

## No Bail



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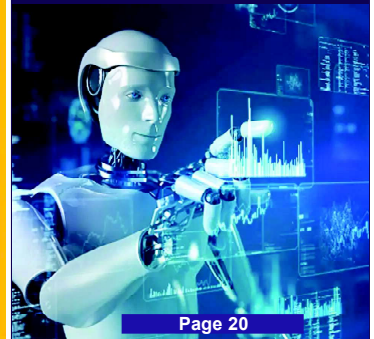
## Trump forum

A big test for CNN

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## Artificially intelligent art vs naturally creative artists



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## Without Talks or Handshakes, How Will India Improve Relations With Pakistan?



(SAI Bureau) We have just hosted the foreign minister of Pakistan, a young dynast of the sort India is familiar with. His mother, who was prime minister, was assassinated by extremists, his grandfather, who was prime minister and also president earlier, was assassinated by the judiciary and the Army.

(Story on page 21)

## PM Modi to Visit US Next Month, President Joe Biden to Host State Dinner

(SAI Bureau)- The US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden will welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States for an official state visit on June 22. The announcement was made by the White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Wednesday. The state visit will also feature a state dinner. The White House said that the visit will reaffirm the strong partnership and warm relationship between the United States and India. In the press release, the White House said that the visit will further bolster the shared commitment to a free, open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific.

(Story on page 22)



## Love Jihad: Religious Ambivalence Versus Extreme Fundamentalism

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## Why Mamata banned The Kerala Story in Bengal

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## The Real 'Kerala Story' is Much Bigger and More Worrisome

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# George Santos in custody, federal indictment unsealed ahead of first court appearance

**Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., to make first court appearance on Wednesday**

(South Asian Insider Bureau)-The federal indictment against Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., was unsealed Wednesday ahead of his first court appearance on federal charges.

A 13-count indictment was made public Wednesday in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York charging the congressman with seven counts of wire fraud, three counts of money laundering, one count of theft of public funds, and two counts of making materially false statements to the House of Representatives. The indictment was returned Tuesday under seal by a federal grand jury sitting in Central Islip, New York. Santos was arrested Wednesday morning and will be arraigned in the afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Arlene R. Lindsay at the federal courthouse in Central Islip. He currently is being held at that federal courthouse.

"This indictment seeks to hold Santos accountable for various alleged fraudulent schemes and brazen misrepresentations," U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said in a statement. "Taken together, the allegations in the indictment charge



Santos with relying on repeated dishonesty and deception to ascend to the halls of Congress and enrich himself. He used political contributions to line his pockets, unlawfully applied for unemployment benefits that should have gone to New Yorkers who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and lied to the House of Representatives. My Office and our law enforcement partners will continue to aggressively root out corruption and self-dealing from our community's public institutions and hold public officials accountable to the constituents who elected them." Santos, who also goes by Anthony

Devolder, unsuccessfully ran in 2020 to represent New York's Third Congressional District but was victorious his second time around in 2022. He was sworn in on Jan. 7, 2023, mere days after the New York Times exposed that Santos allegedly fabricated large swathes of his résumé, including that he had worked for two major Wall Street firms, graduated from Baruch College and was a descendant of a Holocaust survivor. The Times reported Santos was also facing pending fraud charges in his native Brazil. In January, the local Nassau County GOP demanded Santos resign, namely taking issue with

the freshman congressman allegedly lying about his Jewish ancestry, but he refused. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, hanging onto a narrow Republican majority, said Santos would be removed if a House Ethics probe revealed he violated campaign finance laws. "As a retired NYPD Detective, I am confident the justice system will fully reveal Congressman Santos' long history of deceit, and I once again call on this serial fraudster to resign from office," Rep. Anthony D'Esposito, a fellow Republican freshman congressman whose district borders Santos', said in a statement to Fox News Digital.

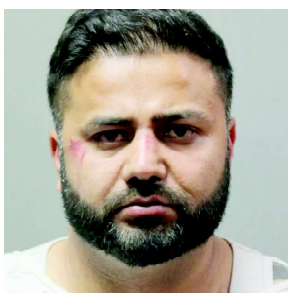
Asked by Fox News on Wednesday about Santos' indictment, Rep. Marcus Molinaro, R-N.Y., remarked in the corridors of Capitol Hill, "I can't wait for him to be gone." Rep. Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., expressed a similar sentiment off-camera. The DOJ indictment alleges that at the height of the pandemic in 2020, Santos applied for and received unemployment benefits while he was earning an annual salary of \$120,000 from a Florida investment firm and running for Congress in

New York. He alleged received more than \$24,000 in unemployment insurance benefits from the New York State Department of Labor.

Santos' alleged behavior continued during his second run for Congress when he allegedly pocketed tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions and laundered it into his own bank accounts to pay down personal debts and buy designer clothing. Santos is also accused of lying on House financial disclosures about income and dividends earned through Devolder Organization LLC, based out of Florida, and unemployment benefits.

House GOP leadership used their weekly press conference Wednesday to blast the Biden administration ahead of the expiration of Title 42 later this week, but also responded to questions about Santos. Rep. Steve Scalise, R-La., noted that Santos no longer is serving on committees, saying that "in America, there is a presumption of innocence, but there are serious charges, and he's going to have to go through the legal process."

## Teens Killed In Crash: Roslyn Man Accused Of Driving Drunk, Wrong Way, Fleeing Scene In Jericho



(News Agency)- The crash happened around 10:20 p.m. Wednesday, May 3 in Jericho.

A 2019 Dodge Ram operated by a 34-year-old man was traveling southbound on Route 106 (North Broadway) in the northbound lanes and collided with a 2019 Alfa Romero four-door sedan occupied by four teenage boys, Nassau County Police said.

As a result of the collision, two of the boys, both 14 years old, suffered fatal injuries and were pronounced dead at the scene.

The boys' identities have not yet been released.

The other boys, ages 16 and 17, were taken to a local hospital and admitted for internal injuries but are currently listed in stable condition. The 17-year-old was the driver of the Alfa Romeo.

After the initial collision, the Alfa Romero then additionally struck a 2023 Volvo, occupied by a 49-year-old woman and a 16-year-old male passenger, police said.

They were treated at the scene for minor injuries and released. The driver of the 2019 Dodge Ram, Amandeep Singh, of Roslyn, was arrested and transported to a local hospital for minor injuries. He will be arraigned on Thursday, May 4, at First District Court in Hempstead. The Nassau County Police Department said more information on the crash would be released on Thursday afternoon.

## Spain considers ending or curbing controversial 'golden visa' scheme

(South Asian Insider Bureau)-Inigo Errejon, the leader of the Mas Pais political party, told reporters that his party and the Social Security Ministry had reached an agreement to end the program. The programme allows property buyers who spend at least €500,000, as well as their families, to receive a three-year residence permit. Errejon stated that "Spanish citizenship can't be bought" and added that the golden visas have led to an "brutal rise" in housing prices, forcing locals from their neighborhoods without creating new jobs.

The ministry refused to confirm any plans to end the program. Officials familiar with the discussions said that no agreement has yet been reached, as the ministry is still studying the proposals of political parties.



El Pais reported earlier on Monday (8 May) that Spain is considering stricter requirements for applications of golden visas.

The European Commission urged EU member states not to allow investors to become citizens and to tighten the checks on residency permits. They described these programs as a risk to security and money laundering.

Portugal, a neighboring country,

said that it would stop a similar program in March.

According to government statistics, from the beginning of the golden visa program in 2013 up until November last year, Spain granted almost 5,000 permits. Chinese investors topped the list. Errejon claimed that the visas were a kind of "backdoor privilege" for millionaires and turned Spain into "a sort of colony which often attracts dark money".



# More Indians eyeing EB-5 visas to resettle in US



(South Asian Insider Bureau)-An increasing number of Indians are turning to EB-5 visas for resettlement in the US even as there are concerns of job cuts, as per United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data. In order to obtain an EB-5 visa, which holds parity with a Green Card, individuals are required to invest a minimum of \$800,000 towards creating a minimum of 10 job opportunities. Indians are reportedly collaborating to pool funds and invest in real estate projects to fulfil this requirement, media

reports said on May 9.

"We can take 20 investors with \$800,000 each, to collect \$16 million. The sum will then be lent to a developer who's building a \$50 million rental apartment, building, or a hotel. And the investors don't have to buy it, they don't have to manage it and don't have to employ any people, it's a passive investment and they make a return through interest," said Nicholas A Mastroianni III, president and chief marketing officer of US Immigration Fund (USIF), a company that facilitates EB-5 visas.



## India, Canada agree to increase discussions on movement of skilled professionals, students

(South Asian Insider Bureau)- India and Canada have agreed to increase discussions on the movement of skilled professionals and students as they are contributing immensely in strengthening the economic ties between the two countries. A joint statement was issued after the meeting between Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Canadian Minister of International Trade, export promotion, small business and economic development Mary Ng. Both the leaders emphasised on the importance of a comprehensive trade agreement. In 2022, both the countries resumed negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). In pursuit of that goal, talks towards an Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA), as a transitional step towards the CEPA, have been under way and several rounds of discussions have already taken place. The EPTA would cover, among others, high level commitments in goods, services, investment, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, and dispute settlement. Both the Ministers meet as part

of the India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment. Mr. Goyal was in Canada for this meeting. "The Ministers noted the significant movement of professionals and skilled workers, students and business travellers between the two countries, and its immense contribution to enhancing the bilateral economic partnership. And in this context, (they) noted the desire for enhanced discussions in the area of migration and mobility," the statement said. Both sides agreed to continue to discuss ways to deepen and strengthen the bilateral innovation ecosystem through an appropriate mechanism to be determined. On increasing cooperation in the area of critical minerals, the Ministers agreed on the importance of government-to-government coordination to promote critical mineral supply chain resiliency. "They also agreed to explore options for business-to-business engagement on critical minerals between the two countries and have committed to an annual dialogue at the officials level on the margins of the Prospectors and Developers Association Conference in Toronto," it added. There is a huge demand for critical minerals such as lithium, titanium,

vanadium, cobalt, nickel and graphite in India as the country is targeting to boost the production of renewable energy by 2030. Further, the two countries also discussed ways to increase cooperation in sectors such as agricultural goods, chemicals, green technologies, infrastructure, automotive, clean energy, electronics, and minerals and metals. "The Ministers further asked their officials to discuss trade remedy issues of bilateral importance on a regular basis," the statement said. The two sides also agreed to explore enhanced cooperation through measures such as coordinated investment promotion, information exchange and mutual support between the two parties in near future. "This cooperation between India and Canada will be finalised by way of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) preferably this year," it added. "They emphasised enhancing cooperation in sectors such as clean technologies for infrastructure development, critical minerals, electric vehicles and batteries, renewable energy/hydrogen, and AI (artificial



intelligence)," it said. Both the Ministers held discussions on relaunching the Canada-India CEO Forum and India also invited top Canadian universities to set up their campuses here. India attracted \$3.2 billion foreign direct investment during April 2000 and December 2022. India's exports to Canada stood at \$3.8 billion during April-February 2022-23 as against \$3.76 billion in 2021-22. Imports from Canada stood at \$3.77 billion during the 11-month period last year as against

\$3.2 billion in 2021-22. Major items of Indian exports include medicines, garments, diamonds, chemicals, gems and jewellery, petroleum oils, made-up, sea food, engineering goods, marble and granite, rice, electric equipment, and plastic products. Imports included pulses, fertilizers, newsprint, aircraft and aviation equipment, diamonds, copper ores and concentrates, bituminous coal, wood pulp, nickel, unwrought aluminum, asbestos, and cameras.



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A leadership breakfast was recently held in Long Island, New York. American Diversity Forum, led by well known community leader Mohinder Singh Taneja organized this event. Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino was presented an honorary Shawl as a token of appreciation on behalf of the community. (Seen in picture: Supervisor Joseph Saladino, Mohinder Singh Taneja and Attorney Jessica).



Town of Hempstead recently celebrated Israel @ 75. Hempstead Town's elected leaders, Supervisor Don Clavin, Town Clerk Kate Murray, Councilwoman Melissa "Missy" Miller, Councilman Thomas Muscarella, Councilwoman Laura Ryder, Councilman Christopher Carini, Councilman Dennis Dunne, Sr. Deputy Supervisor & Senior Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby were in presence. Town partnered with Eric Post AJC Long Island Mindy Perlmutter Naiman Jewish Community Relations Council - Long Island (JCRC-LI) Michael Cohen Simon Wiesenthal Center. A special thanks was given to Zahid Syed, TOH community affairs Executive Affairs.



Country Chicken & Burgers, a unique concept in casual, fast dining & take out recently opened their doors for the public. Restaurant is located on Old Country Road, in Westbury, Long Island. To mark the opening, a Grand Opening event was organized. While Don Clavin, Supervisor, Town of Hempstead sent his best wishes, Kate Murray, Town of Hempstead Clerk performed the Ribbon Cutting ceremony with Jennine Driscoll, Receiver of Taxes. Zahid Syed, Executive Director of the Community Affairs Department, Deepak Bansal of IACC, Pinky Jaggi of LILC and many other well known community leaders and activists were in attendance. Everyone enjoyed delicious, fresh food and congratulated the owners Sudhir Kumar and Rajesh Kumar, who are successful business owners and well known members of the community. Here are some exclusive pictures of the event.

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# Khushbu Sundar from India honored by Shri Navagraha Devasthanam of North America

## Ms. Sundar is a well-known actress, social activist, and a Member of Indian Parliament

(By Sharanjit Singh Thind) New York- Khushbu Sundar, a multi-faceted achiever from India was recently honored for her outstanding work to support children and women. Event was organized by and held at Shri Navagraha Devasthanam of North America. The temple is unique in nature and the only temple in the world outside of India dedicated to Sarvamangala Shri Saneeswara. Ms. Sundar has been a prominent voice in advocating for the rights of women and children in India and worldwide. The ceremony was held to honor Ms. Khushbu Sundar, a well-known actress, social activist, and politician. She has made significant contributions to society, especially to the rights of women and children, and is an inspiration to many. Assemblywoman Solages praised

Ms. Sundar's dedication and leadership, stating that "her tireless work and advocacy for women and children have been truly inspiring." She also highlighted Ms. Sundar's contributions to the field of education and her efforts to promote access to quality education for girls in India. To recognize Ms. Sundar's contributions, both Assemblywoman Solages presented her with a future for children and women plaque in honor of her achievements. Ms. Sundar attended by many Elected & appointed officials, Entrepreneurs



and community leaders. Among the eminent personalists attending the ceremony are Sridhar S & Board Member of Shri Navagraha Devasthanam of North America, Deputy Consul General of India, Deputy Counsel General, Bob Lancia, Former candidate for Congress in Rhode Island. In her speech, Ms. Khushbu Sundar expressed her gratitude for the recognition and thanked the organizers for their efforts. She highlighted the importance of cultural exchange and collaboration between nations, emphasizing the strategic alliance between India and the United States. Ms. Sundar also stressed the role of women in politics and the importance of empowering and encouraging them to pursue their dreams.

## No Bail

(By our staff reporter) Amandeep Singh, The driver who is accused of killing two Roslyn Middle School students was held without bail Monday as more than 100 people waited outside the Nassau County Courthouse. Drew Hassenbein and Ethan Falkowitz, both 14-year-old tennis players, sustained fatal injuries and were pronounced dead at the scene of the DWI crash in Jericho Wednesday evening, police said. The two boys, along with Roslyn High School students Zach Sheena and Ethan Solop, were on their way back from a celebratory dinner with their tennis team. Both Sheena and Solop remain in the hospital in stable condition with internal injuries, according to Newsday. Police reported that the four boys were in a 2019 Alpha Romero sedan driving on North Broadway when at 10:21 p.m. they were struck by a 2019 Dodge Ram driving in the opposite direction of traffic. The driver of the Dodge Ram, Roslyn resident Amandeep Singh, 34, was arrested and treated at a local hospital for minor injuries, according to police. Singh's blood alcohol content was 0.18, police said, more than twice the legal limit of 0.08.

A few dozen family members and friends of both families were permitted in the first-floor courtroom for a three-minute hearing Monday where District Court Judge Anthony Paradiso scheduled Singh's next appearance for June 6. More than a dozen people supporting Singh were also present in the courtroom. The crowd outside the courtroom applauded after being informed no bail was set for Singh. Village of East Hills Trustee Brian Meyerson told reporters "we are a community, we have gone



through two funerals. It was the most horrific thing to ever listen to." Singh's attorney, James Kousouros, in a statement to Blank Slate Media Saturday, said "This is clearly a sad and devastating situation and our prayers are with the families who have suffered the unimaginable loss of their loved ones. As much as the public wants to hear definitive statements from the defense, we cannot comment further until the matter is thoroughly investigated and discovery is reviewed."

As a result of the collision, the Alpha Romero then hit a 2023 Volvo occupied by a driver, 49, and a passenger, 16. Both were treated at the scene for minor injuries, according to police. Support local journalism by subscribing to your Blank Slate Media community newspaper for just \$50 a year. Roslyn resident Amandeep Singh, 34, faces a slew of charges, including aggravated vehicular homicide, for a fatal car crash while driving intoxicated. (Photo courtesy of the Nassau County Police Department) Det. Capt. Steven Fitzpatrick, commanding officer of the Nassau County Police Department's Homicide Squad, told reporters on Thursday that the scene of the crash was "probably one of the most catastrophic" he had seen "in a long time." Fitzpatrick said surveillance video showed Singh asking police what they were doing at the scene, thinking he was in New Jersey.





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# Vivek Agnihotri sends legal notice to CM Mamata for 'defamatory' remark against The Kashmir Files

**Vivek Agnihotri has sent a legal notice to West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee. Banerjee had reportedly called The Kashmir Files a film based on distorted facts.**

(News Agency)-Filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri has announced that he has sent legal notice to Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of Bengal, with regards to her recent statements. In her recent statements, Mamata Banerjee alleged that movies like The Kashmir Files and the recently released The Kerala Story was made to humiliate a certain section of the society. VIVEK SENDS LEGAL NOTICE TO WEST BENGAL CM

Vivek Agnihotri shared the screenshots of the legal notice and wrote, "I have, alongwith @AbhishekOfficial & Pallavi Joshi, sent a LEGAL NOTICE to the Chief Minister, Bengal @MamataOfficial for her false & highly defamatory statements made with malafide intention to defame us & our films #TheKashmirFiles & upcoming



2024 film #TheDelhiFiles."

MAMATA ON THE KASHMIR FILES

Banerjee, during a press briefing in the state secretariat in Kolkata, had said, "What is 'The Kashmir Files'? It is to humiliate one section. What is 'The Kerala Story'?... It is a distorted story. BJP is showing The Kerala Story, a distorted story. A few days back, some stars funded by BJP came to Bengal, and with some distorted and concocted story, they are preparing Bengal Files."

The Kashmir Files was released in 2022 and was directed by Vivek Agnihotri. The movie told the story of Kashmiri Pandits exodus in the 90s. The Kerala Story, on the other hand, is currently facing ban in several states. The plot follows the story of a group of women from Kerala who converted to Islam and joined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and has been produced by Vipul Shah.

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# The Kerala Story' to be declared tax-free in UP, CM Yogi plans to watch film with his ministers

(News Agency)-Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday announced that his government will declare the movie 'The Kerala Story' tax-free in the state.

"The Kerala Story' will be made tax-free in Uttar Pradesh," the chief minister said in a tweet in Hindi.

Yogi Adityanath and his entire cabinet are expected to see a special screening of the movie.

On May 6, Madhya Pradesh became the first state to declare the controversial film tax-free.

UTTARAKHAND LIKELY TO FOLLOW SUIT

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Uttarakhand is likely to declare the Adah Sharma-starrer film tax-free in the state.

According to sources, chief minister

**'The Kerala Story' will be declared tax-free in Uttar Pradesh, said chief minister Yogi Adityanath. The movie, which has been surrounded by controversy ever since its trailer was released, is facing stiff protests in many states.**



indoctrination in Kerala and how Hindu and Christian women were allegedly being targeted by radical Islamic clerics. The movie claims that these women were converted to Islam and later sent to countries like Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria "to fight for the cause of Islam".

The Kerala high court had refused to stay the release of the movie and said the trailer does not contain anything offensive to any particular community as a whole. Various youth outfits in the state staged demonstrations against the screening of the film.

On Monday, the West Bengal government announced its decision to ban The Kerala Story in the state, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee saying it was done to "maintain peace" and avoid violence.

Multiplex theatres in Tamil Nadu have halted the screenings of The Kerala Story from May 7, citing the law and order situation in the state.

## Delhi govt wins Supreme Court battle with Centre, gets control over services except law and order, land



(News Agency)-The Supreme Court on Thursday in a unanimous judgment ruled in favour of the elected government and said it will have power on all services except law and order and land. LG shall exercise powers under the administrative role as entrusted by the president. Executive administration can only extend to matters which fall outside the legislative assembly but is limited to the powers entrusted by President and it cannot mean administration over the entire NCTD, otherwise the purpose of having a separate elected body in Delhi will be rendered futile, the top court said. It is ideal to hold that democratically elected govt shall have control over its officers, it ruled. If a democratically elected govt is not allowed to control its officers and hold them to account then its responsibility towards the legislature and public is diluted. "If an officer is not responding to govt the collective responsibility is diluted.. if an officer feels they are insulated from elected govt they feel they are not accountable," the CJI said.

The Constitution Bench said it does not agree with Justice Ashok Bhushan in the split judgment of 2019 on who has the power over Delhi's services etc - the Delhi government or the Centre. As CJI DY Chandrachud read the verdict, he said the principle of democracy forms a part of basic structure federalism, ensures the survival of diverse interests and accommodates diverse needs. As the Delhi government is elected by the electorates it must be interpreted to further the cause of representative democracy, the CJI said. "Article 239A(3)(A)(a) does not confer multiple safeguards to ensure that the interests of Union Govt are protected. It provides GNCTD legislature has no power to deal with entries 1, 2 and 8 of list 2. Article 239AA stipulates legislative power of Delhi Govt is excluded with respect to specified lists. entries 1, 2 and 18 of list 2(public order, police and land). The legislative structure is to exclude only specified entries from the power of the legislative assembly of GNCTD," Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said.

make the announcement.

The chief minister is likely to watch the movie at a PVR hall in Dehradun at around 5 pm on Tuesday. He will be accompanied with cabinet minister Ganesh Joshi.

ROW OVER THE KERALA STORY A massive controversy erupted after the trailer of The Kerala Story was out. The film focuses on religious

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# Assam looking to ban polygamy, says CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, sets up panel

**Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that his government would study if it was possible for the state to impose a ban on polygamy. The government has also decided to constitute an expert committee to explore the legal aspects.**

(News Agency)-Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that his government would study if it was possible for the state to impose a ban on polygamy, a move seen as the BJP-governed state inching towards the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

The government has also decided to constitute an expert committee to explore the legal aspects.

The expert committee will investigate whether the state government has the authority to invoke its decision to prohibit

polygamy in the state.

"The Assam Government has decided to form an expert committee to examine whether the state Legislature is empowered to prohibit polygamy in the state. The committee will examine the provisions of The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Act, 1937 read with Article 25 of the Constitution of India, Vis-a-Vis the directive principle of state policy," said the chief minister in a tweet.

"The committee will engage in extensive discussions with all stakeholders, including legal

experts, to arrive at a well-informed decision," he added.

The committee will scrutinise the provisions of "The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Act, 1937, along with Article 25 of the Constitution, to make a well-informed decision. This comes months after Supreme Court said that it would set up a five-judge Constitution bench to hear pleas challenging the constitutional validity of polygamy and 'nikah halala' practice among Muslims. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha took note of the



submissions of lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, who has filed one of the PILs on the issue, that a fresh five-judge bench was needed to be constituted as two judges of the previous constitution bench -- Justice Indira Banerjee and

Justice Hemant Gupta -- have retired.

"There are very important matters which are pending before a five-judge bench. We will constitute one and bear this matter in mind," the CJI said.

