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US President Biden Seeks to Keep China in Focus by Welcoming ASEAN Leaders



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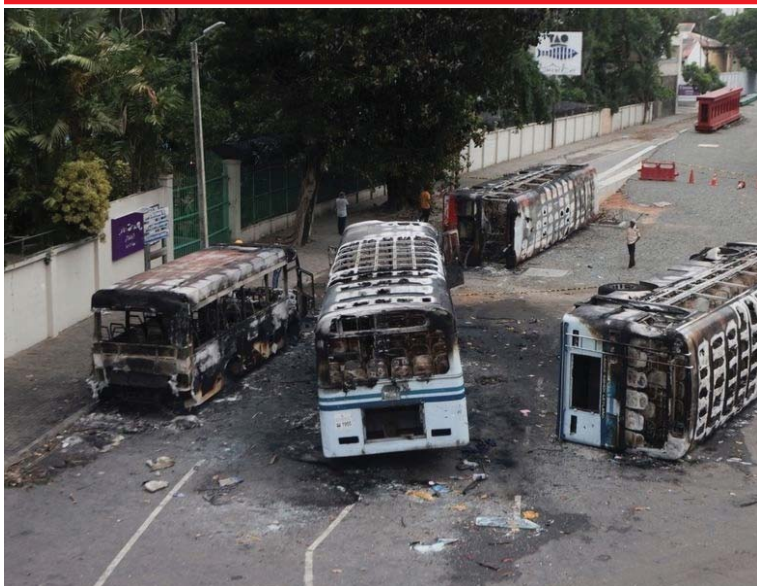
India, China Should Take Path of Coexistence, Cooperation, Competition Post Ukraine War



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Shoot at sight orders in Sri Lanka as protests continue despite PM's resignation

Violence erupted in Sri Lanka on Monday after supporters of Mahinda Rajapaksa attacked the peaceful protestors. The former PM is facing calls for arrest as the opposition accused him of inciting violence



(By Staff Reporter) Deaths. Arson. Nationwide curfew. Sri Lanka has witnessed unprecedented violence over the past two days as the protest over the country's economic crisis continues. Mahinda Rajapaksa, who resigned as Sri Lankan Prime Minister on Monday, is facing calls for arrest for inciting violence that claimed at least eight lives. The supporters of Mahinda Rajapaksa attacked the anti-government protestors demanding his ouster over Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis that has led to acute shortages of food, fuel and medicines and prolonged power cuts. Mahinda Rajapaksa finally quit from his post on Monday, but violence erupted in the island nation soon after his resignation. (Contd on page 31)

Warning! Global warming

World likely to breach 1.5C mark
between 2022 and 2026, say experts



(By Staff Reporter) Several experts have been urging world leaders to take urgent action to contain global warming to 1.5C for some years. But it seems the calls have fallen on deaf ears. Now, it seems the global warming limit of 1.5C may be breached as warned by the experts earlier. (Contd on page 31)

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Indian Working In Dubai Arrested Upon Return To Delhi For Stalking Woman

Police said that the man claims to not know the woman and he started sending her obscene messages and videos after she replied to his initial messages

(By Staff Reporter) Gurugram: A 30-year-old Uttar Pradesh resident working as domestic servant in Dubai was arrested for sending a woman sexually charged messages and stalking her through mobile phone, police here said on Monday. The man was arrested on Sunday when he returned to Delhi from Dubai, they said. He was produced in a city court on Monday and was sent to judicial custody, police said. Sahjeb Ali, the accused, belongs to Rampur district in UP,

and was working as a domestic servant at a Sheikh's house in Dubai, they said. Police started investigating him after a woman filed a complaint on February 1 alleging she was getting lewd messages from him and was being stalked. "I got a message on my WhatsApp number. He continued making video calls and send obscene messages and videos. I asked him to stop this nonsense but he did not stop. Then I moved to police," said the Manesar-based woman in her

complaint. Following the complaint, an FIR was registered against the accused under section 354 D (stalking) of the IPC and section 67 of the IT Act at Women Police Station, Manesar. During the investigation, it was found that the accused had gone to Dubai from Delhi. The police then got issued a look out circular (LOC) against him. Police caught him at the airport when they were informed by airport authorities



that he was returning from Dubai on Sunday. "The accused claims that he doesn't know the woman and he started sending her obscene messages and videos after she replied to his initial messages," said Aarti, SHO Women Police Station, Manesar.

Indian Nurse Dies In Road Accident During Eid Holiday Trip In UAE



(By Staff Reporter) Dubai: A 36-year-old Indian nurse died in a horrific car accident while on a drive with her family to the Jebel Jais mountains in the UAE's Ras Al Khaimah during the Eid holiday, according to media reports on Sunday. Tintu Paul, 36, from Kochi in Kerala, was with her husband Kripa Shankar, children -- Kritin, 10, one and half-year-old Aadin Shankar -- and other family members when their car lost control, veered off the road and crashed, Khaleej Times reported. She, along with her family, was on a short holiday to the Jebel Jais mountain range on May 3 for Eid. Ms Paul, her husband, children, and other family members were rushed to a hospital in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) by the police.

Despite all efforts, the nurse succumbed to her injuries the next day, while her husband and son remain in the ICU. Ms Paul had been working with RAK Al Hamra Clinic for the last one and half years. Basil, Paul's maternal cousin, said that the husband and son are battling for

their lives. "Her husband was severely injured in the accident and is under treatment in ICU

This is the second death of an Indian nurse in a week. On May 1, Sheba Mary Thomas, a resident of Cheppad, Kerala, working in Abu Dhabi, lost her life in another car accident while on the Eid holiday in Salalah, Oman, Gulf News reported

and the elder son is also receiving treatment at a hospital in RAK," he said. Basil said they are simply devastated by this news. "Her (Paul's) mother is unable to accept the loss and keeps saying that her daughter will return soon," he said.

Ms Paul's brother, who is in the UK, flew into the UAE

to help conduct the last rites. This is the second death of an Indian nurse in a week. On May 1, Sheba Mary Thomas, a resident of Cheppad, Kerala, working in Abu Dhabi, lost her life in another car accident while on the Eid holiday in Salalah, Oman, Gulf News reported. RAK Police have urged all motorists and road

users to adhere to all necessary precautions while driving in mountainous areas and abide by traffic rules at all times to ensure their safety and that of others. Police have also advised all road users to drive within the speed limit and maintain a safe distance between vehicles to ensure safety. PTI NSA NSA NSA

Gujarat Begins Tracing Families Of 6 Indians Arrested At US-Canada Border

The six Indian nationals, all in the age group of 19 to 21, were arrested from a sinking boat in the Saint Regis river in Akwesasne, US, close to the Canadian border

(By Staff Reporter) Ahmedabad: The Gujarat police have started an inquiry to trace the families of six young Indian nationals, believed to be natives of the state, who were last week arrested by the US border authorities during a failed attempt to be smuggled into America from Canada, an official said on Monday.

The six Indian nationals, all in the age group of 19 to 21, were arrested from a sinking boat in the Saint Regis river in Akwesasne, US, close to the Canadian border. "We have learnt that those six Indians are natives of Mehsana district. But, we don't have any other information about them. Their families have also not contacted us for any help yet. We have launched an inquiry from our side and started an

exercise to trace the families," Mehsana District Superintendent of Police Achal Tyagi said. The US Customs and Border Protection had earlier said seven individuals were arrested in connection with a failed smuggling attempt early Thursday morning.

Six of the them, citizens of India, were charged with Improper Entry by Alien in violation of the US law. The seventh person, a US citizen, was charged with Alien Smuggling, which is a felony and carries a penalty of a fine and up to 10 years in prison for each violation. Earlier, suspicious activity was reported to the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, which notified the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department about a boat carrying multiple

individuals travelling from Canada near Ontario toward the US.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department responded and observed the vessel taking on water and sinking in the Saint Regis River in Akwesasne. Answering the call for assistance, Border Patrol agents and the HAVFD arrived on the scene to find the reported vessel almost entirely underwater. Following their rescue from the sinking boat, the six Indian nationals were formally arrested by the US border authorities attempting to enter the US from Canada a few days back. These six individuals were identified by the US authorities as N A Patel, D H Patel, N E Patel, U Patel, S Patel and D A Patel.



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Indian-Origin Man In Singapore Jailed For Abusing Service Workers

Peethambaran Dilip, 69, was on Wednesday sentenced to six weeks' jail after he pleaded guilty to two harassment charges



charges. The Singaporean also admitted to one count of uttering words with the deliberate intention of wounding a man's racial feelings. On Wednesday, Deputy Public Prosecutor Tan Zhi Hao said, "(Peethambaran) escalated his abuse in the present case to incorporate racist insults. This should be dealt with sternly, given the need to preserve racial harmony in Singapore." The court heard that Peethambaran went to Clementi Public Library in a public housing estate on June 9 last year, opened a dustbin and spat into it. A cleaner who

spotted him doing so reported the matter to the library's management, according to a report by The Straits Times. Library officer Keith Lim approached Peethambaran and advised him not to spit into the dustbin as it was an unhygienic act, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unhappy, Peethambaran lashed out at Lim and hurled racial insults at him.

The offender struck again on July 22 last year when he went to a polyclinic in Marine Parade (another housing estate) to replenish his medication. Patient service associate Cheek Lay Yean was manning a health monitoring station there when Peethambaran came forward, flung his queue ticket onto a counter and uttered insulting words at her. The DPP said, "Cheek told the accused to stop, but he did not... The accused was known to the staff at the polyclinic because he had scolded polyclinic staff on previous occasions." Peethambaran returned to the polyclinic on October 15 last year and went to a pharmacy counter, where pharmacist Russell Lim asked him if he was collecting his medication. DPP Tan told the court, "The accused did not initially respond, but when Russell repeated his question, the

accused uttered words to the effect of, 'Of course, I am here to collect my medication. If not, what am I here for?'. Peethambaran also directed a racial slur at Lim before leaving the premises. The police were alerted later that day.

These were not his first offences. Without revealing any details, the DPP said that Peethambaran committed criminal intimidation in 2005. In 2017, he was also sentenced to six weeks' jail for assaulting a bus driver. On Wednesday, the prosecutor urged District Judge Jasbendar Kaur to sentence Peethambaran to at least six weeks' jail, adding, "It is highly aggravating that the insulting words that the accused used were of a racist nature and evoked violent imagery." General deterrence strongly applies as a sentencing consideration, given that the accused committed the offences against front-line healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic on at least two separate occasions." For uttering words with the deliberate intention of wounding another person's racial feelings, an offender can be jailed for up to three years and fined.

(By Staff Reporter) Singapore: An Indian-origin Singaporean, a repeat offender described by the prosecution as somebody with a "proclivity to treat service workers abusively", is back behind bars for six weeks after he hurled racial insults at others on three separate occasions last year. Peethambaran Dilip, 69, was on Wednesday sentenced to six weeks' jail after he pleaded guilty to two harassment

Singapore Jails Indian-Origin Man For Trying To Bribe Cops After Accident

Singapore: Krishna Rao Narisama Naidoo, 34, was involved in a motorcycle accident near Pioneer Road, said the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in a news release

(By Staff Reporter) Singapore: An Indian-origin Malaysian man on Wednesday was sentenced to four weeks in jail and fined 5,000 Singapore dollar (SGD) for trying to bribe a Traffic Police officer for being involved in an accident when he was drunk. Krishna Rao Narisama Naidoo (34) was involved in a motorcycle accident near Pioneer Road on November 21, 2021, said the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in a news release.



When officers Senior Staff Sergeant Muhammad Azhar and Sergeant Firhan Abdul Rashid arrived at the scene, Mr Naidoo admitted to Sgt Firhan that he had taken alcohol. He slipped an SGD 50 note to Sgt Firhan and asked him to "please help", according to a report by Channel News Asia. The officers continued to interview him and he underwent a breath analyser test, which he failed. Sgt Firhan conducted a personal search on Mr Naidoo and placed him under arrest.

"In the course of the personal search, Krishna

retrieved an SGD50 note from his bag and offered them money to Sgt Firhan, as an inducement to omit to investigate him for traffic offences," said CPIB, adding that Sgt Firhan did not accept the bribe. The case was reported to CPIB. Mr Naidoo, a Malaysian national, was charged in court on February 16 for corruption. In addition, he was also convicted and sentenced for drunk driving and careless driving as a serious offender. "Singapore adopts a strict zero-tolerance approach towards corruption," said CPIB. Anyone convicted of a corruption offence may be fined up to SGD 100,000, jailed for up to five years, or both.

Witness a new marvel!

Indian instructor in Dubai holds 'tough' yoga pose for 29 min to set new world record

(By Staff Reporter) A new world record seems to have been set for holding a 'tough' yoga pose for the most time by a Dubai-based instructor, media reports said. Breaking the earlier world record set at four minutes and 47 seconds, 22-year-old Yash Moradiya, who is an Indian resident, seems to have registered himself in Guinness World Records by holding the upside-down scorpion (Vrischikasana) position for 29 minutes and four seconds. Moradiya, who has been practising for over five years, fulfilled his dream to come up with a record-setting achievement. In the challenge to set the record, he tested his limits as it is a difficult pose. "The scorpion position, particularly, is all about

stability. The longer we hold the pose, the better we learn to establish the mental resilience to survive any critical situation we face in life with grace,"



Moradiya told Khaleej Times. "Yoga has the ability to transform our physical and mental well-being, driving us to unlock our hidden potential of our bodies away from limiting thoughts," Moradiya added.

The Indian instructor trained for three hours daily for five years to be able to achieve this feat. "The challenge was stabilising the mind after the first five minutes. While my body started to tremble shortly after I went into the pose, it was focusing my inner strength that kept me going," stated Moradiya.

Andhra Pradesh: Chittoor police seizes red sandalwood logs worth Rs 3 crore, seven smugglers held

Seven red sandalwood smugglers were arrested by Chittoor police in Andhra Pradesh and logs worth Rs 3 crore were recovered from them. Police seized a total of 89 red sanders logs from the possession of the accused

(By Staff Reporter) Andhra Pradesh: Chittoor police seizes red sandalwood logs worth Rs 3 crore, seven smugglers held Seven red

Bangalore national highway. The police team intercepted a speeding vehicle which was heading towards Chennai from Chittoor and apprehended two men along with red sandalwood logs.

SMUGGLERS ON RUN

According to Govindaswamy Sethu, the chief operator, two other vehicles, a Mahindra XUV and an Ashok Leyland



sandalwood smugglers were arrested by Chittoor police in Andhra Pradesh and logs worth Rs 3 crore were recovered from them. Police seized a total of 89 red sanders logs from the possession of the accused. The accused have been identified as Govindasamy Settu (44), Murugesan (50), Perumal Venkatesh (44), Kariya Raman (27), Kolanjan (36), Venkatesh. R. (37), Govinda rajulu (21), all residents of Tamil Nadu.

Acting on a tip-off, Chittoor Rural west Circle Inspector Srinivasulu Reddy and his team conducted vehicular checks on Chennai-

mini-truck, were also seized from the possession of the accused. Five red sandalwood smugglers were nabbed during the search of two other vehicles and valuable wood was also recovered from them. A case was registered against them at Gudipala police station after police seized 89 red sandalwood logs worth about Rs 3 crore in three vehicles. Police have now launched a manhunt to four absconding key smugglers from Tamil Nadu and three from Chittoor district. Special police teams have been formed and they are on high alert to nab them at the earliest.

CBI raids 12 NGOs at 40 locations across India over foreign funding

Around six public servants have been caught red-handed receiving bribes and detained. Over Rs 2 crore in hawala transactions have also been seized

(By Staff Reporter) In a massive nation-wide crackdown on not-for-profit organizations flouting foreign funding law, the Central Bureau of Investigation is raiding middlemen and public servants in 40 locations across India, including in Delhi, Mumbai, Rajasthan, Chennai, and Mysore, among others. 12

NGOs have been raided by the federal investigation agency.

Over 10 people have been caught red-handed receiving bribes and arrested. Of them, six are public servants, including some Home Ministry officials.

Illegal transactions of almost Rs 2 crore, routed through hawala channels, have been seized, the agency said.

The federal agency, which received input from the Union Home Ministry about the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, or FCRA, violations, is now

questioning those arrested so far. The Home Ministry received information that certain public



servants, middlemen and Hawala operators were involved in facilitating the inflow of foreign funds to the NGOs illegally, sources told India Today TV.

This information was forwarded to the CBI, who was asked to take the necessary action against all those involved. After learning about the suspected FCRA violations, top officials of the Home Ministry met Amit Shah, who directed them to take strict action against those involved, sources told India Today TV.



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China intends to keep alive boundary issue: Army Chief Gen Pande

Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande said the Indian Army's aim is to re-establish the "trust and tranquillity" between the two sides but asserted that "it cannot be a one-way affair"

(News Agency) Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande on Monday said China's intention has been to keep "alive" the boundary question with India though it remains the "basic" issue between the two countries even as he asserted that the Army's aim was to restore the status quo ante prior to April 2020 in eastern Ladakh.

Gen Pande also said that Indian troops are adequately deployed along the Line of Actual Control to deal with any situation and that guidance has been given to them to "remain firm and resolute" in their tasks.

While referring to the eastern Ladakh border standoff, the Army chief said the Indian Army's aim is to re-establish the "trust and tranquillity" between the two sides but asserted that "it cannot be a one-way affair." "The basic issue remains the resolution of

the border. What we see is that China's intent has been to keep the boundary issue alive," he said about the overall boundary question between the two countries. What we need as a country is a 'whole of nation' approach and in the military domain, this is to prevent and counter any attempt to alter the status quo at the LAC," he told a select group of journalists. The comments by Gen Pande, who took charge as the Army chief on April 30, came as the lingering border standoff in eastern Ladakh completed two years on May 4. "We have a robust posture and adequate forces available to deal with any situation," he said while listing the Army's decision to "rebalance" and "reorient" along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the last two years.

"Our troops continue to hold important positions along the

LACs far as the situation is concerned, guidance given to the troops is to remain firm and resolute in the task they are undertaking and prevent attempts to change the status quo," Gen Pande said.

He also referred to military and diplomatic talks between India and China to resolve the eastern Ladakh standoff. Gen Pande said the diplomatic and military talks between the two sides resulted in the disengagement of troops in the north and south banks of Pangong Tso, Gogra and Patrolling Point 14 (Galwan), adding, "we hope to find resolution through dialogue in remaining areas." "Our aim is to restore status quo ante prior to April 2020," he said. The eastern Ladakh faceoff began on May 4-5 in 2020. India has been insisting on the restoration of the status quo ante prior to the

standoff.

"We are engaging the adversary through military and diplomatic dialogue. Talks have led to disengagement in some areas. We will continue to engage China in talks for resolving the remaining areas," the Army chief said.

The Army chief said his focus has been to increase the use of technology for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in border areas besides ensuring adequate infrastructure and logistics. India and China have held 15 rounds of military talks so far to resolve the eastern Ladakh row. As a result of the talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area. India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the



LAC were key for the overall development of the bilateral ties. The eastern Ladakh border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas.

Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry. Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the sensitive sector.

'Failure of government': DK Shivakumar urges Karnataka CM to ensure peace amid loudspeaker row

DK Shivakumar has asked Chief Minister Bommai and Home Minister Araga Jnanendra to ensure peace in Karnataka amid loudspeaker row

(News Agency) Karnataka Congress President DK Shivakumar on Monday said the Chief Minister Bommai and Home Minister Araga Jnanendra should work to maintain peace and order in the state. His statement comes amid threats by Sri Rama Sene activists to play morning prayers on loudspeakers at temples, if the government fails to act against loudspeakers in mosques.

Speaking on the issue, Shivakumar said, "The Supreme Court already has a ruling on Azaan. The police have already issued notices. A team of our party leaders met the chief minister and appealed. It is the responsibility of the chief ministers to take action on this." "They are deliberately engaging in quarrel. This is a failure of the government. If this is not controlled, there will be unrest and communal conflict in the state," DKS said, responding to the threat issued by Sri Rama Sene. "The chief minister and home minister should work to

maintain peace and order in the state," he added.

At places including in Bengaluru, some Hindu activists were detained by the police. Commenting on the situation in

city, Shivakumar said, "It is the duty of the police to take action in this regard." "The chief minister and home minister should work to maintain peace and order in the state," he added. At places

including in Bengaluru, some Hindu activists were detained by the police. Commenting on the situation in city, Shivakumar said, "It is the duty of the police to take action in

this regard." Meanwhile, Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said strict action will be taken in accordance with court orders to control any activities that cause noise pollution.

Heat wave conditions in 5 MP districts, Ratlam hottest at 46 degrees Celsius

Heat wave conditions prevailed in five districts of MP on Monday with Ratlam reaching a maximum temperature of 46 degrees Celsius

(News Agency) Heat wave conditions prevailed in five districts in Madhya Pradesh on Monday, with Ratlam recording the highest maximum temperature of 46 degrees Celsius in the state. This was the third highest maximum temperature in India after Barmer and Bikaner which sizzled at 46.3 degrees Celsius and 46.2 degrees Celsius, respectively, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Madhya Pradesh is unlikely to see a let up in the sultry weather soon with the Met department forecasting that heat wave conditions may prevail in



some parts of the state for four more days. A trough was running from Punjab to northwest Madhya Pradesh across

Haryana and Rajasthan, a senior meteorologist with IMD's Bhopal office said. He said that heat wave conditions prevailed at Ratlam, Rajgarh, Guna, Khargone and Khandwa.

The maximum temperature of the four major cities in MP Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior was recorded at 42.9 degrees Celsius two notches above normal, 42.8 degrees Celsius, also two degrees above normal, 42 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal, and 42.4 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal, respectively.

Lakhimpur Kheri case: Allahabad HC rejects bail plea of Ashish Misra's associates, SKM welcomes decision

Allahabad High Court rejected the bail applications of Ankit Das, Shishupal, Sumit Jaiswal and Lavkush in the Lakhimpur Kheri case. Samyukta Kisan Morcha welcomed the court's decision



(News Agency) Bail applications of the associates of Ashish Misra, the prime accused in the Lakhimpur Kheri murder case and son of Union Minister Ajay Misra Teni, were rejected by the Allahabad High Court. Samyukta Kisan Morcha welcomed the decision. On Monday, Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh of the Lucknow division bench of Allahabad High Court rejected the bail applications of Ankit Das, Shishupal, Sumit Jaiswal and Lavkush. In its order, the HC, while rejecting all the arguments made by the accused, underlined the political clout of the accused and said that in such a situation, there is

a "possibility of destruction of evidence and impact on the witnesses if they get bail". Not only this, Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh made a scathing remark on the conduct of the Union Minister, saying that, "this incident might not have taken place if the Union Minister of State for Home had not taken alleged utterances" as has been pointed out in the counter affidavit filed on behalf of the Investigating Agency and also mentioned in the charge sheet. "Several innocent lives would not have lost in a most cruel, diabolic, barbaric, gruesome and inhuman manner," he said. The farmers' body, while welcoming the decision, said that after the remarks made on the conduct of the Union

Minister, "there is no excuse left for Ajay Mishra Teni to continue as the minister". SKM further added, "This order gives hope that the wheel of justice has started turning in the right direction, especially since the Supreme Court canceled the bail of Ashish Misra."

It is worth mentioning here that the SIT, formed on the directions of the Supreme Court, had also pointed in the same direction, considering it to be a larger conspiracy in this case.

Samyukta Kisan Morcha has been naming Ajay Misra as the mastermind of this massacre since day one. They also thanked its legal team advocates Shashank Singh and Aman Khawaja and hoped that the court would take

cognizance of all these facts even while reconsidering the bail plea of Ashish Misra. The HC has fixed May 25 as the date for the hearing.

Eight people lost their lives in the violence that erupted during the farmers' protest in Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh last year. The violence took place ahead of a visit to Lakhimpur by Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. Four of the dead were people in cars that were part of a convoy of BJP workers who had come to welcome the UP minister.

While farmers' outfits alleged that Ashish Misra was inside a car that ran over the four farmers, the Union minister's son denied the claims.

Cyclone Asani: 11 fishermen airlifted to safety after being stranded in Bay of Bengal

The Indian Coast Guard airlifted 11 fishermen, who were stranded in Bay of Bengal, to safety. The fishermen were rescued from a boat off Odisha Coast near Sonapur

(News Agency) The Indian Coast Guard, in a swift and deftly coordinated operation, rescued 11 fishermen who were stranded



in Bay of Bengal amid Cyclone Asani. The fishermen were rescued from a boat off Odisha Coast near Sonapur on Monday. At around 3 pm, the Indian Coast Guard Station at Gopalpur received information from Ganjam District Collector regarding 11 fishermen stranded onboard a small dinghy in the cyclonic weather. The said boat belongs to a resident of Sonapur who was returning from Visakhapatnam along with ten other fishermen. The boat was stuck in cyclonic winds and suffered an engine failure. As per the statement of rescued fishermen, the boat was taking in water due to very high swell, cyclonic winds and very rough seas and all the crew onboard feared for their lives. In a swift response, Indian Coast Guard immediately launched its most advanced helicopter ALH MK III from Coast Guard Air Enclave, Bhubaneswar for the rescue of stranded fishermen. All fishermen were safely airlifted. Indian Coast Guard has been working in close coordination with civil administration of states of Odisha and West Bengal to ensure no loss of life at sea during impending weather owing to Cyclone Asani. The cyclonic storm is expected to weaken into a depression as it will move around 100 kms parallel to the Odisha Coast, triggering heavy rainfall in several Odisha districts including areas of Ganjam.

Blast at Punjab Police's intelligence office in Mohali, NIA to send team

A blast occurred at Punjab Police's intelligence office in Mohali on Monday night. The National Investigation Agency will send a team to the office to probe the matter



WHAT IS AN RPG?

A rocket-propelled grenade is a shoulder-fired missile weapon that launches rockets equipped with an explosive warhead. Most RPGs can be carried by an individual, and are frequently used as anti-tank weapons.

(News Agency) A minor explosion occurred on the third floor of Punjab Police's intelligence office in Mohali on Monday night, shattering windows and damaging property. According to Mohali Superintendent of Police Harvinder Sandhu, a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) was lobbed at the building. The National Investigation Agency will send a team to the intelligence office to probe the matter.

Immediately after the blast, the police cordoned off the area around the office and the Senior Superintendent of Police reached the spot. The state has

been put on high alert.

In an official statement, the Mohali Police said, "A minor explosion was reported at the Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters in Sector 77, SAS Nagar at around 7.45 pm. No damage has been reported. Senior officers are on the spot and investigation is being done. Forensic teams have been called."

