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Nupur Sharma's suspension: What next for India-West Asia relations?

BJP has suspended Nupur Sharma for her remarks that have triggered a diplomatic offensive from the Muslim world. Here's a look at what lies ahead for India-West Asia relations



**Full Story
on Page 28**

European Union lawmakers pass ban on new petrol, diesel cars by 2035



(SAI Bureau) In the face of strong conservative opposition, European Parliament lawmakers on Wednesday narrowly voted to back a European Commission proposal for a total ban on new CO2-emitting vehicles by 2035. The Commission last year

unveiled plans to stop the sale of vehicles using internal combustion engines as part of an ambitious climate target to cut emissions by more than half over this decade and 90 per cent by 2035.

(Contd. on page 29)

India and Gulf Nations Stand Inseparable Despite Sinister Attempts to Scuttle Their Bond



(News Agency) With the recent furore in the international media over the controversy related to Islam's Prophet, the Indian government promptly acted upon the requests of its brotherly Gulf nations by respecting their religious sentiments—in order to maintain the historical bonds which the Arabs and Indians have enjoyed. Moreover, the controversy was exploited by the propagandists of fifth-generation warfare to damage India's reputation and its international status. (Contd. on page 30)

Thailand Becomes First Asian Country to Decriminalise Marijuana, But Discourages Smoking in Public

(SAI Bureau) Thailand has become the first nation in Asia to decriminalize marijuana also known as cannabis, or ganja in the local lingo but it is not following the examples of Uruguay and Canada, the only two countries so far that have legalized recreational marijuana on a national basis. The country made it legal to cultivate and possess marijuana as of Thursday, like a dream come true for an aging generation of pot smokers who recall the kick the legendary Thai Stick variety delivered. The stated intention of the country's public health minister to distribute 1 million marijuana seedlings, beginning Friday, has added to the impression that Thailand is turning into a weed wonderland.

(Contd. on page 31)



Russian Navy Starts Baltic Sea Drills Amid Ukraine Tensions

(News Agency) Dozens of Russian ships on Thursday took part in military exercises in the strategic Baltic Sea, after Sweden and Finland recently announced bids to join NATO. Russia's defence ministry said in a statement that ships of its Baltic fleet, will "perform training tasks for the defence of sea lanes and fleet bases". It said that 60 ships and 40 aircraft were taking

part in the manoeuvres which will also take place on land at training grounds in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. The navy drills come amid heightened tensions between Moscow and NATO after Sweden and Finland submitted their bids to join the US-led alliance after the start of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine. If their membership —

currently blocked by Turkey — is approved, Russia would become the only non-NATO country on the Baltic Sea. In a sign of support for Finland and Sweden's NATO membership, US Chief of Staff General Mark Milley was in Stockholm on Saturday aboard the USS Kearsage, making it the largest US warship ever to dock in Stockholm.



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Indian Family Of 4, Killed In Nepal Plane Crash, Cremated In Kathmandu

The Canadian-built plane was carrying four Indians, two Germans and 13 Nepali passengers, besides a three-member Nepali crew when it crashed minutes after taking off from the tourist city of Pokhara on Sunday



(News Agency) Kathmandu: The bodies of four Indians, who were among 22 people killed in the Tara Air plane crash in Nepal's mountainous Mustang district, were cremated on Thursday at the sacred Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Canadian-built turboprop Twin Otter 9N-AET plane was carrying four Indians, two Germans and 13 Nepali passengers, besides

a three-member Nepali crew when it crashed minutes after taking off from the tourist city of Pokhara on Sunday. Businessman Ashok Kumar Tripathi, 54, and his Thane-based estranged wife Vaibhavi Bandekar Tripathi, 51, were on a reunion trip to the Himalayan country along with their son Dhanush, 22, and daughter Ritika, 15, when the tragedy struck. Mr Tripathi's brother and wife were present when the last rites of the four members of the family were performed. The bodies were cremated at the electric crematorium near the temple.

The Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, situated

along the banks of the Bagmati River, is one of the most important Hindu temples in Nepal. Earlier in the morning, the bodies were handed over to the family after post-mortem at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital here. Rescuers on Monday recovered 21 bodies from the wreckage site of the plane belonging to Tara Air. On Tuesday, the last body was also retrieved from the wreckage site. The Nepal government has formed a five-member commission of inquiry headed by senior aeronautical engineer Ratish Chandra Lal Suman to find out the cause of

the Tara Air plane crash. According to a preliminary investigation carried out by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), bad weather was the reason behind the crash of the plane. The black box of the plane was also retrieved by a team of experienced international and national mountain guides from the crash site on Tuesday. The black box, also known as the cockpit voice recorder, records radio transmissions and other sounds in the cockpit, such as conversations between the pilots, and engine noises. It could offer vital clues about the crash in which all 22 people on board were killed.

Indian-Origin Engineer Leads UK Team That Creates Skin Which Feels "Pain"

Professor Ravinder Dahiya said the discovery marks a real step forward in work towards creating large-scale neuromorphic printed e-skin capable of responding appropriately to stimuli



(News Agency) London: A team of researchers led by an Indian-origin engineer in the UK has created an electronic skin capable of feeling "pain" and according to them it could help create a new generation of smart robots with human-like sensitivity.

Professor Ravinder Dahiya, from the University of Glasgow's James Watt School of Engineering, said the discovery marks a real step forward in work towards creating large-scale neuromorphic printed e-skin capable of responding appropriately to stimuli. His team at the university developed the artificial skin with a new type of

processing system based on synaptic transistors, which mimics the brain's neural pathways in order to learn. A robot hand which uses the smart skin is said to show a remarkable ability to learn to react to external stimuli.

"We all learn early on in our lives to respond appropriately to unexpected stimuli like pain in order to prevent us from hurting ourselves again. Of course, the development of this new form of electronic skin didn't really involve inflicting pain as we know it - it's simply a shorthand way to explain the process of learning from external stimulus," explained Mr Dahiya.

"What we've been able to create through this process is an electronic skin capable of distributed learning at the hardware level, which doesn't need to send messages back and forth to a central processor before taking action. Instead, it greatly accelerates the process of responding to touch by cutting down the amount of computation required," he said.

In a new paper 'Printed Synaptic Transistors based Electronic Skin for Robots to Feel and Learn', published on Wednesday in the journal 'Science Robotics', the Scottish university researchers describe how they built their prototype computational e-skin,

and how it improves on the current state of the art in touch-sensitive robotics.

The development of the electronic skin is described as the latest breakthrough in flexible, stretchable printed surfaces from the University of Glasgow's Bendable Electronics and Sensing Technologies (BEST) Group.

Fengyuan Liu, a member of the BEST group and a co-author of the paper, added: "In the future, this research could be the basis for a more advanced electronic skin which enables robots capable of exploring and interacting with the world in new ways, or building prosthetic limbs which are capable of near-human levels of touch sensitivity." Scientists have been working for decades to build artificial skin with touch sensitivity. One widely-explored method is spreading an array of contact or pressure sensors across the electronic skin's surface to allow it detect when it comes into contact with an object. Data from the sensors is then sent to a computer to be processed and interpreted. The sensors typically produce a large volume of data which can take time to be properly processed and responded to, introducing delays which could reduce the skin's potential effectiveness in real-world tasks.

The Glasgow University team's new form

of electronic skin draws inspiration from how the human peripheral nervous system interprets signals from skin in order to eliminate latency and power consumption.

As soon as human skin receives an input, the peripheral nervous system begins processing it at the point of contact, reducing it to only the vital information before it is sent to the brain. That reduction of sensory data allows efficient use of communication channels needed to send the data to the brain, which then responds almost immediately for the body to react appropriately. To build an electronic skin capable of a computationally efficient, synapse-like response, the researchers printed a grid of 168 synaptic transistors made from zinc-oxide nanowires directly onto the surface of a flexible plastic surface. Then, they connected the synaptic transistor with the skin sensor present over the palm of a fully-articulated, human-shaped robot hand. When the sensor is touched, it registers a change in its electrical resistance - a small change corresponds to a light touch, and harder touch creates a larger change in resistance. This input is designed to mimic the way sensory neurons work in the human body.



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Vice President's Tribute To Mahatma Gandhi At Monument In Africa

Venkaiah Naidu is on his three-nation tour, visited the Monument of African Renaissance in Dakar, Senegal on Thursday



(News Agency) Dakar: Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu and his spouse Usha Naidu paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at the African Renaissance Monument, following which he also visited the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar. The museum is a repository of African art, culture and history and aims to highlight Africa's cultural and scientific contributions to the

world. Mr Naidu is on his three-nation tour, visited the Monument of African Renaissance in Dakar, Senegal on Thursday. "The Vice President, Venkaiah Naidu visiting the Monument of African Renaissance in Dakar, Senegal today," tweeted the Vice Presidential secretariat.

The monumental structure made of bronze & copper stands tall at 52 meters and symbolises the 'dignity of the African continent as well as its vision of a better future. Complimenting Senegal for positioning itself as one of Africa's model democracies, the Vice President said that India, as the world's largest democracy, appreciates Senegal's success

in this regard. He further said that these shared values of democracy and secularism form the basis of warm and friendly relations between the two countries.

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu met the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, at the Presidential Palace in Dakar on Wednesday and reviewed the progress in the relationship between India and Senegal during the meeting. Both the leaders agreed to further strengthen cooperation in various fields including agriculture, health, defence, railways, energy and culture. "Vice President @MVenkaiahNaidu and

President @Macky_Sall of Senegal held tete-a-tete followed by delegation-level talks in Dakar today. Reviewed the progress in our ties & agreed to further strengthen cooperation in agriculture, health, defence, railways, energy, culture, etc," spokesperson for Ministry of External Affairs Arindam Bagchi said in a tweet. Mr Naidu will be in Senegal from June 1 to June 3 and will be holding delegation-level talks with the President of the National Assembly Moustapha Niasse and other dignitaries, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

Environmentalism Sunita Narain Gets Special Mention At Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee

In his speech, Prince William focused his message on the environment, and recognized "the monumental and pioneering work of so many visionary environmentalists"



(News Agency) London: Delhi-based environmentalism Sunita Narain got a special mention by Britain's Prince William in his tribute to Queen Elizabeth II during celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee in London marking 70 years of the 96-year-old monarch's reign. In his speech during a Grand Jubilee Party at the Palace on a 360-degree stage outside Buckingham Palace on Saturday night, Prince William focused his message on the environment, and recognized "the monumental and pioneering work of so many visionary environmentalists".

He said, "I think of Rachel Carson from America, Wangari Maathai from Kenya, Sunita Narain from India and so many others. While no one's

grandmother thanks them for talking about their age, my own grandmother has been alive for nearly a century. In that time, mankind has benefited from unimaginable technological developments and scientific breakthroughs." Prince William's address was followed by his father, Prince Charles, who paid tribute to his mother's "lifetime of selfless service". "Your Majesty, you have been with us in our difficult times. You bring us together to celebrate moments of pride, joy and happiness. Maybe this year, it really is coming home. You have met us and talked with us. You laugh and cry with us and, most importantly, you have been there for us, for these 70 years. You pledged to serve your whole life - you continue to deliver," Prince

Charles said.

The Queen did not attend Saturday's concert, but participated in a pre-recorded comic sketch with Paddington Bear to open the concert. In it, she is seen sharing a chaotic English cream tea at Buckingham Palace with the world-famous fictional bear gulping down tea straight from the teapot and accidentally spraying cream at the royal footman. The cartoon character then reveals that he always

carries an emergency stash of his favourite treat, a marmalade sandwich, and offers it to the Queen. Smiling and laughing, the Queen opens her own handbag to show her own sandwich, saying: "I keep mine in here". The star-studded concert saw 22,000 people fill The Mall road, which leads up to Buckingham Palace, to enjoy performances from an array of music artists, as well as appearances from the stars of stage and screen, and the

sporting world. There were songs from Sir Elton John, George Ezra, Craig David, Duran Duran, Alicia Keys and Eurovision runner-up Sam Ryder, while Sir Rod Stewart's performance of 'Sweet Caroline' had all the royals swaying in their seats. There was also a run through of British and Commonwealth sporting achievements by actor and rapper Doc Brown and the show was closed by Diana Ross, with her first live performance in the UK in 15 years.

Indian arrested in Sri Lanka for smuggling foreign currency worth over Rs 4 crore

The man, who has not been identified, was arrested on Sunday by security officials at the Bandaranaike International Airport, Daily Mirror Lanka reported on Monday

(News Agency) A 45-year-old Indian businessman has been arrested at the Sri Lanka international airport for attempting to smuggle foreign currency worth over Rs 4 crore out of the country. The man, who has not been identified, was arrested on Sunday by security officials at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), Daily Mirror Lanka reported on Monday. He came to Sri Lanka for business. Following a search of his suitcase, the security officials found 1,17,000 Canadian dollars and 19,000 Euros worth over Rs 4 crore, the report added. Security officials checked the



passenger's baggage after he behaved in a suspicious manner. The officials observed that the passenger was visiting a toilet at the airport departure passenger terminal several times in a short period of time, the Daily News Lanka reported. He was to board an Indigo Flight bound for Chennai. The passenger and his consignment of foreign currency were handed over to the Customs officials at Katunayake Airport for further investigations. The foreign currency had been confiscated while the passenger was ordered to pay a fine of Rs 10,000.

CEO Who Fired 900 On Zoom Call Sued For "Misleading Investors"

Last year, Better.com CEO Vishal Garg had to apologize for his manner of handling layoffs after a video of him firing 900 employees over a Zoom call went viral on social media



- filed on Tuesday in a US district court, southern district of New York - that she was pushed out of her role in February in retaliation for raising concerns about the deal. She is seeking financial compensation. "We have reviewed the claims in the complaint and strongly believe

them to be without merit," a lawyer for Better.com said in an emailed statement to Reuters. "The company is confident in our financial and accounting practices, and we will vigorously defend this lawsuit," the lawyer added. Founded in 2016 and headquartered in New York,

Better.com offers mortgage and insurance products to homeowners through its online platform. Last year, Mr Garg had to apologize for his manner of handling layoffs after a video of him firing 900 employees over a Zoom call went viral on social media.

Sky is the limit: From quitting her job to scripting Guinness Records, Ultra-runner Sufiya dreams big

(News Agency) On one fine day, Sufiya realised that she was frustrated with her white-collar job. The young woman, who was working as a member of the ground staff at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, wanted to take up running to make sure she maintained her fitness. The overnight shifts at her workplace were taking a heavy toll on her mind and body, but running came as a refreshing change. Sufiya had spent nearly 10 years at her job after having persuaded her family to let her explore the aviation industry. However, she was ready to quit her job and explore ultra-running full-time. What began with marathons soon led her to expeditions. Sufiya, born and brought up in Ajmer, Rajasthan, began falling in love with ultra-running after quitting her job

in 2017. Cut to 2022, Sufiya is a record-breaking long-distance runner from India. The Under Armour athlete has scripted as many as 3 Guinness records, with the latest being the record for the fastest time by a woman to cover the Golden Quadrilateral. Sufiya covered the highways connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata. -- a total distance of close to 6,000 km in 110 days, 24 days, and 23 hours between December 2020 and April 2021. Sufiya also achieved a Guinness Record for being the fastest to cover the Kashmir-Kanyakumari stretch 87 days. Her latest expedition was the arduous Manali-Leh highway which she completed in 6 days in September-October 2021. "When I started running, I did not think I would achieve this much or set a Guinness record.

(News Agency) New York: A former Better.com employee is suing the company and its chief executive, Vishal Garg, alleging they provided misleading statements to investors about the digital mortgage firm's financial prospects and performance. Sarah Pierce, a former executive vice-president for sales and operations at the SoftBank-backed company, claimed in her lawsuit that Mr Garg misrepresented Better.com's statements to ensure investors go through with a SPAC merger instead of withdrawing due to its financial condition. A Better.com lawyer said the claims were "without merit". SoftBank did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment. Better.com's plan to go public through a merger with a special-purpose acquisition company (SPAC) Aurora Acquisition Corp, in a deal that valued it at \$7.7 billion, was agreed to last year and has yet to close. SPAC deals were among the hottest investment trends during the pandemic as early-stage companies looked to go public. Pierce said in the lawsuit

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Navjot Sidhu, jailed in road rage case, hospitalised with liver ailment

The cricketer-turned-politician was taken to PGIMER in Chandigarh on Monday. His condition is now stable, doctors told India Today TV



(SAI Bureau) Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu, arrested in a 34-year-old road rage case, has been hospitalized with liver ailments. The cricketer-turned-politician was taken to PGIMER in Chandigarh on Monday.

His condition is now stable, doctors told India Today TV. A medical board drew a diet

chart for Sidhu, who suffers from obesity and metabolic disorder. The first day in jail, Sidhu refused to eat dal roti, saying he was allergic to wheat.

The former chief of Punjab Congress sought permission for a special diet from home, citing health complications. He was examined by doctors on the orders of a court, following which

a three-doctor team made a diet chart for him.

SPECIAL DIET CHART AT JAIL

According to the chart, the politician will have to be served seven meals a day. Early in the morning, he can be given half a glass of white petha juice or a glass of coconut water along with a cup of Rosemary tea. The former cricketer will then have to

be served a cup of lactose-free milk, one tablespoon of flax, sunflower, melon, or chia seeds, six almonds, a walnut, and two pecan nuts for breakfast. Sidhu's mid-morning snacks comprise fruit and vegetable juices of various kinds, including a glass of beetroot or bottle gourd or cucumber or sweet lemon or tulsi and mint leaves or gooseberry or celery leaves or fresh turmeric or carrot or aloe vera juice. He is alternatively given a fruit - watermelon, melon, kiwi, strawberry, guava, apple, or wood apple. Choices also include sprouted black chana with green gram dal and cucumber/tomato/half a lemon/avocado. For lunch, he has been asked to eat a roti made by mixing sorghum, singhara, and ragi flour in equal proportions. This with a bowl each of seasonal green vegetable and of cucumber and ghia raita or a

bowl of beetroot raita, a green salad and a glass of lassi.

In the evening, Sidhu has been prescribed to have a cup of tea with low-fat milk and no sugar and a slice of paneer or Tofu with half a lemon. At night, Sidhu can have a bowl of mixed vegetable and dal soup/black chana soup sprinkled with black pepper powder and sauteed vegetables, including carrots, beans, broccoli, mushroom, and bell pepper. He has also been advised to drink a cup of Chamomile tea and one tablespoon of Psyllium husk with half a glass of warm water before going to bed. Sidhu was sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment last month by the Supreme Court in the 1988 road rage case. He surrendered on May 20 before the trial court in Patiala and has since then been lodged at the Patiala jail.

PM Modi to meet Hyderabad BJP corporators, leaders in Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold an informal meeting with BJP corporators of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and other senior leaders in Delhi



(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet BJP corporators of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and other senior leaders in Delhi on Tuesday, June 7. PM Modi has invited senior leaders, 47 BJP corporators along with office bearers of Hyderabad unit to the meeting. However, this will be informal interaction over tea.

This is the first time, during his tenure as the prime minister, that PM Modi has called for such informal interaction. Top party

sources told India Today that on May 26, during his Hyderabad visit, PM Modi had asked the state BJP leaders and corporators to come to Delhi. The BJP will hold a national executive meeting in Hyderabad on July 2 and 3. Besides, the party's general secretary organisational, BL Santosh, was also in the city recently. This development comes just months before the Telangana Assembly elections which are slated to be held next year.

Nitish Kumar rejects population control law, cites China's failure

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday rejected any attempt at the enactment of a population control law in the country by the Centre



(SAI Bureau) Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has outrightly rejected any attempts at the enactment of a population control law in the country by the Centre. The Bihar chief minister's response came as a counter to Union Minister Prahlaad Patel's comment earlier this week, where he stated that the Centre was moving towards bringing a law to check the growing population. Forming a law on population control would not

serve any purpose since it is more important to educate girls and women, Nitish Kumar said. He advocated that educating women would automatically bring down the fertility rate, adding that his government, in the last decade, has focused on the education of girls, bringing down Bihar's fertility rate from 4.3 to 3.

"We have found in our study that because of education of women, the fertility rate in Bihar has come down to 3 and we can

bring the fertility rate to 2 in the next seven years. Nothing will happen just by making laws. Work should be done in such a way that it becomes a part of nature. Everyone should see what happened after the enactment of the population control law in China," Kumar said. It must be noted that several BJP leaders from Bihar have been continuously raising the demand to bring in a population control law. Foremost among them is Union Minister Giriraj Singh. Recently, a minister in Nitish Kumar's Cabinet and BJP leader, Neeraj Kumar Singh 'Bablu', also advocated the enactment of a population control law in Bihar. However, Janata Dal (United) has consistently rejected this demand and argued that the government is emphasizing on education of women and girls, which has resulted in a dip in fertility rate.

Maharashtra CM holds meet, packs Sena MLAs off to hotel ahead of Rajya Sabha polls

Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray met Independent MLAs and those from smaller parties on Monday ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls. Additionally, buses were seen parked outside his home to take ruling coalition MLAs to a hotel in Mumbai before the crucial vote



on Monday evening. Around 25 MLAs attended the meeting at his residence.

Further, buses were seen parked outside his official residence for the purpose of taking MLAs from the ruling coalition to a hotel in Mumbai's Malad. The MLAs from Shiv Sena, Congress and Nationalist Congress Party -- the three parties which make up the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi in Maharashtra -- are expected to stay sequestered at hotels till June 10 to prevent horse-trading.

They will be brought directly from there for voting in the Rajya Sabha polls on June 10.

RAJYA SABHA POLLS

In the Rajya Sabha polls on June 10, the Shiv Sena and BJP are set to battle it out for the sixth seat from Maharashtra as none of the seven candidates in the fray -- four of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and three of BJP -- have withdrawn their nomination. In the sixth Rajya Sabha seat, the contest is

between BJP's Dhananjay Mahadik and the Shiv Sena's Sanjay Pawar. The 288-member Legislative Assembly is the electoral college for the Rajya Sabha election. The ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi claims to have the support of 169 MLAs. This includes: Shiv Sena (56), NCP (53), INC (44), Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (3), Samajwadi Party (2), Prahar Janshakti Party (2), Shetkari Kamgar Party (1), Shetkari Krantikari Party (1), Independents (8).

(SAI Bureau) Ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls on June 10, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray held a meeting with Independent MLAs and those from smaller parties

How Delhi minister Satyendar Jain laundered crores with wife, daughters, friends

The Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate have accused Satyendar Jain of using his family members, including his two daughters, to mislead the probe agencies

(SAI Bureau) Arvind Kejriwal's Minister Satyendar Jain, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on charges of money laundering, has allegedly laundered over Rs 16 crore. Along with his family, two other Jain families are under the ED's scanner for being part of this extensive conspiracy. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) have accused Satyendar Jain of using his family members, including his two daughters, to mislead the probe agencies. According to the probe report, accessed by India Today TV, Satyendar Jain's wife and two daughters received crores in the garb of businesses from companies linked to Satyendar Jain.

Satyendar Kumar Jain, his family and friends had control, stakes and share holdings in four Delhi-based companies, the report said. Jain was one of the directors of three of the four firms before becoming part of the Delhi government. However, his family members continued to hold shares in all the four companies. "These companies have laundered money to the tune of Rs 16.4 crore during the period from 2011-2016, including Rs 4.61 crore in 2015-2016

when Jain was a public servant. This amount belongs to Satyendar Kumar Jain, his family members and the families of his business associates, Ajit Prasad Jain and Sunil Kumar Jain," the probe report reads. The agencies have also alleged that Satyendar Jain held active control over the accused companies, even though he had technically resigned from the directorship before contesting the Delhi elections in December 2013. "He had control of the companies through his wife as director of Paryas Infosolutions Pvt. Ltd. and also by maintaining 1/3rd of the shareholding in the name of his wife, family members, relatives and friends in the companies. Similarly, the families of Ajit Prasad Jain and Sunil Kumar Jain also had 1/3rd of the shareholding in the above companies. Satyendar Jain and his business associates provided the amount in cash to Kolkata-based entry operators," reads the report.

The entry operators then re-routed the money through investment in shares of the companies of which Satyendar Jain was director of, the report added. In March 2016, 1.5 lakh shares of Manglayatan Project Pvt. Ltd. were sold by Satyendar Jain's wife Poonam to a Kolkata-

based shell company for Rs 15 lakh. This, according to the probe agency, established the connection between Satyendar Jain and the Kolkata-based shell company.

In the case of the other companies, the probe report alleged that Satyendar Jain controlled the companies and

laundered money through his wife Poonam Jain, daughters Soumya and Shreya.