## Another cheetah dies at Kuno National Park, third death in three months

**Twenty cheetahs were brought to the national park since last year, of which two died in March and April.**



(News Agency)-A female cheetah, Daksha, brought from South Africa and placed in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, was killed in a fight with other cheetahs inside the park. According to sources, Daksha died in a "violent interaction" with the Phinda adult male coalition, which included Vayu and Agni and is also known as the White Walkers. This is the third cheetah to die in Kuno since the cats were brought from South Africa and Namibia. "Prima facie, the wounds found on the female cheetah Daksha seem to have been caused by a violent interaction with the male, during the courtship/ mating attempt," said the Union environment ministry in a statement.

Twenty cheetahs were brought to the national park since last year, of which two died in

March and April.

Sasha, a captive-bred Cheetah, died in March from a kidney ailment she had been suffering from since before she was brought to India. On January 23, she showed signs of fatigue and weakness, after which officials tranquilised and shifted her to a quarantine enclosure for treatment.

In April, the second Cheetah, Uday, died during treatment after he was found sick at the national park.

Earlier today, the Union Environment Ministry said five cheetahs - three females and two males - will be released from the acclimatisation camps into the free-ranging conditions at the Kuno National Park (KNP) before the onset of the monsoon in June. The ministry also said the cheetahs will be allowed to move out of KNP and will not necessarily be "recaptured unless they venture into areas where they are in significant danger".

So far, four of the eight cheetahs brought from Namibia have been released from the fenced acclimatisation camps into free-ranging conditions in KNP.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

released eight cheetahs flown in from Namibia into a special enclosure at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh in September last year.

The cheetahs were brought to

Gwalior from Namibia in a special plane as part of the cheetah reintroduction programme. The animals were later flown to the national park in two Indian Air Force helicopters.

India welcomed 12 more cheetahs from South Africa in February. The second batch of cheetahs landed at the Air Force station in Gwalior before they were taken to Kuno National Park.

## Madhya Pradesh: 22 Dead, Over 20 Injured As Bus Falls Off Bridge in Khargone; PM Announces Rs 2L Ex Gratia

(News Agency)-Madhya Pradesh Khargone bus accident: At least 22 people were killed, while around 20 others were injured after a private bus fell off a bridge in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone on Tuesday morning. The bus was en route to Indore when it skidded off the bridge and fell beneath. The incident took place at 8.40 am. The bus broke the railings of the Dasanga bridge and fell on a dry bed of the Borad river near Dongargaon village, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra said. The vehicle was carrying

financial assistance of Rs 50,000 each to the seriously injured and Rs 25,000 each to those who received minor injuries in the Khargone bus accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also condoled the loss of lives in the road accident

and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased. After the bus fell from the bridge, some villagers rushed to the spot. They pulled out people trapped inside the bus from the windows and backside of the vehicle, as per eyewitnesses. Locals were also seen carrying



around 50 passengers when it met with the accident, a police official said. Twenty-two people were killed in the accident, Mishra said. The injured persons were admitted to the district hospital in Khargone. The police were conducting a probe into the incident, he added.

Following the accident, the Madhya Pradesh government announced immediate ex gratia of Rs 4 lakhs each to the families of the deceased. The government also announced

people and offering water to the harried passengers amid the hot weather, they said. Khargone Collector Shivraj Singh Verma, Superintendent of Police Dharamvir Singh and local MLA Ravi Joshi were among those who reached the spot soon after getting information about the accident.

Former Union minister Arun Yadav, who belongs to Khargone, also expressed grief over the incident.



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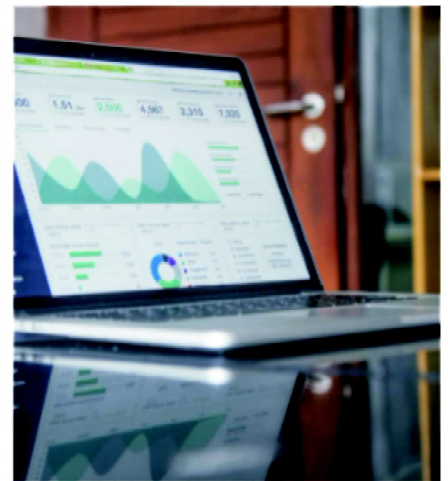
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# The Deep State Is All Too Real

By David Bernhardt

There are two competing conceptions of American governance: the version students are taught in the classroom, and the one that exists in the real world. Grade-school civics teaches that Washington is designed to operate under a system of checks and balances, constrained by the Constitution and empowered by the consent of the governed. In practice, however, power has become concentrated in the executive branch and largely wielded by unaccountable career bureaucrats. The notion of a "deep state" isn't a conspiratorial talking point but a manifest political reality.

The separation of powers is an animating principle of our nation's founding documents. As the Constitution outlines, the U.S. has three distinct and coequal branches of government: a legislature that passes laws, an executive branch that implements them, and a judiciary that interprets them. This built-in division is meant to restrain government overreach and prevent abuses of power. The president and members of Congress regularly stand for election to ensure the government is accountable to the governed, and the judiciary serves in good behavior to ensure that justice is dispensed impartially.

While this sounds nice in theory, the federal government typically doesn't honor it in practice. Congress has delegated much of its lawmaking authority to the executive branch since the 1930s. Federal agencies now issue regulations that have the force and effect of the law. "Administrative judges"-executive-branch employees-routinely preside over trial-like proceedings without juries, letting agencies act as both prosecutor and judge.

Under the Supreme Court's Chevron doctrine, courts generally defer to the executive branch's interpretation of the law both in regulatory and enforcement proceedings. Many of the Constitution's checks and balances, from the separation of powers to the right to jury trial, have fallen by the wayside.

So has much of the government's democratic accountability. The federal government has 2.2 million civilian employees, but only 4,000 of them are political appointees the president can remove at will. Career bureaucrats, who aren't elected by the American people or appointed by the president, therefore make many major policy decisions. Civil-service protections make removing these employees incredibly difficult-and they know it. The system presumes career employees will implement the law and presidential directives irrespective of their

personal preferences. To their credit, many do. During my time in the Interior Department, I saw many career employees faithfully work for the American people.

Unfortunately a great number of their colleagues don't. I vividly recall asking one Interior Department employee, whose remit included work on an endangered mouse species, what her job was. She enthusiastically replied: "I speak for the mice! I speak for the mice!" She was well-meaning, but "speaking for the mice" wasn't in her job description. Her job was to apply the provisions of the Endangered Species Act faithfully-both the protections and limitations Congress wrote into the statute. She instead appeared to be an advocate fighting for a cause.

Many career bureaucrats take this view. During my 12 years in government I often saw career bureaucrats push their preferred policy passions irrespective of agencies' rules, federal regulations or the law. This included career employees needlessly limiting recreational activities in national parks, imposing unneeded burdens on historic preservation and inappropriately restricting activities in the name of species preservation. The list goes on, as does our nation's departure from representative democracy.

Such behavior is especially troubling when the bureaucracy is out of step with America. While recent elections show the American people are closely divided politically, the federal workforce isn't. Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly 2 to 1 among career federal employees, creating an imbalance that makes it very difficult to advance policies that partisan bureaucrats oppose.

America saw how our partisan bureaucracy works when the New York Post reported on Hunter Biden's laptop in October 2020. Though the story credibly documented that the Biden family had benefited from profitable influence peddling with foreign interests, 51 former intelligence officials publicly claimed the laptop had "all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation." The media, along with tech platforms like Facebook and Twitter, then used the letter to justify burying the story.

And buried it was, never mind that the laptop's contents were genuine, as Hunter has admitted. To make matters worse, the House Judiciary and Intelligence committees have since uncovered that Joe Biden's presidential campaign helped organize the letter. In other words, a group of primarily career intelligence officials that ought to be disinterested in political matters endorsed a partisan ruse to affect a presidential election.

## Pakistan is imploding. A failing neighbour will be a nightmare for India and the world

**Pakistan Army is a professional force and will bring about order. The question is whether it will do so by a coup or by ordering elections with or without Imran.**

By LT GEN H S PANAG (RETD)

With the arrest of the former Prime Minister and leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan is in turmoil. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, supporters of a political party targeted the army and attempted to storm the Army Headquarters in Rawalpindi. In Lahore, the residence of the Corps Commander was vandalised. As per Twitter, even war memorials have been damaged. Fears have been expressed about Pakistan's descent into "chaos and anarchy". Imran Khan himself and his supporters have blamed the army and not the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government. All eyes

are on the Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir to bring about some sort of stability. There has been smug satisfaction in India that Pakistan's capacity to challenge India's security, particularly by exporting/supporting terrorism, has been severely affected by its existential economic crisis, internal political turmoil, now further compounded by the arrest of Imran Khan, and serious internal security threats from homegrown terrorism. And that sporadic terrorist attacks in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) were more for retaining relevance and keeping the J&K issue alive rather than a real threat that can cause serious strategic damage. (Contd. on page 24)

## King Charles's Britannia Still Rules the Waves

Regarding Dominic Green's op-ed "King Charles Begins His Reign Amid Discontent and Doldrums" (May 6): Far-called our navies melt away; On dune and headland sinks the fire;

Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!

So wrote Rudyard Kipling on the occasion of Queen Victoria's diamond Jubilee in 1897. On this occasion of King Charles III's coronation, I say, "Not so fast." The British Empire is not dead, it's not even past.

Political domination of the empire's former colonies is no more, but the cultural influence is manifest. If not the largest by the sheer numbers of people who speak it, read it and write it, English is the language of diplomacy,

air commerce, most international business and now, the internet. Because of the language's facility, the culture is dominant. The sun has not, and may not ever, set on the soft power of the empire.

Come Nineveh; come Tyre? Not for a while. Along with language, the British brought a political and legal system that emphasizes individual rights and due process, not only to North America and the Pacific island-nations, but also to many African and South Asian nations. Whether those systems have been, and are being, administered unevenly is beside the point. The systems are there, and available as a framework to provide justice and protect life, liberty and property. They have often done so in a manner superior to whatever they replaced.

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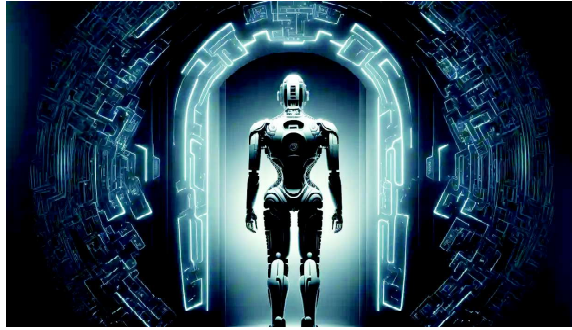
# AI machines aren't 'hallucinating'. But their makers are

Naomi Klein

Inside the many debates swirling around the rapid rollout of so-called artificial intelligence, there is a relatively obscure skirmish focused on the choice of the word "hallucinate".

This is the term that architects and boosters of generative AI have settled on to characterize responses served up by chatbots that are wholly manufactured, or flat-out wrong. Like, for instance, when you ask a bot for a definition of something that doesn't exist and it, rather convincingly, gives you one, complete with made-up footnotes. "No one in the field has yet solved the hallucination problems," Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google and Alphabet, told an interviewer recently.

That's true - but why call the errors "hallucinations" at all? Why not algorithmic junk? Or glitches? Well, hallucination refers to the mysterious capacity of the human brain to perceive phenomena that are not present, at least not in conventional, materialist terms. By appropriating a word commonly used in psychology, psychedelics and various forms of mysticism, AI's boosters, while



acknowledging the fallibility of their machines, are simultaneously feeding the sector's most cherished mythology: that by building these large language models, and training them on everything that we humans have written, said and represented visually, they are in the process of birthing an animate intelligence on the cusp of sparking an evolutionary leap for our species. How else could bots like Bing and Bard be tripping out there in the ether?

Warped hallucinations are indeed afoot in the world of AI, however - but it's not the bots that are having them; it's the tech CEOs who unleashed them, along with a phalanx of their fans, who are in the grips of wild hallucinations, both individually

and collectively. Here I am defining hallucination not in the mystical or psychedelic sense, mind-altered states that can indeed assist in accessing profound, previously unperceived truths. No. These folks are just tripping: seeing, or at least claiming to see, evidence that is not there at all, even conjuring entire worlds that will put their products to use for our universal elevation and education.

Generative AI will end poverty, they tell us. It will cure all disease. It will solve climate change. It will make our jobs more meaningful and exciting. It will unleash lives of leisure and contemplation, helping us reclaim the humanity we have lost to late capitalist mechanization. It will end

loneliness. It will make our governments rational and responsive. These, I fear, are the real AI hallucinations and we have all been hearing them on a loop ever since Chat GPT launched at the end of last year.

There is a world in which generative AI, as a powerful predictive research tool and a performer of tedious tasks, could indeed be marshalled to benefit humanity, other species and our shared home. But for that to happen, these technologies would need to be deployed inside a vastly different economic and social order than our own, one that had as its purpose the meeting of human needs and the protection of the planetary systems that support all life.

And as those of us who are not currently tripping well understand, our current system is nothing like that. Rather, it is built to maximize the extraction of wealth and profit - from both humans and the natural world - a reality that has brought us to what we might think of it as capitalism's techno-necro stage. In that reality of hyper-concentrated power and wealth, AI - far from living up to all those utopian hallucinations - is much

more likely to become a fearsome tool of further dispossession and despoliation.

I'll dig into why that is so. But first, it's helpful to think about the purpose the utopian hallucinations about AI are serving. What work are these benevolent stories doing in the culture as we encounter these strange new tools? Here is one hypothesis: they are the powerful and enticing cover stories for what may turn out to be the largest and most consequential theft in human history. Because what we are witnessing is the wealthiest companies in history (Microsoft, Apple, Google, Meta, Amazon ...) unilaterally seizing the sum total of human knowledge that exists in digital, scrapable form and walling it off inside proprietary products, many of which will take direct aim at the humans whose lifetime of labor trained the machines without giving permission or consent.

This should not be legal. In the case of copyrighted material that we now know trained the models (including this newspaper), various lawsuits have been filed that will argue this was clearly illegal.

## This is America's surprising youth drug crisis

By Kevin A. Sabet, Ph.D.

The data is in and it's becoming increasingly clear that the impacts of commercial marijuana industry are even worse than we thought, particularly for America's young people. A new report released by Smart Approaches to Marijuana shows the reality in "pot-legal states" paints a vastly different picture than the common sales pitch of the industry and supporters of legalization.

The marijuana industry, which spent billions to lobby elected officials and bankroll legalization referendum campaigns, is following the playbook pioneered by Big Tobacco. They recognize that the road to big profits runs through the heaviest users. As such, they have increased potency of the drug by more than four times since 1998, hoping to hook kids while they are young and vulnerable. The numbers show that it's working.

Usage rates have reached



record highs among those who are most vulnerable to marijuana's long-term health effects. The National Institute on Drug Abuse warned, "Past-year, past-month, and daily marijuana use (use on 20 or more occasions in the past 30 days) reached the highest levels ever recorded" among those aged 19 to 30. The percentage of 8th, 10th and 12th graders who used marijuana daily has more than tripled between 1991 and 2020.

Daily marijuana use is indicative

of a marijuana use disorder, also known as addiction to marijuana. For all the talk about how pot is not addictive, in 2021, 1.3 million individuals between the ages of 12 and 17 had a marijuana use disorder, accounting for more than 46% of users in that age group. Legalization is also associated with a 25% increase in marijuana use disorder among them as well. As usage rates, potency and addiction have increased, the adverse effects have also

increased. Though supporters of legalization like to downplay the risks of marijuana, the drug caused more than 70,000 individuals younger than 18 to have marijuana-related emergency department visits in 2021.

The industry told parents and politicians that they would not target kids. That's turned out to be false. From "Pot Tarts" to "Stoney Patch Kids," the packaging of edibles laced with high-potency THC often looks like traditional snacks. Not surprisingly, between 2017 and 2021, there was a 1,375% increase in at-home exposures to marijuana edibles involving children younger than 6.

More minors are driving under the influence of marijuana too. In 2021, 10.67 million people admitted to driving under the influence of marijuana, including 1.36 million who were between the ages of 16 and 20. There were 2.41 times more minors on the road under the

influence of marijuana than were under the influence of alcohol.

Minors have also gravitated toward marijuana vapes, products engineered to include a near-pure form of THC. Between 2017 and 2020, the percentage of 12th graders who vaped marijuana increased from 9.5% to 22.1%. Among 10th graders, it increased from 8.1% to 19.1%, and among 8th graders, it increased from 3.0% to 8.1%. A 2022 study found, "cannabis vaping is increasing as the most popular method of cannabis delivery among adolescents in the United States." and frequent use is increasing faster than occasional use. The marketing scheme of the industry has been to engineer a more potent drug, in forms easier to consume and while stoking the perception that it's harmless. In 1991, 78.6% of 12th graders believed that using marijuana regularly puts one's health at great risk.



# Why coronation ceremony was repugnant and reeked of absurdity

**The ceremony was not repugnant just because of what it represents but also because of how it was conducted. It still mixed religion and government.**

By Dr. Jaijit Bhattacharya

A king in the modern world is an anachronism. It is not of this age and time. And yet, the world was witness to the coronation of another monarch in the Kingdom of Britain. A lavish, opulent ceremony at a time when millions of Britons are getting pushed into poverty. An abomination, when millions of poor in the United Kingdom are not having enough to pay for food and have barely survived a punishing winter. The hard data on increase in poverty is pouring in from sources such as Food Foundation reports and from the Food Parcel data of Trussells Trust. Around 3.2 million adults in Britain are reported to have been not eating for an entire day because they could not afford food. That is, over 5 per cent of Britain's population is starving while a new king was appointed in a pomp and show that is inappropriate for multiple reasons. The coronation ceremony also appeared perverse when millions in its formal colonies are getting lifted out of poverty, while millions in Britain are going into poverty, and in the process, pushing Britain back into the poor backwaters of the world in which it once was.

Not showing off the Kohinoor diamond snatched from a pre-teen boy-king of the Sikh empire, does not redeem the ceremony from the fact that almost everything else is either stolen, or snatched or funded by the sweat and blood of millions around the world. From the red coats of the ceremonial guards to the gold plated carriage, these are all eventually funded by the capital accumulated through loot and slavery.

Here is the office, the monarchy that represents the brutal emptying out of Nigeria and other countries, by shipping off its people as slaves. Men, women and children all over the empire, where the sun did not set, were sold or killed or abused or starved to death to create the empire that is represented by the office of the King whose coronation was broadcasted in all its resplendent unapologetic hypocrisy.

Food was unnecessarily and knowingly snatched from over millions in India, leading to the



great Bengal man-made famine, killing over 4 million people. And it was not the only famine that the British crafted that wiped out millions. It was merely the most recent. This is the office that represents numerous war crimes and heinous crimes against humanity. This is the office that has never made even a token apology for the ravaging of the world in a manner that was unprecedented in the history of humankind.

And yet, the coronation was undertaken, and unashamedly broadcasted to the world, including to the progeny of those that the empire looted, violated and killed in the most cavalier manner. The whimper of an

excuse is thrown in that these actions were carried out at a time period when such crimes against humanity were acceptable. Time period and acceptability are human creations. I am sure the ISIS will also be arguing that their actions are acceptable in this time and age of human sensitivity. And yet, there were civilisations influenced by the thought process of Jainism, Buddhism and other advanced philosophies, who for over 2,000 years, never believed that such crimes against humanity, or any living entity are acceptable. So, who defined the time periods where crimes against humanity were acceptable?

As individual family histories of the

colonial times tumble out, thanks to social media and the general democratisation of narration, we see the colonial narration crumbling after over 70 years of actual colonisation stopping. We had seen paeans written in celebration of the contribution of colonisation of millions of humans. How colonisation led to railways, globalisation, more trade and so on. The list is endless. Is it worth having all of these at the cost of killing, violation or torture of a single human being? And, as we know of what really happened, are any of the so-called achievements of colonisation worth the millions that it butchered?

And for the record, the invention of zero did not require colonisation. The discovery of gravity by Bramhagupta did not require colonisation. The trigonometry and the trigonometric tables of Aryabhata did not require colonisation. The oldest known surgeon, Susruta, did not require colonisation to become the surgeon he was. And what did the railways do? Ensured that loot was accelerated for its movement to the United Kingdom, whose King got coronated. It was

this loot that formed the capital that funded further revenue generation for Britain. And as I had defined "Digital Colonisation" a decade and a half ago, the disproportionate economic benefits continued to pour into Britain through unfair trade agreements. As the colonies and the trade agreements disappeared, Britain's march back into its historic pecking order in the comity of nations has begun. Back to where it was before the Romans discovered it and decided to pass civilisation that they had, in turn, picked from the Greeks and the Persians. The ceremony was not repugnant just because of what it represents but also because of how it was conducted. It still mixed religion and government. It still had to be done inside an Anglican church, with the church anointing the king, to represent that the king is appointed by God himself. This is as absurd as it can be. A tokenism of getting objects from representatives of other religions, smacked more of a colonial mindset rather than modernism, as all other religions seemed subservient to the religion that appointed the king.

## India First | Dynastic Parties and Their Weaknesses

By: Sudesh Verma

Despite ideological differences, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Left parties such as the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) are the only ones in the country that can claim to have been away from dynasty politics and to have followed the letter and spirit of being democratic parties. The Congress, which is the oldest party in our country, has failed the dynastic test, despite making Mallikarjun Kharge the new party president. The test is about who controls the decision-making.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) drama over Sharad Pawar's resignation has forced everyone to contemplate the face of dynasty politics. He resigned as president of the NCP on May 2 and took it back on May 5, within three days of his announcement. The reason for the resignation was to give leadership to the younger generation, and the reason to stay is to respect the will of his party workers. From a common man's perspective, they would be more interested in knowing whether the NCP would transform itself into a true democratic party or would just end

up like other parties that have relied on dynasty for transition and survival.

Despite ideological differences, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Left parties such as the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) are the only ones in the country that can claim to have been away from dynasty politics and to have followed the letter and spirit of being democratic parties. The Congress, which is the oldest party in our country, has failed the dynastic test, despite making Mallikarjun Kharge the new party president. The test is about who controls the decision-making.

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have relied on dynasty for transition and survival.

The dilemma Pawar faced is faced by all dynasts, who are genuinely guided by the love of their sons and daughters. Such dynasts are not guided by the larger cause but see the party as a vehicle to amass power and stay in prominence. In a democracy, we have accepted that a more competent person having a larger support base should lead the party. But often, dynasts are foisted at the cost of ignoring the more competent ones. Also, these successors have been groomed to take on leadership when the time comes. Sharad Pawar's dilemma is whom to choose as the successor. His daughter Supriya Sule or nephew Ajit Pawar, who reportedly knows the nuts and bolts of the party better. Eventually, Sule may win and the party may witness a split. The NCP in that way is going the Shiv Sena way where the late Balasaheb Thackeray allowed Uddhav Thackeray, who was not much interested in politics, to score over nephew Raj Thackeray who was considered the natural choice to succeed Balasaheb. Raj Thackeray later founded the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS).



# Erdogan or Erdogone? How India's Opposition could resemble Turkey's Table of Six

In less than a week, on May 14, Turkey goes to the polls, in what is widely regarded could be a watershed moment. The Table of Six, as the coalition of Opposition parties are called, formed last February hope to disrupt two decades of Erdogan's iron-fisted rule.

V Sudarshan

Quiz: He is seeking his third term. His regime is known to suppress dissent, stifle public discourse, display scant regard for political rights and civil liberties, pursue political opponents via government agencies and it goes after journalists, students, activists, human rights advocates arresting them by the dozen. His government has a poor economic record and most of his voters vote for him for narrow religious and hyper-nationalistic reasons. Known to be a good orator, he would like the country, slipping on various parameters of democracy, to transform into a monolithic political entity, squelching all Opposition spaces. Intolerant of criticism, his regime is heavily into micromanaging and throttling what is left of free speech online while the mainstream media, some of it controlled by his allies, lies supine and spread-eagled, broadcasting only the thunderous silence of surrender, and his heralds incessantly sing noisy hosannas to the One And Only. And oh, he is soft on Russia and what it is doing to Ukraine. The minority has suffered repression because of the crushing divisive agenda and the bitter polarising. And, he continues unbridled because the squabbling and fractious Opposition cannot get its act together. So who is he, and which



is the country? Full marks to you, if you have answered Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The country is Turkey, of course. Last year, a journalist, Sedef Kabas, was arrested and faced a jail term just because she said on television and later tweeted of Erdogan, "When an ox climbs a palace, he does not become a king, instead the palace becomes a barn." Turkish proverb. Thank goodness, the media in India is free enough to let this reporter repeat that of Erdogan. In Turkey, it would not be possible and certainly not worth the risk. Erdogan's chief spokesman termed the comment "irresponsible" and "blatantly insulting our president on television channel with no other goal than spreading hatred".

