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The Meeting is Over?

Conferences bring large groups of people together to exchange ideas, network and do business. In the age of Covid-19, they are the worst kind of 'super-spreader event'. Physical conferences, when they return, will likely look very different.



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Asian American Republican Alliance - AARA organizes fundraiser for US Senate candidate Rik Mehta



(By our staff reporter) New Jersey- Asian American Republican Alliance & one of its cells - IT friends in NJ arranged a get-together with Senate Candidate Rik Mehta who is running for US Senate on August 30th 2020 at Edison area. There were around 25 CEOs from leading IT Organizations in NJ who attended this event. These CEOs are part of IT Serve North east chapter, where its national group members represent over \$5B in revenues nationwide, as per the members who attended.

The meeting was started with opening remarks from AARA founder and Chairman, Sridhar Chillara who touted the goals and mission of AARA and its rapid growth in NJ state as well as nationwide. He insisted the need of the hour was for small business owners to support the Republican party and that true support to be given to Rik Mehta in particular in NJ state. Thereafter Rik Mehta spoke about his journey - how he transformed into a Candidate running for office. He talked about how his father immigrated to this country and

how is he going to help the small businesses and make New Jersey a state for people to live, not leave. This event was hosted by successful business entrepreneur Praveen Thadkamalla & his friends. Afterwards many IT organization CEOs spoke about their industry challenges and what they really expect from the government and how they can contribute to the success of NJ state economy. IT-Serve North East chapter President Mani Kumar who attended this event and fellow members together

endorse Rik Mehta on behalf of IT small businesses. Thadkamalla thanked Asian American Republican Alliance – AARA for facilitating the event and extended continued support to Rik Mehta & Asian American Republican Alliance – AARA. Towards the end, AARA representatives spoke and explained why very one should come forward and join the organization for the benefit of the community. The organizers wish to thank media partners Mana TV who covered and supported this event.

Maharashtra Unlock 4 kicks : Here is what's allowed, what's not

In Unlock 4 in Maharashtra, curbs on inter-district movement have been eased, hotels have been allowed to operate in 100% capacity while the attendance in offices has also been increased.

(News Agencies)- The guidelines for the fourth phase of relaxation from Covid-19 lockdown issued by the Maharashtra government come into effect on Wednesday, a day after the conclusion of Ganapati festival.

Even as the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has announced major relaxations in this phase (called Unlock 4), the general lockdown in the state will continue till September 30 as part of efforts to contain the virus outbreak, chief secretary Sanjay Kumar said in a statement on Monday.

Here's is everything that changes from September 2:

--Inter-district movement eased: The state government has allowed inter-district movement of persons and goods, including those for cross-land border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries, beginning Wednesday. People do not

require an e-pass to carry out such a trip anymore.

--Travel on long distance trains: Passenger reservation system has been enabled and starting September 2, people can travel in long-distance trains only on reserved tickets, an official said. But this travel will be restricted to special trains, which are being plied to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states, he said, adding that the railways is currently running 32 such trains and there will be no change in the frequency. Unlike earlier, these trains will now stop at various stations in the state along the way depending on their scheduled stops.

--Hotels can operate with full staff: The hotels, guest houses and lodges in Maharashtra can now resume their operations with 100% staff strength, up from a third of their capacity since July 8.

-- Private buses can ply: Private passenger buses and mini buses have been allowed to operate too.

--More people allowed in offices: The Thackeray government has permitted increased attendance in offices during Unlock 4. Private offices can now operate at 30% of their strength (or 30 employees, whichever is more), according to the notification. The cap was earlier put at 10%.

In government offices, all officers in Class A and B category have been asked to attend the office daily while the attendance of those in category C and D has been increased to 50% or minimum 50 employees in areas, excluding the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Pune Metropolitan Region.

--Gyms, worship places may open later: "From operations of the gymnasium to opening of the religious places are on the cards. Even the Centre has given relaxations in a phased manner and some of them come into effect from September 21. We have ample time to think over more relaxations till then," said



a senior government official.

What remains unchanged

-- Inter-state travel remains suspended: Even as the state has allowed the resumption of inter-district movement, the inter-state travel still remains suspended. --Ban on operations of Metro services in Mumbai: Although the Centre has allowed metro trains to resume operations from September 7, the Maharashtra government has decided to continue with the ban on operations of Metro services in Mumbai at least for one more month, according to the notification. -- Frequency of long distance trains: While restrictions have not been eased

for local trains, frequency of special long-distance trains, which are currently being plied, also remains unchanged, an official said. --Schools, colleges shut: Schools, colleges, educational institutions, theatres, swimming pools, bars will remain closed till September 30, the notification has stated.

-- Restrictions on gathering to continue: The restrictions on social, political, cultural gatherings, too, continue, the notification has stated. The Centre, however, has allowed academic, sports, entertainment, cultural, religious and political functions with a ceiling of 100 people September 21 onwards.

Rumblings in Uttarakhand BJP as MLA questions government

Uttarakhand BJP says some party MLAs are unhappy with government officials and not with party leadership.

BJP MLA and former party state president Bishan Singh Chuphal has alleged that the government officials and bureaucrats in Uttarakhand are not listening to party MLAs making them face a difficult situation in their constituencies. Chuphal, who is a legislator from Didihat constituency in Kumaon, has reportedly been in touch with other party MLAs who are not happy with their voices not being heard. This development has come at a time when the party has started its preparation for the assembly elections scheduled in 2022.

The rumblings within the party were evident a few days back when BJP state president Bansidhar Bhagat stated that party MLAs themselves need to work hard in their constituencies and not just bank on PM Narendra Modi's name for getting votes. When it sparked a controversy with Opposition Congress leaders saying that it meant the Modi wave had ended,

Bhagat later tried to clarify by stating, "PM Modi is the greatest and the most influential leader of the world and the party will make people aware of projects being carried out in the state with his blessings."

Chuphal, speaking about the fresh developments, said, "We are unhappy that the officials are not listening to us. They are not ready to address our issues or resolve them."

On dissent against the party leadership and his efforts to gather like-minded party MLAs from the Kumaon region, Chuphal said, "We have no issues with the party leadership but the officials." "As far as meetings are concerned, I am meeting all kinds of people who come to me with their different issues. As a public figure, it's my job to resolve their issues. However, the government should do something on the issue of officials not listening to us as public representatives," said Chuphal. The political experts, meanwhile,

claim that the development involving some sort of a dissent among the party MLAs, especially Chuphal has much to do with the Cabinet expansion, as there are three ministerial berths yet to be filled.

Political analyst SMA Kazmi, who has been keeping an eye on state politics for over a decade, said, "Chuphal is using pressure tactics considering the Cabinet expansion regarding which there were reports that it was going to happen soon."

"Being a senior MLA, he was unhappy since he was not made minister in the Cabinet after the party came to power in 2017. Now, when only less than a year is left, he is trying to pressurise the party leadership for getting a ministerial berth," said Kazmi. He said that the issue of officials not listening to the party MLAs is also significant as 'MLAs have to face the public in their area.' The Opposition Congress has meanwhile found an opportunity to attack the BJP, which often



takes a dig on 'factionalism and differences in the state Congress.' Leader of Opposition in the state, Indira Hridayesh, said the current developments show that all was not well in the ruling party. "MLAs are complaining that neither development is being done nor the officials are listening to them. The public is not happy with this too," she said. "Despite a heavy majority, the government is not able to deliver. If it's not focused on development even now, then the public will soon come out in

protest on the roads," said Hridayesh. The BJP, however, tried to downplay the developments and said, 'some MLAs have put their issues before the party forum.' "There are no differences with the party leadership but there are issues regarding the government officials. Those have been put at the party forum by some MLAs which are being addressed by the leadership in the party as well as the state government," said Devendra Bhasin, BJP state vice-president.

Delhi man held for raping and threatening widow, breaching her trust

The woman and the arrested man knew each other for more than two decades, officials associated with the case said

(News Agencies)-Delhi Police on Wednesday said they have arrested a 44-year-old man for allegedly raping a widow, threatening her, and trying to usurp a flat that he got registered in his name after it was purchased using her money. The woman and the arrested man knew each other for more than two decades, officials associated with the case said. The man, identified as Harjeet Singh, was caught from south-west Delhi's Sagarpur area, nearly a month after a case under Sections 376 (rape), 406 (criminal breach of

trust), and 506 (criminal intimidation) was registered at the Rajouri Garden police station on the complaint of the 40-year-old woman, said a senior police officer privy to the development in the case, requesting anonymity. Singh is in garments business, the police said.

The woman, the officer said, in her complaint told the police that her husband died in a road accident in 2018 and she had got Rs 22 lakh as insurance claim against his death. She alleged that Singh, whom she knew for the past 23-24 years, persuaded

her to invest the money in buying a property, the officer said.

"The woman agreed and gave him around Rs 17 lakh to buy a flat in Delhi's Dwarka area. However, Singh got the flat registered in his name. When the woman learnt about it, she confronted him and asked him either to transfer the property in her name or return her money," the officer said, quoting the woman's complaint.

The woman has alleged that on August 5, Singh came to her house, took her to the terrace and forced himself on her. Before



leaving the house, he also threatened her with dire consequences if she reported the matter to the police. The woman, however, approached the police and filed a case against him, said an investigator, who is not authorised to speak to media.

"The man was absconding from his home. We raided the places he frequented but could not locate him. Our team kept collecting information about his whereabouts and on Tuesday, we caught him from Sagarpur area on specific information," the investigator added.

Kafeel Khan detained under NSA released from jail, says UP govt indulging in 'Baal Hatth'

Kafeel Khan claimed that he and his family had to face many hardships as the Uttar Pradesh government was "after" him because of the oxygen issue in BRD Medical College.



"I will always remain thankful to all my well-wishers, who raised their voice for my release. The administration was not ready for release, but because of the prayers (dua) of people, I have been released," he told news agency PTI.

Khan claimed that he and his family had to face many hardships as the state government was "after" him because of the oxygen issue in BRD Medical College.

The Allahabad High Court had on Tuesday morning ordered the release of Khan and stated that his speech at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on December

10, 2019 did not promote any kind of hatred or violence.

The court also set aside his detention under the NSA saying that the February 13 order against Khan by the Aligarh district magistrate was illegal.

"A complete reading of the speech also no where threatens peace and tranquility of the city of Aligarh. The address gives a call for national integrity and unity among the citizens. The speech also deprecates any kind of violence. It appears that the District Magistrate had selective reading and selective mention for few phrases from the speech ignoring its true intent," it said.

The court was hearing a plea filed by the doctor's mother Nuzhat Parveen that sought his release on grounds that Khan was granted bail by a competent court but wasn't freed and three days later, the NSA was invoked against him. Khan was in lodged in the jail since January 29 for his alleged provocative speech at the AMU.

His detention under the NSA was extended by three months on May 12 and then again on August 4 for three more months.

Khan said he now wants to help flood-affected people in Bihar and Assam.

Floods in 3 Gujarat districts, over 9,000 shifted

The intensity of showers decreased during the day, but in the last three days, rain-related accidents claimed 12 lives in the state, said Commissioner of Relief Harshad Patel.

(News Agencies)-Over 9,000 people were shifted to safer places in Gujarat's Bharuch, Narmada and Vadodra districts with the Narmada river swelling due to heavy inflow from upstream dams, officials said on Tuesday.

The intensity of showers decreased during the day, but in the last three days, rain-related accidents claimed 12 lives in the state, said Commissioner of Relief Harshad Patel.

With continuous inflow of water from upstream dams, mainly the Indira Sagar in Madhya Pradesh, the water level of the Sardar Sarovar Dam (SSD) on the Narmada has now reached 133 meters against its top level of 138.68 meters, he said.

As per an official release, 10.70 lakh cusec (cubic foot per second) water is being discharged into the river by opening 23 of SSD's 30 radial gates.

As a result, the level of the Narmada has risen significantly in the last few days and water has now started entering low-lying villages on its banks in Narmada, Vadodra and Bharuch districts, Patel told reporters in Gandhinagar.

"We have shifted 9,794 persons from 49 villages in these three districts so far," the relief commissioner said.

The state government said the water discharge in the Narmada



would be curtailed after 10 pm on Tuesday as the outflow from Indira Sagar dam has been reduced from 11.40 lakh cusec to 7.40 lakh cusec.

After a heavy spell for three days, the rain took a break on Tuesday with only light to moderate showers recorded in some parts of Gujarat.

TMC leaders remember Pranab Mukherjee fondly; they helped him win 1st LS polls

Pranab Mukherjee was respected by most in his constituency of Jangipur.

(News Agencies)- As the nation watched on television the last journey of former President Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday, there was mourning in Bengal's Jangipur that, in 2004, ended the Congress veteran's anguish of never winning a public election despite serving as cabinet minister since the 1970s. Mukherjee contested and won the Jangipur seat in Murshidabad district in 2004 and won it again in 2009. Till 2004, he had been a member of the Rajya Sabha. "Perhaps people don't like me," Mukherjee had jokingly said during an interview.

After the 2004 victory, Mukherjee said in his first speech at Jangipur that he was thankful to the people for finally giving him a land to represent. According to the 2011 census, 66.27 % of the district's

population comprises of Muslims.

Mohammad Sohrab, a former Congress MLA and now a senior TMC leader in the district, was Mukherjee's election agent in 2004 and 2009.

"I had cast my vote for Pranab Babu in Rajya Sabha election, Lok Sabha election and even in the election for the President's post. I knew him for 50 years. He will be missed forever," said Sohrab.

"In 2004, ensuring his victory was a Herculean task as the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which had a strong base, had won the seat twice earlier. Our job was much easier in 2009," added the former lawmaker.

"Pranab Babu was a very religious person and respected all religions. His visit to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters raised many

questions here," he added. Now the minister of state for labour in the TMC government, Jakir Hossain is another person who played a key role in Mukherjee's Lok Sabha victories.

Hossain said, "I met Pranab Da for the first time a few months before the 2004 polls. He said, 'Jakir, I need your help to win the seat.' I assured him that victory would be ours."

"I used all my influence on voters to ensure his victory in 2004. But in 2009, the developmental work he had done in the preceding years made the polls a cakewalk for us," said the minister.

"It is only because of Pranab Da that I got the opportunity to step inside Rashtrapati Bhawan, an experience I will never forget," said Hossain. Now, the lawmaker from the Raghunathganj assembly constituency, Md Akhrujjaman was one of the lieutenants of Mukherjee during



the poll campaigns. "In 2004, Congress MLA Samar Mukherjee told me that Pranab Da would contest from Jangipur and asked me to find out a suitable house for him in Raghunathganj town. We selected the house of Mukti Dhar, a local resident," said the TMC MLA. "I was among the key strategists during the campaign. I requested Pranab Da to ensure deployment of Central security forces at Geria and Sekendra, where rigging was part of polling back in those days. The Election Commission did not allow it. However, it was probably because

of Pranab Da's image that no one dared to rig the polls in those places," said Akhrujjaman. "I have countless memories. I will never forget that because of him I could fly in a helicopter and visit the Rashtrapati Bhawan," added the lawmaker. After Mukherjee gave up the seat in 2012 to become the President of India, his son, Abhijit Mukherjee, succeeded him as the Congress candidate. He retained the seat twice in a row till the ruling Trinamool Congress wrested Jangipur in 2019.

Union home minister Amit Shah discharged from AIIMS



(News Agencies)-Union home minister Amit Shah was discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, on Monday morning, two days after the hospital authorities had said that he had recovered from the post-coronavirus disease (Covid-19) care. "Sh Amit Shah, Hon'ble Home Minister, was admitted at AIIMS, New Delhi for post Covid Care. He was discharged today at 7am. He has fully recovered and is fit to resume his routine activities," said a statement from Dr Aarti Vij, chairperson, media and protocol division, AIIMS. The minister had been complaining of fatigue and body

aches after testing negative for the infection, according to the hospital. Shah had tested Covid-19 positive on August 2 and tested negative for the viral disease 12 days later. However, he was admitted to AIIMS on August 18 for post-Covid-19 care.

On August 2, he had tweeted, "On getting the initial symptoms of corona, I got the test done and the report came back positive. My health is fine, but I am being admitted to the hospital on the advice of doctors." The minister also requested those who had come in his contact to isolate themselves and get tested.

Former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee dies at 84

(News Agencies)-Former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee has died at the age of 84, according to a tweet from his son.

"With a heavy heart, this is to inform you that my father Shri #PranabMukherjee has just passed away in spite of the best efforts of Doctors of RR Hospital & prayers, duas, and prarthanas from people throughout India! I thank all of You," tweeted Abhijit Mukherjee on Monday.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted a tribute, saying the country grieved the former president's passing.

"He has left an indelible mark on the development trajectory of our nation. A scholar par excellence, a towering statesman, he was admired across the political spectrum and by all sections of society," Modi wrote.

The Prime Minister praised Mukherjee's "long-lasting contributions in key economic and strategic ministries" in another tweet. "He was an outstanding Parliamentarian, always well-prepared, extremely articulate as well as witty." India's government announced seven days of mourning in response to the news of Mukherjee's death. Flags will be flown at half mast, and there will be no official entertainment, it said in a press release.

Coronavirus diagnosis

Pranab Mukherjee had previously announced on Twitter that he was to undergo a surgical procedure in the second week of August and did not emerge from the hospital following treatment.

Prior to the surgery, the former president tweeted that he had contracted Covid-19, but there was no announcement from the hospital or his family about the cause of death.

"On a visit to the hospital for a separate procedure, I have tested positive for COVID19 today. I request the people who came in contact with me in the last week, to please self-isolate and get tested for COVID-19," Mukherjee tweeted on August 10.

Mukherjee was elected to India's upper house of parliament in 1969, as a member of the Congress party, serving under India's first female Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

He served as foreign, defense, commerce, and finance minister under various administrations for almost five decades, and as a member of the Indian Parliament seven times. His most influential

period in Indian politics came during the last two terms of the coalition government formed by the Congress party from 2004 to 2014. Under former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, he served as a senior cabinet minister and was eventually elected as the thirteenth president of India in 2012.

Mukherjee served the remainder of his term as president under Modi, before stepping down in 2017. Mukherjee was born on December 11, 1935, in the state of West Bengal. He graduated from the University of Calcutta (now known as Kolkata) and began a career in teaching before going into politics.



India presses ahead with reopening as daily coronavirus caseload surges to record-breaking high



(News Agencies)- India is entering a new phase of reopening that will see subway trains running for the first time in months, despite skyrocketing daily coronavirus infections that are showing no sign of slowing down.

The country of 1.3 billion people has reported more than 75,000 infections for five consecutive days -- the fastest growing caseload of any country in the world.

It recorded 85,687 new Covid-19 infections last Wednesday, the world's highest single-day spike since the pandemic began, surpassing the previous record of 77,255 cases set by the United States on July 16.

India's infection rate has increased exponentially in recent weeks. It took almost six months for the country to record 1 million cases, another

three weeks to hit 2 million, and only 16 more days to hit 3 million. At this rate, India's total number of cases, now at over 3.6 million, is on track to outnumber that of Brazil to become the second highest in the world, behind the US.

But India's death toll remains relatively low compared to its infection numbers. As of Sunday, India reported 64,469 coronavirus deaths -- about half of Brazil's death toll -- with a mortality rate of 1.79%, according to its Health Ministry. As infections soar, the Indian government has continued to lift lockdown measures. On Saturday, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced India will enter a new phase of reopening on September 1 known as "unlock 4."

That includes the resumption of the country's metro rail services in a "graded manner"

from September 7, according to the ministry's statement. Under the new rules, gatherings of up to 100 people will be permitted at sports, entertainment, cultural, religious and political events outside of hot-spot areas from September 21, with mandatory face-mask wearing and social distancing measures.

Schools and colleges will remain closed until the end of September, although up to 50% of the teaching staff will be allowed to return to campus to teach online courses, and students from Year 9 to 12 can also return on a voluntary basis. Easing lockdown measures A lifeline for millions of people living in the country's major cities, the metro rail networks were shut down in late March when Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a "complete" lockdown that required residents to stay home and

brought the country to a standstill. But the strict lockdown -- imposed with little warning or planning -- also exacerbated India's inequality and economic woes. In urban areas, millions of daily wage earners were left without jobs or food -- and many made lengthy and sometimes fatal trips home to far away states, often on foot.

Under pressure to resuscitate the battered economy, Modi's government started to roll back nationwide lockdown measures in May. "Corona will remain part of our lives for a long time, but we cannot allow our lives to be confined only around corona," Modi said in a national televised address at the time. Since then, nationwide restrictions have been eased progressively, although some hard-hit parts of the country have enforced their own restrictions.

But the number of infections has soared, from just over 180,000 cases on May 30 to hit a million by mid-July. New Delhi and Mumbai, the country's two most populous cities, are among the worst hit. On July 27, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the coronavirus had been "brought under control" in India's capital, as daily infections dropped to about 1,000 from a peak of nearly 4,000 in late June. "We now have to focus on the next stage. During Covid people lost their jobs, factories were closed, people faced losses, it became difficult for people to face themselves ... Let us now focus on reviving India's economy," he said. "Without reimposing the lockdown we have managed to keep things in control ... this is essential for improving the economy."

India bans PUBG, Baidu and more than 100 apps linked to China



A further 118 Chinese mobile apps have been banned by the Indian government, as tensions between the two countries continue to rise. Those on the list include several of Tencent's products including the hit video game PUBG Mobile and WeChat Work. Previously the government had banned 59 of the most popular apps including TikTok over national security concerns. India's IT Ministry said it had "credible information" the latest batch were acting against India's interests.

