

## The Mother Of All Aviation Deals



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## Bharat Jodo Yatra Was Good. Rahul Gandhi, Now Move On



When Rahul Gandhi began his Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY) in September, many doubted that he would walk the entire course. After all, he was the "reluctant politician", hardly a match for his 24x7 adversaries with their blazing pursuit of power. His track record doesn't help. In his two decades in politics, Rahul Gandhi has taken off to undisclosed foreign

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Nikki Haley's South Asian heritage is historic part of her presidential campaign

The Indian community — just 1% of America — helped shape two political stars.



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## Who is ChatGPT Creator ?

ChatGPT creator Sam Altman grew up in St. Louis, a city in Missouri, US. Even as an eight year old, he had a deep interest in learning how to code and figured out how to program a Macintosh



(News Agency) ChatGPT ushered in a whole new era in the tech world and companies like Google and Opera are also trying to make it big in the AI race. Even though Artificial Intelligence has been around for quite some time, ChatGPT's popularity got people talking about it at a much grander scale. From students using it to write essays to content creators generating video scripts by entering various prompts, ChatGPT has

been used widely A premium version of the AI chatbot was also rolled out recently. However, users can also access the paid version by visiting OpenAI's website and logging in.

With so much talk around ChatGPT, let's take a look at the man behind it all- Sam Altman. Being the CEO of OpenAI, Sam co-founded the company along with Elon Musk in 2015..

(Contd. on page 19)

## India topples France as UK's largest Scotch whisky market



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## Britain's Queen Consort Camilla will not wear Kohinoor diamond for coronation



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# AAPI Announces 41st Annual Convention in Philadelphia in July 2023

(SAI Bureau) (Philadelphia, PA)

"It is with great pleasure that we announce that the 41st Annual Convention and Scientific Sessions organized by the American Association of Physicians of Indian origin (AAPI) will be held from July 6th to 9th, 2023 in the historical city of Philadelphia, PA," Dr. Ravi Kolli, President of AAPI announced here today.

Highlighting the importance of AAPI and the contributions of AAPI members in the United States, Dr. Kolli, a senior Psychiatrist by profession said, "Today, AAPI is strong representing over 120,000 Indian American physicians, 130 local Chapters, who make



up 10% of total physicians in the US and nearly 50% of International Medical Graduates, rooted in every corner of the nation, who serve every 7th patient in the US. We are proud of our achievements and our contributions to the healthcare industry and the millions of people we serve." "We invite you to the 41st Annual Convention in the historic city of Philadelphia, PA," Dr. Sanjay Gupta Convenor

the Philadelphia Host Team with questions or comments."

"The 2023 AAPI Annual Convention & Scientific Assembly offers an exciting venue to interact with leading physicians, health professionals, academicians, and scientists of Indian origin," said Dr. V. Ranga, Chair of AAPI BOT. "Physicians and healthcare professionals from across the country will convene and participate in the scholarly exchange of medical advances, to develop health policy agendas, and to encourage legislative priorities in the coming year. We look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia."

of AAPI Convention 2023 said. "We have convened a fantastic group of people to meet the needs of the convention and are very excited about this great event. Please reach out to any one of the representatives from

## 2023 SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP)

APPLICATIONS OPEN TO NYC YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 14-24  
Youth and employers can apply now at [nyc.gov/syep](https://nyc.gov/syep)

(SAI Bureau) NEW YORK – New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Commissioner Keith Howard today announced the launch of applications for the 2023 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). This summer will mark the 60th anniversary of the storied program, with New York City once again slated to provide a record 100,000 summer job opportunities for young people ages 14-24. SYEP applications

can be completed online ([nyc.gov/syep](https://nyc.gov/syep)) or at a participating community-based organization during the application period from Monday, February 13, through Friday, March 31, 2023. Applications also opened today for employers who would like to provide work experiences for SYEP participants by becoming a worksite. Program updates will be posted to DYCD's social media sites. For more information, call 311 or DYCD Community Connect (1-800-246-4646).

## Dr. Sampat Shivangi Addresses "Role Of Diaspora In Promoting Healthcare Eco-System During Amritkal" At PBD In Indore

(SAI Bureau) "We want to make India's Health Care a World Class Endeavor, by utilizing:

A. Information Technology; B. Field of Medicine; C. Finance, Banking; and, D. Politics. Towards this end, he recommended that the Government of India must collaborate and harness the resources available in large organizations such as the American Association of

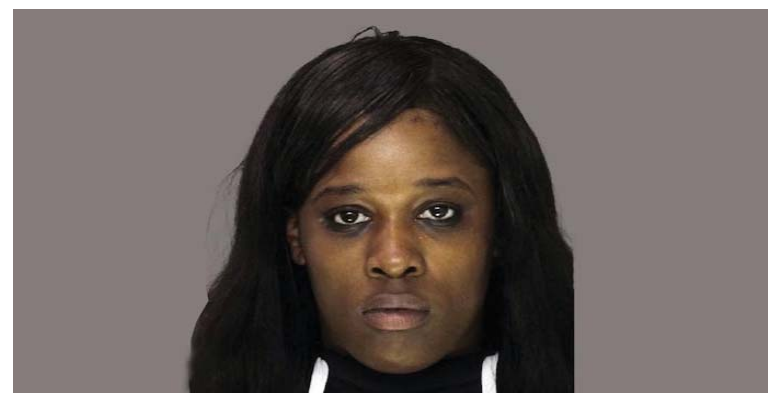


Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) which is the largest ethnic medical organization in the United States,

representing the interests of over 100,000 Physicians of Indian origin, who serve every 7th patient, making up of nearly 15% of the healthcare professionals in their adopted country," Dr. Sampat Shivangi, a physician, an influential Indian-American community leader, and a veteran leader of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) said, while addressing the delegates during the Pravasi Bhrataiya Diwas in Indore, India on January 9th, 2023.

## US mom charged after 6-year-old son pulls out gun in school bus

A mother in Pennsylvania's Norristown was arrested after her 6-year-old son brought a gun to Joseph K Gotwals Elementary School on February 9. The boy found the weapon in a dresser in his mother's room the night before bringing it to school.



(SAI Bureau) A woman in United States's Pennsylvania was charged this week after a six-year-old in each case brought a gun to school, officials said, marking at least three times an elementary school student has brought a weapon to campus this year, including when a six-year-old allegedly shot his teacher in Newport News, Virginia, last month.

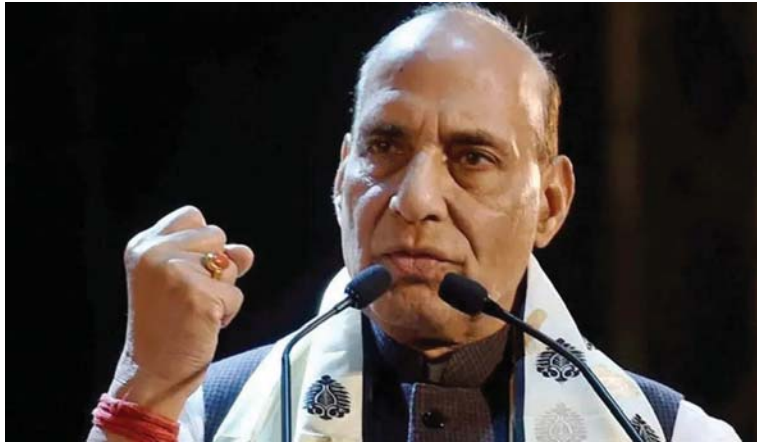
As per the prosecutor, a mother in Pennsylvania's Norristown was arrested after her 6-year-old son brought a gun to Joseph K Gotwals Elementary School on February 9. Jasmin Devlin, 30, turned herself in on charges of felony endangering the welfare of a child and reckless endangerment for failing to secure a firearm in her home, the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office said in a news release. The 6-year-old

child, who was not named, was showing the gun to students on a bus to Gotwals Elementary School, according to an affidavit of probable cause. According to the document, a group of students told the school secretary that a student showed them a gun and bullets. "The school's secretary immediately brought the boy into the office, looked in his backpack and saw the firearm. She then called Norristown Police," the release said. As per the press release, the police suspect the boy found the weapon in a dresser in his mother's room the night before bringing it to school. The 6-year-old told detectives that his 10-year-old brother pulled the gun out of a drawer and started playing with it. The younger brother told police he was scared he was going to be shot.



# India does not want to remain just an assembly workshop: Rajnath Singh

Rajnath Singh addressed over 70 CEOs of local and global Original Equipment Manufacturers during a round table organised as part of Aero India 2023.



There was official participation from Sudan and Saudi Arabia as well. Companies such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Israel Aerospace Industries, General Atomics, Safran, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Bharat Electronics Limited, Bharat Dynamics Limited, BEM Limited, Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Forge, Dynamatic Technologies, and BrahMos Aerospace participated in the discussion. Emphasising that India does not want to remain just an assembly workshop and is looking to engage with friendly countries in defence and security, based on sharing expertise and capabilities, Singh told the industry leaders that the government is open to new ideas and is committed to harnessing the energy, entrepreneurial spirit and capability of the private

sector partners in the area of defence production. The defence minister said the CEOs' round table will "sow the seeds of successful new ventures and partnerships, boost investment, expand indigenous manufacturing and bolster aerospace and defence ecosystem in India."

"This platform was to address the present and future global needs and discuss the importance of supply chain strategy and operations as the world deals with the aftermath of the pandemic and global disruptions," the defence ministry said in a statement. Several foreign OEMs made announcements regarding their plans for investments and collaborations including Safran, Boeing, Collins Aerospace, Pratt & Whitney, and Thales in the

defence and aerospace sector. "General Atomics and Bharat Forge announced to deepen their collaboration in aircraft components and parts. Hensoldt announced Design/TOT and IPR transfer of obstacle avoidance system for Indian Helicopters and co-development of Advanced Multi-Sensor Electro-optics Airborne Gimbals for Indian and world market," the statement added. The CEOs' round table engaged industries for co-development and co-production to make India a Commercial Manufacturing Hub and base for global product support, while exploring the Indian and global markets. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan as well as the three service chiefs also attended the round table.

(News Agency) Defence minister Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) during a round table organised as part of Aero India 2023. More than 75 companies, including 28 foreign OEMs from 15 countries and domestic companies and Defence PSUs, participated in the discussion aimed at forging partnerships between domestic and global Industries of the aerospace and defence sector.

## Are you in a relationship but don't like celebrating Valentine's Day? You're not alone

You may love it or hate it, but you cannot avoid witnessing the fervour that February 14 aka Valentine's Day brings along.

(News Agency) You are in a happy relationship. The one that is built on the strong foundation of love, trust and truth! Deep within your heart, you know how grateful you are to have that special one in your life. And, your significant other knows this too. You often express it to them in your own love language. It may mean surprise gifts, impromptu dates, sending adorable reels, rib-tickling memes, writing letters, cooking a meal or just waking them up with a wholesome cup of tea. Each day, in that case, is a day of love. PS: You can skip the ones spent over fighting and giving your partner a cold shoulder. Cuz, hello, who are we even kidding by expecting that a relationship is a joyride every day! That is, however, not the point. You two are happy in your own world and make each other feel special in your own ways, not just on a regular basis but also on significant days such as anniversaries, birthdays and all. But then comes Valentine's Day. You may love it or hate it, but you cannot avoid witnessing the fervour that February 14 aka Valentine's Day brings along. Even if you don't want to, you are somehow forced to feel that 'love is in the air'. And, it actually is.

Courtesy: All those red and heart-themed decorations at malls, never-ending Valentine's Day sale ads popping up on your mobile screens and the oh-so-mushy posts of much-in-love couples on social media. Is it possible to avoid it at all? We doubt! But, is it important to fall for the Valentine's Day fad, especially if you are in a relationship? Definitely not!

You might be very happy in your relationship with your partner and still hate the idea of celebrating love on a specific day. From being cliché to a mere marketing gimmick, people in love who hate Valentine's Day have their labels for the impossible-to-ignore day of love.

"The entire concept of Valentine's Day for me is preposterous. Thanks to social media, the pressure for couples to celebrate Valentine's Day in a grand manner is immense. I can go out for a quick romantic dinner any day, why dedicate one day to celebrate love? Moreover, the cafes are full, restaurants

have long waiting queues and lovebirds are thronging malls and shops to buy gifts. The bombardment of heavy discounts on gold and diamond jewellery, almost luring me to make



that quintessential purchase for my partner, and the overall commercial aspect of it all is an aversion for me," says Tiasa Bhowal, who calls herself a romantic soul. "I love love. I dearly love my partner. We have been together for several years now. But I just don't understand this idea of Valentine's Day. The day holds no significance for me or my partner. Then why should I jump onto this craze and end up making impulsive expenses on a fancy date or a gift. I would rather save such

gestures all for our anniversary. Another reason I dislike Valentine's Day is that my partner is a die-hard romantic and does not leave a single chance to celebrate grandeur. The clash of opinion and the half-hearted decision from either of the side turns it into a salty day," says Delhi-based Anupriya Khanna, who is now married to her longtime partner. "For me, Valentine's Day doesn't hold any relevance because if you are in love, you're in love every day. And if you want to celebrate your love so much, there are always anniversaries or special days like the first day you met, kissed, etc. Spending thousands of rupees to celebrate this concept is just rubbish. Love can be celebrated at a chai tapri, if true," Shubhi Mishra shared. Sonakshi echoed similar thoughts as she shared why she is not fond of Valentine's Day. "There are many days one can celebrate love. Each couple decides when and how often they'd like to celebrate each other. The absurdity to pin down a day to flaunt your love feels too impelling. Also, most of the people do not even know the reason why it is celebrated," she said. Well, well. What are your thoughts about Valentine's Day?



## BBC India on Radar for Long, Was Defiant Despite Various Notices over Transfer Pricing: I-T Sleuths

(News Agency) As income tax (I-T) sleuths reached the BBC India offices on Tuesday, amid the controversy over BBC's documentary on PM Narendra Modi and the Gujarat riots, sources revealed that the organisation has been on the I-T radar for long over violation of the transfer pricing clause. "The Income Tax Authorities are currently at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai and we are fully cooperating. We hope to have this situation resolved as soon as possible," BBC said in its response.

BBC India, which operates on behalf of BBC London, produces television software and other news material on behalf of the parent company. Sources in the I-T department confirmed to CNN-News18 that only two offices of BBC India were surveyed – one in Mumbai and other in Delhi. Investigation against BBC is being done by the Director General (Mumbai) of the I-T department.

I-T sleuths reveal that the clause of transfer pricing is invoked when the department finds that a particular organization is billing less to the parent organization compared to the market pricing and at the same time, the associated organization is not "keeping an arm's length". On the issue of transfer pricing, BBC India has received various notices from the I-T department in the past, however, the organization has been defiant, said the sleuths.

**'SURVEY, NOT A SEARCH OR RAID'**

I-T sleuths specifically highlighted that Tuesday's

action was a survey under section 133A of the Income Tax Act and not a search or a raid. Under the section, a survey can be conducted only during business hours and no valuables can be seized. However, in case, during a survey, the department finds adequate evidence and tax-evaded valuables, a survey can be converted into a search/raid. A



raid/search is conducted under section 132 of the Income Tax Act. Sources reveal that some mobile phones and laptops of senior BBC officials were taken for some time and released after copying data. A former I-T official told CNN-News18 that the onus of proving violation under transfer pricing lies on the department and is usually a tough task. In most cases of transfer pricing, the department comes back empty-handed at the appeal level. The survey after the controversial documentary has given the opposition more ammunition, amid their allegations "over the use of Indian agencies to muzzle those criticising the government".

## 'One Gautam did tapasya, another one...': Congress continues tirade on Adani

**Once the JPC is there, people will know whether the issue is of seb (apple) or Sebi," Pawan Khera said referring to PM Modi as 'Narendra Gautamdas Modi'.**

(News Agency) There was one Gautam who became Buddha after tapasya and now there is another Gautam for whom PM Modi did tapasya for 18 hours a day for the last 8-9 years, Congress leader Pawan Khera said on Friday in a fresh attack on the government over the Adani row. "The relationship is so strange that PM Modi can't even take his name. Say something no, something like 'ae ji'. But when Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge take his name that gets expunged," Pawan Khera said. The Congress has been questioning the government unrelentingly sticking to its demand of a JPC (joint parliamentary committee) probe into the alleged scam. "You all have heard the names of Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh. In both cases, JPCs were set up. PM Modi is the only one who is scared in the name of JPC. Once the JPC is there, people will know whether the issue is of seb (apple) or

Sebi," the Congress leader said. "The money that LIC lost belongs to the people of the country, not of PM Modi. PM Modi goes on foreign trips. Adani too goes with him, or soon after him. Everyone is now aware of what happened in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The country has the right to know how many shell companies Adani has. What is this friendship that is beyond the country, democracy, Parliament, JPC, Sebi?" Pawan Khera said. As the Supreme Court on Friday reserved its order on an expert committee to review the regulator mechanism, Pawan Khera said the RSS is now calling the Supreme Court 'anti-national'. "RSS which itself is an unregistered organisation is now calling Supreme Court anti-national," Pawan Khera said. "When PV Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee could set up JPC, then why Narendra Gautamdas Modi, is it Gautamdas or Damodardas, can't allow JPC," Pawan Khera said in a dig.

## Who is Monu Manesar, Bajrang Dal member accused in Bhiwani deaths case

**Charred remains of two men were found in a car in Haryana's Bhiwani. Their family members have alleged that the two were abducted by cow vigilantes associated with the Bajrang Dal. One of the accused, Monu Manesar, member of Cow Protection Task Force, has said in a video that he was being framed.**

(News Agency) Charred remains of two men were found in a Bolero in Haryana's Bhiwani district on Thursday. In their complaint to police, the families of the deceased, Nasir, 25, and Junaid, 35, said people who abducted them from Rajasthan's Bharatpur were cow vigilantes associated with the Bajrang Dal.

Police said one of the victims was involved in cases of cow smuggling and a probe was on to determine if the crime was a case of cow vigilantism.

Ismail, Junaid's cousin who filed the FIR, said the bodies were of Junaid and Nasir and they were murdered. Mohit Yadav alias Monu Manesar, one of accused named in the FIR, denied the allegation in a social media video.

**WHO IS MONU MANESAR?**

Mohit Yadav alias Monu Manesar is



a resident of Manesar. He has been associated with Bajrang Dal for the last 10-12 years. For the last few years, he has emerged as the face of confrontation with cow smugglers. Monu is also a member of the Cow Protection Task Force.

He has been absconding after a viral video showed him firing several rounds from a pistol in Haryana's Pataudi, where clashes were reported between two groups last



week. A class 12 student was injured in the firing incident.

**'I AM BEING FRAMED'**

After an FIR was registered against Monu, he released a video saying that no Bajrang Dal team was present there. Monu said the allegations leveled against him were baseless.

"This incident is unfortunate. We came to know about this incident from social media. The strictest

action should be taken against all the accused in this incident. We are fully prepared to cooperate in the investigation," said Monu in a video. He has demanded a CBI inquiry into the matter.