However, in the Global Democracy Index, we are much higher than Turkey, much, much higher. We are regarded merely as a


"flawed democracy", whatever that means and it is probably Western propaganda of the BBC kind. Turkey is way down below, characterised as "hybrid regime", whatever that means, too. We are not there yet, but comparisons, though odious, are now becoming inevitable. Insults to Erdogan are taken seriously. Reuters records "more than 31,000 investigations to this charge" in 2020 alone. Delhi Police have to deal with a lot less.

The Table of Six  
In less than a week, on May 14, Turkey goes to the polls, in what is widely regarded could be a watershed moment. The Table of Six, as the coalition of Opposition parties are called, formed last February hope to disrupt two decades of Erdogan's iron-fisted rule. Turkey's Opposition has been time and again beaten to a pulp at the hustings, mainly


because they couldn't get its act together. This time, they have united under Kemal Kilicdaroglu who leads the main secular Opposition party, the centre-left Republican People's Party (CHP). There is an Indian connection here too but a slight one, more superficial and absurd than substantial.

Kilicdaroglu has a sobriquet "Kemal Gandhi" or "Gandhi Kemal" whichever comes first, not because he looks like, wait for it, Rahul Gandhi, but because he looks a bit like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi but not as much as Ben Kingsley does with make-up. It is not clear how the sobriquet alone will bolster the poll prospects, either in Turkey or in India, and favourable evidence to that effect in India in the last two elections has been slight.

Will Kemal Gandhi and the Table of Six be able to oust Erdogan from his palace? To get to this has not been easy, given their diverse, sometimes contradictory, agendas and political appeal. Meral Aksener, leader of the Good Party (no joke in this tale of battle between Good and Evil), the second largest in the coalition did not think that the soft-spoken Kemal Gandhi was saleable enough against Erdogan.



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# Of Anand Mohan's release from jail and a Mithila crisis



**Anand Mohan was freed on parole repeatedly due to marriage ceremonies in his family before the formal remission.**

**By Kaushal Kishore**

The Bihar government has amended its jail manual to release Mithila's Anand Mohan Singh. This is the masculine and muscular appearance of the politics of the Mithila and Maithili right before celebrations of Sitanavmi. The Nitish Kumar and Tejashvi Yadav - run coalition government is happy to present it as a gift to Rajput leaders to celebrate the birth anniversary of Sita, the daughter of Mithila. In the process, it annoyed certain Dalit leaders like Mayawati, in addition to the diligent and honest officers of the executive. The gangster and former lawmaker as well as 26 others, involved in the 1994 lynching and killing of the top district administrator of Gopalganj, G. Krishnaiah, are its top beneficiaries, reminding us of the

Bilkis Bano case in Gujarat. This flexing of the muscles can help us here to interpret the equation between appeasement of castes and prevailing criminalisation of statecraft.

The state cabinet had approved the remission rule on April 10, and within a few days, convicted prisoners were out of jail. Anand Mohan was freed on parole repeatedly due to marriage ceremonies in his family before the formal remission. The association of civil servants observed that such dilution leads to impunity, erosion of the morale of public servants, undermines public order and makes a mockery of the administration of justice. They have asked the Bihar government to reconsider its decision.

Meanwhile, we discussed the SDGs (Sustainable Development

Goals) and the Gandhian way for three days that the Gandhian School of Democracy and Socialism has organised at Gwalior. Here, one of the delegates from Nepal, Dr Uddhab Pyakurel, referred to the second class citizenship of Maithili-speaking people in Nepal. The crisis is not limited to there, the condition of Mithila in Jharkhand and Bihar too has its own saga. However, Maithili-speaking Indians can be proud of their citizenship status. The southern Terai region of Nepal is known as Madhes or Madhya Desh - country between India and Nepal. In fact, Uddhab referred to it as one of the pain points while describing the case of Nepal. Madhya Desh refers to the nationality crisis that the elite class of Nepal has inflicted upon their fellow companions from the Terai region. The loyalty of these people is believed to be in favour of India. Muslims, who went to settle in Pakistan during Partition, have

been dealing with a similar second-class citizenship crisis. The people of the Mithila region of Nepal are going through this crisis without leaving their own homeland. The masculinity of this group appears in the three mass movements and the separate Madhes Pradesh.

Maithili is the second national language of Nepal. It was added to the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution a couple of decades ago. But still, the plight of Mithila is deplorable. This crisis in Nepal is rooted in the 19th century treaty of Sugauli between the Nepali kingdom and British Indian rulers. The bifurcation of Jharkhand from erstwhile Bihar before the inception of the 21st century marked the last division of this ancient region. Today, development of Mithila - whether in Nepal or in India - has been unusually slow. It reflects step motherly treatment by respective governments.

Ancient history of India refers to the Mithila region for prosperity and abundance. It continued to lead the subcontinent during the colonial regime and a few years after Independence. Begusarai, economic capital of Mithila, was referred to as Ayodhya Raj. Lichhavi, noted as a birthplace of modern democracy in ancient times, is a part of this region. The proponents of jurisprudence and other Indic philosophy are also associated with this region. British bureaucrat George Grierson had conducted the survey of Mithila before he presented its political map. After that, the identity of Mithila had a place in modern history. In the early 19th century, the demand for Maithili was accepted. Rameshwar Singh, the head of the princely state, created a definition of vernacular home-rule (Swaraj) a century ago. It has introduced the idea of bifurcation of states like Mithila and Odisha out of Bihar.



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# West Bengal's Law And Order Situation is a Ticking Time Bomb

By: Sayantan Ghosh

Last week, the Calcutta High Court mandated the National Investigative Agency (NIA) to look into the incidents of communal violence that occurred during Ram Navami celebrations in Howrah and other areas of West Bengal. The high court has already reacted to the law and order situation in the state. From corruption to communal violence and terrible crimes - the situation in terms of law and order and governance has gotten worse under WB Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Banerjee has not, however, taken a strong stance against these violent acts. The chief minister and her party - Trinamool Congress (TMC) - typically blame the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or other Opposition political parties for communal violence concerns as well as other law and order issues.

Unprecedented attacks are taking place across the state against BJP functionaries. In East Midnapore's Moyna, the TMC goons allegedly kidnapped and murdered the BJP's booth chief. Last week, police allegedly fired at a BJP worker in North



Bengal, resulting in his death. But the government is not only silent but also claiming that the BJP is orchestrating these killings to divert attention from the ongoing mega mass outreach program by Mamata Banerjee's nephew and TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee. The TMC supremo is remaining silent because she worries that taking a strong stance against communal violence will cause her Muslim support to further erode. It is sad that she has treated minorities like a vote-bank ever since she was elected the chief minister of West Bengal in 2011. There is no denying that Banerjee is not the first politician

and TMC is not the first political party to appease minorities in West Bengal politics. The Congress and the Left have already done the same. Bengal's electorate is roughly 30 percent Muslim - and without their support - winning elections is impossible. However, there is also widespread misgovernance in West Bengal, and Banerjee is unable to dodge this issue because her administration has repeatedly fallen short of ensuring the safety and security of Bengal's populace.

The BJP began to gain support in West Bengal in 2016. The party performed well in 2019, winning 19 of the state's 42 Lok

Sabha seats. As a result, West Bengal politics became more divisive. However, things started to change after Mamata Banerjee won the 2021 Assembly elections. The TMC has been the target of protests from Bengal residents after several of its top leaders were accused of corruption. The party noticed that its support within the Muslim community exploded in the recent by-elections of Ballygunge and Sagardighi.

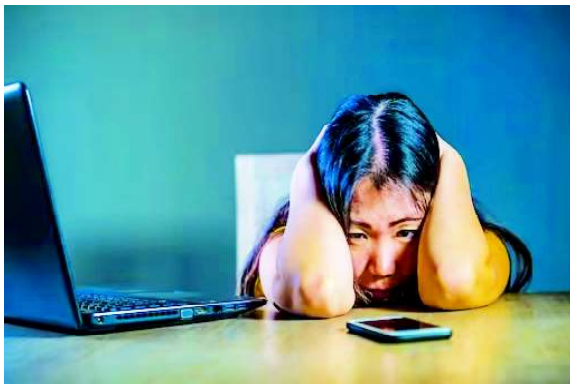
Mamata Banerjee is aware that her party cannot afford to lose the support of minorities under any circumstances. She has even reverted to her strong appeasement push at this point. However, the issue here is that Banerjee is encouraging competitive communalism by using this style of politics. She actually advised Muslims to vote against the BJP when she spoke at a rally this year on Eid. She is politicising the entire community and their support, despite the fact that Eid is a religious holiday and has nothing to do with politics. Banerjee has been accused by the Opposition of stirring up the minority, and this kind of provocation from Bengal's leading

political party is truly frightening and disturbing.

The administration under Banerjee is rapidly slipping out of her grip, which is another problem. Bengal has seen a number of horrific atrocities and acts of violence. A 17-year-old girl was recently discovered dead in North Bengal's Kaliagunj. The police insisted that early investigation showed it was a suicide, despite the family members' claims that it was a murder and rape occurrence. In this case, there were large-scale protests in the neighbourhood, so the police dragged the girl's body to protect it. This tragedy shocked the locals, and there were numerous protests that followed. The situation got out of hand, and the mob not only set fire to the neighbourhood police station but also assaulted the officers. This tragedy is not unique; numerous other horrible crimes are occurring often in West Bengal, and Banerjee's administration is largely silent.

Bengal's political watchers think Mamata Banerjee has been losing control of her government. She has failed to present an organised front during her third term.

## Social Media Emerging as The New Frontier for Gender-Based Violence



By: Akanksha Khullar

As per the Datareportal January 2023 global overview, nearly 4.76 billion people-accounting for more than half of the global population (59 percent)-are active on social media with approximately 137 million new users having joined over the past 12 months. There thus, remains little doubt that society has now been well conditioned to easily and effectively function-work, communicate, educate, attend academia, etc-through the digital realm, predominantly via social

media.

But while social media platforms were originally created to provide a safe space for communication, sharing information, foster connection and creativity amongst users, their negative impact on real-world communities has been rather complex and is swiftly evolving. This rapid advancement and widespread reach of technology has, in fact, created new, highly accessible channels for the dissemination of disinformation, sowing divisiveness and contributing to

real-world harm in the form of violence, persecution and exploitation.

And like any other institution of society-which reinforce the dominance of men and the patriarchal social values-even these social platforms today have become a powerful vehicle for misogynistic threats and harassment that subsequently result in silencing women and creating a multitude of hostile gender abuse. To put it simply, owing to its wild characteristics, provision of anonymity and massive reach, social media companies like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc. have ended up providing an additional fertile ground for gender-based violence to an alarming extent with little accountability.

As a result, over the past recent years, women all around the world have become more and more susceptible to technological crimes including morphing, cyberstalking, phoney profiling, cyber bullying, etc. In fact, not a day goes by when we don't get to

hear about some woman or girl falling victim to non-consensual image or video sharing, intimidation and threats including rape and death threats, online sexual harassment, impersonation or economic harm via digital means. In some cases, these actions also result in physical violence against women or lead to the victims having suicidal thoughts.

And while lack of comprehensive and accurate data collection in this sphere often results in information being fragmented and incomplete, these day-to-day stories and personal encounters are sufficient to conclude that the magnitude of digital violence against women and girls remains colossal, having an impact on society as a whole. The latest data-as presented by the Institute of Development Studies in 2021-in fact, suggests that the prevalence of online and information and communication technology-facilitated violence against women and girls ranges from 16 to 58 percent. The situation is even worse for women and girls who are at risk of or

exposed to intersecting forms of discrimination. According to Amnesty International, women of colour are more impacted by online violence or through digital means in comparison to white women, as black women are 84 percent more likely to receive abusive tweets on Twitter.

Besides, women belonging to ethnic or religious minorities are also particularly vulnerable to violence on social media and are often made the prime targets of sexting, revenge pornography, cyberbullying, etc. A prominent example of this was recently seen in India where digital apps like Sulli Deals and Bulli Bai were created-in 2021 and 2022 respectively-with photos of hundreds of Muslim women maliciously displayed for "auction."

Rivals have also hunted down activists, journalists, and female political leaders, who openly express their personal opinions on digital platforms. Social media, therefore, in no way provides a fair platform for women to express their individual opinion without fear.



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# From Rights to Revdi: Hindutva and the Limits of Economic Justice

**An inherent limitation of the political discourse of Hindutva is that it cannot provide substantive economic or social justice without destabilising itself.**

**Anshul Trivedi**

Recently, while campaigning for the Karnataka assembly elections, Union home minister Amit Shah made a claim that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rule a 'new caste of beneficiaries' has emerged which will ensure that caste arithmetic would not hamper the chances of BJP's victory. Shah was trying to convey that the BJP's welfare regime is so effective that it has created a new electoral bloc cutting across ascriptive identities. If indeed Shah's claim is true, then it begs the question: Why is Modi trying to turn the election into a referendum against the promise to ban fringe saffron groups rather than ask the electorate for a positive mandate based on his welfare record by mobilising this 'new caste'?

However, not only is Modi shying away from asking for votes based on his economic record but he has been waging a concerted attack on the very idea of economic justice by denigrating welfare measures by calling them 'freebies' or revdi. This becomes all the more

interesting because the BJP has promised so-called revdis in its manifesto for Karnataka.

This duplicity is not restricted to a particular state but extends across the country where the BJP-led governments - including the Union government - run extensive welfare schemes while attacking the very idea of the welfare state.

This duplicity is born out of the political and ideological compulsions of Hindutva and highlights the limits of ensuring economic justice under its framework.

Remember religion, forget class. There is a fundamental difference between most other ideological projects which populate the Indian political landscape and Hindutva. Most ideologies are based on some idea of justice, social or economic. Hindutva is the only project that is based not on the idea of justice but on ethno-religious supremacism expressed through the language of majoritarian nationalism.

In We or our Nationhood Defined, RSS ideologue M.S. Golwalkar conceptualised the nation as an

organic whole which can prosper only when all body parts function harmoniously. This is why he lists Communists along with Muslims and Christians as 'threats to the Hindu nation' because while the Muslims and Christians unsettle the cultural uniformity of the nation, the Communists provide a powerful critique of this fictional organic unity of the nation by bringing glaring economic contradictions to the surface.

The construction of the Hindu nation requires the constant mobilisation of the people as 'Hindus'; which means that people must privilege their religious identity above all else while making political decisions.

The construction of this Hindu subject necessitates continuous religious polarisation to sharpen his ethno-religious identity while simultaneously blunting the very real contradictions within the economy.

From rights to revdi: Delegitimising economic justice

However, in a democratic setup, and especially in the face of our woeful poverty, while economic



contradictions can be temporarily swept under the carpet; they cannot be wished away and have to be addressed.

Therefore, Hindutva tackles economic demands by undertaking welfare in an ad-hoc and deinstitutionalised manner; careful not to invest it with the integrity of political discourse. Hindutva's approach to welfare comes out most clearly when contrasted with the approach of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Under the UPA, a regime of rights-based approach to welfare was developed which made the state politically and morally responsible for providing a bundle of basic social goods like work, food, education and information.

PM Modi dismantled the rights-based architecture and replaced it with ad-hoc provisions which were used to bolster his cult and personalise power. For example,

the Modi government took the decision to provide 80 crore citizens with free rations at the cost of Rs 2 lakh crore through a cabinet notification without any major public deliberation.

This decision relocated the problem of hunger from the realm of rights to largesse; transforming citizens into clients dependent upon the benevolent sovereign. Moreover, the absence of any public deliberation around such an important decision performed the function of invisibilising structural economic injustice; thereby, enabling the regime to evade any responsibility for continued economic deprivation; but more importantly, preventing the possibility of the emergence of a class-based discourse which could challenge Hindutva's hegemony.

## The Kerala Story-It's time Muslims give up their medieval ideal of conquest, conversion



**IBN KHALDUN BHARATI**

The central issue of the movie, The Kerala Story, is religious conversion of Hindus and Christians to Islam - a subject few wanted to talk about. Though the Islamic preachers and narrative makers never hid their intention, their liberal-secular patrons would neither talk about it nor let others do the talking. They have a vested interest in Muslim communalism, and are happy with the electoral gains accruing

from Islamic radicalism. Thus, devoid of the integrity to acknowledge the disturbing reality, they also lack the tools to analyse the phenomenon. Expectedly, the movie has stirred a hornet's nest. Exposé of an open secret always does that. The main objection raised against The Kerala Story has been the now-retracted figure of 32,000 conversions of girls in the state to supply soldiers for ISIS. The film producers now mention three girls who converted and went to

fight for ISIS. However, beyond this quibbling over numbers, there have been no serious imputation of falsehood. The core content of the movie has a kernel of truth and is not being disputed. There is no accusation of peddling falsehood. Instead, some are questioning the motives behind telling this truth. It's a politically inconvenient movie that brings to light the topic of religious conversion and its consequences.

There is no denying the fact that conversions happened in Kerala - of girls too! And, neo-converts, even girls, were sent abroad on jihadi missions to fight for ISIS. Women were not recruited in these missions for combat roles. Jihadi men needed comfort girls, and these women were jihad-prostitutes. We learnt about the story when some of them, incarcerated in Taliban's jails in Afghanistan, begged the Indian government to bring them home.

The point to ponder is, when this news broke, what was the reaction of the Muslim community and the liberal-secular intelligentsia? Were they shocked with disbelief or just embarrassed about the revelation? Did they dismiss it as a freak incident or knowing it to be the tip of iceberg tried to retrieve the situation from increasing radicalisation.

Is it a secret that converting a non-Muslim to Islam is considered the greatest of virtues? Could people, even girls, be converted and despatched on jihadi missions without a general acceptance of conversion and jihad in the Muslim society? Did the people react then the way they are doing now at the movie about it? No, they didn't, and therefore, there is a need to introspect, and understand what is going on.

Why convert?

The underlying concept behind

converting people is that one's own religion is the only truth, all else is falsehood. Thus, it becomes one's duty to persuade others to convert to the "true" religion. If persuasion fails, and circumstances allow, the unheeding could be converted by deceit, temptation, or force. Throughout history, most conversions - a supremacist idea - have occurred through force or conquest. With the exception of Southeast Asia, Islam has mainly spread in areas that were conquered by Muslims. While Sufi mystics played a major role in cultivating converts, they could not have succeeded without the protection of the Islamic sword, as they had to reconcile people to the Muslim rule and the ruler's religion. This was Islam's version of the "Cross following the Flag."



# CPEC will be extended to Afghanistan as trilateral cooperation set to deepen

(News Agency)-The foreign ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen trilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and jointly extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan. Following the trilateral dialogue, the three sides issued a joint statement, expressing their determination to leverage Afghanistan's potential as a hub for regional connectivity. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang of China, and Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi of Afghanistan participated in the dialogue representing their respective countries. During the meeting, the three foreign ministers emphasised the significance of ongoing projects such as CASA-1000, TAPI, and Trans-Afghan Railways, highlighting their potential to boost regional

connectivity and promote economic development and prosperity in the region. The three parties emphasised the need to advance "hard connectivity" in infrastructure and "soft connectivity" in norms and standards. They agreed to explore measures to facilitate the movement of people and trade activities. They also decided to boost transit trade through the Gwadar Port. The foreign ministers acknowledged that a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is in the best interest of the region. They emphasised the critical role of trilateral cooperation in promoting this objective. The three sides agreed to further deepen and expand their cooperation in the domains of security, development, and politics, guided by the principles of mutual respect, equal-footed consultation, and mutual benefit. The three parties highlighted the importance of addressing security challenges that pose a significant

threat to regional and global security, and directly impacting the stability and economic prosperity of the entire region. They agreed to coordinate on security matters, including organised crime, drug smuggling and others. They called upon the international community to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and provide the necessary supplies, equipment, and technical assistance to relevant countries in this regard. The three sides stressed the importance of preventing any individual, group, or party, including the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), from using their territories to harm or threaten regional security and interests or carry out terrorist activities. They also stressed the need to avoid interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs and instead focus on promoting peace, stability, and reconstruction in the country. Highlighting the need to boost

economic activity in Afghanistan, the ministers emphasised the significance of exploring feasible pathways towards reviving the Afghan economy. As a step towards this goal, they agreed to consider additional support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and exploring trilateral investment opportunities that promote industrialisation and job creation. Expressing the solidarity with the people of Afghanistan they stressed the crucial need for sustained and urgent humanitarian support, including bridging funding gaps for

humanitarian operations. They underlined that humanitarian support for the people of Afghanistan should not be linked to any political considerations. They expressed satisfaction with the current trilateral cooperation and agreed to carry out exchange and training programs, as well as strengthen people-to-people exchanges by implementing trilateral programs in line with the List of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Practical Cooperation Projects adopted by the foreign ministers during this dialogue.



economic activity in Afghanistan, the ministers emphasised the significance of exploring feasible pathways towards reviving the Afghan economy. As a step towards this goal, they agreed to consider additional support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and exploring trilateral investment opportunities that promote industrialisation and job creation. Expressing the solidarity with the people of Afghanistan they stressed the crucial need for sustained and urgent humanitarian support, including bridging funding gaps for

## India extends \$1 bln credit line for Sri Lanka by a year



(News Agency)- India has extended a \$1 billion credit line for Sri Lanka by one year, a Sri Lankan official told Reuters on Tuesday, giving the crisis-hit country a backup funds to pay for essential imports. The credit line, part of about \$4 billion in emergency assistance extended by India during the peak of Sri Lanka's financial crisis early last year, was scheduled to end in March. Post-negotiations, the credit line was extended until March 2024, said Sri Lanka's Deputy Treasury

Secretary Priyantha Rathnayake. "There is about \$350 million left of the credit line that can be utilised as needed," he said. "However, given the increase of foreign exchange availability in the market, the need is not as keen as it was last year." Reuters reported in March that Sri Lanka was negotiating with India to extend the facility, used so far mainly for medicines and food. Sri Lanka's reserves dropped to record lows in April last year, triggering its worst financial crisis since independence from British

colonial rule in 1948. The island, off India's southern coast, spent months struggling to pay for essential imports such as fuel, cooking gas and medicine and defaulted on its foreign debt. The situation has now improved with Sri Lanka finalising a nearly \$3 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund in March and kicking off debt restructuring talks with key bilateral creditors India, Japan and China. Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves hit \$2.7 billion at the end of last month.

## Qatar begins rebuilding 326 homes for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh



(News Agency)- Humanitarian and development nongovernmental organization Qatar Charity is to rebuild 326 homes for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. They were damaged in March by a fire at the Balukhali camp. The design and construction of the houses, which will have two rooms for each family to live in, has begun, the Qatar News Agency reported on Monday. Local authorities thanked the people of Qatar for their support for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and ongoing humanitarian efforts in other refugee camps in the country. A large fire at the Balukhali camp in Cox's Bazar, which broke out on March 5, displaced about 12,000 refugees, destroyed more than 2,000 homes, and damaged hospitals and educational facilities. Qatar Charity previously repaired 537 homes for Rohingya refugees in the nearby Kutupalong camp, which was similarly damaged by fire in 2021.