Other apps affected include:

"two of search giant Baidu's apps

"CamCard's business card scanner

"Alibaba's Alipay payment app and its Taobao e-commerce platform

"Netease games including Marvel Super War

"Sina News

The ministry said it had received many complaints from "various sources" including several reports about "misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers which have locations

outside India". "The compilation of this data, its mining and profiling by elements hostile to national security and defence of India, which ultimately impinges upon the sovereignty and integrity of India, is a matter of very deep and immediate concern which requires emergency measures."

The ban comes against the backdrop of tensions along a disputed Himalayan border. Both India and China deployed more troops to the Ladakh region in June and clashes have left at least 20 Indian troops dead.

EC plans stringent timeline for declaration of criminal records

The second declaration might come after the returning officer accepts the nomination and the last date could be advanced to four days before campaigning ends and model code of conduct (MCC) applies, officials added.

(News Agencies)- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is considering rolling out a stringent timeline for advertising criminal record by candidates, officials told HT. The first public declaration might be slotted between the candidates being selected by the party to the date of the nomination being filed, they said. The second declaration might come after the returning officer accepts the nomination and the last date could be advanced to four days before campaigning ends and model code of conduct (MCC) applies, they added.

As per existing ECI guidelines, the candidates have to publish

this information thrice -- once in a national and twice in a regional newspaper and thrice on TV channels.

According to the poll panel's notification of October 2018, the declarations are done after the last date of withdrawal of nomination and two days before the end of campaigning. Only the candidates, who contest elections, needed to publish the detailed records.

The decision, said EC officials, is aimed at bringing greater transparency in the electoral process. "The issues are being discussed, but haven't been finalised yet," said an EC official familiar with the matter.

According to a second official,

the decision will make information more readily available to the voters. "Earlier, the ECI had directed to declare the information thrice. It was noticed that candidates try to defer the publication of their criminal records to the last possible day. "The changes are being considered to favour greater awareness for the voters," he added.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi, "Logically, the old system should remain because there is no reason for candidates to publicise antecedents if they are going to withdraw their candidature," said Singhvi. "However, in totality of things and



the need for disclosure and transparency, the declaration does not deserve any major objection," he added.

According to a BJP functionary, who did not wish to be named, the new rules, if implemented, could be a bit of a stretch. "This will make everything more complicated," he said.

Former chief election

commissioner (CEC) SY Quraishi said the changes would be in compliance with the SC order. "It's a good idea," said Quraishi. "The number of candidates with criminal cases rising is a matter of grave concern. The voters can make a more informed choice if the candidates declare their antecedents earlier," he added.

China acted again as peace talks were on

India on Tuesday accused Chinese troops of resorting to "provocative action" even as military commanders were holding talks on Monday to ease fresh tensions near Pangong Lake, underscoring the deep mistrust dogging the disengagement process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

(News Agencies)-India on Tuesday accused Chinese troops of resorting to "provocative action" even as military commanders were holding talks on Monday to ease fresh tensions near Pangong Lake, underscoring the deep mistrust dogging the disengagement process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The latest development follows the two sides trading charges of trespassing the LAC on the southern bank of Pangong Lake since the weekend, complicating the de-escalation process that has stalled at key friction points, including Depsang and Gogra. External affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said that "even as the ground commanders of the two sides were in discussions to de-escalate the situation" that arose from the face-off on the southern bank of Pangong Lake, "Chinese troops again engaged in provocative action".

Without elaborating on the provocative action, he added: "Due to the timely defensive action, the Indian side was able to prevent these attempts to

unilaterally alter the status quo [along the LAC]."

Srivastava reiterated India's assertion that Chinese troops violated the understanding reached by the two sides in diplomatic and military talks on resolving the standoff when they engaged in "provocative military manoeuvres" during August 29-30 in an "attempt to change the status quo" on the southern bank of Pangong Lake.

The Indian side "responded to these provocative actions and took appropriate defensive measures along the LAC in order to safeguard our interests and defend the territorial integrity," he said.

Statements issued by both India and China also make it clear that there was a string of incidents between August 29 and 31 - the Indian side talked about the PLA carrying out "provocative military movements to change the status quo" during August 29-30, while China's western theatre command claimed the Indian side had "broken the consensus" on August 31.

The Indian Army has occupied key heights on the lake's

southern bank to prevent the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) from grabbing territory on the Indian side of the LAC during a stealthy midnight manoeuvre on August 29, people familiar with developments said on condition of anonymity.

The PLA's fresh provocative action on Monday was targeted at the heights held by Indian troops, the people added.

Indian troops are holding a series of positions near Black Top, a hill feature, and on Rezang and Regan passes, which are on the Indian side of the LAC and allow the army to dominate the area and keep an eye on Chinese military activity. Specialist mountain troops played a key role in taking these heights and one of them was killed in a landmine blast.

The people cited above said China triggered the latest face-off through its efforts to occupy dominant positions on the southern back of Pangong Lake, which was hitherto not seen as a friction point as it was under effective control of the Indian side. The tensions in this sector were earlier confined to the



Finger Area on the lake's northern bank. The two sides were now attempting to take dominating positions before colder weather conditions start setting in, making large-scale troop movements and logistics more difficult, the people added.

Srivastava said all military and diplomatic engagements over the past three months, including discussions between the two foreign ministers and the two Special Representatives on the border issue, resulted in an agreement that the "situation should be handled in a responsible manner and either side should not take any provocative action or escalate matters".

He added, "The actions and behaviour of the Chinese side since earlier this year along the LAC has been in clear violation of the bilateral agreements and

protocols concluded between the two countries to ensure peace and tranquillity on the border. Such actions are also in complete disregard to the understandings reached between the two foreign ministers as also the Special Representatives."

The Indian side has taken up the "recent provocative and aggressive actions" with the Chinese side through diplomatic and military channels and "urged them to discipline and control their frontline troops from undertaking such provocative actions," he said. While the India side is committed to resolving all outstanding issues along the LAC through peaceful dialogue, it expects China to abide by the understanding reached earlier and "earnestly work with India to resolve the situation," Srivastava said.

For strategic reasons, India must deepen defence ties with the US

With India hoping to meet most of its defence needs locally, as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, the US and its companies are ideally positioned to be the best partners and allies for India in that campaign

By Frank F. Islam

Over the past 15 years, ties between India and the United States (US) have scaled new heights in almost every imaginable area. The annual bilateral trade in goods and services today is in the region of \$150 billion. The two countries are now natural allies. And they conduct a fair number of joint military exercises annually. But despite this deepening partnership, trade in defence is a weak spot. As India celebrated the arrival of the first five of 36 Dassault Rafale jets from France late last month, in the middle of a border standoff with China in Ladakh, Washington's strategic community and stakeholders in the defence industrial base watched with a mixture of dismay and disappointment. For the US government and the country's defence industry, the Rafale induction at once offered a glimpse into the potential of the Indian defence market and the challenges they face in getting a foothold in the same market.

India was expected to spend over \$100 billion over the next decade. But now, post-Ladakh, the country will be forced to upgrade the defence systems more substantially.



As part of a buying spree, earlier this month, the government announced buying equipment worth more than \$1.16 billion. Prior to that, in the immediate aftermath of the border clashes, the government had approved a purchase of \$5.55 billion worth of weapons and equipment. US companies have also made some inroads. In February, at the "Namaste Trump" event in Ahmedabad, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump announced a \$3.5 billion deal for India to buy US-made helicopters. That was a small

step forward for the US. But the fact remains that when it comes to shopping for military equipment, India routinely prefers countries such as Russia and France.

Why is India hesitant to buy US defence equipment in spite of having a good and growing strategic relationship? There are a number of reasons.

One, India has not been a traditional customer of US military equipment. Once major modern defence equipment is inducted into the military, it requires continuous maintenance, which deepens ties with existing suppliers.

Two, India has been traditionally reluctant to purchase US hardware due to the apprehension that Pakistan, which has a huge stockpile of American equipment, may be familiar with the weapons. So, the concern that the enemy in the neighbourhood may have intelligence on your weapons gives New Delhi pause.

Three, unlike countries such as Russia, Israel and France, the US has a lot of congressional regulatory hurdles to cross before selling military equipment. The president has to notify Congress before selling major defence equipment, articles and

services to other countries. Congress can block deals if it is not satisfied with them. In addition, the Arms Export Control Act prohibits defence manufacturers from selling sensitive technologies to certain countries.

But none of these are insurmountable. It's worth remembering that India and the US signed a civil nuclear deal 12 years ago, overcoming intense opposition from both US domestic political forces and the global non-proliferation community.

In this case, all that the two sides have to do is to negotiate in good faith to put a plan and process in place to minimise obstacles, and maximise the opportunities for collaboration. With the strategic goals of the world's two largest democracies more aligned than ever before, that should not be too difficult. With India hoping to meet most of its defence needs locally, as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, the US and its companies are ideally positioned to be the best partners and allies for India in that campaign. This is the time for the US and India to create a defining defence trade relationship for the 21st century.

Resisting China in Ladakh



The end of August brought a reminder that the border standoff between India and China is far from being resolved. On the military front, both countries have

significantly increased deployment along the Line of Actual Control (most recently, on August 29, when India moved fast to scotch another

adventurist foray by China) and their soldiers are eye-ball to eye-ball - a far cry from the disengagement and de-escalation that military commanders continue to

discuss. On the diplomatic front, India has pulled out of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation exercise rather than have its soldiers stand side-by-side with Chinese troops while a foreign-ministerial meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has been fast-tracked. The economic relationship is also slowly disintegrating.

India has rightly said that the changes in the territorial status quo must be reversed. China has said the two sides should accept the present ground reality, move on and think of the future. Beijing's position is absurd. With wars of conquest largely history, Beijing's preferred model is to impose political humiliation through symbolically powerful victories designed to make the other side look weak.

While there is a debate as to what motivates Beijing, there can be little doubt as to what would be happen if Delhi gave in. Which is why the present situation is unacceptable

While there is a debate as to what motivates Beijing, there can be little doubt as to what would happen if New Delhi gave in - the perception of subordination of India to its northern neighbour in the eyes of citizens as well as other countries. Which is why the present situation is unacceptable and which is why the border will remain on a hair-trigger.

To Checkmate China, India Should Rally Global Support For Independent Tibet

On August 29, President Xi Jinping told senior leaders that China must build an "impregnable fortress" to maintain stability in Tibet, protect national unity and educate the masses in the struggle against "splittism". The same night PLA troops carried out provocative military movements South of the Pangong Tso, prompting India to take pre-emptive action and undertake measures to strengthen positions "to thwart Chinese intentions". The latest Chinese action, and India's pre-emptive move, comes in the backdrop of deadlocked diplomatic-military talks in resolving the four-month-old violent faceoffs between Indian and Chinese troops at Depsang, Galwan, Hot Springs and Finger areas on the North bank of Pangong Tso. Several rounds of military negotiations, Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) meetings, including the last one on August 20, have yielded no worthwhile results. One Special Representative-level phone call on July 5, 2020, too, has not helped. On the ground, China has been actively fortifying its positions, constructing bunkers, and improving roads, particularly laterals from the highway to the border areas. There have been reports of deployment of J-20 stealth fighters and Air Defence radars. India has undertaken large-scale mobilisation of forces and is preparing for the "long haul". Significantly, just a week back, the Chief of Defence Staff had stated that a military option to deal with transgressions by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Ladakh is on the table, but will be exercised only if talks between the two armies and the diplomatic option are unfruitful.

The provocative movement by the PLA in the intervening night of August 29-30 is a premeditated follow up to Xi Jinping's orders to his party, government and military leaders to "solidify border defences in Tibet and ensure frontier security, national security, and enduring peace and stability" in the Tibet region. This was at the seventh Central Symposium on Tibet Work in Beijing on August 28-29. It is China's most important forum for Tibet policies, and this was the first such gathering since 2015.

Enlarging the area of conflict from the North to the South of Pangong Tso is indicative of China's aggrandisement and the greed to grab more Indian territory to provide depth to Tibetan plateau. There are multiple corridors or avenues converging into Chushul, from the East along Pangong Tso and the Spanggur Tso, from Tangtse in the Northwest, and from Dungti-Nyoma in the South, along the Indus. This area has a

history of bloody battles at Gurung Hill, Magar Hill, Rezangla in 1962. It is to the credit of the Indian Army that they have successfully checked the Chinese move and undertaken measures to strengthen its positions. These include occupation of tactically advantageous positions on the heights dominating the corridors leading to the Chushul bowl, with corresponding adjustments in disposition of tanks, ICVs, artillery and combat support elements; also, readjustment of reserves to cater to new contingencies. But this should just be the beginning of the 'long haul'.

Xi Jinping's focus is to solidify China's grip on whatever remains 'autonomous' of the Tibet Autonomous Region. With an area of 2.5 million square kilometres, Tibet was once almost one fourth the size of China. In 1965, China gobbled half the territory of Tibet as its four provinces Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan. What remained as TAR is one eighth of the whole of China. Having itself split Tibet once, Xi Jinping wants to guard it against any internal and external threat to 'splittism'. Tibet has the third largest ice reserve. Some of the major rivers flowing through South Asia and Southeast Asia originate from Tibet. The control over rivers flowing into all the countries bordering Tibet is an obvious lure. Tibet has precious metals and minerals like chromium, gold, iron, magnesium, uranium, and silver. It has coal, gas oil, and some rare earth minerals. All these natural resources contribute to China's newfound power. To continue checking China, it is critical that India's armed forces proactively deal with China in all the theatres, as the PLA has mobilised troops for exercises all along, including opposite Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Side by side, the clarion call for Aatmanirbhar Bharat must be pursued with full vigour to get out of the trappings of trade dependencies on China and along with that the blurring lines between investment, advertisement, ideology, and propaganda. The Prime Minister's Independence Day declaration of the cyber policy must come into effect at the earliest. India's bilateral relationship with China cannot be disassociated from the border issue. The India-China border issue is closely linked with the Tibetan Issue. Given Xi Jinping's hawkish stance towards Tibet and India, it would be naïve to expect resolution of the border issue. It makes eminent sense to rally international support and collectively work towards an independent Tibet. That might ultimately checkmate China's expansionist and hegemonistic ways.

Digital Colonisation: India Needs To Shatter Technology Hegemony Of West, China

There has been significant usage of the term "Digital Colonisation" in recent years, in contexts that are often bordering jingoism. It is important to understand the term that I had coined more than a decade ago, so that we as a nation are better prepared to respond to the challenge. To begin with, it is important to understand what 'Colonisation' from an economic perspective is. In fact, the drivers of colonisation have always been economic, and hence any other definition of colonisation is superfluous. The dictionary definition of colonisation is the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area. But that is not really what happened to nations across Asia, Africa and Americas. What happened in these areas from the 18th century till late 20th century was a massive extraction of wealth by a few, at an inhuman cost to many. In a 2010 research paper, I had formally proposed the definition of 'Colonisation' as the extraction of disproportionate economic benefit from an area of influence through either manipulation of the rules of engagement or through force or deceit. Hence, I had identified three kinds of Colonisation: Social Colonisation, politico-military Colonisation, and now digital or technological Colonisation.

Social Colonisation is what happened in most societies where a small section of the upper class wielded enormous power over the rest of the society and subjugated them, leading to disproportionate economic benefits to the few who controlled the society. This led to serfdom in Europe and Russia with the aristocrats

getting the benefit of such an economic structure at the cost of the vast majority. This was colonisation of the masses within the country. There were similar structures in Asia and other places also. Something then happened towards the latter half of the 18th century - the French revolution of 1789. The revolution led to dismantling of the "social colonisation" structure in France and the message spread fast in Europe that the days of rampant social colonisation were over. However, how would the class that was benefiting from Social Colonisation continue to maintain their opulent lifestyle if they did not get to extract disproportionate economic benefits from their population, who used to toil hard to keep these few aristocrats rich? This class very quickly gravitated to shift from the exploitation of their population to the exploitation of populations of other lands where they were beginning to taste military wins. This was the beginning of politico-military colonisation in an institutionalised manner. Since the colonial powers established full control over foreign lands and their population, establishing the rules of engagement through force and deceit, that led to massive economic exploitation. None of these rules were in consultation with the locals. The rules were not even part of any treaties. For example, in India the British laid out a rule called the Doctrine of Lapse that prevented an adopted child from claiming the throne, that led to the famous war with the Rani of Jhansi. But why would anyone be forced to follow a doctrine that was unilaterally adopted by the British?



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The Congress has four choices now

It needs to wake up to its political marginalisation. Convert the crisis into an opportunity

Rahul Verma

How the Congress party deals with the current crisis will prove who was right: Those who argued that the Congress must perish or those who believe that the party still remains the best available option to challenge the hegemony of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)?

It must first ask itself whether the demands made by the signatories of the letter to Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, are legitimate. The letter from 23 senior leaders of the Congress seemed a genuine attempt to draw attention to the fast-eroding support base of the party, especially among younger voters. It highlighted the leadership challenge, and made recommendations for organisational rejuvenation. And given that several of these signatories come from diverse social segments, with considerable political experience, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to suggest that many within the party (even those who rallied behind the Gandhi family) share the sentiments in the letter. No one, either during the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting or in television debates, has criticised the content of the letter. The criticisms were limited to the timing and the motives of the signatories.

After the showdown at the CWC meeting on August 24, there are four possible scenarios. And it seems the Congress party has opted for the least preferred outcome.

First, Rahul Gandhi takes over as the president in the next All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting and promises to take up the demands made by the signatories. This would be the most optimal outcome. However, the optimal outcome is rarely the eventual outcome in politics as the game not only involves strategic decisions, but a range of other variables. In such a situation, shallow loyalties may be rewarded and even mild criticism would be unacceptable.

Second, there is a split in the party. With most formal positions held by pro-Gandhi family camp, it is almost



impossible for dissenters to force the Gandhis to step aside. But the pro-Gandhi camp cannot also go for indiscriminate purging, as some signatories are heavyweights and may well walk out of the party. However, it is unlikely that there will be any major vertical split in the Congress in the near future. There is little possibility of a 1969 or a 1977 sort of national split as a large section of the Congress base still associates the party with the Gandhi family. Furthermore, during the two national splits earlier, it was a Gandhi leading the rebellion against the party.

Today, there is not a single leader within the party who can mobilise

voters across states or has the resources to sustain such a formation in a lean period. There are a few who can do so in their respective states though.

Why does India's grand old party no longer have enough leaders with a substantial mass base and how did the Gandhi family become synonymous with the party? Though this history is well known, it is worth reiterating. The increasing interference of the Congress high command in state politics during the Indira Gandhi (and Rajiv Gandhi) years neutralised the emergence of independent centres of power within the

party. State leaders were appointed (or dismissed) by the high command in a whimsical manner. The unwillingness to nurture strong state leaders allowed the Gandhi family to stay pre-eminent in the party.

Third, the Gandhis decide that no one from the family will be party president, and ask for a non-Gandhi to lead the party. This is not an easy option. Will the new president be given the space to act as an independent centre of authority? Will the new leader be free from pulls and pressures if the Gandhis continue to play favourites? Will the new leadership have the full support of the party cadres across the country? And, what about the fear among many that the Congress will fragment if a non-Gandhi leads the party?

And fourth, a policy of active marginalisation of dissenters is pursued. The composition of new party committees for the two Houses last week, in particular the selection of Gaurav Gogoi of the Gandhi camp as the deputy leader in the Lok Sabha over other senior figures who dissented, suggests

this is the most likely course of action. This is not a fruitful option as all sides are likely to lose, but this appears to be the direction the party is taking. The Congress has opted to drift along without tackling the crisis head-on. Perhaps we may witness more examples of people expressing dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the party with greater frequency. But it is unlikely that there will be a coup d'etat or ruthless purging. As serious restructuring and re-imagining of the political agenda seem unlikely, political attrition will become a norm. Some leaders may join the BJP, others may go to regional outfits as in the case of Tripura. What does the Congress need to do to overcome this state of inertia? The party leadership must realise that whatever the party's projections of its electoral strength, in reality, the party is getting marginalised. It can no longer continue in the belief that it is an umbrella party with a national presence. The party needs to make a realistic assessment of what revival means for it.

Staggering contraction: Announce a fiscal stimulus, resolve the GST dispute

Till India gets its post-pandemic economy right, its developmental and global ambitions will remain unmet

According to data released by the National Statistical Office on Monday, India's GDP contracted by a staggering 23.9% in the April-June quarter. The contraction is larger than the 19.2% figure projected by a Bloomberg poll of economists. And it shows that the nation-wide lockdown, which was in place in April and May, has taken a heavy toll on economic activity. An examination of Gross Value Added (GVA) figures, which is GDP minus taxes, shows that the non-farm economy has suffered a contraction, including public administration, defence and other services. In an unusual development, the GDP growth numbers are lower than GVA, which means that taxes have also contracted. Experts believe that the first estimates could see further downward revision as informal sector



numbers become available at a later stage. Krishnamurthy Subramanian, the Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) to the ministry of finance, while reacting to the numbers, said that they reflected the exogenous economic shock of the pandemic. He claimed that the economy was already in the process of achieving a V-shaped recovery. High frequency indicators for August do

suggest that things are improving. However, it is important to differentiate between a sequential and annual recovery. The real question is not whether the subsequent GDP numbers show a smaller contraction than 23.9%. What matters is a return to pre-pandemic income levels. Most experts believe that this is not likely in the next few quarters, maybe even years. The government must adopt a two-

pronged approach immediately. One, as this newspaper has argued, it must announce a second fiscal stimulus - and soon - for that is the only way to spur demand. This deployment of additional public resources must be done smartly. For instance, the government's own survey suggests that at least three-fourths of micro, small and medium enterprises were using less than half of their productive capacity as on August 1. Can the stimulus be geared towards boosting this sector? Or would a direct cash transfer to citizens work better? Two, as Covid-19 cases continue to increase, even the ongoing sequential recovery may get jeopardised. India's battle against Covid-19 is critically dependent on how state governments handle the challenge. They need resources to perform on this front.