**WHAT IS THE CASE?**

Nasir and Junaid alias Juna, both residents of Ghatmeeka village in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district, were allegedly abducted on Wednesday and their bodies were found in a charred Bolero in Loharu in Bhiwani the next morning. Police said they were yet to ascertain their identities but confirmed that the burnt car was the Bolero the two men were driving before they were reported missing from Rajasthan's Bharatpur. The two charred bodies recovered from the Bolero were sent to a government hospital in Haryana's Loharu for post mortem. A DNA examination of the bodies would be conducted to ascertain their identities, police said.



# BBC in the news: From Gujarat documentary row to income tax survey

**Income Tax officials conducted surveys at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai over allegations of international taxation and transfer pricing irregularities. Opposition leaders criticised the I-T survey that came close on the heels of the British broadcaster's recent documentary on the 2002 post-Godhra riots. Here is all that has happened since the BBC released the documentary in January this year.**

(News Agency) Income Tax officials conducted surveys at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai over allegations of international taxation and transfer pricing irregularities. Opposition leaders criticised this government's action against the British broadcaster's recent documentary on the 2002 Godhra riots. Here is all that has happened since the BBC released its documentary in January this year.

**January 17, 2023:** BBC releases documentary — India: The Modi Question — on 2002 post-Godhra riots that delves into the Gujarat government's role under then Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Released only in the UK through its streaming service, it was soon available across social media platforms.

**January 21:** Government issues an order to block the documentary using emergency powers under Rule 16 of IT Rules 2021. It even directed YouTube and Twitter to stop sharing the documentary.



**January 22:** The British Prime Minister defends his Indian counterpart in the House of Commons, saying "I am not sure I agree at all with the characterisation" of PM Narendra Modi in the controversial BBC documentary.

**January 24:** Students in Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University plan a screening of the BBC documentary. Watch it on mobile phones after a power cut. JNU Students' Union president

alleges stone-pelting by Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) members ahead of the screening event.

**January 24:** BBC releases the second part of its controversial documentary that looked at the Modi government's performance after his re-election in 2019. Reports said there was no blocking order by the government for this edition of the documentary.

**January 26:** The Students Federation

of India (SFI) organises a screening of the documentary at the University of Hyderabad campus. To counter SFI, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) screens 'The Kashmir Files' movies.

**January 27:** The Kerala unit of the Congress holds a public screening of 'India: The Modi Question' at Thiruvananthapuram's Shanghumugham beach.

**February 3:** The Supreme Court issues a notice to the government on several petitions against the Centre's decision to ban the broadcaster's documentary on the 2002 Godhra riots.

**February 10:** The Supreme Court dismisses a petition seeking a complete ban on BBC in India over the 2002 Godhra riots documentary.

**February 14:** Income Tax officials conduct surveys at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai over allegations of international taxation and transfer pricing irregularities. Opposition leaders criticise the income tax department's action against the BBC.

## 39, including SDM and SHO, booked as woman, daughter burn to death during eviction drive in UP



**UP Police has booked 39 people, including cops, on murder charges as a woman and her daughter were burnt to death in Kanpur Dehat during an anti-encroachment drive. Officials said the two immolated themselves, but family members of the two alleged their hut was set on fire during the demolition drive on Monday.**

to how Pramila Dikshit (45) and Neha met their tragic end. While authorities claim the two immolated themselves, family members and locals allege their hut was set on fire during the demolition drive. After a preliminary investigation, Sub-

Divisional Magistrate (Maitha) Gyaneshwar Prasad was placed under suspension. The JCB that was used in the demolition of the victims' house has also been seized. The Inspector General of Police (Kanpur Range) Prashant Kumar

told news agency PTI that an FIR has been registered on charges of murder, attempt to murder apart from mischief by killing or maiming cattle, mischief by fire with intent to destroy house, etc and intentional insult.

(SAI Bureau) Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday and booked 39 people, including an SDM, a police station in-charge and four revenue officials, on murder charges after a mother-daughter duo were burnt to death during an anti-encroachment drive at a village in Kanpur Dehat. Police swung into action even as villagers protested over the deaths and refused to hand over the bodies for autopsy. The death of the woman and her 20-year-old daughter took place on Monday when police, district administration and revenue officials went to Madauli village in Kanpur Dehat to clear

encroachments on "gram samaj" land. Accounts differ as

## Major fire damages 300 shops in Assam's Jorhat bazaar, no casualties reported so far

**More than 300 shops were gutted due to a devastating fire in Assam's Jorhat bazaar. Fire tenders were immediately rushed to the spot and no casualties have been reported so far.**

(SAI Bureau) More than 300 shops have been gutted in a devastating fire that engulfed a British-era bazaar in Assam's Jorhat district, officials said on Friday. The blaze that broke out late on Thursday evening at Chowk Bazaar, in the heart of Jorhat town, was brought under control after nearly 10 hours of fire-fighting, and efforts are still being made to douse pockets of flames, they said.

### 50 FIRE TENDERS RUSHED

Over 50 fire tenders were rushed to the

bazaar to fight the flames, which is suspected to have been caused by an electrical short circuit at a shop, the officials said. There is no report of any casualty as all shops were closed with owners and staff having left for their homes, a police officer said. The shops that were damaged mostly sold grocery items, clothes, utensils, books and stationery items, he said. Shopkeepers, during the second half of the day on Friday, were seen rummaging through the debris to recover

goods, much of which has been reduced to ashes.

### SHOPS GUTTED IN FIRE

A 50-year-old sobbing Montu Saikia, who owned a bell-metal utensil shop, said that he has lost everything to the fire, and the little left could be sold as scrap items. "We reached home around 8.30 pm after closing our shops, and half an hour later we heard that a fire broke out in the bazaar. By the time, we could reach the spot, the fire had spread far and wide," he rued.



# 12 South African cheetahs to land in India on Saturday; MP's Kuno park ready to welcome them

As per Indian wildlife laws, a month-long quarantine is mandatory before importing animals and they are required to be kept in isolation for another 30 days after arrival in the country.



expert.KNP Director Uttam Sharma said they have set up 10 quarantine bomas for South African cheetahs. In two of these facilities, two pairs of cheetah brothers would be kept.

"We have completed our preparations to receive the big cats on Saturday," he added.

Experts said a delegation from South Africa visited KNP in early September last year to see arrangements at the wildlife sanctuary for housing the world's fastest land animals. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and South Africa last month for the translocation of the mammals last month.

South Africa has donated these big cats to India. But India has to pay USD 3,000 for the capture of every cheetah to the African nation before they are translocated, said the wildlife expert.

India had planned to airlift these South African cheetahs in

August last year but couldn't do so due to delay in signing a formal translocation agreement between the two countries. Due to the delay in the MoU signing for the inter-continental translocation of these big cats, some experts had in December expressed concern over the health of the South African cheetahs as these animals have been quarantined in their home country since July 15 in anticipation of their transfer to India.

As a result of long quarantine, these animals might have lost their fitness, they had said. Prolonged quarantine could be taking a toll on the health of these felines, who are slated to join the eight cheetahs imported from Namibia and released into KNP in mid-September, the experts had said. In fact, the 12 South African cheetahs earmarked for India have not hunted for themselves after being kept in bomas, wildlife experts in the

know of India's cheetah reintroduction plan had said.

Three of them have been kept in Phinda quarantine boma in KwaZulu-Natal Province and nine in Rooiberg Quarantine boma in Limpopo Province, they said. Seven of the cheetahs have lost fitness to a considerable extent as they have not hunted even once since July 15, one of the experts told PTI last month.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on his 72nd birthday on September 17, had released eight cheetahs flown in from Namibia into KNP amid a lot of fanfare, setting the ball rolling for the revival of their population in India where these distinctively spotted cat species became extinct seven decades ago. These fastest land animals from Namibia – five females and three males – are currently in hunting enclosures at the park before their full release into the wild.

(SAI Bureau) After months of delay, a dozen wild cheetahs from South Africa will finally arrive around 12 noon on Saturday in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park (KNP), where eight such felines were brought from Namibia last year, a wildlife expert associated with India's cheetah revival project said on Monday. These big cats – seven males and five females – will embark on journey to their new home thousands of miles away aboard an Indian Air Force (IAF) transport aircraft from the OR Tambo International Airport, Gauteng, South Africa on Friday evening, the project participant and expert told PTI.

He said the South African cheetahs will first arrive at the Gwalior Air Force base in MP on Saturday morning and 30 minutes later they will be transported some 165km away to KNP in Sheopur district by IAF helicopters. After landing at KNP around 12 noon, they will be put into quarantine bomas (enclosures) after half an hour (12.30 pm), added the

## 1 lakh jobs, Ram Mandir, free education : Key takeaways from Karnataka Budget 2023-24

Various schemes and provisions for farmers, students and women were announced in the Karnataka budget for 2023-24 at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Friday.

(SAI Bureau) Seeking to woo students and farmers ahead of the election, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday announced free education in government pre-university and government degree colleges to benefit 8 lakh students. The chief minister also announced an increase in the limit of interest-free short-term loans given to farmers from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh from the coming financial year.

Various schemes and provisions for farmers, students and women were announced in the Karnataka budget for 2023-24 at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Friday.

Apart from this, the state government also announced that a Ram Mandir will be constructed in Ramadevara Betta in Ramanagara.

The Chief Minister also said Anjanadri hill in Koppal district, which is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Anjaneya (Hanuman), will get better tourist facilities as a detailed project report has been formulated involving various works at an estimated cost of Rs 100 crore and a

tender has been invited.

He also said that in the next two years, a comprehensive development and renovation drive of various temples and Maths will be undertaken by the government with an expenditure of Rs 1,000 crore. 'Shrama Shakthi' scheme will be launched to provide aid of Rs 500 per head per month to landless women farm labourers

--The budget proposes to raise limit of interest-free short-term loan to farmers from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

-Loan of Rs 25,000 crore will be distributed to over 30 lakh farmers in next financial year

-Additional subsidy of Rs 10,000 in the year 2023-24 under a new scheme 'Bhoo Siri' for 'Kisan Credit Card' holders.

-Rs 39,031 cr total grant for the agriculture sector

### FOR STUDENTS:

-Free education in Government Pre-University and Government Degree Colleges under 'CM Vidya Shakti Scheme'. This will benefit eight lakh students of the state.

-Self-defence training will be provided to girls studying in residential schools under the department of minority affairs

-Rs 100 crore set aside for construction of new schools in 23 aspirational taluks which do not have Karnataka Public Schools and for the development of functional 46 schools.

-Free coaching for 10000 SC/ST youths to get appointed as Agniveers of the Indian Army

-1 lakh govt jobs to be filled.

-New Bus scheme called Makaala Buss to be launched for school and college students.

### FOR WOMEN:

-250 well-equipped 'She toilets' will be constructed in the heavily populated markets, mega commercial complexes, etc of Bengaluru city.

-Yoga training in all govt women first grade colleges and polytechnic colleges

in aspirational districts for boosting physical strength and confidence of girls

-The state government will provide free bus pass facility to all women working in the organised sector. Rs 1,000 crore will

be provided to this scheme which will benefit a total of 30 lakh women.

-The monthly honorarium of anganwadi workers, cooks and assistants under midday meals, Asha workers and librarians to be increased by Rs 1,000.

-Loan facility for women entrepreneurs in the service sector at 4% interest rate to increase from Rs 2 crore to Rs 5 crore

### FOR ROADS, HIGHWAYS:

"High powered Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Authority is constituted in order to coordinate the operations of various transport agencies and also to find out the scientific remedies to mitigate the traffic problems of the fast-developing Bengaluru," the CM said.

Grant of Rs 1,350 crore from the Central government and Rs 1,000 crore from the state government for Bengaluru suburban rail project will be provided in the current year

-Feasibility report has been already prepared for the construction of airports in Davangere and Koppal districts. Action will be taken to commence the construction work this year: CM



## Manish Sisodia asks CBI to defer questioning in Delhi liquor case, says 'busy with budget work'

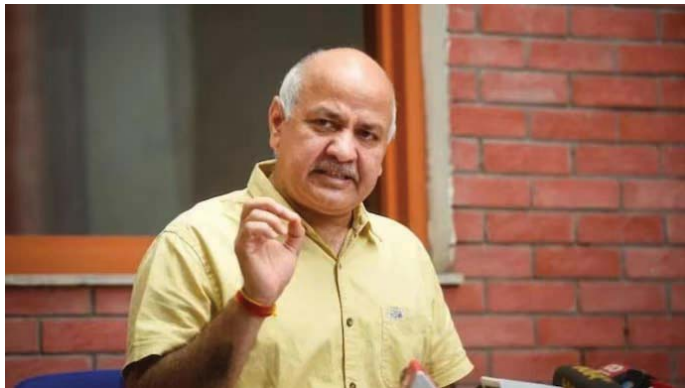
(SAI Bureau) Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who was called to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) office today for questioning in the Delhi liquor policy case, has requested the central agency to defer the questioning to another date.


The CBI summoned Sisodia nearly three

to shift the date. I have always cooperated with these agencies," Sisodia said. He was called for questioning based on the fresh available evidence against him. The summons is in connection with alleged corruption in the formulation and implementation of the excise policy for the national capital. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sisodia, who also held the charge of the Excise department, was earlier questioned on October 17 and his home and bank lockers were also searched in connection with the case. The CBI had registered an FIR in a special court in August last year against Sisodia and 14 others under various sections of the Indian


months after filing the charge sheet in the case. The AAP leader, who also serves as Delhi's Finance Minister, sought an exemption and has asked for a week's time as he is busy "preparing the budget". "I will visit the CBI office by the end of February, whenever they (CBI) will call me. Being the Finance Minister of Delhi, preparing the budget is very important, so I have requested

Penal Code (IPC), including 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 477A (falsification of records), and section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, which deals with taking undue advantage to influence a public servant by corrupt or illegal means or by the exercise of personal influence. Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena ordered the CBI probe last year.





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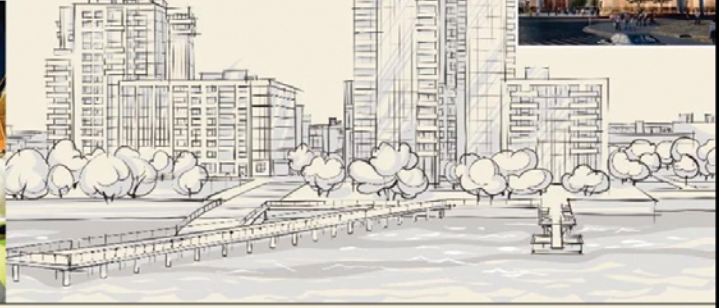
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## By Targeting Narendra Modi, Congress-Led Opposition is Falling into BJP's Trap

As we get closer to Assembly polls for nine states in 2023 and the Lok Sabha polls scheduled for 2024, the budget session of the Parliament has given some clear indications in terms of the agenda for these polls. It has also given an indication that the Opposition parties are becoming more and more desperate. This was reflected in the frequent use of unparliamentary language, disrupting Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech by sloganeering and other unsavoury comments, and most importantly making unsubstantiated and wild allegations in the Adani row. The result was that certain comments made by the leaders of the Opposition were justifiably expunged.

### BJP'S POLL AGENDA

Through the budget, the President's address to the joint session and the Prime Minister's reply on Motion of thanks in the ongoing session, there were enough indications about the poll agenda set by the BJP for 2023-24.

The BJP's focus on its core constituencies is very clear and these constituencies are: Youth, Women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, other socially marginalised sections of the society, farmers and most importantly the 'middle class'. The Prime Minister mentioned the work done for these sections in detail in his speeches in both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha while speaking on the Motion of thanks for the President's address. The latest and the most significant addition in this list is the 'middle class'. There had been often a debate in the past that the Modi government hasn't met the expectations of the middle class. In run up to 2023-2024 polls, the Modi government decided to take this perception bull by horn.

The tax rebates in the personal income tax regime for the middle class were announced in the budget. At least 1 crore individuals in the Rs 5-7 lakh income bracket are expected to benefit from the government's decision to increase the rebate level to Rs 7 lakh under the new tax regime. There has been a slew of other measures in the field of health, education, financial and MSME sectors that are going to bring huge benefits for the middle class. In fact, no budget in the last nine years has been so middle-class-friendly as the 2023-24 budget.

The Prime Minister, while replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks talked about the contribution of India's middle class in detail. Then on 10 February, while flagging off a new Vande Bharat train in Mumbai, he reiterated specifically that this year's budget has strengthened the middle class.

The second key category that the BJP has been focusing on is Scheduled Tribes (STs). The Prime Minister began his reply to the debate on President's address by specifically mentioning that it has been a historical event that the present President of India is a tribal and it is a moment of pride for tribals across

the nation. He also mentioned during his speeches that it is the BJP government which declared the birth anniversary of a tribal leader Birsa Munda as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas. These actions and assertions of the Prime Minister are likely to benefit the BJP. Out of 542 Lok Sabha seats, 47 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. The BJP had won 27 of these seats in 2014 and improved its tally to 31 in 2019. It is looking at improving its tally further in 2024 polls. This outreach to STs would also have a significant impact in the state assembly polls of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and even in north-eastern states going to state polls in 2023. The Congress had won 5 Lok Sabha seats reserved for STs in 2014 and it came down to 4 in 2019. It has done nothing significant to improve its tally on these seats and is waiting to get some benefit from anti-incumbency. The BJP is well aware of this scenario and hence it has made a massive outreach to the Scheduled Tribes.

### MODI VS REST

Another key takeaway from the ongoing parliament session is that the Opposition failed to identify itself with the issues which are connected to the common people. The way it went ballistic in Parliament over the Adani row was a political blunder. This resonates, however, with the radical leftist position taken by Congress on all economic issues. Its attempts to revive the 'Old Pension Scheme' is also a part of that 1970s Socialist welfare model which could be a big jolt for fiscal management. The 'freebies' model had blunted the growth of the Indian economy for long under the Congress' socialist regimes and we witnessed it had catastrophic effects during 10 years of the UPA rule from 2004 to 2014. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a firm stand on this issue that populist measures which could hurt the fundamentals of the economy and hence India's interests, in the long run, shouldn't be pursued.

Throughout the proceedings of the Parliament, ever since the budget was presented on 1 February, it was clear that the Opposition doesn't have a narrative of its own. It doesn't have an alternative development model. Instead, the opposition leaders are busy building only a counter-narrative against the BJP and finding faults in the Modi government's development model.

And in that sphere too, they are not able to leave an impact. The reason is that instead of targeting the government on policy issues, the Opposition leaders are only targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi with lines between the political and the personal attacks getting blurred. That is precisely what happened in 2014 and 2019. The credibility of Modi is far superior to that of any other Opposition leader. The results were evident in itself. The same script seems to be getting repeated for 2024 also.

