludo. Now, a virus may defeat the best traps laid by humankind, but does it stand a chance against something ordained by the Creator? The roll of God's dice-and man's dice-saw dynasties vanquished, epochal battles fought and kingdoms lost. The pastoral world of the Rig Veda was no stranger to it. And the centrepiece of the Mahabharata-as rich a lighthouse view as you want of social realities in the



centuries before-was the virtuous Yudhishtira's fatal attraction for chausar, an ancient board game. Our human-like gods themselves loved it: witness Ellora's eighth century painting depicting Shiva playing a game of dice with his consort, Parvati. Cut to the 21st century.... Things have changed a bit; humans can now recreate themselves in a test tube. But the thrill of dice rolling in the air has grabbed us all over again. The players could now sit

continents apart, but the humble charms of a board or card game bind them irresistibly. Old games refitted onto mobile screens-rummy, poker...and Ludo. The last is the runaway winner in the bustling world of online gaming: millions have downloaded apps for a game that goes all the way back to the one on which epics turned. Now, Hastinapur is in lockdown...so is Houston, and everything in between. But the pulse quickens in countless

homes as that cube spins hypnotically.

Online gaming was already burgeoning in India before COVID-19. It had grown 40 per cent in 2019 to reach Rs 6,500 crore in revenues, with casual and core gamers numbering a grand 360 million-exceeding the population of the US! And now, when world economies have come to grief due to the pandemic, the online gaming sector has shown a contrary graph-the months of lockdown have seen massive growth. This is the second year in a row that online gaming has been the fastest growing segment of the Indian media and entertainment industry. It is now the seventh largest segment of the industry and is expected to be the fifth largest by 2022, according to Ernst & Young. Mukesh Ambani, never a laggard at trendspotting, offered: "Gaming will be bigger than music, movies and television shows put together."

The beating heart of this explosion is the nerdy, hard-core

gamer-a special sub-species of humankind around whom this ecosystem evolved-but the flesh and blood is now made up of ordinary gamers. Ludo, for instance, is simple, comes wrapped in nostalgia, and the multi-player format has created an enjoyable space for family time. The warmth of time spent together in play-with parents and children logging in from across the world-is the best antidote to an atomised existence, made gloomier by the lockdown. Ludo King, an app developed by a Mumbai-based company, became the world's sixth most downloaded game this May, crossing 100 million downloads. The lockdown saw Ludo King's popularity soar 142 per cent, with 51 million playing the game every day, worldwide! Mummy plays rummy in the afternoon with friends, but gets together with daddy and kiddo for a bout of ludo by nightfall, the soft glow of mobile screens lighting up smiling faces.

## Going Away Of Sushant Singh Rajput Is A Collective Failure Of Entire Film Industry

*I personally knew Sushant, and I am still processing the whole tragedy because never in my wildest of dreams did I ever think that Sushant would do such a thing, writes Vani Tripathi.*

Somebody famously said once that dead people receive more flowers than living ones because regret is stronger than gratitude. As Sushant Singh Rajput's last movie, Dil Bechara has started streaming from July 24, and I look back into the whole, very tragic and shocking episode of Sushant reportedly dying by suicide, it almost rings true. There has been an outpouring of love for him from all over since his demise, and for someone to go away like that at a young age of 34 leaves so many questions unanswered.

I personally knew Sushant, and I am still processing the whole tragedy because never in my wildest of dreams did I ever think that Sushant would do such a thing. What I knew of Sushant was something so beautiful, so serious, so sincere and so honest. He was not just a very fine actor but a great human being as well. Rarely have I met people in the film industry who know quantum physics, who understand

astronomy and star gazing. These were not his hobbies, but his passion. Many years ago, I said to him that he should have been an astronaut instead of being an actor.

