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**India and other BRICS
nations could face huge
revenue gap if they don't
decarbonize now**



(SAI Bureau) As the world has pledged to transition towards cleaner energy to combat climate change, a latest report said the governments of Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China and South
(Contd. on page 30)

**A fingertip painting to be
sent to space to guide
aliens to human civilisation**



33-page defence dossier reveals Pakistan's terror plots against India

**A 33-page dossier by the Defence Ministry has revealed
Pakistan's terror plots against India and its citizens**

(SAI Bureau) A 33-page dossier by the Defence Ministry has unmasked Pakistan's nefarious terror designs aimed to bleed India. India Today has accessed definitive proof of the terror plots hatched by Pakistan and the treachery being practiced by the neighbouring country. The dossier details how the Pakistani establishment, including its army, carries out infiltration bids across the borders.
(Contd. on page 29)



**After vowing repeatedly to
'keep going', Boris Johnson
has finally resigned. Why?**

More than 50 ministers and senior aides had quit, and the Conservative party had told him he no longer had their confidence. But Boris fought until the very end



**'Country is bankrupt': PM Wickremesinghe says Lanka
to present debt restructuring programme to IMF by Aug**

Sri Lanka PM Ranil Wickremesinghe has acknowledged that negotiations with the global lender were "more difficult and complicated" than in the past as the country is now "bankrupt."

(By Staff Reporter) Sri Lanka will present a debt restructuring programme to the IMF by August to secure a bailout package, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament on Tuesday, but acknowledged that negotiations with the global lender were "more difficult and complicated" than

in the past as the country is now "bankrupt." Sri Lanka is going through the worst economic crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948, and needs to obtain at least USD 4 billion to tide over the acute shortage in foreign exchange reserves.

(Contd. on page 30)



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Indian-Origin Man Arrested In US For Alleged \$45 Million Investment Fraud

Neil Chandran owned a group of technology companies that he used in a scheme to defraud investors by falsely promising extremely high returns, according to the indictment



(News Agency) : A 50-year-old Indian-origin tech entrepreneur Neil Chandran, of Las Vegas in Nevada, was arrested on Wednesday in Los Angeles, the Department of Justice said. According to the indictment, Mr Chandran owned a group of

technology companies that he used in a scheme to defraud investors by falsely promising extremely high returns on the premise that one or more of his companies, operated under the banner of "ViRSE," was about to be acquired by a consortium of wealthy buyers.

Mr Chandran's companies -- which included Free Vi Lab, Studio Vi Inc., ViDelivery Inc, ViMarket Inc, and Skalex USA Inc, among others -- developed virtual-world technologies, including their own cryptocurrency, for use in the companies' own metaverse.

The indictment alleges that Mr Chandran caused other individuals to make various

materially false and misleading representations to investors, including that investors in his companies would soon receive extremely high returns when one or more of those companies was purchased by a group of wealthy buyers.

In fact, according to the indictment, there was no such buyer group that was about to purchase the companies for the claimed returns; a substantial portion of the funds was misappropriated for other business ventures and the personal benefit of Mr Chandran and others, including the purchase of luxury cars and real estate; and there were no prominent billionaires involved in

purchasing Mr Chandran's companies. Mr Chandran is charged with three counts of wire fraud and two counts of engaging in monetary transactions in the criminally derived property.

If convicted, Mr Chandran faces up to 20 years in prison for each of the wire fraud counts and up to 10 years in prison for each count of engaging in unlawful monetary transactions.

The indictment also alleges that 100 different assets -- bank accounts, real estate, and luxury vehicles, including 39 Tesla vehicles -- are subject to forfeiture as proceeds of the fraud. US Marshals and the FBI are seizing most of the assets pending the resolution of the criminal case.

Indian Restaurant Owner In UK Found To Have Spent Covid Aid On Drinking

Rathudi Mahesh Manglanand, 47, was a sole trader who ran the Chutney Roti Indian Restaurant in Cardiff

(News Agency) The owner of an Indian restaurant in Wales has been placed under nine-year bankruptcy restrictions after reportedly spending most of the taxpayer support from a COVID fund on drinking and gambling. Rathudi Mahesh Manglanand, 47, was a sole trader who ran the Chutney Roti Indian Restaurant in Cardiff. According to the UK's Insolvency Service, the restaurant had already ceased trading prior to the beginning of the pandemic and was therefore not eligible for COVID-19 financial assistance schemes. However,

in April 2020 Manglanand applied for a GBP 25,000 grant from his local council and the following month he applied for a GBP 18,000 Bounce Back Loan. The restaurateur subsequently applied for his own bankruptcy in July 2021 at which point the Insolvency Service began investigating and uncovered "misuse" of the COVID-19 financial support schemes.

"The COVID-19 support schemes generously provided taxpayer money to support genuine businesses and anyone who abused those schemes

should expect to be caught and punished," said Gavin Seymour, Deputy Official Receiver at the Insolvency Service. Manglanand accepted that his business had already ceased trading and told investigators that he had been drinking heavily and "was not thinking straight". He estimated he had lost around GBP 30,000 though gambling in the space of a year. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Kwasi Kwarteng, accepted a nine-year bankruptcy restrictions undertaking from the



businessman, which order to recover the COVID-19 support funding. Bankruptcy restrictions in the UK are wide ranging, with similar effects to an undertaking which impose limits on the business activities of an individual for the duration of the restrictions.

Indian-Led Team In Singapore To Send Machine Learning Software To Space

The NTU team, led by Archit Gupta, got an opportunity to achieve the feat after winning a competition, earlier this month, on developing innovative ways to use artificial intelligence for space applications

(News Agency) An Indian is among five students from Singapore's prestigious Nanyang Technological University (NTU) whose machine learning software will be going up on the International Space Station. The NTU team, led by Archit Gupta, is getting an opportunity to test its project in the ISS after winning a competition on developing innovative ways to use artificial intelligence for space applications earlier this. In the course of next three months, the team

will install the software into an Artificial Intelligence box, a tiny supercomputer. Once that's done, it will be physically transported to the space station. "The purpose of the ISS is to collect experimental data, and if (single event upsets) happen, then the sanctity of the data gets compromised, and the experiment is wasted," Mr Gupta, a second-year student from the School of Computer Science and Engineering told The Straits Time. The disruptions are

called single event upsets, which tend to afflict sensitive electrical components in space. The 20-year-old's software - Cremer - will play a key role in predicting hardware disruptions on the ISS or satellites which can cause such space vehicles to go off course or crash, in the worst outcomes.

Cremer was named after an existing software called Creme, which also addresses single event upsets. "We wanted to build a better

version of it, and hence we named it Cremer," said Mr Gupta. The project of Archit Gupta, who completed his schooling from the Delhi Public School, is said to be a game changer in space technology. The other members of the NTU team are third-year business student Sim See Min, 22, third-year mechanical engineering student Deon Lim, 24, and second-year electrical and electronic engineering student Rashna Ahmed, 21.

Indian-Origin Cop In UK Dismissed Over Racist Remarks On Meghan Markle

Police Constable (PC) Sukhdev Jeer and PC Paul Hefford, both attached to Forensic Services in the Metropolitan Police, faced a misconduct hearing which concluded this week that allegations against them of exchanging vile messages was proven

(NewsAgency) London: An Indian-origin officer is among two dismissed from Scotland Yard without notice for their highly offensive and discriminatory behaviour following a professional standards investigation examining a year's worth of social media messages, including a racist jibe about Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex. Police Constable (PC) Sukhdev Jeer and PC Paul Hefford, both attached to Forensic Services in the Metropolitan Police, faced a misconduct hearing which concluded this week that allegations against them of exchanging vile messages was proven. The tribunal heard details of several racist posts, including reportedly one containing a racist slur about Markle, shortly before her marriage to Prince Harry in 2018. "These vile messages were shared in 2018 within a closed WhatsApp group between a small group of officers. I hardly need to say it is completely unacceptable for anyone, let alone a police officer, to behave in such a manner. The actions of these three are

inexcusable," said Commander Jon Savell, Professional Standards. "The whole of the Met is focused on rooting out anyone who displays this type of behaviour and lets down the Met and the public we serve. Behaviour like this will absolutely not be tolerated and we are driving that message home to our officers and staff at every opportunity," he said. The officers faced an allegation at the level of gross misconduct that between December 2017 and December 2018, while working at Central East Command Unit, they were part of a WhatsApp group on their private phones. They used the group to exchange messages, memes and other content which was inappropriate, highly offensive and discriminatory. The content



was discriminatory on the grounds of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation and disability. "This repulsive behaviour understandably damages that trust and I want to apologise to every single member of the public we serve in this area," said Chief Superintendent Marcus Barnett, who leads the Central East division of the Met Police. "These officers have, rightly, been sacked. I do not want any officer who would engage in this sort of behaviour anywhere near your community. I will be personally emailing everyone who works at Central East to reinforce the message that words matter, respect matters, and every time someone sends this sort of message they cause real hurt," he said. PCs Jeer and Hefford will now be added to the Barred List held by the College of Policing. Those appearing

on the list cannot be employed by police, local policing bodies (PCCs), the Independent Office for Police Conduct or Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

The officers also faced an allegation at the level of misconduct that they each failed to challenge or report the other members of the group for their behaviour.

The messages came to light when another former officer, Richard Hammond's phone was examined as part of an unrelated criminal investigation. He was dismissed without notice in October 2021 following his conviction for perverting the course of justice. The Met Police said it was "working hard to rebuild trust in the country's largest police force and recognise we have a lot to do." Every Met employee has been spoken to about responsible use of social media, absolute adherence to professional boundaries and actively intervening and challenging wrongdoing.

Centre Tweaks Rules On Foreign Funding. What Changes

In a separate notification, the home ministry made five more offences under the FCRA "compoundable" instead of directly prosecuting the organisations or individuals



(NewsAgency) The Union Home Ministry has amended certain rules related to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) allowing Indians to receive up to ? 10 lakh in a year from relatives staying abroad without informing the authorities. **The earlier limit was ? 1 lakh.** In a notification, the home ministry also said if the amount exceeds, the individuals will now have 90 days to inform the government instead of 30 days earlier. In a separate notification, the home ministry made five more offences under the FCRA "compoundable" instead of directly prosecuting the organisations or individuals. Earlier, only seven offences under the FCRA were compoundable. The new rules, Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2022, were notified by the home ministry through a gazette notification on Friday night. "In the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules,

2011, in rule 6, — for the words "one lakh rupees", the words "ten lakh rupees" shall be substituted; and for the words "thirty days", the words "three months" shall be substituted," the notification said. Rule 6 deals with intimation of receiving foreign funds from relatives. It stated earlier that "any person receiving foreign contribution in excess of one lakh rupees or equivalent thereto in a financial year from any of his relatives shall inform the central government (details of funds) within 30 days from the receipt of such contribution". Similarly, making changes in rule 9, which deals with application of obtaining 'registration' or 'prior permission' under the FCRA to receive funds, the amended rules have given individuals and organisations or NGOs 45 days to inform the home ministry about bank account (s) that are to be used for utilisation of such funds. This time limit was 30 days

earlier.

The central government has also 'omitted' provision 'b' in rule 13, which dealt with declaring foreign funds including details of donors, amount received, and date of receipt, etc. every quarter on its website. Now, anyone receiving foreign funds under the FCRA will have to follow the existing provision of placing the audited statement of accounts on receipts and utilisation of the foreign contribution, including income and expenditure statement, receipt and payment account and balance sheet for every financial year beginning on the first day of April, within nine months of the closure of the financial year on its official website or on the website as specified by the Centre. A provision where an NGO or an individual receiving foreign funds had to declare such contributions every quarter on its official

website has also been done away with. In case of change of bank account, name, address, aims or key members of the organisation (s) receiving foreign funds, the home ministry has now allowed 45 days time to inform it, instead of previous 15 days. The home ministry had made the FCRA rules tougher in November 2020, making it clear that NGOs which may not be directly linked to a political party but engage in political action like bandhs, strike or road blockades will be considered of political nature if they participate in active politics or party politics. According to the law, all NGOs receiving funds have to registered under the FCRA. In a separate notification, the home ministry made five more offences under FCRA "compoundable", making 12 such offences compoundable instead of directly prosecuting the organisations or individuals.

Tata's Air India holds walk-in interviews, rival IndiGo's crew goes into 'mass leave'



time. About 55 per cent of the company's flights were delayed.

A large number of its cabin crew called in sick. And mass recruitment by Air India appeared to be too obvious for the sudden sickness to seem mere co-incidental.

Sources in India's aviation industry have been quoted in the media reports as saying that there was a fat chance IndiGo employees took a leave to ensure fatter paychecks at Air India recruitment drive. The phase-2 of Air India's recruitment drive was conducted on Saturday, July 2.

IndiGo, India's largest airline, currently operates

approximately 1,600 flights -- domestic and international -- daily.

News agency Press Trust of India said IndiGo and Air India did not respond to its requests for statements.

According to the Ministry of Civil Aviation's website, 45.2 per cent of IndiGo's domestic flights operated on time on Saturday.

In comparison, the on-time performances of Air India, SpiceJet, Vistara, Go First and AirAsia India was 77.1 per cent, 80.4 per cent, 86.3 per cent, 88 per cent and 92.3 per cent, respectively, on Saturday.

IndiGo CEO Ronjoy Dutta had on April 8 told employees

through an email that raising salaries is a difficult and thorny issue but the airline will constantly review and adjust wages based on its profitability and the competitive environment.

IndiGo had on April 4 suspended a few pilots who were planning to organise a strike the next day to protest against the pay cuts that were implemented during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tata Group took control of Air India on January 27, after successfully winning the bid for the airline on October 8 last year. Air India plans to buy new planes and improve its services, and it recently started a recruitment drive for fresh cabin crew members.

(SAI Bureau) The word 'Indigo' was perhaps a cause of anger and even outright revolt against East India Company in pre-independence India. A simple Google search would reveal as much. Though it's a little weird to connect the two but what happened on July 2, 2022 is an

apparent hark back. This one was not a revolt, everybody would of course have wanted to be politically correct. But the end effect was some company finding it hard to carry out its daily business.

IndiGo, India's largest airline struggled to keep its flights on

16 including school students killed as bus falls into gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu

(SAI Bureau) At least 16 people, including schoolchildren, were killed and 25 others were hurt on Monday in Kullu in the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh after a passenger bus plunged into a narrow valley. At around 8.30 am, on the Neoli-Shansher road, a bus travelling in the direction of Sainj crashed into a cliff in the Jangla section of the Sainj Valley. While in Andhra Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "The bus accident in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh is heart-rending. My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this tragic hour. "I hope those injured recover at the earliest. The local administration is providing all possible assistance to those affected. " The PM Office tweeted: "The Prime Minister has approved an ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh each from PMNRF for the next of kin of those who have lost their lives due to the tragic bus accident in Himachal Pradesh. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000 each." Police and rescue crews arrived on the scene right away to begin rescue efforts after the incident was reported, an official said. Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur tweeted: "The sad news was received about the accident of a private bus in Sainj Valley of Kullu. The entire administration is on the spot, the injured are being taken to the hospital.

75,000 jobs could be created: Tamil Nadu govt inks MoUs worth Rs.1.25 tn with domestic, foreign firms

(SAI Bureau) The government in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu exchanged Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with various Indian and international firms, for a cumulative investment of Rs 1.25 trillion in 60 projects. When they fructify, the MoUs are expected to provide employment opportunities for nearly 74,900 persons.

These MoUs were exchanged with firms spanning across domains such as Fintech, heavy industries, solar power, drone manufacturing, garments, automobiles, etc. at an Investors Conclave organised by the Tamil Nadu Government. Presiding over the event, Chief Minister MK Stalin launched the 'Texperience' program, which is an umbrella suite of technology services that will be made available for free or at a discounted price for a limited period, to improve tech adoption in the state by individuals and start-ups. The Chief Minister also inaugurated TN PitchFest, a platform for start-ups in Tamil Nadu to reach venture capital firms and angel investors.

Speaking at the event, S Krishnan, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary to the Govt. Industries, emphasised how Tamil Nadu had risen in the National Ease of Doing Business ranking by progressing from the 14th rank to the third rank. On the MoUs signed over the past year, he said that 78 of the 132 MoUs

were under implementation. "A 60 percent conversion rate within one year is a healthy sign for the state" he added.

In the revised budget speech for 2021-22, the Tamil Nadu government announced a 'Life Sciences Policy' to develop the state into a global science

manufacturing hub and a 'Research and Development Policy' to strengthen investment in the R&D sector. In accordance with this, the Chief Minister launched the 'TN Life Sciences Promotion Policy 2022' and 'TN Research and Development Policy 2022'.

The event was held in the presence of top bureaucrats from the state, government officials and delegates from foreign embassies. Among the notable firms that exchanged MoUs are Tata Power, Cubic PV, USA, Infosys Limited, Mastercard, L & T, Tech Mahindra, etc.

Maharashtra politics: Aditya Thackeray's first Instagram post after dad Uddhav quits as CMs

(SAI Bureau) After the fall of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, former Maharashtra minister Aaditya

Thackeray posted a picture on Instagram where he has been quite active. He posted a picture of the former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, also his father with the



caption "Always important to follow the right footsteps." Aaditya praised his supporters and claimed that the actual power came from their support and constant blessing. Aaditya posted on Father's Day, a picture of him as a child on Uddhav's lap in his post before the political turmoil. The caption read, "Happy Father's Day to my constant inspiration and strength!" During Shinde's rebellion, Aaditya revealed that Uddhav Thackeray offered Eknath Shine the

chief minister's post but at that time he broke down in tears. However, a month later, he

instigated this dissidence in cooperation with the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). The mutiny against Uddhav Thackeray led to the collapse of Maha Vikas Aghadi's administration, a coalition of Sena,

NCP and the Congress. After Uddhav Thackeray, BJP leader Eknath Shinde became the chief minister and the former CM of the state Devendra Fadnavis took oath as vice chief minister. On July 4, the current chief minister Shinde will have to prove his majority in the state's assembly. Although, the new speaker for the state's assembly has been chosen. Rahul Narwekar has appointed as the speaker with 164 votes in favour.

Pakistan's new ploy, asking terrorists to join Indian parties and target leaders

(SAI Bureau) Pakistan is hatching a new terror Policy in Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Sources in Security forces believe that terrorists are joining mainstream political parties to gain access into their offices and hatch a plot to kill the political leaders of these parties.

Jammu and Kashmir Police arrested two terrorists of Lashkar-e-Taiba identified as Talib Hussain of Rajouri and Faisal Ahmed Dar of Pulwama. The arrest was made in Reasi area of Jammu region. According to BJP Spokesperson, Talib Hussain was an active member of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and was also in-charge of minority morcha social media in Jammu. The BJP says open online membership is the reason as there is no background check done on these people. BJP also says that Pakistan has a new Modus Operandi to put these terrorists in political party offices.

"With the arrest of Talib Hussain, a new issue has come up, the terror organisations across the border in Pakistan are hatching a new conspiracy. By entering the BJP, gaining access and doing recce is to make a plot to kill the top leadership. The Police have busted the module which has come from across the border by those who want to spread terror. Anyone can become a member of the BJP online. I'd say this is a drawback

since there is no system to check the criminal record or antecedents of the people who are taking membership online," said R S Pathania, spokesperson, BJP.

Jammu and Kashmir Police said that these two terrorists were caught by villagers of T u k s o n Dhok while they were t a k i n g shelter in the area. Police also recovered two AK-rifles, 7

Grenades, a pistol, and a huge quantity of ammunition from their possession. Jammu and Kashmir Police had declared Talib an absconder and reward was announced for him ten days ago after a terror module was busted in the same region. Police says that Talib Hussain was in constant touch with LeT terrorist Qasim based in Pakistan and was involved in at least 3 cases of IED blast in Rajouri District besides in civilian killings and grenade blasts.

"From the last few days, we were

searching for Talib Hussain in the Rajouri area of Jammu Region. We had recovered 5 IEDs from the residence of Talib Hussain. We were constantly looking for Talib Hussain and our search was going on in the area. Areas in Rajouri and Raesi



were searched. During the search operation, he reached the higher reaches in the area where they were trying to take shelter. We had declared a reward on Talib Hussain. People saw them moving in the area, which looked suspicious as they were carrying arms and bags along. People showed courage and caught them despite these terrorists having arms and ammunition and could have done anything to them," said Mukesh Singh, ADGP Jammu.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir

has awarded the villagers for their bravery. State has rewarded them with 5 lakh rupees while Jammu and Kashmir Police has given 2 lakh rupees to the villagers for catching the terrorists. The Lieutenant General of UT of Jammu and Kashmir Shri Manoj Sinha has also applauded the courage of villagers and said that with this kind of determination shown by the villagers, the end days of terrorism is not far.

However, the political parties across India are pointing fingers at BJP, as this is the second incident in recent time where someone Like Talib Hussain, an active LeT terrorist connected with handlers across the border was also having close connection with BJP.

While congress has taken strong exception to the presence of dreaded terrorists in the ranks of the BJP and asked the ruling party to explain it to the nation how the dreaded terrorists have been enjoying its patronage by getting important assignments in the party. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti has also commented and said that all criminal elements in the society are associated with the BJP.

"One of the murderers of Udaipur case whose name is Riyaz was associated with BJP. His pictures are all over with leaders from BJP.

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VAIDIK DEPTH

ON THIS COMING DEEPAWALI 2022,
MAA MAHALAXMI WILL BE ENROOTED IN
THE HOUSE OF EVERY HINDU FAMILY.



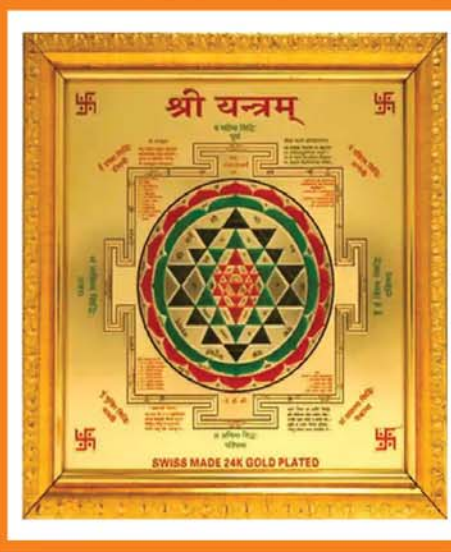
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Slow monsoon progress in June hurt Kharif sowing: Here's why July rains are more important than ever now

Due to the poor monsoon progress in June, rice production in the country may face setbacks. The slow progress of the monsoon has forced farmers to delay sowing



(SAI Bureau) Rice production in India, the second-largest grower, may face setbacks because of poor monsoon progress in June — it was deficient by eight per cent. This has forced farmers to delay sowing in many parts of the country.

Along with rice, the coverage area of many other Kharif crops, especially oilseeds, has decreased compared to last year, the Agriculture Ministry's latest weekly area coverage data shows. Sowing areas for Kharif crops dropped more than five per cent compared to last year, while rice witnessed a 27 per cent drop as of July 1. Cumulative rainfall during June 1-30 is right per cent below LPA. Only 15 of the 36 subdivisions received normal rainfall during June 1-July 3, 2022. The delay in monsoon advancement in the first two weeks of June slowed down the progress of Kharif sowing

WHY IT MATTERS

The latest sowing data indicates that poor monsoon in growing areas may hamper rice production. So far, rice prices are stable. But any drop in harvesting could heat up prices domestically and globally. Currently, many countries are looking for alternatives to costly wheat. Around 150 countries import Indian rice. The onset, duration, and quantity of rainfall in June and July shape the rice market — and other Kharif crops — which is an important factor in food security.

IN NUMBERS

The sowing of Kharif crops continues to be sluggish. It was 278.7 lakh hectares as of July 1 against 294.4 lakh hectares in the previous year, almost five per cent lower. Areas sown under rice and coarse cereals were 27 per cent and 16 per cent lower

than 2021. Oilseeds faced a 5-18 per cent drop in active sowing area compared to last year as of July 1. On the other hand, sugarcane acreage has not changed greatly. Pulses and fibres, in contrast, reported an improvement in the ongoing Kharif season. Sowing has been badly affected in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Bihar — which produce nearly one-fifth of Kharif crops. As of July 1, Kharif sowing in these states reached about 16.44 lakh hectares, almost 12 times less than the average area.

BIG PICTURE

Kharif crops are grown with the onset of monsoon in different parts of the country, and the crop is harvested in September-October. From paddy to coarse cereals and oilseed to cotton, crops grown during this season are important. Assam, West Bengal, coastal areas of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar are some of the most critical rice-growing regions. Punjab and Haryana, known for wheat farming, have also joined the league of important rice-growing states. In the second week of June, the government announced the minimum support price (MSP) for this year. The government has offered nearly four to nine per cent more MSP than last year. For instance, the MSP on common paddy has been raised to Rs. 2,040 per quintal (5.2 per cent), while MSPs of pulses such as tur, moong, and urad have been hiked by 4.8-6.6 per cent.

BOTTOMLINE June and July are the most crucial months for sowing Kharif crops. Unfortunately, June ends with a deficit, and now all eyes are on July rainfall data. Any shortage or spatially scattered or irregular rainfall may exacerbate the global food crisis.

