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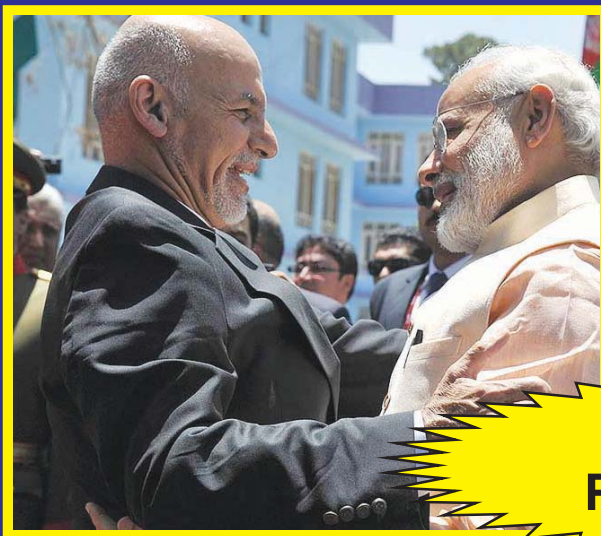
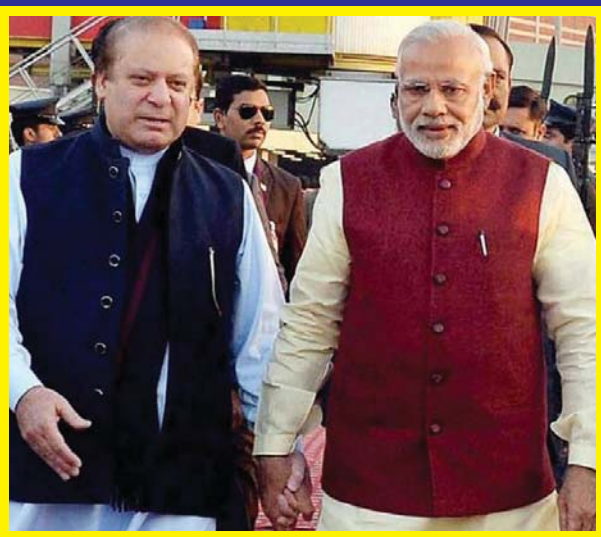
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Sweet, Bitter and Tepid

A Look At India's Relationship With Neighbours



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Indo American Press Club Holds Virtual Induction Ceremony

Dr. Joseph Chalil Inducted As Chairman, Dr. S.S. Lal As President of IPAC



(Press Release By AJAY GHOSH) New York : During a solemn virtual ceremony live telecast on social media and viewed by thousands from around the world, Dr. Joseph M. Chalil assumed charge as the Chairman, while Dr. SS Lal as the President of Indo American Press Club on Sunday, June 28th, 2020. Also, along with the two dynamic leaders, several new members of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee members, and Local Chapter leadership were administered the oath of office. Several world renowned media personnel from around the world felicitated the new officers and IAPC, the largest Indian American Association of Media Personnel begin a new journey under the stewardship of two great leaders well known for their commitment and leadership. Ginsmon Zachariah, the Founding Chairman of IAPC administered the oath of office to Dr. Chalil, along with 3 new members to the Board of Directors: Mathewkutty Easow, Mini

Nair & Thampanoor Mohan. Ajay Ghosh, the Founding President of IAPC introduced Dr. Chalil as the Co-founder and Publisher of The Universal News Network. Dr. Chalil is an Adjunct Professor and author of several scientific and research papers in international publications. A veteran of the U.S. Navy Medical Corps, Dr. Chalil is board certified in healthcare management and has been awarded Fellowship by the American College of Healthcare Executives. Dr. Chalil holds several U.S. Patents, and his research includes Clinical Trial Management in Cystic Fibrosis, Food Allergy, Multiple Myeloma. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Chalil said, "Your choice humbles me, and I promise to do my duties with the best of my abilities." Describing current phase in human history as "unprecedented times for the journalists and the media," he pointed out that "AT LEAST 146 JOURNALISTS HAVE DIED FROM CORONAVIRUS IN 31 COUNTRIES."

Rotary Club of Hicksville South (RCHS) hosted its 12th Annual Installation and Oath Ceremony



by the RCHS members under the leadership of the incoming President, Mrs. Nilima Madan. The Installation Oath Ceremony usually takes place each year towards end of fiscal year, for highlighting and recognizing the activities and the community service projects that were achieved during the past year and to welcome and install the new Executive Board Members of RCHS for the year that starts on July 1st.

(Press Release) Long place outdoors at the East Island: Rotary Club of Lawn, North Lawn & Gazebo Hicksville South (RCHS) of the Nassau County recently hosted its 12th Annual Installation and Oath Ceremony. The event took place outdoors at the East Island: Rotary Club of Lawn, North Lawn & Gazebo Museum of Art, located in Roslyn, NY. The Installation Ceremony was organized

City of New York and New York Power Authority Seek Developers to Install Rooftop Solar Arrays at Dozens of New York City Schools, Manhattan Wastewater Treatment Plant

NEW YORK - NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) Commissioner Lisette Camilo and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) today announced the planned installation of up to 16 megawatts of solar energy on the rooftops of 46 New York City public schools and several New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) sites, including its Wards Island Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility. "The climate crisis is real and it's urgent, that is why the City of New York is taking bold steps to generate solar power on city buildings, including some public schools," said Lisette Camilo, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services. "Solar installations on the roofs of schools and other city facilities is a common-sense way to generate green energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels."

greener energy system for all New Yorkers." The City of New York sought NYPA's assistance with the installation of approximately 16 megawatts of power generated by solar installations on rooftops of some of its facilities. The city enlisted NYPA's support on this initiative to help achieve Mayor Bill de Blasio's goal of installing 100 MW of solar power on public buildings by 2025 and reducing citywide emissions 80 percent by 2050. The initiative will also help achieve Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's statewide goal of having 70 percent of New York's electricity come from renewable sources by 2030.

"With this significant solar project, all at New York City-owned facilities, we will, together, boost the renewable resources in the city's energy supply and move the city and our state closer to accomplishing the ambitious clean energy goals we have set for ourselves," said Gil C. Quiniones, NYPA president and CEO. "Integrating solar systems into community facilities throughout the five boroughs and turning underutilized spaces into green opportunities is a smart way to practice sustainability and push forward our long-term commitment to help build a cleaner,

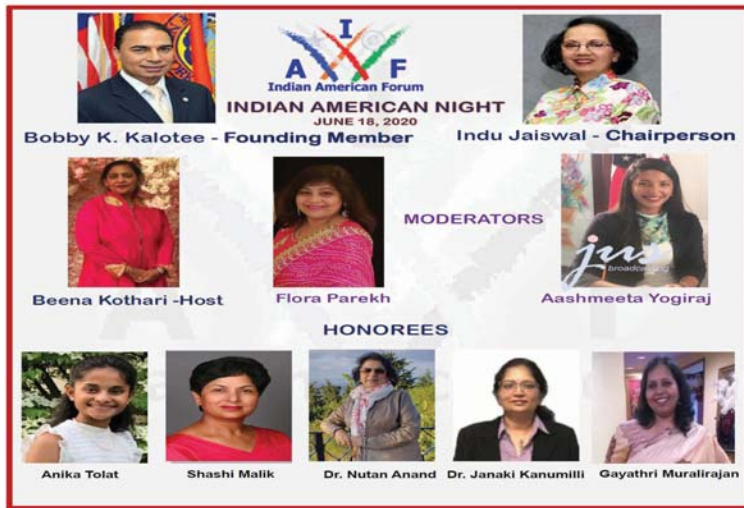
NYPA is asking developers to submit proposals to design, construct, and own solar PV systems at 50 city-owned sites. NYPA will select the developers, manage the project, and arrange 20-year power purchase agreements for DCAS and DEP to buy the electricity output from each of the projects at competitive prices. The due date for responding to the request for proposals (RFP) is August 7, 2020. The solar systems, which have the option of including energy storage, are planned to be constructed on 46 schools run by the NYC Department of Education and account for approximately 11 megawatts of new power generation. Several sites managed by DEP, including the Wards Island plant along the East River in upper Manhattan, will account for the additional five megawatts.

Indian-Americans to Help Trump keep the white house Organize a PAC to Campaign for the Reelection of Donald J Trump for the US President

(Press Release) New Jersey: Looking at the achievements of Donald J Trump as President since taking office, the Indian-Americans for Trump realize that President Trump's first term was indeed focused on reviving the American economy, rightly bringing America on the world stage, defeating terrorism, regulating immigration, and establishing peace through strength. Furthermore, they also believe that he is the best hope for America to continue on this course of strength for the next four years. They do not see any candidate, in either party, who could come close to him for the office of the president of the United States of America. Dr. A. D. Amar, who was one of the three academics to endorse Trump for president early in 2016, much before the 2016 primaries, and had served as the founding President of Indian-Americans for Trump 2016, conferred with some prominent professionals and community activists about helping the reelection of President Donald J. Trump. The result has been the formation of the committee named Indian-Americans for Trump. It is formed with the only purpose to garner actively the support of all Americans, but particularly the

Americans of the Indian Subcontinent, to have Donald J. Trump reelected as the President of the USA. The Committee is led by Dr. A. D. Amar, a Business Professor at Seton Hall University, as its President, and the businessman Mr. Anura Rupasinghe of Metuchen and Ms. Pravesh Chaturvedi of Bloomsbury as its Vice Presidents. Mayor Vic Sordillo of Warren Township, NJ is becoming the PAC Advisor. On June 28, 2020, the Indian-Americans for Trump was duly registered as a PAC by the FEC. The Indian-Americans for Trump strongly believes that under the prevailing domestic and international conditions, Donald Trump is the best hope for America to bring back domestic prosperity for all Americans and play a leading role in establishing the global peace. The officers of the Indian-Americans for Trump urge all Americans, irrespective of their nationality, race, color or creed, etc., to join in our effort, and support Donald J. Trump in his endeavor to make America great again by reelecting him to continue as the President of the USA. They encourage all Americans to become members of this Committee and contact Dr. A. D. Amar at amardamar@yahoo.com

Virtual Indian American Night Organized



Indian American Forum Founding Member Bobby K. Kalotee and Chairwoman Indu Jaiswal with Host, Moderators and Honorees Indian American Forum supporters. Organized by recently organized paid a Founding Member Bobby K. Special Tribute to Indian Kalotee and Chairwoman Indu Jawans and Soldiers who lost Jaiswal, the program was their lives recently at their hosted by Beena Kothari and Virtual Indian American Night moderated by Flora Parekh in the presence of 100+ and Aashmeeta community leaders and Yogiraj. Patriotic tribute

IAF - Entertaining World Class Performers - Violin, Dance, Songs in the presence of 100+ Community Leaders started with American and National Anthem followed by 30 second moment of silence and patriotic songs. Dance, Mathy Pillai and Professional experienced Jyotika Patel added colors to recording artist, Innesa Tymochko-Dekajlo, spell

and achievers were honored by Special Citations at the event namely Anika Tolat, Shashi Malik, Jasbir Jay Singh, Gayatri Muralirajan, Dr. Janaki Kanumilli and Dr Nutan Anand from Supervisor Joe Saladino's office. Several community leaders and IAF Board Members graced the event - to name a few Mohiinder Taneja, Mukesh Modi, Bina Sabapathy, Shammi Singh, Dr. Prachi Dua, Nilima Madan, Dr. Azad Anand, Dr. Urmillesh Arya, Jyoti Gupta, Surender Rametra, Pinki Jaggi, Deepti Vyas and many more. Leading Bollywood Actor Sonu Sood appreciated Shanti foundation via a special message. Additional information can be found at www.indianamericanforum.org.

“Proud Of The Achievements And Contributions Of The Indian-Origin Physicians”



Reddy, President of AAPI thanked Prime Minister Modi for his leadership of India and making India a word leader. The First Ever Virtual Summer Summit by the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) is being held from June 16th to 28th, 2020. During his address on Indo-US Relationship During the Pandemic and the Role of AAPI, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told members of the

powerful and the largest ethnic Medical Association in the United States, “I have closely followed your contributions, sacrificing your life to save that of others. Some of have done the ultimate sacrifice of giving up your own lives at the service of others. Your will be remembered for forever.” Acknowledging the sacrifices of Indian Origin physicians, Modi said, “I want to express my sincere gratitude for being the warriors who are committed to save the lives of so many during the pandemic.” The Prime Minister said that due to lockdown, many initiatives taken by the Government and a people driven fight, India is much better placed than many other nations and India's recovery rate is rising. Due to this the severity of the virus is less than anticipated.

Dr. Hiral Tipirneni criticizes Congressman Schweikert's support of lawsuit that could strip healthcare from 363,000 Arizonans

(Press Release by press@hiral4congress.com) PHOENIX, AZ : In the midst of a pandemic that is currently spiking in Arizona, Dr. Hiral Tipirneni called out Congressman David Schweikert for his support of the Trump Administration's lawsuit that threatens to deprive 363,000 Arizonans of their healthcare. Congressman Schweikert has voted twice in support of this lawsuit. "During a deadly pandemic, when Americans need healthcare coverage more than ever, this dangerous lawsuit puts 363,000 Arizonans and 23.3 million Americans in danger of losing their coverage. As a former ER physician, I've seen firsthand what happens when patients lose access to the healthcare system, and this puts us all at risk by harming our efforts to end this pandemic and reopen our economy. We must protect people with pre-existing conditions- including COVID-19- so they can get the care they critically need," said Dr. Hiral Tipirneni. "Congressman

Schweikert is once again putting a reckless partisan agenda ahead of Arizona families who should not be forced to choose between their health and financial security. This pandemic has shown residents of the 6th district, now more than ever, they need a Representative who will fight for - not against - their families' health and wellbeing in Washington." Dr. Hiral Tipirneni has dedicated her career to improving health care in her community, first as an emergency room physician serving the Phoenix area. After losing her mother and nephew to cancer, Hiral directed her passion and problem-solving skills to evaluating and directing funding for cutting-edge cancer research. She led teams of researchers, clinicians, and patient advocates in the fight to treat and cure breast cancer, prostate cancer, and childhood leukemia. She's a proven problem-solver who's committed to the health and long term well-being of her communities.

(Press Release by Ajay Ghosh) Chicago : “I am proud of the achievements and contributions of the Indian-origin physicians across the world in the battle against COVID-19,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was the Chief Guest at first ever Virtual Global Summit of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) on Saturday, June 27th. In his brief remarks, Dr. Suresh

Police Officer Charged for allegedly using illegal chokehold

(Press RELEASE) suspended without pay by the New York City Police Officer David Afanador, 39, was arraigned this morning before Queens Criminal Court Judge Danielle Hartman. The defendant is charged with attempted aggravated strangulation and strangulation in the second degree for allegedly using a chokehold on a Queens man during an arrest Sunday morning. The officer –

New York City Police Department hours after a video of the incident went viral online – allegedly used a chokehold on a 35-year-old man on the boardwalk near the beach in Far Rockaway, Queens. Judge Hartman released the defendant on his own recognizance and set the return date for August 3, 2020. If convicted, Afanador faces up to 7 years in prison.

Police, Women's Commission clear Scribe of sexual misconduct



Our Staff Reporter

The National Commission for Women in New Delhi has closed the sexual harassment case filed by an actress against senior Indian-American journalist, Dr. Prakash M Swamy on the basis of a report submitted by the Greater Chennai Police Department. The Chennai Police has informed the Commission that it had closed the case

against the scribe for want of evidence. The complainant failed to produce any proof of her alleged complaint. The case drew media attention nationally and internationally as the scribe is well known both in India and in the US. The veteran journalist of 40 years standing had also served as a diplomatic correspondent at the United Nations for over a decade. According to a senior police officer in Chennai, the case is nothing but a Facebook fight where both parties had traded charges and accusations against each other. The scribe, a leading investigative journalist, was probing the alleged murder of the actress's husband. To seek revenge and to stop him from investigating the case, the actress had filed a false sexual harassment complaint that the scribe had visited her house and tried to molest her.

In her social media posts, she

wept and cried for help to punish the journalist and went on to claim that the harassment continued via phone and internet and that the journalist started sending her derogatory messages via Whatsapp, threatening to defame her. The extra actress and a group dancer, Gayatri Sainath also roped in her friends in the social media to bolster her case and damage the scribe's image deliberately. The Chennai Commissioner of Police, who directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Mylapore) to investigate the case, has stated in his final report sent to the Commission in Delhi that the police conducted a thorough inquiry in the apartment complex where the actress lived and interrogated the neighbors of the complainant. It emerged that the apartment complex has a modern security system whereby outsiders can't access without the residents' permission. The

actress had failed to produce any evidence of the alleged incident, the report said.

The scribe had earlier demanded CCTV footage of the apartment complex on the dates the actress alleged and also the guest register at the complex gate maintained by the security staff in support of her case but she could not produce any credible evidence to prove her claim to him or to the police.

Swamy gave a complaint to Cyber Crime Police in Police Commissioner's Office on 28 June 2018 against Gayatri Sainath and three others following continued "digital terrorist attack" on him. The police summoned her and her friends on 29 June 2018. The police conducted an inquiry and found that she had falsely accused the scribe.

The cops warned her and friends not to repeat the mistake and let them go. As a counterblast, she

filed a false complaint to the Adyar All Women's Police Station on 30 June 2018 alleging sexual torture in October 2016, two years ago. The case was transferred to Cyber Crime only to be closed (MF) for lack of evidence and credibility. Sexual torture was not explained or backed up by evidence. It was a mere propaganda full of lies, police said.

In her fresh complaint to the Royapettah All Women's Police Station on 15 November 2018 Gayatri Sainath had alleged the same torture story but did not say "what kind of torture" and was vague again. She also complained to the National Commission for Women and the case was forwarded to Royapettah Station Police for inquiry. They found no truth in the second complaint also. Meanwhile, Gayatri Sainath continued her cyber war against him in the social media.

Millions Switch To "Local TikToks" After India Bans Chinese Apps

Chinese apps ban: The Indian industry has long been pressing for action against Chinese apps which dominate the market, with Sharechat and Inmobi calling for the platforms to follow Indian laws and values

New Delhi: Millions of Indians have joined homegrown social media platforms since the centre banned a slew of Chinese apps, including TikTok, amid growing tensions between the two neighbours, industry officials said today. The ban comes as India steps up economic pressure on China following a violent face-off last month in which 20 soldiers laid down their lives for India. The 59 banned apps include video-sharing giant TikTok, Helo and

Likee, with authorities accusing them of activities "prejudicial" to the "sovereignty and integrity of India".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has a huge social media profile, threw his weight behind the campaign by closing his account on China's Weibo platform on Wednesday.

His photograph and 115 posts made over the past five years were deleted at the request of Indian authorities, the Chinese

company said. India is a key market for global internet players and homegrown app platforms Sharechat and Roposo said they had seen a huge surge in new users since Monday's ban on their Chinese rivals.

Sharechat said in a statement that its video platform had clocked 15 million new downloads - sometimes at a rate of half-a-million every 30 minutes - in the 48 hours following the ban. It now has at least 150 million registered users, it said.

"We welcome the move from the government against platforms that have had serious

privacy, cyber-security and national security risks," Berges Malu, public policy director for ShareChat, told AFP. "We believe this move will help create a level playing field (for Indian platforms)," Malu added. Some 10 million new subscribers have joined the Roposo video app, Naveen Tewari, chief executive of owners InMobi, told AFP, bringing its user base to 75 million. An estimated 120 million Indians were TikTok users before the ban.

Mr Tewari said the app ban would give local platforms the chance to become the world's fourth major tech hub alongside

the United States, Russia and China. The Indian industry has long been pressing for action against Chinese apps which dominate the market, with Sharechat and Inmobi calling for the platforms to follow Indian laws and values.

There are also fears foreign apps could influence domestic affairs in areas such as politics. "Deep penetration of Chinese platforms in an open democracy like India makes its future election processes vulnerable to outside interference and manipulation," said one senior Delhi-based digital industry analyst, asking not to be named.

UN Tribunal Upheld India's Conduct In Italian Marine Case: Ministry Of External Affairs

New Delhi: An international tribunal dealing with the killing of two Indian fishermen in 2012 by two Italian marines has upheld the conduct of the Indian authorities over the incident, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the tribunal upheld the conduct of the Indian authorities under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). India had accused the two Italian marines on board the MV Enrica Lexie, an Italian flagged oil tanker, of shooting dead two Indian fishermen off the Kerala coast on February 15, 2012.

The Arbitral Tribunal was constituted under Annex VII of the UNCLOS on June 26, 2015 on the request of Italy over the dispute.

Mr Srivastava said the tribunal held that the actions of the Italian military officers and, consequently, Italy breached India's freedom of navigation under UNCLOS Article 87(1)(a) and 90.

"The Tribunal observed that India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction over the incident and a valid legal basis to institute criminal proceedings against the marines," Mr Srivastava said at an online media briefing. "The Tribunal rejected Italy's claim of compensation for the detention of the marines. However, it found that the immunities enjoyed by the marines as State officials operate as an exception to the jurisdiction of the Indian courts and, hence, preclude them to judge the marines," he added.

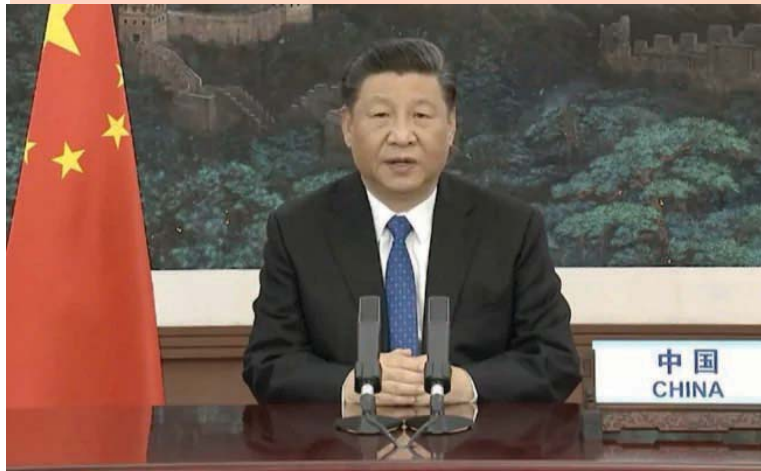
The real face of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir



(By Press section, Consulate General of India in New York) The real face of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was recently revealed as per these photos sent by Consulate General of India from New York. These photographs are from today's terror attacks in Sopore. These pictures speak more than thousand words. An elderly gentleman was gruesomely killed by Pak-sponsored terrorists in the presence of his grandchild. Fortunately, the brave Indian security forces saved the child.

China To Take Countermeasures If UK Extends Hong Kong Citizenship Plan

Britain's offer came in response to a sweeping new security law that China unveiled for the former British territory this week.



London, United Kingdom: China warned Britain on Thursday it could retaliate with "corresponding measures" for London's decision to extend a broader path to citizenship for the residents of Hong Kong. Britain's offer came in response to a sweeping new security law that China unveiled for the former British territory this week. Hong

Kong was under UK jurisdiction until it was handed over to China in 1997 with a guarantee that Beijing would preserve the city's judicial and legislative autonomy for 50 years.

The Chinese embassy in London stressed that "all Chinese compatriots residing in Hong Kong are Chinese nationals". The British plan covers almost three

million Hong Kongers who either have a British National Overseas (BNO) passports or are eligible to apply for one. The embassy said these people were Chinese nationals as well. "If the British side makes unilateral changes to the relevant practice, it will breach its own position and pledges as well as international law and basic norms governing international relations," it said in a statement.

"We firmly oppose this and reserve the right to take corresponding measures," it said without elaborating. Beijing has never publicly raised the possibility of offering Britons either Chinese citizenship or broader residence rights.

The Chinese statement concluded by urging London to reassess its decision and "refrain from interfering in Hong Kong affairs in any way".

'Little we can do'

Britain had sought closer relations with China after ending its decades-long membership in the European Union this year. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government also irritated the US administration in January by allowing the private Chinese telecoms group Huawei to unroll Britain's speedy new data network.

But Britain is now studying ways it can cut Huawei out of its system entirely and build up an alliance of European and Asian providers that reduces China's dominance in the field. UK media said the Foreign Office summoned the Chinese ambassador to London on Wednesday to express its concerns about the law.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab later conceded

there would be little London could do if China refuses to allow Hong Kongers to relocate to Britain. "Ultimately, if they follow through on something like that there would be little that we could do to coercively force them," Raab told ITV television late Wednesday. Raab said London could use "diplomatic leverage (and) other ways" to try to soften China's approach to Hong Kong and not follow through on the full force of the sweeping new security law. Chinese authorities arrested 10 people under the new legislation during protests Wednesday marking the anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China. "But ultimately we need to be honest that we wouldn't be able to force China to allow BNOs to come to the UK," Raab said.

NIA makes 6th arrest in 2019 Pulwama attack, key JeM aide held

Mohd Iqbal Rather had facilitated the movement of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorist Muhammed Umar Farooq, a key conspirator in the Pulwama attack case. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday made a crucial arrest in connection with the Pulwama attack. As many as 40 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were martyred in this IED blast on February 14 of last year. Officials have identified the suspect as 25-year-old Mohd Iqbal Rather, a resident of the Futlipura area of Charar-e-Shareef in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district. Mohd Iqbal Rather had facilitated the movement of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorist

Muhammed Umar Farooq, a key conspirator in the case. Farooq had infiltrated Indian territory in Jammu in April 2018, from the National Highway near the International border to South Kashmir. Along with others, Farooq had assembled the IED used in the attack. According to the NIA, Mohd Iqbal

Rather was in judicial custody since September 2018 in another case related to the JeM under the agency's scanner. He was produced by jail authorities before the NIA Special Court in Jammu on Thursday and has been remanded to the agency's custody for seven days for the purpose of interrogation. Initial probe into the attack revealed that Mohd Iqbal Rather was in constant touch with the Pakistan-based JeM leadership through secure messaging apps. He was also part of JeM's "transportation module". With this arrest, the NIA has so far arrested 6 accused persons in connection with the Pulwama attack.



4 killed in Tuticorin while cleaning septic tank

Four people have died in Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin district while cleaning a septic tank. Initial reports suggest that they died due to asphyxia.

Four people were killed in Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin district while cleaning a septic tank. Initial reports suggest that they died due to asphyxia. The tragedy took place at Chekkarakudi village in Tuticorin district. The deceased are identified as Raja (17), Bala (20), Dinesh (20) and Pandi (28). Two of the four people entered the tank first to clean it. When they did not come out for a long time, the other two also entered the tank to find them. All of them died after inhaling poisonous fumes and suffered from asphyxiation. The police and fire rescue team were called and a case has been registered.

UP govt to recover Rs 900 crores from teachers using fake degrees to get jobs

As many as 2823 teachers employed by government schools in Uttar Pradesh as far back as 2004-05 used fake degrees issued by the Agra University, more popularly known as the Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University.

Agra University, more popularly known as Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University is one of the oldest varsities in India. The university, however, has been making

headlines lately for all the wrong reasons. It has now come to light that as many as 2823 teachers employed by government schools in Uttar Pradesh as far back as 2004-05 used fake degrees issued by the Agra University. The state government has decided to recover salaries paid to these teachers, which amounts to an estimated Rs 900 crores.

Renuka Kumar, Additional Principal Secretary in the UP

Basic Education Department has ordered that FIRs be filed against these teachers by July 3, a senior staffer at the Agra University told India Today. Kumar has also directed officials to recover the salaries paid to these teachers, the staffer added. After an inquiry by the ATS revealed this to be a massive scandal, block development officers (BDOs) of all concerned blocks were instructed to recover the salaries paid out to these teachers to date. However, the latest order by the UP Basic Education Department was issued after the BDOs were found feigning interest in the matter. Inputs suggest that

930 assistant teachers have been terminated from services while action is pending against 450 others. Officials believe that each teacher involved in the scandal is liable to pay Rs 60 lakh back to the state government. Agra alone accounts for 249 of these teachers, 24 of whom have been fired and FIRs filed against them.

"Several teachers have sent applications to the Agra University to get their degrees verified and every application is being followed up closely. However, most degrees probed by the SIT, were found to be fake," the Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University staffer revealed.