# Pakistan: Imran Khan Arrested; Protestors Target Military Premises; Social Media Restricted

**The PTI chief was taken into custody outside the Islamabad high court, where he was appearing for a case related to graft charges.**

(News Agency)-Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan was on Tuesday, May 9, taken into custody by paramilitary police outside the Islamabad high court, where he was appearing for a case related to graft charges. "Imran Khan has been arrested in the Qadir Trust case," the Islamabad police said on Twitter. The allegation in the case is that land was allocated for Al Qadir Trust University in exchange for ensuring the return of £190 million seized in the UK to real estate tycoon Malik Riaz in Pakistan, according to reports. According to the Pakistani newspaper Dawn, Pakistan's interior minister Rana Sanaullah said that Khan was taken into custody because he had failed to appear before the agency despite receiving several notices in the alleged graft case. Khan's close aide, former



information minister Fawad Chaudhry, confirmed the arrest and said that workers of Khan's party PTI were "subjected to torture." The drastic move spurred an angry reaction from party workers and protestors in several cities, with many of them attacking military installations - an indication that they believe the "establishment", the popular euphemism for the Army, is

behind the arrest.

Khan's arrest comes after he accused a serving senior intelligence officer of involvement in the attack on him in Wazirabad in November 2022. While the military has rejected the allegation, the PTI chief repeated the claim in a video message that was posted before his arrest on Tuesday.

The government had also tried to take Khan into custody in March

this year, but the police's attempts were foiled by PTI supporters who camped near his residence in Lahore.

Meanwhile, the PTI has claimed that Khan was "abducted" and that "scores of lawyers and general people have been tortured".

The party also asked citizens to "come out and defend their country", which echoed Khan's words when the police had attempted to arrest him in March. According to Pakistani TV reports, people started gathering at Khan's Lahore residence soon after his arrest. Protests have also begun in several cities. According to Dawn, the Islamabad police rejected the PTI's allegations that people were tortured. They added that Section 144, which prevents the congregation of more than four

people, had been imposed in Islamabad.

Khan was taken into custody by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Pakistan's anti-corruption agency. He was arrested for causing losses to the national treasury, a top government official tweeted.

Ever since he was ousted, Khan attempted to pressure the Shehbaz Sharif government to hold general elections and also to the assembly in Punjab province. The Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies, where the PTI was in power, were dissolved in January this year as a pressure tactic.

The chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, who is perceived as being friendly to the PTI, has asked the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct elections in Punjab this month.

## Ahead of Bilawal's Goa trip for SCO meet, a look at Bhuttos tryst with India

(News Agency)-Amnesia is helpful when it comes to international relations. An air of incongruous expectation surrounds the prospective arrival of Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in Goa on May 4-5.

Now, the SCO consists of India, currently chairman of the group in which capacity it is hosting the summit; China, a country with which relations are strained over Himalaya-sized unanswered questions of cartographic and other sorts of aggressions by the People's Liberation Army; Russia, which is in earnest combat with Ukraine, and a host of proxy interests with half a finger on the nuclear button; and Khazakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, countries many people may not be able to point out in a map even. Tagged along as observers, a shorthand for knocking to join the strange grouping, are four countries - Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia; more over six countries - Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka - have a dialogue partner status. It is quite a collection.



India and Pakistan are newbies in the organisation and if you look at the complexities of the relationship dynamics, it can be legitimately considered a miracle that they are meeting at all. It is therefore slightly unlikely that the SCO, after Goa, will suddenly become a pillar of "the emerging more representative world order based on the supremacy of international law, primarily the UN Charter" as piously envisaged in one of the groupings noteworthy but baffling declarations.

That brings us to young Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The arrival of a Pakistani Foreign Minister on Indian soil is looked upon with the same noteworthiness attached to rare passing comets. They don't visit often but when they do there is a sound and light show. Some

of it in Pakistan and some of it in India. The significance is amplified if the personage happens to bear the name Bhutto.

After the crushing loss to India in the 1971 war, Bhutto's grandfather, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the forebearer of Pakistan's fledgling democracy, emerging from the shadows of

fourteen years of military rule, came to India, more particularly to Shimla, where he signed the Shimla Accord, with Indira Gandhi. Bilawal's mother Benazir, then a teenager, accompanied her father on that fateful trip, where her father thrashed out an agreement which came to be regarded in Pakistan as a sell-out. In India, where lateral inversion is an axiomatic political

phenomenon, there remains wonderment, now mostly political, though not residual, as to how an opportunity was squandered for a durable settlement barely six months after the creation of Bangladesh? To rephrase that cliché, how could India lose on the negotiating table what the army had gained in the battlefield?

## Pakistan could default without IMF bailout, Moody's warns

(News Agency)-Pakistan could default without an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout as its financing options beyond June are uncertain, ratings agency Moody's was quoted as saying in a report published by Bloomberg on Tuesday.

"We consider that Pakistan will meet its external payments for the remainder of this fiscal year ending in June," said Grace Lim, a sovereign analyst with the ratings company in Singapore. "However, Pakistan's financing options beyond June are highly uncertain. Without an IMF programme, Pakistan could

default given its very weak reserves."

Pakistan entered into a \$6.5 billion programme with the IMF in 2019. But the programme's ninth review for the release of \$1.2 billion is pending since October last year as the government has been unable to meet some of the pre-requisites set by the lender.

The IMF tranche is critical for Pakistan as it will also unlock financing from friendly countries, helping Pakistan avert default.

The country has been witnessing economic turmoil since last year, with its foreign exchange reserves down to critical levels while talks with the IMF for the release of the

pending tranche have remained unsuccessful thus far.

A delegation of IMF was in Pakistan in February this year for talks with the government to revive the programme.

After the delegation left, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said negotiations with the lender had "nearly concluded" and a staff-level agreement would happen "next week". But more than two months since then, an agreement is still not in sight.

Meanwhile, reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan stood at \$4.46 billion during the week ending on April 28, enough to cover just a month's imports.



# Artificially intelligent art vs naturally creative artists

(News Agency)-Recent developments in AI have taken the world by storm. On one hand, people are gung-ho about its potential to transform the way we live and work; on the other, it has raised serious privacy and ethical concerns. One of the key segments to be significantly impacted by AI is artists. AI-based tools are creating and transforming art like never before. It has led to concerns among the artist community, with several artists battling legal battles against the AI companies that have replicated the styles and art forms developed over decades by the artists in only a matter of a few seconds. Well, we surely don't know how the great artists from ancient times like Michaelangelo or Raja Ravi Varma would have reacted to AI-generated or imitated art, but currently, some current artists across the globe are surely not happy. The artists are demanding from the artificial intelligence creators and the AI-generated art apps to follow proper procedures

and take consent before copying their art styles. For an artist, creating art is a one-of-its-kind process- a way of exploring one's mind and pouring out creativity coming from skill, emotions and lived experiences. As the famous Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso once said, "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life". The act of creativity for most of the artists is not less than a spiritual experience. Many art forms from sculpture, painting or performing arts like music and dance operas have their roots in the history and culture of the land they originate in.

For example, the classical art of Europe takes one back to the ancient Roman and Greek culture, the sculptures and paintings from Krishnadevaraya's Vijayanagara empire remind us of the fact that he was a great patron of art and culture. The point here is that art is one of the greatest educators of all times, opening different realms of society and al-

lowing one to gain knowledge about the societies that existed in the past which might not be effectively done through AI-enabled art.

However, AI is not without its benefits. The supporters of artificial intelligence generated art argue that AI is not only changing art but also helping in preserving culture and enhancing people's experience. Several governments and universities globally have collaborated with AI companies to conserve some dialects and ancient antiques which otherwise might disappear with time.

The larger question is whether AI will make artists and human-generated art irrelevant. If we think of it, humans have been innovating since time immemorial and, from the first stone tools to fast-speed computers and artificial intelligence, all inventions have been products of human intelligence. History tells us that no invention has been able to surpass or control humans to the extent of making humans

irrelevant. Most inventions have added value, changed the way we live and work, eased our work and in many cases became replaced by the next invention. From peacock feathers dipped in ink to Apple Pencil, art has changed the way it gets created, but the foundation of human creativity has remained constant. Artists can use AI as an assistive tool to expand their creativity, we'd be efficient with creativity and find more time to ideate and invent. AI, instead of devaluing human creative skills, can make artists more creative, expand imagination and explore variations of a design for different uses. As one AI leader said: "As cinema didn't kill theatre and accounting software hasn't eradicated the profession, AI won't replace artists but can become a great assisting tool." From the benign computing technology to the dangerous atomic bomb, no human invention could be stopped in its stride. Thinking that the march of AI could be stopped could be futile.

## Why BJP Will Retain Power in Karnataka

(News Agency)-Just two days from polling, one thing is absolutely clear in the Karnataka assembly elections. This is a must-win election for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This is obvious from the amount of time and energy the party's prime minister and star campaigner, Narendra Modi, has spent on it. He is not just campaigning, but literally camping, in the state. BJP's last-minute push is as massive as it is impressive. But is it enough? That is the question. Regardless of whether it crosses the halfway mark on its own, the BJP seems poised to win back Karnataka.

Let us consider the major factors at play. As the state goes to the polls on May 10th, the most important swing dynamic in voter preferences is anti-incumbency. It is clear in most of the pre-poll surveys that the electorate is not entirely satisfied with the BJP government or the CM, Basavaraj Bommai. The latter is seen as weak and the former as corrupt, despite all the uproar by the party against corruption. Forty percent is jocularly referred to as the alleged percentage of bribe money or extortionate kickbacks. Whether or not this is true, the so-called double-engine Sarkar has not delivered to expectations, whether on employment or infrastructure. The BJP also faces headwinds when it comes to its "North Indian" and "Hindi belt" image. Voters' dissat-

isfaction may turn into bringing back Congress to power. With its strong organisation base, plus two stalwart leaders in former CM Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar, in addition to party president Mallikarjun Kharge, from the state, the Congress has a slight upper hand at the hustings.

To its credit, the Congress has been able to exploit local issues such as agricultural distress, water scarcity, and the biggest of them, unemployment, especially in the countryside. Their manifesto, as does the BJP's, therefore offers sops across the board, but especially aimed at women. The Congress also wants to capitalise on the BJP's anti-minority image. They have promised to restore the 4 percent quota to Muslims which the Bommai government docked. But here's the rub — in their zeal to appease Muslim voters, the Congress also promised in its manifesto to ban Bajrang Dal. This was a huge error, which would be sure to consolidate Hindu votes in favour of the BJP. If the majority has rejected one Congress policy, it is the politics of appeasement. In fact, Bajrang Dal would be a winning mantra. After all, who can go against Lord Hanuman in India? He is one of our favourite deities. You might get away by criticising Lord Rama once in a while, but abusing Hanuman would surely land you

into a lot of trouble. Realising its mistake, the Congress has tried to make amends. Senior leader and former CM, Veerappa Moily, retracted plans to ban Bajrang Dal, while Shivakumar promised to build one Hanuman temple in each district. Clearly, the BJP has changed the narrative. No one who is perceived to be anti-Hindu has a chance to win in India.

The Congress, prepared for a hung assembly, is also stitching up alliances with smaller parties, and independent candidates. The supporters of one of the latter were caught on camera distributing currency notes to voters of the minority community. Both the BJP, which has brought in close to fifty new faces and taken considerable risks in side-lining old-timers, as well as the Congress, have fielded winnable candidates. Both sides have also intensified the mainstream and social media campaigns, though the BJP is clearly ahead of its rivals as journos visiting its war room report. BJP turncoats may also be Trojan horses, serving to bring down the Congress government if the latter is elected to power.

The biggest force multiplier for the BJP is, of course, Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The massive turnouts at his rallies are a clear indication of his appeal among the voters. But one cannot be sure if his popularity will always translate into votes or overcome

the rumblings of anti-incumbency. Home Minister Amit Shah and party president, JP Nadda, have also been campaigning in the state. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind how seriously the party is taking these elections. Karnataka is a crucial state for the BJP, given that it is the party's gateway to the South and also the precursor to the 2024 general elections.

This brings me to my argument — BJP will, indeed, retain power in Karnataka. How? There are two possible scenarios. The first and most desirable one is that it will win on its own. The final push by the trimurti Modi-Shah-Nadda will rouse both the cadres and voters to push them past the finish line. If they get 113 seats or more, they will happily install a new CM, probably a Vokkaliga, as their helmsman. The administration will be tightened, corruption brought down, and the party will shore up its power and prestige in preparation for the 2024 general elections. But what happens if it does not get past the halfway mark? If it is only a matter of a few seats, the party is more than capable of managing to win over a sufficient number of MLAs to form the government. Now we come to the second scenario. What if it is con-

siderably short of numbers, getting no more than 85 or 90 seats as several pre-election polls have predicted? Here is where Plan B will kick in. Yes, the father-son duo of HD Deve Gowda and HD Kumaraswamy of Janata Dal (Secular), will indeed become kingmakers. But only in name. Their political survival as a family party, with a single caste appeal, is under threat. They need the BJP to continue enjoying the spoils of power. They will happily align with the BJP rather than the Congress because they know that a tie-up with the latter may prove suicidal. In such a scenario, JDS will also join the NDA in 2024, bidding for a plum cabinet post in return.

If the Karnataka electorate is as perceptive as it is development-oriented, they will try to give a clear majority to either the BJP or the Congress. This is where the Congress finds itself on the back foot. If it can't win on its own, it will lose. It cannot afford to come out as second best at the hustings. The BJP will also try to win on its own to avoid having to give a pound of flesh to JDS, which betrayed it in the past. But the ruling party knows that even if it comes second in this fight, it has a very good chance of remaining in power. That is why both the rhetoric and the body language of its leaders do not show the nervousness of a side that is about to lose.

# Trump forum a big test for CNN, moderator Kaitlan Collins

(News Agency)- Donald Trump's town hall forum on CNN on Wednesday is the first major television event of the 2024 presidential campaign — and a gigantic test for the chosen moderator, Kaitlan Collins.

Both sides of the political divide expressed suspicion when the CNN forum at New Hampshire's St. Anselm College was announced last week. Some Democrats question whether the former president should be given the airtime, while Republicans wonder if a network Trump has long disparaged can be fair.

Once it begins, Collins must give audience members the chance to ask questions while determining when to step in with her own. She'll weigh how to correct misinformation in a potentially hostile environment: Invited town hall participants are those who expect to vote in a Republican primary.

"It's a balance beam and it can be walked," said Frank Sesno, a former CNN Washington bureau chief now at George Washington University. "We're going to see if Kaitlan is worthy of the Olympics." CNN would not make Collins available to talk before the event, scheduled for 8 p.m. Wednesday.

It speaks to Collins' stature that she was given the assignment at a network with no shortage of experienced political journalists — Dana Bash, Anderson Cooper, Jake Tapper, Chris Wallace. She worked at The Daily Caller, the conservative website launched by Tucker Carlson, before turning occasional guest appearances on CNN into a full-time job in 2017.

She covered the Trump White House and became CNN's chief White House correspondent in 2021. She moved to New York late last year for a co-hosting role on "CNN This Morning." For the 31-year-old Collins, now in the mix for a role on CNN's prime-time lineup, Wednesday's event may also be an important audition.

"She has had a pretty meteoric rise at a young age because of her talent," said Maggie Haberman, New York Times correspondent and author of the Trump biography "Confidence Man." "She was a formidable White House correspondent, always calm under pressure, but she is also incredibly fair and facts-focused."

Collins had her run-ins with the Trump White House. She was barred from a Rose Garden event in 2018 when the Trump team got upset with her shouted questions in the Oval Office earlier in the day.

She has fact-checked on the fly as a morning anchor. "That's not true, Senator," she said to Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida recently when he made a claim about President Joe Biden and Medicare spending on "CNN This Morning."

Alyssa Farah Griffin, once on Trump's communications team and now a panelist on "The View," tweeted after the forum was announced that Collins "is one of the toughest interviews out there. Anyone thinking that Trump will get away with lying without being called out needs to watch her past interviews. Honestly surprised he agreed."

Remarkably, it's Trump's first appearance for a CNN interview since before he was elected president in 2016. Since an-

nouncing his 2024 candidacy, he's generally confined himself to television interviews with outlets that appeal to conservatives.

During his presidency, Trump continually attacked CNN as "fake news." CNN's reputation among Republicans sunk, and although the network's new management has sought to inhabit more of a middle ground politically, it's an uphill battle among his supporters.

It's obvious to everyone with half a brain that Trump won't get a fair shake from CNN," wrote columnist Paula Bonyard for the conservative PJ Media. "Why does he keep prostrating himself before these dishonest left-wing media hacks?"

A Trump adviser, who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said CNN executives made a compelling pitch to the former president. The adviser also noted that Trump found success in 2016 by stepping outside Republicans' traditional comfort zone.

Meanwhile, many Trump opponents believe a man who has continued to spread lies about fraud during his 2020 election loss to Biden doesn't deserve the prime-time exposure. There's also deep-seated suspicion dating to CNN's frequent coverage of Trump's rallies before the 2016 election, which gave a ratings boost to the network and outside airtime to the first-time candidate.

"I find it very hard to defend the choice to give him a live platform, no matter how it is dressed up," MSNBC's Chris Hayes said on his show, which will directly compete with Trump on Wednesday.

CNN has said the forum is part of the network's long-standing tradition of hosting candidate interviews and events. Given Trump's standing in polls with Republican voters, the network said, his candidacy can't be ignored. It's also a reflection of the new era of leadership at the network, and management's efforts

to rebuild trust as a nonpartisan news brand. To that end, current CNN chairman and CEO Chris Licht has made it a goal to broaden the network's reach and ease some of the tension with Republicans, including by reportedly meeting with lawmakers from both parties on Capitol Hill.

Collins was chosen as moderator in part because she's a rising star and in part because of her direct experience covering Trump. She'll be onstage on Wednesday with a team of producers and fact-checkers giving her advice through an earpiece.

Sesno said that CNN should make clear in its advance promotion that it's a no-holds-barred event where the former president can be asked any question. The ad that the network has been running has been a straightforward preview.

"I simply cannot imagine that CNN or New Hampshire Republicans are going to give him a free pass," Sesno said. "But if they do, shame on them."

## Without Talks or Handshakes, How Will India Improve Relations With Pakistan?

**Having thrown away our agency, our focus is not on substance but communicating how we did not shake hands and how we made angry faces. This is what India's foreign policy has become.**

(News Agency)-His uncles were assassinated, one by the police. We have just hosted the foreign minister of Pakistan, a young dynast of the sort India is familiar with. His mother, who was prime minister, was assassinated by extremists, his grandfather, who was prime minister and also president earlier, was assassinated by the judiciary and the Army. His uncles were assassinated, one by the police. This is a person who has first-hand experience of the dangers and problems of the sort of state that Pakistan has formed itself into.

The story in Goa, where the foreign ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation countries met, of course was the rude body language we apparently displayed to him, the apparent refusal to shake hands (and do namaste instead), and so on. It was as if we were hosting someone unwelcome, which we were, and someone who had been forced on us with whom we had personal enmity. He, on the other hand, though young, appears to have acquitted himself well, going by some of the messages on social media, though I did not see the interviews he did. He exposed himself to questioning by our journalists, which our leaders do not do.

Let us turn to the issue, which is how we can improve relations with our

neighbour. The first question to ask is: Do we have any agency or do only they have it? This is worth considering because our position is that we can have no normalcy in ties till they stop doing what they do. Meaning that, according to us, they are the ones who are in control of normalcy. I have written before about the data on deaths in Kashmir from terrorism, which peaked two decades ago at over 4,000 and then fell each year under Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh to go under 200 in a decade, and remain there more or less in the years since. Our government's view appears to be that all violence in Kashmir is externally induced, and there is no local catalyst. I say appears to be because it is not clear if we are saying this. But if we are, then what we mean is that since there is no local component, we will only act on normalisation if violence becomes zero.

This is worth considering while we go through the options we have. Former diplomat Satinder Lambah recently (posthumously) published a book called *In Pursuit of Peace: India-Pakistan Relations under Six Prime Ministers*. In it, he lists the four-point normalisation formula of then-Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf. These were demilitarisation through a phased withdrawal of troops, no change in the borders of Kash-

mir, free movement of Kashmiris across the Line of Control (LoC) without independence and joint supervision in Jammu and Kashmir involving India, Pakistan, and Kashmir.

This did not go through. After this, under Manmohan Singh, another set of guidelines was produced by India. These repeated all four of Musharraf's points, and added more. Three of these additional points were on trade: encourage meaningful across the LoC, removal of non-tariff barriers (meaning delays, inspections, red tape) for all locally produced goods, take measures to increase it and open more routes.

This did not go through either of course, but it sounds like normalisation of the sort that would not only address our concern of violence against civilians and the armed forces but also be beneficial to our economy. India produces goods that Pakistan (or for that matter Bangladesh) does not, but we cannot sell them these products because of trade barriers and reluctance to normalise. Half of all manufacturing in India is in the automobile sector, and the cars, motorcycles and tractors and rickshaws we have are cheaper than the ones sold there. It would be in our interest to push for normalisation or at least to segregate normalisation on Kashmir from other issues like trade, so that our economy benefits.



# The Real 'Kerala Story' is Much Bigger and More Worrisome

(News Agency)-The opposition to film The Kerala Story is yet another attempt to ignore the elephant in the room. And the name of this elephant is Islamic radicalisation in India. So the larger debate shouldn't be about the film or conversions in Kerala only. These are only offshoots of a larger and now deep-rooted malaise — Islamic radicalisation in India.

But first about Kerala. It is a well-known fact that there is a conversion industry in Kerala and the Islamists there have promoted it. The forced conversions and Islamic radicalisation are nothing new to Kerala. The outcome of ignoring this radicalisation could be disastrous. One needs to learn from the past otherwise one is condemned to repeat it. Hence, one must revisit what happened in 1921 during Malabar riots in Kerala.

Kunjahammed Haji, a radical Islamist, led the Malabar riots that resulted in a Hindu genocide in Kerala. There was a massacre of thousands of Hindus, forcible conversions, rape of Hindu women and children and destruction of Hindu properties and places of worship. The violence began at Tirurangadi in Kerala's south Malabar on 20 August 1921, and lasted for over four months. More than a lakh Hindus were displaced. The extent of carnage can be gauged from the fact that martial law was imposed in six out of 10 taluks in the then Malabar district.

The official British records show 2,266 killed, 1,615 wounded, 5,688 captured, while 38,256 surrendered during military engagements. Thousands of Hindus were forcibly converted. Some of them embraced Hindu faith again due to efforts of organisations like Arya Samaj but the shocking story of thousands of hapless Hindus remains untold. Marxist historians ensured that these riots were narrated as merely peasant uprisings in our school and college textbooks. Though, nothing could be farther than truth.

C Gopalan Nair, who was deputy collector of this region when these riots broke, later wrote in his book, The Moplah Rebellion, 1921, "Murders, dacoities, forced conversions and outrages on Hindu women became order of the day." Dr BR Ambedkar has also provided a detailed account on the rebellion in his book, Pakistan or The Partition of India (Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Volume 8, P.163). "Beginning with the year 1920 there occurred in that year in Malabar what is known as the Mopla Rebellion. It was the result of the agitation carried out by two Muslim organisations, the Khuddam-i-Kaba (servants of the Mecca Shrine) and the Central Khilafat Committee," wrote Ambedkar. He further added, "Agitators actually preached the doctrine that India under the British Government was Dar-ul-Harab and that the Mus-

lims must fight against it and if they could not, they must carry out the alternative principle of Hijrat. The Moplas were suddenly carried off their feet by this agitation. The outbreak was essentially a rebellion against the British government. The aim was to establish the kingdom of Islam by overthrowing the British government."

"The Hindus were visited by a dire fate at the hands of the Moplas. Massacres, forcible conversions, desecration of temples, foul outrages upon women, such as ripping open pregnant women, pillage, arson and destruction— in short, all the accompaniments of brutal and unrestrained barbarism, were perpetrated freely by the Moplas upon the Hindus until such

time as troops could be hurried to the task of restoring order through a difficult and extensive tract of the country," said Ambedkar

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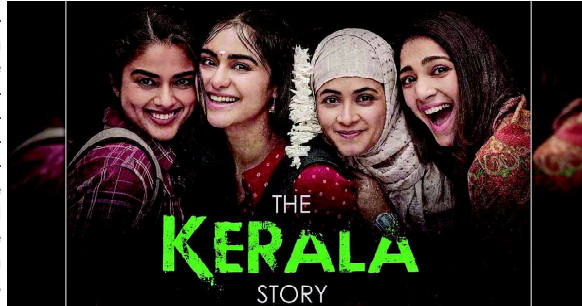
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"This was not a Hindu-Moslem riot. This was just a Bartholomew. The number of Hindus who were killed, wounded or converted, is not known. But the number must have been enormous." Annie Besant, Theosophist and one of the most respected public figures in India's Independence movement, had presided over the first 'Reform Conference' in Malabar in the spring of 1921. She also wrote in detail about how Islamic radicalisation ripped apart the social fabric.