The investigative agencies have also alleged that the AAP leader's long-time associates and friends - Ajit Prasad Jain and Sunil Kumar Jain - were allegedly laundering money at the behest of the minister.

Ajit Prasad Jain's son Vibhav and Sunil Kumar Jain's son Ankush have also recorded their statements before the agencies. The report also has details of Satyendar Jain's daughters allegedly receiving huge amounts of money in their bank accounts without participating in any actual businesses.

3 killed, 6 injured in road accident in Uttarakhand's Champawat

At least three people were killed and six others were injured in a road accident in Uttarakhand's Champawat district on Monday

(SAI Bureau) Three people were killed and six others were injured in a road accident in Uttarakhand's Champawat on Monday evening. At least nine people were involved in the accident after the vehicle they were in met with an accident on Danda-Minar road. The cause of the accident is yet to be known.

The vehicle was heading towards Reetha Sahib from Nanakmatta town when it met with an accident. The injured were rescued by the police and local residents soon after the accident. They are currently



being treated for injuries in a nearby hospital. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over the incident and has announced financial assistance of Rs two lakh to the

kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured. Former Chief Minister Harish Rawat also expressed grief and wished for the speedy recovery of those injured.

Supreme Court pulls up mining company for operating without environment clearance

The Supreme Court has pulled up a mining company for going ahead with mining without getting environmental clearance



for the mining company for going ahead with the extraction of ore when it doesn't have required environment clearances. The court was hearing the special leave petition by M/S Balasore Alloys Ltd assailing Orissa High Court's order of refusing to extend the interim order of status quo. The counsel responded, "My application for forest clearance is pending. We've challenged the timelines. We have excavated the ore and have not been allowed to pick it up." The bench replied, "You cannot be permitted. By way of order of status quo, you cannot get mining clearance. It cannot

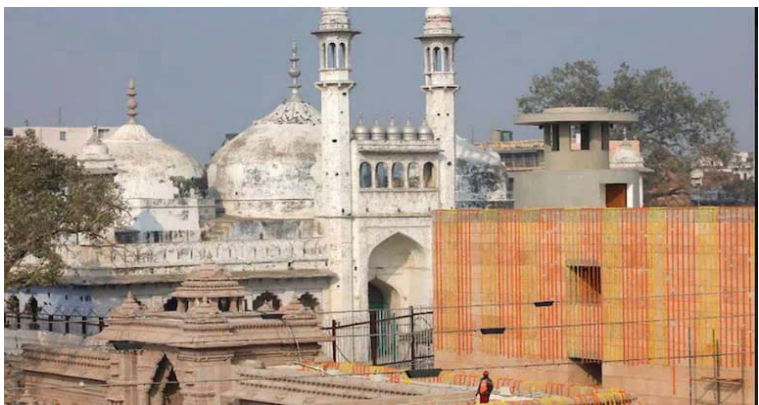
be done. Even if the timelines were extended. We'll set aside the HC's order. Anything which is excavated without forest clearance is illegal. You cannot be permitted to continue excavation." The court further said, "We are in fact going to pass a general order where status quo order has been passed. We'll direct the HC to decide it within 6 months. Without forest clearance, how can you undertake mining?" The bench then ordered the high court to dispose of the cases in six months and said, "It's not in dispute that the petitioner is not having forest clearance at this

stage. Merely because the application for forest clearance is pending cannot be treated as having obtained forest clearance permitting the petitioner to carry excavation activity of mining. Under the guise of order of Status quo, the petitioner who does not have clearance cannot be allowed to carry the mining activity. The high court has rightly not extended the order of status quo." We request the high court to decide and dispose of all the matters where the order of status quo is continuing in mining activity within the period of 6 months from today," the orders stated.

(SAI Bureau) The Supreme Court came down heavily on a mining company for continuing with the mining activities without getting the required environmental clearance. The Supreme Court also directed the Orissa High Court to decide and dispose of all the matters wherein status quo was ordered within six months. On Monday, the vacation bench of Justices MR Shah and Aniruddha Ghose pulled up the counsel appearing

Gyanvapi case: Varanasi judge receives threat letter, asks govt to take action

Varanasi Civil Judge Ravi Diwakar, who had ordered the survey at the Gyanvapi mosque complex, said on Tuesday that he has received a threat letter



(SAI Bureau) Varanasi Civil Judge Ravi Kumar Diwakar said on Tuesday that he received a threat letter from a man named Kashif Ahmed Siddiqui of Islamic Aghaz Movement. Ravi Diwakar is the judge who had ordered a survey at the disputed Gyanvapi-Kashi Vishwanath complex.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had transferred the Gyanvapi case from the civil court to that of the district judge. The next hearing will be on July 4.

WHAT THE LETTER SAID

As per Justice Diwakar, the threat letter insinuated that in present-day 'divided India', even the judiciary has taken on a

saffron hue.

JUDGE WRITES TO GOVT

Justice Diwakar has informed home secretary in the Uttar Pradesh government about the threat letter. He has demanded action in the matter.

SECURITY PROVIDED

The Varanasi Police Commissioner told India Today that Ravi Diwakar has already been provided security. Nine policemen have been deployed to protect the judge and his family.

All the petitioners and advocates associated with the Gyanvapi case have been given proper protection, as per the police.

Amid demand for CBI probe, Kolkata lawyer seeks ED investigation into singer KK's event

A lawyer has filed a PIL in Calcutta High Court seeking ED probe into alleged financial irregularities in singer KK's event organised by the Gurudas College

(SAI Bureau) A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in Calcutta High Court seeking an Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe into singer KK's event. This comes hours after a plea was filed in the high court seeking a CBI inquiry into KK's death. Kolkata-based lawyer Sayon Banerjee filed a PIL seeking an ED probe into alleged misappropriation of college funds for KK's event at Nazrul Manch.

Banerjee claimed that there were financial irregularities in the fest organised by the Gurudas College. He questioned how a

Trinamool Congress-run students union conducted a fest when there was no students' union at Gurudas college since 2018. The PIL also showed a pass with the number 4043 on it. As per Banerjee, there was black marketing of the passes by the members of the students union itself. He claimed that Nazrul Manch's seating capacity was 2,440, more passes were issued.

The Kolkata-based advocate has asked for an independent inquiry into the alleged misappropriation of college funds.

Nuclear-capable Agni 4 missile successfully tested

The nuclear-capable Agni-IV missile was successfully tested on Monday

(SAI Bureau) The nuclear-capable Agni-IV missile was successfully flight-tested under the Strategic Forces Command on Monday. The ballistic missile has a range of 4,000 km. In an official statement, the Ministry of Defence said, "A successful training launch of an Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, Agni-4, was carried out at approximately 1930 hours on June 06, 2022 from APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha." "The successful test was part of routine user training launches carried out under the



aegis of the Strategic Forces Command. The launch validated all operational parameters as also the reliability of the system.

The successful test reaffirms India's policy of having a 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' Capability," the statement added.

Arvind Kejriwal's sudden love for Kashmiri Pandits election stunt: BJP leader

Arvind Kejriwal's statements against the BJP show his "cunningness" at a time when he is trying to cash in on the situation arising out of the unfortunate targeted killings in the Valley, the BJP leader said, alleging that the AAP chief's eyes are set on the upcoming polls in J&K



deputy chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and BJP leader, Kavinder Gupta, alleged. The AAP leader has a Masters' degree in hypocrisy - the reason behind Kejriwal's overnight affection for the Kashmiri Pandits, Gupta claimed, adding that if the Delhi chief minister is so concerned about the community, he should have given them some relief in Delhi by launching schemes for the community which is living in

exile. The senior BJP functionary said that Kejriwal's statements against the BJP government show his "cunningness" at a time when he is trying to cash in on the situation arising out of the unfortunate targeted killings in the Valley and alleged that the AAP chief's eyes are set on the upcoming polls in the UT. Several entities have alleged that the AAP has taken funds from Khalistani supporters living abroad during the Punjab polls and now, by shedding crocodile tears, he is making a similar ground in J&K as well, the BJP leader further alleged. "People should remain wary about the foxy political tricks of Arvind Kejriwal. Being the chief minister of Delhi, Kejriwal

should have helped combat terror mongers. But he is misleading people through his incendiary statements," he added. The BJP leader made it clear that what the BJP government has accomplished in J&K, including the abrogation of Article 370, no other party or person can even imagine doing the same. Soon these attacks on soft targets will also stop, since effective steps have already been taken to tighten the noose around the violence mongers in the Valley, who are working at the behest of their Pakistani mentors, Gupta said. Kashmir has been witnessing a spate of targeted killings, with at least eight people being killed since May 1.

(News Agency) Arvind Kejriwal's nothing but an election ploy with sudden "love" towards the polls being scheduled in the Kashmiri Pandit community is Union Territory (UT), former

Terrorist convicted in 2006 Varanasi serial blasts case gets death sentence

Terrorist Waliullah, convicted in the 2006 Varanasi serial blasts case, was sentenced to death by a Ghaziabad court on Monday

(News Agency) Waliullah, a terrorist who was held guilty in the 2006 Varanasi serial blasts case on Saturday, has been sentenced to death by a Ghaziabad court. On March 7, 2006, blasts at the Sankat Mochan temple and the cantonment railway station in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi claimed at least 20 lives and left over a hundred injured. The same evening, explosives were also found at Dashashwamedh Ghat. The next month, the

Varanasi police arrested Waliullah in connection with the case. He was accused of plotting the serial blasts in Varanasi. After lawyers in Varanasi refused to contest his case, the Allahabad High Court transferred it to a court in Ghaziabad. The court held him guilty in two cases lodged under IPC sections of murder, attempt to murder and mutilation and under the Explosives Act on Saturday. Now, the court has awarded him the death sentence.



Training aircraft crash lands in Odisha, pilot injured

The aircraft crashed at the Birasal Airstrip in Odisha's Dhenkanal district around 3:00 pm. Fire personnel were immediately rushed to the spot

(News Agency) A training aircraft crash landed in Odisha this afternoon and the pilot, a trainee, sustained injuries to his face and nose. The aircraft crashed at the Birasal Airstrip in Odisha's Dhenkanal district around 3:00 pm. Fire personnel were



immediately rushed to the spot. The Government Aviation Training Institute (GATI) operates from the Birasal airstrip. Kiran Malik, who is from Maharashtra, was enrolled with the GATI for training. The flight reportedly fell

from an elevation of 15 feet above the ground, damaging the front portion of the VT-EUW aircraft. The injured pilot was rushed to the Community Health Centre (CHC) in Birasal and later shifted to Kamakhyanagar hospital. In June 2020, a trainer and a trainee woman pilot - Captain Sanjib Kumar Jha from Bihar and Anisha Fatima from Tamil Nadu - were killed in a mishap after their two-seater aircraft crashed on the same airstrip.

Kolkata Police arrests YouTuber for abusing Bengal CM Mamata in videos

YouTuber Roddur Roy was arrested by the Kolkata Police in Goa on Tuesday after TMC leader Riju Dutta filed a police complaint against him



(News Agency) The Kolkata Police arrested famous YouTuber Roddur Roy in Goa on Tuesday after All India Trinamool Congress leader Riju Dutta filed a complaint against him for 'using derogatory remarks against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee' in his videos. Roddur Roy was arrested by the anti-rowdy section of the Kolkata Police.

THE COMPLAINT

In his police complaint, TMC's Riju Dutta urged the police to register an FIR against Roddur Roy on the grounds that he was a "repeat offender" who had "maligned the state of West Bengal" and "perennially used derogatory remarks against CM Mamata Banerjee and MP Abhishek Banerjee" apart from the state's

police force. This came after Roddur Roy posted a YouTube video on his channel in which he criticised the West Bengal government over the death of singer KK after a concert in Kolkata on May 31. After the complaint was filed, YouTuber Roddur Roy made a video challenging the police to arrest him.

NOT THE FIRST TIME

This is not the first time social media sensation Roddur Roy has been in the eye of a storm. Two years ago, he was booked by the police for allegedly hurting public sentiment by distorting the songs of Rabindranath Tagore. He had shot to fame after these videos, in which he replaced the lyrics in Tagore's songs with expletives, went viral on social media.

Al-Qaeda threatens suicide attacks in Delhi, Mumbai, UP, Gujarat over Prophet remarks

Terror group Al-Qaeda has threatened to carry out suicide attacks in different parts of India over the recent remarks made by a few BJP leaders on Prophet Muhammad



Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat to "fight for the honour of the Prophet". This comes in light of the controversy that has erupted after a few BJP leaders made remarks on Prophet Muhammad. "We shall kill those who affront our Prophet and we shall bind explosives with our bodies and the bodies of our children to blow away the ranks of those who dare to dishonour our Prophet... The saffron terrorists should now await their end in Delhi, Bombay, UP and Gujarat," the letter says.

PROPHET REMARKS CONTROVERSY

Over the last few days, several countries such as Malaysia, Kuwait and Pakistan condemned recent remarks made by a few BJP leaders on Prophet Muhammad. While Nupur Sharma made comments during a TV debate, another leader Naveen Jindal posted a controversial remark on Twitter. India, meanwhile, has maintained that the views belong to a few fringe elements only and

do not represent those of the Government of India. India also "categorically rejected" the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) statement slamming India as "unwarranted and narrow-minded". Earlier, the ruling BJP suspended spokesperson Nupur Sharma and expelled media in-charge Naveen Jindal over the remarks. The party issued a statement emphasising its intolerance for disrespect of any religious personality.

(News Agency) In a threat letter dated June 6, terror group Al-Qaeda said it would launch suicide attacks in Delhi, Mumbai,

Amit Shah Meets NSA Doval; Better Tech Use Among Forces Tops Agenda Amid Sticky Bombs Threat



carrying seven sticky bombs was shot down in Rajbagh area of Kathua district shortly after it crossed into the Indian side from across the international border. The drone was part of a major terror plot aimed at the Amarnath Yatra but timely intervention of police foiled the major terror plot, as per sources. Apart from the seven sticky bombs, the drone was also carrying another packet containing seven under-barrel grenades. Police had inputs that terrorists might use sticky bombs to attack the Char Dham Yatra buses. A search party of police detected movement of a

drone from the border in Talli Hariya Chak area under Rajbagh police station's jurisdiction in the morning and fired at it. Police officials said the drone was brought down after being hit by the ground fire. A similar modus operandi was also used during the Katra bus incident earlier this month, where one such bomb was suspected to have been used. Top intelligence sources had then said the mysterious blast inside the vehicle was a terror attack and a sticky bomb was used for the blast on the bus heading to the Vaishno Devi shrine base camp. Security

officials said the threat of IED attacks have always been there. However, sticky bombs (also called magnetic bombs), which can be attached to a vehicle, are a new threat this time. These can be remotely detonated or set off by timers. According to a senior J&K police officer, it is a coin-shaped magnet at the bottom of a small container that enables the attacker to attach the bomb to a metal surface, usually a vehicle. Unlike remote control sticky bombs, these bombs have a timer of about five to 10 minutes, which gives the attacker enough time to flee.

(News Agency) Amid security preparations for this year's Amarnath Yatra in the Kashmir Valley, union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting with national security adviser Ajit Doval, NTRO chief Anil Dashmana and other CAPF heads. In the wake of increased cross-border drone activity and use of sticky bombs, the central agenda of the meeting was better use of technology by armed forces to counter such security challenges. A separate meeting was also chaired by the home secretary, who interacted with heads of National Investigation Agency, Central Industrial Security Force, National Security Guard and Border Security Force. They, too, discussed the use of technology to deal with terror threats.

Earlier in the week, Shah had held a meeting with Doval and RAW chief Samrat Goel among other top officials. They had discussed the security situation in the union territory, which has witnessed a spate of killings since May. Shah had also convened a high-level meeting on June 3 to discuss the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir and to take stock of the arrangements for the annual pilgrimage, which is being held after a two-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In similar meetings about the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, Shah has directed security forces and police to conduct coordinated counter-terrorism operations proactively. The home minister has advocated that to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a prosperous and peaceful J&K, security forces should ensure zero cross-border infiltration. On May 29, a drone

TMC to take out rally against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma amid corruption allegations

The TMC will take out a rally against Himanta Biswa Sarma amid corruption allegations levelled against the Assam CM's wife

(News Agency) Assam Trinamool Congress has organised 'March to Rajbhawan' programme on Wednesday, June 8, at 11 am. The march has been organised to protest against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma amid corruption charges against his wife's company. The TMC rally will be led by Ripun Bora. The



TMC unit will meet the Assam Governor and submit a memorandum asking for an enquiry into the issue of PPE kit procurement by the Assam

CM's wife's company. Apart from the Aam Aadmi Party, the Trinamool Congress has accused Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, of corruption in connection with the supply of PPE kits during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Himanta Biswa Sarma has denied the corruption allegations. In an exclusive interview with India Today, the Assam CM said that not a single penny has been paid to his family.

What is my status in Anil Deshmukh case: Ex-Mumabi cop Sachin Vaze asks CBI court

Ex-Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze, who was granted a pardon by the court last week, asked the court what his status was in the case involving former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh



granted a pardon by the court last week on the condition that he will all the evidence that he has against Deshmukh and others. During the hearing, advocate Rounak Naik and Aarti Kalekar appearing for Vaze said, "The accused number four in the case has not been chargesheeted and he is presumed to be discharged." Judge Gwalani said that the chargesheet has not been filed before the court and since the relevant papers are still under process, he cannot say anything in the case. The court had only the 59 pages of the chargesheet

that the agency had filed in the registry of the court. However, not satisfied with the reply, Vaze went into the witness box and asked: What is my status in the case? "I have no idea about this crime as the papers are not here. His question is right. The public prosecutors should go through the legal process and then let me know," the judge told the public prosecutors in the case. In reply, prosecutor Sumedh Wankhede said, "He is a prosecution witness." Vaze then decided to file an application for default bail as the

chargesheet against him was not filed. However, the judge said, "Forget the chargesheet. Since you have accepted to become an approver and have been pardoned, then show me the provision for bail. Prima facie, you cannot get bail according to procedure until the end of the trial." "CBI has accepted his pardon only on the condition that he will comply with certain conditions. Suppose he does not, then what happens? Until he supports the prosecution case, he will be in prison. His status will continue to be that of an accused until then," he added.

(SAI Bureau) Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, his personal assistant and secretary Sanjeev Palande and Kundan Shinde were produced in Mumbai court today along with the accused-turned-approver Sachin Vaze. Vaze was

Government to announce Agnipath recruitment scheme tomorrow

The government is set to announce the Agnipath recruitment scheme on June 8, Wednesday. Three service chiefs will address a press briefing and will announce the details of the scheme



Navy Chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar will address a press conference to announce the details of the scheme in a press briefing to be held tomorrow.

The three service chiefs briefed the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Agnipath scheme for soldiers' recruitment which will pave the way for induction of troops into the forces for short-term tenures. The Department of Military Affairs under Lt. Gen. Anil Puri along with the three defence forces chiefs made a presentation to

PM Modi on the programme. The new scheme is called Agnipath under which youngsters would join forces for a period of four years and serve the country. The scheme is a part of PM Modi's major reform towards reducing expenditure and age profile of the defence forces. The catchment areas for recruitment could also be significantly expanded. At the end of four years, most of the soldiers would be relieved from duty and would get assistance from the armed forces for

further employment avenues. Several corporations will also have an interest in reserving jobs for such trained and disciplined youth who have served their nation. Initial calculations by the Armed Forces had projected thousands of crores in savings in pay, allowances and pension if a considerable number of soldiers are taken in under the tour of duty concept. The best among the recruited youth could also get an opportunity to continue their service, in case vacancies are available.

(SAI Bureau) The government is all set to announce the approval of the Agnipath recruitment scheme on June 8, Wednesday. The three service chiefs, including Army chief Gen Manoj Pande, Airforce Chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari and

86% of employees in India may resign from their jobs in next six months

(SAI Bureau) With a whopping 86 percent of employees planning to resign in the next six months, the great resignation is set to continue unabated in 2022, according to jobs and recruitment agency Michael Page. Findings suggest that a significant 61% in India are willing to accept a lower salary or forgo a pay rise and/or promotion for better work-life balance, overall well-being, and happiness. "According to our data, not only has it already been taking place for the last two years sparked by the global pandemic, 2022 will only see it intensify," Michael Page said

in its report. According to the survey, this trend will continue in 2022 across markets, industries, degrees of seniority, and age groups. "With the clear majority saying a significant talent migration event is upon us in the next few months, we must be ready for it to increase." While there

is a lot of debate about organisations' work arrangements (hybrid, working from home, etc.) and Covid-related regulations generating employee dissatisfaction, the survey finds that

just 11% of those who have resigned or plan to resign cite this as the cause for their departure. Career advancement, a greater pay, a role change, and job happiness are all common reasons for employees to resign. According to the findings, 61 percent of people are willing to accept a lower wage or forego a pay raise or promotion in exchange for a better work-life balance, overall happiness, and overall well-being. Only 11 percent of those who quit or plan to leave cite Covid-related policies as the cause for their departure.



Trade agreement with UAE, Australia to create 10 lakh jobs in India: Union minister Anupriya Patel

MoS Anupriya Patel said that the FTAs with UAE and Australia will boost India's exports and is expected to create 10 lakh job employment opportunities in India



local artisans. SP Singh Baghel said that so far, most of the trades in Agra are caste-based and only people of a particular caste work in a particular profession. This needs to change and the projects need to be simplified to ensure the smooth development of Agra's industrial strength, SP Baghel said.

Speaking to India Today, Union Commerce Secretary Anant Swarup said that 5 per cent import duty on imports from these countries has been waived off, so industrialists could easily import from these countries. UAE will also open a route to the entire world's markets, he added. Council for Leather Exports

(CLE) chairman Sanjay Leekha said that this agreement could help fulfill India's 1 trillion dollar export target. Puran Dawar, a footwear exporter from Agra, said that this is the first time that the government is informing the public about policy decisions so that all exporters could benefit from them.

India's first 'sologamy' done with mehendi, haldi rituals as Gujarat woman marries herself

The much-talked-about 'sologamy' of a Gujarat woman is now over. Kshama Bindu married herself with all wedding traditions a few days ahead of the scheduled date

(SAI Bureau) Minister of State for Industries and Commerce Anupriya Patel said that the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with UAE and Australia will create 10 lakh new jobs in India. The Union Minister pointed out that with the agreement, the exporters of India will have limitless opportunities ahead of them. Speaking to India Today, Anupriya Patel said that this is the first time the government of India has made such an agreement with these countries. She said that the agreement is expected to create 10 lakh new employment opportunities in India, while also increasing India's export share.

Anupriya Patel said that leather footwear, carpet,

handicrafts, and glass industries of Agra and Firozabad could greatly benefit from this agreement and the government will also help the district in becoming an export center. Union Minister of State for Law and Agra MP SP Singh Baghel said that if there is any law that is causing hurdles in exports, it will be removed. So far, the government has removed about 1500 such laws. SP Singh Baghel also urged Anupriya Patel to pay special attention to the environmental clearance issues plaguing Agra industries. He further urged the Union minister to think about opening an artisan School or university in Agra which will help refine the skills of the

(SAI Bureau) India saw its first 'sologamy' as Gujarat woman Kshama Bindu married herself, with all the wedding rituals of 'mehendi' and 'haldi'. She got married a few days ahead of the scheduled date to avoid any controversy after a BJP leader opposed her wedding and said she wouldn't be allowed to marry in a temple. After the wedding, she thanked everyone in a video message and said she was



grateful for the support and encouragement. "I would like to thank everyone who has messaged me and congratulated me and gave me the power to fight for what I believed in," she said on Facebook. The 'sologamy'

became a major talking point with politicians sharing their thoughts on such a wedding. A BJP leader said such marriages were against Hinduism and said Kshama wouldn't be allowed to marry in a temple. Congress leader Milind Deora, on the other hand, called her marriage another example of 'wokeness', bordering on insanity. While the naysayers were many, she also got support from several quarters. Replying to Deora, Mario da Penha, a PhD candidate in History at Rutgers University said: "We live in a country where women born under the influence of Mars must marry

banana plants, peepal trees, dogs and clay pots so their negative influence is not transferred to their future husbands. If 'wokeness' is insanity, what do you call these customary practices?"

WHO IS KSHAMA BINDU?

Kshama Bindu, a resident of Vadodara, was to marry herself on June 11 in India's first case of sologamy. She identifies as a bisexual person. Kshama did her graduation in Sociology and is currently working as Senior Recruitment Officer in a private company. Both her parents are engineers. "Self-marriage is a commitment to be there for yourself and unconditional love for oneself. It's also an act of self-acceptance. People marry someone they love. I love myself and hence, this wedding," explained Kshama, who works for a private firm.