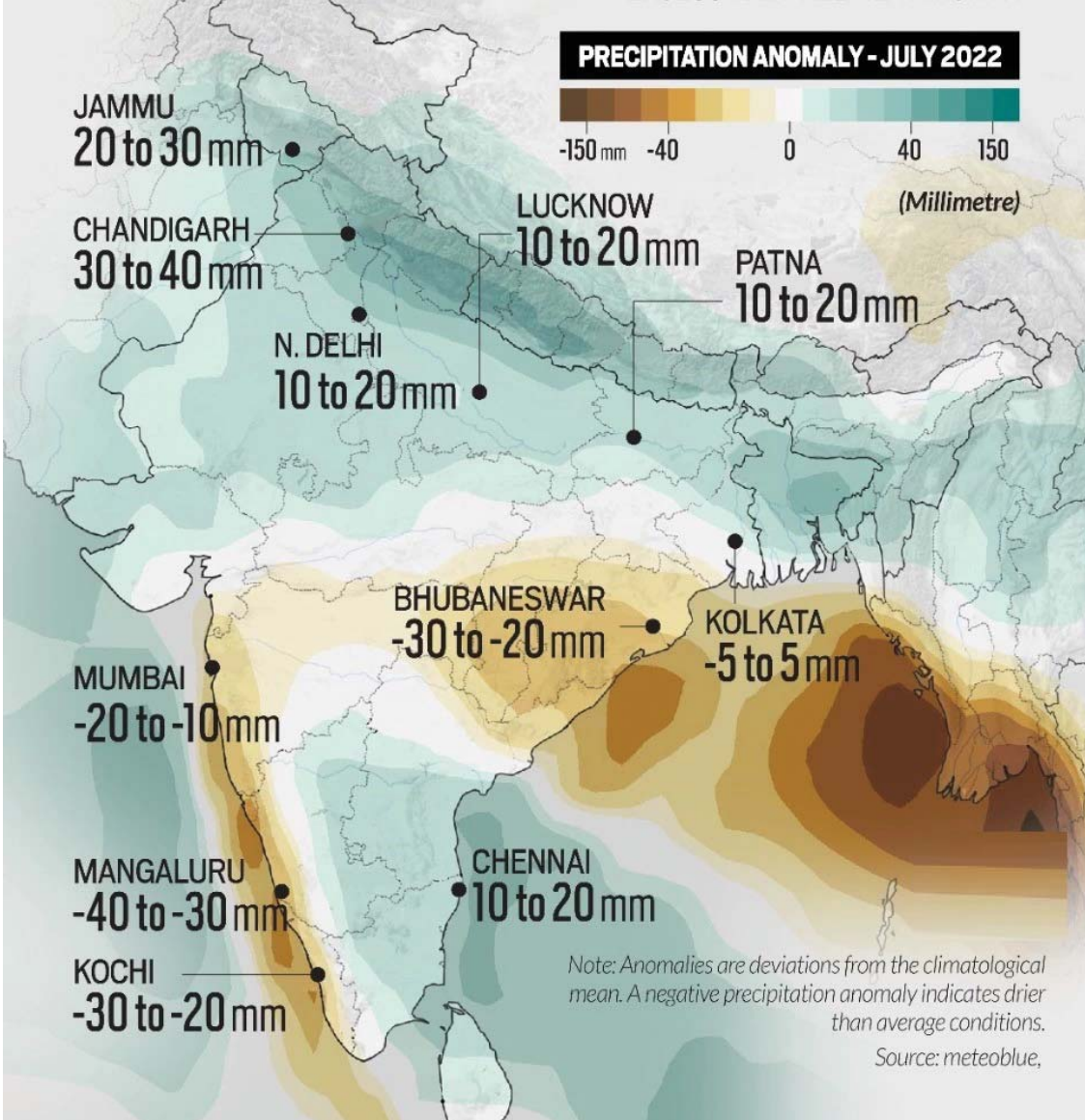
MONSOON'S PROGRESS

Initially, a bullish rainfall forecast had raised expectations of a bumper Kharif crop. But rainfall in June, the first month of the monsoon, was subpar. As a result, farmers delayed sowing. The monsoon set in three days in advance in Kerala on May 29, against its usual onset on June 1. The monsoon has since advanced further to cover parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu well before the normal date. The all-India June rainfall was 152.3 millimetres (mm) against the normal of 165.3 mm, an almost eight per cent deficit. Only 15 of the 36 subdivisions received normal rainfall between June 1 and July 3. The rainfall deficit at the

end of June was 70 per cent in Delhi, 54 per cent in Gujarat, 49 per cent in Jharkhand, 34 per cent in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, 30 per cent in Maharashtra, 29 per cent in Uttarakhand, 28 per cent in Punjab, and 27 per cent in Chhattisgarh. The latest IMD data shows thirteen sub-divisions reported deficient (20-59 per cent below LPA) rainfall. Still, not a single sub-division reported large deficient rainfall (60 per cent or more below LPA). However, eight subdivisions received excess (20-59 per cent above LPA) and large excess (60 per cent or more above LPA) rainfall. July right now promises to be better for Kharif crops.

MONSOON'S LIKELY PROGRESS IN JULY

NORTH INDIA WILL LIKELY RECEIVE EXCESS RAINFALL NEXT MONTH



Gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh to appear before Kerala Crime Branch tomorrow

Gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh will appear before the Kerala Crime Branch officials on Tuesday in a conspiracy case



(SAI Bureau) Swapna Suresh, before the Kerala Crime Branch the main accused in the gold officials at the police club on July smuggling case, will appear 5. She was summoned by the

Kerala Police in a conspiracy case. Earlier, Swapna Suresh had alleged that the state police want to hinder the ED probe and that is why a conspiracy case has been registered against her. The case was registered over a complaint by former minister KT Jaleel. Suresh had alleged that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, his family members and MLA KT Jaleel were involved in the case. She had claimed before the media that she had recorded the same in her statement before the court under section

164 of the Criminal Procedure Code. She was released from jail in November, 16 months after her arrest in the case.

GOLD SMUGGLING CASE

On July 5, 2020, customs officials at the international airport in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram seized baggage containing gold weighing over 30 kg and valued at around Rs 15 crore. The gold was inside diplomatic baggage and addressed to the UAE consulate. Customs officials acted based on a tip off that the

baggage was part of a smuggling syndicate trying to misuse the name of a person who enjoys diplomatic immunity. The gold seizure snowballed into a major political controversy that shook the foundation of the ruling Left government, especially after top bureaucrat M Sivasankar got involved. The gold seizure snowballed into a major political controversy that shook the foundation of the ruling Left government, especially after top bureaucrat M Sivasankar got involved.

Congress files FIR in Chhattisgarh against BJP MPs over doctored video of Rahul Gandhi

The Congress on Monday said an FIR had been filed against BJP MP Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and two other party MPs for sharing a doctored video of Rahul Gandhi to allegedly disturb communal harmony

(SAI Bureau) The FIR against the former I&B minister, BJP MPs Subrat Pathak and Bhola Singh, besides an MLA in Uttar Pradesh Kamlesh Saini, was lodged in Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh, according to the chief of the Congress's media and publicity team, Pawan Khera. The Congress has also lodged complaints against the BJP leaders in Delhi, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, Khera, and the party's social media in-charge Supriya Shrinate told reporters at the party's headquarters. A video in which Rahul Gandhi describes those attacking his Wayanad office as children and saying he had no ill-will against them was "mischievously" used by a TV channel to suggest he was forgiving the killers of Udaipur tailor Kanhaiya Lal, the Congress had said. The channel has since issued a public apology for airing the doctored video.

The Congress also shared pictures of BJP leaders with a terrorist arrested from Srinagar and the prime accused in the murder of tailor Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur and asked what relation does the ruling party have with those fomenting terror and its alleged links with them. "The BJP

is not only pushing the country into flames of hatred and anger, but it is also fostering terrorists in its organisation. Extremism, Terror, Bigotry - how far will the BJP go," the Congress alleged in a tweet posted along with a video of pictures of the accused in Udaipur and the Srinagar terrorist with BJP leaders. The complaints follow Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh writing to BJP president JP Nadda to say the party should initiate action against its leaders for spreading fake news against Rahul Gandhi and get the doctored video removed from their Twitter timelines. Shrinate accused Rathore of sedition. If an

attempt is made by a former Union minister to spread fake news with the intention of disturbing communal harmony in the country, it amounts to sedition, she alleged.

"Peddling fake news on social media is one thing but using social media in cahoots with terrorists will not be accepted. At such a sensitive time in the country, how can they dare to spread a fake video involving Rahul Gandhi. Apart from fake news, this is also a conspiracy because even if Twitter posts are deleted, WhatsApp messages would remain in circulation and disturb



the peace," Shrinate said. "We have to make social media a safe platform, a platform for public discourse and for policy discussions, giving suggestions to improve the policies." The Congress also said on its official Twitter handle that Modi and his government make so many statements on security and their complete disapproval of any anti-national or terror activities but the country asks what they are doing to protect the country from the

"threatening elements" in their own organisation. On a terrorist from Kashmir being a former office-bearer of BJP's IT cell, Pawan Khera said, "This is not the first time this has happened. Dhruv Saxena, an office-bearer of the BJP was also found linked with the ISI." Responding to another question about the presidential polls, Kheda said, "We have seen that the BJP nominated a tribal candidate, but what did they do to the tribals in Madhya Pradesh?"

IMD issues orange alert for next 5 days in Konkan region

(SAI Bureau) The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has deployed two teams in coastal Konkan in Maharashtra in view of an orange alert issued by the IMD for the next five days and considering the last year's massive floods in two districts in the region, an official said on Monday. A team of NDRF is stationed at Chiplun in the Ratnagiri district and another team at Mahad in the Raigad district. The orange alert, predicting heavy to very heavy rains at isolated places from June 4 to June 8, has been issued for Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. A yellow alert has been issued for Mumbai and Thane districts predicting heavy rains at isolated places and heavy

to very heavy rains at isolated places. A yellow



alert has also been issued for the Palghar district for the next two days and an orange alert for the three days thereafter. Out of the eight NDRF teams

in Maharashtra, one each is stationed at Nagpur, Chiplun and Mahad, while the rest five teams are in Mumbai. The official said that these teams have been deployed at the above locations in consultation with the local administration. Chiplun and Mahad cities witnessed massive floods last year, prompting authorities to launch major rescue operations. Incidents of landslides were also reported. Meanwhile, after a break of a couple of days, heavy rains returned to Mumbai on Monday. According to civic officials, the island city recorded 21 mm of rainfall from 8 am to 6 pm, while the eastern and western suburbs received 17 mm and 25 mm of rainfall, respectively

Office leasing sees three-fold rise post-Covid lockdowns

Office leasing across the country has witnessed a three-fold rise in the second quarter of this year post-Covid lockdowns

(News Agency) According to reports, Bengaluru, also known as the Silicon Valley of India, witnessed the highest growth with about 30 per cent rise. Mumbai and Delhi-NCR accounted for 19 and 18 per cent share, respectively.

Real estate gurus say that led by rising demand paired with a steady influx of quality supply, overall vacancy rates declined by a strong 100 basis points during second quarter of the year at 17 per cent. This trend reversal has come after a long haul of nearly 10 quarters since the onset of the pandemic induced lockdowns.

"The quarter saw increased office occupancy after a hiatus, as demand outpaced supply by a significant margin. Absorption in the first two quarters of the



year has already surpassed more than 80 per cent of the total absorption seen in the whole of 2021. Clearly, office demand is well headed to close at 40-45 million square feet by the end of this year. Resultantly, rentals

are also likely to firm up in next two quarters as the occupancy levels rise," said Ramesh Nair, CEO, India and Managing Director, Market Development, Asia, Colliers. Leasing in larger markets was largely led by tech

and flex space occupiers who are aggressively leasing new spaces. Large deals (more than one lakh sq feet) accounted for 47 per cent of the total leasing during the quarter, affirming occupiers' strong expansion

plans. More than 60 per cent of the leasing in the tech markets of Hyderabad and Bengaluru was topped by large-sized deals. "Inflation levels in the country have consistently breached the 6 per cent threshold in the past two-three months. Further, developers are facing the brunt of the rising cost of construction which has affected the new project completions during the quarter. Consequently, we might see 10-15 per cent of the planned project completions being pushed to subsequent quarters as developers are likely to take a cautious approach to tide through these challenges despite the rising demand," said Vimal Nadar, Senior Director and Head of Research, Colliers India.

Shinde faction seeks disqualification of 14 Sena MLAs for defying whip in Assembly

After proving majority on the floor of the Maharashtra Assembly, the faction led by CM Eknath Shinde has moved a proposal seeking disqualification of 14 Shiv Sena MLA for defying the whip during the trust vote



Uddhav Thackeray's faction. The proposal seeks disqualification of Sena MLAs for defying the whip in today's trust vote. However, the Shinde camp has not included MLA Aaditya Thackeray's name in the notice due to their respect for Sena founder Bal Thackeray, Bharat Gogawale told India Today.

Sunil Prabhu, whip of Uddhav Thackeray's faction had also sent a proposal seeking disqualification of Shinde faction

MLAs who voted against Sena's speaker candidate yesterday. The Speaker's office confirmed that they have received complaints from both sides. They have not taken any action and will need some time to scrutinise the complaints, said a senior officer. Earlier, Rahul Narvekar, the newly-appointed speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly, had removed Shiv Sena Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Ajay Chaudhary as the

legislature party leader. Chaudhary was replaced by Eknath Shinde, who won the trust vote today by a comfortable margin. In the 288-member Assembly (effective strength 287), 164 MLAs voted for the motion of confidence moved by the Shinde-led government, way above the simple majority mark of 144, while 99 voted against it on the last day of the two-day special session of the House. As many as 263 MLAs cast their vote

(News Agency) Bharat Gogawale, the Shinde faction's whip in the Maharashtra Assembly, has moved a proposal seeking disqualification of 14 Shiv Sena MLAs part of

India has eliminated all queues by going online, digital push has curbed graft: PM Modi

(News Agency) Praising the role of digital technology in changing the lives of people of the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said India has eliminated queues or lines by going online and offering a host of services.

In the last eight years, he said, the DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) initiative, which aims to transfer subsidies or financial assistance directly to eligible beneficiaries through their linked bank accounts, has saved Rs 2,23,000 crore which were otherwise going to ineligible people.

PM Modi was addressing a gathering after inaugurating "Digital

India Week 2022" here at Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre. "Till eight to ten years ago, we had to stand in lines (queues) for everything. We had to stand in line for birth certificates, to pay bills, for ration, for admission, for results, for certificates, in banks. There were so many lines we used to stand in. India has eliminated all these lines by going online. Now, a majority of these services are digital," PM Modi said.

Highlighting the importance of his government's Digital India Mission, PM Modi said time will not wait for a country which does not adopt new technology when required and

maintained the country had suffered this during the third industrial revolution. But now, India is guiding the world about the fourth industrial revolution - Industry 4.0. Gujarat has taken a lead in this initiative too, as the state had already taken initiatives like data centre, GSWAN, e-Gram and ATVT Jan Seva Kendra" said PM Modi, referring to measures taken on the digital front by the state government when he was Gujarat CM. The experience of launching those initiatives in Gujarat became the foundation for the Digital India Mission, he said, adding the nation-wide programme of the Centre has given relief to the poor from corruption

and it is working for elimination of middlemen in all fields. The prime minister said the combination of Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar and Mobile, called 'JAM', has benefited the poor as well as the middle class more than other sections of the society. While explaining how Digital India initiatives are saving people's time, as they are no longer required to visit government offices, PM Modi shared an experience of his Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi, where he learnt that labourers and poor citizens were preferring to travel by premium semi-high speed Vande Bharat Express train despite it being costlier than regular trains.

Censure motion passed in Delhi Assembly against Centre's letter seeking permission to demolish 53 temples

The Delhi Assembly on Tuesday passed a censure motion against the central government's letter seeking permission to demolish 53 temples in the national capital

(SAI Bureau) The Delhi Assembly on Tuesday passed a censure motion against the central government's letter to the state government seeking permission to demolish 53 temples in the national capital. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Dilip Pandey introduced the censure motion in the House.

The AAP MLA claimed that the PM Modi-led government at the Center has written a letter to demolish 53 temples of Lord Shri Ram, Lord Shri Krishna, Hanuman ji, Shankar Bhagwan, Durga Maa, Sai Baba.

He accused the BJP of breaking temples in Banaras and Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. He stated that now BJP is trying

to destroy 53 temples in Delhi. Now, there is no other way in front of the top leadership of BJP but to apologize to the people of Delhi and the people of the country.

Supporting this censure motion, MLA Atishi alleged that the BJP's lust for corruption is so much that they did not stop at the houses, shops and balconies, but the kind of notices being sent to the former were now also being given to temples.

Atishi alleged that BJP leaders have told the temple authorities that if they do not give them money from the donation box, then bulldozers would run on temple too. "The only reason behind

this is BJP coming to power in MCD. It was there endeavor to make as much money as possible in the last few months. BJP's lust for money is not being fulfilled by collecting money for putting in lanterns, now they have come to demolish 53 temples," Atishi added. Atishi further alleged, "There is a very small and simple thing behind this. The issue is that there is a BJP government in MCD for the last 15 years. In the last 15 years, since the BJP is in power, BJP leaders, BJP councilors, their workers, go from street to street and do extortion. The councilors and leaders of the BJP have been

collecting money per-square-foot all over Delhi." Hitting out at the AAP leaders, BJP MLA Ajay Mahawar said the entire country knows who is in support of temples and who is interested in appeasement. "The issue of appeasement on which the Congress has failed is being done by the Aam Aadmi Party today," he said. Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Rambir Bidhuri congratulated the people of the country for the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya and the one in Kashi. Rambir Bidhuri, in the House, asked whether the AAP MLAs support the construction of temples in Vrindavan or not, to which the members of the ruling party said, "we support".

'Another Eknath Shinde might emerge in Tamil Nadu': BJP's Annamalai warns DMK

BJP leader Annamalai compared the 'dynasty politics' of Shiv Sena and DMK and said a rebel leader would emerge in Tamil Nadu as well

(News Agency) Tamil Nadu BJP chief Annamalai on Tuesday drew parallels between the Maharashtra political crisis and the 'dynasty politics' in DMK, claiming another 'Eknath Shinde' might emerge, implying a rebellion within CM Stalin's party. Addressing party cadres at Valluvar kottam, Annamalai said, "Two and a half years ago, a group of three parties joined hands to form a coalition like the DMK and Congress. Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress joined hands [in Maharashtra], the BJP, which had 105 MLAs, was pushed back and Sena with 57 MLAs formed the government. The Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh tortured as many BJP supporters as possible."

"Then Eknath Shinde came out with 12 MLAs. He went to Surat. This is Rajadharma. When it has to happen, it will happen. It happened after two and a half years [in Maharashtra], we'll see when it happens in Tamil Nadu," he added. "Bal Thackeray's first son, Bindu Thackeray, wanted to act in films but his films didn't do well. Similarly, Karunanidhi's first son, Mu Ka Muthu, also wanted to act in films. Bal Thackeray's second son is Jayadev

Thackeray. He is away from the family. Karunanidhi's second son is Mu Ka Azhagiri. He is also away from the family. Bal Thackeray's third son got the opportunity to become the chief minister and Karunanidhi's third son, Stalin, got the opportunity to become CM," Annamalai pointed out. "Uddhav Thackeray's son Aaditya Thackeray has political ambitions, similarly Stalin's son

Udayanidhi has political ambitions. Both are youth wing leaders of their respective parties. Tamil Nadu is ready for a cabinet shuffle. An Eknath shinde will emerge," he stated. In the event, Annamalai gave an ultimatum to the ruling DMK till December 31 to implement poll promises. The BJP has also warned the DMK that the party will go on a state wide padayatra from January 1, 2023, if the DMK fails to fulfill its promises.

Health Ministry Suspends Joint Drug Controller for Alleged Involvement in Bribery Controversy



(News Agency) Amid the ongoing bribery controversy, the country's apex drug regulatory authority has suspended joint drug controller Eswara Reddy, News18.com has learnt.

In June, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Reddy on charges of accepting bribes for fast-tracking a drug

approval. Reddy, who has been working at the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) for the past 23 years, has been suspended until further orders. The order says a subsistence allowance will be paid to Reddy. He has also served as the drug controller general of India (DCGI) — the chief of CDSCO — from February 2018 to August 2019. According to the order issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, accessed by News18.com: "Dr. S. Eswara Reddy, Joint Drug Controller, CDSCO, FDA Bhawan, New Delhi, is deemed to have been suspended with effect from the date of his detention i.e. 20.06.2022 in terms of sub-rule 2 of Rule 10 of the Central Civil Services (Classification, Control, and Appeal) Rules, 1965, and shall remain under suspension until further orders." As per the Central Civil Services rule book, a government servant who is detained in custody under any law providing for preventive detention or a result of a proceeding either on a criminal charge or for his arrest for debt shall, if the period of detention exceeds 48 hours and unless he is already under suspension, be deemed to be under suspension from the date of detention until further orders.

Another emergency landing of SpiceJet flight: Here's why Dubai-bound plane landed in Karachi

(News Agency) A Dubai-bound SpiceJet flight made an emergency landing in Pakistan's Karachi on Tuesday (July 5). Officials of the aviation regulator DGCA said that the flight was diverted to Karachi as the fuel indicator started malfunctioning. The authorities said that the Boeing 737 Max aircraft was diverted to Karachi after it started showing unusual fuel quantity reduction from its left tank when it was mid-air.

The officials further said that no visual leak was observed from the left tank when an inspection was done at the Karachi airport. An official of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCCA) confirmed that the SpiceJet aircraft made an emergency landing at the Karachi airport after developing a technical fault after it left New Delhi for Dubai.

"The pilot of flight no SG 11 contacted the

control tower while flying over Pakistan airspace and said the aircraft had developed some technical fault. He requested an emergency landing. He was given permission to land on humanitarian grounds," the PCAA official confirmed. Authorities at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) have said that they are investigating the incident. They are also probing the previous incidents when SpiceJet flights made emergency landings.

The same day, another snag occurred as one more flight made a priority landing in Mumbai. The SpiceJet spokesperson said that the SpiceJet Q400 aircraft was operating SG 3324 (Kandla - Mumbai). During the cruise at FL230, the P2 side windshield outer pane cracked. He said that pressurisation was observed to be normal and the aircraft landed safely in Mumbai.

Manipur Landslide: Assam Toll Reaches 11; Two More Bodies Cremated



(News Agency) The number of Assam residents killed in a massive landslide in Manipur's Noney district has reached 11 so far, while at least 10 others from the state are still missing, an official said on Tuesday. Bodies of nine people have already been cremated in their native places, while two more bodies were yet to be transported back to Assam, he said. The state government has compiled a list of 26 names from the state engaged at the Tupul railway yard construction

site when the landslide occurred on June 29. "Out of these 26 people, bodies of 11 have been recovered and five were rescued safely. The rest are still missing," the official said. Altogether 47 people have been confirmed dead in the landslide so far, while 14 more are still missing from the incident site. Meanwhile, two more bodies reached Morigaon on Tuesday and were cremated later in the day. Morigaon Deputy Commissioner P R Gharphalia said, "Bodies of eight victims from

our district have reached so far and last rites have been performed." Of the two bodies of victims from Assam that were recovered on Monday, one is from Morigaon, he added. "The other has not been identified yet as it has been decomposed," Gharphalia said. As many as 21 people from Morigaon were at the accident site, of whom five were rescued. They were flown back to Assam on Monday and are currently undergoing treatment at Morigaon civil hospital.

ED Charge Sheet Against Jharkhand IAS Pooja Singhal, Others in PMLA Case

(News Agency) Ranchi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday filed a charge sheet against former Jharkhand mining secretary Pooja Singhal and others as part of a money-laundering probe against her and those linked to the IAS officer, officials said. The federal agency submitted the around 5,000-page prosecution complaint along with annexures and a list of witnesses and evidence collected before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Ranchi and has named Singhal,

Suman Kumar, a chartered accountant allegedly linked to her, and few others. The ED requested the court to take cognisance of the charge sheet and issue the process for a trial in the case, officials said. Singhal, a 2000-batch IAS officer, was arrested by the agency in May as part of a probe linked to alleged embezzlement of MGNREGA funds and some other alleged suspicious financial transactions.

The 44-year-old bureaucrat was suspended by

the Jharkhand government soon after her arrest. She was posted as the secretary of industries and was handling the charge of the secretary of the state mining and geology department in an additional capacity. Suman Kumar was also arrested. They both are in judicial custody. The ED had first raided the premises of Singhal, that of her businessman husband Abhishek Jha and the chartered accountant on May 6 in Ranchi and covered a few other locations in the state. The agency had



claimed that it seized over Rs 17.79 crore in cash allegedly from Kumar's residence and office premises. It also questioned many state government officials after these arrests. Seeking Singhal's custody in May, the ED had told the court that a multi-speciality hospital "owned" by the officer and her family in Ranchi was being allegedly used by the bureaucrat to "launder" tainted funds and huge payments at the healthcare facility were usually received in cash. The ED, quoting the statements of some witnesses interrogated earlier, told the court that Singhal played a "pivotal role in the construction and managing the important affairs of the Pulse super speciality hospital and huge payments were received in cash." It had claimed that a probe found that Singhal had in the past transferred Rs 16.57 lakh funds from her personal accounts to three bank accounts owned or controlled by the chartered accountant. It alleged that the chartered accountant recorded his statement with the ED under the PMLA and stated that "most of the cash recovered from his house belongs to Pooja Singhal, which was collected by him on her behalf." "He disclosed that on

instructions of Pooja Singhal, he gave Rs 3 crore in cash to a renowned builder for purchasing land for Pulse hospital owned by Pooja Singhal and her family," the ED had alleged.