I did not mean that he was not a good actor; far from it, he was a brilliant master of his craft. Look at his first film Kai Po Che!, which launched the career of three bright young boys (Sushant, Rajkumar Rao and Amit Sadh) in 2013. The first boy among the three who surged ahead and became a mainstream hero was Sushant. Rajkumar for many years kept doing films, which got him critical acclaim but it took him quite some time to become a mainstream, commercial hero. For Sushant, doing a biopic on Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who was not just the captain of the Indian cricket team but a legend, looked like a huge challenge, but he pulled it off effortlessly. And look at Chhichore (2019), which was a sleeper, runaway hit and apparently grossed more than Rs

200 crore at the box office.

So why am I saying all this? I am saying it because actors are supposed to be as good as their last Friday. We do not have Jubilee Kumars in the industry any longer. The whole journey of a film or an actor is from Friday to Monday and from Monday to Friday. And his last Friday was brilliant. So the first question which occurs in your mind is why did he do this? He was not unsuccessful, and he had constantly challenged himself by doing roles which had defined his craft. I think that somewhere it was the disappointment of doing or not doing things that he really wanted to do.

Three years ago, during the International Film Festival of India in Goa, where I was in the steering committee, I reached out to Shekhar Kapur realising that he had never been invited for any Masterclass. It was a baffling truth to my mind that somebody who was the global face of Indian cinema had not even come once to the



Masterclass of one of the biggest film festivals of the country. Shekhar graciously agreed to come even though he was abroad at the time. When Sushant came to know about it, he said he wanted to be part of the Masterclass. I told him that it was supposed to be a solo piece by a filmmaker or a musician but he convinced me to let him be part of it. I could see that Sushant idolised Shekhar.

What subsequently played out at Goa Kala Academy was

pure brilliance of two beautiful minds. It turned out to be a three-hour-long conversation between them, where they discussed at length on a wide range of topics, from astronomy and quantum physics to art of storytelling and the craft of creating films. I still remember that we had to put screens outside the venue to enable the people, who could not be accommodated inside, to watch it. What I am trying to say is that in those days in Goa, Shekhar, Sushant and I spent a lot of time.

# Suzhou Sign MOU with Cypherium To Advance the City's Development of Blockchain Infrastructure Following Successful CBDC Trials

New York City - Cypherium, the enterprise-focused blockchain platform has today announced they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Suzhou City Municipal to contribute to the technical development of blockchain infrastructure in the city, following successful trials of China's digital currency electronic payment (DCEP) project within 'pilot' city Suzhou. The MOU was signed during the 12th Venture Week for International Elites in Suzhou, which took place 10-12 July 2020, hosted by the Suzhou City Municipal. "Suzhou International Elite Week" aims to foster an international epicentre of innovation and create an "entrepreneurship week that never

ends". During this year's Venture Week, 2061 innovation and entrepreneurship projects were collected, including 977 overseas projects and 1084 domestic projects.

Suzhou is one of the most competitive cities in China. In 2018, the city's regional GDP exceeded 1.85 trillion Yuan, ranking seventh in the country's large and medium-sized cities. The city is also one of the pilot cities of China's CBDC project, recently announcing that China's two-tier central bank digital currency, the digital currency/electronic payment (DC/EP) will be issued to workers in the city of Suzhou. State-owned Chinese banks have also been conducting internal, hypothetical-use

tests of the People's Bank of China digital currency in the city as well.

Sky Guo, said: "Suzhou is moving towards its ambition to become a leading blockchain district, especially with CBDCs gaining momentum around the world. With several trials taking place in the city, especially with workers in the city of Suzhou receiving part of their upcoming transportation subsidies in DCEP. Interoperability will likely play a role in determining which projects end up succeeding." Solomon Zhang, Cypherium's CTO attended the event in Suzhou, which was also attended by the Municipal Party Committee who countersigned the MOU at the event. "Through the partnership with Cypherium,

the Suzhou City will boost its competitiveness in the blockchain industry," commented Dean Gong, a representative of the Municipal Party Committee. Cypherium is an enterprise-focused blockchain platform with established partnerships with all the tech giants - Google, Microsoft, Amazon and IBM and has developed the world's first cross-chain interoperability solution for China's new Central Bank Digital Currency. This will enable CBDCs to be able to communicate with their international counterparts as well as their domestic industries and wholesalers. Cypherium offers that opportunity for interoperability through a number of DC/EP-inspired innovations.