## Despite his hard bargain, Yediyurappa is BJP's poll totem in Karnataka

BS Yediyurappa, 79, multiple-term BJP Chief Minister of Karnataka, looms large over the upcoming elections. From a placatory public arm on his shoulder by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the BJP's national executive last month in Delhi to chatter of the Shimoga (Yediyurappa stronghold) airport being renamed after him when it is inaugurated later this month by Modi, BSY is the flavour of the election season. BSY's hard scrabble fight to make the BJP a force to reckon with in Karnataka, so far, the only saffron outpost in southern India, his electorally important Lingayat vote bank and the less than satisfactory performance of his successor Basavaraj Bommai as CM, all add up to Yeddi as a poll totem for the BJP. Colour me unsurprised as Yeddi, a 24/7 politician, has made himself ubiquitous to the election. Quips a senior Congress leader, "If Tipu Sultan (18th century ruler) can be invoked daily then why not Yediyurappa." He has a point. CN Awasth Narayan, minister for higher education in the BJP government, attacked Siddaramaiah of the Congress, saying he "should be finished off just like the Mysuru ruler was". Before this, the BJP state president, Nalin Kumar Kateel, had said that "those who support Tipu should be chased away into the forest. Only those who sing bhajans of Lord Ram should remain in this land".

The BJP, in an incredible move, conflating Tipu Sultan and Veer Savarkar in a public rally, said that "if Siddaramaiah comes to power as an admirer of Tipu, who do you want: Tipu or Savarkar? Where should we send this Tipu Sultan?"

The condition of Bengaluru, the cyber hub of India, is so dismal, with terrible infrastructure and permanently gridlocked traffic, that the BJP has the compulsion to make Tipu a hot button issue since the Opposition is focused on "bilji, sadak,

paani" (electricity, roads and water).

The endemic divisions in the Congress are ensuring that the BJP remains optimistic about Karnataka. As it has become the norm in the Congress, it is bleeding because of the jockeying for power of various leaders, including Siddaramaiah versus DK Shivkumar. In a startling admission, senior Congress leader G Parameshwara said on Monday that the Congress had 10 CM aspirants, including himself. Parameshwara was blunt in saying that everyone is in politics only for power and all want to win the elections and become the CM. During Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, the cracks were papered over as all "CM aspirants walked with him" but, subsequently the Karnataka Congress has seen an unravelling much like the faction-ridden Rajasthan Congress. Bommai has been unable to establish himself as a political authority and is publicly perceived as having to run to Delhi to get approvals from Union Home Minister Amit Shah, whether it is about expanding his Cabinet or an infrastructure project. While Modi and Shah asked Yediyurappa to quit because he had aged out of the bracket the duo had put for active politics, Yeddi refused to fade away. He wanted his two sons, BY Raghavendra, a Lok Sabha MP, and BY Vijayendra - to be given important posts in the state BJP. After an initial hesitation, the BJP realised that the turmoil-ridden Karnataka BJP needed Yediyurappa and his strong Lingayat vote bank. So, concessions have been made for him and assurances given on the political career of his two sons. Yediyurappa has always been an unpredictable politician, having even left the BJP to start his own regional party after he was asked to quit post following a slew of corruption cases. Yediyurappa returned and merged his regional party with the BJP on his own terms and ensured that he kept calling the shots.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

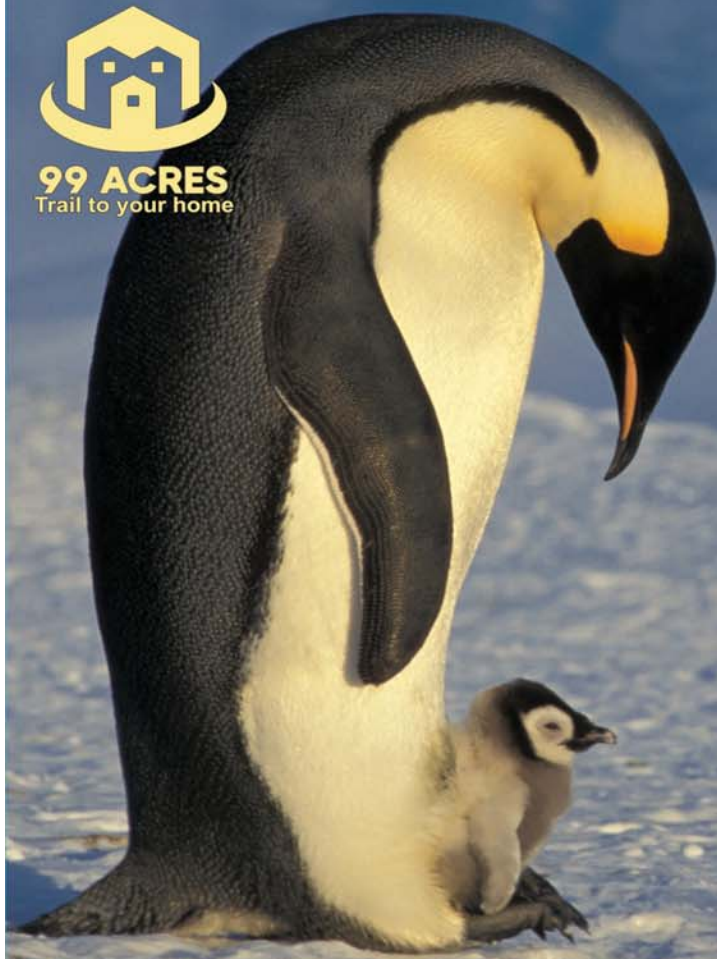
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# How Indian Laws Govern People's Right To Love And Live

In India, only those relationships between a man and a woman are considered to be legitimate when there is a marriage between the two

Seven years ago, Shweta and Arnav met at a house-warming ceremony of a common relative. Their mothers are distant cousins. Their parents go out for holidays together and are also part of the same social circle. Shweta is 35 and Arnav is 37. About five years ago, at a social event in Arnav's house, the two of them realised that they "liked each other a lot". Occasional cups of coffee at Starbucks turned into regular meets and then into day-long weekend dates.

"We would hang out together and realised that we loved being together. After dating for two years, we realised that we did not want to be apart," Shweta tells Outlook. "I was not keen on getting married, I wanted to be free of a long-term commitment. So did Arnav. But we did not want to live apart." They decided to live together without the trappings of marriage. "We were and are clear that it is a live-in relationship. Since we could afford to buy our own home, we bought a flat in a housing complex in Goregaon (in the western suburbs of Mumbai) and started living together five years ago," adds Arnav. They have a three-year old daughter and still have no plans to get hitched.

Since five years ago, their upper



class, well-heeled parents stopped talking to them and to each other. "How can a friendship spanning five decades be forgotten and turn bitter just because the two of us are in a live-in relationship?" questions Shweta. Their friends and colleagues know that they are not married. Some interact with them socially, while a lot many have kept away. According to Arnav, it is when their single friends get married, they jump on to a moralistic bandwagon.

"Suddenly we are not invited to

their homes. The wives are not comfortable with Shweta, so friendships turn cold. Frankly, it does not bother us much," says Arnav.

Over the past few years, live-in relationships have become more acceptable in India as people start to open their minds about the living patterns of others. Pre-marital intimacy and live-in relationships no longer raise as many eyebrows as they did some years ago. However, there continues to be ample criticism as these living concepts lack

leg-ality and acceptance by society.

In India, only those relationships between a man and a woman are considered to be legitimate when there is a marriage between the two. A heterosexual relationship sans marriage is considered illegitimate in India.

There is no particular law in India pertaining to live-in relationships. Therefore, there are no rights or obligations under the law for the parties in a live-in relationship. However, the judiciary has in many cases ensured that there

is no miscarriage of justice.

In the landmark case of S. Khushboo, the Supreme Court held that a live-in relationship fell within the ambit of "Right To Life" under Article 21 of the Constitution. In its judgment, the top court held that live-in relationships are permissible and the act of two majors living together cannot be considered unlawful or illegal. In another landmark judgment in the Dhannu Lal case, the Supreme Court stated that couples in live-in relationships will be presumed legally married. The order also held that the woman in such a relationship would be eligible to inherit the property after the death of her partner. In the S.P.S. Balasubramanyam case, the apex court had in its ruling said that if a man and a woman are living under the same roof and cohabiting for some years, there will be a presumption under Section 114 of the Evidence Act that they live as husband and wife and the children born to them will not be illegitimate.

Aishwarya, 40, and Ravichandran, 44, got married 20 years ago. While Aishwarya is a Maharashtrian, her husband hails from Kerala. They are based in Pune and own a logistics company.

(Contd. on Page 26)

## Rahul Gandhi, His 'Friends' Must Realise that Personal Attacks on PM Modi Have No Electoral Value

During the current session of Parliament, the Opposition parties attempted to corner the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the alleged manipulation of stock by the Adani Group and related matters. Unfortunately, the Opposition was unable to use this issue to challenge Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his BJP government; instead, all it did was reveal its own insecurities. Today, India's Opposition parties must realise that unity is a difficult choice and cannot be achieved when personal ambitions are prioritised over other issues. Even though every Opposition party decided to raise this issue and corner the BJP government, these parties were deeply divided. The Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi, focused on attacking Modi personally on this issue. It is laughable that, despite repeated failures, Rahul Gandhi continues to employ the same old strategy of making everything about Narendra Modi personal as a strategy to

combat the BJP. Using slogans such as "Chowkidar Chor Hai" and "Rafale Issue", he attempted the same in 2019. It is time for the venerable grand old party to recognise that this strategy of personal attacks has no electoral value and that it has repeatedly failed to win the support of the people. Moreover, it demonstrates that despite rumours of a revival of the grand old party, the Congress and its philosophy have not changed.

Here are some of the most important arguments: Initially, there should be no doubt that the Opposition parties should inquire about any alleged irregularities. If the parties believe that the government should be held accountable for the alleged stock manipulation by the Adani Group, as asserted in the Hindenburg

report, then such an issue must be discussed. The parties should request clarification from the government and its



agencies. The group's alleged offshore accounts, as well as the losses at LIC and SBI, should be investigated. Furthermore, it is crucial for the government to come clean on such matters. When such issues are brought to light, the common people's interest is also at stake because large

corporations such as Adani wield enormous control over the stock market. The public should know whether the government believes the report and what steps it has taken to comprehend the situation's reality.

During its time in the Opposition, the BJP successfully cornered the then UPA government on a number of issues, including the coal scam, the 2G scam, and others. While the BJP exerted internal pressure on the UPA government, the India Against Corruption movement led by Anna Hazare, exerted external pressure. However, the BJP was successful in turning the perception of the people against the Congress.

The primary allegation of all the Opposition parties is that the government is attempting to stifle their voices both inside and outside of the Parliament. However, it is also important for the Opposition to consider the truth.

(Contd. on page 26)



# Why America Is So Keen To Embrace India Despite Ukraine differences



By: Minhaz Merchant

What should India make of America's warm geopolitical embrace? United States President Joe Biden has gone out of his way to elevate India-US ties to a strategic partnership across security, defence and technology. As the relationship between the US and China nosedives, India is now seen as Washington's indispensable ally in a fraught and uncertain world order. National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval's recent week-long visit to Washington was a sign of how the US and India are steering the strategic partnership in a new direction. Doval's trip focused on the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET).

In a rare move, Doval was accompanied at the Washington meet by the chiefs of both the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The importance India attaches to iCET was underlined by the presence at the Washington meeting of three other key officers who liaise closely with the prime minister's office (PMO): the principal scientific advisor to the prime minister, the scientific advisor to the defence minister, and the secretary, department of telecom (DoT). It is unusual for such a high level Indian delegation of scientists and security chiefs to hold a joint series of meetings

with top US officials, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.

According to one report, "In support of the iCET, the US chamber of commerce held a roundtable with industry executives across the spectrum of advanced technologies, including semiconductor design and manufacturing, commercial electronics, advanced telecommunications, aerospace, defence and information technology services." China spent decades stealing advanced US technology, right through the early 2000s under the benign gaze of Washington which sought to bring Beijing into the global ecosystem. By the time it discovered China's deception, it was too late: Beijing had reverse-engineered some of America's most advanced technologies. Ironically, days after Doval's delegation left Washington, the US shot down a high-tech Chinese surveillance airship balloon controlled by artificial intelligence (AI) monitors in China. Washington has woken up late to India's homegrown technological strengths. India's Unified Payments Initiative (UPI)

and Open Network Digital Commerce (ONDC) are world-leading innovations. UPI's international launch will enable anyone in the UAE, Singapore, Nepal and Bhutan to make online payments in foreign currency through UPI. In space technology collaboration between ISRO and NASA is growing stronger.

The increasing trust between Washington and New Delhi is in stark contrast to the prickly relationship between the two countries during the Cold War when the US-led West tilted heavily towards Pakistan. That era is over. Islamabad has rapidly turned from a geostrategic asset for the US into a geostrategic liability. The US recognises that India will be the third largest economy in the world by 2028, possibly earlier. A market of one billion consumers, of whom over 300 million are aspirational middle-class, makes India the world's most attractive emerging market. Add to that an increasingly powerful military, expanding infrastructure, the world's largest pool of software engineers, and a strong legal and regulatory system. But, of course, there is an elephant in the room: Russia. Washington

tried hard during the early months of the Russia-Ukraine war to dissuade India from buying Russian crude oil. It soon gave up when India pointed out — in robust terms — that national interest dictated India's economic and foreign policy. Washington has since fallen into line. It turns a blind eye to India now buying nearly 30 percent of its total oil imports from Russia at discounted rates, refining some of this in Indian petroleum refineries and shipping it onwards to Europe. Since the refined petroleum is technically sourced from India — not Russia — it escapes US sanctions. Washington has an interest in maintaining supplies of petroleum products, including diesel, to avoid global shortages and rising prices. The arrangement with India grates with hawks in the Pentagon. The Blinken-run state department counters this by pointing out the growing threat of the China-Russia axis. US foreign policymakers believe that it is imperative for Washington to build an "accommodative" relationship with India across domains, ignoring pinpricks such as trade with Russia.

(Contd. on page 21)

## PM Modi's push for sustainable clothing: Why India can't move away from fast fashion

Without incentives in the fashion industry, rationalisation of the cost structure, and legitimate endorsement by Bollywood and sports ambassadors, sustainable fashion will continue to be an elite obsession

By Rinku Ghosh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wore a blue vest made of recycled plastic bottles in Parliament last week. By doing so, he was trying to make sustainable clothing a conscious choice that needs to be made in everyday life to save the environment. Unfortunately, much talk of sustainable clothing in India continues to be an elite concern, confined to some designer labels and hand-crafted ingenuity. For the vast majority, fashion is still about fast-produced retail wear, an aspiration to be "with it," affordability and brands than about making conscientious choices about our future in a resource-starved planet.

For example, the polymer company that made Modi's vest out of fibres and yarn from

crushed and melted PET bottles, has been around for 14 years. Founded by an IITian, this clothing line is yet to enter the mass market or even establish brand recall. Yet, its production process saves at least 90 per cent water and 50 per cent energy when compared with traditional methods. Globally, the fashion industry causes 10 per cent of total carbon emissions and is a big pollutant. Worse, its yield of harmful greenhouse gases is projected to grow more than 50 per cent by 2030. The industry uses 93 billion cubic metres of water annually. Our National Climate Change Journal (2018) lists textile manufacturing as one of the most polluting sectors of the economy, emitting 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases. According to Levi Strauss, 3,781 litres of water are used

during the production and use phase of one pair of its jeans while 33.4 kg of carbon dioxide is created throughout its lifetime. This includes growing cotton, processing denim and washing at home. Then there is the issue of waste, chemicals leaching into the water and non-biodegradable leftovers piled up in landfills. In fact, India's primary challenge is that green wear doesn't come cheap, confining it to the category of designer labels or high fashion. That's because sustainable fashion still doesn't sit easily on economics. It is not only about setting up a zero-carbon production and supply chain, it is also about including fair trade and ethical practices for labour, nurturing artisanship, recycling and upcycling every bit of sequin, all of which raises production costs. Challenges



abound, beginning with the procurement of sustainable raw materials. Organic cotton, handlooms, even recycled fibres, polyesters or deadstock cost higher as do technical interventions needed to minimise water wastage, emissions, effluents and organic dyes. Scaling the business becomes a bigger challenge given the huge

demand. Besides, maintaining a circular economy of fashion — which involves recycling, waste management and geometric cutting machines to reduce fabric waste — involves sophisticated technological processes, an indulgence at best by big fashion houses, who, like Stella McCartney, have developed a sub-brand.

(Contd. on page 21)



# Why a weak Opposition is not PM Modi's biggest strength. It's something else

An Opposition, fragmented by individual ambitions and personal acrimony, with brief interruptions for unity on issues like Adani and BBC, has failed to match BJP's Hindutva hurricane and governance grandeur. But PM Modi's strength also lies somewhere else.

By Darpan Singh

Much is said about how a weak Opposition, fragmented by individual ambitions and personal acrimony, has been the fuel for the BJP's unstoppable election machine. Some say a united Opposition can defeat the BJP because in the 2019 national election, about 60 per cent of India's voting public did not back the party. It wasn't much different in 2014. To be fair, all of them were not necessarily anti-BJP voters. Theoretically, some of them might have gone for the BJP if they didn't have the choices that they had. They were certainly non-BJP voters, split among 40-odd parties. But some of this fragmentation is not going to change because of regional electoral complexities.

So, what is it that's helping the BJP most? Of course, there's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma. And then the combination of Hindutva hurricane and governance grandeur. But there's something else. Let's first see how governments lost power in the past, and if there is a pattern to change of guard.

The Congress had its legacy of



being a movement for India's independence. So, it was natural that the party ruled at the Centre and in states for years. It was former Congressman Dr Ram Manohar Lohia's campaign for socio-political and economic equality that propelled, for the first time, non-Congress parties to power in some states in the 1960s. In the next decade, the 1970s, another socialist leader and former Congressman, Jayaprakash Narayan or JP, spearheaded anti-Congress protests. This time change didn't come in some states alone. Indira Gandhi lost power and her former minister, Morarji Desai, became the prime minister. If the Emergency went against her, we should not forget she had also split Pakistan into two. In the 1980s, another former

Congressman and former minister, VP Singh, unseated his friend-turned-rival Rajiv Gandhi. Though VP took the top job, there was another former Congressman, Chandra Shekhar, who had contributed to the defeat of the grand old party which had come to power riding on a huge sympathy wave following prime minister Indira Gandhi's assassination only a few years ago. So, the pattern is that a strong party like the Congress lost power when leaders from within emerged as challengers. Even when Morarji Desai's government fell, Charan Singh was behind the fall. When VP Singh had to go, an ambitious Devi Lal and a sulking Chandra Shekhar engineered the exit. It's true that Narendra Modi's arrival in 2014, which

ended the Congress's 10-year rule at the Centre, was different. Unlike the socialists, from Janata Party to Janata Dal, the BJP didn't really need anyone from the Congress to defeat the Congress. It had its own controversial but highly popular man who was beating the Congress election after election in Gujarat. If the BJP's kamandal (Ram temple) politics had neutralised the socialists' Mandal (OBC reservation) plank, CM Modi married Hindutva with talk of governance. And how! But if the party has, since 2014, galloped to add multiple states to its saffron kitty, which has strengthened its rule at the Centre, it's not without the Congress connection. Himanta Biswa Sarma's rebellion against the grand old party meant the

BJP's surge in India's northeast, a region where we also have the examples of N Biren Singh and Pema Khandu. On the other hand, Jyotiraditya Scindia's resignation ensured a lotus bloom in Madhya Pradesh despite an election loss. Uttar Pradesh leaders such as RPN Singh and Jitin Prasada are also with the BJP. There are some other switch-hit instances, too. The 2024 national election will be historic in many senses. Jawaharlal Nehru is the only leader who won three straight polls. If PM Modi wins, he will join the big league. Indira Gandhi also had the same number, but her rule was interrupted by the 1977 loss. So, in a way, the stakes for the next year's battle mirror those seen in the 1970s and 1980s. But there are some differences. During Congress rule, Indira Gandhi's finance minister Morarji Desai could call, in his budget speech, government taxes "the dreaded part" that needed "plastic surgery". Years later, another Congress finance minister, VP Singh, could order tax raids on business houses seen close to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

(Contd. on page 21)

## Community Op Ed: Cannabis Justice for All

(By Mayor Eric Adams)

Legalizing cannabis was a major step forward for equity and justice in our city. But legalization is about following the new laws, not a free pass to sell unregulated cannabis products. Over the last few months, illegal cannabis retailers have taken advantage of decriminalization efforts, with unlicensed smoke shops popping up all over the city. This "Wild West" attempt to gain market share will not be tolerated. New York City has changed the laws, but we intend to enforce them — fairly, equitably, and thoroughly.