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has sought a detailed report from the police on the incident. Former Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh tweeted, "Shocked to hear about the blast at the Punjab Police Intelligence headquarter in Mohali. Thankfully nobody was hurt. This

brazen attack on our police force is deeply concerning and I urge CM Bhagwant Mann to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice at the earliest." According to reports, two suspects had arrived in a car and launched the RPG from about 80 meters away from the intelligence office building. The rocket-propelled grenade was not targeted but a random shot was fired, sources said. The intelligence officials and investigators are currently going through CCTV footage. The rocket launcher may have been delivered via a drone, sources said. In the past few months, there has been an increase in the use of drones for transporting weapons and explosives in Punjab from Pakistan.

Bitta Karate's televised confession is evidence in fresh plea filed by Satish Tikoo's family

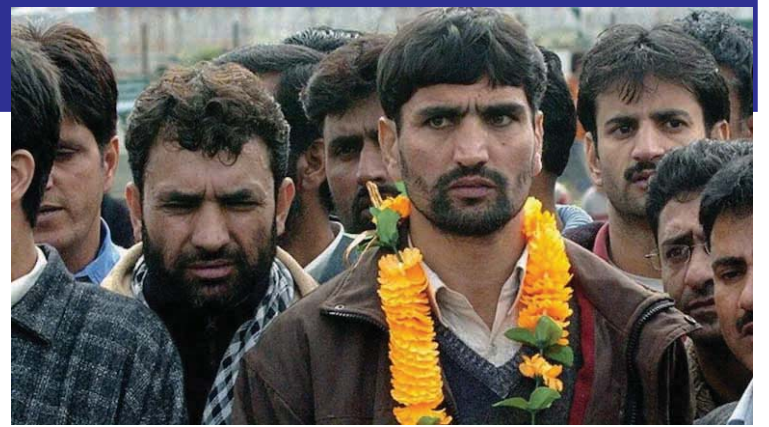
Bitta Karate, in a shocking confession during a televised interview, had said that Satish Tikoo was the first Kashmiri Pandit he had murdered

(News Agency) A fresh application has been filed in court by the family of Satish Tikoo who was murdered by terrorist Bitta Karate, seeking to place on record Karate's shocking confession that Tikoo was the first Kashmiri Pandit he had murdered. The family will submit the footage of the interview before a Srinagar court tomorrow as evidence. The application, filed by advocate Utsav Bains, will be heard by the court along with the video footage and transcript of the televised confession.

Video from India Today's 'Newstrack' show will be placed as evidence before a Srinagar court today in Farooq Ahmed Dar alias Bitta Karate case.

Farooq Ahmed Dar, also known as Bitta Karate, was one of the biggest enforcers of Pakistan's diktat "raliv, galiv ya chaliv (convert, die or leave). Karate is a free man for years and heads the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) - the outfit which led the targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits. Bitta Karate, during an interview in 1991, had admitted to killing "over 20" Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, when the community was forced to flee the Valley. Karate had become a dreaded name for the Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley and was dubbed the "Butcher of Pandits". The targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits systematically began in

January 1990, soon after then Union Home Minister Mufti Muhammad Sayeed's daughter Rubaiya was kidnapped. This ended with the release of dreaded terrorists. Bitta Karate led the attacks and was the main hitman for the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) until his arrest in June 1990. Bitta Karate, who was interviewed while he was in detention in 1991, said that he had become a terrorist "because I was harassed by the local administration". He became an "enemy" of the Indian state, crossed the border to receive training in Pakistan, where the trainers 'did not trust the terror recruits and were shifted



from one place to another a Hindu boy He was possibly blindfolded', he said. "I don't from the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) (It was not a choice). I got the order to kill him, he was to be killed," Bitta Karate had said. More than 56,000 Kashmiri Pandit families were forced out of the Kashmir Valley in 1990. Of these, about 35,000 families took shelter in Jammu, over 19,000 in Delhi and over 2,000 in other parts of the country.

Plea in Gujarat High Court seeks independent probe in Khambhat communal violence

During the Ram Navmi rally, communal violence hit Khambhat with incidents of looting and arson being reported from the area. Religious places of worship were also damaged in the violence.



(News Agency) Muslims in Gujarat's Khambhat have demanded an investigation by either the CID (crime) or the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the case filed against leaders who took out a procession on Ram Navami leading to a communal flare up. They have approached the High Court with their demand. During the Ram Navmi rally, communal violence hit Khambhat with incidents of looting and arson being reported from the area. Religious places of worship were also damaged in the violence. The district administration of Anand carried out a demolition drive and pulled down illegal business establishments of those accused of rioting. The police have filed two FIRs - one against members of the Muslim community and the other against members of the committee that took out the procession along with a mob of 1,000 persons. The petitioners, who have approached the High Court through advocate Anand Yagnik, have claimed that the police have so far not arrested a single accused despite their names being mentioned in the FIR.

No private hospital for surgery: ED opposes Anil Deshmukh's request in court

Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, currently lodged in jail, has sought permission to be shifted to a private hospital for surgery

(News Agency) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has opposed the request made by former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in a special court, seeking permission to be shifted to a private hospital for surgery. The special court in Mumbai, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), will be passing its order on the application on Tuesday. The application, filed by lawyers Aniket Nikam and Inderpal Singh on behalf of the former minister, stated that 74-year-old Deshmukh is suffering from various ailments and has been in jail for the past six months. Last month, he fell in prison and dislocated his shoulder. The state-run JJ Hospital

had suggested surgery and Deshmukh wanted to undergo this surgery by a doctor of his choice. They also pointed out that there is one particular test which the JJ hospital has said cannot be done at the state-run facility. The central agency, in a reply filed through its assistant director Tassine Sultan, sought rejection of Deshmukh's application and said that private hospitalization wasn't necessary. The ED relied on information from the head of the cardiology department at JJ Hospital, who said that there was no correlation of "stress thallium test" with shoulder surgery in Deshmukh's case as the said test was conducted only to rule out "cardiac ischemia".

1 militant killed in encounter with security forces in J&K's Shopian

(News Agency) An encounter broke out between security forces and militants in Shopian district of J&K on Monday. One militant was killed in the initial exchange of fire. One militant was killed in the initial exchange of fire in an encounter in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday.



Security forces had launched a cordon and search operation in Pandoshan area of the

district following information that militants were present there, a police official said. He said the search operation turned into an encounter after militants opened fire on security forces, who then retaliated. The Jammu and Kashmir Police tweeted that the militants had fired at civilians and tried to escape. Two civilians were injured and airlifted to the hospital in Srinagar for treatment.

Thane cops accused of 'robbing' businessman of Rs 6 crore after raid, probe ordered

Four Mumbra policemen have been accused of "robbing" a Thane businessman of Rs 6 crore after a raid at the latter's house



his hard-earned money, the policemen allegedly returned Rs 24 crore to the businessman, while keeping Rs 6 crore for themselves.

The complainant, identified as Shaikh Ibrahim Pasha, alleged that on the midnight of April 12, the Police Inspector (crime) of Mumbra Police station, along with two police sub inspectors, some staff of the police station, and three private persons raided Faizal Memon's residence.

Memon's residence is in Bombay Colony in Mumbra. The police allegedly found thirty boxes with Rs 1 crore packed in each box at Memon's residence. All the boxes were then taken to the Mumbra Police station in the Senior

Police' Inspectors cabin.

At the police station, Police Inspector Shevale started questioned Memon about where he got the money from. According to the complainant, Memon pleaded and said that it was all his hard-earned money, but Shevale and his juniors did not listen and even abused and assaulted him.

The complaint claimed that the policemen then told Memon to give half the amount to them, but he pleaded and agreed to give Rs 2 crores to Shevale. The policemen reportedly told Memon to go outside the cabin. The cops then removed Rs 6 crores and handed over Rs 24 crores to Memon, the complaint alleged.

The complaint letter goes on to

add that Police Inspector Shevale had also allegedly called Senior Police Inspector Ashok Kadlag and said that the matter had been settled for Rs 6 crores. To which Kadlag allegedly replied "very good".

The complaint mentions that the Senior Police Inspector's cabin has CCTV and it can be checked to corroborate the said incident. Accordingly, a case should be registered against the accused police officers and the money they have taken from Memon should be returned.

When contacted, Thane Police Commissioner Jaijit Singh confirmed that Additional Commissioner of the region has been asked to conduct an inquiry into the allegations.

(News Agency) Four Thane cops, including a senior police inspector, have been accused of "robbing" a businessman of Rs 6 crore. The Thane Police Commissioner has ordered an inquiry into the allegation.

According to the complaint sent to Maharashtra Home

Minister Dilip Walse Patil and Thane Police Commissioner Jaijit Singh, it has been alleged that the policemen recovered Rs 30 crore from the businessman, identified as Faizal Memon.

After the businessman requested the officials to return his money, claiming that it was

ED files chargesheet against private firm, ex-Andhra Bank manager in multi-crore bank fraud case

(News Agency) The ED has filed a chargesheet against a private firm and an ex-Andhra Bank manager in a multi-crore bank fraud case.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a chargesheet before the special court at Visakhapatnam against a private firm and its managing director, former chief manager of Andhra Bank and others in a case related to a multi-crore bank fraud. The chargesheet has been filed under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act (PMLA) against Venus Aqua Foods Limited, its managing director, Nimmagadda Ramakrishna, S Ramchander Rao (the then chief manager of Andhra Bank), and others on charges of multi-crore bank fraud. The ED initiated its money-laundering investigation in response to a FIR filed by the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI). The federal probe agency alleged that Venus Aqua Foods Limited, its directors, and their family members availed loans for pisciculture activities and agriculture cash credit loans (AGLCC) from Andhra Bank in connivance with the bank's chief manager but did not use the loan proceeds for the intended purpose.

Investigation revealed that loans were withdrawn in cash and diverted to repay old loans and purchase immovable properties in the names of directors of Venus Aqua Foods Limited and their family members. The money was even diverted to produce a Tollywood movie by the name 'Aakashame Haddu' and thereby caused a loss of Rs 54.64 crore (including interest) to the Public Sector Bank, said the ED in a statement.

Cow dung gas plant to be set up in UP's Bareilly

Cow dung will be sold at Rs 1.5/kg at the gas plant to be set up in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly

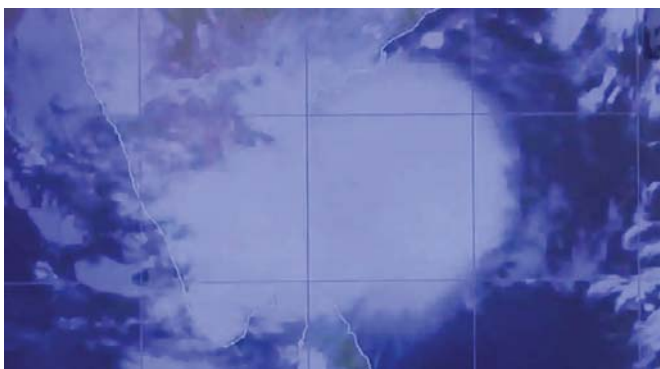


(News Agency) The Yogi government is all set to make Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) from cow dung, starting from Bareilly. A cow dung gas plant will be set up soon in the state where dung will also be purchased for Rs 1.5/kg. Livestock farmers will get a direct benefit from this, and their income will increase, as the government claims. The state government is moving towards a permanent solution to this problem, which had political attention throughout his previous tenure. The Yogi government's Dung CNG Plant Scheme (Dung CNG Plant Scheme) will benefit the farmers of the state the most. In this scheme, the government will purchase cow dung from the cattle farmers because they will get good profit. The government will buy cow dung at Rs 1.50 per kg from cattle owners and this dung will be fully used for making

cow dung plants. Uttar Pradesh's Animal Husbandry and Milk Development Minister Dharampal Singh has said in the past that the work of making cow dung plants in the state will start very soon. Apart from this, Animal Husbandry and Milk Development Minister Dharampal Singh also said that within a year, farmers will get rid of the problem of stray animals roaming on the roads as well as entering the fields and destroying the crops in Bareilly. Significantly, stray cattle emerged as a major election issue in the UP-Assembly election where the opposition parties had fiercely targeted the Yogi government in this matter. The government had promised to solve this problem. In this sequence, the Yogi government is working on the cow dung CNG plant scheme and the problem of stray animals

Cyclone Asani nears Andhra Pradesh, Odisha coast; ports shut, flights cancelled

(News Agency) The Indian Metrological Department (IMD) said on Tuesday that severe cyclonic storm Asani is expected to travel northwestwards until the night of May 10 and approach the west central Bay of Bengal off the coast of North Andhra Pradesh. Cyclone Asani is expected to recurve north-



northeastwards and move into the Northwest Bay of Bengal off the shores of North Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, according to the weather service. During the next 24 hours, it is expected to progressively weaken into a cyclonic storm. In Srikakulam, Vizianagaram,

Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, and West Godavari districts, squally winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph gusting to

60 kmph are expected to continue until 8.30 a.m. on May 11th, according to the IMD. The weather department in Bhubaneswar also informed us that the severe cyclonic storm Asani will

weaken into a cyclonic storm over the next 24 hours. "Under its influence, heavy to very heavy rainfall warning for next 24 hrs for Malkangiri, Gajapati, Ganjam, Puri dists. Fishermen advised not to venture into the sea along & off Odisha coast till 13 May", IMD Bhubaneswar.

Delhi Congress requests PM to name new Parliament building after APJ Abdul Kalam

Delhi Congress has requested PM Modi to name the new parliament building after former president APJ Abdul Kalam to send a message of communal harmony



(News Agency) Delhi Pradesh building, which is currently Congress Committee on under construction, after former Tuesday appealed to Prime President APJ Abdul Kalam to Minister Narendra Modi to send a 'message' about name the new Parliament country's communal

harmony. "We would like to request PM Narendra Modi to name the new parliament building after former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, which will send a message about country's communal amity," DPCC chief Chaudhary Anil Kumar said.

Kumar also accused the Delhi BJP of trying to create social unrest by proposing renaming of 40 historic places. "As the Delhi BJP is failing to cash in on the bulldozer drive, they are now proposing to rename some 40 historic places and roads in

Delhi after 'great personalities', which even those great figures would have objected to had they been alive," Kumar said in a statement.

Delhi unit of the BJP had proposed renaming 40 villages of Delhi after personalities including IB officer Ankit Sharma and constable Ratan Lal, who were killed during 2020 Delhi riots. The BJP has also sought renaming of villages after former President APJ Abdul Kalam and inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, who was martyred

during the Batla House encounter. "If the BJP wants to improve Delhi, then it should build new community centres, improve MCD schools, provide better civic facilities in the villages and urban villages to change the face of these villages, carpet the pot-holed roads, improve sanitation facilities, and get rid of the mountainous landfills posing grave threats to the health of the people, instead of creating unrest in the society with provocative remaining of historic areas in the capital," Kumar said. Live TV

Geared up to handle aftermath of Cyclone Asani, says Indian Coast Guard



(News Agency) With weather forecasts indicating that 'Asani', the severe cyclone storm off India's east coast is likely to move towards north-west Bay of Bengal, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is closely monitoring the situation. As the cyclone is expected to move off the north Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts, the Coast Guard has deployed two ships with helicopters for responding to any contingency including rescue operations post-landfall of the weather system.

Ships at anchorage have also been advised to take shelter and necessary safety measures. Port authorities, oil rig operators, shipping, fisheries authorities and fishermen associations have been informed about the possible impact. The ICG is also in contact with relevant authorities to ensure the safety of boats, vessels and fixed platforms.

In addition to this, Coast Guard Disaster Relief Teams (DRTs) with inflatable boats, life boats and lifejackets are on standby for undertaking disaster response operations. Medical teams and ambulances have also been kept on standby for swift mobilisation.

Caste census in Bihar: Tejashwi Yadav asks CM Nitish Kumar to clear his stand within 72 hrs

Tejashwi Yadav has asked Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to clarify his position on the caste census within 72 hours

(News Agency) Leader of this matter, which is why he is special status for Bihar, but he is now silent on the issue," he said. Tejashwi further hit out at Nitish, saying that the Bihar government is now operating from Nagpur due to the Chief Minister's working style. He charged the Nitish government with instilling constant tension and said that communal forces are trying to break the state's brotherhood.

said Tejashwi, adding that Nitish Kumar had promised to conduct a caste census in Bihar but has been delaying it for several months. "The state government is trying to avoid the issue. The chief minister wants to suppress



working on a delay strategy on this issue," Tejashwi Yadav said. The RJD leader accused Nitish Kumar of dragging his feet on granting Bihar special status in the same way. "Nitish initially lobbied the government for

He also stated that major issues such as inflation, migration, and poverty are being ignored, while Hindu-Muslims, mosques, temples, loudspeakers, and bulldozers are given prominence in the country.

Kanpur police stations putting up voice-recording cameras for better transparency

(News Agency) CCTV cameras with sound recorders are being installed in all police stations in Kanpur to "build transparency". Only police officers will be able to monitor activities happening at police stations via mobiles and ipads. "This arrangement will come into effect within four days," Additional Commissioner of Police Anand Prakash Tiwari said. Under the initiative by Kanpur Police Commissioner, the work of installing CCTVs started on Tuesday. Soon, all the police stations will have this facility in which the entire activities of the police stations will be captured. Additional Commissioner of Police Anand Prakash Tiwari said, "Good quality sound recording CCTV cameras are being installed in all police stations in Kanpur

so that transparency can be built." Till now, there were no sound recording cameras at any police station. Because of this, many times the conversations of the policemen with the accused or the complainants could not be traced. The relatives of inmates sometimes accuse the police of misbehaving in the police station, but due to lack of evidence, the truth cannot come out. This exercise has been started to overcome this problem. Recently, the National Commission for Women (NCW) sent a notice to the Kanpur Police Commissioner to take strict action against the policemen who were involved in allegedly assaulting an elderly maid to confess her crime in the Madhu Kapoor murder case.

Poll strategist, strong party face: List of demands by Gujarat Cong MLAs in meeting with Rahul Gandhi

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi held a closed-door meeting with party MLAs in Gujarat's Dahod

(News Agency) Amid reports of internal bickering in the Gujarat unit of the Congress, Rahul Gandhi held a closed-door meeting with party MLAs in Dahod on Tuesday. Rahul Gandhi's visit to Gujarat is crucial ahead of state Assembly polls scheduled to be held later this year. On Tuesday, Rahul Gandhi addressed a meeting of tribals in Dahod as he sought to woo the adivasi voters. After the meeting with the tribals, Rahul Gandhi held a closed-door meeting with Gujarat Congress MLAs. Ahead of the Gujarat assembly elections, there was a lot of chatter earlier about Prashant Kishor being poll strategist for the Congress. Many believed that



the move would have helped Congress perform well in the polls. However, after Prashant Kishor's

exit, the Gujarat Congress leadership is in need of a good poll strategist. The Congress MLAs reportedly asked for a political strategist who could make a good ground strategy and focus on all 182 seats in the state assembly. During the meeting, the party MLAs reportedly asked Rahul Gandhi to make frequent visits to Gujarat and hold more rallies and roadshows.

Apart from Rahul Gandhi, the party leadership also sought Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's visit ahead of the polls. The state Congress MLAs sought a strong face for the party in Gujarat. The Congress MLAs told Rahul Gandhi that the prospective party face should not be embroiled in any controversy and should be acceptable to all castes. Apart from this, the Gujarat Congress MLAs sought more opportunities for women legislators and unanimously agreed that the state should have more women MLAs. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a Congress MLA present at the meeting said that Rahul Gandhi told the party workers, "Nobody should think that they are above the party. The party is the top priority, not individuals." "Rahulji asked all the MLAs to remain in constant touch with people. He told us that people will put trust in us if we fight for them and resolve their issues," Congress MLA Himmatsinh Patel told reporters after the meeting.

Don't test our patience: Raj Thackeray tells Maharashtra CM



(News Agency) Slamming Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray over the loudspeakers-on-mosques issue, MNS president Raj Thackeray on Tuesday cautioned the Shiv Sena-led MVA government against "testing the patience" of his party in the matter. In a letter addressed to the chief minister, Raj, who perhaps for the first time addressed his estranged cousin as "Uddhav Thackeray", said over 28,000 MNS workers have been served preventive notices, while thousands have been externed.

"This (police action) is for what? To not remove loudspeakers from mosques that are leading to noise pollution?" he questioned.

He said the police are looking for leaders of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena as if they are Pakistani terrorists or 'Razakars' under the erstwhile Nizam rule. "It makes me ponder whether the same high-handedness was shown by the police to find out terrorists or arms hidden in mosques," the MNS chief wondered. He said Marathi people and

Hindus are watching this stance of the state government.

Raj Thackeray had earlier given the May 4 ultimatum to the state government to remove loudspeakers atop mosques and warned that 'Hanuman Chalisa' will be played outside mosques at a higher volume if it is not done.

"I have only one thing to tell the state government. Do not test our patience. No one has come with the ('tamrapat') copper plate of power. Even you have not, Uddhav Thackeray," Raj stated. On Raj Thackeray's ultimatum, the state government had said that the Union government should come out with a policy on the use of the public address system. The Thackeray cousins share a frosty relationship, especially since Raj's exit from the Shiv Sena, founded by his uncle the late Bal Thackeray, in 2005. Maintaining a defiant position over playing Hanuman Chalisa, Raj Thackeray on May 4 asserted that his party will continue with the protests till all sound systems atop mosques are silenced.

In Delhi Mundka fire, 2 held; building didn't have fire clearance, owner on run

Delhi Mundka fire: The blaze is one of the worst since the 2019 Anaj Mandi fire that killed 43

(News Agency) In one of the worst fires that Delhi has recently seen, at least 27 people lost their lives when a blaze engulfed a three-storey building in West Delhi's Mundka; several people were critically injured. The building - which had a car showroom and office spaces - is close to the Mundka metro station. More than 50 people were evacuated to safety in a massive rescue operation; at least 12 were injured. The death figure in the tragedy is likely to go up. 1. Fire-fighting and rescue operations were kicked off soon after the blaze was reported on Friday evening. The fire reportedly broke out at the first floor of the building that housed the office of a firm that manufactures CCTV cameras and Wi-Fi routers, officials said.

2. This is one of the worst fire incidents that the national capital has seen since the 2019 Anaj Mandi tragedy that claimed 43 lives. In Mundka, fire officials said, some of the bodies were charred beyond recognition amid the horror and devastation that unfolded.

3. The blaze reportedly broke at around 4:40 pm near pillar number 544 of the Mundka metro station. Lakhs of people use the Delhi Metro everyday for commuting. "The building did not have a

fire NOC (no-objection certificate). The owner of the building has been identified as Manish Lakra who lived on the top floor. Lakra is currently missing, teams are on the job and he will be arrested soon," DCP (deputy commissioner of police) Sameer Sharma (outer district) was quoted as saying by news agency ANI. 4. Owners of the CCTV cameras and Wi-Fi routers manufacturing firm that had its office operating on the building's first floor - Harish Goel and Varun Goel - have been detained, ANI reported citing Sameer Sharma.

5. A team of NDRF official was seen at the rescue site on Saturday morning. A probe is set to be launched into the tragedy, officials have said. "A car showroom used to operate from this property earlier. The building has also been rented by several outlets. To the best of the association's knowledge, the building had a license to operate a commercial enterprise," Sunil Chadha, the general secretary of the Mundka industrial area society, said on Friday.

6. Scenes of despair emerged from the site of tragedy as some people were seen jumping from the buildings. There was reportedly only one staircase, which made moving out of the building difficult.

Congress's Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury urges Amit Shah to withdraw CAA in Parliament's monsoon session

Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, asking that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) be withdrawn during the next Parliament's monsoon session



Indian citizenship. The Congress MP added that the "ill-thought out legislation" could not be implemented for two years as it is unconstitutional. "It is more than two years now since you passed the ill-thought out legislation called CAA. But still, you are not able to implement it because of its inherent unconstitutionality. That is why Pakistani Hindu returnees are going back to Pakistan out of sheer frustration and hopelessness," said Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury in his letter to Amit Shah. The Congress MP also stated that the CAA cannot

be implemented because it targets a specific community. Exuding confidence that the CAA will not withstand judicial scrutiny, the MP urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to "preserve the fundamentals of governance" — secularism and social justice. In his closing remarks, he asked Shah to repeal CAA, as he had done with the three farm laws.

Amit Shah vows to implement CAA

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will be enforced as soon as the Covid-19 pandemic gets over, Union Home Minister Amit

Shah said in West Bengal on May 5. "CAA was a reality, CAA is a reality and CAA will be a reality. Nothing has changed," he had said. Passed by the Parliament in December 2019, the CAA allows non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan — Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian — to acquire Indian citizenship in order to escape persecution in their home countries. Under the Act, people from these communities who came to India before December 31, 2014, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

(News Agency) Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury wrote to Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday, urging him to withdraw the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament. Chowdhury cited reports of 800 Pakistani Hindus who were forced to return to their country as they failed to secure

Activists of RSS Muslim wing denied entry to Krishna Janmabhoomi-Idgah complex in Mathura

Security forces denied entry to Muslim Rashtriya Manch activists to the disputed Krishna Janmabhoomi-Idgah complex in Mathura



Aghai said that when the issue is already in court, then the RSS Muslim Wing activists should not have gone to the disputed site to unnecessarily create disturbance. They should have waited for the

court's decision, Sami Aghai said. "There are several other important issues before the country apart from religious matters. The country is struggling with inflation, corruption, and

unemployment. In such times, all these religious organizations are trying to rake up centuries-old issues which have no relevance in the current times," Sami Aghai told India Today.

Samajwadi Party MLA booked for obstructing govt work, protesting against demolition drive in Kanpur

Samajwadi Party MLA Amitabh Bajpai has been booked for allegedly having obstructed government work in UP's Kanpur. He protested against a demolition drive in the city and got into a fight with officials over the same on May



(News Agency) The Uttar Pradesh police have filed a case against Samajwadi Party MLA Amitabh Bajpai and three others in Kanpur for allegedly obstructing government work. On May 6, when a police team arrived to conduct an anti-encroachment drive near Gandhi Peace Foundation in

Civil Lines in Kanpur, the locals accompanied by MLA Amitabh Bajpai raised slogans and protested. The police had with them an order from the Additional District Magistrate to conduct the drive. However, the SP MLA said the order was fake and that the high court had stayed the

demolition of the 15 houses around Gandhi Peace Foundation till May 17. He alleged that the ADM had taken Rs 50,000 to issue the aforementioned order.

SP MLA Amitabh Bajpai got into a fight with the police. In a video from the incident, he can be heard saying, "You are not obeying the order of the high court. You are committing hooliganism by taking money. You have become a very big officer. You do not know Kanpur. We are very angry with you." Eventually, the police left and the demolition work at the site was halted. However, the police have now filed a complaint against the MLA.