In J&K, time for dialogue

Pro-India forces are allies. The central government must listen to them

In a candid interview to this newspaper earlier this week, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)'s former chief ministers, and National Conference (NC) leaders, Farooq and Omar Abdullah, spoke of the bitterness they personally felt after Parliament pushed through constitutional changes in J&K last year. The conversation was laced with anger at what they saw as a violation of a sovereign commitment by India by effectively revoking Article 370; hurt at how they were detained and put in the same basket as separatists even as they are viewed as India's representatives in Srinagar; and determination to challenge the changes politically and legally. To be sure, the NC's record is not all clean. Sheikh Abdullah's turn towards radicalism in the early 1950s jeopardised the project of integrating Kashmir with the rest of India. Despite repeated opportunities in power, the party was unable to win over the hearts and minds of people of J&K - which provided space for separatists. By almost portraying themselves as the only force standing between India and secession, the NC also extracted a wide range of political concessions from Delhi, with doubtful outcomes. But it is also true that the NC's firm position in favour of India, right from 1948 onwards, has been an

important element in adding legitimacy to India's political and diplomatic case against Pakistan. The NC has lost hundreds of workers to terrorism because it defended the Indian flag. The Abdullah father-son duo have always participated in peaceful and democratic politics.

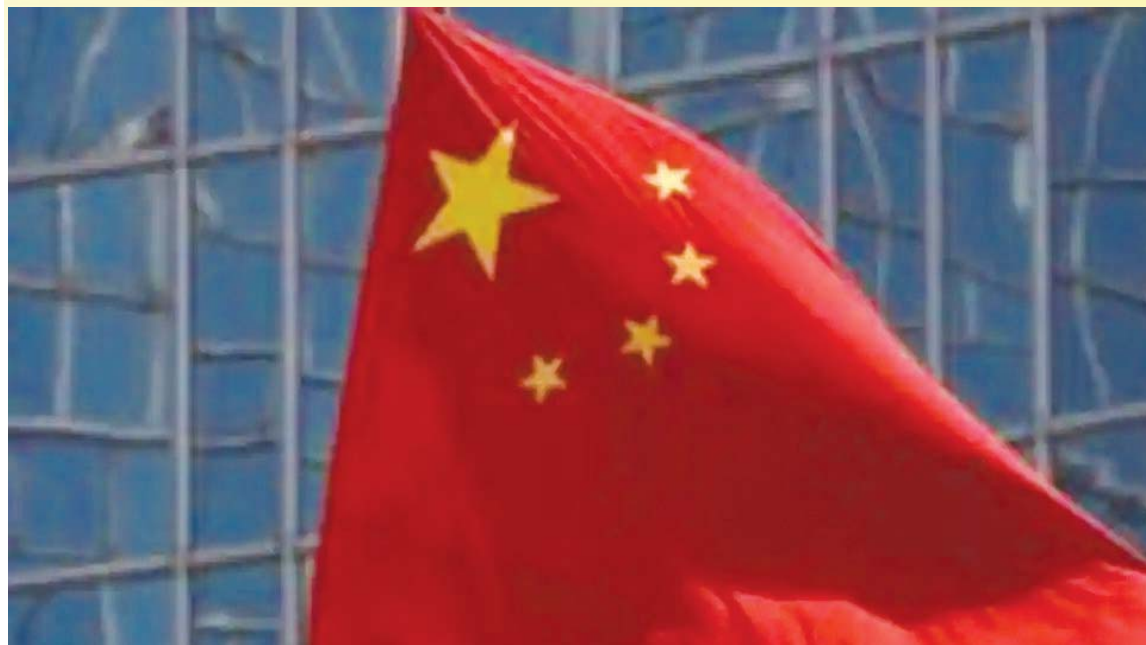
And that is why when they speak, New Delhi must listen and begin a wider process of engaging with Kashmir's pro-India forces. The Centre will not bring back Article 370 - but by suggesting that they will fight this out in the Supreme Court, the Abdullaha are leaving room for a political dialogue that does not hinge on a resolution of this



issue. By pointing to the apprehensions caused by the domicile law and the delimitation process, and the need for statehood, the NC is actually giving a roadmap to the central government on what needs to be revised. If the Centre releases other democratic leaders such as Mehbooba Mufti, begins a genuine dialogue, builds trust and addresses a part of the concerns of Kashmir's political mainstream, there can be a meeting ground.

China is investing in emerging tech. India needs to catch up, soon

There is urgent need to prioritise the resourc



Yogesh Gupta

In the backdrop of China's trade and technology rivalry with the United States (US), its president Xi Jinping summoned leaders of China's artificial intelligence (AI) and strategic industries to a meeting on July 21, and asked them to align their business strategies with China's needs in the greater interest of the country.

After Xi unveiled his grand ambition of making China a world leader in emerging technologies in 2013, the Chinese government has poured billions of dollars to develop commercial and military applications of AI, 5G, new materials, energy platforms, quantum computing

and financial technologies. Its progress has been aided by its civil-military fusion policy, under which ministries and armed forces work together with State-owned and private companies, with the State directing resources in priority areas, without any competition from foreign companies. Several experts say that China has made considerable progress in domains such as smart cities, smart manufacturing, surveillance, semi-autonomous vehicles and hypersonic weapons. In e-commerce, financial technologies, new energy platforms, China is viewed as a world leader. In June 2020, China launched its final satellite

to complete its Baidou navigation system, thus becoming a true space power. According to a study by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2018), China is trying to integrate AI and big data into unmanned aerial vehicles, drone swarms and cyber systems in order to achieve "brain supremacy" (ability to damage cognition of the enemy).

Huawei's emergence as the largest maker of telecom equipment and second largest vendor of smartphones in the world is well known. China has also emerged as the largest manufacturer and exporter of electric vehicles, batteries and solar panels. It accounts for 70%

of commercial drone-manufacturing exporting to more than 70 countries and has developed variants of the US's MQ-1 Predator drones with reconnaissance, command, control, communications and integrated precision-strike capabilities.

Though China has excelled in many areas, it is still dependent on foreign companies for cutting-edge technologies. Huawei's reigning supremacy may well end as the US sanctions on the supply of microchip Kirin (system on chip) start kicking in. Despite huge investments over the last 30 years, China remains dependent on American, South Korean and Taiwanese companies for the supply of microchips and semiconductors which are a prerequisite in the AI industry. Similarly, China's record in making its own engine for long-range aircraft is disappointing. Its homemade WS-15 engine for J-20 stealth fighter aircraft exploded in a ground running test in 2015, and it has started manufacturing the J-20 using the old Russian AL-31 engine which lacks the thrust vector control necessary for a 5th generation aircraft. Ditto, its inability to make high-grade carbon for its stealth aircraft or miniaturise the nuclear reactor for its aircraft carriers. In many instances, China has acquired advanced technologies from the West by

forcing its companies to part with them in exchange for market access or by stealing and copying foreign designs. A basic lacuna in China's approach is low expenditure in basic sciences and fundamental research, which has remained 5% of its overall research and development expenditure (as against 25-30% in developed countries) and shortage of skilled personnel. Also, the environment for innovation has deteriorated with authoritarian and expansionist policies being pursued by the Xi regime, which is damaging global chains, essential for research and collaboration.

India has taken some incipient steps to induct AI into civilian and military domains by establishing the required policy framework and promoting research and applications with collaboration among our defence establishments and industry. In some cases, drones, smart weaponry and other hi-tech military equipment have been imported from the US, Russia, France and Israel. There is urgent need to prioritise the resources in development of AI platforms, necessary for civilian and military applications, to ensure that India does not fall behind more in relative power matrix with China.

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Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

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

Stay home except to get medical care

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



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

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



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

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



Wear a facemask if you are sick

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



Cover your coughs and sneezes

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



Clean your hands often

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



Avoid sharing personal household items

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



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

UAE-Israel Accord Enhances Strategic Autonomy For India Too

The UAE and Israel have pacts with India for security cooperation and counter-terror intelligence, which open doors for multi-faceted collaboration.

N. Janardhan

However one looks at it, the Abraham Accord, which normalises relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, is an inflection point in West Asian and global affairs. The agreement promotes 'warm peace' in the regional space, while creating opportunities for a wide-ranging bilateral and plurilateral developmental deals, with considerable significance for India as well. With several Arab countries also open to the idea of normalising ties with Israel, based on the suspension of Israel's plans to extend its sovereignty, the accord frees the region from the rhetoric of stagnation and pushes it towards positive action. Driven by the United Arab Emirate's belief that the region needed a strategic breakthrough, the accord also underscores the UAE's determination to be a global player - and a sovereign actor.

The accord assists the quest of the signatories and their partners to enhance their strategic autonomy, by setting their own priorities and making their own decisions on foreign policy matters either as individual countries or in cooperation with other like-minded actors.

The UAE has developed a reputation for pursuing a proactive and diversified foreign policy that stresses pragmatism over religious ideology; shuns extremism, and envisions a stable and moderate region that prioritises youth and prosperity.

With respect to Israel, the UAE clearly sees many advantages, particularly in the fields of technology, collaborative investment in key sectors like health, aerospace, tourism, and agriculture, among others. This approach is consistent with the UAE's skillful balancing act with respect to larger power dynamics, e.g., relations between and among the United States, China and Russia. Such an approach

mirrors the foreign policies of some of the UAE's principal strategic partners, including India. Concurrently, it suggests very interesting possibilities for creating broader networks of relationships with India and other Asian countries, with parallel and complementary relationships.

In 2015, Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the UAE in 34 years. In 2017, he became the first to visit Israel. Unsurprisingly, India has welcomed the full normalisation of ties between the UAE and Israel, both of which India considers strategic partners. With the Abraham Accord, the stage is thus set for increased collaboration between Israeli, Emirati and Indian development efforts in various sectors, notably in the domains of technology, agriculture and security.

New Delhi and Tel Aviv signed an agreement in July to expand collaboration in dealing with cyber threats - amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which highlighted the vulnerabilities of digital infrastructure. A month later,

the UAE and Israeli companies signed a strategic commercial agreement focused on clinical research and treatment delivery related to Covid-19.

These separate agreements could evolve into a multilateral strategy, for example, if they were to intersect with the UAE-India agreement in 2018 to explore telemedicine and tele-education projects in Africa. The network could be further tied into Japan's India-backed 'Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.'

In the agriculture sector, the UAE and India are tying infrastructure development to food security to develop 'farm-to-port' logistics solutions. This model could be coupled with the proposed UAE-Israel project to promote tech-powered agriculture across a broad geography. Finally, the UAE and Israel have pacts with India for security cooperation and counter-terror intelligence, which open doors for multi-faceted collaboration. These, however, do not impinge on India's relations with other



countries in West Asia. In his new book 'The India Way - Strategies for an Uncertain World,' Minister of External Affairs Dr S. Jaishankar has listed the UAE among the top five countries that New Delhi must focus on to further its foreign policy objectives. This was reiterated in the minister's response to the accord - the "UAE is central to India's extended neighbourhood. We see (the) UAE on the crossroads of international trade." This is in line with New Delhi's 2017 'Think West' formulation, which includes Israel. Another important factor is the common thread linking the three countries - their strategic partnerships with the United States. This increases the convergence of their interests across a wide range of sectors,

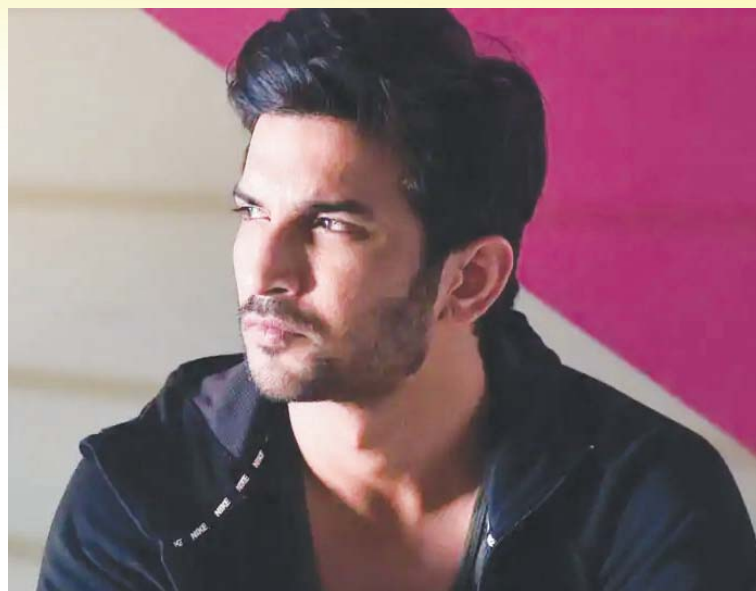
both at the regional and global levels. Over the last two decades, the world has been in the process of a grand 'reset' - or perhaps, a great fluidity, conditioned by large discontinuities in the global order, accelerated and provoked by discontinuities in technology. Countries and entire regions are forced to adapt, innovate and seek new relationships that reinforce their comparative advantages. With less emphasis on ideology with a capital I, there is little sense of permanence or stability - but at the same time a plethora of possibilities and potential. In a post-Covid, multi-aligned, technology-driven world, the UAE, Israel and India, along with the United States, will likely find that they have more common cause than they might have envisioned just a few months ago.

A new low for Indian television news

Finding a balance and reining in TV news is now essential to protect individual liberties, prevent mob justice, and have a civilised discourse - all of which are essential in a democracy.

Over the past decade, the quality of Indian television news has sharply dipped. This can be traced to an obsession with ratings; a preference for contentious studio discussions and dilution of balanced reportage; a tendency to sensationalise news; and a broken business model.

But, with its reportage on the Sushant Singh Rajput case, Indian TV news has hit a new low. Here is what should have happened - a prominent actor dies by suicide; the media covers his life and legacy; there is a conversation on mental health; there is due investigation; and there is closure. Instead, here is what has happened - a prominent actor dies by suicide; the



media decides that it is not suicide but a product of either a deep-rooted conspiracy by an amorphous Bollywood power elite or an outright murder; conspiracy theories

are peddled, reputations tarnished, and every norm of reportage is thrown into the bin; public opinion is manufactured; State agencies either willingly or due to this

media-generated pressure enter the field; and citizens remain distracted.

This is not to suggest that a fair probe is not needed. But by acting as investigator, prosecutor, and judge, on flimsy grounds, TV news has been irresponsible. Today, they have found one target; tomorrow, it could be someone else. There is no easy solution. Self-regulation isn't working. But State-regulation could lead to control, which is not desirable. Finding a balance and reining in TV news is now essential to protect individual liberties, prevent mob justice, and have a civilised discourse - all of which are essential in a democracy.

The Middle East Just Doesn't Matter as Much Any Longer

The United States has much bigger problems to worry about and limited resources to fix them.

AARON DAVID MILLER and RICHARD SOKOLSKY

Joe Biden has made clear that he wants America "back at the head of the table" to "rally the free world to meet the challenges facing the world today. ... No other nation has that capacity." While it is essential for the United States to restore U.S. leadership and credibility on issues that are vital to national security and prosperity—most notably, global health cooperation, combating global warming and pushing back on China's predatory trade practices—there is one region that simply isn't as important as it used to be: the Middle East.

No matter who wins the White House in November, it is important to recognize that in recent years, the turbulent Middle East—where more often than not American ideas go to die—has become decidedly less important to American foreign policy and to our interests. The change reflects not only new regional dynamics and U.S. domestic priorities but the changing nature of American interests there. American leadership and exceptionalism

cannot fix a broken Middle East or play a major role in leading it to a better future. The U.S. still has interests there to protect but America needs to be realistic, prudent and disciplined in how it secures them. If we can learn to act with restraint, we'll avoid the overreach, arrogance and self-inflicted wounds that have caused us and many others so much unnecessary misery and trouble. If the past two administrations were wary about overcommitments in the Middle East pre-pandemic, Washington should be downright allergic to any unnecessary involvement in the time of Covid. Domestic priorities will and should take precedence over any Middle East adventures likely to absorb large resources or the president's time. The next administration will confront the greatest challenge of national recovery since the 1940s—and it won't have a world war that energized the U.S. economy and left America as the dominant power abroad. Add to that crisis domestic unrest driven by severe polarization along class, racial and political lines and a loss of confidence and trust

in our governing institutions. Pressures from growing debt and deficits will impose severe fiscal constraints on pursuing anything but vital American interests abroad.

A glance at the daily headlines underscores just how much U.S. strategic priorities have shifted away from the Middle East over the past few years: The coronavirus pandemic wreaking havoc on American lives and livelihoods and our credibility around the world; extreme weather events—raging forest fires in California, Hurricane Laura ripping into the Gulf Coast, a summer of unusually repressive heat—linked to climate change; an adversarial China flexing its muscles throughout the Asia-Pacific region and an intensifying U.S.-China rivalry for military, economic and technological supremacy; Russia's continued rogue behavior (see: the recent poisoning of Putin's chief domestic opponent Alexei Navalny) and the Kremlin's continued interference in the U.S. presidential election; and the rise of homegrown white-nationalist terrorism. All these



challenges have assumed far greater significance than the declining terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland emanating from the Middle East. The last thing this country needs is to throw good money after bad in a futile search for opportunities to reform, let alone transform, the dysfunctional Middle East. During the Cold War, America's quest to dominate the Middle East was driven largely by the need to ensure the uninterrupted flow of its energy resources to America and its allies. Throughout most of this period, the Persian Gulf constituted a disproportionate share of global oil reserves and U.S. oil imports. Ancient history. With the growth of nonfossil energy sources, the discovery of large oil and natural

gas deposits outside the Persian Gulf and increased domestic oil and natural gas production, the Middle East's vast energy resources are of declining strategic significance to the United States. The price of oil has dropped significantly in recent years despite continued turmoil in major oil producing countries like Iraq, Iran and Libya, which together have removed billions of barrels of oil from international markets. Moreover, roughly 85 percent of Persian Gulf oil exports are bound for China, India, Japan and South Korea. Still, oil production in the Gulf still accounts for about 20 percent of world oil output, and roughly one-third of total seaborne oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

Philosophical Contradictions Fuel India-China Tensions



Prathibha MS

The lack of strategic consensus has made progress in the India-China bilateral relationship elusive. A strategic consensus between India and China would have enabled them to arrive at a political arrangement, where neither of them would be involved in any balance of power politics against each other, and support each other when crucial common interests are threatened. The

reason for this lack, is the use of narrow geopolitical constructs on both sides to describe the bilateral relationship, which reduces the bilateral interactions, to a 'competition versus cooperation' dichotomy. It leads to festering mutual mistrust because of the perception that the other relies on strategic competitors (the US in India's case and Pakistan in China's) to reap geo-political gains. Though both countries attempt to narrow

There are fundamental contradictions between the two countries at the philosophical level, which drastically limit the scope for arriving at a strategic consensus.

these irritants at high-level meetings of the top leaders (Wuhan and Chennai Informal Summits), the bilateral tensions continue reach new heights. While various studies have thrown some light on these schisms, there are fundamental contradictions between the two countries at the philosophical level, which makes the scope for arriving at a strategic consensus limited. These contradictions limit each country's understanding of the actions of the other. As a result, periodic tensions rise if any one country attempts to assert their national interests that could be considered threatening to the other country, be it closer relationship between India and the US or the Chinese foray into South Asia. Relations remain

stable only as long as each side chooses to mute their apprehensions vis-a-vis the other. Even though they recognise that there are policy inadequacies bedeviling the relationship, they are unable to shed these inherent tendencies to let geopolitical concerns dominate the relationship. Philosophical Contradictions—India and China's philosophical traditions have influenced their perception of each other in contrasting ways. In Ancient China, religion and supernatural myths played a significant role. For instance, the rulers of the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.E) used oracle bones for 'divination rituals' to predict auspiciousness for starting wars and travel. They also derived their legitimacy to rule by invoking their special

ability to seek guidance from the 'Supreme God' (Shangdi), whom they believed communicated to them from the souls of their Shang ancestors. When Zhou rulers defeated the Shangs, they replaced the idea of "God" (Di) with "Heaven" (Tian) - the more philosophical 'Mandate of Heaven'. Zhou rulers developed a more cosmological divination text called the "Changes of Zhou" (Zhouyi). Zhouyi later added several philosophical commentaries and the combined text was called the "Book of Changes" (Yijing). The Chinese consider Yijing (125 BCE) to be the foundational text in their philosophical tradition. The Chinese philosophical tradition underwent fundamental transformation when Zhou rule (1046-256 BCE) began to collapse.

To revive the Congress, leaders must return to the grassroots

Instead of seeking a synergy of the "old and new", Rahul Gandhi will have to find a way to involve those who believe in the grassroots struggles. If he does not want to do so, then the family will have to search for and support a new leadership.

Shashi Shekhar

The Congress is once again in the news due to internal political contestation. Is this the usual battle between the old versus new leaders, or a more concerted attempt to change the antiquated structure of the party? The Congress is a national party, with a long legacy. But personality-based parties tend to face a problem. As soon as the leader shows signs of weakness, the party starts to collapse. The Congress has been different because barring a brief interregnum in the 1990s, the party has been under the Nehru-Gandhi family.