## There's No Half-Rescuing A Zombie. Ask Yes Bank



Whatever else you do with a bank that loses half its deposits in six months, don't leave it with half a rescue.

Yes Bank Ltd. was the poster child of India's \$200 billion-plus bad-loan malaise. But the story of its dubious underwriting is

now just another long-drawn criminal case. (Co-founder Rana Kapoor, who ran the bank into the ground, is facing charges of accepting bribes against loans to a fraud-ridden property financier that's since gone bankrupt. He has denied any

wrongdoing.) Of late, Yes is a cautionary tale about botched bailouts and ill-conceived bail-ins. The lessons learned might soon be put to a broader test. The shock of the coronavirus lockdown on economic activity could leave several Indian lenders short of capital - just as Yes was in March, when the authorities recapitalized it by making additional Tier 1 bondholders worthless and ordering a consortium led by the State Bank of India to buy fresh equity. Yet the June quarter results show an institution still wandering in zombie land: Profit tumbled to \$6 million, down 60 per cent from a year earlier. Despite efforts to win back savers, deposits have fallen 48

per cent, with sticky current and savings accounts making up only 26 per cent of the total, less than half the level at rival Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. Net interest income, which grew 16 per cent to 19 per cent at other lenders, fell at Yes. Band-Aid of rehabilitation is coming apart, though Yes's wounds are far from healed. On a struggling loan book, the 0.4 per cent of net advances it set aside for pandemic-linked losses won't be enough. Knowing this, Yes raised another \$2 billion recently in a share sale that saw lukewarm public interest. Even after it paid to make up the shortfall, SBI's 48 per cent stake got diluted to 30 per cent.

If only it was 30 per cent of

something that was becoming bigger and better. Bloomberg banking analyst Diksha Gera estimates around \$4 billion in new soured advances this year. Making loss provisions for those, as well as writing off existing bad loans, would leave Yes with a 20 per cent smaller book value per share by next March even after the fund-raising, she says. How's this an efficient use of the resources of taxpayer-funded SBI, the country's largest lender?

Yes Bank was privately owned, before it was quasi-nationalized by making it SBI's problem. But next year, there will be several small state-owned banks in a similar situation where capital buffers are depleted.

## US economy posts its worst drop on record

The US economy contracted at a 32.9% annual rate from April through June, its worst drop on record, the Bureau of Economic Analysis said Thursday.

Business ground to a halt during the pandemic lockdown in the spring of this year, and America plunged into its first recession in 11 years, putting an end to the longest economic expansion in US history and wiping out five years of economic gains in just a few months.

A recession is commonly defined as two consecutive quarters of declining gross domestic product - the broadest measure of the economy.

Between January and March, GDP declined by an annualized rate of 5%.

But this is no ordinary recession. The combination of public health and economic crises is unprecedented, and numbers cannot fully convey the hardships millions of Americans are facing.

April, more than 20 million American jobs vanished as businesses closed and most of the country was under stay-at-home orders. It was the biggest drop in jobs since record-keeping began more than 80 years ago. Claims for unemployment benefits skyrocketed and have still not recovered to pre-pandemic

levels.

While the labor market has been rebounding since states began to reopen, bringing millions back to work, the country is still down nearly 15 million jobs since February. Next week's July jobs report is expected to show another 2.3 million jobs added. That would bring the unemployment rate down to 10.3% - still higher than during the worst period of the financial crisis.

The worst quarter ever

The pandemic pushed the economy off a cliff. The second-quarter GDP drop was nearly four times worse than during the peak of the financial crisis, when the economy contracted at an

annual rate of 8.4% in the fourth quarter of 2008.