(News Agency) A 10-member team of the Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM) tried to enter the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Idgah complex in Mathura on Wednesday, May 11. Security personnel stationed at the site prevented the Muslim group activists from entering the complex. The activists of Muslim Rashtriya Manch, a body affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), had reportedly gone to the complex to analyze the historic importance of the site. Speaking to India Today, Tushar Kant, leader of MRM team, said that they saw Krishna Janmabhoomi from a distance and expressed the desire to find out about the history of the Idgah, but the security personnel stopped them. He said that the team had gone to Mathura on the directions of the Manch's chief Indresh Kumar. Rehana Khatun, a member of the MRM team, said, "The Manch appeals to all Muslims that they are Indians first and it becomes the responsibility of the entire Muslim community to preserve the peace and tranquility in the country." She said that the disputed site is the birthplace of Lord Krishna and the foreign invaders demolished the temple to build an Idgah. Asif Jafri, another member of the team, said that it is improper to offer Namaz at a place which does not belong to the Muslims. "Every artifact found on the site points to the fact that this was a temple in the past," Asif Jafri told India Today. MRM member Mariam Khan said that Islam does not teach us to fight amongst ourselves. "For the sake of the future generations, it is time that these disputes are resolved with mutual understanding," Mariam Khan added. Meanwhile, reacting to MRM's attempt to enter the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Idgah complex, Bhartiya Muslim Vikas Parishad Chairman Sami

Chittagong Port offered to India for overseas Trade: Beginning of strong bilateral relations

By Susmita Ghosh

India is set to get benefit accessing Chittagong port, which is strategically important point in Bangladesh. Presently, the port results more than 70 percent of Bangladesh's imports and exports. The deal was made after Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar visited Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in April.

PM Sheikh Hasina emphasized on the importance of the connection between the two neighboring countries.

Accessing the country's main Chittagong Port, will open up India's inland north-eastern states like Assam and Tripura.

Jaishankar, who arrived in Dhaka on a short official visit, was greeted by Foreign Minister at Bangladesh Air Force Base Bangabandhu. He invited Hasina to visit New Delhi on behalf of India Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi. This development will not only allow the beginning of strong relationship between the two countries in the future but also will allow overseas trade to flourish. During the meeting, Prime Minister Hasina said that the two countries need further improved connectivity and promote bulk movement of goods. She told Jaishankar that using the port of Chittagong in the southeast of Bangladesh would be of particular benefit to the north-eastern region of India and will provide job opportunities.

Many other bilateral and international issues were discussed in the official meeting, besides the port. Both of them expressed satisfaction with the ongoing cooperation between Bangladesh and India and promised to further strengthen bilateral relations. They also emphasized regional stability for overall socio-economic development between the two countries.

Chittagong's unique location will open up new doors to sea routes while

promoting overseas trade. It will also allow the use of road transport from India to Bangladesh, thus allowing the development of roadways. The major cities on the Eastern side of India will look upon Chittagong's port for their import and export across the south Asian countries. More so, most of the shipping companies will also find it easier to invest and allow inland cargo transport facilities.

Chittagong's nearness to Myanmar will also allow India to promote trade with neighboring countries like

During the meeting, PM Sheikh Hasina said that the two countries need further improved connectivity and promote bulk movement of goods. She told Jaishankar that using the port of Chittagong in the southeast of Bangladesh would be of particular benefit to the north-eastern region of India and will provide job opportunities

Thailand and Myanmar. It will help to form new industrial towns in the remote areas of Bangladesh. Hence, India will find new ways to develop and tighten diplomatic relations near the borders. With respect to the growing business of India with Myanmar, Bangladesh will also be able to get a slice of the profit pie. The Chittagong port's location is ideal for imports and exports along with the South Asian countries through the seaways. Besides, the diplomatic ties between Dhaka and Washington are also going to be affected in a good way by the deal. Bangladesh is vying to get back on the good books of Washington, after their RAB failure, with allegations of nailing the opposition leaders. Through the office in India, the Chittagong port deal will be key to that development. Bangladesh has paved new job opportunities and employment in Dhaka, Chittagong and other cities. India's connection with Chittagong port will be beneficial for both in this development. The management of the refreshed port activity will require the proper utilization of human resources on Bangladesh. With the increase in trade activity and fast transportation, definitely there will be an increase in the overall development of India's north-eastern states along with Bangladesh.

Measuring the change: On socio-economic surveys

India should invest more to enhance the reliability of various socio-economic surveys. The fifth edition of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) provides a

valuable insight into changes underway in Indian society. It throws light on traditional parameters, for instance immunisation among children, births in registered hospital facilities, and nutritional levels. While there is a general improvement in these parameters, there were mixed signals in nutrition. Gains in childhood nutrition were minimal as were improvements in obesity levels. The prevalence of anaemia has actually worsened since the last survey in 2015-16. But the survey's major contribution is its insight into behavioural and sociological churn.

Gains in childhood nutrition were minimal as were improvements in obesity levels. The prevalence of anaemia has actually worsened since the last survey in 2015-16. But the survey's major contribution is its insight into behavioural and sociological churn.

The fertility rate among Muslims dipped to 2.3 in 2019-2021 from 2.6 in 2015-16, the sharpest among all religious communities

when compared to the 4.4 in NFHS 1 in 1992-93. Another set of subjective questions that the NFHS attempts to answer using hard data is gender equity. Less than a third of married women are working and nearly 44% do not have the freedom to go to the market alone. However, a little over 80% have said that they can refuse demands for sex from their husband. This has implications for legal questions surrounding marital rape. Only 72% of Indian men think it is not right to coerce, threaten or use force on a woman if denied sex, which again points to the vast territory that needs to be covered in educating men about equality, choice and freedom in marriage. This question made it for the first time in the family health survey as did another question, about the number of registered births and deaths, in the family survey. Multiple surveys such as the NFHS, Sample Registration Surveys, the Census, labour, economic surveys and ways of interrogation are necessary for insights about a country as vast and complex as India; the Centre should invest more substantially in improving their reliability.

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Why is Nrupathunga University in Bengaluru in thick of controversy?

What is the controversy over Nrupathunga University, which was inaugurated earlier this month by Union Home Minister Amit Shah? How has the university reacted?



status after the state government recognised its contribution to society for 94 years, institutional values, academic excellence, research publications, NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) accreditation and students' performance among other criteria. **What is the controversy?**

Students alleged that the college had committed many violations, including that of the University Grants Commission (UGC) land rule. Narendra N, a 2020 graduate from the Government Science College, alleges that it does not meet any legal requirements to be given the university status. "Through RTI replies we have come to know that the university does not have a hostel within 2 km radius, no academic council, no research committee, no syndicate and moreover is in violation of the UGC land rule which demands at least 25 acres of own land to set up a university. The Science College has hardly 5 acres as per the survey but it submitted a fake

document showing 10 acres to get the university status. If the college is not meeting any of these requirements, on what grounds did the state government set up the university?" asks Narendra, a National Students' Union of India (NSUI) member who wants the college to be stripped of the university status. He also led a student protest opposing the increase in admission fees for bachelors in computer science from Rs 10,000 to Rs 21,000 and that for bachelors in science from Rs 4,000 to Rs 10,000 for the current academic year.

What does the university say?

According to vice-chancellor Srinivas Balli, the university is now working towards setting up an academic council, research committee, syndicate, and hostel facilities to meet the university requirements. "The works for constituting academic bodies and other facilities are underway. We have written to the state government to fast-track the process and appoint nominees to meet the university

criteria. In fact, all colleges undergo the same process once they are accorded the university status and we are no different. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed certain decision making. Moreover, after we got the university status, we have not been given any grants from the government. Hence, we have increased the admission fees to support the laboratory expenses, medical checkups and food distribution," says Balli, who adds that talks are on with the government to also set up a hostel near the university to accommodate students.

What does the Act say?

According to the Karnataka State Universities and Certain Other Law (Second Amendment) Act, 2020, the vice-chancellor must make arrangements for constituting the syndicate, academic council and other authorities of the newly established university within six months from the date of establishment or a period not exceeding one year.

Nrupathunga University, which was inaugurated earlier this month by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has not met the requirements to be given the university status, alleged students. Meanwhile, the vice-chancellor of the university, which was bifurcated in 2020 from the Government Arts and Science College through an amendment in the Karnataka State Universities Act, 2000, said that meeting requirements such as land, academic council, syndicate and research committee is work in progress. Here's a breakdown of what the controversy is all about.

How did the college get the

university status?

The Government Arts and Science College on Nrupathunga road is one of the oldest and most prestigious colleges in Bengaluru. It is not far from Maharani Cluster University and Bengaluru City University (earlier Central College). In 2020, the Government Science College, which was bifurcated alongside the Government Arts College, was upgraded to a unitary university, and named Nrupathunga University, after the approval of Governor Vajubhai Vala through the Karnataka State Universities and Certain Other Law (Second Amendment) Act, 2020. It was given the university

"Do not drink and drive" is a general dictum in most nations. But state governments in India would rather have their citizens drink more and drive more, albeit not together. Facetious as this may sound, it is only half in jest. After the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017, state governments lost their independent taxation powers. The only two significant avenues for states to generate their own tax revenues, without having to seek approval from the Union government, are liquor and fuel since they are outside the GST's ambit. Alcohol and fuel combined account for over a third of states' own tax revenues, up from a quarter before GST. Specifically, alcohol's share in overall state taxes has increased by 50 per cent from the pre-GST years.

When the entire country was under a Covid lockdown in 2020, state governments of all political hues were forced to keep liquor shops open, since they had no other independent means to raise resources and the Union government reneged on its GST commitments. The tragic irony of

Heading for GST Exit

GST isn't just about economic efficiency conceived by technocrats. Sustaining it requires restoring trust in the Centre-state relationship

state governments relying on people's alcohol habits to manage a health crisis was an unintended consequence of the GST. Both the Union and state governments levy high fuel taxes to garner revenues that they do not have to seek permission for or share with each other. This fiscal confrontation is punishing the common Indian with the highest fuel tax rates in the world. To put it cheekily, for the fiscal independence of state governments, GST has induced a perverse dependence on people's driving and drinking indulgences. The solution to the problem of states' growing reliance on liquor and fuel taxes is not to bring these sin goods within the GST ambit, as experts suggest. The roots of GST's current woes lie not in economics but in politics. A technical approach to resolving GST's issues through expanded

coverage or rationalisation of tax rates would be myopic and futile. Government technocrats from the Vajpayee government onwards have peddled the GST as a panacea that would untangle disparate taxation structures across various states, reduce transportation costs and create a unified market that would boost economic growth and yield buoyant tax revenues for everyone to share. They forgot that we do not live in an economy but in a society governed by politics.

The 2015 GST report by the expert committee chaired by the then chief economic adviser proudly proclaimed that the GST would help in "making one India" and waxed eloquent about the economic efficiency benefits of a centralised GST, achieved through curtailing states' fiscal powers. This naïve technocratic endorsement of centralisation

was exploited adroitly by the ruling political class to an expanded "one nation, one language", "one nation, one religion", "one nation, one election" flurry of anti-federalist and anti-pluralistic ideas of "one India". It is not far-fetched to hold the view that GST may have inadvertently paved the path for the over-arching centralisation project by the Modi government in many other areas, under the garb of efficiency and uniformity. Five years after GST, the promised economic gains are elusive. Tax buoyancy has actually declined post-GST. The Union and state governments started to fight as the money got tight. Fiscal federalism woes spilt over to other areas with state governors quarrelling with elected chief ministers, non-BJP states complaining of unfavourable treatment by the Union government during Covid, the

prime minister and chief ministers bickering over protocols in government events and so on. Fuel cesses, Hindi impositions, disputes over the NEET exam and a governor rejecting a duly approved state legislation are not disparate events. They are interconnected issues involving the same political leaders and institutions. The GST has ruptured India's larger federal structure and destroyed trust between the Union government and states. Cooperative federalism cannot just be an economic compact but a broader ethic.

India's GST is precariously held together by the loose thread of "compensation guarantee", under which states surrendered their fiscal powers in return for guaranteed revenues. This thread is about to snap in June. The euphoria over record GST collections in the last few months is not enough to tide over the trust deficit that plagues GST. Fixing GST requires a fundamental reset of the Union-states relationship and nurturing it back to a state of mutual trust and respect. (Contd on page 29)

After Pakistan, Sri Lanka, is Nepal Next?

Why South Asia's Economic Woes are Structural



Even as India grapples with the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, another country is on the verge of facing a similar economic emergency in its vicinity. This time, it is our neighbour in the north, Nepal, which is showing classic symptoms of a brewing economic crisis. Nepal's foreign exchange reserves have fallen by 18 per cent in mid-March since last July, enough to last for just six months of imports. Inflation in the country at 7 per cent is the highest in the last 67 months with crop loss due to last floods adding to its food-fuel inflation already exacerbated by the Ukraine-Russia war. Government has imposed a ban on import of all luxury items such as cars, cosmetics, gold and silver among other things. It has also announced an additional holiday, reducing work week to a five-day schedule to tide over fuel shortage. In terms of external debt, Nepal is almost going Sri Lanka's way with its debt-to-GDP ratio rising to 40 per cent in 2022 from 25 per cent in 2015. According to the government, all is well and opposition must stay clear of spreading rumors but when government projects a 6 per cent growth in its official Bureau of Statistics report when most independent experts are pegging it at 4 per cent maximum, it does become worrying in an election year.

While Sri Lanka and Nepal are recent cases of economic troubles, in our neighbourhood we have an IMF-addict whose 13th bailout plan has been put on hold by the IMF with other agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank showing a similar pattern. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves are at the lowest of the low and won't last beyond June.

Its trade deficit stood at \$39 billion, thanks to the populist policies of now-gone Imran Khan. So bad is the situation that the one of the first priorities of the new PM, Shehbaz Sharif, was to seek Saudi help over and above the loan of \$4.2 billion that the Saudis have extended. Another neighbour, Maldives, is also not in a safe position as among all the South Asian economies, oil imports constitute the highest part of its GDP with 20 per cent of its tourists coming from war-hit Russia and Ukraine. Even before the pandemic, South Asia was already showing signs of weakening economies with the World Bank pointing this out in its 2019 report. Since 2014, South Asia enjoyed the tag of 'world's fastest growing region' unchallenged until it lost to East Asia and the Pacific in 2019. While Sri Lanka and Nepal have COVID-19 as an excuse as both are tourism-dependent economy with a heavy reliance on remittances, Pakistan's economy was in shambles even before the pandemic. According to the latest World Bank report on the region, South Asia is suffering from the twin-blow of COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. But that's true only for the short and medium term.

In the long term, the economic crises that are erupting country after country in the region are a symptom of their structural failures. For instance, Sri Lanka's woes are blamed on China but in reality, Chinese debt is just 10 per cent of the entire Sri Lankan debt. Similarly, blaming the debt accrued due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for Pakistan's economic troubles isn't fair. Pakistan's political economy is skewed in the favour

of military and its favorite businessmen. Annual subsidy to the tune of Rs 1.3 trillion is extended to the big businesses and industries in the worst example of rewarding inefficiency world over. Also, the external debt that these countries have weren't taken in just two years' time.

External debt repayment to exports and remittances ratio is one of the highest in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One of the glaring problems with these countries is their over-reliance on loans and remittances for foreign exchange because of their dismal export performance. All the three countries including Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have slumped in terms of their exports in the last two decades. Sri Lanka's exports to GDP ratio fell to 16 per cent in 2022 from 39 per cent in 2000. Nepal's exports to GDP ratio fell to 6.8 per cent from 23 per cent in 2000. In comparison to exports, the tourism sector has posted a slightly better performance for Nepal by contributing 7 per cent

to its GDP. Pakistan's exports to GDP ratio fell to 10 per cent from 15 per cent in 2003. In contrast, Bangladesh's exports to GDP ratio has improved from 12 per cent in 2000 to 15 per cent in 2019.

The falling exports in the countries that are now experiencing troubles point to the clear need for restructuring the economies to become more efficient and focus on trade as a source of foreign exchange. The ever-widening trade deficits in these countries further highlight the need to curb non-essential imports and encourage domestic industries through the right tax policies and subsidies instead of appeasement. South Asia's dependence on remittances and a few sectors such as tourism becomes especially worrying due to their debt-seeking behaviour. Ideally, these economies should emphasise prudent fiscal policies and diversification of exports but the elite's preference for populism makes sure that bad politics triumphs over good economics.

The economic crises in certain South Asian economies may also ruin the image of the entire region for worse. Unlike Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India have focused on encouraging exports, boosting manufacturing and diversifying their export baskets. Both are in the process of signing a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to embark on joint manufacturing of defence equipment and medicines including vaccines. Their closer integration will benefit Bangladesh by providing it access to a key market like India and help India get connectivity to Bangladesh and beyond as a part of its Act East Policy. While the problems that certain South Asian countries are facing are serious in nature but they must also accept that these are of their own making. The growing India-Bangladesh equation in the same region is a good example to follow, provided they look beyond the narrow lens of zero-sum games and geopolitical rivalries.

How a Meltdown in Sri Lanka Can Have Serious Implications for India's Security



Sri Lanka is witnessing a dangerous meltdown which can have serious connotations for India's security from various angles. As a veteran from the days of the Indian Peace Keeping Force's Operation Pawan, that country holds a special place in my heart. My emotive connection with Sri Lanka makes me that much more concerned. A brief backdrop is necessary before outlining the threat domains.

Sri Lanka has been in a virtual free fall over the last three years but the commencement of this started a couple of years ago. The Rajapaksa family, which has the ignominious honour of being one of the world's most powerful political families with involvement of a large number of family

members in the government, has overseen the destiny of the island state for quite some time. Attempts to bring a dubious Chinese strategic connection to Sri Lanka's future boomeranged after the realisation that cooperation with China involved no free lunches. The Hambantota port and the Mattala Rajapaksa airport constructed with loans from China at a cost of over \$2 billion became white elephants with almost zero utility. Struggling to pay back over \$8 billion Chinese loans and investments, an earlier Sri Lankan government had handed over the majority share of the Hambantota port to the Chinese state-owned company on a 99-year lease to raise \$1.2 billion.

(Contd. on page 29)

The Bengal Conundrum: Hindu Kings of Bengal Were Not Meek, Fought Islamic Invaders Valiantly

It has been a year since unprecedented violence took place in West Bengal after the Assembly election results were announced. Why Bengal has been suffering violence (both West Bengal and Bangladesh)? What was the original demographic composition of Bengal and how it has changed; and how this has affected the socio-political milieu in this region? This multi-part series would attempt to trace the origin of socio-political trends in the larger Bengal region (state of West Bengal and Bangladesh) over the last several decades. These trends are related to the evolution of Bengal over the last 4000 years. It's a long journey and unfortunately most part of it has been forgotten.

The history of medieval Bengal, as we have all been taught, has propagated this myth that the Islamic invaders were full of bravery and Hindu rulers were no match for them. The colonial and Marxist historians as well as contemporary Muslim chroniclers on whom Indian and global academia of our times rely heavily for historical evidence have all underplayed the importance of the Hindu resistance to Islamic invaders. In light of the historical evidence, which seems to have been deliberately ignored, let us take a look at the myths of 'bravery of Islamic invaders' and 'meek submission of Hindu kings' in Bengal during the medieval period.

BAKHTIYAR KHILJI VS LAKSHMANSENA

This 'myth building' started with the invasion of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1201. It is often said that he conquered the whole of Bengal with only 18 warriors with him! When Bakhtiyar Khilji attacked Nadia or Nabadwip in 1201, he had a cavalry of 10,000. Nadia was a holy town of Hindus and it was ruled by Lakshmansena of the Sena dynasty. Being a holy town, there were no fortifications, so Khilji first entered Nadia with 18 horsemen as a forward party and started killing hapless and old pilgrims. He was followed by the cavalry which was basically a bunch of Turk and Afghan mercenaries who under Khilji were focused on attacking and looting the rich towns and cities. During these attacks they maimed, raped and brutalised the common people.

In fact, there is an interesting story that links the coinage of the name 'Bihar' with Khilji's barbarism. When Khilji started his 'loot and scoot' campaign venturing beyond his small



estate of Mirzapur (in present day Uttar Pradesh) awarded to him in 1198, he started raiding the region what we know as 'Bihar' today in search of wealth. During one of these campaigns, he entered a Buddhist monastery and killed all the monks there. Some historians have opined that Khilji mistook this monastery as a fortress and the monks as 'shaven soldiers'. The monastery was known as 'Vihar'. After this incident, the mercenaries started calling this whole region 'Bihar' while they were actually referring to 'Vihar'! Khilji's impact was minimal in Bengal and it isn't that whole of Bengal was captured by his army. Lakshmansena of the Sena dynasty continued to rule as a great Hindu King in Bengal even after this treacherous attack on a defenceless Hindu holy place by Khilji.

Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, a medieval text (written in Persian) by Minhaj-i-Siraj, is considered to be an important source book for the reconstruction of the initial years of Muslim rule in Bengal. The history of the first 50 years of Muslim rule in Bengal is found only in this text. Siraj was a

courtier who exaggerated the exploits of Islamic invaders of Bengal but even he was compelled to describe Lakshmansena as a great king. While this great Hindu king died in 1206 AD, his two sons Bishwarup Sen and Keshav Sen ruled in succession in Bengal carrying forward the legacy of their great father.

'According to Minhaj, Ghiyas-ud-din Iwaz, the Sultan of Lakshnaoti (in Bengal), made an abortive attempt in 1226 to conquer Banga (a major kingdom of Bengal). Perhaps this invasion was foiled by Bishwarup Sen. Keshav Sen also claimed victory in his inscription over invaders from the West possibly Malik Saifuddin (AD 1231-33) of Gaur, who sent an expedition to Banga ... Minhaj also informs us that Sens occupied the throne of Banga up to 1245 AD.' (Nitish Sengupta, Land of Two Rivers, Pp 59-60)

Senas were followed by the Deva dynasty and historical evidence (as mentioned in Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, a chronicle of Delhi Sultanate period) shows that Danuja

Madhav Dasratha Deva of the Deva dynasty entered into a treaty with Balban, Sultan of Delhi, on equal terms. An inscription also showed that he had recaptured the kingdom of Gaur.

Incidentally Khilji and his mercenaries met soldiers who were more than their match as they ventured into the Kingdom of Kamrup (modern Assam but largely part of the ancient Bengal region). As Khilji tried to plunder and brutalise, the tribal warriors of the Tibet region and warriors of Kamrup cut down Khilji's army into pieces. He somehow made a return back to Devkot with less than 100 men. There he was assassinated by Ali Mardan in 1206 in a power struggle which was the hallmark of Islamic rule in India.

When we talk about Bengal in the medieval period, it is important to recall the valour of Hindu kings and chieftains of the Ganga dynasty as well as those in Kamrup. Ganga dynasty ruled the region which we today know as 'Odisha'. Under the great King Anangabhimha III, Vishnu, a Jajpur feudatory of the king, defeated Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din

Khilji who ruled parts of Bengal from 1213-1227. According to noted historian Jadunath Sarkar (The History of Bengal, Vol II, Pp22), "The Chattervara inscription claims success for the Orissa general Vishnu in his war with the Moon of the Yavana kingdom (undoubtedly alluding to Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Khilji) ... performed heroic deeds that baffle description... ."

During the second half of the 13th century when Sultan Mughis-ud-din ventured into Kamrup with great arrogance, the army of Kamrup kingdom slaughtered the Turkish invaders after surrounding them in the jungles. Sultan Mughis-ud-din was killed and whatever was left of his army surrendered to the King of Kamrup.

Sarkar says (pp54), "The Kamrup disaster broke the spell of the invincibility of Turkish arms with the tribes of Koch and Mech (these were two prime tribes of Kamrup), and started them on a new career of political greatness that affected the history of Medieval Bengal for the next three centuries."

Sarkar aptly sums up the 'Hindu resistance to Islamic invaders' in Bengal (pp29), "Outside the home-territory of the days of Muhammad Bakhtiyar i.e. the tract between the Kosi on the west and perhaps a little beyond the Punarbhaba in the east, Devkot on the north and the Ganges in the south – there were powerful Hindu Rajahs strewn all over the country who followed the policy of 'vettasi-vritti' (i.e. to bend like the supple cane under pressure of the tide and become straight again) with regard to the Muslim rulers of Lakhanwati (in Bengal) ... Neither Bengal, nor in fact any other part of India, was conquered by a few cavalry dashes of the Turks as the unenlightened impression goes."

Political Matrix: Dalit Politics is Evolving in Gujarat. Can It Influence 2022 Results?

Elections in India provide an opportunity to the marginalised communities to project their aspirations and contribute to the vibrancy of the Indian democracy. These aspirations are shaped by the level of political awareness and mobilisation among these communities. As we know, numbers matter a lot in democracy: numbers give subaltern social groups the capacity to aspire and acquire political influence and hissedari (share) in resources, development and power.

Few months ago, we saw elections in five states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur. Come winter, and Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh will go to polls. My previous article in Political Matrix had focused on the aspirations of Patidars, a powerful community in Gujarat that every political party wants to woo. In this article, I will train my lens on Dalits, a marginalised social community in

Gujarat, and what may dictate their political choices.

HOW THE NUMBERS STACK UP

In Gujarat, the population of Scheduled Castes is estimated at 7 per cent – this includes around 36 castes and social groups. Like in other parts of India, Scheduled Castes or SCs in Gujarat too have not yet evolved as a politically powerful bloc; they are still disparate and heterogeneous social groups.

At a social level, they are suffering all kinds of exclusions but even within the SC population, one may find graded inequalities, identified by Babasaheb Ambedkar as an inherent nature of Indian social system. In the process of democratisation and development, a sense of competition and jealousy has developed among the castes and subcastes of SCs and Dalits. This, at times, may create hindrance in their political consolidation as a big social group. In Gujarat, Vankar, Valmiki, Khalpa

(Chambhar), Meghwal are comparatively bigger communities among SCs. In spite of their impressive numbers, the process of their politicisation is slow, and their representation in politics is yet to become visible. However, government benefits, development programmes, reservation in education and jobs are reaching to them, albeit slowly. This will subsequently help them develop the capacity to aspire, politically.

THE EVOLVING DALIT POLITICS

The Congress' regime in Gujarat saw a few political leaders from these marginalised communities emerge on the scene, largely because they traced their roots to the Indian freedom movement. But over time, in the politics of the Congress, these leaders due to various reasons lost prominence. Many Dalit leaders groomed during the Congress' time have now shifted to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has been in power in the state for nearly 27

years.

Although the BJP has developed a strong leadership in the state over the years, it is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which started working among these communities after Independence. In the last three-four decades, the organisation's efforts have engineered a shift in the political profile of these marginalised communities. On the foundation of Hindutva, the BJP government's welfarism has further brought these communities closer to the party.