Indira Gandhi took over after Lal Bahadur Shastri. She chose Sanjay Gandhi as her heir after taking control of the party. She lost the election to the Janata Party in 1977, but Sanjay and his supporters did not lose heart. They fought on the streets. Indira Gandhi's political experience and

Sanjay's enthusiasm brought her back to power in less than three years. After Sanjay's death in an air crash, Rajiv Gandhi entered politics. Even before he had cut his teeth in politics, Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984. He became the prime minister (PM) immediately and won the next general elections. But his regime was surrounded by controversy and eventually, he was voted out of office by the newly-formed Janata Dal in 1989. But the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress did not give up. After toppling the Janata Dal government, even as he was contesting the election to return to power, he was assassinated. The Congress then approached Sonia Gandhi, but she did not want to enter politics. This led to PV Narasimha Rao becoming PM. Sonia was forced to take up the leadership of the party. Even under her leadership, the Congress fought a six-year-long struggle, but she then led the

party to power in 2004 for a decade.

Rahul Gandhi's trajectory was different from his mother, father and grandmother. He had ample opportunities to learn the political game. This is why Congressmen were hoping for so much from him in terms of leadership. There have been defeats, but there is hope yet. When Rahul was party president, the Congress lost the 2019 polls, but remember, the party still had governments in six states and if the organisation could have been strengthened, he could have revived its fortunes. Battles in a democracy are not fought only in an election. Real leaders have to go out to the masses, connect with them on issues which matter, and perhaps even start a movement. The Congress was once known for this mode of politics. But it lost the way, with some leaders establishing a



form of feudal politics in the name of the Nehru-Gandhi family. This led to the Congress losing its base, with regional parties becoming stronger in states, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) filling the vacuum nationally.

Today, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah are leaving no space for the Opposition, even though there are a number of issues which need to be taken up, including the economic downturn, Covid-19 and China. Rahul Gandhi has tried to be vocal on these issues, but the discussion has largely remained on social media. What the Congress needed was to get over its internal politics, go to the

streets and raise the issues to win people's confidence. Today, those who are expressing dissatisfaction are as guilty as others. Sonia Gandhi has been a successful party president. But age and declining health are against her now. If the Congress is to be saved from collapsing further, Rahul Gandhi will have to take full command. Instead of seeking a synergy of the "old and new", he will have to find a way to involve those who believe in the grassroots struggles. If he does not want to do so, then the family will have to search for and support a new leadership. This is the only way forward for the Congress.

A Prisoner's Right To Remission In India: An Unending Conundrum

The supreme aim of our prison discipline should be the reformation of criminals, and that there must be in every prison a well-devised and skilfully applied system of rewards for good conduct of prisoners.

Arindam Bharadwaj

Thinkers like G.W.F Hegel have often argued that the criminals are to be punished for the offence they have committed, yet they have the right to be honoured as rational beings when the authorities inflict the punishment on them. The criminal justice system across the globe has come a long way from using punishment for instilling fear is the populace to understanding punishment as a species of secular penance, that aims to persuade offenders to repentance, self-reform and reconcile. India too has taken several positive steps in this direction however the Indian Supreme Court's recent unearthing of a regressive punishment and reintroducing it in today's time has taken us a step backwards in our thrive to achieve a modern, reformatory criminal justice system. In India,

the sentence of life imprisonment in certain cases, when subject to remission, normally works out to a term of 14 years, however after the case of Union of India vs. V. Sriharan (2016), where a five judge bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India adjudicated the matter, a special category of punishment can be imposed by the concerned High Court and the Supreme Court providing for a specific term of incarceration without the possibility or opportunity of remission.

The Journey from Deterrence to Reformation- In India, the earlier notions of prison as a facility in which convicts were forcibly held by depriving their freedom and liberty as a form of punishment changed with a change in social perception towards prison and prisoners. This change was evident from India abandoning some of the severe forms of punishment and introducing a

system, which awards prisoners for their good work, good conduct in the form of remission, review of sentence, wage of labour etc. Also the Constitution of India under Article 20 and 21 have afforded various safeguards to prisoners, and these safeguards and rights have been expanded to include almost all fundamental and human rights by various rulings of the Supreme Court of India and also several High Courts. Further India has also ratified various international treaties like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) which encompasses an obligation on the member states to afford the prisoners the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health. Recently in the year 2016, a new model



prison manual was - finalised with the approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and was circulated to all states and union territories for guidance. The new prison manuals key focusses were to bring uniformity in the laws, rules and regulation that govern prison administration and also emphasised rights of prisoners, repatriation of prisoners, prisoners correctional schemes etc. Despite India's continuous efforts in creating a reformatory criminal justice system, the invention of a special category of punishment by the Supreme Court in the V.

Sriharan case which takes away the opportunity and the option of remission from a prisoner is nothing but a step taken backwards which also violates various principles enumerated in the Indian Constitution and is against the basic tenets of the modern criminal justice system. The Right to Remission The Remission system has been defined under the Prison Act, 1894 to be a set of rules formulated for the time being in force regulating the award of marks to, and the consequent shortening of sentence of, prisoners in Jail.



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China Accuses US of Meddling in Border Dispute With India, Says it Will Endanger Regional Peace

Amid the ongoing border standoff between India and China, Beijing on Thursday accused the United States of meddling in the dispute, warning it will endanger regional peace and stability.

Opposing any third-party involvement, a spokesperson from the Chinese Embassy said, "China and India have the ability to resolve their border disputes bilaterally. We don't accept countries outside the region pointing fingers, let alone meddling or making instigation, which will only endanger the regional peace and stability." The spokesperson said the country

advocates finding a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution through peaceful and friendly consultations. "For a period of time, the two sides have been in touch and in talks at various levels to seek peaceful settlement of the boundary issue," the spokesperson added. The Chinese side further took on the US, saying, "It is regrettable that, out of the zero-sum Cold War mentality, some senior US officials ignored the basic facts, violated the norms of international relations and basic principles of diplomacy, picked up fights

virtually on every front and exploited every opportunities they can to slander and smear China, instigated other countries' relations with China." Reiterating its earlier claim, China said it has never provoked a war or conflict over the past 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. "China has always insisted on resolving territorial and maritime disputes with neighbouring countries through consultations and negotiations on the basis of respecting historical facts, to maintain regional peace and stability," the spokesperson added.



In 'landmark decision', Pakistan approves industrial use of cannabis and hemp



Minister for science and technology Fawad Chaudhry said the move will help Pakistan enter the billion-dollar Cannabidiol (CBD) market.

Twitter handle. The move comes after comprehensive deliberations between different government departments. To produce the CBD, Pakistan plans to import a specific variety of cannabis seeds. "CBD compound plays an important role in therapeutic medicine. After 2016, a breakthrough research was unveiled which prompted China to set up a cannabis research department and is now cultivating hemp on 40,000 acres, and Canada is cultivating it on 100,000 acres," Chaudhry told reporters during a press briefing in Islamabad. He said that the plant Pakistan plans to grow contains legal levels of

tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) - around 0.3 percent or below. At higher levels, THC is intoxicating and illegal in many parts of the world. The minister said that hemp seeds are used for producing oil, leaves for developing medication, while stems are used for fibres which are gradually replacing cotton in the textile industry. "Worldwide, this fibre is replacing cotton. Clothes, bags, and other textile products are being made using this plant's fibre. This is a \$25 billion market and Pakistan can take a big share in this market," Chaudhry said, adding, "this is under government control, so further research can be done and

adequate safeguards through ministry of narcotics can be placed." The minister expected the hemp market to generate \$1 billion in revenue for Pakistan in the next three years when research, cultivation, production, and exports for medical and industrial purposes are underway. The ministry has scouted areas in the Potohar region in northern Punjab, which is considered adequate for growing hemp due to its climate. This is part of the science ministry's larger initiative on precision agriculture under which niche projects focused on non-traditional agriculture are under development.

Pakistan has approved the domestication and commercialisation of medicinal and industrial cannabis and hemp at a Herbal Medicine Park in Jhelum, minister for science and technology Fawad Chaudhry tweeted. Chaudhry called it a landmark decision that will help Pakistan enter the billion-dollar Cannabidiol (CBD) market. "Cabinet has approved first license for @MinistryofST and PCSIR [Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research] for industrial and medical use of Hemp... [The] landmark decision will place Pakistan in billions of USD CBD market," he posted from his

Hindu widows to get share of husbands' properties: Bangladesh court

The Bangladesh High Court on Wednesday ruled that no separation has been made between the agricultural and non-agricultural lands. So Hindu widows have the rights to the lands of their husbands, The Daily Star reported.

For the first time, Hindu widows in Bangladesh will have the rights to both agricultural and non-agricultural lands of their deceased husbands after a top court ruled in their favour, according to a media report. The Bangladesh High Court on Wednesday ruled that no separation has been made between the agricultural and non-agricultural lands. So Hindu widows have the rights to the lands of their husbands, The Daily Star reported.

Under the current norm, Hindu widows in the country are only

entitled to their spouses' homesteads and not any other assets like agricultural land. "Hindu widows will have the rights to both agricultural and non-agricultural lands that belonged to their husbands. They will also get the right to sell the lands for legal necessities during their lifetime," the report said, citing the court order. The verdict by the High Court came following a civil revision petition filed by civilian Jyotindranath Mondal from Khulna district challenging a lower court verdict.

On March 7, 2004, Khulna's joint district judge delivered judgement in a case filed by Jyotindranath, saying that Gouri Dasi, widow of Jyotindranath's elder brother Avimannu Mondal, will get right to the agricultural land of her late husband.

The land had been recorded in the name of Gouri after Avimannu died in 1996. Jyotindranath had filed the case with the court of an assistant judge in Khulna challenging the record of the land in the name of Gouri Dasi in 1996.



NIA books Zakir Naik in 'love jihad' case involving top Bangladesh politician's son



Party. The NIA is probing the Indian businessman's daughter and Bangladesh politician son's marriage in London. Zakir Naik, who is wanted by Indian enforcement agencies, and the hardline preachers of Pakistani-origin based in the US have been named as accused in the case, according to information accessed by IANS.

The girl's father had initially lodged a complaint with the Chennai Central Crime Branch in May, alleging his daughter who was studying in London was radicalised and was forced to covert to Islam. He had also alleged that his daughter was abducted from London and taken to Bangladesh by some Bangladeshis. "The matter involved investigation in foreign

countries. And hence the case was transferred to National Investigation Agency (NIA)," Chennai Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal told IANS. He said it is not possible to share further details on the case. The persons named in the NIA's FIR are Zakir Naik, as well as Yasir Qadhi and Nauman Ali Khan, both US-based Islamic preachers. Qadhi had put a video of Naik where he was seen making sensational claims on safe passage from India when he was being pursued by Indian enforcement agencies. The prime accused is Nafees, son of Shakhawat Hossain Bakul, a BNP leader and former Member of Parliament. Bakul was elected to parliament from Narsingdi-4 as a BNP candidate

in 1991 and 2001. Bakul had been arrested from Khaleda Zia's residence in December 2013 and in June 2017, he was sued by a businessman for extortion. As per the summary of allegations being investigated by NIA, the Central government had received information from the Tamil Nadu government of regarding the registration of case on May 28, 2020, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, relating to the complaint filed against Nafees, a Bangladeshi citizen, who had allegedly indulged in kidnapping and trafficking of an Indian citizen.

The case revealed the commission of offence specified under the scheduled offences in the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has named Islamic preacher Zakir Naik and two hardline preachers of Pakistan origin as accused in an FIR pertaining to a high-profile "love jihad" case. The

high-profile case involves the daughter of a Chennai-based businessman and the son of a top Bangladesh politician, belonging to former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist

In Pakistan-Saudi clash, India has an opportunity



withholding funds, pushing Pakistan to pay debts, and holding back the renewal of an oil supply pact.

This moment was not sudden, but the culmination of the ever-growing ties between New Delhi and the Arab capitals in the backdrop of significant changes taking

related infrastructure. While Riyadh had already designed major changes to its vision of how it intends to power the kingdom financially in the future, taking cues from its neighbour, the UAE and its successes, these shifts will largely rely on eastern economies, with India and China leading the pack.

Even though Pakistan may publicly showcase China as its available alternative to everything, there must be concern in the country over this eventuality. It is important to remember here that China also has robust relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council region, including through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It makes little sense for Beijing to aggressively internationalise Kashmir on behalf of Pakistan, especially in the Gulf, when supporting Islamabad's stance on the same regionally in South Asia including via United Nations is more than enough for its requirements. China's plan include involving Saudi in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) itself, with a \$20 billion plan which now stands at an interesting inflection point. Furthermore, CPEC is only a small part of BRI, which forces China's hand to play its political deck of cards very carefully in the Middle East.

Pakistan's "absolutist" approach towards China may work against India. But the

Gulf region is going to be a different play, and Islamabad's lack of any hedging room against "iron brother" Beijing is going to become a challenge. This is an outcome of myopic State building, where an entire military, economic and political system is designed around one political and geographic agenda.

As Pakistan and Saudi clash, New Delhi is in a comfortable position, having made strong political and economic inroads into the Gulf capitals, which realise realpolitik's strong reliance on economics in modern diplomacy designs, giving a second-tier seat to issues such as religion. The Saudi-Pakistan kerfuffle is not a zero-sum game, and relations between the two will reconcile, led by deep defence and political roots. However, this relationship will look different from what it has historically been.

This is the time for New Delhi to make some critical moves, such as rapidly clearing Saudi- and UAE-backed infrastructure projects, cementing itself as a premier investment destination for the Gulf to park its money. Pakistan's attempt to make Kashmir a big issue in the Islamic world has failed, and the time is opportune for Indian diplomacy and economy to continue to capitalise on this in a restrained yet tactful manner.

In a surprising turn of events, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, in a very blunt and public statement, criticised Saudi Arabia over its aloofness and inability to conduct a meeting on Kashmir in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Qureshi pushed Riyadh, and the kingdom's de-facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), to either lead the Muslim ummah from the front by standing up for Kashmir after India's constitutional changes of August 2019, or let those Islamic countries act which are ready to confront New Delhi. A damage control trip to Riyadh by Pakistan Army and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chiefs yielded little results.

The gulf between Pakistan and its long-term ally, Saudi Arabia, has been growing for some time. The major blow, arguably, for Islamabad, came when, in March 2019, India was invited as a guest of honour by OIC, and the late former external affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj, gave a strong speech to the grouping, as she led the delegation to Abu Dhabi. Pakistan attempted to stall India's participation, but to no effect, and ultimately boycotted the speech by withdrawing its representation from the round table. The fact that Islamabad later on tried to create a parallel OIC, with Turkey, Malaysia and Iran, turned its differences with Saudi into a deeper political divide, leading to Riyadh

place in the region. These changes are led by a much more inclusive and outward-looking United Arab Emirates (UAE), and a change-driven Saudi Arabia under MbS. The churn is also driven by the need to break from the economic reliance on petrodollars and an oil-related economic ecosystem, which has suffered recently with consumption and prices having crashed due to the pandemic.

However, the geopolitical shifts and requirements of the Gulf do not necessarily feature Pakistan beyond a certain point, with its GDP still smaller than that of the Indian state of Maharashtra, where both the UAE and Saudi Arabia have plans to invest heavily in hydrocarbons and

U.S. blacklists ICC prosecutor over Afghanistan war crimes probe



The United States on Wednesday imposed sanctions on International Criminal Court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, over her investigation into whether American forces committed war crimes in Afghanistan. Pompeo also said Phakiso Mochochoko, the head

of the ICC's Jurisdiction, Complementarity and Cooperation Division, had also been blacklisted under sanctions authorized by President Donald Trump in June that allow for asset freezes and travel bans. "Today we take the next step, because the ICC continues to target Americans, sadly," Pompeo told

reporters. Pompeo also said that individuals and entities that continue to materially support Bensouda and Mochochoko would risk exposure to sanctions as well.

The ICC dismissed the measures as "another attempt to interfere with the court's judicial and prosecutorial independence" and said in a statement that it stood by the work of its staff.

"These coercive acts, directed at an international judicial institution and its civil servants, are unprecedented and constitute serious attacks against the court, the Rome Statute system of international criminal justice, and the rule of law more generally," it said in a rare joint statement on behalf of the entire ICC. The State Department also restricted the

issuance of visas for individuals Pompeo said were involved in the court's efforts to investigate U.S. personnel, though he did not name those affected.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was concerned by Pompeo's announcement, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters.

Dujarric said that "we trust that any restriction taken against individuals will be implemented consistently" with a decades-old U.S. deal with the United Nations to host the world body's headquarters in New York.

Bensouda was given the go-ahead by the court in March to investigate whether war crimes were committed in Afghanistan by the Taliban, Afghan military and U.S. forces. The United States revoked Bensouda's entry

visa last year over the possible Afghanistan inquiry. But under an agreement between the United Nations and Washington, she was still able to regularly travel to New York to brief the U.N. Security Council on cases it had referred to the court in The Hague.

Rights groups immediately condemned the U.S. designations.

Richard Dicker, Human Rights Watch international justice director, said it was a "stunning perversion of U.S. sanctions."

"The Trump administration has twisted these sanctions to obstruct justice, not only for certain war crimes victims, but for atrocity victims anywhere looking to the International Criminal Court for justice," he said.

Afghanistan resumes Taliban prisoner release



Afghanistan has resumed the controversial release of hundreds of Taliban prisoners.

A Taliban official told the AFP news agency that 200 prisoners

had been freed by the Afghan authorities since Monday, while the Taliban reportedly released four Afghan commandos. The release of Taliban inmates has

been a pre-condition to negotiations to end 19 years of conflict in the country.

Peace talks are expected to start in Qatar within days of the full release.

An unnamed senior Afghan official told AFP that "dozens" of prisoners had been released on Monday, with the remaining prisoners due to follow suit "within a couple of days".

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai praised the resumption of the prisoner release, which he described as a "positive step towards peace in Afghanistan".

"Why is there a war in Afghanistan?"

"Who are the Taliban?"

"How much has the Afghanistan war cost the US?"

The release of 5,000 militants formed part of a peace deal reached by the US and the Taliban in February, which was meant to pave the way for talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

In August, the Afghan government began to free the final 400 Taliban prisoners, after the move was approved by an Afghan grand assembly of elders. But not all of the

group was released, with both France and Australia objecting to the release of prisoners accused of fatal attacks against their nationals, including humanitarian workers.

According to a report by the Washington Post last week, three Afghans accused of involvement in the deaths of US troops are among the final group.

The Taliban were removed from power in Afghanistan by a US-led invasion in 2001, but now control more territory than at any point since that time.

Landslide, flash floods kill 12 in Nepal, dozens missing

Flash floods and a landslide triggered by heavy rains killed 12 people in Nepal and at least 36 people were missing in the Himalayan nation's biggest monsoon-related disaster this year, officials said on Thursday.

Home Ministry official Murari Wasti said rescuers had pulled 12 bodies out from muddy debris in the Baglung district of northwest Nepal, where nearly 30 houses were washed away by floods or buried in the landslide that struck before dawn.

Rescuers are still searching for victims and the death toll could rise, he said. "This is the biggest natural disaster of the year," Wasti told Reuters. "We have reports of 48 victims - 12 dead and 36

missing - but there could be many more victims as people were trapped while they were still sleeping."

Army spokesman Santosh B. Poudyal said soldiers using shovels and picks were trying to search through the debris for survivors but that rescue work was being hampered by heavy rains that prevented helicopters from landing in the remote area.

Flash floods and landslides are common in mostly mountainous Nepal during the annual monsoon rains which normally start in June and end in September.

At least 287 people have been killed and 154 injured with another 114 missing across the country this year, according to official data.





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Protests erupt in China's Inner Mongolia over Beijing's language politics in schools

(News Agencies)- HT has reached out to the Rights groups say the move to change the medium of instruction in schools in Inner Mongolia mirrors what Beijing has done in Tibet and Xinjiang. Rare protests have been reported from the ethnic Mongolian region in northern China over the imposition of the Mandarin in schools, which locals and rights groups say could lead to the wiping out of local language, identity, and culture. The change in curriculum in schools in Inner Mongolia, which was enacted this week, means that three core subjects - politics, history, language, and literature - will now be taught in Mandarin, and not in Mongolian anymore. The vast mineral-rich province shares borders with Mongolia and Russia. Rights groups say the move to change the medium of instruction in schools in Inner Mongolia mirrors what Beijing has done in Tibet and Xinjiang where, after local languages were replaced, the focus now is to sinicise even Tibetans and Islam - assimilate, even subsume, local ethnic communities within the majority Han population.

Chinese foreign ministry for a comment on the protests. "Almost every Mongolian in Inner Mongolia is opposed to the revised curriculum," a 32-year-old herder from the Xilingol League area surnamed Hu told AFP news agency on Tuesday, warning that Mongolian children were losing fluency in their mother tongue. "In a few decades, a minority language will be on the verge of extinction." Reports said schools were boycotted, and parents staged protests against the move. The head of the New York-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre, Enghebatu Togocho, told HT that locals fear the Mongolian language will be wiped out because of this decision. "What is happening in Southern Mongolia (Inner Mongolia) now as we speak is a region-wide civil disobedience resistance movement that is taking place against the Chinese Central government's attempt to wipe out Mongolian language, culture and identity once and for all," Togocho told HT over email.