India successfully tests Agni-IV intermediate-range ballistic missile



(SAI Bureau) Marking a significant boost to the country's military capabilities, India has successfully carried out a "training launch" of the Agni-IV intermediate-range ballistic missile from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. The missile, which is capable of striking a target that is 4,000 km away, is primarily meant for

deterrence against China. The Defence Ministry said in a statement, "The launch validated all operational parameters as also the reliability of the system." "The successful test was part of routine user training launches carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command." "The successful test reaffirms India's

policy of having a 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' Capability," it added. Developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, which is also working towards "manoeuvring warheads or intelligent re-entry vehicles," Agni-IV is the fourth in the Agni series of missiles which was earlier known as Agni II prime. India, which is in the process of further strengthening its strategic missiles arsenal by adopting newer technologies and capabilities, has three more solitary nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) under development, with INS Arighat now slated for commissioning this year after some delay.

Indian delegation arrives Kabul: Is it the opening of a new bond?

By Susmita Ghosh

Led by joint secretary JP Singh, an Indian delegation team, met the Taliban recently in Kabul. This is the first official step in redeveloping the ties with Afghanistan since the Taliban taken over the country in August 2021.

The delegation team's goal is to oversee humanitarian relief efforts and projects with Indian ties, even though India has a distressed relationship with the Taliban regime. Since the elected Ashraf Ghani government collapsed in the Taliban uprising, the most of those projects came to a standstill.

India, like many other countries, has not recognized the Taliban regime officially in Afghanistan. During the war, India had

closed its diplomatic presence in the country, after evacuating many Indian nationals. However, that did not stop the backdoor contacts through various channels and meetings with the Taliban representatives and the Indian government in third country, Qatar.

As the outcome of the civil war, Afghanistan is now struggling with basic needs and external supports are quite welcome. Historically, India had a close connection with Afghanistan, hence Indian guidance is expected to Afghanistan now.

Following the US presence in Afghanistan, India came forward as the largest regional donor for the country. India has completed and participated in various infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. It includes the new parliament building, the Friendship Dam and several highway projects. However, everything stopped operating after August 2021 following the Taliban takeover.

The Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi stated that the Indian team was to hold meetings with the senior members of the Taliban and discuss India's humanitarian assistance to the country. However, he did not disclose the detail about the team composition, trip duration, scheduled places to be visited and so on. It was

only stated that the team would try to visit several places where India-assisted projects were going on.

Amir Khan Mottaki, the Taliban representative who met the Indian delegation team, expressed positive wishes for resuming diplomatic relationship. The Taliban, in their stance, wants India to resume the stalled projects across the country. They also want India to offer consular services to Afghans, especially, to the students and patients, who need to travel to India often.

With the regime change, the India-Afghanistan tie became erratic, but

India has sent shipments of humanitarian aid, consisting of 20,000 tonnes of wheat, 5 lakh doses of Covid vaccine, 13 tonnes of medicine and winter clothing. For the refugees, India has gifted Iran one million doses of the India-made Covid vaccine, along with 60 million doses of polio vaccine. In the 2022-23 budget, India has allotted INR 200 crores for Afghanistan

India can never afford to lose another ally, especially during the troubles from Pakistan and China along with north-western and

northern borders. Hence, India is extending a supportive approach albeit it doesn't have direct connection with the Taliban.

Even though there was no prior official intimation of the visit, the redevelopment of the relationship was for quite some time now. There were open channels of communication between top Taliban leaders like Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai and Abdul Ghani Baradar in third countries. India's ambassador to Qatar, Deepak Mittal met Stanekzai in Doha, in September, for the first time.

India has sent shipments of humanitarian aid, consisting of 20,000 tonnes of wheat, 5 lakh doses of Covid vaccine, 13 tonnes of medicine and winter clothing. For the refugees, India has gifted Iran one million doses of the India-made Covid vaccine, along with 60 million doses of polio vaccine. In the 2022-23 budget, India has allotted INR 200 crores for Afghanistan.

India's approach and aids have widespread appreciation in Afghanistan already. Even the top-tier Taliban leaders can understand the importance of maintaining a steady relationship with India, which will come in handy in running a country to stability. As India has already extended their friendship towards the war-torn country, it's yet to be seen if India can find a trust-worthy ally in Afghanistan or not.

WHO: Covid Origins Unclear but Lab Leak Theory Needs Study

An expert group drafted by the World Health Organisation to help investigate the origins of the coronavirus pandemic says further research is needed to determine how COVID-19 first began, including a more detailed analysis of the possibility it was a laboratory accident. That stance marks a sharp reversal of the UN health agency's initial

After considerable criticism, including from some of the scientists on WHO's team, Tedros acknowledged that it was premature to rule out a lab leak and said he has asked China to be more transparent in sharing information

assessment of the pandemic's origins, when it concluded last year that it was extremely unlikely that COVID-19 might have spilled into humans from a lab.

In a report released Thursday, WHO's expert group said key pieces of data are still missing to explain how the pandemic began. The scientists said the group would remain open to any and all scientific evidence that becomes available in the future to allow for comprehensive testing of all reasonable hypotheses. It noted that since lab accidents in the past have triggered some outbreaks, the highly politicised theory could not be discounted. Former US President Donald Trump speculated repeatedly without evidence that COVID-19 was started in a Chinese lab. He also accused WHO of colluding with China to cover up the initial outbreak, citing the UN health agency's continued public praise of the country. WHO's expert group said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sent two letters to senior Chinese government officials in February requesting information including details about the earliest human cases of COVID-19 in the city of Wuhan. The experts said

no studies were provided to WHO that assessed the possibility of COVID-19 being a laboratory leak. They said their understanding of how the coronavirus emerged was limited by factors including

that not all research presented by Chinese scientists on the virus has been published. The scientists said numerous avenues of research were

needed, including studies evaluating the role of wild animals, which are thought to be COVID-19's natural reservoir, and environmental studies in places where the virus might have first spread, like the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan. Last March, WHO released a report about COVID-19's origins following a highly choreographed visit by international scientists to China, which concluded that the disease most likely jumped into humans from bats and that there was no evidence to suggest there was a connection to a laboratory. Yet after considerable criticism, including from some of the scientists on WHO's team, Tedros acknowledged that it was premature to rule out a lab leak and said he has asked China to be more transparent in sharing information. In its new report, WHO said they were given access to data including from unpublished blood samples from more than 40,000 people in Wuhan in 2019, which were tested for COVID-19 antibodies. None were found, suggesting the virus was not spreading widely before it was first identified in late December that year.

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Rise and fall of Gupta brothers: An Indian-South African tale of politics, power, & corruption

Two of the three Gupta brothers- Rajesh and Atul Gupta- have been arrested by the UAE authorities for alleged corruption committed when Jacob Zuma was South Africa's president

Three brothers from Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur are making international headlines, but sadly for all the wrong reasons. On Monday, June 6, the South African government said that law enforcement authorities in the UAE have arrested Rajesh Gupta and Atul Gupta for using their 'close proximity' with former president Jacob Zuma to profit financially and influence senior appointments. The third brother, Ajay Gupta, has not been arrested, yet.

The three brothers had moved from UP to Saharanpur in 1990s. In what seemed to be rags to riches story, the Gupta brothers, who had a small business in Saharanpur, managed to set up a flourishing company in South Africa. As they developed political connections, the Gupta brothers simultaneously expanded their business network from computers to air travel, energy, mining, technology and media. Their close association with Jacob Zuma prompted critics to coin the word 'zupta' for the Indian-origin brothers. And then it all came crashing down in 2016-17 when the

corruption allegations began to tighten their noose around the Gupta family in South Africa.

The Gupta brothers- Ajay, Atul, and Rajesh- lived in a dilapidated building in Rani Bazar in Western UP's Saharanpur before they moved to South Africa in 1990s. Their father, Shiv Kumar Gupta, ran 'Gupta and Company' that specialised in distributing soapstone powder. He also made money by importing spices from Madagascar and Zanzibar through his Delhi-based business, SKG Marketing.

In the 1980s, Shiv Kumar Gupta told his sons that Africa would become the next 'America of the World'. And that is how Atul Gupta, who had completed courses on assembling, repairing and maintaining Apple hardware, landed in South Africa to explore business opportunities.

Atul Gupta, who was the eldest of the brothers, arrived in South Africa when the country was opening up to the world after the end of apartheid. There was no red tape at all. Ajay and Rajesh soon followed their elder brother's footsteps. Atul Gupta set up

Sahara Computers in 1993. In 2016, Sahara had an annual turnover of about 22 million dollars and employed 10,000 people.

THE 'GUPTA EMPIRE'

The Gupta Brothers became close to Jacob Zuma, it is said, after a meeting between him and Atul Gupta at a Sahara Computer event around 2015-16. Rajesh, the younger Gupta brother, was a "very close friend" and business partner of Zuma's son Duduzane. The wealthy Gupta family was accused of exercising political influence in South Africa. In 2016, South Africa saw a major political controversy after the then deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas alleged that a member of the Gupta family had offered him the position of finance minister if he advanced their business interests.

Ajay Gupta denied the allegation, saying he had never met Mcebisi Jonas.

Around the same time, former Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan also alleged that he held the Gupta Brothers responsible for having been fired from the Jacob Zuma government.

Moreover, the relationship between Guptas and South Africa's first family came under harsh glare after it was found that a family plane carrying guests for their daughter's wedding landed at the Waterkloof Air Base near Pretoria, the base usually reserved for visiting heads of state and diplomatic delegations.

FALL OF GUPTA EMPIRE

In 2017, about 1 lakh emails were leaked establishing how deeply the Gupta brothers influenced the Jacob Zuma government. This led to massive protests against the Gupta brothers. It all finally came crashing down for the Gupta family after the opposition brought a no-confidence motion against Jacob Zuma, forcing him to step down as South Africa's president.

Following this, the Gupta brothers fled to Dubai. Jacob Zuma was accused of "state capture"- siphoning off of state assets- in association with the Gupta brothers. The three brothers hailing from UP's Saharanpur were said to be so influential that it was alleged that they decided the policies of the Jacob Zuma government.

ARREST OF GUPTA BROTHERS

In 2018, the Gupta family fled South Africa after Jacob Zuma was forced to step down as president.

The South African government had appealed to the UN to get the Guptas back to South Africa when negotiations with the UAE did not yield results because there was no extradition treaty between the two countries.

The treaty was ratified in June 2021, when South Africa immediately began the process of requesting extradition of the Guptas.

Furthermore, in July 2021, Interpol issued a "red notice" against two of the three brothers- Atul and Rajesh- over alleged involvement in a massive web of corruption in South Africa.

Announcing their arrest, the South African Department of Justice and Correctional Services said, "Discussions between various law enforcement agencies in the UAE and South Africa on the way forward are ongoing. The South African government will continue to co-operate with the UAE."

Who is winning the Ukraine war?

On 24 February 2022, when Russia launched its assault on Ukraine many assumed it would be more of shock & awe. The much superior Russian military would soon overpower its much weaker neighbour. But four months on the battle rages on. There are no clear winners. Both Moscow & Kyiv keep making claims & counterclaims of having the upper hand. But in the fog of war, nothing can be seen clearly.

Ruslan Bortnik Director of the Ukrainian Institute of politics, from Kyiv, told Wion that 'Russia was unable to use the effect of surprise and the most prepared part of its army to achieve a quick surrender of Ukraine. But strategically, the Ukrainian state, the economy and the armed forces suffered a lot of damage, which will definitely have a negative impact on Ukrainian opportunities in the future.'

In an op-ed Joe Biden, President of the United States, said, 'the Ukrainian people surprised Russia and inspired the world with their sacrifice,

grit and battlefield success.' Something even the Kremlin won't disagree in private. But the war has caused great pain like any other conflict. Thousands of Ukrainian civilians are killed; millions more have been forced out of their homes. The incessant Russian assault has reduced entire cities to rubble.

The theatre of battle has now shifted east to the Donbas region. In eastern Ukraine, Russian forces have been making slow but steady advances after being beaten back from other parts of the country, including Kyiv. With a see-saw battle for control of the strategically important city of Severodonetsk raging on, regional governor Sergiy Gaiday said that his country's forces now control "half of the city". If the claims are true then it would be a great tactical advantage as the Ukrainian troops were on the verge of being driven out of the key cities. Severodonetsk -- the largest city still in Ukrainian hands in the Lugansk region of the Donbas region -- has been a focal point in recent weeks.

The United States last week announced it would give Kyiv its high mobility artillery rocket system, known as HIMARS, which can simultaneously launch multiple precision-guided missiles & is superior in range & precision to existing systems Ukraine has. It is the latest in a long list of weaponry sent or pledged to the pro-Western country. The U.S. move prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to warn on Sunday that Moscow will strike new unspecified "targets" if the West supplies the missiles to Ukraine & said new arms deliveries to Kyiv were aimed at "prolonging the conflict".

Boris Volkhonsky, Associate Professor, Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University told Wion, 'If the West persists in its strategy of fighting Russia up to the last Ukrainian & goes on supplying heavy armaments to what is left of Ukraine, this may mean a much longer process & much greater number

of casualties -- both military and civilian. The sooner the West realises the futility of such attempts, the better.'

With the conflict raging on countries like Germany which were reluctant initially, have now pledged arms & ammunition to Ukraine. In the latest, the UK Ministry of Defence said it has coordinated closely with Washington over its gift of the multiple-launch rocket systems, known as MLRS, to help Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression. The M270 launchers, which can strike targets up to 80 kilometres away with precision-guided rockets, will "offer a significant boost in capability for the Ukrainian forces," the ministry added. London has so far offered more than \$937 million in military support to Ukraine. This includes air defence systems, thousands of anti-tank missiles & various types of munitions, hundreds of armoured vehicles & other equipment.

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Kanpur violence: Child rights body asks police to probe involvement of children

After a minor surrendered at the Colonelganj police station in connection with the Kanpur violence today, the child rights body has asked the police to probe the involvement of children. The Commission has also requested that the minor should be produced before the Child Welfare Committee

Kanpur violence: Child rights body asks police to probe involvement of children After a minor surrendered at the Colonelganj police station in connection with the Kanpur violence today, the child rights body has asked the police to probe the involvement of children. The Commission has also requested that the minor should be produced before the Child Welfare Committee. Earlier today, one of the 40 rioters identified by the Kanpur police surrendered at the Colonelganj police station. The accused is a minor and his elder brother and brother-in-law, who were also involved in the violent clashes and stone-pelting that took place in the city on Friday, were arrested yesterday. The letter read, "The report further indicates that the said minor boy is involved in stone pelting as per his identity being matched with the video footage." The Commission has also requested that the minor



should be produced before the Child Welfare Committee. It has also asked the police to submit the report within three days of receiving the letter.

MINOR USED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

The child rights body expressed concerns that the anti-social

elements involved in the communal violence in Kanpur has used minors for such illegal activities. "The Commission is of the view that it is evident that the anti-social elements involved in the said communal violence in Kanpur has used minors for such illegal activities, which prima

facie contravention of Section 75 and 83(2) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and relevant Sections of Indian Penal Code, 1860," it stated in the letter. NCPCR has appealed to the police officers to initiate an inquiry and further supplement the relevant Sections

of the Juvenile Justice Act and IPS in the FIR. They have also requested the minor should be produced before the Child Welfare Committee and a report must be submitted within three days of receiving the letter.

KANPUR VIOLENCE

The Kanpur Police has released the pictures of 40 men after scouring through hours of CCTV and video footage in connection with the clashes and stone pelting reported from the city last Friday. The police suspect these men to have played an active role in the Friday violence that injured several people. Violent clashes and stone pelting were reported in Kanpur's Parade Chowk last Friday when a group of people tried to force shopkeepers to down the shutters over remarks made by BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma against Prophet Mohammed in a TV debate. The police have arrested 38 people so far in connection with the case.

India Overcame Hesitations of History & Will Not Allow Anyone to Veto Its Choices: Jaishankar

India will never accept any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo and a posture that departs from established understandings will evoke its own responses, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Tuesday in comments that came in the backdrop of the lingering border row with China in eastern Ladakh. In an address to the foreign diplomatic corps based in India, Jaishankar, referring to India's overall approach in dealing with security challenges, said: "We have overcome the hesitations of history and will not allow anyone a veto on our choices." He said India is looking forward to joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group, overcoming the political impediments that are against global interest, seen as an indirect reference to China's objection to New Delhi's entry into the grouping. Talking about threats of terrorism, Jaishankar said diplomacy has contributed to addressing the challenge by delegitimising it and denying support and sustenance to terrorism. "Our borders also need safeguarding and we will never accept any attempt to unilaterally change

the status quo. A posture that departs from established understandings will evoke its own responses," he said. "When it comes to security, we will do what it takes to ensure national well-being. I acknowledge also the role of trusted partners who work with us to help keep India safe and secure every day. We have overcome the hesitations of history and will not allow anyone anyone a veto on our choices," he said. Jaishankar said a nation like India obviously needs to contemplate its security in the broadest way possible. "In the past, mantras of globalisation lowered its defences and discouraged the building of deeper strengths. That realisation is responsible for the commitment we now see to Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). We certainly want to make in India, but we want to make with the world, and we want to make for the world," he said.



In the event organised to mark eight years of the Modi government, Jaishankar said India has been active in shaping the global discourse on many key issues. "It could be connectivity and maritime security, resilient and reliable supply chains, data and cyber security or indeed terrorism, violent extremism and black money, India has interests and views that it has put forward with assurance," he said. Jaishankar said strengthening a rules-based order is a natural inclination of a polity like India. "We value all opportunities to contribute to it. Our membership of the MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime), Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement are therefore significant," he said. "As a nation with a substantial nuclear industry, we also look forward to joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group, overcoming the political impediments

that are against global interest," he added. China has been stridently opposing India's NSG bid primarily on the grounds that New Delhi is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Its opposition has made India's entry into the grouping difficult as the NSG works on the principle of consensus. The external affairs minister said that an economically stronger India expresses its deep belief of the world being a family through greater development partnerships. "The last eight years have witnessed a tripling of our Lines of Credit commitments over the previous eight-year period. The value of project completion also went up by 38 per cent," he said. "Our neighbourhood and our African partners were the main beneficiaries, even as we expanded projects into new areas. In the coming years, we intend to focus even more on green growth, on digital delivery and on health capacities," he added.

Healthcare in India is ailing. Here is how to fix it

It is time our political systems listen to people and take care of their everyday needs, instead of going for easy options like privatisation, commodification and medicalisation of healthcare

The lesson emerging most unequivocally from the pandemic experience is that if India does not want a repeat of the immeasurable suffering and the social and economic loss, we need to make public health a central focus. The virus is still around. We have no option but to live with that reality. Covid has also shifted the policy dialogue from health budgets and medical colleges towards much-needed and badly-delayed institutional reform. It is heartening to note that the Ministry of Health has issued guidelines to states to establish a public health cadre. The importance of public health has been known for decades with every expert committee underscoring it. Ideas ranged from instituting a central public health management cadre like the IAS, to assess, manage and control public health problems to adopting an institutionalised approach to diverse public health concerns — from healthy cities, enforcing road safety to immunising newborns, treating infectious diseases and promoting wellness. The process of reform to create a public health-centred primary healthcare system needs to start with looking evidence in the eye. After 15 years of the National Health Mission (MHM) and a trebling of health budgets — though not as a proportion of the GDP — less than 10 per cent of the health facilities below the district level can attain the grossly minimal Indian public health standards. Clearly, the three-tier model of subcentres with paramedics, primary health centres with MBBS doctors and community health centres (CHC) with four to six specialists has failed. Why, one might ask. The model's weakness is the absence of an accountability framework. The facilities are designed to be passive — treating those seeking care. Instead, like in Brazil, we need Family Health Teams (FHT) accountable for the health and wellbeing of a dedicated population, say 2,000 families. The FHTs must consist of a doctor with a diploma in family medicine and a dozen trained personnel to reflect the skill base required for the 12 guaranteed services under the Ayushman Bharat scheme — midwives, public health nurses, other paramedics, health workers and community workers. A baseline survey of these families will provide information about those needing attention — the elderly, diabetics, hypertensives, handicapped, pregnant women, infants, and those needing mental or physiotherapy services. The team ensures a continuum of care by taking the family as a unit and ensuring its well-being over a period. Nudging these families to adopt lifestyle changes, following up on referrals for medical interventions and post-operative care through home visits for nursing and physiotherapy services would be their mandate. Their work should be closely monitored and the personnel should be given outcome-linked monetary and non-monetary incentives. Such a system of primary care will need to work under the close supervision of a CHC manned by specialists in family medicine. If trained well and competently, they can handle most ailments and conditions that could and should be handled at the CHC level, referring only those needing specialist care. The implication of and central to the success of such a reset lies in creating appropriate cadres. More immediately, there must be a public health cadre manning the posts at the PHC and CHCs consisting of sub-specialists in family medicine, public health and public health management. Likewise, among nurses, the cadre should comprise two distinct sets of personnel — public health nurses (not ANMs promoted based on seniority) and nurse midwives capable of independently doing all clinical functions for handling pregnancies and women's health issues except surgical interventions. Primary care in India can get traction only if new skills, drastically upgraded competencies and a new mindset are embedded within the vision of a patient, family and community-centred health system. There is also a need to declutter policy dialogue and provide clarity to the nomenclatures. Currently, public health, family medicine and public health management are used interchangeably. They should not be, just as cardiology and neurology should not be used interchangeably though both are clinical disciplines. Family medicine is the clinical arm of public health. The MBBS doctor goes through a two-year training in family medicine, specialising in disease control — communicable and non-communicable diseases, knowledge of health determinants such as nutrition, in addition to imbibing a comprehensive psycho-social understanding of the community being served and good communication capabilities. His training site is a district hospital. The public health specialist, in contrast, is a doctor or a graduate in an associated discipline, specialising in biostatistics, data sciences, epidemiology, health determinants and other population health-related issues.

(Contd. on page 29)

With Gujarat Polls in Sight, How Social Intervention by NGOs, Corporates Influence Political Opinion

Who influences politics? Merely public, funders, media, leaders and cadres? If you see closely, there are other invisible agencies, which have also emerged in recent time in our democratic politics who influence the opinion of people during elections.

One important agency, which has a clout over politics is "philanthropists" who do 'Sewa' or social support activities in underdeveloped regions and acquire public goodwill, which may be converted sometimes into political capital. Various religious sects, social support organisations, civil society groups, NGOs have their network among people, which, in turn, may influence electoral politics at a local level.

In Gujarat politics, we can see how such social, religious and economic groups influence politics. A new process has emerged of accumulating political capital through various CSR-based (corporate social responsibilities) social activities by various small and big industries. It may be not in a planned way but a political byproduct of social activities by various business groups in underdeveloped zone may influence

political choice of the people. Gujarat, which is a hub for business and entrepreneurial activities, will go to polls in a few months. Amidst big corporate houses, Gujarat has been seeing medium- and small-scale industries flourishing in a big way in the last few decades. These business and industrial activities are located in the various regions of Gujarat. If someone sees the economic history of Gujarat, one may find that the state has economic activities around diamond and salt. The cloth, handicraft, automobile and other industries are located in the state and acquired the capacities to earn impressive benefits. Some of the percentages of these earnings go in the CSR and have been used in different social support activities such as skill training, livelihood sector, enhancing entrepreneurship, modernising horticultural initiatives, education, health, digital empowerment. Many of these companies work in the interior and underdeveloped areas of the state. Their social support activities involve goodwill, which creates influences among local communities. It is true that their

influences are scattered but in a limited way they provide power in local politics. However, business groups make a lot of restrictions for themselves, and the NGO groups work with them on social support projects to keep distance from any kind of politics but some of them may use these political influences directly or indirectly in local politics. Through this social and developmental intervention, an alternative structure of influence may emerge. If someone maps these small, medium and big business houses in Gujarat, one may find that many of them are working in hundreds of villages in the state. Some of these economic units intervene in the process of development and change directly but many of them involve NGOs and Sewbhavi organisations for doing social support works among impoverish and underdeveloped communities. In this process, another level of agency of socio-political influence in the form of NGO activists emerges. Some of the NGO activists may have their political ambitions, which may lead to them influencing public opinion during elections. Some of them may emerge

as cadres and leaders and may join competing political party. Many local NGOs, which emerge from social-developmental works, have joined the Aam Aadmi Party in Gujarat, which is perfect example to show how various developmental and social support activities connect with politics in direct or indirect way. It is true that business groups either big or small usually escape from doing politics, but they have an influence at different levels, which is not only growing due to funding or donations, but they are acquiring a new kind of hegemony through their social support activities in rural areas and underdeveloped zones. It is obvious that many government agencies and corporate houses who do CSR among marginal social groups restrain themselves from being political but many NGOs may have no such self-restrictions. Some of them may successfully transform their social and developmental influence political. So, I see the emergence of new political structure in states like Gujarat, which has the capacity to transform their economics into politics.