Quarterly GDP numbers are expressed as an annualized rate. This means that the economy didn't actually contract by one-third from the first quarter to the second. The annualized rate measures how much the economy would grow or shrink if conditions were to persist for 12 months. Not annualized, GDP declined by 9.5% in between April and June, or by \$1.8 trillion.

But by either measure, it was still the worst quarter on record.

The US only began keeping quarterly GDP records in 1947, so it's difficult to compare the current downturn to the Great Depression. That said, in 1932

the US economy contracted 12.9%. Earlier quarterly declines also pale in comparison to this year. Between April and June of 1980, the economy contracted at an annual rate of 8% on the heels of rising oil prices and restrictive monetary policy to control inflation. In the first three months of 1958, GDP declined by an annualized 10%, as production slowed and high interest rates put an end to the post-World War II expansion. The downturn followed the Asian flu pandemic of the previous year, which killed 116,000 people in the United States, according to the Center for Disease Control.

# #StayHome with #BollywoodMonster Mashup attracts thousands to the first-ever virtual event

The two-day virtual concert featured a star-studded lineup including Sunny Leone, Arjuna Harjai and the Meet Bros



The largest South Asian festival in Canada, #StayHome with #BollywoodMonster Mashup, presented by TD Bank - The Ready Commitment, wrapped up its first virtual festival on July 24 and 25 attracting thousands to enjoy two live concerts that featured many amazing musical and dance performances along with special Kidz Hour activities. This year's international Bollywood headliners, Sunny Leone, Arjuna Harjai and the Meet Bros ft. Khushboo Grewal enticed over 350,000 views for the concerts.

On Friday, July 24, Arjuna Harjai made his first Canadian debut - virtually - as he

performed his two hit songs "O Soniye" and "Choti Choti Gal" along with several other classic Bollywood songs. Harjai captivated the audience with his mesmerizing vocals and ended his act with a segment where he answered questions from the #BollywoodMonster Ask Me Anything stage presented by OLG. The first night of the spectacular concert ended with back-to-back performances by fellow Canadian, Sunny Leone, who wowed the audience with her incredible dance moves. Following her performances, Leone joined hosts Upekha Jain and Amin Dhillon for a one-on-one exclusive live video chat

where she answered audience questions.

On July 25, the Meet Bros along with lead singer Khushboo Grewal, ended the two-day virtual festival with a hit performance. They performed their blockbuster songs such as "Main Tera Boyfriend" and "Lamborghini" along with various Bollywood and Punjabi songs.

Those who tuned in quickly realized they were in for a treat for the two-day live broadcast, as viewer Suhana Singh commented on Facebook saying that "hands down, [this] is the best live stream show thus far," while viewer Ivana Gill shared her excitement that

#BollywoodMonster Mashup had gone virtual this year "This is awesome because I never get to attend due to my health. So happy about this new and accessible (really well-executed) show! I really hope you continue this as the live shows come back," said Gill.

Viewers were able to watch fusion performances, including the #BollywoodMonster Orchestra who returned to the BMM stage and played original fusion mashups of hit Bollywood and Western songs with an urban flare. In addition, there were some thrilling performances delivered by N2 The Band, BollyHeelsTO,

Devin Ramoutar and more that had the audience jamming along from the comfort of their own homes.?

Other festivities leading to the two-day concert included a special #BollywoodMonster Kidz Hour presented by Tim Hortons from July 20 to 23 which allowed children of all ages to participate in various workshops ranging from arts, dance and more. In addition to that, there was a special segment featuring TVOKid's Dino Dana's very own Dad, portrayed by actor Amish Patel, who answered all sorts of fun questions asked by kids themselves. "2020 has been a challenging year for all, as the entire world continues to navigate through a pandemic," says Vikas Kohli, executive director of MonstrARTity. "However, despite the unprecedented times we are facing, the team here at #BollywoodMonster Mashup decided that not even a pandemic would stop us from putting on the largest South Asian festival in Canada.