Togocho spoke of "cultural genocide" being carried out in the region, home to the majority of over 5 million ethnic Mongolians. "The new wave of cultural genocide came under the name of 'Secondary Bilingual Education', and the goal of this policy is to completely replace all Mongolian-medium education with Chinese one across Southern Mongolia starting September 1, this year," Togocho said. Christopher P Atwood, a professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches the history of Mongolia and the Inner Asian borderlands of China, explains the policy in the academic journal "Made in China". "The plan is to begin transitioning to the state-compiled textbooks for 'language and literature', 'morality and law (politics)', and 'history' classes. The key point is that these classes will be taught in the national common language-Mandarin Chinese. This policy will be formally implemented



from the beginning of school, this 1 September, starting with 'language and literature' in first and seventh grade," Atwood wrote in the journal, which is brought out by the Australian Centre on China in the World and the Australian National University. Next year, it will be extended to morality and law and then to history in 2022. "So, from 2022, if all goes according to plan, all students in Inner Mongolia will be taking all three of these classes solely in Chinese, on the basis of the Chinese state-compiled textbooks. Previously, in many schools in Inner Mongolia, all of these subjects were taught in Mongolian through high school," Atwood added. According to the AFP, the Inner Mongolia Education Bureau claimed in a Monday social media post that the number of Mongolian-language teaching hours remained unchanged. According to Atwood, that's not true. "But the policy documents envision the new subjects being given greater prominence in the curriculum and taught at lower levels. At the same time, there is also a promise of no increase in school hours. Thus, the share of the class hours for the 'local classes' per week is being reduced in order to increase the class hours for the 'national classes', which cannot but reduce the hours conducted in Mongolian," he wrote.

Ed Markey wins Massachusetts democratic primary, defeating Joe Kennedy



(News Agencies)- Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts defeated Representative Joe Kennedy in the state's hotly contested Democratic Senate primary, besting the scion of a political dynasty by galvanizing the party's progressive wing. It's a come-from-behind win for Markey, who is all but certain of a second full term in the November election in the solidly blue state. He trailed Kennedy after the 39-year-old grandson of Robert F. Kennedy announced his challenge in the fall of 2019; some had expected him to simply retire. But he

campaigned aggressively as a liberal insurgent, out-raised his opponent and won a raft of endorsements, including from outspoken progressive Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The results make Kennedy, who trailed in polls in the days leading up to the Bay State primary, the first member of his storied family to lose a political race in Massachusetts. Polls showed Kennedy had stronger support among minority and working-class voters, but struggled to win over wealthier, educated white voters and younger liberals. In another race pitting a Pelosi-backed candidate against a

The results make Kennedy, who trailed in polls in the days leading up to the Bay State primary, the first member of his storied family to lose a political race in Massachusetts.

contender supported by Ocasio-Cortez, House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal defeated Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse. Neal will run for re-election in November in the solidly Democratic 1st Congressional District in the central and western portion of the state with no Republican opponent. Pelosi had put her clout behind Neal to help him fend off a 31-year-old progressive challenger who was seeking to replicate the success of three other insurgents who ousted incumbent Democrats in earlier primaries this year. Neal, 71, first elected to Congress in 1988, took the lesson from those earlier contests and campaigned hard to keep his seat. In addition to the backing of Pelosi and other influential Democratic Party leaders, he had an unusual cross-party endorsement from the state's popular Republican governor, Charlie Baker.

The Senate contest divided Democratic leaders in the Massachusetts and in Washington. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi endorsed Kennedy, while Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer backed Markey. Markey's co-sponsorship of the Green New Deal with Representative Ocasio-Cortez was central to her decision to support him. The drive by Markey, 74, to run as an insurgent was a remarkable choice for a lawmaker who had served in the House from 1976 to 2013 before he ran for the Senate seat vacated by John Kerry when Kerry was confirmed as President Barack Obama's secretary of state. Kennedy, wasn't even born when Markey first ran for Congress. Markey's victory comes after candidates backed by progressive groups ousted three Democratic incumbents in this

year's primaries: Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel in New York, Representative William Lacy Clay of Missouri and Representative Dan Lipinski of Illinois. Massachusetts voters had a choice between two candidates with liberal voting records. Markey and Kennedy agree on many policies, including the Green New Deal to combat greenhouse-gas emissions, a single-payer health care system and overhauling policing practices in the U.S. In August debates, they argued more about outside spending in the race and the increasingly bitter tone of the contest. Markey called Kennedy at one debate "a progressive in name only." In his advertising, Kennedy accused Markey of forgetting about the working-class residents of his home town of Malden and focusing more on Washington than Massachusetts.

Nancy Pelosi takes heat over visit to California hair salon during Covid-19

Footage aired by Fox News Channel shows Pelosi, her mask around her neck rather than on her face, walking through the establishment. A stylist follows her, wearing a mask.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is getting heat over a solo hair salon visit in San Francisco at a time when California businesses are limited by concern over coronavirus.

But Pelosi's spokesman said she was complying with the rules as presented to her by eSalon.

"This business offered for the Speaker to come in on Monday and told her they were allowed by the city to have one

customer at a time in the business," said spokesman Drew Hammill in a statement. "The Speaker complied with the rules as presented to her by this establishment."

Footage aired by Fox News Channel shows Pelosi, her mask around her neck rather than on her face, walking through the establishment. A stylist follows her, wearing a mask.

The salon owner said she rents chairs to stylists, one of whom

let her know in advance that Pelosi wanted a wash and a blow dry. Outdoor haircuts are allowed in California, but indoor salons have not reopened. The owner said she considered the service "a slap in the face" to business owners who have been forced to close.

Conservatives pounced, casting Pelosi as a hypocrite.

"Speaker Pelosi has pushed policies that would keep our economy closed and our small businesses shut down. But for



herself?" Senate Republicans tweeted. "A salon visit whenever she pleases."

Pelosi says Republicans could help create the conditions to safely reopen if they would only "listen to the scientists."

"Republicans are rejecting the funding needed for testing and tracing to crush the virus and safely reopen schools and the economy," she wrote in a letter Friday to her Democratic colleagues.

Trump administration sending rapid Covid tests to states, CDC bars evictions



The Trump administration will send most of its newly purchased 150 million rapid Covid-19 tests to U.S. states for schools and critical services, a White House official said on Tuesday, as New York City pushed back reopening

classrooms in a deal with union leaders.

The moves came as The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday issued a sweeping order temporarily halting landlords across the nation from evicting millions of tenants in what

it said was an effort to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

The order covers all 43 million US residential renters as long as they meet income eligibility requirements, although an administration official said the government does not expect an "overwhelming" use of the program. The daily number of infections has been in decline across most of the United States in recent weeks, with 36,263 reported on Monday, less than half of the mid-July peak, according to a Reuters tally.

Exceptions include Midwest states such as South Dakota, where hundreds of thousands of motorcycle riders gathered for a

rally in August, and Iowa.

A total of more than 183,000 people have died so far from complications of Covid-19, including 32,647 in New York and nearly 16,000 in New Jersey, the U.S. states with the highest death tolls. In announcing that the "overwhelming majority" of 150 rapid antigen tests purchased from Abbot Laboratories would be sent to state governors, U.S. Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary Admiral Brett Giroir said top priorities included day care centers and first responders. The portable tests can deliver results within 15 minutes and will sell for \$5. They require no

additional equipment, and can use a less invasive nasal swab than traditional lab tests.

President Donald Trump has pushed for schools across the country to reopen classrooms, but many districts have ordered students to stay home and learn online. Among them are Los Angeles and San Diego Counties, the second and third-largest school districts in the nation respectively. In New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio said an agreement had been reached with reluctant teachers union leaders to reopen school buildings to students on September 21 as part of his plan for a mix of in-class and remote learning.

Uighur issue resonates in US presidential polls, China's 'Iron Brother' Pakistan silent

China's treatment of Uighur minorities has been widely criticised across the world, and many international bodies have demanded action against the Chinese government.

Last week, Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee for US presidential election, called the Chinese action a genocide. His campaign said the Biden stands strongly against it in strongest terms.

Biden also took the opportunity to lash out at his Republican rival by questioning President Donald Trump what action his administration is planning to take.

Though Trump has criticised Beijing for the coronavirus crisis, and often called the

Sars-CoV-2 "China virus", he has also sought a trade pact. What he got was a mini trade deal last year, and the ties have since soured. So, Biden has to score a political point in race to White House.

China has been widely condemned for setting up complexes in remote Xinjiang region (where Uighurs mostly live) that it describes as "vocational training centres" to stamp out extremism and give people new skills. The United Nations says at least 1 million ethnic Uighurs and other Muslims have been detained. Pakistan, which calls China its "Iron Brother" has so far remained silent on the issue. In July this year, the Uighur Turks and other Muslim

communities in China also protested Beijing's action against the community. They asked the United Nations and other international organisations to put pressure on Beijing and investigate the "acts of genocide" perpetrated against the Uighurs.

Campaign for Uighurs, which works for the community and keeps highlighting their status in China, released a report titled 'Genocide in East Turkistan' in which it listed instances where the Chinese government persecuted the embers of the minority community.

The report said that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chinese government continues its oppression and persecution of



Uighur Turks and other Muslim communities for its own political and economic interests.

"The Chinese government sent 1.1 million Han Chinese cadres to East Turkistan to control the daily life of Uighurs. Their job is to stay in Uighur homes, share the same bed with them if

necessary and to control all aspects of their daily lives," the report claimed.

In order to disrupt the Uighur family structure, the Beijing administration offers the Han Chinese money, jobs and free homes for these arranged marriages, it further claimed.

Trump administration plans expanded use of personal data

US Customs and Border Protection, a component of DHS, already collects biometric data, including iris scans, from people captured trying to enter the country without legal authority.

The Trump administration announced plans Tuesday to expand the collection of personal "biometric" information by the agency in charge of immigration enforcement, raising concerns about civil liberties and data protection.

In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security said it would soon issue a formal proposal for a new regulation for expanding "the authorities and methods" for collecting biometrics, which are physical characteristics such as fingerprints used to identify individuals.

US Customs and Border Protection, a component of DHS, already collects biometric data, including iris scans, from people captured trying to enter the country without legal authority.

DHS said in a written statement that the new rule would authorize new techniques, including voice and facial recognition to verify people's identity.

The agency did not release the proposed regulation or provide details. BuzzFeed News, which obtained a draft of the policy, reported earlier Tuesday that it included a provision for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, which is also a component of DHS, to collect biometric data from non-citizens legally working and living in the U.S. or seeking to do so.

It would also require U.S. citizens sponsoring relatives to come to the country to provide biometric data, including in some cases their DNA, if it was needed to verify someone's identity.

"This is a remarkable expansion of surveillance, especially the

idea that immigrants could be called in at any point to give these biometrics," said Sarah Pierce, an analyst with the Migration Policy Institute.

It typically takes several months for a new regulation to take effect after a public comment period.

This measure is likely to prompt legal challenges, as have most immigration measures introduced under President Donald Trump.

Acting Deputy DHS Secretary Ken Cuccinelli characterized the new regulation in a written statement as a way to improve the verification of people's identities and modernize operations.

"Leveraging readily available technology to verify the identity of an individual we are screening is responsible governing," Cuccinelli said. "The collection



of biometric information also guards against identity theft and thwarts fraudsters who are not who they claim to be."

DHS is charged with enforcing the strict immigration enforcement policies that have been a hallmark of the Trump administration. But the agency is also in charge of Citizenship and Immigration Services, which is responsible for enabling people to legally live and work in the United States.

A lawyer with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a privacy rights watchdog, said there's no justification for expanding biometric data collection, and no

clear rules for how long the information can be retained, how it can be used, and whether it can be shared with foreign governments or other agencies.

"There doesn't really seem to be any indication that this will help with combating fraud or anything like that," said EFF staff attorney Saira Hussain. "Rather, it's about making it so the government can engage in dragnet surveillance of immigrant communities by being able to access some of their most unique and sensitive biometric information."

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- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.



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China pushing to double nuclear warhead arsenal: Pentagon

Aside from aiming for technological parity with the United States, the People's Liberation Army is also focused on conducting joint operations, to be able to deter or defeat any US effort to intervene on Taiwan's behalf, the report said.

The Chinese military is pressing to double its 200-plus nuclear warheads within a decade with the ability to launch them aboard ballistic missiles by land, sea and air, the Pentagon said in a report Tuesday.

Aside from aiming for technological parity with the United States, the People's Liberation Army is also focused on conducting joint operations, to be able to deter or defeat any US effort to intervene on Taiwan's behalf, the report said.

It said that PLA has already matched or surpassed the US military in several areas, including shipbuilding, land-based ballistic and cruise missiles, and air defense systems.

And in its first public estimate of China's nuclear capacity, the annual report said the country has warheads numbering "in the low 200s" in its nuclear stockpile, fewer than the 300 or more

estimated by independent analysts.

The report says that number is expected to double over 10 years. China can already launch nuclear weapons by ballistic missile from land and sea, and is developing the capacity to do develop an air-launched ballistic missile as well, the report said.

"It is likely that Beijing will seek to develop a military by mid-century that is equal to -- or in some cases superior to -- the US military, or that of any other great power that the PRC views as a threat," the report said.

If China achieves that goal and the United States fails to address it, the report said, it "will have serious implications for US national interests and the security of the international rules-based order."

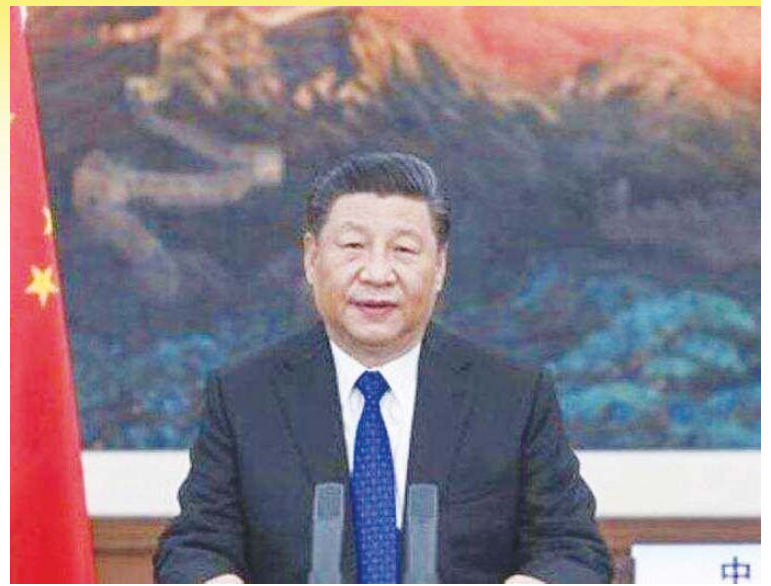
A Pentagon official said that although China remains far behind the United States in terms of

nuclear warheads, the acceleration shows Beijing moving from its traditional "minimum deterrence posture" to full-fledged competition.

"Combined with a near-complete lack of transparency regarding their strategic intent and the perceived need for a much larger, more diverse nuclear force, these developments pose a significant concern for the United States," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Chad Sbragia.

He said the military expansion is part of China's overall strategy for a sweeping modernization and to establish itself as a leading global power by 2049.

China has made clear it sees the United States as seeking to maintain military supremacy globally, and says Washington, with military bases on the western Pacific rim and a potent



naval presence throughout the region, is the source of tensions in Asia.

The report noted that China already has the world's largest navy, with 350 ships and submarines, compared to 293 for the US Navy.

The Pentagon has highlighted that deficit as it seeks to expand its fleet to 355 vessels.

The report also highlights China's advantage, unrestricted by arms agreements that the US and Russia have, in ground-launched ballistic missiles.

However, the United States leads in submarine-launched and air-launched ballistic missiles; China is still working to develop the latter.

The report described China as determined to project its power eastward into the Pacific beyond Taiwan, and to pressure the United States out of the region.

The report said that as China seeks to bring Washington-ally Taiwan under its control, Beijing is seeking the ability to win a possible war with the US over the island.

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Gun pulled at protest prompts county to institute curfew



A Florida county a white man began instituted a curfew Tuesday, several days after a man pulled a gun at a protest against police violence, officials said. Leon County Commission Chairman Bryan Desloge signed an order declaring a local state of emergency that includes a curfew from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. starting Wednesday and lasting for a week. The proclamation cites Tallahassee protests that have turned violent, specifically a Saturday confrontation where a man pulled a gun on protesters. The Tallahassee Police Department said in a statement that the incident occurred during a protest downtown. Police said

the man began "documenting the protest" and then was pushed from behind. A fight ensued, police said, and the man was knocked to the ground. The man got up and pulled a gun, police said. Officers took the man into custody and dispersed the crowd. No charges were filed, and no injuries were reported. Police said the man with the gun "was lawfully carrying a concealed weapon as a license holder." The demonstration was organized by the Tallahassee Community Action Committee in response to the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which has sparked protests across the country.

Wuhan, Ground Zero for coronavirus epidemic, re-opens all schools

Students in face masks returned to class Tuesday in Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the coronavirus first emerged last year, as the city opened schools and kindergartens for the first time in seven months.

Nearly 1.4 million students resumed classes at some 2,800 kindergartens, primary and middle schools across the city, following the re-opening of high schools in May.

Click here for full Covid-19 coverage

State media broadcast images of thousands of students hoisting the Chinese flag -- a daily routine at all public schools -- despite warnings to avoid mass gatherings.

Schools have drawn up plans to switch back to online teaching should new outbreaks emerge, city officials said last week.

Students were advised to wear masks to and from school and avoid public buses or trains if



possible.

Schools were also ordered to conduct drills and training sessions to help prepare for new outbreaks.

Official figures show Wuhan accounted for 80 percent of China's more than 4,600 coronavirus-related deaths and was under a strict lockdown for more than two months from late January.

The city also conducted a mass testing campaign targeting 11 million residents in May.

China has now largely controlled the spread of the virus, and

schools across the country -- which were closed in late January -- have gradually re-opened.

Shanghai re-opened schools in May, and the capital city Beijing, which recently suffered from a local outbreak of the virus, said it will resume all schools including kindergartens in September.

Beijing authorities require teachers and students to wear face masks on campus.

China has not reported any new local transmissions of the coronavirus in recent days.

Me and my family's relationship to India is very good, says Donald Trump

The First Family of the United States is in love with India, US President Donald Trump indicated as he noted that both his daughter Ivanka and son Donald Trump Jr along with Kimberly Guilfoyle think a lot about India and so does he. "I know India and I understood those young people (Kimberly, Donald Trump Jr and Ivanka) that



you mentioned. They're very good young people. And I know their relationship to India is very good and so is mine," Trump told reporters at the White House.

The president, who describes himself as the best friend ever of India and Indian Americans in the White House, was responding to a question about the role the three important members of his family are going to play this election cycle along with respect to the Indian American community. "Would Kimberly, Donald Trump Jr., and Ivanka Trump, who are very popular among Indian Americans, would be campaigning on your behalf among the Indian Americans with your views on India-US relationship?" the president was asked. "I appreciate the nice sentiments.

They think (Kimberly, Don Jr and Ivanka) a lot of India and so do I. And think a lot of your prime minister (Narendra Modi)," Trump said in response to the question.

In the 2016 elections, the Trump family had reached out to the Indian American community, particularly in the battleground states of Virginia, Pennsylvania and

Florida where both Ivanka, and Donald Trump Jr along with his other son Eric and daughter-in-law Lara Trump held meetings with the community members and visited Hindu temples. Ivanka, was the first member of the Trump family to make a trip to India after Trump came to power. She led a high-powered US delegation to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in India in 2017. Ivanka, frequently tweets about issues related to India. Having a star appeal in India, Ivanka is also special advisor to the president. Donald Trump Jr, who is heading the re-election campaign, has also made trips to India. Last December he held a special book-launch event for Indian American community in Long Island.

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Judge And Hangman

process, irrevocably demolished the reputation of Rhea Chakraborty, his former companion.

The intense media scrutiny whipped up mass hysteria and none today is sure whether Sushant took his own life as initially suggested, or if foul play was involved. While public opinion could be divided, media has had no compunction in concluding who it thinks pushed Sushant to death. Though the basic tenet of criminal justice is that one is innocent until proven guilty, Rhea has been overwhelmingly pronounced the villain by prime-

time television. While scrums of journalists hound her and her family inside and outside their home, she has been demonised in many ways-from sex bait to gold-digger and black magician. A Bengali battling for another Bengali under such circumstances is courting trouble, but I still cannot help empathising with Rhea. Irrespective of her role, there is no denying she's getting a raw deal. Hashtags such as #ArrestRhea are being aggressively promoted by TV channels and she is being relentlessly subjected to the

most appalling abuses, including Bhojpuri music albums whose titles refer to her in the most unprintable terms. With sections of the public baying for her blood, it was only natural that politicians would step in and they have done so with unbridled glee. In poll-bound Bihar, the probe into Sushant's death is being marketed as a matter of Bihari pride, while the hounding of Rhea is being sold in neighbouring Bengal to deepen the divide between Bengalis and non-Bengalis before elections scheduled next year.

However unfortunate, this media

trial riveting the nation is neither the first nor will it be the last. We have seen them whenever there has been a sensational crime-the murder of Aarushi Talwar and Sheena Bora serving as living examples. That the current episode involves a celebrity is actually a godsend for purveyors of media trials. It has got them eyeballs and they can expect extra advertisement revenues to follow. The basic purpose served, none really is losing sleep over whether a fair probe is any more possible. For that matter, the CBI-tasked with

uncovering the truth-hasn't been asked any of the inconvenient questions, including the suicide of a family of four in Delhi who left notes accusing officials of the agency of forcing them to end their lives. The CBI did not even bother to investigate the case.

This time though, I hope, the CBI will play its part and justice will be delivered not just to Sushant, but Rhea as well. As for journalists like me, there is no panacea in sight. In the absence of rules, regulations, self-restraint and remorse, we can brace ourselves for being periodically put to shame.

How to vaccinate a billion people

enrolment. In 2009, some of us were grappling with how to enrol at speed, scale and quality. We realised that the traditional model, where the government procured thousands of enrolment kits would not cut it. We came up with a different model. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) appointed registrars such as state governments, private and public banks, and the post office, to carry out enrolment. In turn, these registrars hired enrolment agencies from a UIDAI-approved list.

