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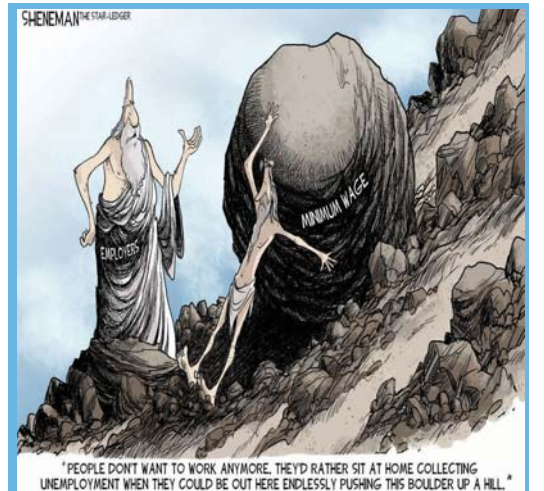



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As elites arrive in Davos, conspiracy theories thrive online

Davos is no conspiracy – it is infotainment



There is no US labor shortage. That's a myth

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Why does so much of Gen-Z hate America?
What's wrong with today's youth?



(SAI Bureau) In previous generations, the rebellious youth were always a topic of consternation for the old folks. They don't listen! They drive too fast and talk too loud. They wear funny clothes and don't respect their teachers. But something has changed in the last few years that should have the older generations far more worried than they would have been in the past. A recent Morning Consult poll found that only 16 percent of Gen Z'ers are proud to live in the United States. Millennials were only somewhat saner at 36 percent. These numbers should set off alarm bells. In the last ten years, there has been a sharp decline in national pride. It is not an accident. It's a deliberate attempt by the left to destroy American patriotism and replace it with their ideology. In 2013, 85 percent of Americans said "extremely or very" proud to be American.

(Contd. on page 22)

Covid-19 Mishandling May Cost China Big, And Even Dent Its Superpower Aspiration

(SAI Bureau) Chinese economic success stories catapulted China as a major actor in international affairs and the world began to think that China would emerge in the post-Soviet world order as the second superpower on the global stage. Some analysts believed that China would be able to push the US influence in the Indo-Pacific region out and establish the Chinese hegemonic order in this region. To

begin with, former US President Donald Trump's hard-line approach exemplified by unleashing an economic Cold War against China and subsequently the Wuhan virus that contaminated the globe in the form of a durable pandemic appears to have assumed a proportion that could culminate in an obituary of Chinese aspiration to become a superpower.

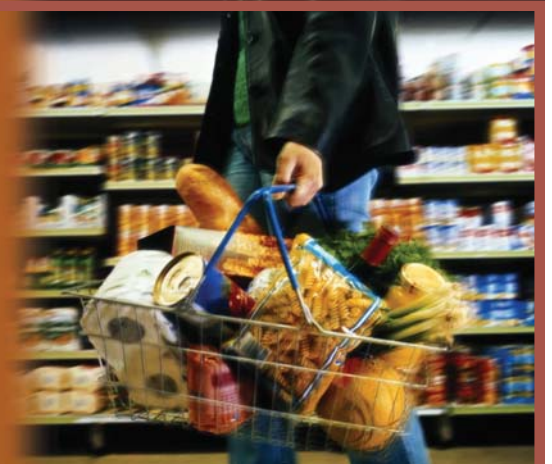
(Contd. on page 22)



Food fraud secretly infiltrates kitchens across America—here's how to avoid it

(SAI Bureau) The food in your kitchen cabinets may not be what it seems. "I guarantee you any time a product can be passed off as something more expensive, it will be. It's that simple," Larry Olmsted, author of "Real Food/

Fake Food," told CNBC. Fraudsters motivated by economic gain secretly infiltrate the global food market through a variety of means, including counterfeits, dilutions, substitution and mislabeling. (Contd. on page 22)



Temple in Australia vandalised with anti-India graffiti, 2nd attack in 7 days

Another temple was vandalised with anti-India graffiti in Australia's Victoria on Monday. On January 12, the Swaminarayan temple in Melbourne was defaced by 'anti-social elements' with anti-India graffiti.

(SAI Bureau) A temple was vandalised in Victoria, Australia with anti-India graffiti on Monday, a report said. This is the second such incident involving a temple in Australia within seven days. The vandalism was noticed when devotees came for darshan on the day of the Pongal festival. The Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs, Victoria, was allegedly vandalised by "Khalistani supporters" with anti-India graffiti, The Australia Today reported. There is no place in Victoria or Australia for this kind of behaviour that we are seeing here, said Victorian Liberal Party MP Brad Battin, reacting to the alleged act of vandalism. "Victoria is and will remain the best multicultural state in the world as long as people learn to work together, not against each other," Battin said. On January 12, the Swaminarayan temple in Melbourne was defaced by 'anti-social elements' with anti-India graffiti. "We are deeply saddened by the anti-India graffiti at the gates of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Mill Park, Melbourne, Australia by anti-social elements. The BAPS temple in Mill Park, like



all temples of BAPS worldwide, universal Hindu values," is an abode of peace, harmony, Swaminarayan Sanstha equality, selfless service, and Australia said in a statement.

Indians are leaving the country in droves. Here's where they are headed and why

(SAI Bureau) India had the largest diaspora population in the world with 18 million people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020, according to a report by the United Nations. According to the 'International Migration 2020 Highlights', by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the UAE, the US and Saudi Arabia host the largest number of migrants from India. In 2020, 18 million persons from India were living outside their country of birth. Other countries with a large diaspora population included Mexico and Russia (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million). India's large diaspora is distributed across the United Arab Emirates (3.5 million), the United States of America (2.7 million) and Saudi Arabia (2.5 million). Other countries hosting large numbers of Indian migrants included Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and the United Kingdom, the report said. Students lead the way Before the pandemic shut global borders, and before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 5.9 lakh Indian students moved to attend



US doubling hiring to speed up Indian visas



(News Agency) The US is working to engage diplomatic spouses and doubling direct hires at its embassy to accelerate visas to Indians, a US official said on Tuesday. Ordinary citizens and

businesses have complained about long waits for US visas as the embassy had cut staff during the pandemic and couldn't meet the rising demand for visas at the required pace when the economies reopened.

"We are doubling the number of direct hires, we have to facilitate the issuance of visas here at the embassy and we are also working to bring on diplomatic spouses to also work in the process in the areas of visas," said Arun Venkataraman, US assistant secretary of commerce for global markets. "So we are continuing to take steps... We have already made progress and are issuing more visas than we ever did before," said Venkataraman, who is in New Delhi ahead of the planned March visit of US commerce secretary Gina Raimondo.

The US has issued more H1B and L visas in 2022 than it did in pre-pandemic 2019, he said, adding that good progress had been made in issuing visas to students.

international campuses. The numbers fell to less than half during the pandemic year, and slowly began recovering as covid protocols around the world began being lifted. As seen over the last few years, Canada remained the most popular destination, boosted by easy immigration pathways and attractive working rules for migrants. The United States, Australia and the United Kingdom and China round up the top 5 destinations for Indian students, with Germany slowly gaining ground. Renouncing citizenships More than 1.6 million Indians have renounced their citizenship since 2011, including 1,83,741 in 2022, according to government data. The United States remains the main draw for Indians moving abroad and gaining citizenship in other countries. As many as 1,63,370 Indians

renounced their citizenship to become citizens of other countries in 2021, according to latest government data.

This number saw a dip during the pandemic, when 85,256 citizens moved out. In 2019, 1,44,017 Indians had relinquished their citizenship.

Most Indians transferred their citizenship to the United States (78,284), followed by Australia (23,533), Canada (21,597) and the UK(14,637). Remittance flows

Migrant workers from India are also on track to send home a record amount of money this year, boosting the finances of Asia's third largest economy poised to retain its spot as the world's top recipient of remittances.

Remittance flows to India will see a rise of 12% to reach \$100 billion this year, according to a World Bank report.

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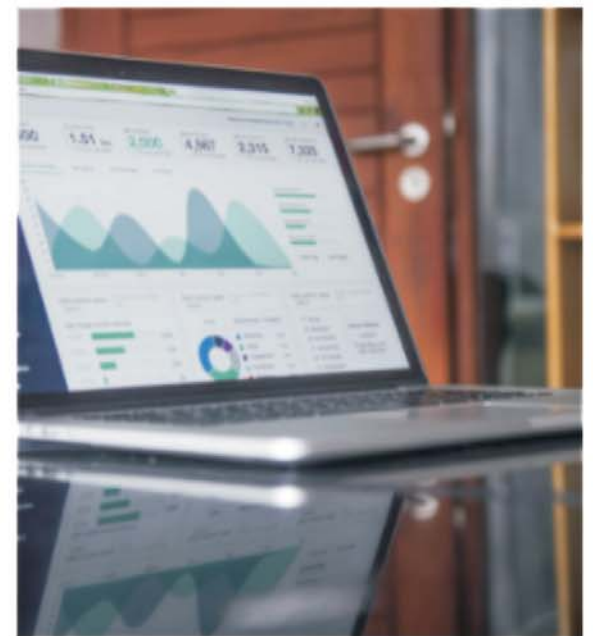
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New Zealand no more a safe place to live: Indian store owners

(NewsAgency) As incidents of crime and robbery continue unabated in New Zealand, distraught Indian retailers and small business owners say that they no longer feel safe in the country and "regret" coming here.

According to police, multiple robberies have hit retail businesses in Auckland and Hamilton cities over the past 24 hours, including those of Indians. In a latest incident of spiralling crime, Kanna Sharma's GAS station on Kaurilands Road in Auckland was ram-raided by robbers for a third time in a row in the early hours of Thursday morning, a police statement said.

"This is the third time I've been ram-raided and I'm shattered. My family is shattered. It's hard to believe a place like New Zealand can be such a nightmare," a devastated Sharma, who left India 23 years ago, told Newshub. Sharma said he thought New Zealand was one of the safest countries in the world, adding:



"I was sadly mistaken. It is not. I regret coming here."

Police said in a statement that "at 2.11 a.m., they responded to reports of the burglary on Kaurilands Road, where it is understood a vehicle was used to gain entry".

According to security footage, a green car was seen ramming into the front door of the shop at least three times, shattering the glass and damaging the front grille in the process.

Sharma said the thieves stole

cigarettes, vapes and many other products from his shop. Close to the New Year, dairy owner Jayesh Patel's store was targeted causing damage worth nearly \$10,000.

Even though the offender has been caught, according to Patel, the incident has left him and his family scared and worried about the damage.

"He smashed through the door and stole some lollies. About \$50 worth, and for what? It will cost about \$10,000 to get a new strong door and replace

and repair everything," Patel told NZ Herald.

"They do this because they know there are no consequences for them. The law is really weak about this." The incident comes just days after four men entered Puneet Singh's dairy store in Hamilton and cut off two fingers of his employee, Nabin, with a machete.

"It is very scary, when I open my shop, my parents in India are scared, they don't sleep because of the time. When I open the shop it's 2 a.m. in India and they keep texting me asking about my wellbeing," Singh told NZ Herald.

Exactly a month before, Janak Patel, 34, was stabbed to death by robbers at Rose Cottage Superette in Sandringham, Auckland, where he worked.

Following Janak's death, New Zealand erupted in protests with people turning up in huge numbers shouting "enough is enough" and holding placards reading, "change the law", in

front of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's electoral office in Mt Albert.

The country announced new measures to counter retail crime, which included providing a NZ\$4,000 subsidy to shop owners to install fog cannons in their shops to stop burglaries.

Sunny Kaushal, who leads the Dairy and Business Owners Group in New Zealand, said that many are angry and annoyed by "games this government is continuing to play and the lies they tell", and "it's time to stop".

Indians make up 5 per cent of the New Zealand population. According to a Ministry of External Affairs report, there are 240,000 Indians residing in New Zealand, out of which there are 1.6 lakh people of Indian origin and 80,000 NRIs.

According to New Zealand government statistics, there were close to 23 ram raids in the Northland region alone until November 20, 2022, the NZ Herald reported.

Indian-origin Ranj Pillai to become 10th premier of Yukon territory in Canada

(News Agency) Indian-origin Cabinet minister Ranj Pillai will on January 14 take oath as the tenth premier of Canada's territory of Yukon, becoming the second politician of Indian heritage to head a region in the country, according to a media report on Tuesday. Pillai, whose roots can be traced from Kerala, was on January 8 unanimously chosen as the leader of Yukon Liberal Party, the party said in a statement on its website.

Pillai was the only candidate in the running when nominations closed on January 7, Yukon News reported.

"I am honoured and humbled to be acclaimed as the leader of the Yukon Liberal Party. We have so much to be proud of and I'm very excited for what the future of the Yukon holds," Pillai tweeted on Tuesday.

The Yukon government's executive council office said Pillai and his Cabinet will be

sworn in on the coming Saturday afternoon in a public ceremony in the foyer of the Jim Smith Building.

He will become just the second premier in Canadian history of Indian heritage,



following Ujjal Dosanjh who held that post in the province of British Columbia between 2000 and 2001.

There are 10 provinces and three territories in Canada. Pillai said in a statement issued by his campaign after the announcement that he was


"committed to working hard, seeking common ground, acting strategically, and to fiercely defending the interests of the Yukon".

"I look forward to serving all Yukoners as our dedicated team continues to make this territory one of the best places to call home," he said.


The leader also thanked outgoing Premier Sandy Silver for his "leadership and dedication".

Premier Silver -- the longest-serving current premier in the country who has been party leader since 2012 and led the party to victory in two elections -- announced on September 9 last year that he would step down from the helm after the party found a new leader to take over the premiership.

The current MLA for Porter Creek South, Pillai was first elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in the 2016 territorial election.



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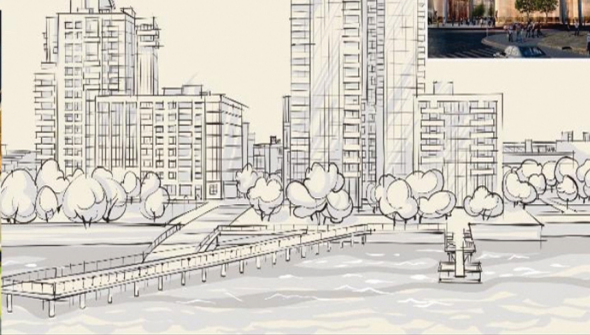
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As international students flock back to Australia, they face even worse housing struggles than before COVID

(SAI Bureau) Australia is welcoming back international students in much greater numbers this year. Some predict new enrolments in 2023 could even be higher than the pre-COVID record in 2019. Student visa applications in the second half of 2022 were up 40 per cent on the same period in 2019.

The downside is many of these students are likely to struggle to find affordable and adequate accommodation. They are facing record low private rental vacancy rates and higher rents than before the pandemic.

Redfern Legal Centre's International Student Legal Service NSW has been assisting international students for over a decade. Its senior solicitor, Sean Stimson, told us: The tenancy situation facing international students in the second half of 2022 - including illegal evictions and illegal rent increases - is the worst I've seen. We are increasingly seeing international students who are occupying substandard, illegal



accommodation, exposing themselves to dangerous environments.

To make matters worse, a number of universities have been selling off a proportion of their student housing in response to falls in revenue during the pandemic. For example, in 2021, University of Technology Sydney sold three buildings with 428 beds for AUD 95 million to Scape, the largest provider in Australia's AUD 20 billion purpose-built student housing sector.

In some cases, this has made student accommodation more costly. Rents are typically equivalent to, or even higher, than rents in the wider private rental market.

Like any group, students' financial resources vary greatly. However, little was known about these inequalities and their impacts on international students' housing and everyday living.

Our recently published study, involving more than 7,000

international students, shows many were struggling financially even before the post-COVID rental crisis. They suffered great anxiety about finding the money to pay the rent and worried about becoming homeless.

We also found food insecurity was common among these students. More than one in five had gone without meals. Similar numbers were unable to heat or cool their home adequately.

What did the study look at?

To study students' experience of financial hardship or precarity, we used a scale of seven financial stress indicators from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. We added a new item, "Could not afford to buy prescribed textbooks".

Our research project surveyed students who depended on private rental accommodation in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia's top destinations for international students, in late 2019.

The sample was drawn from all three post-secondary sectors. It included ten universities, 24

vocational colleges, seven English language colleges and two foundation course institutions. We divided the 7,084 valid responses to the survey into four groups: secure (no financial stress indicators), moderately precarious (one to two indicators), highly precarious (three to five) and extremely precarious (six to eight).

Some 44 per cent of students were secure, 31 per cent were moderately precarious, 20 per cent were highly precarious, and 5 per cent were extremely precarious.

How many students are struggling financially?

A large proportion of students were struggling, as the chart below shows. Some 21 per cent reported going without meals in the past 12 months. And 22 per cent were unable to heat or cool their home adequately.

How affordable is students' housing?

More than half of the students classed as highly and extremely precarious (53 per cent and 58 per cent respectively) said they could not "easily afford housing costs". This compared to 34 per cent of moderately precarious and 17 per cent of secure students.

Paying the rent was a source of much anxiety across all groups.

Some 64 per cent of highly precarious students and 81 per cent of extremely precarious students said they often worried about paying the rent each week, compared to 38 per cent of moderately precarious students and only 16 per cent of secure students. Worryingly, 70 per cent of extremely precarious students reported going without necessities such as food so they could pay the rent. This proportion drops to 40 per cent for highly precarious students, 16 per cent for moderately precarious students and 11 per cent for secure students.

Many international students have a job and paid work is strongly related to precarity. A large percentage of extremely precarious students and highly precarious students (87 per cent and 70 per cent respectively) agreed having paid work was essential to pay the rent.

What happens if you are caught cheating on the TOEFL test or GRE General Test?

(SAI Bureau) For many international students, getting into their desired university abroad is one of the most important decisions they will make in their lives.

Depending on the type of program one looks to pursue, universities may require applicants to take the GRE® General Test, which assesses the candidates' knowledge at the graduate-education level. For English-taught programs, the TOEFL iBT® test is required to prove proficiency in academic English. ETS, the world's largest private, non-profit educational assessment, research and learning organisation based in the United States, develops, administers, and scores tens of millions of tests administered in over 9,000 locations across more than 200+ countries and regions.

It has long been on the cutting edge of addressing test security concerns - in fact, it was the first in the industry to establish a dedicated Office of Testing Integrity (OTI) more than six decades ago.

With the stakes so high, some students and parents resort to unscrupulous means to pass and get the scores they need. However, ETS strongly encourages test takers to test fairly and honestly, as the consequences are not worth the risk.

What if you are caught cheating? ETS's OTI takes all reports of fraud seriously and conducts in-depth investigations to protect the authenticity of test results. When ETS has reason to question a score, it performs a multi-layered security evaluation. Some examples of action ETS has and will continue to take against those test takers who are

caught cheating include:

" Cancelling scores: scores on your exam may be cancelled before they are released to you and your institutions of choice.

" Notifying your institution(s): if ETS receives information after your scores have been released, we can and will continue to cancel scores and notify your institution in those cases.

" You may be banned from testing and lose your test fee: if you are caught cheating twice on a given ETS exam, you will be banned from testing again. Certain offenses lead to an immediate ban. In addition, any test taker caught cheating and has their scores invalidated will lose their test fee.

Testing honestly is critical to you and your future. Working hard to earn your scores

honestly will not only contribute to your personal achievement but will set you up for success as you enter higher education and beyond.

Here are just a few of the security measures put in place to curb cheating, specific to our at-home assessments:

" We use both real-time human monitoring and AI technology, employing both human proctors and AI to detect and prevent suspicious activity.

" We employ a comprehensive security check, which includes ID review and test environment scan to ensure that the test taker is the only person in the room at the time of testing.

" We videotape test sessions from start to finish and use gaze tracking and other technology to detect any abnormal behavior by test takers during their test session.



Refrain from unnecessary remarks on films: PM Modi's diktat to BJP leaders

During the BJP national executive meeting in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi advised the saffron party leaders to refrain from making "unnecessary statements" about films.

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi has advised the BJP leaders to refrain from making any "unnecessary remarks" on films, sources told India Today. PM Modi apparently passed the diktat during the BJP national executive meeting held on January 16 and 17 in Delhi.

As per sources, PM Modi said "some people give statements on some film" which plays on TV and in media all day. The prime minister asked the party workers to avoid making "unnecessary statements". PM Modi's remark came amid calls for a boycott of the movie Pathaan, starring Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone. Pathaan is scheduled for release on January 25, 2023. Several BJP leaders, including Ram Kadam and

Narottam Mishra, have been vocal in their criticism over the use of saffron costumes in the film.

Maharashtra BJP leader Ram Kadam had questioned the filmmakers if the movie was a ploy to gain "cheap publicity" or whether there was a conspiracy behind their decision. The BJP leader had added that since the state of Maharashtra has a BJP government which follows the Hindutva ideals, the government will not allow any film or serial to run which insults Hindutva emotions.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh minister Narottam Mishra fumed over the use of saffron costumes in the film. He had said that the film contains some objectionable scenes, and threatened to ban Pathaan in Madhya Pradesh if those shots were not replaced.

Amazon layoffs in India begin, hundreds of employees across departments impacted: Story in 5 points

(SAI Bureau) Amazon recently announced the layoff of 18,000 employees globally. Well, around 1 percent of employees have been fired in India, as per reports. It is being said that Amazon has sacked as many as 1,000 employees in this market and this does seem to be true because several Indians who have been laid off by Amazon are looking for jobs via LinkedIn. A lot of people have posted about Amazon layoffs and asked for job leads on the platform. Here is everything we know so far in five points.

- Amazon reportedly has about 1 Lakh employees in India, but the company has reduced the headcounts by 1,000. But, there is no official confirmation on this. The news does seem to be true because of hundreds of LinkedIn posts from impacted employees.

- An official email was just recently sent to Amazon India employees, which asked the workers to meet the leadership team on a specific date to get more clarity on the layoff process.

- Amazon did mention that it will be providing five months of severance pay to the employees, which is good because big tech companies like Twitter are reportedly avoiding to pay the promised money to affected people. The email details were obtained by India Today Tech.

- The Amazon layoffs haven't ended yet and it is expected to continue for a few more weeks. The e-commerce giant recently announced that it will be firing 18,000 employees in several markets and even confirmed that severance pay will be given to all of them. The majority of role eliminations are done in Amazon Stores and PXT organizations, as per the details shared by the company. "We are working to support those who are affected and are providing packages that include a separation payment, transitional health insurance benefits, and external job placement support," Amazon CEO Andy Jassy wrote in a blog post.