The probe pertains to a money laundering case in which a former junior engineer in the Jharkhand government, Ram Binod Prasad Sinha, was arrested by the agency on June 17, 2020, from West Bengal after being booked under the PMLA in 2012 after studying the FIRs of the state vigilance bureau against him. Sinha was booked by the vigilance bureau under criminal sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) pertaining to cheating and corruption for allegedly defrauding public money and investing it in his name as well as in the name of his family members while working as a junior engineer from April 1, 2008, to March 21, 2011. The said money was earmarked for the execution of government projects under (the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in the Khunti district, the agency had earlier said. Sinha told ED that he "paid 5 per cent commission out of the defrauded funds to the district administration."

Twenty airports equipped with ambulifts to help 'divyang' flyers board aircraft

The project is an initiative under Accessible India Campaign or Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, which aims to serve the differently-abled community of the country

(News Agency) New Delhi: Twenty airports have been equipped with ambulifts to help flyers with disability or reduced mobility in boarding an aircraft under the Centre's Accessible India campaign, the disability affairs department said. These airports include Vijayawada, Kanpur, Port Blair, Jodhpur, Belgaum, Silchar, Jharsuguda, Rajkot and Hubli, officials said. The initiative has been

taken to facilitate passengers with reduced mobility, 'divyang' travellers on wheelchair and passengers on stretchers during their air travel.

The department also said India's 35 international airports and 55 out of 69 domestic airports are now accessible to 'divyangjan' with accessibility features, and 41 airports are fully equipped with aerobridges and 20 airports have been equipped with ambulifts under the

Accessible India campaign. Ambulifts are used as a boarding vehicle for disabled passengers, passengers with reduced mobility or disabled air-travellers, or people using wheelchairs or the elderly with mobility issues. The Central advisory board on disability has asked all states/UTs to assess the public buildings by July-end that are to be made accessible in the "shortest possible time" for the

disabled under the Accessible India campaign. Accessible India Campaign or Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan is a programme which aims to serve the differently-abled community of the country. Although the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provided a timeline of five years for making all existing public buildings accessible by 14 June this year, till now 585 state buildings and 1,030 central government buildings have been made barrier-free for the disabled.



Kanpur violence 'mastermind and financier', builder Haji Wasi arrested by Uttar Pradesh Police



Haji Wasi was arrested late on Monday night near the Amausi airport in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. He was absconding since the day of the Kanpur violence. The police have procured a non-bailable warrant against him

(News Agency) New Delhi: Haji Wasi, who allegedly funded the 3 June Kanpur violence, has been arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police, Joint Commissioner of Police, Anand Prakash Tiwari informed on Tuesday.

The cops said that builder Haji Wasi was the main financier of Zafar Hayat Hashmi, the main accused

of the 3 June violence that broke out after Friday prayers following a call to shut down all the shops as protest against the remarks made by former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma on Prophet Muhammad. Wasi was arrested late on Monday night near the Amausi airport in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. He was absconding since the day

of the violence. The police have procured a non-bailable warrant against him. "During investigation, we came to know about Haji Wasi's involvement in 3 June violence. Since then we were looking for him, and we had also procured NBW against him. Police teams were searching for him in Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur. We arrested Haji Wasi Monday late night from near Amausi Airport in Lucknow," a Tol report quoted joint commissioner of police Anand Prakash Tewari as saying. The officer also informed that now the police are in the process of producing him in

court. A report by Hindustan Times said that Wasi has more than 80 illegal buildings in Chamangunj and Jajmau areas of Kanpur. The Uttar Pradesh Police said that the entire violence was planned at Mukhtar Baba's restaurant at Dr Berry crossing in Becongunj. The conspirators met several times at the restaurant and funds were provided to them by Baba among others. The cops also informed that Mukhtar Baba arranged biryani for the stone-pelters after the 3 June Kanpur violence. On 23 June, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) had arrested

Mukhtar Baba and probed a number of accused including a Samajwadi Party MLA. The Tol report said that during the investigation, it was revealed that Haji Wasi's family were involved in conspiring the 3 June violence in Uttar Pradesh. His son, Abdul Rahman, and other relatives supported him to instigate the violence. On 3 June, violence broke out in Kanpur over suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma's controversial statement on Prophet Muhammad during a prime-time debate on a national TV channel.

Ecosystem being created in world and India to make social media accountable: Union IT minister

Queried on ways to make social media accountable, the IT minister said the first step is self-regulation

(News Agency) Gandhinagar: Calling social media a "very powerful medium," Union IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday said that how to make it accountable is a "very valid question" and that an ecosystem is being created across the globe and in India for the same. Self-regulation is a first step in the direction of making social media accountable, followed by industry regulation, and then government regulations, said the Union Minister of Railways, Communication and Electronics & Information Technology.

"Social media is a very powerful medium. Social media has a big influence on our lives. How to make it accountable has become a very valid question across the globe. All across the globe, countries and societies are moving in the direction of making social media accountable," he said while interacting with media persons on the sideline of a programme. Queried on ways to make social media accountable, the minister said the first step is self-regulation.

"Any such content that creates a harmful impact on society should be removed. Next comes industry regulation, and thereafter the government regulation," he added. "Everywhere across the globe and even in our country, an ecosystem, a thought

process, is being created to make social media accountable," Vaishnaw said after interacting with the startups and students at Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII). He also highlighted the need for a "fair system" where the content

creator gets his dues when the social media platforms like Facebook reap benefits by sharing it. A person who works hard to create content should also get the benefit and a part of the revenue if social media like Facebook benefits, he said. "Such a thinking is also gaining hold,"

the minister added. "So, how to create a fair system, because this (social media) is very big progress. How everybody becomes a part of this progress, and how it becomes accountable -- works are being done apace on these issues across the globe," he said.

Jyotiraditya Scindia saves the day, gets college student's luggage delivered at hostel gate after IndiGo delays it

(News Agency) A college student's luggage delivered yet.

harrowing ordeal came to an end when Union Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia stepped in and helped her get her luggage delivered to her hostel following "horrible experience" on an IndiGo flight.

The girl named Anoushka in a series of

tweets said that she had to travel to four different airports in less than 24 hours to reach her destination and upon arrival at her destination, she got to know that her checked in luggage wasn't

The Union minister took cognisance of the girl's tweet and replied, "Your luggage has been delivered at the hostel gate. Take care." The girl in her post on 1 July said that she had to go through a lot of trouble due to

IndiGo's delay and incompetence.

Blaming the airline, the girl went on to add that a large number of people travel by air daily in the country and that the journey for some is easy, while other face difficulties. She further said she had the most horrible experience travelling

with IndiGo, because of their "incompetency and delays". Following the student's complaint on the micro-blogging site, IndiGo asked her to come to the airport the next day and pick up the luggage.



Padma Bridge: Does Bangladesh's symbol of pride play a key role in the upcoming election?

By Susmita Ghosh

The historical Padma Setu, a massive state-of-the-art bridge built on the free-flowing river, Padma has exited and unified the common people of Bangladesh to the brim. The bridge, truly has the potential to transform Bangladesh into a country of the future by upgrading its economy. Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the bridge over the Padma River on 25th June 2022. The citizens of the country stayed awake in excitement to take part in the festivities of the bridge unveiling, every milestone of which development was a matter of national news headline and pride. It is the longest bridge in Bangladesh, with a span of 6.15 km. The Padma Multipurpose Bridge is an important landmark in independent Bangladesh's history. Its construction cost was nearly \$3.87 billion, and it connects 21 districts in southwest Bangladesh with the capital, Dhaka, by both road and rail.

There were several world records set while erecting the bridge. There are 42 pillars in the bridge, of which, 40 are in the river. To set the pillars, the pilings needed were 98 to 122 meters deep. The radius of the piling is 3 meters. No other bridge in the world has a powerful load-bearing capacity like the lower deck of Padma bridge, where there is a friction pendulum bearing a capacity of 10,000 tonnes. Consequently, the bridge can withstand an earthquake of up to level nine. The path to success was not a rosy journey at all. The Bangladesh government's original plan was to build the Padma Bridge with external funding from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). However, in 2012, the World Bank withdrew its financing of the bridge, citing "credible evidence" of corruption from the government officials and the other funders followed suit. It impacted the international image of the country and the ruling party Awami League as well. In these trying times, the iron-clad resolve of the prime minister came into play. Prime Minister Hasina opted for self-funding the bridge even though economists and opposition politicians were stark against the plan. Since then, Bangladesh has depended on its own financing to build the bridge. The raw

materials even were manufactured and supplied by companies native to Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh PM took pride in this matter while speaking at the inauguration ceremony. She stated that the bridge is not just bricks, cement, iron and concrete, but it is Bangladesh's pride. It's a symbol of the capacity, strength and dignity as the bridge belongs to the people of Bangladesh.

The impact of the Padma Bridge on Bangladesh's socio-political status quo is immense. In the upcoming election, it will help sway the mass opinion to the

India will be largely benefitted by Padma Bridge as the connectivity with North-East India via Bangladesh by road will be developed. Simultaneously, there are Mongla and Chattogram ports in Bangladesh were given permission to be used by India for the movement of goods

upcoming 2023 poll booth in favor of the ruling party, undoubtedly. After 50 years of its independence, the Padma Bridge, in reality,

connects the two parts of Bangladesh that were earlier divided by the mighty Padma. India will be largely benefitted as the connectivity with North-East India via Bangladesh by road will be developed. Simultaneously, there are Mongla and Chattogram ports in Bangladesh were given permission to be used by India for the movement of goods. It will be mutually beneficial for both the countries as the export-import business will increase manifold.

As Bangladesh self-funded the mega-project singlehandedly, it will brand its reputation as a fast-rising economic power in South Asia. At the same time, the bridge will contribute to the country's economic growth by 1.3 to 2 percent boost per annum's GDP, which will be increased by 1 more percent when the railway segment is completed. The bridge will trade, tourism, and industry, which will, in turn, create opportunities for employment in the southwest of the country.

The track record of the general elections held in the country in 2014 and 2018 was not quite clear and legitimate, which marred the image of the country at the international level. Presently, the existing government hopes to hold a clean election in the upcoming poll of 2023. On the eve of such a tough test ahead, definitely the development of such scale will help boost the party's popularity and its leader as well. If that will help move forward with their electoral and political agenda, only time can say. However, it is clear that the Padma Bridge will remain a massive milestone in the history of free Bangladesh.

Deal or no deal?: On U.S.-Iran direct talks on nuclear deal

Reviving the Iran nuclear deal was a campaign promise of U.S. President Joe Biden. In the White House, Mr. Biden appointed a special envoy for Iran, starting indirect negotiations with the country and direct talks with other signatories of the 2015 agreement to meet this objective. But almost one and a half years later, there has still been

no breakthrough in one of the most contentious issues he faces in West Asia. Multiple rounds of talks in Vienna

made progress in bringing the deal back on track, which had sought to scuttle Iran's nuclear programme in return for lifting international sanctions. But the talks collapsed earlier this year as the Biden administration reportedly refused to remove the terrorist designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a critical arm of Iran's armed forces. Last week, Qatar, which hosted the U.S.-Taliban talks that led to the February 2020 agreement between the Afghan Sunni fundamentalist insurgency and the Trump administration, held indirect talks between the U.S. and Iran. However, as Mr. Biden prepares for his first West Asia tour as U.S. President later this month, a deal is still elusive. While Iran says the Doha talks were positive, U.S. officials say the prospects of reviving the agreement are now worse. That they stay engaged in talks shows that both sides are still keen on a solution, but they face structural impediments. To be sure, the current mess was created by

Donald Trump. The Obama administration and the Rouhani presidency, along with other world powers, had engaged in painstaking negotiations to reach the 2015 agreement, which practically cut off Iran's path towards building nuclear capabilities. Iran was fully compliant with the agreement's terms when President Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of

the agreement. He had hoped that Iran, under economic pressure, would renegotiate the agreement. Instead, Iran began

enriching large amounts of uranium to a higher purity and developing advanced centrifuges, besides strengthening its military presence in the region through its proxies. Mr. Biden, like Barack Obama, also sees a negotiated agreement as the best way to limit Iran's nuclear programme. But he is facing pressure from America's allies in West Asia, especially Israel, to include Iran's weapons programme in the ambit of a fresh agreement. Iran is strongly resisting any attempt to expand the scope of the agreement. As negotiations go on, Israel has stepped up its shadow war with the Islamic Republic, targeting its military and nuclear personnel and weapons facilities. This is a dangerous slope. What the world wants now, at a time when it is struggling with the after-effects of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, is not another open conflict. The U.S. and Iran should start direct negotiations to overcome differences and find common ground on the deal before it is too late.

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Why are 'Just Stop Oil' climate activists gluing themselves to artworks?

Launched earlier this year, Just Stop Oil describes itself as "a coalition of groups working together to ensure the government commits to halting new fossil fuel licensing and production"

'Just Stop Oil', a UK-based group of climate activists, has hit the headlines over the last few months for their rather distinctive disruptions drawing attention to their cause. On July 5, they glued themselves to the frame of a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, attributed to his pupil, Giampietrino, at the Royal Academy in London. There have been a series of such instances at art venues across the UK over the last ten days, apart from other disruptions by the group, which include invading the track at the British Grand Prix at Silverstone last week, and entering the pitches during Premier League football matches in March.

Launched earlier this year, Just Stop Oil describes itself as "a coalition of groups working together to ensure the government commits to halting new fossil fuel licensing and production". Led by organisers from climate groups Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain and funded through donations, the



group propagates "Non-Violent Direct Action" and asserts non-violent civil resistance as a way to "demand their rights, freedom and justice... use tactics such as strikes, boycotts, mass protests and disruption to withdraw their cooperation from the state". In order to make themselves heard, the group has led several protests during the year, including a red-carpet appearance at the BAFTAs (The British Academy Film Awards) in March, where activists chanted and banged drums, wearing T-shirts that read 'Just Stop Oil'

and 'Just Look Up'. Later that month, members of the group attempted to tie themselves to goalposts at the Premier League matches, including games between Everton and Newcastle, and Tottenham Hotspur vs West Ham. More recently, members of the group have been making appeals at art institutions, gluing themselves to prominent artworks across the UK. The incident at the Royal Academy in London comes days after another group of campaigners glued themselves to *The Hay Wain* by John Constable at the

National Gallery in London. Last week, three other paintings, including Vincent van Gogh's *Peach Trees in Blossom*, were targeted at galleries in London, Manchester and Glasgow. While in every incident the protestors have been arrested, the campaign has continued.

What are the group's demands?

The group wants the government to "immediately halt all future licensing and consents for the exploration, development and production of fossil fuels in the UK". Describing the

"extraction of new oil and gas resources in the UK" as "an obscene and genocidal policy", the group's website puts the blame on the government for "actively enabling the fossil fuel industry through obscene subsidies and tax breaks for new fossil fuel extraction... There has been no rapid and sweeping social change, no widespread adoption of low carbon technology, no war-style mobilisation". It further states: "In eight years, we need to end our reliance on fossil fuels completely. The transition will require massive investment in clean technology, renewables and energy storage but it cannot be done at current levels of energy consumption. We need to cut energy demand by insulating Britain and rethinking how we travel including providing free public transport everywhere. This starts by switching government subsidies from dirty fossil fuels towards clean energy, transport and insulation."

How the Vice President of India is elected, what the Constitution says about the post

Ministers Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and RCP Singh resigned from their posts leading to speculation over them being possible candidates for Vice President

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday (July 5) issued the notification for the election of the Vice President of India. The term of office of Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu comes to an end on August 10. The election is scheduled for August 6, and July 19 is the last date for filing nominations.

Neither the NDA nor the Opposition have announced their candidate yet, but Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Steel Minister RCP Singh resigned from their posts on Wednesday (July 6), triggering speculation that Naqvi, in particular, could be the government's nominee for the election. Another name doing the rounds is that of Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan.

Office of the Vice President

Article 63 of the Constitution states that "there shall be a Vice-President of India". Under Article 64, the Vice-President "shall be ex officio Chairman



of the Council of the States" (Rajya Sabha). Article 65 says that "in the event of the occurrence of any vacancy in the office of the President by reason of his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise, the Vice-President shall act as President until the date on which a new President... enters upon his office". The Vice-President shall also discharge the functions of the President when the latter is unable to do so "owing to absence, illness or any other cause".

During this period, the Vice-President shall "have all the powers and immunities of the President and be entitled to... (the) emoluments, allowances and privileges" that are due to the President. The office of the Vice-President of India is the second-highest constitutional office after that of the President, and ranks second in the order of precedence.

Election of the Vice-President

Article 66 lays down the process of the election of the Vice-President. It says

the Vice-President "shall be elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot". For the 16th Vice-Presidential Election, 2022, the Electoral College consists of 233 elected members of Rajya Sabha, 12 nominated members of Rajya Sabha, and 543 elected members of Lok Sabha, adding up to 788 members. In the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, the elector has to mark preferences against the names of the candidates. "Preference can be marked in the international form of Indian numerals, in Roman form, or in the form in any recognised Indian languages... The elector can mark as many preferences as the number of candidates. (Contd on page 28)

Europe calls gas and nuclear energy 'Green'



In a landmark vote for Europe's climate and energy policies, the European Parliament on Wednesday endorsed labeling some gas and nuclear energy projects as "green," allowing them access to hundreds of billions of euros in cheap loans and even state subsidies. The decision placed the European Union's heavy thumb on the scale of a global debate about how and how quickly major industrialized economies can move from their heavy reliance on fossil fuels — and it immediately proved controversial, prompting boos from opponents inside and outside the parliamentary building in Strasbourg, France. Critics said it would lock in and prolong Europe's reliance on fossil fuels, while the measure's proponents, including in the European Commission, the EU executive

arm that drafted it, said it was part of a pragmatic approach to the transition to renewable energy, especially as Europe seeks to wean itself off Russian fuel imports in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine. The measure had been in the works even before Russia's tanks crossed the border, but it gained urgency as the European Union responded to the invasion by banning Russian energy sources, including most coal and oil. Left untouched has been Russian gas, on which Europe remains heavily dependent.

The Russian invasion presented European countries with an urgent choice: to get gas from anywhere other than Russia, or double down on renewable sources like wind and solar. Wednesday's vote signaled Europe's intention to prolong its reliance on gas — the principal

component of which is methane, which speeds up global warming. The choice could undermine a competing European imperative to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by more than half by 2030. E3G, an energy research group, said it was "at odds with the overall direction the EU is taking." The amendment the Parliament backed Wednesday was part of a broader EU effort to give banks and other organizations tools to evaluate which projects deserve loans and funds on the basis of being environmentally friendly. The policy, known as the "taxonomy," is meant to stop "greenwashing," the pervasive practice of mislabeling energy projects as environmentally friendly, and it could determine where hundreds of billions of dollars in investments will flow in coming decades.

But critics of the proposal contend the classifying gas and nuclear projects as sustainable is in itself "greenwashing" and runs counter to European efforts to slash carbon emissions by 55% by 2030 and to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, while also increasing the risks of nuclear accidents. Greta Thunberg, the Swedish climate activist, called

Wednesday's decision hypocrisy. "This will delay a desperately needed real sustainable transition and deepen our dependency on Russian fuels. The hypocrisy is striking, but unfortunately not surprising," she wrote on Twitter after the vote. The classification of gas and nuclear power as "green" was contentious even beyond environmental circles, with its opponents in the European Parliament spread across the political spectrum, including from the right. "Billions of euros in 'green' financing now risk being diverted into polluting energy sources that are far from being harmless and temporary, at the expense of energy efficiency and renewables," the European Environmental Bureau, a Pan-European environmental lobby group, said in a statement shortly after the vote, calling it an "act of institutional greenwashing." But the measure eventually succeeded with strong backing from Germany and France, Europe's two leading economies, and it will help both of them sustain their energy policies and industries. In the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear

catastrophe in Japan, Germany moved away from nuclear energy entirely, pledging to shift to renewable energy sources. But it has remained hugely reliant on Russian gas as a "bridge" and fallen back on the use of coal especially during shortfalls.

France, by contrast, gets 70% of its energy from aging nuclear plants, which have been plagued by problems and shutdowns in recent years. It recently announced a blueprint budgeted at 51.7 billion euros — more than \$53 billion — to build up to 14 next-generation reactors by 2035. While nuclear energy generation does not directly produce carbon emissions, the specter of nuclear accidents has left many wary of it on a continent still traumatized by the Chernobyl meltdown in 1986. The European Commission has said that it knows that gas and nuclear are not perfectly aligned with environmental goals and carry risks, but that it still considers them important in Europe's transition from its current energy mix toward a carbon-neutral future that will be mostly built around renewables.

(Contd. on page 28)

As China Destroys Tibet's Environment, Fate of Billions of Asians Hangs in the Balance

When China invaded Tibet in 1949, a largescale exodus of people occurred. Many, however, remained in their homeland — hoping that the Chinese occupation would one day come to an end. Such hopes linger on to this day, with the slight exception of China altering the way Tibet has existed for millennia, perhaps permanently so. Tibet, along with the Himalayas, is known as the "Third Pole" of the world. Glaciers are natural formations found in the North and South Poles alone, which is to say that these structures cannot be found outside the Arctic and Antarctic regions. The only exception, though, is the Tibetan plateau and the Hindukush Himalayan range. Here, glaciers are found in abundance and feed the water needs of close to two billion

people. The glaciers here are now melting away, and that is a cause of grave concern for billions in the Indian subcontinent and in Southeast Asia who depend on the Tibetan plateau to sustain their day-to-day lives. According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), at least a third of the glacial region in this part of the world will melt due to the climate crisis if carbon emissions are not cut drastically. Tibet and its adjoining areas are sources of 10 major rivers that deliver water to a quarter of the world's population. Tibet is also witnessing a worrying trend of recording average hikes in temperature that are twice the global average. The temperature of Tibet rose by 0.44 degrees Celsius per decade from 1979 to 2020. Calling Tibet the 'Water Tower' of South Asia alone would be an

understatement. As a matter of fact, the region also feeds water to areas of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Within Tibet, a dichotomous scenario has come to exist. The northern region is receiving excessive rainfall due to the heightened activity of the westerlies, while the southern region is grappling with droughts and high temperatures.

Meanwhile, the melting of glaciers not only threatens to initially flood low-lying regions and subsequently lead to the rise of aridity, but also cause major health problems among billions of people. A team of researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences has found close to 1,000 species of bacteria in snow and ice samples collected from Tibetan glaciers. Their paper, published in the journal Nature Biotechnology claims that the melting of glaciers



would unleash these species of bacteria into nature, potentially leading to hazardous health crises. 98 per cent of the bacteria discovered from the melting glaciers have never been seen before.

CHINA'S CULPABILITY

China has played a pivotal role in destroying the Tibetan ecosystem. From building unsustainable hydropower projects across Tibet to setting up the

required infrastructure to construct such dams, Beijing has acted with absolute impunity against Tibet's environment. It is not without cause that the temperature hikes over Tibet are twice the global average. China has been exploiting Tibet to fuel its own sloppy growth engine, especially as the country continues to face incessant bouts of Covid-19, almost three years after the pandemic first broke out.

(Contd. on page 29)

Schooling in Covid Era: An Opportunity for Young Students to Become Better Global Citizens



also correspondingly lower. While a small proportion of children have been reported to suffer from Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome of Children (MIS-C), the overall numbers are very few. Children who are immunocompromised or have risk enhancing comorbid health conditions must be protected from exposure and provided vaccines which are presently permitted.

The virus will stay on, as a part of our ecosystem. It may not yet have reached the state of steady endemicity, where the behaviour is predictable and permits planned responses. However, the perpetuation of the Omicron sub-lineages globally suggests that the virus is establishing itself as a very infectious, highly immune evasive but relatively low virulent descendant of the ancestral virus. While the virulence may be partly blunted by acquired immunity from prior infections or vaccines, the reduced propensity for penetration into the lungs or blood vessels suggests that the virus is following the evolutionary biology pathway to continued co-existence with humans. The biologically sustainable course for the virus from now on is to infect many but kill only a few. While the risk of a dangerously virulent new mutant emerging from immunocompromised persons or infected animals does exist, it is a low probability event. There will be periodic outbreaks, as immunity wanes

among susceptible persons, Covid-appropriate behaviour is abandoned or new variants emerge with higher infectivity. We need not be perpetually prisoners of masks but must wear them when there is increased transmission in the community. Vaccines too are helpful, not in preventing infection but for protecting against severe illness. Three doses seem to be the advisable regimen, for the present. Substantial benefits of more doses against Omicron are yet to be demonstrated. Like in a mild drizzle, we use an umbrella, we must use masks as needed to protect against viral exposure, when cases are rising. When there is a threat of more severe illness, vaccines will help like raincoats protect against being drenched by a heavy shower. Life should not stop unless there is a flood.

Covid-19 also offers us an opportunity to extend school-based learning beyond the formal curriculum. There are many useful learnings for life which can form part of group learning in schools. How can we promote innate immunity against infections through nutritious diet, physical activity, adequate sleep and avoiding immunity sapping addictions like tobacco, alcohol and drugs? The harm caused by ultra-processed foods and sleep depriving digital device addiction is especially pertinent in this context. The increased risk from comorbid conditions like hypertension, heart or lung

disease, obesity and cancers can be a prompt not only to discuss why some adult family members may be at greater risk but also to encourage the students themselves to adopt healthy living habits to reduce the risk of adult chronic diseases. Older school students can be engaged in discussions on why social solidarity within countries, and global solidarity among nations, is an essential part of pandemic response. Why people must wear masks and avoid crowded celebrations, not only to protect self but also others, as part of good civic conduct. How vaccine nationalism and fierce protection of intellectual property rights for promoting commercial profit over global health needs, even during a pandemic, is both unethical and unwise.