Yet, social contradictions have challenged the BJP's expansion mission among marginalised communities. The flogging of Dalits in Una in 2016 and the political mobilisation around it is one such example. Also, incidents like these led to young voices from the community, like Jignesh Mewani, evolve as leaders.

On the other hand, the BJP too has evolved leaders like Ramanlal

Vora, Kirit Parmar among others as the Dalit face of its politics.

The Dalits in Gujarat are evolving their politics mostly through local self-governance, by being elected to panchayats, zila panchayats and municipal corporations. Some of them may emerge as future leaders in the evolving Dalit politics in the state.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a relatively new entrant in Gujarat politics, is also trying to woo Dalits by giving them positions in the party and tickets in local elections. We have to see which of these competing political parties is able to successfully embrace a larger section of the SC community and vice-versa.

The party which is most sensitive to their aspirations for inclusion, dignity and political share and responds to them in a practical and pragmatic way will be able to mobilise a larger section of this historically disadvantaged community in their favour, in 2022 elections.

Why PAN, Aadhaar have been made mandatory for high-value cash deposits & withdrawals

The mandatory condition of obtaining PAN for deposit and withdrawals would help the government in tracing the movement of cash in the financial system

The government has made requirement of a Permanent Account Number (PAN) or Aadhaar number for depositing or withdrawing Rs 20 lakh or more in a financial year or for opening a current account mandatory. The move is expected to help the income tax department monitor high-value cash transactions, and deposits/withdrawals where tax would not be getting paid by the individual otherwise on his or her income.

What are the new rules?

The Central Board of Direct Taxes, in a notification, said furnishing PAN or biometric Aadhaar will be mandatory for such high-value cash deposits or withdrawals from banks in a financial year, or the opening of a current account or cash credit account with a bank or post office. Banks, post offices and co-operative societies would be required to report the transactions of deposits

and withdrawals aggregating to Rs 20 lakh or more in a financial year. As of now, PAN is required to be furnished for cash deposits of Rs 50,000 or more in a day. With these rules, a threshold of Rs 20 lakh has been defined for the full financial year.

How will this help tax department?

The mandatory condition of obtaining PAN for deposit and withdrawals would help the government in tracing the movement of cash in the financial system. Along with the already existing provision of TDS deduction under Section 194N of the Income-tax Act, 1961, these rules are expected to further tighten the loopholes. Section 194N was introduced in Union Budget 2019 for tax deduction at source (TDS)

on cash withdrawals exceeding Rs 1 crore. In the Budget 2020, the threshold



limit for TDS under Section 194N was reduced to Rs 20 lakh for taxpayers who have not filed their income tax returns for the past three years. "This may help the tax department to plug some loopholes, such as for those high-value deposits and withdrawals where they

say they don't have PAN. This could be applied in case of agriculturists or the non-income taxpayers. The PAN-AADHAAR interoperability will help banks to record details for those who don't have PAN. Earlier, there wasn't any threshold for producing PAN for withdrawals," Nangia & Co LLP Partner Shailesh Kumar said.

The interchangeable Aadhaar-PAN provision in the rules would allow a bank or financial institution to ask for Aadhaar in case an individual states that he or she doesn't have PAN, tax experts said. The Finance Act, 2019, has provided for interchangeability of PAN with Aadhaar. It has been provided that every person who is required to furnish or intimate or quote his PAN under the Income-tax Act, and who, has not been allotted a PAN but possesses the Aadhaar number, may furnish or intimate or quote his Aadhaar in lieu of PAN.

Half of Covid-19 patients still have at least one symptom 2 years later

Six months after initially falling ill, 68% of participants reported at least one long Covid symptom



Two years after infection with at least one symptom, Covid-19, half of patients according to the longest admitted to hospital still have follow-up study to date,

published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine.

The study followed 1,192 participants in China who had been infected with SARS-CoV-2 during the first wave in 2020. While physical and mental health generally improved over time, the analysis suggests that Covid-19 patients still tend to have poorer health and quality of life than the general population. This is especially true for participants with long Covid, who typically continue to have at least one symptom including fatigue, shortness of breath, and sleep difficulties

falling ill, 68% of participants reported at least one long Covid symptom. By two years after infection, reports of symptoms had fallen to 55%. Regardless of the severity of their initial illness, 89% of participants had returned to their original work at two years. Two years after initially falling ill, 31% of the patients reported fatigue or muscle weakness and 31% reported sleeping difficulties, compared to 5% and 14% respectively among non-Covid participants. Covid patients were also more likely to report other symptoms including joint pain, palpitations, dizziness, and

headaches. Around half the study participants had symptoms of long Covid at two years, and reported lower quality of life than those without long Covid. In quality of life questionnaires, Covid patients more often reported pain or discomfort (23%) and anxiety or depression (12%) than non-Covid participants (5% in both). Mental health assessments of long Covid participants found 13% displayed symptoms of anxiety and 11% displayed symptoms of depression, while for non-long Covid participants the proportions were 3% and 1% respectively.

Equating states' off-budget borrowings with their debt will clarify extent of indebtedness

Centre's decision will ensure fiscal transparency in states' finances, an area that has been cloaked in opacity



At the beginning of every year, the Union government communicates to state governments how much they are allowed to borrow (their net borrowing ceiling). Normally, this is a routine affair. But this year there have been some changes. Most critically, states' off-budget borrowings, routed through state-owned entities, are now being equated with the state governments' own debt. This will shed light on a segment of state debt that has escaped the Centre's oversight in the past. Considering the proliferation of off-budget borrowings since the pandemic started, some state governments are likely to find this new missive challenging to comply with.

Under Article 293 (3) of the

Constitution, state governments are required to take the Centre's permission for fresh borrowing, if they are indebted to the Government of India. A fiscal deficit target is typically recommended by the Government of India-appointed finance commission for a five-year period and accepted or modified by the Centre. The base fiscal deficit is usually defined in terms of a percentage rate, which is uniformly applicable to all state governments. This is then applied to the Centre's estimate of each state's gross state domestic product (GSDP) for a particular fiscal year to determine the absolute net borrowing ceiling for that year. The borrowing ceiling set in this manner acts as a soft constraint

to that year's state-wise fiscal deficit. This ceiling is typically communicated to the states at the start of each financial year. For 2022-23, the ceiling has been set at 3.5 per cent of GSDP, and an additional 0.5 per cent of borrowings has been allowed, linked, conditionally, to each state's achievement on power sector reforms, taking total borrowings up to 4 per cent of GSDP this year. A caveat is in order. Loans to be provided by the Centre to the states under the special assistance to states for capital investment scheme of Rs 1 lakh crore will be above this limit.

This year, the communication from the Centre has clarified that off-budget borrowings are to be equated with the states' own debt. Moreover, incremental off-budget borrowings that state governments have undertaken in the last two years (2020-21 and 2021-22) will need to be adjusted out of the borrowing ceiling this year. This equating of off-budget borrowings with the state's own debt is a watershed decision for state finances. Undoubtedly, this is a welcome move as it will bring in much-needed fiscal

transparency in an area that has been cloaked in opacity.

So what are these off-budget borrowings? Off-budget borrowings by a state government refer to loans taken by its entities, special purpose vehicles, etc., which are expected to eventually be serviced through the state government's own budget, instead of the cash flows or revenues generated by the borrowing entity. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such loans have proliferated in some states in recent years. However, hard data on such loans is exceedingly difficult to excavate and consolidate to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of its magnitude. Given the lack of data, we are unable to ascertain the state-wise extent of incremental off-budget borrowings that will be adjusted this year. Regardless, this poses a downside to our estimate of gross state development loans (SDL) issuances of Rs 8.4 lakh crore this year.

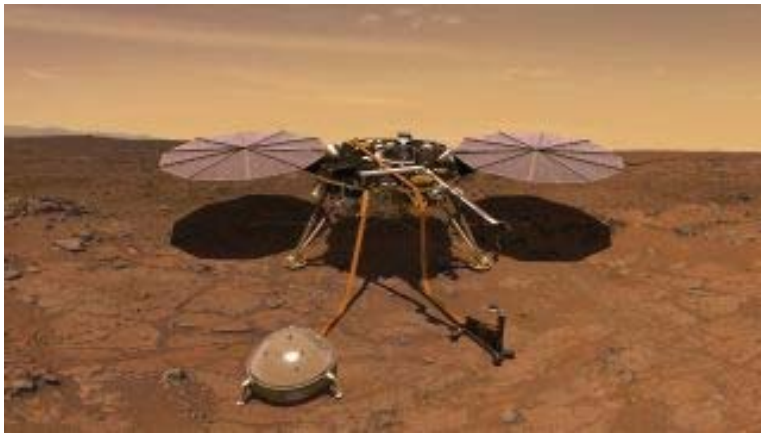
The monthly summary of the Department of Expenditure for March maintains that by raising these borrowings off-budget,

states are effectively circumventing the ceiling set by the Centre. Thus, such borrowings aid states in surpassing the targets for various fiscal indicators that were set under state Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Acts, which have been passed by various state legislatures. Then there is also the matter of the ability of state governments to service this debt in the future to contend with. These interest obligations and the repayment of the principal could widen states' deficits significantly and compress the fiscal space available for other expenditure priorities.

This change in approach towards such borrowings is likely to have come as an unpleasant surprise for some states, especially those that went on an off-budget borrowing spree in the last two years. How they can fund their expenditures this year, with a compressed borrowing space, remains to be seen. We suspect that the usage of liquidity facilities provided by the RBI such as the ways and means advances and overdraft by some states is going to spike this year.

What is a 'marsquake', and what causes it?

On May 4, NASA's InSight lander detected a quake on Mars, the largest ever observed on another planet. What is a 'marsquake', and what causes it?



principal investigator at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said in a statement. "This quake is sure to provide a view into the planet like no other. Scientists will be analysing this data to learn new things about Mars for years to come."

What is InSight doing on Mars?

InSight is not looking for life on Mars, but is studying what Mars is made of, how its material is layered, and how much heat seeps out of it.

This is important because Earth and Mars used to be similar — warm, wet and shrouded in thick atmospheres — before they took different paths 3-4 billion years ago. Mars

stopped changing, while Earth continued to evolve. With InSight, scientists hope to compare Earth and Mars, and better understand how a planet's starting materials make it more or less likely to support life. There are other missions to Mars that are looking for life on the planet, which makes InSight's mandate unique. It mostly boils down to the possibility that the atmosphere of Mars was once warm enough to allow water to flow through its surface, which could mean life existed there too.

In fact, what makes scientists curious about Mars is the "defining question" of the existence of life on the planet, because of the possible presence of

liquid water on it, either in the past or preserved in its subsurface. This question makes the planet more intriguing for scientists since "almost everywhere we find water on Earth, we find life," as NASA puts it. Further, if Mars harboured a warmer atmosphere enabling water to flow in its ancient past (3.5-3.8 billion years ago), and if microbial life existed on it, it is possible that it exists in "special regions" even today. But regardless of life having existed on Mars or not, there is the idea that humans themselves might be able to inhabit the planet one day. Some missions studying the possibility of life on Mars include UAE's Hope, China's Tianwen-1, and NASA's Perseverance.

NASA has reported that on May 4, its InSight Mars lander detected the largest quake ever observed on another planet.

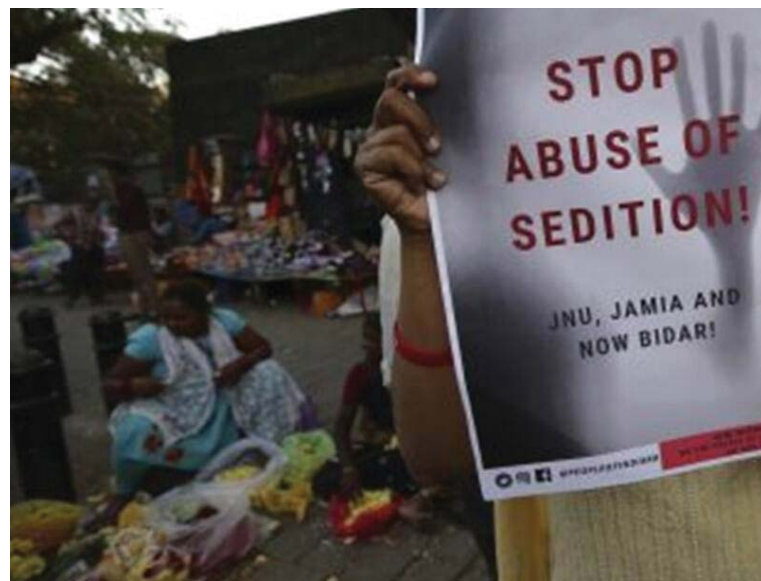
The rover first landed on Mars in November 2018, and has since heard 1,313 quakes. The largest previously recorded "marsquake" was detected in August 2021.

What are marsquakes, and why do they happen?

On Earth, quakes are caused by shifts in tectonic plates. Mars, however, does not have tectonic plates, and its crust is a giant plate. Therefore, NASA notes, 'marsquakes' are caused due to stresses that cause rock fractures or faults in its crust. "Since we set our seismometer down in December 2018, we've been waiting for 'the big one,'" Bruce Banerdt, InSight's

Why Supreme Court's order virtually stalls operation of sedition law

Supreme Court order on the sedition law: Although the court did not explicitly stay the provision — no criminal law in force has ever been stayed by the court — it virtually stalls the operation of the provision



is complete, it will be appropriate not to continue the usage of the aforesaid provision of law by the governments," the court said in its order. Although the court did not explicitly stay the provision — no criminal law in force has ever been stayed by the court — it virtually stalls the operation of the provision. For cases already pending trial, the court said they will "be kept in abeyance", and on registering fresh cases, it said it would "hope and expect" that governments would refrain from registering fresh FIRs, investigating cases or taking any coercive action against accused. "If any fresh case is registered under Section 124A of IPC, the affected parties are at liberty to approach the concerned courts for appropriate relief. The courts are requested to examine the reliefs sought, taking into

account the present order passed as well as the clear stand taken by the Union of India," the court added. In underlining the possibility of fresh cases being registered despite the judiciary's refrain, the Supreme Court has put the onus on the government to ensure that frivolous cases of sedition are not filed to misuse the law. The central government told the court it would issue a directive to states and Union Territories on the new application of the sedition law. Legal experts fear the language of "hope and expect" might not carry much water as it is often difficult for court rulings to trickle down to the lowest level of governance to curb misuse.

The court's shifting the burden of deciding the validity of the law to the government is also new territory. The government

has not indicated whether Parliament or a separate committee will review the law. The significant legal question of law before the Supreme Court is whether the 1962 ruling in Kedar Nath Singh v Union of India was correctly decided. The Kedar Nath Singh ruling, which upheld the constitutional validity of Section 124A, held that speech that is likely to incite disruption of public order would amount to sedition. The correctness of that verdict — crucially whether a law on sedition can be an exception to free speech — will have to be decided by a seven-judge bench. Ultimately, short of Parliament repealing the law on sedition, the court will have to decide the crucial question. Even diluting the provision or replacing it with a new law will have to pass the test of constitutionality before the court.

By ruling that "it will be appropriate not to continue" with the offence of sedition till the government reviews the provision, the Supreme Court while testing the constitutionality of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code has raised the bar for the government to invoke the provision. In effect, the law on sedition is suspended till the court hears the case next — in July next year.

"The case of the petitioners is that this provision of law dates back to 1898, and pre-dates the Constitution itself, and is being misused. The Attorney General had also, on an earlier date of hearing, given some instances of glaring misuse of this provision, like in the case of Hanuman Chalisa. Therefore, we expect that, till the re-examination of the provision

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Sri Lankan President urges people to stop 'acts of revenge' as death toll in violence rises to 8

As the death toll from violence rises to 8, Sri Lanka's President has urged people to stop "acts of revenge"

(News Agency) Embattled Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Tuesday urged people to stop "violence and acts of revenge" against fellow citizens and vowed to address the political and economic crisis facing the nation, even as the death toll rose to eight in the unprecedented violence that erupted after supporters of former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa attacked anti-government protesters here. Nearly 250 people have also been injured in the violence in Colombo and other parts of the country. A curfew is in force across the island nation after mobs burned down the ancestral home belonging to the ruling Rajapaksa family amid mounting anger at the worst economic crisis. Though Mahinda Rajapaksa has quit as prime minister, this has failed to bring calm. "I appeal and urge people to remain calm & stop violence & acts of revenge against citizens, irrespective of political affiliations. All efforts will be made to restore political stability through consensus, within constitutional mandate & to resolve economic crisis,"

President Gotabaya tweeted in his first comments since the outbreak of the violence that saw arson attacks on the homes of several former ministers and politicians. Sri Lanka's Attorney General on Tuesday asked the police chief to conduct an urgent and full-fledged investigation into the violent clashes between anti- and pro-government protesters in the country.

Anti-government protesters have also set up a checkpoint on the road leading to the Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo to prevent the Rajapaksa family loyalists from fleeing the country. Mahinda, 76, resigned as prime minister on Monday amid unprecedented economic turmoil, hours after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters, prompting authorities to impose a nationwide curfew and deploy Army troops in the capital. The attack triggered widespread violence against pro-Rajapaksa politicians. On Monday, protesters attacked the ancestral home of the Rajapaksas in Hambantota, the houses



of 14 former ministers, 18 lawmakers, including former Deputy Speaker, and leaders loyal to the Rajapaksa family.

Video footage showed the ancestral house of the Rajapaksa family in Medamulana in Hambantota city was burning. Prime Minister Mahinda's House in Kurunegala was also set on fire by protesters, while a mob also destroyed DA Rajapaksa Memorial - constructed in the memory of the father of Mahinda

and Gotabaya - in Medamulana, Hambantota. Chairman of the Imaduwa Pradeshiya Sabha A V Sarath Kumara died following an attack on his residence on Monday. Kumara, 63, was admitted to the hospital due to a heart condition following the attack. One person was killed following an attack on a popular hotel in Negombo. Multiple luxury cars worth millions of rupees were completely destroyed.

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Would 'never have agreed' to US demand of military bases in Pakistan, says Imran Khan

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan said that he would "never have agreed" to the US demands for military bases in the country

(News Agency) Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan has reiterated that during his time in power he would "never have agreed" to any US demands of being given military bases in the country in the aftermath of the former's evacuation from neighbouring Afghanistan, according to a media report. The 69-year-old cricketer-turned politician was voted out of power last month through a no-confidence motion, which he alleges was masterminded by the US with the help of local players over his pursuance of an independent foreign policy. He is the first premier in Pakistan whose fate was decided through a no-trust vote.

Addressing the overseas Pakistanis in a video message, Khan said that the US wanted bases in Pakistan in order to "conduct (counter attacks) from here in case if there were any

terrorism in Afghanistan" something Khan said he found "absolutely unacceptable", Dawn newspaper reported. He said Pakistan had already lost 80,000 lives in the US-led 'war on terror' and its sacrifices were still never appreciated, with many US politicians blaming it instead.

"First they blamed us, then they didn't appreciate us, our country and tribal areas were destroyed and now (they) are again asking for bases. I would have never agreed to this and the problems (between us) started from there," he was quoted as saying by the paper. Khan, in an interview in June 2021, had categorically said that Pakistan would "absolutely not" allow any bases and use of its territory to the US for any sort of action inside Afghanistan. His latest comments were similar to the ones he made in a recent podcast where he said that the US was "asking for bases here to

stop international terrorism in Afghanistan".

In the video address, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman said the US wasn't used to Pakistan's government "making independent decisions". He said he wanted Pakistan's foreign policy to be for its own benefit instead of pursuing someone else's objectives.

"The problems started here," he said, adding that Pakistan's relationship with China and visit to Russia were also a "problem" for the US.

Khan also alleged that the "conspiracy" to topple his government started after he refused the demand for military bases and was aided by local abettors. Washington has strongly refuted Khan's claims. He said that by July and August of last year he had understood that "something was happening". Khan said the "bigger conspiracy" than his government being toppled was in who replaced him as he lashed out at the current government and branded it a "corrupt mafia".

He criticised the members of the coalition government, claiming that "powerful local forces" had prevented their convictions in the cases against them.

Khan said that in his experience, Pakistan's "ruling elite is corrupt,



soft and slaves" and would not survive without the US.

"To place such people over us is a conspiracy against the future of this country and also its disrespect." He said an example of how conspiracies to topple governments were pulled off was the fall of Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh and recounted his claims about the 'Cablegate' affair and the toppling of his government through a successful vote of no-confidence. He thanked overseas Pakistanis for staging rallies and protests in his support after his ouster and called on them to participate in social media campaigns to spread awareness about the alleged conspiracy and write to their politicians and public representatives to hold them to account and question if they would allow such a move in their own country. He also urged

overseas Pakistanis to contribute and donate to the PTI's fundraising campaign for its protests and rallies, saying that a "little bit of your support" would go a long way in helping the party.

"I have never seen such awareness and unity in the public as today. I only saw it during the 1965 war and I still remember how the whole nation had united," he said. He said the nation had come together on not accepting servitude or the "imported" government — referring to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's coalition government.

He predicted a massive turnout for his planned march to Islamabad on May 20, adding that the PTI did not want discord or violence in the march, rather it wanted families to participate too so the world and the institutions could know where the nation stood.

Don't think China's 'zero Covid' strategy is sustainable: WHO



(News Agency) World Health Organisation (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said China's "zero Covid" strategy is not "sustainable". "When we talk about the zero Covid strategy, we don't think that it's sustainable, considering the behaviour of the virus now and what we anticipate in the future," the WHO chief said. China has been grappling with a virus surge in Beijing even as it battles lockdown in its financial hub Shanghai. Tedros informed that the WHO had spoken to Chinese officials on the Covid zero strategy while stressing on "shift" in approach. WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan had spoken about a "balance" in control measures to ensure impact on society and

the economy is taken into account. China began conducting mass testing in capital Beijing as authorities closed subway stations and offices and asked people to work remotely.

Health officials have ordered Beijing residents not to leave the city while stressing on negative virus tests to enter public places including offices and supermarkets.

Schools, gyms and entertainment centres in Beijing have also been closed down. China's financial hub Shanghai has been hit by the Omicron wave with over 500 people reportedly dead in the new surge even as the city grapples with food shortage and several rounds of testing.

Poppy cultivation continues in Afghanistan despite Taliban's crackdown on drug trade

The Taliban had vowed to launch a crackdown on the country's drug trade and asked farmers not to cultivate opium - a major source of income for Afghans

(News Agency) Afghanistan has a long history of opium poppy cultivation. As of 2021, Afghanistan's harvest produces more than 90 per cent of illicit heroin globally. Recently, some big consignments of heroin were seized in India and it was revealed in the investigation that the supply route was Afghanistan. Farmers



in Northern Afghanistan prefer poppy cultivation as they get four times more returns from production as compared to other crops. Besides, the unrest in Afghanistan has prompted illegal cultivation and harvest of opium in the country. The Taliban recently imposed a ban on the cultivation of opium in

Afghanistan. However, thousands of hectares of agricultural land is still under poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Talking to India

Today, a farmer said that, due to many folded returns, farmers prefer opium poppy cultivation. "The Taliban has banned poppy cultivation in Afghanistan but those who had already started were

allowed to harvest. But they won't be allowed to do this from next season," Himayatullah, a farmer in Bulk province said. Many believe, after sanctions by the US and other countries, cultivation of the poppy is the only alternative for Afghanistan to make some money and deal with the economic crisis.

Attempt to erase women from public life: Malala's response to Taliban's burqa diktat

Reacting to the Taliban's diktat mandating head-to-toe clothing for women in public, activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai said it was an attempt to "erase girls and women from all public life in Afghanistan"

(By Staff Reporter) At a time when the world is focused on the Russia-Ukraine war, women's rights activist Malala Yousafzai sought to bring back the focus on the Afghanistan crisis that was triggered when the Taliban took over the country again in 2021. Responding to the Taliban's diktat on Saturday directing women to wear head-to-toe clothing in public, Malala Yousafzai said it was an attempt to "erase girls and women from all public life in

Afghanistan". "The Taliban want to erase girls and women from all public life in Afghanistan to keep girls out of school and women out of work, to deny them the ability to travel without a male family member, and to force them to cover their faces and bodies completely," she said. "We must not lose our sense of alarm for Afghan women as the Taliban continue to break their promises. Even now, women are taking to the streets to fight for their human rights and dignity all of us, and

especially those from Muslim countries, must stand with them," the Nobel laureate tweeted. She urged leaders around the world to take collective action to hold the Taliban accountable for violating the human rights of millions of women and girls. The decree on Saturday, the latest in a series, said that women should leave the home only when necessary, and that male relatives would face punishment — starting with a summons and escalating up to court hearings and jail time — for women's dress code violations. "We want our sisters to live with dignity and safety," said Khalid Hanafi,



acting minister for the Taliban's vice and virtue ministry. "For all dignified Afghan women wearing Hijab is necessary and the best Hijab is 'chadori' (the head-to-toe burqa) which is part of our tradition and is respectful," said Shir Mohammad, an official from the vice and virtue ministry in a statement. The Taliban previously decided against reopening schools to girls above grade 6, reneging on an earlier promise and opting to appease their hard-line base at the expense of further alienating the international community.

Sri Lanka crisis: India says 'guided' by 'best interest' of the people; backs democratic processes

With Sri Lanka rocked by economic and political crisis, India has made it clear that its policy with Colombo is "guided" by the "best interest of people of Sri Lanka expressed through democratic processes".



(News Agency) The ministry of external affairs in a statement highlighted that "India is fully supportive of its democracy, stability and economic recovery". The country has seen a full-blown economic crisis as prices of basic commodities sky-rocketed impacting the common man. The economic crisis has now become a political crisis even as Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse resigned. India is the largest neighbour of the Indian Ocean island country and has close linkages - historical and people-to-people with the country. The ministry of external affairs in a statement pointed towards India's "Neighbourhood First policy" and said that it has "extended support worth over US\$ 3.5 billion to the people of Sri Lanka this year alone for helping them overcome their current difficulties". The

statement explained, "people of India have provided assistance for mitigating the shortages of essential items such as food, medicine etc."

The Indian support to Sri Lanka includes \$500 million for fuel and \$1 billion for food, medicine and essential supplies, credit swap of \$400 million and deferment of an Asian clearing union payment of over \$515 million. As part of lines of credit, India has already sent diesel, petrol and rice to the country. Additionally, as Sri Lanka is in talks with IMF for a bailout, New Delhi has also put in its word to the multilateral body. During last month's talks between Indian finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva in Washington a bailout to Sri Lanka was among the topics discussed.