'400 days left, time to hit top gear': PM Modi's mega poll outreach at key BJP meet

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday chaired a second high-level session with top brass and workers during the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national executive meeting in the national capital. Addressing the convention, PM Modi said that the country can be taken forward only by converting this "amrit kaal" into "kartavya kaal". "400 days left (for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections), its time to hit top gear. Let's do everything to service the people. We have to create history," Maharashtra deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis quoted PM Modi as saying. Fadnavis also said that the prime minister's address was inspiring



as well as a direction guide and was about to show a new path. The prime minister asked BJP leaders to work towards "ek Bharat, shreshtha Bharat" [one India, supreme India], he

said. "We were advised to conduct some special programmes of Morchas, especially in border villages. So that we can connect with them more, and our developmental schemes reach

these areas," Fadnavis said. "People under the age group 18-25 have not witnessed the political history of India. They aren't aware of the corruption and wrong-doings that took place in previous governments. So, they need to be made aware and let them know about the good governance of BJP," Fadnavis quoted PM Modi as saying. Furthermore, the prime minister said that every youth should know how the BJP has converted bad governance into good governance. PM Modi also asked leaders to create new workers and strengthen the party's organisation in border villages. He asked the party workers to inform people about

government policies. Devendra Fadnavis also said that PM Modi's speech was not of a political leader but of a statesman, adding that he kept the nation above the party.

PM Modi outlined the political roadmap for the BJP in the run up to a string of state assembly polls this year and the 2024 Lok Sabha election as the party's national executive meeting concluded with his speech. Around 350 BJP leaders from across the country, including Union ministers and chief ministers, gathered to deliberate over the party's electoral strategy for assembly polls and the most awaited 2024 general elections.

Delhi LG's response after Kejriwal's 'Who is he?', 'headmaster' remark

(SAI Bureau)- The sparring between the two sides continues to intensify.

Days after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's remarks in the Assembly drew criticism from rivals, including BJP leaders, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday responded to his comments in a letter. Addressing the Chief Minister, the Lieutenant Governor said that "you have made many statements in and out the State Assembly which have been severally and substantively misleading, untrue and derogatory". On Tuesday, Kejriwal had yet again alleged interference by the Centre in the functioning of his government as he asked: "Who is LG? Where has he come from? I am the Chief Minister... and I have been elected by over two crore people in the national capital." To these comments, LG Saxena gave a sarcasm-laced response in his letter: "As to 'who is LG' and



'where did he come' can be answered if you were to cursorily refer to the Constitution of India, others do not deserve a reply since they cater to a very low level of discourse."

He also reacted to Kejriwal's "you are not my headmaster" dig. "I deem it proper to bring to your attention certain issues so

as to help you comprehend the issues at hand in totality and deal with them in a real and comprehensive manner. In doing so, I am not acting as a 'headmaster' but a benign and conscientious voice of the people," LG Saxena stressed in his letter.

The Chief Minister had hit out

with the "headmaster" comment when he took out a march on Monday - along with his deputy Manish Sisodia and other AAP leaders - to the LG's office. He had repeated the comment in the Delhi Assembly the next day too.

Meanwhile, Kejriwal's mega march also found a mention in

the LG's letter as he rebuffed the Chief Minister's "refused to meet me" comment, calling it "unfortunate". "I invited you and Deputy Chief Minister to come and see me... I would have indeed loved to have you and served you lunch as well. However, you chose not to come on the pretext of wanting to meet with all of your MLAs. You would appreciate that given the short notice and sudden demand on your part, it would not have been possible to meet 70--80 people." He also drew a comparison of enrolments and attendance at the government schools before and after the AAP government took over in what could be seen as the ruling party's claims of improving the condition of the schools. He also yet again reiterated that the proposal of teachers' training in Finland - which is among the latest flashpoints - was not rejected by him but only a "cost-benefit analysis" was sought.

'Tukde tukde Congress in Rajasthan': BJP's salvo on Ashok Gehlot vs Sachin Pilot



(SAI Bureau) The BJP has latched on to the comments by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his Congress colleague Sachin Pilot as differences seem to surface again between the two leaders months ahead of the state elections. A video of Gehlot is being shared widely on social media after Pilot apparently lashed out at his own party's government over the paper leak case. "Are kaha ja raha hai koi adhikari, koi neta isme shamil nahi tha.. to paper ki copy to tijori me hoti hai... yeh to jadugari ho gayi. Koi Jadugar hi hoga. (It's being said that no leader or officer was involved in the paper

leak case. But the paper's copy is locked up. Some magician must be involved then)," Pilot said at an event, taking a potshot over the probe in the paper leak case. The "jadugar (magician)" comment was seen as a tacit jibe at Gehlot, who is often referred to by that name as far as the Rajasthan politics is concerned. But after this comment, a video of Gehlot was widely shared where he could be heard saying that "a big corona(virus) entered our party". The clip, according to news agency PTI, is of a pre-budget meeting Gehlot had with the representatives of employees' union on Wednesday.



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'Saving ecology' or Jalandhar bypoll?

Punjab CM Mann orders closure of Zira liquor factory

Month after clashes between cops & protesters, CM announces factory will be closed to 'preserve environment'. Decision signals govt's willingness to reach out to agitating farmers.

(SAI Bureau) Faced with the growing ire of farmers in Punjab, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Tuesday announced the closure of a liquor factory that has been facing protests for seven months. In his statement, Mann said that a liquor factory of Malbros International Limited at Zira tehsil in Ferozepur district will be closed with immediate effect to "preserve the environment". The decision, he said in a video statement, was taken after due deliberations with environmental experts and legal luminaries. The chief minister said that no one, no matter how affluent, could take law of the land for granted and that anyone guilty of breaking them would be dealt with sternly.

Located at Mansurwal village in Punjab's Ferozepur district, the factory has been non-functional



since last July after farmers of the village started a permanent sit-in protest outside its gates alleging that the unit was causing air, water, and soil pollution.

Over the past few months, the issue has snowballed into a point of contention between the farmer

unions and the Bhagwant Mann government.

The factory is owned by liquor baron Deep Malhotra, a former Member of Legislative Assembly

of the Shiromani Akali Dal who is now said to be close to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Malhotra's offices were among those raided by the Enforcement Directorate last October as part of the investigations into the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Sources in the Punjab government cited the growing resentment among farmer unions and an inevitable Lok Sabha bypoll in Jalandhar as possible reasons for the "change of heart". One of the chief drivers of AAP's landslide victory in the Punjab elections, farmers have been up in arms against the Mann government for various reasons in the past few months.

It's also significant to note that the decision came days after the death of Congress MP from Jalandhar Santokh Chaudhary. Chaudhary's death Saturday will necessitate a by-election for the parliamentary seat.

AAP's 'flip-flop'

The AAP government's decision puts an end to a seven-month

battle waged with farmers of Punjab.

In October, Malhotra approached the Punjab and Haryana High Court to have the protesters removed and the factory reopened. The last hearing took place on 23 December during which the high court told the Punjab government to file fresh reports by expert committees regarding the allegations of pollution.

The next date of hearing is on 28 February.

The Punjab government's decision, however, came even before the various expert committees constituted submitted their reports. It also came hours after a high-court-appointed panel visited the site of protest.

In his statement, Mann said that the decision was taken "in keeping in view the effects of this project on the environment and ecology of the state" and that the project could have disturbed the ecological balance of the area.

'Minor' Change in Terror Plot

Pak-based Groups Prefer Juveniles for Attacks, Find Intelligence Agencies



(News Agency) Terrorist groups such as Islamic State, Khalistan terror outfits and The Resistance Front (TRF) have adopted a new strategy - employing minors - to execute attacks in India, the central intelligence agencies have found after the recent busts. Reason? Less severity in punishment, easy way to evade radar of intelligence agencies in comparison to seasoned players and their tech savviness, among others, say intelligence experts.

A case in point could be the

busting of the module led by Basit Kalam Siddiqi from Varanasi. At least four to five juveniles were part of his pro-Islamic State telegram channel namely 'The Caravan of Desert'. They were networking with IS cadres/ sympathizers across the globe and intended mass attacks by disseminating improvised explosive device (IED) making manuals through Telegram Channels.

THE SELECTION

Investigations into recent terror attacks in Punjab also

revealed that handlers spot these boys physically as well as through social media and motivate them to work in lieu for money and fame. Young boys are deliberately selected as they get minor punishment. A similar trend has been observed in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Investigations indicated that juveniles are easy prey to online radicalisation and can be used as highly motivated and loyal Over Ground Workers for terror activities.

Pakistan-based terror handlers target juveniles for their vulnerability. Terror handlers identify these juveniles online and cyber-engage them to build rapport and trust, say intelligence experts.

At times, Pakistan handlers also directly contact these juveniles on WhatsApp and start communication. Further, some juveniles in Kashmir valley are also being supplied with narcotics in an attempt to link them with narcotics terror network

Lucknow police searching for couple after video of them romancing on scooty goes viral



(News Agency) A video from Lucknow's Hazratganj area has gone viral on social media showing a couple romancing while sitting on a moving scooty. Lucknow police are now looking for the couple to take action against them. As soon as the video went viral, the police started investigating the footage. The Deputy Commissioner of Police in Lucknow Central Zone, Aparna

Rajat Kaushik, confirmed that the video is from Lucknow and was taken in the Hazratganj area.

Two police teams have been deployed to look for the couple. Police are also checking the CCTV footage from nearby cameras to nab them. Police said action will be taken against the couple under the Motor Vehicle Act and also for spreading obscenity.

Boxer Vijender Singh joins protesting wrestlers, questions PM's silence



wrestlers by the WFI president and its coaches and of mismanagement in the functioning of the federation. They demanded a complete overhaul of the federation.

Under pressure to resign from his position over allegations of sexual exploitation of women wrestlers, Brij Bhushan on Friday said he will "expose" the "political conspiracy" in the evening at a press conference.

Brij Bhushan, who is also a BJP Lok Sabha MP from Kaiserganj in Uttar Pradesh, said that he will hold a press conference at the Wrestling Training Centre in Nawabganj in Gonda district of the state.

The development comes hours after grapplers Malik, Punia, Phogat, Dahiya among others had a late-night meeting with Union sports minister Anurag Thakur on Thursday. Reports claimed Thakur is likely to meet with wrestlers in the national capital again on Friday.

(SAI Bureau)- On Thursday, several of India's top wrestlers, including Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia participated in the sit-in protest at Jantar Mantar that began on Wednesday.

Ace boxer Vijender Singh on Friday joined the wrestlers protesting at Delhi's Jantar Mantar against the Wrestling Federation of India and its chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. "I have come here to meet the wrestlers today," Vijender Singh, also a Congress leader, told news agency ANI. Later, holding a

press conference with former Indian discus thrower Krishna Poonia, the allegations against Brij Bhushan were serious and strong, action should be taken against him under the appropriate section of the IPC. "It is condemnable that the prime minister has been silent over the issue. There should be action at the earliest in the matter. Being a boy from Haryana's Bhiwani, I action under the appropriate section of the IPC," the boxer said.

Wrestlers have levelled charges of sexual harassment of women

Wearing windcheater, Rahul Gandhi resumes Congress yatra from Kathua, ends t-shirt debate

(News Agency) Rahul Gandhi had been wearing a t-shirt even in the chilly weather of north India during the ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi resumed his Bharat Jodo Yatra from Hatli Morh in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday with several prominent leaders, including Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray) MP Sanjay Raut also joining the foot march. Interestingly, amid light showers, Gandhi donning a black windcheater over a white T-shirt - the first time he wore a jacket during the Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir march - started his yatra, putting an end to the much-talked-about t-shirt debate. Rahul Gandhi had been wearing a t-shirt even in the chilling cold wave conditions in north India during his foot march. The yatra was scheduled to start at 7 am but was delayed by an hour and fifteen minutes apparently due to the inclement weather. The march, which started from Kanyakumari on September 7, entered Jammu and Kashmir from Punjab on Thursday evening and is scheduled to end in Srinagar on

January 30.

The march, which started from Kanyakumari on September 7, entered Jammu and Kashmir from Punjab on Thursday evening and is scheduled to end in Srinagar on January 30. Several Congress leaders, including the party's Jammu and Kashmir unit president Vikar Rasool Wani and his predecessor G A Mir, accompanied Gandhi during the final leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra. "I have come to join the yatra on behalf of my party. The atmosphere in the country is changing fast and I am seeing Gandhi as a leader who is raising his voice on real issues," Raut said. "The way people are connecting with this yatra is heartwarming. He is a leader and that is why he is on the roads. The people will choose (who would be their leader), he added. The march entered Jammu and Kashmir through Lakhanpur on Thursday and halted there for the night following the flag handover ceremony which was attended by a galaxy of prominent leaders, including National Conference president Farooq Abdullah.

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House Republicans can fix border, end Biden's border crisis and reclaim control from Mexican cartels

America is under siege by both cartels and our own politicians. Since day one of his presidency Joe Biden has made it clear that he would rather allow cartels to control our border than be vulnerable to political attacks from the left. As a result, we have experienced the largest border security crisis in modern American history. The Secretary of Homeland Security has perpetuated this crisis through "encounter and release" policies that ignore our laws and put both Americans and the migrants seeking to come here in danger. Now, House Republicans have a chance to force the President's hand to end the crisis and reclaim control of our border from cartels. H.R. 29, the Border Safety and Security Act, will immediately reverse these "encounter and release" policies by requiring DHS to instead "detain or turn away." This is the border security equivalent of the pandemic-prevention deterrent known as Title 42, which all Republicans have supported – somewhat imprudently – as the solution for the border. It was only a Band-Aid solution during the pandemic and a health policy is not a border policy, but its powers make clear the border solution.

The problem is that the Biden administration has used asylum as the exception to swallow the rule of border security; now hundreds of thousands arrive at our southern border each month. Secretary Mayorkas has released between 1-2 million illegal migrants into American communities, heavily through an abuse of parole authority which is supposed to be used on a "case-by-case" basis. We know that in just the first 15 months of the Biden administration, DHS released 836,225 people encountered of the more than 1 million illegal migrants apprehended by CBP not turned away under Title 42 – some 80 percent. Immediate release of migrants before adjudication of claims is not only a problem in each case, but also represents a "pull-factor" for more illegal migrants. An incomprehensible 4 million migrants have been encountered under the Biden regime, overwhelming border patrol.

Agents have been taken away from patrolling to "processing" and this creates security gaps for cartels to traffic in drugs like fentanyl, which killed at least 72,000 Americans in 2021. Moreover, it has allowed cartels to move some 1 million "got-aways" who evade arrest and are often the more dangerous individuals – sometimes affiliated with gangs or terrorist organizations. We should not accept this. Our laws surrounding asylum were never meant to encourage migrants to make the dangerous journey through hundreds of miles of desert terrain — driven by

cartels that are basically terrorists for hire. Our asylum laws were meant to be a last resort for those fleeing legitimate persecution and had no other options — not the blueprint for a human trafficking pipeline.

The Border Safety and Security Act is the solution.

First, the bill provides the Secretary of DHS with the authority to turn away illegal migrants without admissible documentation if the Secretary sees it necessary to obtain operational control of the border. Operational control is not a controversial idea and is already required by the "Secure Fence Act of 2006, which then-Senator Joe Biden and current Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer voted for. Turning away illegal migrants is not a new concept — the public health authority commonly referred to as "Title 42" has allowed DHS to do so since March of 2020. In fact, the Biden administration actually appealed court decisions that would have terminated the policy. Biden's DHS admits the potential need to turn migrants away because "we anticipate migration levels will increase as smugglers seek to take advantage of and profit from vulnerable migrants once the Title 42 public health order is lifted." Further, H.R. 29 will require DHS to use this "turn-away" authority if someone cannot be detained through the pendency of an asylum claim or placed in a program consistent with Migrant Protection Protocols. Current law already requires illegal migrants seeking asylum to be detained through the adjudication of their claim; this closes Biden's loopholes. There will be some who spuriously claim this bill would somehow eliminate asylum, and that is flatly false. Those who claim it are either misinformed or seek to misinform. H.R. 29 corrects the abuse of our asylum laws and allows for migrants to claim asylum — which is good for America and good for immigrants. Further, it does not do anything DHS is not already either allowed or even required to do under current law. From before the time of the Declaration of Independence or our Constitution, America has been a refuge for those seeking freedom from oppression. She should remain so. But we cannot allow laws meant to serve the oppressed to create even more oppression in the false name of compassion. We will never solve this border crisis if Congress is not willing to step in and fix the policies causing it. The Border Safety and Security Act is the single best policy we would put forward to do that today.

(By Rep. Chip Roy , Mayra Flores for Fox News) Mayra Flores is a former Texas Congresswoman and is now a Senior Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

The Pakistan PM is aiming for a Peace Prize, not peace talk. India has seen this olive branch before

Pakistan, the habitual offender, has once again extended an olive branch to India and expressed its desire for peace talks. It is a déjà vu moment for New Delhi. Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif recalled multiple wars with India and lamented that "conflicts brought nothing good to any side but misery and poverty". Sounding more like a peacenik ready to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, he even prophesied as to 'who will live to tell what happened, if God forbid a battle starts, as both sides are nuclear powers'. New Delhi is certainly not amused yet silently watching as the economic situation in Pakistan turns from bad to worse.

This is not the first time that a Pakistani prime minister is extending the hand of friendship towards India.

The country's political leaders as well as the generals in the Pakistan Army, who are the real rulers in Islamabad, have routinely called for friendly relations between the two neighbours and an end to hostilities. But every such pro-peace statement is invariably followed by a rider to "settle the long-pending issue of Kashmir". The generals on their part will not forget to punctuate their peace calls with a warning that the Pakistan Army is capable of giving a fitting reply to the Indian Army in the battlefield, whatever that means.

Where is the preparation for talks?

Sometime in January last year, then-army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa had pontificated that Pakistan is committed to the idea of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence and it is time to extend a hand of peace in all directions. Interestingly, this peace advice came from a general who had spewed venom against India after the aerial strikes at the terror training

camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in 2019 after the Pulwama attack. Even Shebaz Sharif's olive branch to New Delhi comes with a rider asking his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to 'resolve Kashmir and other issues through dialogue'. What the other issues are is obviously not explained. He also mentioned the plights of Kashmiris, pointing out human rights violations in Kashmir. The hard fact is that no prime minister of Pakistan can sell his or her idea of talks with India without mentioning Kashmir. It is evident from the 2015 post-Ufa joint communique in Russia that did not mention Kashmir.

Peace talks between India and Pakistan need a good amount of preparation, homework and strong track-two diplomatic exercises. When New Delhi decided to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution, a good number of calculations about possible reactions from Pakistan must have been carried out. It was necessary to "inform" the establishment in Islamabad that it would be futile to carry its opposition to the move beyond a particular point. Contrary to the attitude of earlier dispensations, the Narendra Modi government drew a new red line for Pakistan vis-à-vis Jammu and Kashmir. While Nawaz Sharif, who attended Modi's oath-taking ceremony in 2014, did not meet any J&K separatists, New Delhi cancelled foreign secretary-level talks because Pakistan's high commissioner in New Delhi did. It is possible that in the subsequent "track-two" meetings, the Pakistani side was warned that Article 370 will go and that Islamabad should realise that it is dealing with a new and different India under Modi.

Seshadri Chari



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Embracing Taliban key to China's goals in Central Asia. But Islamic State won't let it happen

Like the US and USSR before it, China is being taught that being the pre-eminent power in Afghanistan isn't necessarily a good thing.

Large garbage bags had been used to cover up the magnificent tau tau — funeral effigies — standing over the swimming pool to avoid offending the guests. "The statues made it very obvious who the guy and who the gal are," the president of the energy giant Unocal, Marty Miller, gingerly explained. The shrouding had been mandated by a consultant hired to make sure cultural miscommunication did not end up sabotaging the \$4.5 billion pipeline deal the oil tycoon hoped to seal over dinner that evening in 1997. The dinner went well: A photograph records the beaming madrasa-educated Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil posing in front of a lit-up Christmas tree at Miller's mansion in Sugar Land, Texas.

Earlier this week, just days after China and the Taliban announced a \$540 million deal to prospect for oil in Afghanistan's Amu Darya basin, Islamic State terrorists attacked the foreign ministry in Kabul. The murderous suicide bombing took place just as a delegation from Beijing was due to meet foreign ministry officials to discuss the oil agreement. The

second major attack on Chinese targets in Kabul in just weeks, this incident has served as a notice that the superpower's ambitions for energy pipelines cutting across Central and South Asia might prove to be pipe dreams.

Like the United States and Soviet Union before it, China is being taught that being the pre-eminent power in Afghanistan is not necessarily a good thing. The unhappy fate of Marty Miller's efforts is a cautionary tale for all who play the Great Game. The Islamic State war on China

The man standing in the way of China's ambitions to reshape Afghanistan is a one-time engineering student who was just two years old when the Taliban captured power in 1996 in Kabul. Belonging to a family with deep links to the Hezb-e Islami of the jihadist warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar—who was ejected from power in Kabul by the Taliban—Sanaullah Ghafari is believed to have been introduced to jihadist circles while studying at Kabul University, scholar Amir Jadoon and her co-authors have recorded.

Fighting under the command of

Tajmir Jawad—a senior commander in the networks of Taliban leader Sirajuddin Haqqani—Ghafari played a key role in facilitating suicide bombings targeting the Afghan government and the US.

Later, Sanaullah drifted into the Islamic State, rising to lead the organisation in 2020. The challenge he faced was significant. The Islamic State had been battered by US-led military operations and fighting with the Taliban. Extreme coercion and extortion, scholar Antonio Giustozzi writes, had also repulsed residents of the areas it controlled. For a while, the organisation seemed destined for extinction.

The rise of the second Islamic Emirate in 2021 gave the Islamic State the opportunity it was seeking. Frustrated rank-and-file Taliban, angry with the spoils of power being monopolised by powerful commanders, began shifting their allegiances. Ethno-linguistic chauvinism in the Taliban, analyst Atal Ahmadzai notes, helped the Islamic State draw in numbers of new recruits from the north and west of Afghanistan. For its followers,

the Islamic State represents authentic jihad, which will continue until the apocalypse. The Taliban's relationship with China—the latter cast as an oppressor of Muslims in Xinjiang—is projected in Islamic State propaganda as core evidence of the Emirate's inner corruption.