A discussion that must be had in schools is on the ecologically irresponsible patterns of development that have created conveyor belts for zoonotic pandemics. How deforestation removes the natural barriers between forest dwelling viruses, veterinary populations and human habitat. How unsustainable production and consumption of animal meat provides an opportunity for viruses to multiply and mutate at rapid scale. By stirring such discussions in the Covid-era of schooling, we will provide an opportunity to young students to become better global citizens and shape a better future for humanity. Isn't that the prime purpose of education?

As Covid-19 case counts are rising again, there are apprehensions of a fresh wave building up. Surveillance systems are being strengthened, both through a 2 percent testing of incoming international travellers and increased community level testing. Healthcare systems are being put on alert, even though the risk of severe illness from the currently circulating Omicron sub-variants appears to be low. Life is still in uninterrupted motion, despite the concerns. However, there is one aspect of social life which has been vulnerable to disruption in the past and needs protection even as we gear up our defences. That is school education.

Schooling has resumed with caution after several months of closure. There were many expressed concerns and counterposed claims on potential harms of opening of schools or continuing to shut them. Though the decision to reopen schools has come rather late, it is a much needed measure to ensure that young children are not deprived of the scholastic and socialisation benefits of in-person schooling. Two concerns were voiced about reopening schools, even when other elements of social life (work, business, travel, sports and entertainment) opened up after both the first and second waves of Covid-19 in India. The first was that since children move and socialise a lot, they can become rapid spreaders of disease. The second was that children, who were not eligible for vaccination in 2021, may be severely affected by the virus. So, school closures were advocated to protect both the children and the adults they might infect. Both concerns have been shown to be misplaced.

Children are no more likely

than adults to be infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Transmission occurs through both droplets and aerosols. The risk of infection depends on the site, duration and intensity of exposure to the virus. An adult working in a crowded, closed building is more likely to be infected than a child in a classroom with open windows or on the playground where the wind does not permit viral clouds to form or hang around. Masking, by children and school personnel, will reduce the risk of transmission even when a fresh wave is building up.

It is by now clearly evident that children are less likely to suffer from severe illness, even when infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This may be because the numbers of ACE-2 receptors, the portal of entry of the virus into human cells, are lower in number in a child than in an adult. Since the intensity and duration of illness is shorter in a child than in an adult, the risk of transmission to others in the community is

Pope Francis to give women say in appointment of bishops, and top-level positions in Holy See

Pope Francis disclosed that for the first time he would name women to a previously all-male Vatican committee that helps him select the world's bishops and said he wants to give women more top-level positions in the Holy See. The role of women in the Vatican hierarchy was one of the many Church and international topics the 85-year-old pontiff discussed in an exclusive interview with Reuters in his Vatican residence on July 2. A new constitution for the Holy See's central administration that came into effect last month allows any baptised Catholic, including lay men and women, to head most Vatican departments. As reported by Reuters,

Pope said in the 90-minute interview that discussed the new constitution for the central administration, known as the Curia, "I am open to giving (women) an opportunity." He mentioned that last year, for the first time, he named a woman to the number two position in the governorship of Vatican City, making Sister Raffaella Petrini the highest-ranking woman in the world's smallest state. "Two women will be appointed for the first time in the committee to elect bishops in the Congregation for Bishops," he said, as reported by Reuters. The move, which has not been officially announced, is highly significant because women will for the first time

have a say in the appointment of the world's bishops, who are all men. Francis did not name the women or say when their appointment would be announced officially. Members of the committee, which is now made up of cardinals, bishops and priests, usually meet twice a month in Rome. Asked which other Vatican department conceivably be headed by a layman or woman, Francis suggested that they could include the department for Catholic Education and Culture and the Apostolic Library. They are currently headed by male clerics. Francis has already named a number of women, both nuns and laywomen, to Vatican departments.

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A short history of the demand for 'Dravida Nadu', its evolution

DMK MP A Raja recently brought back into focus 'Dravida Nadu' or the idea of a separate Tamil Nadu, in the presence of Chief Minister MK Stalin

Andimuthu Raja, the DMK MP from Nilgiris, said in the presence of Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday (July 3) that if the central government did not give Tamil Nadu greater autonomy, the DMK could be "compelled" to revive the demand for a "separate" state.

"Chief Minister is walking on Anna's way, don't push us to Periyar's way. Don't compel us to ask for our own country, give us state autonomy. Until then we will not rest," Raja wrote on Twitter, where he posted a video of the speech. Raja did underline, however, that "national integrity and democracy are important".

E V Ramasamy 'Periyar' (1879-1973) had started the Self Respect Movement to "redeem the identity and self-respect" of Tamils. He envisaged an independent Dravida homeland of Dravida Nadu, comprising Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada speakers, and launched a political party, Dravidar Kazhagam (DK), to pursue this goal. C N Annadurai (1909-1969) was the last Chief Minister of Madras state, and the first Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He



founded the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) after breaking with Periyar, which ultimately chose to go slow on the demand for an independent Dravida Nadu and instead worked for greater autonomy for Tamil Nadu and better cooperation among the southern states.

Raja's comments come in a period in which the DMK government in Tamil Nadu has repeatedly and vocally disagreed with the policies of the central government, and accused it of undermining India's federal structure.

The demand for Dravida Nadu

The movement for a separate

Dravida country has passed through several stages and meanings. The early 20th century agitations against the colonial government of Madras state (of which, along with Tamil Nadu, portions of modern-day Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala were part) often included expressions of regional aspirations. The South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as Justice Party, which was founded in 1917 by Sir Pitti Theagaraya Chetty, Dr T M Nair, and Dr C Natesa Mudaliar, was the first to raise the flag of anti-Brahminism, and oppose the caste system that put Brahmins at the top of the social hierarchy.

At the time, the presence of Brahmins in the Madras government was disproportionately higher than their population in the state, and the Justice Party demanded opportunities for those lower in the caste hierarchy.

In 1920, the Justice Party won the first legislative council elections held under the Government of India Act, 1919, and formed the government. The Congress had boycotted the elections. The Justice Party remained in power until 1926, and then from 1930-37.

Periyar, the founder of the Self-Respect Movement (1925), was both anti-caste and anti-

religion. He advocated major social reforms, including equality for women in society, and supporting birth control for women for their health and well-being. He also opposed the domination of Hindi and emphasised the distinct cultural identity of the Tamil nation.

In 1938, the Justice Party and Self-Respect Movement came together, representing the merger of the party and the movement. In 1944, the new outfit was named Dravidar Kazhagam. DK was anti-Brahmin, anti-Congress, and anti-Aryan (read North Indian), and launched a movement for an independent Dravida nation.

Post-independence, DK continued to demand Dravida Nadu, and Periyar refused to contest elections. In 1949, Annadurai split from Periyar due to ideological differences, and his DMK joined the electoral process. The DMK's platforms were social democracy and Tamil cultural nationalism, but Annadurai was silent on Dravida Nadu. In 1967, Annadurai became Chief Minister.

(Contd. on page 28)

The MVA government's biggest failure was in protecting free speech

For people who criticised the government, jail had become the norm and bail an exception. The MVA government missed out on what constitutes a real democracy - pluralism and the right to dissent

As Ketaki Chitale walked out of jail after 40 days on June 24, she would have breathed a sigh of relief. This relief was also felt by crores of Maharashtrians as the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was on its last legs around the same time.

In 2019, the people of Maharashtra resoundingly voted in favour of a BJP-Shiv Sena alliance with Devendra Fadnavis at the helm. However, in a shocking turn of events, the MVA was born and formed the government.

Unsurprisingly, the people of Maharashtra did not take kindly to the ideological compromise entered into by the three political parties. With the edifice of good governance missing in the state, there was discontent against the MVA from day one itself. Several individuals took to exercising their views on the sign



of the times in Maharashtra and with the MVA being averse to any form of criticism, the most lethal assault of the erstwhile government was on free speech. The past two years saw a clampdown on free speech like none other and the MVA conveniently ignored the fact that public criticism is essential to the working of public institutions. This clampdown began with the imposition of a Section 144 CrPC order in Mumbai, which prohibited persons

"from disseminating information on social media platforms which was found to be incorrect and inciting mistrust against government functionaries" amid the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only was this executive order arbitrary but it also suffered from the vice of vagueness and prohibited bona fide criticism and advocacy against the actions of the government. Any person who dared to speak out against the MVA or any of its

leaders was met with an iron hand and the state machinery was misused to harass them. Cases in point are the demolition of the office-cum-house of an actress and the arrest of a journalist who dared to criticise Uddhav Thackeray, the then chief minister of Maharashtra.

This crackdown on free speech also extended to social media. Individuals such as Sameet Thakkar, Sunaina Holey, Nikhil Bhamre, Ketaki Chitale and Paresh Borse paid the price for exercising their right to free speech in the state. All these individuals were arrested for tweeting against the MVA government. While one might have disagreed with the tone of such statements, one thing that was certain was these arrests ran contrary to all established legal norms and were reflective of gross abuse of the police machinery. (Contd. on page 28)

SpiceJet gets DGCA notice for safety lapses

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation on Wednesday served a show cause notice to SpiceJet for its failure to offer “safe, efficient and reliable” air services. The regulator has also warned the airline that its permit to operate commercial flights in the country is valid only for one more year.

The DGCA has given the accountable manager of SpiceJet, i.e. its chairman and managing director Ajay Singh, three weeks to respond to why action should not be taken against the airline.

The notice comes a day after the airline faced at least three incidents, which included a diversion of a Delhi-Dubai flight to Karachi due to a fuel indicator malfunction, a cracked windshield on a Kandla-Mumbai flight, and a snag in the weather radar on its cargo aircraft flying from Kolkata to Chongqing



forcing a turnback. The snags on Tuesday take the total incidents involving SpiceJet to 8 since May 1. “Whereas the reported incidents on aircraft operated by M/s SpiceJet Ltd. from 1st April 2022 till date have been renewed and it has been observed that at

number of occasions the aircraft either turned back to its originating station or continued landing to the destination with degraded safety margins,” says the notice from Director Air Safety at DGCA, Sanit Kumar. Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya

Scindia in a tweet said passenger safety was paramount and “even the smallest error hindering safety will be thoroughly investigated & course-corrected”. The DGCA blamed the safety lapses on poor internal safety oversight at SpiceJet,

failure to undertake maintenance of its planes as well as the poor financial status. “Whereas, financial assessment carried out by DGCA in September, 2021 has also revealed that airline is operating on cash and carry and suppliers/ approved vendors are not being paid on regular basis leading to shortage of spares and frequent invoking of MELs [minimum equipment list].” An MEL is a document an airline seeks from a regulator to seek relief when all equipments on an aircraft are not operative. It spells out which pieces of equipment may be allowed to be inoperable along with any procedures that are required for an aircraft to operate under specific conditions while maintaining airworthiness. The regulator has also said that it has authorised SpiceJet to perform commercial operations upto May 16, 2023 — an implicit warning that its permit could be revoked.

Russia-Ukraine: War without an end?

Death, displacement and destruction have become cold statistics and stock visuals for millions not directly impacted by the Russia-Ukraine war. But Putin and Zelenskyy have not stopped fighting. Is it a conflict without an end?

When was the last time you genuinely meant to read a piece on the Russia-Ukraine war? The answer will vary depending on where you come from.

When Vladimir Putin invaded his neighbour on February 24, watchers of geopolitics were not really shocked. But the world became anxious. The anxieties were not merely limited to disruptions in crude oil supplies and the subsequent rise in prices of essentials. The hostilities could escalate into a larger catastrophe. They still can.

Back then, many were searching on the internet versions of: when will the war end? Slowly, for millions not directly impacted by the war, fatigue set in and the focus shifted to more immediate issues of concern. The death, displacement and destruction became cold statistics and stock visuals.

War coverage moved out of the front pages and prime-time TV shows. But the forces of Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy have not stopped the fighting that's into its fifth month. For both countries, it's a lived reality. War does not honour calendars. England's

Scilly conflict dragged on for a staggering 335 years. More recently, the Iran-Iraq war lasted for almost eight years. Theoretically, war ends when the problems that led to the war are resolved on the battlefield.



War ends when one side wins and the other loses. War also ends when its objectives are achieved or when it becomes clear that they cannot be achieved. We saw what happened in Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and many more countries. Little surprise that one of the most searched questions in this context now is: why is the Russia-Ukraine war not ending?

Before we answer this in detail, two quick questions need tackling: Why did Putin invade Ukraine? And what has happened, and not happened, in the biggest conflict in Europe since World War

Two?

WHY THE INVASION? The easy answer will be: Putin invaded Ukraine because he thought he could. He knew Nato (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) would supply weapons but not get involved in direct combat because Ukraine was not part of the US-dominated military alliance. The world would never want a full-blown nuclear conflict. But let's look at what he said he was fighting for. Putin said he wanted to demilitarise Ukraine and “stop genocides” of Russian-speaking people by “neo-Nazi forces” of

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's regime backed by Nato. Putin said he wanted Ukraine, ruled by Russia for over two centuries, to show neutrality with regard to his strategic tussle with Nato in eastern Europe, and stop embracing the West. Putin said he wanted Ukraine to acknowledge Crimea (which he annexed in 2014) as Russian territory, and recognise the Donbas comprising the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk (where rebels backed by him already held significant territory) as independent states.

Encephalitis deaths add to post-flood worries in Assam

Japanese encephalitis has killed six people in Assam since April when floods and rain-induced landslides struck the State to claim 186 lives so far. According to the office of the Mission Director of the National Health Mission (NHM) Assam, the six were among 48 Japanese encephalitis cases reported from April to July 6. While two persons died in Jorhat district, a person each died in Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Nagaon and Dhemaji districts. “With the floodwaters receding and inmates of relief camps returning to their houses, consumption of contaminated drinking water and subsequent health issues have been reported from some pockets in the districts. The district health teams have been instructed to intensify the monitoring and timely reporting of cases of fever for follow-up and action,” M.S. Lakshmi Priya, NHM Assam's Mission Director said. Tests for Japanese encephalitis are available free of cost in all district hospitals and government medical college and hospitals, she added. The instruction followed a meeting on Wednesday to review steps undertaken to check the spread of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Apart from Japanese encephalitis, acute encephalitis syndrome has killed 16 people this year, health officials said. They were among 143 cases reported so far. A total of 19 dengue cases has also been reported to date.

Acute encephalitis syndrome is most widely caused by the Japanese encephalitis virus carried by mosquitoes. On Wednesday, a spokesperson of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority said the flood situation eased considerably with the number of affected people declining from 4.26 lakh to 3.75 lakh in the last 24 hours. There are now 1.35 lakh people taking shelter in 295 relief camps across 20 flood-affected districts compared with 1.48-lakh people 24 hours ago, the spokesperson said.

In Islamabad Visit, Beijing's Top Troubleshooter Lobbies for Chinese Military Presence in Pak



as the director of the Central Committee on Foreign Affairs. He is considered to be the architect of Beijing's 21st century foreign policy and reports directly to Chinese President Xi Jinping. Diplomatic sources told News18 that his visit to Pakistan suggests he may have travelled with a special mission to convince ally Islamabad of the need for Chinese outposts in the country. Sources added that China is particularly concerned over the security of CPEC projects in Balochistan. A Chinese delegation led by Yang Jiechi reportedly briefed Pakistan army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa about the slow pace of CPEC projects and tabled Beijing's concerns on the security situation in Balochistan. In May

this year, police in Pakistan had arrested a would-be suicide bomber who planned to blow herself up near a convoy of Chinese nationals along the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Two weeks before that, a woman suicide bomber blew herself up on a university campus in the southern port city of Karachi, killing three Chinese teachers and their Pakistani driver. Balochistan is home to a deep-water port in Gwadar city, which Beijing is developing under the CPEC. Baloch separatists say they've been fighting for decades for a greater share in regional mine and mineral resources. They attack gas plants, infrastructure, security forces and Chinese interests, which they say amount to the

occupation of their land and resources in the name of development. Sources said Yang has demanded Chinese military outposts for Gwadar Economic Zone I & Zone II in Balochistan in the first phase. The top diplomat is learnt to have told Bajwa that Beijing has invested more than \$60 billion, but the CPEC projects are still incomplete and trade via Gwadar is yet to start. Sources told News18 that Yang offered another \$40-50 billion against the military outposts. The diplomat's trip to Pakistan was a follow up after Pakistan military leadership's recent visit to China. In Pakistan, Yang Jiechi held separate meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari & army chief General Bajwa.

(News Agency) China has once again tried to push for the presence of its military in Pakistan, ostensibly to protect its nationals and projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this time through top diplomat Yang Jiechi

who recently wrapped up a visit to Islamabad.

Yang Jiechi is an influential member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China (CPC) and is known to be the regime's top troubleshooter in his position

Taliban, Al Qaeda, IS-K, TTP Want To Make Pakistan A Sharia State; Pak Army Fails To See Design

(SAI Bureau) The Taliban, Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), Islamic State - Khorasan (IS-K) and Al Qaeda want to see Pakistan become a Sharia state but view the Pakistan Army as a major obstacle in their quest. Pakistan army is also playing into its hands by using the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) to suppress the secular and nationalist struggles spearheaded by the National Democratic Movement (NDM) and Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), the president of Gilgit Baltistan Institute in Washington Senge Sering wrote in the Baltimore Post-Examiner. Sering also said the TTP is in touch with the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) terrorists.

He fears the truce will not end hostilities and rather put the safety of tribal communities at risk since the TTP is in control of the region. Sering also said that such truces, like the existing one Pakistan Army has with the TTP, only allow TTP to expand and bring no



lasting peace. He said the army generals are ready to surrender the safety of the region's inhabitants in exchange for the safety of their own generals. TTP terrorists disapprove education of women, force minor girls to get married to people aged above them and attack artists and musicians - all in the name of enforcing Islam. The TTP last month on June 24 released an official statement reiterating its pledge to bring Pakistan under Sharia Law. This led to fear among Pashtun leaders.

Sering highlighted that four members of the Youth of Waziristan were killed by the terrorists recently. Following this and several other previous incidents, the Pashtuns are critical of the collusion between the Pakistan Army and the terrorists since it has damaged the secular fabric.

Mohsin Dawar, an NDM politician, said the peace talks with TTP are futile since they have a disastrous impact on the culture of the tribal communities living in Pakistan. The Pakistan

military, Sering says, are wary of the region-wide protest against the armistice agreement with TTP organized by the NDM and PTM. The military establishment fears that politicians like Ali Wazir, a prominent parliamentarian from South Waziristan, will foil Pakistan's state policy of using terrorism on Afghan soil for strategic benefits.

Sering pointed out that in 2020 Wazir was framed by the establishment for allegedly committing a hate speech crime. Sering says the framing of charges

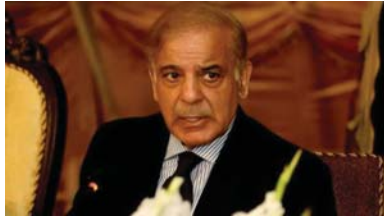
was done by the military to allow the TTP some breathing space in the tribal districts. This has only come to bite back the Pakistan Army and the government. TTP accuses the Shehbaz Sharif government and the Pakistan Army of bowing to the West's wishes and calls them West's slaves. Sering expressed his fears while writing for the Baltimore Post-Examiner saying that the military generals will forgo the precondition that TTP has to surrender its arms since its backs are against the wall. The arrangements are also beneficial for the friends of the TTP. Growing bonhomie between Al Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri and the Taliban's head, Haibatullah Akhundzada has allowed the Al Qaeda to reclaim safe havens in Pakistan.

The Al Qaeda also plans to join its forces with the Pakistan-backed Haqqani Network to take back Afghanistan to its dark days where it was the epicenter of terrorism.

Pak court grants exemption to PM Shehbaz, his son in corruption cases

A Pakistan court has granted exemption to PM Shehbaz Sharif and his son in corruption cases

(News Agency) A Pakistani court on Tuesday granted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son and Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz a one-time exemption from personal appearances at hearings in separate corruption cases. Prime Minister Shehbaz was to appear before an accountability court in Lahore on Tuesday in the Ashiana-i-Iqbal Housing Scheme corruption case in which he is facing misuse of authority and causing a loss of millions of rupees to the exchequer. He requested the court through his



counsel that he be granted an exemption as he was "preoccupied in Islamabad in connection with various official matters" and cannot appear before the court. In a separate but similar application in the Ramzan Sugar Mills case, Hamza stated that as the chief minister of Punjab, he was "preoccupied with various important matters of urgent nature and public welfare". "It is for the reason of preoccupation in the discharge of constitutional obligations that [I] am unable to appear before this honourable court today," he said, according to a report in the Dawn newspaper. The court accepted the applications of both leaders

and adjourned the hearing till July 16. Shehbaz has already been granted permanent exemption from appearing in the Ramzan Sugar Mills case, in which he has been nominated as the primary suspect alongside Hamza. Shehbaz's pre-arrest

bail in the Rs 14 billion money laundering case of the Federal Investigation Agency has already been confirmed by a special court. Ousted prime minister Imran Khan has expressed his surprise at how a suspect like Shehbaz, who is wanted in a

multi-billion money laundering case, is given a "huge relief" by courts. "This man (Shehbaz) should be sent to jail in a money laundering case instead of placing him on the chair of prime minister," Khan said at a rally recently. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) filed a case against Shehbaz and Hamza in 2019, alleging that they "fraudulently and dishonestly" caused a Rs 213 million loss to the national exchequer. According to the NAB, when Shehbaz was the Punjab chief minister, he had issued a directive for the construction of a drain in Chiniot district primarily to benefit the sugar mills owned by his sons.

Covid in China: A city of 13 million forced to shut down again to avoid 'explosion' of cases

(News Agency) Some parts of the ancient Chinese city of Xi'an was shut down again to avoid an explosion of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases, owing to the highly transmissible Omicron subvariant. The officials said Tuesday (July 5) that businesses, schools and restaurants in Xi'an, which is home to 13 million people, will close for one week.

cut the risk of cross-infection". Zhang said: "We must race against both time and the virus... to guard against all possible risks



At the fag end of last year, the historic city Xi'an endured a month-long lockdown. Now, the city has reported 18 cases since Saturday in a cluster. As per the official notices, the cases are caused by the fast-spreading Omicron variant, which is already dominant in the United States and Britain. Zhang Xuedong, who is the city official, said during a press conference that Xi'an would implement "seven-day temporary control measures". The measures would "allow society to quieten down as much as possible, reduce mobility... and

and hidden dangers, and decisively avoid an explosion in community spreading." the latest rules will kick in from midnight on Wednesday. As per city government's notice, the public entertainment venues including pubs, internet cafes and karaoke bars would shut their doors. The notice added that the restaurants will not be allowed to serve diners indoors but may continue to offer takeaway services. Schools are to start the summer holiday early and universities will seal off their campuses.

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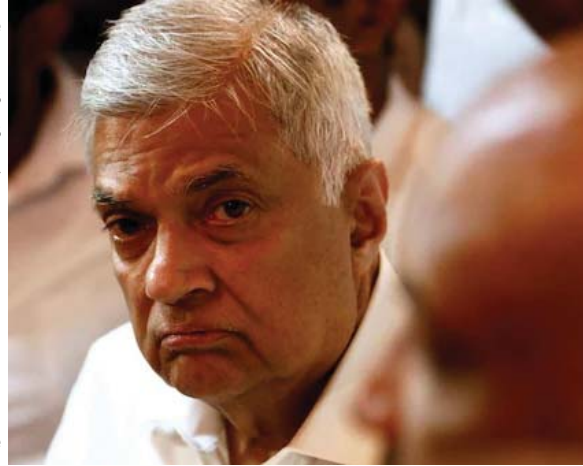
Crisis-hit Sri Lanka to Organise Donor Conference With India, China and Japan

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament on Tuesday that Sri Lanka will organise a donor conference of friendly countries like India, China and Japan once a staff-level deal is reached with the IMF on a bailout package, as the economic crisis-hit island nation seeks to create an aid consortium. Addressing Parliament on the roadmap of the government to address the economic crisis, Wickremesinghe also said India had to limit the loan assistance to Sri Lanka due to the recent global crises, including the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war.

"After obtaining the staff-level agreement, we will organise a donor-aid conference by bringing together the friendly countries that provide us with loan assistance, such as India, China and Japan. We hope to create a system where we can get loan assistance through a common agreement," he said. Among the problems the country is facing today, the primary issue is the fuel crisis, he said. "At the same time, we are also facing the problem of food availability. In terms of

fuel and food, our country was going to have to face this crisis at some point in time. Fuel was scarce. Food prices went up," he added. "Due to the recent global crises, this situation has become more acute and we who were in the frying pan fell into the oven... This situation is not unique to us. This affects other countries as well. India and Indonesia are also affected by this global crisis. Therefore, India has had to limit the loan assistance that they have given to us," he added.

India's unprecedented economic, financial and humanitarian assistance to the people of Sri Lanka stands at over USD 3.5 billion in 2022. India has also extended three credit lines to the tune of more than USD 1.5 billion and forex support of around USD 2 billion, according to the Indian High Commission here. The Government and people of India have also supplied medicines to several health-related establishments in various



parts of Sri Lanka and distributed kerosene among the fishermen of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's total debt burden increased to Rs 21.6 trillion by March

2022, Wickremesinghe said. The prime minister said that the total debt burden of the Government at the end of 2021 was Rs 17.5 trillion and by March 2022 it has increased to Rs 21.6 trillion.