Scindia camp wins big in MP Cabinet expansion, Shivraj inducts ministers with eye on bypolls: 10 points



The Jyotiraditya Scindia camp of former Congress MLAs won big at the Madhya Pradesh cabinet expansion. 11 ministers from his camp were inducted in the govt. The much awaited cabinet expansion in Madhya Pradesh that was due since CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan took oath on March 23 finally took place on Thursday at the Raj Bhawan in Bhopal.

A total of 20 cabinet ministers and eight ministers of state took oath on Thursday. Five cabinet

ministers had been sworn in on April 21, taking the toll number of ministers in the cabinet to 33.

Big takeaways from the expansion:

1. The Gwalior-Chambal region has been overtly represented with 11 ministers inducted from the region. Sixteen of the 24 Madhya Pradesh assembly seats where by-elections are due are from this region.

2. All other regions in Madhya Pradesh, namely Mahakoshal, Malwa, Baghelkhand and

Bundelkhand have been underrepresented.

3. Of the 22 Congress MLAs who joined BJP, a total of 14 have been inducted as ministers. Of these, 10 are cabinet ministers and four are ministers of state. Nearly half the Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet is from a Congress background.

4. A total of 11 ministers owe allegiance to former Congress veteran Jyotiraditya Scindia, who toppled the Kamal Nath government and joined BJP. Three other ex-Congress MLAs, Bisahul Singh, Aidal Singh Kansana and Hardeep Singh Dang who are not from the Scindia camp have also been inducted.

5. Jyotiraditya Scindia has been successful in driving a hard bargain with the BJP. While in the Congress he had six loyalists as ministers in the Kamal Nath cabinet, in Shivraj Singh Chouhan's cabinet, he has 11.

6. In a bid to give more representation to Scindia and to the Gwalior Chambal region,

caste representation has also gone for a toss in this government.

7. The 33-member cabinet has eight Thakurs, three Brahmins, one Jain, one Kayastha, one Sikh, one Maratha among the non-reserved categories. Thakurs are overtly represented in the cabinet as they are only 4-5% of the population in Madhya Pradesh but have more than 20 percent in the cabinet. Brahmins also comprise 4-5% of the population in the state but have been represented proportionately. However, the number of Brahmin ministers is much less than the previous Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinets. 8. The business community or Banias and Jains long been considered supporters of the BJP and its earlier avatar (the Jan Sangh), but have only one representative in the form of Omprakash Saklecha, the son of former CM VK Saklecha.

9. There are only four ministers from the tribal community whereas tribals comprise 21% of population in Madhya Pradesh.

There are four ministers from the Scheduled Caste community even though SCs comprise 10% of the population in the state.

10. A number of prominent faces that were part of the previous Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet were dropped in order to accommodate the Scindia group. Those who could not make it include Rampal Singh, Rajendra Shukla, Surendra Patwa, Sanjay Pathak, Gaurishankar Bisen and Paras Jain.

20 Cabinet Ministers inducted on July 2: Gopal Bhargava, Vijay Shah, Jagdish Devda, Bisahul Singh, Yashodhara Raje, Bhupendra Singh, Aidal Singh Kansana, Brijendra Pratap Singh, Vishwas Sarang, Imarti Devi, Prabhuram Chaudhry, Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Pradyuman Singh Tomar, Prem Singh Patel, Omprakash Saklecha, Usha Thakur, Arvind Bhadoria, Mohan Singh Yadav, Hardeep Singh Dang and Rajvardhan Singh Dattigaon.

Priyanka Gandhi clears Rs 3.46 lakh dues against Lodhi bungalow hours after govt says 'vacate'

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi reportedly made an online payment and cleared the pending dues against her Lodhi Estate bungalow. On Wednesday, the government asked her to vacate her Delhi residence as she is no longer under SPG protection.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi has cleared all her dues against her government-allotted bungalow in Delhi's Lodhi Estate, just hours after she was served a notice by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to vacate it. Priyanka Gandhi reportedly made an online payment and cleared the dues. She was issued a notice that her dues as on June 30, 2020, stood Rs 3,46,677 and she had to clear them before vacating the accommodation. The Centre on Wednesday cancelled the government accommodation allotted to Priyanka Gandhi, directing her to vacate the house within one month.

India Today TV has learnt that the Ministry of Home Affairs had informed through communication on June 30, 2020, that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has been assigned Z+ security with CRPF cover on an all-India basis, which does not have any provision for allotment or retention of government accommodation. After changes in the SPG Act last year, she is not an SPG protectee anymore. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was allotted Bungalow number 35, Lodhi Estate on February 21, 1997, on security grounds as an SPG protectee. Persons with Z+ security cover are not entitled to government accommodation. However, exceptions can be made only by the Cabinet Committee of Accommodation (CCA) based on security

perception assessment by MHA on their recommendation. Sources say the Cabinet Committee on Accommodation (CCA) in its meeting held on December 7, 2000, reviewed the guidelines on the allotment of government accommodation on security ground and decided that in future no private person, other than those

UN Tribunal Upheld India's Conduct In Italian Marine Case: Ministry Of External Affairs

New Delhi: An international tribunal dealing with the killing of two Indian fishermen in 2012 by two Italian marines has upheld the conduct of the Indian authorities over the incident, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the tribunal upheld the conduct of the Indian authorities under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

India had accused the two Italian marines on board the MV Enrica Lexie, an Italian flagged oil tanker, of shooting dead two Indian fishermen off the Kerala coast on February 15, 2012. The Arbitral Tribunal was constituted under Annex VII of the UNCLOS on June 26, 2015 on the

request of Italy over the dispute. Mr Srivastava said the tribunal held that the actions of the Italian military officers and, consequently, Italy breached India's freedom of navigation under UNCLOS Article 87(1)(a) and 90. "The Tribunal observed that India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction over the incident and a valid legal basis to institute criminal proceedings against the marines," Mr Srivastava said at an online media briefing. "The Tribunal rejected Italy's claim of compensation for the detention of the marines. However, it found that the immunities enjoyed by the marines as State officials operate as an exception to the jurisdiction of the Indian courts and, hence, preclude them to judge the marines," he added.

INS slams China for restricting access to Indian newspapers, media websites

The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) has slammed China's action of restricting access to Indian newspapers and media websites and urged the Indian government to expeditiously take steps to ban access to Chinese media in the country. The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) has slammed China's action of restricting access to Indian newspapers and media websites and urged the Indian government to expeditiously take steps to ban access to Chinese media in the country.

INS president Shailesh Gupta on behalf of its members said the action of the Chinese government to restrict access to Indian newspapers and media websites is uncalled for. He said even the access through the VPN (Virtual Private Network) server has been blocked by creating a technologically advanced firewall. "Gupta strongly urges the government of India to expeditiously take steps to ban all kinds of access to Chinese media in India and call off collaborations/investments made by Chinese in Indian media companies with immediate effect," the INS statement said. India on Monday banned 59 apps with Chinese links, including the hugely popular TikTok and UC Browser, for engaging in "activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order".

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An Open Letter to Our White Allies at Companies– If Not Now, When?

It was more than a week after George Floyd's death, and I opened my Facebook page to see a post from an old high school mate. At this point there are few friends from my Milwaukee, Wisconsin high school on my Facebook pages after years of debates where many insisted that "All Lives Matter." But on this day, I stopped in my tracks as I read her post about how watching George Floyd's murder sparked a change of heart. She acknowledged that Black Lives Matter was not a slogan but a statement about the value of human life.

This awakening has been happening across our country and our world. It may start with one individual. But how can corporations rise to the challenge?

In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and the recent civil unrest, we need white people to speak to other white people, to acknowledge privilege in all of its forms and become true co-advocates in the fight to eradicate racism. Writing a post on Facebook or releasing a statement that Black Lives

Matter is appreciated. But at this inflection point, acknowledgment of 400 years of injustice is a first step. We recognize that from an early age whites have been taught that race and religion are topics that are to be avoided. But in that avoidance festers lack of knowledge of inequities. We need white co-advocates to boldly engage in uncomfortable conversations and push for policies that will lead to greater equality. For allies at small businesses and large corporations, organizations like NYUL have ways that can help you be active allies to drive real change.

Every year NYUL recognizes corporations that recognize that diversity matters. NYUL bestows Champions of Diversity Awards to corporations with exemplary practices as exhibited by their supplier diversity, diversity of leadership, philanthropy and composition of their workforce. And every year we have corporations apply that have no Blacks or women on their boards, have a concentration of

Blacks in non-management positions, and no formal commitment to supplier diversity. These corporations want recognition without doing the work. Building diverse workplaces require awareness, analysis, commitment and resources.

But where can you begin? You can start by asking a few questions:

1. Does your corporation have Blacks and women on your Board of Directors, C-suite and in senior management?

2. Does your corporation regularly review the diversity of your workforce and develop goals and metrics for achieving those goals?

3. Does your corporation have a formal supplier diversity program with goals for Minority & Women Owned Business Procurement?

4. Does your corporate giving prioritize resources on those communities most in need, for instance those zip codes with highest concentration of COVID-19 cases and deaths?

5. Does your corporation have an on-going partnership with Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, Inroads, MIT, NAACP, or Urban League? These are all organizations to eradicate racism and providing diverse candidates for the workplace.

6. Does your corporation have a formal mentoring program that encourages Black employees to develop relationships with a Mentor (help develop skills and share advice and resources) Advocate (Know mentees work and speak well of the mentee to others) and Sponsor (get involved with supporting organizations leading change.)

7. Does your corporation have a leadership team responsible for discussing issues of inclusion that has access to the C-suite?

It is time for every company to not only become a Champion of Diversity, but to fight racism in policy and practice. That time is now.

**By Arva Rice | President & CEO
New York Urban League, Inc.**

Resisting Chinese encroachment

India must not contribute to the digital and economic rise of the same power that harms it

On June 29, the minister for electronics and information technology and law and justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad, tweeted that "For safety, security, defence, sovereignty & integrity of India and to protect data & privacy of people of India the government has banned 59 mobile apps." After the usual partisan bluster surrounding this move subsides, India must operationalise and strengthen this momentous decision. India, its people, and its territory that are now increasingly digital, must be protected from China's encroachment and influence.

This long-term response has to be shaped by three ideas. First, India must not contribute to the success, proliferation and performance of digital weapons that will be ranged against it. China's tech must be recognised as one. Second, it must wean itself away from an iniquitous trade relationship that makes it dependent on a country that seeks to harm it. And, third, India needs to step out of the shadow that stunts its own economic growth, diminishes its political clout and limits its digital ambitions.

The presence of China's hardware and platforms in India's digital ecosystem

constitutes a long-term security threat. Arriving at this conclusion requires no strenuous leap of logic. A level-headed assessment of China's stated intentions and observable actions is enough. China has manipulated democratic means to transmit its propaganda and advertised its way to ensure suitable reportage and headlines. It has leveraged WeChat to interfere in Canadian politics, and to intercept content beyond its jurisdiction, and adopted western social media platforms to target dissidents abroad, exacerbate racial tensions in the United States (US), interfere in Taiwan's political processes and spread disinformation about the coronavirus. China has entrenched the influence of its tech platforms in key global institutions such as the United Nations in an attempt to redraw the rules of information flows and the ethical applications of emerging technologies like facial recognition systems.

These are fundamental to China's great power ambitions — they assist Beijing to expand its "discourse power", develop indigenous technologies, create lock-ins through standards and infrastructure, weaponise its

economic and technological interdependence, and emerge as a technology superpower. Relations with India are inconsequential to Beijing's imagination of the world. India has to look out for itself. This new mindset to review engagement with China tech is a vital first step to protect itself. China will continue to gather information on Indians. More worrisome is the insidious ability of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to interfere in or influence India's political and social spheres. During the Doklam stand-off, the security establishment discovered that the Chinese-owned UC Browser was filtering certain news on Android handsets in India to shape perceptions and outcomes — classic information warfare in the digital age. Recently, we have seen content critical of China being taken down on one of the banned apps and moderation of other incidents and images as well.

This is not unique to Chinese platforms. But far-reaching national security legislations, and subservience to a one-maned party that is inimical to India, make their continuance untenable. Indian democracy, however flawed, must steer

clear of the digital "tea rooms" owned by the CPC.

Will this Indian decision cause economic harm to Chinese platforms? In terms of revenues, clearly it will not. In terms of value, tremendously so. Platforms rely on network effects to scale — every additional user drives up valuations and the aggregate data that they produce feeds into other commercial and research and development activities and product development. Indian eyeballs and data should not fuel Chinese malfeasance directed against them.

Similarly, India must bar China's telecommunications infrastructure from its 5G networks. It is time to say "No way Huawei". Countries such as Singapore, the US, Australia and others have already signalled different degrees of intent to manage the Dragon. New Delhi's decision should strengthen this trend and encourage others. Political trust is increasingly going to shape the direction of technology flows. India must work with its allies and partners through new initiatives such as the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence to compete with and

contain China.

India's actions will invite consequences. China will respond using other aspects of the economic relationship. India's dependence on electronics, pharmaceuticals and other industrial inputs are well-documented and easy pickings. China's response could manifest itself along the Line of Actual Control or through cyber intrusions. China's ability to impose costs must serve to motivate India.

Bilateral trade is healthy when there is a balance. With China, it is a doubled-barrelled shotgun trained between India's eyes. It is important that we fix this now as a three trillion dollar economy. Otherwise, all our future growth will only serve to strengthen the entity which seeks to weaken us. India's decision has come at a time when economic activity is already under siege from the Wuhan virus and when major economies are also questioning their dependence on China. A reconfiguration of value chains is inevitable. Public opinion favours this and the short-term pain will be acceptable to many. As India restarts its pandemic-stalled economy, let us create value chains that are not of dubious origin.

India's torture culture *The Neoliberal Looting of America* needs to end now

Only the people, including the Bar, the media, civil society and student groups, can rise up against torture practices

By now, everyone has heard of the tragic deaths of P. Jayaraj and J. Benicks, a father-son duo in a small town in Thoothukudi. Jayaraj, 58, was arrested by the police following an altercation with them on keeping his son's mobile phone shop open in violation of lockdown rules. After Benicks was also taken into custody, the two were mercilessly thrashed to death.

Being found guilty of the 'offence' of keeping a shop open during the lockdown would have ordinarily granted Jayaraj and Benicks a maximum of only three months of imprisonment. The story, sadly, does not end with the police alone. Before the two men died, the police sought their remand, which a judge sitting in a court complex mechanically seems to have granted, without ever seeing the two men, or seeming to question the rationale for their remand. The series of events, starting with the cruel lockdown enforcement methods and concluding with the utterly gruesome and entirely avoidable deaths, is a sign that we are living with a completely broken system of law enforcement.

Endemic to police culture

The Tamil Nadu Police has acquired notoriety over the decades for employing torturous methods for law enforcement. During my tenure as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, several cases in this regard were brought to the court. But this issue is not restricted to Tamil Nadu alone. Torture is, in fact, an integral part of police culture all over the country. Indeed, it would not be amiss to argue that this culture in India today is reminiscent of the brutality of the colonial police forces that we are so keen to forget.

Official data also accept that police torture is a reality, but the quality of such data is always suspect. The pervasiveness of police torture is best understood in the compelling case found in reports made by NGOs and observers over the years, including by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, Amnesty International and People's Union for Democratic Rights.

The data on torture show that it is not only an integral part of India's policing culture; in some investigations (such as terror cases), it is treated as the centrepiece. The fact is that the current laws facilitate such torture, such as through the admissibility of confessions as evidence under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which continues refurbished as the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act. Unfortunately, policing has also not mainstreamed the upgrade to newer

technologies, like DNA analysis, which can directly impact law enforcement practices.

What some have labelled as India's "public secret" is tiptoed around in the international arena. The official position on state-sponsored or state-endorsed torture can be seen in a 2017 quote by India's then Attorney-General. In his opening speech in Geneva at the country's universal periodic review at the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Attorney-General invoked Gandhi and Buddha, stating that "India...believe[s] in peace, non-violence and upholding human dignity. As such, the concept of torture is completely alien to our culture and it has no place in the governance of the nation." This would be a textbook example of hypocrisy, if ever.

Undoubtedly, the offending officers in the Thoothukudi case are being prosecuted, and some compensation will also be paid to the victims' families. But such piecemeal action is not what is needed. What we really need is a recognition that torture is endemic and a systemic problem, and the only answer lies in stringent legal framework that is aligned with and committed to the principles of international law under the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) to which India has been a signatory since 1997, and a watertight enforcement mechanism that deters such practices.

Supreme Court on torture

Even before India signed the UNCAT, our Supreme Court had brought about glorious jurisprudence highlighting the many problems with the country's torture culture. In Raghbir Singh v. State of Haryana (1980), the Court was "deeply disturbed by the diabolical recurrence of police torture resulting in a terrible scare in the minds of common citizens that their lives and liberty are under a new peril when the guardians of the law gore human rights to death." These sentiments were revisited in Francis Coralie Mullin v. Union Territory of Delhi (1981) and Sheela Barse v. State of Maharashtra (1987), where the Court condemned cruelty and torture as violative of Article 21. This interpretation of Article 21 is consistent with the principles contained in the UNCAT. The UNCAT aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment around the world. Although India signed the UNCAT in 1997, it is yet to ratify it. In 2010, a weak Prevention of Torture Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha later sent it to a Select Committee for review in alignment with the UNCAT. (I, too, appeared before this committee in 2010 after retirement from judicial office). But the Committee's recommended law, submitted in 2012,

(Contd on page 29)

The private equity industry, which has led to more than 1.3 million job losses in the last decade, reveals the truth about free markets.

"It's hard to separate what's good for the United States and what's good for Bank of America," said its former chief executive, Ken Lewis, in 2009. That was hardly true at the time, but the current crisis has revealed that the health of the finance industry and stock market are completely disconnected from the actual financial health of the American people. As inequality, unemployment and evictions climb, the Dow Jones surges right alongside them — one line compounding suffering, the other compounding returns for investors.

One reason is that an ideological coup quietly transformed our society over the last 50 years, raising the fortunes of the financial economy — and its agents like private equity firms — at the expense of the real economy experienced by most Americans.

The roots of this intellectual takeover can be traced to a backlash against socialism in Cold War Europe. Austrian School economist Friedrich A. Hayek was perhaps the most influential leader of that movement, decrying governments who chased "the mirage of social justice." Only free markets can allocate resources fairly and reward individuals based on what they deserve, reasoned Hayek. The ideology — known as neoliberalism — was especially potent because it disguised itself as a neutral statement of economics rather than just another theory. Only unfettered markets, the theory argued, could

ensure justice and freedom because only the profit motive could dispassionately pick winners and losers based on their contribution to the economy.

Neoliberalism leapt from economics departments into American politics in the 1960s, where it fused with conservative anti-communist ideas and then quickly spread throughout universities, law schools, legislatures and courts. By the 1980s, neoliberalism was triumphant in policy, leading to tax cuts, deregulation and privatization of public functions including schools, pensions and infrastructure. The governing logic held that corporations could do just about everything better than the government could. The result, as President Ronald Reagan said, was to unleash "the magic of the marketplace." The magic of the market did in fact turn everything into gold — for wealthy investors. Neoliberalism led to deregulation in every sector, a winner-take-all, debt-fueled market and a growing cultural acceptance of purely profit-driven corporate managers. These conditions were a perfect breeding ground for the private equity industry, then known as "leveraged buyout" firms. Such firms took advantage of the new market for high-yield debt (better known as junk bonds) to buy and break up American conglomerates, capturing unprecedented wealth in fewer hands.

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A reset in Kashmir policy

With the external front fragile, get the internal house in order

Earlier this week, the hardline Kashmiri secessionist leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, quit the All Party Hurriyat Conference, the umbrella formation of separatist organisations in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). His resignation is being widely seen as a function of both his old age (he is 91) and internal factional differences — he also attacked the Hurriyat leaders based on the other side of the border in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Many in New Delhi have viewed it as a setback for separatist politics in the Valley. It is true that Mr Geelani has been a staunch pro-Pakistan and Islamist figure; he has

justified the violence and terror that has been wreaked on Kashmir for decades; and if he is forced to retreat from the political sphere — for whatever reason — this is good news. But it is important to recognise that Mr Geelani is not just an individual — but a thought. He represents a mindset that sees India as an “occupation force” and there are many other emerging figures, belonging to the same strand, such as Masarat Alam Bhat, who will seek to lead this school of thought. Delhi has to adopt a two-pronged approach. There can be no dialogue with those who advocate secession and violence. The might of the intelligence-security

machinery must be used to deal with all such elements and a clear message that there can be no compromise on India’s territorial integrity and constitutional values must be sent out. At the same time, this is also a ripe moment to re-examine the Kashmir policy. The constitutional changes of August 5, 2019 — effective nullification of Article 370, re-organisation of the state, and its dilution into a Union Territory — and measures such as a crackdown on political activity and detention of leaders has alienated a large segment of moderates and pro-India people. Given the external situation — the stand-off at the India-

China border, and the fragile situation on the Line of Control — it is crucial for India to get its house in order. For this, New Delhi must release democratic leaders still under detention (including Mehbooba Mufti); begin a process of political engagement with mainstream leaders, and, while making it clear that Article 370 is history, offer eventual restoration of statehood to J&K as a mechanism for bringing all pro-India forces on board; and pave the way for elections. To take on external adversaries, India must cover its domestic bases. And given its strategic location, Kashmir must rank at the top of this domestic reset.

How I Battled Coronavirus, Cut Off From The World

By Gauri Datta Gupta

I roll down the car window for the person in the PPE suit to take my nasal and throat swabs. For months, we've seen images in the media of frontline workers in PPE suits, seeing one inches away from my face feels surreal. The nasal swab is piercing and my eyes well up. Test over, the Covid Warrior nods. I can't tell if it's a man or a woman but offer my thanks for the fearless role they play. I roll up the car window, little knowing that the Warrior is the last person I'll see in 17 days. 'Covid positive', says the report, a verdict more piercing than the stinging nasal swab. Having self-isolated since the first signs of fever four days earlier, I read and re-read the report, hoping for a different result. Despite the unremitting use of masks, hand sanitizers and sprays, I've been blindsided by a shrewd and unsparing opponent. I slowly absorb the weight of the report and steel myself for the road ahead. I inform my family and senior colleagues, sorry for the anxiety it will cause them.

"Can I tell a friend?" asks my 15-year-old daughter on a video call later that evening. "Of course," I say, adding that we will go about this in an open and informed manner. Discreetly but anxiously, she scans my face and asks why my eyes are puffy. I tell her that the fever is to blame for my swollen eyes, though in reality it was the thought of my physical separation from her that had driven me to tears earlier in the day. I can see her bravely holding up and my heart aches at not being able to hug her when she needs reassurance and comfort. We're both hurting, both trying to put up a brave face.

New cases, deaths, recoveries - for those of us in a newsroom, these three Covid statistics are what we process daily. As I pick up the newspaper the next day, the statistics seem personal. I've become part of the story - a 'new case'.



For an avid news follower, I suddenly find it difficult to read the papers or watch the news. Stories of Covid deaths and images of patients struggling in hospital derail my sense of calm, stirring anxiety. I make the difficult decision not to follow the news for the next few days, sending myself deeper into isolation. The wily virus manifests itself differently for different people. I have no cough or cold, only fever and body ache for the first few days. My temperature dips in the day, lulling me into believing that I'm on the mend. By the evening, I watch with trepidation as the digits on the thermometer rise - 100, 101, 101.5. The nights are long and uncertain - tossing and turning, feeling hot and cold. There's a dull ache in my head and my legs hurt. I spend several nights sitting up - pressing my head with one hand, my legs with the other. And then there's the Oximeter - a must-have accessory for Covid cases. Several times a day, I check my oxygen levels, levels that can dip precipitously for those affected by Coronavirus. Many stressful moments are spent in isolation waiting for the Oximeter to deliver its verdict - mercifully, it doesn't let me down. Despite being in isolation, my family and friends make

sure I'm not alone, making their presence felt in countless ways. My husband dutifully leaves my food and an endless supply of hot drinks outside my room. Since my daughter won't be seeing either parent for weeks, my sister steps in to fill her parents' shoes. Not just that, she runs my house remotely and updates the civic authorities and RWA about my Covid status. My sister-in-law who is a doctor takes charge of my recovery while our reassuring NDTV doctor calls several times a day to ask how I am. Supportive messages from friends, cousins and colleagues flood my inbox, while parents of friends ensure one doesn't feel the loss of one's own. Touchingly, former colleagues who I haven't met in years send messages of support. I may be hermetically sealed off, but the world breaches my walls to reach me.

Day 7 is crucial. From here on, it's wait and watch as I'm told you can either get better or take a turn for the worse. I try to stay calm, banking on books and Netflix, which my daughter has finally prevailed upon me to download. Yet, it's an anxious wait, waking up each morning wondering if this is the day I'll finally flatten the curve. A colleague has been in the Covid ICU and is in need of plasma

therapy - a stark reminder of the turn Covid can take. Daily video calls with my daughter are a precious time of day. It's been a tough few months for her - Covid sent her into post-board exam lockdown, robbing them of downtime with friends, physical classrooms and summer vacations. Now, not just are friends, teachers and classes online, so are her quarantined parents. She understands it's a battle the world is up against and doesn't complain.

By Day 9, the fever and body ache subside. What follows is an intermittent shortness of breath. As an asthmatic prone to seasonal asthma, I hope it's just that. At the back of my mind, I know the havoc Covid can play with the respiratory system. As any asthmatic would know, not being able to breathe easy is distressing. I push away thoughts of ventilators and oxygen masks and rely on steam inhalation, breathing exercises, asthma medication and my inhaler to help me breathe easy. My sister in the U.S. suggests I shut my room window, just in case it's letting in some allergens. A week later, I can breathe easy again. Quarantine over, I step out into the disorienting sunshine of a Delhi summer. I surprise my daughter who wasn't expecting me. The anxiety I saw on her face over video calls makes way for a Kodak moment. There's nothing more I can wish for. I may have recovered from Covid but there is no room for celebration. I'm deeply grateful for having seen the light at the end of the tunnel. My heart goes out to those who went down fighting and to families who won't see loved ones again. I'm filled with gratitude for frontline workers, bravely fighting an invisible enemy, staking all that they have for a cause larger than themselves. In these uncertain times one thing's for sure - God appears in many avatars, PPE suits is one of them.

My Covid-19 Experience

By Mukul Kesavan

I tested positive for Covid-19 on June 6 after two and a half months of a fairly rigorous quarantine. The first question that people who test positive ask themselves is, how did this happen despite my precautions? This is especially true of middle class victims of Covid who have the online connectivity and financial reserves to shield themselves from the outside world as the virus spreads.

My household - my wife, our cook and I - stayed inside the house from late March, when the lockdown began, to late May. All deliveries were transacted in the open air across a table in our backyard. We vaguely understood that the virus could linger on objects and infected surfaces called fomites, so we let durable goods sit outside till their surfaces became sterile and tried, to the extent possible, to scrub packaged perishables with soap and water. Fresh produce was soaked in a solution of potassium permanganate and rinsed in the hope that this would keep the novel corona virus at bay.

As the lockdown was eased, I began to occasionally take my evening walk around the neighbourhood with my mask on, veering away from approaching people at abrupt tangents. Given the repeated assurances of epidemiologists that the possibility of catching the virus outdoors was vanishingly small, provided social distance was maintained, it seems unlikely that those walks were the source of my infection.

I visited banks on three separate occasions to catch up with transactions that had been postponed. In each case, the banks were nearly empty, the tellers (and I) wore masks and social distance was strictly observed. All of these visits were short: just over five minutes. On another occasion, I went to a large shoe shop to buy summer chappals. Shop assistants sprayed my hands with sanitizer, I pointed at the pair I wanted to buy and a quick credit card transaction completed the visit. There were very few customers about and as I paid, it was moot who was keener to shrink away from the other, the cashier or me. Again, it's possible that I caught the virus during these transactions, but given the scientific advice, the physical precautions taken-sanitizing, masking, social distance, handwashing afterwards - and the brevity of the visits, the risk

seemed small.

The one transaction that seems careless in retrospect was a visit to an optician to order a pair of back up glasses that were, by definition, unnecessary. This happened four days before I began running a fever, and the visit was more a diversion from the cloistered monotony of two months of quarantine than a real errand. It was a small, air-conditioned shop and I was there for just under fifteen minutes. Everyone inside was masked but getting fitted for frames is a close-range business. I didn't need a test because they had my prescription, but trying on spectacle frames, centering the lenses and paying the bill took a while.