Even as it rebuilds itself, the Islamic State knows it must prevent the Taliban from stabilising—and to do that, it needs to be sure China's economic plans foil. The mirage of mineral wealth

The new oil deal with the Taliban, analyst Catherine Putz notes, is, in fact, an old agreement. Ten years after 9/11, then-Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai's relationship with the US deteriorated over its failure to act against Pakistan for supporting the Taliban. The Afghan government began courting China. Karzai handed a State-owned Chinese company a \$3 billion contract to mine copper in Mes Aynak. China also committed to building a railway line to Torkham, connecting Afghanistan to Pakistan's ports. Karzai saw the projects as

bribes for Beijing: The thinking went that Beijing, in return, would use its influence over Pakistan to push it to rein in the Taliban.

Late in 2011, Karzai's Afghanistan signed a deal with the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), handing over rights to extract oil from the Amu Darya basin. Then-mining minister Wahidullah Shahrani announced in 2012 that the project had begun drilling for oil. Early the following year, he said commercial exploitation would begin in the summer.

The oil wells stayed dry, though—and six months later, amid escalating violence, CNPC staff left Afghanistan.

Like other great powers involved in Afghanistan, China hopes that it will be able to stabilise the country by unlocking its fabled mineral wealth. Faced with growing concern about the long-term costs of the Afghan campaign, US military commanders had begun talking-up claims of its mineral wealth. The resources, the Pentagon argued, could help lay the foundations for a self-sustaining Afghan State.

Does PM Modi's "One Earth, One Family" Slogan Apply To India?

An Indian talking from a global platform may be a routine occurrence today, but it wasn't on Sept 11, 1893, when Swami Vivekananda spoke at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which was convened in a hall in that city's Art Institute. The space where the Swami spoke has been carefully preserved by this famous institute, where priceless exhibits daily draw large flocks of viewers. Indians among the visitors to the exhibits are thrilled when they learn that only a few steps away lies the space where the celebrated address was given 130 years ago. Here is what Vivekananda, just 30 at the time, said there on a date in 1893, which in 2001 would become unforgettable for another reason: "I am proud to belong to a religion

which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth."

Indians reading these words today cannot feel entirely comfortable. Our present government has declared more than once that there is at least one religion whose persecuted adherents in lands adjacent to India cannot qualify for Indian citizenship. However, the point I wish to make here is a different one, and it is this. While many today may mentally "accept" (as Vivekananda put it) that "all religions are true," some seem unwilling to accept Indians

adhering to Islam or Christianity as neighbours or fellow citizens possessing rights equal to the rights we enjoy.

Accepting other "religions"? Yes, they are likely to say. Accepting Muslims and Christians? Sorry, no, would for some be the true answer.

After a face-to-face survey of 29,999 Indian adults of all faiths conducted between late 2019 and early 2020 - before the COVID-19 pandemic - the reputed Pew Research Center found 84% saying that to be "truly Indian", it was very important to respect all religions. 80% were of the view that respecting other religions was a very important part of what it means to be a member of their own religious community. These large majorities were found

among Indians of all faiths.

Pew did not, it seems, ask the 29,999 Indians if they felt that fellow citizens of different religions should have full democratic rights. Nor can we be certain that all respondents would provide truthful answers to such a question. Still, we may safely assume that a majority of Indians want all their compatriots to enjoy full and equal rights.

We hear the oft-fiery voices of those who demand the abridgement of minority rights. At times, one might imagine that the poisonous winds that blew on our subcontinent in 1947 have returned after 75 years. Yet that is hardly the whole truth.

Years ago, in 2005, when my wife Usha and I interviewed people with memories of the 1947 violence in both halves of what

until that year was a single, undivided Punjab, the phrase zahreeli hawaa was used in Lahore by Chaudhry Muhammad Hayat, a retired squadron leader of Pakistan's air force, to describe what had hit both halves of Punjab, destroying Hindu, Muslim and Sikh lives.

With warmth and emotion, Hayat recalled "Bhagat Saab", as he called him, an old Sikh teacher who apparently "knew all the principals and headmasters of Gujrat tehsil (north of Lahore, south of Rawalpindi) and used to get tuition fees excused for poor Muslim boys, especially poor Jat boys". Thanks to Bhagat Saab's goading and monetary help, Hayat went to school, matriculated in the first division, and began a successful career.

How Gautam Adani is helping Modi govt with India's foreign policy challenges

India's decision to walk the middle path, both on the Quad and the Russia-US tangle, is not only right but also courageous. Three recent announcements have pretty much set the tone for Indian foreign policy in the year to come. First, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's remarks on India-US relations were remarkable for their confidence and forthrightness. Second, Russia's crude oil export to India surged to a new high of one million barrels a day, according to the energy tracker Vortexa.

And third, Gautam Adani, the third richest person in the world and said to be close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, completed the purchase of the Haifa port in Israel, strategically located on the Mediterranean, for a cool \$1.15 billion. All three seemingly unrelated events are actually related – and that too, quite interestingly. Jaishankar's message to the high-profile audience at the closed-door conference organised by the Ananta Aspen Centre think-tank in Delhi was, essentially, a piece of advice delivered to friends. Which is, that the India-US



relationship is not a transactional one, so don't look at the purchase of defence goods as an indicator of things looking up or down. Advice to the US

Jaishankar may or may not have been referring to the government's plan to buy 26 French Rafale jets for the Indian Navy, and rejecting the US firm Boeing's F/A 18 Super Hornet aircraft.

Now this is good advice, which by all accounts, the Americans are listening to. They are also learning to hold their peace. One big learning comes from the Indian backlash last year to US criticism of India's decision to buy discounted oil from Russia, days after the latter invaded Ukraine. The American angst is related to

India's decision to shore up a dictator, Vladimir Putin, when he was raining missiles down on innocent men, women and children – India agreed, but pointed out that the temptation to buy cheap oil was too great to be ignored.

That the Modi government's top priority was to keep the economy as healthy as possible for all its citizens. Buying non-Russian oil was far too expensive – especially since the US had also sanctioned traditional partners and oil-producing nations Iran and Venezuela – and would eat into India's budget coming off Covid. The Americans understood and are believed to have moved their unhappiness to private

conversations. India's purchase of Russian oil has only gone up – energy tracker Vortexa confirms that more than one million barrels of oil per day were bought in December.

India has been in that odd position over the past year – holding its nose at what Putin is doing in Ukraine, but unable to say much about it because it needs Russia. One look at the European situation this winter, when households are being forced to turn down their heat even for domestic use, will tell you that the Modi government has taken the right decision to walk this path.

Petroleum minister Hardeep Singh Puri's presence at the Aspen Centre conference reinforces the government's middle path strategy on Russia and the US. That India very much believes in the special relationship with Washington DC and hopes that the Biden administration understands its compulsions. Delhi's puzzle But there is something that New Delhi doesn't quite understand about the Biden administration – and that is, its

refusal to name an ambassador to India two years into its tenure and remaining determined to nominate former Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti.

None other than Congress MP Shashi Tharoor highlighted this view in an article in The Los Angeles Times, pointing out that India is quite mystified that its "indispensable partnership" with the US is being treated so casually by the Biden administration.

Clearly, if the Garcetti nomination is having problems, aren't there any other Americans who can make the cut? Or has Biden run out of both ideas and friendly folk and doesn't really care about the India relationship?

That's why Gautam Adani's purchase of the Haifa port on the Mediterranean is so important. Make no mistake, this is a strategic decision. According to the Israeli Haaretz newspaper, Adani's bid was five times higher than the second bidder, and it was said that "price was less important." Across the Haifa bay sit the Chinese – they have bought out the Haifa container terminal.

Kathmandu-Kerung railway, airports & more— Chinese aid can cost Nepal and its ties with India

Nepal is often referred to as "a yam between the two boulders" as it lies between two powerful neighbours—India and China. So, for its survival, it needs to have balanced relations with both. After becoming Prime Minister of Nepal on 26 December 2022, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' in his first interview with ABP News (India) said that he would forget the old disputes with India in his bid to strengthen Nepal's relations with this country. He also said that all the misunderstandings between the two countries would be sorted out through dialogue and for this, he might first visit India before any other country. However, his first seven days in office indicate that the country is inching closer to one neighbour at the cost of the other. Within hours of Prachanda

becoming Prime Minister of Nepal, the Chinese technical team arrived in Kathmandu on 27 December to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Kathmandu (Nepal)-Kerung (China) railway project. Regarding the Kathmandu-Kerung railway, the key issue is if it has the potential to serve Nepal's interests or that of China. Kerung in the Tibetan region of China is several

thousands of kilometres away from the mainland. So, not many people would travel through it. In the trade sector, Nepal imported goods worth INR 233.92 billion from China in 2020-21; while it exported

goods worth only INR 1 billion to that country.

Estimates are that the Kathmandu-Kerung railway line would cost the nation US\$8



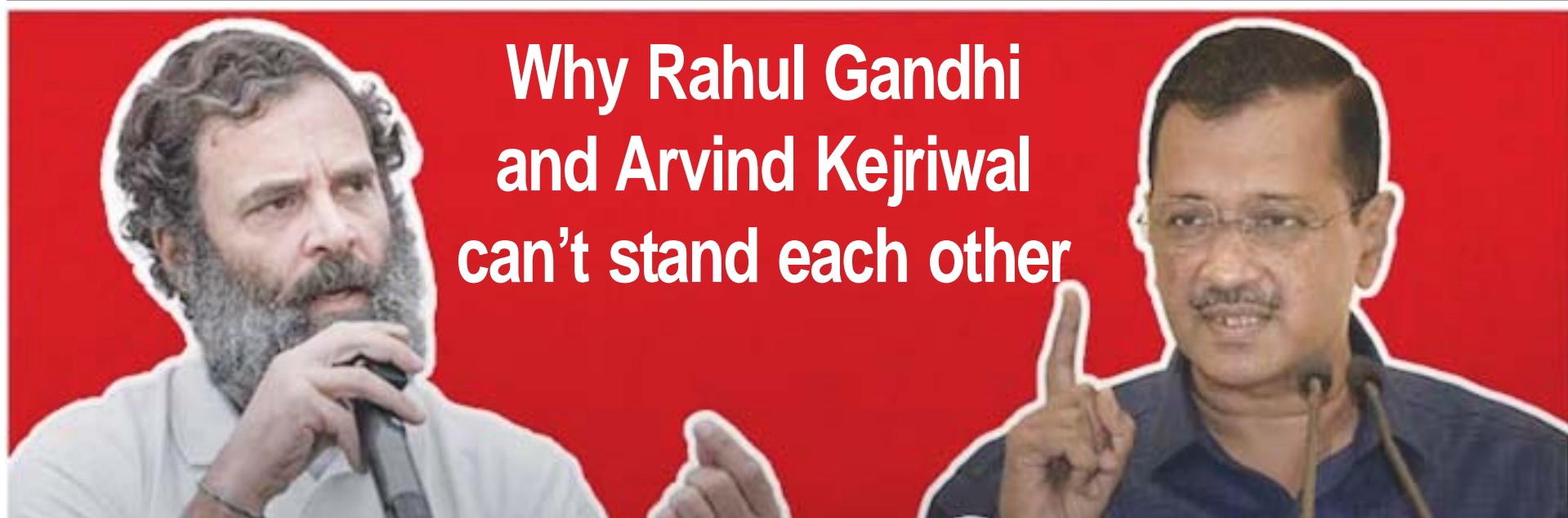
billion, which is more than a fourth of the country's total GDP. For a lower-income country like Nepal, it will not be possible to repay the interest and the principal amount for this

project. Also, this proposed rail line will have to pass through the most difficult terrain in the Himalayas for which several bridges and tunnels would have to be built. In winter, there is always heavy snowfall in the Himalayas, which could disrupt railway services if the track is not cleared. Even if it is done, it will prove to be a costly affair. The environmental

impact of this project is another challenge. Considering the huge cost involved in the construction of the project, the Sher Bahadur Deuba-led Nepali Congress government in Nepal sent a

message to China in 2021 that it would not have any problem accepting the project like the Kathmandu-Kerung railway from China under Belt Road Initiative (BRI) provided it comes in grants. Will China be able to gift this railway to Nepal in grants is a question?

On the third day 28 December 2022, China opened the Rasuwagadi (Nepal)-Kerung (China) border which was lying closed for nearly three years since January 2020 when COVID-19 cases started picking up. Perhaps, this was a symbol of welcome to Prime Minister Dahal. But it is not known why China could not open Tatopani border which is still lying closed ever since 2015 when Nepal was hardest hit by the earthquake.



The Congress snub to the AAP for Bharat Jodo Yatra's Srinagar gala isn't surprising. Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal haven't been able to see eye to eye. This is despite their common goal. Why is that so?

The Congress has invited leaders of about a dozen like-minded (read anti-BJP) parties to attend the concluding function of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Srinagar on January 30. But such an extensive list doesn't include Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). In fact, even when the Bharat Jodo Yatra was in Delhi, AAP's bastion, Kejriwal didn't join the long march. For the Srinagar gala, which is likely to signal how robust India's political opposition is going to be ahead of 2024, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's JDU and two opposition parties — Samajwadi Party and BSP — in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, the most crucial state electorally, have been invited. This is even after these three parties politely turned down Congress's invite to join the yatra. This is despite the fact that the

JDU is ruling Bihar in alliance with the Congress and the grand old party has allied with Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and the BSP of Mayawati in the past. Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao's Bharat Rashtra Samithi has also stayed away from Rahul's campaign. Even then, the AAP has not been invited to the January 30 event. Why is Kejriwal a political pariah for the Congress? Let's be clear that the AAP is not a political fringe. With Mamata Banerjee's TMC, KCR's BRS and Nitish Kumar's JDU proving to be primarily regional parties, only Rahul and Kejriwal seem to be potential challengers for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will be seeking a third straight term in 2024. The reality is that the AAP is the only anti-BJP party that's

expanding — it has chief ministers in Delhi and Punjab and some MLAs in BJP's fortress of Gujarat and also in Goa, again ruled by the saffron party. In short, after the BJP and the Congress, the AAP is the third "national" party and no other political outfit has that kind of appeal. But the issue of the AAP not being invited to Kashmir shouldn't be seen in isolation. Rahul and Kejriwal haven't been able to stand each other's shadows for a while. Here are a few examples. In 2018, at JDS leader HD Kumaraswamy's swearing-in ceremony in Bengaluru, an event marked by the presence of a galaxy of leaders to showcase unity among anti-BJP forces, Rahul and Kejriwal were on the stage but chose to sit in opposite corners. Later, in the same year, both Rahul

and Kejriwal joined a protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar but this time, they dodged each other to ensure they weren't caught in one photo frame. Kejriwal was on the dais, addressing the gathering, while Rahul was being updated on when the AAP leader was likely to leave. Kejriwal stepped down from the stage and Rahul's convoy arrived. During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, both Rahul and Kejriwal fought on Twitter, blaming each other for the failed talks held to forge an alliance against the BJP. Next year, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi held a meeting of opposition parties, excluding the AAP. The AAP said it didn't get an invite. The Congress's explanation was that Kejriwal's party had been invited for such meetings in the past but nobody turned up and, hence, there was no point in asking again.

In February last year, during the election campaigning in the security-sensitive and border state of Punjab, Rahul said a leader of the Congress, unlike the biggest leader of the Jhaadu (the election symbol of the AAP), would never be seen at the house of a terrorist. This was a veiled but perhaps the most scathing attack on Kejriwal who had reportedly stayed overnight at the house of a former Khalistani terrorist in Punjab during the 2017 Punjab elections. During the December 2022 Gujarat election, when asked if he was damaging the Congress, Kejriwal said Rahul alone was sufficient to do this job, in reference to top leaders quitting the grand old party after a series of election defeats in recent years with the Gandhi scion at the helm of the party.

The fading lights between Joshimath and Jyotirmath

Today, all eyes are fixed on Joshimath, watching what unfolds in the heartland of the Himalayas. The prime minister interpreted its seriousness to the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. The aquifer bursts beneath the Jaypee Colony of Joshimath in the Himalayas on Monday, January 2. A series of disturbing news has been coming about the rapid ground subsidence since then. It has continued to frighten everyone. The sinking of the ground at an altitude of over 6000 feet is sufficient to remind the missing lights of ancient shrines of Adi Shankara and the capital of the Katyuri Kingdom that redefined Indian knowledge traditions on the silk route. Today,

all eyes are fixed on Joshimath, watching what unfolds in the heartland of the Himalayas. The prime minister interpreted its seriousness to the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. From New Delhi to Dehradun to Chamoli, all are aligned to ratify the PM, CM and DM alignment of the statecraft and its colonial hangover. Local people are on the streets with the slogan: "NTPC, go back!" Some others are asking about compensation - in terms of nothing less than the Badrinath corridor project. Bureaucracy is busy. In addition to evacuation, they have procured 4,000 pre-fabricated houses for safe shelters. At last, the apex court decided

the public interest litigation on it only today. In fact, the newest Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath played the key role behind this petition. Initially, the Supreme Court of India declined the urgent hearing in this case to allow the government to act freely for the survival of life in Joshimath area. They left it on the plaintiff to approach the High Court at Nainital. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Office declared it a landslide subsidence zone and asked the experts to prepare short and long term plans to improve the situation. The expert committee will share its findings after their study. Meanwhile, the NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) advised government

agencies to refrain from making comments on the subsidence. The tunneling associated with NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) and its 520 megawatt TVHP (Tapovan Vishnugad Hydropower Project) is next to Joshimath. The administrative officers of the state have served a notice to stop the construction works at that site. But, the foot soldiers of the ruling class refused to obey and denied any responsibility for the destruction of Joshimath. Two governments - in the centre and the state - are ready to accept it. The same is reflected from a response to the Uttarakhand government from the union power ministry. The consultation with the union home

ministry on it is in progress. It suggests that the NTPC tunnel is not passing under the town of Joshimath, and the main causes of subsidence are the sub-surface seepage and erosion by natural drainage, occasional heavy rainfall, seismic activities and heavy construction work. Now, the equation between the ruling class and the political class is in the public. The foot soldiers of the political class are divided on two different lines, whether asking for compensation or no more old and new development projects. The proponents of modern development vision are ready to suggest how to save the town, but no one seems to care. Jyotirmath hosts experts like Ravi

Legalising Opium Cultivation Will Boost Farmers' Income, Dilute Menace of Synthetic Drugs in Punjab

As Punjab tries to wriggle out of the grip of the rampant drug menace, the farmers as well as policy-makers have been pushing for legalising opium poppy cultivation, arguing it will increase farmers' income and help fight against fatal synthetic drugs.

India is one among 12 countries where the legalisation of a natural drug like opium poppy cultivation for medical purposes is allowed in a controlled manner by The Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), which issues licences to farmers to cultivate opium poppies. Around 6,500 hectares in MP, UP and Rajasthan are under cultivation of poppy, but it is not allowed in Punjab.

The Central government once must see it with a new dimension when Punjab is already in the grip of synthetic drugs and heroin being smuggled across the border from Pakistan, despite a constant vigil of security agencies. The National Drug Policy can be revisited on the controlled manner of cultivation of these high-value cash crops like opium, which is not so fatal as compared to synthetic drugs. An estimated 200 synthetic drug overdose deaths



have been reported in Punjab during 2022. Different studies reveal that around 67% of people Punjab are addicted to synthetic drugs like heroin (Chitta) so the state must come forward to replace and reduce the most abused synthetic drugs with the farming of poppy which produces khaskhas, poppy husk and opium. Maharashtra and West Bengal governments are also seeking permission for the same.

In 1985, when the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act was enforced, poppy cultivation was banned in Punjab. Yet in rural areas, there is a common perception that till the time recreational drugs like opium and poppy husk were legal, the

menace of synthetic drugs was unheard of.

Medical experts also believe that a large number of people can be weaned away from more harmful synthetic drugs if the government allows medically supervised, regulated production of opium. **ECONOMICS OF OPIUM**

The studies conducted in the states where the central government allows opium poppy cultivation, a farmer can harvest 45-50 kg poppy per hectare and earn up to Rs 5-6 lakh, which can lead to crop diversification in Punjab that has always been talked about but never achieved. This initiative could go a long way in addressing the farm crisis, reeling under massive debt, a good return from poppy

cultivation will help them break the debt trap.

The economics of opium works in two ways. Legally, a grower gets around Rs 70,000 per kg for opium, Rs 1,200-1,500 for poppy husk and Rs 1,500-1,700 for poppy seeds widely known as khuskhus.

SUBSTITUTE FOR SYNTHETIC DRUGS

In the medieval period of 980-1037 AD, Avicenna, a famous Persian scholar described that opium has been used as a base for the opioid class of herbal drugs. The NDPS Act, empowers the state governments to permit and regulate the supply of opium to drug addicts where such supplies are for medical and scientific purposes. The central government sells opium to the state governments who, in turn, supply it to the drug addicts' rehabilitation centres.

Opium gum contains several indispensable alkaloids such as morphine, codeine and thebaine. Morphine is the best analgesic in the world. In the case of extreme and excruciating pain such as that of terminally ill cancer patients, nothing alleviates the suffering except morphine. Codeine is commonly used in the

manufacture of cough syrups.

POLICY-MAKERS' ADVOCACY
During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, more than two lakh farmers of Punjab filled up forms seeking legalisation of opium cultivation, submitted to then CM Capt. Amarinder Singh. Ex-MP and cardiologist Dr Dharmvir Gandhi, who had moved a private member's bill in Parliament in 2016, seeking legalisation of the recreational use of marijuana, had also supported by then MP Vinod Khanna.

Former MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa said, "The financial condition of small farmers will change drastically if the government allows each farmer to cultivate opium even on an acre of land. The government cannot put a complete end to drugs."

HUMAN APPROACH

There is a need for a human approach to decriminalisation of natural drugs such as opium, marijuana and poppy husk by bringing out a suitable amendment in the NDPS Act, 1985.

Countries like the US, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Uruguay, and Portugal have decriminalised natural drug addicts.

Canada and Justin Trudeau Tied in Dysfunction and Dystopia

While a recently conducted opinion poll among thousands of Canadians shows a majority wish that the Canadian Prime Minister step down, a deeper look may be warranted at the darker side of Canadian politics. Often lauded for his looks and his performative support of equality and diversity, Justin Trudeau's unpopular moves are quietly swept under a carpet of gushing news articles. He has had the misfortune of being the prime minister at a time of much global turbulence, and has unfortunately, rarely matched up to popular expectations.