Sri Lanka will present a debt restructuring programme to the IMF by August to secure a bailout package, he said. Sri

Lanka is going through the worst economic crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948, and needs to obtain at least USD 4 billion to tide over the acute shortage in foreign exchange reserves. The country, with an acute foreign currency crisis that resulted in foreign debt default, had announced in April that it is suspending nearly USD 7 billion foreign debt repayment due for this year out of about USD 25 billion due through 2026. Sri Lanka's total foreign debt stands at USD 51 billion. The Sri Lankan economy has virtually come to a grinding halt after it has run out of foreign exchange reserves to import fuel. Sri Lankans continue to languish in long fuel and cooking gas queues as the government is unable to find dollars to fund imports. The Indian credit lines since January this year have provided a lifeline to Sri Lanka amidst growing public dissent over the worsening economic conditions. The development assistance extended by India stands at over USD 5 billion with more than USD 600 million being in grants.

Pakistan's ex-PM Imran Khan threatens to 'reveal everything' if harassment of his party workers continues

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan on Tuesday threatened to identify the characters responsible for the conspiracy to topple his government if his harassment and that of his party was not stopped

(SAI Bureau) Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan on Tuesday threatened to reveal all about the "conspiracy" that allegedly led to his downfall. Khan's video message came ahead of crucial by-election in Punjab this month where his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is trying to secure the seats against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). In his message, Khan alleged the provincial administration was involved in rigging the upcoming polls. Khan was removed through a no-trust vote in April but refused to



concede his defeat, and rather alleged that an American conspiracy with the help of local actors was the cause of his ouster. His belligerent posturing has clashed with the powerful establishment. He upped his ante in the video message, threatening to identify the characters responsible for the conspiracy to topple his government if his harassment and that of his party was not stopped. "If we are pushed against the wall and harassed then I will be forced to speak up and will lay bare everything before the nation about what happened," he said. Khan said he was keeping mum in the interests of the nation but he knew everything about those bringing his downfall. "I know how this conspiracy happened and who is involved," he said. The

former premier also said that he had recorded a video to identify "which characters did what and who committed this great betrayal with the country" and it would be released if something happened to him. Khan also said that there was similarity between his ouster and the downfall of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was removed by military dictator Ziaul Haq in 1977, as both of them were ousted after the US disapproved Pakistan's effort to go for an independent foreign policy. He also trained his guns at the present rulers by accusing them of corruption and seeking a deal to whitewash their sleaze. Khan also lashed at the government for harassing journalists, particularly those who are seen to favour the PTI.

8 more Lankan nationals arrive on Indian shores; total influx surpasses 100-mark

(SAI Bureau) More than 100 Lankan nationals have fled the crippling economic crisis in their home country to arrive on Indian shores, since March this year. A group of eight Lankan Tamils, including a one-and-a-half-year-old child were among those that arrived at Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, during the wee hours of Tuesday. In recent months, it has become routine for Sri Lankan nationals to take risky, illegal boat rides from the Northern parts of the island nation, in the hope of being brought to Indian shores (in Tamil Nadu), where they can live in refugee camps.

The latest batch of Lankan nationals are said to be natives of Valvettithurai in Jaffna and had fled their home country after the prices of essential commodities became unsustainable with their meagre income. According to Sasikala, who arrived on Indian shores with her family, Rice was being sold at Rs.400 per kg (approx 1 USD), sugar at Rs.350 per kg, kerosene at Rs.1,200 per litre (approx 4 USD). In addition to the skyrocketing prices, the wait times for buying

essentials amid the shortage is also extremely long. It is understood that the eight members paid for their boat ride by selling their home, jewellery and other belongings. Those fleeing the island nation and heading for Tamil Nadu, have predominantly been members of the Lankan Tamil community. With a shared language and culture, the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the people of Tamil Nadu in India share an umbilical connection.

As the Indian state that is nearest to Sri Lanka and also as one that shares deep cultural and linguistic ties with the Lankan Tamils, leaders in Tamil Nadu have always voiced out for the welfare of Lankan Tamils. While the Government of India has been at the forefront of helping Sri Lanka by providing financial aid, fuel, and crucial support at International fora, the Tamil Nadu Government has also been sending (via the Indian High Commission in Colombo) ship-loads of food, medicines and milk powder, to provide temporary succour to the people of the island nation.

China targets Venus, Sun, Moon in next phase of space exploration

The Chinese Academy of Science is set to select five big-ticket missions to explore the deep universe, solar system and Earth

(SAI Bureau) After successfully roving on Mars, collecting samples from the Moon and constructing a Space Station, China has its eyes set on deep horizons in space. The Chinese Academy of Science is gearing up to select big-ticket missions to further study the Sun, Moon, Earth and exoplanets. The New Horizons Program, conceived by China, has selected 13 candidates from a list of proposals submitted under four broad fields of space astronomy and astrophysics, exoplanets, heliophysics and planetary and Earth science. Among the 13, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) committee is likely to green light at least five missions as part of the third Strategic Priority Program (SPP III) project, spacenews reported. According to a paper published in the Chinese Journal of Space Science, "The future development of space science needs urgent top-level planning and advanced layout to clarify the overall goal and investment portfolio from 2025 to 2030." The selection and priority list of



these mission is expected to be ready by the end of this year. Based on the budgetary allocation, technical prowess the missions will be launched during 2026-2030, a period covering China's 15th Five-year plan. Under the space astronomy and astrophysics, three candidates have been chosen that include The Enhanced X-ray Timing and Polarimetry (eXTP) mission is a powerful

X-ray observatory to monitor the sky, Dark Matter Particle Explorer-2 to look for possible evidence of dark matter annihilation or decay signals and Discovering the Sky at the Longest Wavelength (DSL) mission that calls for sending an array of 10 small satellites into lunar orbit. Meanwhile, under exoplanet field, China is likely to go ahead with the Closeby Habitable

Exoplanet Survey (CHES) and Earth 2.0 (ET) missions that aim to study 100 sun-like stars within 33 light-years. Chinese scientists have proposed four missions under heliophysics focused around the Sun. These include SOLar Ring (SOR) to study the Sun and inner heliosphere, Solar Polar-orbit Observatory (SPO) to study solar poles, Chinese Heliospheric Interstellar Medium Explorer (CHIME) mission to conduct first measurements of interstellar gas and dust.

When it comes to digging into our own solar system, China could go ahead with the Venus Volcano Imaging and Climate Explorer (VOICE) mission to understand the evolution of the closest planet to Earth, E-type Asteroid Sample Return (ASR) mission to collect samples from three objects cruising in space and low-Earth orbit Climate and Atmospheric Components Exploring Satellites (CACES) low-Earth orbit Climate and Atmospheric Components Exploring Satellites (CACES) to better understand the dynamics of climate.

India, China ties show 'momentum of recovery': Wang Yi tells Jaishankar

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday said that the ties between China and India have generally shown a "momentum of recovery" as the two countries have maintained communication and effectively managed their differences

The ties between China and India have generally shown a "momentum of recovery" as the two countries have maintained communication and effectively managed their differences, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar during their meeting in Bali on Thursday. During the one-hour meeting on the sidelines of a conclave of foreign ministers of the G20 nations, Jaishankar conveyed to Wang the need for an early resolution of all outstanding issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, and asserted that bilateral ties should be based on mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest. Wang said that since March this year, China and India have maintained communication and exchanges, effectively managed differences, and the bilateral relations have generally "shown a momentum of recovery." China and India, he said, share common interests and similar legitimate claims. On the bilateral issues, Wang said the two countries should take practical

actions to implement the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries that "the two countries are not each other's threats, but cooperation partners and development opportunities."

He also said the two countries should push for the early return of the bilateral relations to the right track and light up the bright future of the relations together. China and India, Wang said, share common interests and similar legitimate claims, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, quoting a press release on the talks issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry here. Apparently referring to independent stand struck by both the countries on the Ukraine issue, Wang said as the world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, major countries like China and India will definitely not go with the flow but are destined to uphold strategic determination, achieve their respective development and revitalisation in accordance with the established goals, and make greater contributions to the future of mankind. Wang said China

appreciates India's support for its hosting the BRICS meetings and the High-level Dialogue on Global Development in June, and it will support India's work in 2023 as the next rotating chair of the G20 countries and of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Noting that both countries, as advocates of multilateralism, share views in areas ranging from safeguarding peace and security, boosting economic recovery, improving global governance, to jointly combating COVID-19, Wang said they should strengthen coordination and cooperation, and join efforts to make international relations more democratic, international order fairer, the developing countries' voices to be heard more and their legitimate interests better maintained. In New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Jaishankar reaffirmed the importance of "fully abiding" by bilateral agreements and protocols, and the understandings reached between him and Wang in their previous conversations. "The External Affairs Minister (EAM) called for



an early resolution of all the outstanding issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh," the MEA said in a statement. It was the first meeting between the two foreign ministers since Wang visited India on March 24 and 25. Earlier, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian while referring to the Indian press release said "what I can say is that the China-India border area is generally stable at the moment".

"The two sides have agreed to follow the important common understandings reached by the two leaders and the agreements signed by both sides, and properly resolve issues related to the

Western sector of the China-India boundary in line with the principle of mutual and equal security," he said. "China and India are each other's important neighbours. The two sides have the will and capability of jointly maintaining peace and tranquility in the China-India border areas," he said. The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area. The face-off escalated after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15, 2020. Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

US Treasury Secy Janet Yellen Speaks To Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, Discuss Severe Economic Challenges

(SAI Bureau) Top officials from the United States and China held a "candid" video call on Tuesday to discuss global economic challenges, especially regarding supply chains. The exchange between Chinese Vice Premier Liu He and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen came as President Joe Biden considers lifting some tariffs on imports from China to try and ease soaring inflation. The world's two biggest economies are also grappling with Covid-snarled supply chains and rising global energy prices. "The two sides agree that as the world economy is facing severe challenges, it is of great significance to strengthen macro-policy communication and coordination between China and the United States," China's official Xinhua news agency reported. "And jointly maintaining the stability of the global industrial and supply chains is in the interests of both countries and the whole world." The Xinhua report said the video call took place at the request of the United States, and described the conversation as "constructive". Yellen and Liu "discussed macroeconomic and financial developments in the United States and China, the global economic outlook amid rising commodity prices and food security challenges", the US Treasury Department said in a readout. "Secretary Yellen frankly raised issues of concern including the impact of the Russia's war against Ukraine on the global economy and unfair, non-market (Chinese) economic practices." China has repeatedly refused to condemn the Russian invasion, and has been accused of providing diplomatic cover for Moscow by blasting Western sanctions and arms sales to Ukraine. With inflation in the United States at 40-year highs, authorities there are rushing to try and find ways to ease price pressures. Among the options is lifting some of the trade tariffs imposed on China by Biden's predecessor Donald Trump. Any decision is likely to come soon as some of the Trump duties are set to expire from July 6 unless renewed. The penalties were



aimed at punishing what the United States says are China's unfair trade practices. In the call with Yellen Tuesday, China "expressed its concern about issues including the lifting of additional tariffs on China and sanctions by the US side", according to Xinhua. Contact is expected in the coming weeks between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Florida's 15-week abortion 'trigger law' restored after temporary halt



(News Agency) The state of Florida in the United States restored the ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy after a judge temporarily stopped the state law. The "trigger law" was passed in the aftermath of the Supreme Court overturning Roe v Wade but Judge John C Cooper of an appellate court in Florida's capital of Tallahassee called the law "unconstitutional". However, the state won an appeal on Tuesday and that meant that the measures are once again valid in Florida with immediate effect.

While Florida and Kentucky had similar judgements, it seems that the appeals will allow the fast application of the trigger laws. Earlier, the judgement by Judge Cooper faced a lot of criticism as the Republican lawmakers of the state were not happy in the delay when it comes to their application. "The Florida constitution does

not include – and has never included – a right to kill an innocent unborn child," said a spokesperson for Florida's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, last week.

Republican representative Anthony Sabatini had also said that the party would be looking at even tougher abortion laws in the absence of Roe v Wade. "We must pass the heartbeat bill & other strong ... measures to protect Florida's unborn children," he wrote on Twitter. The pro-abortion groups did not take the development well as they criticised the stance taken by the Republican politicians. "Florida politicians have turned their backs on women and people who can become pregnant, forcing us into a second-class status by denying us the right to make decisions about our bodies, our healthcare, and our futures," the American Civil Liberties Union wrote in a tweet on Tuesday.

Antony Blinken to Meet China, Shun Russia at G20 Talks in Bali



(News Agency) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will hold a rare meeting with China's foreign minister seeking to contain tensions, but will shun his Russian counterpart at a conference in Bali this week, officials said Thursday. Blinken will arrive Thursday in the Indonesian resort island for talks of foreign ministers of the Group of 20, the club of major economies that still includes Russia — despite US-led efforts to isolate Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. The State Department said Blinken will meet for the first time since October with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, one of a string of recent meetings between the world's two largest economic powers amid high tensions on issues including Taiwan.

"I expect that in the course of that meeting that we will be able to discuss having guardrails, so to speak, on the relationship so that our

competition does not spill over into miscalculation or confrontation," said Daniel Kritenbrink, the top US diplomat for East Asia. The United States also remains committed to exploring areas of potential cooperation where our interests require," he told reporters. The meeting comes as the White House expects a new conversation in the coming weeks between US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has not traveled internationally since the Covid-19 pandemic. **Shunning Russia**

In contrast to the effort to stabilize relations with China, State Department spokesman Ned Price said that Blinken would not meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Blinken last saw Lavrov in January in Geneva, where the top US diplomat warned Russia of massive consequences if it went ahead and invaded Ukraine.

US parade shooting suspect charged with 7 counts of 1st degree murder

If convicted, the suspect, 21-year-old Robert E Crimo III, would face a maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole. The accused had opened fire with a rifle from a rooftop onto a crowd of people watching a July Fourth parade near Chicago

(News Agency) The man accused of opening fire with a rifle from a rooftop onto a crowd of people watching a July Fourth parade near Chicago, turning the holiday celebration into another national tragedy, was charged on Tuesday with seven counts of first-degree murder.

If convicted, the suspect, 21-year-old Robert E. Crimo III, would face a maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole, Illinois states attorney Eric Reinhart said in announcing the charges at a news conference.

Reinhart said the first-degree murder charges would be followed by dozens of additional charges before the investigation is over. The prosecutor said he would ask that Crimo remain held in custody without bail at the suspect's first court appearance, scheduled for Wednesday.

It was not immediately clear if Crimo had a lawyer.

Authorities said Crimo had planned the attack for weeks and had come to authorities' attention at least twice

before on reports that he threatened suicide or harm to others, local officials said on Tuesday.

Authorities said the suspect fired more than 70 rounds from a rooftop at random onto people watching

Monday's parade in Highland Park, Illinois, and then made his getaway dressed in a disguise to blend in with the panic-stricken crowd, authorities said on Tuesday. In addition to the seven people killed in the gunfire, the attack sent more than three dozen

other people to area hospitals for treatment of gunshot wounds and other injuries, authorities said.

After fleeing the scene, the suspect drove to Wisconsin and back to Illinois before he was pulled over and arrested later on Monday, according to Sergeant Chris Covelli, a spokesperson for the Lake County Sheriff's office.

At a late-afternoon news briefing on

Tuesday, Covelli cited two previous encounters between Crimo and law enforcement - an April 2019 emergency-911 call reporting he had attempted suicide and another in September of



that year regarding alleged threats he had directed at family members.

Police responding to the second incident seized a collection of 16 knives, a dagger and a sword amassed by Crimo in his home, though no arrest was made as authorities at the time lacked probable cause to take him into custody, Covelli said.

"There were no complaints that were

signed by any of the victims," Covelli explained.

Police revised the confirmed casualty toll from the shooting with the death of a seventh person who succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday.

Among the dead were Nicholas Toledo, a grandfather from Mexico in his 70s celebrating with his family among the flag-waving crowds at Monday's parade, and Jacki Sundheim, a teacher at a nearby synagogue.

Crimo, who has distinctive facial tattoos apparently tried to conceal his identity on Monday as he made his getaway, Covelli told reporters. "He blended right in with everybody else as they were running around, almost as if he was an innocent spectator as well," Covelli said.

The suspect fled to his mother's house nearby, and later borrowed his mother's car. The shooting took place in a neighborhood with a large Jewish population, but police had no evidence of any anti-Semitic or racist basis. Investigators were reviewing videos he had made filled with violent imagery.

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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.



Halfway through 2022, US has witnessed 309 mass shootings, nears record-breaking numbers

Six months into 2022, there have been at least 309 mass shootings in the US, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Shooting incidents in 2022 are rivalling last year's record-breaking numbers

(News Agency) The mass shooting at a Fourth of July parade in Chicago's Highland Park suburb on Monday, which claimed six lives, is the latest in a wave of gun violence that has rocked the United States since the start of the year.

According to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), there have been at least 309 mass shootings in the US, six months into 2022. The tragedy in Highland Park is the 15th mass killing of the year and the 11th mass shooting of the holiday weekend. As per GVA data, around 10,072 people have died nationwide due to firearms -- including intentional and accidental killings but not suicides -- so far this year.

The GVA defines a mass shooting as an incident in which four or more people are shot or killed. Within the first 185 days of 2022, there have been an average of 11 such incidents a week. A Forbes report states



shooting incidents in 2022 are rivalling last year's record-breaking numbers. "Mass shootings this year are on track to approach the 692 recorded in 2021, which was the highest figure since the Gun Violence Archive started tracking shootings in 2014," it said. The attack at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, in which 19 children and two teachers

were killed, was the country's deadliest shooting this year.

January 23 Six people were found shot dead during a welfare check on a home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A 34-year-old man has been charged with the murders, which appeared to be a robbery gone wrong.

April 3 Six people were killed in an

apparent gun battle that erupted as nightclubs were emptying in downtown Sacramento, the state capital of California.

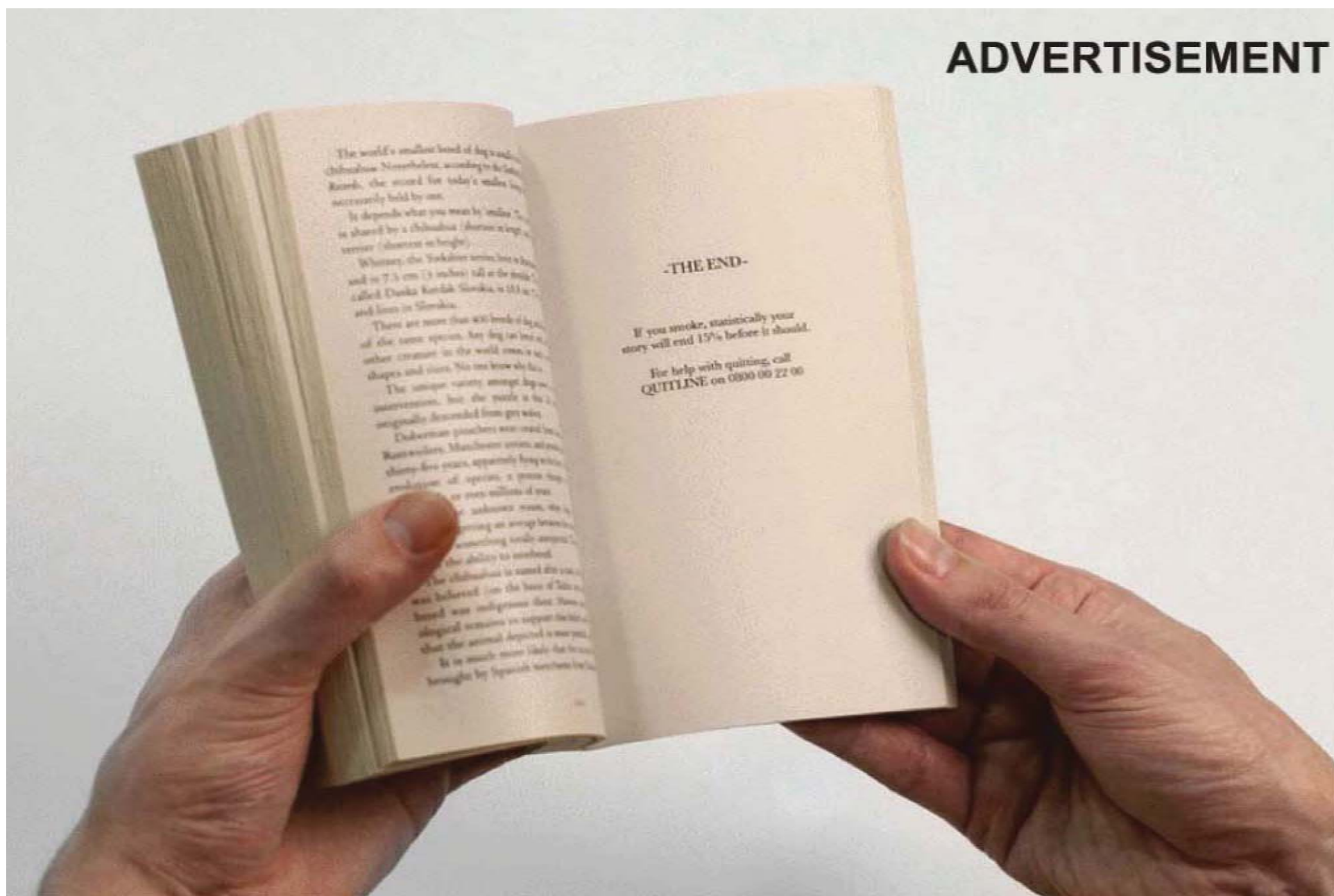
May 14 A white teenage gunman killed 10 people at a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighbourhood of Buffalo, New York.

May 24 Nineteen young children and two teachers were killed when a teenage gunman went on a shooting rampage at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas - America's worst school shooting in a decade.

June 1 A man who blamed a surgeon for pain he suffered after back surgery stormed into a hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and fatally shot four people, including the doctor.

July 4 At least six people were killed and 30 others, including children, were injured when a gunman armed with a high-powered rifle opened fire at an Independence Day parade in Highland Park, Illinois.

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How the Vice President of India is elected, what the Constitution says about the post

(From page 14)

While the marking of the first preference is compulsory for the ballot paper to be valid, other preferences are optional," the Election Commission of India said in a release issued on June 29. Under the Constitution, the Vice-President "shall not be a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State". If a member of any of these Houses is elected to the post, "he shall be deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date on which he enters upon his office as Vice-President".

Eligibility and term of office

Article 66(3) says "No person shall be eligible for election as Vice-President unless he — (a) is a citizen of India; (b) has completed the age of thirty-five years; and (c) is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States". Under Article 66(4), "A person shall not be eligible for election as Vice-President if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments." Article 67 lays down that the "Vice-President shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office". However, the Vice-President

"shall, notwithstanding the expiration of his term, continue to hold office until his successor enters upon his office". The Vice-President may leave office before the end of his term by resigning to the President, or he "may be removed...by a resolution of the Council of States passed by a majority of all the then members of the Council and agreed to by the House of the People".

What if the election is disputed?

Article 71 of the Constitution deals with "Matters relating to, or connected with, the election of a President or Vice-President". It says that "all doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with the election of a President or Vice-President shall be inquired into and decided by the Supreme Court whose decision shall be final". Should the Supreme Court declare the election of the President or Vice-President void however, "acts done by him in the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of the office of President or Vice-President, ...on or before the date of the decision of the Supreme Court shall not be invalidated by reason of that declaration". Also, "Parliament may by law regulate any matter relating to or connected with the election of a President or Vice-President".

Europe calls gas and nuclear energy 'Green'

(From page 15)

It calls gas a "low emission" fuel, which is only accurate when compared to coal, which is very polluting, but not compared to wind and solar. "This vote is important recognition of our pragmatic and realistic approach in helping many member states on their transition path towards climate neutrality," the commission said in a statement shortly after the vote. "Climate neutrality is our objective and legal obligation. We are committed to using all available tools to move away from high carbon-emitting energy sources," it added. These goals, and the means to achieve them over the next few decades, are key to Europe's efforts to lead the world on climate policy. But Europe's decision to classify gas and nuclear energy as "green" is now likely to reverberate widely and could also undercut European efforts to coax other countries, like China, to rein in their own emissions, analysts said. The new classification for gas is likely to make it far harder to meet a climate goal championed at the last international climate negotiations: cutting methane. Methane is more potent in its ability to warm the planet than carbon dioxide emissions, although it breaks down in the atmosphere sooner. Over 20 years, it can create 80 times as much warming as the same amount of carbon dioxide. In short, cutting methane emissions would slow down warming more quickly, which is the argument that the European Union itself used when it joined the United States in November in announcing a global pledge to reduce methane emissions by 30% by

2030. Prominent nongovernmental organizations including WWF and Greenpeace said they planned to litigate against the EU labeling of gas and nuclear, and European lawmakers are also expected to sue the European Commission over its handling of the policy. But apart from a divergence from its environmental goals, the step Wednesday also constitutes a strategic error in dealing with Russia, other critics said. So far EU nations have banned Russian coal and most will phase out even the import of Russian oil in response to the Ukraine invasion, but they remain especially dependent on Russian gas for electricity and heating. Russia has used its gas exports to Europe as a lever to exert pressure on the European Union. The bloc is trying to get gas from other sources, such as Africa, the Middle East and the United States, but is far from banning the Russian imports because it needs them too much. By doubling down on longer-term gas investments, the European Union practically locks in higher global demand for the fuel longer term, even if it doesn't buy it from Russia itself. That will mean that Russia can continue selling its gas to other countries at high prices, perpetuating a vital revenue stream. Some Ukrainian experts and lawmakers decried the decision. "Vladimir Putin is rubbing his hands with glee today," Inna Sovsun, a Ukrainian deputy, said in emailed comments. "Europe just handed him a huge present by classifying gas and nuclear as sustainable. A gift that will channel billions into his pockets and further boost his war chest."