## PM To Visit US On June 22, Joe Biden To Host State Dinner: White House

(News Agency)-New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will go to the US on a state visit on June 22 following an invitation from President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, the government said in a statement on Wednesday. The US President and the First Lady will also host PM Modi to a state dinner.

"The visit will underscore the growing importance of the strategic partnership between India and the United States as the two nations collaborate across numerous sectors. The leaders will have the opportunity to review strong bilateral cooperation in various areas of mutual interest, including technology, trade, industry... and deepening people-to-people connections," the government said. PM Modi's state visit is a sign of the deepening US-India relationship as the Biden administration advances policies and initiatives for a free and open Indo-Pacific to counter what it sees as a growing threat posed by China. Both India and the US are working to shore up support against China's growing assertiveness. PM Modi visited Mr Biden at the White House in 2021, but as part of the Quad

summit bringing together the US, Australia, Japan and India, and not a full state visit. The US and India last month announced an Initiative on critical and emerging technology, a plan to share advanced defence and computing technology, including the joint production of General Electric jet engines. The two leaders will "explore ways to strengthen India-US collaboration in pluri-lateral and multilateral fora, including in the G20. They would reflect on their shared vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific and discuss opportunities to expand and consolidate the Quad engagement," the government said on Wednesday. In a statement, the White House said the upcoming visit "will affirm the deep and close partnership between the United States and India and the warm bonds of family and friendship that link Americans and Indians together." The visit will strengthen our two countries' shared commitment to a free, open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific and our shared resolve to elevate our strategic technology partnership, including in defence, clean energy, and space," the White House said.

# Love Jihad: Religious Ambivalence Versus Extreme Fundamentalism

(News Agency)-Samuel P Huntington in his classic work *The Clash of Civilizations* had hit the nail on the head when he made this trenchant observation: "World politics is entering a new phase, in which the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of international conflict will be cultural. Civilizations – the highest cultural groupings of people – are differentiated from each other by religion, history, language, and tradition. These divisions are deep and increasing in importance. From Yugoslavia to the Middle East to Central Asia, the fault lines of civilizations are the battle lines of the future".

The phenomenon of 'love jihad' needs to be seen as representing a facet of the clash of civilizations. Over one thousand million Hindus if converted can become a global changemaker to either of the two foreign religions that have pitched camp in India for the past few centuries. No stone has been left unturned in this lawless game of conversion. "Killing a belief could be worse than killing a human being. When you kill a human, you take their life, but when you take their faith, they are left without hope, without meaning," observes Nimish Dayalu in *Caveman's Secret Sauce: Finding Answers to the World's Oldest Questions*. Hence, the strategy to ridicule Hindu beliefs, traditions, culture and heritage.

In this process, which has been a continuous one for centuries, the range of tactics has stretched from internecine wars, abductions, mass rapes, to luring with money, food, education, medical treatment and even marriages. The last mentioned is currently creating a

cyclone in a tea cup, all across India and also globally, as a film *The Kerala Story* has opened a can of worms. Religiously illiterate Hindu girls become soft targets for fundamentalist snipers, out to convert, marry, transport them to terror hot spots, and abandon them for use by foreign terrorists sexually.

Statistics of missing women across India are alarming. In Odisha, there has been a 73% rise in missing minor girls in 2022. Over 40,000 women went missing in Gujarat over the course of five years, as per official statistics.

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, 7,105 women went missing in 2016, 7,712 in 2017, 9,246 in 2018, and 9,268 in 2019. In 2020, 8,290 women were reported to have gone missing. The total number adds up to 41,621.

West Bengal, had the highest number of missing women from 2016-2020, with 1,43,102 cases reported. In Tamil Nadu, the number of missing women during the same period was 53,780. Uttar Pradesh, which has a population of over 20 crore people, had 25,535 missing women reported during the same period.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2018 report shows that Karnataka was among the top 10 states in India with the maximum number of missing women cases. Similar reports are emerging from Andhra Pradesh, where in 2019 the official records revealed that 2,100 women are missing.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, National Crime Records Bureau's 'Report on Missing Women and Children in India' does not maintain any statistics about women who have gone missing, who

were trapped in conversion rackets, subjugated by using deadly narcotics, sexually abused, transported to West Asian countries, for use as sex slaves.

Obviously, the Ministry of Home Affairs has to do a lot of homework, investigation and effective prosecution to bring the offenders to book. The problem is that our legal tools like the Indian Penal Code and Indian Evidence Act are woefully inadequate and totally outdated to tackle emerging new dimensions in traditional crimes.

Hence abductors, transporters, rapists, converters, drug-traffickers, all go scot-free.

Weaponising fake love-marriages, narcotics consumption, Arabic food, language and culture, for bringing about demographic, cultural and religious changes, appear apparently innocuous, but are fraught with dangerous and far-reaching consequences.

This is happening on a global scale but the additional problem facing India is the massive Hindu millions who are utterly ignorant about their religion and heritage. Temples are taken-over by state governments, and their administrations packed with atheists, those professing foreign faiths and looters. Religious education for Hindus is denied, while full encouragement being given to other faiths to freely propagate and market their faiths. In fact, conversions from Hinduism itself is encouraged by giving reservation and other benefits to fresh converts in many southern states.

There is a deliberate hidden agenda and policy to encourage religious conversions and bring about electoral changes.

It was never imagined by the makers of the Constitution that a day would come, when even the religious illiteracy of the Hindu masses could be made malleable and moulded to cause political changes. Unless the government imposes tight restrictions on religious conversions, like in West Asian countries, as also in many South Asian countries, the internal security situation in India will deteriorate badly, and may also become an international menace.

The judiciary itself is helpless as there are a lot of undefined and loose terms like 'secularism', 'minority', 'law and order' floating around creating havoc in every sphere. 'Secularism' needs to be replaced by 'respect for every religion', 'minority' needs to be replaced by 'second, third, and fourth largest majority' and strict conditions need to be imposed with special monitoring for all Special Marriages Act cases.

Stern message needs to be sent out that 'law and order' is not for politicians to decide, claiming it as a state subject, national security is not negotiable under any circumstances.

Every citizen and politician should remember that democracy and secularism are flourishing only because of the magnanimity of the Hindus, the day that equation changes, family rule, multi-parties, languages and diverse cultures will all be crushed and trampled.

The central government and every state government is, therefore, duty-bound to protect each and every faith, and citizens need to be protected from predators and purveyors of foreign faiths, hunting for fresh prey, luring them with marriage contracts and euphoric drugs.

## Why Mamata banned The Kerala Story in Bengal

(News Agency)-It couldn't have been better timed to be the first chief minister of the country to ban *The Kerala Story*, a movie denounced by critics as allegedly vilifying Muslims and hailed by headline Hindu activists and some BJP leaders as highlighting the 'threat of Islamic terrorism'. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee did what some of her counterparts were perhaps dithering on.

With Union home minister Amit Shah setting foot in Bengal to participate in Rabindranath Tagore's 162nd birth anniversary (May 9) celebrations, it couldn't have been a more opportune moment for the BJP to rake up its narrative of Mamata's alleged appeasement politics—the ban on the Sudipto Sen-directed film being a fresh trigger. Union information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur has already said that Mamata has done "injustice to the sisters and daughters of West Bengal by banning the film" while Locket Chatterjee, the BJP MP from Hooghly, told news agency ANI: "She (Mamata) made a huge mistake. She doesn't

know Bengalis... If she is banning #TheKeralaStory, it seems Mamata Banerjee is anti-Hindu, anti-India and anti-women. The film is based on ISIS and nothing else. It means she is trying to ban this film to hide something." Mamata fears screening the film in Bengal would be potentially dangerous and things could take a disharmonious turn. "This (ban) is to avoid any incident of hatred and violence, and to maintain peace in the state," read her government's order on the ban.

Mamata has called *The Kerala Story* a "distorted" film and indicated that it was propaganda material. "Why did they make *The Kashmir Files*? To humiliate one section... What is *The Kerala Story*? If they can prepare *The Kashmir Files* to condemn the Kashmiri people... now they are defaming Kerala. Next, they will make *'The Bengal Files'*," she said. Mamata banning the film needs to be seen from a wider political perspective too. On the backfoot in terms of securing the minority vote-bank in the recent Sagardighi bypoll, which the Trinamool Congress (TMC) lost by 20,000 votes

to the Congress-Left combine, Mamata has lately been on an overdrive with her Muslim outreach. The Sagardighi seat has an over 60 per cent Muslim population. Post defeat, Mamata has brought the minority affairs department under her, besides issuing a notification for completion of pending recruitments of madrasa teachers. Various other doles have been announced for the minorities.

The ban on the film may well be seen by some as an extension of such moves with the motive of securing the support of Muslim voters. The BJP's Hindutva drive for the past two years failed to make much impact in Bengal. The BJP is no longer a close competitor of the TMC and, therefore, many Muslims in Bengal perhaps feel no reason to be alarmed of the party. Again, the BJP's stand of going soft on Muslims as a part of its national policy of reaching out to the 'liberal' sections of the community is supposed to have minimised the reasons to go for a tight consolidation. The BJP's vote share has dropped in recent

polls. With the party politically weakened, minorities may not feel the need to unite under its principal opponent TMC. This is something bothering Mamata, and may have prompted her to go hammer and tongs against the BJP and assure the minorities that she was their protector in Bengal. By banning *The Kerala Story* and saying that the film intended to "humiliate" one section of society, Mamata has made it clear that she will not allow majoritarian politics to override minority sentiments. Communal polarisation in Bengal in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections may suit both the TMC and the BJP. And this narrative will be important for both parties to reduce the battle to a binary, both in politics and religion, to make sure other political entities are irrelevant. With *The Kerala Story* ban, it is already evident. Interestingly, Mamata has hinted that what she did should have been done by the communists in Kerala. By alluding to the 'communists', she has managed to send another message to the minorities in Bengal that when it comes to protecting them, she is the safest bet.



# Pakistan is imploding. A failing neighbour will be a nightmare for India and the world

Former Chief of the Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa's 2021 statement – "tanks are not in a condition to work, there is no diesel for the movements of cannons...so let's settle issues with India", only substantiated the argument. Repeated assertions by our own security establishment also tend to support this view. So much so, that India has scheduled the G20 tourism working group meeting in Srinagar from May 22 to 24.

But a reality check based on past experience with Pakistan and empirical wisdom leads to exactly opposite conclusions. Economic deprivations and internal strife rarely result in primordial and religious conflict being given up. It continues, at times, even to the extent of self-destruction. I examine the national security challenges likely to be faced by India from an imploding Pakistan.

## A timely warning

Two major terrorist attacks in 15 days (20 April and 5 May), resulting in 10 soldiers being killed in action and the fulminations of Pakistan's foreign minister, Bilawal Bhutto, both in and outside of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation foreign ministers meeting on 5 May, is a timely warning for India.

It may be a coincidence, but the time (3 pm) of the ambush in area of Tota Gali on Bhimber Gali – Surankot road on 20 April, which resulted in five soldiers being killed in action and one wounded, was approximately 1.5 hours after the announcement (1:22 pm) of the visit of Bilawal Bhutto to attend SCO foreign ministers meeting in Goa by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan. The news of the second ambush with an IED in Kandi forest of Rajouri district, which took place at 07:30 am on 5 May and resulted in another 5 Special Forces commandos being killed in action and one officer wounded, was breaking on news channels while the meeting of the foreign ministers was still in progress. The second ambush appears to have been a deliberate trap laid by the terrorists who lured the soldiers by feeding planted information.

During the foreign ministers meeting, diplomatic niceties were observed with both India and Pakistan stating their known positions on terrorism and other matters without naming each other. Jaishankar highlighted, "cross-border terrorism". Bilawal indirectly accused India of "weaponising terrorism for diplomatic point scoring". He also obliquely referred to abrogation of Article 370 and need for great power mediation on interstate disputes implying J&K. After the news of the Kandi terror-

ist attack, diplomatese was given short shrift and both sides bluntly stated their absolutist positions targeting respective domestic opinion. Bilawal Bhutto was first off the mark with a well-choreographed press conference mostly attended by Pakistani journalists who were part of his entourage. He reiterated Pakistan's position on terrorism and abrogation of Article 370 and put the onus on India to create conducive conditions for future talks. When asked about India holding G20 tourism meet in Srinagar, with a smirk on his face, Bilawal crudely threatened, "waqt par aisa jawab denge ki unko (India) yad rahega (when the time comes, we will respond in a manner that India will remember)".

A few hours later, the response of S Jaishankar was even more scathing and unforgiving. Apart from point by point rebuttal in very caustic language, he castigated Bilawal Bhutto of being a "promoter, justifier, and I am sorry to say spokesperson of a terrorism industry, which is the mainstay of Pakistan".

## Pakistan's crisis and proxy war

Due to primordial religious emotions, perceived deprivation of J&K in 1947 and its dismemberment in 1971, Pakistan considers India to be an enemy State. It has an unambiguous India-centric long term national security strategy backed by a political, public and military consensus. It has waged a proxy war in J&K since 1989 under the shadow of nuclear weapons, which safeguard it from existential threat from India. As a weaker State, Pakistan has given up the idea of militarily defeating India and after 2008, it has also given up perpetrating terrorist acts in the hinterland of India. However, despite all odds, it has persisted with its strategy in J&K.

The humiliating defeat of Kargil only spurred it to increase the tempo of terrorism. The threat of being bombed back to Stone Age triggered only a temporary change. Operation Prakaram did not deter it. Surgical Strikes and Balakot Air Strike were dismissed with contempt. In Afghanistan in a span of 42 years (1979 to 2021), it defeated two superpowers — erstwhile USSR and the US, ironically both times being financed by the latter.

Despite its economic, political and ever-increasing homegrown Islamic Terrorism, Pakistan has persisted with the proxy war in J&K. Its intensity has been calibrated to avoid the sanctions of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Proxy wars have also been diluted to a great extent by more efficient management of counter-insurgency operations by the Indian Army, particularly in the Val-

ley, by strengthening the counter-infiltration grid.

There has been a discernible change in tactics. Encounters with security forces are being avoided. In the last one year, the minority community has been specifically targeted, both in the Valley and in Punch, and Rajouri districts. Due to heightened security in the Valley, Punch and Rajouri districts have been reactivated since 2021.

This is also due to a void in the counter-insurgency grid due to movement of the Uniform Force with two Rashtriya Rifles Sectors to Eastern Ladakh. The data does indicate an overall drop in violence up to May 2023. In my view, this is temporary and violence will increase with the onset of summer.

## An unstable Pakistan will be worse for India


Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote in the visitor's

book of Minar-e-Pakistan during his Bus Yatra in 1999: "A stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest. Let no one in Pakistan be in doubt. India sincerely wishes Pakistan well." There is immense wisdom in his words. A belligerent Westphalian State of Pakistan whose conduct can be tempered by international pressure and FATF sanctions is far better than an anarchical state. Currently facing an economic crisis, its conduct can also, to some extent, be shaped by the International Monetary Fund and other donor states. Its errant behaviour can invite international sanctions. So long as Indian security forces can keep the proxy war within manageable limits, a Westphalian Pakistan at worse is only an irritant.

A failed, anarchical Pakistan will be a nightmare for India and the


world. Imagine a nation armed with nuclear weapons dominated by religious fanatics with a death wish. It will team up with the Taliban in Afghanistan to establish an Islamic Caliphate. The consequence for J&K would be horrendous and the proxy war will spill over into the hinterland of India. Even in its best avatar — the Iranian model — it will offer no solace to India.

Pakistan Army with all its flaws is a professional force and will bring about order in Pakistan. The moot question is whether it will do so by a coup or by ordering elections with or without Imran Khan. The world cannot afford a failed Pakistan and will soon come to its aid. It would be prudent for India to strive for a stable Pakistan as part of the international order whose conduct can be controlled with economic strings.




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# Disney updates lawsuit against DeSantis to add new events

Disney on Monday amended its free speech lawsuit against Gov. Ron DeSantis to add recent developments in the tit-for-tat fight between the entertainment giant and the Florida governor, such as a new law granting the state unprecedented authority to inspect a monorail system at Disney World.

(News Agency)- Disney's amended complaint filed in federal court in Tallahassee is updated with developments since the entertainment giant almost two weeks ago sued DeSantis and an oversight board for the Disney World governing district that is made up of members newly appointed by the governor. The new complaint references legislation passed last week by Florida lawmakers that rescinds agreements that Disney and a previous oversight board consisting of Disney supporters made earlier this year, giving the entertainment giant control over design and

construction at Disney World. The amended lawsuit also includes the new measure passed last week by Florida lawmakers giving the state authority to inspect Disney World's monorail system, which previously had been conducted in-house.

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conducted in-house.

The fight began last year after Disney, beset by significant pressure both internally and externally, publicly opposed a state law that bans classroom lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades, a policy critics call "Don't Say Gay."

As punishment, DeSantis took over Disney World's self-governing district through legislation passed by Florida lawmakers and appointed a new board of supervisors that would oversee municipal services for the sprawling theme parks and hotels. But before the new board came in, the company made agreements with

members of the previous oversight board that stripped the new supervisors of their authority when it comes to design and construction.

The creation of Disney's self-governing district by the Florida Legislature was instrumental in the company's decision in the 1960s to build near Orlando. The company had told the state at the time that it planned to build a futuristic city that would include a transit system and urban planning innovations, so the company needed autonomy in building and deciding how to use the land. The futuristic city never materialized and instead morphed into a second theme park that opened in 1982.

## About 1 in 5 Asian Americans hide their heritage from non-Asians, some out of fear, report says



(News Agency)-Some of the details that Asian Americans choose not to share include ethnic food or clothing as well as cultural and religious practices, the Pew Research Center said in the report released Monday.

"Pew Research Center conducted this analysis to understand the rich diversity of people of Asian origin or ancestry living in the United States and their views of identity. The study is part of the Center's multiyear, comprehensive, in-depth quantitative and qualitative research effort focused on the nation's Asian population," the report said. The research was conducted in the wake of a recent rise in attacks against Asian Americans, including during the Covid-19 pandemic amid misinformation and misplaced aggression about the origins of the virus. Reported hate crimes against Asians in 16 of the nation's largest cities and counties rose 164% in

2021, according to a study from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at Cal State University San Bernardino. And a 2022 report from Pew found about a third of Asian Americans reported changing their daily routine due to concerns of racially motivated violence.

The new survey is based on a sample of 7,006 adults in the US who identify as Asian, either alone or in combination with other races or Hispanic ethnicity. Respondents were interviewed between July 5, 2022, and January 27 of this year. When asked why they had hidden some aspects of their culture, Asian Americans mentioned a number of reasons from "fear of being embarrassed to wanting to avoid awkward questions or having to explain themselves, and even concern of potential discrimination," the Pew report said.

## Body found in search for missing student in New Zealand cave system

(News Agency)-Rescue workers trying to locate a high school student who went missing in a flooded cave system after a school trip during heavy rain on New Zealand's North Island, have found a body, according to a statement released Wednesday morning local time from police superintendent Tony Hill, a Northland District Commander. While the formal identification of the body is yet to take place, police are offering support to the family of the missing student and have concluded the search mission.

Police first received reports on Tuesday morning that a group of high school students were in difficulty at the Abbey Caves in Whangarei, around 180 kilometers (112 miles) north of Auckland.

Of the 15 students and two adults in the group, all but one made it out of the cave safely, police said in a statement posted to Facebook.

An initial search failed to find the boy and officials suspended the search around 5 p.m.



Tuesday when night fell.

Police said the body was recovered late Tuesday evening, and was made possible by specialist equipment brought in from Auckland which allowed the search to continue longer. "We acknowledge this event has been very distressing for the school and wider community, and that there are a number of questions the public will have. At the moment, Police's focus is on supporting those affected, and we remind people to please not make assumptions as to what has occurred," the police statement read.

The year 11 students from Whangarei Boys High School (WBHS) were caving as part of an outdoor education class when they "encountered a severe weather event," the school said in a statement.

"In time we will seek to understand how this situation occurred, but for now I ask that we stay united as a WBHS community and provide support where required," the statement added. The school said it would open as normal on Wednesday to "maintain a sense of routine" for students and staff.



# Putin tried to project strength, but Moscow Victory Day parade revealed only his isolation



**For Russian President Vladimir Putin, this year's Victory Day parade in Red Square was a chance to continue his war on history. He succeeded only in underscoring his geopolitical isolation.**

(News Agency)-In a speech before the assembled troops, Putin drew a direct line between his invasion of Ukraine and the sacrifices of World War II. Flanked by surviving veterans of what Russia still calls the Great Patriotic War, the Russian president cast himself as savior and defender of an embattled Russia targeted by the "globalist elites" of the West.

"Today, civilization again is at a breaking point," Putin said. "Again, a true war has been unleashed against our motherland."

While Russia sees "no unfriendly

nations in the West or in the East," Putin suggested darker forces are conspiring against Moscow.

"Western globalist elites still talk about their exceptionalism, pitting people against each other and splitting society, provoking bloody conflicts and coups, sowing hatred, Russophobia, [and] aggressive nationalism," he said.

"The Ukrainian nation has become hostage to a coup which led to a criminal regime led by its Western masters. It has become a pawn to their cruel and selfish plans." It's worth unpacking this for a moment. It's Putin's

longstanding view that Ukraine is not a legitimate nation — Ukrainians and Russians, in his view, are "one people" and the Ukrainian state is an artificial construct. In his conspiratorial view of the world, states like Ukraine are merely vassals, and Washington calls the shots. And if a shadowy global cabal is pulling the strings in Kyiv, that belief justifies what Russia calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine. Let's remember that it was a genuine popular revolt — not, say, the CIA or George Soros — that brought people onto Kyiv's Maidan Square to support Ukraine's aspirations for joining the European Union, leading to the ouster of Ukraine's pro-Russian president in 2014. And that Russian-speaking Ukrainians — and even some Russian nationals — are also fighting and dying on the side of Ukraine.

But Putin is immune from fact-checking exercises here. Collective remembrance of World War II is the closest thing Russia has to a state religion, and May 9 — when Russians commemorate the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 — marks the holiest of days. For a domestic audience, the Victory Day parade provides a visual parallel between the veterans of the war that ended 78 years ago and the participants of Russia's war on Ukraine today. According to state media, over 500 participants of Russia's so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine took part in the parade on Red Square Tuesday. And in his speech, Putin cast them as the heirs of victory in the Great Patriotic War. Not surprisingly, Ukrainians are pushing back against such historical gaslighting. In video remarks,

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he had submitted a bill to the Verkhovna Rada — Ukraine's parliament to change official victory day celebrations from May 9 to May 8, and compared Russia's aggression to that of Hitler's Germany.

"It is on May 8 that most nations of the world remember the greatness of the victory over the Nazis," Zelensky said. "We will not allow the joint victory of the nations of the anti-Hitler coalition to be appropriated and we will not allow lies as if the victory could have taken place without the participation of any country or nation." Zelensky also played host to an important visitor in Kyiv on the same day as Putin's Victory Day parade: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who arrived bearing promises of continued support from Europe for Ukraine.

## Migrants living on the streets of El Paso are urged to turn themselves in to immigration authorities as expiration of Title 42 looms

(News Agency)-Federal agents moved through the quiet streets outside Sacred Heart Church in El Paso, Texas, early Tuesday morning, handing out flyers to more than 1,000 migrants who have been sleeping on the sidewalks, encouraging them to turn themselves in to immigration authorities ahead of the looming expiration of a Trump-era border restriction policy. Worry spread throughout the makeshift encampment as migrants read the document, which urged those who skirted authorities on the way into the US to visit the nearest processing station a few minutes walk from the church. There, the flyer said, they would be "processed by CBP officers and placed on the correct immigration path."