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China urges Pakistan to arrest terrorists behind Karachi University blast

Following the suicide bomb blast at Karachi university where three Chinese nationals were killed, China asked Pakistan on Tuesday to arrest the culprits responsible for the attack



"her country wants a complete investigation into the Karachi attack and to reach the real culprits as soon as possible." Sanaullah also expressed grief over loss of lives of Chinese nationals in the Karachi University blast. Both leaders agreed to further improve cooperation between the Pakistani ministry and the Chinese embassy

to ensure the fool-proof security of Chinese citizens, according to the statement. "Our coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will take Pakistan-China relations to a new high," he said. The minister also said that Pakistan and China will not allow any internal or external conspiracy to

succeed in spoiling their friendship. He informed the Chinese charge d'affaires that a special desk has been set up at the Interior Ministry for effective liaison to ensure the security of foreigners, especially Chinese citizens, in Pakistan. The minister vowed to bring the ones involved in the Karachi incident to justice.

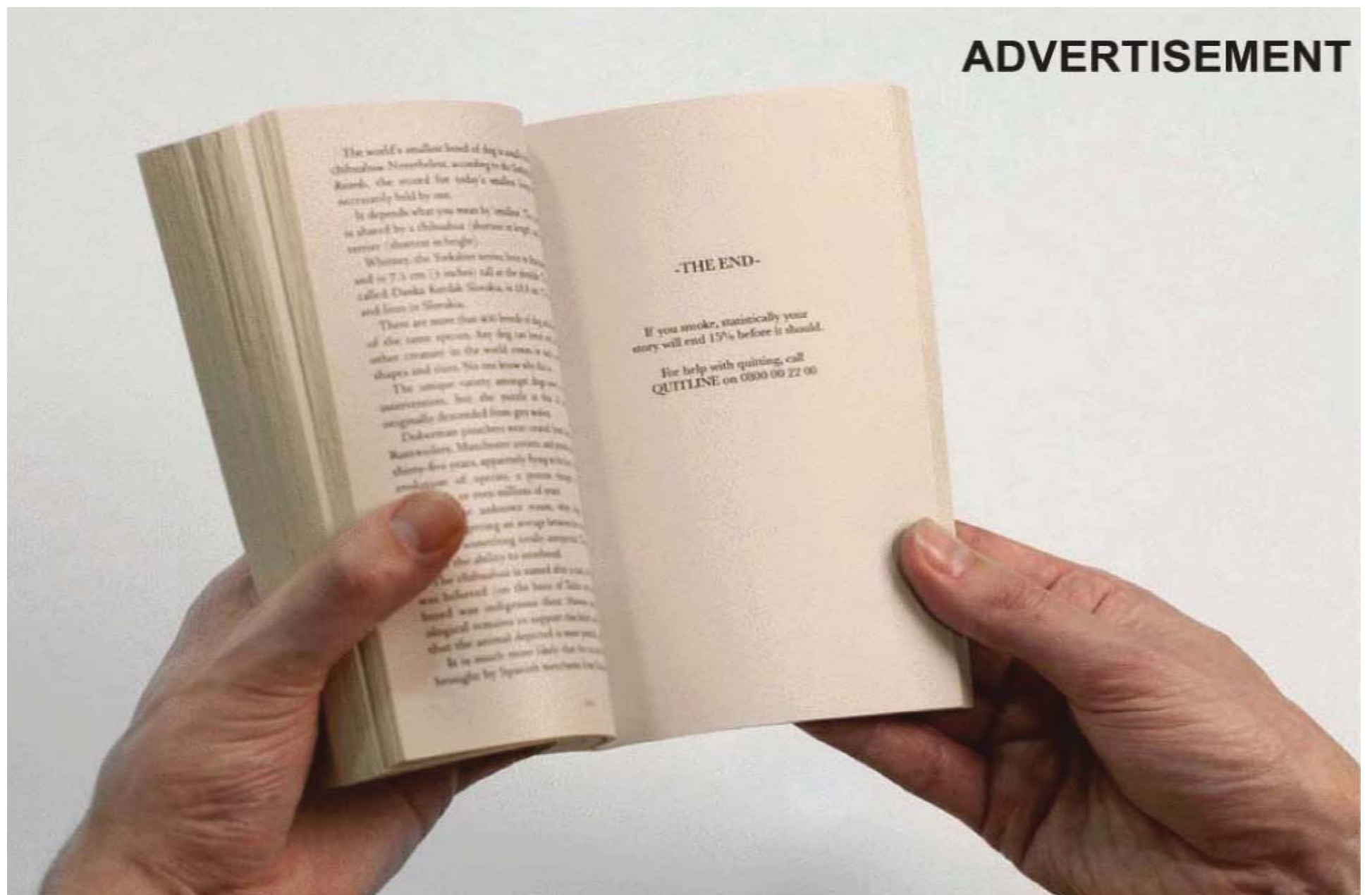
Elections in Pak will only be held after introduction of poll reforms: Zardari

(By Staff Reporter) The co-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Asif Zardari, has made it clear that elections in the country will only be held after poll reforms are introduced and the National Accountability Laws are amended. Zardari, a senior political leader who played a key role in the vote of no-confidence motion moved by the opposition parties last month against former premier Imran Khan, said elections would be held once the incumbent coalition government completes both tasks. "I have also talked to Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) on this and we agreed that we can go to polls as soon as the reforms and targets are met. "We have to change laws and improve them and then go to elections. Whether it takes three or four months,

we have to work on implementation of policies and improving the electoral process," Zardari told a press conference here on Wednesday. He also said the coalition government headed by Nawaz Sharif's brother Shehbaz Sharif had no issue with voting rights and representation of overseas Pakistanis in elections. Asked about Wednesday's statement by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif that one could not rule out the possibility of elections before November, Zardari said the PML-N leader had his own views and was bound to listen to his party's directives. He said the PPP and the PML-N had decided that until electoral reforms were brought, there would be no talk about the new army chief's appointment. Zardari also said the army was "apolitical" for the first time.

(By Staff Reporter) China on Tuesday urged Pakistan to arrest the real culprits behind the terrorist attack in Karachi last month which killed three Chinese nationals. China's charge d'affaires Pang Chunxue met Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah to discuss various issues, including the security of the Chinese nationals in Pakistan in the wake of the suicide bombing. On April 26, an explosion triggered by a burqa-clad woman suicide bomber from the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) ripped through a van of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi, leaving three Chinese teachers dead and one injured. This is among many attacks attempted on Chinese citizens in Pakistan in the last couple of years. Minister Sanaullah said in the meeting that his country was utilising full resources to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals working here, according to a statement by the interior ministry. "The state is using its full resources to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals in Pakistan," the Interior Ministry quoted Sanaullah as telling the Chinese diplomat. In response, the Chinese charge d'affaires said

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COVID-19 Vaccines: A Way to Honor Heritage, Community, and Family During AANHPI Heritage Month

CDC and the We Can Do This COVID-19 Public Education Campaign emphasize vaccine availability and the need for continued safe practices

(By Staff Reporter) As Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities across the nation honor and celebrate the diverse contributions made in the United States we are reminded that COVID-19 vaccines and boosters continue to make it possible for us to gather safely in public and private.

As of May 12, CDC reported over 258 million Americans (all eligible ages) have made the choice to be vaccinated. Currently, over 12.8 million Asians (non-Hispanic) and 618,000 Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders aged 5 years and older have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, 95% of older Americans have been vaccinated—that's 56.5 million adults aged 65 and older—a significant achievement in protecting our community's elders since last year.

"We've got over 90% of seniors that are already vaccinated," said Dr. Cameron Webb, White House Senior Policy Advisor for COVID-19 Equity, at an April 22 summit called Conversations on Encouraging COVID-19 Vaccines. "We've got to get those same levels around boosters to really get that

protection we need."

Although AANHPIs are generally more likely to have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine compared to the overall U.S. population, about 39% of eligible Asians and over 52% of eligible Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders are still in need of a booster.

Webb said, "If you have been vaccinated and boosted, you are very well protected against the [COVID-19] variants we are currently seeing. We have the tools to save lives ... and we've seen [that] boosters are very critical in keeping people safe." The nation has come a long way to keep communities safe but data consistently show how communities of color remain



Honor our heritage, community, and family today by getting vaccinated for a safer tomorrow.

encouraging parents to take action for the health and well-being of their families. "Almost all children who end up in the ICU are completely unvaccinated," said Dr. Sean O'Leary, Vice Chair from the American Academy of Pediatrics. "This is both tragic and encouraging. Tragic because at this point in the pandemic, those hospitalizations were almost completely preventable, and encouraging because we have such a powerful tool [vaccines] going forward to prevent children from suffering."

With more relaxed public mandates on COVID safety protocols and increased travel, COVID cases and hospitalizations are on the rise again. What is encouraging is that the death rate from COVID continues to decrease, thanks to widespread vaccinations.

Boosters have provided more people an extra measure of protection from the COVID virus and variants. As AANHPIs, let's honor our community's history by helping protect its future.

Talk to a doctor or your local health care professional if you have questions. Find vaccines and boosters near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). We can do this!

Biden sets inflation agenda; discusses end to China tariffs

(By Staff Reporter) As the US stocks rebounded after a rout on Monday, President Biden declared that battling inflation will be his "top domestic priority". In a surprise move, the US president said he is "discussing" an end to China's trade tariffs but hasn't reached any decision yet. "We're discussing that right now,"

Biden said on lifting trade tariffs against China.

On Tuesday, US WTI oil fell below \$100 per barrel amid fears of a slowdown in the global economy.

The US has witnessed the highest inflation in decades as several sectors face a shortage of workers. The US Fed's policy committee had last week raised the key rate by a half point even as Wall Street stocks took a battering on Monday.

Bitcoin fell under \$30,000 to reach a ten-month low as

the cryptocurrency continued to lose its value. The US Federal Reserve official had said earlier that it would work to bring down "unacceptably high" inflation. Central banks in



the UK and Australia had also increased interest rates as data showed China's export had slowed to its weakest in nearly two years. According to reports, consumer debts and credit rose 1.7 per cent in the US amid housing debt and zooming inflation and rates.

Student loans had also climbed to \$14 billion in the first quarter of the year as consumer price inflation touched 8.5 per cent.

US mulls USD 40 billion for Ukraine



(By Staff Reporter) US lawmakers on Tuesday were set to begin debate on USD 40 billion aid package for Ukraine amid Russian invasion. The US warned that Russia was likely preparing for a long conflict in Ukraine. It is expected that defense, humanitarian and economic funding will be passed comfortably. "This is a large package but the need is great and time is of the essence... The president has called on both chambers of Congress to act quickly on the Ukrainian aid package, so act quickly we must," Chuck Schumer, who leads the Senate Democratic majority, said on the floor. Leaders in US Congress on Monday struck a deal to release \$6.8 billion more than the \$33 billion previously requested by the White House to help the Eastern European nation ward off Moscow's invasion. The financial boost will include extra USD

3.4 billion for military and humanitarian assistance. If the package passes as planned, US spending to bolster Ukraine's defenses against Russia's invasion and address the ensuing humanitarian crisis will soar to around \$54 billion. The action comes as a top US official warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin is preparing for a long war that may not end with Russian victory in the east. "We assess President Putin is preparing for prolonged conflict in Ukraine during which he still intends to achieve goals beyond the Donbas," Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said at a hearing on Capitol Hill. She added that Putin was counting on US and EU resolve to weaken as the conflict continues to cause food shortages and inflation, including spiraling energy prices.

Top US spy warns China wants to gain military control of Taiwan

(By Staff Reporter) Avril Haines, Director of US National Intelligence, has said that China is "working hard" to eventually exert influence over Taiwan's military. Despite the United States' unwavering backing for the island nation, Haines told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday that the potential threat is "severe" over the next ten years, CNN reported. She refused to discuss the likely timeline identified by the US intelligence community in public.

The current Russia-Ukraine situation, as well as how Chinese President Xi Jinping and China's governing Communist Party (CCP) perceive the lessons of Western support, could affect the timing, according to the National Intelligence Agency chief.

"It's our view that (China is) working hard to effectively put themselves into a position in which their military is capable of taking Taiwan over our intervention," Haines said, as quoted by CNN. According to US intelligence sources, Taiwan is anticipated to acquire some "valuable lessons" as the Ukraine war drags on for another three months, allowing the island nation to defend itself against a Chinese invasion. "I think they are learning how important leadership is, how important small unit tactics are, how important a (non-commissioned) corps is, and really effective training with the right weapon system and what those systems with the right people would be able to do to thwart that," Lt. Gen. Berrier said, as quoted by CNN.

Passenger with no flying experience lands plane in Florida after pilot gets ill

(By Staff Reporter) It was nothing short of a miracle. Something that has only been witnessed in movies so far. A pilot manning the Cessna 208 Caravan plane heading to Florida had suddenly become ill. With no co-pilot by his side, an unnamed passenger, with no prior flying skills and who was heading home to see his pregnant wife, decided to have a go at the private plane. The

result: The plane landed safely, no one was harmed, and the man who flew the single-engine plane instantly became a hero globally.

The incident took place on Tuesday. The plane took off from Leonard M. Thompson International Airport in Marsh Harbor, the Bahamas, and was headed to Florida on Tuesday afternoon when the drama began. Two people were aboard the single-engine Cessna 208 when the pilot had a "possible medical issue," the Federal Aviation

Administration said in a statement, CNN reported.

The condition of the pilot was not immediately known. Sensing the gravity of the

passenger remained remarkably calm as he tried to work out what to do and wait for the air traffic controller to find his aircraft. "Try to hold the wings level and see if you can start descending for me. Push forward on the controls and descend at a very slow rate," the air traffic controller can be heard telling the man.

The man was found flying off the coast of Boca Raton, and the air traffic control at Palm Beach



airport managed to guide him on how to land the plane. An aviation expert told CNN it is not uncommon for small turboprop airplanes such as the Cessna 208 Caravan to fly with only one pilot, particularly when the flights are private. According to Daily Mail, an FAA spokesperson confirmed they were investigating the incident and said the pilot suffered a 'possible medical issue'. Though they did not provide any further details on his condition.

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

US President Biden Seeks to Keep China in Focus by Welcoming ASEAN Leaders

(By Staff Reporter) President Joe Biden will host Southeast Asian leaders in Washington this week as his administration seeks to show it can maintain its focus on the Indo-Pacific and the long-term challenge of China despite the immediate crisis in Ukraine. A two-day summit with the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) begins with a White House dinner on Thursday before talks at the state department on May 13. Up to eight of the 10 ASEAN leaders are expected. Myanmar's leader has been excluded over a coup last year and the Philippines is in transition after an election. It will be the first time leaders of ASEAN, created in some of the darkest days of the Cold War, have gathered as a group at the White House. President Barack Obama was the last US leader to host them, at Sunnylands in California in 2016. The summit comes ahead of Biden's May 20 to 24 visit to South Korea and Japan, which will include meetings with the other leaders of the Quad grouping of countries - India, Australia and Japan - who share US concerns about China's ambitions to expand its influence in the region and globally. Kate Rebholz, acting US ambassador to ASEAN, told Washington's Stimson Center the summit would result in "an ambitious and

forward-looking US-ASEAN vision statement" and new initiatives, including partnerships in public health, climate and economic growth. However, analysts and diplomats do not expect dramatic advances in what is shaping up to be a largely symbolic summit. They say a key headline is likely to be elevation of the current US-ASEAN "strategic partnership" by adding a word to make it a "comprehensive" strategic partnership, bringing it into line with the description of ASEAN's ties with Australia and China. But the fact the summit was being held at all despite the huge distraction of Ukraine was aimed squarely at China, which Washington says remains its key long-term foreign policy challenge, regardless of Russia's actions. "The meeting is the message... that the US is in fact capable of walking and chewing gum at the same time, and it's not distracted," Bilahari Kausikan, a former permanent secretary of Singapore's foreign ministry, told the Stimson event. US officials say the White House will be seeking more support for its Ukraine efforts and looking ahead to Biden's trip to Japan and South Korea this month, as well as expected visits to Southeast Asia later in the year. White House Indo-Pacific coordinator

Kurt Campbell said on Monday there would be "substantial" discussions with ASEAN on technology, education, infrastructure, and that Washington would soon announce plans to better battle illegal fishing in the Pacific. ASEAN countries, several of which have competing claims with China in the South China Sea, will likely welcome such initiatives and are broadly keen to boost ties with Washington. US 'FALLS FLAT' ON ECONOMICS However, they have been frustrated by the US delay in detailing plans for economic engagement since former President Donald Trump quit a regional trade pact in 2017. At a virtual summit with ASEAN last October, Biden said Washington would start talks about developing a regional economic framework, but diplomats say this is likely to feature only peripherally this week. Japan's Washington ambassador said Biden's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is likely to be formally launched in Japan, but its details were still under discussion. Analysts and diplomats say only two of the 10 ASEAN countries - Singapore and the Philippines - are expected to be among the initial group of countries to sign up for the negotiations under IPEF, which does not currently offer the expanded market access Asian countries crave,

given Biden's concern for American jobs. There has also been some frustration that ASEAN leaders will get little personal time with Biden, with no bilateral meetings announced. An adviser to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, in office since 1985 but making his first White House visit, told Reuters Biden should spend more time with leaders if he was serious about elevating ties with the region. Kao Kim Hourn said Cambodia, which has close economic ties to China, would not "choose sides" between Washington and Beijing although US investment in his country was growing. ASEAN, likewise, worked with both under its principle of "inclusiveness," he said. Analysts say even though ASEAN countries share US concerns about China, they remain cautious about siding more firmly with Washington, given their predominant economic ties with Beijing and limited US economic incentives. The US does a pretty solid job on politics and security, but it falls flat on economics," said Gregory Poling of Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It cannot effectively compete with China if it only brings guns and diplomacy to the table. It has to bring cash to put it bluntly, and we've not been good at doing that."



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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

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How a Meltdown in Sri Lanka Can Have Serious Implications for India's Security

(By Staff Reporter) The economic problem got compounded by the acts of terrorism on April 21, 2019 sponsored by the Islamic State (IS) with alleged linkages in Southern India. Tourism, on which Sri Lanka's economy is greatly dependent, took a nose dive with 70 per cent reduction. Before there could be any scope for recovery, the coronavirus pandemic hit the island and international remittances from the Sri Lankan diaspora took a 25 per cent hit. Thereafter, everything went south leading to the balance of payments crisis and the inability to service loans. Even as I write, I can see multiple images on Indian television, of violence and street turbulence with Mahinda Rajapaksa having resigned from the post of prime minister.

Situations of national meltdown result in chaos, loss of control and misery among the people across various segments of society. It happened in Syria, resulting in destruction of the economy and the steady stream of displaced people leaving the country for whatever pastures they could find. However, when this happens in a nation already bitterly divided on ethnic, linguistic and religious grounds with a history of an old internal conflict, akin to a civil war, the situation becomes even more dangerous. Global terror organisations mostly gravitate towards such areas of turbulence where persistence of internal violence, low administrative capability, shortage of resources and huge scope for thriving on chaos exist.

The terror events of April 21, 2019 were a trailer and more would have followed while the Islamic State was in the search for pastures, post its eviction from Syria and Iraq, except for the fact that India's intelligence services were quick in

quelling any potential support from the South Indian networks; the IS also found more productive pastures in North Afghanistan. The Easter bombings of 2019, as they are called, occurred when the government of the day had perfectly good control over the administration. Can one imagine the scope for acts of terror which exists today when there is no control of government and political vendetta is in full flow? We are aware that deep set networks for terror finance, ideology and human resources connected with Sri Lanka exist in parts of Southern India. Activation of all these will spell potential threat to our security.

Sri Lanka's long-standing ethnic problem had caused the war between the separatist LTTE and the government for over 30 years till 2009. In that year, the Sri Lankan government decided to finally adopt the full kinetic option without being concerned about the fallout. The result was a resounding military victory and the vanquishing of one of the most high-profile terror organisations in the world, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). However, the conflict termination resulting in military victory was abysmally managed. I remember asking General (now Field Marshal) Sarath Fonseka, the former Sri Lanka Army chief, in a seminar in India whether the post conflict management could have been better with higher scope to resolve the ethnic Tamil issue involving the LTTE. He fully agreed with me. Despite all the potential arising from the victory, the roots of the ethnic issue have never been neutralised. Such conditions encourage aspirations and already there are indications that activists in Canada, the US, Australia and Europe are desirous of raking up the Tamil

militancy while collapse of governance continues. The combined effect of both these trends would mean a fallout in vulnerable parts of India. Equally, the ability of the island recovering on a fast mode, as per Indian security needs, would get unacceptably delayed.

It is not just the scope of the spread of instability, it very much involves economics too. The island's FDI from India amounted to about \$1.7 billion from 2005 to 2019. After China and the UK, India was the biggest source of FDI for Sri Lanka in 2019, at \$139 million. Lots of major Indian companies have invested in Sri Lanka. India relies considerably on Colombo port for global trade given it is a trans-shipment hub. Sixty per cent of India's trans-shipment cargo is handled by the port. India-linked cargo also accounts for 70 per cent of the port's total trans-shipment volume. A meltdown in economic terms is bad enough; it gets compounded by the lack of scope of recovery due to the simultaneous socio-political and economic issues. There is also the

issue of displaced people landing on Indian shores. Refugees always bring turbulence in their wake. The expanding torrent gets political significance and before we know anything, they are so well integrated that it's impossible to send them back. The ethnic connection with elements in India and the history of the LTTE's strife against Indian forces inspires no confidence in the emerging situation. India will need to seriously monitor the situation developing in Sri Lanka on multiple fronts. The Sri Lankan security forces are more than sufficient to handle the situation but need to be backed. The external factor has to be kept in mind considering the fact that turmoil in Sri Lanka is always perceived to have an effect on India. Parties inimical to Indian interests would be working overtime to build influence among some radical groups in the midst of the chaos. There is no need to name these elements because their identity is well known. Temporarily, there appears little scope beyond take over by the Army to ensure basic governance, control over the streets and restoration of confidence. India only needs to administratively support the people and just be on the enhanced look out.

FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

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



Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION

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

REWARD

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

REMARKS

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

CAUTION

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

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

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

Field Office: Baltimore

Heading for GST Exit

Given the staggering economic, social and political diversity of India's states, GST was always going to be a tough proposition for any government or prime minister. Implicit bargains such as revenue guarantee agreements between the Union and states are necessary but not sufficient to make GST tenable. Now that India is committed down the GST path, the onus lies with the Modi government to deftly balance all stakeholders and win back their confidence, rather than thrust GST further down the states' throats such as bringing alcohol and fuel within its ambit. This would only constrain the fiscal sovereignty of states even more and exacerbate mistrust.

The GST brouhaha is no longer just an economic issue but a larger political issue of state rights with public opinion in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Punjab stacked against the idea. Merely extolling its economic benefits is not enough to convince people in these states to embrace a retooled GST.

Perhaps there is a lesson to learn from another democracy, Britain, where public opposition to losing some sovereign freedom in return for economic gains of a common European market, was capitalised by politics, eventually leading to Brexit. If the Union-states relationship and the federal structure are not rebuilt with trust and faith soon, India may have to confront its own "GSTExit".

India, China Should Take Path of Coexistence, Cooperation, Competition Post Ukraine War

Competition created politics: Even before Man discovered fire, he was competing over food, shelter, and mates. It led to conflict/warfare between individuals, groups and nations. Unsurprisingly, the world is engaging 24X7 in the 4Cs (cooperation, competition, confrontation and conflict). In cooperation, policymakers can leverage national elements of power to engage openly or selectively (transactional for specific objectives), maintain, and advance. Open-ended cooperation sustains relationships and secures bilateral advantages without significant resource outlays. Competition and confrontation are generally overlapping, and confrontation remains below armed conflict (grey zone/hybrid).

Confrontation provides three possible options; a nation can seek to improve the overall strategic position by employing all measures short of what may lead to armed conflict; with minimized risk, it can attempt to counter competitors' actions to maintain a strategic position and prevent competitor gains; or, within policy or resource constraints, it can contest "with prudent means" against the adversary. The final level of the continuum is armed conflict. In an armed conflict, the potential options include working to defeat an adversary by imposing desired strategic objectives, deny and frustrate an adversary's strategic objectives, or degrade the adversary's ability and will. This 4Cs continuum is age old. What is fairly new and being very effectively implemented by many nations is the use of multiple-domains, especially the non-kinetic, cognitive and non-cognitive ones to achieve objectives before the adversaries red lines are crossed, or below the conflict threshold of an adversary nation. This is exactly what China (with collusive Pakistan) is increasingly doing since the last few decades: waging a hybrid war against India to achieve their national objectives including territorial ambitions.

CURRENT ONGOING GEO-STRATEGIC EVENTS: UKRAINE AND LAC

Hybrid and grey zone operations have proved so effective that it is increasingly becoming the norm globally. Combined with niche and disruptive technologies, domains of information and psychological operations, perception management and legal warfare, which can be accessed by poorer nations and even groups and individuals the world has indeed become a place of 'persistent engagement' which are not necessarily cooperative in nature. The Ukraine war and Ladakh confrontation are two major geo-political events, which have engaged India and the world, and can engulf us without a warning in a rapidly escalatory scenario.

THE LADAKH BORDER STANDOFF

This is a modern-day derivative of the concept that combines different elements of the conflict spectrum but gives importance to political, economic diplomatic, legal, ideological and

information warfare (non-kinetic domains), with lesser focus and application initially of kinetic warfare among the many other domains. Economic and information domains remain the core element around which all others pivot. It involves moving purposefully pursuing political objectives through carefully designed operations, cautiously but surely towards the objectives rather than seeking decisive results rapidly. It usually aims at

India shared a historic and time-tested 'quasi-alliance' with the Soviet Union/ Russia, but with the current Russia-China strategic convergence, India's bilateral relationship is being reduced to defence cooperation and limited-scale economic relations

remaining below escalatory thresholds to avoid open hostilities but is not averse to the use of comprehensive national power to achieve the ends.

Military intimidation, applied around the threshold grey zone often forms a part of such strategy. Extreme rhetoric, demands from the country's legislature and employment of diplomacy to project international linkages of advantage (currently Moscow-Beijing-Ukraine-The 'West are tabling UN and global multi-lateral organisations). This is brinkmanship at its best, and if war does not break out, perhaps a fine example of 'winning without fighting' (a few tactical skirmishes/intimidations like Doklam and Galwan: some intentioned and some unplanned, add substance to the narrative).

A similar situation has been created and manifested along India's Northern borders since early 2000s; attempted salami slicing by the Chinese PLA by activation of friction points, military intimidation as happening currently, high-intensity propaganda with wolf-warrior diplomacy, and continuous nuances of psychological warfare. Fifteen rounds of high-level military talks (22 Special Representative level talks) with limited results of pull back have taken place, and now the PLA is improving infrastructure, and even developing border villages for legitimacy and quicker response. This has been China's larger game plan of attempting hybrid coercion to keep the northern borders in focus of Indian strategic thinking; preventing refocus on the Indo-Pacific and the maritime domain, thereby causing an adverse impact on the rising strategic confidence of India; it's a different matter that under a stable strong government and a rising India, the narrative may have backfired and galvanised the lumbering elephant. We must also note that China follows the '3 Wars strategy': the doctrine of employing cyber, legal and media domains alongside optimal military intimidation while maintaining a strong deterrence.