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China commends India's aid to crisis-hit Sri Lanka, says South Asia remains its priority

China on Wednesday praised India's efforts to assist Sri Lanka in dealing with its worst financial crisis

In a rare gesture, China on Wednesday commended India's efforts to assist Sri Lanka to deal with its worst financial crisis but refuted the island nation's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's remarks that Beijing has shifted its strategic focus from South Asia, including Pakistan, to South East Asia, saying the region still remained its priority. Sri Lanka has been grappling with unprecedented economic turmoil since its independence from Britain in 1948. Sri Lanka's economic crisis has created political unrest with protesters demanding President Rajapaksa's resignation.

"We have taken note that the Indian government has also done a lot in this regard. We commend those efforts," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here while replying to questions about whether China, which has made big investments in Sri Lanka, is hesitating to help it when the island nation is facing the worst economic crisis.

"China is ready to work with India and the rest of the international community to help Sri Lanka and other developing countries experiencing difficulty to pull through the hardship as early as possible," he said in an updated comment posted on the Foreign Ministry website.

India has rushed about USD 3 billion in assistance in the form of line credit and other modes to help Sri Lanka which has virtually declared insolvency and defaulted on all foreign loans including that of China totalling to USD 51 billion. China has announced assistance of 500 million RMB (about USD 74 million) for the supply of essential goods but remained silent about President



Rajapaksa's request to defer the loan repayment, as well as its earlier announcement to consider a USD 2.5 billion loan facility for Colombo. Beijing appeared to be peeved over the remarks by Rajapaksa that China appears to be shifting its strategic focus towards South-East Asia and Africa, noting that South Asian countries in financial trouble are not getting the same attention from Beijing as before.

In an interview to Bloomberg on Monday, Rajapaksa said that Lanka couldn't tap a USD 1.5 billion (credit line from Beijing) and has yet to hear back on his request to President Xi Jinping for a USD one billion loan to buy essential goods.

Rajapaksa said China indicated that it would help Sri Lanka, while adding that "usually they don't like" lending out more money to cover earlier debt payments. "My analysis is that China has shifted their strategic focus into South-east Asia," Rajapaksa said. "They see more strategic interest in the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia, that region, and Africa."

"They have less interest in this region," Rajapaksa said. "I don't know whether I am right or wrong, even the focus on Pakistan has gone down. That shows that their interest here is not like earlier. Their interest has shifted to two other areas," the Sri Lankan president said. Sri Lanka and Pakistan are the biggest recipients of China's biggest investments and loans in the region. While Colombo received about USD eight to 10 billion investments and loans from China, Beijing is currently committed to build USD 60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) over which India has protested as it is being laid through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Significantly, both countries are seeking IMF bailout packages to tide over the worst economic crisis. China has already rolled over USD 4.5 billion debt of Pakistan in March and reportedly agreed not to withdraw USD 2.5 billion from Pakistan's central bank, which Beijing deposited in 2019 to boost the depleted forex reserves of the all-weather ally to prevent it from going the Sri Lanka way. Observers say Beijing is worried

that with more countries in the region likely to face serious economic crises, demands for financial assistance may increase, putting pressure on the Chinese economy, which is in a slowdown mode with increasing pressure exerted by Covid lockdowns. Reacting to Rajapaksa's remarks, Zhao said, "as a traditional friendly neighbour, China pays close attention to and feels for the difficulties and challenges facing Sri Lanka. We have all along provided support to Sri Lanka's socio-economic development as long as our ability permits". "As to China-Sri Lanka financial cooperation, shortly after the Sri Lankan government announced to suspend international debt payments, Chinese financial institutions reached out to the Sri Lankan side and expressed their readiness to find a proper way to handle the matured debts related to China and help Sri Lanka to overcome the current difficulties," he said. "South Asian countries, along with the other countries in our neighbouring areas, are China's priority in its diplomacy. China attaches great importance to forging closer good neighbourly relations with its neighbours and has worked hard to this end," he said, citing Beijing's assistance in natural disasters, global financial crisis and Covid. "China will work with relevant countries to respond to risks and challenges and pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to jointly sustain the sound momentum of security, stability, cooperation and development in our region and bring great benefits for all peoples in this region," he said. On the economic crisis, he said, "we have noted and followed closely the financial, fiscal and international balance of payment difficulties facing the South Asian countries and other developing countries as you mentioned".

Odisha CM Patnaik to Go on Foreign Trip After 10 Years, Likely to Meet Pope Francis

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is likely to go on a foreign trip after almost a decade. He will be visiting Rome and the United Arab Emirates by the end of June to attend several events. Patnaik is likely to meet Pope Francis, the Pope of Rome and Head of the Catholic Church in Vatican City later this month, official sources said, adding that he has sought an appointment with the sovereign of Vatican City. The proposed foreign trip will be Patnaik's second in his 22 years as the Chief Minister of Odisha. This would take place after a gap of ten years.

Sources further said that Patnaik is scheduled to attend investors' meetings

in Rome and Dubai and also meet non-resident Odia (NRO) delegations during his trip. He will be in UAE on June 28 to attend an industrial meet and several other events. His proposed meeting with the Pope may be viewed as an attempt to take his image a few notches higher. His branding and projecting as a political leader in his 25 years in public life have been limited to the state and national levels. This could become the maiden occasion when he will grab international eyeballs with such a high-profile meeting. Notably, Patnaik had gone on a foreign tour for the last time in May 2012 to attend London Business Meet.

BJP to Launch 'Booth Shashaktikaran' Drive in Bengal to Study Benefits of Central Schemes

The BJP is all set to roll out its Booth Shashaktikaran drive in West Bengal, during which it will poll households at the booth-level to understand whether and how locals are benefitting from central schemes. The drive is in line with the central leadership's thrust on booth-level management, also emphasises during party president JP Nadda's visit to the state. "We will go to every house in every booth and ask if they are getting the benefits of centre schemes... We will prepare this data from June 15," said BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh. Sources said the party has decided to

slot booths in three categories. Category A consists of booths where the margin in was close, category B has booths where the margin was wide and category C has booths won by the party. Sources said a team of 25-30 people will visit these homes with MPs and MLAs to collect data on benefits of central schemes. The data will then be uploaded onto an app to be analysed by the party. The Trinamool Congress has accused the BJP of copying the drive from them. "They are copying, but let me tell you, people don't believe them anyway," said TMC general secretary Kunal Ghosh.

Indian Army's Tour of Duty: An analysis

A first of its kind model, the Indian Army has come up with a new recruitment model; it is called the Tour of Duty in which civilians can be recruited into three services of the armed forces for four years.

Unlike short service commission officers where an officer serves in the Indian army for 10 years, the latest model of Tour of Duty offers a comparatively low duration of service. The eligibility criteria however remain the same debarring the length of the service. Meanwhile, 25 per cent of the soldiers who will be recruited under the new scheme will be re-enlisted for full service after a month.

The four-year stint will include six months of training and three and a half years of service. In the past few months there have been various

discussions circling the new recruitment scheme and the nuances it brings to the table.

The scheme attracts those who seek to join the armed forces without adopting it as a full-time career. However since no proposal gets traction just like that, the proposal was pushed by several drivers.

And in the next few minutes of this article, we will decode the pro and cons of the Indian Army's Tour of Duty process. How will the Tour of Duty be beneficial for the Indian Army? The basic thought process behind the proposal is to reduce expenditure on military pensions. India's budget for the financial year 2022-23 allocated is Rs 5.25 lakh crore for defence which includes the defence pension component of about Rs 1.2 lakh crore and a reduced pension component will lead to a larger capital outlay.

With this, in view, the proposal is believed to envisage recruiting personnel into the army for short tenures on a volunteer basis. It will further help in producing a better and large number of soldiers in less time and with fewer

investments.

The money saved by this process could be used to focus more on the advancement of technology and military modernisation.

Secondly, the tour of duty will serve as a golden opportunity for India's youth to experience military life without having to join the armed forces on a long-term basis. It will eventually produce better disciplined and experienced youth who could venture out into other fields after the tenure of their service.

Anchored on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's major reform of reducing expenditure and age profile of defence forces, the best among the chosen lot of soldiers will have the opportunity to continue their service in case vacancies are available. While those who leave the forces after a period of four years will

have a plethora of options on their table. Several corporations will show interest in reserving jobs for trained and disciplined youth who have served their nation. The Tour of duty soldiers will ensure that a large quantum of the workforce is

dedicated and skilled thus enhancing the output of the government and the private sector. Possible disadvantages of TOD While there is a clarion call for the tour of duty scheme to be implemented, there are also voices that are vehemently against it. Veteran army officers have the opinion that the step will not be successful owing to the short duration of the service, they believe that instead of devoting fully to the army, there are high chances that these

intern soldiers could be focusing on just building their resume. Meanwhile, there are also apprehensions about how the duration of the tenure is too less. TOD soldiers will not have the opportunity to attend professional courses where a soldier is groomed through several training courses like the YO's course, Platoon Weapons course and various other courses where the actual grooming takes place. A TOD soldier will never get the time or the bandwidth to be trained or learn the ethos of the 'paltan' and the army. In the end, the new 'Agnepath' scheme is structured in a very business-like feeling where a message that a potential youth gets is number one that you can serve in the Indian Army without any shackles of commitment. Secondly apart from getting the prestigious stamp of military duty, you can earn more than double the pay as compared to a fresher in the corporate world.



Is it a bee? Is it a fish? It is endangered and needs to be protected, rules California court

What's yellow and black, has a stinger and loves pollen? Apparently, the answer to this question is fish. A California court has ruled that bees can now legally be fish under specific circumstances. This groundbreaking ruling is not something to be laughed at; instead, it has the intent of protecting an irreplaceable species. The bee population in California and elsewhere has been on a rapid decline for some years now and this ruling is a step toward righting a decades-old wrong. Four years back public interest groups in California approached the court, asking them to include four species of bumblebee in the state's list of endangered animals.

The state Fish and Game commission maintained the list, and they agreed to consider the request. This 'stirred up a hornet's nest' of legal proceedings.

In the first hearing of this case, a court denied Bees' inclusion in the list. As per a report by the Wall Street Journal



(WSJ), California almond farmers were very much against this inclusion. The state annually produces 3 billion pounds of almonds, which are heavily dependent on bees pollinating as many as 1.3 million acres of the trees. Farmers and trade groups were concerned that by placing bees on the protected list, they would have to restrict farmers from working with bumblebees and from using

pesticides, which can harm bees but are necessary for the preservation of almond trees. A law from 1970, California's endangered species law affords special protection to endangered "bird, mammal, bird, fish, amphibia or reptile". The farmers contended that Bees don't figure in any of these categories. The first court agreed with this reasoning.

However, the Fish and Game Commission appealed and the second time's the charm.

The commission pointed out that the legal definition of 'fish' in California has been vague for some time. When California legislators defined fish, they didn't exactly stick to the scientific classification. They included all types of seafood including molluscs, clams, crustaceans like lobsters etc. Earlier, other animals were passed off as fish. In 1980, a snail got state protection, in the next four years, even a shrimp and a crayfish were awarded protection as 'fish'. So why not bees? As per the appeals court any invertebrate animal, i.e., which doesn't have a backbone, irrespective of whether it lives on land, in the sea or air can qualify for protection as 'fish'.

Now opponents are considering challenging this ruling in the state Supreme court. Will the bee be a fish for long or not? We will 'sea'.

Myanmar calls foreign outrage over activists death sentence 'reckless and interfering'

(SAI Bureau) Myanmar's ruling junta has condemned what it called "reckless and interfering" foreign statements about a rare execution order against two prominent opposition figures, accusing them of aiding terrorism by demanding their release. The United Nations, the U.S. State Department and France last week denounced the rejection of the appeals of a veteran activist and a former lawmaker, a decision that paves the way for the country's first executions in decades. A state newspaper on Tuesday carried a foreign ministry statement rejecting the international criticism,

expressing "utmost indignation and strong protest" at France in particular for calling the Myanmar junta an illegitimate military regime, and accused it of meddling in its affairs. "The ministry protests and objects in the strongest terms to the irresponsible and reckless statements and remarks," it said, adding the United States, France and UN remarks were "abetting terrorism" and neglecting

what it called violent attacks against authorities. Kyaw Min Yu, a veteran democracy activist, and Phyo Zeyar ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party, were



sentenced to death by a military tribunal in January on charges of treason and terrorism. It is unclear when they will be executed or how they pled in their trials, which Myanmar has largely held behind closed doors. Judicial activists say the junta is controlling the courts and denying its opponents fair trials. The military has been condemned globally for its deadly crackdown on the protests and dissent that followed its February 2021 coup. The United Nations has said its investigations show the military has committed mass killings and crimes against humanity. The junta has said it is seeking to restore peace and order.

Sri Lanka urgently seeks \$6 billion to keep economy afloat



auspices with China, Japan and India -- Sri Lanka's three biggest bilateral lenders -- would be a "great strength" in helping source more loans.

Sri Lanka is already in talks with the IMF for a bailout and has appointed international experts to help restructure its debt, about half of which is in international sovereign bonds. Wickremesinghe again warned the country was heading for serious food shortages and said the United Nations had

agreed to issue an urgent appeal on Thursday to raise humanitarian funds. A disastrous ban on agricultural chemical imports, introduced by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last year, dramatically curtailed crop yields and led to protests by farmers. The policy was reversed months later, but Sri Lanka is now out of foreign currency to import fertiliser, pesticides and other much-needed farming chemicals.

Wickremesinghe became premier in May after his predecessor, Mahinda Rajapaksa, the elder brother of the president, stepped down after months of protests against the government's economic mismanagement. At least nine people were killed and many more wounded in riots that followed an attack on peaceful demonstrators outside President Rajapaksa's office in Colombo last month.

(SAI Bureau) Cash-strapped Sri Lanka on Tuesday asked the International Monetary Fund to arrange a creditor meeting for \$6 billion in loans to help keep the country afloat during its unprecedented economic crisis. Months of daily blackouts, long queues for petrol and record inflation have made daily life a misery in the South Asian island nation of 22 million people. The government has already defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt, and a critical shortage of foreign currency has left traders unable to import adequate supplies of food, fuel and other essential goods. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said the country needed \$5 billion for its daily needs in the next six months, along with another billion to stabilise Sri Lanka's rapidly depreciating rupee.

"We call on the International Monetary Fund to hold a conference to help unite

our lending partners," the premier told parliament. He said a meeting under IMF

Pakistan needs USD 41 billion in next 12 months, says finance minister

(SAI Bureau) Pakistan Finance Minister Miftah Ismail has reportedly said that the country would need USD 41 billion in the next 12 months. "We have to pay back USD 21 billion in the next year. I am guessing that the outside limit of the current account deficit will be USD 12 billion. I think that we should have reserves of at least three months. So we need USD 41 billion over the next 12 months and I think it will happen," he said as quoted by Pakistani news outlet Dawn. The finance minister's statement came as he addressed the Pre-Budget Business Conference organised by the government in Islamabad. During the conference,

Ismail said that Shehbaz Sharif government had re-engaged with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). "We talked to them and we are very, very confident that we will soon have an agreement with the IMF. We are very, very confident of that," he said. The



minister further said that an average debt during the PTI government's tenure was Pakistani rupees (PKR) 5,177 billion, while for the PML-N it was PKR 2,132 billion which was used for infrastructure development. He said that over the span of 71 years, the country's rulers -- including military dictators -- took out loans of PKR 25,000bn while former premier Imran took out loans worth PKR 20,000bn over a span of four years. "This is 80 per cent of all loans taken by the entire government of Pakistan in the previous 71 years," he said, adding that this had resulted in an increase in debt servicing. "The more you borrow, the more you have to pay."

As expected, China, Cambodia rubbish claims of secret naval base at Ream as Australia raises concern

(SAI Bureau) After Australian prime minister voiced concern, China and Cambodia have rubbished claims made by a recent report about a secret naval base coming up at Ream on the Gulf of Thailand. The announcement was, however, expected. Labelling the report as "concerning", PM Anthony Albanese had raised questions about the project and called for transparency. "We encourage Beijing to be transparent about its intent and to ensure that

its activities support regional security and stability," Albanese said. Cambodia has also apprised Australia that no foreign military will be given 'exclusive' access to the Ream base, he added. In a call with Australian foreign minister Penny Wong, Cambodia's deputy prime minister Prak Sokhonn has rejected the news report as "groundless accusations", as per a statement released on Tuesday by Phnom Penh. The development of the base was "not a secret",

a spokesman earlier said. "Cambodia won't allow the Chinese military to use it exclusively or to develop the site as its military base,"



Phay Siphon, government's spokesman told AFP. The base would not be solely for use of navy, China said. In Beijing, Zhao Lijian, foreign ministry spokesman, said in a briefing on Tuesday, "The transformation of Ream naval base is only to strengthen Cambodian naval forces' capabilities to uphold maritime territorial sovereignty and crack down on sea crimes." The criticisms of the US were "malicious conjectures to attack and smear" Cambodia, he added.

Pakistani rupee nosedives to all-time low of 202.83 against US dollar

(SAI Bureau) The Pakistani rupee on Tuesday surpassed all prior records against the US dollar after shedding sheds Rs 2.77, or 1.37 per cent, against the US dollar in the interbank market. It plummeted to an all-time low of 202.83 against the US dollar in the interbank market as demand increased due to oil-related payments and ambiguity regarding the revival of the multibillion, According to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the local currency surpassed its previous record low of Rs 202 recorded on May 26. Moreover, for the first time in its history, the local currency made a historical drop of Rs 4.00 in a single day and surpassed Rs 204 threshold against the greenback in the interbank market during the intraday trade, reported Geo News. Moreover, during the day the currency faced renewed pressure after foreign currency inflows from overseas Pakistanis through their Roshan Digital Account (RDA) dived to a 15-month low at USD 189 million in May 2022. The market reversed the free fall and closed the day with a loss of nearly Rs 3. This was the third consecutive workday free-fall of the rupee. In the open market, the rupee closed at a historic low of 204 against the greenback, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan. Speaking to Geo News, Arif Habib Limited Head of Research Tahir Abbas said the currency is under pressure due to pending oil payments and rising oil prices in the international market.

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Tributes pour in for 'hero' train driver who sacrificed life to save 144 passengers in China's Guizhou

A train driver sacrificed his life to save 144 passengers in China's Guizhou province



in Guizhou on Saturday, reported China.org.cn.

The following accident killed driver Yang Yong and left eight others injured, mentioned a statement released by the China State Railway Group, the national railway operator. The remaining 136 passengers were safely rescued. After analysing the train data, investigators found that Yang detected an abnormality on the track when the train was in a tunnel near the Rongjiang station and engaged the emergency brakes. The train hit the mud and rockslide and slid for over 900 meters before it derailed. Yong was a veteran soldier. He served in the

People's Armed Police Force (PAP) Hainan Corps from 1993 to 1996. During his service, he was a squad leader and was rated as an outstanding soldier. After retiring, Yang took up the jobs of co-driver, assistant driver, foreman, driver instructor, ground driver, and train driver.

NETIZENS POUR IN TRIBUTES

People hailed Yong as a hero and paid tributes online. A user tweeted, "Train driver on D2809 5 second braking" : Emergency braking becomes muscle memory, Yang Yong did everything he could." Another Twitter user wrote, "Do remember, there's

a hero in China today called Yang Yong, who was on duty on the D2809 train from Guiyang North to Guangzhou South. He saved all except himself." Urging people to remember the deceased train driver, a user shared an illustration and wrote, "Remember the name of the hero, Yang Yong." A user shared a video of the train driver's body being taken to his hometown and wrote, "The heroic driver of #D2809 Yang Yong returned to his hometown of #Zunyi, #Guizhou, under the escort of the convoy. Locals spontaneously lined the way to bid farewell Welcome home heroes."

(SAI Bureau) The driver of bullet train D2809, who engaged the emergency brakes within five seconds of detecting an abnormality in southwest China's Guizhou province on Saturday, managed to stop the train and save the lives of 144 passengers before he died due to derailment. Two carriages of the train travelling from Guiyang to Guangzhou, Guangdong province, came off the tracks after being hit by mud and rockslides as the train neared Rongjiang station

Former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani 'almost certainly' didn't flee Kabul with millions in cash: US watchdog

One of the US government watchdogs has claimed that former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani 'almost certainly' did not flee Kabul with millions in cash as it fell to the Taliban

(SAI Bureau) Former Afghan president Ashraf Ghani almost certainly did not flee Kabul as it fell to the Taliban with millions of dollars in stolen cash, a US government watchdog's report said Monday. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report, which will be published on Tuesday, is an interim document, as the office is still awaiting answers to questions sent to Ghani.

First reported by Politico, it interviews witnesses as well as officials who were in the

helicopter convoy with Ghani as they hastily fled the Presidential Palace in Kabul while the Taliban marched into the capital on August 15, 2021. In subsequent days, multiple reports suggested that Ghani and the other officials took up to \$169 million in Afghan government money with them. Ghani has always fiercely denied these claims.

"Although SIGAR found that some cash was taken from the grounds of the palace and loaded onto these helicopters, evidence indicates that this

number did not exceed \$1 million and may have been closer in value to \$500,000," the report states.

It based that assessment heavily on interviews with the witnesses and officials involved, all of whom said they saw no signs of such large amounts of cash on the helicopters already overloaded with people fleeing for their lives. "\$169 million in hundred dollar bills, stacked end to end, would form a block 7.5 feet (2.3 meters) long, 3 feet wide, and 3 feet tall... This block would have weighed 3,722



pounds, or nearly two tons," SIGAR noted, adding that witnesses reported "minimal luggage" on the helicopters, which had no cargo holds. Instead, one official carried around \$200,000, another carried some \$240,000 and others had "\$5,000 to \$10,000 in their pockets... No one had millions," one former senior official told SIGAR.

"If true, this puts the total amount of cash on board the three helicopters at approximately \$500,000, with \$440,000 belonging to the Afghan government," the report said. "SIGAR also identified suspicious circumstances in which approximately \$5 million in cash was allegedly left behind at the presidential palace,"

the report added. It was not clear where the money came from or what it was for, "but it was supposedly divided by members of the Presidential Protective Service after the helicopters departed but before the Taliban captured the palace," it said.

The report said there appears to have been "ample opportunity and effort to plunder Afghan government coffers." But, the watchdog added, it "does not have sufficient evidence to determine with certainty whether hundreds of millions of dollars were removed from the country by Afghan officials as the government collapsed or whether any stolen money was provided by the United States."

China suspects wind blowing from North Korea leading to Covid wave in Dandong

(SAI Bureau) Daily Covid cases have been increasing in the Chinese city of Dandong, which shares a border with North Korea, raising suspicion that wind blowing in from North Korea could be a reason behind it.

Despite being locked down since the end of April, daily cases have been trending up in Dandong, a city of 2.19 million. According to the city's Center for Disease Control, most of the infected people found in the community during the past week had not been outside of their housing compounds for at least four days prior to their diagnosis. North Korean state media has said that the Covid wave has abated, after daily numbers of people with fever topped

390,000 about two weeks ago, but the World Health Organization has cast doubts on North Korea's claims of progress in the fight against a COVID-19 outbreak, saying it believes the situation is getting worse, not better, amid an absence of independent data. Pyongyang has never directly confirmed how many people have tested positive for the virus but experts suspect underreporting in the figures released through government-controlled media, making it difficult to assess the scale of the situation. The Chinese authorities have urged the residents living by the Yalu River that runs between the two countries to close their windows on days with southerly winds and go for regular testing.