Nations are forgiven for slow economic growth due to pandemic measures and Canada is still recovering. But as citizens struggle, the Canadian government has quelled all forms of protest by citizens, taking



extreme counter-measures. At the same time, Trudeau has been at the forefront of supporting unlawful agitations in democracies. Caste protests attempting to speak for a minority of farmers in India saw a rapid spread of the virus, the livelihood of citizens in the region being affected for months, murders and

gang rapes, and all this was funded by foreign sources. It saw Trudeau publicly support the protests that held a nation to ransom, with rhetoric chosen to distort the effect of a law designed to give greater freedom to individual farmers, while reining in the power of the middleman. On the other hand,

Canadians protesting the effects of some of the harshest vaccine and lockdown mandates in the world were dealt with an iron fist. Ironically, the Freedom Convoy highlighted the utter lack of freedom to protest, with those not even part of the protest but supporting it seeing their bank accounts frozen at a time of extreme financial insecurity. A total of almost C\$8 million were frozen by Canadian banks while articles about how the freeze was more benign than experienced swarmed internet search pages. Despite his actions during protests, Trudeau also supported anti-government protests in China as the country struggled to rein in another wave of Covid-19 spread through strict lockdowns.

While his speeches mention democracy as an ideal, he has

been public about being enamoured by Chinese authoritarianism and how they "get things done." While increased military belligerence by China causes countries to reevaluate dependencies on the Communist authoritarian regime, Canada is at the forefront of "mending" ties. The Chinese government mouthpiece Global Times recently reported towards the end of 2022 that "China has become Canada's second-largest trading partner and second-largest export destination. In the first eight months of 2022, bilateral trade reached nearly \$61 billion, up 18 percent year-on-year." This is despite Canada's Industry Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne calling for a decoupling from China and more investment from the US.

How India Plans to Lead Global South During its G20 Presidency

India taking the leadership of the Global South has several diplomatic dimensions. It broadens India's role in addressing the many challenges currently facing the international community. No doubt the countries of the Global South raise their voice in the UN General Assembly and in the various international conferences organised under UN auspices. The Global South features many regional organisations, be it the African Union, ASEAN, Mercosur, the Caribbean Community, etc, where regional issues and concerns and their linkages with larger global developments are addressed. It is, therefore, not as if the voice of the Global South is not heard.

It is in the specific context of G20 that India has taken the lead to reflect the broad concerns of the developing countries in the discussions on economic and financial issues, as well as larger developmental ones, in this more restricted and focused group of the world's leading 20 economies, created in the first place to address more purposefully pressing emerging issues of global economic growth and financial stability. India has more credibility today for many reasons to amplify the voice of the Global South. India's position today has no relevance to the Cold War years when it sought to distance itself from its ideological antagonisms



and pressures to choose one or the other side. India's biggest economic partner today is the US; at the same time India is nurturing its vital historic ties with Russia. Even with regard to China, its biggest strategic adversary, India has a major economic relationship. If India is a member of the Quad and also the I2U2 (grouping India, Israel, US and UAE), and is pledged to the Indo-Pacific concept, it is also a member of BRICS and the SCO. India now has a bridge position between developed and developing countries and between adversaries in a very different context today. In a sense, India taking the leadership to voice the concerns of the Global South also promotes a multipolar or a poly-centric world. India, seen as a country with a capacity to influence and mobilise the Global South, gives it more political and diplomatic

strength in dealing with all its partners such as the US and its adversaries such as China. India is now the fifth largest global economy and could well be the third largest by 2030. With the global economy under stress and signs of recession in some developed economies, India's growth at around 7 percent this year will be the highest amongst the large economies as per the IMF and the World Bank. India's voice is now backed by economic strength of its own. Its achievements in making advances in digitalisation and linking it to the country's development needs, be it in the areas of direct benefit schemes, payment systems, creation of a unique identification system (Aadhaar), etc, can be emulated advantageously by other developing countries.

India has handled the Covid-19 crisis better than many advanced

countries, relying on its own capacities to vaccinate its huge population and also supply much needed vaccines to a large number of developing countries at a time when the developed economies were hoarding them for domestic requirements. India has also provided humanitarian aid in the form of food and medicines to a handful of developing countries in distress. India has also engaged as never before groups of island states, whether in the Caribbean or the Pacific, as part of its diplomatic focus on the Global South. This also includes continuing attention to Africa. Nearer home, India has revitalised ties with its neighbours and devoted special attention to the Indian Ocean rim states.

India thus bridges the East-West as well as the North-South divides. It is this position that it intends to capitalise on during its G20 presidency. The G7 has now a tradition of inviting select countries to its summits to gain more legitimacy to the decisions that emerge. The BRICS, SCO and G20 summits too are occasions when the presiding country invites a set of countries to attend as part of its larger diplomatic objectives. India has been imaginative in not only inviting select countries to the G20 summit but reaching out to countries of the Global South as a whole to elicit from them their

views and priorities about issues that need to be addressed in the G20 summit deliberations. That after Indonesia, India is presiding over the G20 and will be followed by Brazil and South Africa shows the increasing role of the Global South in shaping global decisions on economic growth and financial stability and other issues that now figure on the G20 agenda, be it debt relief, climate finance, energy transition, achievement of SDG goals, data location and privacy, food and energy security, etc.

It is in this background that India organised a virtual Voice of South Summit 2023 on 12-13 January, that included a Foreign Ministers Session and a Leaders Session. At least 120 countries participated. The statements made by India's Prime Minister and its External Affairs Minister on the occasion spell out India's thinking and objectives in organising this summit and feeding its outcome into G20 deliberations, apart from developing an independent India-Global South agenda through this summit. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar stated at the opening of the Foreign Ministers Session that the key concerns of the developing world are not being captured in the G20 debates and discussions, be it the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, terrorism, ongoing conflicts and debt crises. India has therefore wanted to ensure that India's G20 presidency gathers that voice, the perspectives, the priorities of the Global South, and articulates them clearly in its debates.

Jaishankar expressed India's view that the world is becoming increasingly volatile and uncertain for the South, that the Covid-19 period showed to it the danger of over-centralised globalisation and fragile supply chains, with the Ukraine conflict adding more stress, especially on food, energy and fertiliser security. He noted that capital flows started constricting even as debts mounted, with developing countries also expected to bear the burden of developing climate resilience, industrialise without carbonising, deal with increasing climate events and lift millions out of poverty while managing at the same time disruptions and uncertainties in global supply chains.

Why India Needs to Expand Export Quality Skilled Manpower

Managing an ever-burgeoning population is a Herculean task. It can also be an opportunity, but it all depends upon how we prepare ourselves to treat the population. According to the World Population Prospects-2022, India's population will reach 1.428 billion on 1 July 2023. It will marginally be higher than the 1.426 billion figure for China at the time. So, we are all poised to replace China as the most populous country in the world, but we have a distinction of 65 percent of the total population below the age of 35 years. This demographic dividend presents an opportunity that can be leveraged to create a high-quality skilled workforce for the rest of the world. Every year over 12 million young people reach the employable age in India but we are unable to absorb them, even though many are armed with higher degrees but are not equipped with employable skills. The India Skills Report (ISR) 2022 states that only 46.2 percent of those coming out of higher educational institutions are employable. It is high time for India to provide 'Ready to Hire' young workforce talent, as all the major developed countries like the US,



Europe, Japan, Germany and China are reeling with aged population. Some economists and social scientists link the problems like hunger, malnutrition and unemployment to India's vast population. It was an utter failure that even after 75 years of Independence and currently having the world's youngest population, we have not been able to export quality skilled manpower to the world's leading and expanding economies. We have young people but without the potential of skills which make them more employable. Unfortunately, our journey so far on the road to skilling has not been so satisfying. As per the National Policy for Skill Development and

Entrepreneurship (NPSDE) 2015, the target was to impart various types of skills to 40 crore people by 2022. However, around 4 crore people have been trained. NPSDE estimates that only 5.4 percent of the workforce in our country has undergone formal skill training as compared to 68 percent in the UK, 75 percent in Germany and 96 percent in South Korea. Given the fact that 83 percent of the workforce is engaged in the unorganized sector with limited training facilities, upgrading of skills, both in the manufacturing and services sectors remains a challenge. The major challenges to skill development, as also pointed out by the NITI Aayog, involve mapping skill requirements sector-wise and geographically; making vocational training in school education as an aspirational choice; engaging industry for improved quality and relevance — scaling up the apprenticeship programme; integrating the informal sector into the skill development ecosystem; putting in place an effective, internationally recognised assessment and certification system.

Biden-Harris Administration Unveils National Strategy to Advance Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities

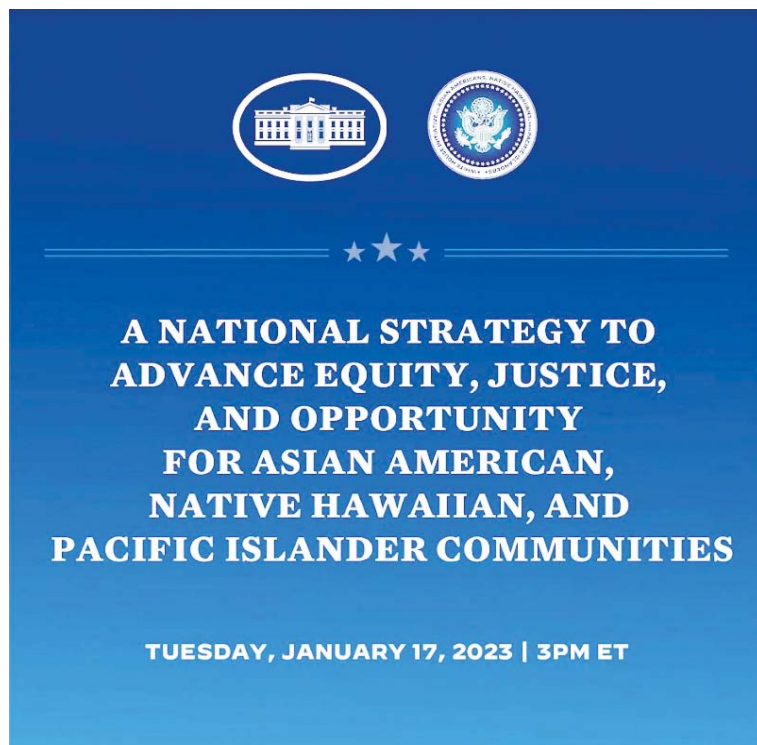
Senior administration officials, community leaders, and elected officials celebrate the release of more than 30 federal agency action plans to promote safety and equity for AA and NHPs.

(News Agency) WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) convened federal government officials and community leaders to mark the release of the Biden-Harris Administration's first-ever National Strategy to Advance Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) Communities.

At a special virtual event, senior Biden-Harris Administration officials outlined the details of 32 federal agency plans, which build on the Administration's previous actions to promote safety and equity for AA and NHPs. Community leaders also discussed additional steps the federal government can take to address critical priorities for AA and NHPI communities, including data disaggregation, language access, and combatting anti-Asian hate. Watch the full event [here](#).

WHIAANHPI is also soliciting public feedback on the agency plans [here](#).

"From day one, President Biden and Vice President Harris have made clear their commitment to address the needs of underserved communities,



including Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities," said Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra. "With the release of today's national strategy, the public can see the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government approach to advancing equity and addressing the challenges that Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities face."

"These 32 agency action plans are the result of more than a year

of work by dedicated public servants in collaboration with community advocates, and detail specific commitments to advance justice and opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders," said U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Katherine Tai. "These commitments are bold, ambitious, and deeply aligned with the Biden-Harris Administration's broader equity agenda. This national strategy also builds upon our shared progress to ensure the safety and

prosperity of our families, neighborhoods, and communities."

The event was moderated by WHIAANHPI Executive Director Krystal Ka'ai, and included panel discussions moderated by Erika Moritsugu, Deputy Assistant to the President and AA and NHPI Senior Liaison, along with Sonal Shah, Chief Commissioner of the President's Advisory Commission on AA and NHPs. Since January 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken steps to address the needs of AA and NHPI communities by advancing policies that promote equity, expanding entry points to federal services and programs, and centering the experiences and resiliency of AA and NHPI communities. To support these efforts, WHIAANHPI engaged federal agencies to improve interagency policymaking, program development, and outreach efforts to AA and NHPI communities across the country. In Summer 2022, 32 of these agencies – including all 15 executive departments in the President's Cabinet – submitted agency plans that outline specific actions to advance equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities. These plans are deeply aligned

with the Biden-Harris Administration's broader equity agenda and represent an historic first for the federal government. Participants of the virtual event included:

Secretary Xavier Becerra, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, WHIAANHPI Co-Chair Ambassador Katherine Tai, U.S. Trade Representative, WHIAANHPI Co-Chair Secretary Pete Buttigieg, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Miguel Cardona, U.S. Department of Education Isabella Casillas Guzman, Administrator, United States Small Business Administration John Tien, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Julie Su, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor Nani Coloretti, Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget Vanita Gupta, Associate Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice Erika L. Moritsugu, Deputy Assistant to the President and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Senior Liaison Chiraag Bains, Deputy Assistant to the President on Racial Justice and Equity

NYIC Demands Mayor Adams Stop Scapegoating Asylum Seekers and Include Immigrant New Yorkers in the FY24 Budget

(News Agency) New York, NY— Yesterday, New York City Mayor Eric Adams released the City's preliminary budget for fiscal year 2024, with relatively little investment made to support immigrant New Yorkers to fully integrate and thrive in New York City. Today, his Administration asked the State to commit funding to support asylum seekers, in addition to their calls to the Federal government. In that request, the Administration continued to place blame for the City's budget woes on the estimated 40,000 asylum seekers who have arrived in NYC since last spring.

Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition: "We are shocked to see immigrants

and asylum seekers excluded from Mayor Adam's vision for New York City, especially after he espoused for much of last year that the city will always be welcoming to immigrants. Instead, Mayor Adams has released a budget that delivers the bare minimum to low-income families, and does little to ensure our newest arrivals are able to fully integrate and thrive. To rebuild our economy and invest in the future of our young people, the Mayor along with the NYC Council must include funding and services for all immigrants and New Yorkers, including recent arrivals and asylum seekers in the final budget. This includes fully investing in the English Language Learner (ELL) Transfer Schools Program, which

provides bilingual social workers, robust training for school-based staff, and community-based wrap-around support for older newcomer youth, many of whom have endured unimaginable trauma during their journeys to New York. New York City must also prioritize the hiring of additional social workers in our public school system at competitive rates to support the needs of every New York student, and give them a fighting chance to fully recover from the hardships of the last two years.

"Scapegoating immigrants for the austerity measures in his budget is shameful and inaccurate, given that our most recent arrivals account for less than 1% of New York City's \$103 billion

budget, according to the Mayor's own math. There is no doubt that our State and Federal governments bear some responsibility in helping the city provide for our newest arrivals, and we add our voices to the Mayor's call for greater support from them. However, the Mayor cannot shirk responsibility for his budget choices and management of the situation. By excluding our newest neighbors from his budget, he just told tens of thousands of immigrant New Yorkers that they don't matter. Is that really what he intended to say with this budget? We call on the Mayor, Speaker Adams and the NYC Council to account for newcomer asylum seekers, while supporting and restoring programs that support them and all New Yorkers."

Greta Thunberg detained while protesting in Germany

Greta Thunberg was held while protesting against the demolition of the coal village of Luetzerath in Germany.

(NewsAgency) Climate campaigner Greta Thunberg was detained alongside other activists on Tuesday during protests against the demolition of the coal village of Luetzerath but the entire group will be released later in the day, according to police.

"There is no reason to hold them for days. It might take hours or they will go immediately," a spokesperson for regional police in Aachen said, speaking about the whole group of demonstrators.

Thunberg was held while protesting at the opencast coal mine of Garzweiler 2, some 9 km (5.6 miles) from Luetzerath, where she sat with a group of protesters near the edge of the mine. The clearing of the village in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia was agreed between RWE and the government in a deal that



allowed the energy giant to demolish Luetzerath in exchange for its faster exit from coal and saving five villages originally slated for destruction.

Activists have said Germany should not be mining any more lignite and should focus on expanding renewable energy

instead. Riot police backed by bulldozers removed activists from buildings in the village with only a few left in trees and an underground tunnel by last weekend, but protesters including Thunberg remained at the site staging a sit-in into Tuesday. Thunberg, was seen sitting alone in a large police

bus after having been detained, a Reuters witness said. "We are going to use force to bring you to the identity check, so please cooperate," a policeman said to the group, according to Reuters footage. "Greta Thunberg was part of a group of activists who rushed towards the ledge. However,

she was then stopped and carried by us with this group out of the immediate danger area to establish their identity," a spokesperson for Aachen police told Reuters, adding one activist had jumped into the mine.

Thunberg was carried away by three policemen and held by one arm at a spot further away from the edge of the mine where she was previously sat with the group.

She was then escorted back towards police vans.

The Swedish climate activist addressed the around 6,000 protesters who marched towards Luetzerath on Saturday, calling the expansion of the mine a "betrayal of present and future generations."

"Germany is one of the biggest polluters in the world and needs to be held accountable," she said.

Boris Johnson to write book 'like no other' on stormy time as UK prime minister



(News Agency) Boris Johnson has signed a deal to write a book on his tumultuous time as U.K. prime minister.

The Brexiteer politician — who led the Conservative Party to a thumping 2019 election victory but was ousted by his own MPs last year in the wake of a host of scandals — will pen a memoir for HarperCollins, the publisher announced Monday.

Arabella Pike, publishing director at imprint William Collins, said:

"This will be a prime ministerial memoir like no other. I look forward to working with Boris Johnson as he writes his account of his time in office during some of the most momentous events the United Kingdom has seen in recent times." No publication date has yet been set for the book, and financial details of the deal have yet to be disclosed.

Johnson, a longstanding fixture in British politics, led the 2016 campaign for Brexit. He took

charge of the Conservatives in 2019, wiping out the opposition Labour Party in its traditional heartlands in that year's election. But his first year in office coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, and, while the U.K. government was praised for its rollout of vaccines, it attracted sharp criticism for its wider handling of the crisis and became mired in the so-called Partygate scandal over breaches of lockdown rules by key people in Johnson's own government. Johnson was finally brought down by his MPs last year following sexual misconduct claims against a key political ally, but rumors of a potential comeback continue to swirl in Westminster after the Tories replaced his successor Liz Truss with Johnson's old foe Rishi Sunak. The ex-PM has previously written a host of books, including a biography of his political hero Winston Churchill and a children's book: "The Perils Of Pushy Parents."

US, Ukraine top military chiefs meet in person for 1st time

(South Asian Insider Bureau) The top U.S. military officer, Army Gen. Mark Milley, traveled to a site near the Ukraine-Poland border on Tuesday and talked with his Ukrainian counterpart face to face for the first time — a meeting underscoring the growing ties between the two militaries and coming at a critical time as Russia's war with Ukraine nears the one-year mark. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met for a couple of hours with Ukraine's chief military officer, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, at an undisclosed location in southeastern Poland. The two leaders have talked frequently about Ukraine's military needs and the state of the war over the past year but had never met. The meeting comes as the international community ramps up the military assistance to Ukraine, including expanded training of Ukrainian troops by the U.S. and the provision of a Patriot missile battery, tanks and increased air defense and other weapons systems by the U.S. and

a coalition of European and other nations. It also marks a key time in the war. Ukraine's troops face fierce fighting in the eastern Donetsk province, where Russian forces — supplemented by thousands of private Wagner Group contractors — seek to turn the tide after a series of battlefield setbacks in recent months. Army Col. Dave Butler, a spokesman for Milley, told two reporters traveling with the chairman that the two generals felt it was important to meet in person. The reporters did not accompany Milley to the meeting and, under conditions set by the military, agreed to not identify the military base in southeastern Poland where they were located. "These guys have been talking on a very regular basis for about a year now, and they've gotten to know each other," Butler said. "They've talked in detail about the defense that Ukraine is trying to do against Russia's aggression. And it's important — when you have two military professionals looking each other in the eye and talking about very, very important topics, there's a difference."

Trump prepares to open next phase of 2024 campaign in South Carolina

The former president will hold a more "intimate" event than his typical rallies in the key state later this month.

(South Asian Insider Bureau) Former President Donald Trump is planning to hold his first public campaign event of the year in South Carolina, in what aides are portraying as a first step into a more public phase of his 2024 White House run.

Trump is slated to make an appearance in late January in Columbia, S.C. It will not be a rally, his advisers said, but will be a more "intimate" event where he will roll out his leadership operation in a state which hosts a key early Republican primary contest. Trump's advisers are casting the plans as part of a gradual build-out of the former president's campaign, following a relatively private month-and-a-half since a November launch that coincided with the holiday season. During a Wednesday interview with POLITICO, senior Trump advisers Brian Jack, Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles pushed back on the idea that Trump had so far run a low-energy effort, pointing to his opening of a campaign headquarters in West Palm Beach, Fla., his activity in key primary states over the course



of the 2022 midterm election and the initial build-out of senior staff. They said the forthcoming South Carolina event, among other moves, was evidence that the former president was taking important steps to set himself up for the GOP nomination during the opening days of the race. "Not all that occurs in the campaign is done in the public eye ... There's a level of expectation that is maybe pushed by people that don't view the campaign in maybe the most positive light," said LaCivita. "You have to husband your resources, you have to plan

and you have to be ready, and so all of that — we don't advertise those aspects of campaign building, of campaign organizing."

The comments come amid mounting questions in political circles about Trump's low-profile approach. Trump has not held any of his trademark rallies since the end of the midterm election — prompting chatter that he is starting the campaign in a state of political weakness, after a host of Republican-endorsed candidates fell short in the 2022 midterms. The Trump officials declined to say when his rallies

would resume — but they argued that it made little sense to hold them at such an early point in the campaign.

"People want to push, 'Why aren't you doing rallies?' Well, I think it would be kind of crazy to be spending huge amounts of money this far out," LaCivita said.

It's the latest piece of a broader plan to solidify Trump's standing in states that hold key nominating contests in early 2024. During the midterm election, the former president endorsed a host of candidates in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada. Trump has also hired a pair of Iowa-based strategists, Alex Latham and Eric Branstad, come out in support of Iowa's first-in-the-nation status for its caucuses and, this week, took out a full-page advertisement in the Iowa GOP's annual legislative breakfast program.

In New Hampshire, the former president has maintained a close relationship with the state party chairman, Stephen Stepanek, as he has with the Nevada GOP chair, Michael

McDonald. And last June, he spoke remotely to a breakfast gathering of South Carolina GOP officials.

Trump notched a critical win in South Carolina's 2016 primary, where he received nearly one-third of the vote in a splintered field. This time, the former president could face opposition in the state from two South Carolina-based Republican rivals: Sen. Tim Scott and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, both of whom are potential candidates.

But Wiles argued that Trump was the best positioned to win the South Carolina primary contest, and that "there's no data that I've ever seen that suggests otherwise."