Some experts feel that by revoking Article 370, the Narendra Modi government removed the special status granted to J&K and bifurcated it into two Union Territories in August 2019. UT of Ladakh's map includes the Aksai Chin area that is under the Chinese control since 1962 war and the Shaksgam Valley that Pakistan ceded to China in 1963. China equated this cartographic change akin to losing Aksai Chin that, in turn, 'would jeopardize the stability of China's entire western

frontier'. This narrative is, however, false as China was always aware of India's stand and has kept the border issue alive purely for political bargaining. India has strongly maintained that the LAC crisis would have a bearing on broader ties while the Chinese offer a starkly different message, calling on both sides to "place the border issue in an appropriate position".

PAKISTAN'S RELENTLESS GREY ZONE WARFARE AGAINST INDIA

Collusive Pakistan (some would say 'client' state) is happy to add fuel to the fire, with the 'All domain' support of China (CPEC has added a new dimension including presence of Chinese people and security personnel in Pakistan and PoK). Pakistan has undoubtedly been waging a hybrid war against India since at least 1977 when the Zia Doctrine came into play, with the belief that India could only be tackled through the asymmetric route with extreme hybridity adopted into a tailor-made campaign. Tackling J&K is only a part of the strategy that spread deep and wide across India. The Zia Doctrine and its further refinements aim at exploiting potential chasms in Indian society — religious, ideological, linguistic, caste and even ethnic. At its core lies the ideology of changing the way people follow their faith, and attacking India's core strength of secularism.

Hybrid warfare has no exact boundaries and to Pakistan includes insurgency and terrorism. The centre of gravity of the hybrid campaign is the information and psychological warfare blitz (IW and PSYOPS) directly and through proxies. Many countries today including some from the West have tailored specific organisations [Pakistan (ISI), Israel (Mossad), China (MSS), Russia (KGB), India (R&AW) as per Pakistan] for this potent and effective domain which has the capabilities to cause kinetic action and physical damage (riots, terrorism and lone

wolf acts, logistical and economic paralysis). The 'weaponisation of social media (SM)' is increasingly taking centre stage for information and disinformation; Kargil, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Kashmir and East Ladakh, and Ukraine are vivid reminders of the power of SM. With multi-lateralism and advent of current multi-domain hybrid war, relations between nations specially between nuclear states such as India, China and Pakistan is not dyadic anymore.

RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE ON FEBRUARY 24, 2022

Russia, a master of deception and disinformation, has also been creating a similar scenario since 2000 by carrying out confrontationist activities to its East in the Donetsk and Luhansk region, and occupying Crimea in 2014. However, Putin surprised and paralysed the world specially USA, that leads NATO, by actually invading Ukraine. World opinion though divided, does agree that the main causative factor is the relentless Eastern drive of NATO and the West reaching Russia's underbelly and stated red lines.

INDIA'S PLAY OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AND HEDGING

India shared a historic and time-tested 'quasi-alliance' with the Soviet Union/ Russia, but with the current Russia-China strategic convergence, India's bilateral relationship is being reduced to defence cooperation and limited-scale economic relations. Fortunately, India's deterioration in relations with China coincided with rupture in the US engagement with China. India has been compelled to enter into several foundational security agreements with the USA, in addition to joining the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). To address the security dilemma that it currently faces, India while retaining its strategic autonomy is countering China through hedging. India is playing her cards very astutely and strategically, supports a multipolar world and Asia paradigm rather than a zero-sum alliance system to play a leading role in international fora. The core of India's 'Act East' policy (robustly pursued now) which enhances her role among ASEAN countries is by supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and aligning its security, defence and trade domains to counterbalance China (PM Modi and EAM Jaishankar have publicly stated that 'a multi-polar Asia is one of its essential constituents').

However, the bottom-line is that India despite any security alliances or agreements she enters into, will have to deal with both China and Pakistan on her own, as other powers have no direct bearing on this confrontationist triangular relationship. Ukraine has once and for all dictated that total long-drawn wars are possible, and space for conventional operations exist even between NWS (nuclear weapon states). This does impose a certain pragmatism and sensibility to India's strategic conduct.

Shoot at sight orders in Sri Lanka as protests continue despite PM's resignation

The Sri Lankan defense ministry has announced shoot-on-sight orders to quell riots, as per a report by AFP. PM Rajapaksa resigns, Sri Lanka imposes nationwide curfew

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned on Monday following unprecedented anti-government protests demanding his ouster as well as the administration led by his younger brother and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over the country's worst economic crisis. Mahinda's resignation came hours after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters outside President Gotabaya's office, leaving around 173 people injured and triggering widespread violence against pro-Rajapaksa politicians. At least four people, including a ruling party MP, were killed in the subsequent violence. After Rajapaksa's resignation, violence erupted across the nation. Monday's violence triggered widespread anger, with people singling out Rajapaksa supporters and attacking them in many parts of the country. As per the police, five people died in the violence in the nation on Monday. The Rajapaksa family's ancestral home in Hambantota was also set on fire by protesters.

The government imposed a nationwide curfew and deployed army troops in the capital Colombo.

Calls for ex-PM Rajapaksa's arrest Mahinda Rajapaksa is facing calls for his arrest from Opposition politicians for inciting violence against peaceful anti-government protesters. He has been accused of inciting the ruling party mobs to attack peaceful protesters by making a defiant speech while addressing several thousands of his supporters to deflect calls for his resignation.

"Rajapaksa (Mahinda) must be arrested and brought before the law," M A Sumanthiran, the main Tamil legislator, said in a message.

Ex-PM Rajapaksa take shelter at naval base



Mahinda Rajapaksa, along with his family, fled his official residence and took shelter at a naval base in Trincomalee on Tuesday.

Mahinda Rajapaksa left his official Temple Trees residence early on Tuesday morning even as a mob tried to enter the premises. Throughout the night on Monday, the police fired teargas shells to dissuade mobs trying to enter the former PM's residence.

On Tuesday, a protest began in front of Sri Lanka's Trincomalee Naval Base after reports emerged that Mahinda Rajapaksa and some of his family members were there after leaving the official residence in Colombo.

Protesters set up checkpoints The anti-government protesters have reportedly set up a checkpoint on the road leading to the Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo to prevent the Rajapaksa family loyalists from fleeing the country.

"Large group of people have set up a checkpoint on the road leading to the Katunayake Airport. They are trying to prevent ruling faction loyalists from fleeing the country," as per report by News 1st channel.

Resident urges people to stop

'violence and acts of revenge'

On Tuesday, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa urged people to stop "violence and acts of revenge" against fellow citizens and vowed to address the political and economic crisis facing the nation. "I appeal and urge people to remain calm & stop violence & acts of revenge against citizens, irrespective of political affiliations. All efforts will be made to restore political stability through consensus, within constitutional mandate & to resolve economic crisis," President Gotabaya tweeted in his first comments since the outbreak of the violence that saw arson attacks on the homes of several former ministers and politicians.

WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT OF PROTEST?

Sri Lanka is struggling to stay afloat amid the deepening economic crisis

with the island nation on the brink of bankruptcy, with nearly USD 7 billion of its total USD 25 billion in foreign debt due for repayment this year.

A severe shortage of foreign exchange means the country lacks the money to buy imported goods. People have endured months of shortages of essentials like food, cooking gas, fuel, and medicine, and lining up for hours to buy the very limited stocks available.

In April, Sri Lankans, who are blaming the government for the worst economic crisis since its Independence in 1948, marched along dark streets and gathered outside President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's house in capital Colombo to stage a protest. They even tried to storm his residence but were stopped by armed soldiers.

Warning! Global warming World likely to breach 1.5C mark between 2022 and 2026, say experts

There seems to be a 50:50 chance for the world to warm up by over 1.5C in the next five years, said researchers at UK Met Office, which is the national meteorological service of the nation. Although it may be temporary, the rise in temperature is not a good sign. The years between 2022 and 2026 will see record warmest years, the researchers said.

At first, Paris climate agreement was signed by political leaders to keep the rise in temperature of the Earth under 1.5C. And then at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, the world reiterated its commitment to the goal. The global temperatures from 2022 to 2026 may be

between 1.1C and 1.7C higher than the pre-industrial levels, the study said. In one year in the period, the chances of breaching 1.5C level is 48% or around 50:50, the researchers predicted. Met Office's Dr Leon Hermanson, who is the lead author of the report, said, "The basic thing that's changing is that the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, are slowly creeping up. I think people are already quite concerned about climate change and it is worrying, it is showing that we continue to warm the planet and we're getting closer to this first threshold that was set in the Paris agreement - and we need to continue doing everything we can to cut the use of fossil fuels."



Jharkhand mining secretary Pooja Singhal arrested by ED in 5-yr-old money laundering case

The case relates to alleged diversion of MGNREGA funds worth Rs 18.6 crore during Singhal's tenure as the deputy commissioner of Khunti district between February 2009 & July 2010



Ranchi: Pooja Singhal, the Jharkhand mining and industry secretary, who was being questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) since Tuesday in connection with a five-year-old money laundering case, was arrested by the agency Wednesday evening, government sources told ThePrint.

The case relates to the alleged diversion of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme funds worth Rs 18.6 crore during Singhal's tenure as the deputy commissioner of Jharkhand's Khunti district between February 2009 and July 2010. Since Friday, the ED has raided close to two dozen locations, including properties linked to Singhal and her family members. The ED teams also recovered a huge stack of cash worth Rs 19.35 crore from the house of Suman Kumar, a Ranchi-based chartered accountant, who allegedly has links to

Singhal and her family. Kumar was arrested by the ED on 7 May.

Among the properties raided in four states, including Jharkhand, is the Pulse Sanjeevani Healthcare Private Hospital, where Singhal's husband Abhishek Jha is the managing director. Jha has also been questioned by the ED, government sources said.

Top level government sources also told ThePrint that the arrest could now set the ball rolling for Singhal's suspension. "We can initiate action against only under two conditions – either if we get a formal report from the ED or she is arrested by the ED," a senior Jharkhand government officer told ThePrint. The ED raids are happening at a time when the Opposition BJP in Jharkhand has approached state Governor Ramesh Bais and sought CM Hemant Soren's disqualification for allegedly misusing his position to grant himself a

mining lease, and his wife an industrial lease, in Ranchi. This allegedly happened during Singhal's tenure as mining and industries secretary. She is also the chairperson of the Jharkhand State Mineral Development Corporation.

This is not the first controversy in which Singhal's name has cropped up.

As the ED's investigation into the money laundering case is unfolding, a string of other glaring irregularities allegedly involving Singhal are also being revealed, sources in the agency told ThePrint. Despite this, the 2000-batch IAS officer, a millionaire according to her own immovable property returns filed with the Centre, has enjoyed top positions in successive Jharkhand governments, headed by chief ministers belonging to various political parties — be it the BJP's Arjun Munda, Raghubar Das or the present CM, Hemant Soren of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM).

A mission to Uranus would be expensive, time-consuming but worth it

Scientists have confirmed over 5,000 planets orbiting stars in other parts of the galaxy. Lack of knowledge about Uranus & Neptune is a limiting factor in understanding planetary science

If you want to visit Uranus, you need to start planning early. Designing and building a craft to cross the billion-plus miles might take a decade, and the cruise to the solar system's third-largest planet could require an additional 15 years.

Undaunted, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine recommended last month that the U.S. should launch a mission to Uranus for the first time since 1986. Visiting the outer reaches of the solar system is likely to cost more than \$4 billion. But the return on that investment will go well beyond the groundbreaking discoveries craved by scientists and outer space buffs. It will also play an important role in attracting and training the next generation of space scientists and engineers, ensuring continued U.S. leadership of a field it's dominated for decades.

During the early years of the space race, human crews received most of the attention. But the U.S. was also establishing itself as a formidable leader in exploring the solar system with robotic spacecraft. These missions helped develop and maintain a workforce proficient in a range of skills, from low-light photography to power systems appropriate for long space missions. By the mid-1960s the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's confidence in its abilities led to planning for a grand tour of the solar system's outer planets. Launches would take place in the late 1970s, with flybys occurring into the late 1980s.

For NASA and its research laboratories, the long wait was a feature, not a bug. As far back as 1967, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the federally funded research and development center that's built and managed many of NASA's interplanetary explorers, used the grand tour as a means to recruit. For early scientists and engineers in search of stable employment, the lure of a groundbreaking project that

lasts into middle-age was irresistible. In time, those recruits transformed the grand tour concept into the Voyager 1 and 2 spacecraft that launched in 1977 (and continue to fly into interstellar space).

After zipping by Jupiter and Saturn, Voyager 2 made humanity's only visit to Uranus in 1986. The brief flyby

astronomical observatories, including the Hubble Space Telescope, via a Zoom call. Last month, that lack of knowledge led the National Academy of Sciences to recommend that a Uranus probe and orbiter be NASA's top priority over the next decade.

Hammel doesn't foresee any serious technical barriers to a successful mission. Rather, the greatest challenge is convincing Congress that a mission that won't meet its target until the 2040s is a worthwhile investment. Hammel, who was a member of the imaging team for Voyager 2 when it visited Neptune in 1989, thinks it is. "Voyager was built by people who thought about it when I was in elementary school," she said. "And it launched when I was in high school."

Similarly, Hammel explained, the next Uranus mission should be built for someone who's in elementary school right now. "Twenty years from now, she'll be a fresh young postdoc and her missions will be there and she'll be ready to go," Hammel said.

NASA will be keen to have her. A 2020 report by NASA's inspector general found that 6,000 of the agency's 11,000 science and engineering employees are over 50, with nearly half of those eligible for retirement. Long-term programs, such as a Uranus orbiter, will be needed to inspire, recruit and retain the talent necessary to maintain U.S. leadership in space exploration. For Hammel, and the current generation of space scientists, that young scientist symbolizes much more than a U.S. edge in solar system navigation or deep space probe heating. "I think that there's something in the American psyche that says we can do things for the future," Hammel said. "That's what a great nation does. It's what I work for." A return trip to Uranus is a good way to prove that she's right. NASA and Congress should start the countdown.



revealed 11 previously unknown moons (some of which might contain oceans), two rings, a bizarre magnetic field unlike anything else in the solar system and temperatures that barely fluctuate between the poles and the equator. After Voyager, NASA sent craft that orbited Jupiter and Saturn, deepening knowledge of the gas-giant planets. But the mysterious ice giants — Uranus and Neptune — received no return visits. That's changing for an unexpected reason. Over the last several years scientists have confirmed more than 5,000 planets orbiting stars in other parts of the galaxy, most of them unlike anything in our solar system.

"So our lack of knowledge about Uranus and Neptune is now a limiting factor in our understanding of planetary science," said Heidi Hammel, vice president of science at the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, a consortium that manages

'Ready to face whatever's next': What Yasin Malik said about guilty plea in terror-funding case

'Friend of the court', advocate Akhand Pratap Singh, says he tried to make Malik understand consequences of pleading guilty, but he made up his mind not to face trial

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Mohammad Yasin Malik has "made up his mind not to contest the charges against him, and says he is ready to face whatever is next", he told amicus curiae (friend of the court), advocate Akhand Pratap Singh.

Accused in a 2017 terror-funding case probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Yasin Malik pleaded guilty to all charges framed against him before a Delhi court Tuesday. He has been charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for committing a terrorist act, raising funds for terrorism, being a member of a terrorist group and part of a criminal conspiracy, and for sedition. An amicus curiae is an individual who is not part of a particular case, but is appointed by the court to give impartial advice in respect to some matters of law. Singh, who met Malik inside Delhi's Tihar jail on two occasions, told ThePrint that he tried to convince the JKLF leader to go to trial but the latter refused. "I was appointed the amicus by the court to make Malik understand the consequence of him pleading guilty, and to guide him. I met him twice inside the jail and also made him understand in detail, but he has made up his mind," Singh said.

"He does not want to contest the charges. He said he was clear that he wanted to plead guilty and does not want to face the trial," he added. Asked why Malik decided to plead guilty, Singh said: "He said he is ready to face whatever is in store for him. He also said a lot of other things, which I cannot divulge. But he is sure he does not want to face the trial."

During the court hearing Tuesday, Yasin Malik was the only accused in the case who pleaded guilty to charges framed against him, while the others pleaded not guilty. Malik chose not to have a lawyer represent him in this case, and was appearing for himself.

Special Judge Praveen Singh will pronounce the judgement in Malik's case on 19 May, and also hear arguments regarding the quantum of sentence for offences



to which Malik has pleaded guilty.

Received, collected money to fund terror'

Yasin Malik was among a dozen people arrested by the NIA in April 2019 in connection with a terror-funding case registered in May 2017 against members of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Dukhtaran-e-Millat, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahideen and other separatist groups. The were accused of raising, receiving and collecting funds to fuel separatist and terrorist activities, being part of a conspiracy to cause disruption

in the Kashmir Valley, and waging war against India. According to the NIA, Malik was involved in raising, receiving and collecting funds through various illegal means, including hawala transactions, for funding separatist and terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir. In its two chargesheets, the NIA also named Altaf Ahmad Shah alias Altaf Fantoosh, the son-in-law of separatist Syed Ali Shah Geelani; Shahid-ul-Islam, spokesman for the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umer Farooq; Ayaz Akbar, spokesman for the

Geelani-led faction of the Hurriyat and separatists Nayeem Khan, Bashir Bhat alias Peer Saifullah, and Raja Mehrajuddin Kalwal. A Delhi court had in March this year, after hearing arguments from both sides, ordered framing of charges against the accused. The court had said the accused, including Malik, were direct recipients of terror funds, and were part of a criminal conspiracy to orchestrate large-scale protests, resulting in violence and arson in the Valley. The court observed that Malik had set up an elaborate structure and mechanism across

the world to raise funds for carrying out terrorist and other unlawful activities in Jammu and Kashmir in the name of "freedom struggle". The court formally framed charges against other Kashmiri separatist leaders Farooq Ahmed Dar, Shabbir Shah, Masarat Alam, Mohammad Yusuf Shah, Aftab Ahmad Shah, Altaf Ahmad Shah, Nayeem Khan, Mohammad Akbar Khanday, Raja Mehrajuddin Kalwal, Bashir Ahmad Bhat, Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, Shabir Ahmad Shah, Abdul Rashid Sheikh, and Naval Kishore Kapoor.



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Modi govt's coal reforms go beyond the current crisis. It transforms India's energy security

Land acquisition for coal mines has had a complicated history in India. But Modi govt's reforms pave the way for a paradigm shift in energy security

In the last week of April 2022, the National Power Portal's coal update flagged an imminent shortage of coal supplies at the Dadri-II and Aravalli thermal stations that supplied electricity to Delhi-NCR. This shortage, a result of a complex intersection of circumstances—ranging from a heatwave in North India to delays in coal transportation—was so severe that the Delhi government predicted that Metro Rail services would have to be suspended and rolling blackouts would follow unless coal stocks into these feeder stations were replenished quickly. Acting immediately to deal with the impending crisis, the Coal Ministry worked in tandem with the Ministry of Railways, who proceeded to cancel over 753 scheduled passenger trips to make way for freight trains carrying coal, and overnight pressed over 500 rakes on coal transport duty to meet the soaring demand for coal. Overlooked in this coverage of the coal shortage was a major policy announcement made on 13 April 2022 about sweeping reforms in the coal sector, particularly related to usage, acquisition and disposal of land acquired under the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957. These big-ticket policy changes announced by the Narendra Modi government in April effectively addressed the long-standing needs of the sector and have the potential to unlock significant growth as well as enhance energy security.

History of land acquisition in India for coal mining

Land acquisition—particularly for industrialisation and infrastructure projects or 'public purposes'—has a long and complicated history in India and is governed by a complex set of policies and rules. Until 2013, land acquisition by government agencies from private landowners in India was governed by the Land Acquisition Act of 1894—an old, colonial-era law—replaced by a new Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR). However, areas that are acquired for the purposes of coal mining continued to fall under the older, CBA (A&D) Act, 1957 which was an unwieldy older Nehruvian-era legislation.

The nature of mining-related land



acquisition is different from that for other industrial or public purposes. For instance, infrastructure projects like roads can be rerouted or changed to minimise the impact on private landowners, but if a coal deposit has been identified in a particular area, only that coal-bearing land can be acquired, and projects can not be redesigned or shifted to adjoining areas that are non-coal bearing.

The 1957 Act was created in an era

incidental to mining purposes.' The law provided for no exemptions to this rule. Thus, even a coal washery or quarters for coal miners could not be constructed on it. Furthermore, once the land was notified under this Act, there was no provision for its de-notification. Thus, coal mining agencies that had acquired extensive fields while prospecting, could neither transfer the land back to the

use them to build solar energy parks, as part of the larger goal of reducing carbon emissions and commitment to work towards mitigating climate change in line with international agreements but can not do that under the act which forbids such usage. The Act tied the hands of coal-mining entities to the extent that they could not even surrender these lands to the local forest departments for

The world has changed enormously since this original act was passed. Changing energy security imperatives, and the development of new technologies and alternate sources of energy have rendered most of the old Act irrelevant, bureaucratic and obsolete

when dependence on coal was near total, and alternate sources of energy like solar, wind, etc, had yet to become widely prevalent, and placed severe restrictions on land acquired through this legislation. According to the Act's guidelines, the government first had to issue a notification declaring its intent to begin prospecting for coal in the notified area. The prospecting notification had a validity of two years, following which the government could declare its intention to acquire the land under Section 7(1) of the Act, and had to complete the land acquisition within a three-year period.

The problem lay not with the process of acquisition as much as with the severe restrictions placed by the 1957 Act on usage. Land acquired under the CBA (A&D) Act, 1957, could only be used for the purposes of coal mining and activities 'strictly

original owners nor use it for any other purpose if it turned out to be non-viable. They could not sell or mutate the notified land either. This resulted in significant resentment against coal mining in areas, particularly tribal regions where Coal India Limited had acquired land while prospecting but could not legally denotify them to hand them back to the original owners.

Alternative energy sources

The energy landscape and availability of alternative options have changed significantly since the original act was formulated. Wind and solar energy did not even exist as concepts in 1957. Today, part of the stated mandate of the government and energy-related public sector undertakings like Coal India is to diversify their portfolio and reduce fossil fuel dependence by creating wind and solar power parks. Coal India has an ambitious plan to develop mined out/exhausted coal areas and

reforestation, even if they wanted to. The government runs an initiative focused on 'compensatory afforestation,' under the administration of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), where regeneration activities are carried out in available lands to compensate for the diversion of forest lands. Coal India's subsidiaries had identified over 3,200 hectares of non-forest mined out land that was flagged off for renewal and compensatory afforestation, but the old act had no provisions that allowed for transfer and mutation to Forest Departments, preventing even environmentally friendly initiatives.

Finally, while the RFCTLARR Order 2015, brought the quantum of compensation paid to individual landowners under the CBA (A&D) Act, 1957 in congruence with the new land

acquisition norms, legislative lacunae meant that owners whose lands were acquired for coal mining were forced to pay income tax on compensation—something that no other landowners were required to do. This created a great deal of resentment and resistance.

Other issues that are to be addressed The world has changed enormously since this original act was passed. Changing energy security imperatives, and the development of new technologies and alternate sources of energy have rendered most of the old Act irrelevant, bureaucratic and obsolete. A lot of the coal mining process is no longer open-cast, but underground, using modern technology that results in no disturbance or impact on the surface, environment and existing land usage. Yet authorities such as the Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) continue to insist that surface rights to the land be acquired if underground mining permits have to be issued. This is analogous to expecting Delhi's underground Metro Rail, for instance, acquire all the surface land its underground routes passed through before permitting the rail to run. When such hindrances are not placed on other underground operations, this insistence on coal-related activities is patently absurd. While our dependence on fossil fuels will continue for now, opening coal-bearing lands for alternative uses such as afforestation, development of cleaner energy parks like solar/wind stations, coal-related ancillary activities, etc, will result in significant growth and boost local economies in backward, coal-rich districts. The far-sighted move announced by the Union Cabinet may not immediately solve today's coal crisis but is a significant, creative way forward that will initiate a long-term paradigm shift in energy security and rejuvenate local economies. Adhiraj Parthasarathy is a Director in the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office, NITI Aayog, where he works on the evaluation of government schemes. He koos @adhirajp. Devansh Kedia is a freelance writer whose interests lie in water resources, land rights and public health. Views are personal.

In Myanmar, a new 'criminal' State is rising. And China is paying to build it

Myanmar's narcotics warlords are finally becoming the arbiters of the State. While China quietly moves in, India will have to make tough choices

Miss Hairy Legs—soldiers disrespectfully called the cross-dressing, colourfully bisexual General Olive Yang, who had once terrified classmates by carrying guns into Lashio's Guardian Angel's Convent School in Myanmar and thrown a urine pot at her husband, Twan Sao Wen, when he attempted to forcibly consummate their marriage. For all the grumbling, though, the 10,000 soldiers in her ranks proved willing to follow her to the gates of hell, fighting savage battles to set up the opium trade lines laboratories that funnelled heroin to Southeast Asia and beyond.

While international sanctions have walled off Myanmar from the world economy, the People's Republic of China has been quietly moving to cash in. The door is open again for work on the gargantuan Mong Tong dam on the Salween River in Shan—a project that was stalled earlier due to environmental protests under the democratic government. A multi-billion effort to grow trade along with the road and rail links from Kunming in southern China to the Kyaukphyu deep seaport in Rakhine is on again. There is even going to be a cross-border Special Economic Zone, linking Lincang in China's Yunnan to the town of Laukkai in the Kokang region, the infamous home to some 30 casinos set up to help launder profits coming from the region's powerful ethnic Chinese-organised crime cartels.

The ghost of Olive Yang would be smiling right now: Myanmar's narcotics warlords are finally becoming the arbiters of the fate of her nation, becoming indistinguishable from the structure of the State itself.

Chinese empire and the warlords
Last month, more than 3,000 people lined up on an athletics track in Mong La in the Kokang region for the three-day funeral rites of the 91-year-old international warlord, gun-runner, narcotics trafficker, and money-launderer Peng Jiasheng. Friends, as well as enemies, came to pay homage. It was hard to tell which was which: representatives of the Arakan Army, the Shan State Army, the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, and the Kachin Independence Army were all there. Min Aung Hlaing, the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar military's Kengtung-based Golden Triangle



Command—and most important of all, diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China were present as well.

In essence, China is paying the Kokang cartels to ensure work goes forward despite the disruptions and pressures of the democratic government. The main proxy it has cultivated in the region is the United Wa State Army with an estimated 30,000 fighters, whom it supplies weapons from across the border. The Kokang cartels, in turn, fund

of the anti-coup People's Defense Forces.