'If Imran Khan is harmed...': Pakistan lawmaker threatens Shehbaz Sharif govt with suicide attack

Pakistani lawmaker Ataullah has threatened to carry out suicide attacks against government leaders if "a single hair on Imran Khan's head is harmed"

(SAI Bureau)A Pakistani lawmaker has threatened to stage suicide attacks against top officials in the Shehbaz Sharif government if any harm is caused to his party chief and former prime minister, Imran Khan. Member of National Assembly Ataullah, who belongs to Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, said in a video shared on Twitter, "If a single hair on Imran Khan's head is harmed, then those running the country be warned. Neither you nor your

children will remain. I will be the first one to carry out a suicide attack on you, I will not spare you. Thousands of workers are ready to do the same." Ataullah's remarks came in the wake of rumours that a conspiracy is afoot to assassinate Imran Khan, who was ousted from power after failing a trust vote in parliament earlier this year. Khan has been given enhanced personal protection and the security cordon outside his Islamabad mansion has also been

strengthened. The Pakistan government is also considering bringing sedition charges against the cricketer-turned-politician after a protest march called by his party turned violent and left a trail of destruction in capital Islamabad last month. Ataullah's statement has sparked sharp reactions from the Pakistan government. Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb said that those who issue threats against the country have no place in the political process. There is no



room for such people in dialogue or any political process and they would be arrested, she added. However, this isn't the first time that a staunch Imran Khan supporter has threatened payback amid the purported threat to his life. Khan's nephew, Hassaan Niazi, has warned of an "aggressive response" if any harm is caused to the former premier. "Anything happens to our leader Imran Khan, will be treated as attack on Pakistan. Response will be aggressive, the 'handlers' will also regret," said Hassaan Niazi, as quoted by ANI.

Bangladesh HC postpones hearing in tax evasion case against pro-Pakistan leader Kamal Hossain

The Bangladesh High Court has postponed the hearing in a tax evasion case against Pro-Pakistan leader Dr Kamal Hossain



opposition in 2018 polls. Dr Kamal's firm has barely disclosed five per cent of his actual annual earnings in his tax returns in the year he led the anti-Awami alliance of Islamist parties in the national elections. The bank accounts of his law firm Kamal & Associates has come under scanner for these "shadowy financial transactions".

His firm disclosed only Taka 1,04,03,495 as his annual earnings, but the bank account shows his actual earnings as Taka 20,11,04,219.

NBR sources say his firm is supposed to pay Taka 6,09,85,351 as income tax, but

has actually paid Taka 76,41,548.

The source of this considerable income which Kamal Hossain allegedly concealed is also under probe.

It also remains to be investigated if some of this undisclosed income has flown from foreign sources, because his British son-in-law David Bergman had launched a propaganda blitz with Western support to project Dr Kamal as the PM face of the national Opposition.

According to Australia-based columnist Prof Abul Hasnat Milton, Bergman was hired by Bangladesh Nationalist Party

(BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami in the run up to the war crimes trial.

Moreover, Bergman's Netranews is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy or NED of the USA, the very country that opposed the war crimes trial as back then Hillary Clinton rang Sheikh Hasina to stop the trial and acted as a "conduit" between Tarique and Dr kamal.

The NED's role in regime change operations of US Intelligence is well documented by experts like Jeff Richelson in his magnum opus "US Intelligence Community"

(SAI Bureau) Bangladeshi leader Dr Kamal Hossain is in thick soup after the country's National Board of Revenue (NBR) found him hiding yearly income, leading to charges of massive tax evasion. This week, the Bangladesh High Court has deferred a ruling on writ petition filed on behalf of Dr Kamal. Earlier, the Tax Appeal tribunal upheld the NBR's demand for Bangladeshi Taka 6.9 crore as payable for assessment year 2018-19 as legitimate. Hossain filed a writ petition in the High Court challenging the order of the Tax Appeal Tribunal. The High Court has adjourned the hearing for a week.

The NBR investigation revealed Kamal Hossain's law firm in 2018-19 showed its annual income as Taka 1.04 crore, evading tax over 6 crore.

On 30 December 2019, the deputy tax commissioner observed that Dr Kamal's firm

had actually earned Taka 20.11 crores, and should pay Taka 6.09 crores as tax. Though a final verdict is awaited, the tax evasion case has become a blot on Gana Forum leader Kamal Hossain who was projected as an alternative to PM Sheikh Hasina by the Islamist

Taliban regime accountable for rise in illegal trafficking of children in Afghanistan

(SAI Bureau) Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the illegal trafficking of Afghan children and the illegal sale and purchase of goods have been on the rise in the region. Due to the hunger and humanitarian crisis, the illegal buying and selling of goods across the border has increased manifold as little children on the Torkham border carrying sacks on their backs and tying them on their shoulders with ropes and running behind the truck have been spotted with Taliban fighters present at the entrance to Afghanistan. The children, aged between three and 10 years, watch every passing truck so that they can somehow get on board and enter

Pakistan, where they could sell goods and buy sugar and flour in return. Meanwhile, border security officials chased trucks carrying children. Four or five-year-old children hiding inside the tyres of these large trucks were pulled out by security officials and sent back to the Afghan border, reported The Frontier Post.

A customs officer said that there are cigarettes, batteries, food items, and some drinks which they give to the locals. However, in return, they get sugar, flour, pulses, etc. "Some of the bags contain illicit drugs and narcotics which these children try to sell cheaply here in Pakistan, but due to strict checking at the

Torkham border, these children are caught." He added that many children die because of accidents due to hiding or hanging in trucks, the Frontier Post quoted, citing the custom agent. Taliban fighters are often seen across the border chasing the children so that they will not cross the gate, but hunger and need have taken away all the fear of those innocent children, the report added. In another statement, a local shopkeeper said, "We are at a loss because we buy and sell goods at full price after paying taxes, but some locals also take advantage of these children by buying cheap goods without paying taxes."

US government orders seizure of aircraft owned by Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich

(SAI Bureau) Amid crackdown on Russian oligarchs, the US government ordered the seizure of two aircraft owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

The US justice department said the two aircraft - Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner and Gulfstream G650ER - violated US export controls. However, reports claim the aircraft are out of reach of US enforcement even though "active steps" are being taken by authorities to track and seize them.

The US warrant said the Boeing and the Gulfstream each were flown from a foreign country to Russia. "The Boeing was flown to Russia on March 4, 2022 without a BIS license and without a license exception, and is now in the United Arab Emirates," it said. According to the filing, the Gulfstream was flown to Russia on March 12-15 and remains in the country.

The seizure warrant further said that the Boeing and Gulfstream were owned by Roman Abramovich through a "series of shell companies in Cyprus, Jersey and the British Virgin Islands." The Boeing is reportedly worth approximately \$350 million and the Gulfstream is worth approximately \$60 million, the US authorities informed.

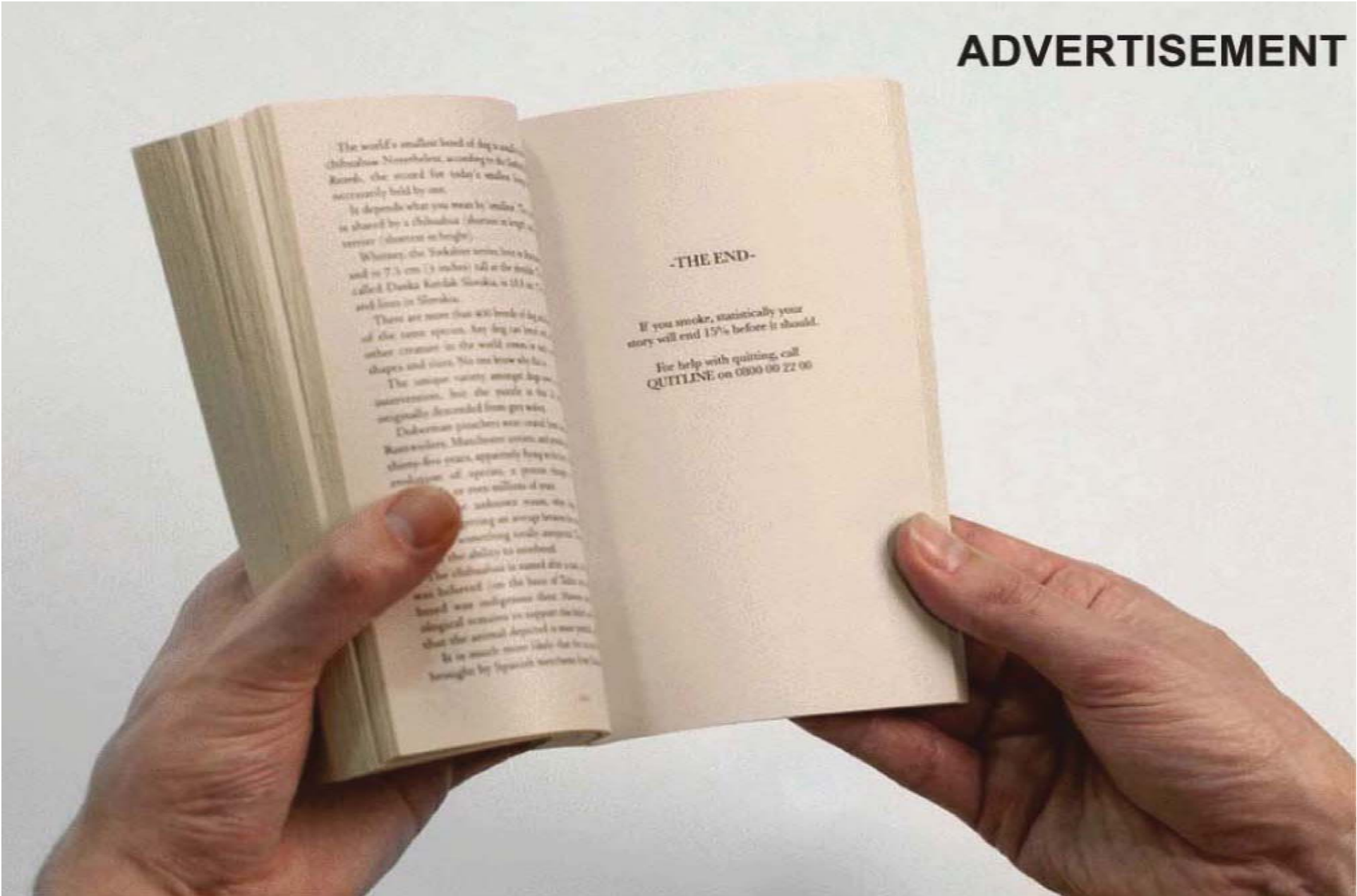
US VP Kamala Harris announces USD 3.2 billion migration fund for Central American countries

(SAI Bureau) US President Kamala Harris announced on Tuesday a fresh USD 1.9 billion in private sector funding aimed at boosting jobs in hopes of reducing migration from Central America. The announcement was made at a Latin America summit in Los Angeles. Leaders of Mexico and other affected countries have snubbed the summit. Tackling root causes of rising migration to the US has become a top priority for US President Joe Biden and the task has been handed to Harris.

Republican Party has seized upon the issue of migration. Donald Trump, former US president who was from Republican Party wanted to build a physical wall along southern border of the USA to deter migration. At Latin America Summit in Los Angeles, Harris' unveiling of USD 1.9 billion in business commitments has come announced last year. The funding is aimed at creating economic opportunities in the impoverished so-called Northern Triangle of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. During her announcement, Harris also announced creation of "Central American Service Corps" funded through US aid to mentor young people. A White House build safe and prosperous lives at home." Interestingly, none of the Northern Triangle leaders are attending the summit. Mexican President Obrador is absent too. But Prime Minister Ariel Henry of Haiti -- another rising source of migrants as the country further descends into violence - will attend.



ADVERTISEMENT



Double standards haunt US and Europe in NATO dispute with Turkey



(SAI Bureau)US and European acquiescence in Turkey's long-standing refusal to honour Kurdish ethnic, cultural, and political rights has come home to roost with Turkish opposition to Finnish and Swedish NATO membership.

The opposition has sparked debates about Turkey's controversial place in the North Atlantic defense alliance.

Turkey's detractors point to its problematic military intervention in Syria, relations with Russia, refusal to sanction Moscow, and alleged fuelling of tension in the eastern Mediterranean, calling the country's NATO membership into question.

Its defenders note that Turkey,

NATO's second-largest standing military, is key to maintaining the alliance's southern flank. Also, Turkey's geography, population size, economy, military power, and cultural links to a Turkic world make it a critical link between Europe and Asia. In addition, Turkish drones have been vital in Ukraine's war with Russia, while Turkey has been a mediator in the conflict, albeit with limited success.

Kurdish rights hardly figure in the debates, and if they do, only as a prop for taking Turkey to task for its slide into authoritarianism.

An ethnic group spread across southeastern Turkey, northern

Iraq, northern Syria, and western Iran, Kurds are seen at best as assets in the fight against the Islamic State and at worst a threat to Turkish security and territorial integrity. Turkey's estimated 16 million Kurds account for up to 20 per cent of the country's population. Turkey, or Türkiye as it wants to be known going forward, has used the security argument to make its agreement to Swedish and Finnish NATO membership dependent on the two Nordic countries effectively accepting its definition of terrorism as including any national expression of Kurdish identity. Turkey has demanded that Sweden and Finland extradite 33 people, some of whom are Swedish or Finnish nationals, because of their alleged support for the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) or exiled preacher Fethullah Gulen, whom President Recep Tayyip Erdogan holds responsible for a failed military coup in 2016. Turkey accuses the two Nordic countries of allowing the PKK to organize on their territory. Alongside the United States and the European Union, Turkey

has designated the PKK as a terrorist organisation. The PKK has waged a decades-long insurgency against Turkey in which tens of thousands have been killed.

Turkey also wants Sweden and Finland to support its military operation against the People's Protection Units (YPG), a US-backed Syrian Kurdish group that played a crucial role in defeating the Islamic State. Turkey asserts that the YPG is an extension of the PKK.

Mr. Erdogan recently announced that Turkey would launch a new military operation to extend the Turkish armed forces' areas of control in Syria to a 30-kilometer swath of land along the two countries shared border. The offensive would target the YPG in the towns of Tel Rifaat and Manbij and possibly Kobani, Ain Issa, and Tell Tamer. Past US and European failure to stand up for Kurdish rights, as part of Turkey's need to meet the criteria for NATO membership that include "fair treatment of minority populations," has complicated the fight against the Islamic State, stymied

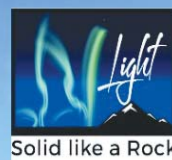
Kurdish aspirations beyond Turkey's borders and enabled repression of Kurdish rights in Turkey.

More immediately, the failure to hold Turkey accountable for its repression of Kurdish ethnic and political rights within the framework of the Turkish state has enabled Ankara to establish Turkish policies as a condition for NATO membership even if they violate NATO membership criteria.

Those policies include defining the peaceful expression of Kurdish identity as terrorism and the rolling back of Kurdish language and cultural rights since the collapse in 2015 of peace talks with the PKK. Turkey lifted the ban on Kurdish languages and the word Kurd in 1991. Until then, Kurds were referred to as 'mountain Turks.'

The governor of the southeastern Turkish province of Diyarbakir, widely seen as a hub of Kurdish cultural and political activity, forced this writer under threat of death to leave the region for using the word Kurd rather than mountain Turk in interviews in the 1980s.

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The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.



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US, allies fly fighter jets amid North Korea tensions

The United States and its Asian allies flew dozens of fighter jets in the midst of North Korean tensions

(News Agency) The United States and its Asian allies flew dozens of fighter jets over waters surrounding the Korean Peninsula on Tuesday in a show of force as their diplomats discussed a coordinated response to a possibly imminent North Korean nuclear test. The flights came as US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman travelled to Seoul for discussions with South Korea and Japanese officials over the gathering North Korean threat and warned of a "swift and forceful" counterresponse if the North proceeds with a nuclear test explosion, which would be its first in nearly five years.

If staged, the test could be another leap forward in North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's goal of building an arsenal that can viably threaten regional US allies and the American homeland. That would escalate a pressure campaign aimed at forcing the United States to accept North Korea as a nuclear power and negotiating economic and security concessions from a position of strength. While the Biden administration has vowed to push for additional international sanctions if North Korea conducts a nuclear test, prospects for robust punitive measures are unclear because of divisions between permanent United Nations Security Council members.

"Any nuclear test would be in complete violation of UN Security Council resolutions. There would be a



swift and forceful response to such a test," Sherman said after meeting with South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong. "We continue to urge Pyongyang to cease its destabilizing and provocative activities and choose the path of diplomacy." Sherman and Cho are planning a three-way meeting with Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Mori Takeo on Wednesday over the North Korean nuclear issue. Extending the countries' joint displays of military might, four U.S. F-16 fighter jets flew in formation with 16 South Korean planes — including F-35A stealth fighters — over waters off South Korea's eastern coast, an exercise aimed at demonstrating an ability to quickly respond to North Korean provocations, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The United States and Japan conducted a separate drill involving six aircraft — four Japanese F-15

fighters and two American F-16s — above waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, Japan's Defense Ministry said. The flights came a day after U.S. and South Korean forces fired eight surface-to-surface missiles into South Korea's eastern waters to match a weekend missile display by North Korea, which fired the same number of weapons from multiple locations Sunday in what was likely its biggest single-day testing event.

North Korea has conducted 18 rounds of missile launches in 2022 alone — including its first demonstrations of intercontinental ballistic missiles since 2017 — exploiting a favorable environment to push forward weapons development, with the Security Council effectively paralyzed over Russia's war on Ukraine. North Korea may soon up the ante as U.S. and South

Korean officials say it is all but ready to conduct another detonation at its nuclear testing ground in the northeastern town of Punggye-ri. Its last such test and sixth overall was in September 2017, when it claimed to have detonated a thermonuclear bomb designed for its ICBMs.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, U.S. special envoy for North Korea Sung Kim said Washington and its allies were increasingly concerned by not only the unprecedented number of ballistic missile launches but also because "senior North Korean officials have used rhetoric that could suggest the use of tactical nuclear weapons." He did not elaborate. Since taking power in 2011, Kim has accelerated nuclear weapons development despite limited resources and has shown no willingness to fully surrender

an arsenal he sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.

Experts say with its next nuclear test, North Korea could claim an ability to build small bombs that could be placed on a multiwarhead ICBM or fit on short-range missiles that could reach South Korea and Japan. Rafael Mariano Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Monday there are indications that one of the passages at the Punggye-ri testing ground has been reopened, possibly in preparation for a nuclear test. Hours before Sherman's meeting in Seoul, State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters in Washington that the United States believes North Korea could seek its seventh test "in the coming days."

The Biden administration's punitive actions over North Korea's recent weapons tests have been limited to largely symbolic unilateral sanctions. Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution in the Security Council that would have imposed additional sanctions on North Korea over its previous ballistic tests on May 25. "We have called on members of the international community, certainly members of the U.N. Security Council's permanent five, to be responsible stakeholders in the U.N. Security Council as a preeminent forum for addressing threats to international peace and security," Price said.

US expert panel gives go-ahead to Novavax Covid vaccine



(News Agency) A panel of experts in the US has given a go ahead for Novavax Covid vaccine. The panel was convened by US drug regulator. Although a late runner in global

combat against Covid, Novavax can help efforts to overcome vaccine hesitancy. Right now, three vaccine have approval in the US; Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. Experts in

the panel voted 21 in favour of Novavax vaccine. There was one abstention and no vote against the vaccine. There have been concerns that Novavax vaccine is linked to rare cases of heart inflammation. It is expected that US Food and Drug Administration will issue emergency authorisation soon. Then another agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will weigh in with guidance on how it should best be used. Maryland-based Novavax was an early frontrunner in the global vaccine race, but fell behind after being hit by manufacturing and

regulatory delays. The US was one of the few major markets where it hasn't yet received authorization, while the EU, UK, Canada, Australia are among many that have already given it the green light. The vaccine is based on lab-grown viral proteins. Officials are hoping that Novavax will help people overcome vaccine hesitancy. The vaccine does not need cold storage requirements as Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do. Possible myocarditis link Novavax's vaccine was found to be more than 90 percent effective against symptomatic cases of

the disease. But its trial was conducted long before the currently circulating sub variants of Omicron were dominant, and the company may yet have to add a booster or update its shot. What's more, six cases of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, were detected in the group that received the vaccine, against one case in the placebo group, in a trial of around 40,000 people. Novavax says there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal relationship between the cases of myocarditis and the vaccine.

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Nupur Sharma's suspension: What next for India-West Asia relations?

BJP has suspended Nupur Sharma for her remarks that have triggered a diplomatic offensive from the Muslim world. Here's a look at what lies ahead for India-West Asia relations

On Sunday, the ruling BJP suspended its spokesperson Nupur Sharma for her remarks on Prophet Muhammad. The BJP also sacked Naveen Jindal, who was media head of the party's Delhi unit, over his tweet on the founder of Islam.

The actions have come amid a diplomatic and social media offensive from the Islamic world of West Asia that has left the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to do the damage control. Arab or Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the UAE, as well as Iran in the Persian Gulf, have condemned the remarks. Qatar and Kuwait even said they expected a public apology from India, prompting India to say the comments from some "fringe elements" did not represent the views of the Indian government.

WHO IS NUPUR SHARMA?

Nupur Sharma was the Delhi University Students' Union president before becoming an advocate, unsuccessfully contesting against AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal in the 2015 Delhi Assembly election and emerging as one of the more prominent BJP spokespersons.

During a TV debate last week on the ongoing Gyanvapi Masjid row, Sharma had made her remarks in response to "Muslims mocking the Hindu faith by making fun of the Shivaling and calling it a fountain." The police in Hyderabad, Pune, and Mumbai registered cases against her for hurting religious sentiments as both clashes (including in Kanpur) and protests for her arrest and also threats against her spiralled. Sharma withdrew her remarks. Jindal also deleted his tweet.

But the BJP's actions are not entirely because of what the two said. The stakes in India-West Asia relations are pretty high.

THE HIGH STAKES

India's Muslim population is the world's third-largest and the world's largest Muslim-minority population. But part of the reason why the BJP acted against Sharma and Jindal, as Indian ambassadors were summoned and handed protest notes, are the



high stakes in West Asia where anger among the local population and calls to boycott Indian products grew.

India has the largest diaspora population in the world. The UAE has the highest Indian population living outside of India. In fact, Indians form 30% of the UAE's population. The other preferred destinations are Saudi Arabia, the US, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. According to the MEA, most Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), almost 7.6 million, live in West Asia, also referred to as the Middle East, for education or work, mostly semi-skilled or unskilled but also white-collar jobs. Their safety is a concern.

The remittances that the diaspora sends back to India are crucial to the Indian economy. India consistently remains the largest receiver of remittances in the world. In 2021, India received over 87 billion dollars in remittances. Remittances constitute about 3.1% of India's gross domestic product (GDP), up from 1.45% in 1980. The majority of these remittances come from the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman.

Then there is the trade angle. India's business with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, stood at \$87 billion in 2020-21. India has signed a free trade agreement with the UAE and

is in talks for a more comprehensive deal with the GCC, a regional, intergovernmental, political, and economic union. The strategically critical region, frequently visited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is also the top source of India's energy imports.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are India's third and fourth-largest trading partners, respectively. Both countries have committed billions of dollars for investment and infrastructure creation in India. Aviation is another crucial sector between both sides.

There are also cultural and other bilateral stakes. PM Modi visited the UAE earlier this year, his fourth visit to the country as Prime Minister. The Indian Pavilion at the Dubai Expo showcased India's culture and achievements, from yoga and ayurveda to space programmes. The pavilion also had a model of the Ram Temple and BAPS Hindu Temple, being built in Abu Dhabi at Rs 900 crore. When PM Modi visited the UAE in 2015, he was the first Indian Prime Minister to do so in 34 years. The UAE has conferred its highest civilian award, the "Order of Zayed", on PM Modi. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, has visited India twice during PM Modi's tenure, including as the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2017.

India says the UAE is central to

India's extended neighbourhood. "We see the UAE at the crossroads of international trade. As Singapore is to the East, UAE is to the West," India said recently.

The UAE was also among the first countries that backed India on the abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir.

Of late, India has maintained cordial relations with two of the main rivals in the region: Iran and Saudi Arabia. PM Modi has also travelled to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and Iran. And leaders from these countries have also visited India, diluting Pakistan's traditional influence in the region.

No wonder that, apart from suspending Sharma and sacking Jindal, the BJP also released a statement that said it respects all religions and strongly denounces insults of any religious personality.

The BJP is also against any ideology which insults or demeans any sect or religion. The BJP does not promote such people or philosophy," the party said. "India's Constitution gives the right to every citizen to practise any religion of his/her choice and to honour and respect every religion".

Will this be enough? The criticism is growing. The 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the second-largest intergovernmental organisation in the world after the United Nations, has also

condemned the remarks on the Prophet.

So, what next for India-West Asia relations?

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

On Sunday, India rejected OIC's comments as "unwarranted" and "narrow-minded". MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India "categorically rejects OIC Secretariat's unwarranted and narrow-minded comments. The government of India accords the highest respect to all religions." The West Asia offensive came when Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu was in Doha, Qatar. But even before Nupur Sharma triggered a storm, leaders in the Muslim world had been expressing displeasure over controversial remarks by Indian politicians. And this might not be the last either.

Experts believe that once the current storm is over, both sides, India and the Muslim world, will have to ultimately come back to the drawing board.