The MVA government's biggest failure was in protecting free speech

(From page 18)

Matters went further downhill as in some incidents when the police chose not to get involved, party workers of Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena decided to take matters into their own hands. In one such horrific incident, these party workers thrashed a veteran navy officer named Madan Sharma as he shared a satirical cartoon about the erstwhile chief minister. In another instance, Shiv Sena workers tansured a man for his comments on social media. While the tenure of the MVA government could be remembered for many things ranging from Covid mismanagement to unbridled corruption, the starkest feature was their abuse of power and oppression of people for exercising their right to free speech. For people who criticised the government, jail had become the norm and bail an

exception. It is ironic that while all these efforts and abuse of state machinery were done in order to silence people to preserve illegitimately acquired power, the government was unseated by its own partymen. The party legislators who revolted are on record that the actions of the government made it difficult for them to face the people. This once again shows that such intimidatory tactics aimed at silencing people do not work. With such concrete efforts to curb free speech, the MVA government missed out on what constitutes a real democracy. Pluralism and the right to dissent are essential facets of democracy. Moreover, the dissenter must be at ease and shall not need to look over her shoulder at all times due to the political opinion she holds. In the past two years, the Maharashtra government turned this meaning of democracy on its head.

A short history of the demand for 'Dravida Nadu', its evolution

(From page 18)

Linguistic nationalism

The Linguistic Provinces Commission (or S K Dhar Commission) set up in 1948 argued against a linguistic basis of reorganisation of states, reasoning it could lead to further division. "When a conflict of interest, real or imaginary, arises between linguistic groups differing in numerical strength and in mental and moral equipment, it does not take long for the minority to feel that it has no chance against the majority, and it finds an easy solution of its difficulty in a desire for separation," the Commission said. In 1952, the freedom fighter Potti Sriramulu died at the end

of a 56-day hunger strike undertaken to demand a separate Telugu state. In the face of intense public anger, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru announced an intention to create a separate Andhra state, and in 1953, the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was constituted under Justice Fazl Ali, historian K M Panikkar, and parliamentarian H N Kunzru. The report of the commission was in favour of a linguistic division of states; however, it cautioned that "It is neither possible nor desirable to reorganise the State on the basis of a single test of either language or culture; a balanced approach which takes all relevant factors into account is necessary."

The States Reorganisation Act, 1956, which incorporated some of the suggestions of the SRC, redrew the boundaries of states along linguistic lines, and created the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore and Kerala in southern India. In the process, a major demand of the linguistic movements was fulfilled, and the idea of an independent Dravida Nadu was weakened further.

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As China Destroys Tibet's Environment, Fate of Billions of Asians Hangs in the Balance

(From page 15)

China has begun large-scale mining of Lithium and Uranium in Tibet, impacting not just the region's overall carbon footprint, but also altering the Monsoon cycle. According to Tibet Press, a CCP-sponsored White Paper titled 'Tibet since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity from Beijing' shows how Beijing has scant regard for the environment of Tibet. In fact, China is

now being accused of using Tibet as a "dumping ground". Beijing is pushing infrastructure development in Tibet at an unprecedented scale – mostly to challenge India and reinforce its occupation over the region. Dams, you see, are not singular structures. Chinese dams are big, and to construct them, a lot of associated infrastructure – roads, bridges among other structures need to be built first. All of this has a cumulative

negative impact on the area's ecosystem. Meanwhile, unregulated mining in Tibet is leading to a release of earth-warming hydrocarbons in a big way, which plays a direct role in glacial melting and the thawing of permafrost – which is a permanently frozen layer on or under the Earth's surface.

Meanwhile, the mining coupled with all of China's "developmental works" in Tibet is causing the water quality in the region to deteriorate. Since Tibet is a source that feeds several rivers and streams, the contamination of water is bound to lead to catastrophic outcomes for not just Tibetans, but Asians at large. China knows it is guilty of mass destruction. That is precisely why the Communist nation is hunting down environmental activists who dare to speak against the Chinese state's excesses on Tibet's environment. There are at least 50 'known' cases of China persecuting Tibetan environmental activists since 2008.

In 2021, under its latest Five-Year Plan, China allocated USD 30 billion to ramp up infrastructure in Tibet. The money will be used for building new

expressways, upgrading existing highways and improving the road conditions in rural areas, among other fields. Freshwater resources in North China are scarce and polluted. Therefore, China has, of late, come to depend on the water sources of Southern China, and Tibet in particular. To quench the thirst of water-deprived North, China is overseeing the construction of the world's most expensive water project, called the 'South-to-North Water Diversion Project'. Diversion of water to China's thirsty regions will definitely alleviate the water woes of the country's most populated, industrial and economically consequential regions, but the repercussions for Tibet will be devastating, and they have, as of now, only begun showing effect. The worst for Tibet is yet to come. Tibet is being exploited and contaminated by China. Its serene environment is being polluted by Beijing, and its people are being oppressed. Now, China's activities in Tibet pose a security threat to all of Asia, especially the likes of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and of course, the Mekong River basin countries, which have already begun facing all-out water wars from Beijing.

33-page defence dossier reveals Pakistan's terror plots against India

(From Front page)

It also points to how the Hindus, a minority in Pakistan, are being butchered.

The file highlights the killings of policemen, teachers, and migrant workers in Jammu & Kashmir by Pak-backed terrorists, who work as direct proxies of the forces in Islamabad, and exposes how Pakistan kills political workers and brainwashes the youth in Jammu & Kashmir to join the terror ranks. **INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS** The first section of the extensive file, titled "Terrorist Incidents Along The LoC And In The Hinterland", lists and elaborates the 16 attempts made by Pakistani terrorists to cross over into India between 2020-2021. The comprehensive report also shows the route taken by the terrorists each time across the various sectors along the International Border, the arms and documents seized from them by the security forces. It also lists the number of terrorists killed by the security forces while trying to stop them.

RECRUITMENT ACROSS J&K

"The unabashed state-sponsored terror machinery operating from Pakistani soil remains rooted to a familiar modus operandi. Identify gullible or helpless youth in desperate need of money, indoctrinate them, drum radical and spiteful ideas into their impressionable minds and make them fight the so-called battle of jihad. If the catchment area extends to Kashmir, it includes Pakistan as well," the report says, talking about the various recruits from the Valley. Chats attached with the dossier showed terrorists apprising their handlers in Pakistan about their movements.

TARGETING CIVILIANS IN KASHMIR

The third section of the dossier focuses on the target killings in Kashmir. "In a change of tack in recent years, especially after Article 370 that conferred special status on J&K was abrogated in 2019, Pakistan-sponsored terrorists have targeted civilians in the Valley. The idea is to create a sense of fear and insecurity in the minds of

ordinary citizens - who are easy to target - while at the same time peddling a false narrative that things are not 'normal' in the former state. And all of this is done in the facade of simmering 'local' discontent, by 'indigenous' terror groups that are propped up and patronized by the Pakistani Deep State," it reads.

"Since March this year, there has been a spurt in such violence, with over a dozen cases reported. Many of those targeted were religious minorities. According to data put forth by the Ministry of Home Affairs, 87 civilians have been killed in J&K since the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, compared to 177 civilians in the previous five years. The victims of terrorist attacks include women and children."

The report is substantiated by visuals of gruesome killings - of civilians, non-Kashmiri and migrant labourers and members of the minority community and also posters put up by terror outfits warning "non-local stooges to leave our land and get ready for dire consequences (sic)".

ATTEMPTS TO DISRUPT THE POLITICAL PROCESS

"Pakistan - supported terrorist groups have targeted political workers, leaders and elected representatives in J&K to dissuade them from participating in the political process and government functioning. A total of 27 such people from different political parties have been killed in the last three years," the Army file says, listing the political killings in the Valley in recent times. "In a country that has seen more than three decades of military rule and where the Army calls the shots irrespective of which party forms the government, terrorism with a view to destabilising Jammu and Kashmir has thrived. Despite being placed in the 'Grey List' of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), its support to terrorists continues unabated. It's time the country was named and shamed globally and held accountable for its actions," the dossier concludes.

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.

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India and other BRIICS nations could face huge revenue gap if they don't decarbonize now: Report



(SAI Bureau) Africa (BRIICS) Sustainable Development (IISD) now to account for declining need to act now to decarbonize on Thursday, warned that if fossil fuel use—or risk a USD and start adjusting their fiscal these countries did not 278 billion gap in revenues by policies to account for declining decarbonize and diversify their 2030, equivalent to the fossil fuel use or they could face revenues, they will risk a revenue combined total government a USD 278 billion revenue gap that could reverse progress revenues of Indonesia and South by 2030. The report titled 'Boom on poverty eradication and Africa in 2019, said the report. and Bust: The Fiscal economic development. "As the The report spotlights Implications of Fossil Fuel global clean energy transition heavy dependence on fossil fuel Phase-Out in Six Large gathers pace, six emerging revenues in the BRIICS nations and argues that this economic Emerging Economies' released economies need to start and reliance puts these countries at by the International Institute for adjusting their fiscal policies

risk of experiencing a government financial revenues—substantial revenue gap over the next few decades, as the world transitions from fossil fuel-based energy systems to cleaner energies to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The study finds that by 2050, overall fossil fuel revenues in BRIICS countries could be as much as USD 570 billion lower than a business-as-usual scenario where governments fail to phase down fossil fuels enough to avoid the worst climate impacts. The widest gaps are expected to occur in India (USD 178 billion), China (USD 140 billion), and Russia (USD 134 billion), the report said.

According to the IISD, public revenues from fossil fuel production and consumption currently account for a staggering 34 % of general government revenue in Russia, 18 % in India, and 16 % in Indonesia. The share stands at 8% in Brazil, 6% in South Africa, and 5% in China. "This includes only direct, first-order, economies have an enormous opportunity to build more resilient and economically sustainable energy systems as they decarbonize—but they must plan ahead to avoid shortfalls in public revenues that could reverse progress on poverty eradication and economic development," said Tara Laan, Senior Associate at IISD and lead author of the report.

'Country is bankrupt': PM Wickremesinghe says Lanka to present debt restructuring programme to IMF by Aug

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team visited Colombo on June 20 to continue discussions on an economic programme that could be supported by an IMF lending arrangement. The IMF later said it has concluded "constructive and productive" discussions with Sri Lankan authorities, but warned that the crisis-ridden island nation needs to do more on debt restructuring and step up structural reforms to address corruption vulnerabilities before a bailout package is finalised. "The first round of discussions with the IMF has been a success but the assistance depends on the debt restructuring programme which Sri Lanka has to come up with," Wickremesinghe said in Parliament.

Sri Lanka is currently working on the debt restructuring sustainability being prepared by legal and financial experts. "We hope to submit this report to the IMF by August. Once this is done we will be able to reach an agreement," he said. The anticipated IMF facility is viewed as being slow to materialise due to the question of the island's debt sustainability. Wickremesinghe said the economic crisis will be resolved through meaningful reforms and stressed that the support of Parliament, including the

Opposition, is of paramount importance. "A return to an open economy, devoid of state monopolies, is a must. Economic integration with the region mustn't be feared, but pursued," he said. Wickremesinghe recalled that Sri Lanka held negotiations with the IMF on many occasions before, however at those times discussions were held as a developing country. "But this time the situation is different from all those previous occasions. We are now participating in the negotiations as a bankrupt country. Therefore, we have to face a more difficult and complicated situation than in previous negotiations," he said.

"Once a staff-level agreement is reached, this will be submitted to the IMF Board of Directors for approval. But due to the state of bankruptcy our country is in, we have to submit a plan on our debt sustainability to them separately. "Only when they are satisfied with that plan can we reach an agreement at the staff level. This is not a straightforward process. We have been able to end the round of discussion effectively despite these difficulties," Wickremesinghe said. He said Sri Lanka's economy is currently shrinking and the government was trying to reverse it. "According to central bank

statistics, our current economic growth rate is between negative four and negative five. According to IMF statistics, it is between negative six and negative seven. This is a serious situation," he said. "By 2025, our aim is to create a surplus in the primary budget. Our effort is to raise the economic growth rate to a stable level. Our expectation is to establish a stable economic base by 2026," he said. "It will take till 2026 to go back to the 2018 level. If we make a determined journey along this road map, we can achieve an economic growth rate of negative one by the end of 2023, he said.

He said the total debt burden of the government at the end of 2021 was Rs 17.5 trillion and by March 2022 it has increased to Rs 21.6 trillion. The Prime Minister also presented the roadmap with proposed solutions to the existing economic problem. He said it was important to stabilise the rupee as soon as possible and strengthen the rupee without letting it fall. "We have implemented a plan to limit the printing of money in the future. In 2023, we will have to print money with restrictions on several occasions. But by the end of 2024, it is our intention to stop printing money completely." Wickremesinghe

said that Sri Lanka's inflation by the year end would be over 50 per cent. "Our plan is to control inflation. By the end of this year, inflation will rise to 60%. This is mainly due to the increase in the prices of goods in the world and the fall in the value of the rupee," he said. He said the government aims to reduce the inflation rate to between 4 and 6 per cent by 2025. The inflation in the month of June as measured by the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) was 54.6 per cent up from 39 per cent in May, it was announced last week. "Another top priority for us is to protect the banking and financial system, he said. "We will have to restructure the Electricity Board, Ceylon Petroleum Corporation and Srilankan Airlines," he said. Tuesday's Parliament session had to be suspended for ten minutes due to a tense situation which erupted in Parliament when Opposition MPs started shouting slogans against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and displayed posters "Gota Go home" when Wickremesinghe was making a statement on the progress of the IMF talks. President Rajapaksa, who was present in the House to attend sessions, left the chamber after the session was suspended.

After vowing repeatedly to 'keep going', Boris Johnson has finally resigned. Why?



(By Staff Reporter) Boris Johnson has resigned. This is something everyone had been expecting this week — but the Prime Minister had refused to go. Until Thursday (July 7). On Thursday, the BBC quoted Tory MP Andrew Mitchell as saying about Johnson: "It's a bit like the death of Rasputin. He's been poisoned, stabbed, he's been shot, his body's been dumped in a freezing river and still he lives." But the Prime Minister has been finally pushed out of the office he insisted on clinging to as his government, battered by endless scandals and crises for a year, collapsed around him over the last couple of days.

How and from where did the final push come?

Boris Johnson had become virtually a Prime Minister without a government. There is the inescapable fact of mass desertion of the Prime Minister. British media were running lists of ministerial resignations, and The Guardian was reporting that as of 9 am on Thursday (1.30 pm in India), 27 ministers — five at the cabinet level and 22 below cabinet level — had put in their papers. In addition, Johnson had sacked levelling up secretary Michael Gove on Wednesday for disloyalty, hours after Gove met Johnson and asked him to leave office. And environment secretary Rebecca Pow had announced her resignation on Twitter around 2.45 pm India time.

Besides these 29 ministers, dozens of parliamentary private secretaries (PPSs) had exited as well, taking the number of resigning ministers and government aides to more than 50.

While, as The Guardian noted, the PPS resignations are "far less important" because "government can function without PPSs, but not without ministers", the numbers do add up. By Thursday afternoon, Johnson, who had made a characteristically fiery brazening-out speech in the House of Commons on Wednesday, appeared to be in real danger of being reduced to a Prime Minister without a government.

Earlier, after Larry, the famous cat of No. 10 Downing Street, made an appearance outside the British Prime Minister's residence, reporters staking out the door jocularly asked the feline whether he too was intending to leave. There was the blunt assertion by minister after minister of the loss of faith in Johnson's leadership. It began with Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister) Rishi Sunak and health and social care secretary Sajid Javid who resigned within minutes of each other on Tuesday (July 5) — and the following morning Javid told Parliament that "at some point, we have to conclude that enough is enough". "I believe that point is now," Javid said, and added that he believed "the problem starts at the top". Sunak, who like Javid, is seen as a potential replacement for Johnson, said in his resignation letter that "the public rightly expect government to be conducted properly, competently and seriously", and despite knowing that he may well end up never being minister again, "I believe these standards are worth fighting for and that is why I am resigning". And in an extraordinary development on July

7, Nadhim Zahawi, whom Johnson made Chancellor barely 48 hours ago, posted on Twitter: "Prime Minister: this is not sustainable and it will only get worse: for you, for the Conservative Party and most importantly of all the country. You must do the right thing and go now."

The Conservative Party had finally decided that the Prime Minister is a liability. In his resignation speech outside No. 10, Johnson was candid in admitting that he had failed to persuade his party colleagues that it would be "eccentric" to change the leader at the present moment. The BBC was reporting earlier on Thursday that Graham Brady, chairman of the 1922 Committee of backbench

Tory MPs, had met Johnson and informed him that he had lost the confidence of the party. There is a clear electoral calculation involved. Even before the Chris Pincher scandal exploded on the government, opinion polls in Britain showed the Conservatives trailing behind Labour. The number of Tory MPs who are convinced that Johnson must be got rid of to preempt the damage to the party has now reached critical mass. On Wednesday, Conservative backbenchers in the Commons were literally laughing at the Prime Minister as he sought to defend himself against lacerating criticism and vowed to "keep going", and jeered him with shouts of "Bye, Boris" as he left

the House by a side door. The situation now is significantly worse for the Prime Minister compared to a month ago, when he was able to secure enough votes to survive a no-confidence motion brought against him by a large group in the Tory party. While he got majority support — 211 of the 359 MPs — as many as 148 MPs (more than 40 per cent) voted against, denting Johnson's legitimacy. After that though, the Conservatives suffered hugely damaging defeats in by-elections for two parliamentary districts, Wakefield, and Tiverton and Honiton. The latter defeat was especially significant because it overturned the Conservative Party's 24,000 majority in the district, the biggest ever majority to be overturned in a by-election, according to The Guardian. On June 24, the co-chairman of the party resigned, saying "We cannot carry on with business as usual" and that "somebody must take responsibility". The elections to both seats were brought on by the resignations of Tory lawmakers who were facing sex scandals — one of them had to quit after being convicted of sexually assaulting a teenage boy, and another had been caught watching porn in Parliament. The Pincher scandal — which showed that the Prime Minister had promoted a Conservative MP to deputy chief whip in the Commons despite being aware that he had a history of sexual misconduct — turned out to be the last straw that broke the government's back.

A fingertip painting to be sent to space to guide aliens to human civilisation

(By Staff Reporter) Scientists have decided to send a unique fingerprint painting in the Euclid spacecraft which is set for launch in 2023. The mission, which is aimed at exploring the evolution of the universe by the help of 3D mapping, will have the painting as a representation of human civilisation. The painting will be depicting the Milky Way Galaxy and it was created by visual artist Lisa Pettibone along with 250 scientists and Euclid instrument scientist Tom Kitching. When asked about the motive of the painting, Kitching said - "After Euclid's lifetime, it will just be floating in space. What if future beings found Euclid? How would they know anything about the humanity of the people?" The artist — Lisa Pettibone — said that the painting will add a "bit of humanity" in the Euclid project and added that the entire picture was done by the scientists by dipping their fingers

in the paint.

"Although Euclid has always been beautiful in concept and materials, it didn't really say anything about the people involved and humanity as a whole. We asked ourselves whether we could do something artistic that would speak to people," Lisa said on the European Space Agency website. "We wanted something authentic, not perfect, and not shaped too much. The result is a piece of art with a wonderful energy to it that captures all the energy of the people involved," Lisa added. The picture will be fixed to Euclid after it was engraved onto a plaque by the use of lasers. It will also feature a short poem by poet Simon Barraclough in a typewriter font, ESA claimed. "It is adding an element of humanity to a dark, vast space, where, as far as we can see, there is no other intelligent life," Lisa said.

Controversial movie poster of goddess 'Kaali': UP Police files FIR against Leena Manimekalai

The controversy erupted after the Canada-based Indian origin filmmaker took to Twitter to share a poster of her film which depicted a woman dressed in a costume portraying the Goddess and smoking. A flag of the LGBT community is seen in the background

The Uttar Pradesh police registered an FIR on charges of criminal conspiracy, offence in place of worship, deliberately hurting religious sentiments, and intention to provoke breach of peace against filmmaker Leena Manimekalai for her movie 'Kaali' for the disrespectful depiction of Hindu Gods. The controversy erupted after she took to Twitter to share a poster of her film which depicted a woman dressed in a costume portraying the Goddess and smoking. A flag of the LGBT community is seen in the background.

Earlier, BJP leader Shivam

Chhabra filed a police complaint against filmmaker Manimekalai. For hurting the sentiments of the Hindu society, a complaint was filed with the Delhi Police today against Leena Manimekalai, the producer of the documentary film 'Kaali'. A complaint was filed with Amrutha Guguloth, Deputy Commissioner of Delhi District Police. The complainants demanded punishment against Leena by taking strict action under strict sections of the law, including Section 295A of IPC, Section 79 of IT Act 2000 and Prohibition of Indecent Representation of Women Act,

1986.

Several films and shows have in the past landed in trouble for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. Anurag Basu's 'Ludo' faced Twitterati's ire for purportedly promoting 'Hinduphobic' content in the movie. In 2021, Saif Ali Khan-starrer web series 'Taandav' raked up a row for allegedly creating a possibility of religious tension by portraying Hindu Gods in a bad light.

Who is Leena Manimekalai?

Leena Manimekalai is a Madurai-born, Toronto-based Indian filmmaker, poet and actor.



Her works include five published poetry anthologies and a dozen films in genres, including documentary, fiction and experimental poem films. She has been recognised for participation, mentions and best film awards in many international and national film festivals. She currently lives in Canada. She is also the owner

of Leena Manimekalai Productions, a producing company. Leena has directed several documentaries and her notable works include Mathamma, Parai, Breaking The Shackles, Love Lost, A Hole in the Bucket, Goddesses, Sengadal, My Mirror is the Door and Song of Resistance to name a few.

Study shows methane is much more sensitive to global heating than previously thought



A new study shows that methane is four times more sensitive to global warming than previously thought, reported The Guardian. The study justified the rapid growth in methane in recent years and revealed that methane-related global heating could potentially escalate in the future decades unchecked. Measurements from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recorded the growth of this greenhouse gas passing 1,900 parts a billion last year, nearly triple pre-industrial levels and 80 times as potent as carbon dioxide over a 20-year time span.

An earth scientist at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, Simon Redfern, claimed, "What has been particularly puzzling has been the fact that methane

emissions have been increasing at even greater rates in the last two years, despite the global pandemic, when anthropogenic sources were assumed to be less significant." Natural sources such as wetlands contribute to nearly 40% of methane emissions, and on the other hand, anthropogenic sources such as cattle farming, fossil fuel extraction, and landfill sites contribute to 60% of the emissions.

Expanding exploration of oil and natural gas, rising emissions from agriculture and landfill, and rising natural emissions as tropical wetlands warm and Arctic tundra melts are a few among others to be blamed for the rising methane emissions. Generally, methane is removed from the atmosphere through a reaction

with hydroxyl radicals (OH) also present in the atmosphere. However, a slowdown in this chemical reaction can also be an explanation for the rise in methane emissions. The Guardian quoted Redfern, who said, "The hydroxyl radical has been termed the 'detergent' of the atmosphere because it works to cleanse the atmosphere of harmful trace gases. On average, a carbon monoxide molecule remains in the atmosphere for about three months before it's attacked by a hydroxyl radical, while methane persists for about a decade. So wildfires have a

swift impact on using up the hydroxyl 'detergent' and reduce the methane removal."

Redfern and his colleague Chin-Hsien Cheng used four decades of methane measurements to understand the driving force of methane acceleration. They analysed changes in the climate to identify how the availability of hydroxyl radicals influenced the impact of changing climate on methane sources. The findings of the study have been published in the journal Nature Communications. The study concluded that global warming is four times more influential in speeding up

methane emissions than previously estimated, with increasing temperatures contributing to producing more methane and simultaneously slowing down the removal of methane from the atmosphere. "It was a really shocking result and highlights that the effects of climate change can be even more extreme and dangerous than we thought. The worry is that climate change may accelerate such risks, feeding back to accelerating atmospheric methane concentrations in a vicious circle," The Guardian quoted Redfern.



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Parts of Europe are now drier than they have been in thousand years

Climate change is affecting us all. There is an urgent need to address the issue facing humanity otherwise our very existence on the only planet we've got will be in jeopardy. In the latest sign that we are headed for a grim future, a study has found out that parts of Spain and Portugal are drier than they have been than in last 1200 years. The drier climate has the potential to severely affect wine and Olive production in these two countries. The Azores High is an area of high atmospheric pressure that moves clockwise over the Atlantic region. It is called "gatekeeper" for rainfall in Europe. The winter rain in Europe is caused by the Azores High. It sends westerly winds inwards into the continent and causes winter rain.

The study of this phenomenon was carried out by researchers in the United States and was published in journal Nature Geoscience. The study has found that Azores High, the high-pressure system "has changed dramatically in the past century and that these changes in North Atlantic climate are unprecedented within the past millennium". A climate model simulation was used in this study.

The simulation had climate data of the last 1200 years fed to it. The simulation showed that high-pressure system began to grow in last 200 years as greenhouse gas emissions increased. In 20th century, it expanded even more



dramatically as climate change. The scientists have said that as Azores High expanded, western Mediterranean countries have become drier. Authors of the study say that data trends point towards rainfall decreasing by as much as 10 to 20 per cent by the end of the century. This has the potential of making Iberian peninsula "some of the most vulnerable in Europe". You can now write for wionews.com and be a part of the community. Share your stories and opinions with us here.