An article I read later in The Wall Street Journal about covid transmission suggested that some infections in China occurred in restaurants because aerosolized virus accumulated "...in the air over time and strong airflow from an air-conditioning unit on the wall may have helped recirculate the particles in the air." It's possible that the close encounter at the optician's led to my infection but it's impossible to know for certain. If there is a moral to this story, it is that if

you must go into an airconditioned shop, either order what you want and step out while the shop bills you, or finish your business inside five minutes and leave. A friend of mine who has diabetes was even more careful than I was, not stepping out once since the Prime Minister inaugurated the lockdown, and not coming within yards of non-household humans. It still wasn't enough to keep the virus out. It's hard to draw definite lessons from anecdotal evidence. Statistically, the chances of infection via fomites might be low, but it's still a possibility. All you can do is commit yourself to best-practice routines that keep the odds in your favour.

The second, and more pressing question after testing positive for Covid is whether you should isolate at home or check into a hospital. This is a particularly urgent question for people over sixty (like me) because this cohort accounts for the vast majority of covid deaths the world over. From my own experience, and that of friends over sixty who tested positive, the answer to that question depends on a) your symptoms and b) whether you have co-



morbidities that leave you vulnerable to the sudden respiratory crises that severe cases of covid can induce.

I had a single symptom: low-grade fever that lasted unbroken for eleven days. I didn't have a cough or shortness of breath, nor did I lose my sense of smell or taste. I don't have hypertension or diabetes. I do have apnoea, a sleeping disorder, but I hadn't read it mentioned as relevant to Covid, so I chose to ignore it. I isolated at home and I was lucky; my fever broke and I recovered. The friend with diabetes chose to check into hospital after a cough developed and his oxygen levels (as measured by an oximeter) dropped. It was the right decision because it allowed the doctors to spot and treat a

patch on a lung that might have gone undetected at home.

My decision to isolate at home, and my friend's decision to check into hospital, were taken on the advice of physicians contacted over the phone or via a video consultation. These aren't decisions that a lay person of any age should make on the strength of general knowledge or online erudition. We are so irradiated with information about Covid-19 that the temptation to stay home and self-medicate with hydroxychloroquine or Vitamins C and D or karha is strong. It should be vigorously resisted. It's another matter whether a hospital bed will be available or affordable, should you choose to check in. But that's a question for another day.

3 Steps Government Should Take To Save Jobs In Tourism

The Prime Minister's speech on June 30 coincided with the inauguration of Unlock 2.0. This is the phase when government policy should gradually be making the transition from relief to repair - repair of the economy from the ill-planned lockdown. Unfortunately, the speech had little in terms of economic foresight and planning. It is not that the government is without funds. Raising petrol and diesel prices, and accessing the Rs 8,000 crore saved following the suspension of the MPLAD scheme, has given the government room to spend. We had suggested that this money be used to transfer Rs 10,000 directly to the accounts of each worker in the unorganized sector, who comprise nearly 90% of our workforce. But this government has decided to ignore workers and has chosen not to upfront help small businesses, especially in those sectors that generate enormous employment, both direct and indirect.

One such industry is hospitality and travel. To tell you its plight, and to explain how some of this could have been anticipated, let me take you back to March 5,

almost four months ago. India was in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a country, we had only 30 positive cases. Even so, it was apparent to some of us that the danger was coming. The government continued to be in denial, but in neighbouring and regional countries, the panic was starting and the numbers were mounting. Six days later, the World Health Organisation formally declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a "pandemic".

Why am I referring to March 5? On that day, in my capacity as a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Travel, Culture and Tourism, I wrote to the chair of the Committee. I urged the Committee to take suo motu cognizance of the impact of COVID-19 on the aviation and tourism industry, and meet as early as it could.

My letter was ignored. The BJP is never in a mood to listen to constructive suggestions made by an opposition MP. In March, the party's attention was on another MP - Madhya Pradesh - where defections were being organized and a state government was being toppled.

The Committee finally met on March 18. It was a desultory effort. Few took the pandemic seriously, even though the number of cases was nearly 200 by then and calls for a lockdown had begun to be heard. The rest is history.

Tourism has been knocked out cold by COVID-19. It will be among the last industries to recover. People will regain full confidence to travel only when a vaccine is developed, and the impact can be imagined. Tourism accounts for nearly 10 per cent of India's GDP and employs 12.75 per cent of our workforce (2019-20 figures). A Business of Travel Trade survey estimates 40 per cent of companies in the travel and tourism sector are at risk of closure over the next six months. A massive 81 per cent of travel and tourism companies have lost 100 per cent of their revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A further 15 per cent have lost up to 75 per cent. According to the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality, between 38 and 50 million jobs are at risk. If even large, homegrown, well-funded players like MakeMyTrip, Yatra, Goibibo

and Oyo are struggling, imagine the plight of the smaller players. As COVID-19 numbers keep rising, the risk to livelihoods will also continue to rise. The aviation industry is likely to suffer a loss of US\$ 11.2 billion due to COVID-19. This could claim 2.9 million jobs.

Even before the pandemic, the travel and tourism sector was the step-child of the government. Budget allocations this year were low, despite the promise of making India an "incredible" destination. The optimists had hoped that tourism would be recognised as an export industry and get tax benefits, but the Finance Minister made no such announcement. Infrastructure and connectivity gaps were not substantially addressed either.

There were expectations that the government's COVID-19 stimulus package would provide some relief to travel and tourism. Sadly, this Rs 20 lakh crore package - more a rebranded loan scheme than a genuine stimulus - offered very little for travel and tourism stakeholders. As I wrote earlier, the travel and tourism industry is critical for jobs and livelihoods.

The return of Amit Shah to the national stage

While his return marks the return of politics, as HM, Shah must provide a healing touch to the citizenry

By Rajdeep Sardesai

In the nasty and cruel world of social media, even the second most powerful man in the country is not spared. When Union home minister Amit Shah was conspicuous by his absence in the first two months of the Covid-19 lockdown, there were even distressing questions raised about his health, eventually forcing the home minister to issue a clarification that all was well. In the last month, as the country slowly unlocks, all doubts have been put to rest: Shah is well and truly back.

He has given a slew of well-choreographed interviews on the first anniversary of Modi 2.0. He has addressed virtual rallies in Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal. He has closely monitored the Rajya Sabha elections, especially in his home state of Gujarat and staved off a crisis in Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Manipur. Most significantly, he has virtually taken over as the Big Boss of the Covid-19-hit national capital.

In a sense, the return of Shah marks the unlocking of politics. For almost three months during the lockdown, it wasn't just the country's economy that was in a lockdown; it was also its politics. With the mostly-timid Opposition

reduced to expressing its angst on Twitter, there seemed little space for raising issues of vital public interest. Neither Parliament nor scarcely a select or standing committee has met to address urgent matters. Yes, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi has held half-a-dozen meetings over video-conference with chief ministers but these cyber-engagements cannot be a substitute for the cut-and-thrust of public debate. Where other democracies, most notably the United Kingdom, have ensured that open parliamentary debate is encouraged, India has chosen to impose a moratorium on its politics.

This willful disregard for any form of democratic dissent and discussion is dangerous. It allows a dominant party government to impose its will on the people, behind a veil of non-transparency and non-accountability. A serious national security challenge on the Sino-Indian border in Ladakh has been wrapped up in secrecy and disingenuous wordplay. The tragedy of the dislocation of millions of migrant workers is blamed on state governments. The failure to prepare for a pandemic by boosting health infrastructure is again blamed on

states. A faltering economy is put on pause mode but no industrialists (with one or two notable exceptions) can raise their voice. No details are provided to a Right to Information petition filed seeking information about the PM Cares Fund. Petrol and diesel prices are hiked 22 times in two months with no explanation. A 27-year-old Jamia Millia Islamia student activist is named as a prime conspirator in the Delhi riots but local political leaders linked to the ruling party are given a clean chit. A police officer arrested for allegedly helping terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir is granted bail because no charge-sheet is filed, but bail to human rights activists is furiously opposed.

In this ominous scenario of unbridled State power, re-enters Amit Shah. No other minister in Modi 2.0 has invested as much time and equity in keeping the political pot boiling as the home minister. From nullifying Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, pushing ahead with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, driving the Ram Mandir agenda forward, Shah has provided the ideological muscle to the BJP's Hindutva juggernaut. Not to forget his sharp and ruthless political instincts that have seen the BJP

displace the Janata Dal-Secular-Congress government in Karnataka, engineer mass defections in Goa, topple the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh, and now gradually break the Congress in Gujarat.

With Shah's return to centre-stage, it would seem that the Modi government is preparing to shift gears once again and focus on the political management of a Covid-19-struck nation. There is, for example, an election to be won in Bihar at the year-end and Shah's poll organisation skills will be required to ensure what seems a near-inevitable triumph. There is an even bigger prize that awaits in West Bengal next year, the conquest of which Shah has made a personal mission of sorts. That in the midst of the pandemic and in a cyclone-ravaged state, Shah chose to launch a scathing attack on his great rival, Mamata Banerjee, is a sign that the gloves are now off once again.

Ironically, the home minister is expected to work closely with state governments during a national disaster, provide support and guidance to them, and ensure harmonious Centre-state relations. Shah's personality trait is instinctively combative but a pandemic calls for a change in style, for co-operation and not

confrontation. This is not a moment for further dividing a hyper-polarised society or seeking to rule by fear and intimidation. Whether a leader like Shah can reinvent himself is uncertain. The rules for good governance are very different from those for winning elections.

Already, in Delhi, there are suggestions that Shah is overseeing the Covid-19 fight by diktat with little consultation with the state government. Which might partly explain why so many unilateral decisions taken one day are hastily abandoned the very next. The home minister may have no love lost for Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal but this is a moment to set aside personal differences and work as a team. So far, in his political career, Shah has been a divisive figure; now he needs to become a unifying force by providing a healing touch to a traumatised citizenry. Post-script: The only thing certain about Indian politics is that the future is uncertain. At the beginning of 2020, Shah and Kejriwal were engaged in one of the most acrimonious and polarised election campaigns the country has seen. Now, a virus has forced them to jointly inaugurate Covid-19 care centres as grim-faced, masked men!

The Taste With Vir: I support the TikTok ban

But the calls for a boycott of all Chinese goods are ill-thought out.

By Vir Sanghvi

Now that we are all agreed that Tik Tok is A Bad Thing, where do we go next? Do we extend the bans/boycotts on services and products from the People's Republic of China (PRC)? And if yes, how do we go about it? The first thing to remember is that global boycotts can and do work. South Africa would never have agreed to dismantle apartheid if the world had not boycotted its products and made apartheid-supporting South Africans feel like a global pariahs.

What's less clear is whether country-to-country boycotts change the attitudes of regimes. Few of us use anything made in Pakistan. And from time to time we have boycotted sporting events with Pakistan. It is not clear whether these boycotts have made any difference to the attitude of the Islamabad regime.

So, I am not sure that an Indian boycott of Chinese goods will change Beijing's mindset. At present, around two to three per cent of China's exports come to India

(the figure for China's exports to the US ranges between 15 to 21 per cent, depending on how you calculate it). Presumably President Xi had already thought of the trade implications when he escalated the conflict with India.

Another way of controlling China's exports to India would be a simple import ban imposed by the government but that, as we shall see poses dangers including retaliation and damage to Indian industry. The key question about boycotting Chinese imports is: where does the boycott end? It is okay to boycott Chinese smart phones. But do we boycott any product that has Chinese components? This is almost impossible to do because there is no way of knowing where every single component in say, a machine, was manufactured. And besides, we use Chinese components just as much as the rest of the world. Already, there are complaints that Chinese components and ingredients that are needed for the manufacture of drugs and medical

equipment are being arbitrarily held up by Indian customs authorities. The Indian auto industry is also dependent on Chinese components and would be damaged by import bans on Chinese goods.

So yes, it is tempting to call for a boycott on Chinese products. But let's be clear: we can only boycott the products that are not essential for Indian industry. Otherwise, it's we who lose out.

We can, quite easily, boycott Chinese consumer goods like TVs and smart phones. It won't necessarily do much harm to the Chinese economy or make any difference to President Xi.

But it will make us feel better about ourselves. And it will make a symbolic point.

Once you get past phones and computers, however, things get more complicated. If you are banning or boycotting the products that Chinese business manufactures, do you extend the same principle to companies that Chinese business owns in India?

This is what some economists call the PayTM problem. While PayTM is hailed as a great Indian achievement (which it is) it is also true that it is majority-owned by Chinese interests. In fact it is owned by the same Chinese conglomerate that owns the UC Browser. So why act against the browser and not PayTM?

If you are to look at companies where Chinese investors hold significant stakes, the list includes nearly every celebrated start-up of the last decade or so: Big Basket, Byjus, Flipkart, MakeMyTrip, Ola, Oyo, Swiggy, Zomato, Snapdeal and many others.

There is nothing immoral or underhand about what these companies are doing. They accepted Chinese investment openly and transparently, within the rules made by the Indian government.

But the truth is that as they prosper and their valuations go up, the Chinese make more and more money. And they get rich from Indian consumers.

(Contd on page 30)

Why can companies still silence us with mandatory arbitration?

More than 55% of the American workforce is now subject to mandatory arbitration. This system of private courts must be abolished



By Moira Donegan

When it was revealed in October that Andy Rubin received a \$90m exit package after being forced to resign over a credible sexual harassment claim, Google employees around the world walked out in protest. They were disgusted at what appeared to be a reward for bad behavior, and they wanted more accountability for members of management. But they were also angry at the strategy that the company used to keep harassment claims a secret: forced arbitration. Google employees, like their counterparts at a ballooning number of American companies, were subject to forced arbitration – meaning that if they had a conflict with their employer, such as wage theft, race discrimination, or in this case, sexual harassment,

they were not entitled to take that claim to court. Instead, they would be forced into an alternative justice system called arbitration. Arbitration is a system of private courts. They operate using different rules than civil courts – there is no judge or jury, for instance, but an “arbitrator” who is chosen by the parties, and paid by the employer, to decide the case. It is strictly confidential. Since the 1920s, arbitration has been legally binding: once parties agree to settle a dispute in arbitration, they give up their right to go to court.

The practice has been around for centuries, functioning as a quicker, cheaper alternative to the formal justice system, and it was originally developed to settle disputes between businesses. But starting in the mid-1980s, the

US supreme court issued a series of rulings saying that arbitration could be used for other kinds of conflicts – including conflicts between employees and employers over things such as discrimination.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, more than 55% of the American workforce is now subject to mandatory arbitration – up from just 2% in 1992. Most of those workers don't know that they have forfeited their right to sue. Employers slip mandatory arbitration clauses into their employee contracts – those big stacks of confusingly worded hiring documents that employees are asked to sign, but usually don't read.

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, mandatory arbitration clauses have posed a problem. Women who feel newly emboldened and safe in coming forward with their accounts of harassment and assault in the workplace find to their surprise that they have already relinquished their right to a day in court. Instead, they are forced into a private system, where their claims are resolved with unclear rules for the process, little oversight, and a mandate to keep it all a secret.

There is a reason employers have

been so eager to adopt mandatory arbitration clauses. The arbitration system favors employers over employees in several crucial ways. Chief among them is confidentiality: the secrecy of arbitration proceedings allows companies to avoid embarrassment and public censure. Mandatory arbitration clauses are often paired with non-disclosure or non-disparagement agreements, which forbid an employee from saying anything that could be construed as negative about the company or its leaders. Combined, these provisions allow employers that use arbitration to conceal bad behavior by management or a pervasive culture of harassment, and to quietly dispatch those who complain.

The confidentiality provision also hampers a complainant's lawyer, who, because she is bound by confidentiality, also can't look for other plaintiffs who have had similar experiences of harassment or discrimination at the company. “There are [lawyers] out there who know about fairly harrowing wrongdoing,” says David Noll, a professor at Rutgers Law and an expert in arbitration. “And they can't go out and find other people that it happened to.” This brings us to a second pillar

of arbitration's disenfranchisement of workers: in arbitration, all disputes are one-on-one. There is no such thing as a class action arbitration case. Even if sexual harassment is pervasive at a company, with many victims who have standing to complain, women will have to bring complaints to arbitration one at a time.

This changes the economic calculus of bringing a harassment complaint: it is much less efficient, and much more expensive, to hire a lawyer for every individual employee who has been victimized. And just as mandatory arbitration clauses are often paired with non-disclosure agreements, they are also often accompanied by class action waivers, meaning the employee can't join any class action case that is brought against the company in a court. An individual arbitration is her only option.

There's also the matter of outcomes. In arbitration, employees win their cases much less often than in court – and when they do, they are awarded much less money. There's no right of appeal. And all of this is agreed to in a contract that's presented to employees without the opportunity for negotiation,

(Contd on page 30)

Why did it take so long for Reddit and Facebook to block racist groups?

Powerful tech companies have two areas of vulnerability - employees and advertisers. Now both are in open revolt



By Siva Vaidyanathan

This week, in a matter of just 48 hours, several social media companies made major changes to how their platforms are and can be used. Reddit deleted a group, or “subreddit”, called “The Donald” that was known for encouraging targeted harassment and hate speech. YouTube banned videos from white supremacists like David Duke and Richard Spencer. And Facebook cracked down on a wide swath of dangerous content, including

groups devoted to the “boogaloo” movement, which hopes to spark a race war in the United States. These developments signal a significant shift in how these companies see their role and responsibility in the world. Until extremely recently their leaders repeatedly declared that “free speech” was their primary value, and trumped other values like safety, dignity and democracy. Now, without declaring they had been wrong all along, these companies seem to have all

decided it was time to declare a different way of dealing with dangerous, extremist content – at least on the surface. Why all this action, and why now?

The first half of 2020 was a perfect storm of factors that made many of these companies reconsider how they want to represent themselves to the world and how they want to treat their users. The flood of misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic endangered lives. The bold movements for social justice that rose up in the wake of the martyrdom of George Floyd heightened sensitivity and awareness of the dangers of white supremacy in the US like nothing else in recent years. And the re-election effort of Donald Trump has grown increasingly dangerous, with the president and his followers frequently deriding public health efforts and celebrating state and vigilante violence against Black people and their allies.

In this environment, corporate leaders at Google, Twitter,

Facebook, Reddit and other companies had to take much more seriously the question of how they influence the world. Of course, social media scholars have been calling for this level of attention for almost a decade. Since around 2017, many journalists have, as well. But it took more than scholarship and journalism to make a difference. Companies as rich, powerful, and ubiquitous as Facebook and Google only have two real soft spots. One is labor. Both Google, which owns YouTube, and Facebook face a constant shortage of highly qualified and experienced workers. Many people who work for these companies have other employment options in ways that most American workers will never enjoy. Technology workers command high salaries and have unusual flexibility in their career plans and life choices. They are also in constant communication with each other, meaning that Silicon Valley workers, when they

choose to, have a lot of power in terms of collective message-making. Recent months have seen growing expressions of disgust among workers at major tech companies who are frustrated at their companies' refusal to respond more assertively to problems with how their platforms are used. The CEOs and COOs of these companies are now, belatedly, realizing they have to take these concerns seriously.

The other soft spot is advertising. Advertisers have even more power than workers. This week several major global advertisers, apparently led by Unilever, announced that they are suspending advertising on Facebook until the company has stronger protocols against the use of its platform for hate speech and disinformation.

Unilever may be one of the few institutions on earth that Facebook needs more than it needs Facebook.

(Contd on page 31)

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The mistaken Chinese calculation

Its economy is shrinking; PLA isn't fully prepared; anti-China sentiment is high; India will be resolute

China has been uncomfortable with the emergence of another Asian power. Apart from checkmating proposals made by India at the United Nations and other global forums, Beijing has tried to contain New Delhi's influence in the region. In a bid to throw a cordon sanitaire around India, China has focused on the countries in India's immediate and extended neighbourhood. It has established a strategic partnership with Pakistan and deepened diplomatic, economic and military engagements with others. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been leveraged for this purpose. China also employs both inducements and coercion. In the Indo-Pacific region, Africa and some other regions, China has unabashedly interfered in internal matters.

All emerging great powers tend to be aggressive to maximise their influence in the geopolitical arena. However, in the case of China, such behaviour seems premature. While China has made discernible strides in augmenting its comprehensive national power (CNP), there are still several internal and external challenges that continue to give President Xi Jinping sleepless nights. On the domestic front, these pertain to its economy, the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s leadership, national morale, and the rising anti-China sentiment in the international domain.

China's shrinking economy has generated widespread unemployment. The Chinese Communist Party (CPC)-driven policy of empowering State-owned

enterprises has impacted the private sector that used to contribute over 65% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and more than 90% of new jobs. Moreover, the relocation of manufacturing, growing debt, and an ageing population that will shrink its workforce, will impinge on China's economic stability in the long-term. In 2012, Xi had announced the transformation of PLA into a world-class military, that would facilitate its journey towards the "world's centre-stage" by 2049. Since then, multifaceted reforms have been undertaken to enhance its combat power and accountability to the CPC. However, Xi, who personally monitors the reforms, is unhappy with the professional standards of PLA leadership as it lacks practical war-fighting experience. Several think-tanks



have assessed that at this juncture, PLA is well short of the capabilities required to challenge other militaries. National morale is a crucial ingredient of CNP. China's national morale should not be gauged by its captive media's reportage and the diplomatic activism unleashed by its new brand of "wolf warriors". Both are involved in countering the western and Indian media, besides marketing the Chinese model of governance and projecting Xi as a global leader.

But beneath the surface, there is growing dissent against the CPC owing to the spike in unemployment, choked civil liberties and victimisation of all perceived detractors and minority communities. Xi's heavy-handed approach in enhancing the CPC's control is also creating dangerous undercurrents. As per open-source information, he had dismissed and imprisoned over 2.3 million officials between 2013-2018, including several senior PLA officials and bureaucrats.

India in talks with US, Canada, others on establishing air travel bubbles: AAI

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had on June 20 said the government will start thinking on the resumption of scheduled international passenger flights in mid-July, when it expects the domestic air traffic to reach 50-55 per cent of the levels before the coronavirus.



India is in talks with the US and Canada and the countries in European and Gulf regions on establishing individual bilateral bubbles which will allow airlines of each country in the pact to operate international flights, said Arvind Singh, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI), on Thursday.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA) had on June 23 said India is considering establishing "individual bilateral bubbles" with the US, the UK, Germany and France.

Singh said, "This morning, I took a brief from the key point person (from the MOCA) who is negotiating with the countries, and he said that we are in constant touch. We are working on a consensus to restart the international flights. This is going to be through air bubbles." "Talks are mainly going on between India and the US, India

and Canada, India and Europe and India and the Gulf countries to start flights in these bubbles," he said at a webinar called "Reposing the faith in flying" organised by the GMR group. Scheduled international passenger flights remain suspended in India since March 23 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Singh said the MOCA official has informed him that the discussion with the countries is at a "very advanced" level and the effort is to restart international flights at the earliest. "I am sure there would be a positive outcome of the talks with the US, Canada and with the Gulf countries and the negotiations are going on," he noted. The EU has presently banned the flights from India as the number of coronavirus cases are rising in the country, Singh said. Civil Aviation Minister

Hardeep Singh Puri had on June 20 said the government will start thinking on the resumption of scheduled international

passenger flights in mid-July, when it expects the domestic air traffic to reach 50-55 per cent of the levels before the coronavirus. After nearly two months of suspension to combat the coronavirus outbreak, the government resumed scheduled domestic passenger flights on May 25. However, it had then allowed the airlines to operate the maximum 33 per cent of their pre-COVID flights. The MOCA increased the limits on June 26

from 33 per cent to 45 per cent. The MOCA on June 23 had said, "As we contemplate further opening up in response to demands, we are looking at the prospect of establishing individual bilateral bubbles, India-US, India-France, India-Germany, India-UK. These are all destinations where demand for travel has not diminished. Final decisions pursuant to negotiations are expected to be taken soon."

Covid-19: Changing what it means to travel safely

Our ability to move has shaped the world, and it will dictate the future of the human race. But as the world struggles through an unprecedented lockdown, it faces a scary, new question: How will cities safely move billions of people after a pandemic? Before Covid-19, we took mobility for granted. On an average day, five million travelled by the Delhi Metro, and over 10 million by Delhi's public buses. The Indian Railways carried over 24 million, and Mumbai's buses over 30 million passengers a day. A million passengers travelled through India's airports every day. Today, those numbers are down sharply. As India thinks about how to reopen safely, the question will be how will it move millions, while keeping people safe. Can you have social distancing during rush hour on a Mumbai local train? In 2020, will we be torn between environment-friendly, efficient mass

transit and fuel-guzzling personal transport?

It's heartening to see that India's pioneering technology services industry has embraced working from home. However, for many, personal transport or working from home is not an option. Mass transit must find solutions to get back up and running while slowing the spread of the coronavirus. The New York City Transit, responsible for the city's buses and subway, is testing social distancing markers at stations, as well as "rides by reservation". The city's subway authorities disinfect each train every night. The Paris, London and Singapore Transit authorities are making face masks mandatory for riders, installing thermal scanners, and limiting the number of seats available on trains. In China, robots are disinfecting trains and stations, and providing hand sanitisers to passengers.

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It can no longer be business-as-usual

India needs to reset its entire relationship with China. There will be pain, but it's time to stand up

The difference between the summer of 2020 and earlier face-offs between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh is that, this time around, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has come in strength.

Several divisions of PLA have been deployed in the depth areas, and, consequently, there are also larger numbers of troops in close proximity to each other in the India-China border areas. The Indian Army has also made a matching build-up in the area and all along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Due to the sheer numbers as well as the fact that armour and artillery have also been brought up, it is apparent that PLA has planned and prepared this current offensive. It aims at moving the ground positions of Chinese troops right up to what they conceive is LAC.

By doing so, what, in effect, the Chinese are attempting to accomplish is to unilaterally define and determine LAC without bilateral consultation with

India. China will decide what is its territory and will move to exercise actual control over it. The Indian Army has blocked the Chinese and is deployed to protect Indian territorial integrity. What PLA has also managed to do is to violate all the principles, norms, standard procedures which have evolved over the past 25 years to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas. They have displayed how little store it sets by agreements signed by its own government.

Strategically, what the Chinese are signalling to India and the world is that they are the number one power in Asia and that they will throw their weight around as they wish, whether in the South China Sea or on the India-China border.

They also want India to understand and accept that China's comprehensive national power far outweighs India's, and that the nation must acknowledge its place in the pecking order of Asia. India must roll over and play dead. The 21st Century is not an Asian century but a

Chinese century.

India's military action in eastern Ladakh, in turn, sends China the very clear message that India does not accept Chinese hegemony and will not tolerate its bullying and pushing. India shall stand up to it. The nation's brave soldiers did exactly this, on that fateful night of June 15 in the Galwan Valley. Remember, the rest of the world is also watching. If China has thrown down the gauntlet, India has picked it up.

Having militarily sent out the clear intention to take on China and oppose its aggressive methods aimed at browbeating other nations including India, we cannot let the rest of the India-China relationship continue as normal. It cannot be business as usual.

Why? If India was to do that we would be negating the message of our military action on the ground, and, in stark contrast, be conveying to the Chinese that India can live with what its army has done. Therefore, India needs to



reinforce and reiterate its military messaging through policy decisions which further underline India's very clear national consensus not to accept Chinese big brotherly attitudes and plain bullying. It is for this reason that India will have to take measures to indicate that if there is no peace on the border, the rest of the relationship with China will also be negatively impacted. A reassessment and recalibration of India's China policy are required to make India's messaging crystal clear. The first step in this resetting of India's China policy was the ban on 59 Chinese apps such as TikTok, WeChat and UC Browser. India is only getting started. Banning Chinese firms on national security grounds from participating in India's 5G trials and rollout will be a

strong indication of New Delhi's mindset.

One consequence of Chinese actions will be for India to strengthen its partnerships with democracies such as the United States, Japan, France, South Korea and, perhaps, Indonesia. India must also expand its relations with Taiwan. Delhi will have to reassess its China policy with a cool, calm, rational frame of mind. There is no need for knee-jerk reactions. In order to weigh the options which can be on the table, India has to have widespread consultations which must be timebound. The new policy must be implemented within 2020 itself. Such a reset and recalibration of India's China policy, particularly in the economic realm, cannot be accomplished without

causing some pain to ourselves. When we have decided that a strong message needs to be sent to China, then we must also be ready to bear the pain.