India's dependence on West Asia's oil and gas is massive, especially after supply disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine war. India meets 80% of its oil needs through imports. But it works both ways. While concerned about the diplomatic offensive, New Delhi also knows Gulf countries need India to keep importing their oil. India primarily imports oil from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. They also need Indians to continue living and working there. They also need to keep doing business with India. Also, West Asia massively depends on food imports from India. The items include rice, meat, spices, marine products, fruits and vegetables, and sugar. So, boycott calls may not last long. Be that as it may, the ongoing row may also mean that the BJP will have to be more cautious in articulating its views during religious debates in the media and also election campaigning. After all, as we have seen now, what happens in India doesn't necessarily stay in India. There are international prices to pay.

Healthcare in India is ailing. Here is how to fix it

(Contd. from page 16)

His training sites are dusty villages, densely populated slums, disease-prone areas and laboratories. Thus, while the family doctor cures one who is sick, the public health expert prevents one from falling sick.

The public health management specialist is a different animal — with specialisation in health economics, procurement systems, inventory control, electronic data analysis and monitoring, motivational skills and team-building capabilities, public communication and time management, besides, coordinating with the various stakeholders in the field. His training grounds are management institutions, public health departments that implement the National Health Programmes and a two-year probation

where he works through the health system (like IAS officers). Such trained persons are the ones who ought to work as CMHOs (chief medical health officers). Imagine the energy and skills that such young, well-trained persons would bring to the district health administration and later as the DGHS, instead of the current arrangement where the DGHS could be a doctor who has never stepped out of the operation room in a Delhi hospital. The training of the cadre will not require medical colleges. But the competence of trainers, the way to be trained, the content and pedagogy require imagination. Alongside, India needs to move beyond the doctor-led system and paramedicalise several functions. Instead of "wasting" gynaecologists in CHCs, when there is an overall shortage of them,

midwives (nurses with a BSc degree and two years of training in midwifery) can provide equally good services except surgical, and can be positioned in all CHCs and PHCs. This will help reduce C Sections, maternal and infant mortality and out of pocket expenses. Likewise, lay counsellors for mental health, physiotherapists and public health nurses are critically required for addressing the multiple needs of primary health care at the family and community levels. This needs to be acknowledged and such trained persons appropriately positioned based on patient load and disease burden.

Bringing such a transformative health system will require a comprehensive review of the existing training institutions, standardising curricula and the qualifying criteria.

Faculty reviews are required to make the training inspirational and not dull and repetitive, as it is currently. Spending on pre-service and in-service training needs to increase from the current level of about 1 per cent. And, finally, a comprehensive redefinition of functions of all personnel is required to weed out redundancies and redeploy the rewired ones.

It is time our political systems listen to peoples' voices for a family doctor to ensure their everyday needs — and not easy options like privatisation, commodification and medicalisation of the system. Resetting the system to current day realities requires strong political leadership to go beyond the inertia of the techno-administrative status quoist structures. We can.

European Union lawmakers pass ban on new petrol, diesel cars by 2035

The measure passed by 339 votes to 249 with 24 abstentions at a session in Strasbourg -- in practice limiting future sales to emissions-free all-electric models. Cars currently account for 12 percent of all CO2 emissions in the 27-member EU bloc, while transportation overall accounts for around a quarter. The conservative European People's Party (EPP), the parliament's biggest group of lawmakers, had sought to push a compromise that would have diluted the proposals and allowed sales of hybrid vehicles to continue. Their amendment was narrowly defeated while an ambitious attempt by the Greens to bring the measure deadline forward to 2030 also failed.

Conservatives were also unable to push through amendments on having a car's production-related carbon footprint taken into consideration as well -- potentially allowing carmakers credits for synthetic, so-called e-fuels, made with captured carbon dioxide and hydrogen produced from renewable sources. After the vote, EU environmental committee chair Pascal Canfin triumphantly tweeted: "100 percent zero emission cars in 2035! I strongly welcome the vote on CO2 standards in the @Europarl_EN. This position of the European Parliament is an important victory and consistent with our objective of climate neutrality." German Green EU legislator Michael Bloss also hailed

the vote as a move that would simultaneously protect the climate and jobs in the sector. French EPP lawmaker Agnes Evren was less impressed, however, with a decision she said would "condemn industrial activity and strongly penalise

consumers". She said the legislation would prevent the commercialisation of high-performance hybrid vehicles or vehicles using biofuels, whose production she said could potentially prove less expensive and less polluting than electric vehicles.

Who is winning the Ukraine war?

Contd. from page 14

The NATO allies continue to stress that these weapons are defensive in nature and won't be used to strike inside the Russian territory. But Moscow isn't convinced. Over the last four months, as the battle intensifies, the U.S. & its European allies have pumped in more advanced & deadlier weapons to Kyiv. Russian forces meanwhile have claimed to have destroyed multiple batches of western weapons meant for Ukrainian forces. So how is this conflict going to end? Well, Ruslan Bortnik told Wion, 'The war in Ukraine will end only when one of the participants in the war wins or all sides of the war are convinced of the impossibility of victory. At the same time, one must understand that the Ukrainian-Russian war is only part of the global confrontation between the United States & its allies and Russia and its allies for the right & rules to determine the new world order. This is how this war is

perceived by all global states.'

Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine along with the crippling sanctions on Russia has disrupted supplies of fertiliser, wheat & other commodities from both countries, pushing up prices for food & fuel, especially in developing nations. Ships loaded with grain remain blocked in Ukraine, which before February was a leading exporter of corn & wheat & alone accounted for 50% of world trade in sunflower seeds & oil. Putin has said Moscow is ready to look for ways to ship grain blocked in Ukrainian ports but has demanded the West lift sanctions.

Clearly, as the war rages on in Ukraine, it also compounds the problems around the world. The global economy was slowly coming out of the pandemic induced slowdown but the biggest military conflict in Europe in decades has added to the economic woes. This is continuously pushing up food & fuel prices around the globe.



FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure



Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION

Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	Place of Birth: Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India
Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990	Eyes: Brown
Hair: Brown	Weight: 165 pounds
Height: 5'9"	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Sex: Male	
Nationality: Indian	

REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore

India and Gulf Nations Stand Inseparable

Despite Sinister Attempts to Scuttle Their Bond

Social media witnessed Chinese whispers that India can be cowed down by the bully, in this case, a Twitter storm that can potentially damage the nation's economy. However, it's not a mickey-mouse play to straight-away boycott India. Especially, when both the regions hold historical, cultural, religious, and strategic ties.

India's historical ties with the Arab nations date back more than 5,000 years to trading between the ancient civilisations of the Indus Valley and the Dilmun. Arab merchants, traders and religious men would traverse through the gigantic oceans to reach the coasts of India to enjoy the business-friendly markets, culturally rich atmosphere, and welcoming society.

Gujarat's port of Gogha has been active since the 5th century CE and it flourished as a major trading point during the 10th to 16th century CE. In fact, the early companions of Prophet Mohammed landed in Ghogha around the early 7th century and built the Barwada mosque there, whose Qibla direction is Jerusalem (not Mecca). During the British era, the English imperial interests in the Gulf region were administered by the Bombay Presidency. Until the 1960s, the Indian rupee was a legal tender in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the Trucial Sheikdoms.

EMOTIONAL RELATIONS

Given the significant relations India maintains with the Gulf countries, Indian premier Narendra Modi focused on the region from the beginning of his term in 2014. He made a series of visits to all the GCC capitals during 2015-16, and encouraged the Arab monarchs to visit India. These visits included Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

In August 2015, the UAE was the first Gulf country Modi visited, marking the first visit by an Indian prime minister to the UAE for 34 years. Both the nations inked the deals in various sectors. UAE planned investments into India's infrastructure development, spanning ports, airports, highways and construction, and petrochemical projects as well.

In February 2019, Modi broke the protocol to receive the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman—popularly known as MBS. Saudi Arabia's smart leader called Modi his "elder brother", and said, "I am his younger brother, I admire him".

When Kuwait's most revered leader Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah passed away in September 2020, the Indian government declared a day's state mourning throughout the country. The gesture was observed very positively in Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti government appreciated it.

Upon the demise of UAE's president Sheikh Khalifah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in May 2022, the Indian government observed a day's mourning. Again, a gesture appreciated by the UAE royals and citizens.

MUTUAL DEPENDENCIES

India and the Gulf nations share a huge chunk of mutual economical dependencies, which include food security, renewable and nuclear energy, education and skill development, the defence industry and



counterterrorism, biotechnology, space, electronics, and information technology, which includes artificial intelligence and machine learning (AIML), cyber security, Cloud-based solutions, and more.

Rahul Roy Chaudhury, a senior researcher at International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), explained the Energy, Expatriates and Economy (EEE) relationship between Gulf nations and India.

There are over 8.5-9 million Indian expatriates throughout the region, whose skill-sets benefit the Gulf, while their impressive annual remittances benefit India—which is about 65 per cent of the nation's total remittances.

Roy explained, "India is dependent on the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states for 42 per cent of its overall oil imports; three of the top five oil suppliers to India are Gulf states, with Saudi Arabia, the largest, providing 20 per cent of India's total oil imports. Qatar is also India's dominant supplier of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Any disruption in energy imports from the Gulf will have serious implications for India's economic growth".

According to the Business-Standard report, UAE was also India's second-largest export and import market in 2021-22.

Likewise, Saudi Arabia was India's fourth-largest trading and import partner in the last fiscal year.

In February 2022, India and UAE signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)—the trade pact was implemented last month. Meanwhile, India and Oman have agreed to undertake a joint feasibility study, before they could sign a preferential trade deal on limited goods.

During 2019-20, India's hydrocarbon trade with the Gulf region was worth \$62 billion—which is 36% of the total hydrocarbon trade. In short, Gulf countries account for almost 15 per cent of India's global trade.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY TIES

Gulf regions especially Saudi Arabia and UAE have held deep military and intelligence ties with India. Moreover, it improved remarkably in the recent past.

Former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr.

Ausaf Saeed—who worked as the ambassador from April 2019 till March 2022 in the Kingdom, extensively worked on various political, economic, consular and cultural issues, besides Hajj management. During his tenure, India and Saudi Arabia witnessed a great deal of cooperation in the areas which were unexplored before.

In March 2021, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Modi were connected via teleconference. Then in September, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan visited India.

The first bilateral Naval exercise "Al Mohed-Al Hindi" was conducted in August 2021 on the Eastern Coast of Jubail in Saudi Arabia.

India's historical ties with the Arab nations date back more than 5,000 years to trading between the ancient civilisations of the Indus Valley and the Dilmun. Arab merchants, traders and religious men would traverse through the gigantic oceans to reach the coasts of India to enjoy the business-friendly markets, culturally rich atmosphere, and welcoming society

In February 2022, Saudi land forces commander Lt. Gen. Fahd Bin Abdullah made a historic visit to India and held extensive talks with former Indian Army chief Gen. M.M. Naravane.

Interestingly, during the 2019 US-Iran escalations in the Gulf waters, Iran seized and attacked the UAE oil-tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, in response to that India deployed its naval ships to contain the Iranian aggression, and to guard the Arab oil-tankers.

Back in June 2012, India's most-wanted terrorist Zabiuddin Ansari aka Abu Jundal—the handler of the ten terrorists involved in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. He was deported from Saudi Arabia, and was arrested upon arrival at the Delhi airport.

HAJJ

Those who call for sanctioning India usually forget how hypothetical the statement is, as this step not only strains ties with India

but also the Indian Muslims won't be able to visit Mecca and Madina.

When the diplomatic ties are wrecked—there would be no embassy functioning inside Saudi Arabia, and there would be no diplomatic missions inside the Kingdom to hold the hands of the Indian pilgrims who desire to perform the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimage.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia, having a moderate Islamic leadership, would never take such a drastic step to ban Indian Muslims from performing rituals, for the sake of some political spat.

NASCENT DEVELOPMENTS

India-Gulf relations have witnessed a great reset in the post-pandemic period. Former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Talmiz Ahmed noted in 2021, about the Gulf's investments in the agriculture industry of India.

He wrote for the Observer Research Foundation that India loses about 21 million tonnes of wheat annually, worth \$8.3 billion, due to inadequate storage and distribution facilities. Also, India loses about 21 million tonnes of vegetables and 12 million tonnes of fruits annually due to the absence of requisite cold storage amenities.

Due to these harsh realities, UAE invested in India's farm-related logistics sector and this cooperation could boost domestic stocks for India, and partly meet the needs of the UAE as well.

Moreover, in May 2022, India promised to export wheat to Saudi Arabia and UAE, despite the grain ban it announced for the rest of the world.

In the field of electric automobiles, this month Saudi Arabia's leading automobile company Abdul Latif Jameel, famous for Toyota cars, committed an investment of up to \$220 million in India's Greaves Electric Mobility, which is one of India's leading two-to-three-wheeler mobility players.

RESOLVING MUTUAL DISPUTES AMICABLY

In October 2021, Saudi Arabia commemorated its presidency of the G20 summit by publishing the map of G20 nations on its new 20 Riyal note. However, the map showed Jammu and Kashmir as separate territory from India.

The then Indian Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Saeed raised the issue to his counterparts, and later India learnt that Saudi Arabia withdrew the currency.

India and the Gulf nations have always been an unbreakable unit irrespective of their reservations and disagreements. Both the regions have always resolved the issues without any unpleasant outcome.

A couple of media outlets are trying to stir a sense of anxiety that India may face a heavy backlash from the Gulf nations for the recent controversy. But it's never been the case. Those who used unrefined language for the Prophet were brought to book immediately, while India displayed maturity and the relations are back to normal. Those who hold desires to watch a fallout between India and the Gulf nations will only return home in despair.

Thailand Becomes First Asian Country to Decriminalise Marijuana, But Discourages Smoking in Public

Some Thai advocates celebrated Thursday morning by buying marijuana at a cafe that had previously been limited to selling products made from the parts of the plant that do not get people high. The dozen or so people who turned up at the Highland Cafe were able to choose from a variety of buds with names such as Sugarcane, Bubblegum, Purple Afghani, and UFO. "I can say it out loud, that I am a cannabis smoker. I don't need to hide like in the past when it was branded as a illegal drug," said 24-year-old Rittipong Bachkul, the days first customer.

So far, it appears there would be no effort to police what people can grow and smoke at home, aside from registering to do so, and declaring it is for medical purposes.

For the time being, however, would-be marijuana tourists might want to proceed

with caution. Thailand's government has said it is promoting cannabis for medical use only, warning those eager to light up for fun that smoking in public could still considered to be a nuisance, subject to a potential 3-month sentence and 25,000 Thai baht (\$780) fine.

And extracted content, such as oil, remains illegal if it contains more than 0.2% of tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the chemical that makes people high. The status of marijuana is still in considerable legal limbo because while it is no longer treated as a dangerous drug, Thai lawmakers have yet to pass legislation to regulate its trade.

Thailand mainly wants to make a splash in the market for medical marijuana. It already has a well developed medical tourism industry and its tropical climate is ideal for growing cannabis.

"We should know how to use cannabis,"

Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, the country's biggest marijuana booster, said recently. If we have the right awareness, cannabis is like gold, something valuable, and should be promoted.

But, he added, "We will have additional Ministry of Health Notifications, by the Department of Health. If it causes nuisances, we can use that law (to stop people from smoking)."

He said the government prefers to build an awareness that would be better than patrolling to check on people and using the law to punish them. Some immediate beneficiaries of the change are people who have been locked up for breaking the old law. From our perspective, a major positive outcome of the legal changes is that at least 4,000 people imprisoned for offences relating to cannabis will be released, Gloria Lai, Asia regional director

of the International Drug Policy Consortium, said in an email interview. People facing cannabis-related charges will see them dropped, and money and cannabis seized from people charged with cannabis-related offences will be returned to their owners. Her organization is network of civil society organizations worldwide advocating drug policies grounded in principles of human rights, health and development.

However, economic benefits are at the heart of the marijuana reforms, projected to boost everything from national income to small farmers livelihoods.

There is concern over whether the benefits will be distributed equitably.

One fear is that giant corporations could be unfairly served by proposed regulations involving complicated licensing processes and expensive fees for commercial use that would handicap small producers.

Ambani-Murdoch vs Jeff Bezos-the heavyweight IPL media rights battle

Bezos is the second-richest person in the world. Ambani is at No. 9. Disney-Star, the incumbent media rights holder will be there, while the presence of Apple and Google makes the bidding war interesting

(News Agency) On the field, Gujarat Titans sprang a surprise, upset the odds and ended up being the best team of this year's Indian Premier League. Now, as the stage is set for the IPL media rights' – linear and digital – e-auction on Sunday, it needs to be seen if a newcomer rules the roost.

The auction pool has 10-odd participants, some of the world's richest and very famous going head-to-head. The auction throws up the possibility of a straight fight between Mukesh Ambani, representing Viacom18/Reliance and Jeff Bezos, Amazon chairman, especially for the digital rights.

Bezos is the second-richest person in the world. Ambani is at No. 9. Disney-Star, the incumbent media rights holder will be there, while the presence of Apple and Google makes the bidding war interesting.

How intense could the bidding war be?

There's a feeling that Disney-Star could go for aggressive bidding to retain the media rights and it's purely down to the numbers. Hotstar, the company's digital platform, reportedly gets 30 per cent of its global revenue from India, with the IPL being the determining factor. For Amazon and Netflix, on the other hand, only 5-10 per cent of their global revenue comes from India.

Then again, Indian conglomerate Reliance and Viacom18 have entered into a strategic partnership with Bodhi Tree, with the latter investing \$1.78 billion into the project. This is an investment platform, run by media

tycoon James Murdoch's Lupa Systems and former Star India executive Uday Shankar. As Star's chairman-cum-CEO, Shankar had changed the entire landscape by securing the IPL media rights for his erstwhile company five years ago, by paying four times over the base price. Now he will be in the rival camp. "James and Uday's track record is unmatched," Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries, had said following the tie-up. With 400 million-plus customers, Reliance's Jio is the country's largest telecommunications company.

Bezos's Amazon, meanwhile, livestreams the English Premier League, arguably the world's most popular football league. It might go all-out to secure the digital media rights of the world's most popular cricket league as well. Gaining an edge over its global rival Netflix Inc. offers the added incentive.

What is the base price?

Five years ago, Star had bagged the IPL media rights for the 2018-2022 cycle for Rs 16,347 crore. This time, for the 2023-2027 cycle, the BCCI has set the base price at Rs 32,890 crore. According to a top BCCI official, the expectation is about the highest bid going past Rs 45,000 crore. Like a BCCI insider said, the auction dynamics don't follow the simple profit-and-loss logic. It's about acquiring the market share dominance and how much the companies are willing to fork out.

Who has picked the tender documents?

It is learnt that Disney-Star, Sony,

Zee, Viacom18/Reliance, Google, Amazon, Apple, Dream11, Sky Sports UK and SuperSport SA are among the parties to purchase the invitation to tender (ITT) documents. Some of them, however, have expressed their displeasure over a sharp increase in the base price. "It's a very aggressive reserve price and there has to be reality check, as TV viewership of IPL has dropped by over 34 per cent, and at a time when the rights are coming up for renewal," NP Singh, managing director and CEO of Sony Pictures Networks India, told The Economic Times last month.

Why is the BCCI still so confident?

According to a BCCI official, the IPL as a product is "unrivalled". There's no other content that attracts eyeballs, which the IPL gets. Chennai Super Kings chief executive Kasi Viswanathan agreed. "This year, maybe, was an aberration in the sense that you still didn't have home and away games. This was a reason for a dip in viewership.

"But if you look at the competitive cricket that is played in the IPL, everybody knows that this is the best T20 league in the world. And that probably is the reason why its media rights are so much in demand," Viswanathan told The Indian Express.

How important are digital rights in the whole equation?

Unlike the last term, composite bids have been done away with. A company can

separately put in bids for all three buckets. Also, this time, the BCCI has divided digital rights into two separate buckets – one for all matches, while the third bucket contains the non-exclusive rights for 18 games every season, including the tournament opener and playoffs. This can attract companies who are willing to get a small share of the cricket pie, fetching the cricket board big money in the process.

How will an increase in the number of teams determine the auction process?

To start with, the addition of two new teams have increased the number of matches to 74 and it contributed to the base price this term almost doubling the winning bid in 2017. But going beyond the hard numbers, the two new teams have brought in new fans into the tournament. For example, Titans, the defending champions, can play in front of 100,000 spectators, giving them enough opportunity to develop a big fan base. This is expected to rapidly increase TV/online viewership also.

Does the IPL have global appeal?

Last year, Manchester United's American owners, the Glazers, took part in the IPL franchise auction, as two new teams were brought to the fold. Not that the Glazers are big cricket fans, but they found the IPL's model, which is pretty akin to the NBA and Major League Baseball – a closed-shop league without promotion and relegation and revenue guaranteed from certain quarters – attractive.

At 'young' age of 100, woman gets driving licence renewed in Italy



In yet another example showing 'age is just a number', an Italian woman seems to have made heads turn at the 'young' age of 100. Well, the woman has become the third centenarian in the country in recent years to have got her driving licence renewed, media reports said. After clearing an eye test at a driving school in the northern province of Vicenza, Candida Uderzo was provided a new licence. As the woman likes to be autonomous, she does not want her son to drive for her. "This renewal makes me happy and will make me feel a little bit freer too. I'm lucky, I'm 100 years old, and being so healthy is

a surprise to me too. I never take tablets, just the odd sleeping pill once in a while," Uderzo told Corriere della Sera. Claiming her eyesight to be good, the centenarian said she can read the newspaper without glasses. The only regret in Uderzo's life has been to lose her husband when she was relatively young. "But I decided that staying alive meant enjoying it as much as possible. I started going for long walks with friends, it helped me to deal with the grief. After retiring, I joined a walking group and haven't missed an outing since. Every Sunday at 6 am, I am ready to go," she told Corriere.

Twitter reassures staff on Musk deal, sees vote by August

Musk in recent weeks has been publicly skeptical of Twitter's user numbers, and the amount that are automated bots, driving uncertainty about whether he will complete the deal

Twitter Inc.'s top lawyer reassured staff Wednesday that the deal to sell the company to billionaire Elon Musk is still progressing, and that a shareholder vote will occur in late July or early August, according to people familiar with the matter. The company is just waiting for the Securities and Exchange Commission to approve its proxy, after which it will be sent to shareholders, Vijaya Gadde, Twitter's head of legal and policy, said at an employee meeting, the people said. Musk in recent weeks has been publicly skeptical of Twitter's user numbers, and the amount that are automated bots, driving uncertainty about whether he will complete the deal. The company has agreed to share its firehose of public tweet data with Musk in an effort to assuage his concerns, according to a person familiar with the situation. The Washington Post earlier reported on the data agreement.

"Twitter has and will continue to cooperatively share information with Mr Musk to consummate the transaction in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement. We believe this agreement is in the best interest of all shareholders," the company said. "We intend to close the transaction and enforce the merger agreement at the agreed price and terms." Gadde and other executives

Wednesday responded to a flurry of employee questions and concerns about the deal. Among them: whether people will be able to continue to work from home, as Twitter has promised would be possible. Gadde said remote work is not protected by the merger agreement, so there's no guarantee Musk will continue to allow it, the people said.

White House announces new national marine sanctuary to preserve Hudson Canyon



On World Oceans Day, the White House announced a new national marine sanctuary to preserve the Hudson Canyon. The proposal includes designating the largest undersea canyon on the Atlantic coast as one of the nation's next underwater parks. Hudson Canyon is an ecological hotspot located approximately 100 miles off the coast of New York and it reaches depths of 2.5 miles.

As per the proposal by US President Joe Biden's administration, Hudson Canyon would become a national marine sanctuary. The canyon is a vast gorge in the Atlantic Ocean and is home to endangered whales, sharks and sea turtles. Hudson Canyon would receive permanent federal protection.

Media reports noted that Hudson Canyon would be off-limits to oil and gas drilling. Such restriction is aimed at protecting marine life and cold-

water coral. Importantly, before finalisation, the proposal will undergo a public comment period through August 8.

As quoted in an NYT, Richard W Spinrad, the administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said in a statement: "A sanctuary near one of the most densely populated areas of the Northeast U.S. would connect diverse communities across the region to the ocean and the canyon in new and different ways." Spinrad further added that the sanctuary would leave "a lasting legacy for future generations." As per the Wildlife Conservation Society's New York Aquarium, Hudson Canyon would be the first national marine sanctuary off New York and New Jersey. Biden's administration also announced that the United States will phase out single-use plastics in national parks and other public lands over the next decade.