Trump's advisers also said the former president was holding dinners with top donors and party leaders, among other moves behind the scenes. He has been monitoring the race for Republican National Committee chair, which pits the incumbent, Ronna McDaniel, against a challenger, California committeewoman Harmeet Dhillon. McDaniel has held the post since 2017, when Trump nominated her for the chairmanship. Wiles said Trump was open to the possibility of endorsing in the contest, which will be decided at the committee's annual winter meeting in Dana Point, Calif., later this month.

Within the former president's orbit, the current presidential campaign is being seen as very different from the 2020 one. So far, the 2024 campaign is tightly staffed, and Wiles said its ranks of aides would be filled out "deliberately" — an implicit contrast with Trump's reelection campaign four years ago, which was criticized as bloated. And unlike Trump's 2020 campaign, based in a sleekly designed office in Arlington, Va., with panoramic views of the Beltway, the just-opened West Palm Beach headquarters is sparsely decorated, with used furniture, two TVs, and a cheap refrigerator.

"It is a true campaign headquarters," Wiles said, adding that it was not "extravagant in any sense."

Russia Has Lost More Troops In Ukraine Conflict Than US Did In First World War: Report

(News Agency) It has been close to 11 months since Russia launched its military operation on Ukraine. There has been unimaginable loss of life, people fled homes, pets killed and infrastructure destroyed. Now, Ukraine has claimed that Russia has lost nearly 1,17,000 troops since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022. If this turns out to be true, it will mean that Russia lost more troops than the United States did in the first World War, reported Newsweek.

According to the most recent figures released by Ukraine's Armed Forces on Tuesday, 1,16,950 enemy troops have been "eliminated" since February 24. However, NDTV is not able to independently verify the claim.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs



of Ukraine took to Twitter to share these statistics. They wrote, "328 days of full-scale Russia's war on #Ukraine. Information on #Russian invasion. Losses of #Russia's armed forces in Ukraine, January 17." The Ministry also adds that 3,121 tanks and 4,877 vehicles and fuel tanks, 2,104 artillery

systems belonging to Russia were also destroyed during the full-scale attack.

A total of 1,16,516 Americans lost their lives in World War I, with 53,402 of them dying in battle and the remaining 63,114 succumbing to non-combat related causes, primarily influenza, while serving in Europe, according to

Newsweek. Russian casualties had now surpassed the number of Americans killed in the Korean War (1950-19953) which amounted to 36,516. It is to be noted 58,220 Americans were killed in the Vietnam War which took place from 1955-1975. Russian casualties, according to Ukrainian reports, greatly outnumber those in the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the two Chechen wars in the 1990s and 2000s, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and Moscow's participation in the Syrian Civil War, the outlet further noted. Less than 6,000 troop deaths have been officially reported by Russia during the war, which is currently nearing a year, Newsweek further said.

Organizer of Home-Invasion Robbery Crew Sentenced to 96 Months in Prison

While Incarcerated, Defendant Organized Robberies with Co-Conspirators Targeting Chinese American Victims in Queens, Long Island, and New Jersey

(News Agency) Defendant's Co-Conspirators Sexually Assaulted One Victim Inside Her Home

Earlier today, at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, Lamonte Johnson was sentenced by United States District Judge Raymond J. Dearie to 96 months' imprisonment for conspiring to commit robbery and using force and threats in furtherance of robbery, in his role as lead organizer of a home-invasion crew. The sentence will run consecutive to Johnson's two 20 years-to-life state prison sentences that he was already serving following his conviction for a 1986 double homicide. Johnson was convicted of the federal robbery charges following a one-week jury trial

in May 2022. Johnson's four co-conspirators previously pleaded guilty to related offenses.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York announced the sentence.

"Lamonte Johnson was not deterred by prison walls from organizing armed home-invasion robberies, but today's sentence ensures he has been held accountable for these vicious crimes, and that there is justice for his victims," stated United States Attorney Peace. Mr. Peace thanked the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the New York City Police Department for their work leading the investigation.

As proven at trial and detailed



in public filings, in March 2019 Johnson was serving consecutive 20 years-to life sentences for two murders in state prison when he organized a robbery crew with the goal of targeting Chinese American victims. Johnson connected his half-brother John Martin with Shi Zhen Lin, a former inmate who Johnson knew from prison. Lin's role in the conspiracy was to identify Chinese American

targets for the crew to rob. Martin recruited other members to join the crew and together they committed or attempted to commit multiple robberies in Queens, Long Island and New Jersey. In May 2019, Corey Mobley, Brandon Daniels, and Martin committed a home-invasion robbery in Little Neck, Queens. During the robbery, Mobley and Daniels held at gunpoint a group of women and children and sexually assaulted one of the victims.

Johnson's co-conspirators have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from seven years, for Lin, to 19 years for Mobley.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and

the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. The Department of Justice reinvigorated PSN in 2017 as part of the Department's renewed focus on targeting violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney's Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, locally based strategies to reduce violent crime. The government's case is being handled by the Office's Organized Crime and Gangs Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Jonathan Siegel and Michael W. Gibaldi are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Paralegal Specialist Brittany Wissel.

Disbarred California Attorney Sentenced To Five And A Half Years In Prison For Long-Running Multi-Million-Dollar Investment Fraud Scheme

Defendant Sold Interests in Real Estate that He Did Not Own

(News Agency) Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that DEREK JONES, a disbarred California attorney, was sentenced today to five and a half years in prison. JONES ran fraudulent investment funds, including real-estate investment firms and a venture-capital firm, through which he defrauded investors of over \$8.6 million over a period of more than seven years, from at least 2012 through 2019. JONES previously pled guilty to one count of wire fraud and was sentenced today before United States District Judge Loretta A. Preska.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "When investors purchase shares in real-estate funds and other investment funds, those investors have every right to expect that the people promoting and selling those investments are treating them honestly and telling them the truth about their investments. Today, Derek Jones, a disbarred attorney, was held accountable for violating this

right over an extended period of time, selling interests in real estate that he falsely claimed to own and defrauding his investors out of millions of dollars."

According to the Indictment, statements made in court, and other publicly filed documents in this case:

From at least 2012 through at least 2019, JONES deceived his victims into investing in various companies and investment funds that he controlled, including purported real-estate development and investment firms using variations of the names "BlueRidge," "Living City," and "Atiswin," and the purported venture capital firm Realize Holdings ("Realize").

In fraudulently inducing victims to invest in his funds, JONES routinely lied to investors, including in glossy brochures and legal documents that contained misrepresentations about real estate that JONES falsely claimed was owned or otherwise controlled by BlueRidge, Living City, and Atiswin. For example, JONES

falsely told investors and prospective investors that BlueRidge was developing a "resort village" on land it controlled on Semiahmoo Spit in Washington State and, separately, that BlueRidge had purchased an existing hotel in that same location, when in fact neither BlueRidge nor JONES owned or controlled any of that property. In other cases, JONES falsely claimed that his companies were under contract to purchase a ranch in Colorado and that his companies had secured long-term leases for various pieces of property slated for development, including California properties in Santa Monica, Hermosa Beach, and Los Angeles. Instead of using investors' money as he promised, JONES misappropriated investors' money, using much of it to make Ponzi-style payments to other investors to whom he owed money in connection with earlier transactions and for personal and family expenses, including the private-school tuition of his children.

In executing his scheme,

JONES also sent falsified and counterfeit documents to investors and others. For example, on repeated occasions, JONES provided doctored bank statements showing that he had millions of dollars in various corporate accounts, when in fact he had little or no money in such accounts. On other occasions, he provided counterfeit financial statements that falsely purported to be based on internal audits of companies that he controlled. He also sent investors and others falsified contracts with key pages removed, forged land-leases, and fictional statements of asset allocation. JONES also used the names of other individuals — without those individuals' authorization or knowledge — to communicate via email with investors and thus foster the illusion that JONES's businesses were viable operations with real employees. In total, JONES defrauded investors out of more than \$8.6 million.

During the commission of the fraud charged in this case,

JONES was suspended from the practice of law by the State Bar Court of California for earlier fraudulent conduct. JONES was ultimately disbarred in July 2022 based on findings by the State Bar Court that he had intentionally misappropriated money belonging to a client in 2011 and that he had made misrepresentations to the client, to the court, and to others.

JONES, 48, of San Marino, California, pled guilty on November 1, 2021, to a single count of wire fraud. He was sentenced today to five and a half years in prison, three years of supervised release, forfeiture of \$8,679,787.66, and restitution to his victims in an amount to be determined within the next 90 days. Mr. Williams praised the excellent work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This case is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Raymond Lewis and David M. Abramowicz are in charge of the prosecution.

Gunman dressed as lawyer kills prominent attorney inside courtroom in Pakistan

(News Agency) A gunman dressed in full judicial robes shot and killed a prominent attorney inside a courtroom in northwestern Pakistan on Monday, police said. The attacker, who was arrested at the scene, had opened fire at Abdul Latif Afridi, a former president of Pakistan's lawyers union and a prominent figure in the community, fatally wounding him. The attack took place at the High Court in Peshawar.

The attacker, Adnan Khan, had previously accused Afridi of orchestrating the 2015 killing of his father, Samiullah Khan, who was also a lawyer, said Naeem Khan, a police officer.

The gunman fired six shots at 79-year-old Afridi's chest from less than a foot away, eyewitness and legal assistant Muhammad Rizwan told AFP. According to Rizwan, as the gunman surrendered to police, he said:



"Don't shoot, I had a feud with him and I have taken my revenge."

It was unclear how the attacker managed to sneak into the court building with a handgun. The killing was condemned by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, government officials, politicians

and lawyers.

In a statement, Sharif expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where Peshawar is the capital. His chief rival, the party of opposition leader and former

Prime Minister Imran Khan is in power in the provincial assembly. Sharif described Afridi as "a seasoned jurist and a brave politician who was known for his righteousness". Before his killing, Samiullah Khan, the father of the attacker, had represented Shakil

Afridi, the Pakistani physician who helped the CIA find al Qaeda mastermind Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was killed in 2011 by Navy SEALs in a raid on his hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The physician ran a fake vaccination campaign that helped locate and identify bin Laden. The doctor and the lawyer killed on Monday are not related. In 2012, Pakistan sentenced Shakil Afridi to 33 years in prison on charges of allegedly providing money and medical treatment to Islamic militants in a former tribal region. Afridi and his family have denied those charges. Pakistan was outraged over being kept in the dark ahead of the SEALs operation. Washington has demanded Afridi's release but Islamabad has resisted the demand, saying he violated Pakistani law. The doctor was never formally charged in bin Laden's case.

UN Blacklists Pakistani Militant After China Lifts Block

(News Agency) China on Tuesday defended its decision to allow the United Nations to designate an anti-India militant leader as a global terrorist, saying the designation would enhance international cooperation against terrorism.

Abdul Rehman Makki, 68, who is currently serving an unspecified jail term in Pakistan on terror charges, was added to the U.N. Security Council's sanctions list on Monday.

India and the United States jointly proposed the listing last June, but China, a close ally of Pakistan, placed a so-called "technical hold" on the proposal, which it removed on Monday.

"Terrorism is a common scourge for humanity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular news conference in Beijing when asked about China's reversal.

"The individual you mentioned has been convicted and sentenced by Pakistan, and this designation is a sign of recognition of Pakistan's staunch fight against terrorism," Wang



noted. He described the U.N. listing mechanism as "conducive" to strengthening international cooperation against terrorist threats.

Responding Tuesday to Makki's placement on the sanctions list, Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said her country was "a victim of terrorism and supports" international counterterrorism efforts, including those of the U.N.

"The listing of Mr. Abdur Rehman Makki is a technical issue

undertaken under relevant procedures of the United Nations Security Council. In any case, he has been convicted by a Pakistani court already," Baloch noted.

She reiterated Islamabad's call for "strict compliance" with the Security Council's listing rules and procedures to "maintain the integrity of the U.N. counterterrorism regime." She did not elaborate.

Arindam Bagchi, spokesman for India's Ministry of External Affairs, welcomed the U.N. listing of Makki, calling the procedure

an "effective tool" to curb threats from regional terrorist organizations.

"India remains committed to pursuing a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism," he said. Organizations and individuals added to the Security Council's ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions list are subject to assets freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes.

The U.N. statement on Monday identified Makki as the deputy chief of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant group, also known as Jamat-ud Dawa, blamed for the 2008 attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai.

New Delhi accuses the Pakistani militant leader of playing roles in several terrorist attacks in India, including the Mumbai carnage, which killed 166 people. Foreigners were also among the victims. Makki is the brother-in-law of LeT founder Hafiz Saeed, who is also serving a prison term in Pakistan on charges of financing anti-India militants.

Saeed denies India's allegations that he masterminded the

Mumbai bloodshed.

Pakistani authorities arrested Makki in 2019, and a court sentenced him to six months in prison in 2020 on charges of financing terrorist activities. He remains in jail for reasons not immediately known.

Makki is also wanted by the U.S. in connection with the Mumbai attack, and Washington has issued a \$2 million bounty for his arrest.

New Delhi has long accused Islamabad of harboring and funding militant groups blamed for terror attacks on Indian soil and Muslim-majority parts of India-administered Kashmir.

Pakistan, which also administers part of Kashmir, denies the allegations as an attempt to divert attention from India's alleged human rights violations and atrocities against Kashmiris.

The nuclear-armed rival nations have fought several wars and limited conflicts, mainly over Kashmir, since gaining independence from Britain in 1947. The dispute remains at the center of bilateral tensions.

HRW accuses Bangladesh police unit of 'rampant' Rohingya abuse

(News Agency) Rights group says the Armed Police Battalion is engaged in extortion, harassment and wrongful arrests of refugees it is tasked with protecting. An elite Bangladesh police unit is engaged in the "rampant" extortion, harassment and wrongful arrests of the Rohingya refugees it has been tasked with protecting, Human Rights Watch (HRW) alleges.

The Armed Police Battalion (APBn) operates in camps housing nearly one million members of the stateless minority, most of whom fled neighbouring Myanmar after a military crackdown that is now the subject of a genocide investigation by the United Nations. Refugees and humanitarian workers told the New York-based human rights watchdog that safety had deteriorated after the unit took charge of camp security in 2020. In a report outlining police conduct and released by HRW on Tuesday, some



Rohingya said abuses had become "a regular occurrence". "Abuses by police in the Cox's Bazar camps have left Rohingya refugees suffering at the hands of the very forces who are supposed to protect them," HRW Asia researcher Shayna Bauchner said.

The rights group said it had spoken to dozens of Rohingya refugees living in the sprawling and overcrowded camp network in southeastern Bangladesh and documented at least 16 cases of serious abuse by

battalion officers.

Police demanded hefty bribes and threatened refugees with arrest if they did not pay, HRW's report said, adding that families were often forced to sell gold jewellery or borrow money to free unjustly detained relatives. "Police generally demanded 10,000-40,000 taka (\$100-\$400) to avoid arrest, and 50,000-100,000 taka (\$500-\$1,000) for the release of a detained family member," the report said.

Bauchner called on authorities

to investigate the accusations and hold responsible officers to account.

Battalion commander Syed Harunor Rashid said the HRW report was "questionable".

"Criminals are telling them false facts, and [Human Rights Watch workers] are reporting them. This is like giving comfort to criminals," he told the AFP news agency, adding that the unit would investigate if it "receives specific complaints". Police acknowledge that violence has spiked in the camps, which are home to armed groups and are allegedly used as staging posts for regional drug trafficking networks. At least 20 refugees, including top community leaders, were killed by armed groups last year as part of a turf war in the settlements.

Police extortion 'a regular occurrence'

Several Rohingya refugees told AFP that police abuses were "rampant".

"A few days ago, I was returning

to the camp with my brother's medical report from a hospital," Ali Jaker, 20, said. "APBn officers stopped me at the checkpoint, interrogated me and slapped me."

Jaker said they stole the equivalent of \$50 from him. "Then they took my mobile phone," he said. "They threatened to take action against me if I shared the story with anyone."

Sitara Bibi, 45, called police extortion "a regular occurrence".

"I had to pay 3,000 taka [\$30] to them during my son's marriage," she said. "If we didn't pay them, the police would file a drug smuggling case against my son."

One Rohingya community leader, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told AFP that refugees were forced to pay police to travel between camps or to gain entrance to camps late at night. "If anyone protests these abuses, he is arrested," the leader said.

Backing Sri Lanka, India sends financing assurances to IMF

China, Japan and India are Sri Lanka's biggest bilateral creditors and their financing assurances are critical to getting a \$2.9 billion package from the IMF; Japan also expected to send assurances soon

(News Agency) India sent financing assurances to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday, becoming the first of Sri Lanka's creditors to officially back the crisis-hit island nation's debt restructuring programme.

The development comes days ahead of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's scheduled visit to Colombo on January 19 and 20, and just as Sri Lankan leaders concluded talks with a visiting high-level delegation of the Communist Party of China.

"The written financing assurances from India were sent to the IMF Monday evening," a top official source in Colombo confirmed to The Hindu. This takes Sri Lanka one step closer to getting a crucial \$2.9-billion package from the IMF, made contingent on "receiving financing assurances from Sri Lanka's official creditors and making a good faith effort to



reach a collaborative agreement with private creditors."

China, Japan, and India are Sri Lanka's three largest bilateral lenders. With India getting on board, Sri Lanka's chances of swiftly tapping IMF assistance now depend on similar assurances from Japan and China. Sources familiar with Sri

Lanka's ongoing negotiations with creditors said that the Paris Club, of which Japan is a member, is likely to send its financing assurances "soon". China blamed for delay

Following the staff-level agreement with the IMF in September 2022, the Ranil Wickremesinghe government

said that it would obtain IMF support before the end of the year. However, as Sri Lanka's negotiations with creditors dragged on, Chinese loans came under the spotlight, drawing criticism from both local politicians and international actors. In a parliamentary intervention, a prominent

opposition legislator squarely blamed China for the delay.

More recently, the U.S. Ambassador to Colombo, in a media interview, asked China not to be the "spoiler" in Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process. The Chinese Embassy responded sharply on Tuesday, accusing the U.S. official of "hypocrisy" in a statement that pointed to private creditors from western countries, who hold about 40% of Sri Lanka's debt. Meanwhile, President Wickremesinghe on Tuesday told Parliament that ongoing discussions for economic recovery were "successful".

"Currently, we are working to get our economy on the right track. Now we have to get India and China to consent to this debt restructuring. We are continuing discussions in that regard, and I am pleased to announce to this House that the discussions are currently successful," he told the House.

How Covid-19 Mishandling May Cost China Big And Even Dent Its Superpower Aspiration

The Covid-19 pandemic had its origin in China, swiftly crossed the Chinese border mainly due to intentional secrecy maintained by the Chinese government and overnight ended the spectre of China as an attractive destination for the international community to do trade, business and investment activities with that country. China madly reacted to statements and observations that blamed the Chinese government for not releasing the information about the virus in time and alerting the international community. When Australia demanded an investigation into the origin of the virus, Beijing overreacted by imposing economic sanctions against Australia.

When several countries around the globe struggled to combat the pandemic, China bragged about its ability to contain the pandemic; indirectly conveying the message that the health security system is superior to that of other countries, including the United States.

When India, Europe, the United

States and many other countries were finally able to successfully deal with the virus and its subsequent mutants, China accused other countries of ending the lockdowns too early and continued to implement a Zero Covid-19 policy; again seeking to tell the world that Chinese government is more caring of the health of its citizens than other countries. In fact, in the midst of sufferings and deaths of people in other countries, China made military misadventures in its neighbourhood, especially along the land border with India, the South China Sea and the East China Sea. The bloody skirmish that occurred in Galwan Valley and massive troop deployments in other parts of LAC were the results of Chinese offensive moves. Moreover, when millions of Chinese were confined to their homes in the most severe lockdowns imposed by the Chinese government, Xi Jinping engineered another term in office for himself and made preparations to annex Taiwan by force. The theory that domestic

problems encourage leaders to engage in foreign adventures for diverting the attention of people aptly fits into the actions of President Xi Jinping.

The failure of the Zero Covid-19 policy, efforts by multinational companies to shift out of China, the determination of countries to seek alternative routes of supply chains bypassing China, huge energy shortages affecting Chinese industries, banking crisis in multiple Chinese cities, real estate debt crisis and, finally, massive protests across China against the Zero Covid-19 policy have created anxiety and desperation in the Xi Jinping administration.

The latest outcome of all these developments is the complete lifting of the Zero Covid-19 policy that has made the prescription much costlier than the disease! The policy pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other — zero Covid to no Covid! The consequences have been devastating. What India experienced during the Delta wave is perhaps pale in

comparison to what is happening in China now — long queues in crematoriums, shortages of medicines, jam-packed ICUs, dead bodies lying around, hospitals teeming with patients, doctors and medical helpers dog-tired, deaths of celebrities hitting the headlines and the overburdened health infrastructure on the verge of collapsing. All these are not reported in the mainstream government-controlled Chinese media for obvious reasons. If the Xi Jinping administration is not giving the actual data to the World Health Organisation, can it be trusted to be transparent to its own citizenry? Indian drugs of various kinds are in great demand in China but are not available in drug stores due to government restrictions. Black markets are flourishing, but with it fake medicines. India has offered help, and so has the United States. But the Chinese government seems to be maintaining its false pride in its ability to address the crisis on its own. So outlandish is the

Chinese government policy that it has lifted all restrictions on inbound and outbound travellers amidst a surging number of Covid-19 patients. It has put the lives of Chinese citizens in trouble, but so has it done for international travellers. The Chinese government refuses to learn from the experiences of other countries in handling the pandemic, but at the same time, it has overreacted to the steps taken by scores of countries to screen travellers from China at the ports of entry. Beijing has suspended issuing all kinds of visas recently for South Koreans and Japanese in response to the restrictions imposed on travellers from China. China's desperations have huge costs for the world and such policies may further hasten the decline of China's influence in the world and delay or deny its aspiration for acquiring a superpower status. China may soon cease to be the factory of the world and its belt and road initiative may hugely fail before it is fully realised.

Why does so much of Gen-Z hate America? Here's why we can't give up on them

Today that number is 63 percent. It wasn't until 2016 that that number ever dipped below 80 percent, sometimes being in the high 80s and 90s. That's a collapse. This is not an accident. The indoctrination happening in our schools have resulted in this kind of opinion among the young. The numbers show a complete lack of knowledge of the rest of the world. What the kids are learning in school in the U.S. is that the freest country in the history of humanity, the country that has set the example for democracy and for freedom and has been a beacon of hope to people all over the world is meh, not that great.