Indian soldiers have done this on our borders; now it is time for ordinary Indians to show that they are willing to do so too. The pain is likely to come in the form of higher consumer prices for certain products; it may come in the form of lower profits for firms; it may also take the form of lower revenues for traders.

We shall have to accept some pain, if we are to convey that we are a strong, united nation which China has made the mistake of riling. India's strength of character will have to be put on full display to indicate to China that it will not be business as usual.

On tech, India was naive. It has finally woken up

Entrepreneurs now have a chance to build technologies which can serve as alternatives to Chinese dominance

The Chinese government banned Facebook in 2009. And even Mark Zuckerberg — despite having a wife of Chinese origin; learning Mandarin; and doing public relations stunts such as jogging in the smog-filled streets of Beijing to say how much he loved China — was not able to have it change its policy. Zuckerberg even went to the extent of creating new tools to censor and suppress content — to please the communists.

But the Chinese were smarter than he was. They saw no advantages in letting a foreign company dominate their technology industry. China also blocked Google, Twitter, and Netflix, and tripped up companies such as Uber. Chinese technology companies are now among the most valuable few in the world. Facebook's Chinese competitor, Tencent, eclipsed it in market capitalisation in November 2017, passing the \$500-billion mark. Its social media platform,

WeChat, enables bill payment, ordering taxis and booking hotels while chatting with friends. It is so far ahead in innovation that Facebook is desperately trying to copy its features in the payment system it added to WhatsApp. Other Chinese companies such as Alibaba, Baidu, and DJI, have also raced ahead. Huawei has become a global threat with its 5G technologies and deep government links.

As I have mentioned before in these columns, the protectionism that economists have long decried — which favours domestic supplies of physical goods and services — supposedly limits competition, creates monopolies, raises costs, and stifles competitiveness and productivity. But that is not a problem in the technology world. Over the Internet, knowledge and ideas spread instantaneously. Entrepreneurs in one country can easily learn about the innovations

and business models of another country and duplicate them. Technologies are advancing on exponential curves and becoming faster and cheaper, making them affordable to every country. Technology companies that don't innovate risk going out of business because local start-ups are constantly emerging to challenge them.

Chinese technology protectionism created a fertile ground for local start-ups by eliminating the threat of foreign predators. The government selected what companies it could best control and gave them the advantage.

China actually learned some its tactics from Silicon Valley, which doesn't believe in free markets either. The Valley's moguls openly tout the need to build monopolies and gain an unfair competitive advantage by dumping capital. They take pride in their position in a global

economy in which money is the ultimate weapon and winners take all. If tech companies cannot copy a technology, they buy the competitor.

And then there is data, the most valuable of all technical resources. Data analysis enables everything from micro-targeting of advertisements to voter suppression and population control. Mobile applications are the greatest spying devices ever invented, monitoring not only their users' interests but also their locations, purchasing habits, connections, political opinions, and health.

That is why the top technology companies from both East and West, the monopolists and predators, see India as the juiciest of all spoils. It has a massive market ripe for the picking, and data gold mines. India has also been naïve in its data protection policies and support for domestic innovation; it bought the old

propaganda about the need for open markets.

There are some big differences, though, between the Chinese and American companies that are vying for the Indian markets. The Chinese government largely controls the actions of its companies, feeds them resources and technologies it has stolen from the West. It gives them every unfair advantage so that it can steal more and subvert democracies. Silicon Valley companies want more data so that they can sell more products. They may show bad judgment and cross ethical lines, but they aren't playing geopolitics or endangering the sovereignty of free nations. This is why the Indian government's decision to ban TikTok and other Chinese companies makes sense. What was long holding Indian entrepreneurs back was the lack of Internet connectivity and mobile phones.

The double-speak of parties on foreign funding

Both the BJP and the Congress united to circumvent the law. Their barbs on China carry little meaning



As India's border stand-off with China continues, the latter's aggressive manoeuvres raise difficult questions about India's diplomatic options, foreign partnerships, and future defence requirements. But the latest crisis has also set off an unseemly round of finger-pointing between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its principal national rival, the Congress, with both sides accusing the other of cosying up to the communist regime.

In response to Opposition barbs that the Narendra Modi government's China policy has been tantamount to "appeasement", the BJP unearthed evidence that Beijing had previously funnelled money into the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, a Congress-affiliated brain trust. Caught on the back foot, the Congress took the airwaves to argue that several politically-connected Chinese firms — from Huawei to Xiaomi — have donated millions of rupees to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES).

The ugly mud-slinging between the ruling party and its primary Opposition centres on three claims: that foreign adversaries are meddling in domestic affairs; that wayward foreign "donations" are shrouded in a veil of secrecy; and that independent, third party audits are needed to clear the air.

What is left unsaid is that both the BJP and the Congress have worked — often hand-in-glove — to ensure that they themselves are absolved of precisely the kind of scrutiny

that they are now demanding. When it comes to transparency, credible auditing, and protections against foreign influence, both parties chant in unison: Do as I say, not as I do.

In a landmark 2013 judgment, the Central Information Commission (CIC) ruled that India's political parties operate as "public entities," rendering them subject to the provisions of the Right to Information Act. In response, the six national parties thumbed their nose at the CIC, disregarding the apex body's verdict. The CIC, lacking an enforcement mechanism to

bring the parties to heel, referred the matter to the Supreme Court, where it languishes till today. According to an Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) analysis, two-thirds of national parties' declared income in 2018-2019 emanated from "unknown sources". Interestingly, the ruling party's unknown income was 1.5 times greater that of the other five national parties combined.

Of course, these figures represent what parties determine acceptable to disclose. Despite the heated rhetoric about the need for the government or

Opposition interests to submit to audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), political parties face no third-party scrutiny. Yes, one can readily find parties' income tax returns online. But nowhere in this raft of documents will you find either the signature of a credible, independent auditor or a tight correlation with the reality of party finances.

But it is in the realm of foreign contributions where the hypocrisy of political elites is the most apparent. In 2014, the Delhi high court found both the BJP and the Congress guilty of accepting donations from several foreign corporations. In 2016, these two rivals set aside their bitter differences to bail one another out by amending the 2010 Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) to retroactively redefine what a "foreign source" was under the law. Rather than face the consequences, the two parties conspired to simply reclassify previously designated foreign companies as "Indian" with the stroke of a pen. The

cynicism behind this measure was matched only by the legislative clumsiness on display; because several of the foreign donations pre-dated 2010, Parliament had to pass a second retrospective bill in 2018 — this one amending the original 1976 FCRA law.

Having tackled the FCRA issue, the present government ushered in a trifecta of legislative changes — the introduction of anonymous electoral bonds, the elimination of the cap on corporate giving, and the scrapping of a provision that firms detail their political contributions on their annual profit and loss statements.

Collectively, these alterations have not simply opened the door to possible foreign funding, they have flung it open and laid down a welcome mat. We now know from Nitin Sethi's investigative reporting that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Election Commission of India (ECI) both expressed grave concerns about electoral bonds. When

first presented with details of the scheme, RBI told the finance ministry that the new funding instrument was vulnerable to money laundering, opacity, and potential abuse. ECI, too, lamented that the new bonds would open the door to foreign influence via dodgy money routed through shell companies. These concerns fell on deaf ears.

But, perhaps, the most damning reality is that no politician in India is losing sleep over this sordid state of affairs. Politicians are counting on political tribalism to dominate common sense, sending citizens scurrying to their respective social media corners. They are counting on the populace to imbibe the headlines, glossing over the fine print. And, most importantly, they are counting on voters to ignore concerns about probity when they show up at the ballot box. And, in the end, who can blame them? As evident in voting patterns, when it comes to integrity in Indian politics, politicians have the last laugh.

Trump spotted a pattern in China's standoff with India. Here are 21 reasons

President Donald Trump on Thursday waded right in the middle of India's dispute with China, asserting that Beijing's aggressive stance in Ladakh fits with the larger pattern of Chinese aggression in other parts of the world. President Trump's office did not elaborate on China's aggression elsewhere but is seen as a clear reference to Beijing's efforts to enlarge its position on border disputes. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had recently called it China's "rogue attitude" as he announced the movement of US supercarriers in the Indo Pacific region to counter China's aggressive posture.

According to Beijing watchers, China has traditionally suffered from xenophobia against foreigners. The Middle Kingdom's fears were exacerbated in the past two centuries as a result of which China believes that it is the only civilizational power in the world and the rest are either tributary states

or barbarians.

China has had territorial disputes with 21 neighbours including India over its claims on land and sea. Here is a complete list of its disputes.

Brunei

China claims the southern part of the Spratly Islands chain. Brunei, on the other hand, claims part of South China Sea nearest to it as part of its continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone

Philippines

China and Philippines disagree over parts of the South China Sea including the Spratly Islands. Philippines took the dispute to the International Court of Justice where they won the case but the Chinese side did not abide by the order of the ICJ. Tensions have continued between the two countries despite economic incentives offered by China.

Indonesia

China's nine-dash line overlaps the Natuna Sea/Exclusive Economic Zone of Indonesia

leading to disputes. China claims fishing rights in waters near the islands. Indonesia government argues that China's claims are not recognised under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Indonesia irked China in July 2017 when it renamed parts of the South China Sea as North Natuna Sea to underscore its claim.

Malaysia

China's dispute with Malaysia also revolves around parts of the South China Sea, particularly the Spratly Islands. Its claims cover only islands included in its Exclusive Economic Zone of 200 miles as defined by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Malaysia has a military presence on three such islands that it considers to be part of the continental shelf.

Singapore

Singapore is not a claimant state in the South China Sea disputes but is closely aligned to the United States and allows the presence of

US naval forces in Singaporean waters. It does not want to antagonise China by openly taking sides though it does advocate freedom of navigation and resolution of all disputes in line with the UN Convention of Law of the Seas.

Laos

China claims large areas of Laos on historical precedent of China's Yuan Dynasty during 1271-1368

Thailand

Thailand opposes China's dredging on the Mekong River since 2001 for large ships to carry goods from its landlocked Yunnan province to ports in Thailand, Laos and remaining southeast Asia. China has also built hydropower dams on the main stream of the Mekong River, altering the natural flood-drought cycle, affecting ecosystems as well as economies. The Thai Cabinet scrapped a Chinese-led dredging project in February 2020 to blast rapids on the Mekong river.

(Contd on page 31)



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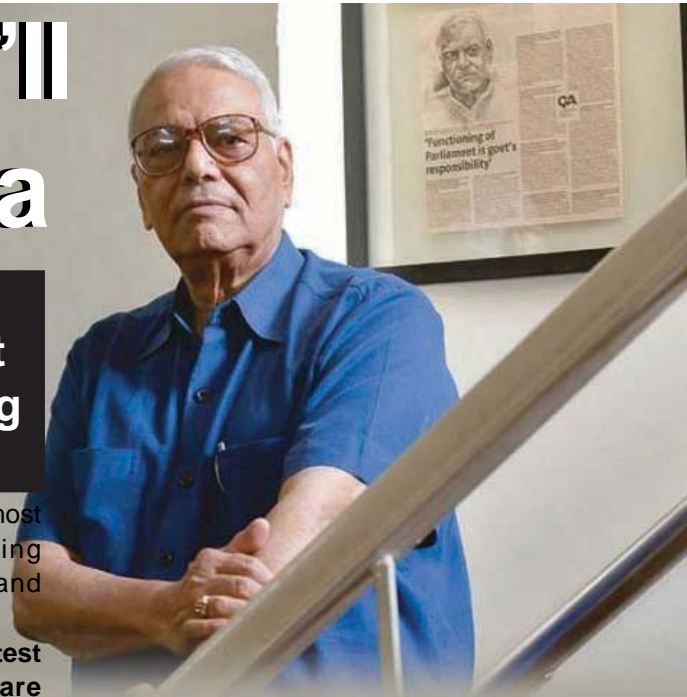
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Bihar Is In A Mess And We'll Change It: Yashwant Sinha



Former BJP leader Yashwant Sinha is back with a Third Front to take on the JD(U)-BJP combine. He says his front will contest all 243 seats as “elections are a means to bring change in a democracy” and it is time to change Bihar.

Former BJP leader Yashwant Sinha refuses to stay in political oblivion. With assembly elections due in Bihar later this year, Sinha is back with a Third Front to take on the JD(U)-BJP combine. The former Union minister tells Bhavna Vij-Aurora that his front will contest all 243 seats as “elections are a means to bring change in a democracy” and it is time to change Bihar. Excerpts from the interview:
How did the idea of a

Third Front for Bihar come about? In recent months, we watched the sad scenes of migrant workers walking back to their villages. The largest number was of those who belong to Bihar. As many as 40 lakh Biharis migrate from the state to look for jobs. Even after 73 years of independence, why is Bihar in such a mess? This question came to me time and again. I am a Bihari. I studied in Patna and was a Bihar-cadre IAS officer.

Many others—friends, family and people of the state—had the same question and urged me to take the lead. I decided to try and lead a movement for change in Bihar, an ‘andolan’. Things are in a mess in the state.
What kind of a mess? Nitish Kumar has been chief minister for the past 15 years, and when I looked at the data, I realised Bihar continues to be at the bottom in all development indices. For the past 27 years, Bihar

has not developed in most sectors, including agriculture, health and education.
Are you going to contest all seats? Who all are supporting you? Yes. We are going with the slogan ‘Is baar badlo Bihar, banao behtar Bihar’. Several small political parties, independents and intellectuals are part of the Third Front. We welcome all like-minded people and parties to join us in transforming the state.
Are you willing to ally

with the Congress and the RJD? I have not had any discussion with them, but yes, they are welcome. Anyone who is interested in developing Bihar can join in.
What about another BJP rebel and fellow Bihari, Shatrughan Sinha? I have not spoken to him

yet, so I wouldn’t know his mind. But yes, I will be talking to everyone in the coming days.
Political strategist Prashant Kishor had also talked about supporting a Third Front in Bihar. Are you in touch with him? I have not spoken to him yet. But I am willing to explore.

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India rejects Pakistan's allegation on Karachi attack, rubs it in with reminder to Khan's 'martyr' remark

India has responded to Pakistan's attempt to blame New Delhi for a terrorist attack on Karachi stock exchange late last month.

India on Thursday rejected Pakistan's allegation that the June 29 terrorist attack on Karachi stock exchange was New Delhi's response to 2008 Mumbai terror attacks as "absurd" and chided Islamabad for attempting to shift the blame for its own domestic problems.

The external affairs ministry added that Pakistan needed to reflect on its government's attitude towards terrorism in the light of their Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent comments describing slain al-Qaeda leader and global terrorist

Osama Bin Laden as a "martyr".

A day after the terror attack on Karachi stock exchange, Imran Khan had claimed in Pakistan's national assembly that the attacks had been "planned by our neighbouring country India". Soon after, China circulated a draft of a press statement for the UN Security Council to issue, condemning the Karachi attacks. However, interventions by countries friendly to India such as Germany and the United States led to more than 24-hours delay in its release on Wednesday.

"India rejects these absurd

comments on terrorist attacks in Karachi. Pakistan cannot shift the blame on India for its domestic problems," Anurag Srivastava, the official spokesperson for the ministry of external affairs was quoted by news agency ANI as having said.

The delay in passing the statement at the UN security council is being seen as a message disapproving Pakistan's continued support for terrorism in the south Asia region. The UN statement had been written by China on Pakistan's behalf and it

was expected to be timed for release with Pakistan government's efforts to blame the attack on India, without explicitly saying so in the statement. It was also noted by UN diplomats closely associated with the process, that the statement could have also been an attempt by Pakistan to portray itself as a victim of terrorism instead of being the leading sponsor of terrorism in the region.

On Thursday, the Indian government added that Pakistan needed to revisit its position towards terrorists following Imran



Khan's description of Osama bin Laden as a martyr," Anurag Srivastava was quoted as saying by ANI. Imran Khan's gratuitous reference to the former

chief of Al-Qaeda, the global terrorist organization behind 26/11 attacks on the US including their PM's description of a global even in his own country.

PM Modi, President Putin vow to strengthen Indo-Russia ties, discuss Covid-19 crisis

Russian President Putin thanked PM Modi for the phone call and reiterated his commitment to further strengthening the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries in all spheres.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the coronavirus crisis on Thursday and resolved to strengthen the Indo-Russia ties for jointly addressing the challenges of the post-Covid world. During a telephonic

conversation, the two leaders agreed to maintain the momentum of bilateral contacts and consultations, leading to the annual bilateral summit to be held in India later this year. The prime minister conveyed his keenness to welcome Putin in India for the bilateral summit. The leaders took note of the effective measures undertaken by the two countries to address the negative consequences of

the Covid-19 pandemic and agreed on the importance of closer India-Russia ties for jointly addressing the challenges of the post-Covid world, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said. Putin thanked Modi for the phone call and reiterated his commitment to further strengthening the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries in all spheres. During their conversation, Modi

congratulated Putin on the success of the celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the victory of the Allied Forces in the World War 2, and also for the successful completion of the vote on constitutional amendments in Russia, the statement said. The prime minister noted the participation of an Indian contingent in the military parade held in Moscow on June 24 as a symbol of the

abiding friendship between the people of India and Russia. An official statement issued by the Russian side said the two leaders discussed topical issues on the Russian-Indian agenda and confirmed their mutual commitment to further strengthening the privileged bilateral strategic partnership and close cooperation both in the bilateral format and within international organisations and associations.

Pakistani International Banned from flying to Europe for Six Months

'There are strong indications that a high number of Pakistani pilots' licences are invalid,' said the EU's safety regulator

Pakistan's national carrier has been banned from flying from Europe for the rest of 2020. The European Union Air Safety Agency (Easa) has withdrawn "third country operator" authorisation from Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for six months from 1 July. The ban also applies to the UK. The decision follows the crash of a PIA Airbus A320 on a scheduled flight from Lahore to Karachi on 22 May. Ninety-seven passengers and crew died after a botched "go-around" that damaged the plane

on a first attempted at landing. The preliminary report found the captain and first officer disregarded standard procedures and ignored alarms. Earlier this month, PIA was summoned to Easa's headquarters in Cologne to discuss safety shortcomings. Then, on 24 June 2020, Pakistan's aviation minister told parliament that 262 out of 860 pilot licences issued by the country's civil aviation authorities were fraudulent. More than half were held by pilots employed at PIA, though the airline said that

36 of the pilots no longer worked for the airline. The letter from Easa to PIA says: "There are strong indications that a high number of Pakistani pilots' licences are invalid." It added: "PIA persists in failing to demonstrate compliance with the applicable standards."

In response, the airline tweeted: "PIA is in touch with Easa to allay their concerns and hopes that the suspension will be revoked." The airline can appeal within the next two months. Passengers have been

offered postponements or refunds. In normal times PIA links the capital, Islamabad, with Heathrow, Birmingham and Manchester; Lahore with Heathrow and Manchester; and Karachi with Heathrow. None of these flights is currently operating. A spokesperson for the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said: "PIA flights from Birmingham, London Heathrow and Manchester airports are suspended with immediate effect. The CAA is required under law to withdraw PIA's permit to

operate to the UK pending Easa's restoration of their approval that it meets international air safety standards." PIA has suffered two other fatal events in the past six years. In 2014, one passenger died when an Airbus A310 from Riyadh in Saudi Arabia was struck by bullets on the approach to Peshawar in Pakistan. In December 2016, a domestic flight from Chitral to Islamabad crashed on a hillside with the loss of all 47 passengers and crew on board.

Why is Pakistan spending so much money on defence amid COVID-19?

The government seems more interested in keeping the military content than providing support for struggling citizens.

The Pakistani government does not seem willing to shift its spending priorities despite the burgeoning COVID-19 challenges. Pakistan has emerged as one of the countries with the fastest rate of coronavirus infections in recent weeks, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The country reported its first coronavirus case on February 26 and is now among the top 15 most-affected countries. More than 4,000 people have lost their lives to the disease in Pakistan since the beginning of the outbreak. Moreover, there is a significant shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators in the country.

Despite all this, Islamabad allocated \$7.85bn for defence and merely \$151m for health in the budget for the financial

year 2020-2021. This represents a 12 percent rise in Pakistan's defence spending compared with the last financial year. The single-line figure presented in the budget does not give a full picture of the amount actually being spent on defence either.

To avoid hard questions

from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Pakistan refuses to be fully transparent about its military spending. Major acquisitions by the armed forces, spending on the public sector development programme (PSDP), expenditure on the nuclear programme and para-

military forces, payments for military pensions, a newly set-up national security division and a few other military expenditures are not reflected in the budget. If these were to be added to it, Pakistan's defence spending would be even higher - at around \$11bn.



Bangladesh sends China \$6.4bn infrastructure wishlist

The Economic Relations Division, which made the request in a letter to the Chinese government, is hoping to elicit \$1.6bn to expand Payra seaport and \$1.2bn for a 10km-long bridge between the city of Barisal and the suburb of Bhola, across two rivers in the Ganges delta.

The Payra project, the first phase of which was completed in 2016, is eventually expected to cost up to \$15bn.

So far, the China Harbour Engineering Company and China State Engineering and Construction Corp have been awarded contracts worth \$600m,

and the Jan De Nul Group, headquartered in Luxembourg, has secured a 10-year contract for the dredging work.

The port will require at least \$1bn in dredging work to create a navigable channel to the Bay of Bengal, involving the shifting of 100 million cubic metres of material. Other projects on the shopping list include \$850m for a project to manage the Teesta river, \$800m to improve electricity transmission and distribution, a technology park, an upgrade of Barisal-Kuakata highway to four lanes and the construction of sewerage in Dhaka. China

overtook India as Bangladesh's largest trade partner in 2015, and has since become an important investor in its infrastructure. Altogether, China has funded, or will fund, projects worth \$38bn in the country, \$24bn of which were agreed during a visit by President Xi Jinping in 2016.

Last June, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of Bangladesh, signed an agreement to establish an Investment Cooperation Working Group with China, and this held its first meeting in Dhaka this year. The request for funds was made through this channel. The proposal was made

despite a Chinese suggestion that Bangladesh not bring forward new projects until those under way had been completed. Dhaka says its proposed schemes replace four projects worth \$3.2bn that have received funding from other sources, such as the Dhaka-Sylhet motorway, which is being paid for by the Asian Development Bank. In recent years China and India have used investment in Bangladeshi infrastructure as a way of gaining influence in the country, and Dhaka has made its request during a period of sharply increased tension between its two benefactors.

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1,500 have died with COVID-19 symptoms in Bangladesh: report

At least 1,500 people have died while displaying symptoms of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus, in Bangladesh, a study has found.

Bangladesh Peace Observatory or BPO, a research project under Dhaka University's Centre for Genocide Studies, revealed the information in the form of a graphical presentation titled 'COVID-19 Graphics'.

Funded by the UNDP, the BPO gleaned its findings from reports published in 25 news media outlets, including national and regional newspapers, online portals and television channels, from Mar 8 to Jun 27.

In the 12th 'COVID-19 Graphics' on Thursday, the BPO found that 198 people had died with COVID-19 symptoms across the country in the last week. The figure was 206 the week before.

No-one was reported to have died with COVID-19

symptoms in the first two weeks of the outbreak in Bangladesh. But three people reportedly died with the symptoms between Mar 22 and 28, according to the report.

The figure jumped to 63 from Mar 29 to Apr 5. Over the following weeks, the tally was 106, 120, 114, 93, 50, 67, 48, 73, 154, 206,

205 and finally 198.

The tally of fatalities with coronavirus symptoms peaked at 451 in Chattogram division, followed by 338 in Dhaka, 185 in Khulna, 170 in Barishal, 148 in Rajshahi, 83 in Sylhet, 70 in Rangpur, and 55 in Mymensingh division, according to BPO. The presentation

also highlighted some other social and political issues that came to the fore during coronavirus epidemic. In different parts of the country, 217 instances of torture and social stigmatisation linked to the novel coronavirus have taken place, with 172 incidents of protest, according to BPO. Around

27 percent of these protest incidents involved demands for relief items and aid, 41 percent for unpaid salaries and bonuses, while 16 percent called for the lowering of house rent or tuition fees during the lockdown.

Another 6 percent of the protests were aimed at the irregularities in relief

distribution, 4 percent called for health and medical benefits, while 2 percent of the incidents were related to the proposed budget.

At least 18 people died while 551 were injured in the 132 clashes that took place in connection to the coronavirus epidemic, the report said.

Chinese policy towards Sri Lanka tells a cautionary tale

China was quick to aid coronavirus-stricken Sri Lanka. Chinese magnanimity and speed in responding to the Indian Ocean island's request contrasted starkly with Beijing's more measured response to Africa's needs, widely expected to be the pandemic's next hotspot.

Geography was, but, one reason why China favoured the strategic island that straddles one of the Indian Ocean's busiest shipping routes.

China was rewarding Sri Lanka for stalling military-related talks with the United States two years after the People's Republic was accused of pursuing predatory debt-trap diplomacy. Sri Lanka

granted China in 2018 a far greater stake in its port of Hambantota at a moment that it was unable to service its debt to Beijing. Sri Lanka has so far dragged its feet on signing a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the United States that would regulate the rights and privileges of visiting US military personnel.

The hold-up was prompted by Sri Lanka's rejection of the terms of an associated \$480 million Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC) development aid package on the grounds that it impinged on the country's national security.

At the same time, however, Sri Lanka has done nothing to challenge its Acquisition and

Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) with the United States that governs the transfer of US logistics supplies as well as support and refuelling services for US military operations in the Indo-Pacific region.

The discrepancy in China's approach towards Sri Lanka as opposed to Africa could revive charges that predatory debt diplomacy is a feature of China's multi-billion dollar infrastructure, telecommunications and energy-driven Belt and Road Initiative that seeks to connect the Eurasian landmass to the People's Republic. To be fair, only a handful of renegotiations of Chinese debt would suggest that China is using

liability as a diplomatic tool.

Nonetheless, China's willingness to grant Sri Lanka a 10-year \$500 million concessionary loan to deal with the economic fallout of the pandemic in addition to donations of medical supplies offered by China to countries across the globe is likely to raise eyebrows.

The risk is that countries in Africa, as well as the Middle East like war-torn Syria and financially bankrupt Lebanon that no longer can count on assistance from Gulf countries struggling with economic woes of their own, may feel that they have little alternative but to follow in Sri Lanka's footsteps.

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.



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.



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.



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.



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

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Young people are throwing coronavirus parties with a payout when one gets infected, official says

Some young people in Alabama are throwing Covid-19 parties, a disturbing competition where people who have coronavirus attend and the first person to get infected receives a payout, local officials said. The parties are being held in Tuscaloosa, and infected people are urged to attend so others can intentionally contract the virus, City Council member Sonya

McKinstry told CNN. She said she heard about the trend from fire officials. "We thought that was kind of a rumors at first. We did some research, not only do the doctors' offices confirm it, but the state confirmed they also had the same information," she said. During a presentation to the City Council this week, Fire Chief Randy Smith also said young

people in the city are throwing parties with a payout if they catch coronavirus, McKinstry said. The first person confirmed by a doctor to have coronavirus after the exposure wins the money made off the ticket sales, she said. Over the past few weeks, there have been several parties in the city and surrounding areas, and probably more that officials don't know

about, she added. "It makes me furious," McKinstry said. "Furious to the fact that something that is so serious and deadly is being taken for granted. Not only is it irresponsible, but you could contract the virus and take it home to your parents or grandparents." The city is working on getting the word out and breaking up such parties. It also passed a mask ordinance

this week that goes into effect Monday. "This is not political. This is a public health issue. People are dying and there is no cure. We have to do whatever we can to save as many lives as possible," McKinstry said. CNN has reached out to the Alabama Health Department for comment. The state has reported about 39,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and nearly 1,000 deaths.