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

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Why has the govt eased norms for Indians to receive more money from relatives abroad, but hiked import duty on gold?

Both the steps, taken in a matter of two days, are aimed at curbing the outflow of funds and on the other hand enhancing inward remittances



inward remittances. Experts say that an increase in the limit of remittances by relatives from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 10 lakh will lead to an increase in inflow of funds into India which will stabilise the forex reserves and also the currency.

Similarly, an increase in import duty on gold from 7.5 per cent to 12.5 per cent will discourage gold import as it will result in increase in the price of gold in India. An increase in inflow of funds and reduction in outflow of funds on account of gold imports will help stabilise the currency, forex reserves and reduce the trade deficit that widened significantly in the months of April and May 2022.

What is the concern?

The trade deficit in the month of

April and May 2022 stood at a high of \$20.1 billion and \$24.6 billion respectively making an aggregate of \$44.7 billion in two months. By comparison the trade deficit in April and May 2021 stood at \$21.8 billion. While petroleum import is leading to a rise in the same, gold too contributed significantly to it. In May 2022, gold imports stood at \$6 billion as against gold imports of \$670 million in the same month last year. Experts feel that an increase in import duty on gold will lead to increase in cost of import and discourage its import and consumption.

Is there a concern on forex reserves?

Even as the forex reserves are strong, there is a concern over

its decline. While India had forex reserves of \$642 billion at the end of October 2021, as on June 24, 2022 it stood at \$593 billion. So, there has been a decline of almost \$50 billion in forex reserves over the last eight months. Experts say that even in the forward market the forex reserves have come down by almost \$20 billion in the same period. "If the two are combined the overall reduction in forex reserves is \$70 billion in around 8 months and that is a big cause of concern. The government needs to arrest the outflow of funds and increase inflow of funds to stabilise the forex reserves and also stabilise the currency," said the CEO of a financial services firm.

THE HOME Ministry Saturday amended certain provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) allowing Indians to receive up to Rs 10 lakh annually from their relatives abroad.

Earlier, they could receive up to Rs 1 lakh per annum without notifying the authorities. This comes a day after the government enhanced the import

duty on gold import from 7.5 per cent to 12.5 per cent in a bid to discourage import of gold that leads to increase in trade deficit and puts pressure on the currency and forex reserves.

What will these steps lead to?

Both the steps, taken in a matter of two days, are aimed at curbing the outflow of funds and on the other hand enhancing

Border Villages in Tibet: Why India Should be Wary of China's New 'Eyes and Ears' in Himalaya

The China-India military face-off in the Galwan Valley on June 15, 2020 was considered one of the deadliest military confrontations between the two nations since 1962. It has almost been one and half years since India lost the lives of around 20 soldiers in the Galwan Valley during that face-off. For the past few years, China has been creating a new strategic front to encircle India by building a chain of border defence villages along the Indo-Tibetan borders. Because of this, India may have to pay a heavy price in terms of its territorial integrity and national security. In the future, this could change the demographic pattern in the world's highest frozen border — the Himalaya.

By invading Tibet, China has forcefully shifted the traditional borders between India and Tibet into the Sino-Indian boundary. Since then, the two Asian giants have been engaged in more than thousands of border skirmishes. Despite India's formal recognition of Tibet as a part of the People's Republic of China on two occasions — 1954 under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and 2004 under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee — Chinese leaders have always suspected India's role in the Tibetan movement. Apart from this, the Sino-Indian conflict over the Indo-Tibetan border remains as one of the longest geopolitical disputes in Asia. The centrality of Tibet is a key factor in resolving the China-India conflict. When Xi Jinping became the President of China on March 14, 2013, he gave utmost importance to the domestic stability in Tibet and the

safeguarding of its assumed frontiers. Subsequently, the Chinese authority has emphasised that "developments in Tibet are related to the overall work of the party and the country, and the focus of work in Tibet should be 'safeguarding' the motherland's reunification and national unity". By retaining China's Tibet policy of safeguarding national unity and reunification, China has re-strengthened the importance of "maintaining the stability of Tibet" as the security and safeguard of the national interest during the 7th Tibet Work Forum in 2020.

For securing the stability of Tibet and its borders, China has built a chain of border defence villages across the Himalayan frontiers, which share borders with India, Nepal and Bhutan. These villages are a part of China's veiled poverty alleviation programme to show the achievement of China's development in Tibet and to secure the borders simultaneously. Building infrastructures and well-designed border villages in Tibet's border regions are intrinsically linked to the dual-use infrastructure development, which serves as border watch-posts for monitoring cross-border migrations and occupying no-man's land on the Himalayan frontiers.

Both Professor Dawa Norbu and Claude Arpi have written on the dual-use of infrastructure development in Tibet. The good network of roads and railway lines



gives easy access to China for the deployment of its military in Tibet's border regions. According to the so-called China's Tibet Autonomous Region's (TAR) work report in 2017, the Chinese government has launched the rural rejuvenation programmes in the name of "the construction of well-off villages and simultaneous relocation of Tibetans in these villages". The relocation of people in Tibet's frontiers and building border defence villages are also outcomes of the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, in which Xi Jinping called for "Chinese people with talent to work in remote and border areas with the ethnic minority population". In July 2017, the TAR issued the "Plan for the Construction of Well-off Villages in the Border Area of the Tibet Autonomous

Region (2017-2020)". It involved the building of 628 border villages in TAR's 112 border towns across 21 border counties which are located in Shigatse, Lhokha, Nyingchi, and Ngari prefecture. China has built 354 well-off border villages in Lhokha which shares a border with the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. China claims that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of China. The construction of these villages could lay the groundwork for the future towns and cities in the bordering regions.

The Chinese government has allocated around RMB 30.1 billion (\$4.6 billion approximately) for building 628 border villages in Tibet. The allocation of the budget also includes the construction of housing facilities, infrastructure, and public service facilities. Out of these 628 administrative border villages, there are 427 first-line border villages and 201 second-line border villages. The first-line border defence villages are built in close proximity to or across the Line of Actual Control, which has a direct geopolitical impact for India, Nepal and Bhutan. The second-line border defense villages are located in Tibet's border regions. To encourage the people to settle there, the Chinese authority has facilitated a conducive environment and attractive subsidy to the residents of the border villages for their permanent settlement. The residents from the first line villages receive RMB 47,000, and the second line villages receive RMB 4,500 as an annual subsidy.

The new guidelines against 'service charge' and what you can do if a restaurant adds it to your bill

The CCPA was established in July 2020 under The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to promote, protect, and enforce the rights of consumers as a class, and to investigate, prosecute and punish violators

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on Monday issued guidelines to prevent unfair trade practices, and to protect the interest of consumers with regard to the levy of service charge in hotels and restaurants.

Under the guidelines, consumers can lodge complaints against hotels and restaurants by calling the number 1915.

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What can a consumer do in case of a violation of these guidelines?

The consumer has four options at different levels of escalation in case she spots the levy of service charge in her bill. First, she can make a request to the hotel or restaurant to remove the service charge from her bill. Second, she can lodge a complaint on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH), which works as an alternative dispute redressal mechanism at the pre-litigation level. The complaint can be lodged by making a call on the number 1915, or on the NCH mobile app. Third, the consumer can

complain to the Consumer Protection Commission, or through the edaakhil portal, <http://www.edaakhil.nic.in>. Fourth, she can submit a complaint to the District Collector of the concerned district for investigation and subsequent proceedings by the CCPA. A consumer can complain directly to the CCPA by sending an e-mail to com-ccpa@nic.in.

Why did the CCPA issue the guidelines?

The CCPA took cognizance of grievances regarding restaurants and hotels levying service charge by default, without first asking or informing consumers. On June 2, the Department of Consumer Affairs under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, held a meeting with restaurant associations and consumer organisations on the levy of service charge in hotels and restaurants. After the meeting, the department announced that the Centre would soon release a "robust framework" to ensure strict compliance of its 2017 guidelines which prohibited the levy of service charge. A day later, Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal said restaurants cannot ask customers to pay hidden charges. "You (restaurants) can raise wages of your workers by raising rates. There is no bar on that. We would welcome it if they raise their employees' wages. They are free to increase the wages of their employees and they are free to charge any rate," Goyal told a press conference on June 3. "Par chhal se chhupa hua ek rate, aur wo bhi kuchh charge karte hain kuchh nahin karte hain, padega ki kya real price hai? (But they cannot levy a charge by deceit; and when some of them do so and the others don't, how will people know what the real price is?)," Goyal said.



Under which law have these guidelines been issued?

The CCPA has issued guidelines under Section 18 (2) (I) of The Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The guidelines are in addition to the Centre's 2017 guidelines which prohibit the levy of service charge on consumers by hotels

and restaurants, and terms the charging for anything other than "the prices displayed on the menu card along with the applicable taxes" without the "express consent" of the customer as "unfair trade practices".

What do restaurants and hotels say?

Representatives of the hotel and restaurant industry told the Centre that the levy of service charge by a restaurant is a "matter of individual policy". There is "no illegality in levying such a charge", they said. They also said that service charge brings in revenue to the government, since tax is paid on it.



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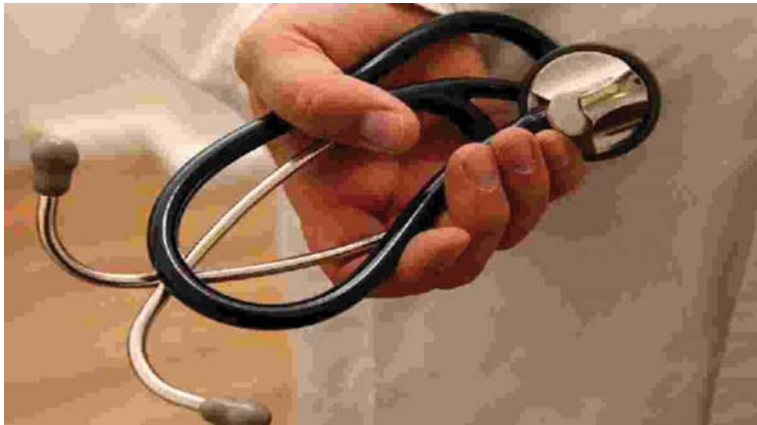
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Super bikers across Delhi-NCR join IHW Council's 'Gratitude Ride' for doctors, nurses and healthcare workers

The Gratitude Week (July 1-7) an initiative by IHW Council was institutionalized in the year 2020 at a time when the entire world was bearing the brunt of the unprecedented Covid19 pandemic and the only ray of hope was provided by the doctors who selflessly attended to patients



where the bikers commenced their journey where Lok Nayak Hospital, Fortis Vasant Kunj, Aakash Healthcare and Primus Hospital. The occasion also recognized the services of other frontline workers such as police, media, sanitation workers, essential services providers and delivery boys," IHW Council said in a statement. Our healthcare fraternity and frontline workers have shown extraordinary commitment during the pandemic. We are proud to be associated with a cause that is meant to express our collective gratitude to them. This program also highlights our commitment towards promoting road safety in India. The bikers who participated in the ride also emphasized on the message of road safety," Ajoy Shah, Head of Marketing Training,

JK Tyre & Industries stated. "The 3rd Edition of Gratitude Week, a unique initiative by Integrated Health and Wellbeing (IHW) Council was kick-started on National Doctors Day, with an online inaugural session. The session saw doctors from government as well as private sectors, coming together to share their challenges and experiences during the COVID19 pandemic," it stated. "Gratitude Week is a humble effort from our side to emphasize on the lifesaving role played by the doctors especially during the pandemic. Their contribution and sacrifices will be remembered for generations to come. Medical technology is growing at a rapid phase and much of the credit for that goes to our doctors and medical researchers, humanity is indeed indebted to them forever," Kamal

Narayan, CEO, IHW Council said in a statement. During the inaugural ceremony of Gratitude Week held on National Doctors Day, Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai, MoS for Women and Child Development shared his insights on the role of doctors in society and also congratulated the Integrated Health and Wellbeing (IHW) Council for organising the Gratitude Week commemorating doctors and frontline workers who played a pivotal role in mitigating the aftermaths of the pandemic.

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(News Agency) As part of IHW Council's Gratitude Week 2022 doctors and nurses at several hospitals Delhi, including those in the largest dedicated COVID-19 facility Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Hospital on Monday got a pleasant surprise when groups of super bikers came to greet them with flowers in their hands to express their gratitude for the selfless services the healthcare

fraternity has been rendering to people in the wake of the pandemic. The initiative was conducted in association with JK Tyre and Bharat Petroleum. Moreover, these bikers then headed to the Constitution Club of India where doctors and nurses representing several hospitals were felicitated in a formal ceremony. "The supporting hospitals for the initiative from

Gap between 2nd, precaution dose of Covid vaccine reduced to 6 months

Corresponding changes have been made in the CoWIN system to facilitate the new vaccine regimen

(News Agency) The Union Health Ministry has reduced the gap between the second and precaution dose of COVID-19 vaccine for all beneficiaries from nine to six months following a recommendation by NTAGI. Corresponding changes have been made in the CoWIN system to facilitate the new vaccine regimen.

In a letter to states and Union Territories, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Wednesday said the revision was made following a recommendation of the Standing Technical Sub-Committee of the



National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) six months or 26 weeks from the date of administration of the second dose at government view the evolving scientific CVCs, free of charge," Bhushan said. Instructions in this regard may be issued to all the officials concerned and it may also be publicized widely, the Union health secretary said. "I look forward to your support and leadership for extending the benefits of the precaution dose to all due beneficiaries at Covid vaccination centres as well as household level during the ongoing Har Ghar Dastak 2.0 campaign, he said in the letter addressed to chief secretaries and administrators of all states and Union Territories.

The recommendation has also been endorsed by NTAGI, Bhushan said. "Therefore, it has now been decided that the precaution dose for all beneficiaries from 18-59 years will be administered after completion of six months or 26 weeks from the date of administration of the second dose at Private Covid Vaccination Centres. For beneficiaries aged above 60 years and above as well as the healthcare and frontline workers, precaution dose would be administered after completion of

Shanghai, Beijing order new round of mass COVID-19 testing

(News Agency) Residents of parts of Shanghai and Beijing have been ordered to undergo further rounds of COVID-19 testing following the discovery of new cases in the two cities, while tight restrictions remain in place in Hong Kong, Macao and other Chinese cities. Shanghai has only just emerged from a strict lockdown that confined most of its 24 million residents to their homes for weeks and the new requirements have stirred concerns of a return of such harsh measures. The latest outbreak in China's largest city, a key international business centre, has been linked to a karaoke parlour that failed to enforce prevention measures among employees and customers, including the tracing of others they came into contact with, according to the city health commission. All such outlets have been ordered to temporarily suspend business, the city's department of culture and tourism said.

Shanghai's lockdown prompted unusual

protests both in person and online against the government's harsh enforcement, which left many residents struggling to access food and medical services and sent thousands to quarantine centres. Beijing has also seen a recent outbreak linked to a nightlife spot. It has been conducting regular testing for weeks and at least one residential compound in the suburb of Shunyi, which is home to many foreign residents, has been locked down with a steel fence installed over its entrance to prevent residents from leaving. Enforcement in China's capital has been far milder than in Shanghai, although officials continue to require regular testing and prevention measures. In the northern city of Xi'an, whose 13 million residents endured one of China's strictest lockdowns over the winter, restaurants have been restricted to takeout only and public entertainment spots closed for a week starting Wednesday.

New cases of HIV rise in Eastern Europe, decline in the West

Almost 160,000 people were diagnosed in Europe with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, according to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) regional office for Europe.

(News Agency) More than 130,000 people were newly diagnosed with HIV last year in Eastern Europe, the highest rate ever for the region, while the number of new cases in Western Europe declined, global public health experts said on Wednesday. European Union and European Economic Area countries saw a reduction in 2017 rates, mainly driven by a 20% drop since 2015 among men who have sex with men. That left Europe's overall increasing trend less steep than previously.

All told, almost 160,000 people were diagnosed in Europe with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, according to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) regional office for Europe. "It's hard to talk about good news in the face of another year of unacceptably high numbers of people infected with HIV," said Zsuzsanna Jakab, director of the WHO regional office. Calling on governments and health officials to recognise the seriousness of the situation, she urged them: "Scale up your response now." The United Nations AIDS agency UNAIDS warned in July that complacency was starting to stall the fight against the global epidemic, with the pace of progress not matching what is needed. Some 37 million people worldwide are infected with HIV.

Stay Healthy And Super Fit With Dried Fruits And These Healthy Bars

Dried fruits contain little to no fat. They also contain significant calories per serving, making them a natural source of energy for athletes. They are also a good supplement for people seeking to gain weight in a healthy way.



(News Agency) As healthy living has become a catchword these days, people have taken to eating dried fruits and health bars. Experts say these can give natural nutrients. V.V. Mani, Director, Operations, Unibic, and Suhasni Sampath, Co-Founder, Yoga Bars, explain how dry fruits and nuts used in health snack bars help the cause of healthy living:

Dried fruits generally contain more fiber than the same-sized serving of their fresh counterparts. Fiber helps in keeping your digestive system running smoothly.

The various dry fruits are packed naturally with a mix of nutritional elements like potassium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, iron, carotenoids, antioxidants, vitamins, dietary fiber, flavonoids, selenium and more apart from the good quality fat and protein that these provide. Dried fruits generally contain more fiber than the same-sized serving of their

fresh counterparts.

These help in various ways like increase of good cholesterol, reduction in bad cholesterol, maintaining blood pressure, blood sugar control, thyroid control, improving heart function, bowel

movement, skin health, hair control, cancer fighting properties, improving bone health, improved vision, easing digestion and fighting anaemia to name a few. Many of the dry fruits are low in glycemic index, and so, they help slow release of energy and control blood sugar.

Because most of the water is extracted from fruits, their nutrients are condensed into a small package. Dried fruits like apricots, raisins, prunes and figs contain high amounts of beta carotene, vitamin E, niacin, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium. Dried fruits contain little to no fat. They also contain significant calories per serving, making them a natural source of energy for athletes. They are also a good supplement for people seeking to gain weight in a healthy way. Dried fruits like apricots, raisins, prunes and figs contain high amounts of beta carotene, vitamin E, niacin, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium.



Obese children more likely to develop asthma than kids of a healthy weight, warns study

Parents, please take note. Your child's weight plays an important role in determining his or her asthma risk. Obese or overweight children are at an increased risk of asthma, a new study has found.

(News Agency) US obese youngsters were more likely to develop the lung condition than children of a healthy weight. The findings suggest that the incidence of an

asthma diagnosis among children with obesity was significantly higher than in those in a normal weight range and that 23-27% of new asthma cases were directly attributable to obesity.

"Paediatric asthma is among

the most prevalent childhood conditions and comes at a high cost to patients, families and the greater health system," said co-author Terri Finkel from Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando. "There are few preventable risk factors to reduce the incidence of asthma, but our data show that reducing the onset of childhood obesity could significantly lower the public health burden of asthma," Finkel added. For the study published in the journal Paediatrics, the research team analysed medical records of more than 500,000 children. The researchers reviewed de-identified

data of patients aged two to 17 without a history of asthma, receiving care from six paediatric academic

medical centres between 2009 and 2015. Overweight or obese patients were matched with normal weight patients of the same age, gender, race, ethnicity, insurance type and location of care. The researchers found that obesity

among children with asthma appears to increase disease severity. Being overweight was identified as a modest risk factor for asthma, and the association was diminished when the most stringent definition of asthma was used.



It's raining diamonds on these planets. They are in our solar system

There are two planets in our solar system where diamonds are raining, but we will never be able to get there in one piece

(News Agency) Monsoons have been a blessing from the immense heat that most of India has been withstanding in the past few months and as rains pour the temperature has substantially gone down. While the rain on Earth is made up of water (hydrogen and oxygen) droplets, there are some planets where these droplets are much heavier and thicker, and instead of water, they are made up of carbon. The temperature and pressure conditions on these planets are so extreme that carbon atoms could be crushed into diamonds in their

atmospheres raining down. These planets are not far from Earth and form the outer layer of our solar system. They are - Uranus and Neptune. These two worlds, while iconic for their blue-hazed appearance, are more than just eye-soothing colours. These two planets have conditions that could harden carbon atoms to such high extremes that they form diamonds. Unfortunately, you cannot survive on these planets to collect these diamonds.

WHY IS IT RAINING DIAMONDS?

Uranus and Neptune are characterised by

their unique shades of blue which, while they appear similar, are very different in features. This blue colour is the prime reason behind this unique condition on the planets. The colour is a result of methane, which condenses so rapidly upon these haze particles that it efficiently 'snows' out at the base of this layer, falling to lower, warmer levels, where the methane evaporates, releasing the core haze particles."Inside the planet, when it gets really hot and really dense, these, these diamonds form and accumulate, and then they become even heavier. And that means

that they kind of rain down in the atmosphere," Naomi Rowe-Gurney said. However, she also added that it's not the rain that we see here because these pressures are extreme, and we will never be able to get there as a human. Neptune and Uranus, the last two planets in the outer reaches of the solar system, have a lot in common including their sizes, masses and atmospheric compositions, yet they appear very different from each other. While Neptune, at a visible wavelength, has a distinctly bluer colour, Uranus is a pale shade of cyan.

One-fourth of seafloor equal to Europe mapped for the first time



(News Agency) Scientists have for the first time mapped one-fourth of the entire global ocean floor to better understand the unique features hiding beneath the waters. We know more about the Moon, its craters, and its surface than we know about the oceans and seafloor on Earth. But not for long, researchers have successfully mapped nearly one-fourth of the global seabed amassing information and data in large

chunks to create a digital map of the ocean floor. The development was revealed at the recently concluded UN Ocean Conference 2022, where researchers from the Seabed 2030 Project said that the figure now stands at 23.4 per cent, reflecting an increase of 10.1 million square kilometers of new bathymetric data from last year's figure.

The amount of sea floor that has been mapped now equates to an

area around the size of Europe, and slightly larger than the Sahara - Earth's largest hot desert.

WHAT IS SEABED 2030?

A collaborative project between The Nippon Foundation and the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), Seabed 2030 aims to chart the world's entire

Mapping the Oceans

ocean floor. Mitsuyuki Unno, Executive Director of The Nippon Foundation, announced the figures five years after the project was launched at the first-ever UN Ocean Conference in New York. "Despite covering over 70 per cent of the planet, our knowledge of what lies beneath the blue

surface has been severely limited. Without this crucial information, we cannot possibly set about having a sustainable future," Unno said, adding that in just five years Seabed 2030 has led the way in ocean mapping to achieve 23.4% of the seafloor mapped to a high resolution.

Ready for science: Another Webb Instrument tuned to find hiding planets

With two instruments ready for science, all eyes are on July 12 when the first images taken by the James Webb Telescope will be made public

(News Agency) The James Webb Telescope is ready for the July 12th observation as engineers ready instruments on the multi-billion-dollar observatory one after another. The Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI) is now ready for science after completing post-launch preparation. This is the second instrument after the Near-Infrared Imager and Slitless Spectrograph instrument (NIRISS) was tuned ahead of the first observations. Details with pictures from the first observations will be released on July 12 from 15,00,000 kilometers away from Earth. Engineers completed the calibration after checking its coronagraphic imaging capability, which uses two different styles of

masks to intentionally block starlight from hitting its sensors when attempting to make observations of the star's orbiting planets. Nasa said that these customized masks allow scientists to directly detect exoplanets and study dust disks around their host stars in a way that's never been done before. The instrument initially cooled off in the shade of Webb's tennis-court-size sunshield to about minus 183 degrees Celsius. It further used an electrically powered cryocooler to drop the temperatures to less than 7 kelvins. "These extreme operating temperatures

allow for MIRI to deliver mid-infrared images and spectra with an unprecedented combination of sharpness and sensitivity," Nasa has



said. "We are thrilled that MIRI is now a functioning, state-of-the-art instrument with performances across all its

capabilities better than expected. Our multinational commissioning team has done a fantastic job getting MIRI ready in the space of just a few weeks. Now we celebrate all the people, scientists, engineers, managers, national agencies, ESA, and NASA, who have made this instrument a reality as MIRI begins to explore the infrared universe in ways and to depths never achieved before," said Gillian Wright, MIRI European principal investigator. While there have been no details about the first target that the observatory will be focused on, the team will proceed through a list of targets that have been preselected and prioritized by an international committee to exercise Webb's powerful abilities.

Next stop Moon: Capstone mission escapes Earth's orbit on its way to lunar world

The Capstone mission, that will identify a new orbit around the Moon and pave the way for the big-ticket Moon missions, has left Earth's orbit on course to the lunar world

(News Agency) Days after being launched from New Zealand, the Capstone mission that will find a new route in lunar orbit has begun its journey towards the Moon. The Cislunar Autonomous Positioning System Technology Operations and Navigation Experiment (CAPSTONE) left low-Earth orbit and started its solo journey to the Moon. The spacecraft will reach the Moon in November of this year.