The agencies bought UIDAI-approved enrolment kits directly from vendors of biometric devices. The operators of the enrolment kits were certified through another ecosystem. Enrolment operations were quickly set up nationwide. At its peak, there were some 35,000 stations that could enrol up to 1.5 million residents a day. The reimbursement was ₹50 per successful Aadhaar generated. This public-private partnership is how we managed comprehensive coverage - and fast. The result: 600 million residents got their Aadhaar in four years, and a billion in 5.5 years. The response to the pandemic needs to be even faster.

India is uniquely placed to offer vaccination for the entire population at speed and scale. The experience of Aadhaar enrolment is helpful, as is the infrastructure provided by Aadhaar. Now that everyone can be authenticated online, either



using Aadhaar or using mobile phones, be it by biometrics or OTP, it creates a new paradigm. For example, we can allow anytime-anywhere vaccination, where a person can walk into a vaccination station nearby, have a choice to get authenticated with Aadhaar or phone number and get a shot - all in minutes.

India is the vaccine capital of the world. Serum Institute of India is the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, with a capacity to manufacture 1.2 billion vaccine doses a year. It has partnerships with vaccine makers Oxford/AstraZeneca, Novavax and Codagenix. Zydus Cadila has started Phase 2 clinical trials of its vaccine ZYCoV-D. If successful, it says it can manufacture 100 million vaccines a year. Bharat Biotech has begun Phase 2 trials of its indigenous vaccine developed with Indian Council of Medical

Research and the National Institute of Virology. It says it will have a capacity of 200 million doses per year. Biological E has tied up with Johnson&Johnson. With the acquisition of Akorn India Pvt Ltd, it expects to have a capacity of one billion doses per year. There are other firms, and other vaccines too.

Sure, things remain uncertain. Some vaccines may be unsuccessful; some may require two doses or may need to be repeated after a few months. The capacities may be overstated, and some of that capacity will be exported. Even after that, it is still reasonable to assume that India will have adequate vaccine supplies at some stage. If any of the vaccines fail, the capacity earmarked for the failed vaccine can be used to manufacture a successful vaccine of the same type.

Given what we know of India's

capacity for vaccine manufacture, it is important that the system design for vaccination roll-out is based not on vaccine scarcity, but vaccine adequacy. Even if we don't start that way, India should reach adequacy by the end of 2021. We are not distributing a precious resource, we are trying to deliver fast and far, a vaccine that everyone needs.

India has a long and accomplished history of immunisation. But that infrastructure can't be used because the immunisation that is now required - over one billion, possibly two billion, vaccinations in less than two years - is very different in speed and scale to the current system, which is limited to 25 million infants born each year, and pregnant women. The Covid-19 vaccine will have to be universal. And finally, if we load Covid-19 vaccination on the

current vaccination infrastructure, it will be overwhelmed. It is possible that for three to five years, the regular workload of all childhood vaccinations for infants will be disrupted, endangering over 100 million babies. Our success in polio is commendable, but it is vital to remember polio is an oral vaccine that an untrained care worker can administer at the recipient's home.

The current vaccine infrastructure requires the government buying the vaccines and then distributing them. Government procurement works well when we have stable and proven vaccines. However, in the Covid-19 scenario, which is exceptionally dynamic and varied, there will be a large number of vaccines available with varying safety, efficacy, length of immunity, dosage, etc. As soon as the first vaccine becomes available, there will be pressure on the government to purchase large quantities and start distributing immediately.

However, in this approach, the government, and ultimately the people of India, take on many risks. If, after a few months, there are unacceptable side effects, or the vaccine does not work as well as expected, or fortuitously a better, cheaper vaccine comes along, then the procured stocks will become worthless. At this time, the issue is likely to be politicised and the usual finger-pointing, CAG audit will start and cripple further efforts.

Netflix suspends 'Bad Boy Billionaires' release after India court order

Subrata Roy, founder of the Sahara India Pariwar conglomerate, who spent two years in jail - successfully secured an order against it using his name from a regional court. The top court ordered Netflix to take its petition back to the lower courts in the Indian state of Bihar. Another regional court in Hyderabad has separately stayed the show's release at the behest of Ramalinga Raju, whose software company Satyam was behind a \$1bn accounting scandal. Netflix, which declined to

comment, now faces a potentially difficult battle through India's lower courts to clear the way for the show, which had been due to air on Wednesday. It has removed the trailer for the series from its website. The case is a significant setback to the streaming giant as it seeks to expand its footprint in India, where it launched in 2016. Bad Boy Billionaires: India marked one of its boldest forays into documentary content in the country. The four-part series is billed as an "investigative

docuseries [that] explores the greed, fraud and corruption that built up - and ultimately brought down - India's most infamous tycoons". It has faced multiple legal challenges from the tycoons featured in the show, who include fugitive liquor magnate Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi, a celebrity jeweller accused of being at the centre of an alleged \$2bn fraud. Please use the sharing tools found via the share button at the top or side of articles. Copying articles to

share with others is a breach of FT.com T&Cs and Copyright Policy. Email licensing@ft.com to buy additional rights. Subscribers may share up to 10 or 20 articles per month using the gift article service. More information can be found here. Both Mr Mallya and Mr Modi fled to London after becoming embroiled in separate scandals, with both accused of defrauding public sector banks. Both the once-high flying tycoons are fighting their extradition back to India, and Mr Modi is being held in jail in the UK. Both deny allegations of wrongdoing. Mr Roy,

the flamboyant founder of a business empire that included real estate, media and retail was jailed for two years for contempt of court in connection with a case involving a \$4bn convertible bond issue found illegal by the Indian courts. He left prison in 2016. Mr Raju was behind what was then the biggest accounting scandal in Indian history after admitting in 2009 to inflating revenues at Satyam. He was sentenced to seven years in 2015 but is no longer in jail.

Chushul aggression is part of China's plan. It wants to provoke India

The fact is that actions of paramount leader Xi Jinping such as consolidation of Hong Kong, sinification of Tibet, subjugation of Uighurs in Xinjiang and domination of the South China Sea all point to Fortress China, with India bearing the consequences in Ladakh. Clearly under the mask of the coronavirus disease that originated in Wuhan, communist party chief Xi is grabbing all that he wants to believe belongs to China and is not averse to use of military force to achieve his objective. While ASEAN nations look to the US to shoulder the burden in the South China Sea against big brother China, India will have to carry the cross alone as it is surrounded by ally states of the Middle Kingdom.

A weak US President after the November elections will confirm the rise of China as a global superpower with a divided Europe in no position to act against Beijing but only talk tall. The UN Security Council is the other talk shop.

The many ramifications of India being a front-line state against China with three neighbours - Nepal, Pakistan and Myanmar - in a cosy relationship with Beijing is indeed disturbing. The Indian task becomes humongous with the Chinese United Front Work Department under Xi Jinping making serious inroads into the country through individuals and organisations. This department, which reports

directly to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, not only gathers intelligence but also ensures that potential critics of Beijing remain divided throughout the world. While the current government under Narendra Modi has the numbers in Parliament to deal with a resurgent Middle Kingdom, a weak government in Delhi on a future date will decimate the resistance to Beijing. From the current events in Ladakh, it is quite clear that China wants to activate the entire LAC and provoke India into a reaction or cow down in submission through use of psychological warfare, spreading discontent

through its ideological brothers and finally, use of brute military force. Xi Jinping clearly believes in taking all that the past rulers of the forbidden city had fantastically claimed. Given the bleak scenario, it is important that the Modi government ensures that only the competent and meritorious are placed at the top in military, diplomacy, intelligence and a bureaucracy that works in silos. A democratic India is already handicapped in dealing with a single-agenda China and a seniority based leadership will only deepen the crisis. The last thing that India wants to see is a divided military that embarrasses the nation through leaks to settle personal scores, an intelligence organisation that prepares only reports and a

diplomacy that does not have teeth. The saving grace is that some of India's best minds are handling national security today at the apex level who respect rising China, but are not afraid of it. For long, India has been sitting on the fence without taking any stand on global issues. This was valid in the past as India did not have the heft or the gravitas to get the global ear. Hence, it would often not take positions as it had to take into account politicians who were still living in the erstwhile Soviet era or a Cold war side-show called the non-aligned movement. Coronavirus has changed the world forever. India must change or bear the consequences.

Congress Must 'Dethrone' Gandhis And Revive Inner-party Democracy To Survive



The latest manifestation of the Congress's bid to self-destruct was clearly visible in the reaction of the party leadership to the letter asking for organisational reforms including some form of inner-party democracy that would help revitalise India's Grand Old Party. Instead of addressing these very pressing issues the Congress president, her son, and their

acolytes in the party interpreted the demand as a rebuke to the Gandhi family. Most members at the CWC meeting of August 24 launched visceral attacks on the signatories of the letter for demanding reforms and thus daring, even if implicitly, to challenge the Gandhi family's dominance of the party. The meeting was proof if one was

needed that the Congress leaders, especially Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, have not learnt any lessons from the electoral debacles under their watch.

This should be an eye-opener for those sceptical of the argument that the Congress party has become the exclusive preserve of the Gandhi family. Sonia's haughty demeanour and Rahul's intemperate remarks should put to rest all doubts on this score. One wonders whether the time has now arrived to rename the party the Gandhi Family Party (GFP) to distinguish it from the Indian National Congress(INC). Even when Mahatma Gandhi was at the zenith of his popularity during the freedom movement, the Congress did not become his personal property. Leaders

such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, and Subhas Chandra Bose were not his echo chambers. That the CWC in 1947 under Patel's and Nehru's urgings accepted the partition plan against the Mahatma's wishes is testimony to this fact.

The ease with which the Gandhis successfully turned the demand for organisational reform into an attack on themselves is proof of the high degree of control exercised by them over the party as well the total lack of backbone among most so-called leaders of the party. Sonia Gandhi indulged in high drama by offering to resign knowing fully well that she will be "persuaded" to continue until Rahul is ready to step into her shoes again. It is clear that the Gandhis treat the party as their family property, an idea that has its roots in the autocratic and dynastic proclivities of Indira Gandhi.

The virulent attacks on the

signatories to the letter make two things very evident.

One, that members of the CWC and other functionaries in the party retain their positions at the pleasure of the Gandhi family since most of them are unelected and/or unelectable and, therefore, cannot afford to incur the Gandhi family's wrath. The proper term for them would be "retainers" rather than leaders. Two, the way the "dissenters" quickly ate their words and abjured any intention of criticizing the Gandhi family and apologized for any unintentional hurt caused to the family by their letter also demonstrates their total dependence on the Gandhi family for their political survival. But their decision to retract has not prevented continuing virulent attacks on them, obviously encouraged if not ordered by the Congress High Command.

What the future of conferences could look like

In mid-March, the 2020 PROMAX Europe conference was due to take place in Madrid, right as Spain locked down its entire country. As virus cases climbed, the annual entertainment-marketing conference - with its 500 attendees, 300 hotel rooms and £400,000 (\$524,000) cost - was put on hold. The postponement meant "that all of the tickets, all of the purchases, all of the speakers and all of the production commitments had to be put on ice, or at least kind of mothballed for the time being", says Lester Mordue, the conference's director.

Now, despite organisers' hopes to resume later in the year, PROMAX isn't taking place in 2020 - at least not in person. It's just one example of the massive pause on the global conference industry in the wake of Covid-19. Conferences, which traditionally see participants convening centrally in a hotel or events centre, involve lots of close contact; members sitting together, sharing buffets and conversing in tight quarters. Many see hundreds of participants flying in from around the world. In the age of Covid-19, they are the worst kind of 'super-spreader event': a conference held in Edinburgh in February resulted in 25 attendees contracting the coronavirus, including one who then seeded it at a child's birthday party. "It's large numbers of people coming together, social inhibitions and norms being relaxed, and people spending time together that makes for a higher risk of transmission events," says Paul Hunter, professor of medicine at the University of East Anglia. "Conferences certainly do fill that criteria."

Right now, conferences are nearly impossible to hold - both logistically, due to travel restrictions, and as a matter of public health. Yet they have to continue, as a \$1.1tn global industry supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. How does the industry go forward in such a changed world?

The digital transition

PROMAX took parts of its conference - including some keynote speeches - online, trading the auditorium for the Zoom window. Organisers weren't alone: just as most



elements of transacting business have moved to video-chat screens, so have conferences.

"Everyone was talking about e-conferences" before the coronavirus, but few bothered to explore it as an option, explains Mandy Jennings of Paje Consulting, an event-planning business based in Cheshire. "We were in that situation of doing what we're used to. This has forced everyone to embrace it, and made companies realise some of these things can be done in a virtual world, rather than sending people on a train or plane around the globe."

Attendance at the online sessions that replaced PROMAX was "encouraging", says Mordue, with some sessions getting the same number of attendees they would normally. Participants were allowed to transfer their tickets to the virtual event or to defer to a physical event in 2021. PROMAX says it expects to adjust its pricing structure for future web conferences to allow people to choose events at a fair cost for them. Feedback has so far been positive, says Mordue, with many enjoying the ability to catch up with digital sessions on-demand.

But organisers acknowledge that digital events are in many ways a pale imitation of traditional conferences. "Our conscious decision to not try and replicate the conference experience is a recognition that in-person physical conferences have certain tangible benefits," says Mordue. Businesses spend money to send employees to conferences because of the networking

opportunities and happenstance discussions that take place on the sidelines.

"We all know that networking is a big part of conferencing," says Mordue. "The ability to speak to the speakers or your community, to communicate your ideas and get inspiration - that's the conference experience." Although organisers are trying to replicate as much as they can through online events, that intangible element of being energised around others is much harder to capture when people aren't physically gathered.

"You tend to be sticking to that agenda in a digital conference," says Jennings. "It's shorter, and you don't get the chance you do in person."

A changed future

Despite the potential safety issue, some conferences are slowly starting to return to the calendar. In the UK, the government has announced conferences can recommence on 1 October, after extensive lobbying by the industry, which warned 30,000 jobs were at risk. Conferences are worth £11bn to the UK economy, according to Rachel Parker, director of the Association of Event Venues, a UK industry body. She says between 50 and 90% of staff in the UK organising and venue industry were furloughed, with many starting to see redundancies as UK government support begins to end. "While we've got a green light to go, we're potentially trading at 15% to 25% in this last quarter, and so we need additional [financial] measures from government," Parker says. Physical conferences, when

they return, will likely look very different. "Organisers will have to look at measures that happen within the technical side," says Parker. For instance, most virologists would be chilled at the notion of passing a single stick microphone among audience members for a question-and-answer-session. Instead, organisers are looking at boom microphones, which hang over the heads of participants, or using systems like Sli.do, which allows users to submit questions through an online chat system. Holding social events in the evenings, where most of the informal networking would traditionally take place, seems challenging, given many nations are continuing to regulate large social gatherings.

Parker's industry body is also suggesting mitigation measures such as spacing out furniture, replacing paper handouts with digital ones and monitoring the density of conferences. "There might have to be a traffic light system at entry points," she says, adding: "We're hoping we won't have to do all these things." It could be possible to cater for people with individually boxed lunches, instead of buffets, and provide extra space to network while remaining socially distant. Masks, in keeping with most countries' rules on indoor gatherings, will be compulsory.

Fear factor?

Conferences are one of the best sectors to reopen as societies continue to tackle Covid-19, Parker argues. "We know who is coming to our events," she says. "You may get some walk-ups, but 99.9% of people who

come to our conferences are pre-registered. Track and trace is already there."

Linda Bauld, a public health professor at the University of Edinburgh, is more cautious, however. "One of the main benefits of conferences is you are gathering a lot of people in an indoor environment, and that's exactly what we don't want to be doing at this time," she says. "I think a national conference within the UK, you could, just like we're opening hotels, run it physically distanced. But international conferences seem like a bad idea this year, full stop." As well as the fact that travellers from some nations will pose a higher risk due to higher infection rates, she notes that the risk of travel itself in planes and taxis will likely act as a deterrent to big international events.

Hunter, the professor of medicine, believes that it is the arrival of a vaccine, rather than an efficient tracing system, that will unlock conferences for many. "I suspect some people sadly won't get over the psychological fear, though I suspect most of us will," he says. "With an effective vaccine, if we do get one and it's distributed early next year, the risks and anxieties from that will be a lot less."

As the conference industry figures out its next steps - vaccine or no - Hunter himself is eager for their return. "Part of the thing about conferences, especially in the scientific community, is the opportunity to meet face-to-face with people you might not otherwise meet and come up with plans for doing new science and projects together," he says. "That's to a large extent how science develops."

While conference planners and event specialists are certain that digital conferences will cannibalise physical audiences for the remainder of 2020, with respondents to a July survey by PCMA, the Professional Convention Management Association, saying coronavirus will have an extensive impact on their industry, they're less certain it'll have a significant impact in 2021.

"There are some lights at the end of the tunnel that are beginning to appear," says Mordue. "But in the meantime, we have the good old internet to save us."

Why the GST framework is in trouble



The switch to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July 2017 was a historic moment in India's fiscal trajectory. It scrapped a plethora of central and state taxes and paved the way for a uniform tax regime and a common market across the country. Ideally, there should have been fewer GST slabs, but the idea was always to move to this once the regime stabilised.

Like all big-ticket reforms, GST had to wait for a long time to see the light of day. Reforms such as GST are difficult to implement not because they do not have enough traction as ideas, but because the transition from the status quo to a new framework is challenging. In GST's case, the shift required both the Centre and

states to give up their sovereignty in levying indirect taxes to the GST Council, a body which includes representation from the Centre and the states. Still, the loss of fiscal sovereignty was much greater for states. The biggest question which needed to be addressed before shifting to GST was what if revenue collections fell short of expectations? This was a matter of deep concern for the states, which feared a loss of revenue.

The final deal was struck, under the stewardship of the late Arun Jaitley, who brought in his remarkable consensus-building skills as finance minister, with the Centre offering a guarantee to the states. They would be

assured of 14% growth in revenues for the first five years of GST. This money was to be realised from cess on luxury and sin goods.

Three years after the implementation of GST, many state governments (run by non-Bharatiya Janata Party forces) are alleging that the Centre has reneged on this promise. Their objections seem valid. The Union has not paid the constitutionally mandated ₹1.5 lakh crore of GST compensation to states for the months of April-July in the current fiscal year. The reason is that cess collections have not been enough to make payments. It also expects that the total shortfall in GST compensation to the states will be ₹2.35 lakh crore

in the current fiscal year. Of this, the Centre claims, ₹97,000 crore is on account of GST implementation and the rest is due to the external shock of the pandemic.

The states have been told that they can exercise two kinds of borrowing options to meet this shortfall - either borrow the entire ₹2.35 lakh crore, or borrow ₹97,000 crore. The Centre has said it will work with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to facilitate this process. The repayments will be made by extending the period of cess on luxury and sin goods. As some states are claiming, there is basically one option on the table. The states have to borrow to raise the money, which, the Centre owes them. The GST Council will meet again next week to resolve the matter. Irrespective of the nature of the final resolution, state governments are bound to feel let down. The GST experience will also make them chary about agreeing to change the status quo for market-friendly reforms in the future. A growing distrust between the Centre and the states does not bode well for our democracy.

To be sure, the current economic situation, which caused this crisis, is indeed extraordinary. The Indian economy will witness a contraction, of at least 5% this year. Revenue collections will

miss projections made in February, before the pandemic spread. However, GST's problems go back to the pre-Covid-19 period. While most people agree that a unified tax was desirable (this continues to be the case), its revenue-generating abilities were grossly overestimated initially, especially because slabs have gone through constant revision. Just one example should make this clear. The budget estimate for Centre's GST collections was ₹7.43 lakh crore in 2018-19, the first full budget after GST's implementation. This number is just ₹6.9 lakh crore in 2020-21 - so, a tax head is expected to shrink even when GDP has grown. Even the reduced targets have not been realised. The Centre's GST collections in 2018-19 and 2019-20 were only 78% and 90% of budgeted targets. Even finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while speaking at the HT Leadership Summit in December 2019 acknowledged this point. "I am not saying that people did it (reduced rates) thoughtlessly, but in the enthusiasm to reduce taxes, that framework which was originally agreed at stage one of GST was distorted," Sitharaman said, explaining that lowering the tax rate impacted the input tax credit and transferred more taxes to the buyer.

Why people object to laws that save lives

Wearing a seat belt or a face mask can help to save lives, so why do some people still refuse to put them on and even protest against laws requiring them?

Wearing a seat belt or a face mask can help to save lives, so why do some people still refuse to put them on and even protest against laws requiring them?

"I just hate them," says one woman when asked why she refused to put one on. "I think I hate them because you have to wear them, and I think it's more of a 'you've got to wear it', so I don't want it."

"I think, whether you're male or female, it's a dominance thing," replies the man next to her. "I'm in charge, you don't tell me what to do."

It's the sort of reasoning you might expect from protestors who refuse to wear masks when

out in public during the pandemic. Their objection is not just about comfort, or even scepticism that they can save lives. It's also resentment about being told what to do by authorities. Except the interviewees above were not upset about laws that have made face masks mandatory in public spaces in many countries. Instead, they were talking about seat belts.

The interviewees were British drivers who admitted to not wearing their seat belts while in cars in 2008, despite it being a legal requirement in the UK to wear one in the front seat of a vehicle since 1983 and in the

back seat since 1991.

The comparison between face mask and seat belt protests is a popular one. Celebrities have used it to point out that abstainers have always existed. The media has pointed to it in an attempt to explain the origin of protests against a measure that could help to control the spread of the pandemic. But the introduction of seat belt laws was far less straightforward than the requirement to wear face masks. It was messy, fraught and slow. (Read more about how face masks can control the spread of Covid-19.) But there is a lot we can learn from the introduction of seat belt laws and other public



health interventions. Why, for instance, does there seem to be differences between the adoption of the rules in different countries? And why are some people prepared to challenge a health measure that will surely save lives?