'It's very troubling': alarm grows over Covid-19 spike among young Americans

Until recently, the majority of coronavirus cases that Dr Quinn Snyder, an emergency doctor at one of Arizona's largest emergency departments, saw were older people. But since mid-May, when the state's stay-at-home order was lifted, and particularly after the Memorial Day holiday, the demographic has shifted. Snyder says he has seen an "explosion" in cases among 20-44-year-olds. Some of those, he said, are coming in severely ill –



requiring oxygen, intubation and ventilators. "We even had people in that age group die, unfortunately. So it's very troubling and it's very difficult to watch young people die from this

disease. It's horrible." As cases continue to soar at record levels across the US, which now has over 2.6m cases, there is growing alarm about a surge in younger people getting

Doctors are seeing more and more young patients – and health experts are urging young people to take the virus seriously

the virus. On Friday, Vice-President Mike Pence said half of new cases in the US in recent weeks were adults under 35. Speaking ahead of the Fourth of July holiday weekend, health experts in hotspot states – which include Arizona, Texas and Florida – warned numbers will continue to rise and that if young people do not take better precautions, hospitals will reach capacity and states could be left with

no choice but to completely shut down. Factors thought to have contributed to the surge in cases among younger people include graduation parties, mixed public messaging, higher risk tolerance and bars. About half of Arizona's almost 80,000 cases fall into the 20-44-year-old age bracket. Nightclubs and bars – closed this week as part of the Republican governor Doug Ducey's "pause" of reopening in an attempt to

stop the spread – are the "primary reservoir" for the disease, said Snyder. He wants to see a stay-at-home order and urged young people to stay at home. "The truth is that if we are going to contain this pandemic, if we are going to prevent our hospitals from overflowing, it's absolutely critical that people in the 20-44-year-old age group take much more precautions than they currently are taking and stay at home."

Trump's bond with veterans starts to fracture over Russian bounty plot

A series of military figures are lining up to condemn the president over his reported inaction after being briefed on the plot

Military veterans helped sweep Donald Trump to power in 2016, turning out in swing states like Ohio and Florida as Trump vowed to spend vast sums on defense. They have largely stuck with him ever since, even as Trump has repeatedly attacked venerated military leaders. But as Trump grapples with the scandal over his reported inaction after being briefed on a Russian plot to pay bounties for the killing of US troops, cracks in the relationship are starting to show, and a series of military figures have lined up to condemn the president.



Even before news of Russian bounties broke, Trump's bond with the military appeared to have become fractured. Some veterans and members of the military were horrified by Trump's pledge to deploy active-duty military forces to anti-racism protests and demonstrations. "Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people – does not even pretend to try," said Gen James Mattis, Trump's

former defense secretary, in an extraordinary critique of the president in early June.

"Instead he tries to divide us. We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership." The New York Times reported on Friday that the Trump administration had ignored intelligence about a Russian plot to offer bounties to Afghan militants to kill US troops. Trump has called the report – aspects of which have been confirmed by other outlets – a hoax, and insisted he was not briefed on the Russian plan. The New York Times and CNN have since reported that the information was included in a daily intelligence briefing in February, although Trump is known to rarely read those briefings. The report of the plot, and Trump's response, could prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back when it comes to the armed forces. Even Republicans were shocked by the allegations.

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

cdc.gov/COVID19

3/19/20 - March 19, 2020 1:02 PM

U.S. Democrats push to extend \$600 weekly coronavirus unemployment benefit

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Democrats in the U.S. Senate, impatient with the pace of Republicans' consideration of additional aid related to the coronavirus pandemic, on Wednesday proposed long-term extensions to a temporary unemployment insurance program. The \$600-per-week payments to laid-off workers, which began at the end of March and are set to expire on July 31, would be extended until jobless rates in individual states fell below 11%. On June 5 the U.S. unemployment rate stood at 13.3%. Under the Democrats' legislation, these federally backed benefits would fall by \$100 for every percentage-point decrease in a state's unemployment rate, until joblessness falls below 6%.

The proposal comes as 33 million people in the United States are either receiving unemployment benefits or awaiting approval, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said.

While many workers have been returning to their jobs after states loosened self-quarantine steps in response to the coronavirus pandemic, a significant increase in hospitalizations in several states has since caused some governors to rein in those actions.

Fearing an election loss, Trump allies push him to be less polarizing

With four months to go before he faces Democrat Joe Biden in a Nov. 3 U.S. election, Trump's opinion poll numbers have sunk as he struggles to manage the coronavirus pandemic, economic woes and protests over racial injustice. Speaking on condition of anonymity, allies said Trump was often his own worst enemy. They pointed to him retweeting a video on Sunday that included a supporter shouting, "white power," a slogan among white supremacists, and then deleting it. "He has to go back and become an acceptable president and then take the wood to Biden," said a Republican ally close to the White House. "People are even actually saying, 'Does he want this anymore?'" the ally said of fellow Republican supporters. "Is he looking for an exit strategy?" Trump's falling poll numbers worry some fellow Republicans they will lose control of the U.S. Senate, having already lost leadership of the House of Representatives in 2018. The source said perhaps as soon as August, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell may have to advise Republican Senate candidates to distance themselves from Trump if needed to win election and

keep their majority. McConnell's office did not respond to a request for comment. Asked about the concerns, White House spokesman Judd Deere said the president "has shown time and again that he's not afraid to take on the big challenges facing this country" and that Trump and his team are "engaged in an ongoing policy process for a bold second-term agenda."

Biden pulls together hundreds of lawyers as a bulwark against election trickery

Biden pulls together hundreds of lawyers as a bulwark against election trickery. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said on Wednesday that his party has assembled a group of 600 lawyers and thousands of other people to prepare for possible "chicanery" ahead of November's election.

"We put together 600 lawyers and a group of people throughout the country who are going into every single state to try to figure out whether chicanery is likely to take place,"

Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, said on a video conference with donors to his campaign. "We have over 10,000 people signed up to volunteer. We're in the process of getting into the states in question to train them to be in a polling place," he said, in a time when the coronavirus pandemic requires extra precautions. Biden's remarks come as dire warnings about efforts by Republicans to cheat in an Nov. 3 election while also

criticizing his election opponent, Republican President Donald Trump, for undermining confidence in the vote. A senior political adviser and top lawyer for Trump's campaign, Justin Clark, said Biden is lying and stoking fear while Democrats are trying to "fundamentally change" how elections are conducted, an apparent reference to their support for widespread mail-in voting. Republicans have argued that mail-in voting and other changes being suggested by Democrats in the midst of

the pandemic could create fraud. "They are inserting chaos and confusion into our voting process because it is the only way they can win," Clark said in a statement, adding that the president is committed to "fair and free elections." Biden has previously said that his single greatest concern is Trump's trying to "steal" the victory. Election experts have been on edge about the process given chaos and legal challenges during primary elections held amid the viral outbreak.

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Coronavirus and sanctions hit Iran's support of proxies in Iraq

(Reuters) - Iran's financial and military support for Shi'ite proxy paramilitary groups in Iraq, a linchpin of its regional foreign policy, has been dramatically disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic and U.S. sanctions, according to people familiar with the matter.

Interruptions caused by the virus, including border closings to prevent the spread of the disease, have drastically cut Tehran's cash supplies to the militia groups in recent months, said three Iraqi paramilitary group commanders and a regional official familiar with Iran's activities in Iraq. The funds from Iran are typically allocated for military operations related to the paramilitary groups' activities such as fighting Iran's opponents, including attacks against U.S. targets, the three commanders said.

Since the coronavirus hit earlier this year, Iran has reduced its monthly payments to each of

the four top militia groups in Iraq to between \$2 million and \$3 million from \$4.5 million to \$5 million, said one of the commanders, who belongs to a powerful paramilitary group. The reduced funding has impacted operations of the militia groups and is forcing them to seek alternative sources of funding for military operations and weapons such as from their own business interests, the commanders said.

Iraq shares a border with Iran, a coronavirus epicenter in the Middle East with more than 11,000 reported deaths, according to a Reuters tally.

Disruptions brought on by the pandemic come on top of a squeeze on Tehran's financing of the paramilitary groups over the past two years caused by U.S. sanctions on Iran, said the three commanders and the regional official. The regional official said Tehran's funding of the groups has dropped by millions of dollars. The sanctions combined with the

coronavirus crisis and a decline in oil prices have helped force Iran, which faces a large budget deficit, to limit its military spending including on the Revolutionary Guards.

Iran's linking of its paramilitary proxies in a Shi'ite axis of power across Iraq and through Syria to the Mediterranean, has been crucial to its strategy of countering U.S. influence as it has come under pressure from sanctions.

U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook agreed that U.S. sanctions were having an impact on Iran's funding of paramilitary groups, saying it was "further evidence that our campaign of maximum pressure is successfully depriving the (Iranian) regime of revenue to fund its terror proxies and other destabilizing actions across



the region." He did not discuss the degree of the impact.

The squeeze on militia financing also follows the killing of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani, who died in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad in January. The loss of the senior military commander, who created

an Iran-aligned axis of influence across the Middle East and steered political allies in Iraq, has dealt a blow to the operations of paramilitary groups and Iran's broader aims in Iraq, according to the three commanders as well as the regional official and a senior Iranian diplomat.

Japan's capital sees biggest rise in coronavirus cases in two months



The Japanese capital, with 14 million people, had initially sought to hold new daily cases at fewer than 20 after the government lifted the state of emergency on May 25, only to see its tally consistently exceed 50 over the past week. Tokyo's daily count last rose above 100 on May 2. On Wednesday, it confirmed 67 new cases. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said about 70% of cases on Thursday were among people in their 20s and 30s. "It's really unpleasant that it is increasing somewhat. I'd like to ask all Tokyo residents and everyone at businesses for their cooperation to prevent that," she said. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters he didn't think there was a need for a fresh state of emergency. "We'll continue to pay attention to the

infection situation in the area with a sense of urgency, and work to both prevent spreading of infection and support economic activity," he said. Officials have also said the medical system can handle existing infections and that increased testing partly explains the rise in confirmed cases. Despite more cases in Tokyo, Japan, with about 19,000 cases and 976 deaths, has reported a lower overall rate of infection than many countries. More than 10.7 million people have been reported to be infected by the coronavirus globally and over 515,000 have died, according to a Reuters tally. This week, Tokyo said it would move away from numerical targets in favour of more reliance on expert advice to rein in the virus and avert more economic damage.



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India's torture culture needs to end now

Never fructified, as the then UPA government allowed the Bill to lapse. In 2016, Ashwani Kumar, a senior advocate and former Union Minister of Law, sought the enactment of a torture law via a Supreme Court petition. By 2017, the Law Commission had submitted its 273rd report and an accompanying draft torture law. But the Supreme Court dismissed the petition on grounds that the government cannot be compelled to make a law by mandamus; treaty ratification was a political decision; and that it was a policy matter. A second petition on the issue filed by Mr. Kumar also met the same fate as the first one.

This rejection was a sign of the Supreme Court turning its back on its own glorious jurisprudence, and its efforts to aid law-making in the past, whether in using the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women to reform the law around workplace sexual harassment; or customary international law in environmental cases; or the right to privacy — this long and varied list is revelatory of a proactive Court that sees itself as responsible for nudging Parliament into legislative action. Even with failings, the Commission's draft Bill is better than not having one at all. A version based on this draft was circulated to State governments for views, but nothing has come of it, and nothing is likely to, either. This reluctance is arguably because all governments appear to collectively agree that police brutality is a necessary evil to maintain law and order. Neither the Home Ministry nor this government

is likely to take up the torture law. Indeed, the manner in which the torture bill has been treated reveals a betrayal of the people of India by successive governments. There have been opportunities for 23 years to enact a law on torture, but they have been studiously avoided. State consultation also has no meaning. It is evident that all governments enjoy the status quo, where the police are used as a tool for self-preservation. Any disequilibrium is not politically desirable. As disheartening as this may seem, all is not lost. There is much inspiration around us. Days after George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis in the U.S., when a policeman held him in an 8-minute-46-second-chokehold, the #BlackLivesMatter movement emerged, with many Indians joining in too. The movement, led by the people, started a national debate in the U.S. on policing, including radical reforms such as defunding and disarming the police. Arguably we need a people's movement at home too that will bring about the necessary legislative changes that the Law Commission has suggested, and that encourages institutions to #EndTortureToday. Only the people can rise up against these practices, just as they are doing in other parts of the world. And by people, I include important stakeholders like the Bar, the media, civil society and student groups. Each of these have relevant roles to play in bringing about the change we want to see. It is merely a matter of who decides to pick up the mantle first.

(By Ajit Prakash Shah,
Courtesy The Hindu)

Lessons for India On Italian marines case

The Italian marines' case meets with a disappointing end, as India loses right to trial

The long quest for justice for the two Kerala fishermen shot dead by Italian marines from the Enrica Lexie about 20.5 nautical miles off India's coast in February 2012 has ended in disappointment. An international arbitration court has ruled that India does not have jurisdiction to try the marines, who, it held, were entitled to immunity as they were acting on behalf of a state. The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague admitted that both India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction in the matter but concluded that the marines' immunity precluded India's jurisdiction. In India's favour, the PCA found that the Italian vessel had violated the right and freedom of navigation of the Indian fishing vessel under UNCLOS, and that the action, which caused loss of lives, property and harm, merited compensation. It asked the parties to consult each other on the compensation due to India as a result. More significantly, the PCA rejected a key argument by Italy that India, by leading the Italian vessel into its territory and arresting the marines, violated its obligation to cooperate with measures to suppress piracy under Article 100 of UNCLOS. This may mean that the arbitration court did not view the incident as one related to piracy at all. The incident had caused national outrage as the public saw these as wanton killings, inasmuch as the circumstances indicated no attempt by the fishing

vessel at piracy. The fishing vessel was within the country's Contiguous Zone and it was quite clear that the offence warranted arrest and prosecution under domestic law.

With the piracy angle ruled out, a regular trial was in order. The Union government should have taken over the prosecution and ensured a quick trial. However, as legal tangles were being sorted out, and India was dealing with the diplomatic fallout, the marines managed to obtain orders to leave the country. The Supreme Court ruled that only the Centre, and not Kerala, can prosecute the marines. A bigger legal issue, which caused more delay, came later. The National Investigation Agency invoked the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act, 2002. This caused a diplomatic furore as it provides for the death penalty. The EU threatened to impose trade sanctions. Ultimately, it took time for these charges to be dropped. The PCA's award, which is final and has been accepted by India, is a huge setback for the expectation that the two marines would face a criminal trial in India. In the end, Italy succeeded in taking the matter out of India's hands. It should now make good on its commitment to have the marines tried under its domestic laws. The takeaway for India should be the lessons, in the legal and diplomatic domains, that can be drawn from the experience.

NYC: STOP THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS!

New Yorkers working together can slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in New York City.



PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



STAY HOME IF SICK

- Stay home and call your doctor if you have symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat.
- If you do not feel better in 24-48 hours, seek care from your doctor.
- 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.
- If you have family or friends who have one of these conditions, do not visit them if you feel sick.



REDUCE OVERCROWDING

- Consider telecommuting.
- Stagger work hours, starting earlier or later.
- Walk or bike to work, if possible.
- If the train is too packed, wait for the next one.

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The Taste With Vir: I support the TikTok ban

But the calls for a boycott of all Chinese goods are ill-thought out.

So why is it okay to take an Ola cab and help enrich some Chinese entity but wrong to buy a Chinese TV?

It's a difficult question and I haven't heard many convincing answers from boycott-advocates. While the arguments in favour of an economic boycott of China often raise more questions than they answer, there are two good reasons for getting rid of some Chinese entities from India.

The first is security. There are now innumerable cases from all over the world of Chinese products (hardware and software) turning out to have backdoors that allow Chinese interests to access private information.

If you load a Chinese app, it might well start drawing out your personal data. If you use a Chinese chat service, there is a possibility that your private chats might be recorded on a server somewhere in China. If you use a Chinese made mobile phone, the manufacturers could have unlimited access to everything stored on that phone. If you install a Chinese-made smart TV, the makers know how to turn on the camera and microphone remotely without you even knowing.

The risk from Chinese software and hardware is well known and globally recognised. The Chinese themselves insist that their people only use their own apps. In China, locals can't access Instagram or WhatsApp. They have to use local equivalents so that the state can keep a watch on them. Chinese citizens have no choice but to use these apps.

But we do. So you'd have to be nuts to voluntarily use Chinese apps to communicate. And each time you use a Chinese made smart device, you are probably entrusting your privacy to President Xi and his minions. This is true of Tik Tok, one of the subjects of the recent ban on Apps. In just three years or so (Tik Tok came to India only in 2018), the app has around 125 million users in India. In smaller towns and among younger people, its use has become so widespread in such a short space of time that its rate of growth dwarfs anything

that Instagram or Twitter have managed in India.

The security issues with TikTok are well known. Neither the US army nor the Indian military will allow their personnel to use TikTok. Earlier this year, an Israeli cyber security firm found that a 'flaw' allowed its researchers to retrieve personal information from TikTok user accounts. This was one of several weaknesses reported by various security researchers. TikTok said, after each complaint, that it had fixed the 'flaw'.

But it left open the big questions: if it is so easy for hackers to get personal information from the site, what about the people who actually run the site? How super-easy must it be for them? My view on Chinese software and hardware ---- and this is long before the Galwan valley conflict --- is that you use them at your own peril. There is also a second reason for Indians to be wary of Chinese apps. As the world has learned over the last century, soft power often has more influence than hard

power. The United States is possibly the most powerful country in the history of civilisation. But you and I are not frightened of American's military might because we don't need to be. We are already in thrall to America because of the various elements of its soft power from jeans to pizzas to Hollywood to rock music. As Rupert Murdoch famously said, modernization has come to mean Americanisation. (And globalisation is often another euphemism for Americanisation.)

Over the last two decades, the US has used technology to leverage its soft power. Apple's iPhone changed all phones forever. The great social networking and photo-sharing sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp and others have remade the world in America's image. That kind of power means much more than the US's six thousand plus nuclear weapons. Over the last decade, especially in Asia but also elsewhere in the world, China has tried to mimic America in the soft

power game. Cheap Chinese smart phones, messaging apps, conference apps and video-sharing apps (like TikTok) are now ubiquitous. In India, they are carefully aimed at a mid-level segment that hasn't necessarily grown up on American popular culture. So what's the difference? If America can have a hold on one socio-economic demographic than why can't China have the same kind of hold on another? It's a good question but there is a difference. First of all, the US has no territorial ambitions in India, no history of conflict with us and obviously, no desire to keep us down so that it can be the only power in Asia. It's all right for India to be friendly with China (that's what foreign policy is about) but it is crazy to believe that we can ever be friends. Moreover, for all its fault and the problems with its companies (Facebook, for instance, is either immoral or downright evil) the United States has systemic checks and balances. At present, Facebook faces a damaging boycott from many of its

advertisers and if Joe Biden gets elected in November, it is possible Facebook may even get broken up. No such thing will ever happen in China. Many of the largest companies are controlled by elements of the state and face no ethical scrutiny. They are, at the end of the day, instruments to advance the interests of the PRC. So yes, it is right to be suspicious of the Chinese state and its companies. Hell, it was wrong to ever be trusting of their intentions --- even before tensions flared up along the border.

But it is childish to believe that Xi and his cohorts at the top of the Chinese government will be terrified of a boycott of Chinese electronic goods. Besides, there is a double-standard implicit in the boycott: why brag that you won't use a Chinese phone while continuing to enrich China by giving your money to the "Indian" companies that Chinese interests own either mostly or in part? Don't buy Chinese TVs if you don't want to. (I don't use Chinese electronic products myself.) But the concerns run much deeper than swearing off Chinese phones. And the issues are more complex than a Twitter trend may suggest.

Why can companies still silence us with mandatory arbitration?

More than 55% of the American workforce is now subject to mandatory arbitration. This system of private courts must be abolished

at the time of hiring, before they know what sort of company culture they're entering or what their colleagues and superiors might subject them to. The supreme court has repeatedly reaffirmed arbitration's legitimacy and the legality of these exploitative practices by employers who coerce or trick employees into signing away their legal rights. But there is a growing consensus that mandatory arbitration isn't a fair way to resolve employment discrimination claims. "The situation now, where every arbitration agreement is enforceable -- it's not a sustainable equilibrium," says Noll. Feminists agree, and have made a renewed push to end forced arbitration in sexual harassment cases. Google ditched the practice after their employees walked out; Facebook followed suit the next day. But real

change will require not just such tactical concessions to workers by large companies, but legislation to enforce a ban on this unjust practice. New York's governor, Andrew Cuomo, signed a ban on forced arbitration for sexual harassment contracts in July, a major legislative victory for the #MeToo movement, and similar laws are on the books in Washington and Maryland. Other states are preparing to follow suit.

There has even been a move toward a national fix. The Restoring Statutory Rights Act, which would bar forced arbitration in a wide array of employee disputes, was introduced in Congress in 2016. But it's languished in committee, ignored by lawmakers unwilling to prioritize workers' rights.

Constitutional rights, like the freedom to sue over violations of federal anti-discrimination law, shouldn't be

dependent on what state you live in, or what company you work for. They shouldn't be able to be taken away in relationships as unequal as that between an employer and an employee. And illegal behavior by companies, like the enabling of sexual harassment, should not be able to be swept under the rug and hushed up in an asymmetrical, secretive process. Abuse thrives on secrecy, and sunlight is the best disinfectant. It is long past time to make forced arbitration nationally illegal in sexual harassment claims, if not in all workers' complaints, and to bring these disputes into the public eye, under the full scrutiny and protection of the court. Workers' rights -- including, crucially, the right of women to be free from sexual harassment -- need not be privatized and kept in the shadows. They must become a public concern.

Why did it take so long for Reddit and Facebook to block racist groups?

Powerful tech companies have two areas of vulnerability - employees and advertisers. Now both are in open revolt

In fact, the consumer products conglomerate has a fairly strong record on matters of social responsibility. Yet it's been somewhat surprising when companies beyond the usual list of do-gooders step up to make a stand against racism and fascism. Advertisers as powerful and diverse as Clorox, Ford, HP and Adidas have decided that they do not want their products and logos associated with racism, calls to violence, or other trappings of emerging fascism in the United States. The number of boycotting companies has grown to more than 300, and even

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle were reportedly phoning their corporate friends to encourage them to stop advertising on Facebook.

Why did it take so long, however, to get major tech companies to change their tune? Why weren't the leaders of Reddit, YouTube and Facebook willing to take such steps in the aftermath of the 2017 genocide of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar? Why didn't they act in 2016, when Facebook actively supported the Trump campaign as the failed businessman pledged to

build a wall to keep Mexicans out of the US and ban Muslim immigration? Why did it take the visual evidence of the killing of George Floyd and all of the fallout within just one country, the US, to move advertisers, labor and management to take such action? Didn't all the algorithmically stoked violence in Sri Lanka, India, Kenya, Myanmar and the Philippines matter? We shouldn't celebrate this moment. Let's mark it, instead, as a potential turning point in the history of Silicon Valley and its relationship with movements

for global social justice, and try to understand its limitations. We still don't know to what extent these recent moves to de-platform extremism will make a difference over time. It's likely these advertisers will return to Facebook – still the best advertising platform ever created – after the US election in November. There is also a very good chance that the extremist actors who are pushing for violence and racism will just find a way to re-platform themselves under new aliases. Other social media services might help these movements promote themselves

and generate not only wider audience participation, but also the sense of victimhood and indignation that is one of the chief drivers of fascism. So these moves could backfire or yield only marginal results over time. Nonetheless we should review the Great Deplatforming of 2020 as a potentially positive shift in the awareness of powerful people about the plight of the powerless and the rising forces of fascism in the United States.

If only these companies, and the democracies they operate in, took the global threats more seriously. We still have much work to do.

Why did it take so long for Reddit and Facebook to block racist groups?

Powerful tech companies have two areas of vulnerability - employees and advertisers. Now both are in open revolt

This had already led to fall in water levels and fears that it would lead to drought and affect 6 million people in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam

Japan

Japan's dispute with China centers around South China Sea, particularly Senkaku Islands, Ryukyu Islands and the overlapping Air Defence Identification Zone and Exclusive Economic Zone in the East China Sea

Vietnam

Vietnam, which fought a bloody war with China in 1979 when Beijing tried to teach its former ally a lesson, has stood its ground on its territorial claims over parts of the South China Sea, and the Macclesfield Bank, Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands. Last month, a Chinese ship rammed a Vietnamese fishing boat operating in the Paracel Islands that was seen as an effort by Beijing to flex muscles to enforce a unilateral fishing ban in parts of the South China Sea against vessels from another nation.

India

China occupies 38,000 sq km Indian territory in the Aksai Chin region apart from staking claim on Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. It was this expansionist policy that led to the ongoing standoff between the Indian Army and the Chinese PLA that escalated

into a violent scrap in Ladakh's Galwan valley. Another 5,163 sq km of Shaksam valley was illegally ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963. Hence, the total Indian territory occupied by China is over 43,000 sq km.

Nepal

Nepal and China have pending border issues over three boundary pillars in Dolakha and two in the vicinity of Mt Everest. There have, however, been reports that China has illegally occupied strategic land at 12 places across Nepal. China has also claimed part of Nepal dating back to the Sino-Nepalese war in 1788-1792, claiming that some parts of Nepal are part of Tibet and therefore, part of China.

Taiwan

China claims all of Taiwan but particular disputes are Macclesfield Bank, Paracel Islands Scarborough Shoal, part of South China Sea and the Spratly Islands. The Paracel Islands, also called Xisha Islands in Vietnamese, is a group of islands in the South China Sea whose sovereignty is disputed.

North Korea

The two countries have a continuing dispute over Mount Paektu and Yalu and Tuman rivers. China has also claimed Baekhu Mountain and Jiandao. Beijing has, on occasions, claimed all of North Korea on historical grounds (Yuan Dynasty 1271-1368)

South Korea

South Korea and China have an overlapping Air Defence Identification Zone and a continuing Exclusive Economic Zone dispute over Leodo (Socotra Rock) in the East China Sea. China has also, on occasions, claimed entire South Korea on historical grounds (Yuan Dynasty 1271-1368)

Mongolia

China and Mongolia have settled their boundary dispute but China has claimed all of Mongolia on historical precedent (Yuan Dynasty 1271-1368).

Bhutan

Bhutanese enclaves in Tibet, namely Cherkip, Gompa, Dho, Dungmar, Gesur, Gezon, Itse Gompa, Khochar, Nyanri, Ringung, Sanmar, Tarchen and Zuthulphuk. Bhutan has lost a substantial chunk of area under dispute including the Kula Kangri peak to slow encroachments by China. Beijing claims Kula Kangri and mountainous areas to the west of this peak in addition to the western Haa district of Bhutan.

Tajikistan

The two sides have a bilateral dispute dating back to 1884 when a border demarcation agreement between the Qing Dynasty and Tsarist Russia left large segments of the frontier in the sparsely-populated eastern Pamirs without a clear definition.

The Chinese claims are based on historical precedent (Qing Dynasty 1644-1912).

In 1991, Tajikistan inherited from the Soviet Union three disputed border segments constituting about 28,000 sq km which China and the Soviet Union had been unable to resolve.

In 1999, Tajikistan and China signed a border demarcation agreement defining the border in two of the three segments. Under this deal, Tajikistan ceded about 200 sq km lands to China. In 2002, Tajikistan agreed to cede 1,122 sq km or about four percent of the territory that Beijing had claimed. China has, in all, settled for 3.5 per cent of the claimed territory.

Kazakhstan

China has laid claim to a territory in Kazakhstan stretching from Semirechie to Lake Balkhash covering 34,000 sq km. In May 2020, a Chinese website 'Sohu.com' published an article claiming that Kazakhstan is located on territories that historically belong to China.

China has settled for 22 per cent of its claim over Kazakh territory. Despite a border demarcation treaty with China in 1994 and claim by Kazakh state media that the Kazakhstan government had succeeded in retaining 56.9 percent of the disputed territory, critics had opined that

the remaining 43.1 per cent of the land also belonged to Kazakhstan for which a new deal should be signed.

Kyrgyzstan

China lays claim to the whole of Kyrgyz territory. In May 2020, Chinese website tutiao.com published an article on such a claim and argued that under the Han Dynasty, the entire Kyrgyz territory was part of the Chinese mainland before the Russian empire captured it.

China has settled for 32 percent of its claim over Kyrgyz territory. Under the 1999 agreement, Kyrgyzstan handed over 1,250 sq km to China.

Russia

Despite signing bilateral agreements in 1991 and 1994 to delimit the eastern and western section of the Russia-China border, a few sectors remain unresolved. There are 160,000 sq km still unilaterally claimed by China despite signing several agreements.