The kind of privilege that it takes to hold that opinion is mind-boggling. It means this person was taught to believe that the immense advantages that they have through the sheer luck of being American are not that important. They do not know the struggle people across the world still go through to be free or how desperately people want to be Americans. The haters were taught to take for granted the freedom and liberty that is their birthright.

In the last few years the left has successfully taken over curriculums in public schools across the country. They push the idea that America is just not that great. They force the 1619 Project onto curriculums. They remove discussion of the founding fathers or of American history in general. All education is geared at the idea that America is a terrible

place. Aside from being wrong, it's deeply myopic. The people who push this idea think they are worldly. But worldliness involves knowing something about other countries and not being so shortsighted about your own. These are people born on third base and thinking they've hit a triple. Deep down, Americans are a very patriotic people. Yes, even the young people. But they've gotten to where admitting it is not permitted. Millennials and Generation Z are the first generations raised with "cancel culture," and with that a forced conformity of thought. To break with the pack, with your teachers, and say that America isn't just great but the greatest, is simply not allowed. Wrongthink can lead to bad grades or harassment by their peers. It will take some bravery for the young people to overcome what is happening to them. And it will take standing up for ideas they know to be true but have been told so long that they are not. More than that, it will take the older generations doing more than just tsk-tsking these kinds of numbers. They have to educate the young people in their homes or in their lives about the miracle that is the American experiment. The miracle needs maintaining, and it needs a continued effort to ensure its success. Cancel culture and the push of leftist conformity will be destroyed eventually. The older generations have to be in the fight, and can't just give up on the youth to make that happen.

Food fraud secretly infiltrates kitchens across America—here's how to avoid it

This not only harms consumers' wallets, but it also puts public health and safety at risk.

Some estimates say food fraud affects at least 1% of the global food industry at a cost as high as \$40 billion a year, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

"We might not know the overall impact of food fraud because so much of what fraudsters do is hidden from us and has been for centuries," Kristie Laurvick, senior manager of the foods program at the U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention, told CNBC.

Even the FDA says it can't estimate how often this fraud happens or its economic impact. "Be aware of products that you put in you, on you or plug in the wall," John Spink, director of the Food Fraud Prevention Think Tank, told CNBC.

Between 2012 and 2021, the most common type food fraud was lying about an animal's origin and dilution or substitution, both ranking at 16% of recorded incidents by food-safety monitor Food Chain ID.

For example, dilution could entail

adding a cheaper vegetable oil to an expensive extra virgin olive oil.

"If I drink scotch, I couldn't tell you [the] difference between a \$50 bottle and a \$5,000 bottle. So, I know I could be deceived at that point," Spink said. The Food Fraud Prevention Think Tank suggests five questions a consumer can ask themselves to reduce their vulnerability to product fraud. What type of product is it? Take extra caution with any product that you put on your body, ingest or plug in the wall.

Can you recognize the difference between products?

Do you know the retailer or supplier? Do you trust them?

Are you shopping online? If so, did you find the online supplier from a reliable source?

Complain. Is the supplier legitimate? If so, they will want to know.

Watch the video above to learn more about the different types of food fraud, how the industry is preventing risk, what consumers can do and where fraud in the olive oil, spices and seafood markets may be lurking.

There is no US labor shortage. That's a myth

There is, however, a shortage of jobs paying sufficient wages to attract workers to fill job openings

When a public problem is wrongly described, the solutions posed often turn out to be irrelevant or inhumane. A current example: America's so-called "labor shortage".

Jerome Powell, the Federal Reserve chair, says the United States has a "structural labor shortage" that's unlikely to be resolved anytime soon.

The US Chamber of Commerce claims there are over 10 million job openings in the US for which employers can't find workers.

Here's the truth: there is no labor shortage. There is, however, a shortage of jobs paying sufficient wages to attract workers to fill job openings. For most Americans, real (inflation-adjusted) wages continue to drop. Wages have been increasing less than prices. Those price increases include the costs of food, energy, rent, childcare, eldercare and transportation (cars, gas and public transit) – all big expenses for working people.

Meanwhile, the federal minimum wage continues to plummet. It hasn't been raised in 13 years – the longest period without a raise in its history. Adjusted for

inflation, its real value is the lowest it's been in 66 years. You don't have to be a financial wizard to see why some workers might say the hell with it. Economists offered similar warnings of a "labor shortage" after the financial crisis and recession of 2008-09. But when the economy strengthened and wages rose, the so-called "labor shortage" magically disappeared.

So, what should be done about the difficulty employers are having finding workers?

Simple. If employers want more workers, they should pay them more. Jerome Powell and his colleague at the Fed don't want to hear this. They're aiming to deal with the "labor shortage" by slowing the economy so much that employers can find all the workers they need without raising wages.

Even with inflation slowing, central bankers still believe they need to slow the job market and tamp down wage gains. "The biggest cost, by far, in [the service] sector is labor," said Powell at his latest news conference in December. "And we do see a very, very strong labor market ... where wages are very high." But slowing the economy will prevent millions of people from getting raises and cause millions more

to lose their jobs – disproportionately low-wage workers, women and people of color. Republicans and some corporate economists, meanwhile, are blaming the "labor shortage" on overly generous jobless benefits. They say the way to get more people into jobs is to make their lives outside jobs less tolerable.

A recent "study" by Casey Mulligan and EJ Antoni claims that "it pays not to work in Biden's America", because unemployment and Affordable Care Act benefits are so generous that "many businesses can't get workers back on the job almost three years after Covid-19 hit these shores".

Baloney. Apart from the non-working wealthy and their heirs, most unemployed people are hard up. Pandemic benefits are over, and America's social safety nets are in tatters – as they were at the start of the pandemic. Before the pandemic, fewer than 30% of unemployed Americans qualified for unemployment benefits, which last no longer than six months – the least generous of any other rich nation. Since then, we've done nothing to fix this broken system. Affordable Care Act subsidies, meanwhile,

allow low-income people to afford health insurance. Without these subsidies, many wouldn't get the medical care they need and would face higher odds of getting seriously sick and hence unable to work. Taken to its logical extreme, the corporate Republican argument might be correct. Eliminate all safety nets and at some point people without jobs will hurt so much they'll have to take any available job, at any wage, whatever the job demands. But do this, and we end up with an economy that's even crueler than today's economy. The reason people aren't working is that work doesn't pay them enough, given declining real wages and the increasing costs of what they depend on. Both the Fed's solution – slow the economy so employers can find the workers they need without raising wages and the Republican corporate solution – slash safety nets so people are so desperate they must take any job available – are cruel. They would impose huge burdens on many of the most vulnerable people in our society. If we want more people to take jobs and we wish to live in a decent society, the answer is to pay people more.

Davos is no conspiracy-it is infotainment

What media group in the current climate would not like to own such a business?

Greetings from Davos, the annual shindig of world leaders and chief executives in a valley by a Swiss mountain. Or perhaps the site of a global conspiracy of the power elite. Or perhaps the place where a Swiss professor imposes his quaint euro-views on "stakeholder capitalism" on US corporations. Or perhaps one giant cocktail party.

The fact that the World Economic Forum has been going since 1971 and can pull 2,600 professionals away from their desks without knowing precisely why they come is quite an achievement. Any event that can charge SFr22,000 (\$23,600) per seat – and up to SFr500,000 for membership – has things to teach rivals.

Quartz, the business news publication, this week unveiled the "confidential" list of Davos attendees, reinforcing the notion that the 0.1 per cent is up to no good. "It allows bankers or people in business to meet and make deals they couldn't legally do in their offices," says Richard Saul Wurman, founder of the Ted conferences.

But why travel all the way to Davos to fix prices? Most people here spend their days debating corporate social responsibility and the global economy, and

their nights rubbing shoulders with fellow guests over drinks and dinner. The WEF is not a conspiracy; it is infotainment. Klaus Schwab, its lugubrious founder, presents himself as a high-minded soul whose mission is to foster understanding among politicians and the private sector. In Schwab-speak, this year's agenda is to "look at the future in a much more positive, constructive and dynamic manner, gaining the resilience [his italics] to adapt to changing contexts".

Mr Schwab is equally a canny entrepreneur who founded a business that is a model for others, from social networks including Facebook and Twitter to old-media companies that yearn to charge for content. He runs a networked club-like think-tank with high margins and growth that has seen off challenges. Davos possesses, to quote its baffling 2013 theme, "resilient dynamism".

Given the number of companies that now want to get into the same business, what is his formula?

First, Davos is serious – its participants discuss weighty topics and review the state of the world. They hear from policy

makers and economists what is going on, and what they think will happen (rightly or wrongly). "Davos is a factory where the conventional wisdom is manufactured," says David Rothkopf, the author of Power Inc.

That matters because it is a business-to-business operation – few people here buy their own tickets. The entry fee is paid by organisations that want to be sure it is worthwhile, or at least to justify the expense to anyone who asks. "In my innocence, I didn't think Davos could keep going because it was so boring, but I didn't understand it," says Mr Wurman, who now runs the WWW Conference.

Second, it is live. Media and entertainment companies have come to realise the value of live events, compared with the written word, audio or video. The Rolling Stones, who do not sell half the records they used to, charged fans up to £950 per ticket on their recent tour (and Mick Jagger attended Davos last year).

Meeting experts, seeing their reactions, asking them questions, perhaps even conversing over drinks, is a more engaging experience than reading their words in print or seeing them on television. It is

a bespoke event that cannot be duplicated – one that is personal and thus valuable.

It is also full of performances. Alongside the politicians and economists, there are scientists and artists who give insights into their fields – this year they will talk, among other things, on space debris and brain science. Like Ted, it has found that people enjoy a quick dip into another discipline. Third, it is a club. Entrance is tightly restricted and it plays to people's vanity to be invited, or even permitted to join. The beauty of members' clubs such as Soho House is that people pay to be with other people they want to become peers with, or whom they admire. The currency of a club is its members. In this sense, it is similar to an online social network. Facebook and Twitter are free to use and have massive memberships compared with Davos, but they share with the conference the attractive attribute of not needing to pay for content.

Indeed, some companies become sponsors to place people on Davos panels. Corporate membership, star guests, personal contact, intellectual stimulation and parties make a potent

combination. The network effect is hard to break, even with reverses such as the anti-globalisation protests of the 1990s. Once a quorum of the elite signed up, Davos grew until everyone complained it was too big. What media group, facing the commoditisation of news and the piracy of digital content, would not like to own such a business? Many (including the Financial Times) already run conferences, and others are chasing in the hope of supplementing the meagre revenues from advertising. But Mr Schwab is a tough act to follow. The high-level conference business is personal. The most successful ones have an impresario-like figure at their heart – first Mr Wurman and now Chris Anderson at Ted, Herb Allen at the Sun Valley media conference, Yossi Vardi at DLD, Mr Schwab at the WEF. When any set of critics becomes too vocal or too influential, Mr Schwab invites them inside his tent; he denies that the WEF is a conspiracy but plays up its influence on world events; he disdains the Davos fringe of parties and dinners without ever quite running them out of town. If nothing else, it is worth the trip to see how it's done.



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Is This a Lost Decade for Indian Manufacturing?

Rarely has one seen broad stagnation in the capacity utilisation of industry caused by lack of demand for nearly a decade

An inexplicable aspect of India's economy, extensively commented on by experts, is the way capacity utilisation in industry has remained more or less stagnant at 60-70% over the past decade. New investments fructify only when capacity utilisation reaches close to 90%. That is when entrepreneurs plan new capacities.

In a few months, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will complete nine years in office and the one thing that has exasperated

policy makers in his government is the lack of broad-based recovery in private investment. Both greenfield (new projects) or brownfield (expansion of existing capacity) investments have been admittedly weak. Manufacturing forms 14% of India's GDP. Since 'Make in India' launched in 2014, the deadline for one of its key goals — to lift the share of manufacturing in GDP to 25% — has been pushed back three times, from 2020 to 2022 to

2025. The ratio has remained unchanged since 2014. The frustration of policymakers has manifested in various ways. Recently, in an interview with a prominent business channel, the revenue secretary said the government would like to see some real commitment of investments by the private sector before extending the time period of key tax concessions in the forthcoming Budget. He said there was no point extending tax concessions when the private

sector was not adequately responding with new investments. The revenue secretary was essentially admitting that the Modi government's biggest tax concession to industry (15% corporate tax for new projects), announced in September 2019, had failed to trigger new investments on a significant scale. The government had touted its 15% corporate tax for new projects as the world's lowest, which would make India

the most attractive investment destination. But that never happened. It is not clear whether the forthcoming budget will extend the concessional corporate tax regime for another few years. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman also showed exasperation recently when she advised Indian businessmen to realise their inherent strength. She said like the mythical Hanuman, Indian businesses are not fully exploring their hidden prowess. More recently, the FM said the states need to be much more proactive in attracting new investments. These statements betray frustration that private investments are not picking up on a scale required to drive real growth and employment. Clearly, the supply-side measures comprising special tax benefits/subsidy to industry aren't working as the government had desired. Government-driven public infrastructure projects have created higher capital formation in recent times, but that has not led to the private sector participation as part of a "crowding-in effect" as envisaged by the finance minister. According to Dhananjay Sinha, head of Systematix Institutional Equities, a private research firm, the growth in government-driven fixed capital formation in the second half of 2022 camouflages a real decline of over 6% in the fixed private capital formation. Sinha also asserts that private investment as a ratio of GDP has actually declined.

US lawmakers in Davos tell Europeans: America's not protectionist

DAVOS, Switzerland — As snow pounds the Swiss mountain town of Davos, American lawmakers are huddled in warm, quiet rooms trying to assuage European concerns that the United States hasn't just turned into a protectionist power.

The passage of Washington's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the \$369 billion behemoth legislation stuffed with clean-energy incentives, has upended EU-U.S. relations, prompting European accusations that the U.S. is unfairly boosting its own companies to encourage local investment.

In response, the EU is looking to counter with state-provided aid of its own. As the World Economic Forum hosts its annual event in Davos this week, a U.S. delegation — featuring some of the most high-profile members of Congress — was planning to meet European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen Monday night to discuss the issue before she gives a much-anticipated speech here Tuesday morning. That meeting was canceled due to travel issues for von der Leyen, however, though U.S. lawmakers are

still hoping to reschedule. The mix of U.S. senators and House members say Europe has it all wrong. The U.S., they told POLITICO in multiple exclusive interviews on the sidelines of the elite gathering, is simply investing in its own energy and economic security. And a stronger America means a stronger ally, they argued. Europe and Germany "became too reliant on Russian energy," said Senator Chris Coons, a Democrat from Delaware who's leading the delegation, adding "my hope is that we can together find a path forward." American and European leaders need to "have that conversation about the alignment of values and priorities." But Europe doesn't see alignments right now — only breaks.

After something of a golden era of EU-U.S. cooperation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine — the two sides worked constructively together to devise complex sanctions packages against Moscow — Europe was caught off guard by America's subsidy-heavy legislation. In particular, a provision granting tax

credits for electric vehicles manufactured in North America incensed the Europeans — including big car producers like France and Germany.

American lawmakers understand the criticism but believe it's misguided. Senator Joe Manchin, the centrist Democrat from West Virginia who was instrumental in passing the IRA, said Europe is being "hyper hypocritical" after decades of European protectionism.

Manchin continued that, on a separate occasion, he told French President Emmanuel Macron the IRA couldn't possibly hurt Europe, despite the concerns. That's the same message he's delivering in the winter wonderland.

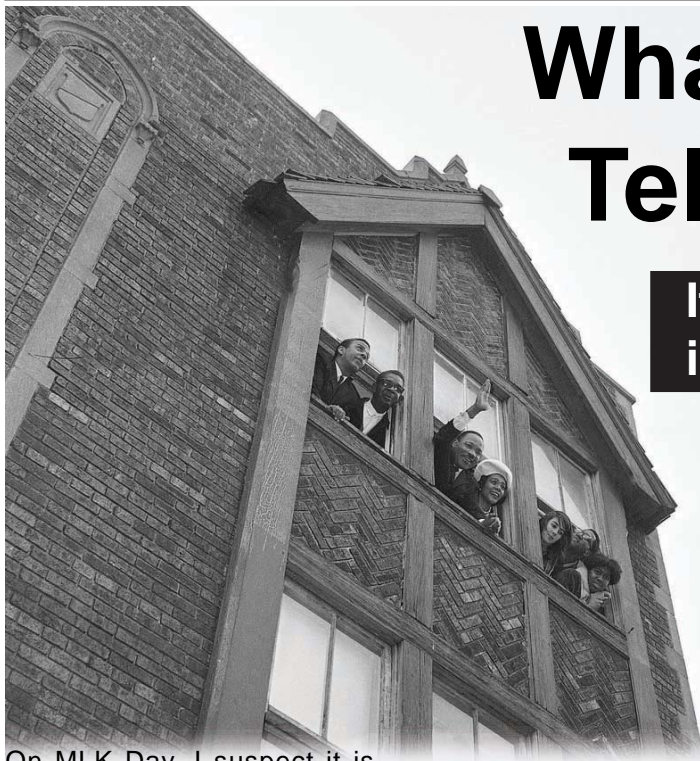
"That bill was designed to basically strengthen the United States so that we can help our allies and friends, which need it right now," Manchin said. "And if anybody needs it, the EU needs it. And without that, we're not going to be and maintain the superpower status of the world if we're not energy independent."

Representative Gregory Meeks from New York, the House Foreign Affairs Committee's top Democrat, said Europeans still seem nervous despite the bipartisan message from Democrats and Republicans. They're asking if lawmakers can still amend the legislation to assuage fears of withering European investments. Meeks has been retorting that "there's no perfect bill," and that it's "extremely important" to secure America's supply chain for critical semiconductors and to combat climate change.

Yet how the U.S. tackles climate change is still a point of contention within Congress, as Manchin — who retains immense sway with a razor-thin Democratic majority in the Senate — says fossil fuels remain vital to the American economy. "I told them, I said, the most important thing is basically you cannot eliminate your way to clean your climate," Manchin said outside the Hilton Garden Inn, where lawmakers are staying. "You can innovate it, and that's what we're doing in the U.S."

What MLK's Final Campaign Tells Us About His Legacy

It was when King began to desegregate communities in the North that he became a more dangerous figure



On MLK Day, I suspect it is easier for many Americans to reflect on King's words of love and harmony than on his radical agenda for American transformation. Associating him and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference he led with ending the old Jim Crow of the South is a comforting vindication of American progress.

But a close look at King's words and deeds in pressing his vision in the North and on the entire nation might render him a more dangerous or uncomfortable figure. And yet his ideas for radical transformation and reconciliation are more relevant than ever in our current moment of toxic division. I recently reread the chapter from *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* on his Chicago campaign for "open housing." In 1966, King moved his family into a tenement apartment in one of the poorest communities in Chicago, his entrée to northern agitation. King wanted to help organize a broad, nonviolent movement that would attack "ghetto" segregation and the systemic exclusion of Black Americans from white neighborhoods. For me, reading this chapter was a refreshing primer on King's tactics for nonviolent social change. SCLC and its local affiliates had mounted successful nonviolent sit-ins throughout the South to enable Black Americans to sit, shop, eat, travel, learn and work where they desired. Birmingham, where Bull Connor turned fire hoses and attack dogs on crusading children, was the symbolic

city in which social confrontation ultimately altered politics, enabling passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Similarly, the spectacle and horror of police clubbing the heads of John Lewis and others on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, watched by millions on television, accelerated passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the wake of those victories, King thought that Chicago would be an equally strategic city for piercing the nation's conscience to upend northern segregation. A broad local coalition of Black groups had invited him and SCLC to join their campaign. Together they planned marches, rallies and other confrontations, what would become known as the Chicago Freedom Movement. Their goal was to enable Black Americans to move out of dilapidated tenements, access opportunity elsewhere, and to transform all social institutions to include them and make upward mobility real for all people.

While the southern civil rights movement had been powered mainly by middle class people, in Chicago King wanted to begin organizing with people trapped in concentrated poverty. And so he moved his family to North Lawndale, then a West Side locale of poverty that was more than 90 percent Black and minutes from the white suburban sundown town of Cicero, which had violently repelled Blacks.

King's Lawndale neighbors paid more in rent or purchase price for wretched housing than whites paid for modern homes in the suburbs. They paid more for consumer goods. They could not leave Lawndale, nor could they access jobs that were elsewhere. This social system, a "ghetto prison" or a domestic colony, was in many ways more resistant to change than the caste system SCLC had attacked in the rural south. And yet King and others in the Chicago movement had the audacity to try.

King refused to approach this movement with gradualism. "Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy, now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all God's children," he said. As they had in Birmingham and Selma, they would seek change through nonviolent confrontation between those that resisted and those that demanded change. They organized, including recruiting Black gang members to lay down their arms and join their nonviolent cause. They marched in white neighborhoods and were met with bricks, bottles, swastikas, firecrackers and chants of "white power." At a march through Marquette Park on the South Side, as thousands of whites tried to thwart nonviolent marchers, a stone struck King's head, and he knelt with supporters. In the interlude, King said before cameras that he had "never seen, even in Mississippi and Alabama, mobs as hostile and as hate-filled as I've seen in Chicago." Then they continued to march.

Two months of confrontation in the summer of 1966 led to negotiation and a written commitment to open housing from the City of Chicago and

its Board of Realtors. The agreement was not enforced but it inspired the Fair Housing Act of 1968 that would be passed only in the wake of King's assassination. King's radical vision of humans of all colors working together to replace residential caste with communities of love and justice may seem quaint or naïve. But the legal imperative to "affirmatively further fair housing" continues and, as I wrote for MLK Day last year, there are localities that work at inclusion and racial justice. Birmingham, Selma, Chicago. These examples vindicate King's philosophy that tension was necessary to spreading awareness of systems of oppression, which in turn gathered multiracial political power for change. With the key planks of American segregation countered by new civil rights laws, King turned to tackling poverty and economic oppression. He had endured the "whitelash" of

those who saw civil rights gains as coming at the expense of whites but did not give up on the radical Christian ideal of redemption and agape love in which former enemies might become friends.

In the last months of his life King was organizing the Poor People's Campaign. He aimed to build a multiracial army, to bring poor Blacks, whites, L a t i n o s , I n d i g e n o u s people, and others to the National Mall to demand economic justice. He hoped that by focusing on the basic, pure goal of enabling all people to work

to feed a family, and have economic security when work disappeared, the movement would find a middle ground between frustrated urban rebellion on the left and backlash on the right. King was assassinated in April 1968 and without his sonorous voice on the Mall, this campaign, with its month-long Resurrection City of tents, was largely forgotten. In a time of division, dismantling structures that set people apart or creating class solidarity across races for policies that tackle economic inequality, seems nearly impossible. But on MLK Day we should all recommit to King's work at reckoning and reconciliation because without it we will get more of the same — an often cheap politics of division that harms democracy and most especially, struggling people of all colors.