An uncertain start

While the evidence that seat belts save lives is undeniable, there was a time when their introduction looked uncertain.

Car manufacturers, insurance companies, law enforcement, politicians and drivers all had vested interests in seat belt laws.

For the car manufacturers, the issue was cost. At the time they were hopeful that seat belts would become mandatory because they were much cheaper to fit than airbags - the other technology for which lobbyists were campaigning.

Rival powers jockey for the lead in hypersonic aircraft



"I've spent my career on things flying fast," says Adam Dissel, who heads up the US operations of Reaction Engines.

This British company is building engines that can operate at dizzying speeds, under conditions that would melt existing jet engines.

The firm wants to reach hypersonic velocity, beyond five times the speed of sound, around 4,000mph (6,400km/h) or Mach 5. The idea is to build a high-speed passenger transport by the 2030s. "It doesn't have to go at Mach 5. It can be Mach 4.5 which is easier physics," says Mr Dissel.

At those kinds of speeds you could fly from London to Sydney in four hours or Los Angeles to

Tokyo in two hours.

However, most research into hypersonic flight is not for civil aviation. It originates from the military, where there's been a burst of activity in recent years. 'Zoo of systems'

James Acton is a UK physicist who works for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. Surveying the efforts of the US, China and Russia in hypersonic weapons he concludes that "there's a whole zoo of hypersonic systems on the drawing board". Special materials that can withstand the extreme heat created around Mach 5, and a host of other technologies, are making hypersonic flight in the Earth's atmosphere possible.

Experiments in piloted hypersonic flight date back to America's X-15 rocket-plane of the 1960s. And Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) also re-enter the atmosphere at very high hypersonic speeds.

Now rival powers are striving to create weapons that can stay within the atmosphere, without needing to utilise the cooling properties of outer space, and that can be manoeuvred - unlike a static ICBM aimed at a city - towards a target that might be moving itself.

Carrier-killers

Military spending is driving the hypersonic push by the three big national players.

In a recent Pentagon media briefing Mike White, assistant

director for hypersonics in the US military, talked about development being driven by "our great power competitors and their attempts to challenge our domain dominance". Accuracy is a major challenge for these hypersonic missiles. Mere possession of hypersonic missiles, dubbed "carrier-killers", might force US aircraft carriers to stay far from the Chinese coast in the mid-Pacific. But hitting a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier travelling at 30 knots or more (35mph or 56km/h) requires fine adjustments to a missile's course that are tough to achieve at Mach 5. The heat generated around a missile's skin creates a sheath of plasma, or gaseous matter, at hypersonic speeds.

This can block off signals received from external sources, such as communications satellites and can also blind internal targeting systems trying to see outwards to locate a moving object.

Plasma only builds up where the highest temperature is found.

A conical-shaped missile will have a uniform coating of plasma, but missiles that resemble sleek-winged darts may push that plasma screen away from surfaces that contain the most sensitive antennae.

Shark jaws

As if hypersonic flight isn't difficult enough, chemical dissociation adds to the problems.

At extreme speeds and temperatures this phenomenon causes oxygen molecules to break down into their constituent atoms. This in turn complicates the chemical model that any air-breathing engine is based on.

Progress in the hypersonic arms race has been dramatic. In 2010 the US flew a shark-jawed, unmanned aircraft across a stretch of the Pacific Ocean at hypersonic speeds for five minutes.

Covid-19: The daredevils who defy scientific advice

Many continue to go about their lives, refusing to follow simple preventive health guidelines, as if the world is already in a post-pandemic era

India's Covid-19 cases are rising. Balram Bhargava, director-general of the Indian Council of Medical Research, has attributed the spread to irresponsible citizens who refuse to follow the mandated preventive health guidelines of wearing masks and maintaining social distance. He said, "I wouldn't say young or old, but irresponsible, less-cautious people who are not wearing masks are driving the pandemic in India".

Long is a recent adjective being used to describe Covid-19 because of its impact on the body much after being tested negative, and despite the body having enough antibodies. According to recent findings, recovered people may continue to suffer from severe lung and heart damage, muscle ache, energy loss, breathlessness, memory issues, even

psychological distress. This new information should instill fear, and motivate everyone to adopt all suggested preventive health behaviours such as wearing a mask, frequent hand washing, and maintaining social distance very sincerely.

Yet, many continue to go about their lives, refusing to follow simple preventive health guidelines, as if the world is already in a post-pandemic era. I am going to take the liberty to call all such people daredevils. Daredevils, by definition, are reckless people who enjoy doing dangerous things.

What is the link between a daredevil's cognition of the ongoing pandemic and his motivation to be such a daredevil? In other words, what makes a daredevil expect a favourable outcome, of not getting infected, despite reckless behaviour?

Prior research finds people can have favourable expectancies because of, and not limited to, any of these reasons - their self-belief and personal efficacy; because they think they are lucky; because they think they are favoured by God. According to Scheier and Carver (1987), the reason for favourable expectancies can be any of these but all of them will lead to an optimistic orientation-that is, a general expectation that only good things will happen to me. An optimistic orientation, that instills a positive outlook about the future, has been found to affect health decisions related to smoking, diet, and exercise, and explains why individuals make choices that may have adverse effects on their health. It is quite plausible, and some recent research suggests so, that our daredevil may have a misplaced



perception of the severity of Covid-19, almost like a denial, that may, in fact, be attributed to a high optimistic orientation. Such biases in the perception of risk have been observed historically in other pandemics too. According to a health communication framework called Protection Motivation Theory, people tend to protect themselves based on their perception of the severity of a threatening event, the perceived vulnerability related to the occurrence of the event, the efficacy of the recommended preventive behaviour, and their

self-efficacy. This theory lends an understanding of preventive health behaviour being displayed during the ongoing pandemic. In a recent study, Jovancevic and Milicevic (2020) confirm a high optimistic orientation among Serbians who defied social distancing guidelines and received guests, despite fully comprehending the negative health consequences associated with this behaviour. Is our daredevil so optimistically oriented that he is unable to comprehend his vulnerability to Covid-19?

DHFL case: Auditor flags fraudulent transactions worth Rs 17,394 cr

The administrator of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DHFL), appointed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), obtained assistance from Grant Thornton to conduct investigation into the affairs of the mortgage firm.

Fraudulent transactions worth Rs 17,394 crore happened at debt-ridden mortgage firm DHFL during FY07 to FY19, according to transaction auditor Grant Thornton. Earlier this year, the administrator of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DHFL), appointed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), obtained assistance from Grant Thornton to conduct investigation into the affairs of the mortgage firm. Last year, the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had admitted the company for insolvency resolution. It had

appointed Indian Overseas Bank's former managing director and CEO R Subramaniakumar as the company's administrator. "The preliminary estimation included in the application (filed before NCLT) places the monetary impact of the concerned transactions at approximately Rs 14,046 crore, as being the amount outstanding in the books of the company as on June 30, 2019. "...and additionally Rs 3,348 crore being the amount considered as due and outstanding towards notional loss to the company on account of charging lower rate of interest

to certain entities referred to in the Application as the Bandra Book Entities," DHFL said in a regulatory filing on Wednesday.

As per the report prepared by the transaction auditor, the concerned transactions occurred during financial years 2006-2007 to 2018-19, it said.

Based on the report, application has been filed with the NCLT, Mumbai against 87 respondents, including Kapil Wadhawan, Dheeraj Wadhawan, Township Developers India Ltd, Wadhawan Holdings Private Limited, Dheeraj Township Developers Private Limited,



Wadhawan Consolidated Holdings Pvt Ltd and certain others entities as reported by the transaction auditor.

Last year, the RBI sent the troubled mortgage lender DHFL for bankruptcy proceedings, making it the first financial services player to be sent to the NCLT for resolution.

As of July 2019, the

beleaguered home financier owed Rs 83,873 crore to banks, National Housing Board, mutual funds and bondholders/retail bondholders.

Of the total, secured debt stands at Rs 74,054 crore and unsecured Rs 9,818 crore. Most banks have declared DHFL accounts as non-performing assets.

Vodafone-Idea likely to get a lifeline from Amazon, Verizon



Amazon.com Inc. and Verizon Communications, the largest wireless carrier in the US, are set to resume talks to buy a significant stake in struggling Vodafone Idea Ltd for more than \$4 billion, two people aware of the negotiations said.

The stake-sale talks were paused because the outcome of a Supreme Court case on

staggered payments of government dues was uncertain and could have threatened the survival of Vodafone Idea, the people said seeking anonymity.

Tuesday's decision by the top court to give telcos 10 years to pay a total of ₹ 1.4 lakh crore in dues paves the way for a resumption of the negotiations. The fundraising is crucial for

The stake-sale talks were paused because the outcome of a Supreme Court case on staggered payments of government dues was uncertain and could have threatened the survival of Vodafone Idea, the people said seeking anonymity.

cash-strapped Vodafone Idea to pay government dues and invest in upgrading its network, a process that was halted for lack of funds. Of the combined dues of all telcos, Vodafone Idea alone needs to pay around ₹ 50,400 crore more to the government in licence fee, spectrum usage charges, interest and penalties. It has already paid ₹ 7,854 crore.

The company reported a staggering loss of ₹ 25,460 crore in the June quarter due to one-time charges, including provisions to cover payments due to the government. On Tuesday, Mint reported that the company is resuming talks with financial and strategic investors, citing

senior company officials.

In a late-night filing on Tuesday, Vodafone Idea said that its board will meet on 4 September to consider proposals for fundraising. While Amazon has a major presence in India, Verizon is present in India through its media and online unit Oath Inc. The US wireless carrier has also partnered with Bharti Airtel Ltd in the past and, most recently, in July, when it launched the BlueJeans video-conferencing service in India to serve business customers. While both Amazon and Verizon declined to comment, Vodafone Idea spokespersons did not respond to emailed queries

Earlier this year, Financial Times reported that Google was in talks to acquire a 5% stake in Vodafone Idea. Google, however, decided to invest \$4.5 billion in its rival, Jio Platforms, the digital arm of Reliance Industries Ltd.

Technology and telecom analysts have already stated that the Jio-Facebook-Google deals would only increase the pressure on rival telecom companies to forge similar partnerships.

While Vodafone idea will not compete with Reliance Jio on the range of offerings, it will expand its connected ecosystem theme to include products and services that go beyond telephony, according to the people cited above.

Subscribe a sports car: Porsche offers Netflix-like packages in this country

Buying a Porsche may not be within the reach of many across the world but speed enthusiasts can now look forward to 'owning' and driving a select collection of iconic cars in the product portfolio. This is thanks to a subscription service launched in the US by the sports car maker called 'Porsche Drive' which allows interested customers to get their hands behind the wheels for anywhere between one and three months.

The subscription-based model is essentially similar to such models on video streaming platforms like Netflix. And while

new cars will offered for sale much like they have always been, the subscription-based service seeks to be a more affordable option for those who may either not have the financial resources for an outright purchase or may not want to own a vehicle. Or both.

The most affordable Porsche being offered in the service is the Macan SUV which starts at \$1,500 per month (approximately ₹ 1.10 lakh). On the other end of the product profile available is Porsche 911 which starts at \$2,600 per month (approximately ₹ 1.90 lakh).

There is also an activation fees of \$595 (approximately ₹ 44,000) but this is waived off if a customer opts for the three-month subscription plan.

The subscription fees also takes care of insurance, roadside assistance and vehicle maintenance, and can be home delivered and can be picked up once the subscription service ends or is brought to an end. This, however, is only for locations which are within 20 miles (32 kilometres) of a participating Porsche dealership.

Porsche says that the service will help those who



always dreamt of driving its cars but couldn't because of their respective reasons to experience all that its cars have to offer. It, however, is not the first car maker to bring about such a service. Car makers like Nissan, Cadillac

and Lexus have also gone down this path in recent times in a bid to keep the revenue stream flowing. A few of these companies also offer the option of letting customers purchase the vehicles, if they so wish, at the end of the subscription period.

Vodafone Idea shares fall nearly 13% after AGR verdict

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted 10 years to telecom firms such as Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and Tata Teleservices for paying the AGR-related dues to the Department of Telecommunications

ations with certain conditions. Shares of Vodafone Idea on Tuesday tumbled nearly 13 per cent, while those of Bharti Airtel rose more than 6 per cent after the Supreme Court granted 10 years to telecom firms for paying the AGR-related dues to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) with certain conditions.

Vodafone Idea shares tanked 12.76 per cent to close at Rs 8.89 apiece on BSE. During the day, it plummeted 24.53 per cent to Rs 7.69.

The stock went into a tail-spin after the order, erasing all its early gains.

Shares of Bharti Airtel, however, jumped 6.38 per cent to settle at Rs 546.75. During the day, it

rose by 7.99 per cent to Rs 555.05.

Bharti Airtel was the top gainer in the Sensex pack.

RIL shares also gained 0.43 per cent to close at Rs 2,087.55 apiece after rising 2 per cent to Rs 2,121.75 per unit during the day.

"The Supreme Court verdict is not as beneficial to Vodafone Idea as it is to Bharti Airtel. Vodafone was looking forward for a 20-year-payment cycle which has now reduced to 10 years. Considering the high annual interest, depreciation and amortization cost the annual AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) dues could put further strain on the cash flows of the company," said

Rusmik Oza, Executive Vice President, Head of Fundamental Research at Kotak Securities.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted 10 years to telecom firms such as Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and Tata Teleservices for paying the AGR-related dues to the Department of Telecommunications with certain conditions.

The apex court asked telcos to pay 10 per cent of the AGR-related dues by March 31, 2021. "The SC verdict giving a 10-year time frame for payment of AGR dues with 10 per cent upfront payment can be regarded as reasonably fair. However, the 10-year time frame puts a question



mark on the survival of Vodafone. Investment Strategist at Geojit For the stock market the verdict Financial Services said.

is mixed. Since it is positive for Failure to pay the instalments of Bharti and RIL these two the dues would incur penalty, heavyweight stocks are likely to interest and contempt of court, remain resilient, supporting the the bench cautioned the telecom markets," V K Vijay Kumar, Chief firms.

Indian spot gold rate and silver price on Sep 02, 2020

Get latest update on daily spot gold prices, currency exchange rates and other precious metal rates in India. An increase of 0.02% in spot gold price in India was seen since yesterday, taking the value to Rs. 51760.0 from Rs. 51750.0. It was also higher than the previous week average of Rs. 51524.29 by 0.46%.

The spot gold prices in India (Rs. 51760.0) witnessed a growth of 0.02%, despite global gold prices (\$1964.5) saw a drop of 0.3%.

Global spot prices continued to fall as per the current close with a value of \$1964.5 per Troy

ounce. The total downturn being of -0.3%. This price level is 0.37% lower than average gold price observed in the past 30 days (\$1971.9). Among other precious metals, silver prices saw a fall today. Silver plunged 0.1% to \$28.1 per Troy ounce.

Further, platinum price has suffered. The precious metal platinum fell 0.37% to \$941.0 per Troy ounce. Meanwhile in India, gold was priced at Rs. 51384.0 per 10 gram on MCX, with a change of Rs. 0.0. Also, the price of 24k gold in the Indian spot market was quoted at Rs. 51760.0. MCX Gold on Sep 02, 2020

On MCX, silver futures plunged nearly 1.0% or Rs. 700.15 per kg to the price level of Rs. 70015.0 per kg. The gold spot price today (Rs. 51760.0) increased by Rs. 0.0 from yesterday (Rs. 51750.0), whereas global spot prices saw a downturn of \$5.0 to \$1964.5 value today. No change was seen in MCX future price as of today, and had a value of Rs. 51384.0. Currency Exchange Rate on Sep 02, 2020

The dollar to rupee conversion has been constant since yesterday and any fluctuation today in the gold price would suggest no relation with the dollar value.



Sensex rises over 50 points in early trade; Nifty tests 11,500



weighed on investor sentiment.

Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty started on a muted note on Wednesday amid concerns over India-China border tensions and weak cues from Asian peers.

After opening on a choppy note, the BSE Sensex was trading 58.69 points or 0.15 per cent higher at 38,959.49; while the NSE Nifty was up 22.95 points or 0.20 per cent at 11,493.20.

UltraTech Cement was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 2 per cent, followed by ONGC, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, ITC, Reliance Industries

and Infosys.

On the other hand, SBI, Bajaj Auto, HDFC, Kotak Bank and Titan were the laggards.

In the previous session, Sensex settled 272.51 points or 0.71 per cent higher at 38,900.80, while Nifty advanced 82.75 points or 0.73 per cent to settle at 11,470.25.

Exchange data showed that foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 486.09 crore on a net basis on Tuesday. According to traders, domestic equities turned choppy as concerns of India-China border tensions weighed on investor

sentiment.

India on Tuesday said China's fresh attempt to change the status quo in the south bank area of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh is in "complete disregard" to the understandings reached between the two countries. Further, weak cues from other Asian markets also kept investors cautious, traders said. Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul were in the red in mid-day deals, while Tokyo was trading with gains.

Stock exchanges on Wall Street ended on a positive note in overnight session.

The Boys season 2 review:

Diabolically deranged, hit Amazon superhero show chooses scandal over subtlety

The Boys season 2 review: Season two, despite frequent bursts of action and violence, is almost like a 70s conspiracy thriller, and showrunner Eric Kripke is usually successful at balancing the edgy meta-ness with the broader cultural critique.

A lot has changed since the first season of *The Boys* released last year. *Watchmen*, the comic book property with which it shares DNA, came out with a game-changing reboot. More importantly, however, the real world turned into the sort of dystopian fantasy that the show so mercilessly mocked. My capacity for the sort of nihilism that *The Boys* peddles is definitely waning, though. Do we really need more reminders that our planet is being consumed, even during one of the worst years in recorded history, by corporate greed? Or is it necessary to never lose sight of the evil that surrounds us, simply because we've had enough? There are no correct answers. Of course, by definition, revolution implies the existence of oppression. And *The Boys* is a revolutionary show, about revolutionaries. Led by the brash Bill Butcher (Karl Urban, by way of Jason Statham), they took on the vile Vought Industries precisely because the corporation posed a threat to the planet. Just because we now find ourselves in the middle of a

pandemic that has only broadened the wealth gap mustn't mean we reject art that dissects why such things happen. Even as the coronavirus pandemic sent the world economy into its worst slump since the Great Depression, and more than 100 million people across the globe into 'extreme poverty', Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos became the first person ever to record a net worth of more than \$200 billion. There was a time when war profiteers used to be looked at with utmost disgust. This was the central conflict that raged in Tony Stark's heart in the first *Iron Man* film, which arrived in the shadow of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. But what of pandemic profiteers? While Amazon maintained its position as one of the world's most valuable companies, in India, the government launched a relief fund that it said doesn't come under the ambit of the Right to Information act, thereby relieving itself of the responsibility to be transparent about where the money was being spent. This irony is lost neither on me, nor showrunner Eric Kripke, who in

the second season of *The Boys* doubles down on the themes it introduced in season one more forcefully. That's what mass validation does for you, I suppose - it gives you the courage to bite the hand that feeds. But this time, the stakes are personal - while Butcher is motivated by a desire to protect his wife, Hughie and Annie are working together to bring down Vought from the inside. Season two, despite frequent bursts of action and violence, is almost like a 70s conspiracy thriller in tone - and Kripke is usually successful at balancing the edgy meta-ness with the broader cultural critique. The Seven - the show's corrupt version of *The Avengers*, or the *Justice League*, in case Marvel fans take offence - are weaker than they have ever been. The Deep, after being outcast for his sexual misdeeds (not because Vought disapproved, but because his presence was bad PR), has found Scientology? A-Train is struggling with the fallout of season one's Compound V relapse, and Homelander is looking to consolidate his position as the leader of The Seven, now that the team is on its knees. While the first three



episodes - that's how many I'm allowed to talk about - don't quite have a set-piece as jaw-dropping as the plane sequence from season one, a 'tryout' scene involving a blind character reinforces the idea that Homelander is, in fact, the supervillain of the show. Like Rorschach in Damon Lindelof's *Watchmen* reboot, Homelander also appears to have become a symbol for white power, while Stormfront, the newest member of The Seven, brings the disruptive social media savvy that proves to be a clincher in captivating the minds of middle-America. They butt heads initially - both are alphas in a team desperate for leadership - but realise eventually that a partnership is the only way forward. It is just one of the

many (over-the-top) ways in which *The Boys* suggests that a merger between conservatives such as Homelander and radicals such as Stormfront is the key to power in modern-day America, and perhaps the reason behind the rise of men like Donald Trump. It takes longer for season two to kick into gear, as compared to the first season, which came out all-guns-blazing. But once Butcher makes his almost Hindi film-inspired 'entry', the pace picks up significantly. The second season of *The Boys* will premiere with three episodes on September 4, followed by a new episode every week. It's worth sticking around, if only to see just how much more ambitious the series can get in an already greenlit season three.

Hilary Swank interview:

Oscar-winner on being inspired by Kalpana Chawla to play astronaut in Netflix's *Away*

In an interview to Hindustan Times, the Oscar-winning Hilary Swank spoke about being inspired by Kalpana Chawla as she prepared to play an astronaut in the Netflix space drama *Away*.



Oscar-winning actor Hilary Swank said that Kalpana Chawla was among the many real-life icons who inspired her to play astronaut Emma Green in the Netflix space drama *Away*. Chawla was the first woman of Indian origin to go to space. She

died in 2003, in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster.