In October 2004, the 4,300 sq border was finally demarcated in its entirety, thus resolving a 300-year-old territorial dispute. In 2005, the Russian Parliament ratified the agreement in 2008, a part of the Abagaitu Islet, the entire Tarabarov Bolshoi Ussuriysk Island and some adjacent river islets were handed over to China. dusta

To Push Back China's Growing Belt And Road Initiative Will Be India's Main Challenge

This isn't just something Beijing can do; because of BRI, it's a top strategic priority. Additionally, a disconnected region with a hobbled regional organisation and limited trade is not hardwired for robust diplomacy and cooperation. Rather, it complicates efforts by New Delhi to build goodwill and confidence with its neighbours, and deprives it of forums to push back against the perception of some of its smaller neighbors that it acts like a bully. To this end, India's best bet, at least initially, is to hold off on regional charm offensives and other diplomatic blitzes. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Instead, it should continue its longstanding military modernisation efforts, build on existing agreements and plans with its neighbours, and embrace newer regional institutions that don't suffer from the problems of SAARC. Energy and connectivity

projects, under the aegis of BIMSTEC and its member states, offer a useful start. In recent years, India has concluded energy deals with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. There have also been discussions on an electricity-sharing arrangement with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. Indian efforts to push back against China's deepening influence in South Asia would benefit from US support. And from a strategic standpoint, Washington is certainly game. The Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy is all about balancing out China's power. Washington's free-falling relationship with Beijing, coupled with its rapidly growing partnership with New Delhi, give it added incentive to offer cooperation.

It's no coincidence that US leaders have been unusually

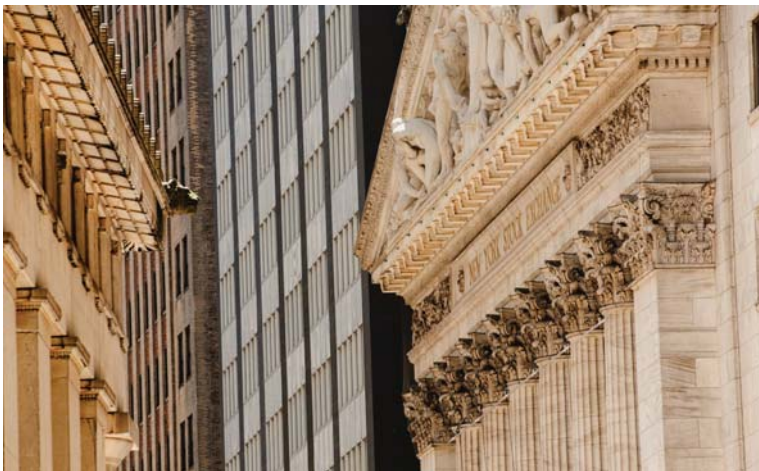
public in their messaging on Ladakh—including comments from an influential Congressman and a senior State Department official that were deeply critical of China, as well as a tweet from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo offering condolences to India for its fallen soldiers. However, tactically speaking, one can't count on US assistance to counter China in South Asia. The Trump administration is focused laser-like on the pandemic, the sputtering US economy, and the election in November. Additionally, US attention to China's activities in Asia tends to be focused more on East and Southeast Asia—areas that are home to American treaty allies. Furthermore, outside of its partnership with New Delhi and its military presence in Afghanistan, Washington's track record and footprint in South Asia are relatively modest. And it can't

hold a candle to the Chinese infrastructure projects that account for much of Beijing's imprint there. There's been talk in Washington in recent years about developing "a new Silk Road" in South Asia and other vague aspirations, but relatively little to show for it on the ground other than some rare concrete achievements like the US-backed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline. Still, with the Ladakh crisis generating more talk of how India should more openly side with America, it's the right time to push for more US-India cooperation in South Asia. Indeed, South Asia now fits into Washington's geographic conception of the Indo-Pacific. Recall the comment made at this year's Raisina Dialogue by Matthew Pottinger, a senior

White House official, that the Indo-Pacific stretches from "California to Kilimanjaro". Additionally, new US institutions can help hasten collaborations with India in the western Indo-Pacific. The BUILD Act, signed into law by President Trump in 2018, facilitates America's ability to dep-loy resources for overseas development projects through the formation of a new development agency known as the US International Development Finance Corporation.

India-China rivalry is entering a potentially destabilising stage that will likely become an extended new normal. India will need to draw on domestic, regional, and international resources alike to reassert its clout against an emboldened nemesis that is increasingly projecting power in areas too close for New Delhi's comfort.

The Neoliberal Looting of America



standard fee structure involves collecting around 2 percent of the investor money they manage annually, and then 20 percent of any profits above an agreed-upon level. This lucrative arrangement also lets them tap into the very favorable "carried interest" tax loophole, allowing them to pay much lower capital gains tax rates on their earnings, rather than normal income taxes like most people.

An examination of the recent history of private equity disproves the neoliberal myth that profit incentives produce the best outcomes for society. The passage of time has debunked another such myth: that deregulating industries would generate more vibrant competition and benefit consumers. Unregulated market competition actually led to market consolidation instead. Would-be monopolies squeezed competitors, accrued political power, lobbied for even more deregulation and ultimately drove out any rivals, leading inexorably to entrenched political power. Instead of a thriving market of small-firm competition, free market ideology led to a few big winners dominating the rest. Take the banking sector. For most of American history, banks were considered a public privilege with duties to promote the "best interest of

the community." If a bank wanted to merge or grow or offer new services, the regulators often denied the request either because a community could lose a bank branch or because the new product was too risky. During the neoliberal revolution of the 1980s and '90s, Congress and bank regulators loosened the rules, allowing a handful of megabanks to swallow up thousands of small banks.

Today, five banks control nearly half of all bank assets. Fees paid by low-income Americans have increased, services have been curtailed and many low-income communities have lost their only bank. When federally subsidized banks left low-income communities, vulture-like fringe lenders — payday, title, tax-refund lenders — filled the void. As it turns out, private equity firms are invested in some of the largest payday lenders in the country.

Faith in market magic was so entrenched that even the 2008 financial crisis did not fully expose the myth: We witnessed the federal government pick up all the risks that markets could not manage and Congress and the Federal Reserve save the banking sector ostensibly on behalf of the people. Neoliberal deregulation was premised on the theory that the invisible

hand of the market would discipline risky banks without the need for government oversight. Even a former Fed chairman, Alan Greenspan, the most committed free market fundamentalist of the era, admitted in the understatement of the century, that "I made a mistake." We can start fixing the big flaws propagated over the last half century by taxing the largest fortunes, breaking up large banks and imposing market rules that prohibit the predatory behaviors of private equity firms. Public markets can take over the places that private markets have failed to adequately serve. Federal or state agencies can provide essential services like banking, health care, internet access, transportation and housing at cost through a public option. Historically, road maintenance, mail delivery, police and other services are not left to the market, but provided directly by the government. Private markets can still compete, but basic services are guaranteed to everyone. And we can move beyond the myths of neoliberalism that have led us here. We can have competitive and prosperous markets, but our focus should be on ensuring human dignity, thriving families and healthy communities. When those are in conflict, we should choose flourishing communities over profits.

The private equity industry embodies the neoliberal movement's values, while exposing its inherent logic. Private equity firms use money provided by institutional investors like pension funds and university endowments to take over and restructure companies or industries. Private equity touches practically every sector, from housing to health care to retail. In pursuit of maximum returns, such firms have squeezed businesses for every last drop of profit, cutting jobs, pensions and salaries where possible. The debt-laden buyouts privatize gains when they work, and socialize losses when they don't, driving previously healthy firms to bankruptcy and leaving many others permanently hobbled. The list of private equity's victims has grown even longer in the past year, adding J.Crew, Toys 'R' Us, Hertz and more. In the last decade, private equity

management has led to approximately 1.3 million job losses due to retail bankruptcies and liquidation. Beyond the companies directly controlled by private equity, the threat of being the next takeover target has most likely led other companies to preemptively cut wages and jobs to avoid being the weakest prey. Amid the outbreak of street protests in June, a satirical headline in The Onion put it best: "Protesters Criticized For Looting Businesses Without Forming Private Equity Firm First." Yet the private equity takeover is not technically looting because it has been made perfectly legal, and even encouraged, by policymakers.

According to industry experts, 2019 was one of the most successful years for private equity to date, with \$919 billion in funds raised. The private equity executives themselves can also garner tremendous riches. Their

Silicon Valley Wants US To Follow India In Banning Chinese App TikTok: Expert

Last December, the US Army banned the use of TikTok by its soldiers. It called the app a security threat. The US navy has enforced similar restrictions.

Silicon Valley, the global IT hub, does not feel sorry for TikTok, which has been banned in India, and in fact wants the US to take a similar step against the popular Chinese app, according to a prominent Indian-American venture capitalist.

India on Monday banned 59 apps with Chinese links, including the hugely popular TikTok and UC Browser, for engaging in "activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order".

The ban came against the

backdrop of the current standoff between Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh. Former president of TIE Silicon Valley Venkatesh Shukla said TikTok is fast becoming one of the most influential social media platforms, joining the likes of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram in terms of audience size, demographic engagement and advertising dollars.

TiE is a non-profit organisation for entrepreneurial networking. "Given this competition for advertising dollars, Silicon Valley

does not feel sorry for TikTok," said Shukla, the Indian-American venture capitalist. Advertising dollars refers to promotional expenditure against the expected revenue to be generated.

"In fact, the sentiment here seems to be that the US should follow suit and ban it (TikTok) in the US as well. After all, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are not allowed to operate in China, so why should TikTok be allowed here?" Shukla asked. Cuban-American music video director and producer

Robby Starbuck said the US should ban the Chinese video-sharing application.

"Ban all apps controlled by China. They're a national security risk that we can't afford to take," Starbuck tweeted.

Business magazine Forbes said TikTok will be adversely hit by these new restrictions on its largest market.

"There was a storm of publicity last week, when TikTok was found by Apple AAPL to be secretly accessing users' clipboards. TikTok claims that this was an inadvertent technical

bug caused by an anti-spam filter, but the backlash was fast and furious," Forbes wrote. Last December, the US Army banned the use of TikTok by its soldiers. It called the app a security threat. The US navy has enforced similar restrictions. In February, TikTok had agreed to pay USD 5.7 million to the US Federal Trade Commission to settle allegations that it illegally collected personal information from children under the age of 13, such as names, email addresses and their location.

SHO who masturbated in front of woman and her daughter terminated from service

A day after being arrested, the station house officer (SHO) who allegedly masturbated in front of a woman and her daughter when they went to the police station to lodge a complaint has been terminated from service by the Uttar Pradesh Police, a senior official said on Thursday.

A day after being arrested, the station house officer (SHO) who allegedly masturbated in front of a woman and her daughter when they went to the police station to lodge a complaint has been terminated from service by the Uttar Pradesh Police, a senior official said on Thursday. "The Police Inspector who indulged in perverted behaviour in front of a female complainant inside a police station in Deoria has been terminated from service. There will be zero tolerance towards anyone violating the dignity of women. No one is above law," a Additional Director General (ADG), Law and Order, Prashant Kumar said. An FIR was registered against

Inspector Bhism Pal Singh and he was arrested on Wednesday, Deoria Superintendent of Police Shripati Mishra said. Inspector Singh was absconding since Tuesday and a reward of Rs 25,000 was declared for his arrest.

Singh, who was Bhatni Police Station (Deoria) SHO, was caught masturbating in his office on June 22 when the woman and her daughter visited him with a complaint related to a land dispute, police said. The SHO was already suspended for alleged dereliction of duty in another case related to his posting at Salempur and was attached to the police

line. A video of the SHO's vulgar act, recorded by the woman's daughter, went viral on Tuesday, leading to demand of strong action against him. An FIR was registered against the police inspector at the same police station after the video surfaced. He has been booked under the charges of voyeurism, outraging the modesty of a woman, and public servant disobeying law, the Deoria SP had said. Singh indulged in vulgar acts while talking about the land dispute. The woman's daughter made a video and showed it to other members of her family," the complaint filed against him said.

India deploys Special Forces units in Ladakh amid military standoff with China

surgical strikes against Pakistan-based terror camps and can be used effectively on the Chinese front if and when needed, sources added.

Most recent inputs indicate that Special Forces units have already been deployed along forward locations in eastern Ladakh. Troops have been fully apprised about roles they may have to assume in case hostilities with China escalate. India has more than 12 Special Forces regiments who train on different terrains and have developed specialisation in desert, mountains and jungle terrain. The Special Forces units deployed in Jammu and Kashmir regularly practice war games in high-altitude areas in and around Leh. While raiding them, Indian Army Special Forces had destroyed multiple launch pads near the Line of Control (LOC) during the 2017 surgical strikes. Troops had targeted and eliminated a number of terrorists, along with Pakistan Army personnel tasked with training and guiding them to India through different routes. At present, India and China are engaged in a military standoff along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. Tensions have been high since June 15 when a violent face-off between soldiers of the Indian Army and People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops resulted in casualties on both sides in the Galwan Valley.

Congress veteran Ahmed Patel questioned for 3rd day in Rs 14,500 crore money laundering case

"Today, once again people of our most important Gujarati friends visited me and asked questions. I answered all the questions. However, they are asking questions very slowly, almost with a speed of a narrow gauge. Maybe they want to tell their boss that we have interrogated Ahmed Patel for hours," he had said on Tuesday. On Saturday, Ahmed Patel alleged that the government is targeting him and other Opposition leaders to divert attention from its failure to manage an economic, health and national security crisis. "Rather

than fighting the pandemic and China, this government is keener to fight the Opposition. Nonetheless, our conscience is clear. We have nothing to hide, nor are we afraid to criticise and expose the government's failures and their past corruption," he said. The statements of the veteran Congress leader is being recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), officials said. India Today TV has learned that during the investigation, a key witness had disclosed the connection between Chetan Sandesara,

Ahmed Patel, his son Faisal Patel and son-in-law Irfan Siddiqui. Sunil Yadav, an employee of the Sandesara group, had alleged in his statement that Chetan Sandesara allegedly used to handover huge amounts of cash to Ahmed Patel's son-in-law Irfan Siddiqui. Sunil alleged that Ahmed Patel's residence was also used for meetings. "Chetan Sandesara used to refer to Ahmed Patel's residence (23, Mother Teresa Crescent Road, Delhi) as headquarters. Chetan and Gagan Dhawan used to visit

Ahmed Patel's residence. They have gone to this address at least 25-30 times. The meetings were fixed by Chetan and Gagan Dhawan through Mahajan (PA of Ahmed Patel) over the phone," Sunil allegedly said in his statement. The ED is also probing allegations that Siddiqui "occupied" a residential property in Delhi's Vasant Vihar that was purchased by the Sandesaras. The Enforcement Directorate has already questioned Irfan Siddiqui, son-in-law of Ahmed Patel, in connection with multi-thousand-crore bank fraud and money

laundering probe against the Gujarat-based pharmaceutical firm Sterling Biotech. Ahmed Patel's son Faisal Patel was also questioned by the ED earlier in the same case. Ahmed Patel, a close associate of Sonia Gandhi, is a Rajya Sabha member of the Congress from Gujarat and holds the post of treasurer in the party. The alleged Rs 14,500 crore bank loan fraud is said to have been perpetrated by the Vadodra-based pharma firm and its main promoters -- Nitin Sandesara, Chetan Sandesara and Deepti Sandesara - all of whom are absconding.

Sweet, Bitter and Tepid: A Look At India's Relationship With Neighbours

Chinese hostilities and the perennial lack of trust with Pakistan are not the only political issues that Asian superpower India is facing. Here's a quick review



India-China: Rival Asian Powers

Boundary dispute: China has differences with India on both the McMahon line in the east (its border with Arunachal Pradesh) and the Ladakh-Tibet LAC. A claimant and effective occupier of Aksai-Chin, China now claims all of Galwan Valley, a part of Ladakh. China also claims the entire Arunachal Pradesh.

Border with China: over 4,000 kms.

Rivers: A grave problem brews, with Chinese diversion of Brahmaputra water, which flows from Tibet and enters India in Arunachal Pradesh. China building dams on its upper reaches, which will reduce the volume of water downstream. Northeastern states concerned.

Belt and Road Initiative: India has refused to join China's BRI despite Beijing's best efforts as a vital road connecting Xinjiang with Pakistan's Gwadar passes through Gilgit-Baltistan in PoK, thus infringing India's sovereignty. India is also mindful of the debt trap ensnaring those who borrow from China.

India-Pakistan: Hostile Neighbours

Kashmir: Pakistan has fought three wars over Kashmir and challenges the basic Indian position that Kashmir is an integral part of India. Abrogation of Article 370, that scrapped Kashmir's special status, is a new sticking point.

Terrorism: India charges Pakistan of using terror groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed in fomenting constant trouble in Kashmir. Pakistan-backed terror groups are responsible for attacks on Parliament, 26/11 and the J&K assembly, among others. Pakistan accuses India of aiding Baloch insurgents.

Water: The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty gave India use of three eastern rivers and Pakistan that of the western rivers of the Indus river system. But a brooding dispute over building of dams is likely to flare up in future as the countries fight over the quantum of water released.

India-Bangladesh: Teething Differences

Water: The sharing of the Teesta waters is an emotional issue in Bangladesh. No progress yet despite excellent ties between New Delhi and Dhaka.

NRC: Though the National Registrar of

Citizens exercise in Assam is an internal affair of India, since many of those excluded from the NRC are Bengali Muslims living near the Bangladesh border, Dhaka fears a reverse migration.

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA): The act gives citizenship to minority Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians persecuted in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Dhaka is furious—it says it does not persecute minorities.

Economy: Bilateral trade has grown steadily. Indian exports stood at US\$ 9.21 billion and import at US\$ 1.04 billion in 2018-19. India announced a second line of credit (US\$ 2 billion) in 2015 for infrastructure projects. Third credit line of US\$ 4.5 billion was announced in April 2017, one of the biggest by India to any country. Both governments are trying to restore pre-1965 rail links and increase frequency of Calcutta-Dhaka Maitree Express and Calcutta-Khulna Bandhan Express. Bangladesh imports 1,160 MW of power from India.

India-Nepal: Old Partners, New Freeze

Territorial dispute: Nepal released a new map that shows the areas of Kalapani, Limpiadhura and Lipulekh—hitherto regarded by both as part of India—as Nepalese territory. Located at the trijunction between India, Nepal and China, it is of significance. While disputing it, India wants to resolve the issue through dialogue.

Water: Unresolved, intermittent talks about sharing of river water.

Madhesis: These are people living in the Nepali Terai adjoining India with deep links with our nation. India's 2015 blockade of Nepal was aimed at getting Madhesis their rights in the new Nepali constitution.

Economy: India is Nepal's foremost trade partner and the leading source of foreign investments. Total bilateral trade stood at US\$ 8.27 billion in 2018-19. Motihari-Amlekhgunj cross-border petroleum pipeline opened in 2019. Indian assistance in post-2015 Nepal earthquake includes about 40,000 houses, over US\$ 1.65 billion in line of credit extended to Nepal. India offers about 3,000 scholarships to Nepalese students every year.

India-Bhutan: Druk Bond

Strategic partners: India has an agreement for protecting Bhutan's external borders. This is a focal point of the Doklam standoff with China in 2017 as Indian troops tried to stop Chinese road construction in territory claimed by both Thimphu and Beijing.

Economy: India has committed Rs 4,500 crore for the 12th Five Year Plan of Bhutan (2018-23). India assists in developing hydro power. The trade volume stood at Rs 8,560 crore in 2017.

India-Myanmar: Gateway

Strategic partners: Change in power from military junta to democracy brought a

new friendship between the two countries. A niggle was Indian Army's 'surgical strike' deep into Myanmar territory across Manipur against militants holed out in the neighbouring nation in 2015.

Economy: Bilateral trade stood at US\$ 1.7 Billion in 2018-19, an increase of 7.53 per cent from 2017-18. India is the fifth largest trading partner of Myanmar. India is building the Kaladan transport project, which includes a 109-km road from Zorinpui in India to Paletwa in Myanmar. It is part of the Look east Policy. Under the Rakhine state development programme, India has committed over US\$ 25 million.

India-Afghanistan: Close Knit

Strategic partners: Since 2001, India has been a close ally of the democratically elected Afghan government and provider of diplomatic/strategic assistance to Kabul, though it has never sent its military to support the Western troops there. India's assistance is mainly humanitarian help in reconstruction. It has over 140 community development programmes (US\$ 120 million), covering education, health etc.

Economy: Bilateral trade stood at US\$ 1.5 billion. The nations have a dedicated air freight corridor, launched in 2017. Afghanistan also exports to India through Chabahar port in Iran.

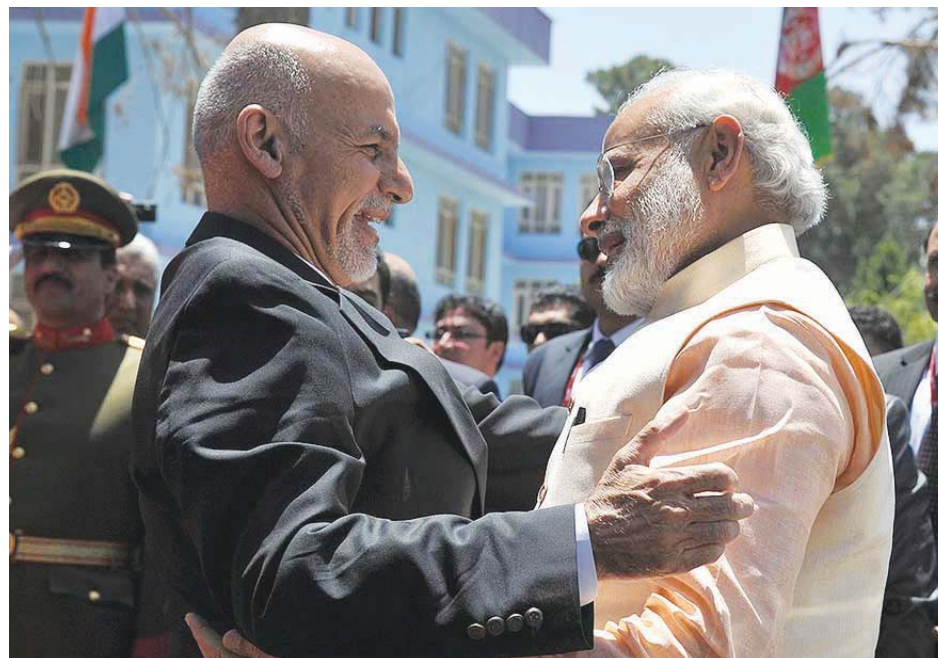
India-Sri Lanka: Ties Under Watch

Tamil Minorities: Even after the end of its civil war, Sri Lanka is loath to give its Tamil minorities all that was promised in the India-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. New Delhi keeps urging Colombo to settle the issue.

The China factor: Delhi is wary of the Dragon's growing influence in Sri Lanka. Memories of the time when Chinese submarines docked in Colombo during Mahinda Rajapaksa's last term not forgotten.

Fishing Disputes: Fishermen of the two countries drift into each other's waters, arrests are made and boats seized. A recurring problem not easily solved.

Economy: India announced line of credit worth US\$ 450 million in 2019 for infrastructure projects. Bilateral trade in 2018 amounted to US\$ 4.93 billion.



Why India Feels Cornered Than Never Before By A Hostile Neighbourhood

India's paternalistic attitude towards neighbouring countries generated resentment and created space for China

From the time India was scissored into its present shape out of a larger piece of brown parchment, the question has lingered: how exactly do we orient ourselves to what surrounds us? There were no easy answers. On the flanks were parts that were formerly India, severed by amputation; on the north was an indistinct set of fluid dotted lines cutting across icy swathes, where human populations and oxygen levels both dipped to nearly zero. Four major wars in the first quarter-century after freedom marked a legacy of flux: diplomacy had to forge its subtle tools in this fire. One possible diplomatic answer to that question came from a man whose natural instincts harked back to a pre-split state of unity. Not a surprise, for Inder Kumar Gujral (b: 1919) had lived through the Partition, and carried a strong residue of old Lahore inside him—along with the diction.

Through the decades, when he was ordinarily resident in Lutyens' Delhi, with his capital at IIC, even Gujral would not have imagined himself as the one on whom would fall the chance to deliver the 50th anniversary I-day address from Red Fort. The experiment with history was short-lived, but his 11-month stint as India's PM left behind a semi-formally enunciated way of being for the country: the Gujral Doctrine. Still relevant in the Modi era? Yes, of course. It's an interesting menu of what-if options in history. Gujral's tenure and his soft, unassuming persona may seem to belong to another epoch—the unilateral declaration of India's muscular nationalism of a year later, Pokhran-II, would certainly not have happened had he continued. Nor its consequences: Kargil, and a decade of heightened conflict. But his legacy also endured as the other pole of India's dichotomous foreign policy: in the strenuous peace-making of the Vajpayee-Manmohan years, the Lahore bus ride, the cricket diplomacy, an attempted détente in Kashmir. And with his 'Neighbourhood First' stance, what Prime Minister Narendra Modi came into office with was his own variation on that doctrine. He had essentially borrowed Gujral's idea—of paying greater attention to India's smaller neighbours,



nurturing relations within South Asia and beyond—and made it his own, with a few tweaks. He made a statement by inviting all SAARC leaders for his oath-taking in 2014. That August, he travelled to Nepal and punched all the right buttons in his speech to Nepal's Constituent Assembly—even Kathmandu's streets weren't immune to the excitement. Then, President Xi Jinping came calling in November and visited Ahmedabad, the PM's home town—the first of many meetings. Contrary to what pundits may have predicted, Modi even tried to make peace with Pakistan, stopping over in Lahore on his way home from Afghanistan to greet Nawaz Sharif on his birthday on Christmas Day in 2015. It worked well for a while; then the Uri terror attack put a stop to those attempts. There has been no turning back since. By now, a year into his second term, the Neighbourhood First policy itself seems a historical relic. This May 22, 2020, satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows a People's Liberation Army (PLA) base in Galwan valley along the Line of Actual Control. Chinese and Indian commanders have agreed to disengage their forces in the disputed area after a clash left 20 Indian soldiers dead. The commanders reached the agreement on June 22 at their first meeting since the June 15 confrontation. All the inroads China has been making into India's 'backyard' emanate here—and it's not just about the Chinese ships and

submarines that frequent the high seas. Take Xi's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) across Asia: an astonishing bid to create a modern Silk Road network where all the world's asphalt converges on Beijing. India is a lone big absentee; every other regional nation with the exception of Bhutan has signed up. Every country is in need of funds for infrastructure, and it's difficult to resist China's chequebook diplomacy. China now has a military base in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa—just like the US and old European powers. The latest flashpoint on India's periphery—the bloody faceoff in Ladakh—is an extension of this new harnessing of territory. A kind of Chinese lebensraum. No wonder, India's South Asian neighbours are watching the situation with interest—indeed, a touch of glee is not absent. The presence of China hands all of India's neighbours something substantial to leverage against what many of them perceive as a local bully—even if India has hardly exited the game. The Maldives had turned its back on New Delhi under Abdulla Yameen, welcoming China with open arms, but pulled back when the regime changed. In Colombo too, the Rajapaksa brothers are back in the saddle—President Gotabaya and PM Mahinda have struck all the right chords for now, but everyone knows the China card can always be brought out at critical moments. Even Dhaka has discovered a new bipolarity. Last week, China announced massive tariff exemptions to Bangladesh—on

an astounding 97 per cent of its products. Even that left a bad aftertaste in Dhaka after a Calcutta-based Bengali daily described it as "charity (khoyraati)", though the paper apologised on June 23. "Many are disappointed. This word is not acceptable to me," said foreign minister A.K. Abdul Momen—he stopped short of making a formal protest, using a more diplomatic tack. "India is indeed our biggest friend," he said, and affixed a qualifier, "India-China are both good friends, close neighbours... development partners". Islamabad, of course, has no need for as many niceties, nor does the exchange stay verbal. The LoC remains red hot. It has been so ever since Uri/Pulwama—firing is common and casualties routine. But the new ambidexterity developed by Bangladesh is matched—indeed, surpassed—only by Nepal. Last week, Kathmandu issued a new map which showed three contested areas—the Lipulekh Pass (which connects Kumaon to Tibet), Kalapani and Limpiyadhura, some 370 sq km altogether—as its own. After Nepal's parliament endorsed the new markings, India called on it to "refrain from unjustified cartographic assertion". Nepal has harked back to the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli signed with the East India Company to establish its claim to these slivers of land, located on the strategic India-China-Nepal trijunction. The Communist Party government of K.P. Sharma Oli is now sitting pretty and asking for foreign secretary-

level talks—a kind of brinkmanship that could scarcely have been imagined earlier. "Nepal has pushed itself into a corner by publishing the maps. Kalapani is in Indian territory, will they fight and take it from us?" asks former diplomat Gautam Bambawale. Asked whether Nepal would actually get together with China and Pakistan for a loose alliance against India, Kunda Dixit, editor, Nepali Times, retorts: "Not a chance. If Indian media keep talking of Nepal's generals and politicians tilting towards China, it may one day become a self-fulfilling prophecy. But ganging up is unlikely." Yet, a congruence is visible. The new map was triggered by India inaugurating the Lipulekh road last month, quite like how China resents India building roads, bridges and airstrips in border areas. The Ladakh faceoff has undoubtedly emboldened Kathmandu too. India is soft-peddling the issue, aware that much of this ultra-nationalism is domestic posturing. Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli needs to do—and indeed goes back to the wave of anger triggered by India's 2015 blockade. That was classic old-style India, acting on its 'natural sphere of influence'—strongly reminiscent of how a similar blunder by Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 had actually exacerbated anti-India sentiments, a fact the MEA's institutional memory should have alerted it to. When Nepal's new Republican Constitution was unveiled in 2015, New Delhi took the side of the disenchanted Madheshis, a linguistic-demographic continuum from eastern India. Nepal, which transported 80 per cent of its essential supplies through India, was hit hard. And Oli, PM then, vowed never to repeat the strategic mistake of depending on one country. He turned to China and wrapped up a string of deals. Beijing also promised a rail line from Tibet to Kathmandu. Soon after the blockade was lifted, Oli was ousted—he suspected an Indian hand. His re-election campaign in 2017 focused on memories of the blockade, and promised those days of suffering would never recur. A thumping majority ensued, and while he has repaired ties with New Delhi, China now has a new omnipresence in Kathmandu.