Sanjay Dutt aka Baba as he's fondly and affectionately addressed by his fans, is celebrating his birthday today on July 29. And on this special occasion, to fill some excitement in his fans, the actor shared his first look from KGF: Chapter 2.

The first one ended on a cliffhanger that promised that the story will continue before it

culminates forever. Dutt plays the antagonist Adheera, and his character is inspired by the brutal ways of the Vikings. Taking to his Instagram account, the actor said how this film is special and how he couldn't have asked for a better gift.

Seeing his look, daughter Trishala Dutt commented- "Happy Birthday Daddy I love you!" (sic) Ronit Bose Roy

wrote- "Amazing," (sic) and this was followed by the thumbs up emojis.

For the uninitiated, the first chapter ended with Yash's Rocky killing his rival Garuda, who controlled the gold mines of Kolar with slavery and savagery. With a turn of events, Adheera had promised that he won't try to take over the gold mines as long as Garuda was alive. In the

## KGF Chapter 2: On Sanjay Dutt's Birthday, Here Comes His First Look As Adheera

second part of KGF, we will see Adheera and Rocky engaging in a power struggle over the gold mines- as it hints, brutally.

Mounted on a large scale, KGF 2 has the stellar cast of 'Rocking superstar' Yash, Sanjay Dutt, Raveena Tandon amongst the others. The social media is abuzz as the fans are loving Adheera's look. Produced by Vijay Kiragandur and directed by Prashant Neel, KGF2 is brought by celebrated names including Excel Entertainment and is a multilingual venture- to be released in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi.

Dutt has been acting in films

for over four decades now. Making his Bollywood debut with his father Sunil Dutt's Rocky in 1981, he went on to do films like Naam, Kabza, Saajan, Khalnayak, Vaastav, Kaante, Munna Bhai M.B.B.S., Dus, Lage Raho Munna Bhai, Dhamaal, All the Best, Agneepath, and Son of Sardaar. He has clearly been enjoying his turn as the antagonist in multiple films. After Panipat and KGF, he also happens to be the villain in Shamshera opposite Ranbir Kapoor and Prithviraj opposite Akshay Kumar.

## China says disengagement process almost complete in eastern Ladakh, India disagrees

China had said that the situation on the ground was easing.



(Story on Page 29)

## Coronavirus cases in India cross 16 lakh-mark; 10 lakh recoveries and over 35,000 deaths



(News Agencies) The total number of coronavirus cases in India has reached over 16 lakh. Over 10 lakh people have recovered and at least 35,000 have died to the virus. India's Covid-19 tally breached the 16 lakh-mark on Thursday evening. As per the Union health ministry website, (Contd on page 29)

Ayodhya Ram Temple will help Indians reconnect with past, honour our brave ancestors: Amish Tripathi



(News Agencies) The bhumi puja of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the coming up of the temple is something that would help the people of India to rebuild and reconnect with their ancient past, said bestselling author Amish Tripathi on Wednesday. Speaking to India Today TV in an exclusive interview, Amish Tripathi said the unfortunate part of our education system is that it doesn't give us an adequate understanding of what our nation's history is. He said the history that is taught to us is more of the history of our invaders rather than our own history. (Contd on page 30)

## Lord Ram's Images, Ayodhya Temple Model To Be Displayed At New York's Times Square On August 5

"This is not a once-in-a-lifetime or a once-in-a-century event. This is an event that comes once in the life of mankind. We had to give it a befitting celebration and what better place than the iconic Times Square to commemorate the 'Ram Janma Bhoomi shilanyas,'" Mr Sewhani said.

(News Agencies) New York: Images of Lord Ram and 3D portraits of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be beamed across the giant billboards in the iconic Times Square in New York on August 5 to celebrate the temple's groundbreaking ceremony, with organisers describing the commemoration as a one-of-a-kind and historic event. Prominent community leader and President of the American India Public Affairs Committee Jagdish Sewhani on Wednesday said that arrangements are being made to celebrate the historic moment in New York on August 5, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. (Contd on page 29)