For many years, people of color in our communities were routinely targeted when it came to cannabis law enforcement. Cannabis criminalization was used to harass, arrest, and prosecute our brothers and sisters.

Advocates rightly pushed for an end to these practices, and fought hard to put racial equity at the center of New York's cannabis legalization efforts. Past convictions were automatically expunged or suppressed.

People with past convictions for marijuana and their family members are being given priority for these licenses.

50 percent of licenses have been set aside for social and economic equity applicants.

An open and democratic process resulted in the progress so many wanted to see — an end to the "war on drugs" mentality, the establishment of a safe and sanctioned cannabis industry for adults, and a pathway to restorative justice for those who were unfairly prosecuted in the past.

Legal cannabis is expected to be a \$1.3 billion industry that will create thousands of jobs and generate approximately \$40 million per year in tax revenue for our city. And 40 percent of the tax revenues from legal cannabis will be invested back in the communities that were most harmed by prohibition.

We have a moral obligation to make sure that the people who were adversely affected by marijuana criminalization get their fair share of this emerging market. That's part of the mission of the new CannabisNYC Office. This is a city agency that will make New Yorkers aware of opportunities to participate in this industry, promote equity, and help applicants navigate the licensing process.

In the last month, the first licensed cannabis dispensaries in our city have opened for business. One is owned by a not-for-profit that supports people living with H.I.V. and A.I.D.S., the other by a formerly incarcerated entrepreneur who received priority for a license because he is one of countless Black men who was harmed by the drug war in the 1990s.

But these legitimate businesses are facing stiff competition from shops that are not following the rules. Instead of respect for the law, what we have seen recently is the proliferation of storefronts across New York City, selling unlicensed, unregulated untaxed cannabis products.

Those who flout the cannabis tax laws and regulations are robbing the very communities that are finally on the cusp of benefiting from a just and equitable system. We cannot allow that. We're not going to take two steps back by letting illegal smoke shops take over this emerging market, especially when so many of them are selling unlawful and unlicensed products that could seriously harm consumers. It is time for the operation of illegal cannabis

dispensaries to end. Sheriff Miranda and our partners at the N.Y.P.D. recently took direct action to counter this trend. Over a two-week enforcement blitz, the Sheriff's Office issued 566 violations and seized \$4.1 million worth of product at 53 locations. And this week, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office sent letters to approximately 400 unlicensed smoke shops in Manhattan. The letters state that the city will commence legal eviction proceedings against commercial tenants who are engaged in illegal business activity. That includes the unlicensed sale of cannabis, the sale of untaxed cigarettes, and the sale of adulterated products. If owners and landlords fail to initiate timely eviction proceedings against these commercial tenants, the Sheriff's Office will take over and pursue eviction proceedings. While we are not ruling out criminal prosecutions for tax evasion, money laundering, or the sale of cannabis to minors, the focus of this initiative at this time is civil enforcement. We want to give New York's legal cannabis market a chance to thrive — and deliver on the vision of safety, equity and justice that advocates fought for so long.





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# At least 10,000 women in Japan's hot springs secretly filmed for over 30 years, 17 arrested

17 people were arrested in Japan for secretly taking pictures and videos of women in hot spring baths across the country. The voyeurism ring has been running for 30 years and affected at least 10,000 women



he helped identify the others involved in the act. The Asahi Shimbun newspaper said police in Shizuoka prefecture arrested 16 men after Saito revealed the identities of more than a dozen men who he said filmed and shared explicit images and videos of women bathing in hot springs. The arrested accused include senior company executives, local government officials and a doctor from Tokyo, reported The Guardian. They are accused of violating nuisance prevention ordinances, a law against illicit photography and pornography. They are also

suspected of violating child pornography laws. 50-year-old Karin Saito told the authorities that he started taking pictures and videos of women in hot springs since he was 20 years old. Police said the rest of the men who were arrested learnt the techniques to film women from Saito and used high-end technology to film at least 10,000 women. The accused filmed the women in at least 100 locations. They would hide several hundred metres away in the mountains and take pictures and videos of women in hot springs. These men also added subtitles to the videos

and held get-togethers to screen them. Japan's hot springs attract millions of domestic and international tourists every year. People are now worried that the news of the incident will impact the industry, which was just getting back on its feet after being hit by the pandemic. "This is shocking and I have to say that voyeurism for the purpose of obtaining naked images of someone of the opposite sex simply has to be severely punished," Yutaka Seki, executive director of the Japan Hot Springs Association, told the South China Morning Post newspaper.

(SAI Bureau) Japan's police have arrested 17 people for filming at least 10,000 women bathing in hot springs across the country for over 30 years. The alleged mastermind behind the voyeurism ring, Karin Saito, was arrested in December 2021 and

## White House: No indication objects were part of China spy program

(SAI Bureau) The White House on Tuesday said that they don't have an indication that the three objects shot down by the U.S. military over the weekend were part of China's spy program, noting though the difficulties with recovering the debris. "While we can't definitively say, again without analyzing the debris, what these objects were, thus far — and I caveat that by saying thus far — we haven't seen any indication or anything that

points specifically to the idea that these three objects were part of the [China's] spy balloon program, or that they were definitively involved in external intelligence collection efforts," national security spokesman John Kirby said. Officials have not been able to analyze the debris because getting access to them has been difficult, considering the tough conditions where they landed when they were shot down.

When asked if there's a possibility that the debris may never be recovered, Kirby said, "I think we're taking this day by day and doing the best we can to try to locate the debris and then develop a plan to recover it."

Kirby on Monday had said that the uncertainty of the surveillance capabilities of the three objects in U.S. airspace led to President Biden's orders for the military to shoot them down. The objects were shot



down by the U.S. military roughly one week after the U.S. shot down a Chinese

surveillance balloon off the coast of South Carolina. The first object was shot down on Friday off the northern coast of Alaska, the second was shot down on Saturday over frozen territory in northern Canada, and the third was shot down on Sunday over Lake Huron. Kirby stressed that the debris "would certainly be of immense value" in terms of identifying the objects and figuring out where they came from. It's a "leading explanation" that the three objects were balloons tied to a benign or commercial entity, Kirby said. But, he added that no entity or individual has come forward to claim them. Officials have ruled out that they came from the U.S. government. Kirby warned that "it could be some time before we locate the recovered debris" and outlined that Lake Huron, where the object on Sunday landed when it was shot down, is a deep lake. He also said that there are tough weather conditions in the three locations where the objects fell.

## January inflation comes in higher than expected

(SAI Bureau) Consumer prices rose 0.5 percent in January and 6.4 percent annually, according to Labor Department's consumer price index released Tuesday, a jump in inflation which could encourage the Federal Reserve to further raise interest rates.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, came in at 0.4 percent on a month-to-month basis and 5.6 percent annually. Annual inflation continues to decline from its high of 9.1 percent in June, a 40-year high.

Still, the pace of monthly price growth accelerated in January from December, when prices rose 0.1 percent.

Food prices rose 0.5 percent in January, while housing costs rose 0.7 percent, making up for the bulk of the increase.

The annual inflation figure, which came

in slightly above analysts' expectations, may push the Fed into steeper or more

interest rate hikes in an effort to slow the

much too high."

She said additional rate hikes are necessary to bring inflation down to the Fed's 2 percent target, even if they cause economic pain.

"While there are costs and risks to tightening monetary policy to lower inflation, I see the costs and risks of allowing inflation to persist as far greater," Bowman said. On the year, grocery prices are up 11.3 percent, energy prices are up 8.7 percent and housing costs are up 7.9 percent, putting a dent in Americans' finances. "Going

forward, inflation is unlikely to maintain its recent pace of deceleration," ZipRecruiter lead economist Sinem Buber wrote in a note. The price of used cars is one of the few areas where inflation is easing, with prices dropping 11.6 percent annually after skyrocketing in previous years.



economy and reduce demand for goods and services. Earlier this month, the Fed rolled out its smallest rate hike since March 2022 as inflation appeared to ease, but that strategy could change if prices don't fall fast enough.

Fed Governor Michelle Bowman said Monday that inflation "continues to be



# Fury as energy firm flies 100 reps to £600-a-night Maldives resort for 8 days as millions struggle to afford heating



(SAI Bureau) AN energy firm has flown 100 reps to a paradise island on an all-expenses-paid jaunt — as millions of Brits back home struggle with soaring bills and worry about putting on the heating. One holidaymaker told The Sun: “It doesn’t sit right during a cost-of-living crisis.” The group of 100 reps arrived in the Indian Ocean paradise last Tuesday and wasted no time in handing out business cards in the 27C (80F) sunshine. They were whisked from capital Malé to the island of Ailafushi in a 15-minute speedboat ride across crystal-clear water.

The group are staying eight days all-inclusive at the OBLU Xperience where some rooms cost £594 a night. Male reps were seen playing volleyball in the pool while their partners relaxed on sunbeds. Posh restaurants offer Indian, Thai and Italian cuisine and guests can pay extra to jet-ski, scuba dive and snorkel. One holidaymaker said: “It doesn’t sit right during a cost-of-living crisis. All are wearing purple wristbands and look like they’ve been having a whale of a time. “They just chill on the beach or by the pool most of the day. They have also hired out part of the restaurant.” Another angry honeymooner added: “They basically ruined our holiday. They were handing over business cards and giving us sales pitches.” Campaigners and MPs hit out at the jolly, which was postponed from 2020 due to Covid. Warren Kirwan, of disability-charity Scope, fumed: “This is a kick in the teeth for disabled Brits. They’ll be lying on a beach in the sun while disabled people are freezing and starving in their own homes. “Companies should be focusing on supporting those in greatest need instead

of patting themselves on the back. Nobody should be profiteering on the back of this crisis.” Utility Warehouse is built on word-of-mouth marketing. Its self-employed agents earn a commission every time they sign households to broadband, mobile and insurance deals. Customers get bigger discounts the more they sign to. Meanwhile, in exchange for signing up four new customers every month for a year, the agents, also known as partners, can be sent to exotic locations such as the Maldives and Mexico. If they sign up 75 customers they can get a cheap lease on a Mini Cooper. If they

sign up 200 they can use a Porsche Boxster for a month. The company has boomed in the past year as customers seek cheaper deals. And while it boasts its energy offer is £125 less than the price cap, it is still around £1,000 more than it was a year ago. Simon Francis, from the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, said: “While these lucky people may be celebrating overseas, there is little joy back home among energy customers struggling to make ends meet.

“We’d urge energy firms to show restraint with bonuses and incentives while their profits are being made on the backs of young families, older people and those with disabilities -living in cold, damp homes.”

Howard Cox, at FairFuelUK, added: “Utility Warehouse claim their environmental green tariffs make it easy for us to do our bit for the planet.

“Yet the company hypocritically and insensitively are happy to fly their people in a polluting jet on a free jolly to celebrate increased revenues.”

Labour MP Khalid Mahmood added: “This just shows the

greed that is going on. We need to look into this madness when we are living through a cost-of-living crisis. This incentive is disgraceful when it could be helping those who need it most such as the elderly.”

Tory Kevin Foster said: “Families sat in a cold home will be bemused and angered to see the firm they are with flying people to tropical climes on the back of prices paid.” Last June Utility Warehouse boasted record results with growth rising 20 per cent. It now has 814,684 customers and is “targeting an additional million over the next four to five years”. The firm also said: “With an -ongoing cost-of-living squeeze, compounded by an expected increase to the energy price cap in October of £800, thousands of customers are turning to UW every week to save money on their bills.” In its half-year financial results ending in September 2022, Utility Warehouse saw its revenue rocket 51.5 per cent to £562.4million. Actress Joanna Lumley promoted its multi-level marketing scheme for Brits to become their own bosses in

2019. Two years ago Ofgem fined Utility Warehouse £1.5million for -failing to “treat some of its customers fairly and to offer services and support to those in payment difficulty”. At the time Utility Warehouse accepted its failings between 2013-18, which it admitted “resulted in some customers being disadvantaged and facing increased financial hardship”. This month’s Ofgem review of energy supplier standards still found “moderate weaknesses” at Utility Warehouse in its handling of customer issues. A spokesman for the company defended the jolly, saying: “More than 50,000 people across the UK from all backgrounds are UW Partners. “Our partners are self-employed and earn an income by referring our services to their friends and family. “In doing so, we offer a meaningful way to help people earn their way out of the cost-of-living crisis. We also offer partners ways to earn extra incentives such as holidays. “We are proud of our hard-working partners and are transparent about the opportunities that come with it.”

## Former monarch joins campaign to reinstate Nepal as ‘Hindu State’

(News Agency) The campaign was launched on a day the Nepal government led by Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ declared a public holiday to mark 23 years of the Maoist war.

IN A symbolic but significant political move, former Nepal king Gyanendra Shah on Monday joined a public campaign that envisages restoration of Nepal’s earlier status of a “Hindu Kingdom”.

The campaign was launched on a day the Nepal government led by Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ declared a public holiday to mark 23 years of the Maoist war.

The decision to declare Monday a public holiday for the first time was met with nationwide protests, including some constituents from the ruling coalition, who refused to recognise the decade-long insurgency as “people’s war”. Shah flagged off the event — ‘Let’s save dharma, nation, nationalism, culture

and citizens mega campaign’ — from Kakarbhitta in eastern Nepal’s Jhapa district in the presence of a huge crowd cheering and applauding him. The campaign is being coordinated by Durga Prasai, a central committee member of

significant at a time when the country’s political situation seems to be drifting towards instability and uncertainty. Prasai, who runs a specialised cancer hospital, said the current situation in Nepal has turned out to be “suffocating” for the people.

Although he did not directly call for return of monarchy, he said, “We never wanted, and we will not be a republic which will send more than 10 million Nepali youth to the Gulf countries to shed their blood and sweat.” He has also been demanding that loans taken by farmers from cooperative banks and microfinance companies be waived off as their plight is forcing them to end their lives.

Shah, and representatives of different sects of Hindu religion, lit lamps to mark the proposed nationwide campaign. The former king’s son Paras, daughter Prerana and niece Sitashma joined Shah, who has been camping in Damak, about 40 km from the venue, for the last six weeks.





# Sri Lanka hikes power prices by 66% hoping to gain IMF support



(News Agency) COLOMBO- Sri Lanka raised electricity prices by 66% on Thursday, in a move the government hopes will persuade the International Monetary Fund to provide a bailout for its crisis stricken economy. The increase, announced by Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera, comes after the government raised electricity prices by 75 percent last year, and adds to the pain of Sri Lankans already struggling with inflation above 54% year-on-year in January and income taxes as high as 36% percent. "We know that this will be hard on the public, especially the poor, but Sri Lanka is caught in a financial crisis and we have no choice but to move towards cost reflective pricing," Wijesekera told reporters. "We hope that with this step Sri Lanka has moved closer to getting the IMF programme." An official at the monopoly Ceylon Electricity Board confirmed the scale of the price increase. The IMF agreed to loan Sri Lanka \$2.9 billion in September to overcome its worst financial crisis in seven decades, but the deal comes with conditions that include raising taxes, removing subsidies and cutting public sector debt. The government of President Ranil

Wickremesinghe, who took over after mass protests against economic mismanagement ousted his predecessor last year, desperately needs the funds and has been courting multilateral agencies for support since taking office in July. Wijesekera said the price increase would help the power ministry offset the gap caused by the cessation of government subsidies from January, and also help better manage long-term fuel contracts. The government hopes to reduce tariffs by July, when it plans to revise prices again, he said. Analysts forecast the power price hike to further increase inflation. "We are projecting inflation to increase slightly to 55.5% next month but overall inflation will continue downward given the high base effect from last year," said Dimantha Mathew, head of research, First Capital Holdings. Inflation hit a record 73.7 percent in September last year. "We can't bear these costs anymore," said Asela Sampath of the All Island Canteen Owners Association, a group that represents the restaurants sector frequented by middle to low-income Sri Lankans. "We ask for forgiveness from consumers, but we have no choice but to pass down these costs."

# Pakistan also has a G20 now. It's called Gareeb 20

## Bomb, chit fund, Allah—Home Remedies for Pakistan's economy in case IMF doesn't come through

(News Agency) As the prices of petroleum goods in Pakistan were hiked by Rs 22 last night, a new wave of inflation is set to welcome the spring. Also bombarding us are the latest spring and summer collections in clothing stores across the country. It is for you to choose between eating, dressing up and praying. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has assured the nation that he will sell his clothes to feed us, but I wonder who will even buy them. Not me, at least, for lack of funds, of course. How did Pakistan get here?" is a question that everyone has a different answer to. Where else would it have reached, if not where it's at, considering how it has been run so far? Not a superpower, but super power-less, for sure. But all is not lost—2047 is the year Pakistan will become an economic superpower. That said, all we have to do now is to wait for 24 years to pass by like 24 hours. And then we will rule the world. In this waiting time, Pakistan should not look at India's economic progress at all. What good will it do to us? US president Joe Biden told Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi how the Air India-Boeing deal would provide a million jobs to Americans. India became the 5th largest economy in the world, leaving behind the UK. Then the country found Lithium reserves in Kashmir, while 'Kashmir banega Pakistan' is still an unfound idea. That India has the presidency of G20 should be no bother for Pakistan. The latter has its own league of G20, best known as Gareeb 20. Considering now Saudi Arabia doesn't follow a no-strings aid policy, there aren't any friends with benefits left for Pakistan.