Just hours later, hundreds of people lined up outside a US Customs and Border Protection enforcement center under the scorching sun with plans to turn themselves in, some holding pieces of cardboard to shield themselves from the heat. Among them was Beckenbauer

Franco, 42, who came to the US from Venezuela, where he sold food and fruit after being unable to find work as an attorney, the profession he studied.

There, Franco made about \$5 per day, and told CNN a carton of milk cost between \$15 and \$18 — making many of the necessities for his 12-year-old daughter and aging parents unaffordable.

"What hurts the most is that they don't have enough to eat," he told CNN in a quivering voice, just hours before he joined the line. "(I ask) that they hear me, that they help me," he said, referring to immigration authorities. "That they give me asylum to be able to work in this country."

The enforcement action by federal officials here comes as the United States braces for the lifting of Title 42, a 2020 policy to curb the spread of Covid-19 that allowed US authorities to swiftly expel migrants encountered at the southern border, with some exceptions. It's set to lapse on Thursday,

along with the nation's coronavirus public health emergency.

Hundreds of migrants turned themselves in for immigration

processing, a source familiar with the data told CNN. The official tally has not been released. The policy has been controversial in part because

immigrant rights advocates argued officials were using the public health as a pretext to keep as many migrants out of the country as possible.

## Immigrant Advocates Condemn Mayor Adams' Plan to Move Asylum Seekers to Upstate Hotels

New York, NY—Today, NYC Mayor Eric Adams announced that some single adult male asylum seekers will be given the option to spend four months at two hotels that will be used as shelters in Orange County, NY.

Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition:

"New York State has a rich tradition of welcoming immigrants, and upstate towns like Buffalo and Utica have seen incredible economic and cultural revitalization from the resettlement of refugees to those regions. We believe that success is still possible, but it requires

deliberate planning and a coordinated strategy involving relevant municipal government officials, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. Instead, the Adams administration insists on going it alone. Working together, New York can live up to its legacy as a welcoming city and state for all immigrants. Alone, Adams just continues to not get stuff done, at the expense of asylum seeking families whose only mistake was believing that America is a refuge from the harm they experienced in their home countries.

"Shutting New York City's door on asylum seekers does

nothing more than put band-aids on an over-stretched shelter system, keeping everyone in limbo even longer. It is long past time that Mayor Adams stopped treating people seeking safety as a crisis, and started investing in an infrastructure of permanent housing, legal representation, and social service support that will allow asylum seekers, and all New Yorkers, to build their lives here in the city, if they choose to do so. Busing people upstate for shelter is only a temporary fix. They will be out of sight, but it's short-sighted to think that the Mayor can resolve New York City's housing problems in this manner."

# Bangladesh's water crisis and the problem of a 'green' solution



**The negative impact of a water project involving a nature-based solution in the city of Khulna should be a cautionary tale for policymakers.**

As the world scrambles to address climate change and build resilience to prepare communities for its destructive impacts, nature-based solutions are being presented as a panacea. These projects, which leverage nature and natural processes to help alleviate the effects of climate change and harmful human activity, are increasing in number and scale.

In the Philippines and India, mangrove forests are being expanded in conjunction with existing breakwaters on coastlines to protect against storms and flooding. Similarly, in South Africa, wetlands are being restored to recharge groundwater and protect from drought water-insecure cities, like Cape Town. Communities

globally are encouraged to scale up nature-based solutions and integrate them into modern infrastructure. A 2021 report published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) concluded that such an approach could save the world \$248bn annually in construction costs for expanding infrastructure.

Governments around the world are investing in research and development of nature-based solutions, while global financial institutions such as the World Bank are actively involved in funding projects utilising such approaches.

As urban planning scholars studying water, urbanisation, and climate justice in small and medium-sized South Asian cities, we agree that nature-

based solutions hold promise. But we also suggest caution. Our work in Khulna, a region in southern Bangladesh facing multiple ecological crises, provides one example of how integrating nature-based solutions can lead to complicated outcomes that help some communities while harming others.

Khulna's 'nature-based solution' in 2011, Khulna, Bangladesh's third-largest city, was facing severe water scarcity. Along with declining groundwater and pollution, there was rising saltwater intrusion into its freshwater sources. The local government had several options to address the crisis.

It could build a desalination plant to treat water from nearby rivers. But such installations are known to be ecologically harmful. For example, a paper from the Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment, and Health notes that desalination plants discharge 142 million cubic metres of hypersaline brine every day globally. That is enough to

cover the US state of Florida under 30cm (12 inches) of brine, which can be toxic and incredibly harmful to marine life. Another option the local government had was implementing tougher water controls on residents and businesses. This would mean asking residents to conserve water and industries to drop water-intensive practices and invest in rainwater harvesting systems. Such water conservation policies can be hard to implement and politically unpopular.

To avoid the negative effects of a desalination plant and potentially unpopular water conservation policies, the local government opted to construct a "climate-proof" water supply system for which it managed to obtain foreign funding from the Asian Development Bank and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

This water supply system was planned to extract water from the Madhumati River in the village of Mollahat, 40km (25 miles) northeast of Khulna, and

bring it to the city. During the rainy season, water would be processed directly by a water treatment plant and then provided to consumers. During the dry season, when the salinity of the Madhumati is high, the water would be mixed with low-salt water collected in a reservoir during the rainy season to decrease its salt concentration before being sent to the plant. Policymakers hoped this "nature-based solution" of mixing water would address future problems as rising seas will continue to increase salinity levels in Khulna's water. The framing of the new water infrastructure as climate- and nature-friendly enabled the local government to justify the construction of the expensive project. The new water infrastructure, which was finished in 2019, indeed benefitted Khulna residents. It increased access to piped water from 23 percent of households to 65 percent and provided water access to some informal settlements that did not have any previously.

## What is Title 42, why is it ending and what's happening now at the border?

Title 42, the Trump-era pandemic public health restrictions that became a key tool officials used to turn back migrants at the US-Mexico border, is set to expire on May 11.

Here are answers to some key questions about Title 42, what's happening on the ground and what could happen next.

What is Title 42?

In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a public health order that officials said aimed to stop the spread of Covid-19. The order allowed authorities to swiftly expel migrants at US land borders. The policy is widely known as Title 42, for the portion of US code that allowed the CDC director to issue it. Migrants encountered under Title 42 have been either returned to their home countries or sent back into



Mexico. Under the policy, authorities have expelled migrants at the US-Mexico border more than 2.8 million times since the policy began, according to US Customs and Border Protection data.

The policy, which officials have relied on to manage a spiraling situation at the border, is set to end at 11:59 p.m. ET on Thursday. Why is Title 42

ending?

We've known for months that Title 42's days were numbered. The policy's end comes as the Biden administration is ending the Covid public health emergency nationally.

The emergency declaration was the legal underpinning for Title 42's border restrictions, in addition to a number of other policies.

What will happen at the border after Title 42 is lifted?

Officials predict that lifting Title 42 is likely to spur a significant increase in the number of migrants trying to cross into the US.

One reason for the expected spike: Many migrants who were sent back to Mexico under the policy are desperate and losing patience. Advocates say for many of those who were expelled under Title 42, the situation has been dire.

Since Biden took office, Human Rights First says it's identified more than 13,000 incidents of kidnapping, torture, rape or other violent attacks on people blocked or expelled to Mexico under Title 42. Another reason for an expected surge in migrant crossings, according to officials, is misinformation from smugglers who exploit migrants for financial gain.

Speaking to reporters last week, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas urged would-be migrants not to fall victim to those efforts.

"You are being deceived, and you are risking your lives and your life savings, only to meet a consequence that you do not expect at our southern border," he said.

"The border is not open, it has not been open, and it will not be open subsequent to May 11," he said. What is the Biden administration doing to prepare? Without Title 42 in place, US immigration authorities will return to decades-old protocols at a time of unprecedented mass migration in the Western hemisphere.

Under that system, migrants are either removed from the country, detained or released into the US while their cases make their way through immigration court.





## Will Karnataka find a 'new' talent or an 'old' face as CM on May 13?

Here's an exercise in "Kaun banega Karnataka ka mukhyamantri?" looking at each candidate's positive or negative points to occupy or not ascend the chief minister's gaddi.

Every Assembly election in every Indian state tends to be important as well as interesting. Each one will have its own unique features and challenges as the diversity of this country and its people will make sure that there is never a dull moment and it is never easy to predict the outcome!

The high-voltage campaign for election to the Karnataka Assembly will come to an end on May 8, the voting will take place on May 10 and the counting of votes on May 13. But, nobody is sure as to who will form the government and who will become the chief minister, as the pre-poll surveys have gone haywire swinging from one side to the other.

But, it is not difficult to name the front-runners for the chief minister's post, depending on how the results pan out. So, here's an exercise in "Kaun banega Karnataka ka mukhyamantri?" looking at each candidate's plus or minus points to occupy or not ascend the chief minister's gaddi.

-Siddaramaiah, who goes without initials, hailing from Siddaramanahundi in Mysuru district and a former chief

minister, who served from 2013 to 2018, could be the top choice of the Congress party should it attain a simple majority of 113 seats. On his watch as chief minister, the Congress party was defeated in the 2018 elections, coming down from 122 seats to 80 seats. And yet, the 'Gandhi parivar', particularly Rahul Gandhi, believes that he has the right credentials to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Karnataka in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and shore up the Congress's prospects. On the negative side, he is already 76 and, having been the chief minister once, people know the 'baggage' he carries. During his five-year term, he gave disproportionate importance to officials of his Kuruba community, whether in administration or the police department, antagonising others, particularly the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas.

Lingayats also carry a grudge against him as he tried to split them into 'Veerashaivas' and 'Lingayats' allegedly to gain political advantage. Some of Siddaramaiah's actions as chief minister, dusting out Tipu Sultan from history and glorifying him, releasing several PFI and SDPI

activists facing criminal charges from jail, etc have made him unpopular among sections of Hindus, and failing to give a good administration despite having the full backing of the party high command may also go against him. -DK Shivakumar, believes this is his best chance to fulfil his ambition of becoming the chief minister. After filing his nomination papers, he and his wife conducted homas and havans at half-a-dozen 'powerful' temples invoking gods to help him. He is an eight-time MLA from Kanakapura and, unlike Siddaramaiah, he has built a solid base in his constituency.

He is a quintessential loyalist of the Congress party and has been the 'go-to-man' to shelter Congress legislators from other states in times of crises.

Besides being one of the richest politicians in the country, the Congress leadership knows that Shivakumar can be relied upon to raise funds for fighting elections in other states and the coming Lok Sabha polls. On the negative side, he is facing multiple cases filed by the CBI, the ED and the IT departments and he had the ignominy of spending 104 days

in jail and he is out on bail as the cases are pending. The Congress leadership will have to consider all the pros and cons of making DKS the CM as the Centre could potentially expedite the cases to embarrass the party. Besides, he is not as sophisticated as Siddaramaiah in dealing with the legislators, which may weigh against him. -Basavaraj Bommai, the incumbent BJP chief minister, is not necessarily an automatic choice even if the party attains a majority on its own. Bommai, who is an 'outsider' to the BJP and RSS, joined BJP at the behest of BS Yediyurappa in 2006, coming from the Janata Dal (United).

Ironically, the party leadership chose Bommai to head the government after it removed Yediyurappa in a 'surgical strike' carried out in July 2021. He has proved himself to be hard working and done a decent 'holding operation' for the last 22 months.

On the negative side, he has failed to develop a stature of his own as a chief minister. He made a miserable beginning as he failed to control the extremist elements in the party, allowing the hijab-

halaal-aazaan issues to disturb peace and tranquillity in society. There will be strong pressure to make a BJP veteran as chief minister, but if the BJP crosses the half-way mark, the 'euphoria' could enable Bommai to remain in office at least till the May 2024 Lok Sabha polls. -Pralhad Joshi, the 4-time MP from Hubballi-Dharwad region, has grown in stature ever since he became a minister in the Modi cabinet in 2019. After the death of Ananth Kumar, another Karnataka MP, who expertly handled the party MPs as a parliamentary affairs minister, the BJP found Pralhad Joshi perfectly stepping into his shoes and earn the confidence and proximity of both Modi and Amit Shah.

After Yediyurappa was sidelined, there was a buzz that Joshi would take his place as chief minister, but the demands of replacing a Lingayat stalwart with another Lingayat resulted in Bommai getting that opportunity. Supporters of Joshi are hoping that after the May 13 result, the BJP will go for a complete make-over installing him at the helm.

# What is Al-Qadir Trust case in which ex-Pak PM Imran Khan was arrested?

**Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was taken into custody by the Rangers in the Al-Qadir Trust case on Tuesday afternoon.**

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was arrested on Tuesday in connection with the Al-Qadir Trust Case from the premises of the Islamabad High Court, where he was attending two hearings this afternoon. Khan was taken in custody by the Rangers from the court premises.

The news of Imran Khan's arrest prompted the chief justice of the high court, Aamer Farooq, to direct the Islamabad police chief, the interior ministry secretary and the additional attorney general to appear before the court within 15 minutes and explain why the former PM was arrested and in which case.

Imran Khan's arrest comes a day after the Pakistani military rejected his accusations against a serving senior intelligence officer of involvement in his



assassination attempt. Imran Khan doubled down on the allegations in a video message hours before his arrest on Tuesday.

**WHAT IS THE AL-QADIR TRUST CASE?**

Imran Khan, his wife, Bushra Bibi, and their close aides Zulfikar Bukhari and Babar Awan formed the Al-Qadir Project Trust which was aimed at setting up

the Al-Qadir University to impart 'quality education' in the Sohawa Tehsil of Punjab's Jhelum district. The trust's office address in the documents has been mentioned as "Bani Gala House, Islamabad".

Bushra Bibi later signed a memorandum in 2019 with a private real estate firm, Bahria Town, to receive donations from them. The trust went on to receive

land measuring 458 kanals, 4 marlas, and 58 square feet from Bahria Town as part of their deal. However, according to Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, of this 458 kanals of land, Imran Khan fixed its shares and transferred 240 kanals of the donated land in the name of Farah Gogi, a close friend of Bushra Bibi.


the value of this land was underestimated and Khan received his share in the name of the university, Sanaullah claimed, adding that the former PM tried to suppress the matter. Following these allegations, Pakistan's former Finance Minister Miftah Ismail tweeted that Imran Khan gave nearly 190 million pounds to real estate tycoon Malik Riaz, who later had to give away this amount to British authorities to settle an

investigation into whether this money was from any proceeds of crime.


Malik Riaz also donated hundreds of acres of land to a trust, whose members were Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi, and Farah Gogi.

But according to the critics, the trust received millions in the name of donations in 2021 for an under-construction institute named Al-Qadir University, which was inaugurated on May 5, 2019, by Khan, who is the chairperson of the institute. The scandal came to light when Pakistan's media pointed out that 180 million Pakistani rupees were received by the trust when the records showed expenses of around 8.52 million Pakistani rupees. They further asked why the institute was charging students when it was acknowledged as a trust.

**IF YOU'VE BEEN IN A COLLISION**  
OR YOUR VEHICLE BECOMES DISABLED ON THE HIGHWAY:




- Activate your vehicle's four-way yellow flashers
- Pull over to the side of the road
- Consider moving your vehicle off the highway entirely




**THIS WILL:**

- Protect you from oncoming traffic
- Allow safer passage for other motorists
- Provide easier access to emergency responders

**BE SAFE.**  
**NEVER**  
**CROSS OR WALK**  
**ON HIGH SPEED ROADWAYS.**



**WALKING ON NYC HIGHWAYS, EXPRESSWAYS OR PARKWAYS IS DEADLY AND AGAINST THE LAW.**





# Kali Row:



## West Insists On Earning Bad Karma By Insulting Hindu Gods Thinking No Harm Will Come Its Way

There is basic incomprehension in the largely Abrahamic West when it comes to Maa Kali. Of course, it is not just Maa Kali. The West has discarded the large pantheon of Roman and Greek Gods of old, with their passions and contradictions that might have provided an insight. Very few in the West understand our ancient religion which many of us call a way of life as well. Except, that is, for a most respectful sliver of those who are aware of the nuances, subtleties and tenets of Hinduism. These few people know it is a loosely woven repository of wisdom and spiritual knowledge combined with science, yoga, meditation and astrology. It has survived thousands of years without ever taking to the sword or trying to convert anyone. And there are many paths to salvation within its teachings.

To Hindus these aware people in the West are born again Hindus in the Western sense of having found new or dormant religious beliefs in adulthood, or are simply reincarnations of Hindus. It is the oldest religion in the world, going back over 10,000 years, in contrast to Abrahamic religions, all born in the deserts around present-day Jerusalem and Mecca, at around 2,000 years ago. At its core, the Hindu religion embraces paradox, illusion it calls Maya, redemption, contradiction, all to the utter exasperation of the Western mind. It is very hard for a superficial appreciation of it to make its way in the maze most Hindus proudly embrace, and take for granted since birth. So, for most Westerners given to 'either-or' binary thinking, it is just so much horrifying and self-serving paganism, practised by India's caste-ridden teeming

millions, at least by over 75 percent of them.

The Abrahamic Muslims, converted largely by force in the subcontinent, Shia, Sunni, Ahmadia, Bohra, Aga Khan's followers, some 20 percent of the Indian population, are schooled to think likewise.

If they belong to Opposition political parties, they regularly insult Hindu Gods. This includes many with ostensible Hindu names out to insult the BJP, Hindus and Hindutva, while pandering to their own minority vote banks. This is, after all, a very large number of people, given India's population is now around 1.42 billion people. Their notions, of 'animal worshipping' Hindus that drink cow urine, with 33,000 crore Gods to their one, are also upheld and used by the subcontinental Mohammedan

diaspora. This sort of prejudice is backed to an extent by a smattering of erstwhile subcontinental Roman Catholics and Protestants, perhaps frustrated in their attempts to convert more and more Hindus. Recent legislation against forcible or inducement-based conversions has cramped their style. Clamp downs on illegal NGO funding is another flashpoint.

However, this evangelising and conversion does not hesitate to incorporate Hindu symbolism and that of the Sikhs to draw in their prospects. Bhagwa and tilaks are used, Christ and the Virgin Mary are depicted considerably Indianised, congregations are called satsangs.

All this influences and confounds the surface-skimming White man in his views on Hinduism. He has enough Hindu-hating subcontinentals to take a cue from. The virulence against is even more pronounced amongst the Pakistanis abroad, brainwashed to hate Hindus from birth. So many poison pen pieces are written and TV shows anchored by ethnic subcontinentals. Most Christian and Muslim preachers in India attempt to look down on Hinduism as just so much sacrilegious activity of unbelievers destined to never be admitted to Heaven. The same song is sung

in mosques and churches frequented by subcontinentals abroad in the West.

But any Hindu will tell these blasphemers, because that is what they are from the Hindu perspective, that it is not at all a good idea to insult or denigrate Ma Kali, even if it is born of ignorance and prejudice.

Karmic retribution, Hindus believe, will certainly follow. This is a grand belief that does not involve the slaughter of the Kafir or non-believer in the Abrahamic style. Not a finger needs to be lifted against the culprit, because he will be made to pay for his sins automatically by the workings of his Karma and the 'Akashic Record' of his deeds. Particularly, it is said, the motivations behind them. The plight that post-Brexit Britain finds itself in these days, its reduction to a middle grade power, that too in terminal decline, many Hindus believe, is because the British are now paying for their atrocities in India during their colonial domination. They are finding difficulty in feeding themselves and paying their day-to-day bills.

Karmic retribution, it is known works for centuries, is carried over from past lives. It is also inescapable.

That the British inflicted great hardship on many other countries

during their imperial period, the same Hindus believe, will also be counted and duly punished. Of course, the West as a whole, thinks all this is so much esoteric mumbo jumbo, but a few amongst them are not so sure nowadays. The White man is generally caught up in Maa Kali's popular depiction. There she is, nude and blue, with a Kharga dripping with blood in one of her hands, her tongue sticking out in error at having accidentally stepped upon her Lord, red and vivid, a garland of human heads around her torso and waist, proud breasts exposed, hair worn long and open. She is standing with one leg on her husband Lord Shiva, lying prone at her feet.

That Maa Kali, sometimes the burning ghats Maa Kali, sometimes worshipped by bandits and thugs, is also Lord Shiva's generally benevolent consort Parvati as well as Maa Durga, is lost on these people of little knowledge. The same deities with equally valid and myriad forms, is a concept hard to grasp for occidental thought.

To the ignorant and propaganda-soaked White man, brought up on racist ideas, this striking depiction of Maa Kali in her retributive form, is conveniently representative of innate Hindu bloodthirstiness.

## Can Enzymes Really Help Solve the Plastic Crisis?

Buried in the dirt outside a plastic manufacturing plant, researcher Uwe Bornscheuer from Germany's University of Greifswald found his breakthrough. Bacteria living there contained enzymes with the ability to break down polyurethane — the polymer used to create the foam in running shoes, mattresses and home insulation.

Around 16 million tons of fossil fuel-based polyurethane is discarded each year, and two-thirds of it ends up in landfill or incinerated for energy. The little that is recycled is largely ground up and turned into inferior products such as carpet underlay. But Bornscheuer says his enzymes, known as urethanases, could unlock a new way to recycle the polymer. Using natural functions, they can quickly break it down to its constituent pieces, which can then be used to generate new polyurethane in a more environmentally friendly manner.

"We took pieces of polyurethane material, threw them in a beaker, threw in the enzyme. And it was completely degraded after two

days," said Bornscheuer.

"I'm very confident that with the methods people use in my field, they can engineer the enzymes to do this within a few hours." Recycling polymers such as polyurethane in this way would create a much higher quality end product than mechanical recycling, and could do it in a cleaner and more efficient way than the chemical recycling available today. Tiny enzymes versus mountains of plastic waste. Cesar Ramirez-Sarmiento, associate professor at the Institute for Biological and Medical Engineering at Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile describes enzymes, which are a type of protein, as "the entities that actually take care of stitching things together or breaking them apart."

But with 460 million tons of oil and gas-based plastic manufactured in 2019 — a volume set to triple by 2060 — and as little as 9% of it recycled using more conventional means, plastic-tackling enzymes would need to work their way through mountains of the stuff. Around one billion tons of it annually by 2060.

There has been some success in using so-called PETase enzymes to break down polyethylene terephthalate or PET, which is commonly used in bottles, clothes and packaging.

A French company called Carbios — partly funded by fast-moving consumer goods giants including Nestle and PepsiCo as well as clothing and beauty companies such as Patagonia, Puma and L'Oreal — has developed a demonstration plant in the central French region of Clermont-Ferrand that it says can break down two tons of PET in 10 hours using engineered enzymes. The PET waste is turned into pellets, which PETase enzymes reduce to monomers and impurities. The monomers can then be used to produce 100% recycled PET products, thereby allowing the limitless creation of essentially virgin PET. They can also be used to create entirely different products, such as pharmaceutical drugs. The impurities and the enzymes, however, are incinerated.



**The Wire looks at the PM's several inauguration sprees which have been twinned with party campaigns for state elections, since the 2022 Gujarat polls. Who benefits when the PM inaugurates a road bypass or does a 'griha praves' timed with polls in the area?**

## The Cost to the Nation of a Perpetually Campaigning Prime Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Hyderabad on November 29, 2020, for just an hour, to review ongoing COVID-19 vaccine trials at Bharat Biotech. The Hyderabad Police confirmed the PM's visit and schedule to the media only three days prior, on November 26, 2020. While this was certainly an 'official visit', according to the Union government, it was nothing less than a surprise visit by Modi for the city police. The timing of Modi's visit was interesting, it was just two days before Hyderabad voted in a fiercely contested municipal election after aggressive campaigning by the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (then Telangana Rashtra Samithi) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Although Modi did not make any speeches, the 'official' visit by Modi seemed to have served an intended and unofficial purpose for the BJP, as TV channels and social media in Telangana focused singularly on the Modi's visit, while hailing his efforts to combat the pandemic. It is no secret, and often held out as a point of pride, that Modi is perpetually in election mode. That Modi is BJP's primary vote-catcher is no secret and his face

is projected in every election, from local body polls to the parliament elections. Modi, too, repeats often that every vote cast for the BJP in every election directly goes to him. The timing of official visits by PM Modi, the kind of inaugurations done by him and the cost of such



number of political rallies, in the months leading up to the elections. In Karnataka, which votes tomorrow, these inaugurations by the PM have been unfailingly followed by his participation in the BJP's election campaign events. Some of these events are

In the last week of March this year, the inauguration of the Bengaluru Metro's Purple Line from Whitefield to K.R. Puram by Modi was reportedly "rushed" even though a good amount of work on the corridor is yet to be completed. However, Modi took the Metro ride with the usual fanfare, with the local BJP government publicising it widely. Eleven days after Modi inaugurated the line, a station on the corridor had a leaking roof and standing water near the ticket counter. Citing the pending work and its reduced utility, Congress took a dig at the PM, saying that Modi had inaugurated the metro line from "nowhere to nowhere". The inauguration of Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway by Modi has also attracted similar criticism. Three days after the publicised inauguration, photos emerged on social media of roads on the expressway damaged due to rains.