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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

ਭੋਇਸ਼ਾਹ: ਸਰਕਾਰ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇਸ ਸਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਭੇਜੇ ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਦੇ ਛੇਤ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕੌਨਸਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਏ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕੌਨਸਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਏ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕੌਨਸਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਏ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ।

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India's non-alcoholic drinks market to reach Rs 1.47 trillion by 2030'

India's non-alcoholic beverages market is expected to grow to Rs 1.47 trillion by 2030 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.7 per cent, from around Rs 671 billion in 2019, the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (Icrier) said in a detailed analysis.

More than 60% of the global market was made up of carbonated soft drinks (CSDs), ready-to-drink teas (RTDs), energy drinks, and sports drinks. The most popular beverages among Indians are carbonated beverages, bottled water, and fruit beverages and juices. According to the report, the government

should focus on increasing farmers' revenue through the use of fruit pulp/puree/juices, as well as look into taxation on fruit-based beverages and juices. To encourage the expansion of the Indian juice/beverage business and farmers, the paper proposes lowering the tax on fruit pulp/puree-based commodities from 12 percent to 5%.

"While India is the world's greatest producer of numerous raw materials required in the production of non-alcoholic beverages, roughly 25-30 percent of the fruits and vegetables grown in the country are still lost in the supply chain," according to Deepak

Mishra, director and chief executive of Icrier.

"We are far behind other developing countries in exports of beverages. For example, in 2020, we were the 59th global exporter of fruit and vegetable juices, while Brazil ranked first. With the PLI scheme and other incentives, there is scope to enhance the domestic manufacturing capacity and exports."

Nutrition-based taxes

Furthermore, the paper suggests that taxes in the Union Budget for 2023-24 be set in such a way that they encourage people to consume healthily. Nutritional taxes should be implemented.

Carbonated sugar-based drinks, for example, may be subject to the highest GST rate of 28%, but carbonated fruit juices with no added sugar or mineral water should be taxed at the lowest rate.

The FSSAI product regulations must be aligned with the product definitions in the GST tax slabs, as moderate taxation can lead to increased revenue collection, increased investment in R&D and product innovation, reduced supply chain wastages, increased farmer income, and India becoming one of the leading global beverage hubs.

IMD issues 'orange alert' in Delhi, north east warned for heavy rainfall

The India Meteorological Department has issued an 'orange alert' in Delhi and other neighbouring locations for severe heatwave conditions with temperatures ranging from 44 to 47 degrees Celsius, reported by ANI.

The national capital has been experiencing severe heatwaves in recent days. On Saturday (June 4), Delhi saw searing summer heat, with the temperatures exceeding 47 degrees Celsius. Mungeshpur saw a temperature reaching 47.1 degrees Celsius, while Pitampura recorded 46.5 degrees Celsius. RK Jenamani, a senior scientist at IMD said, "Orange alert in Delhi. Severe heatwave from June 4 in Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, UP and parts of MP, Rajasthan. Temp varying b/w 44°-47°. Shall continue for four more days. We advise people to venture out carefully as heat spells are very severe."

The hottest temperature recorded in Ganganagar, Rajasthan and Hisar, Haryana recorded 47.5 and 46.8 degrees Celsius respectively. The senior scientist further added that heavy rainfall is expected in east India and warnings for the same has been issued for Meghalaya, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. However, the monsoon has nowhere started in the North.

Russia-Ukraine war: Norway donates howitzers to Ukraine

Amid escalating situation in eastern Ukraine, Norway has donated 22 self-propelled howitzers to the war-torn nation. The Norwegian defence ministry said on Wednesday (June 8) that the supply included spare parts, ammunition and other gear. In a statement, the ministry said, "The Norwegian government has waited to publicly announce the donation for security reasons. Future donations may not be announced or commented upon." After Russia on February 24 announced the decision to invade Ukraine, the so-called "special military operation", the United States and several Western countries came forward to supply arms and military aid to support Ukrainian resistance while countering Russia. Recently on June 5, Ukrainian deputy defence minister Ganna

Malyar said that Ukraine needs continued military support from Western countries until it defeated Russian forces. The European allies have supplied weapons to Kyiv such as drones, Howitzer heavy artillery, anti-aircraft Stinger and anti-tank Javelin missiles. Recently, US President Joe Biden said Washington would supply Ukraine with M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS. Biden especially mentioned that he received assurances from Kyiv that it would not be used to target Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin reacted sharply as he warned the United States in an interview broadcast on Sunday that Russia would strike new targets if the West supplied longer-range missiles to Ukraine for use in high-precision mobile rocket systems.

Women's panel writes to Telangana police over increasing crimes against women, seeks report

The National Commission for Women wrote to the Director General of Police, Telangana, over the increasing incidence of crimes against women in the state

Expressing concern over the increasing rate of heinous crimes against girls and women in the Hyderabad district of Telangana, the National Commission for Women wrote to the Director General of Police, Telangana, to initiate action in this matter. The NCW Chairperson, Rekha Sharma, in her letter requested the DGP, Telangana to send a report detailing the steps taken by the state to ensure the safety and security of girls and women, so that such incidences can be prevented in future, within seven days. A copy of the letter has also been sent to the Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad. The NCW, in its statement, said that it had come across an article that reported five

cases of rape against minor girls in Hyderabad in a week.

Two more incidents of rape involving minors were reported in Hyderabad on Monday, the fifth in a week, the article had stated. NCW said, "The Commission has taken serious note of the increasing rate of heinous crimes against girls and women in Hyderabad district of Telangana. The role of police is not only to protect and prevent crimes, but also to take swift and appropriate action in such matters. Therefore, the Commission has taken cognizance of the matter." A 17-year-old girl, who went to a club for a party, was allegedly gang-raped by five people inside a car on Saturday, May 28.

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France to sign US-led moon exploration agreement

The country will become the 20th to sign on to the pact since 2020, when it was conceived by the Trump administration

France is set to sign a US-led multilateral agreement aiming to govern how countries behave in space and on the moon, according to two people familiar with the plans. France's signing of the pact, called the Artemis Accords, will mark one of the most significant endorsements yet of Washington's effort to shape international legal norms and standards for exploring the lunar surface, said the sources, who asked not to be identified. A spokeswoman for the French space agency did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A spokeswoman for NASA, which led the drafting of the Artemis Accords, did not return an email seeking

comment.

French officials Tuesday night will sign the accords during a celebration at the French ambassador's residence in Washington, D.C., of the French space agency's 60th anniversary, one of the sources said.

The country will become the 20th to sign on to the pact since 2020, when it was conceived by the Trump administration as a diplomatic prong of NASA's flagship space exploration program, Artemis. That program aims to return humans to the moon's surface by 2025 with the help of U.S. allies and private companies. The accords, mainly built on broader principles in the landmark 1967 Outer Space Treaty, include an array of principles designed to promote peaceful uses of space, from



establishing "safety zones" around future moon bases to sharing scientific data with other countries. The United Kingdom, Japan and Canada are other key countries that have previously signed the accords, with France set to become the seventh European signatory, last month, was Colombia, one of a handful of signatories that view the accords as a boost for the Artemis program. developing their own space capabilities. China, which is not a signatory to the Artemis Accords, is planning its own moon exploration program that NASA chief Bill Nelson and other U.S. officials see as a rival to the Artemis program. Russia, the U.S. space agency's longtime partner on the International Space Station, plans to work with Beijing on its moon program instead of

US announces \$100 million healthcare training plan at Summit of Americas amid partial boycott by leaders

The United States on Wednesday announced a \$100 million initiative to train half a million health workers across Latin America at a summit that was conceived as a platform to showcase U.S. leadership in reviving Latin American economies and tackling migratory pressures. The pandemic "showed us the many cracks in our global health systems and underscored the importance of strong and resilient health systems for the entire population," a White House statement said. But, the United States President Joe Biden's plan to unveil a package to spur recovery in Latin America, help stem immigration and counter China's growing regional economic clout has been marred by a partial boycott by leaders upset at Washington's decision to exclude Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua from the summit.

U.S. officials hope the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles and a parallel gathering of top business executives can pave the way for greater economic cooperation as regional nations grappling with higher inflation work to bring supply chains stretched by the COVID-19 pandemic closer to home. "It's much better for us ... to have a supply chain here in the Americas than it is for us to be dependent on a supply chain that comes from China," U.S. ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar told Reuters on the sidelines of the summit. Seeking to present alternatives to China, U.S. officials said Biden would unveil an "Americas Partnership" on Wednesday to speed pandemic recovery by building on existing trade deals. The plan would aim to mobilize investments, reinvigorate the Inter-American Development Bank, create clean energy jobs, strengthen supply chains and promote "sustainable and inclusive trade" in the region, one administration official said. Still, an initiative that promotes jobs abroad could face U.S. protectionist pushback, as well as questions about how many widely divergent economies could make it work.

Classified Name change

Vikramjeet, resident of 5 Stafford lane Hicksville NY11801, changed name to Vikramjeet Singh



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PM Modi to Inaugurate Finance, Corporate Ministry Celebrations, to Launch Jan Samrath Portal



week is being celebrated as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (AKAM) from 6th to 11th June, 2022," read the statement by the PMO on Sunday, June 5.

Narendra Modi to Launch Jan Samrath Portal

According to the press release, the Prime Minister will launch a national portal for credit linked government schemes - Jan Samrath Portal. It is a one-stop digital portal linking Government credit schemes, the PMO said in its release. As per the JanSamrath website, it is a digital portal linking 13 credit linked government schemes on a single platform.

It's a first of its kind platform which directly connects beneficiaries to lenders, the PMO said in its press release.

"The main purpose of Jan Samrath portal is to encourage

inclusive growth and development of various sectors by guiding and providing them with the right type of government benefits through simple and easy digital processes. The portal ensures end to end coverage of all the linked schemes," the statement noted.

PM Modi to Inaugurate Digital Exhibition, Release Special Coins

As per the PMO release, Modi will also inaugurate a digital exhibition which will trace the journey of the finance and corporate ministries over the past eight years. "Prime Minister will inaugurate a Digital Exhibition which traces the journey of the two Ministries over the past eight years," it said.

"Prime Minister will also release special series of Re 1, Rs 2, Rs 5, Rs 10 and Rs 20 coins. These

special series of coins will have the theme of the logo of AKAM and will also be easily identifiable to the visually impaired persons," as per the PMO release. The programme will also be organised simultaneously at 75 locations across the country and each location will be connected through virtual mode with the main venue, said the statement from the Prime Minister's Office. Earlier in May, finance secretary TV Somnathan had said that the Centre is working on a 25-year economic blueprint, which will be achievable in a long term. The exercise will see the involvement of all arms of the Union government to mark "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav". The Centre is focussing on various goals and projects over the next 25 years, when India will complete 100 years of independence.

(News Agency) prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, June 6, will inaugurate the "iconic week celebrations" of the finance and corporate ministries at New Delhi, the Prime Minister's Office has said in a press release. This is being celebrated as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, the release said. The celebrations will last from

June 6 to June 11, it added. The programme will be organised in as many as 75 locations simultaneously.

"Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Iconic Week Celebrations of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on 6th June, 2022 at 10:30 AM at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. This

Cashing on Clay: How Rafael Nadal's Epic French Open Domination Can Serve Your Financial Success

(News Agency) last night, tennis legend Rafael Nadal clinched his 14th French Open win. Taking his Grand Slam streak to a record 22 titles, Nadal dominated the clay court against his Norwegian opponent Casper Rudd. The Spaniard was all of 19 years when he won his first French Open on the red court. And yesterday, this saga continued with an emphatic win of 6-3, 6-3, 6-0 over Rudd.

In general, Nadal's life is a goldmine of iconic moments and memories for any sports enthusiast. But a closer look at Sunday's Roland Garros 2022 final also presents a treasure trove of actionable financial insights for everyone.

INVEST TIME, NOT JUST YOUR MONEY

At 36, Rafael Nadal is the oldest player to win at the Roland Garros tournament. He began his A-list professional career almost 20 years ago, and that has been peppered with many highs and lows. Many thought he was done for after he failed to make it to the big leagues in 2015 and 2016. But six years down, Nadal is all firing and raring. The temptation to earn quick fire, skyrocketing returns can disillusion even the



very best. And that can lead us to invest heavily and only in very volatile and relatively new asset classes like cryptocurrencies. In comparison, staying invested in conventional, long-term wealth creation instruments like mutual funds, NPS, PPF and more can seem dull.

But don't entirely let go of the Nadal-esque stocks and mutual fund units of your portfolio. These can be stocks of blue-chip, large companies that generate returns

which are consistent, albeit not very high. Or they can be your mutual fund investments in index or large-cap funds. They'll deliver, eventually. And with a bang.

EXPERTISE MATTERS

Out of the 92 titles he's earned in his career, 63 have been on clay. It's no surprise he's nicknamed the king of clay. He's well-known and feared for his terrific forehand, which he used deftly during Sunday's match.

That's what kept Rudd on the back-foot.

Expertise combined with experience is what makes a successful player. And if you want your portfolio to be one fine market player, it's time to brush up on the expertise bit.

DIY investing is great, but consulting a financial planner on your portfolio can do you wonders. They'll help you assess, reassess and align your financial goals. By giving you a

clear breakdown of how you're currently progressing and what changes you should make to reach your goals, they'll give your investments the edge it needs.

STAY PUT. DON'T QUIT

Rafael Nadal's career has been riddled with injuries. But most recently, there was much talk about the resurgence of his chronic, painful foot condition. On multiple occasions, Nadal had described the immeasurable pain he experiences because of this. And despite that, he managed to lift the coveted trophy on Sunday. Staying invested in the markets is like swimming in choppy waters. It's a test of your resilience. A quote, often ascribed to Roland Garros himself, reads "victory belongs to the most tenacious". It's very easy to panic and exit when the markets hit lows. You feel like you're losing money. But in the long run, the markets, too, reward the most tenacious. Don't let a few reds and volatilities push you to entirely sell your investments and leave. Stay put. And in turn, you will see massive shoots of greens and handsome returns from your portfolio in the long run.

International oil prices jump after Saudi Arabia hikes crude rates

Brent crude was up 0.8 per cent at \$120.63 per barrel after touching an intraday high of \$121.95, extending a 1.8 per cent gain from Friday



(News Agency) International oil futures jumped on Monday, with Brent rising above \$120 a barrel after Saudi Arabia hiked prices for its crude sales in July, signalling tight supply even after OPEC plus agreed to accelerate output increases over the next

two months. Brent crude was up 0.8 per cent at \$120.63 per barrel after touching an intraday high of \$121.95, extending a 1.8 per cent gain from Friday. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 0.8 per cent, at \$119.80 a barrel after earlier hitting a

three-month high of \$120.99. It gained 1.7 per cent on Friday. Saudi Arabia raised the official selling price (OSP) for its flagship Arab light crude to Asia to a \$6.50 premium versus the average of the Oman and Dubai benchmarks, from a \$4.40 premium in June, state oil producer Aramco 2222.SE said on Sunday. The July OSP is the highest since May, when prices hit all-time highs due to worries of disruption in supplies from Russia amid sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.

The price hike came despite a decision last week by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, together called OPEC+, to

increase output in July and August by 648,000 barrels per day, or 50 per cent more than previously planned. Iraq said on Friday it plans to raise output to 4.58 million bpd in July. Oil producers are "making hay while the sun shines", Avtar Sandu, manager of commodities at Phillip Futures in Singapore said, adding that US summer driving demand and easing of covid-19 lockdowns in China are expected to keep prices high. The OPEC+ move to bring forward output hikes is widely seen as unlikely to meet demand as the increased allocation is spread across all members, including Russia that

is facing sanctions. "While that increase is sorely needed, it falls short of demand growth expectations, especially with the EU's partial ban on Russian oil imports also factored in," Commonwealth Bank analyst Vivek Dhar said in a note. Separately, Italy's Eni and Spain's Repsol could begin shipping Venezuelan oil to Europe as soon as next month to make up for Russian crude, five people familiar with the matter told Reuters, resuming oil-for-debt swaps halted two years ago when Washington stepped up sanctions on Venezuela. However, the volume that the companies will receive is not expected to be large, the people said.

No change in existing currency, banknotes, says Reserve Bank of India

The Reserve Bank of India clarifies that there will be no change in existing currency and banknotes



(News Agency) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday clarified that there would be no change in existing currency and banknotes. The RBI's clarification came after there were reports that claimed the

central bank was mulling changes to the existing currency and banknotes by replacing the face of Mahatma Gandhi. "There are reports in certain sections of the media that the Reserve Bank of

India is considering changes to the existing currency and banknotes by replacing the face of Mahatma Gandhi with that of others," the RBI said in a statement. "It may be noted that there is no such proposal in the Reserve Bank," the central bank stated. "RBI clarifies: No change in existing currency and banknotes," the central bank tweeted. There are certain reports suggesting the finance ministry and the RBI were contemplating to use the faces of other prominent Indians, including Rabindranath Tagore and APJ Abdul Kalam, on banknotes of certain denominations, according to PTI.

RBI repo rate hiked: How will it impact FDs, EMIs, loan interests

(News Agency) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday raised the interest rate by 50 basis points to a two-year high of 4.9 per cent as it doubled down to tame inflation that has surged in the last couple of months in Asia's third-largest economy. This is the second hike in the repo rate in as many months. The rate hike comes on the back of a 40 bps increase effected by the RBI at an unscheduled meeting on May 4. All the six members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, unanimously voted for the latest rate hike.

WHAT IS REPO RATE?

Repo rate stands for the repurchasing option

rate. It is the rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks. IMPACT ON EMIS, LOAN INTERESTS, FDs? whenever the RBI increases the repo rate, banks generally follow it by hiking interest rates on home loans, car loans and others. If banks increase interest rates, then equated monthly installments (EMIs) automatically go up, impacting borrowers. However, when the RBI hikes the repo rate, it is likely to augur well for depositors who park their money in savings accounts and through fixed deposits (FDs). Banks are likely to offer greater interest to FD accounts. "Interest rates are on the rise on back of persistent inflation and a moderate RBI policy of raising rates and easy liquidity.

Indian economy to grow at 7.2%, inflation high at 6.7%, projects RBI

The RBI has kept the real GDP growth forecast for Financial Year 2022-23 at 7.2 per cent. The central bank has raised its inflation forecast to 6.7 per cent



(News Agency) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday projected that the country's economy will grow at 7.2 per cent in the Financial Year 2022-23. The central bank has increased its inflation forecast to 6.7 per cent for the current fiscal year. The RBI has kept the real gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for Financial Year 2022-23 at 7.2 per cent. India's GDP is likely to grow at 16.2 per cent in quarter 1 of FY 2022-23 (April-June), 6.2 per cent in quarter 2 (July-September), 4.1 per cent in quarter 3 (October-December) and 4 per cent in quarter 4 (January-March). Meanwhile, RBI has raised its inflation forecast to 6.7 per cent for the financial

year 2022-23 from an earlier estimate of 5.7 per cent. Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation, which the RBI factors in while arriving at its monetary policy, galloped for the seventh straight month to touch an 8-year high of 7.79 per cent in April.

The RBI raised the interest rate by 50 basis points to a two-year high of 4.9 per cent as it doubled down to tame inflation that has surged in the last couple of months. All the six members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, unanimously voted for the latest rate hike. The rate hike comes on the back of a 40 bps increase effected by the RBI at an unscheduled meeting on May 4.

How diet and exercise can help prevent heart attack; cardiologist offers tips

Considering lifestyle factors play a crucial role in heart ailments, experts recommend right diet and exercises to improve heart health and prevent heart attack



when the blood flow that brings oxygen to the heart muscle is reduced or cut off completely. Foods with high amounts of sugar, salt, refined carbs, saturated fat can raise risk of heart attack and lead to build-up of plaque of fat, cholesterol and other things due to which blood clots can form. Eating healthy food and limiting intake of alcohol while increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other heart healthy foods can help you strengthen your heart health. Dr Sanjay Kumar, Director of Cardiology, Fortis Escorts Hospital, Faridabad talks about the right diet and exercises to prevent heart attack, in an interview with HT

Digital.

DIET

- Limit the amount of sodium in food to up to 6 gm. This means choosing low-salt and 'no-added salt' foods and seasonings at the table or while cooking. The nutrition facts label on food packaging shows the amount of sodium in the item.

- Limit drinks that contain alcohol. Too much alcohol can increase blood pressure and triglyceride level. Triglycerides are a type of fat found in the blood. Alcohol also adds extra calories, which will cause weight gain. Excess alcohol also increases your blood pressure.

- Dietary approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH): Doctors

recommend the DASH eating plan for high blood pressure. The DASH eating plan focuses on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other foods that are heart healthy and low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium. This diet plan is also particularly helpful for prevention of coronary artery disease.

- DASH also focuses on fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products, fish, poultry, and nuts. The DASH eating plan reduces red meats (including lean red meats), sweets, added sugars, and sugar-containing beverages. It is rich in nutrients, protein, and fibre. The DASH eating plan is a good healthy eating plan, even for those who don't have high blood pressure.

(News Agency) Popular singer KK died of myocardial infarction or heart attack recently after performing at a concert in Kolkata. This has raised concern about cardiac health in general among people. Considering lifestyle factors play a crucial

role in heart ailments, experts recommend right diet and exercises to improve heart health and prevent heart attack. It is also important to manage risk factors such as smoking and stress to reduce chances of any heart trouble. Heart attack happens

What is norovirus detected in Indian state of Kerala?



fluids. The disease caused by the norovirus is self-limiting and lasts only two or three days normally.

Is it contagious?

Yes, it is highly contagious.

Norovirus can be transmitted through contaminated water, food

and surfaces. The primary route of infection is oral-faecal. As the virus has several strains, a person can get infected multiple times.

How can we fight norovirus?

After using the lavatory, wash hands with soap repeatedly.

During outbreaks, disinfect the surfaces with a solution of hypochlorite at 5,000 parts per million. In extreme cases, patients should be administered rehydration fluids regularly.

Are any vaccines available?

No, there are no vaccines available for this disease.

What is nose-bleed fever and how does it spread? All you need to know about CCHFV

(News Agency) Nose-bleed fever, also known as Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever virus (CCHFV), has caused panic after the recent detection of cases. In a report by AFP last week, the World Health Organization said that this year Iraq has recorded 19 deaths among 111 CCHF cases in humans. Recently, media reports mentioned that India has recorded two cases of nose-bleed fever, including the death of a 55-year-old woman.

Cases rising in Iraq

Haidar Hantouche, a health official in Dhi Qar province, said, "The number of cases recorded is unprecedented." The surge of cases in Iraq this year has shocked the officials since numbers far exceed recorded cases in the 43 years since the virus was first documented in the country in 1979. Only 16 cases resulting in seven deaths had been recorded in 2021 in his province, Hantouche said. But this year Dhi Qar has recorded 43 cases, including eight deaths.

How does it spread?

The Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever spreads, jumping from animals to humans.

According to the World Health Organization,

"Animals become infected by the bite of infected ticks."

"The CCHF virus is transmitted to people either by tick bites or through contact with infected animal blood or tissues during and immediately after slaughter," the global health body added.

What are the symptoms?

WHO has listed some of the common symptoms of the rare nose-bleed fever infection, which are: Fever, chills, shudders, myalgia, headaches, nausea and vomits, abdominal pain and arthralgia.

Is it fatal?

A report by AFP noted that the virus has no vaccine. According to medics, the start can be swift, causing severe bleeding both internally and externally and especially from the nose. It causes death in as many as two-fifths of cases.

The WHO said that it is endemic in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans, CCHF's fatality rate is between 10 and 40 per cent.

'Mortality seems to be declining'

Ahmed Zouiten, who is the WHO's representative in Iraq said there were several "hypotheses" for the country's outbreak.

(News Agency) Norovirus has been detected in India's state of Kerala. The virus has been found in two lower primary school students in the city of Thiruvananthapuram, media reports said. More samples have been collected and sent for examination, the health department officials said. The students seem to have got the virus from contaminated food from the mid-day meals, which was distributed at the schools as per prima facie. A meeting of officials has been convened by Education Minister V Sivankutty to discuss the steps that should be taken to make the mid-day meals safe.