"I do know of her," Swank told Hindustan Times. "All the research I've been doing about all the astronauts, they've greatly inspired me." She said that astronauts know "that they have

a 50-50 chance, and it's a part of their job, and a part of their journey, knowing that they can lose their lives." She said that she has an "admiration for anyone who is willing to go to those extremes." In *Away*, Swank's character leads a three-year mission to Mars that forces her away from her family. The drama unfolds both on Earth, where her husband and teenage daughter learn to live without her, and in space, where Emma Green navigates unexpected challenges as the commander of an international crew. Describing her character

as someone who has 'in her marrow' to fulfil her purpose, she said, "There are these extraordinary people, who have these visions, and that's what makes them great leaders and explorers." She said that the difficult choice that Emma has to make about leaving her family to honour her duty isn't restricted to women. "It's a modern day struggle." *Away* is Swank's second major television role after she broke out as a movie star with 1999's *Boys Don't Cry*. She recently

appeared in the FX drama *Trust*, from the *Slumdog Millionaire* team of Simon Beaufoy and Danny Boyle. She previously appeared in the Netflix project *I Am Mother*. *Away*, created by Andrew Hinderaker and involving the talents of executive producers Matt Reeves (*The Batman*) and Ed Zwick (who also directed the pilot), arrives on Netflix on September 4. The show also stars Ato Essandoh, Ray Panthaki, Mark Ivanir, Vivian Wu and Josh Charles.

Coronavirus pandemic: Fear and dread haunt Covid-19 'long-haulers' months after infection



Breathlessness, memory loss, extreme fatigue, headaches, brain fog, muscle pain and swelling joints, are commonly described among multiple recurring symptoms in global online patient advocacy blogs and chatrooms.

And for many, the anxiety, depression and dread are at least as debilitating as the physical frailties. "That's been the pattern - relapse and remit - for so many of us," said Sandra Edwards, a 46-year-old Briton who now helps run a newly-formed patient advocacy group called LongCovidSOS.

"We're in no man's land. We don't know if this is chronic or if it will come to a point where we'll make a full recovery," she told Reuters. "You wake up in the morning and don't know how you're going to feel - not just day by day, but sometimes hour by hour. It slowly chips away at you."

According to LongCovidSOS, data from a symptom tracker app devised by King's College London scientists shows that 10% of COVID-19 patients are still unwell after three weeks, and up to 5% may continue to be sick for months. **UNCERTAINTY**

"Mentally, you feel abandoned," said Morena Colombi, a 59-year-old from Truccazzano in the Italian province of Milan who was diagnosed with COVID-19 in February and is still suffering symptoms. "Even the doctors don't know how to help you."

"Maybe one day you get better, and the next day you pay for it," she told Reuters. "You can no longer resume your life as before and that makes you depressed." Til Wykes, a psychology professor at King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IPPN), notes that uncertainty is a key feature of anxiety. The unknown progression of the disease leaves doctors unsure of how to help, and can make patients feel fearful and alone. "For most illnesses we have an understanding about what will happen first, what will happen next, and what to expect," she said. "The problem (with COVID) is that the symptoms come, then seem to be abating, but then they come back again."

After the World Health Organization met groups representing long-term COVID sufferers last month, the WHO's

director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus assured them: "We hear you loud and clear". But he cautioned: "We still know relatively little about the long-term effects. We only have less than eight months of experience (of the coronavirus pandemic) to draw on." Patients like Callard and Edwards say they recognise doctors are dealing with a completely new disease caused by a novel virus, so can't be expected to have all the answers. But they and mental health specialists say the psychological impact of this unpredictability and lack of control make things worse.

Rona Moss-Morris, head of psychology at the IPPN, says evidence from previous disease outbreaks and from studies of patients who have been in critical or intensive care shows a significant impact on levels of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "And it's also very frightening for people being at home - and not in hospital - and feeling they can barely breathe, for example," she told Reuters. "We're hearing horror stories from people who were in that kind of situation."

Until March 19 this year, Felicity Callard, a 49 year-old British university professor and lecturer, was fit, active and strong. Now, she says, she's exhausted, frail and scared.

Her mind fills with fears about what kind of damage might have been done to her heart, lungs and brain when she suffered what is classified as a "mild" case of COVID-19 more than five months ago - and she's terrified it might happen again.

"I was absolutely, completely destroyed by this illness," she told Reuters. "My life has completely changed. I'm basically confined to a kilometre from my house and back - because that's as far as I can

walk."

Back in March, she says, she felt more individual control over her health. She was reassured in part by messages that the vast majority of cases are mild, and that good infection control, hand hygiene and social distancing would reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19. Now, however, she feels as though "the threat is everywhere."

Callard is one of thousands of people worldwide who are reporting a wide range of ongoing symptoms many months after being diagnosed with COVID-19. Some call themselves COVID "long haulers", while others have adopted the term "long COVID" to describe their condition.

Tattoo ink, food dyes could help find cancer: Study

The humble ink in a tattoo artist's needle could be the key to improving the detection of cancer, according to new research.

In a new study, researchers have discovered how commonly used coloring agents such as tattoo inks and food dyes could help improve cancer detection. The humble ink in a tattoo artist's needle could be the key to improving the detection of cancer, according to new research from the USC Viterbi Department of Biomedical Engineering.

WiSE Gabilan assistant professor in the department with a lab at the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience, Cristina Zavaleta and her team recently developed new imaging contrast agents using common dyes such as tattoo ink and food dyes.

When these dyes are attached to nanoparticles, they can illuminate cancers, allowing medical professionals to better

differentiate between cancer cells and normal adjacent cells. The work has been published in Biomaterials Science.

Early detection is crucial for patients to have the best possible outcomes from cancer; a disease that will affect over 38% of Americans at some point in their lifetime. However, detection is challenging without good imaging agents; contrast materials which when injected into patients, allow for imaging such as MRI and CT to function with better sensitivity and specificity, enabling medical professionals to diagnose with accuracy, and for surgeons to identify the exact margins of tumors. "For instance, if the problem is colon cancer, this is detected via endoscopy. But an endoscope is literally just a flashlight on the end of a stick, so it will only give information about the structure of the colon - you can see a polyp and know you need to take a biopsy," Zavaleta said.

"But if we could provide imaging tools to help doctors see whether

that particular polyp is cancerous or just benign, maybe they don't even need to take it," she said. Illuminated nanoparticles move through a blood vessel to find cancer. The coloring dyes were incorporated into nanoparticles to allow for more sensitive imaging contrast when identifying cancerous cells.

To achieve this, the team has discovered a unique source of optical contrasting agents from the household coloring dyes and pigments that we routinely encounter. These "optical inks" can be attached to cancer-targeting nanoparticles to improve cancer detection and localization.

The dyes and pigments were discovered from common coloring agents that already have U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, which the team hopes may enable them to be more easily and safely implemented in imaging practice.

For Zavaleta, inspiration struck in an unusual place -- an



animation class with Pixar artists in Emeryville, California, the home of the famed studio. Zavaleta, who enjoys art and animation among her hobbies, said she was intrigued by the inks and paints that the artists brought to class. "I was thinking about how these really high pigment paints, like gouache watercolors, were bright in a way I hadn't seen before, and I was wondering if they had interesting optical properties," Zavaleta said. The idea led her to tattoo artist in nearby San Francisco, Adam Sky, another artisan working with bright dyes. "I remember I

brought a 96-well plate and he squirted tattoo ink into each of the wells. Then I took the inks to our Raman scanner (used to sensitively detect our tumor-targeting nanoparticles) and discovered these really amazing spectral fingerprints that we could use to barcode our nanoparticles. It was super cool," Zavaleta said. One of the safety challenges of imaging using nanoparticles is that often these nanoparticles can have prolonged retention in organs like the liver and the spleen, which are responsible for trying to break down the nanoparticle.

Russia's 'slow-motion Chernobyl' at sea

Beneath some of the world's busiest fisheries, radioactive submarines from the Soviet era lie disintegrating on the seafloor. Decades later, Russia is preparing to retrieve them.



By tradition, Russians always bring an odd number of flowers to a living person and an even number to a grave or memorial. But every other day, 83-year-old Raisa Lappa places three roses or gladiolas by the plaque to her son Sergei in their hometown Rubtsovsk, as if he hadn't gone down with his submarine during an ill-fated towing operation in the Arctic Ocean in 2003.

"I have episodes where I'm not normal, I go crazy, and it seems that he's alive, so I bring an odd number," she says. "They should raise the boat, so we mothers could put our sons' remains in the ground, and I could maybe have a little more peace." After 17 years of unfulfilled promises, she may finally get her wish, though not out of any concern for the bones of Captain Sergei Lappa and six of his crew. With a draft decree published in March, President Vladimir Putin set in motion an initiative to lift two Soviet nuclear submarines and four reactor compartments from the silty bottom, reducing the amount of radioactive material in the Arctic Ocean by 90%. First on the list is Lappa's K-159.

The message, which comes before Russia's turn to chair the Arctic Council next year, seems to be that the country is not only the preeminent commercial and military power in the warming Arctic, but also a steward of the environment. The K-159 lies just outside of Murmansk in the Barents Sea, the richest cod fishery in the world and also an important habitat of haddock, red king crab, walrus, whales, polar bears and many other animals. At the same time, Russia is leading another "nuclearification" of the Arctic

with new vessels and weapons, two of which have already suffered accidents.

Decaying legacy

During the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union built more than 400 nuclear-powered submarines, a "silent service" that gave the adversaries a way to retaliate even if their missile silos and strategic bombers had been taken out in a sudden first strike. Just 60 miles (97km) from the border with Nato member Norway, the Arctic port of Murmansk and surrounding military bases became the centre of the USSR's nuclear navy and icebreakers, as well as their highly radioactive spent fuel. After the Iron Curtain fell, the consequences came to light. For instance, at Andreyeva Bay, where 600,000 tonnes of toxic water leaked into the Barents Sea from a nuclear storage pool in 1982, the spent fuel from more than 100 submarines was kept partly in rusty canisters under the open sky. Fearing contamination, Russia and Western countries including Britain embarked on a sweeping clean-up, spending nearly £1bn (\$1.3bn) to decommission and dismantle 197 Soviet nuclear submarines, dispose of strontium batteries from 1,000 navigation beacons and began removing fuel and waste from Andreyeva Bay and three other dangerous coastal sites. As in other countries, however, Soviet nuclear waste was also dumped at sea, and now the focus has shifted there. A 2019 feasibility study by a consortium including British nuclear safety firm Nuvia found 18,000 radioactive objects in the Arctic Ocean, among them 19 vessels and 14 reactors.

While the radiation given off by most of these objects has neared background levels thanks to silt build-up, the study found 1,000 still have elevated levels of penetrating gamma radiation. Ninety percent of that is contained in six objects that Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom will raise in the next 12 years, Anatoly Grigoriev, Rosatom's head of international technical assistance, told Future Planet: two nuclear submarines and reactor compartments from three nuclear submarines and the icebreaker Lenin. "We consider even the extremely low probability of radioactive materials leaking from these



objects as posing an unacceptable risk for the ecosystems of the Arctic," Grigoriev said in a statement. No such sweeping nuclear clean-up has ever been undertaken at sea. Recovering the reactor compartments will involve salvage jobs in frigid waters that are safe for such operations only three or four

months out of the year. The two nuclear submarines, which together contain one million curies of radiation, or about a quarter of that released in the first month of the Fukushima disaster, will pose an even greater challenge. One of them is the K-27, once known as the "golden fish" because of its high cost.

Long-missed pink flamingos return to Kenya's Lake Nakuru

Eight years ago, rising water levels in Kenya's Lake Nakuru drove away the clouds of pink coloured flamingos that were the park's biggest draw. Rangers say their disappearance triggered a drop in visitor numbers by for the Nakuru National Park. The return has rekindled hopes of a gradual rebound in an area heavily reliant on tourists

for employment and revenues. On a recent visit, flocks of flamingos foraged for food in the lake's turquoise waters, while others flapped in a sine-wave formation above. A rhinoceros grazed nearby.

"With the increase now of the number of flamingos we have

started seeing visitors also increasing," Caroline Mwebia, the park's tourism warden, told Reuters.



She declined to give visitor numbers and the Kenya Wildlife Service did not return calls seeking comment. But nearly a quarter of a million visitors came in 2011, the last year figures are publicly available for.

Flamingos eat insect larvae and algae that gives them their pink

hue. High water levels shrink the birds' ideal breeding and feeding grounds.

When Nakuru lake first rose, Mwebia said, flamingos left for nearby lakes like Bogoria and Baringo whose waters were shallower.

But heavy rains in recent years have also flooded those lakes, forcing the birds to return to Nakuru,

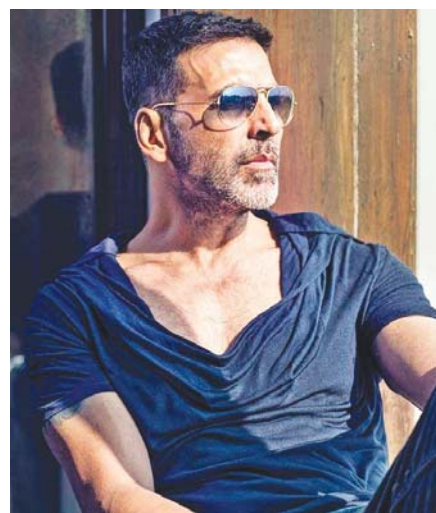
where they are such an intrinsic attraction that the street leading up to the park is decorated with flamingo-shaped lampposts.

The global pandemic has battered Kenya's tourism industry, but Nakuru at least sees a bright spot on the horizon.

Vaani Kapoor jets off to Scotland to join Akshay Kumar on Bell Bottom shoot.



After Akshay Kumar began shooting for Bell Bottom in Scotland last week, the film's leading lady Vaani Kapoor is all set to join the team. Vaani was spotted at the Mumbai airport on Wednesday, on her way to the UK. Seen in a blue shirt, black leggings and boots, Vaani was seen making her way inside the airport with a mask on. She even greeted someone with a hug before posing for the paparazzi gathered outside the airport. Bell Bottom is one of the first films to announce resumption of shooting schedule after the coronavirus-induced lockdown, which had brought the entertainment industry to a grinding halt. Akshay and the rest of the team had to quarantine in Scotland for two weeks before they could begin shooting for the movie. "The new normal has made us realise a different way of working that none of us could have imagined. As much as I'm happy to be back on the sets, it's also important for us to take care of everything around us. "Pooja Entertainment has laid down a safety plan for our shooting schedule abroad. We hope these measures help us accomplish a smooth and safe shoot,"



Akshay said in a statement. The production house chartered a flight to fly the entire unit with medical facilities. Besides medical-grade masks and face shields, the production house has also made it mandatory for the cast and crew to wear a wrist watch that will constantly monitor their oxygen levels, body temperature,

blood pressure, stress levels and pulse. A centralised dashboard records the parameters of the entire unit and keep a check for any changes in readings. Director Ranjit M Tewari said though it'll be a challenge to shoot under the current situation, the crew is excited to start the work. "It is going to be a challenging shoot given the circumstances, but I am extremely confident of the health and safety protocols put in place by Pooja Entertainment. Every member of the Bell Bottom family is exhilarated and geared up to kick start work," Tewari said. The film's on-set guidelines also includes maintaining social distancing of no less than six feet wherever possible, hand sanitising stations available throughout the set, disinfecting surface areas and equipment using alcohol-based sanitisers before and after every shoot.

Shivaleeka Oberoi: Post the release of Khuda Haafiz

everyone's asking about my experience of working with Vidyut, but are they asking him the same question?



Keen on becoming an actor, Shivaleeka Oberoi decided to learn more about the craft before taking the plunge. She started as assistant director for films, Kick (2014) and Housefull 3 (2016). While that experience helped but it took her three years and over hundred auditions to land a part in Yeh Saali Aashiqui (2019) and then her recent web released film, Khuda Haafiz happened.

"Much like any outsiders, my journey too

wasn't easy... Forget getting shortlisted, many a times my auditions didn't reach the directors and producers. This I came to know much later," she says. Oberoi admits being prepared to face difficulties but when nothing was falling in place it did affect her. "You wake up almost every day thinking what next. The uncertainty affects your mental peace. My parents kept motivating me to the extent that they told me to continue with my education and try something else," says the actor, adding the positive feedback around Khuda Haafiz has been encouraging. "While many pointed out that there wasn't much of me in the trailer, but they liked my overall performance, expressions in the film and said that they would've loved to see more of me," she adds. While she knew from the beginning about her screen space, Oberoi continues, "Vidyut [Jammwal] is a bigger star so Khuda Haafiz being identified as his film is alright because the story revolves around his journey. But any film is a teamwork. You don't show everything in the trailer to keep the suspense alive. But even after watching the film, I don't understand why isn't the perspective changing.

Kangana Ranaut calls out Mumbai Police chief for liking 'derogatory tweets' on her, police force denies claim



name. It mentioned that the post was 'liked by CP Mumbai Police'. In a following tweet, Kangana wanted to know if she would be safe in Mumbai after this. She wrote: "When @CPMumbaiPolice is openly intimidating me like this, encouraging bullying and crime against me, will I be safe in Mumbai? Who is responsible for my safety? @PMOIndia." Among those who supported Kangana was Sushant's sister Shweta Singh?Kirti. Retweeting Kangana, she wrote: "My God!! Shameful!!! #justicefor Sushanth SinghRajput" Mumbai Police was quick to revert on the

Actor Kangana Ranaut has called out the commissioner of police, Mumbai, Param Bir Singh, for liking a derogatory tweet against her. She also questioned how there was a sanction for 'public teasing and bullying', where there should have been condemnation. Taking to Twitter and sharing screenshots which showed the senior officer liking the said tweet, Kangana wrote: "Liking derogatory tweets about people who are fighting against the murderers of Sushant, instead of condemning public teasing and bullying like this @CPMumbaiPolice is encouraging it, @MumbaiPolice has hit all time low ... SHAME !!!" One of the screenshots showed a manhole painted with Kangana's

matter. Replying to the actor's first tweet, the official Twitter handle of Mumbai Police said: "This tweet has never been liked by @CPMumbaiPolice- the cyber police station has been asked to examine the screenshot." Fans also wanted to know what action was being taken against those who painted the manhole with the actor's name. One said: "What is the action that you have taken against the person who had drawn defamatory paintings on the street?? Is there a complained filed investigation done?? Who tried to wash away the paintings after it was highlighted?? Will painter and accomplices be booked?"



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Chushul aggression is part of China's plan. It wants to provoke India

From a bit player during the Cold War, India is a frontline state to potential superpower China

(News Agencies)- When then Defence Minister AK Antony returned from Beijing in July 2013, he was fascinated by the infrastructure development in China. He was rather intrigued how China was able to build straight roads unlike the ones that he had seen back home in India that yielded to hurdles in the way. At that point, Antony was told by his South Block advisers that in communist China, unlike India, buildings or any hurdles are uprooted to make way for the roads or highways. While Antony understood the message, it is time that a democratic India came to terms with the adversary at its doorstep in Ladakh. For the past four months, the Indian Army has been on the razor's edge to defend the 3,488-kilometre Line of Actual Control (LAC) from China's aggressive People's Liberation Army (PLA) from pursuing its 60-



year-old agenda of imposing the 1960 cartographical expansion map of the then Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai on the ground in Ladakh. The situation is critical as the Indian Army cannot hold back the PLA forever by staring at the adversary. And the fear is that one bullet could lead to a huge escalation on the LAC. It is not that the Chinese Western Theatre Commander Zhao Zongqi or his communist party boss Xi Jinping do not understand the consequences. It is Zhongguo, the Middle Kingdom, in action with its wolf warriors attributing the current friction to the undefined nature of the India-China border despite 15 years of Special Representative dialogue to sort out the issue and a plethora of agreements and protocols.

(Contd on page 30)

How to vaccinate a billion people



(News Agencies)-The inventor of the polio vaccine Jonas Salk said: "Our biggest responsibility is to be good ancestors". India is approaching a big decision; whether we will take one to two years or three to five years to vaccinate 1.3 billion people. History will judge whether we were good ancestors by this decision. The difference could be thousands of lives, millions of livelihoods, hundreds of bankruptcies, unsustainable public finances, and ?2-3 lakh crore in bad loans.

In recent times, the one government initiative that has physically reached a billion people is Aadhaar (Contd on page 29)

Netflix suspends 'Bad Boy Billionaires' release after India court order



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Netflix has been forced to suspend the release of its new docuseries Bad Boy Billionaires - which depicts the alleged misdeeds of scandal-hit Indian tycoons - after India's Supreme Court refused to hear its plea against a lower court order staying the show. The Supreme Court rebuffed the streaming group's efforts to clear the way for the series to air after one of the disgraced billionaires depicted -

(Contd on page 30)

Judge And Hangman

What we have witnessed since Sushant Singh Rajput's death is far beyond what the media's accepted mandate is.

By Ruben Banerjee

I have been a proud journalist for most of my life, but for brief phases when professional pitfalls such as a delayed promotion or a psychopathic boss forced me to ponder whether pursuing a profession considered of higher calling was worth the pain. I have, I must say, somewhat relapsed into a similar, contemplative mode over the past few weeks. Ever since Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput was found dead in June, the media drama around his untimely death has given the hallowed principles of journalism a noisy burial. If Sushant's death-whatever the cause-was



tragic, what followed has been no less a disaster. It has left practitioners like me disturbed and dismayed.

No one denies that the media's job is to speak truth to power, point out injustices, unearth evidence of corruption and ensure justice is done to those wronged. But what we have witnessed since Sushant's death is far beyond what the media's accepted mandate is. In the guise of a campaign to deliver justice to Sushant posthumously, a raucous section of media launched its own parallel investigation into the causes that led to the actor's death and, in the

(Contd on page 29)