In other instances, Modi was seen inaugurating projects which do not merit an inauguration by a PM. There have been instances where he clubbed official and party events, blurring the necessary demarcation between government and party work. For instance, on March 12, Modi inaugurated the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway in his official capacity as the PM but it was only after he held a massive roadshow in Mandya as BJP's campaigner. Activists from Karnataka pointedly asked the PM as to who paid for the roadshow. On the same day, he also inaugurated IIT campus at Dharwad, an official event but was alleged to have become a BJP

event with the Basvaraj Bommai government ferrying people, allegedly BJP workers, from across the state to attend the programme. Karnataka is one state where Modi has spent the longest time in any year since he became PM in 2014.

We look at the PM's inauguration blitz in five states where elections were held recently, in Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, and Gujarat, as well as in Karnataka, where the election will be held on May 10. Karnataka

Starting from January 12 this year, Modi has visited Karnataka eight times so far – the maximum number of times that he has visited any state in any given year since he took over as the PM in 2014. Each day between April 29 and May 8, Modi addressed three to four rallies.

Writing for Hindustan Times, A. Narayana noted that over the course of 21 public meetings and several roadshows, BJP has pretty much singularly banked on Modi's image and position to turn the anti-incumbency tides.

The PM's frequent visits to the state this year began on January 12 when he addressed a national youth festival in north Karnataka's Hubbali. He returned to the state on January 19 to launch development projects worth Rs 4,223 crore near Kodekal in Hunsagi taluk of Yadgir district. On the same day, he also delivered a speech at Malkhed, and gave away title deeds (hakku patra) to eligible beneficiaries of newly declared revenue villages.

Starting with his presence at India Energy Week, an official event, in Bengaluru on February 6, Modi visited the state four days that month. He laid the foundation stone for the Tumakuru Industrial Township and dedicated a HAL helicopter factory to the nation. Within a week, he was seen again in Bengaluru on February 13 to flag off Aero India 2023.

On February 25, he addressed the Amrit Mahotsav of Delhi-Karnataka Sangha in Delhi.

The PM visited Shivamogga in central Karnataka to inaugurate the Shivamogga airport, besides addressing a public meeting and launching several development projects on February 27. On the same day, he also headed to Belagavi in north Karnataka to launch several multiple development initiatives and to release the 13th instalment of PM-KISAN.





# China sends two drones in one week around Taiwan but calls US the 'empire of hacking'

Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang revisits India but makes no progress in ending the border deadlock. A Chinese cybersecurity firm calls the US the 'empire of hacking'. Qin resumes the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral cooperation mechanism. Beijing sends a TB-001 drone around Taiwan for the second time in a week. Chinascope looks at Chinese foreign policy in action in India and Pakistan. China over the week

Chinese foreign policy's new focus on disrupting US power in non-Western countries was displayed as Qin visited Myanmar, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan this week.

Qin attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)'s Foreign Minister's Summit on 5 May in Goa, where he met with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar. The Chinese foreign minister was in India for the second time after his March visit to the G20 Foreign Minister's Summit. Following Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu's visit to India last month, expectations for a proper border resolution were already running low. And Qin only repeated

Li's assertion that the situation at the border is 'generally stable'.

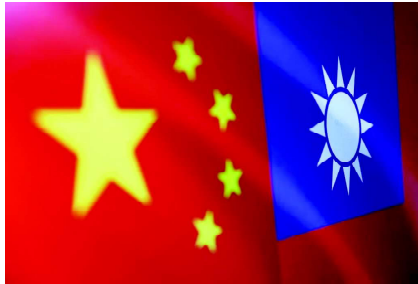
"China-India border situation is generally stable. The two sides should continue to implement the important common understandings reached between leaders of the two countries, consolidate existing outcomes, strictly abide by relevant agreements and protocols, work to ease and cool down the border situation, and maintain sustained peace and tranquillity in the border areas," said Qin.

"The two sides should continue to implement the important consensus reached by the two countries' leaders, consolidate existing achievements, and promote the further cooling of the border situation," he added.

The hashtag "Qin Gang Meets with Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar" was viewed over 1 million times on the Chinese microblogging platform Weibo. Beijing's statements following Qin's bilateral meeting with Jaishankar don't give us any new insight into the border talks. Instead, Chi-

nese State media has communicated the cost of India aligning with the US' security agenda.

"The [Joe] Biden administration clearly wants to use India to contain the development of China's influence, but this strategy has not gone well. On the one hand,



after the impact of the [Covid-19] epidemic in India, people's lives are difficult and economic development has 'stagnated'. What India needs is 'recuperation' rather than a conflict with China on the border," said an op-ed published by the official account of news portal China.com.

Joseph Torigion, Global Fellow at the Wilson Center's History and Public Policy Program, says Beijing is pursuing a dual strategy of deterring India's close ties with the US while shrinking New Delhi's strategic options.

"What's changing now is that the competition between the United States and China is intensifying at precisely the moment that leaders in New Delhi are concluding Beijing following the Galwan incident. The future remains to be seen, as China will be concerned about pushing India too far in the direction of the United States, but also will want to make India's relationship with the US costly," said Torigion in an interview with The Hindu.

After the Goa leg of the trip, Qin went off to Pakistan, where he met Chief of the Army Staff Syed Asim Munir and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

"China firmly supports Pakistan in achieving unity and stability as well as its self-reliant economic development and terrorism-crackdown efforts. China is willing to promote high-quality development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and

## SPECIAL FEATURE

### Ask NAPCA

#### 1. Do I still need to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID is still with us. In late March the US still averaged 19,500 cases per day, 585,000 per month. For older adults, COVID is still dangerous. The risk of severe cases that require hospitalization is pretty low for people under 18. If you are 65 and over, the risk is 36 times higher and the older the higher. So older adults are strongly recommended to stay up to date with the most current vaccine. If your last shot was before Sep. 2022, you should get an updated bivalent vaccine and then it provides protection against both the original COVID virus and the Omicron strains that are infecting people right now. The COVID virus changes like the flu virus so it is important to get the most recent updated vaccine to get the best protection.

#### 2. What type of COVID-19 vaccine should I receive? And how many times?

Because the protection provided by the COVID-19 vaccine fades much more quickly for people 65 and older and people who have underlying conditions, CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) updated its COVID-19 vaccine recommendations to allow an additional dose of the updated (bivalent) vaccine for these populations.

? No matter how old you are, if you have not gotten a shot since September 2022, you definitely need one!

? If you are 65 or older or if you

have underlying conditions, it may be a good idea for you to get an extra dose of bivalent vaccine. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to decide whether it makes sense for you.

#### 3. What is Medicaid redetermination (Unwinding of the Medicaid Continuous Enrollment Provision) and how does it affect my Medicaid?

Medicaid eligibility is required to be renewed periodically, but during the COVID public health emergency, Medicaid disenrollment has been paused in every state by federal provision. However, the continuous coverage requirement ends on March 31, 2023. Your state checks whether you still qualify for Medicaid coverage and will be able to resume Medicaid disenrollments starting April 1, 2023. The disenrollments will not occur all at once, as the process will be spread out across most of 2023 and the first part of 2024. To be prepared for Medicaid redetermination, make sure your contact information is updated so that you can receive any communications your state sends you. When you receive a Medicaid packet or letter in the mail, you need to fill out the renewal form and send it (with requested documents if applicable) to the address provided. If you are ineligible to renew your Medicaid, you will qualify for a special enrollment period to find and enroll in a new health insurance plan in time for your loss of Medicaid coverage.

#### 4. What option do I have if I lose

#### Medicaid after unwinding Medicaid continuous enrollment condition?

There will generally be three options for those who are no longer eligible for Medicaid as the result of the Medicaid unwinding process.

Option 1: You can re-apply for Medicaid to find if you still qualify. If your income level or medical need changes, you might qualify for Medicaid in your state. You can apply any time, and there's no limit to the number of times you can apply.

Option 2: You may be able to get low-cost, quality health coverage through the ACA Marketplace. Submit a new or updated Marketplace application and provide the proof of the last date of Medicaid between March 31, 2023 and July 31, 2024, then you will be eligible for this temporary Special Enrollment Period (SEP). You will have a 60 days' window after you submit your application to select a Marketplace plan.

Option 3: You may be able to sign up for Medicare without paying a late enrollment penalty. If you now qualify for Medicare but didn't sign up for it when you first became eligible, you have a limited time (SEP) to sign up without paying the usual penalty. Your SEP starts the day your state notifies you that your Medicaid coverage is ending and continues for 6 months after your Medicaid coverage ends.

Plus, you can try to apply for Medicare Savings Programs to get assistance for your Medicare copays and/or

deductibles.

#### 5. I am eligible for Social Security retirement based on my 40 working credits and eligible for spousal benefits based on my husband's Social Security credits. I am 62 soon and trying to claim spousal retirement which is higher than my worker's benefit. How much would it be and how do I apply for it?

You could apply for spousal retirement benefit once you reach the age of 62 if your husband already started receiving his retirement. The rule is that depending on your age upon claiming, spousal benefit can range from 32.5% to 50% of your husband's primary insurance amount (PIA), which is the monthly benefit the retiree is entitled to at full retirement age (FRA). When you apply for spousal benefit at 62, you will receive 32.5% of the husband's PIA permanently.

The longer you wait to claim the spousal benefit until your FRA, the bigger the monthly amount grows. The maximum amount you can receive is up to 50% of his PIA. If your husband took his retirement earlier than his FRA, your spousal benefit in turn will be counted based on his reduced amount. When you apply for spousal benefit, you must apply for both your worker's benefit and spousal benefit at the same time. Social Security pays worker's benefit first, then adds enough of the spousal benefit to make up the difference and match the higher amount.

# Spain's April heat nearly impossible without climate change

**The regions in the study are all suffering from a multi-year drought, which can exacerbate high temperatures, the scientists said.**

Record-breaking April temperatures in Spain, Portugal and northern Africa were made 100 times more likely by human-caused climate change, a new flash study found, and would have been almost impossible in the past.

A group of international scientists did a rapid computer and statistical analysis of a late-April heat wave that stretched across the Iberian peninsula into Algeria and Morocco. The four countries experienced temperatures as high as 36.9 degrees Celsius (98.4 degrees Fahrenheit) to 41 degrees Celsius (105.8 degrees Fahrenheit) degrees. Study lead author Sjoukje Philip of the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute said in a briefing that a weather event this extreme "would have been almost impossible in the past, colder climate," adding: "We will see more intense and more frequent heat waves in the future as global warming continues." Because the



analysis released Friday was one of the quickest ever — the heat still hasn't subsided much — the study by World Weather Attribution is not peer reviewed, which is the gold standard for science. But the team of WWA scientists do these quick studies using scientifically accepted techniques and often get them published later in peer-reviewed journals.

The regions in the study are all suffering from a multi-year drought, which can exacerbate high temperatures, the scientists said. Currently, 27% of Spanish territory is in either the drought

"emergency" or "alert" category and water reserves are at 50% of capacity nationally. The average dam storage in Morocco is at similarly low levels, and in Tunisia many homes have water cuts during the day. Farmers across the Western Mediterranean have warned that poor harvests are likely, in some regions for the sixth year running.

The study also said the extreme heat in Europe is rising faster than computer models had projected. The same thing happened in the Pacific heat dome, so scientists who create computer models need to go back

and rethink their overly conservative projections, said University of Washington's Kris Ebi, who wasn't part of the study, but praised it.

The scientists compared real life April temperatures to a simulated world without climate change. They found that a heat wave like the one the Western Mediterranean suffered in April would have been more than two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) less severe in a world without coal, oil and gas pollution trapping heat. The study will also help inform governments preparing for the earlier onset of extreme hot weather, with the aim of preventing deaths and unrolling heat awareness campaigns. Last year, at least 15,000 people died in Europe because of extreme hot weather, according to the World Health Organization, with Spain one of the countries worst affected.

"When we can send out warnings with calibrated messaging, that allows people to accurately perceive their personal risk, that

can lead to personal behavioral changes," said Roop Singh of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, another of the study's authors. Changes include access to air conditioning in schools, monitoring heat-related hospital admissions and advising citizens to avoid outdoor sports at certain hours of the day, she said.

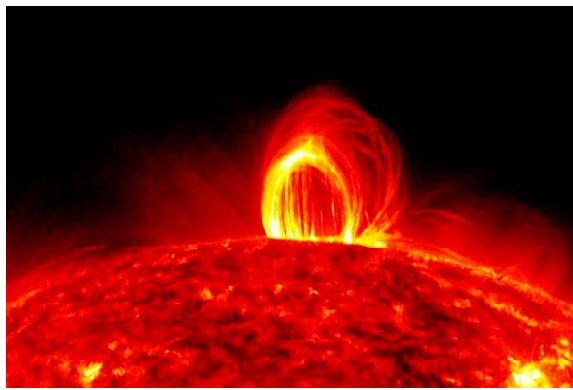
The results of the study make sense and are important, according to three outside climate scientists.

"The world is approaching the moment when nearly all heat waves will have a climate change fingerprint," Ebi told The Associated Press in an email. "In the meantime, these kinds of analyses are valuable for moving policymakers and justifying investments." Studies like these are important, but "it's also now like asking if the dog with berries on its face got into the pie cooling on the counter," said North Carolina State Climatologist Kathie Dello, who wasn't part of the study.

## Geomagnetic storm from Sun to hit Earth. Migratory birds, satellites most vulnerable

A Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) from the Sun is on its way to the inner planets travelling at speeds of over millions of kilometers per hour and is likely to impact Earth. The plasma particle from Sun is likely to trigger a geomagnetic storm on the planet that could affect radio waves.

The coronal mass ejection emerged from reversed-polarity sunspot AR3296 on May 7. CMEs are massive bursts of plasma and magnetic fields that are released from the Sun's corona. The corona is the outermost layer of the Sun's atmosphere, and it is made up of extremely hot plasma that is constantly in motion. When a coronal mass ejection is released, it sends billions of tons of charged particles



speeds. These particles can travel at up to 3 million kilometers per hour, and if they're aimed in the direction of Earth, they can cause all sorts of effects when they arrive. The US-based Space Weather Prediction Center forecasted that the May 7 CME could trigger a G1 class minor

geomagnetic storm on Earth as it hits the planet's magnetic field. The event could cause weak power grid fluctuations, and a minor impact on satellite operations is also possible. Geomagnetic storms are caused by the interaction between the CME's magnetic fields and Earth's magnetic

field. When these magnetic fields collide, they can cause a rapid fluctuation in Earth's magnetic field, which can create electrical currents in the ionosphere and in the Earth's surface. These electrical currents can disrupt satellite communications and power grids, as well as create auroras in the polar regions.

The geomagnetic storm could continue on Thursday as well with migratory animals likely being affected at higher levels, and aurora visible at high latitudes. It's worth mentioning that migratory birds use Earth's magnetic field for their navigational requirements. Earth was recently hit by a major bout of geomagnetic storms that triggered auroras at even low altitudes. The mysterious phenomenon was observed in

Ladakh as well and was picked up by the Indian Astronomical Observatory.

The aurora was captured on April 22-23 night after a coronal mass ejection was hurtled from the Sun on April 21. The CME struck Earth at a speed of 21,60,000 kilometers per hour. Auroras also known as northern & southern lights are caused by the solar wind interacting with Earth's magnetic field, exciting particles in our atmosphere and causing a light show in the process. NASA has said that the Sun is peaking in its solar cycle and heading for solar maximum leading to rampant activity. Last week the Sun exploded with 14 notable solar flares and 31 coronal mass ejections, most of which were not directed toward Earth.



# Europe's 1360-kg satellite is set to crash on Earth



**Aeolus is losing its fuel and its tanks are almost depleted as the spacecraft orbits Earth at an altitude of 320 kilometers.**

Over five years after it was launched into space a 1360-kilogram satellite is on its way to crash on the planet. The spacecraft will have a fiery death as it re-enters Earth's atmosphere after completing its initial three-year-long mission in space.

Aeolus, which is an Earth Explorer research mission, was designed to demonstrate new

space technology, and became one of the highest impact-per-observation weather satellites, from the European Space Agency (ESA). END-OF-LIFE MODE

Aeolus is, however, now losing its fuel and its tanks are almost depleted as the spacecraft orbits Earth at an altitude of 320 km and is already being pulled by Earth's wispy atmosphere.

The spacecraft is further being pushed by plasma waves coming from the Sun as they wash past Earth. "Intense solar activity in recent months means that the satellite has been using even more fuel to remain in orbit. For Aeolus, it's been like running against the wind," European Space Agency, said in a statement.

The spacecraft shut down its science operation on April 30 this year and the instruments have been put into a special mode to perform end-of-life activities that will help to prepare the Aeolus-2 follow-on mission. THE DEATH PLUNGE

In the coming months, the European Space Agency will command Aeolus to descend naturally from its current altitude of 320 km to 280 km after which it will be gradually lowered to 150 km above Earth's surface as the death plunge begins. Scientists said that the satellite will burn up as it descends to around 80 km.

"The chance of a re-entry causing any harm is exceptionally low. The final date depends on how solar activity speeds up the process, but Aeolus is expected to be no more before the end of August," ESA said in a release. The space

agency added that engineers have carefully worked out how to best position Aeolus in Earth's atmosphere to target open ocean waters upon reentry, hugely reducing the amount of land over which pieces fragments could fall.

"The exact details on the reentry approach and series of manoeuvres and operations, as well as a more detailed timeline will be made public in mid-June. For now, we can anticipate that we are targeting the best ocean corridor to reenter," Tommaso Parrinello, Aeolus Mission Manager said.

## Why are insects attracted to light? Science has the answer

**A team of researchers has now claimed to have understood the underlying navigational nightmare that attracts insects to that spec of light in the darkness.**

Have you ever been annoyed by a buzzing insect while you are scrolling your phone in the darkness? or a massive flock of these insects flying in an erratic path around street lights?

While we have known that insects fly at a level during the day, their flight path becomes completely unpredictable at night in the presence of artificial light. We have known that moths and insects are attracted to artificial light, but we had not known the mechanism behind it. A team of researchers has now claimed to have understood the underlying navigational nightmare that attracts insects to that spec of light in the darkness and makes them go berserk. While a long-standing theory has been that the insects consider the light to be coming from the Moon or a celestial object, which scrambles their navigational senses causing them to fly in a scattered pattern around the light. But the new explanation is much more scientific.

Biologists from the Imperial College London and Florida International University have explained that insects consider the artificial light to be coming

from the open sky in the darkness and in that interpretation, they orient themselves along an up-and-down axis. The instinct then prompts them to roll back towards the light creating the seemingly erratic flight paths. "Our guidance model demonstrates that they go into endless banking turns, sufficient to create the seemingly erratic flight paths of insects near lights and is the most plausible model for why flying insects gather at artificial lights," the team said in a paper uploaded to the bioRxiv server. It is yet to be peer-reviewed.

The team employed high-resolution motion capture in the laboratory and stereo-

videography in the field to reconstruct the 3D kinematics of insect flights around artificial lights. They tracked the flights of dragonflies, butterflies, and moths flying around light bulbs in the lab and forests of Costa Rica. They noticed that at times the insects would tilt upward into a stall, while at other times pass above the bulb flip upside down, and nosedive.

Entomologists have already known that insects could fly level in the daytime due to directional instincts and are able to keep their backs pointed toward sunlight. However, the new study reveals that they lose this ability in the presence of artificial light in the darkness. Scientists have



already warned that Insects around the world are rapidly declining due to rising artificial light. While Habitat loss, pesticide use, invasive species, and climate change have all

contributed to the decline in insect numbers, critical for the balance of nature, "artificial light at night is another important, but often overlooked, bringer of the insect apocalypse."

## James Webb Telescope observes alien star bound by 3 asteroid belts over 23 billion km in size

Astronomers were excited when the James Webb Space Telescope took flight and began science operations last year and the reasons are clear. The world's most powerful observatory has looked at a star with three asteroid belts around it.

The star, Fomalhaut, located in our own cosmic backyard of the Milky Way galaxy, is one of the brightest

stars in our night sky and the brightest in the southern constellation Piscis Austrinus. It is located 25 light years from Earth. This is the first asteroid belt ever seen outside of our solar system in infrared light by the James Webb Space Telescope.

The three asteroid belts extend 23 billion kilometers from the star, which is 150 times the distance

of Earth from the Sun. These observations of three concentric dusty rings of debris orbiting Fomalhaut provide the fullest view to date of such structures outside our solar system. "I would describe Fomalhaut as the archetype of debris disks found elsewhere in our galaxy because it has components similar to those we have in our own planetary

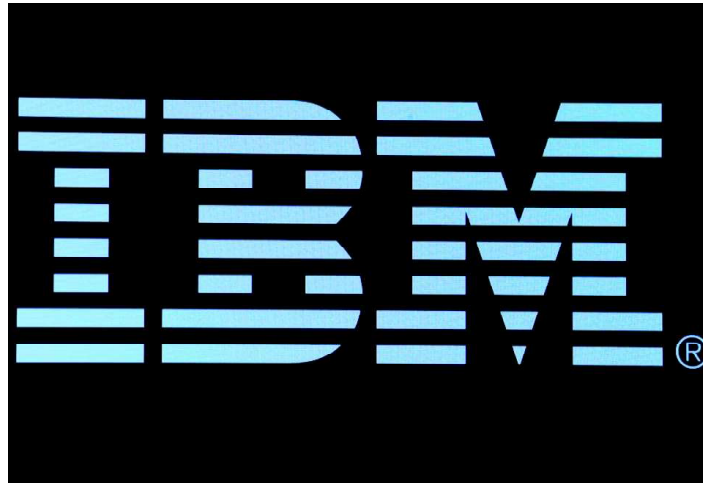
system," said Andras Gaspar, who led the observations, said in a statement. Fomalhaut is 16 times more luminous than the sun and almost twice as massive. It is about 440 million years old - less than a tenth the age of the sun - but is probably nearly halfway through its lifespan. Astronomers first discovered a single belt of debris around Fomalhaut in 1983.

# IBM unveils new watsonx, AI and data platform

International Business Machines Corp (IBM.N) on Tuesday launched watsonx, a new artificial intelligence and data platform to help companies integrate AI in their business.

The new AI platform launch comes over a decade after IBM's software called Watson got attention for winning the game show Jeopardy. IBM at the time said Watson could "learn" and process human language. But Watson's high cost at the time made it a challenge for companies to use, according to Reuters reporting. Fast forward a decade, chatbot ChatGPT's overnight success is making AI adoption at companies a focus, and IBM is looking to grab new business. This time, the lower cost of implementing the large language AI models means the chances of success are high, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna told Reuters ahead of the company's annual Think conference.

"When something becomes 100 times cheaper, it really sets up an attraction that's very, very different," said



Krishna. "The first barrier to create the model is high, but once you've done that, to adapt that model for a hundred or a thousand different tasks is very easy and can be done by a non-expert." Krishna said AI could reduce certain back office jobs at IBM in the coming

years. "That doesn't mean the total employment decreases," he said about some media reports talking about IBM pausing hiring for thousands of jobs that AI could replace. "That gives the ability to plow a lot more investment into value-creating activities... We hired more people than were let go because we're hiring into areas where there is a lot more demand from our clients." He added that IBM was also embracing a more open ecosystem and partnering with open-source AI software development hub Hugging Face and others.