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a virus, which is similar to the diarrhoea-inducing rotavirus. It infects people across different age groups. The outbreaks of this disease

generally occur on cruise ships, dormitories, nursing homes and other closed spaces. Norovirus is resistant to several disinfectants. It can also survive hand sanitisers. Not just this, norovirus can also survive in temperature up to 60°C. So, only steaming food or chlorinating the water will not kill the virus. Diagnosis of this disease is generally done by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of norovirus are vomiting, diarrhoea and fever. The symptoms usually show up one or two days after exposure to this virus. This virus makes the patients feel nauseous and suffer from fever, abdominal pain, headaches and body aches. In extreme cases, dehydration could happen due to loss of



British researchers develop gel that can repair damage after heart attack

Researchers have been successful in generating heart tissues in a biodegradable gel that could lead to new cardiovascular treatments

(News Agency) With the world facing a massive burden of heart-related diseases, researchers in the United Kingdom have developed a new gel that can help repair damage caused by a heart attack. Researchers have been able to support the growth of heart muscle using the gel, showing scope for enhancing cardiovascular treatments. Scientists have long been looking for ways to reduce the risk of progression to heart failure. However, only one per cent of the cells injected directly into the heart have remained in place and survived. The latest research has helped in developing a new gel that can be safely injected into the beating heart to act as a scaffold for cells to grow new tissue.

The gel is made of chains of amino acids called peptides, the building blocks of proteins. The bonds between the peptides mean that the gel can exist in different states. When it's under stress, the peptides disassemble and behave like a liquid, making it ideal for injecting. The study was presented at the British Cardiovascular Society conference in Manchester. The team of researchers from the University of Manchester is hopeful that their gel will become a key part of future regenerative treatments for damaged hearts. "The heart has a very

limited ability to repair any damage it sustains. Our research has been looking for ways to overcome this so we can keep the heart in a healthier place for longer. While it's still early days, the potential this new technology has in helping to repair failing hearts after a heart attack is huge," Katharine King, a Ph.D. student, who led the study said in a statement. She is confident that the gel will be an effective

option for future cell-based therapies to help the damaged heart to regenerate. The researchers maintained that a good blood supply will be vital for the injected cells to develop into new tissue and they observed signs of blood vessel growth in the gel, proving the technology could boost the growth of new vessels. The team was also able to show that gel can support the growth of normal heart muscle

tissue. The team was able to grow the tissues when they added human cells that had been reprogrammed to become heart muscle cells into the gel. After growing for three weeks, the "cells started to spontaneously beat."

The British Heart Foundation (BHF), which funded the project, said that the team injected the gel with a fluorescent tag into the hearts of healthy mice, which

revealed that the gel remained in the heart for two weeks. Echocardiograms (ultrasounds of the heart) and electrocardiograms (ECGs, which measure the electrical activity of the heart) showed the method to be safe.

Researchers are now planning to test the gel in mice after a heart attack to see whether the heart cells can develop new muscle tissue.

'Successful cancer drug trial is ray of hope but...': Oncologists explain

(News Agency) On Wednesday, it was announced that for the first time, a drug trial had shown 100% eradication of cancer in patients. Speaking to India Today, leading oncologists explained the development.

World Brain Tumor Day, which falls on June 8, brought good news for the millions who suffer from cancer across the globe. On Wednesday, it was announced that for the first time, a drug trial had shown 100% eradication of cancer in patients. The trial was conducted at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan, US.

The drug — dostarlimab — was administered to 12 rectal cancer patients, who seemed to have recovered completely as the disease could not later be detected by physical exam, endoscopy, positron emission

tomography (PET) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans.

Responding to this major development, senior oncologist Pragma Shukla told India Today it was "a ray of hope".

However, she, along with oncologist Pramod Kumar Julka, highlighted reasons our optimism still needs to be 'guarded'.

"The study was conducted on a very small set of people. Further, the follow-up period ranging from six to twenty-five months is very less for cancer patients. The disease comes back in different ways at different intervals of time. All this has to be considered," she said. She added, "Then comes the cost. In the study, the molecule was given every three weeks for six months. Taking Indian market rates, the cost for six months

treatment is Rs 30 lakh. People can't afford this in India."

Dr Pramod Julka added that such studies need to be conducted in the Indian context as well. "The company can give the medicine free of cost for studies to be done in India," he said.

Agreeing with him, Dr Shukla said, "We have to be cautious about results in Western literature. Genes are different." But all the necessary skepticism does not take away from the hope that the drug trial has brought. "With new therapies, we have managed to increase life span of cancer patients even in Stage 4. Immunotherapy is the future of oncology and will come to India too in a big way," said Dr Julka. The drug provides hope that patients can be treated without painful chemotherapy and surgeries. Phase 3 trials of the drug are yet to be conducted.

Research reveals Covid affects the unborn children



(News Agency) Coronavirus is here to stay. It's been more than two years since the virus emerged as the bane of all of our lives. Now, new research has revealed that the virus is even

affecting unborn babies. Researchers have found that babies born to COVID-19 infected mothers have exhibited neurodevelopmental outcomes at the age of six weeks. Such

babies exhibited increased difficulty in relaxing and adapting their bodies while being held as compared to babies born to non-infected women. The analysis, which was presented at the 30th European Congress of Psychiatry in Budapest also pointed out that infants born from infected mothers also had significant difficulty in controlling their shoulder and head movements. This in particular suggests that Covid affects motor functions.

However, Dr Rosa Ayesa Arriola of the Marques de Valdecilla University Hospital in Spain pointed out that not all babies show neurodevelopmental

differences.

"Our data shows that their risk is increased in comparison to those not exposed to Covid in the womb. We need a bigger study to confirm the exact extent of the difference." The initial study compared 21 infants born to COVID-19 infected mothers to 21 born to healthy mothers.

As part of the test, mothers had to undergo a battery of assessments, this includes biochemical tests, along with psychological questionnaires during and after pregnancy. Post-natally NBAS or Neonatal Behavioural Assessment Scale was also conducted to measure the baby's movement and

behaviour. "We found that certain elements of the NBAS measurement were changed in 6-week-old infants who had been exposed to the SARS-COV-2 virus. Effectively they react slightly differently to being held, or cuddled," said Agueda Castro Quintas from the University of Barcelona. Another member of the research team, Dr Livio Provenzi pointed to the importance and the need for further study of the direct and indirect effects of COVID-19 on parents and infants. "Pregnancy is a period of life which shapes much of our subsequent development, and exposure to adversity in pregnancy can leave long-lasting biological footprints."

Geologists successfully predict volcanic eruption five months in advance, develop new forecasting system

A team of researchers has developed a new model that can predict volcanic eruptions in advance. They just demonstrated it in Galápagos



(News Agency) When the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcano off the South Pacific island erupted earlier this year, while the impact was limited on lives, livelihoods were lost and ripples were felt across the world, including in space. The impact could have been reduced had there been a warning beforehand.

A team of researchers is on the precipice of developing a warning system that could predict volcanic eruptions before it happens. In a study published in the journal Science Advances, they have detailed the system that successfully predicted the 2018 eruption of the Sierra Negra volcano in the Galápagos.

Researchers from the University of Illinois predicted the eruption with an error margin of a day using advancements in high-performance computing data assimilation by combining it with satellite InSAR data with

numerical models. The volcano erupted on June 26, 2018, five months after they issued the forecast.

"One of the great challenges in the field of volcanology is to develop quantitative models to investigate the processes that

lead to volcanic eruptions and use these models to provide eruption forecasts," researchers said in the paper that details the development of models capable of interpreting field observations and tracking the evolution of a magma system. Forecasting a volcanic eruption is difficult, similar to weather forecasting where different dynamic variables are involved. Sierra Negra, the most voluminous of the Galápagos volcanoes, occupies most of the southern portion of Isabela Island and has experienced at least seven historic eruptions since 1911, with an eruption occurring approximately every 15 years. Instruments had already begun

picking up signals of rumblings under the surface indicating the volcanic activity rising.

The team of researchers used the same methods as utilised in the weather forecasting business and combined observational data of the volcano's ground activity with predictions from simulations. The team then used satellite and radar images of the ground below the volcano to observe the magma activity. These combined the data and ran it through supercomputers to predict the future. Based on the movement of the magma system under the surface in the early months of 2018, they predicted a possible eruption

between June 25 and July 5. The volcano erupted on June 26, preceded by a rapid increase in seismic activity. A magnitude 5.4 quake was also recorded along the southern side of the caldera and the eruption that followed lasted for 58 days with the lava flow spreading over 30.6 square kilometers.

"Coulomb stress transfer models suggest that the faulting event triggered the 2018 eruption by encouraging tensile failure along the northern portion of the caldera. These findings provide a critical framework for understanding Sierra Negra's eruption cycles and evaluating the potential and timing of future eruptions," the paper read.

Aliens may be using free-floating rogue planets as spacecrafts in universe, says study

(News Agency) Aliens may be using rogue planets as spacecraft, a study has found. The research has been published in the International Journal of Astrobiology. Irina Romanovskaya, professor, physics and astronomy, Houston Community College, who is the author of the study, has told Motherboard that the rogue planets, who have either been knocked out of their original system by some gravitational event or formed externally, seems to have been used as spaceship as they are hard to detect in the interstellar dark between systems. There may also be a substantial number of

such rogue planets in the universe. "This increases the chance that some advanced extraterrestrial civilisations, if they exist, might hitch a ride on free-floating planets. Which is why I call such hypothetical civilisations Cosmic Hitchhikers," Romanovskaya said. These nomad worlds may be habitable even as they don't draw energy from a star. It can happen if they have subsurface oceans, atmospheres with hydrogen to preserve it and residual core heat, which can provide energy for some period of time. As per Romanovskaya's hypothesis, rogue planets have advantages

over spaceships as they have own resources and habitats and don't need artificial gravity. They could also prove to be an apt escape for the inhabitants of an aging system. So, it's just a matter of time when such a rogue planet comes close to a system with a habitable world, like Earth, and then aliens use a regular spacecraft to jump over to our planet. Romanovskaya said, "There are no traffic lights in the galaxy. If the solar system happens to be in the way of some free-floating planet, the planet will not stop at the red light. It will fly right through the solar system."

How did giraffe get its long neck? It was not always like this

Neck elongation independently evolved among several animal groups dating back hundreds of millions of years, also including marine reptiles



(News Agency) Fossils unearthed in China of a forerunner of the modern giraffe are offering insight into the early evolution of this mammal's trademark long neck, driven not only by the benefit of reaching high foliage but also by head-bashing competition between males for mates. Researchers on Thursday described skeletal remains including a thick skull and strong neck bones of an early member of the giraffe family called *Discokeryx xiezhi*, roughly the size of a large bighorn sheep, that lived about 17 million years

ago in the Xinjiang region in northwestern China.

Discokeryx's solidly built skull and strong cervical vertebrae were well adapted to high-speed head-to-head impact like that seen in competition among males of some mammal species for female mates, according to the researchers. *Discokeryx* boasted, they said, the most complex joints between the head and neck as well as between the individual neck bones of any mammal.

Discokeryx's skull was topped by a single large disc-shaped

and helmet-like ossicone, the name for the horn-like knobs atop giraffe's heads. "Ossicones, like horns and antlers, usually serve as weapons for males fighting for mates," said Chinese Academy of Sciences paleontologist Shi-Qi Wang, lead author of the study published in the journal *Science*. "*Discokeryx* has extreme morphologies of the head and neck adapted for head-butting behavior," said paleontologist and study co-author Jin Meng of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

"The traditional hypothesis for driving the elongation of the giraffe neck is eating - reaching up to get tree leaves. This new finding shows that, in the giraffe family, members do different things in their early evolution. The new species represents an extreme example in which the neck is not elongated but becomes very thick to absorb the power and impact from powerful head-butting," Meng added. Another hypothesis for

giraffe neck evolution - one supported by *Discokeryx*'s anatomy - is that elongation was driven by behavior displayed in competition for mates like the "necking" seen in giraffes today in which males violently strike each other with their necks. Longer-necked males often win these duels.

"If a male giraffe has a shorter neck, then the female may refuse the mating request of the male," Wang said.

Neck elongation independently evolved among several animal groups dating back hundreds of millions of years, also including marine reptiles such as *Elasmosaurus* and *Tanystropheus*, the various sauropod dinosaurs including *Patagotitan* and *Mamenchisaurus* and even swans and geese living today. *Discokeryx*, according to the researchers, may offer a peek at the early stages of giraffe neck elongation that unfolded over millions of years, though this

species took a different evolutionary route specialized for head-butting. *Discokeryx* is not considered a direct ancestor of today's giraffe, but rather a side branch of the giraffe family.

The modern giraffe, found in sub-Saharan Africa, is the world's tallest living land animal, with males up to 18 feet (5.5 meters) tall and females up to 14 feet (4.3 meters) tall. A giraffe's neck, stretching about six feet (1.8 meters), is the longest of any extant animal, though it has just seven neck bones like other mammals. *Discokeryx* inhabited an open grassland with patches of trees and shrubs during a time known as the Miocene epoch. It lived alongside shovel-tusked elephants, hornless rhinos, horned pigs, deer with crown-like antlers, three-toed horses and various antelopes. Predators included saber-toothed cats, hyenas and a member of a mammalian group called "dog bears" as big as a polar bear. "*Discokeryx* most likely ate grasses," Meng said.

Anxiety, distress, suicidal behaviour: Climate change poses serious risk to mental health

The WHO has echoed the findings by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in February, which stated that fast-rising climate change poses a growing hazard to mental health

(News Agency) The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that climate change poses serious risks to mental health and well-being and urged countries to include mental health support in their climate crisis response. Climate change has emerged as the biggest crisis on the planet with impacts being seen across the world. From melting of glaciers to uncontrolled wildfires to unpredictable flooding, climate-led extreme events have become more intense and frequent in the last few years. The findings released in the global health body's policy brief, echo findings by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in February which stated that fast-rising climate change poses a growing hazard to mental health and psychosocial well-being,

ranging from emotional distress to anxiety, sadness, bereavement, and suicidal behaviour.

"The impacts of climate change are increasingly part of our daily lives, and there is very little dedicated mental health support available for people and communities dealing with climate-related hazards and long-term risk." Dr Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health at WHO, said in a statement. The impact of climate change on mental health is distributed on the basis of socioeconomic status, gender, and age, but it is obvious that climate change affects many of the social determinants that are already contributing to significant mental health burdens around the world. A survey conducted by WHO in 2021, among 95 countries, only

nine included mental health and psychosocial support in their national health and climate change plans.

WHO said that around a billion people worldwide suffer from mental illnesses, but three out of every four do not have access

to the necessary services in low- and middle-income countries. Climate change is affecting an already difficult situation for mental health and mental health services around the world, said Dévora Kestel, Director of the WHO's

Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Furthermore, he added that countries should do more to protect people by increasing mental health and psychosocial assistance as part of disaster risk reduction and climate action.

Can there be alien life in Milky Way? New study provides a fascinating answer

(News Agency) Are we alone in the universe? This is a question that has bothered scientists for time immemorial. A number of researchers over the years have attempted to find any trace of alien life in the farthest corners of the universe but till now, no concrete proof has emerged from the studies. However, according to a professor at the University of California Los Angeles, there can be intelligent alien life on Dyson spheres around white dwarf stars in the Milky Way. Ben Zuckerman, who teaches physics and astronomy, has authored a new study which focuses on alien presence in the Dyson spheres. Dyson spheres are hypothetical constructions which exist around a star and the

spheres, named after well-known physicist Freeman Dyson, take in a huge amount of the star's power output. According to the study, Freeman suggested that if alien life exists on a planet, they would prefer to create a Dyson sphere around their star than moving around in the universe. As a result, a study of the spheres can point towards the viability of alien life on a white dwarf (a small, dense star). The study proposes that Dyson spheres can also allow the scientists to understand the exact number of alien civilisations that exist in the universe. The absence of any Dyson spheres can hint at an unstable environment and that rules out the presence of alien species up to a certain extent.

Tabu suspended mid-air, thrown against wall, pulled by rope in BTS clip from Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2 set

A new behind-the-scenes video was shared by T-Series giving a glimpse of Tabu as she channelled her inner Anjulika and Manjulika in Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2

(News Agency) Actor Tabu smoothly juggled between her roles as Anjulika and Manjulika in Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2 as seen in a new behind-the-scenes video shared by T-Series on their YouTube channel. The actor plays a double role in the Anees Bazmee directorial. In the over four-minute-long video, Tabu was seen playing both the characters with ease. Speaking about her roles, Tabu said, "Two and a half years almost. Anees had told me only one line 'Tabu, you will have to play two roles--one is good the other is bad'. I was like 'okay'." Anees next said, "A very important character in the film. I didn't have to think much about whom to choose for the role." Next, Tabu is seen dressed as Manjulika as she goes around the set scaring people and smiling. She also told everyone,

"Yaad karoge sablog (Each one of you will remember)" before giving a scary laugh. Bhushan Kumar said, "Tabu has done a fabulous job." Several crew members called Tabu's performance 'outstanding' and that it blew their minds. In one of the scenes, a crew member was seen pulling Tabu's hair and the actor, seemingly hurt, screamed, "Masterji." Tabu was seen getting dragged by the hair as she lay on the floor and was pulled by the harness. Actor Kartik Aaryan said, "She's someone who brings so much to the table. It's been a learning experience and a great experience working with Tabu ma'am." Actor Kiara Advani said, "She's such a fine actress. It's such a pleasure working with her. She's so lovely and warm on set." The video next showed Kiara lip-syncing as Tabu sang

a song. Both burst out laughing. Tabu was also seen goofing around on the sets. Her transformation as Majulika was also shown in the clip. She said, "It was a new experience for me, but of course it was exciting. Manjulika was floating on a harness, so that was tough." As the video continued, Tabu was seen lifted up high as she was suspended on a harness, banged against the wall as she fell on the floor, and pulled by a rope as she lay on the floor. At the end of the video, Tabu, Anees and the team celebrated by cutting a cake. Tabu signed off saying, "I think it's special because of that. Because you don't do it always. That's it." Apart from Tabu, Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2 also features Kartik and Kiara among others. Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2 recently crossed the ₹150-crore mark at the domestic



box office. Produced by T-series Bhulaiyaa, which starred Akshay Kumar and Vidya Balan in the sequel to the 2007 film Bhool lead roles.

Aamir Khan's Laal Singh Chaddha scene leaves filmmaker Sanjay Gupta curious: 'Who is selling golgappas in moving train'

Filmmaker Sanjay Gupta asked a question about a scene in Aamir Khan-starrer Laal Singh Chaddha, and Aamir's fans soon offered him explanations



(News Agency) The much-anticipated trailer of Aamir Khan-starrer Laal Singh Chaddha released on May 29 and received many different reactions. Filmmaker Sanjay Gupta, who has directed films like Kaabil, Jazbaa, and Shootout at Lokhandwala, also reacted to the trailer and had one crucial question. Sanjay took to his Twitter account on Tuesday to share a still from the trailer, which showed Aamir eating a golgappa on a train. Aamir says in the scene, "Meri mummy kehti thi ki 'zindagi golgappe jaisi hondi hai, pet bhale hi bhar jaawe, man nahi bharta' (My mummy used to say, 'life is just like a golgappa, your tummy might feel full, but your heart always craves more')." He then eats the golgappa. Sanjay said about the scene that he is curious to watch the film to find out who was selling golgappas on a moving train. He wrote, "One reason I'm dying to see this film



is who is selling Golgappas in a moving train." However, Aamir's fans soon offered him several explanations for the scene. Many shared pictures of golgappas stalls on the railway stations, while others pointed out that golgappa combo packs are available to order and IRCTC has also announced an e-catering facility for it. Some noted that Aamir's character could have also brought it with him. Aamir stars in the title role in Laal Singh Chaddha-- the official Hindi

adaptation of the Academy Award-winning 1994 film Forrest Gump, which starred Tom Hanks in lead. Laal Singh Chaddha also features Kareena Kapoor and Mona Singh. It marks the Bollywood debut of Naga Chaitanya. The film is directed by Advait Chandan, produced by Aamir Khan Productions and Kiran Rao, and presented by Viacom18 Studios. The comedy-drama is scheduled to release in theatres on August 11 this year.

Don't doubt anyone: Salman Khan to cops on 'Moose Wala kar denge' threat

Salman Khan has told the police that he knows about Lawrence Bishnoi - the leader of the gang to which Brar is allegedly affiliated - because of the death threat he received from Bishnoi in 2018 during the trial of the blackbuck case



(News Agency) Actor Salman Khan, who recently got death threats, has told the police that he has no enmity with anyone and that he doesn't know Goldy Brar, the Canada-based gangster who had claimed the attack on singer-politician Sidu Moose Wala. "I have not got this letter. My father got this letter while on a morning walk. I have no recent enmity with anyone. I don't have any solid reasons to doubt anyone," the actor has told the police, sources told India Today TV.

"I have not had any dispute with anyone recently. No threat call or message

has come." However, the actor said that he knows about Lawrence Bishnoi - the leader of the gang to which Brar is allegedly affiliated - because of the death threat he received from Bishnoi in 2018 during the trial of the blackbuck case.

The police are probing the matter further. An unsigned letter with the message "tumhara Moose Wala kar denge (you will end up like Moose Wala), allegedly addressed to actor Salman Khan and his father Salim Khan, was found at Mumbai's Bandra Bandstand promenade on Sunday. The letter was spotted by Salim Khan's guards where the veteran screenwriter usually sits after his morning walk

Kajol says she never wanted to be a part of Bollywood: 'Always wanted to do a job'

Actor Kajol who has appeared in hit films such as Baazigar, Yeh Dillagi, Karan Arjun, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, has said that she never wanted to be an actor

(News Agency) Veteran actor Tanuja and her daughter, actor Kajol will soon come as guests on Kon Honaar Crorepati, the Marathi version of Kaun Banega Crorepati. During the show, Kajol revealed that she never wanted to be an actor. She also said that she just wanted to do a regular job. During the show, which is hosted by Sachin Khedekar, Kajol said, "I never wanted to become a part of the Bollywood or Hindi Film industry. I did not want to enter the industry as an actress. I always wanted to do a job. A job where I could get a pay cheque in my

account every month." Kajol made her acting debut in 1992 with Rahul Rawail's Bekhudi and went on to deliver hits like Baazigar, Yeh Dillagi, Karan Arjun, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, Gupt, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, My Name is Khan, Fanaa among others. The actor, who has delivered numerous hits, told PTI in an old interview that she became an actor by chance.

"I did not have a great start. My first film did not do well. I have never considered it (acting) as a career, it happened to me and I just went with the flow. I was always on my toes

(while choosing a film) and have been choosy always. I had a great time working on all the films, I met some amazing people. I still think of my work as a play time and rather my work is at home," she had said in 2019. Kajol was last seen in the 2021 Netflix film Tribhanga, which also starred Tanvi Azmi and Mithila Palkar. She is currently working on Revathi's upcoming film Salaam Venky. The film was announced in October 2021. Originally titled The Last Hurrah, the film's title was changed when the shooting commenced.



Sonakshi Sinha reacts to marriage rumours with Shah Rukh Khan's line

Hours after she seemingly confirmed her relationship with Zaheer Iqbal, Sonakshi Sinha shared a video as she reacted to her marriage rumours

(News Agency) Actor Sonakshi Sinha has reacted to the rumours about her marriage by lip-syncing to one of actor Shah Rukh Khan's lines. Taking to Instagram, Sonakshi posted a video, in which she sat in a room and acted to be deep in thought. She wrote in the clip, "Me to the media: Kyu haath dho kar meri shaadi karwana chahte ho (Why are you adamant in getting me married)!!? She also wrote, "Le media:" as she lip-synced Shah Rukh's dialogue from one of his films, "Accha lagta hai mujhe, bohot mazaa aata hai (I feel good. This is fun)." Reacting to the video, her rumoured boyfriend Zaheer Iqbal dropped several laughing emojis. Sonakshi's post comes just hours after she seemingly confirmed her relationship

with Zaheer as they said 'I love you' to each other on Instagram. Earlier, Zaheer posted a video on Instagram in which Sonakshi sat in a flight. As she held a burger in her hands, she looked at the camera saying, "Okay you want to take a video, right? Now get this." She then takes a big bite from her food and started laughing. Zahir captioned the post, "Happy Birthday Sonzzz. Thank You for not

killing me. I Love You. Here's to a lot more food, flights, love and laughter.



P.S - This video sums up the entire time we've known each other." Sonakshi wrote, "Thaaankkk you ... love you?... now I am coming to kill you." Sonakshi made her Bollywood

debut alongside Salman Khan in 2010 with Dabangg. Zaheer made his debut in Bollywood with Salman's Notebook (2019). The duo will be next seen together in Double XL. The film also stars Huma Qureshi and is scheduled to release this year. Double XL is directed by Satram Ramani.

Recently, Prime Video announced Dhaad starring Sonakshi, Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah, and Sohum Shah. Directed by Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi, Dhaad will mark Sonakshi's web series debut. The show is backed by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's Excel Entertainment and filmmaker Zoya Akhtar and Kagti's production house Tiger Baby.

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