The Capstone mission was orbiting Earth attached to Rocket Lab's Photon upper stage since it lifted off on June 28 on top of a Rocket Lab Electron rocket Launch Complex 1 on the Mahia Peninsula of New Zealand. "Over the past six days, Photon's engines fired seven times at key moments to raise the orbit's highest point to around 810,000 miles from Earth before releasing the



Capstone CubeSat on its ballistic lunar transfer trajectory to the Moon. The spacecraft is now being flown by the teams at Advanced Space and Terran Orbital," Nasa said in a blog update. The spacecraft will now use its own propulsion and the Sun's

gravity to navigate the rest of the way to the Moon. The four-month journey will complete with the spacecraft inserting into its near rectilinear halo orbit (NRHO) around the Moon on November. 13. "The gravity-driven track will dramatically reduce the amount of fuel the

CubeSat needs to get to its target orbit around the Moon," Nasa added. Rocket Lab CEO Peter Beck said, "Feels like something epic should be said but all as I can say is perfect moon mission success." Once in lunar orbit, it will serve as the

first spacecraft to test a unique, elliptical lunar orbit and act as a pathfinder for Gateway, a Moon-orbiting outpost part of the Artemis program. Capstone will help reduce the risk for future spacecraft by validating innovative navigation technologies and verifying the dynamics of this unique, halo-shaped orbit. The spacecraft will use a dedicated payload flight computer and radio to perform calculations to determine where the CubeSat is in its orbital path and use the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO), hovering above Moon since 2009, as its reference point. The intention is for Capstone to communicate directly with LRO and utilize the data obtained from this crosslink to measure how far it is from LRO and how fast the distance between the two changes, which in turn determines Capstone's position in space.

Rovers from Earth will have to dig deeper to find life on Mars

Martian rovers looking for signs of ancient microbial life on the Red Planet will have to dig deeper



(News Agency) As the search for life on Mars intensifies with Perseverance, Curiosity, and China's Zhurong rover looking for signs of ancient bacterial life, a new study indicates they will have to work harder and dig deeper. Lab experiments have revealed that the rovers will have to dig at least 6.6 feet to find any possible signs. Scientists suspect that radiation from space could have degraded small molecules such as amino acids relatively quickly on the surface. Finding amino acids on Mars can be considered a potential sign of ancient Martian life because amino acids can be created by life, and are widely used by life on Earth to build proteins. "Our results suggest that amino acids are destroyed by cosmic rays in the Martian surface rocks and regolith

at much faster rates than previously thought. Current Mars rover missions drill down to about two inches. At those depths, it would take only 20 million years to destroy amino acids completely. The addition of perchlorates and water increases the rate of amino acid destruction even further," Alexander Pavlov, scientist with Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt said in a statement. The result suggests a new search strategy for missions that are limited to sampling at shallow depths. Just like Earth's thick atmosphere and global magnetic field that shields the surface from most cosmic rays, Mars also had these features but lost this protection as it aged. However, there's evidence that billions of years ago, liquid water

persisted on the surface of the Red Planet. Since liquid water is essential for life, scientists are searching for evidence of ancient Martian life by examining Mars rocks for organic molecules such as amino acids.

The team mixed several types of amino acids in silica, hydrated silica, or silica and perchlorate to simulate conditions in Martian soil and sealed the samples in test tubes under vacuum conditions to simulate the

thin Martian air. Some samples were kept at room temperature, about the warmest it ever gets on the surface of Mars, while others were chilled to a more typical minus 67 degrees Fahrenheit. The samples were blasted with various levels of gamma radiation similar to what Mars would have experienced over 80 million years of exposure. This experiment is the first to mix amino acids with simulated Martian soil. While amino acids have not been found

on Mars yet, they have been found in meteorites, including those from Mars. Organic matter has been found on Mars by Nasa's Curiosity and Perseverance rovers; however, it is not a conclusive sign of life since it could have been created by non-biological chemistry. The results of the experiment imply that it is likely that the organic material observed by these rovers has been altered over time by radiation and therefore not as it was when formed.

China rejects NASA accusation it will take over the moon

(News Agency) China has stepped up the pace of its space programme in the past decade, with exploration of the moon a focus. China made its first lunar uncrewed landing in 2013 and expects to launch rockets powerful enough to send astronauts to the moon towards the end of this decade. "We must be very concerned that China is landing on the moon and saying:

'It's ours now and you stay out'," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson told German newspaper Bild in an interview published on Saturday. The U.S. space agency chief said China's space programme was a military one and that China had stolen ideas and technology from others. "This is not the first time that the head of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

has ignored the facts and spoken irresponsibly about China," said Zhao Lijian, a spokesman at the Chinese foreign ministry. "The U.S. side has

constantly constructed a smear campaign against China's normal and reasonable outer space endeavours, and China firmly opposes such irresponsible remarks." China has always promoted the building of a shared

future for humanity in outer space and opposed its weaponisation and any arms race in space, he said. NASA, under its Artemis programme, plans to send a crewed mission to orbit the moon in 2024 and make a crewed landing near the lunar south pole by 2025. China is planning uncrewed missions to the moon's south pole some time this decade.



Hotels, restaurants barred from levying service charge

Amid rising complaints, the CCPA has issued guidelines for preventing unfair trade practices and violation of consumer rights with regard to levying of service charge



(News Agency) The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on Monday barred hotels and restaurants from levying service charge automatically or by default in

food bills and allowed customers to file complaints in case of violation. Amid rising complaints, the CCPA has issued guidelines for preventing unfair trade practices and violation of consumer rights with regard to levying of service charge. As per the guidelines, "No hotels or restaurants shall add service charge automatically or by default in the bill." There should not be any collection of service charge by any other name, it added. No hotel or

restaurant can force a consumer to pay service charge. They have to clearly inform the consumer that service charge is voluntary, optional and at consumer's discretion. "No restriction on entry or provision of services based on collection of service charge shall be imposed on consumers," the guideline said. Further, service charge cannot be collected by adding it along with the food bill and levying GST on the total amount. If any consumer finds

that a hotel or restaurant is levying service charge in violation of the guidelines, s/he can request the concerned establishment to remove it from the bill amount. The consumers can also lodge a complaint on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH), which works as an alternate dispute redressal mechanism at the pre-litigation level, by calling 1915 or through the NCH mobile app. They can also file complaints with the Consumer Commission.

India is in better position than most other countries, says Sanjiv Goenka on economic situation



"We are in a much better position than most other countries. Once the Russia and Ukraine conflict ends, a flurry of investments will be announced," Sanjiv Goenka said at the fifth edition of the India Today Conclave East

Ukraine, said Sanjiv Goenka, founder and chairperson of RPSG Group.

"We are in a much better position than most other countries. Once the Russia and Ukraine conflict ends, a flurry of investments will be announced," Goenka said at the fifth edition of the India Today Conclave East.

Goenka said that the situation during the Covid pandemic and that of current due to geo-political conflict are different. "Covid, when it hit us, was huge uncertainty. Today it is a political one due to the Russia and Ukraine conflict.

Once this ends, there will be a rush of announcements.

Investment plans have been chalked out," Goenka said. He said that sectors like steel, cement, and paper are doing very well. Goenka said that his company's greater focus on fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), retail, sports as this helps connect with consumers directly.

NOT ANOTHER FUTURE Goenka said that his company's emphasis will shift to the new-age business. "We are debt-free, we did not take debt for the retail business. We are focusing on regions where we don't need to spend on backend infrastructure," he said. Talking about competition from big conglomerates like Reliance and

Amazon in the retail sector, Goenka said, "We have no intention of becoming another Future."

FORAY INTO AYURVEDA

Goenka said that his company is focussing on Ayurveda. "We got into Ayurveda and took time, now we are launching ayurveda with a difference," he said. Citing an example, Goenka said that his company would launch "diabetic Chyawanprash". **IPO** Talking about the current situation of start-ups and the trend of opting for the initial public offering (IPO) route, Goenka said that public listing is relevant when a company starts making a profit.

(News Agency) India is in a much better position than most other countries during the ongoing conflict between Russia and

New Motor Insurance Scheme Allows You to Pay Premiums Only When You Drive; How it Works

(News Agency) Edelweiss General Insurance (EGI), has launched SWITCH, a one-of-its-kind on-demand, mobile telematics-based comprehensive motor insurance, for customers who want their vehicle insurance plans to be hassle-free. Launched under the IRDAI's Sandbox scheme, SWITCH is completely digital that comes as a money-saving option for those who drive well. The motor insurance is subscription-based, which means that customers can pay the premium monthly depending on the usage.

SWITCH can be bought online at www.edelweissinsurance.com. Post-purchase, customers can download the SWITCH app from Google Play Store and

the iOS App store to see their policy, Edelweiss General Insurance said in a press release on Monday. "The app detects motion and automatically activates insurance when the vehicle is driven, making it convenient and hassle-free for customers," it said.

The unique nature of the SWITCH vehicle insurance allows customers to save money if they are driving well. "This usage-based model measures not only the quantity but also the quality of driving and calculates premium accordingly. This makes SWITCH unparalleled in the market as the only motor insurance product that generates a real-time driving score and dynamically rates the premium," said Edelweiss in the press

release. Customers are given a driving score based on several driving parameters such as overspeeding, distracted driving, sudden braking, etc. Therefore, the better you drive, the better your score will be and the less you will have to pay. In addition, policyholders will no longer need to switch on the policy if they use their car as the app will do it for them automatically.

The entire product lifecycle is digital, right from purchase, to claim intimation, claim settlement, customer service, etc., thereby providing a seamless customer experience. The policy also allows customers to pay premiums in monthly installments after the initial premium is paid to activate the policy, making it convenient for them.

While the policy covers accidental damage while in motion and switched on, the vehicle will be covered 24x7 round the year against fire and theft as these incidents can happen even if the vehicle is not being driven, Edelweiss said in the statement. "Customers can also opt for, and avail of, multiple add-on covers such as depreciation protect, engine protect, NCB protect, roadside assistance and more, as are offered with a regular Edelweiss motor insurance policy," it said. Talking about the policy, Edelweiss General Insurance executive director and CEO Shanai Ghosh said, "SWITCH has been designed keeping in mind the changing driving preferences of today's mobile-savvy customers."

New Labour Code: Unorganised Workers To Get Benefits Of Employees' State Insurance Scheme



health and working capacity. It provides financial assistance to compensate the loss of his/ her wages during the period of his abstinence from work due to sickness, maternity and employment injury. The scheme provides medical care to his/her family members also. The ESI scheme is a self-financing scheme. The ESI funds are primarily built out of the contribution from employers and employees payable monthly at a fixed percentage of wages paid. The State Governments also bear 1/8th share of the cost of medical benefit. Through a small contribution, the benefit of free treatment is available under hospitals and dispensaries of ESIC. Currently, it's available for the organised sector workers only. After retirement also, an Insured person who superannuates or retires under a voluntary Retirement Scheme or takes premature retirement, after being

an insured person for not less than 5 years, shall be eligible to receive medical benefit for himself and his spouse subject to production of proof thereof, and payment of a nominal contribution of rupees one hundred and twenty for one year. In case the insured person expires his spouse shall continue to receive medical benefit on the payment of contribution.

ESIC and the New Social Security Code

Under the code, The doors of ESIC will now be opened for the workers of all sectors along with the workers of the unorganised sector. Expansion of ESIC hospitals, dispensaries and branches upto district level. This facility to be increased from 566 districts to all the 740 districts of the country.

Under the new code, even if a single worker is engaged in hazardous work, he would be given ESIC benefit. Gig workers

engaged in new technology will also be given an opportunity to join ESIC. Apart from this, plantation workers will also get benefits of the ESIC. Institutions working in the hazardous area will be compulsorily registered with the ESIC.

Other New Benefits of Social Security Code

The benefit of pension scheme (EPFO) will be open to all workers of organised, unorganised and self-employed sectors. A social security fund will be created to provide comprehensive social security to the unorganised sector. The requirement of minimum service has been removed for payment of gratuity in case of fixed term employees, according to the new code. Employees engaged on fixed term will also get same social security benefit as permanent employees, and a national database of workers of the unorganised sector will be created through registration on a portal.

(News Agency) The four new labour codes — new wage code on wages, social security, industrial relations, and occupation safety, health and working conditions — are soon going to become a reality. Once implemented, under the social security code, the Employees' State Insurance Scheme of India (ESIC) will be opened up for the unorganised sector workers also.

Here's about the ESIC and the new social security code:

What Is ESIC?

The ESIC Scheme, which is administered by a statutory corporate body called the Employees' State Insurance Corporation, provides full medical care to the employee registered under the ESI Act, 1948 during the period of his incapacity, restoration of his

Growth matters, says Mamata Banerjee on joining hands with Adani, Ambani



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "Politics is something different, Industry is something different. If you want to grow, you have to involve all"

(News Agency) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said that politics and industry should not be mixed and cited the state's growth as the reason why her government chose to join hands with Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani's conglomerates - Adani Group and Reliance Industries.

"Politics is something different, industry is something different. If you want to grow, you have to involve all. You have to divide the fruit for all. I don't mind who is A, who is B, who is C, who is D. I mind who matters," CM Banerjee said at the fifth edition of the India Today Conclave East 2022.

She also attacked the central government, claiming that it only encourages BJP-minded business personalities. "The Modi government only encourages BJP-minded people where they keep money and where they get money. That is the basic difference between us and them - our interest is to build up the industry and wherever the opportunity is," CM Banerjee said.

"Adani group is doing data bank here. Mukesh Ambani's group is building a cable landing station here. There is opportunity from every corner," she said.

ADANI'S INVESTMENT IN BENGAL

Earlier in June, the West Bengal government gave its nod to Adani Enterprises to set up a hyper-scale data centre at Bengal Silicon Valley in the New Town area on the outskirts of the capital city, Kolkata. The state cabinet gave its go-ahead to the company to set up the facility on 51.75 acres of land. "The state cabinet today gave the nod to the proposal by Adani Enterprises to set up a 100 per cent hyper-scale data centre at Bengal Silicon Valley in New Town, Rajarhat. The project will come up on 51.75 acres of land, which has been given on a 99-year lease," West Bengal Industry Minister Partha Chatterjee then said. Bengal Silicon Valley is an innovative information technology hub which is envisioned to attract investment in IT, ITeS and telecom projects with employment potential. During the sixth edition of the Bengal Global Business Summit in April this year, the Adani Group committed Rs 10,000 crore of

investment over a decade to port infrastructure, data centres and undersea cables, centres of excellence in digital innovation, fulfilment centres, warehouses and logistics parks. "Over the next decade, we expect our

total investment in Bengal to exceed Rs 10,000 crore. Thereafter, as we continue to expand here, we will bring into Bengal our world-class expertise across the green energy value chain," Adani

Group chairman Gautam Adani said at Bengal Global Business Summit 2022 (BGBS). Gautam Adani said the investment will help generate 25,000 direct and indirect employment.

Rupee falls 5 paise to 78.99 against US dollar

On the interbank forex market on Monday, the rupee opened 5 paise lower at 78.99 against the US dollar

(News Agency) The rupee fell to nearly 79 against the US dollar in early trade on Monday. This came as concerns remained over sustained inflation and continuing foreign fund outflows weighed. On the interbank forex market on Monday, the rupee opened 5 paise lower at 78.99 against the American currency, according to a PTI report. The rupee hit a record closing low of 79.05 against the US dollar on Friday, versus Thursday's close of 78.97. On Monday, share

markets remained subdued. The Sensex fell 0.01 per cent or 6.82 points to 52,901.11. The Nifty was down by 0.11 per cent or 16.95 points to 15,735.10. Meanwhile, the central government last week raised its basic import duty on gold

second biggest consumer of the precious metal tries to dampen demand and bring down the trade deficit. India meets most of its gold demand through imports. That has put pressure on the rupee, which hit a record low earlier on Friday.



Hema Malini once combed Shah Rukh Khan's hair and he 'decided not to leave Mumbai after that'

Shah Rukh Khan, who starred in Hema Malini's film Dil Aashna Hai, had revealed why he decided to not leave Mumbai after she combed his hair. The film was produced and directed by Hema. It also featured Divya Bharti

(News Agency) Actor Shah Rukh Khan worked in Hema Malini's directorial Dil Aashna Hai in the 1990s. During an old interview, Shah Rukh Khan revealed that Hema once 'combed' his hair during their shooting. Shah Rukh and Hema were last seen together in Veer-Zaara, which released in 2004.

Dil Aashna Hai was produced and directed by Hema under the HM Creations banner. The film starred Shah Rukh, Divya Bharti, Jeetendra, Mithun Chakraborty, Dimple Kapadia, Amrita Singh and Sonu Walia. Dil Aashna Hai was the first film that Shah Rukh signed in 1991 but due to

delays, it got released in December 1992. The release came just a few months after he made his debut with Deewana which released in June 1992.

During an appearance on India TV's show Aap Ki Adalat, Shah Rukh revealed that Hema Malini called him for work and told him, "You would have to do makeup and all'. I told her 'I am a Delhi boy and don't have much idea about make-up'. Then Hema ji came to me and combed my hair, that was the day when I decided that I will stay here and will never leave Mumbai." In her biography, Hema Malini: Beyond The Dream Girl, Hema

wrote about she didn't like Shah Rukh's hair during his audition because she wasn't able to see his eyes. An excerpt from her book reads, as quoted by Filmfare, "Hema remembers how nervous Shah Rukh had been during that first meeting. Apparently, every question of hers was met with a breathless, incoherent reply! The first audition left her dissatisfied. Hema suggested they try again – this time with his hair gelled back and his colourful jacket replaced with a plain tee. The results were satisfactory but just to be doubly sure, Hema called Dharmendra over to come and



meet the young actor. Dharam, it is believed, took a liking to the young man instantly." Currently, Shah Rukh is gearing up for the release of Pathan. The film is backed by Yash Raj Films and directed by Siddharth Anand and features Shah Rukh in the lead role. The film also stars Deepika Padukone and John Abraham

and will release on January 25, 2023. In Jawan, Shah Rukh is collaborating with filmmaker Atlee. The movie will land in theatres on June 2, 2023. Apart from these films, Shah Rukh will also be seen in Rajkumar Hirani's Dunki. Along with Shah Rukh, Taapsee Pannu is also a part of the film which will release on December 22, 2023.

Javed Akhtar threatened me for not apologising to Hrithik Roshan, Kangana Ranaut tells Mumbai court

Actor Kangana Ranaut told the court that Javed Akhtar threatened and insulted her after she refused to apologise to Hrithik Roshan



JAVED AKHTAR INSULTED ME, SAYS KANGANA RANAUT

In court, her sister and witness Rangoli Chandel was present when Ranaut submitted that when she refused to accede to Akhtar's demand to apologise to Roshan, Akhtar got upset and insulted her modesty. She alleged that he threatened her with adverse consequences from the Roshan family, who he claimed had influences in the government and could have her jailed. Kangana stated that Akhtar had said, "We will not take time to put up impostors, then it will be open to the public to know that your affair was not with Hrithik but with impostors,

then your face will be blackened, there will be so much infamy in the public that you will have no other way except suicide. We have evidence, they have all the ministries, apologize and save yourself. A girl from a good family will be drown in shame. If you have little shame to save your honor, then don't insist."

PROVOKED ME TO DIE BY SUICIDE, SAYS ACTOR

Akhtar provoked her to commit suicide, causing mental disturbance, her statement added. Ranaut in her complaint alleged that Akhtar committed "serious crimes" against her. She claimed in the plea that to lower her public image and give

a favourable public verdict in support of the co-star, Akhtar allegedly "forced Ranaut to tender a written apology to the co-star" which she claimed was "extortion of an apology", according to her lawyer Rizwan Siddiquee.

Ranaut had sought issuance of process against Javed Akhtar under Sections 383, 384, 387 (extortion), 503, 506 (criminal intimidation) and 509 (outraging modesty of woman) of the Indian Penal Code. This complaint was filed after Akhtar had registered a criminal complaint in the Andheri Magistrate court against Ranaut in 2020 for criminal defamation.

(News Agency) Actor Kangana Ranaut told a court in Mumbai that Bollywood lyricist, Javed Akhtar threatened and insulted her after she refused to apologise to actor Hrithik Roshan and has committed the offence of extortion. The actor on Monday appeared before the court in connection with a defamation complaint filed against her by Javed Akhtar.

Last year, Kangana Ranaut had registered a complaint against Akhtar and following this, she recorded her statement before the Andheri Metropolitan Magistrate court as part of procedure. During the recording of her statement, Ranaut had requested the court that no one should be present except her

sister and lawyer. The court had accepted this request of hers and advocate Jay Bharadwaj, representing Akhtar, also stepped out of the court room.

Raj Babbar sentenced to two-year jail by Mumbai court for assaulting polling officer in 1996 case

(News Agency) Raj was convicted for voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant from performing his duty and three other offences. The court also imposed a fine of ₹8,500 on him. The polling officer had lodged an FIR against Raj during an election in May 1996. The complaint was lodged at the Wazirganj police station here. At that time, Raj was contesting from the Samajwadi Party. Raj was present in the courtroom when the verdict was

announced. Born to Kaushal Kumar and Shobha Rani on 23 June 1952 in UP's Agra district, Raj Babbar graduated in theatre. He also studied at Delhi reputed National School of Drama. He made his film debut in 1980 with Insaaf Ka Tarazu. Some of his notable films are Saazish, Aankhen, Dalaal, The Gambler, Andaz, Yaarana, Barsaat, and Ziddi. After working in more than 150 movies and 30

plays, the actor decided to foray into the active politics. Raj joined Samajwadi Party in early 90s and was nominated to Rajya Sabha in 1994. There he worked in various committees including Home Affairs; Consultative Committee, Ministry of Civil Aviation. In 1999, he contested the Agra constituency and defeated his nearest rival BS Rawat of BJP by a margin of more than 1,10,000 votes.





When Zayed Khan said he can't blame anyone for his career: 'I did impulsive things'

Zayed Khan once spoke about his career in Bollywood and said that he was young and did impulsive things while working in films. He turned 42 on Tuesday

(News Agency) Actor Zayed Khan kickstarted his Bollywood journey with his first film Chura Liya Hai Tumne alongside Esha Deol and went on to be a part of films like Mai Hoon Na, Wada, Dus and Cash. About his career, he once said that films back then happened a lot due to luck. He also said that he cannot blame anyone for not being on top of his career. Zayed Khan is the son of actor-filmmaker Sanjay Khan and Zarine Katrak. He is the brother of interior designer Sussanne Khan who was previously married to actor Hrithik Roshan. Zayed last appeared in the 2015 film Sharafat Gayi Tel Lene and is likely to announce his comeback movie soon. Despite being from a filmy background, Zayed didn't get a taste of fame overnight. Talking about his film journey, he told Telly Chakkar in 2017,

"So much has changed now; when we did films it happened with lots of chances and luck. There was no definitive planning as such. It used to be like 'I want to be with the best makers, talented people, work with them and do films.' It was an industry of great camaraderie. There was no professional bitterness and it has seeped in today. Having said that, I was very young and I did impulsive things." "I think I can't blame anybody for anything. Why wasn't I up (top of his career) there all the time... I looked at it (dynamics of the industry) as if this is going to be there forever but it was my indiscipline in reality," he explained why he might have not been his best version. Zayed turned 42 on Tuesday. He will be next seen in an upcoming film, which will be released on an OTT platform.



Rajkummar Rao says 'nepotism will always be there' in film industry 'but your work and talent will speak'

Rajkummar Rao has said that 'nepotism will always be there' in the film industry. He added that opportunities also exist along with it though

(News Agency) Actor Rajkummar Rao has opened up about nepotism in the film industry saying that it 'will always be there'. In a new interview, Rajkummar also said that though nepotism exists there are also many opportunities in the industry. He spoke about his friends and classmates like Jaideep Ahlawat and Pratik Gandhi, who are getting recognition on OTT platforms. Rajkummar made his acting debut with Love Sex Aur Dhokha (2010) but gained recognition with supporting roles in Gangs of Wasseypur-Part 2 and

Talaash: The Answer Lies Within (2012). He also featured in Kai Po Che, Shahid, Queen, Bareilly Ki Barfi, Aligarh, Ludo, Newton, The White Tiger and Stree among others. Rajkummar won the National Film Award for Shahid. In an interview with India Today, Rajkummar said, "Nepotism will always be there, but now there are many opportunities. I have friends who were my classmates but are getting recognition now, thanks to OTT platforms. Like Jaideep (Ahlawat) who did so well in Pataal Lok and Pratik (Gandhi) in Scam 1992. Nepotism will be there, but your

work and talent will speak." He also spoke about hit films and the kind of movies he prefers. "No one knows the formula of a hit film, you have to keep trying and then leave it to destiny. I haven't really thought about why South films are doing well, maybe because they are good films, the hard work shows. But I believe cinema goes through phases, at one point we were shooting songs in Switzerland, then we started telling small-town stories, and now it is time for larger-than-life cinema that the South offers."

Akshay Kumar responds to question about joining politics: 'I do whatever possible to take up social issues'

(News Agency) Actor Akshay Kumar has responded to a question about joining politics. The actor was speaking at the book launch of Hinduja's and Bollywood, held at the Institute of Directors at London's Pall Mall. When asked the question, the actor ruled out joining politics, saying he was "very happy" doing films.

Akshay began his career in 1991

with Saugandh but his first commercial success came with the action thriller Khiladi (1992), leading to the Khiladi film series. He has featured in nearly 100

films in his over-three decades-long career. He has also won several awards, including a National Film Award. He was last seen in the historical drama Samrat Prithviraj, which released theatrically on June 3. Directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi, the film also features Manushi Chhillar, Sanjay Dutt, Sonu Sood, Manav Vij, Ashutosh Rana, and Sakshi Tanwar.

As per news agency PTI, when asked about joining politics at the event, Akshay said he tries

to do his bit through cinema. "I am very happy making films... As an actor, I do whatever possible to take up social issues. I have produced 150 films, the one nearest to my heart is Raksha Bandhan. I produce commercial films, sometimes with social issues. I produce three-four films a year," Akshay who was the chief guest at the event, said.



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