Environmental activist Sai Khur Hseng offered journalist Tom Fawthrop this simple explanation for why this development is being welcomed even if it comes with drugs and crime: "People at all levels of Shan society are suffering from the economic crisis. They are hungry for money."

The Generals' drug-runner friends
Late one night in 1962, soon after

Jimmy Yang, became a member of parliament. Similarly, Lo Hsing Han received permission to run opium convoys without military interference in return for providing troops to fight ethnic insurgents. His brother, Lo Hsing-Ko, was conveniently appointed chief of the Kokang police.

From time to time, the system frayed. In the mid-1970s, Peng Jiasheng allied with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) to beat out competitors in

There is even going to be a cross-border Special Economic Zone, linking Lincang in China's Yunnan to the town of Laukkai in the Kokang region, the infamous home to some 30 casinos set up to help launder profits coming from the region's powerful ethnic Chinese-organised crime cartels

counter-insurgency groups by Myanmar's Border Guard Forces, keeping open logistics corridors like Chinshwehaw and Kunlong, which are adjacent to the special autonomous zone.

The funding model is simple: in return for the security of Chinese projects, the insurgents, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Organised Crime says, produce and run staggering quantities of methamphetamine and other opioids.

Following the 2021 military coup, the rival ethnic insurgent groups did not fight the army but helped other expand the territories from which warlords could extract resources.

Even though there were large-scale anti-coup rallies in Taunggyi, the Shan capital, only the Ta'ang National Liberation Army was somewhat supportive

he left an opera performance in Yangon, General Ne Win began to paint Myanmar—the land of jade and rubies—grey. Horse races, beauty contests and dance competitions were banned by the new military dispensation, author Bertil Lintner has recorded. The beer came from the people's brewery, cakes from their patisseries, and toothpaste from the toilet industry. The students who protested were massacred.

From their Kokang bastions, warlords like Yang fed the world's growing demand for heroin—and, in the process, brought cash into an economy bankrupted by General Ne's "Burmese way to socialism." Even though the Kokang cartels controlled territory, they enjoyed a comfortable relationship with the military-state: Yang's brother,

the drug trade. In the 1980s, though, when the party got split, its remnants signed a ceasefire deal with the government. Peng signed a deal as well, but conflicts with the army for territory and shares, for a time, forced him across the border into Yunnan.

There were others to pick up the slack, though—the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, led by Peng's brother Peng Jiafu, the National Democratic Alliance Army led by Peng's son-in-law Lin Mingxian, and the United Wa State Army led by Bao Youxiang.

Faced with threats to its legitimacy from the democracy movement, the Myanmar military has rebuilt relationships with many warlords. General Min Aung Hlaing, the head of Myanmar's military junta, and the

officer responsible for attacking Peng in 2009, even sent a special condolence message.

The empires built by the drug lords are visible all over Yangon: heroin earnings have been laundered, according to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, like Kyaw Win's Mayflower banking group, Yang Maoling's Peace Myanmar Group, and surrendered druglord Khun Sa's Good Shan Brothers.

The challenge for India

The case for India maintaining a deep relationship with Myanmar's military is obvious: it holds the key to peace in the troubled Northeast. In 1988, following the pro-democracy protests, New Delhi paid a heavy price for severing links with Myanmar's military. Later, though, India repaired relations. In 1995, the Indian Army targeted a column that was taking arms from Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh through the Mizoram forests. The Army's 57 Division, working together with the Myanmar Army, killed 38 insurgents.

In 2010, India and Myanmar signed an agreement stating that Indian forces could pursue insurgents across the border. Four years later, the two countries signed an agreement on coordinated patrolling and intelligence sharing. Naga and Manipuri insurgent bases across the border were shut down. In return, India provided economic and military aid to Myanmar, helping the Generals avoid the trap of excessive dependence on China.

There's no telling, though, just where this might lead. The massive investments China is making in Myanmar will inexorably give it a growing leverage; there's just no way India can compete dollar for dollar. The People's Liberation Army has also begun developing its relationships with groups once seen as close to Indian interests—like the Arakan Army in Rakhine—supplying them with weapons and cash. In essence, China seeks to emerge as the hegemon in Myanmar, the patron of both the military-run State and the warlords who oppose it.

India, then, is at some risk of losing influence with the Myanmar military and its collaborators—and, at once, shedding whatever moral capital it had among pro-democracy groups. Tough choices, it seems probable, will have to be made in the not-too-distant future.

Biden Loses Potent Aide with Departure of Press Secretary Psaki

She could be playing the charmer, hurling verbal explosives, or just applying spin, but whichever version of Jen Psaki appears at the White House podium, there's little question her departure Friday strips President Joe Biden of an able ally.

Instantly recognizable with her fiery red hair, press secretary Psaki, 43, has been the public face of the Biden administration from the moment the veteran Democrat moved into a White House reluctantly vacated by Donald Trump on January 20, 2021.

Psaki, who always said she didn't expect to keep the high-pressure position more than about a year, is now reportedly on her way to a lucrative host position at MSNBC cable news. She's leaving just as a brutal midterm elections campaign starts, domestic problems like inflation and illegal immigration pile up around Biden, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine lurches into ever more complex geopolitical territory.

No doubt that Psaki's successor Karine Jean-Pierre — making history as the first Black and openly gay person in the job — can expect a torrid next few months.

Jean-Pierre, however, will also inherit a presidential press operation rebuilt after the anti-media rantings of the Trump White House. Under Trump, the famous James S. Brady Briefing Room literally gathered dust while the rapidly changing cast of characters in the administration's press shop often seemed mostly concerned with attacking reporters.

Psaki leaves under a minor ethics cloud, given that she was being headhunted by TV outlets — and negotiating her deal — while continuing in her daily press secretary duties.

But that aside, there has been widespread praise for her professionalism. Psaki herself stresses the higher calling she sees in the press secretary role, going on Fox News last weekend — her boss' biggest antagonist — to laud the importance of a free media. "This is the greatest job I've ever had, maybe the greatest job I ever have," she said. The goal, his aides said, was to bypass a biased media, but Trump's reliance on chaotic informal press gatherings and sometimes garbled or misspelled tweets fueled perceptions

that his main aim was to make the presidency his personal reality show. One press secretary, Stephanie Grisham, never held a single briefing in her nine months on the job. Her successor, Kayleigh McEnany, did hold some briefings, but these often veered into bad-tempered back-and-forths where McEnany made clear she shared the president's loathing for the media. On taking over the warren of tiny offices and cubbyholes constituting the White House press shop, Psaki restored the tradition of daily televised Q&As and established a team always available for questions — even if they did not always provide answers. At the podium, Psaki typically fields queries on everything from Biden's thoughts about abortion to trade tariffs on Canadian lumber, the war in Ukraine, and the ups and downs of the First Family's pets. Using skills that will transfer well to the TV host's chair, she comes to briefings so well prepared that it's rare for any journalist to trip her. "One day, people will learn not to come for Psaki, but it is not this day," quipped @Angry_Staffer, a popular political commentator on Twitter, posting a clip of the press

secretary turning the tables this week on a reporter's seemingly tough question with a torrent of counter-arguments.

Psaki's self-confidence comes from deep experience as a Democratic party operative and stints under president Barack Obama as State Department spokeswoman, White House communications director, and election campaign press secretary. And while her most stinging briefing room retorts are celebrated by online fans in #psakibomb memes, she relies less on gotcha tactics as much as a willingness to engage politely with hostile questioners.

That's a trait which got a thumb's up from no less than Peter Doocy, the Fox News White House correspondent, who has taken up the mantle of Psaki's chief sparring partner. Some of their on-camera exchanges have been tense, but when Psaki announced she was leaving, Doocy thanked her, saying "you've always been a good sport" and adding that he was "sorry to see you go."

To which Psaki, triggering laughter through the briefing room, shot back: "Are you?"

How courts can stop judgments on death sentence from being challenged

In December 2012, India witnessed unprecedented protests following the gruesome gang-rape of a 23-year-old paramedic student (named Nirbhaya later) by five persons on a moving bus in New Delhi.

"Hang the monsters" placards were a common sight during the protest. The rage was intense, and the demand for the death penalty for the accused persons seemed non-negotiable. The trial court convicted the five accused persons of rape and murder and sentenced them to death.

The Delhi High Court confirmed the death sentence awarded by the trial court, and the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the high court.

The Supreme Court bench consisting of Justices Dipak Misra, R Banumathi and Ashok Bhushan gave a concurring decision upholding the death penalty for the convicts. Justice Dipak Misra called the case "a story from a different world where humanity has been treated with irreverence".

Reading the judgment makes it clear that the court did not decide to uphold the death penalty under any sort of public pressure. In strict adherence to the law and the fact that aggravating

circumstances outweighed the mitigating circumstances, the court gave its decision.

It is important to note that in the famous Bachan Singh case the apex court had urged that a balance sheet of "mitigating and aggravating circumstances" have to be drawn before sentencing a person to death. And, in the Nirbhaya case, the balance sheet tilted towards aggravating circumstances, evident from the unimaginable injuries caused to the victim.

The Nirbhaya case led to many changes in the penal law. One among them was regarding the trial of juveniles for heinous crimes. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill 2015, which was finally passed in 2016, allowed for juveniles between the age of 16 and 18 to be tried as adults in case of heinous crimes.

It was a case of a dastardly brutal rape that shocked the conscience of the country. One of the reasons the Nirbhaya case could get the required attention apart from the gruesome nature of the crime was the fact that it took place in the National Capital.

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APOLLO
FARMS & RESORTS

Bitcoin price falls to 3-month low, other cryptocurrencies in red

Bitcoin's price was down by 3.48 per cent at \$33,569.96. The world's largest cryptocurrency hit the lowest in 2022 at \$32,951



(By aStaff Reporter) Bitcoin's price on Monday fell to a three-month low as other cryptocurrencies were in the red. Bitcoin has so far reacted negatively to more aggressive

measures announced by the US central bank. Investors were worried over global inflationary pressure and the situation in Ukraine.

BITCOIN PRICE TODAY

Bitcoin's price was down by 3.48 per cent at \$33,569.96. The world's largest cryptocurrency hit the lowest in 2022 at \$32,951.

Ethereum, the second largest cryptocurrency by market capitalization, was down by 4.15 per cent at \$2,453.65. "Bitcoin continued

to fall over the weekend as investors and institutions paused following the hike in interest rates. BTC has been trading at its lowest today at US\$33,000, which is the weakest since January. BTC dipped by nearly 13% over the past week, and if this downtrend continues, we may also see BTC falling towards US\$30,000," Edu Patel, CEO and Co-founder of Mudrex, said. "Ethereum and most cryptocurrencies are also

down since the past week. Due to rising macroeconomic factors, the downward trend is likely to continue for the next few days," Patel said.

CRYPTOCURRENCY PRICES LATEST

XRP price fell by 2.34 per cent, Terra was down by 4.89 per cent, Solana fell by over 5 per cent, Cardano was down by 7 per cent, Avalanche fell by over 7 per cent, Stellar crashed 5 per cent. Other cryptocurrencies such as Dogecoin fell by over 3 per cent, and Shiba Inu was down over 7 per cent.

Food prices to remain high? How climate change, war are biting us badly

The central bank has projected that retail inflation will be at 5.7 per cent in the current financial year. Looking ahead, food inflation pressures are likely to continue, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said

(By aStaff Reporter) Food prices around the world, including in India, skyrocketed this year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has a detrimental impact on key exports of wheat and fertiliser from those countries. At the same time, droughts, floods and heat fuelled by climate change have affected harvests. Wheat prices hit a 14-year peak in March, and maize prices reached the highest ever recorded, the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES) said in a report released last week. That has made basic staples more expensive - or harder to find - for families in many countries, especially the poorest.

RISK TO GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Climate change, widespread poverty and conflicts are now combining to create "endemic and widespread" risks to global food security - which means higher food prices may be the new normal, unless action is taken to curb the threats, IPES noted, as per a Reuters report. The IPES report suggests not only cutting emissions swiftly to limit climate change but also tackling commodity speculation, giving debt relief, cutting reliance on chemical fertilisers, reshaping trade and shoring up national grain reserves. If these things are neglected, the world will find itself "sleepwalking into the catastrophic and systematic food crises of the future", the

IPES experts noted.

WHY ARE FOOD PRICES SO HIGH?

Russia and Ukraine supply about 30 per cent of global wheat exports, but those have fallen as a result of the ongoing crisis.

But the drop in exports from Russia and Ukraine has driven up competition for the remaining wheat on the global market, leading to higher costs that are particularly painful for poorer, debt-ridden countries that rely heavily on imports.

But the disruption to wheat exports from Russia and

Ukraine is not the whole reason for the price hikes, which have spilled over into maize, rice and soy markets as buyers seek alternative grains.

Spurred by the conflict, financial speculators have leapt into trading in grain futures, for instance, "artificially" inflating prices as they seek to profit from market uncertainty, G7 agriculture ministers have complained. Since the last food price crises of 2007-2008 and 2011-2012, "governments have failed to curb excessive speculation and ensure transparency of food stocks and

commodity markets," said Jennifer Clapp, a professor specialised in food security at Canada's University of Waterloo. The problem "must be urgently addressed" if the world wants to ensure more stable food prices in coming years as climate change, conflict and other threats drive up risks, she added.

IMPACT OF CLIMATE

Some wheat-growing countries are already planting more, and India has said it will boost exports of wheat to meet demand, although its current heatwave could dent yields, the

London-based Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit warned.

But efforts to boost production globally have been hampered by shortages of chemical fertiliser. Russia and Belarus produced 40% of international potash exports last year and that trade has also been hit by the war. Climate change impacts - from droughts and heatwaves to flooding and new pests - also are making it harder for farmers in many parts of the world to get a reliable crop, a problem set to worsen as planet-heating emissions continue to rise.

Indian Rupee falls to all-time low against US dollar

The reason behind the drop in value of the Rupee could be blamed on the demand for riskier assets and also because the foreign investors continue to dump the domestic stocks

(Staff Reporter) India's official currency Rupee has dropped 51 paise to an all-time low of Rs 77.41 against the US dollar in early trade on Monday.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the Rupee opened at 77.17 against the American dollar, then lost ground to quote at 77.42, registering a fall of 52 paise from the last close. The Rupee has slipped past the previous record low of 76.98 in March.

On Friday, the Rupee had slumped 55 paise to close at 76.90 against the US dollar.

The reason behind the drop in value of the Rupee could be blamed on the demand for riskier assets and also because the foreign investors continue to dump the domestic stocks.

Investors are also worried that the broader Asian stocks could decline



further due to the tightening COVID lockdown in Shanghai, which could hit global economic growth. The Indian Rupee opened weaker on Monday against the dollar as weakness in global equities on concerns over the economic outlook and rising bond yields weighed on sentiments, said Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities. Forex traders said risk appetite has weakened amid mounting concerns about inflation that may trigger more aggressive rate hikes by the global

central banks. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.35 per cent higher at 104.02, tracking rising US yields and fears about higher interest rates. Moreover, Asian and emerging market peers started weak this Monday morning and will weigh on sentiments. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share Sensex was trading 737 points or 1.34 per cent lower at 54,098.58 points, while the broader NSE Nifty declined 220.25 points or 1.34 per cent to 16,191.00 points. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.14 per cent to USD 112.55 per barrel. Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 5,517.08 crore, as per stock exchange data.



Ancient tales of trolls and magic live on in Iceland, an island nation of volcanoes, lava fields, glaciers and ice caves. To fully explore every corner of the dynamic landscape, unravel local folklore and battle the natural elements, one must take to the skies.

Enter Jón Kjartan Björnsson, the pilot with a mission to show the real Iceland.

Björnsson, a helicopter pilot for 35 years, has taken camera crews, directors and actors to some of the most stunning spots in the country.

The thundering waterfalls and deep valley gorges seen in TV's "Game of Thrones" and the movies "Oblivion" and "Flags of Our Fathers" are thanks to Björnsson's expert navigation skills.

Björnsson explains that since you cannot use a zoom on the wide-angle camera, the trick to getting that intimate feel is moving the actual helicopter close to the shot: "If it feels like you're close, you are close," he

says.

Iceland, the alien planet

Although Björnsson loves to showcase his strikingly dramatic country, many of the shots he enables filmmakers to create are not presented as Iceland at all.

In fact, Björnsson says, "Whenever directors want to show somewhere on another planet, they shoot in Iceland!"

The aerial filming world is small, explains Björnsson, who describes it as a big family.

The desolate volcanic deserts, glaciers and lush mossy valleys seen on the planets of Eadu and Hoth in "Star Wars," in "Game of Thrones" Land Beyond the Wall, and in Thor's home of Asgard were all filmed in Iceland. Iceland also stands in for an alien planet in the movie "Interstellar," where astronauts travel through a wormhole to find another home after Earth becomes uninhabitable.

And in the post-apocalyptic film "Oblivion," Iceland features as both a war-torn and ravaged Earth as well as its potential

replacement, the planet of Titan. Iceland immersion

In addition to work on feature films and television series, Björnsson is also responsible for getting the director and filming crew in the right spot for the FlyOver Iceland video used in the exhilarating experience based in Reykjavík.

The FlyOver exhibit, currently in Vancouver and Iceland and soon in Las Vegas and Toronto, takes visitors on a sensory ride suspended over a 20-meter (65.6-foot) screen. The experience blends some of those amazing sights depicted on film with the physical sensation of flying, including an actual mist falling on your face from a waterfall.

You might even get a whiff of fresh mountain flowers as you glide over a meadow.

In one stunning sequence in the Iceland film, Björnsson flies right through an impossibly narrow arch that has the whole audience gasping and holding their breath as they feel themselves trying to

make it through the arch.

In fact, he tells CNN Travel the width was very comfortable at about 50 meters, but it sure looks and feels narrow as you embody the role of the silent passenger, sitting beside Björnsson, trusting Björnsson.

The finished footage from FlyOver and Björnsson's other projects - full films and shows -- creates the impression that the audience is right there with him. It's as close as most people can hope to get to many of Iceland's otherwise inaccessible territory. Remarkably for a man who has been flying professionally for over three decades, Björnsson says he is actually scared of heights and prefers low-level flying.

One scene in the eight-and-a-half-minute minimovie takes place at Iceland's highest peak, at 7,000 plus feet (2,134 meters) above sea level. "I almost had to close my eyes sometimes!" Björnsson quips.

Björnsson routinely has the opportunity to fly over places most Icelanders will never visit.

"Most of those sites in FlyOver are pretty difficult to get to unless you have a helicopter. The little lighthouse just south of Iceland is probably the most difficult one. But when you have the helicopter, you can go wherever you like to go!"

That remote and lonely little lighthouse is known as The Þridrangaviti lighthouse and is located on the Westman Islands, about five miles off the coast of mainland Iceland.

The making of the movie Some parts of the island do not feature in the final cut of director Dave Mossop's 2019 FlyOver Iceland video because weather conditions posed insurmountable obstacles.

Filming took place over a year and a half in all seasons. Mossop says that they were stranded for days in the northern part of the island when bad weather, including sideways snowstorms and zero light, made it impossible to film or to leave. This part of the country seldom sees tourists and locals had warned Mossop that flying and filming would be difficult. The challenging shoots, nonetheless, reaped great rewards: The helicopter's positioning gives viewers a grasp of the sheer scale of Iceland's glaciers, not visible in this way by land -- or even accessible.

Black sands, lava fields and deep green valleys look like a series of dramatic canvas landscapes stitched together into one true masterpiece. "One of the most remote places that we got to visit and one that you would never be able to experience in its full effect from the ground is called the Tungnaa river, and I think it's one of the seven wonders of the world."

Microsoft Flight Simulator's 2020 reboot may be the safest way to fly this year

Avgeek desktop gamers and wannabe airline captains can finally get the high-altitude fix they've been craving.

Following a prolonged period of hibernation, the rebooted Microsoft Flight Simulator, officially available on August 18, could be the perfect antidote to pandemic-induced cabin fever -- or to airplane cabin withdrawal symptoms, for those who've been bumped off their real-world flight plans due to Covid-19.

Getting misty-eyed over the imminent demise of the "Queen of the Skies"? Flight Simulator will let you fly your very own Boeing 747 on that round-the-world trip you had to cancel this year.

Or if looping the loop over the snow-capped Pyrenees is your thing, the new flightsim helps users master the controls of a

Pitts aerobatic plane as it slices through snow and wind effects that mirror real-world weather, derived in real time from climatic data sources. Alternatively, if you didn't manage to get your skiing holiday in this spring break, you could go off-piste and get some digital solace by landing your Cessna Citation executive jet at Courchevel Altiport.

Reality? Check.

Photo-realistic graphics are a given in the world of online gaming, but what separates this sim from its rivals is the facility to fly anywhere in a world reconstructed from high-definition satellite-generated Microsoft Bing mapping imagery.

Bing data is siphoned through Microsoft's machine-learning technology which then builds 1.5 billion houses and 2 trillion trees -- not to mention 37,000 airports,

all hand-touched to ensure that each runway has the right length and that taxiways and parking stands are marked correctly.

The colossal quantity of data required to simulate this realistic world in real time is managed using Microsoft's Azure cloud-based platform. Azure does the heavy lifting, so your home computer doesn't need to be of the super-duper variety to deliver a convincing experience.

Take off from London City Airport on a frosty morning, and as you pass the Shard you can even peer through the glinting glazed superstructure into the highly detailed interior of the building -- just one of many architectural icons that have been modeled in geek-satisfying ultra-high-resolution to bring a sense of realism that transcends the norm for digital games.



That's quite a feat for a sim that many fans had assumed, just a few years ago, would never be resurrected, or supported by Microsoft -- given that the last revision was with the release of Microsoft Flight Simulator X (FSX), its 10th version, in 2006. In the meantime, other flight simulator rivals had built their own simmer followings, notably Laminar Research's X-Plane 11, which provides over 3,000

airports, an intuitive interface, high-resolution graphics and even pushback tugs and roaming fuel trucks at airports. Another popular sim is AeroFly FS 2, that offers such features as route planning, an Instrument Landing System (ILS) Omnidirectional Radio Range (VOR), Non-directional Radio Beacon (NDB) plus Virtual Reality support for Oculus Rift and HTC Vive without any additional software.

Monkeypox Virus: Types, symptoms, causes, and treatment

(News Agency) Monkeypox is an uncommon disease caused by a monkeypox virus infection. Monkeypox virus is a member of the Orthopoxvirus genus in the Poxviridae family. Variola virus (which causes smallpox), vaccinia virus (used in the smallpox vaccine), and cowpox virus are all members of the Orthopoxvirus genus. Monkeypox was initially found in 1958, when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease in groups of monkeys utilised for study occurred. The monkeypox virus is no longer transmitted by monkeys, despite its name. Monkeypox is thought to be spread by small rodents and squirrels in Africa's rainforests, though additional research is needed. More information on the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and dissemination of

monkeypox can be found here.

Types of Monkeypox Virus

The monkeypox virus is divided into two types: central African and west African. The central African monkeypox virus is more likely to cause serious illnesses and death than the west African monkeypox virus.

Symptoms and Signs of Monkeypox

The symptoms of monkeypox are similar to those of smallpox, however they are usually milder. Monkeypox symptoms include fever, chills, headache, muscle discomfort, and weariness.

Lymph nodes swollen

After one to three days, a rash would appear. The rash usually begins on the face and extends to other regions of your body, such as the palms of your

hands and the soles of your feet. The rash begins as flat, red pimples that eventually evolve into blisters that fill with pus. After several days, the blisters may crust over and fall off.

Spread of Monkeypox

Monkeypox can spread for a variety of causes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): When a person comes into contact with an infected animal or human, monkeypox is disseminated. Animal-to-human transmission occurs when an infected animal's blood, body fluids, or pox lesions come into contact with broken skin, such as bites or scratches. Monkeypox can also pass from person to person, but this is uncommon. When you come into contact with virus particles from an

infected person, this is known as person-to-person transmission. Coughing, sneezing, and airborne droplets can all spread the infection. You can potentially become infected by touching an infected person's sores.

Treatment

Although there are no specific therapies for monkeypox infection at present time, outbreaks can be controlled. A monkeypox outbreak can be controlled with smallpox vaccine, cidofovir, ST-246, and vaccinia immune globulin (VIG). The best available information about the benefits and dangers of smallpox vaccination and medicine use for the prevention and management of monkeypox and other orthopoxvirus infections was used to establish CDC guidance.

Mental health matters: What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



(News Agency) PTSD, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, is a mental health problem that is caused or prompted by a traumatic and scarring incident. Contrary to popular belief, it is not essential for a person to have experienced a terrible incident for PTSD to emerge; merely seeing such an event can "mess you up." People often associate the disorder with war veterans, flashing back to wars they've been in, triggered by something as trivial as a car backfire. While this is an excellent example, PTSD does not only affect military veterans. Anyone can be affected. Anyone who has experienced trauma in their lives is at risk of developing PTSD.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 70 per cent of people have experienced at least one traumatic event in their life. However, not all of those people will develop this illness.

This mental health disorder is highly common among rape victims and sexual assault survivors.

According to the American

Psychiatric Association (APA), PTSD affects about 3.5 per cent of US adults each year, and at least one out of every 11 people will be diagnosed with it at some point in their lives.

Women are at greater risk than men.

What are the symptoms of this disease?

People with PTSD experience persistent, disturbing thoughts and feelings about the traumatic event long after it has occurred. They may have flashbacks or nightmares about the incident, feel hopelessness, dread, or rage, and feel detached or estranged from others, including family members. Those who suffer from PTSD may avoid situations or people who remind them of the

traumatic event, and they may have strong negative reactions to seemingly trivial things like loud noises or an accidental touch. Depression, anxiety, and substance addiction are all common illnesses that occur alongside PTSD.

What treatment options are there?

As mentioned before, not everyone who encounters trauma develops PTSD. According to APA for some of those who do develop PTSD, the symptoms may fade over time. For people struggling

with PTSD, family support can be extremely crucial. Therapy is another vital option; seek expert assistance. Psychiatrists and mental health professionals utilise a number of techniques to help people cope with trauma, including medication and one-on-one counselling sessions. Remember that mental illnesses can be just as crippling as physical illnesses. These, too, can cause extreme stress and make everyday chores impossible.

An innovative breast conservation surgery is helping patients lead better lives

“The advantage of oncoplastic surgery is that it exterminates cancer safely and provides a cosmetically excellent outcome to a patient of breast cancer”

(News Agency) On July 14, 2020, Meghana Yardi, a 42-year-old pre-primary teacher felt an “extra growth” in her left breast. On further investigation, a tumour was confirmed and soon her fear of injections and the idea that “I may not have a breast ruined my peace of mind”.