IBM said companies can use the watsonx platform to train and deploy AI models, automatically generate code using natural language and use various large language models built for different purposes such as chemical creation or climate change modeling.

## Go First crisis

### Customers need to wait longer for refunds



Beleaguered airline Go First could take longer to process flight ticket refunds to customers in the wake of its deepening financial crisis. The Wadia group-owned airline has already cancelled all flights till May 12, in addition to suspending sale of tickets. While Go First said it would issue refunds to customers who had already booked tickets, a report suggests that the airline may take at least a couple of weeks before it could start the process.

Go First is expected to request the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for some additional time for issuing refunds as it plans to

raise necessary funds, reported moneycontrol.com.

A source told the publication that the airline is likely to ask the NCLT for a moratorium to raise money to provide ticket refunds for flights that were cancelled after May 2. In addition, the source said processing refunds could take a couple of weeks. Meanwhile, another source told the publication that Go First's promoters may look to raise around Rs 200 crore for the refunds as well as to pay all its employees.

Go First's inability to refund customers even after the DGCA's directive indicates growing financial hurdles for the airline. The report suggests that Go First would have to make

refunds to the tune of Rs 450 crore to Rs 500 crore. In addition to the burden of refunds, Go First has a total liability of over Rs 11,000 crore. Go First has sought the NCLT to urgently accept its insolvency plea as it would offer the airline protection against adverse action by the aviation regulator and aircraft lessors. However, the NCLT is yet to take a decision on the matter.

Go First's financial crisis deepens Go First faces the risk of getting its air operator's certificate (AOC) cancelled, while lessors are already pushing hard to repossess aircraft.

While filing its insolvency plea, Go First blamed US aerospace manufacturer Pratt & Whitney for the supply of faulty engines that led to the grounding of more than half its fleet. It also said that Pratt & Whitney has failed to supply engines on time, leading to an acute cash crunch arising from operational hurdles. Go First has said it was forced to cancel flights due as more than half of its fleet was grounded due to the unavailability of spares and spare engines from Pratt & Whitney.

## Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic to resume tourism flights to space



Nearly a year after it was grounded due to a mishap, Virgin Galactic is set to resume its commercial flights to space taking tourists into orbit on brief spaceflights.

A four-member test flight is likely to take place in May and the company aims to launch its first commercial flight in late June. Backed by billionaire Richard Branson, the company, had in May last year delayed its commercial service to the first quarter of 2023. The missions were delayed due to the supply-chain crisis and labor shortage. The company has now gone through a lengthy upgrade on its centerpiece tourist spacecraft before ticket sales were reopened. The tickets are priced at \$450,000 each, including an initial deposit of \$150,000. The spacecraft will

return to space with Jamila Gilbert, Christopher Hue, Luke Mays, and Beth Moses, who will board the Unity 25 flight. Richard Branson was among six Virgin Galactic employees who took part in the maiden flight, soaring more than 80 km above the New Mexico desert. He had touted the mission as a precursor to a new era of space tourism and said the company he founded in 2004 was poised to begin commercial operations next year. However, later it was found that the flight deviated from its initial path. It was revealed that the flight path was too shallow and the nose of the ship was insufficiently vertical following which an investigation was launched by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).



# Can you eat mangoes if you have diabetes? Only if...

**Although mangoes are high in sugar content, they also contain lower carbohydrates, which could be beneficial for diabetics.**

Millions in India are suffering from the chronic condition - diabetes. While type 1 diabetes is caused by an autoimmune reaction, type 2 diabetes is caused by various lifestyle habits.

The disease is a result in too much sugar in the blood (high blood sugar level) due to the pancreas either not able to produce enough insulin or cannot effectively use the insulin produced. In most cases, diabetics have to lower their sugar intake and have foods that have a low glycemic index i.e., foods that do not spike the body's blood sugar level. Most

fruits are discouraged from being consumed if you have diabetes.

In the summer season, mangoes are quite prominent and widely available. Most people think that diabetics cannot consume mangoes due to its high level of sugar content. However, according to experts, having mangoes in moderation can be quite beneficial for the body. Dr Pullela Srikar Krishna, Internal Medicine and Diabetologist, Apollo Clinics, told IndiaToday.in that in small quantity, mangoes can control the blood sugar level. "Diabetics with good sugar control can eat

mangoes in small quantities. Although mangoes are high in sugar content, they also contain lower carbohydrates," said Dr Pullela Srikar Krishna. Mango contains significant amount of vitamin E, K and B complex, and high in fibre including calcium, potassium and copper. Research has shown that mangoes have a significant role in the treatment of metabolic disorders. "Eating a mango every day could protect people against high cholesterol as well as diabetes," said Dr Krishna. But eating a lot of them can disbalance the blood sugar level. In fact, Dr Krishna advised not



to eat mangoes and not to consume it in the form of juice. "Diabetics should eat mangoes in moderation. They should check their sugar levels regularly. But they should not consume mango juice and only eat mangoes as a whole fruit.

Consuming raw mangoes with yogurt or rice helps to cut the sugar levels in the body," as per the expert.

Other summer fruits that diabetics can eat regularly include guava, papaya, kiwi, pear and cantaloupe.

## The perils of indoor pollution: How it makes asthma worse

**Indoor pollution is, sometimes, more harmful to the lungs than outdoor pollution.**



"Indoor pollution is more dangerous, sometimes, than outdoor pollution because it is settled dust. Settled dust goes directly in the air and you will persistently inhale the particles in the house, whereas in outdoor pollution the air particles are more scattered and sparser and you might not keep inhaling it continuously," said Dr Azmat Karim. He added that when the air quality changes (lowers) and there is turbulence in the climate, more dust is inhaled and it can make breathing worse.

"For someone who has asthma, these dust particles can cause exacerbation like bronchial asthma and type 1 respiratory failure. As a result, a person might even have to go to the ICU (intensive care unit)," said Dr Karim.

### WHAT DOES INDOOR POLLUTION INCLUDE?

Indoor pollutants include products of combustion, including particulate matter (PM) and oxides of nitrogen, as well as airborne allergens and endotoxin.

Air pollution has been the leading cause of not only catalyzing but also causing asthma across the world. The situation is even grim in countries like India and China, which suffer regular bouts of pollution.

With over 300 million people suffering from this breathing disease across the world, studies have shown that particulate matter can cause various symptoms like coughing, breathlessness, and wheezing, especially when someone is asthmatic. Caused by the inflammation and narrowing of the airways in the lungs, this chronic disease is often

underdiagnosed or under-treated, particularly in low and middle-income countries.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), people who have under-treated asthma can suffer sleep disturbance, tiredness during the day, and poor concentration. While it is mostly believed that the situation is triggered by outdoor pollution, indoor pollution is also a leading cause.

Dr Azmat Karim, Consultant, Pulmonary Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Fortis Escorts, Okhla Road, New Delhi, told IndiaToday.in that indoor pollution is, sometimes, more harmful to the lungs than outdoor pollution.

## Can belly fat be the reason for your hair loss? Find out



Speaking to healthy hair growth. These IndiaToday.in, Dr Navya Handa, Consultant Dermatologist and Cosmetologist, Primus Super Speciality Hospital, New Delhi, said that having excess belly fat can be a sign of an unhealthy lifestyle, which can contribute to hair loss. "One of the main culprits behind hair loss is an imbalance in hormones. Excess belly fat can lead to higher levels of the hormone dihydrotestosterone (DHT), which can shrink hair follicles and cause hair to fall out," said Dr Navya Handa. As per the expert, an unhealthy diet and lifestyle can lead to nutrient deficiencies, such as iron and biotin, which are essential for

to healthy hair growth. These deficiencies can cause hair to become weak, brittle, and prone to falling out. Furthermore, stress is a common cause of hair loss, and having excess belly fat can be a sign of chronic stress. "High levels of stress can disrupt the hair growth cycle and lead to hair loss. Therefore, while belly fat may not be directly responsible for hair loss, it can be a sign of an unhealthy lifestyle that can contribute to hair loss. Maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and managing stress levels can help promote healthy hair growth," said Dr Handa.



# Afwaah REVIEW

## Nawazuddin Siddiqui-Bhumi Pednekar Film Is Classic Case of Noble Attempt Gone Wrong

How bad can rumours be? Can they blur the lines between truth and fiction? What role does the media, the fourth pillar of the democracy, play in disseminating a rumour? How often do they propagate a false narrative to keep the wheel of breaking news running? What kind of power does the new-age media wield? And what goes behind the politics of skyrocketing views? Veteran director Sudhir Mishra's latest outing *Afwaah* deals with one of the most relevant issues of our times – false propaganda and its socio-political ramifications. Needless to say, it hits home, rather too close.

Mishra began his career with late filmmaker Kundan Shah's satirical comedy *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron* in 1983, which dealt with rampant corruption in Indian politics, news media and business. In 1987, he marked his directorial debut with *Yeh Woh Manzil To Nahin*, which touched upon the motifs of student activism and political skirmishes. Over the years, he became synonymous with films that made social and moral commentaries. *Afwaah* is no different and interestingly, his career almost comes a full circle with this social and human drama. *Afwaah* is set in a small constituency named Sawalpur in the north-western India. Vikram Singh, a local politician, aspires to win the next state elections and is set to get married to Nivi Singh, the daughter of one of the most influential political members with who he has formed a coalition. While canvassing for the election one day, Vikram gets injured when a peaceful campaign suddenly turns violent. During the scuffle, he whispers something into the

ears of Chandan, one of his trusted aides, following which the latter holds a dagger and marches towards a meat shop killing the Muslim butcher who runs it. The entire episode gets caught on a reporter's

camera. When it gets aired, trouble arises as people assume that Chandan killed the butcher on Vikram's order.

film has a fantastic and extremely nuanced premise on paper. It could have captured the imagination of the audience,

narrative. The writing is bumpy and the execution has several loopholes and there are many questions that are left



On watching the news, Nivi is devastated. She decides to break off her engagement with him and runs away one night. While on the run, she meets Rahab Ahmed, an ad-man, who has returned home after a stint in America. Soon, rumours are made to float around that it's a case of Love Jihad wherein Rahab has kidnapped Nivi and forcefully wants to get married to her. Vikram decides to circulate a video of Nivi and Rahab's alleged elope to save his own image and soon, it starts spreading like a wildfire. How a rumour, much like a ruthless monster, holds the power to taint lives and careers follows the crux of *Afwaah*. The

made them sit up and think deep. It could have been so much more. But it doesn't because the lofty promises made fizzle out like a damp firecracker soon enough. While it manages to touch upon every aspect of how rumours are often misconstrued as the gospel truth and the role that traditional and digital media play in reinforcing the same, the story of *Afwaah* never really tugs at your heartstrings. The characters go through the murkiest agony but your heart never goes out to them. The interplay of greed, power and ambition in a politically charged climate of today is explored but it doesn't lend much to the

unanswered.

We are, time and again, told that phone networks aren't at their best in the desert but the makers decide to make phones and internet work at their own convenience. While in one scene, a doctor tells Rahab that all phone lines are jammed due to the imposition of Section 144, in the next scene, we see Vikram making calls without the slightest deterrence. In another sequence, a dance performance at the Nahargarh Literature Festival is made to stop after a framed perpetrator tries to barge inside the palace but in the subsequent

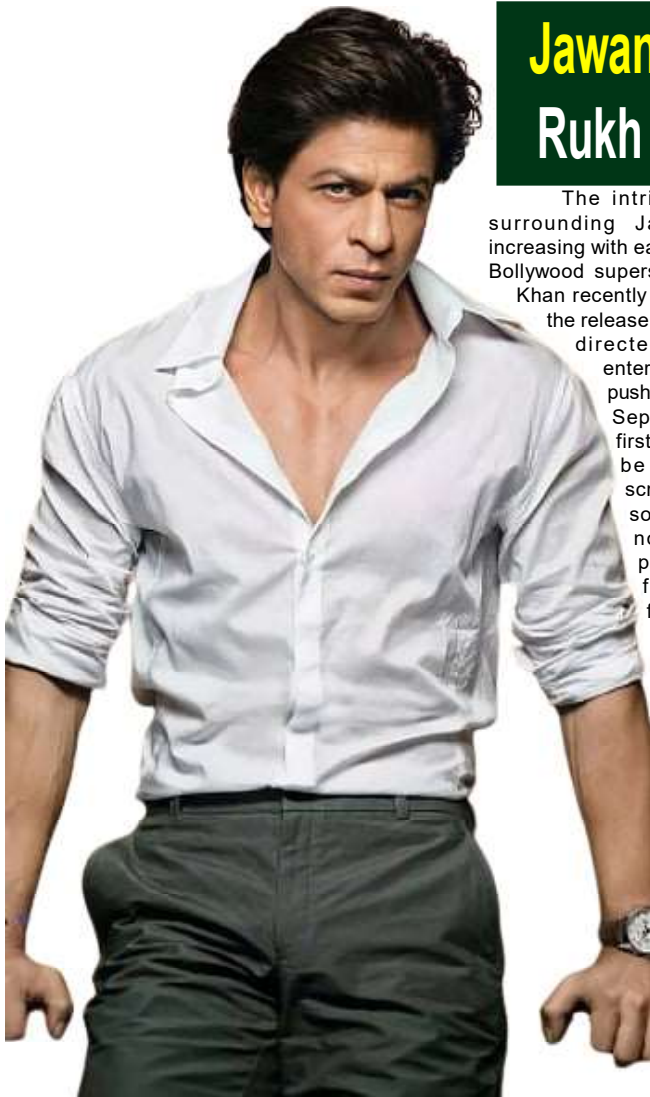
scenes, the makers constantly make use of intercuts and jump cuts to shift from a gruesome scene to the dance performance. Even at two hours and six minutes, *Afwaah* seems too long. The film picks up only towards the second part of the first half and dips again towards the end of the second half. It boasts of a plethora of some incredible actors but most of them have their characters under-written. Nawazuddin Siddiqui as Rahab Ahmed suffers because this character has a flat graph. Despite his beaming brilliance and fresh avatar, he doesn't get to play around with emotions and situations. Unfortunately, the signature spark of Nawazuddin is missing here.

Bhumi Pednekar plays Nivi Singh. On the surface, this is a character that has a spine, a mind and a voice. But we hardly get to see any of that. Mishra is known for sketching some brilliant female characters in a career spanning four decades. *Chameli* (2004), *Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi* (2005), *Yeh Saali Zindagi* (2011), for instance. But Nivi is quite unimpressive. It's almost as if she's cut from the same cloth as Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare's (2020) Kitty, Shubh Mangal Saavdhan's (2017) Sugandha and Dum Laga Ke Haisha's (2015) Sandhya. Sumeet Vyas essays the greedy, manipulative and controlling Vikram Singh. His is the only character that stands out. And Sumeet does a remarkable job as the anti-hero. It's a positive leap from his last outing as an antagonist, Mrs Undercover (where he played a cold-blooded serial killer). In *Afwaah*, he easily steals the show with his subdued charm. Sharib Hashmi as Chandan also delivers an impressive act.

*Afwaah* might be a realistic tale but it gives in to poetic justice eventually. It is a classic case of a great, noble and bold attempt gone wrong. Its honest and daring themes and statements go awry simple because the written word doesn't translate to the screen with the same effervesce, grit and gumption.



## Jawan: Ridhi Dogra 'Fell in Love' With Shah Rukh Khan in 5th Grade, Says 'I Told SRK..'



The intrigue and buzz surrounding Jawan is only increasing with each passing day. Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan recently announced that

the release date of the Atlee directed action entertainer has been pushed from June 2 to September 7. In a first, Shah Rukh will be seen sharing screen space with some of the most notable and popular names from the South film industries such as Nayanthara, Vijay Sethupathi and Thalapathy Vijay. Joining them will be Priyamani, Deepika Padukone, Sunil Grover and Ridhi Dogra. Interestingly, Jawan will mark Ridhi's first big-scale theatrical release. Earlier this year, she

marked her big screen release with the small-budget animal vigilante film, Lakadbagha, which received a lukewarm response. As per reports, Ridhi has a cameo appearance in Jawan but details about her character are still kept under wraps. In an exclusive chat



Speaking about it, Ridhi says, "I wrote so much. I've so many notes on my phone from that day because I was going through so many mixed emotions. I was waiting in a make-up room for almost half a day. The anticipation was killing me. That day, I went through all emotions – happiness, exhaustion, crying and nostalgia."

Ridhi Dogra tells us that her love story with Shah Rukh dates back to decades and it all started in the year 1993. "I was ten years of

age when Shah Rukh Khan, the phenomenon, came about. I remember being blown away him. The first time I fell in love with him was during Darr. I think I was in the fifth grade at that time," she reminisces. Apart from his acting chops, Shah Rukh has often being hailed for his wit and intelligence, a glimpse of which may be sneaked during his interviews with the press and interactions with students and fans.

## Kangana Says 'No One Asked for Ban' on Aamir Khan's LSC; Shabana Azmi Tweets 'Refresh Your...'

Actor Shabana Azmi has seemingly responded to Bollywood star Kangana Ranaut's claims that "no one asked for a ban" on Aamir Khan starrer Laal Singh Chaddha. In a fresh tweet, the

ban."Shabana Azmi had earlier questioned those who were demanding a ban on producer Vipul Shah's latest release The Kerala Story. She had tweeted, "Those who speak of banning The Kerala Story are as wrong as those who wanted to ban Aamir Khan's #Laal Singh Chaddha. Once a film has been passed by the Central Board of Film Certification nobody has the right to become an extra constitutional authority."Kangana Ranaut had agreed with Shabana Azmi but pointed out that "no one asked for a ban on LSC". Reacting to her tweet, Kangana wrote, "This is a very valid point except for the fact that no one asked for a ban on LSC. People just didn't want to see it for many reasons, major reason was it was a remake of a very popular old Hollywood classic which most people had already seen..."The Kerala Story has been facing backlash from a section of



veteran actor shared a screenshot of an old article about a plea seeking a ban on Laal Singh Chaddha. Sharing the photo of the online news article, Shabana Azmi wrote, "So Twiterratis who are saying there was only boycotting of LSC and no call for ban kindly refresh your memory. There was a PIL asking for

political parties and groups who have claimed that the film is not based on facts, and propagates hatred against the Muslim community. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday declared a ban on The Kerala Story in the state in order to "avoid any incident of hatred and violence."



# Adipurush Trailer Release Highlights:

## Prabhas Chants 'Jai Shree Ram' at Launch; Fans Call It 'Mindblowing'

The trailer for Adipurush, starring Prabhas and Kriti Sanon, is finally out now. The makers dropped the trailer on the official YouTube channel of T-Series this afternoon. Meanwhile, a mega launch event was organised for the same in Mumbai. Prabhas was also in the city to attend the event along with Kriti and director Om Raut.

Saif Ali Khan, who plays an antagonist in Adipurush, skipped the trailer launch event. According to reports, Saif has planned to

give Adipurush promotions a miss because he will be off for his annual vacation with his wife Kareena Kapoor Khan and sons Taimur and Jeh. Earlier, Saif also didn't attend the poster and teaser launch of Adipurush in Ayodhya.

The team of Adipurush on Monday showcased the film's trailer exclusively to a bunch of fans in Hyderabad and the early response has been

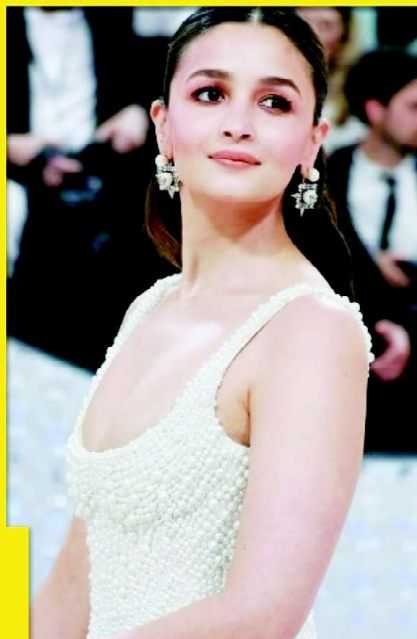


have watched it, calling it "pure as goosebumps". Unfortunately, the trailer of Adipurush was leaked online. Touted as a film celebrating "the victory of good over evil", multilingual period saga Adipurush is an on-screen adaptation of the Hindu epic Ramayana. Adipurush stars Prabhas as Raghav, Kriti Sanon as Janaki, Sunny Singh as Shesh, and Devdatta Nage as Bajrang. Directed by Om Raut, the film also stars Saif Ali

Khan as the antagonist Lankesh.

Earlier, Adipurush courted controversy, including boycott calls, when the teaser of the magnum opus was launched in October over the depiction of Hindu deities and inferior quality of visual effects. The makers were also slammed for the apparent Islamisation of Lankesh over Saif's look as the demon king, who was seen sporting a beard and buzz cut.

## Neena Gupta Is 'Very Jealous' of Priyanka Chopra, Alia Bhatt's Met Gala Stint, Says 'I Wish...



Many from the current generation of Bollywood actors are ruling the roost globally. They are being lauded for blazing the trail and paving the way for having taken representation, diversity, and inclusivity a notch higher. While Deepika Padukone was a presenter at the 95th Academy Awards, Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Alia Bhatt graced this year's MET Gala, making many heads turn. Not only is their feat inspirational for newbies trying to make it big in the West but also for older actors. As for Neena Gupta, she feels mixed emotions.

In an exclusive chat with News18, Gupta confides that she has been experiencing a kind of 'envy' and she wishes she could have received this kind of global recognition too back in the day. "I wish we also had the same kind of exposure. I think about it every passing minute. I feel envious every second (smiles)," she says.

Having defied the age-old norm pertaining to ageism in the Hindi film industry with a slew of projects that she has been and will be headlining, Gupta wishes she was a young actor today. "I wonder what if I was a young actor in this day and age! I could have achieved so much more. Having said that, I know that you can't have everything that you wish for. I definitely do feel thankful for all the work that's coming my way even at this age. But yes, I

feel very, very jealous when I look at them wearing gowns and walking [on the global stage]," she states. The 63-year-old, however, has already decided that if she ever gets invited to a global event, she will be sporting a creation put together by her designer-



cum-actor daughter, Masaba Gupta. She remarks, "If they call me, I'm game. I don't have the body to wear a gown. So, I'll wear a very beautiful saree if I'm invited to go [to an international event]. But no one's inviting me (laughs). If an opportunity comes my way, I've Masaba to style me."

Known for her candour, the actor, who was recently seen in Mrs Chatterjee VS Norway, jokes that female actors who are younger than her also have a reason to be 'jealous' of her. Prod her and she puts forth a plethora of films that she has lined up for release.

"We just wrapped up Charlie Chopra & The Mystery of Solang Valley and I'm shooting for Metro In Dino. Pachhhattar Ka Chhori is also in the making. I've done a segment in Lust Stories 2 which is directed by R Balki. It will release on June 29. It's a beautiful

and amazing short," she says. Gupta further adds, "Then I've three projects with Jio Studios — one feature film called Baa and two anthologies named Dogs Not Allowed and Ishq E Nadaan, where I'll be working with Kanwaljit (Singh). I've also finished another film for Amazon with Jackie (Shroff). It's called Sabun and it's very close to my heart. It's very different from Khujli (2017). It's directed by Vijay Maurya and he's so good!" At present, she is looking forward to the world television premiere of Goodbye (2022) on &Pictures on Sunday (May 7) at 12 noon. While speaking to us about the film, she is reminded of her friend and peer, Satish Kaushik, who passed away on March 9 following a cardiac arrest.

"A very close friend of mine, Satish Kaushik, passed away. We used to meet seldom but whenever we used to meet, he used to tell me, 'Nancy, aaj tere ghar pe dinner karenge.' The dinner plans would also include Anupam (Kher). But because of our diverse schedules, that dinner plan never materialised. Goodbye deals with exactly this. Life is unpredictable and anyone can leave us at any given moment. So, it's important that we say what we want to anyone who matters or do the things that our heart desires."



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