What is Bangladesh Nationalist Party's future after Khaleda Zia?

Since both mother and son Tarique, still at the helm of the BNP, are facing a slew of corruption charges and stand convicted in many of those, they possibly will not be able to contest elections

Between 2001 and 2006, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) made Bangladesh synonymous with graft as the nation became the champion in Transparency International (TI)'s corruption perception index (CPI) in 2005 for the fifth consecutive year, a report in the country's leading daily reads.

That was when the BNP-ruled the country under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia with her sons — Tarique Rahman and Arifat Rahman (now deceased) — reportedly "made fat cuts

from business deals" that undercut substantial progress for many years. Since both mother and son Tarique, still at the helm of the BNP, are facing a slew of corruption charges and stand convicted in many of those, they possibly will not be able to contest elections. Perhaps, this is why they are not interested in preparing the party for elections and would rather adopt the path of violent street protests to oust the elected government first, according to the country's political observes. The game plan emerges loud and clear -- bring down the government by force, then manipulate or coerce the judiciary to overturn the judicial verdicts and get cases dropped, so that they can retain leadership, said Ajoy Das Gupta, an eminent researcher.

Tarique and Begum Khaleda continuing to helm the BNP "is a glaring breach in morality", says country's anti-graft watchdog Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) executive director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

In early January, a Dhaka court directed the government to confiscate all moveable and immovable assets of BNP's acting vice chairman Tarique Rahman



and his wife Zubaida Rahman in a graft case filed by the anti-corruption commission (ACC). Since Tarique runs the BNP from London and his mother Begum Khaleda already stands convicted of misappropriation of funds meant for orphans, the party is in deep soup at a time when it is trying to launch an all-out movement to overthrow the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman has said that keeping Begum Khaleda and Tarique — who have been sentenced by the court — in BNP's top leadership "contradicts" the party's 27-point outline for state reform, which includes stance against corruption, and is a sign of "moral decay", according to a report by country's top newswire service UNB.

"There is also a law on whether those convicted of corruption can participate in election," he added. "It is a matter of court and justice. In terms of moral position, I would say it is contradictory. They (BNP) are speaking against corruption but running the party with those (Begum Khaleda and Tarique) convicted," he pointed out.

And the recent order of the court is one among a long list of substantive evidences that lay bare the rampant corruption of the BNP leaders

back during their reign.

According to the Transparency International index, Bangladesh held an inglorious record of being top of the charts in the Global Corruption Index for five consecutive years when the BNP ruled this country under Genral Zia's leadership. "A disgrace for Bangladesh; and Bangladesh retain the championship, a shameful episode" were some headlines featured in national and international media outlets back then.

BNP's new 27-point manifesto a wish list, self-contradictory: TIB

The party has a new 27-point outline for state reform, including fight against graft. "What they (BNP) have is actually a wish list," reports UNB quoting Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

"Considering BNP's history and its experience with the people of the country, it can be said that political parties make manifestos. When they come to power, the picture is different, however. In that sense, this is a wish list. Although, many of the issues mentioned are important for Bangladesh," he added.

Indian conglomerate Tata cancelled \$3 billion deal in Bangladesh over a bribery issue during BNP's regime. In 2005, Tata reportedly pulled

out after BNP leader Tarique Rahman offered a bribery deal to the Indian company. In a post from his verified account on Facebook, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ICT Advisor Sajeeb Wazed Joy earlier said that the unchecked greed of BNP acting vice chairman Tarique Rahman and his friend Giasuddin Mamun took a toll on the investment sector of Bangladesh, causing many foreign investors to turn their back, reported The Daily Star. "Why did Tata pull out of a thousand-crore dollar investment plan at the last moment? How were the youths of Bangladesh deprived of their employment opportunities?" questioned Sajeeb.

FBI testimony against Tarique and his partner

An FBI agent testified in the Tk-20.41-crore money-laundering case filed against BNP chief Begum Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman and his business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun.

This is the first time that a US FBI agent has testified before a court in Bangladesh. The testimony is expected to be a turning point in the case since the agent has said Tarique laundered money using Mamun's account in a Singapore bank. Debra Laprevotte, a supervisory special agent of the FBI, told

before a Dhaka court how she had tracked down the money allegedly laundered by BNP's Tarique Rahman and Mamun to a bank account in Singapore.

She said the documents recovered from the Singapore bank include detailed records of money transfers and payments made from the account. It also had photocopies of Tarique and Mamun's passports, which were submitted when the two applied for credit cards from the bank.

"The first credit card on the account was a Visa credit card in the name of Mamun," she told the court, adding, "there is another credit card in the name of Tarique Rahman".

The bribery, embezzlement, and culture of corruption that Tarique Rahman helped create and maintain in Bangladesh has directly and irreparably undermined US businesses, resulting in many lost opportunities, wrote James F Moriarty, during his stay in Bangladesh as US ambassador.

"His theft of millions of dollars in public money has undermined political stability in this moderate, Muslim-majority nation and subverted US attempts to foster a stable democratic government, a key objective in this strategically important region," reads Moriarty's cable leaked by Wikileaks.

Tarique's flagrant corruption has also seriously threatened specific US Mission goals, it said. With such categorical observations in the past about Tarique, will the US now look the other way and back him to promote their possible regime change agenda in Bangladesh? A question worth a huge ponder, reads a social media post.



Banking sector giant Chanda Kochhar's rise and fall

Chanda Kochhar was arrested by the CBI along with her husband in connection with the alleged cheating and irregularities in loans sanctioned by ICICI Bank to the Videocon Group

A Padma Bhushan awardee, pioneer of the retail banking revolution in the country, celebrity CEO and an icon for women, Chanda Kochhar has been a regular on the covers of Forbes and Fortune. She was instrumental in making ICICI Bank the country's biggest private sector lender. Chanda Kochhar was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation

(CBI) along with her husband Deepak in connection with the alleged cheating and irregularities in loans sanctioned by ICICI Bank to firms of the Videocon Group. Her stint at ICICI Bank ended abruptly in 2018 when she sought early retirement following allegations of corruption and quid pro-quo while granting loans to the now bankrupt Videocon Industries.

She was mired in allegations of conflicts of interest, lack of disclosures and quid pro-quo while extending loans to Videocon. She, in fact, was the first woman to head a large lender in the country.

A favourite of the then group chairman KV Kamath, Kochhar joined ICICI Bank as a management trainee in 1984. She rose through the ranks to

play an important part in its transformation into a retail-focused lender when it turned into a commercial bank in the early 1990s. In 2009, she was chosen to succeed Kamath as the managing director and chief executive despite a strong leadership bench. Her elevation also led to the exit of Shikha Sharma - the former Axis Bank chief, who was senior to her in the group. Before her elevation to the corner office, she was a key member of the bank's management and was also the chief financial officer.

Her firm control of the institution led to a complete stoppage of negative press - there was just one bank run incident during her tenure.

When an RBI review in 2015 found a large amount of under-reported dud assets with the bank, she announced a new strategy of concentrating only on well-rated borrowers.

She has led many social causes, but her inspiring rise to the top was most admired.

Over the years, she came to define ICICI Bank until the announcement of her formal exit six months after allegations of impropriety first cropped up. She went on indefinite leave after the board was forced to launch an external probe into the issue. A loan to Videocon and the business dalliances between its

promoter Venugopal Dhoot and her husband Deepak Kochhar led to her ouster from the bank. Dhoot had invested in and subsequently exited a power company promoted by the power couple and did not disclose this when ICICI Bank gave a loan to Videocon as part of a consortium. Initially, she enjoyed the board's full backing, but as the list of allegations kept growing, she found herself alone. Finally, a complaint by a whistleblower proved to be her undoing.

The bank initially exonerated her but later launched an independent probe by a retired judge and Kochhar went on indefinite leave.

Sandeep Bakhshi was made the chief operating officer to oversee the day-to-day operations. Kochhar had six months to go before her term expired in March 2019.

Regulations allow private sector bank chiefs to continue till 70. Her offer to resign was accepted with immediate effect. She took over ICICI Bank when it was the second largest in the system and the largest among its private sector peers. By the time she stepped down, it had slipped to a distant third spot in the sector and the second largest private sector lender after HDFC Bank.



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5 Superfoods To Include In Your Winter Diet For A Glowing Skin

(SAI Bureau) Healthy diet is beneficial for boosting the immunity as well as maintaining proper body weight. It also rejuvenates your skin, curbs wrinkles, thereby leaving you with glowing skin. As beauty starts from within, it is important to know what we should eat on a daily basis. The food we eat has a direct impact on our skin. Suppose, if we consume junk food for a week, we will notice dullness and breakouts on the skin but if we eat right, our skin glows beautifully.

During the winter season our skin can become dull and dry, one might not be able to protect it in the right manner. If you aim to have beautiful and glowing skin this winter, here are 5 superfoods that one should include in your diet.

Carrots

Carrots are rich in beta-carotene which protects our skin from UV rays. Carrots are also packed with antioxidants, vitamin A and



potassium that keep dry skin and uneven skin tone issues at bay. Sweet Potatoes

A winter special food is loaded with tons of benefits. Sweet Potatoes are rich in fibres and

beta-carotene which not only nourishes the skin but also makes it glow from inside.

Citrus fruits

Winters are the time when fresh juicy citrus fruits such as

oranges, grapes, tangerine and lime are available in abundance.

These vitamin C rich fruits are excellent winter superfoods and have antibacterial properties that can help treat your acne,

pigmentation and dark spots. Besides, this they also work as a skin lightening agent and reduces ageing signs.

Chia Seeds

Chia seeds are the best source of minerals, vitamins, proteins, antioxidants and a lot of other nutrients. Not just this they are also a great source of Omega 3 fatty acids which makes your skin shine and reduces acne scars, fine lines and wrinkles. The high levels of antioxidants present in it help fight free radical damage caused by sun exposure. Turmeric

Turmeric has anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory components which helps to luster the skin, fight all the dirt and bacteria that cause damage to your skin. Drinking warm turmeric water helps the skin radiate and look healthier. You can also apply turmeric paste mixed with curd and besan to make your skin look shiny and glowing.



How To Take Care Of Your Heart And Lungs In Cold Weather



(SAI Bureau) Did you know that cold weather can spell trouble for your heart and lungs? Winter can affect our immune system and make us susceptible to health issues. With many of us leading sedentary lifestyles, this means that the risk of sudden heart attacks and respiratory issues increases significantly in winter. When the cold air hits, it becomes more difficult for the body to stay warm. As a result of lower body temperatures, the lungs react by shrinking down. This reduces the amount of air that you can take in each breath. Cold air also contains less moisture and as a result breathing it can dry out the airways. This can trigger

an asthma attack or pneumonia. Moreover, winter is also known to aggravate heart problems like chest pain or cardiac arrest. A lot of people will encounter various respiratory issues such as cold, cough, asthma, pneumonia and bronchitis issues during winter. When the body is cold, the blood vessels also start narrowing and the heart has to work harder to pump blood around the body. This results in increased heart rate and blood pressure ultimately leading to heart attacks.

Here are some tips that you can follow to keep these crucial organs healthy during the winter season.

A new mental health plan for US army veterans includes free 'suicide help



(SAI Bureau) 'Military veterans in the United States will not be able to avail free treatment if they are stuck in an "acute suicidal crisis" as a mental health care plan was announced by the US Department of Veterans. The plan will include free treatment, including inpatient care of up to 30 days, and outpatient care of up to 90 days. Secretary for Veterans Affairs (VA) Denis McDonough said, "Veterans in suicidal crisis can now receive the free, world-class emergency health care they deserve—no matter where they need it, when they need it, or whether they're enrolled in VA care."

"This expansion of care will save Veterans' lives, and there's nothing more important than that,"

he further said. The health care plan can be used by both VA and non-VA healthcare facilities, and even those veterans that are not enrolled in the VA system can avail the benefits. "Former members of the armed forces, including reserve service members, who served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location who was discharged under conditions other than dishonourable," can avail the suicide care, the statement said. Under the new policy, eligible veterans will be paid directly or their treatment costs will be reimbursed.



Here Is All That You Need To Know About The Importance Of Having A Plant-Based Diet

(SAI Bureau) Obesity is an emerging public health problem of epidemic proportions worldwide. As to WHO, globally, obesity has nearly tripled since 1975 and as per 2016 data 1.9 billion adults are overweight or obese. Unhealthy dietary habits are a major modifiable factor, leading to obesity. India too is battling this full-blown crisis of malnutrition which has worsened over the years in addition to undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency.

The increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity are important predicting indicators of their relationship with Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as metabolic syndrome, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, heart disease and cancers that today are plaguing the nation.

This increase in NCDs is partly due to a shift in lifestyle with a higher intake of calorie-dense foods, high in refined cereals, sodium, sugar, saturated fat, processed meats, packaged foods and Transfats and low intake of vegetables, fruits, fibre, nuts and seeds coupled with a decrease in physical activity levels.

Consuming good amounts of fruits and vegetables at 300g of vegetables and 100g of fruits, as recommended by ICMR in addition to pulses, cereals, millet and other plant foods are known to be protective against diseases caused by chronic oxidative stress. This benefit is both due to consuming these plant-based foods which have health-promoting compounds and due to a decrease in the consumption of excess processed foods and red

meats.

The protective nature of plant foods is due to the combined benefit of fibre and phytonutrients they contain which provides protection against the initiation and progression of the disease. These beneficial components of plant foods include phytosterols and antioxidants.

Polyphenols are a group of plant-derived functional components and are categorised into lignans, phenolic acids and flavonoids based on their different structures. They have various biological activities including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, antiviral and antibacterial properties and play an important role in preventing NCDs which are on the rise. They are also potential prebiotics which regulates the intestinal flora and prevent dysbiosis and maintain gut health and overall health. To ensure a healthy balanced vegetarian diet all the macro and micronutrients should be adequately included in the diet.

Carbohydrates (CHO) are the main source of energy whereas Complex CHO has many other additional health benefits too. It provides dietary fibres - both soluble and insoluble which play a major role in disease prevention. Including fruits, vegetables, and pulses and choosing whole grains like wheat, oats, barley, quinoa, corn and millet improves the nutritional quality of food intake.

Millet is a group of cereals which have many health-promoting attributes, they are gluten-free and have higher amounts of proteins, minerals, and vitamins and some even have a low Glycaemic Index (GI) when compared to wheat and rice. Sorghum (Jowar),

pearl millet (Bajra), foxtail millet (Kangni), and finger millet (ragi) are some of the important millets. They are a good source of fibre and have health-promoting vitamins, minerals, phenolic acids and flavonoids, in addition to their potential prebiotic and probiotics health benefits. With so many health benefits it is good to include these 'Nutri-cereals' with a variety of other grains on a daily basis to get the benefit from all. ICMR recommends 1/3 of the cereal intake can be these healthy millets.

Proteins have a wider range of functions in the body. Recommendations as per ICMR are to consume 0.6-0.83 gm/kg body weight of proteins. Including vegetarian protein sources such as pulses, beans, soy, milk and milk products and nuts and seeds and also combining cereals with pulses complements proteins and ensures adequate intake.

Fats and oils are an essential component of a balanced diet providing the essential fatty acids besides helping in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins - Vitamin A, D, E and K. The fat consumption of 25-40g (5-6 teaspoons) per person/ day of visible fat such as oils, ghee, butter etc. depending on the energy requirement. It is recommended to decrease the consumption of Saturated fats to less than 8-10 per cent of the energy obtained from animal products, coconut and palm oil and include monounsaturated (MUFA) and polyunsaturated (PUFA) fats (in the ratio of 1.3:1 respectively) from nuts, avocados, seeds, and oils of olive, safflower, sunflower, corn and oil, safflower, canola in the right proportion.

Here Is How You Can Start Eating Healthy And Right



(News Agency) Nutrition plays a big role in our lives, and yet maintaining a healthy lifestyle with a focus on nutritious foods can be a challenge. With New Year resolutions kicking in, one needs to focus on eating healthily and staying fit too. But where to start? How do you pick the healthy from the unhealthy? How much is too much? And so many such questions bombard our minds and bring us down. Well, not anymore. Omega-3 is an essential nutrient, but our body can't make it from scratch; hence, we must get it from foods. Omega-3 is a source of good fats, and the nutrient is associated with several potentials and proven health benefits. For instance, it may play an essential role in reducing the risk of heart disease¹, may help support a healthy immune system² (as part of a healthy diet), and help maintain brain health³, among other functions. They are the only tree nut that is significantly high in plant-based omega-3 ALA. In addition to omega-3 fatty acids, you must ensure you're getting enough protein in your diet. A macronutrient that your body needs in large amounts to stay healthy, protein helps curb unnecessary cravings, build lean muscle, and maintain a healthy weight. This nutrient is also used by our body to build and repair tissues. Eggs, chicken, dairy products, and California walnuts are a few good sources of protein to incorporate into your daily diet.

Snack smart

If you plan to snack, how about choosing options that may not hinder your healthy lifestyle? Celebrity nutritionist and Founder of QUA Nutrition, Ryan Fernando says "Avoid snacks that are high in sugar, salt, and fat, and opt for fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole-grain snacks. My go-to snack is a handful of California walnuts with black raisins. I pair black raisins with a handful of walnuts - that's my way of also beating sugar cravings post meals." Practice portion control

Don't just watch what you eat, but also watch how much you eat - and this isn't limited to weight-watchers. Whether you are bored, want to finish up leftovers, feel sad, or just have an elaborate spread in front of you - overeating can occur under any circumstances, and you must avoid it. If not, in the long run, it may lead to a variety of illnesses, including obesity and diabetes.

Portion control involves eating a healthy mix of foods in limited quantity, which helps you keep a tight check on how many calories you consume. Use a measuring cup, if needed. Ideally, half your plate should be vegetables, another half should be grains and lean protein.

BharatPe's founder Koladiya sues Grover to reclaim shares



2015.] And ever since then, Grover became the face of the company. While Koladiya continued to remain the tech backbone of BharatPe – but as a ‘consultant’.

However, the founders and other stakeholders reached an understanding to minimize Koladiya's public involvement with the firm. The arrangement involved him transferring his

(News Agency) Bhavik Koladiya, the original founder of BharatPe, has filed a lawsuit against Ashneer Grover in the Delhi High Court. Koladiya is taking legal action against BharatPe's co-founder and former managing director Grover “to get back his shares from him.” The matter has been listed before Justice Prateek Jalan in the Delhi High Court.

Koladiya and Grover's fight over shares was first reported by Mint last year.

As co-founders, Koladiya and Shashvat Nakrani (who was studying at IIT-Delhi at the time) established BharatPe in July 2017 and incorporated it in March 2018. Koladiya was the company's face back then and was talking to investors for funding. Three months later in June 2018, Grover joined as the third co-founder. When Grover joined, the shareholding structure then was: Grover got 32% equity, Nakrani held 25.5%, and Koladiya still remained the largest shareholder in the company with a 42.5% stake, as per Registrar of Companies filings.

However, six months later in December 2018 just before Sequoia came on board as an investor, Koladiya's name went missing from the founders' list “owing to discomfort on the part of large institutional investors to have a person with a jail term in the US.” [Koladiya went to the US in 2007 and was running a grocery store where he started accepting payments digitally without a license. This violated identity theft and mail fraud laws in the US, and he ended up getting arrested and jailed. After judicial proceedings that went on for 22 months, he was let go with a fine of \$100 and deported back to India in

stake to Grover, Nakrani, Nakrani's father (also his erstwhile schoolteacher) and some angel investors.

At present, Koladiya has filed a lawsuit to get his shares back from Grover in the Delhi High Court. As of today, Grover holds shares worth over ₹1000 crore for Koladiya.

The defendants, in this case, include BharatPe as well.

BharatPe raised its last funding round in 2021 at a valuation of \$2.85 billion.

The development comes seven months after Koladiya moved out of BharatPe. In August 2022, Mint was the first to report about Koladiya's exit from the firm and the reasons behind his move. Soon after the ‘ugly’ boardroom battle between Grover and BharatPe came to an end with the former's exit, Koladiya was planning to take legal action against Grover to get back his shares from him. “The company's investors also assured their support to Koladiya from the outside,” a source then told Mint.

“But just a week before he was to approach a Delhi court, Bhavik was asked not to pursue the case against Ashneer ‘because a settlement was being discussed’ with Grover – who was asked to leave the company over allegations of financial irregularities in February last year.”

One of the main reasons Koladiya ended his association with BharatPe was disagreements with the firm's management.

When Mint reached out to Koladiya for a comment, he said: “I cannot comment on this matter as it is sub-judice now. You can speak to my attorneys Sim & San.” BharatPe declined to comment, while Ashneer Grover did not respond to Mint's queries.

Goldman Sachs posts its worst earnings miss in a decade as revenue falls while expenses rise Goldman Sachs



(News Agency) on Tuesday posted its largest earnings miss in a decade as revenue fell and expenses and loan loss provisions came in higher than expected.

Here's what the investment bank reported: Goldman said quarterly profit plunged 66% from a year earlier to \$1.33 billion, or \$3.32 per share, about 39% below the consensus estimate. That made for the largest EPS miss since October 2011, according to Refinitiv data. Revenue held up better, at \$10.59 billion, down 16% from a year earlier and just below the estimate.

Shares of New York-based Goldman fell more than 6% in early trading.

“Widely expected to be awful, Goldman Sachs' Q4 results were even more miserable than anticipated,” Octavio Marenzi, CEO of Wall Street consultancy Opimas, said in an email. “Revenues were largely in line with forecasts, but earnings took a big hit. The real problem lies in the fact that operating expenses shot up 11%, while revenues tumbled.”

More cost-cutting and layoffs at Goldman could be ahead because of that, Marenzi said. Goldman said operating

expenses jumped 11% from a year earlier, to \$8.09 billion, due to higher compensation, benefits and transaction-based fees, among other reasons. That is about \$800 million more than analysts had expected for quarterly costs.

Analysts including Betsy Graseck of Morgan Stanley have flagged concerns that wage inflation would hit banks' results in the fourth quarter.

Another reason results disappointed: Goldman posted a \$972 million provision for credit losses in the quarter, compared with \$344 million a year earlier, as the bank set aside more funds for potential losses in credit card and point-of-sale loan portfolios. That is 50% more than analysts had expected for the quarter.

The bank is seeing “early signs of consumer credit deterioration” as the economy slows and more borrowers are at risk of falling behind on payments, CFO Denis Coleman said Tuesday during a call with analysts. Goldman said its companywide revenue decline was driven by sharply lower results in two of its main divisions, Asset & Wealth management and Global Banking & Markets.