To Push Back China's Growing Belt And Road Initiative Will Be India's Main Challenge

China's recent provocations in Ladakh mark the latest manifestation of Beijing's growing clout in India's backyard. The current border crisis, which has plunged India-China relations to their lowest point in decades, will sharpen New Delhi's desire to push back against Beijing's deepening footprint in South Asia. Mustering the capacity to do so, however, will not be easy. The main accelerant of Beijing's growing presence in South Asia is its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—a mammoth transport corridor project that uses infrastructure investments to gain influence and access to markets and strategic spaces. In South Asia, BRI is most visible in Pakistan, where the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has become the project's most operationalised component. New Delhi opposes CPEC because it entrenches one bitter rival on the soil of another, but also because it is envisioned to pass through territory India claims as its own. And yet, BRI's tentacles extend far beyond Pakistan. Last year, a Chinese thinktank released a report that identifies three additional South Asia-focused parts: the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (an admittedly ambitious component, given its inclusion of a BRI-resistant India), the Trans-Himalaya Corridor (involving investments in Nepal), and a Maritime Silk Road initiative enveloping Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. Each part has made ample progress, though India has unsurprisingly not participated in BCIM.

All but two SAARC countries—Afghanistan and Bhutan—explicitly figure in China's BRI plans. China hopes to expand CPEC into Afghanistan if that nation ends its long-running war. It has invited Bhutan to join BRI. Factors aside from BRI further strengthen China's prospects in South Asia. The coronavirus pandemic has assailed many South Asian economies, which affords Beijing opportunities to step up financial assistance and gain more influence. Its recent announcement to grant tariff exemptions to 97 per cent of Bangladesh's China-bound exports is instructive. Political transitions have also been helpful; the Sri Lankan leadership that took office in November 2019



enjoys strong ties with Beijing. Not surprisingly, China is leveraging its foothold in South Asia to pressure and test India—including in areas where New Delhi has traditionally held sway. Witness the Doklam standoff, at the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction. Or, more recently, Nepal—where Beijing may well be leveraging its growing ties with Kathmandu to push it to take a hard line in its current border spat with India. Ladakh is just the latest—but arguably the boldest—attempt by Beijing to provoke New Delhi in its broader backyard. The good news for India is that China does face vulnerabilities. Prior to the pandemic, BRI states enmeshed in Beijing's 'debt-trap' diplomacy faced considerable economic risks from China's largesse. A 2018 Center for Global Development study found that five SAARC states—Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—faced a "quite high" risk of debt distress from new BRI-related funding. The catastrophic economic consequences of COVID-19 may make them more uneasy about taking on loans they will struggle to repay. Additionally, the Ladakh crisis, with its multiple Chinese incursions and brutal violence by PLA forces, reminds South Asian states Beijing's increasingly aggressive steps. Because of this and its poor initial handling of COVID-19, Beijing is suffering a major image problem. This may make some SAARC states wary about deeper cooperation with Beijing, given the reputational costs.

So there's an opportunity for New Delhi to push back against China in South Asia. It already has something to build on. Indeed, for all the talk of New Delhi's

struggles in its neighbourhood, it could be a lot worse. Nepal remains a key partner (India is its largest aggregate investor, with robust collaborations on infrastructure). Despite recent tensions with Dhaka over India's new citizenship law, India-Bangladesh ties are stronger than they were a decade ago. Afghanistan and Bhutan remain close friends. The relationship with Male has improved markedly since Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, a China critic, was elected president in April 2019. And Sri Lanka's new administration, despite past affinities with Beijing, has signalled its unwillingness to be overly dependent on China.

In effect, contrary to the claims of detractors in Islamabad, India is far from isolated in its neighbourhood. And yet, slowing China's march into India's backyard amounts to a tall order—and not just because of the depth of Beijing's clout and resources.

Consider just how favourable the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia are for China. It is one of the world's most disconnected and poorly integrated regions. Its infrastructure is notoriously poor and its main regional institution, SAARC, is ineffective. Thus, intraregional trade is modest. Enter China, which can mobilise quickly to deploy huge infrastructural assistance in short order. This isn't just something Beijing can do; because of BRI, it's a top strategic priority. Additionally, a disconnected region with a hobbled regional organisation and limited trade is not hardwired for robust diplomacy and cooperation. Rather, it complicates efforts by New Delhi to build goodwill and confidence

with its neighbours, and deprives it of forums to push back against the perception of some of its smaller neighbors that it acts like a bully.

To this end, India's best bet, at least initially, is to hold off on regional charm offensives and other diplomatic blitzes. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Instead, it should continue its longstanding military modernisation efforts, build on existing agreements and plans with its neighbours, and embrace newer regional institutions that don't suffer from the problems of SAARC. Energy and connectivity projects, under the aegis of BIMSTEC and its member states, offer a useful start. In recent years, India has concluded energy deals with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. There have also been discussions on an electricity-sharing arrangement with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. Indian efforts to push back against China's deepening influence in South Asia would benefit from US support. And from a strategic standpoint, Washington is certainly game. The Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy is all about balancing out China's power. Washington's free-falling relationship with Beijing, coupled with its rapidly growing partnership with New Delhi, give it added incentive to offer cooperation.

It's no coincidence that US leaders have been unusually public in their messaging on Ladakh—including comments from an influential Congressman and a senior State Department official that were deeply critical of China, as well as a tweet from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo offering condolences to India for

its fallen soldiers.

However, tactically speaking, one can't count on US assistance to counter China in South Asia. The Trump administration is focused laser-like on the pandemic, the sputtering US economy, and the election in November. Additionally, US attention to China's activities in Asia tends to be focused more on East and Southeast Asia—areas that are home to American treaty allies. Furthermore, outside of its partnership with New Delhi and its military presence in Afghanistan, Washington's track record and footprint in South Asia are relatively modest. And it can't hold a candle to the Chinese infrastructure projects that account for much of Beijing's imprint there. There's been talk in Washington in recent years about developing "a new Silk Road" in South Asia and other vague aspirations, but relatively little to show for it on the ground other than some rare concrete achievements like the US-backed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline.

Still, with the Ladakh crisis generating more talk of how India should more openly side with America, it's the right time to push for more US-India cooperation in South Asia. Indeed, South Asia now fits into Washington's geographic conception of the Indo-Pacific. Recall the comment made at this year's Raisina Dialogue by Matthew Pottinger, a senior White House official, that the Indo-Pacific stretches from "California to Kilimanjaro". Additionally, new US institutions can help hasten collaborations with India in the western Indo-Pacific. The BUILD Act, signed into law by President Trump in 2018, facilitates America's ability to deploy resources for overseas development projects through the formation of a new development agency known as the US International Development Finance Corporation.

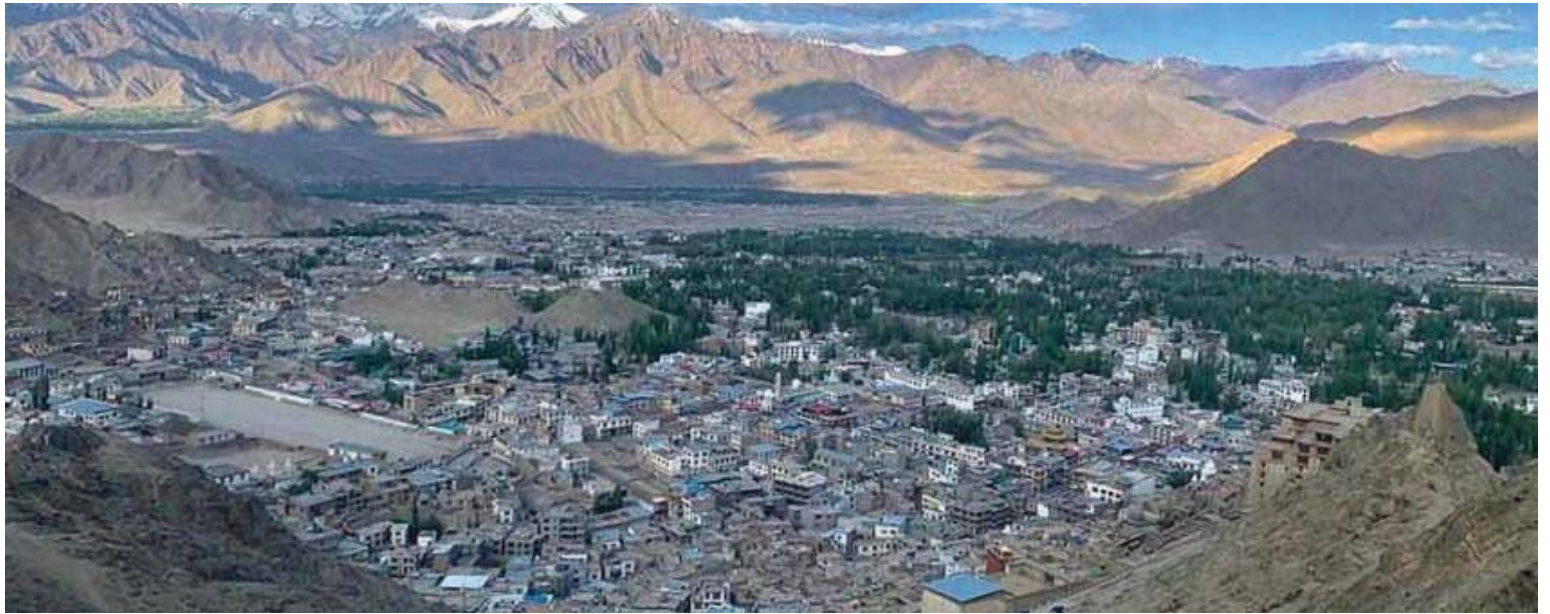
India-China rivalry is entering a potentially destabilising stage that will likely become an extended new normal. India will need to draw on domestic, regional, and international resources alike to reassert its clout against an emboldened nemesis that is increasingly projecting power in areas too close for New Delhi's comfort.

Chinese Tension Haunts Ladakh

Even As Valley Remains On The Boil

Kashmiris believe that the situation on the LAC will have an impact on valley and counter-insurgency operations

As the Indian Air Force jets hover over Leh, capital city of newly created Union territory Ladakh, there is deafening silence on the ground in the cold desert. Amid the roar of fighter jets and unprecedented security build up in Ladakh, the police are not allowing anyone to move in the streets of Leh citing COVID-19 restrictions. There has been a steep rise in coronavirus cases in Ladakh over the past one week, forcing the government to resume the lockdown. However, the border tension



following deadly clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers on June 9 looks more worrisome than the pandemic.

“China carries out aggressive acts every year, but they have crossed all limits this time,” says a shopkeeper in the main market of Leh. Many politicians in the city argue that the Chinese will not stop here if they are not pushed back. “They have taken our cultivated land, our grazing land, and if they are not stopped, it is not going to end,” warns Rigzin Spalbar, former chairman of the Ladakh Hill Development Council. Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal asks, “If we know ‘Azad Jammu Kashmir’ as Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), why not to call Aksai Chin ‘China-occupied Aksai Chin’?”

In contrast to the silence on the roads in Ladakh, there has been no pause in the almost-daily encounters in the Kashmir valley, leading to the killings of young militants, some of whom took up arms barely a month ago or even later. When the government snaps the internet connection in a district, people there come to know that encounters are about to take place. These days, the internet is shut down almost every morning in the south Kashmir districts of Shopian, Kulgam

and Pulwama. On June 21, internet connection was snapped and three militants—all new recruits—were killed in the heart of Srinagar’s old city, taking the total number of militants slain this year to 106. Over 70 of them were killed during the COVID-19 lockdown. After the June 21 encounter, the police claimed to have recovered an AK-47 rifle and two pistols.

Many here believe that regardless of how the situation plays out on the LAC, it will have an impact on Kashmir and counter-insurgency operations. When former CM Omar Abdullah tweeted asking people not to look towards Beijing and cited the plight of the Uyghurs in China, he faced such a backlash that he deactivated his Twitter account. “There was rage against Omar as he didn’t gauge the mood in Kashmir,” says a member of a mainstream political party. “With the BJP government working for demographic change in J&K by enacting law after law, you cannot browbeat Kashmiris by bringing up the Uyghurs. India’s Kashmir record is so terrible and inhumane that even citing the Uyghur example is seen as an affront here and Omar realised it within half an hour of his comment.”

Police, however, see

social media as a challenge. “The major threat and challenge is from the radicalisation and instigation of people through social media. We can call it ‘virtual militancy,’” says Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar. “In December 2019, at least 252 militants were active in Kashmir, and now the number has come down to 100-200. The police don’t go by numbers; it is their job to kill militants wherever they get a lead about their presence.”

Nearly half (51) of the militants killed this year were from Hizbul Mujahideen. Since the killing of Hizbul’s longest-serving operational commander, Riyaz Naikoo, on May 6 in Beighpora village of Pulwama, the largest Pakistan-backed insurgent organisation in Kashmir has been taking a hit almost every day. On May 20, Hizbul divisional commander Junaid Sehraie—son of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chief Mohammed Ashraf Sehraie—was killed in Fateh Kadal area of Srinagar along with other two militants. Nineteen houses were burned down during the operation and three civilians, including a child, died when a shell left behind at the site exploded later. “It is true that the Hizbul is bearing the brunt of the ongoing counter-insurgency operations,” says a senior police officer based in south Kashmir. “And it looks like the organisation is facing a shortage of weapons too. In

some encounters, only pistols are recovered. In others, only one gun is recovered from three or four slain militants. The absence of civilian protests and civilian killings during the encounters this year also marks them as different from previous ones.” According to the officer, Jaish-e-Mohammed and the newly formed The Resistance Front (TRF) now pose the biggest challenge to government forces. “The number of foreign militants killed this year is less than before. When a foreign militant from Jaish escapes during an operation and leaves behind a US-made M-4 carbine, you realise where the real challenge comes from. Emergence of the TRF is another signal that foreign militants are now going to take centre stage,” he adds.

IGP Kumar, however, says he doesn’t see any difference among various militant groups as all of them work together in Kashmir. According to official figures, around 50 locals have joined militancy so far this year—145 had joined in 2019 and 220 in 2018. Instead of handing over the bodies of militants to their families, government forces are taking them to Baramulla or Sonmarg in north Kashmir for quiet burials. Relatives of militants often visit the graveyards in Sonmarg and

Baramulla to look for the graves of their kin. How this emotionally sensitive issue plays out in future has to be seen. Analysts in Kashmir believe the killing of militants won’t wipe out militancy from the region, and that the present situation only indicates government forces have an upper hand at the moment.

While all eyes on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir has been witnessing intense shelling for the past few weeks. An Indian soldier was killed on the morning of June 22 as the armies of India and Pakistan exchanged heavy fire in the Nowshera sector of Rajouri district in Jammu. A couple of days earlier, five civilians had been wounded due to shelling at a village in the strategic Haji Peer sector in north Kashmir’s Uri, around 100 km north of Srinagar. Earlier in June, at least six civilians had been injured and over a dozen houses damaged at Nambla village of Uri. “One of the shells fell near the Uri police station,” says a Uri resident. Sources say intense shelling is taking place in areas along the LoC where it had not been reported earlier. In PoK, journalists have reported five deaths in the past week due to cross-LoC shelling.



The lasting gift of the Fourth of July

On the Fourth of July, Americans come together to celebrate their independence and their revolutionary experiment in democracy. This year, many voices believe that the experiment is failing.

A recent Gallup poll shows that national pride in the United States is at a record low. Our country's increasing division and the unwillingness by some to participate in a healthy civilized debate and listen to dissenting opinions is fostering greater fissures.

In the face of social unrest, economic distress, and the ongoing pandemic, it is perhaps not surprising that Americans have lost some faith in their institutions and in their national story. Another CBS News poll found that 67% of Americans consider the country is on the "wrong track."

Mindless pride should always be questioned, but mindless rejection is also a danger. These trends occur against a backdrop of low achievement in civics and history understanding, which exacerbates the problem of governance in this country. Americans are expected to govern themselves, but we are neglecting to provide our citizens with the foundations to uphold these responsibilities, our shared values as a nation, and how this country has evolved over time. Nations need to have symbols, creeds and stories that allow different individuals to imagine a shared sense of purpose and interest. Without them, it is hard to find common ground. People who do not understand why they have the beliefs that they have are often unable to have a constructive conversation about the difficult issues that democracies need to fix collectively.

The Fourth of July should be a day for Americans to celebrate the common values that spring from the origin of our nation. When the American patriots separated from Great Britain, they famously declared their reasons, noting

that "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" required an explicit statement. The first part of the Declaration would enshrine two powerful principles that have come to define the fundamental values of the American nation. The first was a claim that governments must be responsive to the consent of the governed, and the second was an assertion that all men are created equal, with rights that are inalienable and should be protected.

These two concepts created the cornerstone of American liberty, and the justification for American democracy. They have powerfully shaped American values and identity — but it did not have to be that way.

Earlier in 1776, William Henry Drayton, a patriot from South Carolina, wrote a declaration of independence from Great Britain that had similar grievances against the crown — the same complaints about the tyranny of the British — but did not use any of the phrases regarding popular consent or the equality of rights for the people. Instead, he used a more conservative argument, which emphasized that the king had abdicated his responsibilities to his subjects in the colonies, and therefore the colonies were allowed to establish their own governments.

Without an emphasis on popular sovereignty and equal rights, it would have been a very different declaration indeed. Without the creed of liberty, the document would not have been so significant, and would not have contained the transformational fuel that powers the aspirational values of our nation.

But our Declaration of Independence did argue that all men are created equal and

that governments need to respect fundamental rights and represent the consent of the people. And so, Americans immediately seized upon these concepts to reshape the world around them.

Despite the limitations of the right to vote for poor men, for women, the continued existence of slavery and limitations on the civil rights of African Americans in the moment of our independence, the powerful rhetoric of equality and consent had a transformative impact.

As early as 1780, language similar to that of equality in the declaration was used to create the first gradual law of manumission in Pennsylvania, which would end slavery in a generation. Language similar to the Declaration of Independence was used to end slavery in a judicial argument in Massachusetts in 1782, as well as other northern states — the first large scale emancipations in modern history.

Poor men throughout the nation would use the language of equality and popular sovereignty to claim equal access to vote during the founding era. Equal rights language would bring down the monopoly on religious truth, long controlled by the state in the Eurocentric world, and guarantee a belief in the freedom of conscience of all people in the US. Immigrants would use the Declaration to claim equal treatment and access to citizenship, and therefore representation. It would be used to justify the idea of the legitimacy of an opposition party against elected majorities, and it would be used to protect the rights of individuals in the Constitution, as well as the state constitutions, which came to define American citizenship.

Abraham Lincoln would use the language in his Gettysburg Address in 1863 to remind a shattered country that the nation was "conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," and that the fight in the Civil War would help see whether these assertions could endure.

Women would use the Declaration of Independence to demand equal laws and the right to vote. Unions would use it to organize labor against capital. The American people would use it to navigate between the charms of fascism and communism when our systems seemed to be failing. Abolitionists would use it to attack the institution of slavery and Fredrick Douglass and Martin Luther King, and many others, would use it to point out the hypocrisy of white citizenship in the face of continued black oppression. And we still use these principles to measure the freedom of other nations, whether or not we decide to shape our foreign policy to our values. George Washington, as he became the first president of this new nation, with such grand ideals, declared that it was to be "a great experiment in human happiness." He also reminded the founding generation that "it is yet to be decided, whether the Revolution must ultimately be considered as a blessing or a curse: a blessing or a curse, not to the present age alone, for with our fate will the destiny of unborn Millions be involved." The founding generation did not make a perfect country. In many ways, they failed to live up to their powerful vision of liberty. Nevertheless, they gave us our founding aspirations and institutional inheritance that we still rely upon to solve our problems.

Future of News What May Save India's Flailing Print Journalism In Digital Age

This business model, termed the advertiser-revenue model of news, has been the dominant operational model for newspapers over the last few decades. However, as readers shift from the newspaper to the webpage, the sustainability of this model has begun crumbling.



advertising grew at a rate of 8%, while digital advertising grew by 38% (The Future: Now Streaming, FICCI-KPMG Report, 2016). Projections about the near future predict that digital advertising is expected to grow at a rate of around 27% in the coming few years, while print advertising is projected to grow at a relatively meagre 3% (Digital Advertising in India 2020, Dentsu Aegis Network, 2020). When these projections are combined with the slowing growth in the readership of print news, it presents a bleak outlook for the commercial future of print news.

At the same time, news organisations have struggled to benefit from the shift towards digital advertising. The process of digital advertising relies heavily on 'advertising platforms' – who operate as middlemen between advertisers and publishers of news. Over the previous decade, these advertising platforms have grown in power, with reports indicating that the market is primarily dominated by two players – Google and Facebook. The presence of these platforms as 'unavoidable trading partners' for most news publishers has diminished their ability to negotiate for better returns from the platforms. While Google has recently made some concessions in respect of revenue-sharing with news publishers in some countries, the advertiser-revenue model of news has not proved that it can succeed for newspapers in the digital age. The rising trend of paywalls and subscription models is perhaps the strongest evidence of the failure of the digital advertiser-revenue model.

The news that's fit to print: Sustaining credible journalism

There are larger consequences which follow from the failing business model of traditional print news. Print newsrooms have long been hailed as the primary sites for credible journalism, who employ the largest number of professional journalists. The diminishing influence of the print news industry also points to the diminishing influence of professional editors in deciding the news 'diet' of their readers. When the primary mode in which the news reaches its audience is through their social media news feeds, the algorithm starts acting as the editor. Unlike the front page, which is curated by

professionally trained and accountable journalists, the top stories are decided by the algorithm's ranking of the news which receive the most hits. Consequently, there is a propensity to prioritise issues which drive engagement on social media, which may often come at the cost of more sombre, public-interest reporting.

It is, of course, attractive to say that the future is inevitable, and print will eventually be a victim of the vicissitudes of time. This perspective, however, misconstrues the emphasis of the present moment. The question is not so much of holding on to the past and preserving the status of incumbents, but of ensuring that credible journalism can transition into the future in a sustainable manner. It is in ensuring this transition that the law has a role to play.

Many would be quick to point out that this seems like a business problem, and perhaps not a 'legal' one. They would be ignorant of the law's commitment to ensure a vibrant environment for the press. Several constitutional cases in India have recognised that part of the Government's constitutional mandate is to ensure sustainable journalism. This is not limited merely to preserving the right of newspapers to say 'what' they want to say, but also of ensuring that they 'can' say what they want to. The constitutional mandate, on a close reading of these judgments, is not limited to preserving the editorial freedom of the press, but also to ensure that the business of the press is not so unsustainable that it reduces the volume of circulation of newspapers, the number of newspapers in the market and competition amongst newspapers. A harsh business environment for the press directly undermines a reader's right to be informed. In this context, the law does not only respond to the market but can also be used to shape market conditions to achieve beneficial social ends – which includes the preservation of credible journalism. This constitutional mandate must be pressed into action in order to ensure that credible journalism can survive in the face of an overwhelming digital transformation.

The winds of change: Towards legal reform

There are various ways in which

legal reform can help structure these market conditions to achieve the greatest public interest. Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy's report on the "The Future of News in India" examines avenues of such reform and proposes the way forward to sustain credible print journalism in India. The report develops a roadmap of legal reform based on an analysis of the constitutional values that should be advanced in the development of press laws.

Examining the need to orient the environment of digital news to the public good, the report highlights the potentially dominant position of online advertising platforms and argues that this issue falls squarely within the remit of the Competition Commission of India. Further, the Report argues that comprehensive regulations about the online distribution of news can ensure that user's news feeds feature credible sources of news, and that readers are able to tell apart misinformation and credible news.

Significantly, the role of the Department of Audio-Visual Promotion (DAVP), a department under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which is responsible for channelling government advertisements to newspapers, assumes great importance considering the fall in commercial advertising. The DAVP appears to be suffering from a serious number of operational inefficiencies and has a long history of bureaucratic control, questionable allocation practices and ineffective transparency mechanisms. The report highlights the need for institutional reform of the DAVP to equitably channel state support to the print news industry. These, and other similar areas of reform as outlined in the report, must be a priority for the Government to ensure sustainable journalism.

Last year, a draft bill called the Registration of Press and Periodicals Bill, 2019, was circulated by the Government, with the stated objective of reforming press regulation in India. Any policy reform considered to sustain news for the public good must be consultative and inclusive. Thus, it is imperative that this reform be carried out through open and consultative processes, which involve journalists, the news industry and civil society in an effort to save news from falling victim to the sands of time.

By any reasonable measure, the print news industry lies in dire straits. The financial shock of the Covid-19 crisis has brought this trend to a precarious tipping point. The last few months have seen several reports of media houses laying off their journalists, cutting their salaries and benefits and even shutting down entire editions of their papers. This is not a crisis limited to India, as is evidenced by similar decisions being made in newsrooms across the world. It is also not a crisis that has an end in sight. Spectators of the industry unanimously express a pessimistic outlook about the future of print news, and it is easy to see why. In a world of mobile applications and web pages, the physical newspaper looks like a relic of a different age.

Print news is a predictable victim of the technological transformation of our society. The internet brings down the costs of producing and distributing information. The penetration of smartphones and 4G internet across the country signals that the days of the newspaper stand might be over. Instant access to an unlimited selection of news content for free may have seemed like a pipe dream twenty years ago, but the promise of the Internet points to this utopia. Yet, all is not well online. With traditional revenue streams from print advertising slowing down, news organisations have naturally moved to monetise their digital editions, with paywalls slowly becoming the norm for online versions of newspapers as well. A world of pay-walled news, where only those who can afford hefty monthly subscriptions are able to read credible accounts of current events seems like a cheap parody of the promise of the Internet.

The answer to optimising the news environment clearly seems more complex than just to 'move

everything online'. There is a deep malaise at play in the print news industry, and its business models have found themselves flailing in a world which is increasingly more comfortable with tossing the newspaper aside. To break down this issue, we must ask a few questions: what are the causes and consequences of the current state of the print news industry? Why is it necessary to save this industry? What would a solution potentially look like?