But that was only till she met oncoplastic breast cancer surgeon Dr C B Koppiker. He explained to her that that she would not lose her breast and that the hollow created by removing the cancerous tumour would be filled up through 'oncoplastic surgery'.

Now, nearly two years later, Yardi says “I cannot even see the incision on my breast till I specifically look for it.” “Even if I wear a halter neck top, at the most a slight line may be visible,” she smiled. Breast cancer prevalence

has been rising steadily in India, and is presently the most common cancer among females. Of the cases being reported, at least 14% are being detected at a late stage and approximately 50% are “locally advanced” at diagnosis. Mastectomy or breast removal is still performed widely in patients in India and South East Asia. However, the procedure has been associated with several long-term side effects such as body asymmetry, postural instability, depression, loss of self-esteem and poor quality of life. But no woman should lose her breast to cancer, said Dr C B Koppiker, the director of Oncology Sciences at Jehangir Hospital and Medical Director Orchids Breast Health in Pune.

“The advantage of oncoplastic surgery

is that it exterminates cancer safely and provides a cosmetically excellent outcome to a patient of breast cancer,” said Dr Koppiker who is also an honorary associate professor at University of East Anglia in the UK and is on the board of directors of Society of Oncoplastic Surgery (SOS) in the US. Globally, breast conserving surgery is now the preferred procedure for breast cancer treatment and doctors such as Koppiker are working towards ensuring that oncoplastic conservative breast surgery gets a firm footing in India as well. In the past, in cases such as Yardi's, mastectomy along with reconstruction — instead of breast conservation — has been the norm. Dr Koppiker uses a ‘perforator flap’, a volume replacement technique for breast conservation surgery.

Experts see blood stem cell transplant as a curative treatment for thalassemia



Thalassemia Associations, says "At present, stem cell transplant is the only curative treatment available for Thalassemia patients. If not cured on time, such patients are dependent on blood transfusions all throughout their lives along with other expensive treatments & regular investigations. Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojna is a unique project initiated by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India. Under this scheme, a patient can get financial aid up to Rs. 10 lakhs from Coal India Ltd. DKMS has offered us an opportunity to get free HLA tests done in the country. This enables the patients to check if they have a matched sibling."

LOW AWARENESS

There are around 270 million Thalassemia patients in the world but awareness about the disease is alarmingly less. Symptoms of Thalassemia usually start at 4 to 6 months of age and usually present with lethargy, poor feeding, progressive pallor, poor weight gain and sometimes vomiting and diarrhoea. On examination, the babies are pale and have liver and spleen enlargement. Patrick Paul, CEO, DKMS BMST Foundation India, says, "It is our mission to support

blood cancer, and other blood disorders such as Thalassemia patients in India, for which we have initiated the DKMS-BMST Thalassemia programme. Under this programme, DKMS-BMST collaborates with local NGOs and transplantation clinics to organise camps where paediatric thalassemia patients and their siblings travelling from afar places in India to give buccal swab samples for free HLA typing. Samples from the camps are analysed in the DKMS laboratory based out of Germany and clinical matching reports of the same are provided. In cases where there is no matching sibling for a sick child, we also support unrelated donor searches for patients." Since the inception of the programme, so far, 7,162 HLA typings have been facilitated by DKMS-BMST.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Dr. Bhat also added, "A successful blood stem cell transplant depends on a perfect HLA tissue match. Patients and donors of Indian origin have unique HLA characteristics that are severely under-represented in the global database, which makes the probability of finding a suitable donor even more difficult. Indian patients mainly require an Indian tissue match. This calls for increased

awareness and the need to encourage many more people in India to register as potential blood stem cell donors."

To register as a potential blood stem cell donor, healthy individuals between 18-50 years of age can register at: dkms-bmst.org/register

All it takes is five minutes of your time and a simple 3-step process:

Step 1: Visit the site, fill in an online form and you will receive a DIY swab kit at home.

Step 2: Once you receive the swab kit, fill out the consent form and take a tissue sample from the inside of your cheeks with 3 cotton swabs provided in the kit.

Step 3: Send back your swab sample in the pre-paid envelope provided. The DKMS laboratory will then analyse your tissue type and your details will be available in the global search for blood stem cell donors. If you do come up as a suitable donor, DKMS-BMST will get in touch with you straight away. Once you come up as a match, blood stem cells will be obtained from the bloodstream using a procedure called Peripheral Blood Stem Cell Collection, which is similar to a blood donation wherein only your stem cells are taken. This is a safe, non-surgical outpatient procedure.

(News Agency) Instead of undergoing painful blood transfusions throughout one's life, medical experts are now seeing blood stem cell transplant as a curative treatment for thalassemia

Baby Bhushra Naqeeb, an 11-year-old girl who has suffered from thalassemia since the age of 6 months, recently suggested an allogeneic stem cell transplant as her only chance of survival after over 10 years of blood transfusion. Finally, with the support from the DKMS-BMST thalassemia programme, she underwent stem cell transplantation in October 2021 under Dr. Sachin Jadhav, HCG (HeathCare Global Enterprises Ltd.) group of hospitals. Post the transplant, Bhushra is able to lead a normal life as she also attends regular school.

India is also known as the Thalassemia capital of the world. The country has the largest number of children with thalassemia major with over 10,000 children born with it every year. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), over four million Indians are thalassemia carriers and more than 1,00,000 are patients. Parents, who are usually asymptomatic, are the carriers of this disease and have a 25% chance of passing this disease to their children.

Patients suffering from thalassemia are required to undergo lifelong regular blood transfusions to maintain their hemoglobin levels. However, it can now be cured with stem cell transplantation.

THE ONLY CURE

Dr. Sunil Bhat, Director and Clinical Lead, Pediatric Hematology, Oncology and Blood & Marrow Transplantation, Narayana Health said, "Thalassemia

patients are mostly children who go through painful blood transfusion for several years in their life. Blood transfusions have their own challenges and risks for the patients. A stem cell transplantation is currently the only curative option available for this condition. Recent data shows a more than 90% success rate of stem cell transplantation in patients who have HLA (Human Leukocyte Antigen) matched stem cell donors." In a blood stem cell transplant, stem cells are collected from the blood of the donors and transplanted into the thalassemia patient after their bone marrow has been destroyed. Only 30% of patients who need transplants have a fully HLA-matched donor in their family, while the rest of them depend on an unrelated donor. Shobha Tuli, the founder of the NGO - Thalassemics India, President-Federation of Indian

New Zealand on verge of wiping out painful cattle disease

When *Mycoplasma bovis* was first discovered in New Zealand in 2017, it prompted a huge response from the government, which concluded there was a one-off opportunity to wipe out the disease

(News Agency) New Zealand is on the verge of eradicating a painful disease from its herd of 10 million cattle after a four-year campaign that has cost hundreds of millions of dollars and resulted in more than 175,000 cows being killed. Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said Thursday that 271 farms had been cleared of *Mycoplasma bovis* and only a single farm in the country still had the bacterial disease. New Zealand would be the first country that has managed to wipe it out completely. In an interview with The Associated Press, O'Connor said it had been a traumatic process for affected farmers. If an infection was found on a farm, even healthy cows were killed to ensure the disease was stamped out.

"I'd say every farmer was very unhappy about having to see their herd be culled," O'Connor said. "These are

people who have strong connections, commitment and investment in their animals." Farming is the nation's biggest export earner and vital to its economy. When *Mycoplasma bovis* was first discovered in New Zealand in 2017, it prompted a huge response from the government, which concluded there was a one-off opportunity to wipe out the disease before it spread widely.

Found in cattle in the U.S. and Europe, *Mycoplasma bovis* is a bacteria that can cause cows to develop mastitis, pneumonia, arthritis and other painful conditions. The bacteria is not considered a threat to food safety, but the resulting diseases in cows can cause distress and result in lower milk and beef yields. O'Connor said the final farm with the disease was a feed yard where cattle came to be fattened before slaughter. He said

the farm would be cleaned of the disease later this year, and it would take several more months of monitoring around the country after that to declare victory. He said the New Zealand campaign was groundbreaking. "It is hugely significant, and I think there are other countries that have *M. bovis* that will be seeking to find out more about their options to eradicate as well," O'Connor said. He said the final cost for the eradication program will likely come in slightly under the budgeted 886 million New Zealand dollars (\$580 million), money that has gone toward operations, surveillance and compensation. The government is picking up most of the tab, with farmers and the cattle industry also contributing. It's unclear how the disease first entered New Zealand, which has strict biosecurity controls. One theory is it arrived in imported bull semen.

Scientists discover hidden water reserve under Antarctic, enough to submerge Statue of Unity

Scientists have for the first time managed to get a glimpse of a vast reserve of water hiding under the Antarctic ice sheet. The reservoir has enough water to submerge the Statue of Unity

(News Agency) In what could be a game-changing discovery, scientists have detected vast quantities of water hiding in the sediments beneath an Antarctic ice stream that could boost our understanding of how it might affect sea levels across the world. The new discovery confirms what researchers had already suspected. Researchers calculated that if they could squeeze out this water on the surface, it will form a lake that ranged from 220 to 820 meters deep. This water would be enough to submerge the Statue of Unity, which is 182 meters in height. The team managed to image just one such ice stream on the frigid world, but suspect there are many more that can shed light on how the system works and how it changes over time in response to climate. They conducted the measurements of the Whillans Ice Stream.

The discovery published in the journal Science states that this groundwater, extending downward for more than a kilometer, contains more than 10 times as much fluid volume as the shallow hydrologic system above. The study was led by researchers from Scripps Oceanography and Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. "Ice streams are important because they funnel about 90 percent of Antarctica's ice from the interior out to the margins," Chloe Gustafson, a postdoctoral researcher at Scripps Institution of Oceanography said adding that there is probably groundwater beneath more Antarctic ice streams.

Hidden underground reservoirs

Scientists have long speculated about the presence of vast reserves of groundwater under the Antarctic ice sheets and hypothesized its contribution to the workings of the

planet. However, they have been unable to measure the volume of these reserves. The latest measurement was conducted during the 2018-2019 field season by the ground-based geophysical electromagnetic (EM) method called magnetotellurics. The researchers used variations in Earth's electric and magnetic fields to measure subsurface resistivity.

Electromagnetic techniques have been used to image shallow groundwater in the upper 100 to 200 meters (328 to 656 feet) beneath some thin glaciers and permanently frozen areas. This time the team used the technology to measure about 800 meters at the Whillans Ice Stream. "This technique typically hasn't been used in polar environments. This is a nice demonstration of the power of the technique and how much it can bring to our knowledge of not just Antarctica,

but Greenland and other glacier regions, as well," study co-author Helen Amanda Fricker said. The team imaged from the ice bed to about five kilometers and even deeper and the data confirmed the existence of thick sediments buried under ice and snow.

"The Empire State Building up to the antenna is about 420 meters tall, at the shallow end, our water would go up the Empire State Building about halfway. At the deepest end, it's almost two Empire State Buildings stacked on top of each other. This is significant because subglacial lakes in this area are two to 15 meters deep. That's like one to four stories of the Empire State Building," Gustafson said.

Researchers speculate that groundwater may similarly exist under similar conditions on other planets or moons that are releasing heat from their interiors.

New oral vaccine protects against Covid and reduces its transmission, says Study

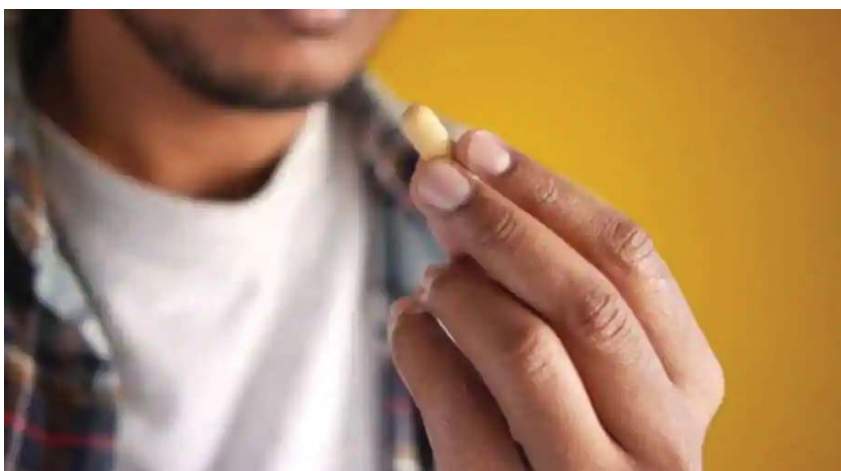
(News Agency) A study conducted on animals has shown that a covid vaccine developed to be administered orally not only protects fighting against the coronavirus, but also reduces the airborne dissemination of the SARS-CoV-2 virus to the others in close contact, reported by PTI.

The study published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, shows that the vaccine has the capacity to neutralise the virus through mucosal tissue, limiting the infections and the spread of the active airborne particles. In the study, which used hamsters for trials, the vaccine induced a strong

antibody response in the blood and lungs. When the animals were exposed to large doses of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, causing a breakthrough infection they were found to be less symptomatic and had lower quantities of infections virus in their nose and lungs than the non-vaccinated hamsters. As a result, they did not shed as much virus through routine airborne exposures, according to the researchers. Stephanie N Langel of Duke University Medical Centre in the US said, "Considering

most of the world is under-immunised and this is especially true of children, the possibility that a vaccinated person with a breakthrough infection can spread covid to unimmunised family or community members poses a public health risk."

She further said that developing such



vaccines will not only be beneficial for protecting against disease but will also decrease the chances of transmitting the virus to an unvaccinated person. The researchers, which included teams from Vaxart, a US vaccine producer and Lovelace Biomedical Research Institute, a clinical research non-profit, examined the vaccine that uses an adenovirus as a vector to express the virus spike protein. The SARS-CoV-2 uses the spike protein to enter and infect human cells.

JNU biologists identify a new way to better treat kala-azar

Professor Anand Ranganathan along with a team of researchers have identified new ways to better treat kala-azar, which affects several countries, including India

(News Agency) After successfully finding a new way to attack malaria and tuberculosis, a team of JNU along with a team under Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) researchers is once again leading the way in molecular biology with their latest approach to better treat Visceral leishmaniasis (VL) and post kala-azar dermal leishmaniasis (PKDL).

Kala-azar is one of the biggest health problems identified globally, which, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), is fatal if left untreated in over 95% of cases. It is characterized by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anemia. It remains one of the top parasitic diseases with outbreak and mortality potential. Leishmaniasis is caused by protozoan parasites which are transmitted by the bite of infected female phlebotomine sandflies. According to WHO figures, an estimated 7,00,000 annually. The study led by

Professor Anand Ranganathan of the Special Centre for Molecular Medicine (SCMM) at JNU along with a team under Shailja Singh of SCMM, exploits a green chemistry-based approach to chemically synthesize glycoside derivatives, which are composed of a glucose entity, to enhance efficacy against the strain of Leishmania Donovan. The study has been published in the journal Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology. "Kala-azar is a dreaded disease and endemic to eastern parts of India. If this new molecule can in any way help combat this disease and prove to be a better and cheaper alternative to the currently used amphotericin B, I believe it would be a good step forward," Professor Anand Ranganathan of the special Centre for Molecular Medicine, JNU said. Glycoside derivatives are highly abundant in nature and the study shows that they can be used against Leishmania parasites, which have developed resistance to currently used antileishmanial drugs.

Anupam Kher says he fumbled while taking Pandit Shivkumar Sharma's name during his radio job: Became an actor after that

Pandit Shivkumar Sharma died on Tuesday. Actors Amitabh Bachchan, Anupam Kher and Juhi Chawla remembered him on social media



Anupam wrote, "Pandit Shivkumar Sharma had a major role behind my acting career. My heart grieves. God makes very less such people. May his soul rest in peace and may his family stay strong."

In the video, Anupam said, "Today I am in Los Angeles, when I came here I got to know about the death of Pandit Shivkumar Sharma. I have a lot of memories with him. While I was doing my first job at All India Radio, as an announcer, I fumbled while taking his name on-air during the show and after that I left my job and became an actor." He added, "Whenever I used to meet him after that, I used to tell him that if that day I wouldn't have fumbled while

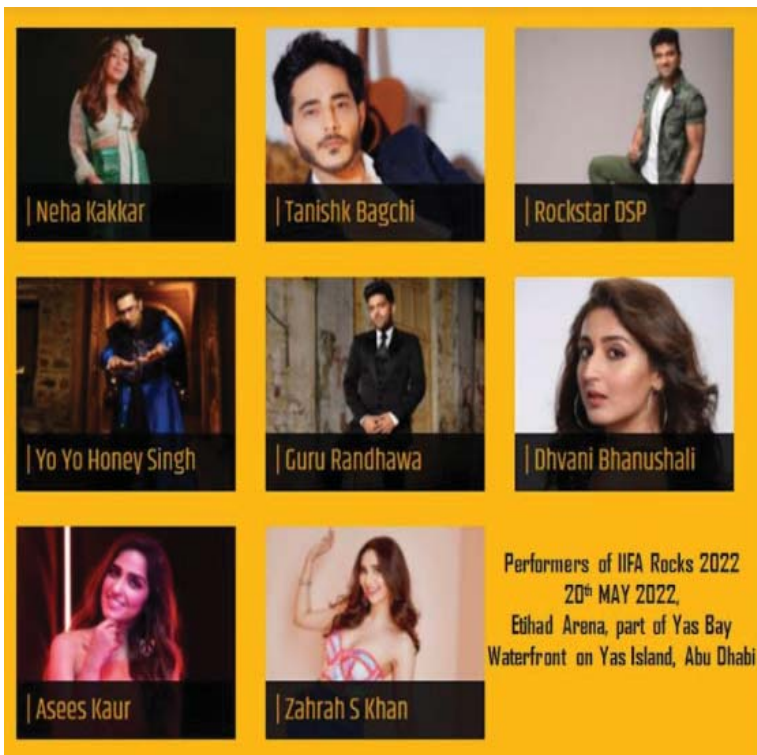
taking his name then I would still be an announcer and not an actor." Actor Juhi Chawla also tweeted a photo of Pandit Shivkumar Sharma and wrote, "Rest in peace Shivji." Act penned an emotional note in memory of the late musician on his blog. Shivkumar Sharma was one-half of the music composer duo Shiv-Hari. He gave music for several of Yash Chopra's films like Silsila, Lamhe, Chandni, and Darr. Amitabh Bachchan starred in Silsila while Juhi featured in Darr.

Amitabh wrote, "There is the passing away of the Maestro, Shivkumar Sharma, who played the santoor, a special instrument, from the valleys of Kashmir .. who designed so

many film musics for me and many others .. continued success after success, numbs you from the pain of pain .. as also the reverse .. Shivkumar ji, who played the 'santoor' in its brilliance .. who put his heart and soul into whatever he took up .. humble despite his incredible presence .. and the talent of a genius." Shivkumar Sharma, one of India's most well known classical musicians, was credited for taking santoor, the folk instrument from Jammu and Kashmir, to the global stage. He received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1986, followed by the Padma Shri in 1991, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2001.

(News Agency) Actor Anupam Kher shared a video on his Instagram handle in the memory of late Santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar Sharma. Actor Amitabh Bachchan also penned a heartfelt note for him on his blog. Shivkumar died on Tuesday morning following a heart attack at his Pali Hill residence here. The 83-year-old musician was cremated with full state honours in the presence of family and close friends on Wednesday. Sharing a video and a monochrome photo of Pandit Shivkumar Sharma,

KARAN JOHAR & PARINEETI TO HOST IIFA ROCKS 2022

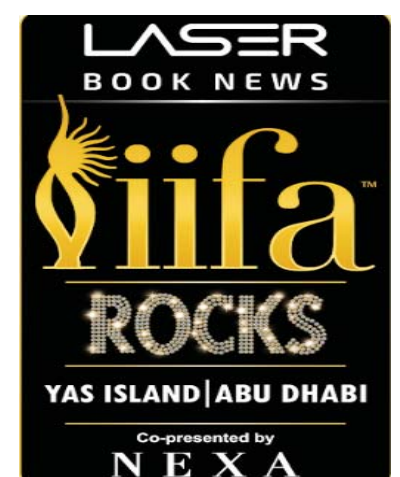


associated with bringing global fans closer to Bollywood and closer to all of us. So being a part of IIFA has always been special but this time it's even more special because it's happening at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi and I am super excited to be there and meet everyone."

As the countdown to the biggest celebration of Indian Cinema worldwide draws near,

International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards announces the winners for the Technical Awards for the 22nd edition in Yas Island, Abu Dhabi on May 20th 2022.

IIFA ROCKS PERFORMERS Debating at IIFA Rocks this year are Devi Sri Prasad, Tanishk Bagchi, Neha Kakkar, Dhvani Bhanushali, Guru Randhawa and Honey Singh.



Official trailer for Akshay Kumar Starrer Prithviraj Releases ahead of June premiere



(SAI Bureau) The official trailer has been unveiled for Prithviraj, the highly anticipated Yash Raj Films production starring international megastar Akshay Kumar. Akshay Kumar takes on the role of King Prithviraj Chauhan of the Chauhan

dynasty as he takes on Muhammad Ghori of the Ghurid dynasty in The First Battle of Tarain. The film enters cinemas from the 3rd June. Akshay, who stars alongside Manushi Chhillar in her Bollywood debut, took to his social media accounts on

Monday to share the trailer. He wrote, "Shaurya aur veerta ki amar kahaani. Ye hai kahaani Samrat Prithviraj Chauhan Ki (this is story of Prithviraj Chauhan) Releasing in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. Celebrate Samrat #Prithviraj Chauhan with #YRF50 only at a theatre near you on 3rd June."

Prithviraj is based on Prithviraj Raso, a Braj Bhasha epic poem about the life of Prithviraj Chauhan and also stars Sakshi Tanwar, Ashutosh and Lalit Tiwari in pivotal roles.

Akshay Kumar's upcoming list of releases in 2022 also includes Ram Setu, Cinderella, Raksha Bandhan and Oh My God! 2.

(SAI Bureau) The highly anticipated IIFA ROCKS will be hosted by Bollywood's biggest Producer - Director Karan Johar and multi-talented actress Parineeti Chopra and will bring to you headline acts from the best.

The event will take place at the Middle East's largest state-of-the-art indoor entertainment venue, Etihad Arena, part of Yas Bay Waterfront on Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, in collaboration with the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu

Dhabi), and Miral, Abu Dhabi's leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences.

Karan Johar - "I am thrilled to be hosting this year's IIFA Rocks. IIFA is beyond just an event, it's a brand and a platform where talent is bestowed on from music, arts and culture along with fashion shows that make it an extravagant weekend."

Parineeti Chopra - "I am super excited to be co-hosting IIFA Rocks this year. It is an honour to be a part of the hosting team. IIFA has always been

Miss India New York 2022 Organized by Panache Entertainment



ultimate final question and answer! The event was highlighted with the presence of the perfect chief guest, Bollywood's mesmerizing queen Meenakshi Sheshadri. The former Miss India herself, took the stage to congratulate, crown.

(By Staff Reporter) Glitz, Glam and Galore, it all came Down recently at Antuns by Minar in Hicksville, Long Island! Miss, Teen, Mrs and the FIRST EVER Miss PRE-TEEN India New York was brought to you by Nishi Bahl of Panache Entertainment in association with IFC. The

star studded evening opening with an opening dance choreographed by Shilpa Jhurani performed by ALL the beautiful contestants. New York's best of the best, perfect combination of beauty and brains, contestants between the ages of 6 to 66 took the ramp, choreographed by

Nishi Bahl and competed for the covenant crown! Each lady presented themselves with utmost grace, elegance, Poise and confidence and competed in the most elite ethnic wear, glamorous evening wear, a preliminary round consisting of their respective talent, and the



Common audience is telling us something and we must listen: Jackky Bhagnani

In a candid conversation with HT City, filmmaker Jackky Bhagnani discusses his upcoming slate of movies and his penchant for making massy entertainers



pressure of expectations being such a young producer?

I want to produce content that is universal and appeals to the larger geography and demography. I want to put in effort in improving this genre. Mass universal film doesn't mean badly written and lazily produced content that rides primarily on the star pull of the cast. If you watch Pushpa, each and every scene has been written with so much of craft. I want to create well written, well produced commercial entertainers that have really good music. Action, comedy, drama and even genres like larger than life historical and mythological content. I come from the school of mass entertainment. Not so long ago my father and lots of other Bollywood producers were catering to the entire Indian cinema going audience. Of course, that content needs to evolve and match the expectations of the newer generation of audience.

I want to do that. This is my vision.

Your upcoming slate of films is quite diverse, we believe. For instance: Ganapath is in the action genre, while Bade Miyan Chote Miyan is an action- comedy. What's your take on making mass entertainers for a theatrical experience, given the kind of consumption on OTT, and making movies which will only work in theatres?

If there is anything we've learnt over the years, it's that the audience is hungry for variety, for different content and this need is increasing at a rapid pace. My responsibility as a producer is to recognise that need, and cater to it. As far as the discussion around theatrical content vs OTT content is concerned, great content will work irrespective of the platform. Theatres offer that added layer of an experience, so while planning a mass entertainer for the big screen, one must always give audiences an enticing reason to opt for a theatrical experience.

As a producer, how do you maintain a balance between business and art? How does the fact that you have been an artiste yourself, help you in toeing this line ?

We are entertainers. If that requires art and craft, which it does, then we are artistes also. But the prime objective is to entertain. Also, audience is never wrong. We can't bore or confuse the audience. There is a lot of art that goes into giving the audience a very engaging and very entertaining time, and we want to do that. **Coming from a strong pedigree of massy commercial entertainers, are there any other plans to revive any classic Hindi-language films?**

Yes, there are plans to revive a lot more franchises. I will only be able to disclose these announcements at the right time. I'm really excited and look forward to contemporising them. With our recent learning, we hope to have them appeal to a wide audience.

(SAI Bureau) Filmmaker-actor Jackky Bhagnani is not someone who believes in churning out mediocre content. One of the youngest and dynamic producers in the country, Bhagnani is a man on a mission, which is to make movies, that resonate with the entire country, irrespective of the rich diversity. In a candid conversation with us, Bhagnani discusses his upcoming slate of movies and his penchant for making massy entertainers.

There are several people who have started believing that the Hindi film industry, Bollywood is slowly losing out to cinema from different

regions, especially to the movies being made in South. You thoughts?

We need to make good commercial films that resonate with the whole of India. I take the success of last few films as a great sign of revival of cinema as a mass entertainment medium. All kinds of audiences enjoying one particular film is actually great. Common audience is telling us something and we must listen. It's not about North or South, it's about coming up with good quality entertainers.

How do you approach a particular project, and how do you deal with there any

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