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# Pakistan plans to quadruple domestic coal-fired power, move away from gas

(By Staff Reporter) ISLAMABAD, - Pakistan plans to quadruple its domestic coal-fired capacity to reduce power generation costs and will not build new gas-fired plants in the coming years, its energy minister told Reuters on Monday, as it seeks to ease a crippling foreign-exchange crisis. A shortage of natural gas, which accounts for over a third of the country's power output, plunged large areas into hours of darkness last year. A surge in global prices of liquefied natural gas (LNG) after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an onerous economic crisis had made LNG unaffordable for Pakistan. "LNG is no longer part of the long-term plan," Pakistan Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan told Reuters, adding that the country plans to increase domestic coal-fired power capacity to 10 gigawatts (GW) in the medium-term, from 2.31 GW currently. Pakistan's plan to switch to coal to provide its citizens reliable electricity underscores challenges in drafting effective decarbonisation strategies, at a time when some developing countries are struggling to



keep lights on. Despite power demand increasing in 2022, Pakistan's annual LNG imports fell to the lowest levels in five years as European buyers elbowed out price-sensitive consumers. "We have some of the world's most efficient regasified LNG-based power plants. But we don't have the gas to run them," Dastgir said in an interview. The South Asian nation, which is battling a wrenching economic crisis and is in dire need of funds, is seeking to reduce the

value of its fuel imports and protect itself from geopolitical shocks, he said. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank have fallen to \$2.9 billion, barely enough to cover three weeks of imports. "It's this question of not just being able to generate energy cheaply, but also with domestic sources, that is very important," Dastgir said. The Shanghai Electric (601727.SS) Thar plant, a 1.32 GW capacity plant that runs on domestic coal and is funded

under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), started producing power last week. The CPEC is a part of Beijing's global Belt and Road Initiative. In addition to the coal-fired plants, Pakistan also plans to boost its solar, hydro and nuclear power fleet, Dastgir said, without elaborating. If the proposed plants are constructed, it could also widen the gap between Pakistan's power demand and installed power generation capacity, potentially forcing the country to idle plants. The maximum power demand met by Pakistan during the year ended June 2022 was 28.25 GW, more than 35% lower than power generation capacity of 43.77 GW. It was not immediately clear how Pakistan will finance the proposed coal fleet, but Dastgir said setting up new plants will depend on "investor interest," which he expects to increase when newly commissioned coal-fired plants are proved viable. Financial institutions in China and Japan, which are among the biggest financiers of coal units in developing countries, have been backing out of funding fossil-fuel projects in recent years amid pressure from activists and Western governments.

## Virginians face terrorism charges years after Pakistan trial



(By Staff Reporter) — It was almost 15 years ago when five young men from northern Virginia left the U.S. to pursue dreams of jihad in Afghanistan, only to find themselves under arrest in Pakistan when their farewell video prompted family members to contact the FBI. Now, after the five served a decade in a Pakistani prison, U.S. prosecutors are moving forward with plans to put them on trial again for terrorism charges. At a status hearing Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, however, a judge gave strong indications that she plans to toss out charges against one of the men on the grounds that torture and solitary

confinement he allegedly endured in Pakistan have rendered him mentally incompetent. In fact, U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema has questioned the utility of bringing charges against any of the five, given the fact that they were convicted and punished already in Pakistan. "If these men have been prosecuted in Pakistan and served significant periods of incarceration in a Pakistani prison, and now the United States government is trying to charge them for essentially the same conduct in this country, you've got to think about whether that makes sense," Brinkema said during a December status hearing on the case.

## Pakistan train explosion kills 1, wounds 8 passengers

**Officials say a powerful explosion inside a moving passenger train has killed at least one person and wounded eight others in eastern Pakistan**

LAHORE, Pakistan -- A powerful explosion inside a moving passenger train killed at least one person and wounded eight others in eastern Pakistan on Thursday, police and a railway spokesman said. District Police Chief Mian Mahboob said the explosion happened in Chichawatni, a district in the eastern Punjab province. He said officers were still trying to determine whether it was a bomb or something else that caused the explosion while the train traveled between Quetta, the capital of southwestern Baluchistan province, to the

northwestern city of Peshawar. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. For over a decade, Baluchistan has been the scene of a low-intensity insurgency by ethnic Baluch separatists who want autonomy or independence. They often target passenger trains and security forces in Baluchistan. Babar Ali Raza, a spokesman for Pakistan Railways, also said that there was a blast on the Jaafer Express passenger train, but experts were trying to determine the details. He said the dead and wounded are being transported to a nearby hospital.

## Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra to visit Bangladesh tomorrow

**During his two-day stay, Kwatra will meet Bangladesh foreign secretary Masud Bin Momen and review the entire range of bilateral relationships**

(By Staff Reporter) Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra will pay an official visit to Bangladesh from February 15 to 16, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Tuesday. He will meet his Bangladesh counterpart Masud Bin Momen and review the entire range of bilateral relationships, including political and security, water, trade and investment, power and energy, defence, connectivity, and sub-regional cooperation, the ministry said in a statement. "The visit to Bangladesh is keeping in line with the highest priority



accorded to India's region. The Foreign Secretary's upcoming visit will further strengthen bilateral ties and impart momentum to ongoing cooperation in diverse areas," it said.



# Shahabuddin Chuppu declared next Bangladesh president-elect

Election Commission says the ruling Awami League party nominee was elected unopposed as the 22nd president

(By Staff Reporter) Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu, 74, has been declared as the next president-elect of Bangladesh by the country's Election Commission after no other candidate was put forward. Speaking to reporters in the capital, Dhaka, Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said the ruling Awami League (AL) party's nominee was elected unopposed as the 22nd president. The nomination process for the presidential election ended on Sunday. With 302 members, the AL party has the majority in the 350-seat national parliament, and no other party had the numbers to nominate a presidential

candidate.

Born in 1949 and hailing from the northern

Pabna district, retired district judge Shahabuddin also served as a member of the AL's Advisory Council. A freedom fighter of the country's independence war in 1971, he also served as commissioner of the country's autonomous body Anti-Corruption Commission. Shahabuddin will replace the incumbent, Abdul Hamid, whose tenure expires on April 24. According to the country's constitution, the presidential election must be held 60 to 90 days before the expiry of each five-year term. Hamid cannot become president again as he was elected for two terms, according to the country's constitution.



## Ruling Taliban display rare division in public over bans

A rare public show of division is emerging in the ranks of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban

(By Staff Reporter) ISLAMABAD -- A rare public show of division within the ranks of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban emerged in recent days when Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, a powerful government figure, gave a speech seen as implicit criticism of the movement's reclusive supreme leader. The Taliban leadership has been opaque since the former insurgents' takeover of the country in August 2021, with almost no indication of how decisions are made. In recent months, the group's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has appeared to take a stronger hand in directing policy. In particular, it was on his orders that the Taliban government banned women and girls from universities and schools after the sixth grade. The bans raised a fierce international uproar, increasing Afghanistan's isolation at a time when its economy has collapsed — and worsening a humanitarian crisis. The bans also appeared to contradict previous policies by the Taliban government. Between the Taliban takeover until the December ban on attending universities, women had been allowed to continue their studies. Taliban officials repeatedly promised that girls would be allowed to attend secondary school, but a decision to allow them back last year was suddenly reversed. Haqqani made his comments in a speech over the weekend to a graduation ceremony at an Islamic religious school in the eastern province of Khost. "Monopolizing power and hurting the reputation of the entire system are not to our benefit," Haqqani said, according to video



clips of the speech released on social media by his supporters. "The situation cannot be tolerated," he added. Haqqani said now that the Taliban have taken power, "more responsibility has been placed on our shoulders and it requires patience and good behavior and engagement with the people." He said the Taliban must "soothe the wounds of the people" and act in a way that the people do not come to hate them and religion. Haqqani did not refer to Akhundzada, but the remarks were seen by many commenting on social media as directed at him. Haqqani also did not mention the issue of women's education, but he has said publicly in the past that women and girls should be allowed to go to school and universities. Zabihullah Mujahed,

the top spokesman for the Kabul government, said in an apparent reaction to Haqqani's comments — without naming him — that criticism is best voiced privately. "If someone criticizes the emir, minister, or any other official, it is better — and Islamic ethics also say — that he should express his criticism directly and secretly to him," not in public, he said. Akhundzada, an Islamic scholar, almost never appears in public and hardly ever leaves the Taliban heartland in southern Kandahar province. He surrounds himself with other religious scholars and tribal leaders who oppose education and work for women. Only one known photo of him, years old, exists. Akhundzada came to Kabul only once since the Taliban takeover to give a speech

to an assembly of pro-Taliban clerics, though he was not shown in media coverage at the closed event. The Taliban have typically dealt with internal differences behind the scenes, and Haqqani's comments "are a major escalation," said Michael Kugelman, the deputy director of the Asia program and senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center. The Taliban leaders have the same broad vision, but "in Kandahar, they're hermits, they're not involved in the day-to-day," said Kugelman. In Kabul, they have to govern and provide services, he added. Haqqani leads a faction of the Taliban known as the Haqqani network, built around the family of the same name centered in Khost. The network battled U.S.-led NATO troops and

former Afghan government forces for years and was notorious for attacks on civilians and suicide bombings in Kabul. The U.S. government maintains a \$10 million bounty on Sirajuddin Haqqani for attacks on American troops and Afghan civilians. His comments pointed to an apparent difference between some senior Taliban, who have had to rapidly adjust to the demands of government after two decades of fighting as insurgents. When they took power in 2021, Taliban officials said they wanted better ties to the world. They said they would not return to the social restrictions on women or punishments, such as public lashings, that they imposed during their first time in power in the 1990s. But over the nearly 20 months since, the Taliban have barred women from most jobs, middle school and high school as well as from parks. They've also ordered women to wear head-to-toe clothing in public. The deputy prime minister in the Taliban government, Abdul Salam Hanafi, indirectly criticized the ban on education for women and girls in a speech in Kabul this week. "If we don't improve the quality and quantity of the education system and do not update it, we will never succeed," he said. He added that the duty of Islamic scholars requires more than prohibiting a behavior or practice — they must also offer a solution and a path forward. Ahmed Rashid, a veteran Lahore-based journalist who wrote several books about the Taliban, said he didn't expect change from Akhundzada and his Kandahar-based supporters.



# From Macron To Sunak, Why Heads Of Western Countries Are Thanking PM Modi For Air India Aircraft Deal

**The venerable Tata Group has used its Maharaja's power and made the grade for 470 aircrafts from Boeing and Airbus for Air India. From Rishi Sunak to Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron, even the world leaders have congratulated India, PM Modi and the company for scripting this new chapter in history**

Whispered behind the doors of an opulent Victorian hotel near Buckingham Palace in London, the Air India Boeing and Airbus deal, was brought home on February 14, 2023. Scripting another chapter for history books, the venerable Tata Group used its Maharaja's power and made the grade for 470 aircrafts from world's leading carriers, Boeing and Airbus. From 'the mother of all aviation deals' to 'deepening of partnerships,' the Air India aircraft deal has brightened India's spot on the global aviation map, making the world leaders also congratulate the country and its leadership. Stirring the western influence-dominated world, this deal has also enabled countries like the United States of America (USA) and France to come forward, appreciate and recognise India's space in the global skies. In an address on the historic moment, N.

Chandrasekaran, Chairperson, Tata Sons Ltd., said, "Air India is not just another project. It is a national project. There are huge expectations. We are going through a major transformation because we are committed to building a world-class airline known for safety, on-time performance, the best of Indian hospitality and modern fleet and a wholesome experience for every passenger, whether they are in the first row or the last row." Air India's historic Airbus and Boeing deal, announced via a virtual event, was not just a deal for words but was also attended by dignitaries like PM Modi, French President Emmanuel Macron, the phenomenon Ratan Tata, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Air India's MD and CEO Campbell Wilson and many more. For those not familiar with the finer nuances of the deal, the Boeing order is for

220 firm jets. Announced by the US President Joe Biden, of these total jets, 190 are Boeing 737 Max single-aisle planes, 20 are 787 Dreamliners widebodies and 10 are the 777X, which is also the newest version of Boeing's widebody, presently undergoing the certification process. Similarly, of the total 250 Airbus carriers, 140 are A320neo, 70 are A321neo single-aisle planes, 34 are A350-1000 and the remaining are A350-900 widebodies.

As far as the utility of these newly acquired Air India's jets goes, the planes from the Airbus 320 family and Boeing 737 MAX are reportedly expected to fly domestic and short-haul international flights. The remaining dual-aisle planes will reportedly fly to Europe and the Americas, also signalling towards the importance of the remarks made by world leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron,

UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and USA's Joe Biden. Air India Airbus, Boeing Deal – How The World Leaders Reacted And Why The Air India Boeing, Airbus deal comes at a time when India is actively pacing its efforts towards a \$5 trillion economy. An aviation space that has seen the rise and fall of several carriers, is regardless, always open to some change.

As per several experts, at this point, Air India's aircraft deal is also a lifeline for both Boeing and Airbus to restore and gain some footing in the Indian market, one that is sometimes seen as a single-aisle jet space but is also welcoming towards the wide-body market. However, as much as the companies and countries stand to benefit from the deal, as per some world leaders, so do the common people. At this point, the world economies are all eyeing a chunk

of the pie, especially with regards to jobs for the common person. Seeing merit in the Air India Airbus, Boeing deal, a White House statement referred to it as 'historic'. As per Secretary Gina Raimondo, the Indian conglomerate Tata Group-led Air India's deal is very positive even for America as it is an opportunity for more job creation. At a time when mass layoffs and a global economic slowdown are the trends, this deal also comes as fresh air for the US-India ties, ties that will also foster better returns for the common person of the States. "Today, Air India announced its purchasing over 200 American-made aircraft. That's Boeing's third biggest sale of all time and will support over one million jobs across 44 states. It's a win for American workers and reaffirms the strong relationship between our two nations," wrote Secretary Raimondo.

## Who is ChatGPT creator Sam Altman, all you need to know

Obsessed with technology since a young age According to an article in The New Yorker that dates back to 2016, Sam had an early passion for technology and began programming at the age of eight.

"The thing people forget about human babies is that they take years to learn anything interesting," Sam told the publication. He added, "If A.I. researchers were developing an algorithm and stumbled across the one for a human baby, they'd get bored watching it, decide it wasn't working, and shut it down."

### Growing up

Sam grew up in St. Louis, Missouri and developed a keen interest in coding at a young age. He became proficient in programming a Macintosh, which ultimately became his 'lifeline in the world'. In an interview with The New Yorker, he said, "Growing up gay in the Midwest in the two-thousands was not the most awesome thing. And finding AOL chat rooms was transformative. Secrets are bad when you're eleven or twelve."

### Dropping out of college

After studying computer science at Stanford University, Sam, along with two friends, dropped out of college to work on Loopt, an app that allowed friends to share their location. They later sold the company for USD 43 million. The report also says that Sam was in a relationship with one of the co-founders of Loopt. After dating for

nine years, the couple split up. "I thought I was going to marry him—very in love with him," Sam told The New Yorker. After selling Loopt, Sam founded Hydrazine Capital and eventually became the president of Y Combinator in 2014, succeeding Paul Graham. Y Combinator has been the starting point for companies like Airbnb, Reddit, Quora, and Twitch. In 2014, he also delivered a lecture in the prestigious Stanford University. The article in The New Yorker also reveals how Sam is 'prepared for survival in case the world ends'. He told the publication, "I prep for survival. My problem is that when my friends get drunk they talk about the ways the world will end. After a Dutch lab modified the H5N1 bird-flu virus, five years ago, making it super contagious, the chance of a lethal synthetic virus being released in the next twenty years became, well, nonzero. The other most popular scenarios would be A.I. that attacks us and nations fighting with nukes over scarce resources." He added, "I try not to think about it too much. But I have guns, gold, potassium iodide, antibiotics, batteries, water, gas masks from the Israeli Defense Force, and a big patch of land in Big Sur I can fly to."

Sam's mother also talked about her son's belief in the apocalypse and said that he is an 'optimist yet a survivalist, with a sense that things can always go deeply wrong, and that there's no

single place in the world where you're deeply at home'.

She said, "Sam does keep an awful lot tied up inside. He'll call and say he has a headache—and he'll have Googled it, so there's some cyberchondria in there, too. I have to reassure him that he doesn't have meningitis or lymphoma, that it's just stress." **Collaborating with Elon Musk for OpenAI**

As per reports, OpenAI was founded in 2015 with the intent of saving humanity from the potential destruction of AI. The company was launched as a non-profit research company, dedicated to the cause. Sam Altman and

Elon Musk were among the founders of the company. Musk resigned from OpenAI in 2018 as his other two companies, SpaceX and Tesla, were also working on AI technologies. In 2019, OpenAI declared itself as a 'for profit' company and partnered with the likes of Microsoft and other big corporations. Microsoft has recently strengthened its partnership with OpenAI and the same was revealed in a press release. OpenAI has since its inception developed several AI tools, such as ChatGPT and DALL.E. Both are quite popular today and are being used across the world.

## Britain's Queen Consort Camilla will not wear Kohinoor diamond for coronation

According to BBC, "there were concerns about a diplomatic row with India if it had been used" since India has demanded the return of Kohinoor diamond. Camilla, the wife of King Charles III of Britain, will not wear the crown featuring the controversial Kohinoor diamond during her coronation in May, the Buckingham Palace announced Tuesday. According to BBC, "there were concerns about a diplomatic row with India if it had been used" since India has demanded its return. The 105-carat Kohinoor is one of the largest cut diamonds in the world. It was taken from India by the East India Company during the colonial era and presented to Queen Victoria. It is set in a crown last worn by Charles's grandmother

during her coronation. Apart from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan have also claimed ownership of it since Indian independence in 1947. Camilla, the Queen Consort of UK, will wear Queen Mary's crown instead, which has been taken out of the Tower of London to be resized. "The choice of Queen Mary's Crown by Her Majesty is the first time in recent history that an existing crown will be used for the Coronation of a Consort instead of a new commission being made, in the interests of sustainability and efficiency," the Palace said in a statement. The Queen Mary crown was commissioned and worn by the consort of King George V for the 1911 coronation.



# Nikki Haley Announces Presidential Run

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (R) jumped into the presidential race early Tuesday, becoming the first Republican to officially challenge former President Trump for the GOP's 2024 nomination. The former governor and United Nations ambassador announced her bid in a video, calling for new leadership in a party that she acknowledged had repeatedly failed to capture the popular vote in most presidential elections over the past three-plus decades.

"Republicans have lost the popular vote in seven out of the last eight presidential elections. That has to change," Haley, 51, said. "Joe Biden's record is abysmal, but that shouldn't come as a surprise. The Washington establishment has failed us over and over and over again. It's time for a new generation of leadership."

Haley's entrance into the race has been expected for months. While she said nearly two years ago that she would not challenge Trump for the 2024 nod if he decided to mount another bid for the White House, that didn't stop her from laying the groundwork for a campaign. After leaving the Trump administration, she founded her own outside group, "Stand for America," to boost GOP candidates ahead of the 2022 midterm elections. She's also stayed active on the national media circuit.

In an interview with Fox News in January, she signaled that she was still weighing a White House bid, saying that the country needed a new generation to step up in 2024 and offering herself as potential leader. It's bigger than one person. And when you're looking at the future of America, I think it's time for new generational change. I don't think you need to be 80 years old to go be a leader in D.C.," Haley told the network. "I think we need a young generation to come in, step up, and really start fixing things." Haley's expected to kick off her first official campaign swing this week with a series of stops in Iowa and New Hampshire, the first states to hold Republican presidential nominating contests.