Rupee edges lower towards 82/USD as Asian currencies drop

(News Agency) The Indian rupee weakened on Tuesday, slipping back towards the 82 per dollar mark, as the greenback broadly rebounded and Asian currencies weakened. The rupee was trading at 81.84 per dollar by 9:37 a.m. IST, compared to its previous close of 81.6125.

The currency saw its worst session in a month on Monday, when traders cited heavy dollar

buying by state-run banks and stop-losses being hit to take the rupee to near 81.75-levels from sharp opening gains. The dollar purchases were suspected to be on the Reserve Bank of India's behalf, so the currency's near-term resistance is likely going to be 81.20-81.30, said a trader at a private bank.

“Exporters are advised to increase their hedge on the



break of 81.90 levels, while importers are advised to

increase their hedges on the break of 81.60 levels,” said Ritesh Bhansali, vice-president at Mecklai Financial Services. Most of Asian emerging market currencies and stocks were lower, with the yuan extending losses with a 0.4% drop. The Chinese currency fell despite industrial output, retail sales and economic growth data all beating expectations, underlining the toll exacted by

a stringent “zero-COVID” policy.

The dollar index edged higher to 102.400-levels, after hitting a seven-month low in the previous session. The market focus will be on U.S. retail sales, industrial production and producer prices this week to further gauge whether the economy was feeling the effects of the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes.



Golnesa 'GG' Gharachedaghi from Shahs Of Sunset poses in lingerie from her Intimately line as she promises new designs: 'I'm certain you'll want some'

(News Agency) Golnesa 'GG' look, with the popular podcaster Gharachedaghi posted sizzling lingerie photos to her Instagram page on Tuesday afternoon. The 41-year-old Shahs Of Sunset veteran had on both black and red lace and satin pieces that made the most of her curves.

In her caption the TV star said something new was coming soon: 'I'm certain you'll want some. #IntimatelyGG.'

Late last year the mother of one chose several eye-popping looks for her promo shoot, including an animal print bra and panties combo that showed off her flat abs. The reality star's toned legs look even longer in a complementary pair of animal print pumps.

The provocative look was accented with a white coverup inspired by a man's shirt in one

writing, 'I paid for it... so it's mine. If you want some... get in line.'

Her Shahs co-star Lilly Ghalichi commented, 'Ok mama' and added a set of flame emojis, and former Real Housewife of Orange County star Gretchen Rossi added a 'Yes girl!!!'

GG also posted 'I'm not your average baby mama. Coming soon....' referring to a photo in which she's paired the leopard print bra and panties with a black menswear inspired jacket.

The 5ft8in doyenette donned a lacy black teddy with thigh high stockings as she sat seductively against a white background, and another in which leans forward giving a 'come hither' look straight into the camera.

GG looked stunning in a black maxi-dress with a racer-back and hip-high slits on either side.

The self-proclaimed 'Persian princess' has already tried her hand quite successfully at selling hair extensions and in the cannabis industry as the CEO of Wusah.

The star says she first turned the cannabinoid CBD to deal with her rheumatism. The company sells a variety of products including topical creams and capsules.

Shahs of Sunset followed a group of six Persian-American friends in Los Angeles who tried to juggle their active social lives and careers while also balancing the demands of their families and traditions.

The socialites had busy dating lives and are prominent in the party scene. Among the featured friends were real estate agent Mercedes, controversial singer Asa and classic Persian Princess Golnesa.

'Don't be f***ing ruuude'

Kylie Jenner busts out a VERY salty caption alongside her sexy selfie amid social media battle with sister Kim Kardashian

(News Agency) Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian recently duked it out on Instagram after Kylie didn't 'tag' Kim's SKIMS line in her most recent post.

And on Tuesday, Kylie took a playful swipe at her sister by using one of Kim's most famous quotes against her.

'don't be f***ing ruuude' Kylie captioned a slideshow of busty snaps.

Though the caption caught plenty of attention, so did Kylie's sultry snaps.

For the images, Kylie posed seductively with one manicured finger resting on her plump lower lip.

For another shot, she buried a hand in her hair and left her mouth slightly agape while staring away from the camera. Her silky raven hair was swept over one shoulder and worn in glamorous body waves that cascaded down her chest.

The mother-of-two's hazel eyes were done up with mascara and smokey eyeshadow while her famous pout was painted a pinky nude.

Kylie's chiseled cheekbones were amped up with pink peach blush from her Kylie Cosmetics line and a generous amount of highlighting powder helped her achieve an ethereal glow.

The array of busty snaps earned heavy praise from her 378million followers.

She gave fans a closer look at her glamorous appearance by uploading a 13-second video to her TikTok page.

Flashing a sexy smirk, Kylie fiddled with her voluminous locks before briefly lip-syncing the lyrics to Snooze by SZA which she admits she's been playing 'on repeat.'

In the snippet featured in Kylie's clip, SZA sings: 'How can I snooze and miss the moment?

/ You just too important / Nobody do body like you do / I can't lose when I'm with you / I can't just snooze and miss the moment' According to TIME, Snooze is about 'wanting to be present for every moment with the person you love.'

Whether or not the inclusion of the song has any subliminal meaning, Kylie does not appear to be hung up on her ex-boyfriend Travis Scott. As for her unlikely feud with Kim, the back-and-forth kicked off Monday when Kylie shared photos of herself in a skintight black romper as she frolicked in a field. Kylie captioned the post: 'Kyventures.'

Soon after, Kim took to the comment section to ask her little sister to 'tag' her brand in the post so fans would know that the black bodysuit was from her SKIMS line.



In India, deity decorating a calling for Hindu temple artist

(News Agency) The former computer professional — now a very specialized type of artist — locked his gaze on the deity before him. On a recent afternoon, 33-year-old S. Goutham was perched on a ladder at the altar of the goddess Durga at the Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Chennai, India. Goutham — his hand moving steadily — was pleating a green silk sari to adorn the deity. “You cannot get tense when you are doing this work,” he says. “You can’t do this if you are not patient. You need to become one with her.” A computer science graduate, Goutham quit his job nearly a decade ago to pursue his calling. He has since followed in the footsteps of his ancestors as a fifth-generation decorator of temple deities. In Hindu temples, idols are mostly made of materials such as black granite, white marble or five-metal alloys that have sacred significance. These deities are worshipped as physical, tangible representations of god (Brahman) who is believed to be infinite, omnipresent and beyond comprehension. Worship in a Hindu temple includes bathing these deities in

milk, decorating them with colorful clothes, flowers, perfumes such as sandalwood, jewelry, and even weapons such as swords, clubs and tridents. Oil lamps are lit at the altar, and sacred chants and foods are offered to the gods. Decorating the deities is a millennia-old practice that is described in the Hindu epic Ramayana, and Goutham has been learning the

art since he was a toddler. He crafted his first formal decoration when he was 13 — at the very altar where he stood 20 years later on a day in November. He has done thousands of decorations, ranging from relatively simple ones that take an hour or two to complete, to others that are more complex and take several days.

Goutham said he became interested in decorating deities as a child because of his father. “When you are little, your father

is your hero,” he said. “I wanted to be just like him.”

The first lesson Goutham got from his dad was about the weapons each god would hold. He heard stories about the



power of each weapon and how gods would wield them. The personality of the deity and the story of the god or goddess could change

depending on their weapons, the clothes they wear, the expression on their face or the position in which they are sitting or standing,” he said. When he sets out to decorate a deity, Goutham says he has a concept of what to do, but doesn’t start out with a sketch. He goes step by step — placing the deity’s hands, feet and weapons. Then, he moves on to the clothes and jewelry. Gradually, the god’s form manifests.

There are rules about the types of materials that can be used on deities.

“The human body is made up of earth, water, fire, air and space, and everything you see naturally occurring on Earth is made of these elements,” Goutham said. “To show this, we decorate deities using things that occur in nature and are a representation of these elements, like copper, cloth, coconut fibers and so on.” He says decorating a deity combines elements from art, dance and yoga, in terms of the hand gestures and postures the deities assume. Man-made materials such as plastic are prohibited. Goutham says he uses little pins to hold fabric together, but makes sure the pins don’t directly touch the idol. He sources the deities’ arms and legs, mostly made from copper or brass, as well as the weapons and jewelry, from artisans. He has also created an app and website for those who wish to learn more about this art and dreams of establishing an institution to train artists who can maintain the sacred tradition. While most deity decorators are men, he sees no reason why women cannot learn and practice it. “Everyone is equal under god,” he said.

Norway archaeologists find ‘world’s oldest runestone’



(News Agency) Archaeologists in Norway said Tuesday that have found a runestone which they claim is the world’s oldest, saying the inscriptions are up to 2,000 years old and date back to the earliest days of the enigmatic history of runic writing. The flat, square block of brownish sandstone has carved scribbles, which may be the earliest example of words recorded in writing in Scandinavia, the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo said. It said it was “among the oldest runic inscriptions ever found” and “the oldest datable runestone in the world.”

“This find will give us a lot of knowledge about the use of runes in the early Iron Age.

This may be one of the first attempts to use runes in Norway and Scandinavia on stone,” Kristel Zilmer, a professor at University of Oslo, of which the museum is part, told The Associated Press. Older runes have been found on other items, but not on stone. The earliest runic find is on a bone comb found in Denmark. Zilmer said that maybe the tip of knife or a needle was used to carve the runes. The runestone was discovered in the fall of 2021 during an excavation of a grave near Tyrifjord, west of Oslo, in a region known for several monumental archaeological finds. Items in the cremation pit — burnt bones and charcoal — indicate that the runes likely

were inscribed between A.D. 1 and 250. “We needed time to analyze and date the runestone,” she said to explain why the finding was first announced on Tuesday. Measuring 31 centimeters by 32 centimeters (12.2 inches by 12.6 inches), the stone has several types of inscriptions and not all make linguistic sense. Eight runes on the front of the stone read “idiberug” — which

could be the name of a woman, a man or a family. Zilmer called the discovery “the most sensational thing that I, as an academic, have had.” There is still a lot of research to be done on the rock, dubbed the Svingerud stone after the site where it was found. “Without doubt, we will obtain valuable knowledge about the early history of runic writing,” Zilmer said. The runestone

will be exhibited for a month, starting on Jan. 21, at the Museum of Cultural History, which has Norway’s largest collection of historical artifacts, from the Stone Age to modern times. Runes are the characters in several Germanic alphabets that were used in northern Europe from ancient times until the adoption of the Latin alphabet. They have been found on stones and different household objects.

Should you worry about lichens, moss, algae on trees?

(News Agency) Now that deciduous trees are bare, trunks and branches have taken center stage, and you might be noticing nuances and irregularities that evaded your attention over the summer. For instance, what are those green masses growing on your trees?

Those growths could be either lichens, moss or algae, and the good news is that none are cause for alarm.

Because they usually grow on stressed or declining trees, many people assume these organisms are responsible for making their trees sick. But they aren’t parasitic; they’re opportunistic, which is to say they like to grow on trees that are already ailing or growing in poor conditions.

Lichens are symbiotic organisms of fungi, algae and possibly yeast that live off each other, not

your tree. They typically present as pale green or gray (or sometimes orange) crusty or leafy masses on tree branches and trunks, rotting logs and wood fences.

The growth of lichens is actually a good sign because they will not survive in polluted areas. If you’ve got lichens, you’ve got good air quality. However, because lichens often take advantage of already stressed trees, their presence typically indicates the need for a bit of TLC. Water the trees, aerate the soil around them, and apply much to the root zone, which is the area that begins 4 inches (10 centimeters) away from the trunk and extends as far as the branches reach overhead. Moss is another non-parasitic organism that thrives in moist conditions and grows on trees, lawns or even bare soil in shady areas.



Harnaaz Sandhu flaunts traditional roots in regal lehenga on stage at Miss Universe 2022

Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Sandhu flaunted her Indian roots on stage at the grand finale of Miss Universe 2022. The diva, who crowned her successor R'Bonney Gabriel at the event held in New Orleans, rocked a multi-hued lehenga for her first appearance on the stage today, January 15.

She slipped into a regal ensemble from the label Rimple and Harpreet Narula. Here's a short clip of the moment when she was welcomed on stage. Clad in an ethereal and heavily-

embellished lehenga set, she exuded oodles of ethnic elegance. What Harnaaz wore was a blue-and-pink lehenga further enlivened with colourful accents and sequinned embellishments. Her voluminous lehenga skirt also boasted of chevron patterns.

Apart from being doused in a splash of colours, her blouse and the dupatta were also accentuated with gota patti details. The diva upped the ethnic glory with an ornate maang-tikka and

a matching pair of traditional earrings. For her makeup, she opted for neutral hues and rocked glossy lips, Kohl-rimmed eyes and a bit of beaming highlighter. Her hair, flowed down in soft curls. Harnaaz Sandhu later changed into a billowing black gown designed by Saisha Shinde. Her dazzling ensemble was an ode to former Miss Universe winners from India – Sushmita Sen and Lara Dutta. Harnaaz won the Miss Universe title in 2021.

Pathaan's Marketing Strategy

No Media Interviews, Reveals Trade Analyst



There will be no interviews for Pathaan in the run-up to the release of the film, revealed trade analyst Taran Adarsh in a tweet today, explaining why there has been radio silence from the stars. Pathaan, starring Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone and John Abraham, will market itself simply with the release of songs and trailers - the second film in the recent past to do so after Drishyam 2, which starred Ajay Devgn and Tabu. There have been no media interactions by either Shah Rukh Khan or Deepika Padukone and John Abraham recently dodged answering questions about

SRK's look in Pathaan at a press conference (fuelling reports of a rift but that's a separate story). Traditionally, film releases are heralded by a promotional blitz of interviews by the cast; last year, several interviews both old and new controversially became fodder for trolls calling for the boycott of the films the interviews were given for. In a tweet posted on Tuesday, Taran Adarsh wrote: "Earlier Drishyam 2. Now Pathaan. No interviews to media persons during pre-release promotions. Relying on songs and trailers to do the talking."

Mr Adarsh also offered

commentary on this marketing plan calling it a "wise strategy, a step in the right direction." He included a screenshot of an earlier tweet he had posted suggesting that interviews by actors be dropped in favour of letting the songs and trailers do the talking for upcoming films. Pathaan, produced by Yash Raj Films and directed by Siddharth Anand, is an action movie starring Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone as agents on an anti-terror mission against John Abraham. The film releases on January 25 and thus far, there has been absolutely no press or publicity by the stars.

Is RRR actor Jr NTR on his way to join the Marvel Cinematic Universe? Here's what we know

Jr NTR has been making headlines with his appearance in several interviews in Hollywood. While he is being called out for his accent, the actor has been going all out in promoting RRR in Los Angeles. Recently, the RRR actor expressed his

chatted for a moment. Will Jr NTR land a role in Marvel Cinematic Universe? Let's keep our fingers crossed. Stating that Tony Stark is his favourite character, he added, "He's so relatable. He is someone like us. He does not have superpowers.

He doesn't come from a different planet. He's not someone who has been put through a science experiment and become the Hulk." Not just Jr NTR, Ram Charan also revealed that he would be game to do superhero roles. He also revealed his favourite Marvel



interest in being part of the superhero and said, "Captain America! We Now, it looks like the foundation for the same has been laid out as Jr NTR met Marvel Studios' executive, Victoria Alonso, in the US. Last week, Jr NTR revealed that he would love be part of a Marvel movie. And at the Golden Globes 2023 afterparty, an American journalist introduced him to Marvel Studios' executive, Victoria Alonso. According to Variety's Mark Malkin, the two

also have amazing superheroes in India. Why not invite one of our superheroes to come here?" Ram Charan and Jr NTR played the roles of Telugu freedom fighters, Alluri Seetharama Raju and Komaram Bheem, respectively. SS Rajamouli's RRR is a fictional story based on the lives of these two freedom fighters.

Dahaad, India's first web series to premiere at Berlin International Film Festival



Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby's *Dahaad* directed by Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi will be India's first web series to premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Dahaad starring Sonakshi Sinha, Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah, and Sohum Shah in

the lead, has been selected for the Berlinale Series Competition.

The show is set in a small, sleepy town in Rajasthan. An 8 part, slow-burn crime drama that follows Sub-inspector Anjali Bhaati and her colleagues at the local police station unravel a curious case.

When a series of women are mysteriously found dead in public bathrooms, Sub-Inspector Anjali Bhaati is tasked with the investigation. At first, the deaths appear to be clear-cut suicides but as the cases unravel, Anjali begins to suspect that a serial killer is on the loose. What follows

is a riveting game of cat and mouse between a seasoned criminal and an underdog cop as she pieces together evidence before another innocent woman loses her life.

Prior to *Dahaad*, Reema Kagti has delivered many critically acclaimed and loved stories with films like *Talaash*, *Zindgi Na*

Milegi Dobara, *Gully Boy* (also presented at The Berlinale) and web series like *Made In Heaven* amongst many others. Directed by Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi, produced by Ritesh Sidhwani, Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti, and Farhan Akhtar, *Dahaad* is slated to release in 2023.

Porn actor Ron Jeremy found unable to stand trial for rape

A Los Angeles judge on Tuesday declared that porn performer Ron Jeremy is mentally incompetent to stand trial on dozens of rape and sexual assault counts.

Superior Court Judge Ronald S. Harris said in a hearing that after reviewing reports from both prosecutors and Jeremy's defense that he is in "incurable neurocognitive decline" from which he is unlikely to recover. Prosecutors asked that he be periodically reevaluated.

A hearing on placing the 69-year-old Jeremy, whose legal name is Ronald Hyatt, in a state hospital will be held next month. Jeremy pleaded not guilty after a grand jury indicted him on 34 counts of sexual assault, including 12 counts of rape.

"When he was arrested two years ago I said he would be found innocent of all charges," Jeremy's attorney Stuart Goldfarb said in an email. "Two



years have passed and with the additional discovery I received I believed he would have been found innocent. It is unfortunate due to mental condition he will not go to trial and have the opportunity to clear his

name." Jeremy, who has remained in jail since his arrest in 2020, did not attend the hearing.

An email seeking comment Tuesday from the District Attorney's Office was not

immediately returned.

Jeremy, 68, whose legal name is Ronald Jeremy Hyatt, pleaded not guilty to more than 30 counts of sexual assault, including 12 counts of rape, when the Los Angeles County grand jury returned an indictment against him on Aug. 25. He has been in jail since his arrest in June 2020. His attorney, Stuart Goldfarb, has said he is "innocent of all the charges" and they would prove it. An email seeking further comment from Goldfarb on Saturday was not immediately returned.

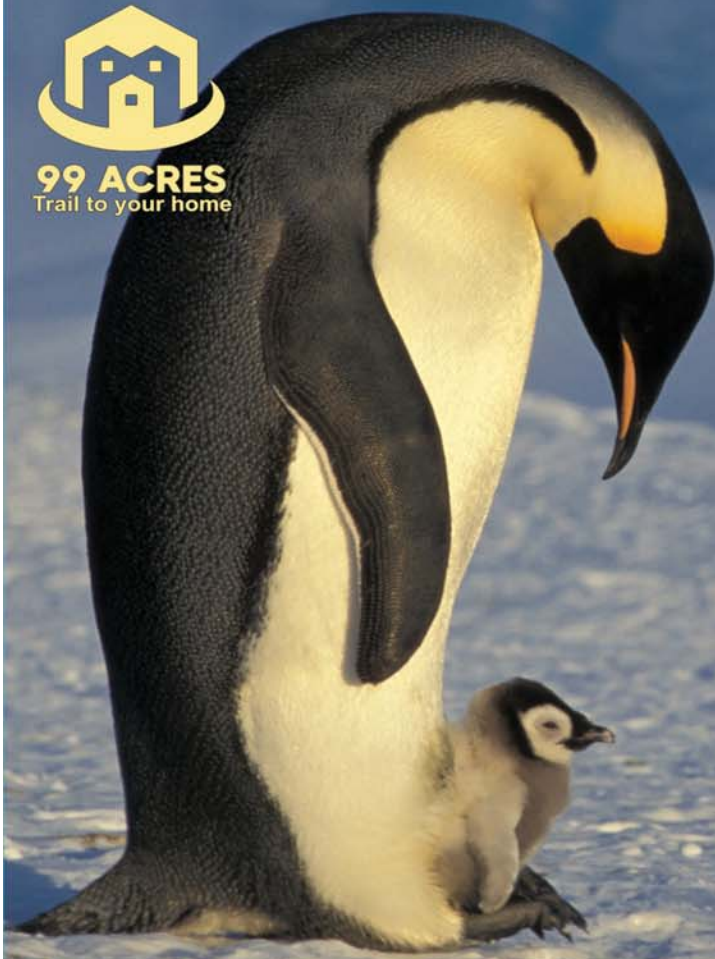
Nicknamed "The Hedgehog," Jeremy has been among the best-known and most prolific performers in the porn industry for decades, and became a recognizable pop cultural novelty through reality shows, public appearances and music videos. He has long been a magnet for seekers of autographs and selfies, which is how most of the

women and girls aged 15 to 51 he is accused of assaulting first met him.

Some didn't even recognize him initially, but they came into his orbit because of the air of fame around him. A woman whom Jeremy is charged with sexually assaulting when she was 15 in 2004 said she approached him at a rave he was hosting in Santa Clarita, California.

"I didn't know who he was, but I just — everyone told me he was famous so I was excited to meet a celebrity," said the woman, now 33, known as Jane Doe 5. After they met, he invited her backstage, where he asked her if she wanted to see "something cool," then lifted her in the air, put his hand under her skirt and molested her, she said.

Many women described Jeremy using the same methods in the same places.



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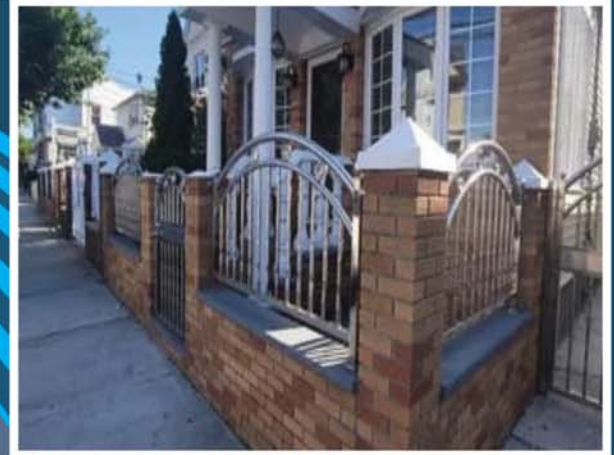
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