The sands of time: Print news in a digital age

In order to understand how the print news industry arrived at its current predicament, it is important to understand the dynamics that undergird their enterprise. Most newspapers cost around Rs. 15-20 to produce, while they are sold for prices around Rs. 1.5-4 (The Indian Media Business, Vanita Kohli-Khandekar, 2013). The shortfall is made up by advertising revenue that a newspaper generates. Effectively, advertising revenue cross-subsidises the production costs of a newspaper. This business model, termed the advertiser-revenue model of news, has been the dominant operational model for newspapers over the last few decades. However, as readers shift from the newspaper to the webpage, the sustainability of this model has begun crumbling.

Advertisers tend to follow eyeballs. The rise of digital news, with its ability to target demographics of readers in a personalised manner on social media platforms, offers a more attractive proposition to most advertisers who have shifted the focus of their advertising budgets towards digital advertising. This is a trend that was set in motion a few years ago and has only gotten stronger. For example, in the period from 2014 to 2015, print media

The fashion labels whose clothes are made by prisoners

The agile hands of men who once made a living as pickpockets and robbers have been given another task in Peru's largest prison. By cutting, sewing and printing clothes they are able to earn money to send to their families on the outside. Buzzing sewing machines add to the cacophony of sound at San Pedro de Lurigancho men's prison in central Lima, the capital of Peru. Around 30 prisoners are in the workshop, making printed t-shirts and other items of clothing for Peruvian fashion brand Pieta.



The noise makes it impossible for the men to talk to each other without shouting. But they are used to the commotion - the prison is home to 10,000 inmates, even though it was only built for 2,000. Carlos Arcel, 51, is fashioning sweaters from llama wool. With a pile of the black fabric next to him, he works the sewing machine so quickly that the fringes flutter. He can earn up to 400 sol (\$113; £92) per week, sending the money to his family, which includes his daughter Igen. Working for Thomas has made my heart happy," he says. The Thomas in question is Frenchman Thomas Jacob, the owner and founder of Pieta.

A former fabric buyer for French fashion house Chanel, he was inspired to set up the Lima-based business back in 2012, following a visit to San Pedro prison. Thomas, who had been living and working in Peru, went with a friend who was teaching some of the prisoners French. "Some of the interns told me that they knew how to sew, weave and print, but that they didn't get to use that knowledge," says Mr Jacob, 33.

"I realised that there was potential to do something for these people, so I decided to start a clothing brand that would be designed, produced and distributed from prison." Today the business has around 50 workers across three Peruvian jails, two male and one female, and makes around 1,000 garments a week. A not-for-profit enterprise, the prisoners earn a commission from the sale of each item they make. Those

that get involved need not have any prior experience of clothing manufacturing, and the crimes for which they are serving their sentences range from petty theft to murder.

Pieta now has three stores in Lima, but most of the clothes - which since the coronavirus outbreak include face masks - are sold via its website. It gets most of its international orders from Australia, the US, and other countries in South America. The prisons are paid equivalent to the Peruvian minimum wage, but Mr Jacob says that he did not base production in the jails to save money. "The textile industry in Peru is quite well developed, and because we have a fairly large production, we could reduce our costs significantly if we moved outside the prison," he says.

"But I don't want to exploit people and make them

feel bad. We are a social project, and it would not serve any purpose if we moved the production." Working for Pieta also helps prisoners to reduce their sentences, as it enables them to afford to sign up to academic courses. Doing this study results in their prison time being cut by authorities.

"My sentence is five years long, but you can get out faster if you study for at least two years," says Daniel Rojas Palacios, 25. He has been working for Pieta for a few months. In addition to providing for his young daughter on the outside, he is using the money to pay to study textile design. "The course costs, and that's why I have to work a lot," he adds. Peru is not the only country that lets fashion companies locate their textile production inside prison. In Finland, a business called Papillon has been doing the

same as Pieta since 2009." In addition to providing reasonable work and rehabilitation projects in prisons, with the aim of activating inmates, we aim to make our products in the most sustainable way possible," says Papillon chief executive Teemu Ruotsalainen. Another fashion label that makes its clothes behind bars is Danish brand Carcel, which produces clothes in two women's prisons, one in Thailand, and the other in Peru. Founder Veronica D'Souza says she was inspired after visiting a women's jail in Kenya. "The guards at the prison said that the worst thing for the women is to do nothing. It causes depression."

Florian Irminger, chief executive of campaigning group Penal Reform International, says his

organisation is in favour of prisoners being able to work for companies, provided that they are not being exploited. We believe in rehabilitation efforts of prisoners, including through prison labour that is significant, and provided that it is based on a freely agreed upon contract by the prisoner," he says. "Too often, prison labour, however, is seen as cheap labour. Labour in prison should be an opportunity for the prisoner to contribute to the development of the community. Work should allow to improve the conditions

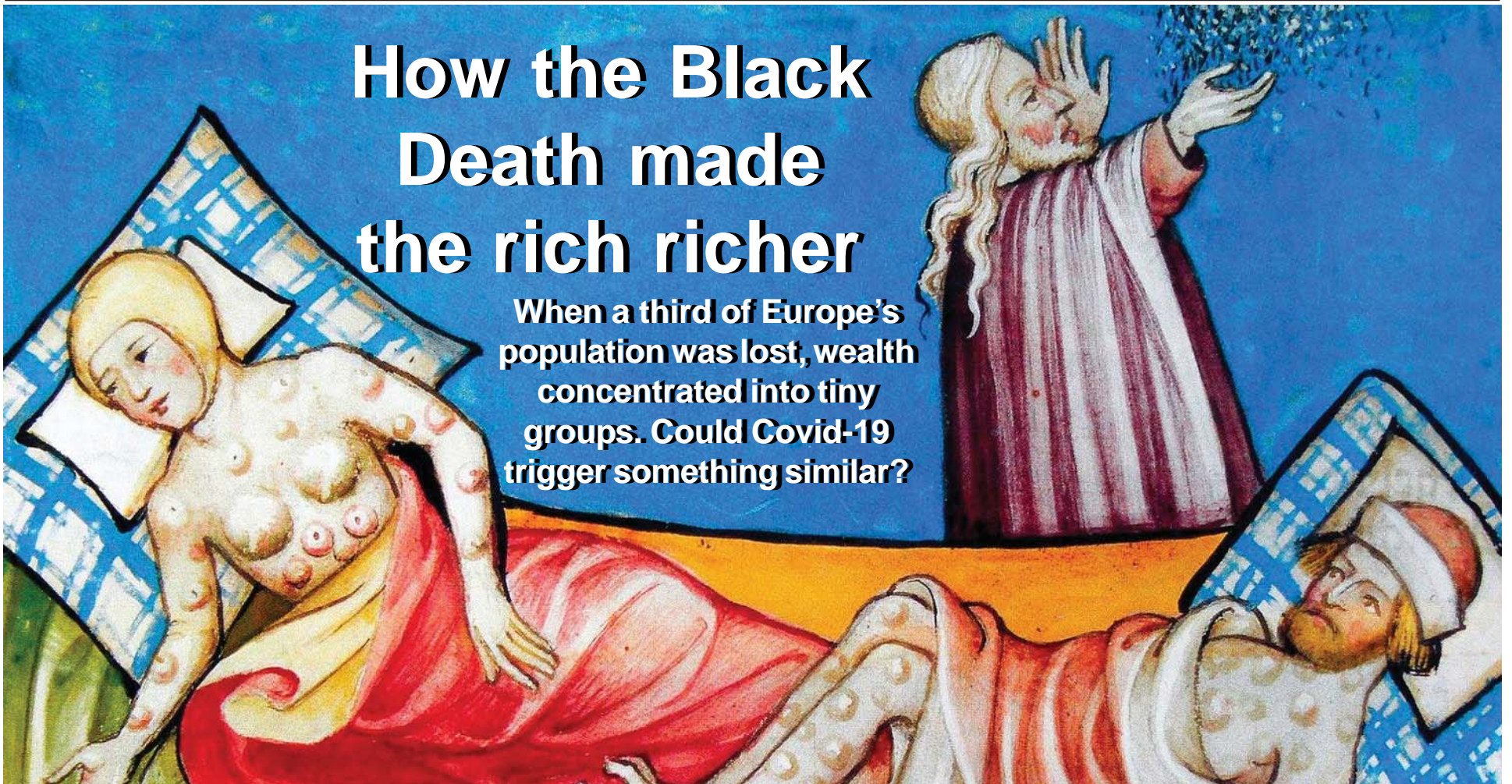
in which prisoners live, especially in contexts of low and middle-income countries. Finally, work in prison must have a long-term contribution to the prisoner's life, for example through training and work certificates." Back in Peru, Mr Jacob says the prisons involved in Pieta are "happy to have something to do". The company takes its name from Michelangelo's sculpture of Mary holding a lifeless Jesus after he being taken down from the cross. Mr Jacob says he chose the name, which in English means "pity" or "compassion", as the sculpture represents resurrection.

"The motivation of the prisoners is to make money, and learn a profession, and with the money they can shorten their prison time," he says. "When they come out we have hopefully also changed their attitude."



How the Black Death made the rich richer

When a third of Europe's population was lost, wealth concentrated into tiny groups. Could Covid-19 trigger something similar?



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In June 1348, people in England began reporting mysterious symptoms. They started off as mild and vague: headaches, aches, and nausea. This was followed by painful black lumps, or buboes, growing in the armpits and groin, which gave the disease its name: bubonic plague. The last stage was a high fever, and then death.

Originating in Central Asia, soldiers and caravans had brought bubonic plague – *Yersinia pestis*, a bacterium carried on fleas that lived on rats – to ports on the Black Sea. The highly commercialised world of the Mediterranean ensured the plague's swift transfer on merchant ships to Italy, and then across Europe. The Black Death killed between a third and a half of the population of Europe and the Near East.

This huge number of deaths was accompanied by general economic devastation. With a third of the workforce dead, the crops could not be harvested and communities fell apart. One in ten villages in England (and in Tuscany and other regions) were lost and never re-founded. Houses fell into the ground and were covered by grass and earth, leaving only the church behind. If you ever see a church or chapel all alone in a field, you are probably looking at the last remains of one of Europe's lost villages.

The traumatic experience of the Black Death, which killed perhaps 80% of those who caught it, drove many people to write in an attempt to make sense of what they had

lived through. In Aberdeen, John of Fordun, a Scottish chronicler, recorded that:

This sickness befell people everywhere, but especially the middling and lower classes, rarely the great. It generated such horror that children did not dare to visit their dying parents, nor parents their children, but fled for fear of contagion as if from leprosy or a serpent. Although the death rate from Covid-19 is far lower than that of the Black Death, the economic fallout has been severe due to the globalised, highly-integrated nature of modern economies. Add to this our highly mobile populations today and coronavirus, unlike the plague, has spread across the globe in a matter of months, not years.

While the Black Death resulted in short term economic damage, the longer-term consequences were less obvious. Before the plague erupted, several centuries of population growth had produced a labour surplus, which was abruptly replaced with a labour shortage when many serfs and free peasants died. Historians have argued that this labour shortage allowed those peasants that survived the pandemic to demand better pay or to seek employment elsewhere. Despite government resistance, serfdom and the feudal system itself were ultimately eroded.

But another less often remarked consequence of the Black Death was the rise of wealthy entrepreneurs and business-government links. Although the Black Death caused short-term losses for Europe's largest companies, in the long term, they concentrated their assets and

gained a greater share of the market and influence with governments. This has strong parallels with the current situation in many countries across the world. While small companies rely upon government support to prevent them collapsing, many others – mainly the much larger ones involved in home delivery – are profiting handsomely from the new trading conditions.

The mid-14th Century economy is too removed from the size, speed, and interconnectedness of the modern market to give exact comparisons. But we can certainly see parallels with the way that the Black Death strengthened the power of the state and accelerated the domination of key markets by a handful of mega-corporations.

Black Death business

The sudden loss of at least a third of Europe's population didn't lead to an even redistribution of wealth for everyone else. Instead, people responded to the devastation by keeping money within the family. Wills became highly specific and wealthy businessmen, in particular, went to great lengths to ensure that their patrimony was no longer divided up after death, replacing the previous tendency to leave a third of all their resources to charity. Their descendants benefited from a continued concentration of capital into a smaller and smaller number of hands.

At the same time, the decline of feudalism and the rise of a wage-based economy following peasant demands for better labour conditions benefited urban elites. Being paid in cash, rather than in kind (in the granting of privileges such as the right to collect

firewood), meant that peasants had more money to spend in towns.

This concentration of wealth greatly accelerated a pre-existing trend: the emergence of merchant entrepreneurs who combined trade in goods with their production on a scale only available to those with significant sums of capital. For example, silk, once imported from Asia and Byzantium, was now being produced in Europe. Wealthy Italian merchants began to open silk and cloth workshops. These entrepreneurs were uniquely positioned to respond to the sudden labour shortage caused by the Black Death. Unlike independent weavers, who lacked the capital, and unlike aristocrats, whose wealth was locked up in land, urban entrepreneurs were able to use their liquid capital to invest in new technologies, compensating for the loss of workers with machines.

In southern Germany, which became one of Europe's most commercialised areas in the late 14th and 15th Centuries, companies such as the Welser (which later ran Venezuela as a private colony) combined growing flax with owning the looms on which workers span that flax into linen cloth, which the Welser then sold. The trend of the post-Black Death 14th and 15th Centuries was a concentration of resources – capital, skills, and infrastructure – into the hands of a small number of corporations.

The age of Amazon

Rolling forward to the present, there are some clear similarities. Certain large organisations have stepped up to the opportunities provided by Covid-19. In many

countries across the world, entire ecologies of small restaurants, pubs and shops have suddenly been closed down. The market for food, general retail and entertainment has gone online, and cash has pretty much disappeared.

The percentage of calories that restaurants provided has had to be rerouted through supermarkets, and much of this supply has now been taken up by supermarket chains. They have plenty of large properties and lots of staff, with the HR capacity to recruit more rapidly, and there are many underemployed people who now want jobs. They also have warehouses, trucks and complex logistics capacity.

The other big winner has been the giants of online retail – such as Amazon, who run a "Prime Pantry" service in the US, India and many European countries. High street shops have been suffering from price and convenience competition from the internet for years, and bankruptcies are regular news. Now, much "non-essential" retail space is closed, and our desires have been re-rerouted through Amazon, eBay, Argos, Screwfix and others. There has been a clear spike in online shopping, and retail analysts are wondering whether this is a decisive move into the virtual world, and the further dominance of big corporations. Keeping us distracted as we wait at home for our parcels is the streaming entertainment industry – a market sector which is dominated by big corporations including Netflix, Amazon Prime (again), Disney and others.

FTC Sends Refunds to People who lost Money to Work-From-Home Scheme

The Federal Trade Commission is sending full refunds totaling more than \$284,000 to people who lost money to a scheme that used misleading spam emails to lure consumers into buying work-from-home services. The FTC alleged that Effen Ads, LLC and its owners worked with an affiliate marketing network called W4 LLC to promote a work-from-home scheme by sending bulk unsolicited email, or spam, to consumers. The emails included "from" lines that falsely claimed they were coming from news organizations like CNN or Fox News, and "subject" lines that falsely suggested the

opportunity was endorsed by celebrities such as investor Warren Buffett and personal finance expert Suze Orman.

The emails linked to websites displaying fake news stories and false celebrity endorsements, according to the complaint. Consumers who clicked on the links were routed to websites pitching the Effen Ads' work-from-home schemes. The schemes operated under numerous brand names such as Secure Home Profits, Paydays At Home, Home Cashflow Club, Home Cash Code, Home Payday Center, Snap Web Profits, Complete Profit Code, Global

Cashflow Center, Global Payday System, Your Income Gateway, Home Payday Club, Web Payday Center, and Home Payday Vault. As part of their settlement with the FTC, the owners of Effen Ads and W4 LLC agreed to pay more than \$1.4 million. Today's distribution provides refunds to those who were deceived as part of Effen Ads' work-from-home scheme. The remaining funds will be used to provide refunds to people whose personal information was sold by Effen Ads to Vision Solution Marketing, a telemarketing firm that peddled allegedly bogus business opportunities and agreed to a

separate settlement with the FTC. The FTC is sending \$97 each to 2,931 people who lost money to the Effen Ads scheme. Most recipients will get their refunds via PayPal, but those who receive checks should deposit or cash their checks within 90 days, as indicated on the check. The FTC never requires people to pay money or provide account information to cash a refund check. If recipients have questions about the refunds, they should contact the FTC's refund administrator, Rust Consulting, Inc., 1-866-317-7915. Consumers can find a state-by-state breakdown of FTC refunds on the FTC's refund data dashboards.

Data Center Company Settles FTC Privacy Shield Case

An operator of secure data centers has settled Federal Trade Commission allegations that it misled consumers about its participation in the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield framework and failed to adhere to the program's requirements before and after allowing its certification to lapse. As part of the proposed settlement, NTT Global Data Centers, Inc., formerly known as RagingWire Data Centers, Inc. (RagingWire), must hire a third-party assessor to verify that it is adhering to its Privacy Shield promises if it plans to

participate in the framework. The Privacy Shield framework allows participants to transfer data from European Union countries to the U.S. in compliance with EU law.

In a complaint filed in November 2019, the FTC alleged that, between January 2017 and October 2018, RagingWire claimed in its online privacy policy and marketing materials that the company participated in the Privacy Shield framework and complied with the program's requirements. In fact, the FTC alleged, the company's certification lapsed in January 2018

and it failed to comply with certain Privacy Shield requirements while it was a participant in the program. The FTC also alleged that, upon allowing its certification to lapse, RagingWire failed to take the necessary steps to confirm that it would comply with its continuing obligations relating to data received pursuant to the framework. The proposed settlement also prohibits the company from misrepresenting its participation in the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield framework, any other privacy or data security program sponsored by the government, or

any self-regulatory or standard-setting organization. If its certification of participation in the Privacy Shield framework lapses in the future, the company also must continue to apply the Privacy Shield protections to personal information it collected while participating in the program, or return or delete the information. After counsel for the Commission reached a settlement agreement with the company on April 16, 2020, the matter was withdrawn from administrative litigation for the purpose of allowing the Commission to consider the consent agreement.

CBI searches premises of MIAL, GVK in Rs 805 crore scam

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has conducted searches in Mumbai and Hyderabad in connection with the Rs 805 crore scam involving GVK Group and Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL)

chairman of the GVK Group of Companies, GV Sanjay Reddy, Managing Director of the Mumbai International Airport Limited, officials of the Airport Authority of India (AAI) and nine other private firms on the

allegations of irregularities to the tune of Rs 805 crore. The CBI's case is on the basis of source-based information. It has been alleged that over Rs 805 crore was siphoned off by the accused, resulting in a loss to the public exchequer between 2012-2018. According to FIR, Mumbai International Airport Ltd, GVK Airport



and other private firms.

India Today TV has learnt that the searches that lasted till Wednesday night, were conducted at the official premises linked to GVK Group of Companies, GVK Reddy and MIAL. The federal probe agency has seized incriminating documents during the searches pertaining to the case, sources said. The agency has filed an FIR against G Venkata Krishna Reddy,

Holdings Limited, Airport Authority India (AAI) and few other foreign firms formed a Joint Venture Company (JVC) in which GVK owned 50.5 per cent of the shares, while AAI had 26 per cent.

As per the agreement signed between AAI and MIAL in 2006, MIAL had the responsibility to run the Mumbai airport for which AAI had to share 38.7 per cent of their revenue as annual fees with MIAL.

YES Bank fraud: Rana Kapoor given interim protection from arrest till July 11

Mumbai: The special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court in Mumbai on Thursday granted protection to Rana Kapoor, YES Bank's co-founder, former managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO), from arrest by CBI until July 11 in two cases registered against him in connection with the bank's fraud case. Earlier in March, CBI had registered two cases against Kapoor.

One first information report (FIR) had alleged that the bankrupt YES Bank had invested Rs 3,700 crore in short-term debentures of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL) between April and June, 2018. In lieu, Kapoor was allegedly paid "kickbacks" to the tune of Rs 600 crore by DHFL promoter, Kapil Wadhawan. DHFL had sanctioned a loan to DoIT Urban Ventures (India) Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of RAB Enterprises in which Kapoor's wife Bindu is a director and 100% shareholder, the CBI

had stated in its FIR. Kapoor's three daughters -- Rakhee Kapoor Tandon, Roshni Kapoor and Radha Kapoor -- are also 100% shareholders in DoIT Urban Ventures (India) Pvt Ltd. It is on the basis of the CBI case that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) began its probe into allegations of money laundering by Kapoor and subsequently arrested him in early March. In the second case, CBI alleged that Kapoor and his wife bought a bungalow from Avantha Group promoter Gautam Thapar at a much lower price than its market valuation. In the past, Thapar had mortgaged the bungalow for a corporate loan of Rs 600 crore, but he sold it for Rs 380 crore to Bliss Abode Pvt Ltd, when Kapoor's wife was a director of the company. On March 20, CBI had obtained production warrant to arrest Kapoor after he was remanded to judicial custody by the Prevention of the Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court.

Brave New World: A series so bad, even the orgies are dull



When even the orgies are dull, you know a television series is in trouble. The boredom sets in early on and never goes away in the splashy new adaptation of Brave

New World, based on Aldous Huxley's then-futuristic novel, published in 1932. Like the book, the series is set in a dystopia disguised as a utopia. Sameness reigns, in a

world where babies are engineered in factories and assigned grades according to their status. Alphas are smart and privileged; Epsilons are dim-witted worker bees. Everyone is blissfully happy thanks to happiness pills called Soma. Huxley's message, of course, was that sameness crushes free will and imagination, leading to even greater unhappiness than before. Classic though it is, Brave New World has never had the cultural grip of that other anti-totalitarian warning from

the era, George Orwell's 1984. Orwell's message of the government controlling thought and distorting facts through language resonates more potently than ever today. Huxley's book does not, partly because the technology he envisioned as wild and improbable is already here in many ways. The idea of 'test tube babies', as they were once called, has morphed into the valuable process of in vitro fertilisation. Genetic engineering is quickly becoming more a matter of

ethics than science. The series' creators clearly knew they'd have to update Huxley's world, but seem to have been befuddled by what to do with the plot and its technology, and uninterested in developing the characters. The show is set in a city called New London, a place of high-rises and glossy minimalist furniture, with a sleeker version of the London Eye in the skyline. The design looks as appealing and soothing as it is meant to be, one of the show's few effective

elements. The characters are not given much in the way of personalities, though. At the centre is Bernard Marx (Harry Lloyd), who is ever-so-slightly out of key with his role as a government official. When he first meets Lenina Crowne (Jessica Brown Findlay), he is officially scolding her for being monogamous, which is against all the rules. It is absolutely anti-social not to have sex often, with a variety of partners.

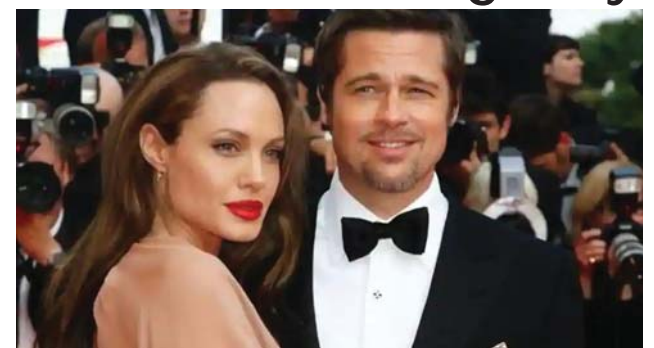
Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's relationship has come a long way

Brad Pitt's recent visit to his ex-wife Angelina Jolie's house has opened the floodgates for renewed speculation on their relationship. The former couple has been famously involved in a bitter custody battle over their six children, but recent reports seem to suggest that their equation is not what it used to be. While a 2018 report claimed that the two could "barely be in the same

room together," ET quotes a source as now saying, "Brad and Angelina have come a very long way and they're finally in a place where they both want to work together to raise their kids. They have no plans to recThe source continued, "They chose to live close to one another so they could easily go back and forth with the kids. This week wasn't the first time Brad and Angelina have spent time

together at her home. They are in a much more amicable relationship." Earlier this week, Pitt was spotted at Jolie's house, where he spent hours before being photographed riding off on his motorbike. "Brad and Angelina want their kids to be healthy and happy and to have the support of both of their parents," explained the source. "It has taken years to heal and they finally are in a place where

they can co-parent in a really healthy way." In November last year, Jolie had said that she would have preferred to live abroad and will do so as soon as her children are 18, but "right now, I'm having to base where their father chooses to live." Jolie recently spoke to Vogue about her decision to split. "I separated for the well-being of my family. It was the right decision. I



continue to focus on their healing," she said. In an interview to French magazine Madame Figaro, she said "I had lost myself

a bit" when her "relationship with Brad was coming to an end." She added, "I felt a deep and genuine sadness, I was hurt."

A Pic Of Dilip Kumar And Saira Banu From Padmini Kolhapure's Throwback Khazana



Actress Padmini Kolhapure, in her Throwback Thursday post, took a trip down memory lane and returned with a priceless throwback from years ago. The 54-year-old actress' post also

features actor Dilip Kumar, now 97, and his wife Saira Banu, 75. Padmini Kolhapure, who co-starred with Dilip Kumar in films such as Vidhaata and Mazdoor in the Eighties, captioned her photo in these words: "My

favourites Yusuf uncle (loved chatting with him) and Saira Baaji." The Panipat actress also described Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu as "legends" and "forever greats" in her post. In the photo, Padmini can be seen engaged in

conversation with Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu. Padmini Kolhapure often fills up her Instagram with black and white memories. Just weeks ago, she shared a throwback from the muhurat of 1988 film Mar Mitenge, which was produced by her husband Pradeep Sharma. The photo starred the films co-stars Jeetendra, Mithun Chakraborty, Kader Khan, Vinod Mehra, Shakti Kapoor along with Padmini. Ahead of that Padmini Kolhapure shared this adorable throwback of herself and Poonam Dhillon to post about having practising social distancing from years ago. Padmini Kolhapure, who worked as a child actor

in 1974 film Ishk Ishk Ishk, also dug out this photo from her treasury. Can you spot her? Padmini Kolkapure is best known for her roles in Eighties films such as Insaaf Ka Tarazu Prem Rog Vidhaata, Woh Saat Din, Souten, Pyar Jhukta

Nahin, Ahista Ahista among others. She was last seen in Marathi movie Prawaas, ahead of this which featured in a significant role in the period piece Panipat. Padmini Kolhapure also featured in the TV show Ekk Nayi Pehchaan.





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Silicon Valley Wants US To Follow India In Banning Chinese App TikTok: Expert

Last December, the US Army banned the use of TikTok by its soldiers. It called the app a security threat. The US navy has enforced similar restrictions.



(Story on Page 33)

SHO who masturbated in front of woman and her daughter terminated from service



A day after being arrested, the station house officer (SHO) who allegedly masturbated in front of a woman and her daughter when they went to the police station to lodge a complaint has been terminated from service by the Uttar Pradesh Police, a senior official said on Thursday. (Contd on page 33)

India deploys Special Forces units in Ladakh amid military standoff with China

Special Forces units have already been deployed along forward locations in eastern Ladakh and apprised of their roles, if and when needed.



Amid the ongoing dispute with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India has now deployed its Special Forces units in Ladakh for operational roles, if required. "Para special forces units have been moved from different locations in the country to the Ladakh region where they are already carrying out exercises," government sources told Aajtak and India Today. Special Forces units played a key role in the 2017 (Contd on page 33)

Congress veteran Ahmed Patel questioned for 3rd day in Rs 14,500 crore money laundering case

Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel is being questioned for the third day by a team of ED officials in connection with the Rs 14,500 crore Sterling-Biotech bank fraud case.

Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel is being questioned for the third day by a team of Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials in connection with the Rs 14,500 crore Sterling-Biotech bank fraud case. Earlier on Tuesday, Patel was interrogated for over 10 hours by a three-member team of the Enforcement Directorate at his Delhi residence and for 8 hours on Saturday.

Sandesara, who are the prime accused in a scam bigger than the



The financial probe agency is recording Ahmed Patel's statement over his alleged connections with Chetan Sandesara and Nitin

Punjab National Bank (PNB) case. During questioning, Ahmed Patel was also confronted with the

statements given by the witnesses and suspects in the case, sources said. India Today TV has learned that Ahmed Patel was asked about his alleged relationship with Chetan Sandesara and Nitin Sandesara and on the charges that huge amounts of cash was delivered at his Delhi residence by them. Ahmed Patel denied all the allegations and hit out Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. (Contd on page 33)

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

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