Her announcement was also expected by Trump, who disclosed in late January that he had spoken to Haley about a White House bid and said he encouraged her to do so. In announcing her campaign, Haley signaled a strategy that seeks to bridge the divide between traditional conservative priorities — shrinking the federal deficit and upping security at the U.S. southern border — and the culture-war-focused populism exemplified by the likes of Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R). "Some people look at America and see vulnerability. The socialist left sees an opportunity to rewrite history. China and Russia are on the march. They all think we can be bullied, kicked around," Haley said. "You should know this about me: I don't put up with bullies. And when you kick back, it hurts them more if you're



wearing heels." Of course, she still faces some steep challenges. Early polling shows her distantly trailing both Trump and DeSantis, who hasn't yet jumped into the presidential contest but is expected to later this year. Her early announcement could allow her to gain a closer look from voters and Republican donors before other prospective candidates enter the race. But Haley's campaign launch also puts her in direct contention with Trump, who appointed her as his envoy to the U.N. just after taking office in 2017. The former president is running to reclaim the White House in 2024, and has made clear that he believes he is the GOP's rightful nominee, even as other Republicans consider their own bids. Haley irked many Republicans two years ago when she appeared to criticize Trump in the wake of the Jan.

6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol. Still, Haley has a winning track record to fall back on; she's never lost a race for public office in her political career. She's tough. She won the governor's race in '10 and none of us thought Nikki would have a chance," said Katon Dawson, a former South Carolina Republican Party chair who's backing Haley's presidential bid. "She brings a lot to the Republican Party as far as diversity and common sense. And I think those are the things that will attract people to her candidacy." Haley's announcement is further evidence that Republicans have become increasingly willing to take on Trump, who has maintained a vise-like grip over the party since he captured the White House in 2016. Many in the GOP have soured on him in recent months, believing that his brand

and political instincts are responsible for Republicans' lackluster performance in the past three election cycles. Her candidacy could also have larger implications for the 2024 GOP presidential primary. While early polling shows DeSantis leading Trump in hypothetical head-to-head match-ups, Trump regains the edge in a multi-candidate field.

While she may be the first Republican to challenge Trump for the nomination, she likely won't be the last to announce. In addition to DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, among others, are believed to be moving toward White House bids. There's also the possibility that Haley will have to square off against a fellow South Carolinian, Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.), who is said to be weighing a presidential campaign. Both Haley and Scott are set to attend a presidential candidate forum in South Carolina next month. Haley's entrance into the presidential contest was met with scorn from Democrats. In a call with reporters on Tuesday, Jaime Harrison, the chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), cast Haley as a right-wing extremist who propped up Trump and his agenda during her tenure as U.N. ambassador. "She was a disastrous governor. She didn't really have any experience going into being the U.N. ambassador," Harrison said. "I don't really care about her intentions. I just know the end result, which will be horrible for the American people."

## Bharat Jodo Yatra Was Good. Rahul Gandhi, Now Move On

locations every few months, and often at politically critical moments. It was naturally assumed that Rahul Gandhi would take a break - or many of them - in course of his Bharat Jodo Yatra. As it turned out, walking was not one of Rahul Gandhi's problems. Unknown to most, physical fitness is his superpower. On the last day of the Yatra, in snow-wrapped Srinagar, he plodded through slush and ice, waving aside an umbrella held up for him. Addressing a rally that day, flecks of snow clinging to his beard, he was a far cry from "Pappu" - the name many in the BJP use derisively for the Congress leader. But the Yatra and the valorous tales of walking more than 3,500 km should have been in the past by now. The walk from the southernmost tip of India to the symbolic northern crest of India is just the start of a far more complex and complicated journey. Rahul Gandhi should have immediately applied himself to the task of giving shape to the political narrative he crafted over the past few months. He should have tried to convert spontaneity into resolve, identify challenges and devise a plan. But almost a fortnight after the end of the Bharat Jodo Yatra and a week after his speech in Lok Sabha, there is no such plan for beating the party into shape ahead of 2024. Those who see the

Yatra as a counter-narrative to the BJP say there are a few promising facts. One, the Yatra drew big crowds, even in the Kashmir Valley. Two, Rahul Gandhi consistently used the vocabulary of 'love', contrasting sharply with hate rhetoric, and this found takers. This, according to the Rahul cheer squad, showed that support for the BJP's majoritarian politics is shrinking. And that the ideology of the Congress still resonates among people. The third and most important point - that Rahul Gandhi's image has undergone a complete makeover. Unfortunately, harping on Rahul Gandhi makes the long Yatra seem essentially about recasting his image. A campaign like this cannot be about one man's image. The Congress and Rahul Gandhi need to understand that as long as Narendra Modi's personal stock soars, efforts to pit another leader against him will yield nothing. For people to desire change, it is important to talk about what impacts their daily lives. This may be a herculean task as Narendra Modi is a master at this game. Not only does he speak the language of the masses, but he also weaves in civilisational themes that go deep and awaken in people a sense of imaginary denials and past humiliations. The Congress must also realise that any attempt to convert gains from the Bharat Jodo Yatra

into Rahul Gandhi's personal capital will antagonise other opposition leaders. Having either won or emerged second in almost 250 Lok Sabha seats in the 2019 polls, the Congress remains the largest non-BJP party. But for it to be able to convert anywhere near 50 per cent of these seats, the party has to strike tactical alliances. This would require dimming the spotlight on Rahul Gandhi. The Congress's performance in state elections later this year could be its key to making senior partner in its alliances with regional parties.

But even success in Karnataka and a reasonable showing in the three northern states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh will not give the Congress the head start it needs for 2024. Modi said last week in parliament that "one person is weighing on an entire opposition brigade". These are early days yet. But as they prepare to face a string of elections, Rahul Gandhi and the Congress would be better served by underplaying gains from the Yatra and focusing instead on challenges ahead. Modi and the BJP are formidable. Turning the tables on them is a mathematical possibility. But for that, Rahul Gandhi and his party both need to be far more creative and imaginative than they have been until now.



# India topples France as UK's largest Scotch whisky market

The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) said that India imported 219 million 70cl bottles of Scotch compared to France's 205 million last year – representing growth of the Indian Scotch market of more than 200 per cent in the past decade.

India has overtaken France to become the UK's largest market of Scotch whisky in terms of volume with a 60 per cent hike in imports in 2022 over the previous year, according to figures from Scotland's leading industry body. The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) said that India imported 219 million 70cl bottles of Scotch compared to France's 205 million last year – representing growth of the Indian Scotch market of more than 200 per cent in the past decade.

As one of the key sectors of focus for the UK in the free trade agreement (FTA) talks with India, now in their seventh round of negotiations, SWA pointed out that the hike in volume still makes up only a fraction of the Indian whisky market due to high tariffs.

"Despite double-digit growth, Scotch

whisky still only comprises 2 per cent of the Indian whisky market," the association said on Friday. "SWA analysis shows that a UK-India FTA deal which eases the 150 per cent tariff burden on Scotch whisky in India could boost market access for Scotland's whisky companies, allowing for an additional GBP 1 billion of growth over the next five years," it noted. The value of the Indian market for Scotch exports comes in at fifth worth GBP 282 million, up 93 per cent in 2021 and behind France, Singapore and Taiwan. The 2022 trend also saw the Asia-Pacific region overtake the European Union (EU) as the industry's largest regional market, with double-digit post-pandemic growth also seen in Taiwan, Singapore and China besides India.

"During a year of significant economic headwinds and global supply chain disruption, the Scotch Whisky industry continued to be an anchor of growth, supporting investment and job creation across Scotland and the UK," said SWA Chief Executive Mark Kent.

"By reducing tariffs through the UK-In-

dia free trade agreement, continuing the duty freeze in the March budget, and ensuring the industry's continued ability to advertise our world-class product in our home market, the Scottish and UK governments can count on the Scotch Whisky industry to reinvest its success across the UK," he said.

Overall, the year 2022 saw solid growth in Scotch exports around the world, with the US holding on to its topmost position as the largest market by value at GBP 1,053 million. The total export value of Scotch whisky - one of the UK's biggest exporters - was up 37 per cent by value to GBP 6.2 billion.

UK Trade Minister Nigel Huddleston said: "Scotch whisky is one of the UK's great exporting success stories, contributing billions of pounds to the economy and supporting thousands of jobs, so I'm pleased to see these export figures showing a growing global demand.

"It's essential we continue to support the industry as it expands into

new markets thanks to our new trade agreements around the world such as CPTPP [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership] and in India. As we set our sights on GBP 1 trillion exports by 2030, I'm confident we can see Scotch whisky go from strength to strength in the years ahead."

According to SWA data, on average the equivalent of 53 bottles of Scotch Whisky are exported every second -- up from 44 per second in 2021. Bottled Blended Scotch Whisky accounts for 59 per cent of value exports, with Single Malt 32 per cent of all Scotch whisky exports by value.

"The whisky industry alone employs 11,000 people directly in Scotland, over 7,000 of whom work in rural areas and a further 42,000 jobs across the UK. We will continue to engage with and listen to the whisky industry to understand how we can improve export opportunities and remove barriers to trade," added Mairi Gougeon, Scottish government's Rural Affairs and Islands Cabinet Secretary.

# How Indian Laws Govern People's Right To Love And Live

They have twin teenaged boys, studying in grade 10. When they fell in love, neither realised the Herculean battle they would face for acceptability in Aishwarya's family and social circles. "My wife is from an upper caste family, while I belong to the OBC community. This has never bothered us or my family. But, Aishwarya cannot understand the reason for her parents and relatives unwilling to accept me as a son-in-law even after 20 years of marriage and two children," laughs Ravichandran.

During their dating days, the fact that they belonged to different castes did not make any difference, it was the love and romance that sailed them through. While Ravichandran's parents were ecstatic with his choice of a bride, Aishwarya faced the toughest battle at her house. "I always believed that my parents were broad-minded as they never ever discussed caste or encouraged us to do so," says Aishwarya. "Ravi would come home and they liked him. But the day I told them that we were getting married the first question I was asked was what caste he belonged to. I did not know. Their question shocked me," she recalls. When her parents realised that he belonged to the OBC community, they forbade her from meeting him. He was no longer welcome in their house. Finally, they eloped and married.

A division bench of the Allahabad High Court had said that adults had a right to choose their partners, irrespective of religion. The petition was moved by one Shifa Hasan and her partner, both residents of Uttar Pradesh, saying that they were in

love and living together on their own will.

"As the present petition is a joint petition by two individuals who claim to be in love with each other and are major, nobody, even their parents could object to their relationship," said the order.

According to the Supreme Court, inter-caste marriages are a unifying factor and there has never been a ban on inter-caste or inter-religious marriages in India. In 2016, a study was conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research to ascertain statistics pertaining to inter-caste marriages. It was revealed that only five per cent of the marriages in India are inter-caste ones. While Mizoram has the highest number of such marriages at 55 per cent, Madhya Pradesh saw the lowest at one per cent. This survey also found that if the boy's mother was educated it had a positive impact on inter-caste marriages. If the mother was educated beyond class ten then there was a 36 per cent chance of the probability of an inter-caste marriage. A bench of the Supreme Court comprising justices Sanjay Kisan Kaul and Hrishikesh Roy noted that it would "hardly be a desirable social excuse" for parents to shun their children only because they decided to marry outside their caste or community. The judges highlighted the need for specific guidelines and training module for policemen to understand and deal with such socially sensitive cases. The apex court further stated that sensitising the policemen will help couples get protection under the law in the eventuality of parents lodging criminal cases against them.

But what happens when love strikes the police force itself? Twenty-three-year-old Poonam and 22-year-old Gauri fell in love at a police station. They are both sub-inspectors and met at their first posting there. Love did not hit them the first time they met, it happened much later. "We connected with each other. Since there were not too many women in the police station, we became friends and hung out together," says Gauri. Scared to voice their liking for each other they kept mum. It was by chance they realised they were gay. "Right at the beginning we were allotted a room in the police quarters. It makes everything very easy and no one knows that we are in a relationship," Poonam tells Outlook. "We got engaged recently. Since women wear jewelry, no one makes much of the rings on our fingers. If anyone comes to know about us, we will be dismissed from our jobs and killed by our relatives. No questions asked, no answers given," says Poonam. In 2018, the Supreme Court struck down Section 377 which criminalised homosexuality as an unnatural act. A significant point made by the apex court was that for constitutional purposes the LGBTQ minority is a part of the diverse plural of India. It had then stated that Section 377 marred their "joy of life" and rejected that this minority should not be subjected to "societal pariah and dereliction". However, same-sex marriage remains illegal in India. The Supreme Court said that recognising same-sex marriages had more legal ramifications than simple legal recognition. Aparna, 36

and Shayan, 42, are colleagues in a media company. They are both married to other people and live with their individual families. Aparna does not have any children, while Shayan has a daughter from his marriage. Aparna and Shayan fell in love other during their night shifts. The long working hours helped build on their love and before they knew they were dating. "We are work spouses in the truest sense. I love my family and Shayan loves his. We (also) love each other," says Aparna. She confessed to loving "the space she is in now" where "both loves co-exist". Both Aparna and Shayan say that they are careful when at work and at home. "We know what we have is forever. So why be greedy and spoil it?" asks Shayan. "We have enough time for each other. We have invested in a flat and no one knows about this. We have been together for seven years," he adds. Earlier, Indian law allowed an aggrieved husband of a married woman in an adulterous relationship to file a complaint. But the same right is not allowed to an aggrieved wife if her husband is found to be in an adulterous relationship. The Supreme Court had ruled that adultery, overturning previous rulings on this issue and declared Section 497 of the IPC as "unconstitutional". Under this section adultery was an offence and the convict could be sentenced to five years in prison. In its judgment, the top court said that the law, making adultery an offence, was archaic, discriminated against women and a clear violation of fundamental rights.



# Why America Is So Keen To Embrace India Despite Ukraine differences

The world is cleaving into two halves. On one side is the US-led West. On the other is the China-Russia axis. Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East remain uncommitted to either half. Grouped together as the Global South, India is its natural leader. But New Delhi needs to tread carefully. The danger of the Global South becoming a new version of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is real. NAM was the brainchild of three leaders: Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Egyptian President Gamel Abdel Nasser and Yugoslavia's

President Josip Broz Tito. They led a group of developing countries, many newly independent, who wanted to remain geopolitically equidistant from the US and the Soviet Union blocs during the Cold War.

As Kawashima Shin, a professor at the University of Tokyo, wrote in *The Diplomat*: "In the middle of last month, the Indian government hosted the online 'Voice of Global South Summit: for Human-Centric Development', which brought together more than 120 ministers and leaders.

Along with an in-person summit meeting, the conference consisted of 10 sessions, addressing key topics such as the global economy and climate change, rising inflation, energy and food issues, and the debt problems that are plaguing many developing countries." "The summit underscores India's aspirations, as chair of the G-20, to set the agenda as a representative of the Global South. In addition to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the presidents of Guyana, Vietnam, Mozambique,

Senegal, and Uzbekistan as well as the prime ministers of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand, Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea took part in the in-person summit. India was clearly taking advantage of the opportunity of its tenure as G-20 chair to engage in active diplomacy to realise its agenda." For India, leadership of the Global South has utility value today but the country's true place in the world lies elsewhere. It is as a balancing pivot between the two main power axes — the US-led West and China-Russia.

## PM Modi's push for sustainable clothing: Why India can't move away from fast fashion

Fashion trends move rapidly with seasons and the pret market (mass production of designer wear). This creates the need for fast fashion, involving mass production lines, cheap labour and quick turnarounds. In India, the e-commerce boom and wide smartphone connectivity mean it is speedier to do so, setting off a cultural phenomenon called urbanisation, acquisitive consumption behaviour being its most reliable index. With India's consumer demographics becoming younger, under 25, fashion and appearance consciousness will dictate buying behaviour. A McKinsey report has already predicted the number of online fashion shoppers in India to reach

500 million by 2030. Globally, too, fast fashion has driven the perception of clothing as a disposable item and a seasonal indulgence rather than a durable good. Data shows that in the last 20 years, the number of clothes bought has doubled from 50 billion garments to 100 billion. What about industry cred? Even in the West, that's a tough call. Copenhagen fashion week is the only one which is laying down sustainability requirements for designers this year. The major fashion weeks are still far from firming them up. The European Union is just about testing digital passports on its sustainable clothing brands, where shoppers can scan the code on the label and access

the item's journey, from source to the consumer, tracking its water usage and carbon emissions. In India, this kind of circularity has a long way to go. One retail fashion experiment by the Aditya Birla group, which uses natural cellulose fabric, is just that — an experiment. One of India's most successful pret designers, Anita Dongre, runs an eco-sustainable label called Grassroots but that is no match for her mainline mass brands. Without incentives in the fashion industry, rationalisation of the cost structure, and most importantly, legitimate endorsement by Bollywood and sports ambassadors, sustainable fashion will continue to be an elite obsession, not a practical choice. At the

end of the day, only IndianOil, a PSU, has decided to make the Modi vest a part of its staff uniform. Without a glitzy campaign to capture the national imagination, "green clothing" will be reduced to efforts of women's cooperatives and NGOs while "re-use, recycle, renew or upcycle" will remain confined to individual efforts to make a legacy statement of family heirlooms. Social media posts and hashtags may just not be enough to change buying behaviour. But we do have the world's best skilled labour, weavers, handcrafters, innovators and are also the world's largest producer of organic cotton. Can we make it all come together to match shop-floor economics?

## Why a weak Opposition is not PM Modi's biggest strength. It's something else

Moved to the defence ministry, VP Singh unearthed irregularities in the purchase of submarines. The campaign against the Bofors deal was only a logical progression. Even when the saffron party was in power from 1998 to 2004 (if we discount the 13 days in 1996), there was a troika at the top: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi. There wasn't much to choose between the first two in terms of stature. In fact, Advani went public saying he sacrificed the job for Vajpayee. And this is where the current BJP's biggest strength lies. And this strength flows from

how PM Modi has run a remarkably tight ship. Good or bad, there's no G23. There's not more than one candidate for the post of the party chief. In short, dissidence is negligible, if any. And the couple of dissidents like Varun Gandhi don't have the wherewithal to mount any noticeable challenge. Even the likes of Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar, who have been dropped from the government, remain committed to the party's cause. If Desai, as finance minister, sought to take credit for policy interventions, all Budgets after 2014 have been seen to have deep imprints of the prime minister.

Phrases like Modinomics are a regular feature. It's not difficult to see where the articulation for India's defence and foreign policies come from. Instances could go on and on. When PM Modi recently said in Parliament that *desh dekh raha hai, ek akela kitnon pe bhari padh raha hai*, it was not only about his capacity to make himself heard despite the incessant sloganeering from the Opposition benches. When the Adani issue broke, some wondered whether it could be India's Bofors moment. Apart from the merit of the two cases, the main difference between then and now is there is no VP

Singh. Anti-BJP parties come together on Adani and other such issues but remain divided over pre-election strategies. So, even if considerable Opposition unity comes about, which seems a far cry at this moment, it may miss the sting and dramatic powerplay. Prime ministers have lost when few thought they would. For example, when Vajpayee looked invincible in 2004, Manmohan Singh came to lead the country for 10 years. But this time, a lot may depend on whether a majority of Indian voters are getting tired of Hindutva and PM Modi's charisma.



# Should Bangladesh Get Out of the Adani Power Deal?

**Adani's inclusion of costs that appear to be non-existent may allow Bangladesh to claim the deal invalid. If not, questions of political compulsion would prove hard to dispel.**



As billionaire Gautam Adani's business empire and its practices have become a subject of intense global scrutiny, Bangladesh, too, seems to be drawn under the scanner. More and more experts are now coming out questioning the rationale behind Bangladesh's power purchase deal with Adani Power (Jharkhand) Limited (APJL), which many of them have termed as "one-sided" and against Bangladesh's interests. Amid such controversy, Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, adviser to the prime minister on energy, while responding to questions from the Indian media recently, said talks with the Adani Group on power supply were "private" and "can't be made public." It's unclear whether the prime minister's energy adviser meant commercial secrecy of the deal or the political compulsion alleged by The Washington Post in a report on December 9, 2022.

The question of commercial secrecy is no longer a valid argument, since a number of news organisations have obtained a copy of the contract and experts have published detailed analysis of it. Reviewing the Adani contract, The Washington Post suggested that though the deal appeared unfavourable, not signing it was not an option for political reasons.

Surprisingly, the Bangladesh government did not respond to the newspaper's request for comments or protest its suggestions after the story was published. This policy of secrecy seems to be maintained strictly, as the government refrains from contesting the claims in the local press that the APJL will be paid almost double the purchase price of power compared to that paid to Bangladeshi producers, and three times the price of power imported from other sources in India at present.

These price comparisons are crucial as the import of Adani power is in addition to the existing overcapacity. Last week, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in his

speech in Lok Sabha, made similar suggestions when he questioned why Prime Minister Narendra Modi's deal for selling power to Bangladesh became a deal between Bangladesh and the Adani Group. Rahul Gandhi's attack on Modi's relationship with Adani is nothing new. What's new, though, is the timing as the Adani Group's share values and fortune have been bleeding heavily following the allegations of widespread fraud and irregularities by the well-known activist investment firm Hindenburg Research. Hindenburg called it "the largest con in corporate history."

Before all this media brouhaha, another serious research pointed out the flaw in the contract and put out a figure of more than US \$ 1 billion that Adani would be getting from Bangladesh over its 25-year term. In a joint study, published in June 2022, the Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED) and Growthwatch, a voluntary research and advocacy institution in India, said the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) would have to pay a maximum of US \$ 1.17 billion and a minimum of US \$ 918.18 million per year to buy electricity from Adani Group's Godda Power Plant. Of this amount, US \$ 423.29 million is the capacity charge per year, which amounts to US \$ 11.01 billion over its lifetime, which will only benefit the billionaire Adani Group to make more money. Now AdaniWatch, a non-profit project established "to shine a light on the Adani Group's misdeeds across the planet," claims that the contract between Bangladesh and Adani may be "legally invalid."

In a co-authored article, Ravi Nair, an independent Indian journalist, says there are at least two issues that may allow either parties to scrap the deal altogether. According to India's Guidelines on Cross Border Trade of Electricity, coal-fired power plants owned by private companies would only be

allowed to export electricity if they had surplus capacity. AdaniWatch says India still doesn't have power surplus, and bending the rules by the state of Jharkhand to exempt Adani may not be legal. It then adds that Adani's inclusion of costs that appear to be non-existent may allow Bangladesh to claim the deal invalid, too. According to the report, under the contract, the BPDB will have to pay

a reference tariff that includes excise duty, customs duty for imported goods, service tax, krishi kalyan tax, central sales tax, VAT on equipment, composite tax on civil construction, work contract tax, construction workers' welfare fees, water charges, and income tax.

At four and a half months before the contract was signed, the Indian government rolled out a comprehensive Goods and Services Tax regime, replacing almost all those state and centre taxes. Then again in 2019, 15 months after signing the contract, the Godda Power Plant project was declared a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), granting them a lot of tax exemptions. Documents showed that the majority of the company's imports came after the project was declared an SEZ, and the company also avoids paying import duty or any other tax on imported coal. It also doesn't have to pay GST, surcharges on duties, or any other import duty.

AdaniWatch says the power purchase agreement (PPA) "stipulates that APJL must inform BPDB of any changes in law that might affect these assumptions within 30 days of such an occurrence, and any variation shall be adjusted in the reference capacity price."

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# The AI arms race is on. Are regulators ready?

The race among tech companies to roll out generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools is raising concerns about how mistakes in technology and blind spots in regulation could hasten the spread of misinformation, elevate biases in results and increase the harvesting and use of Americans' personal data.

So far tech giants Microsoft and Google are leading the race in releasing new AI tools to the public, but smaller companies and startups are expected to make progress in the field. This year isn't the start of the AI boom — both leading companies have been laying the groundwork for launching AI products for years. Still, Microsoft President Brad Smith has called 2023 an inflection point for AI, comparing it to 2007 for the smartphone or 1995 for the web — the years the new technologies exploded in popularity with the public.

Momentum for generative AI tools sped up in the fall, after the launch of popular tool ChatGPT, which delivers detailed answers to user queries in a conversational tone.

The AI-powered tool is backed by parent company OpenAI, which received hefty investments from Microsoft before and after its launch.

As ChatGPT's popularity has skyrocketed, regulators are attempting to lay down a foundation of ground rules for tech companies already speeding ahead.

As it stands, federal AI guidance is largely voluntary and broad, meaning companies are left to set and follow their own guardrails. "Right now in the US there's sort of a lot of things going on, but it's very early. I think regulators and policymakers don't have a good understanding of how some of these technologies work," said Rayid Ghani, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University.

"They don't necessarily have a good handle on how to regulate them — whether they regulate the process, whether to regulate what it produces," he added.

As that process continues, tech companies are competing neck and neck in the race to be dominant in the AI sector. Last week, Google announced the launch of Bard, a ChatGPT rival. The company also said it would introduce more AI-powered tools across its search function, including releasing AI-powered blurbs of responses to users' queries before the traditional links the search engine produces.

One day later, Microsoft said it



would incorporate generative AI into a new version of its search engine Bing.

Long operating in the shadow of the dominant search engine Google, Bing reached 31.7 million visits the day after the announcement, which is 15 percent higher than Bing's average daily volume for the past six months, according to data estimated by SimilarWeb. The race to be on the cutting edge of the generative AI game poses concerns that the products and services may be risky for users if companies are rushing to "get in front of competitors," Ghani said.

"Not that they were robust before in a lot of these dimensions, but now they're even less so," he said. The clearest example of that risk is generative AI tools giving false information in results, or what the industry is dubbing "hallucinating." "In many cases, you would not know that it's wrong unless you're an expert yourself or you're doing separate research on the topic and you're able to verify the facts that the AI chatbot is advancing," said Nathalie Maréchal, co-director of the privacy and data project at the Center for Democracy and Technology.

Even during Google's demonstration of Bard last week, the tool gave the wrong response.

In a gif showing an example search query for "what new discoveries from the James Webb Space Telescope can I tell my 9 year old about?," Bard's response incorrectly said that the telescope took "the very first pictures of a planet outside of our own solar system."

**What happens when AI gets it wrong?**

Delivering false information is not a new facet of generative AI chat tools, because incorrect information has always been available in response to search queries on

search engines that have existed for decades.

But the shift toward incorporating these generative AI tools into search exaggerates those risks by taking away a level of sourcing for where the answers are coming from, Ghani said. As they incorporate these tools into search, Microsoft and Google seem to be leaning toward a process that will allow users to hover over text and see where the information was pulled from.

Those search functions have not been opened to the wider public yet. With ChatGPT, such a feature does not exist and there's no indication as to where the information is pulled from. Maréchal said generative AI chat tools also pose risks over generating "plausible seeming disinformation" more easily and at lower costs for bad actors with the intent to spread false or misleading messages across social media.

That could make it more difficult for social media companies' detection tools, which are largely powered by other forms of AI, to identify disinformation.

"Companies should be thinking more carefully through the risks and harms of products before they release them," she said.

**Regulation of AI is largely voluntary, worrying critics**

As for specific regulation on AI, the government's guidance is mostly optional at this point.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) last month released an AI Risk Management Framework. The group said that is intended for voluntary use and aims to improve the ability of companies to incorporate trustworthiness into the design, development and use of AI products and services.

There are also more agency-specific regulatory actions being built from agencies such as the Food

and Drug Administration or the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Ghani said those aim to address specific issues related to AI use in those sectors.

The NIST framework followed a blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights the White House released in October. Complying with the rights laid out by the White House was also voluntary.

Data privacy and AI are a concern for the White House. One pillar laid out by the White House's bill of rights was a push for data privacy.

Maréchal said the rise of generative AI tools underscores the need for lawmakers to pass a comprehensive data privacy bill, like the American Data Privacy Protection Act (ADPPA).

But despite bipartisan support, the bill failed to make it through Congress last year.

"ADPPA wasn't written with this specific risk category in mind, this particular product in mind. ADPPA will protect people from a wide range of harms, including discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics," she said. Even if models were trained on personal data that was available before new regulation, she said there is a strong "recency bias," which is when the behavior data that is most useful for generating revenue is what a system uses. "The more recent [data] about your behavior is what's going to be the most relevant," she said. "Otherwise, we'd all be seeing ads about stuff that we were doing 10 years ago."

Tech companies say they are following internal regulations when building AI.

The lack of strict government regulations on AI as it evolves means much of the work is coming from self-imposed guidelines.

Microsoft said it is following the "Responsible AI Standard" it released in June to guide how it

builds its systems. The company says its standards are based on six core principles: fairness, reliability and safety, privacy and security, inclusiveness and transparency and accountability.

While Microsoft said it uses its self-imposed principles, the company is also in discussions with key D.C. players, with executives in town last week for meetings. OpenAI's CEO Sam Altman was also on Capitol Hill earlier this year and met with lawmakers including tech regulation-focused Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), according to aides for the senators.

Companies are warning against creating too many AI regulations. Microsoft executives cautioned against D.C. imposing regulations that could slow down innovation. Tech has argued it should be able to go fast with guardrails in place, with the ability to add more as they go.

The company's executives have also warned that competitors in China may not slow down simply because U.S. companies are being forced to regulate.

At the moment, Microsoft has said that it is leading the AI race in its partnership with OpenAI, with Google and China's Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence on its heels, according to Microsoft.

The AI push by companies is raising questions about Chinese competition.

Maréchal said that companies framing calls to slow down as a risk that might let China get ahead a "nonsense argument" that is used to "appeal to certain policymakers' xenophobia."

"First of all, innovation is not inherently good because it's innovation," she said. "An innovative way to harm more people is not something that we want and China is using various AI tools for mass surveillance and social control, and that is not what we should be moving towards." Other companies, big and small, are also expected to jump more aggressively into the generative AI race. Wedbush analysts Dan Ives and John Katsingris wrote in a Feb. 10 report that they believe Microsoft is leading the race so far "Usain Bolt style." But both analysts said the race will be a "a long one" that they expect tech giants to spend billions on in the coming years. "Now the Street awaits Apple, Meta and others with their next poker moves in this AI Big Tech battle underway," the analysts added.



# Nikki Haley's Woman Problem

**Ten years ago, her gender might even have been an advantage. But today she's running at a time of maximal sexism in Republican politics**

As Nikki Haley kicks off her 2024 campaign this week in Charleston, South Carolina, one big question looms: Will she have a fair shot as a woman candidate at a moment of maximal sexism in Republican politics?

If this were the Republican Party of 10 years ago, Haley would be a candidate with enviable advantages, having served as a South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador. She is staunchly pro-life, and she is a woman of color — significant for a party that has wanted to diversify for years. But given the reality of Republican Party politics today, her presidential dream could become a nightmare. Under the best of circumstances, women who run for president face a particularly pernicious strain of American gender bias that has overshadowed every previous campaign. Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign was plagued with sexist double standards that played a huge part in derailing her. In 2020, six women candidates competed in the Democratic presidential field and received more negative coverage than their male counterparts. As I wrote about at the time, the combination of benign neglect from the media and disproportionately negative coverage certainly impeded their prospects. On the Republican side, Carly Fiorina faced an endless barrage of sexist attacks from then candidate Donald Trump and others when she ran for president in 2016. And women of color in the political arena, like Haley, are twice as likely as other candidates to be targeted with misinformation and disinformation.

Haley could very likely have it worse than the candidates did in 2016, encountering a veritable buzz saw of sexist and racist attacks from the moment she declares her presidential run. That's because the base of the Republican Party, the most rabid and committed primary voters, has become more male and more far-right since Trump became the party standard



bearer. Misogynist ideology and hate has proliferated so much among in recent years that the Southern Poverty Law Center has begun tracking "Male Supremacy" groups. Groups like the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys that supported Trump and have seen members convicted of seditious conspiracy for involvement in the January 6th insurrection on the Capitol are also rabidly anti-woman. Proud Boys founder Gavin McInnes told listeners on his podcast that, "Maybe the reason I'm sexist is because women are dumb." Avowed White Supremacist Nick Fuentes, who dined recently with Trump at Mar-A-Lago, has told followers that his ideal world is one where the "women don't have the right to vote," one in which "women are wearing veils at church," and "women [aren't] in the workforce."

In another era these extremists could be safely relegated to the political margins, but today they are playing a more central role than ever. While Kevin McCarthy and some other Republican leaders have condemned Fuentes, Trump himself refused to disavow him and dozens of lawmakers refused to comment about it either way. Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who continues to enjoy some of the highest ratings in cable TV, has used his considerable platform

to launch racist and sexist attacks that have become more overt and more vitriolic in the last few years.

Of course, Trump, as the only declared Republican presidential candidate, looms large. He built his base on attacking women, particularly women of color. From endlessly debasing women journalists, political leaders and public figures who have criticized him to his braggadocio on the "Access Hollywood" tapes and racist rants against Secretary Elaine Chao Trump has never tried to hide his disdain in even minimal veneer. He even brought Roger Ailes, who before his death in 2017 had been accused of sexual harassment by at least 20 women, on as an adviser to his campaign and appointed Bill Shine, who was accused of covering up sexual harassment during his time at Fox News, as White House communications director. Researchers found that in the 2016 election "hostile sexism" was a primary predictor of support for Trump, second only to party affiliation.

Astonishingly, it's not just Trump or right-wing extremist men that push sexist ideology in the

Republican Party. Congresswomen Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert have both embraced anti-feminism, despite their own career ambitions. It's a trend that's not especially new. Phyllis Schlafly, who was among the first prominent conservative women to back Trump when he ran for president, successfully fought passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, and railed against equal rights for women even as she was benefiting from the system she fought. But these attitudes pose a particularly significant threat today because so many of the figures most at ease with hostile sexism now hold positions of real power in the Republican Party. Lauren Boebert may be a back bencher, but she was part of the crew that held McCarthy's speaker vote hostage. She told the Denver Post that she believes "women are the lesser vessel, and we

need masculinity in our lives to balance that." Taylor Greene, who now holds leadership positions on Congressional committees and is vying to be Trump's running mate in '24, told an interviewer that Satan was manipulating women into having abortions.

Haley faces a high hurdle in even convincing Republican voters that a woman can be president. A December 2022 USA Today poll revealed just how challenging gender is in Republican politics. Overall, a majority of voters (55 percent) say that gender doesn't matter in presidential elections. Those who did have a preference chose a male president by more than 2-1, 28 percent-12 percent. Among Republicans, 50 percent said the ideal president would be male while a paltry 2 percent said she would be female. In contrast, Democrats with a preference chose a woman over a man by 2-1, 24 percent-11 percent. Among those voters with a preference, men by 8-1 preferred a male president over a female one, 32 percent-4 percent. Even women were somewhat more likely to prefer a male president (25 percent-19 percent). Politics is as much about time and place as it is about talent. And in this time and place, the hurdles for a woman in the Republican Party are exceptionally high. Whether we agree with Haley's positions or not, we should all root for a level political playing field that stays in the bounds of decency and civility. Unfortunately, in today's Republican political reality, the chances that happens are slim to none.





# The First Time America Was Attacked by Balloons

## History offers lessons for easing the current U.S.-China crisis

For weeks now, America has been transfixed by the case of Chinese spy balloons and unidentified objects wafting across the nation's skies. The origin and purpose of some of these objects remains unknown. But no matter what they turn out to be, they have already precipitated a crisis in U.S.-China relations. Amid growing tensions between Washington and Beijing, China's apparent use of balloons to snoop on the United States has already led to the postponement of a highly anticipated China visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and to passage of a unanimous House resolution condemning China for violating U.S. sovereignty.

Most of the attention and concern has focused on the Chinese balloons' possible surveillance of sensitive military sites. But there is a deeper, more painful reason that secret high-altitude balloon flights are so unsettling: They have been used to attack America before, and they could do so again. This dark history underscores why the U.S. and China must both act quickly to lower tensions, especially in the aerial domain. During the Second World War, the only successful, large-scale attacks mounted on the U.S. mainland came in the form of some 9,000 high-altitude balloons launched from Japan. Relying on the same jet stream winds that conveyed China's spy balloons across the United States, Japan's Fu-Go balloons carried a small explosive payload deep into America's heartland. These balloon bombs caused only minor damage and, tragically, a handful of deaths. But the U.S. government feared their potential to cause widespread panic and undermine morale enough to censor any mention of the strange new weapon — part of the reason they've been largely

forgotten.

Today, the history of the Fu-Go balloons holds three important lessons for the leaders of China and the United States as they navigate the current crisis.

First, there is something about unseen, high-altitude objects that invites a degree of alarm out of proportion to their direct harm for national security. Like the Fu-Go balloons, initial indications suggest that the military value of China's spy balloons is minimal. But their impact on public perception and alarm has been hard to overstate.

Witness the reaction of Democratic Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, where the balloon was first spotted, who said, "We think we know what they were going to collect, but we don't know. That scares the hell out of me." Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, meanwhile, ripped Defense officials at a hearing for not acting when the balloon was above her state: "It's like this administration doesn't think that Alaska is any part of the rest of the country!" Beijing — or any other nation tempted to release high-altitude objects into American airspace — must understand this special sensitivity and take any measures necessary to avoid repeat spy balloon incursions.

A second lesson is that balloons can be surprisingly stealthy weapons. It took U.S. authorities several months to piece together Japan's balloon bomb plot. China's high-altitude balloons, meanwhile, appear to have exploited what a senior Air Force officer called a "domain awareness gap" — meaning the balloons passed through holes in America's existing air defenses. Such gaps are especially concerning if, as in the 1940s, they create new avenues for adversaries to attack U.S. territory. China, which possesses far more sophisticated weaponry than balloons, including hypersonic missiles, has little reason to exploit these gaps to mount an actual attack — but terrorists or rogue states might. That is of no less concern to national security experts. At a minimum, the prospect of weaponization is likely to increase the risk of confrontation, whether between the U.S. and China or another aerial adversary, in the event of any future airborne incursions. Leaders on all sides must redouble their efforts to strengthen crisis communication channels to defuse any future incidents as quickly as possible.

A third, final and much happier lesson of the Fu-Go balloons is that crisis and conflict can eventually be

transformed into cooperation and even comity. Indeed, the story of the Fu-Go balloon bombs had a surprisingly happy ending, thanks to the actions of individual Americans and Japanese who worked to transform wartime tragedy into postwar partnership. In the 1980s, residents of Bly, Ore., which suffered the only casualties caused by the balloon bombs, began a correspondence with Japanese citizens involved in producing the bombs. The former American and Japanese antagonists even held a poignant in-person meeting in Bly after the war.

We must hope that a similar ending emerges from this latest crisis in U.S.-China relations. Fortunately, both sides have an opportunity to ensure that it does. Though blighted by the balloon incident, China recently re-opened itself to foreigners without onerous quarantine and Covid testing requirements for the first time in almost three years. This long overdue opening should be cause for celebration and a resumption of frayed people-to-people ties. In the coming months, large numbers of American businesspeople, researchers, students, journalists and others are likely to travel to China once again. Leaders in both Washington and Beijing must create the space for this exchange to thrive, whatever differences exist between the two governments. China, for its part, must start by preventing any further aerial incursions into U.S. airspace.

More than anything, the history of the Fu-Go balloons shows that when tensions are as high as they are between the U.S. and China, countries must use people-to-people ties to better ground their rocky relationship — or risk subjecting the world to far greater turbulence.





# The Lithium found in Jammu can fuel India's green ambitions, cut China dependence

**Lithium found in Jammu should not just be a 'feel-good' discovery. It must be used to develop the entire electric vehicle and energy storage ecosystem in India.**

The Geological Survey of India recently announced that they had 'found' minerals bearing Lithium deposits, or 'Lithium inferred deposits' in Reasi district of Jammu. Even more impressively, the resources are estimated to contain around 5.9 million tonnes, which if confirmed would give India some of the world's largest proven deposits of Lithium after Australia, Bolivia, Chile and China. And you do not really need all that much Lithium in a battery. If you remember the periodic table from your high-school chemistry, you would know that Lithium is the lightest metal. Thus, an average 'AA' Lithium-Ion cell uses just a couple of grams of the element. On cars, a nominal Lithium-Nickel Manganese Cobalt (LiNMC) battery uses just 70 grams of Lithium per kilowatt-hour. The increasingly more common Lithium Ferro-Phosphate (LFP) cells used nowadays use slightly more Lithium, but are cheaper to produce.

So any which way you look at it, the huge amount of Lithium found in Jammu would power the entire Indian automotive industry as well as fulfill the needs of the consumer electronics industry for a century. And that does not preclude the possibility of even more Lithium being found elsewhere in India. This will do much to assuage the fear that following India's constant dependence on importing crude oil from petro-states to keep the arteries of the economy running, the country would become dependent on new 'electro-states' such as China, which dominates Lithium refining and battery making. But to be clear, China will continue to dominate battery making for electric vehicles. By building up a massive industry, ring-fencing the resources needed to make batteries including Lithium, Chinese companies own the largest Lithium mines in the world situated in Australia. China has managed to accelerate local demand for electric vehicles. In 2022 alone, the country sold 6.89 million 'new energy vehicles' (NEVs), and in the process, it has developed local champions such as BYD Corporation, a company that controls the entire value chain —



from refining lithium to making the cells and then the finished products. BYD has even entered the Indian passenger car market with the Atto-3 SUV. But most importantly, BYD and CATL, another Chinese Lithium-processor and battery manufacturer, are taking massive strides in developing and patenting new technologies. BYD manufactures their Lithium-cells using a process called 'Blade Technology' and BYD Blade cells are not just used by BYD but also the likes of Toyota and Mercedes-Benz.

## The Lithium rub

And therein lies the rub. India cannot just extract Lithium, it will have to work overtime to refine the deposits. And both these processes are extremely 'dirty'. I expect there to be an environmental furore around extraction and refining. However, this will develop core technologies and skills among Indian companies. One great hope in India, before this Lithium discovery, was around a potential alternative chemistry that is Sodium-Ion technology. Sodium is much more easily available (in the sea) and while it has issues around energy density, it would be cheaper than importing billions of dollars-worth of Lithium-Ion batteries. Reliance Industries even invested in a start-up in this area. But most of the breakthrough work on Sodium-Ion batteries is being done by the aforementioned Chinese firm, CATL.

If sensibly extracted, the deposits could be a game changer for a country poor in traditional energy resources other than coal. The automotive industry, from two-wheelers to passenger cars and

commercial vehicles, is shifting toward electric motion. Sure, nowhere near the numbers that China is achieving but EVs dominated the stands of carmakers at the Auto Expo and India has already — in the likes of Ather Energy and Ola — developed some local champions.

But India needs more such

champions that develop own technology. And while we are doing a fantastic job in writing the software code that is powering the electric vehicle revolution across the world, this new find of Lithium should not just be a 'feel-good' factor. It must be used to develop the entire electric vehicle and energy storage ecosystem in India. Discovering oil in the twentieth century did allow nations such as the United Arab Emirates to transform themselves into a global commercial and transportation hub — a city like Dubai doesn't depend on oil anymore. But many more countries have been cursed by crude, squandering the resources that they were blessed with.

China has already run off on the Lithium front, but there is no reason that if we judiciously use what we have discovered, we can catch up and we can be self-reliant, making a world of difference to our future.

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# Dating in the time of coronavirus Chat online, meet much later

With governments clamping down on social interactions to contain the coronavirus spread, dating sites are discouraging dates and asking users to get to know each other virtually instead.

With governments clamping down on social interactions to contain the coronavirus spread, dating sites are discouraging dates and asking users to get to know each other virtually instead. "We don't know who needs to hear this, but now is NOT the time to go out with your date to a bar," leading match-maker OkCupid tweeted on Monday. "FaceTime, Skype, call, text, call, message on our app.... all very romantic right now," it added. Dating sites contacted by AFP refused to divulge their traffic since Covid-19 starting shutting down US cities this week but it

appears their usage is far from slowing.

Even if some academics would like them to suspend their activities entirely. "It's time to shut down Tinder and all online dating services," tweeted US writer Matt Stoller. "No more internet-enabled interactions among random people until the #coronavirus crisis has passed," he added. Joking about the coronavirus has become popular on dating sites, although not necessarily effective at endearing matches to each other. "If someone seems like they're not taking the crisis seriously or

they're making fun of it for me personally that's a turnoff," said comedian and author Lane Moore. She helped created the show "Tinder Live," in which she interacts with matches in real time, and thinks coronavirus could be an "opportunity" for people to bond. "I'm talking to a guy right now who I met on Tinder Live and we're both talking about how this coronavirus COVID-19 stuff is impacting our lives so that can be a good way to know somebody," she said. Moore, from New York, says many of the men she meets on Tinder want to cut the

conversation short and jump straight to meeting in the flesh. She thinks it's a good thing that now men are being forced to chat more first. "That's something that women have always wanted because it's an opportunity to meet someone you like the first time but also try to make sure that they're safe," Moore explained. The dating site Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB) is proposing several different ideas for remote interactions, including an online video game date. "This is going to be important for us to think

outside the box in crazy times like this," said CEO Dawoon Kang. CMB is also organising an online group discussion, which it has never done before. Yale University student Ileana Valdez and five friends spent just a few hours setting up a dating site for students whose classes have been canceled and campuses are deserted. The site, OKZoomer, a nod to the popular expression "Ok boomer" which millennials use to refer to older people, picked up 6,500 users in less than a week, according to Valdez.

## Coronavirus outbreak: Condom sales in India go through the roof and Dutch sex workers risk trafficking and abuse as coronavirus bites

Stockpiling of groceries and essentials aside, in the wake of Covid-19, pharmacists say that people are now buying condoms and other contraceptives in excess



The coronavirus outbreak has triggered fear among people leading to a consumer behaviour shift. Buyers are stockpiling essentials as the infectious virus continues to spread around the world. With recreational places such as gyms, park and theatres under a lockdown until the end of this month, and with

many corporates allowing working from home, people have started to stock up on food and hygiene products. However, a different kind of trend has been noticed with condom sales going through the roof. Many retailers have seen sales surge nearly 25% to 50% in the last one week. "People now have a lot of time, and they are bored at

home," informs Harshal Shah, a medical shop owner in South Mumbai, adding that generally, people prefer smaller packs but the demand for bigger packs has seen a huge boost. He says, "People usually prefer buying a pack of three, but in the last week most of them have purchased packs of 10 and 20." Echoing a similar thought, Ajay Sabrawal, a shop owner from the same area, says, "It's funny because generally we see a surge in sale during the festive period, especially during New Year. People are stocking up medicines and are also buying condoms. I have increased my stock by 25%."

Dutch sex workers risk being trafficked and mistreated by dangerous clients as the shutdown of Amsterdam's sex clubs, to prevent the spread of coronavirus, is likely to drive the trade underground, according to sex industry campaigners.



Dutch sex workers risk being trafficked and mistreated by dangerous clients as the shutdown of Amsterdam's sex clubs, to prevent the spread of coronavirus, is likely to drive the trade underground, according to sex industry campaigners. Lyle Muns, a sex worker in Amsterdam, told the Thomson Reuters

Foundation that he had stopped seeing clients but was able to survive, for now, on his savings and a loan. Others were less secure, said Muns, who is also a board member at My Red Light, a brothel in Amsterdam run by sex workers who hire out windows where they pose to attract clients. It shut on

Sunday in line with government orders. "Vulnerable sex workers will only become more vulnerable to human trafficking because of the coronavirus situation once their economic situation gets more desperate," said Muns. Prostitutes around the world are likely to be hit by similar moves as the coronavirus epidemic brings tight restrictions on movement and economic hardship. The Dutch government on Tuesday announced measures to support self-employed workers whose income has been impacted by coronavirus.





## New Zealand's Chatham Islands might be the only place in the world experiencing overtourism right now

The coronavirus pandemic has decimated the travel industry, as hotels, restaurants and airlines in destinations around the world find themselves going broke or dramatically cutting back costs as they try to survive.

But there's one place on the planet where there are too many tourists right now: the Chatham Islands.

Haven't heard of them? It's okay; you're not the only one.

The remote Pacific Ocean archipelago near the international date line is technically part of New Zealand. And as New Zealand's borders remain mostly closed and locals are advised to not travel overseas at this time, the Chathams -- about 500 miles east of the country's South Island -- have become 2020's hottest getaway for Kiwis. Moving to the top of the list - In a typical year, the Chathams -- whose two main populated islands are Chatham Island and Pitt Island -- get about 2,000 tourists. That compares to about 700 full-time residents, most of whom live on Chatham Island, the largest of the archipelago.

But 2020 is no typical year.

The Chathams' remoteness usually makes it a part of the country that New Zealanders never get around to visiting. Now, that remoteness is an

advantage, with travel-starved Kiwis turning to the islands as a way to feel like they're on a far-off holiday without having to quarantine or take a Covid test. "It happened quite quickly," Jackie Gurden, the islands' tourism manager, explains about the tourism spike in the Chathams. "It's a bit more expensive to get out here so you don't get young people looking for a cheap holiday, and there are no beach resorts or anything." But once the pandemic kept international borders closed, Tourism New Zealand -- the country's official national tourism board -- had to pivot from marketing their country to foreign tourists to encouraging domestic travel. That suddenly made the usually-sleepy Chathams a hot commodity. Demand, though, is far outstripping supply. Gurden

estimates that there are 150 beds on the islands in a mix of hotels, lodges, guesthouses and local residences that list themselves on sites like Airbnb. Most property is privately owned, and camping is forbidden.

The only airline serving the archipelago is Air Chathams, which operates just a handful of flights per week between Chatham Island and what the locals refer to as "the mainland." (Side note: most Kiwis only mean the South Island when they say "mainland," but to Chathamites both the North and South Islands fall under this category.)

Normally, tourism season lasts from about November to March, which is summer in the southern hemisphere. But now, all on-island accommodation is booked solid through June 2021. Even

Gurden, who lives on New Zealand's North Island, isn't sure she'll be able to find a place to crash when she next visits.

What to do there

In the past, most visitors to the Chathams were older travelers looking for a quiet place to get away from it all. Prices can be high, as much food and fuel for has to be shipped from mainland New Zealand. But once you're able to get there, the beautiful scenery is worth the trip. Pitt Island is believed to be the first inhabited place in the world to see the sun rise every day. The Chathams were the easternmost sliver of the Gondwanaland supercontinent, meaning it has a fascinating range of terrains, including basalt columns a la the Giant's Causeway and volcanic cones. The islands are also home to some of the world's rarest

birds, plus there's a large -- and adorable -- seal colony.

Where do we go from here?

Before she was the islands' tourism manager, Gurden was asked to work on a consulting project for the future of the hospitality industry there -- although no one could have guessed just how soon some of those initiatives would be tested. Luckily, some of those projects included the islands' tourism website and official brochure, which landed in the hands of would-be visitors just in time.

In some ways, an uptick in tourism is a major plus for the islands, where most people work in the farming or fishing industries and the absence of a high school sends students off to Christchurch in their teens.

The islands also got a grant from the New Zealand government to help with infrastructure projects, like public toilet facilities and updates at the airport. Even without a pandemic, 2020 was shaping up to be the Chathams' time to shine.

"It's not about driving growth, it's about managing growth," Gurden explains. "There's a need for growth in tourism to create jobs for young people. Young islanders can actually have a future on the island."

That said, she cautions would-be visitors to respect the delicate ecosystem and small-town feel that makes the Chathams so special in the first place. "There is a resistance on the island to tourists coming into their space," she says. "Tourism is about coming and taking but we made sure there's a way to give back." That means tour companies give \$25 per traveler to the Chathams, which uses the money to pay for projects that benefit locals, such as the construction of a swimming pool.





# Bollywood Actors Prashantt Guptha and Kashmera Shah 'move' Hollywood towards mental health in showbiz!



filmmakers, talent managers, celebrities and business professionals from various walks of life.

Says Prashantt Guptha, 'this has been the need of the hour for a long time and I can't believe it has remained a vacant niche to fill for so long.' The format of the evening was a chat show moderated by LA based actress and esteemed personality of Rukus Avenue Radio and the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA), Priyadarshini G Roy. Kashmera and Prashantt entertained the audience with humorous quips on the reality of showbiz when also asked about what it takes for South Asians in America to make it in Hollywood, and, offered poignant tips on breaking through Bollywood. Both actors expressed that the single greatest take away from all the guests was that never before has an event been done

in Hollywood that reflected upon the importance of mental health, happiness, mindfulness, along with offering tools for showbiz people to avoid depression, anxiety, suicide, drugs, and alcohol addiction. In her reflection of the evening that was attended by over 150 guests, Kashmera Shah expressed, "there are many seminars and masterclasses but to see people attend something in Los Angeles where everyone that attended was from varied professions was heartwarming. People here have so much understanding about the shortcomings of our industry and they are so supportive. I am super impressed by Prashantt's efforts and I want to help him in taking this further." Prashantt was most enthusiastic in crediting all the people who made generous contributions towards the fruition of what he called, a 'party with a purpose.'

Foremost, LA based entrepreneur and event promoter Sameer Moosani, and along with him: New York based attorney and motivational coach Ariana Tadler, founder of 2Meditate - Swati Desai, Long Island based real-estate powerhouse Fran Lisner, California based entrepreneur & film producer Vivienne Kjono, Writer/Filmmaker and MD Dr. Raj Gupta, Real-Estate and community leader Anil Bansal, artiste Namrata Sharma of Namah, and Jasmine Singh of Solm8 sports shoes. Possibly the most heart-warming moment of the evening was Prashantt's revelation of having been through clinically treated depression & anxiety, and wanting to ensure that along with a successful career as an actor, he did his best to create a movement to prevent such from happening in the lives of all who pursue the arts & entertainment as a career.

Hollywood recently witnessed a first-time and one of a kind event at the Arth Bar & Kitchen in Culver City. Called CINEMA & SANITY, the evening was a showcase put on by actor Prashantt Guptha along with friend and fellow Bollywood actress Kashmera Shah, to create an awareness about mental well-being in the field of arts & entertainment. In attendance were Hollywood producers,

## SELFIEE 2nd Trailer Out! Akshay Kumar & Emraan Hashmi Seen Locking Horns!



After breaking the internet with the first trailer of Selfiee followed by the hit songs 'Main Khiladi Tu Anari' and 'Kudiyee Ni Teri Vibe', a second trailer for the Akshay Kumar-Emraan Hashmi starrer Selfiee has just come out. Featuring a battle between Akshay and Emraan's characters, the exciting Selfiee Trailer 2 is jam-packed with action, drama, and a whole lot of adrenaline as we build up to the film's release on 24th February. The unveiling of the second trailer took place at the Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies. Akshay Kumar brought this grand moment onto his Twitter and said, "Thank you @nmims\_india students! You guys made #SelfieeTrailer2 Launch a memorable event. Watch Selfiee

trailer 2 now. And watch #Selfiee in cinemas, on 24th Feb." The story of 'Selfiee' revolves around a famous actor Vijay Kumar (played by Akshay Kumar) who needs to renew his driver's license and runs across a super-fan in the form of RTO Inspector Om Prakash, performed by Emraan Hashmi. He tries to help his idol obtain a driving license providing he undertakes all of the necessary tests, which leads to a rivalry between the superstar and his superfan attracting the media and public's attention. Presented by Dharma Productions, the film has been co-produced by Hiroo Yash Johar, Aruna Bhatia, Supriya Menon, Karan Johar, Prithviraj Sukumaran, Apoorva Mehta and Listin Stephen.

## LOVE AGAIN

What if a random text message led to the love of your life? In this romantic comedy, dealing with the loss of her fiancé, Mira Ray sends a series of romantic texts to his old cell phone number...not realizing the number was reassigned to Rob Burns' new work phone. A journalist, Rob is captivated by the honesty in the beautifully confessional texts. When he's assigned to write a profile of megastar Celine Dion (playing herself in her first film role), he enlists her help in figuring out how to meet Mira in person...and win her heart. Priyanka Chopra Jonas has premiered the new trailer and poster for her upcoming Hollywood film LOVE AGAIN which

message led to the love of your life? In this romantic comedy, dealing with the loss of her fiancé, Mira Ray sends a series of romantic texts to his old cell phone number...not realizing the number was reassigned to Rob Burns' new work phone. A journalist, Rob is captivated by the honesty in the beautifully confessional texts. When he's assigned to write a profile of megastar Celine Dion (playing herself in her first film role), he enlists her help in figuring out how to meet Mira in person...and win her heart.



sees her starring along with Sam Heughan as well as Celine Dion who debuts multiple new songs. Released by Sony Pictures, the much anticipated romantic comedy opens only in theaters on May 12. What if a random text

the beautifully confessional texts. When he's assigned to write a profile of megastar Celine Dion (playing herself in her first film role), he enlists her help in figuring out how to meet Mira in person...and win her heart.



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